

NATIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION ADDS ITS VOICE TO CALLS FOR REGULATION OF GAMBLING ADVERTISING

20 November 2025

The [National Planning Commission](#) (NPC) adds its voice to growing concerns about the widespread proliferation of gambling advertising across media and digital platforms in South Africa. This was among a range of issues it tabled for discussion at a meeting with the Chairperson of Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Communications and Digital Communications, Hon Khusela Sangoni held on 12 November 2025.

The NPC called on the Portfolio Committee to intensify and tighten up its oversight and accountability mechanisms to ensure that industry bodies and regulators stem what appears to be a burgeoning, unchecked and reckless practice.

The National Gambling Board's 2023/24 Annual Report indicates that the total value of bets placed in South Africa exceeded R1.14 trillion. Gambling promotions and advertising often target sport, entertainment, and youth-focused platforms, a trend which poses significant social and economic risks, particularly to vulnerable groups in low-income households.

It has been widely reported that online gambling addiction is driving debt spirals among young South Africans, so much so that gambling may now be directly linked to food insecurity in many households, due to addiction or problem gambling. According to Old Mutual's 2025 Savings & Investment Monitor study, one in five South African gamblers "borrow, use credit or sell something to fund their gambling" and one in four "have found themselves in financial difficulty as a result of their gambling". Stats SA data also indicates that "gambling and betting are on the rise".

The saturation of gambling content in mainstream and online spaces promotes and normalises high-risk behaviour, which could undermine efforts to achieve the development objectives of the country, such as eradicating poverty, unemployment and inequality as outlined in the National Development Plan.

"It seems that in the face of reckless and unchecked advertising, most South African gamblers do not know when to stop. If this trend is allowed free reign, the noble NDP goals of ending poverty, inequality and unemployment will be severely undermined. The Commission believes that responsible governance and commercial ethics must co-exist and supports calls for stronger regulation and oversight of predatory gambling advertising.

Towards this end, the NPC's Deputy Chairperson, Prof Tinyiko Maluleke, called for "a coordinated national response involving regulators, broadcasters, advertisers, civil society and academic partners to review and strengthen existing policies".

The meeting also discussed concerns pertaining to sustainability issues facing the news media and the negative impacts this may have on democracy. A decline in independent, public-interest

journalism threatens democratic accountability and informed citizen participation. The NPC and the Portfolio Committee agreed to work together in strengthening sustainable media ecosystems as these are essential to good governance, active citizenship and civic education.

They also identified challenges and opportunities presented by the evolving media and technology landscape. For example, they noted that there is currently no comprehensive policy framework to hold online creators, including podcasters, accountable because they operate on digital platforms outside South Africa's regulatory framework. The meeting agreed that while freedom of speech is non-negotiable, it must be balanced against citizens' rights to dignity and protection from the incitement of violence, hate or discrimination. "Our view is that...if a platform performs the same public communication function as a broadcaster, it should be subject to similar expectations of accountability and fairness", said Hon Sangoni.

The Portfolio Committee also revealed that it is in the process of drafting a legislative reform agenda to modernise media regulation and ensure sustainability, which takes into account the current realities of AI, digital platforms, social media and the spread of misinformation. The Portfolio Committee indicated that they will be calling upon the NPC to help them with the coordination of inputs to enrich their processes to find solutions to the issues discussed. This is in line with the NPC's call for the establishment of a multi-stakeholder Media Sustainability Forum that convenes relevant stakeholders to develop long-term and innovative funding models to support public interest media and to ensure coherence across the broader communications ecosystem and media landscape.

Meanwhile, the NPC welcomes the report by the Competition Commission issued on 13th November on the effect that global digital platforms have on the communications environment and its remedies designed to restore fairness, transparency, and sustainability in South Africa's media ecosystem. It notes the report as a significant first step and supports its call that "sustained collaboration, investment and policy support remain vital to ensure a diverse, credible ecosystem."

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