



National Gambling Board
South Africa
a member of the dtic group

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MEDIA RELEASE

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SOUTH AFRICA'S GAMBLING REGULATORS INTENSIFY FOCUS ON UNLAWFUL GAMBLING ACTIVITIES

Pretoria, 25 August 2025

The National Gambling Board (“NGB”), in collaboration with Provincial Licensing Authorities (“PLAs”) and law enforcement agencies, has intensified its efforts to combat the rise of unlawful online gambling activities in South Africa. This follows a growing concern over the proliferation of unlicensed gambling websites and platforms targeting South African consumers, often without regard for local gambling laws or consumer protection.

The NGB, as the regulatory authority responsible for safeguarding the integrity of the country’s gambling sector, warns the public against participating in unlawful online gambling operations. These platforms are not only operating unlawfully but also pose serious risks to consumers including fraud, unfair gambling practices, and a lack of recourse in the event of disputes.

The Acting Chief Executive Officer of the NGB, Mr. Lungile Dukwana says: “As the gambling regulation fraternity, we remain unwavering in enforcing the law — **online gambling is unlawful and unacceptable**. Through targeted enforcement, inter-agency cooperation and public education, we are protecting South Africans from illegal gambling harm, unfair operators, and illicit financial flows. Our commitment is clear: ensuring that gambling in South Africa remains safe, fair, and licensed.”

What does the law say about online gambling?

Gambling in South Africa is regulated and licensed through the National Gambling Act, 2004 (Act 7 of 2004) (“the NGA”) and the nine Provincial Gambling Acts. The NGA, which sets the national norms and standards, has expressly prohibited online gambling until a legislative framework to regulate online gambling is developed and passed by Parliament.

The NGA defines an “**interactive game**” as “*a gambling game played or available to be played through the mechanism of an electronic agent accessed over the Internet other than a game that can be accessed for play only in licensed premises, and only if the licensee of any such premises is authorised to make such a game available for play.*” The NGA makes the offering and playing of such interactive games unlawful. Section 11 of the NGA, entitled “**Unauthorised interactive gaming unlawful**”,

expressly states that “*a person must not engage in or make available an interactive game except as authorised in terms of this Act or any other national law.*” Consequently, any winnings derived from unlawful online gambling and remitted to the NGB will be forfeited to the State.

The NGA seeks to balance societal protection, industry integrity, policy uniformity, and economic objectives by limiting excessive gambling opportunities, safeguarding players, ensuring fair regulation across provinces, generating revenue for public good, advancing empowerment, and promoting inclusive growth and employment.

The Threat of Unlawful Online Gambling

Unlawful online gambling has expanded rapidly, driven by economic pressures and the accessibility of offshore operators and unlicensed platforms, particularly after COVID-19. This undermines the regulated industry, deprives the state of revenue, and heightens risks of addiction, financial distress, and social harm—especially among low-income communities who increasingly view gambling as a source of income rather than entertainment.

Regulatory and Law Enforcement Response

Gambling regulators face an ongoing challenge of offshore online casino operators offering their products to South African citizens. To combat this, where an offshore operator is identified and is licensed in another jurisdiction, the NGB engages the respective regulator to address their licensees’ illegal activities in South Africa. The NGB and PLAs also work closely with law enforcement agencies, financial institutions, and internet service providers to disrupt illegal platforms.

Through established committees’ strategies have been developed against illegal gambling, including online operations. Collaborative efforts by all key stakeholders are necessary to ensure a holistic response towards combatting and suppressing illegal gambling operations. Detection and enforcement of both offshore and locally hosted illegal online gambling sites are however hampered by issues such as tracing of financial flows and jurisdictional complexities, highlighting the need for greater cooperation with financial institutions and internet service providers.

To mitigate the risks of gambling addiction, the NGB and PLAs ensure that licensed operators implement safeguards, such as self-exclusion programs and responsible gambling guidelines. Illegal gambling operators however derail these mitigating measures significantly as they disregard the requisite protection, leaving consumers vulnerable.

To counter this, the NGB - through nationwide education and awareness campaigns - encourages legal and responsible gambling in the form of face-to-face community education engagements, community and mainstream media campaigns, radio messages, and social media campaigns.

Face-to-face education campaigns are conducted through community information sessions, town hall meetings or imbizos, school and tertiary institution visits, awareness drives at the premises of gambling operators and at social grant information points. These campaigns take place across a broad spectrum of demographics in rural, urban and peri-urban areas, and may be conducted in a collaborative approach with other related regulators, entities, departments or non-governmental organizations.

The NGB and PLAs also work with the South African Responsible Gambling Foundation (“SARGF”) to ensure that people who need assistance with compulsive, addictive and problem gambling behaviour have access to free counselling, treatment, and support by mental and social health professionals. This service includes family members impacted.

South Africa remains one of very few jurisdictions worldwide that supports problem gamblers in the form of free treatment and counselling, as well as multidisciplinary education and awareness campaigns across the country.

“Gambling is one of the only industries in the country where businesses visibly demonstrate their responsible citizenship by contributing to the funding of the SARGF basket of services to the public. We encourage problem gamblers, or their families to reach out to the Foundation for advice, treatment or counselling on the toll-free number 0800 006 008 or via WhatsApp on 076 675 0710. To report unlawful gambling activities, Mr. Dukwana says: “The public can report unlicensed internet cafes and/or any other illegal gambling activity to the NGB via: info@ngb.org.za or 010 003 3475. Alternatively, complaints can be lodged in each province through the Provincial Licensing Authority offices.”

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ABOUT THE NATIONAL GAMBLING BOARD

The National Gambling Board (NGB), an agency of the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (dtic), was established in terms of the National Gambling Act, Act No 33 of 1996 which was repealed on 01 November 2004 by the National Gambling Act, 2004, (Act No 7 of 2004) ('the Act'). The Act makes provision for the oversight of matters relating to casinos, bingo, betting and wagering and Limited Payout Machines (LPMs), and promotes uniform norms and standards in relation to gambling throughout South Africa.

The strength of the NGB is informed by multiple decades of regulating a gambling industry which was fragmented with low credibility from the pre-1994 era. Its performance outcome is an effectively regulated and continuously supervised gambling industry, which is a significant economic sector that upholds national and internationally recognised standards of compliance and consequently national and international industry reputation.

The NGB is a regulator with concurrent competencies with the provincial gambling regulators. Its work is to ensure harmonisation and consistency with the National Gambling Act and its statutes. The NGB provides a stable environment within which the gambling industry can grow its operations for the benefit of all.

Additionally, the NGB prioritises broad-based public education around illegal gambling and responsible gambling in the best interest of the South African public, balancing a capable state, with the economic growth of the industry and social cohesion.

Vision

To position South Africa as the pre-eminent jurisdiction with an exemplary and effectively regulated gambling industry.

Mission

Lead the regulation of the gambling industry in the fulfilment of the National Gambling Act, 2004, through an effectively regulated and supervised gambling industry that upholds domestic, continental and internationally recognised standards of compliance.

Please refer to www.ngb.org.za for further information.