

IMPACT NEWS

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www.gisnsw.org.au



Consumer Voices in Canberra

Since its inception the Consumer Voices—Peer Spokespeople Program has provided a limited outreach service to the ACT, we have now applied to the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission for funds to establish a n ACT program and await the outcome. Meanwhile we have continued to support ACT Gambling Help services to provide community education and support them in working with ACT Clubs Gambling Contact Officers (GCO) training. The summary below provides some reflections on two GCO training sessions from the Consumer Voice speaker (Kate Seselja) and staff from a number of Clubs in the ACT to who attended the training.

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I was recently asked in my role as a Consumer Voices team member to attend two staff training sessions in the ACT. It was a great opportunity to speak to a large number of club staff in two different sessions in the one day. I was speaking on behalf of the Gambling Impact Society's program but as the evening began I had no idea just how powerful that voice could be.

I was nervous, as I had heard from other speakers that sometimes staff could be a little defensive of the work they do. I hoped this would be a supportive session where all parties could speak openly but also learn from those who have been directly impacted by poker machine gambling. I got up and walked over to the podium and began. 'Keep breathing. Just keep breathing,' I kept repeating.

I was honest and vulnerable as I explained how my addiction to poker

machines had stripped me of my assets and had almost cost me my marriage – I wanted them to have an understanding of what my life was like before, during and after my recovery.

After I finished speaking you could have heard crickets, and my initial thought was, 'Oh well, it's been a waste of time, no one cares.'

However, in the next minute I looked up and saw that some of the staff had tears in their eyes. They listened, and they were empathetic, they realised that I wasn't there to blame them at all.

I have accepted that I am not able to gamble without getting out of control because of the way I interact with the machine. I have come to realise that there are plenty of people that can drop a dollar in and walk off, but I am not one of those people – for me I just had to say like an alcoholic who can never have another drink, I can never gamble again.

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Consumer Voices in Canberra cont...

I had a chance to bring to light the fact that in the 12 years I gambled, not once did I have any kind of encounter with a Gambling Contact Officer – I didn't even know that they existed. I was able to help the club staff become more aware of how much more needs to be done to help people know that there is someone in the club that they can reach out to if they are in crisis, before they leave the club and do something they can't take back.

It was interesting to note that whilst in the group training session there were not many questions from the floor but once we broke for coffee, many staff members spoke with me personally. Club staff who attended these sessions were also asked to provide written feedback on what they found helpful. Their comments are as follows:

The consumer voice session was a very big eye opener

Consumer voice session puts everything into perspective. Seeing the magnitude of helplessness gives a better understanding of "addiction":. Counselling works for those who acknowledge the problem!

The consumer voice session (Kate's story) was very helpful in really understanding the hardships an affected person goes through.

Consumer voice session definitely opened my eyes to how far the extent of a gambling problem can go.

Kate's story was very powerful and honest, it opened my eyes. I will be looking for people – like Kate so I can help or make that first contact.

Kate was amazing – she showed courage to be able to stand up and tell her story.

Consumer story most helpful, getting insight

The consumer voice session was very interesting. Was definitely an eye opener and makes you realise the extent that gambling addiction can have on anybody.

Kate's story was really helpful as it showed that problem gambling can affect anyone

I really found that the consumer guest speaker provided an invaluable insight to problem gambling.

I found the Consumer voice session helpful in being able to identify and refer individuals with these issues.

Having an actual recovering problem gambler stand up and speak with us was really good.

I think it was important to highlight to club staff that pokers machines are not the only issue going on with the patron.

I thought having an actual reformed gambler speak was very helpful. It made gambling problems real.

Also how devastating it can be on people's lives.

Understanding the process of helping client to overcome issues.

Showing the group that the face of a problem gambling is not always what you expect.

Was great to hear the point of view from a consumer side, not just our own.

The consumer voice is very important as it breaks the stereotype.

Listening to a true story of someone's gambling problems helps to hit home how important it is to provide information to anyone we think needs help

The consumer voice was the most enlightening

My journey of stepping out into the light and sharing my story has just begun and I hope that my honesty can encourage others out of the bonds of shame and regret so they can get the help that they need to be able to reclaim their life.

Kate Seselja (Consumer Voices –Canberra)

Thank you to Relationships Australia ACT and Clubs ACT for inviting the GIS to contribute to this training program.

Gambling, technology, advertising and your child

Greg Isles, Problem Gambling Counsellor, Mission Australia

We live in a culture that has long portrayed gambling as a normal part of life, however, changing technology, in concert with an exponential increase of advertising in recent years, has significantly increased young people's exposure to gambling, particularly sports betting.

