

IMPACT NEWS

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www.gisnsw.org.au



An Introduction From Our New Chairperson

When the highly charged debate around poker machine reform commenced in 2010, Google became my best and worst friend. The positives were that it helped to inform, provided access to research, papers, articles and opinions. On the negative side, it highlighted a major issue with commentary: the majority of voices with the most airtime were not people impacted, nor people with expertise or deep knowledge of a complex issue.

Then Google turned up the Gambling Impact Society. From the start I realised it was unique. It was the only site I could find that was independent and represented consumers.

From there I became a consumer voice. It has been a challenging, rewarding, empowering experience. Not only was I able to further clarify my own experience as a child impacted a parent's gambling, I have been able to hear the stories of others. It has been powerful, educational and given me even more perspective. I have enormous respect for everyone who shares his or her story. It takes courage, honesty and vulnerability.

The sacrifices people make in reliving their personal story has served to educate, inform, challenge stereotypes and assumptions and reveal the uncomfortable truth around the danger of gambling products, normalisation of gambling and the devastating harm it creates.

Many organisations could find people to talk about their story, but not in the way that the Gambling Impact Society, under Kate's leadership, has been able to do.

The process is respectful, supportive and empowering – by ensuring people are adequately trained, prepared and supported.

The GIS is the only organisation that represents the interests of consumers in gambling and takes a holistic approach – across the gambling regulatory environment, industry, political climate, product risks, whole of family impacts, education for treatment providers and experiences of consumers. This means we have such an important role in advocacy, education and providing information.

The organisation has some terrific people. There are long term, dedicated volunteers on the management committee with passion for the cause and many other volunteers and consumer voices with a wide range of valuable skills and abilities that contribute to keeping things running.

It is for all of these reasons that I decided to become even more involved and accept the role of Chairperson.

We hope to expand our reach, increase our impact and ensure sustainability of the organisation. As part of this, the management team will be developing our ongoing strategy in March this year and welcome input and feedback from all of our members in that process. We'd love to hear from you on the future direction of the Gambling Impact Society and where you would most like to contribute.

- Allison Keogh, Chairperson

To contribute your ideas please email:
info@gisnsw.org.au

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Society Activities

We hope everyone enjoyed a Happy Christmas and the festivities of the season. The GIS held its AGM in early December and is pleased to welcome Allison Keogh as the new Chairperson for the organisation.



"The GIS is pleased to welcome Allison Keogh, a new Chairperson for the organisation."

Allison, as some of you may know, has been a keen participant on our Consumer Voices program bringing the voice of children impacted by problem gambling to the fore. She has a strong background as a consultant adult educator in organisational leadership, change management and coaching, skills which will be valuable to our organisation as we continue grow.

We would also like to say a big thank you and farewell to Maxine Edwards who has been a member of our management committee for many years and chairperson for the past two years.

Maxine will continue to support our committee in her role as the Nowra Neighbourhood Centre coordinator.

Over the Christmas period the committee has been taking a well earned break in order to replenish for

the new year ahead. The GIS will be holding a strategic planning day on March 18th as part of their annual review process.



This is a day for committee members, staff and volunteers to come together to consider the organisation's aims, objectives, programs and strategies for the year. It promises to be an exciting opportunity to reflect on the past years achievements and consider direction for the future.

Executive Officer - Kate Roberts

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

Consumer Voices Update

Barbara and Kate have been promoting the Consumer Voices Program with the aim of delivering 25 sessions to a range of community/welfare agencies by the end of the current funding period April 30th. We hope there will be further funding extensions after that as there is a lot of interest in the program.

The Consumer Voices program continues to respond to requests to support NSW and ACT training programs for Club staff. We are very pleased to be able to work with these venues to strengthen their Responsible Gambling and harm minimisation strategies.

The program has also been supporting the latest RGF Gambling Help social marketing campaign to promote Gambling Help services. Special thanks go to the CV team members who supported the launch in October and related media articles which included their personal stories.

January 16-18th saw Kate and Barbara deliver the latest round of training for new Consumer Voice recruits and we are pleased to welcome new members to the team including two from Canberra. Kate will be working with the new CV team members in partnership with Relationship Australia's ACT Gambling Help to establish a number of sessions for the Canberra and surrounding area.

We will also be arranging some follow on training/support meetings for our trained Consumer Voices team in Nowra, Sydney and Canberra in the coming months.

