



GAMBLE RESPONSIBLY DURING THE FESTIVE SEASON

"winners know when to stop!"

It is that time of the year again. **"Ke December Boss!"** Despite the challenges experienced during 2020 as a result of Covid-19, or perhaps because of those challenges, citizens across the country are looking forward to the festive season. It is a time that is usually filled with social activities, parties, and anything that can provide fun and entertainment. The South African gambling industry is no exception, and it will provide entertainment in the form of gambling, as well as peripheral entertainment, such as cinemas, restaurants and shows at casino establishments. This means that the industry offers exciting activities and opportunities for recreation. However, for those experiencing or recovering from a gambling problem, it is also a season full of dangerous temptation.

The NGB is committed to ensuring that members of the public who participate in any licensed gambling activity are protected; society and the economy are protected against over-stimulation of the latent demand for gambling; and licensing of gambling activities are transparent, fair and equitable. This will safeguard the public at large participating in gambling activities against the adverse effects of gambling.

For most people who engage in it, gambling is a harmless leisure activity that may yield public benefits such as contribution to government taxes/levies, employment opportunities and tourism. For those that gamble responsibly, it is relaxing and has no impact on their lives. However, a study conducted by the South African Responsible Gambling Foundation (SARGF) in 2011 indicated that about 3% of the population are considered to be problem gamblers, and 0.5% are living with addiction. Problem gambling is often known as the **Hidden Addiction**. Unlike other addictions, problem gamblers do not display physical signs. There are no *"card marks"* on their arms, no *"roulette breath,"* no *"dice eyes,"* and no saturation point. While visible symptoms are minimal, problem gamblers often experience feelings of depression, anxiety and guilt and may have suicidal thoughts. They often neglect family and friends, run up large amounts of debt, and may be involved in illegal activity to fund their addiction.

To protect punters against the risk of problem gambling, the NGB constantly engages in awareness-raising to educate the public to make the right choices. The message is simple: gambling is a form of recreation, it is not a form of income generation. Monies used to gamble should be monies that one can afford to lose, and playing at a gambling machine should be seen as similar to buying a ticket for a new movie. You do not expect to get the price of the ticket back, because what you paid for was the entertainment, and you can afford to lose the cost of the ticket. Gambling should be seen in that way. Once you find yourself unable to stop playing, or you are spending more than you can afford to lose, then it's time to stop. If you are having difficulty, help is readily at hand, through advice and counselling on a toll-free number through the foundation. Casinos also provide forms if you wish to self-exclude yourself if you sense that you have a gambling problem.

Our biggest threat, and which will impact punters during the festive season, is illegal gambling. Any form of gambling, that is not offered by a licensed operator, is illegal. A common form of illegal gambling is online gambling, where casino-type games can be accessed at venues styled as internet lounges, or also through smartphones and laptops. No casino-type game is legal unless it is offered within a brick and mortar establishment that is licensed in South Africa. It is difficult to close down illegal operators, so they can easily take your money as you gamble, but when it comes to receiving a winning, it will be blocked by banks, and if found

to have been derived from illegal gambling, it will be forfeited to the State. Other forms of illegal gambling would include things like games of dice and FaFi (Mo-china) that are played on the street, taxi ranks, etc. and like all forms of illegal gambling, no punter protection exists.

Illegal gambling impacts the business of licensed institutions. However, and more importantly, illegal gambling frustrates the very purpose of regulation of gambling in South Africa, which is to protect the public against the risks and socio-economic impact of gambling and the proliferation of gambling. The regulated industry is carefully controlled and monitored and provides safeguards to members of the public. Should a punter be unfairly treated or have winnings withheld by a licensed operator, that operator will be dealt with by the relevant PLA, and could have their licence revoked. However, no such protection exists with illegal gambling operators.

We thus urge the public to gamble wisely and responsibly during this festive season. The holidays are a time for celebrating and relaxing. So, play it safe, and separate yourself from the temptations that could trigger problem gambling.

Here are some responsible gambling tips to keep your gambling fun:

- Budget carefully: By ensuring that you know exactly how much you have to spend, it becomes much easier to simply draw that amount of money in cash, and to leave your credit card at home and out of reach of temptation.
- Stay social! Gambling alone is usually one of the signs of addiction, so try to avoid going out alone, solely to gamble.
- If you want to know how to gamble responsibly, allocate a certain amount of time for the gambling activity to avoid overspending.
- Don't 'chase' losses by gambling more.
- Have realistic expectations of what gambling will accomplish – it will not help you pay your debts and bills, but it will provide a few hours of fun.
- Avoid drinking alcohol when gambling, as it impairs decision-making and can lead to overspending.
- Try to keep a separate account for gambling money, so that it cannot be drawn from your main account and so that it is easier to keep track of how much you spend on gambling.
- Don't borrow money to gamble – as the saying goes, "Don't play with money you don't have."
- Gamble during the good times – when you feel positive and happy, rather than during difficult times. When depressed, angry, or under pressure, gambling becomes a high-risk situation.

The NGB thus encourages you to be smart, to gamble responsibly, to seek help if you sense you may have a problem, and to report any form of illegal gambling of which you become aware. You need to avoid illegal gambling operators at all costs, and report such activities to law enforcement or to the NGB. Should you wish to contact the NGB to obtain further information, or to report any suspicious gambling activity, please email info@ngb.org.za.

Issued by the NGB Communications Team