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Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, Parliament of Victoria  
Parliament House, Spring Street,  
East Melbourne Victoria 3002, Australia

Dear Chair of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee,

A response from the CEO, Carol Bennett is provided below. Please note that Rev Tim Costello, Chief Advocate of the Alliance, is overseas at this time.

Thank you for your additional request for information on the Victorian Community Support Fund (CSF).

It's important to start with highlighting that the financial overview for the CSF is not up to date and the last available report is from the 2019-20 period. The Alliance for Gambling Reform has written to the Department of Treasury and Finance, as well as the Treasurer and the Secretary of the Department of Treasury and Finance to ask when the statements from 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 will be published. We are yet to receive a response.

Despite the entire Community Support Fund coming from gambling losses in Victoria, only 24.54% of the fund's \$112.23m in revenue in 2019/20 actually went to tackling gambling harm. Most of this revenue currently goes to the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation.

An [audit](#) of the Fund found that the 'overall performance cannot presently be assessed as it has no explicit objectives and there is no monitoring, evaluating or reporting on its overall effectiveness.' The date of this audit is not explicit, but it appears it was over 10 years ago. Despite this audit being over a decade old, it does not seem this situation has changed.

The projects that are funded are very ad hoc and with the wrap up of the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation expected in June 2024, there are questions about how the funding will support preventing gambling harm in the future.

The Alliance is of the view that the entire Community Support Fund, based on taxes directly from hotel poker machines, should be directed towards preventing and reducing gambling harm. Expanding prevention projects that are demonstrating results invested in by the VRGF (which will lose funding in 2024) are a good start. Funding and investing in more independent research into gambling harm and its impacts would also be positive.

With gambling taxes forecast to be \$2.6 billion in 2023-24, the Fund is a small portion of taxes and an even smaller portion goes directly to preventing harm. Redirecting investment of the Fund into programs and services that prevent and reduce gambling harm would maximise positive benefits for the Victorian community.

Yours sincerely,

Carol Bennett, CEO