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Australian punters lost nearly \$23 billion last year, with a 30 per cent growth in sports betting helping to drive a continued rise in annual gambling losses.

New Australian Gambling Statistics figures show Australians lost \$1241 per head in 2014-15, with poker machines still the biggest cause of punter losses with \$11.6 billion lost, an increase of 4.9 per cent.

The continued growth of punter losses reignited calls for state and federal governments to get serious about tackling problem gambling through action on sports betting advertising and pokies.

The annual compilation of all state and territory data shows that total expenditure, or gambler losses, hit \$22.7 billion in 2014-15, an increase of 7.7 per cent on the previous financial year.

There has been an explosion in sports betting, with the sector growing by 30.1 per cent in 12 months – with predictions the exponential growth will continue.

But sports betting is still one of the smallest segments of the market, worth \$814 million, compared to pokies, racing (\$2.8 billion), and Lotto (\$1.7 billion).

Traditional betting on racing was the smallest growing sector at just 2.7 per cent.

The Victorian government on Sunday announced a ban on betting ads near schools and on public transport, while Canberra is moving to crack down on offshore bookies, as well as strengthen consumer protection for local online punters.

There are also renewed calls from Senator Nick Xenophon, the Greens and Tasmanian independent Andrew Wilkie for poker machine reform.

Gambling losses in total for Victoria hit almost \$5.8 billion in the 2014-15, with poker machine losses surpassing \$2.5 billion, propping up Treasury coffers by more than \$1 billion.

In NSW, punter losses hit \$8.9 billion, with \$5.7 billion lost on the pokies alone, sports betting worth \$162 million and racing \$945 million.

Across the nation casinos raked in \$5.1 billion of gambler losses, with Melbourne's Crown Casino hauling in \$1.8 billion.

Monash University Public Health expert Charles Livingstone said the growth in sports betting losses was "phenomenal".

"It demonstrates why we need to better regulate promotion and advertising. Otherwise we're facing big growth in gambling problems and harm from young men and women," Dr Livingstone said.

"But the 600-pound gorilla of Australian gambling is still the pokies: \$12 billion in losses per year, and still growing, year after year. If we're worried by sports betting, we should be 13 times more worried about the pokies."

Alliance for Gambling Reform spokesman Tim Costello said state governments could fix the "poker machine madness"

"[That is] if any of them really cared about the issue," he said.

The Australian Gambling Statistics 2014-15 shows that in Victoria total per person gambling losses hit \$1250. Pokies losses was the biggest segment with \$558 lost per Victorian.

In NSW, per person losses were higher at \$1517.

Human Services Minister Alan Tudge? said the rate of problem gambling in the online sector was three times that of other areas.

“Many Australians love to gamble but we have to make sure the gambling environment is a safe one – that’s why we are cracking down on illegal offshore gambling providers and introducing much strong consumer protection for online gambling,” Mr Tudge said.

Deakin University associate professor of public health, Samantha Thomas, suspected sports betting had grown on the back of heavy marketing.

“While not all losses equal harm, a lot of them do. It’s time for governments to start to seriously consider the factors that are contributing to these growing losses and implement effective evidenced-based strategies to reduce harm,” she said.

“This includes addressing the factors from industry, such as prolific advertising or high intensity poker machines, that may be contributing to harm. Clearly, ‘gamble responsibly’ strategies are not having an impact on reducing losses or preventing harm.”

Victorian Gaming Regulation Minister Marlene Kairouz? said the state government shared the community’s concerns about problem gambling. She said the government had invested \$150 million over four years to support problem gambling services.