During 2012, there were reportedly 20,000 advertisements on free to air TV in Australia for sports betting alone. In the same year, a two week audit of televised NRL and AFL programs showed that gambling advertising constituted 2.5% of broadcast time. One extremely worrying consequence of this saturation of gaming advertising seems to be the normalisation of the idea that if you are interested in sports, you bet on sport.

The portrayal of gambling in advertisements is often glamorised and always about winning. Teenagers are particularly vulnerable to these images because they are more influenced by media and advertising than adults and tend to be more impulsive and less likely to fully understand the risks. As such, regular exposure to gambling advertisements can easily lead to false beliefs that gambling is an easy way to make money and live the dream.

The top six wagering organisations reported outlays on advertising and marketing in 2012-13 of up to \$40 million each!

Statistics show that between 60-80% of all young Australians gamble to some extent each year, with boys more likely to gamble than girls and more likely to develop a problem. Research also tells us that 3-4% of all teenagers have a problem with gambling – that's an average of one student in every typical size high school class.

A young person with a gambling problem can lead to other problems like depression, the undermining of friendships and of family relations, missing or dropping out of school and even criminal activity to fund their behaviour. Many people with a gambling problem later in life report that they started gambling when under age.

Some of the signs you might notice if your teenager does have a problem with gambling include:

- Being short of money without apparent reason
- Talking about sports and other events largely in terms of the odds

- Secrecy about gambling activities or irritability when away from gambling activities
- Changes in grades or performance at school
- Changes in mood and social withdrawal

If you suspect that your teenager has a problem with gambling, it may be better to raise the issue indirectly so they don't feel accused and put up defensive barriers. For example, if a gambling advertisement comes on TV you can start a discussion by asking them what they thought of the ad and what message they took from it. You could also ask whether they've seen any ad's on social media and whether any fellow-students gamble. If they reveal that they are gambling, let them know you have concerns and explain why.

To help you talk to your children about gambling, go to the NSW Gambling HELP website www.gamblinghelp.nsw.gov.au and download or order: *Talking to Teens about Gambling: a guide for parents and carers.*

Contributing to Impact News

Impact News would like to thank the contributors to this issue for sharing their valuable insights and experience.

This newsletter is published through the collaboration of our many volunteers, and contributions to our content are always more than welcome. Without the support of our members and community, Impact News would not be possible.

Impact News would like to take the opportunity to extend an invitation for members of the Gambling Impact Society to contribute their own articles to upcoming issues. We are particularly seeking contributions from those willing to share their personal stories of their experiences with problem gambling.

You don't have to be the world's greatest writer—all our content is carefully edited and treated with the utmost respect—you just have to be willing to share.

Submissions can be made to info@gisnsw.org.au

The high cost of Australia's addiction to 'pokies'

Source: Jon Donnison, From: *BBC.com/news*, July 24, 2015

Laura began gambling on slot machines, or pokies as they are known in Australia, when she was 20 years old.

Within a few months she was hooked. "I loved it but it didn't love me back," says Laura, not her real name, a wobble of emotion in her voice. She is now 25.

At her peak she was losing about A\$5,000 (\$3,650; £2,350) a month. "It would be basically all the money I had until my last dollar was gone."

Laura had a decent job but she would pour all of her salary into the pokies and then borrow from friends and relatives to gamble more.

"I lost my relationship. I lost my job. I went to pretty desperate measures to fund my gambling."

'Gambling problem'

Laura is far from alone. Australians are officially the world's biggest gamblers with each adult losing on average more than A\$1,380 a year.

That is double the amount lost by Americans and almost three times as much as the British.

"Australians lose more per head than any other country in the world," says Dr Sally Gainsbury from the Centre for Gambling Research at Southern Cross University.

"Australia definitely has a gambling problem," she says. "One percent of adults have a serious gambling problem which is actually a clinical disorder. Four percent of adults have moderate gambling problems and eight percent a low range of gambling problems."

That means it is estimated there are a staggering half a million Australians at risk from problem gambling.

'Hypnotised'

By far the biggest problem is slot machines, of which there are more than 200,000 across Australia.

"Pokies are the biggest revenue generator," says Dr Gainsbury. "Around two-thirds of all gambling losses are through the pokies and in Australia that amounts to

around A\$9.8bn a year." *

It is incredibly easy to gamble in Australia. There are pokies in just about every pub or bar.

Many pubs contain betting shops, where punters are able to gamble and drink at the same time, and there's nearly always a handily placed cash machine near by, often even in the pub itself.