Gambling Machines Research Hijacked By The Industry

Source : Jim Orford, From: Gambling Watch UK, January 2015

This is an edited extract. The article in its entirety can be accessed at <http://rethinkgambling.org/the-much-anticipated-gambling-machines-research-first-reports/>

Initial suspicions about the independence of this research programme

The first series of reports of the programme of research on machine gambling commissioned by the Responsible Gambling Trust (RGT) are out. The results were presented to an audience largely consisting of industry representatives at a conference held in London on 10th December. This is important research not least because those of us who have been arguing for something significant to be done about Fixed Odds Betting Terminals (FOBTs) in betting shops were told that no policy decisions would be taken until this research had reported. We were always suspicious about this, suspecting that it was a way of avoiding taking any action. We were suspicious because, as we have repeatedly pointed out, the current British system of funding and commissioning research does not guarantee its independence from the industry. RGT is 'an industry led body' and was always unlikely to support research which might threaten the massive profits which the industry now makes from FOBTs. It always seemed likely that the machines research programme would follow the industry lead in focusing on problem play and problem players rather than on problem products. This was confirmed early on in the reports of the research where it is repeatedly stated that the main purpose of the programme was 'to identify problem gamblers and harmful patterns of play'. The large bulk of the reports, and of discussion at the 10th December conference, has focused on trying to predict problem individuals and sessions of play. Suspicions were intensified because the research has been conducted by a consortium including the much respected NatCen and a company called *Featurespace* which has a history of contracts with the gambling industry which is represented on its board.

A survey of loyalty cardholders: nearly half were found to be problem or at-risk gamblers and most held negative attitudes towards the product

One of the most interesting reports in the series gives us an initial analysis of a survey, using a number of questions similar to those used in the 2010 British Gambling Prevalence Survey (BGPS), of those holding loyalty cards with Ladbrokes, William Hill or Paddy Power. The most striking feature of the results to me was the extremely high rate of problem gambling

(Problem Gambling Severity Index [PGSI] scores of 8 or more) – a massive 23% – with a further 24% scoring as 'moderate risk' (scores of 3 to 7). Rates of problem gambling were particularly high amongst those who were unemployed (38%) and were also high amongst those who gambled on a larger number of forms of gambling, those in the lowest of five income groups, those in England who lived in the most deprived areas, those who were economically inactive because of long-term sickness, and members of BME groups. Asked whether it 'is a harmless form of entertainment', 54% disagreed (24% strongly) and 29% agreed (only 5% strongly). Asked whether it 'should be discouraged', 41% agreed (19% strongly) and 37% disagreed (7% strongly).

Industry betting transaction data: large minorities of players lose large amounts of money in short periods of time

Other reports looked at betting transaction data provided by the five big bookmaking companies. In England, 40% of all these bets were placed in betting shops in the 20% most deprived areas – not surprisingly, since this is where 38% of all the betting shops are located. The average bet size was just over £5 (nearly £6 in the 20% most densely populated areas and nearly £7 in London, and nearly £10 after 10 p.m. at night).

One of the most interesting things is how stake size and expenditure of money and time varied by whether a betting session only involved betting on B2 machines (the FOBTs), only on B3s (faster, low stake, jackpot, slot-type machines), or involved both types of machine. Not surprisingly, the mean stake per bet during B2-only sessions was £14, much higher than for other types of session. At the 90th percentile it was £38 and at the 95th percentile £65, showing that a large minority of stakes in such sessions are many times higher than the stakes that are possible on B3 machines. Interestingly, though, when it comes to expenditure in sessions of different types, B2-only sessions were no more costly than B3-only sessions, in terms of either money or time, with the highest means being for sessions that involved both types of machine (a mean loss of just over £14 and a mean session length of a bit over 20 mins). An indication of the large amounts of money that people are losing in quite short periods of time is given by the

figures for, say, the 95th percentile for monetary loss which corresponds to a loss of £105, and the 95th percentile for length of session which corresponds to a bit over half an hour.

Linking transactional and loyalty cardholder survey data: prediction of problem gambling from transactional data is poor (and the report of this part of the programme displays bias)

About 4,000 of the loyalty cardholders who agreed to take part in the survey also agreed that their results could be linked to the betting transactional data. In the discussion of these results the authors say that they have shown that they can predict problem gambling and that there is therefore 'a bright future for behavioural analytics' in the area of social responsibility and gambling. Of course no one expects perfect prediction but even the best was hardly impressive. For example, 50% of problem gamblers could be identified but only at a cost of a false positive rate of 25% amongst non-problem gamblers. Since the latter are much the larger group, this represents an unacceptably high false-positive rate.

