

Quick Reference Language Guide September 2020

DON'T USE: "problem gambler" or "responsible gambling"

DO USE: people experiencing gambling harm, people affected by gambling issues

"Problem gambler" is an industry term, as is "responsible gambling". It places all the blame with the gambler and attributes no responsibility on the industry.

DON'T USE: players/playing

DO USE: users/using

The industry has worked hard to condition us all to view the use of machines as "playing", in order to make it sound fun and innocent, when clearly it is neither. People "use" poker machines. That said, it's best to use "people targeted by poker machines", or "poker machine targets" where possible.

DON'T USE: gaming

DO USE: gambling

Gaming implies fun, gambling has serious consequences and impacts.

DON'T USE: pokies

DO USE: poker machines

This isn't a hard and fast rule, but the diminutive pokies makes the machines sound cute/friendly.

DON'T USE: "anti-gambling" to describe the Alliance or our advocates

DO USE: gambling reform organisation or advocate

The concept of us being anti-gambling is an industry trope that portrays us as being "the fun police" and wanting gambling gone from Australia. We want gambling to not cause harm, not to be totally banned.

DON'T USE: poorest suburbs/most disadvantaged suburbs/vulnerable communities

DO USE: most stressed suburbs/communities

People will not necessarily identify with being considered poor or disadvantaged, but will often identify with being under stress. This allows us to describe their situation, without alienating them.

DON'T USE: victims of poker machines

DO USE: people targeted by poker machines

The term "victim" is incredibly disempowering, and sadly too many of us still blame the victim in certain circumstances. "Target" allows us to express the harm in a less patronising way, and also explain that none of this happens by accident. If there is a target, there has to be a shooter, and that shooter deliberately wanted to cause harm. It is also expandable as a term, so we can eventually start to talk about poker machines targeting stressed families etc.

DON'T USE: gambling expenditure

DO USE: gambling losses or money taken

Expenditure implies gambling is something that can be budgeted for or controlled.

DON'T USE: Sports betting

DO USE: Sports gambling

The latter sounds harsher than the former and clearly the sporting codes don't want to be associated with gambling, so we should put the word "gambling" front and centre in our comms. "Sports-betting" will be seen as dishonest and "sports-gambling" will be seen as more representative of what we are talking about.

WHENEVER DISCUSSING A STORY ABOUT GAMBLING HARM REMEMBER TO INCLUDE

Gamblers Helpline 1800 858 858 gamblershelp.com.au

When discussing gambling-related deaths by suicide, refer to Mindframe's language guide mindframe.org.au/suicide/communicating-about-suicide/language