



STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY  
Mr Peter Cain, Dr Marisa Paterson MLA, Mr Andrew Braddock MLA

**Inquiry into Annual Reports 2020-21**  
**ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE**  
**21 February 2022**

Asked by Marisa Paterson MLA on 21 February 2022: Minister for Gaming, Shane Rattenbury MLA took on notice the following question(s):

[Ref: Hansard Transcript 21 February 2022, Pages 27-28]

In relation to:

**DR PATERSON:** My question is in relation to page 50 of the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission annual report, around gambling revenue. In previous years, gambling revenue in the ACT has been decreasing. Last year, in comparison to 2019-20, there was a 20 per cent increase in gambling revenue in the ACT. Would you suggest that, unlike every other sector of business and hospitality, COVID restrictions and the pandemic have been a good thing for gambling revenue?

**Mr Rattenbury:** Dr Paterson, I am just having a look at that data for you and trying to think through the answer to your question. I do not know whether Ms Chan is there, from the Gambling and Racing Commission.

**Ms Chan:** Thank you, Dr Paterson, for the question. Yes, with the change in the revenue, there has been a bit of an increase. I am not able to say what is behind that, apart from the fact that the revenue is based on gaming activity. An increase in revenue is directly attributable to an increase in activity.

**Mr Rattenbury:** We might take this on notice. I am happy to keep going with questions, but, from my quick look at this, with respect to the figures you are referring to, the increase is compared to 2019-20. Certainly, with the 2019-20 financial year, because we had the initial lockdown, my recollection is that overall gaming revenue was down that year; therefore, the government's revenue was down that year. The following year, I understand that it went back up. Let us check that and come back to you. I am trying to line up the financial years here and make sure I am giving you an accurate answer. Please go on with your questions.

**DR PATERSON:** Do you think that we should have done more, coming out of the first COVID lockdown, to reduce gambling harm, given that there was such a significant increase in revenue?

**Mr Rattenbury:** I do not know that there has been a significant increase in revenue. We have seen over recent years, overall, that gaming machine revenue has been either stagnant or slightly declining. That would be over a six- to eight-year period. I do not believe it has gone up substantially in recent times. I will double-check this to make sure, and we will provide that to you on notice. I think it bounced back after going down, materially. You did ask me this question at the last hearing, about whether we should have done more. We have a substantial harm minimisation program. We have reduced the number of gaming machine licences in the ACT by around 25 per cent in the last five years, and we are working on bringing in bet limits and load-up limits. These are, historically, compared to what has happened in the ACT, significant reforms that are designed to have a big impact on harm minimisation.

**DR PATERSON:** I will be interested to see your answer to the question on notice.

**MINISTER RATTENBURY:** The answer to the Member's question is as follows:—

In 2020-21, COVID-19 restrictions required gambling operations to cease in the ACT for 40 days, compared to cessation of 140 days in 2019-20.

ACT Gambling and Racing Commission ('the Commission') activities following the 2020 COVID-19 Lockdown included:

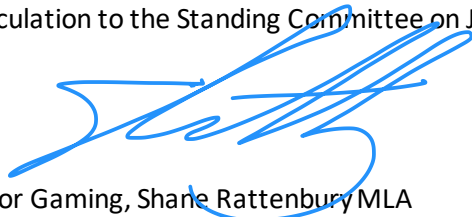
- On 28 May 2020, a statement was released on the Commission website from the Commission Chair. This statement recognised that the cessation of gambling impacts people differently, assured Canberrans that they could continue to access support and information during the shutdown, encouraged venues to review the harm prevention procedures and provided information and resources for people who might be having difficulty with online gambling and mental health.

In preparation for the easing of COVID restrictions on gambling, the Commission:

- emailed all Gambling Contact Officers reminding them of their obligations regarding gambling harm and provided harm prevention resources for their venues (20 July 2020).
- wrote to all Club Board Directors reminding Directors of the continuing risks of gambling harm and inviting them to review their harm prevention and reduction process (7 August 2020).
- provided harm prevention materials and information, covering:
  - i. looking for and appropriately responding to the signs of gambling harm
  - ii. supporting gambling contact officers
  - iii. support and information options for people experiencing gambling harm
  - iv. reviewing harm prevention processes
  - v. in-venue signage and messaging
- The Commission also provided extra Gambling Contact Officer (GCO) annual training sessions in the lead up to the recommencement of gaming operations through the end of December, to cater for GCOs wishing to take the opportunity to refresh their skills.
  - In 2019-20, 9 training sessions were held, attended by 119 GCOs.
  - In 2020-21, 13 sessions were held, attended by 157 GCOs.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety

Signature:



Date:

1/3/22

By the Minister for Gaming, Shane Rattenbury MLA