

IMPACT NEWS

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www.gisnsw.org.au



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Inside this issue:

‘Key Points’ – the long awaited Productivity Commission (PC) report into gambling has finally been publicly released by the Federal Government.

‘Action Needed’ - Toby Hall, the CEO of Mission Australia, one of the country’s leading community services organisations has called on government to implement the PC recommendations as a matter of urgency.

‘Know the Odds’ – emanating from our highly successful Public Forum on Problem Gambling held during RGAW, the GIS has produced a ‘discussion starter’ about the impacts of gambling on the community that **you** can use to help raise awareness of Problem Gambling among your colleagues, friends and family.

If you or anyone you know believes the recommendations of the PC should be ratified by government, let your local State and Federal members know.

All the above, plus our usual features and information. And please don’t forget to renew your membership (form enclosed). Your support is vital and very much appreciated. Together we can make a difference!

Productivity Commission Report into Gambling 2010 Key Points

- The rapid growth following liberalisation of gambling in the 1990s has given way to more ‘mature’ industry growth.
 - Total recorded expenditure (losses) in Australia reached just over \$19 billion in 2008-09, or an average of \$1500 per adult who gambled.
- Gambling is an enjoyable pursuit for many Australians. As much as possible, policy should aim to preserve the benefits, while targeting measures at gamblers facing significant risks or harm.
- While precision is impossible, various state surveys suggest that the number of Australians categorised as ‘problem gamblers’ ranges around 115 000, with people categorised as at ‘moderate risk’ ranging around 280 000.
- It is common to report prevalence as a proportion of the adult population, but this can be misleading for policy purposes, given that most people do not gamble regularly or on gambling forms that present significant difficulties.
- The risks of problem gambling are low for people who only play lotteries and scratchies, but rise steeply with the frequency of gambling on table games, wagering and, especially, gaming machines.
- Most policy interest centres on people playing regularly on the ‘pokies’.
- While survey results vary, around 15 per cent of these regular players (95000) are ‘problem gamblers’. And their share of total spending on machines is estimated to range around 40 per cent.
- The significant social cost of problem gambling — estimated to be at least \$4.7 billion a year — means that even policy measures with modest efficacy in reducing harm will often be worthwhile.

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Productivity Commission Report Key Points cont.

Continued from page 1

- Over the last decade, state and territory governments have put in place an array of regulations and other measures intended to reduce harm to gamblers.
 - Some have been helpful, but some have had little effect, and some have imposed unnecessary burdens on the industry.
- A more coherent and effective policy approach is needed, with targeted policies that can effectively address the high rate of problems experienced by those playing gaming machines regularly.
- Recreational gamblers typically play at low intensity. But if machines are played at high intensity, it is easy to lose \$1500 or more in an hour.
 - The amount of cash that players can feed into machines at any one time should be limited to \$20 (currently up to \$10 000).
 - There are strong grounds to lower the bet limit to around \$1 per 'button push', instead of the current \$5–10. Accounting for adjustment costs and technology, this can be fully implemented within six years.
- Shutdown periods for gaming in hotels and clubs are too brief and mostly occur at the wrong times. They should commence earlier and be of longer duration.
- There should be a progressive move over the next six years to full 'pre-commitment' systems that allow players to set binding limits on their losses.
 - Under a full system, there would be 'safe' default settings, with players able to choose other limits (including no limit).
 - In the interim, a partial system with non-binding limits would still yield benefits, and provide lessons for implementing full pre-commitment.
- Better warnings and other information in venues would help. But school-based information programs could be having perverse effects and should not be extended without review.
- Relocating ATMs away from gaming floors and imposing a \$250 daily cash withdrawal limit in gaming venues would help some gamblers. But the net benefits of removing ATMs entirely from venues are uncertain.
- Effective harm minimisation measures for gaming machines will inevitably reduce industry revenue, since problem gamblers lose so much. However, this would not occur overnight and the reductions may be offset by other market developments.
- Problem gambling counselling services have worked well overall. But there is a need for enhanced training and better service coordination.
- Online gaming by Australians appears to have grown rapidly despite the illegality of domestic supply. Gamblers seeking the benefits it offers are exposed to additional risks and harms from offshore sites that could be avoided under carefully regulated domestic provision.
 - Liberalising the domestic supply of online poker card games, accompanied by appropriate harm minimisation measures, would test whether managed liberalisation should be extended to all online gaming forms.
- Recently enacted race fields legislation has been the main way jurisdictions have addressed the dual reform challenges of preventing free-riding by wagering operators and facilitating a competitively neutral wagering industry.
 - Should the race fields legislation be unsuccessful in either respect over the next three years, a national funding model should be established, based on federal legislation and with an independent price-setting body.
- The arguments for retaining the exclusive right by the TABs to provide off-course retail wagering products are not compelling.
- Governments have improved their policy-making and regulations with respect to gambling, but significant governance flaws remain in most jurisdictions, including insufficient transparency, regulatory independence and coordination.
 - There is a particular need to improve arrangements for national research

