Shadow Minister for Family and Community Services Dr Richard Lim has called for tighter control on the expansion of gambling services and improved assistance for problem gamblers, following the release of the Australian Bureau of Statistics Review of Gambling Activity in Australia.

“The social cost of gambling is widely recognised. The Government must find a balance between the right of individual Territorians to gamble and the responsibility of the Government for overall community welfare.

“When the last study was released in July 2001, just as the Martin Government was coming into office, the net takings from gambling per adult across the Territory were $1,079 with the Northern Territory ranked third in gambling takings behind New South Wales and Victoria.

“This is in sharp contrast with this week’s statistics of $1, 250 in gambling takings per adult Territorian, a marked increase of over 15%. The Northern Territory now holds the unenviable title of the highest gambling losses per adult of any State or Territory, with losses more than 29% greater than the national average.

“One look at these statistics and it comes as no surprise that problem gambling has become a major social concern in the Territory.

“Right now the Labor Government is enjoying the significant revenue that gambling contributes to the Territory Treasury and is therefore reluctant to engage in active solutions to the problem,” Dr Lim said.

Dr Lim said excessive gambling is ruining the lives of countless Territorians and their families.

“The terrible impact of uncontrolled gambling on individuals and families is felt across society with consequences of increased bankruptcy, unemployment, divorce and suicide.

“The Government must increase the priority given to the prevention and treatment of problem gambling by controlling the expansion of gambling services and improving the provisions for problem gamblers to get help," Dr Lim said.