



# How Roblox pressures children to spend money

## Key Insights

- **High exposure:** Roblox is one of the most widely used platforms by Australian children.
- **Gambling-like design:** Many games use loot boxes, spin wheels, and random rewards that rely on luck, not skill. These mechanics are difficult for young children to navigate.
- **Psychological pressure tactics:** Players are prompted to spend after losses or setbacks. "Near-miss" visuals make rare wins feel close. Big wins are highlighted, while typical losses are hidden.
- **False urgency and scarcity:** Countdown timers, rotating shops, and limited-time offers create pressure to act quickly. Some games simulate constant "limited availability" to drive spending.
- **Misleading pricing practices:** Items are presented as "discounted" (e.g. "worth 9999") without evidence the higher price was real, or with "daily discounts" available every day.
- **Pay-to-win and pay-to-skip:** Spending money is often needed to progress or avoid long wait times.
- **Obscured real-world costs:** Multiple virtual currencies (e.g. Robux and in-game coins) make it difficult to understand how much money is being spent.
- **Design risk for children:** What appears to children to be a free-to-play gaming environment in practice functions as a commercial ecosystem designed to encourage impulsive and consistent spending.

## Evidence & Analysis

Roblox is one of the world's largest digital platforms, with 350 million monthly users, an average of 151 million daily visits, generating 4.89 billion USD in annual revenue in 2025. Most Roblox revenue comes from selling Robux, a virtual currency bought with real money and spent while playing games on the platform.

The games children play on Roblox are built by third-party developers. Game developers receive a share of the revenue Roblox makes when children spend money during gameplay. Game developers are therefore incentivised to make design decisions and implement strategies that maximise in-game spending.

During gameplay, children are repeatedly shown messages like "Buy now!", "Get this item now!", "Click here to unlock!", "Don't miss out — purchase now!" or "Ask your parents to buy this for you!". Many games also encourage players to use pay-to-win and pay-to-skip options.

Roblox games often pressure players by making offers seem time-sensitive, through countdown timers, expiring deals, and rotating shops. In *Grow a Garden*, for example, the shop refreshes every five minutes and rare items appear briefly, creating a constant sense that players might miss out.

A sense of urgency is also created through items displayed for purchase with crossed-out "worth" prices (such as "worth 9999"), visually mimicking real-world sale items, but without evidence that the prior high price ever existed. In some cases, games offers appear after a loss. In *'Steal a Brainrot'*, for example, players might be offered a discounted spin (e.g. 49 Robux instead of 99) following an undesirable outcome from a previous transaction.

Random reward mechanics are also common in Roblox games. These include features like loot boxes and spin wheels that children pay to access, with rewards based on chance rather than skill.



## Evidence & Analysis (cont.)

Similar to gambling, unpredictable outcomes mean players are more likely to keep trying — especially when spin animations show rare items as "near misses", or when prizes are featured with extremely rare (0.1%) odds. This can give children the impression that a big win is likely when it is not. Games have been found to reinforce this by highlighting rare wins through announcements and leaderboards, while keeping the most common low value outcomes hidden.

These design choices make pressure children to spend money, while also making it hard for them to understand the value of what they are purchasing. The use of virtual currencies compounds the problem. Children convert real money into Robux and, for many games, they must then convert Robux into a separate in-game currency before they can make their purchase. Each conversion moves children further away from a clear understanding the true cost of what they are buying.

## Implications for Australian Policymakers & Law Enforcement

This tech issue briefing raises concerns about Roblox that require urgent attention across three key areas:

- 1. Is this environment suitable for young people?** More research is needed to understand the long-term psychological and developmental consequences of exposing children to heavily commercialised, gambling-like game designs.
- 2. Are these practices legal?** The Australian government must assess and clarify whether Roblox games are operating according to Australian Consumer Law — particularly regarding prohibitions on misleading or deceiving consumers — and whether games accessible to children should be classified as gambling products and regulated accordingly.
- 3. Are parents and caregivers sufficiently informed?** Do Australian families understand what their children are being exposed to and how they are spending money in Roblox games? Do they have enough information to make decisions about their children's access to the platform? What support or tools are needed to better inform and give families meaningful oversight and control over their children's activities on the platform?

## Further Reading

Clark, L., & Zack, M. (2023). *Engineered highs: Reward variability and frequency as potential prerequisites of behavioural addiction*. *Addictive Behaviors*, 140, 107626. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2023.107626>

Drummond, A. et al. (2020). *The relationship between problem gambling, excessive gaming, psychological distress and spending on loot boxes in Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, and the United States—A cross-national survey*. *PLOS ONE*, 15(3). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0230378>

Hardwick, T. et al. (2025). "They're Scamming Me": How Children Experience and Conceptualize Harm in Game Monetization. In *Proceedings of the 2025 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3706598.3713611>

Xiao, L. Y. (2020). Which Implementations of Loot Boxes Constitute Gambling? A UK Legal Perspective on the Potential Harms of Random Reward Mechanisms. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 20, 437-454. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-020-00372-3>

## About This Research

For further detail or to cite this research, please refer to the full report:

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