Disclaimer:

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

**Phone
Gambling Help NSW
for information on your
local Problem
Gambling Service
1800 858 858**



Action needed to reduce problem gambling

By Ranie Coelho

Mission Australia, one of the nations leading community service charities, has called on the State and Federal Governments to swiftly implement the recommendations of the Productivity Commission's Report into Gambling* released on Wednesday, to reduce the impact of problem gambling on Australians.

"Mission Australia sees the human face of problem gambling in our services every single day," said Toby Hall, Mission Australia CEO. "Problem gambling causes not only financial crisis and bankruptcy, it contributes to family and relationship breakdown, homelessness, depression and even suicide.

"We would like to see practical measures like \$1 bet limits on poker machines and mandatory shutdown times in gaming venues quickly put in place. This will help reduce the number of people with a gambling problem and reduce the impact on those already struggling to cope with their addiction.

"We urge governments at all levels to implement the Productivity Commission recommendations to reduce problem gambling as soon as practically possible."

Mr Hall welcomed the news that the federal government has indicated it will support further harm minimisation programs for poker machines, but said it was disappointing there has been no commitment or time frame to implement the recommendations.

With poker machines accounting for 75-80 percent of problem gamblers, the Commission was right [to] focus on further restrictions on poker machines, Mr Hall said.

"Poker machines are far and away the most prolific form of gambling by the clients of our gambling counselling services," said Mr Hall

"We can not tackle problem gambling without looking at further restrictions on poker machines."

"According to the Commission's own figures, around 40 percent of the revenue from poker machines comes directly from problem gamblers.

"We can not continue to base such a large chunk of a sector's revenue on taking money from people with an addiction".

Mr Hall said that the measures outlined in the report that should be quickly implemented include:

- Lowering bet limits on poker machines to one dollar per button push (equating to losses of around \$120 an hour as opposed to the current level of up to \$1500) as well as setting limits on how much can be put in a machine at any one

- Mandatory shutdown times for gaming rooms in hotels and clubs, as there is ample evidence that this is when high-risk gamblers are more likely to gamble and they are also often likely to be under the influence of alcohol.
- Removing ATMs from gaming areas. This is regularly cited by problem gamblers as something which would assist them to manage their gambling as it forces them to take a time out and leave the area. This is already being put in place in some jurisdictions.
- Additional funding for further gambling counselling services and improved training and education for counsellors.

Media contact: Patrick Flynn ph. 0407 411 256

Explosive report links pokies to jump in crime

JASON DOWLING

July 22, 2010

THERE is a significant relationship between spending on poker machines and crime in Victoria, a study commissioned by the state government has concluded.

In potentially explosive findings, researchers say they have found "strong and robust" evidence of a link between spending on pokies and the incidence of "income-generating" crimes such as theft, robbery, fraud and handling stolen goods.

The findings, which have been quietly posted on the Department of Justice website, add weight to long-held assumptions about the incidence of problem gamblers turning to crime to feed their habits.

They concluded that only drug offences had a stronger link to crime than poker machines.

The report by University of South Australia researchers, found evidence of a "positive and significant link between gaming expenditure and crime" in Victoria across three different years - 1996, 2001 and 2006.

The report's lead author, Sarah Wheeler, said the link between pokies and crime was a causal one. "We are suggesting that the causal link runs from increased gaming to increased crime, rather than the other way round," Dr Wheeler said.

The report adds to anecdotal evidence from criminal cases on the impact of poker machines.

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Know the Odds

A discussion starter about the impacts of gambling?