Unlike the report on the survey of loyalty cardholders, that report (first authored by Dave Excell of Featurespace) was noticeably less careful. As well as making a point of noting the absence of stake size in their best predictive model, they say in the discussion that, because no one variable alone was predictive, 'The focus should shift away from regulating particular parameters, such as stake size, but take a balanced rounded approach which considers the player, the product and the environment', a clear reference to the debate about high stake FOBT machines which have been so controversial and which were the stimulus for setting up this programme of research in the first place.

There is much confusion and mistrust about 'return to player' (RTP) messages

Amongst a number of other projects which contributed to the overall research programme was a small-scale qualitative study exploring players' understanding and opinions about RTP information. Although participants were split between those who felt that such information was useful and those who did not, a main finding, was that messages about RTP were mostly found to be unclear and/or inaccessible. There was too much technical language, the mathematical concepts involved were not easy for everyone to understand, and the English-only language was an additional problem for some.

A laboratory experimental study suggests that staking impairs decision-making

This experiment was conducted with 32 regular but non-problem gamblers. Decision-making was impaired, although this happened at both stake levels used in the experiment (£20 and £2) when compared with the control condition in which no money was staked. Unexpectedly this occurred both when winning as well as when losing. A conclusion drawn by the first author in his talk at the meeting was that structural characteristics do affect decision-making and that the product therefore does matter.

The British gambling research agenda has been hijacked by the gambling industry

One obvious indication of this is the makeup of the organisations that have collaborated to sponsor, oversee and carry out the research. The research was probably carried out, and mostly reported, without direct influence by the industry. The point is that the research required the collaboration of the industry who provided access to much of the data, and the very nature of the research and the questions being asked are part of a whole framework of ideas about 'responsible gambling' which is industry-friendly and not too industry-challenging. Featurespace has a history of working with the gambling industry and has contracts with the industry. That part of the report led by Featurespace was much less cautious in drawing conclusions and Featurespace has been accused of drawing unwarranted, industry-favourable, conclusions in a press release and tweets prior to the conference.

Matthew Hill of the Gambling Commission summed up for me the whole problem with the way the research programme has been set up by saying that the takeout message was that 'we should be looking at people not the product'. That seems to be strange coming from the body that is charged with regulating the industry! Richard Glynn, Chief Executive of Ladbrokes, was clearer still in concluding that, 'it's not the product'. Alex Blaszczyński made essentially the same point at the end of his written introduction from the Oversight Panel: '... at this stage, it would be inadvisable to rush policies on the basis of these foundational studies... more would be achieved by a strategic approach compared to fragmented, disjointed and potentially costly policies that fail to achieve their objective'. The final word went to Richard Glynn who, in response to my suggestion that the research agenda had been hijacked by the industry, referred to 'provocateurs', amongst whom I presume he counted me as one!

ACT Government Allows \$50 Note for Poker Machines

Source: Kirsten Lawsom From: [Canberra Times](#), January 11, 2015

Anti-gambling campaigners have blasted a decision by ACT Gaming and Racing Minister Joy Burch to scrap the \$20 note limit for poker machines, allowing gamblers to use \$50 notes.

Ms Burch made the change on December 22 but there was no announcement. The move was not mentioned in the package of changes to poker machine law released in October.

The decision to scrap the \$20 limit has taken problem-gambling groups by surprise.

The Salvation Army's Scott Warrington, who manages a residential program for problem gamblers, said machines should be limited to coins.

"Anything that encourages people to lose more money is a terrible thing," he said. "A lot of our clients will just take their pay and once they start on the poker machine, that's it; they can't stop themselves. Then they're virtually starving for a week or two weeks before they get paid again."

Independent senator Nick Xenophon said people would lose money more quickly, fuelling problem gambling. "The fact that it was done with little or no public consultation is completely cynical on the part of the government," he said. "They're prepared to balance their books off the backs of the vulnerable and the addicted." Dr Charles Livingstone, a gambling researcher at Monash University's School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, said the move would hit people who had a problem with gambling and accelerate others into problem gambling.