"My partner used to say it was like I was hypnotised," says Laura.

"I was chasing the adrenalin of having a big win. There was just something about the lights and the sounds of the pokie machines. I would just crave it."

Laura, now a university student who hasn't gambled for more than a year since joining Gamblers Anonymous, says she knew the odds were against her but she just couldn't stop herself.

'Lied to their faces'

Gambling addiction takes many forms.

"I knew exactly what time I got paid and I lost all that money before I even left the office," says Matthew, again not his real name, a 35-year-old IT worker.

Matthew became hooked on amateur online trading sites, speculating on shares and currencies.

He first noticed he had a problem not because of the losses but because of the amount of time he was wasting at work researching the markets.

But soon he says he was losing more money than many people make in a year; tens of thousands of dollars.

"I lost a relationship, my fiancée. The relationship I had with my mum went down the drain," Matthew says.

"The thing that got most people was that I lied to their faces about where I was and about my money situation."

* **Editor's note: The Productivity Commission (2010) states pokies losses as \$12 billion**

The high cost of Australia's addiction to 'pokies'

Continued from page 4...

Social Costs

Most compulsive gamblers have similar stories to tell. "In terms of social costs, it is estimated that problem gambling costs A\$4.7bn each year," says Dr. Gainsbury.

"Gambling is something that affects not just the individual but the people around them. We're talking family breakdown, unemployment, work disruption and then things you can't even put a price on like suicide."

With such a heavy social cost you would think the government would be keen to do something about it. You would be wrong.

"Gambling taxes are one of the single largest sources of income for the state and territory governments," says Dr Gainsbury.

"It's estimated that in 2014-15 they'll get almost A\$5.9bn from gambling [in taxes]. This is over 10% of total tax revenue for some of the states."

And if anything, gambling is growing in Australia.
Chinese lure

On Sydney Harbour, a huge new super-casino is being built by the Australian businessman James Packer.

The A\$2bn project is being aimed primarily at the Chinese market, hoping to lure a growing number of high rollers from Asia.

"Chinese gamblers are being highly targeted," says Dr Gainsbury.

"They're the ones who are expected to be staying at the five-star hotel and playing at the high roller tables."

Despite the estimated 500,000 people here at risk from problem gambling, Australia looks set to solidify its title as the capital of big betting.

Disclaimer: The views and opinions contained in this newsletter are not necessarily the views and opinions of GIS NSW Inc.

Australia's political donations little better than developing nations

Source: Latika Bourke, From: *smh.com.au*, July 28 2015

A federal MP claims Australia's political donations system is little better than the sleazy cash-in-brown-paper-bag operations that occur in corrupt developing nations.

Independent MP Andrew Wilkie lashed out the major parties and some of his crossbench colleagues for accepting "grubby money" from the gambling industry, which successfully rolled back his attempts to curb poker machine use in Australia.

He said large donations the gambling industry made to the political parties and to the Liberal MP and then opposition spokesman Kevin Andrews were made as investments in return, whether that be an immediate or eventual policy decision favourable to their vested interest.

"Any suggestion that that money didn't influence policy is patent nonsense," Mr Wilkie told the ABC on Tuesday.

He said the proof was in the fact that the modest reforms to curb poker machines made by the Gillard minority government were "quickly overturned" by the Coalition government with the support of Labor in the Senate.

"We in Australia rail at wads of cash in brown paper bags in other countries but our political donations system is little better," Mr Wilkie said.

Mr Andrews says any suggestion his policies can be bought or influenced are "wrong and offensive." Fairfax Media does not suggest the donations directly influenced Mr Andrews' decision making.

But Mr Wilkie said the donation exposed a clear conflict of interest..

"It's one thing to hand money over to a political party but to effectively hand it to the Shadow Minister ... through another entity ... frankly it makes this no better than large sums of money changing hands in a brown paper bag in a developing country," he said.

Mr Wilkie said donations should be declared immediately and the disclosure threshold of \$13,000 lowered.

Who spent what on pokies in Victoria

Source: Hayley Sorenson, From: *South Coast Register*, July 28, 2015

Punters lost close to \$48 million dollars on poker machines in the Greater Bendigo area in the 2014/2015 financial year.

The loss of \$47.7 million is up on last year's expenditure of \$46.2 million.

Machines at the All Seasons Hotel collected \$9.7 million while Bendigo Stadium's machines took \$6.9 million.

Campaspe Shire gamblers spent \$8.2 million with the highest takings at the Echuca Workers and Services Club. Punters lost \$3.4 million at the club in the 12 months to July 2015.