- 40-60% of gambling profits comes from people who gamble problematically¹
- 80% of those in treatment for gambling problems are addicted to poker machines²
- The NSW Health Study of 2007, found over 10% of families have experienced a gambling problem³
- Unlike drug and alcohol addiction where the impacts are obvious gambling addiction is usually hidden
- Young men (18 -24) are the highest risk group⁴

Individual impacts

The average person with a gambling problem loses \$12,000 a year and often much more.² The most sacrificed item to pay for gambling is groceries⁴. Other household expenses follow, children's school expenses, credit card debt, ... the list is endless.

Relationships with family, friends and at work suffer. Shame is common as is stress, feelings of low self-worth and a sense of being out of control and unable to get back into control.

Depression and anxiety are common impacts on health. Around 20% of suicide attempts are related to gambling problems⁵. It can be so overwhelming that it is hard to see that the gambling behaviour is the problem.

Focus

*Have you ever played the pokies?
If so, how would you describe your gambling?
Ever spent more time or money than you intended,
or suffered problems from gambling?*

Family impacts

Financial impacts on families hit hard, bills mount up, legal issues arise and there never seems to be enough money to go round. Stealing to pay for gambling is widespread and often the family bears the costs.

Family assets are sacrificed, houses and superannuation can all be lost when a family member's gambling gets out of control.

Partners may take on extra work to make up the debts, and accept more responsibilities. Emotional bonds suffer.

Around 85% of spouses of those gambling problematically suffer emotional illness such as anxiety and depression⁶.

Children also suffer stress related health problems such as asthma, anxiety and depression. They are more at risk of developing a gambling problem later in life.

At work, on-line gambling is an increasing problem. Loss of time from work because of gambling is an issue along with loss of employment.

Focus

What personal experience do you have of the impacts of gambling on families?

Community impacts

There are 180,000 poker machines in Australia and 98,000 in NSW. In 2008 \$4.2 billion in gaming machine profits were made in NSW⁷.

Community impacts are widespread but not even throughout the community. Lower socio-economic areas are affected much more than higher areas. For example there are few pokies in Chatswood compared to the South West suburbs of Sydney.

Gambling is a highly taxed activity so while government coffers swell, the local community suffers (money going into pokies means less money staying in the community) – less money going into local shops, cafe's &/ (or) other local businesses. Despite popular perceptions, gambling venue cash contributions to communities is minimal. NSW Clubs after taking into account their tax rebates, contribute less than 1% of their total gaming profits⁸ and there are no mandatory requirements on other gambling venues to provide community funding.

Many gambling venues, such as Clubs, pay minimal tax due to their non-profit status and other government tax concessions. As a result they can subsidise their services and activities from gaming machine profits and offer cheap meals, drinks, free community rooms and other facilities.

This impacts on other businesses who can't compete with these arrangements. The gambling industry claims it creates jobs but research shows that gambling venues take work from other businesses⁹

One poker machine averages \$42,000 profit a year to a venue this is why other forms of entertainment such as bands, performing arts etc are on the decrease.

Continued page 5

Know the Odds—discussion starters

Cont from page 4.

State governments gain 10 -12 % of their taxes from gambling. For every problem gambler 5-10 other people are negatively affected.¹

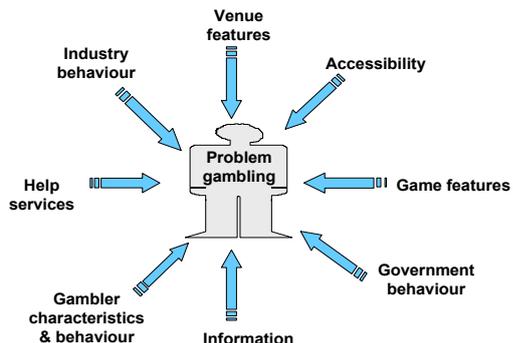
This industry relies on people who are addicted to an unsafe product to supply the majority of their profits. The gambling industry is hurting our community.

Focus

What do you think of the ethics of this business practice? How would you like to see things change?

Change is needed

The Federal Productivity Commission released its latest report into gambling on 23/6/10.¹ This recommends a number of important reforms including the adoption of a public health approach, which recognises that harm is spread throughout the community, rather than a treatment approach, which focuses on individuals



A Public Health Approach to Problem Gambling¹

- Proposed reforms include improved consumer information and protection, increased prevention and early intervention and better support for those who get into difficulties and their families.