"It will almost certainly increase the amount of money going into machines and most of that will come from people with a gambling problem or on the way to a gambling problem," he said.

The states and territories had an "appalling" conflict of interest when it came to regulating gambling and were unable to make sound decisions, driven more by their revenue concerns than by protecting gamblers, he said. ACT Labor owns 488 poker machines through its Labor clubs.

Ms Burch said the decision was made as part of ongoing consultation with clubs aimed at harm minimisation but also at maintaining the viability of clubs, including their ability to compete with NSW clubs.

She had asked for advice on how to impose a limit on how many notes a single machine could take from an individual gambler.

Clubs ACT chief executive Jeff House said the restrictions on notes were introduced about 2004 when there was no ATM withdrawal limit in clubs.

Now that the ATM limit was \$250, it made sense to allow \$50 notes.

"We thought it made sense to allow patrons to use \$50 notes and, by virtue of that, have \$50 notes in the ATMs within venues rather than just \$20 bills," he said. "It costs clubs money to buy money that goes into the ATMs and if there are notes of higher denominations, it costs less money for the clubs to restock their ATMs." Mr House said the \$20 limit had hit poker machine profits when it was introduced but he did not expect lifting the limit would have the opposite effect in the current environment.

"I think all it will do is represent convenience for club members," he said. "I don't think they will be putting through the machines more money than they otherwise would. I think it will be the same amount of money but just in different denominations."

Asked about the government's failure to publicly announce the change, he said, in his view, it was not significant enough to have warranted an announcement. Liberal leader Jeremy Hanson said it was "not surprising that ACT Labor would seek to maximise its profits".

"It is morally and ethically bankrupt that ACT Labor owns, operates and regulates poker machines in Canberra," he said.

Australian Churches Gambling Taskforce chairman Tim Costello said scrapping the \$20 note limit was irresponsible.

"It makes no sense. It is completely a failure of ACT policy and of the industry that loves to say there's just a few individuals who are pathetic individuals who have problems. The problem is the machines," he said. Without bet limits, you could do "rapid damage in a very short time", Mr Costello said, pointing to the Productivity Commission's recommendation to limit bets to \$1 and losses to \$20 an hour.

The ACT is one of the few regions to allow note acceptors. South Australia, Tasmania, the Northern Territory and Western Australia allow machines to take coins (other than in casinos). Western Australia doesn't have poker machines other than in a casino. Victoria has a \$50 note limit. Queensland scrapped its \$20 limit a year ago. NSW has no limit.

Greens Slam LNP Qld Casino

Source: AAP From: 9news.com.au, January 29, 2015

The Newman government's decision to green-light three new casinos for Queensland reeks of backward thinking and a "third world" approach to development.

That's according to the Greens, who have slammed the Liberal National Party on the scheme, two days out from Saturday's election.

The state government is fielding expressions of interest from parties interested in securing approval for one of three new integrated resort developments.

One site is slated for the Queen's Wharf precinct in Brisbane, with two more proposed for regional Queensland. The government announced last year these approvals would come with casino licences.

Queensland Greens Senator Larissa Waters said extra casinos would turn Queensland into "the problem gambling state" of Australia, and instead the government should look at creating jobs in fields like renewable energy and eco-tourism.

"Let's actually invest in Queensland's brains and capitalise on our natural beauty," Ms Waters said. She says if Queenslanders want to gamble they are more than welcome to do so at the state's four existing venues.

Ms Waters' federal colleague Richard Di Natale says the Newman government's commitment to casinos and coal industries, rather than new sectors and technologies, has hallmarks of a "third-world dictatorship".

Local candidate Kirsten Lovejoy says art shows, festivals and new parklands - not poker machines - should be brought in to revamp the Queens Wharf entertainment zone.

Expressions of interest for the Integrated Resort Developments close on March 31.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **GIS Strategic Planning Day**
18 March, 2015
<http://gisnsw.org.au/>
- **Third Asia Pacific Conference on Gambling & Commercial Gaming Research**
12-14 April 2015, Beijing, China
<http://www.gamblingstudies.org/>
- **Discovery 2015**
21-23 April 2015, Toronto, Canada
'Persuasion, Prohibition and Personal Change'
<http://www.responsiblegambling.org/>
- **The 4th Asian Pacific on Problem Gambling and Addiction Conference**
8-9 May 2015, Hong Kong, China

Phone Gambling Help for information on your local Gambling Support Services <https://>

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

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