Machines in the Central Goldfields took \$6.9 million while Macedon Ranges Shire poker machines took \$8.7 million.

About \$3.2 million was put through Mount Alexander machines.

The Loddon Shire has no poker machines.

The Productivity Commission in 2010 estimated about 95,000 "problem gamblers" across Australia accounted for about 40 per cent of all poker machine losses.

St Luke's Anglicare regional director Carolyn Wallace said low-income areas were hit the hardest by the impact of poker machines.

"These are the most vulnerable people with the least disposable income who are accounting for a large proportion of gambling losses," she said.

Ms Wallace said St Luke's provided assistance to about 500 people across central Victoria each year through its Gamblers' Help program.

She said that figure was an under-representation of problem gamblers.

Ms Wallace said problem gambling took a heavy toll.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **National Association for Gambling Studies Conference** www.nags.org.au
25—27 November, 2015
Adelaide, Australia
- **Discovery, 2016**
April, 2016
Canada
- **16th Gambling and Risk Taking Conference**
May, 2016
Las Vegas, U.S.A
- **European Conference on Gambling Studies and Policy Issues**
13—16 September, 2016
Lisbon, Portugal

See more at :

<https://aifs.gov.au/agrc/conferences>

**Phone Gambling Help
for information on your
local Gambling
Support Services
1800 858 858**



**Free Gambling Help
is available online
at
www.gamblinghelponline.org.au**

USEFUL RESOURCES

Don't Leave It to Chance : A guide for families of problem gamblers—

Edward Federman, Charles Drebing & Christopher Krebs (self-help book)

Adolescent gambling— Mark Griffiths

Teenage Gambling— Carol Silverman Saunders

Losing Your Shirt - Mary Heineman (self-help book)

Behind The 8-Ball—A Guide For families Of Gamblers - Linda Berman & Mary – Ellen Siegel (self-help book)

Overcoming Compulsive Gambling: A Self-Help Guide -

Prof. Alex Blaszczynski , University Sydney

Stop Gambling—A- Self-Help Manual For Giving Up Gambling - Simon Milton

Wanna Bet—Winners And Losers In Gambling's Luck myth - Tim Costello & Royce Miller

Stop Gambling Start Living - Laraine Rasmussen.

House of Cards: Hope for gamblers and their families - Tom Raabe.

The Addictive Personality—Craig Nakken

Creating Self Esteem—Lynda Field

Practical Financial Strategies Booklet : A Self Help Guide for Problem Gamblers

by Gerri Coleman (Contact Central Coast Problem Gambling Service, 02 4344 7992).

Free Yourself—Self-help Guide <http://www.freeyourself.com.au/>

My Passionate Affair with Poker Machines (DVD) <http://www.freeyourself.com.au/>

Free Yourself (DVD) <http://www.freeyourself.com.au/>

You Figure It Out— Resource Kit (including video, Cd and training notes for Community Education with High School Students— Know The Odds, Tel: 0417107440)

Help Online

www.gamblinghelponline.org.au

www.gisnsw.org.au

www.gansw.org.au

www.gansw.org.au/GamAnon

www.smartrecoveryaustralia.com.au

www.chrysalisinsight.org.au

www.freeyourself.com.au

www.nrgs.org.au

www.stvincents.com.au

<http://youthgambling.mcgill.ca/Gambling2/index.php>

www.gamblersanonymous.org.au

www.miph.org/gambling

www.responsiblegambling.org

www.femalegamblers.info/

www.pgfnz.org.nz

www.gamblingwatchuk.org

www.gamblinghelp.nsw.gov.au

www.problemegambling.gov.au

General Interest Websites

www.socialwork.unimelb.edu.au

www.nags.org.au

www.unsw.edu.au

www.afm.mb.ca

www.societystudygambling.co.uk

www.camh.net



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WHY NOT JOIN & RECEIVE THIS NEWSLETTER QUARTERLY?

The Gambling Impact Society (NSW) Inc. looks forward to providing you with regular information and education on gambling and related subjects. The Society aims to increase public awareness through the newsletter, and provide a forum for support and information for those directly affected by problem gambling, community service providers and the gambling industry. We welcome your contributions to this newsletter and in joining we hope to provide you with an outlet for discussion, support & information. Your membership will contribute to the ongoing work in this field and help us achieve our goals.

Your membership fee will go to resource the publication of this newsletter and the further development of the society, which is a non-profit organisation developed and run by volunteers. Membership to 30 June each year is:

Please circle:

Organisations \$60

Individuals \$30

Concessions/Students \$15

Name.....
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Organisa-
tion.....

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dress.....
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