Important poker machine product safety recommendations include:

- A pre-commitment system to enable gamblers to set limits on time & money before starting.
- Lowering the potential cost of play per hour from \$1,200 to an average of \$120 by cutting the maximum bet from \$10 to \$1per button press.



- Reducing high intensity gambling by limiting cash inputs by note acceptor to \$20 with no further cash able to be inserted until the credit falls below this limit.
- Research shows recreational gamblers will not be hindered by these changes.¹

Focus

*The gambling industry opposes these reforms. If you want to **support these reforms** write to your local State & Federal MPs. Talk with friends, family, workmates and **get involved**. Contact the *Gambling Impact Society (NSW)* www.gisnsw.org.au to support a National campaign.*

You can view the Productivity Commission’s report at <http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/gambling-2009/report>

TAKING ACTION ON PROBLEM GAMBLING – IT’S IN YOUR HANDS

References:

¹<http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/gambling-2009/report>

²Productivity Commission Report, 1999. *Australia’s Gambling Industries*, Vol. 1 & 2, November.

³Source: New South Wales Population Health Survey 2007 (HOIST). Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Department of Health. www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/surveys/hsa/07/toc/2_beh14_gamblingasp

⁴AC Nielson (2007), Prevalence of Gambling and Problem Gambling in NSW – A Community Survey,2006. NSW Office of Liquor Gaming and Racing

⁵Gambling linked to one in five suicidal patients. The Age, Kate Hagan, *April 21, 2010*

⁶Lorenz, V.C. and Yaffee, R.A. 1988. ‘Pathological gambling: Psychosomatic, emotional and marital difficulties as reported by the spouse’, *Journal of Gambling Behavior*, 4(1),.

⁷Office of Liquor, Gaming & Racing - Fast Facts July 2008 www.olgr.nsw.gov.au

⁸Con Walker, B.,2009. *Casino Clubs NSW: Profits ,Tax, Sport and Politics*, Sydney University Press

⁹The South Australian Gambling Industry, 2006, SA Centre for Economic Studies

Explosive report links pokies to jump in crime *[cont. from page 3]*

In 2006, a County Court judge condemned the widespread availability of poker machines when jailing Kate Jamieson, a mother of two who stole more than \$3.5 million from her bank employer to fund her addiction to poker machines.

Judge Roland Williams questioned at the time "how a so-called civilised society can allow and offer the mindless operation of poker machines to witless members of the public under the euphemism of gaming and entertainment is no doubt a question for the sociologists of this world".

Charles Livingstone, of the Health Social Science Department at Monash University, said the findings of the researchers were damning.

"We now know unequivocally that providing lots of poker machines adds not just all the layers of harm that we knew about - the money, the social problems - but it has also got a layer of crime that has now been well and truly documented," Dr Livingstone said.

The findings follow revelations in April this year that almost one in five suicidal patients seen by The Alfred hospital emergency department is a problem gambler.

Rebecca Harrison, spokeswoman for Gaming Minister Tony Robinson, said the new report indicated the relationship between crime and gambling was complex.

She said community views must also be given "special weight" by Victoria's gambling regulator when deciding on applications for new gaming venues.

Upcoming Events

Gambling Impact Society (NSW) Inc.

Management Committee meets monthly, third Wednesday of the month, 12.30 –2.30 pm. Nowra Neighbourhood Centre 134 Kinghorne Street, Nowra. Contact: Chairperson Kate Roberts Tel: 02 4421 5077

Gambling Conferences

Australia

8-10 August 2010. Sydney—Australasian Gaming Expo

23 August 2010 Melbourne—Problem Gambling Treatment Guidelines

15 October 2010 Melbourne—National Conference of emerging and New Researchers in Gambling [ENERGI] Conference

1-3 December 2010 Gold Coast—National Association of Gambling Studies 2010 Annual Conference

International

14-16 July 2010 Madrid—World Gaming executive Summit 2010

20-22 July 2010 Hong Kong—Sports betting and Lotteries Asia

14-17 September 2010 Vienna—8th European Conference on Gambling Studies and Policy Issues

October 2010 Madrid—International Masters of Gaming Law Fall Conference

4-5 October 2010 Halifax—Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation Responsible Gambling Conference 2010

16-18 November 2010 Las Vegas—Global Gaming Expo [G2E]

Society Activities

We would like to say a big thankyou to all those who supported our Responsible Gambling Awareness Week Public Seminar on the 18th May, particularly do we thank our special guest speakers, four of whom had travelled from far and wide to be with us. Their valuable contributions provided us with further knowledge and stimulus to move forward and this, together with all who participated, culminated in a very successful day.

The Productivity Commission's 2009 Report, just released, heralds a new reform in recommending a public health approach to problem gambling. We welcome this recognition of the extent of harm to the community from problem gambling and this fact, alone, gives stimulus for open community debate and awareness of the ramifications of problem gambling. In other words, this fresh approach will lessen the fear and ignorance which in turn, will help to minimise the shame and the stigma that can destroy individuals and their families.

Mental health is inclusive in a public health approach to problem gambling and we have registered our full support for Prof Mendoza's courageous stand on mental health reform. With the new face of government in Canberra, Prime Minister Julia Gillard has, today, received 85,000 signatures supporting new leadership for mental health reform. Was your name there? This is People Power in anyone's language!

D Webb

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

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 and Audio Tape kit - cost \$49.95 (Contact Gabriela Byrne, 0414 844 387)

My Passionate Affair with Poker Machines (video) - \$49.95 (Contact Gabriela Byrne, 0414 844 387)

Free Yourself (video) - \$49.95 (Contact Gabriela Byrne, 0414 844 387)

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

Overcoming Compulsive Gambling - desensitisation/relaxation audio tapes (Contact Prof. Alex Blaszczynski, - Westmead Hospital, Sydney)

Illawarra Health Gambling Recovery Program - group treatment manual for counsellors - (Contact Responsible Gambling Fund Unit, Dept. Gaming & Racing for info. on reprints)

Women & Gambling Information Kit—Karen Richardson & Kate Roberts- contact GISW(NSW) 02 4421 5077

Less than Even: The Hidden Cost of Gambling—video. Contact GISW(NSW) 02 4421 5077

Against the Odds—Youth & Gambling—Discussion CD. Contact GISW(NSW) 02 44215 077

No More Bets Please - video. Contact monkeyssee@monkeyssee.com.au or sales@livingsolutionsbookshop.com.au



General Interest Websites

www.socialwork.unimelb.edu.au
www.nags.org.au
www.unsw.edu.au
www.afm.mb.ca
www.knowodds.org
www.societystudygambling.co.uk
www.camh.net
www.pgfnz.co.nz

Do you know any interesting websites relating to problem gambling?

Let us know and we'll include them in our next edition

Email: info@gisnsw.org.au

Self-Help Websites

www.gisnsw.org.au
www.nrgs.org.au
www.gamblinghelp.nsw.gov.au
wwwsvh.stvincents.com.au/
www.education.mcgill.ca
www.gamblersanonymous.org.au
www.miph.org/gambling/
www.freeyourself.com.au
www.responsiblegambling.org
www.responsiblegambling.qld.gov.au
www.gamblingproblem.co.nz
www.femalegamblers.org/suggestedreading.htm

Do you know any interesting self-help websites relating to problem gambling?

Let us know by email info@gis.nsw.org.au



Resources from NEW ZEALAND

PG Counselling Manual
 PG Education In High Schools- manual and video
 Pow Pokies T-shirts
 Facts Sheets
 On Gambling

Contact:
www.pgfnz.co.nz

Shoalhaven Gambling Resource Library— GIS

(NSW) has developed a community library with reports, books, self-help literature & videos for loan to GIS (NSW) groups and others in the Shoalhaven locality. We can supply a resource list and are always looking for ideas for additions. Contact: GIS (NSW) 02 44215077

***Do you have any other suggestions?
 Please send them to us so we can share your ideas with others.***

Return Address:
Nowra Neighbourhood Centre
134 Kinghorne Street
Nowra NSW 2541

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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 2011 is as follows:

Organisations \$50

Individuals \$25

Concessions/Students \$10

Additional donations welcome.

Name.....

Organisation.....

Address.....
.....
.....

Telephone:

Fax:

E-mail:

Please circle:

Organisations \$50

Individuals \$25

Concessions/Students \$10

Cheques payable to: Gambling Impact Society (NSW) Inc.

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c/o Nowra Neighbourhood Centre
134 Kinghorne St, Nowra
NSW 2541

*Any news, personal stories, comments on articles, important information etc., please send correspondence to **The Editor** e-mail—info@gisnsw.org.au and mark in “subject” section - **for newsletter**, or mail to above address*