



TAKING ACTION ON PROBLEM GAMBLING

A strategy for combating problem gambling in Victoria

October 2006



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Message from the Premier

Problem gambling has been high on the Victorian Government's agenda since coming to office in 1999.

At that time, it was estimated that more than two per cent of the Victorian adult population were experiencing problems with their gambling, and the industry was growing rapidly.

While a great many Victorians enjoy the entertainment and leisure experiences offered by gambling, some cannot manage their gambling and it becomes a problem for them, their families and the community.

In any society with a legal gambling industry, the challenge for governments, industry and the community is how to respond to this problem.

The Government is committed to reducing the harm caused by problem gambling. We have taken strong action over the last six years to address problem gambling and our action has been effective, with the prevalence of problem gamblers in Victoria declining to one per cent.

While much has been achieved, we must maintain the momentum.

This is why we have developed the framework set out in *Taking action on problem gambling*. It will ensure we pursue an integrated approach to consumer protection and to the prevention, early intervention and treatment of gambling related harm.

Taking action on problem gambling sets out the actions and initiatives that the Government will put in place over five years to tackle problem gambling.

We have acted to ensure that the Victorian gambling industry operates in a balanced way that minimises the incidence of problem gambling while creating an environment where those who gamble safely are permitted to do so.

The Government is proud of its record in developing a responsible, sustainable gambling industry in Victoria. But more needs to be done for the benefit of all Victorians.

STEVE BRACKS MP
Premier of Victoria

Message from the Minister for Gaming

Many Victorians are rightly concerned about the harm caused by problem gambling and as the Minister for Gaming I share that concern.

It is important to recognise, however, that not every dollar spent on gambling is a dollar of harm. Indeed for the vast majority of Victorians, gambling in its many forms is a legitimate and enjoyable recreational activity. Many people gamble safely without causing harm to themselves or others.

Furthermore, the gambling industry makes a significant contribution to the Victorian economy. Over 15,000 people are employed at clubs and hotels with gaming machines, the Melbourne casino and TAB agencies, while the racing industry is an important source of employment in rural and regional Victoria.

Gambling taxes help to fund some of the essential services that the Government provides for all Victorians, including vital health services, community projects, problem gambling services and community education initiatives. Since 1999, 85 per cent of gaming machine taxes – about \$4.4 billion – was spent on health and community projects across every region of Victoria.

Problem gaming is, however, a very real problem for some Victorians. Since coming to office the Government has put in place a range of strategies that have halved the number of problem gamblers and increased the number receiving counselling.

Taking action on problem gambling will build on these achievements and represents the biggest commitment of funding for problem gambling in Australian history.

I look forward to working with the gambling industry, local government and the community as we put the initiatives set out in *Taking action on problem gambling* in place. Together we can further combat problem gambling in Victoria.



Daniel Andrews MP
Minister for Gaming



Executive Summary

Taking action on problem gambling outlines Victoria's response to problem gambling over five years and sets out the major initiatives and actions the Government will take to combat problem gambling.

The Government will spend \$132.3 million between 2006-07 and 2010-11 to build a safer gambling environment and improve treatment services for problem gamblers and their families.

Highlights from the seven Action Areas in *Taking action on problem gambling* include:

Action Area One: Building better treatment services

- The Government will increase funding for gambler's help services by \$36.8 million (or nearly \$7.4 million a year) to \$79.8 million over five years.

Action Area Two: Ensuring a more socially responsible gambling industry

- The Government will work with industry and community advocates on gambling to finalise a single code of conduct for the Victorian gambling industry for proposed implementation in 2007.
- The Government will inject \$2.6 million to strengthen the industry self-exclusion program through a partnership between gambler's help services and the gambling industry.

- The Government will provide \$1.2 million to resource the Responsible Gambling Ministerial Advisory Council to continue its advisory role to the Government on responsible gambling issues.

Action Area Three: Promoting healthy communities

- The Government will commit \$37.5 million over five years to further develop the *Problem Gambling Community Awareness and Education Strategy*.
- The strategy will include:
 - \$24 million for community education aimed at making Victorians less likely to become problem gamblers
 - \$5 million for local community education activities
 - \$580,000 for community education and health promotion
 - \$1.4 million for the development of school-based learning programs
 - \$4.6 million for community partnerships
 - \$2 million for community advocacy for responsible gambling.

Action Area Four: Protecting vulnerable communities

- The Government will double the number of capped regions and extend the boundaries of the existing metropolitan capped regions. There will be 19 regions capped at 10 gaming machines per thousand adults, resulting in the removal of approximately 540 gaming machines from vulnerable communities. Capped regions that currently have a lower density than 10 will be capped at the lower density.

- By 2010, the maximum density of gaming machines for all other local government areas (with the exception of the central business district, Southbank and Docklands in the City of Melbourne), will be set at 10 gaming machines per thousand adults, with areas below 10 gaming machines per thousand adults able to increase machine numbers up to the maximum density.

- The Government will investigate destination gaming and release a discussion paper on proposals for destination gaming in Victoria. The investigation will examine the suitability of gaming venues located at racetracks as destination gaming venues.
- The Government will amend the Victoria Planning Provisions to give local councils a greater say by requiring a planning permit for the placement of gaming machines in their communities.

Action Area Five: Improving consumer protection

- The Government will require the removal of any automatic teller machine in a gaming venue, or within 50 metres of an entrance to the Melbourne casino gaming floor, that does not limit the amount that a consumer can withdraw per day to \$400.
- The Government will reduce the maximum gaming machine bet limit from \$10 to \$5*.
- The Government will give the Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation (VCGR) power to ban a product or practice that encourages consumers to engage in behaviours associated with problem gambling.

A \$132.3 million commitment over five years.

- The Minister for Gaming will be given new powers to ban any gambling product that is designed to explicitly avoid or undermine any aspect of the Government's responsible gambling policy or legislation.
- The Government will reduce the maximum amount that a player can put into a gaming machine at the start of play by 90 per cent to \$1000 and will require all winnings over \$1000 be paid out fully by cheque*.

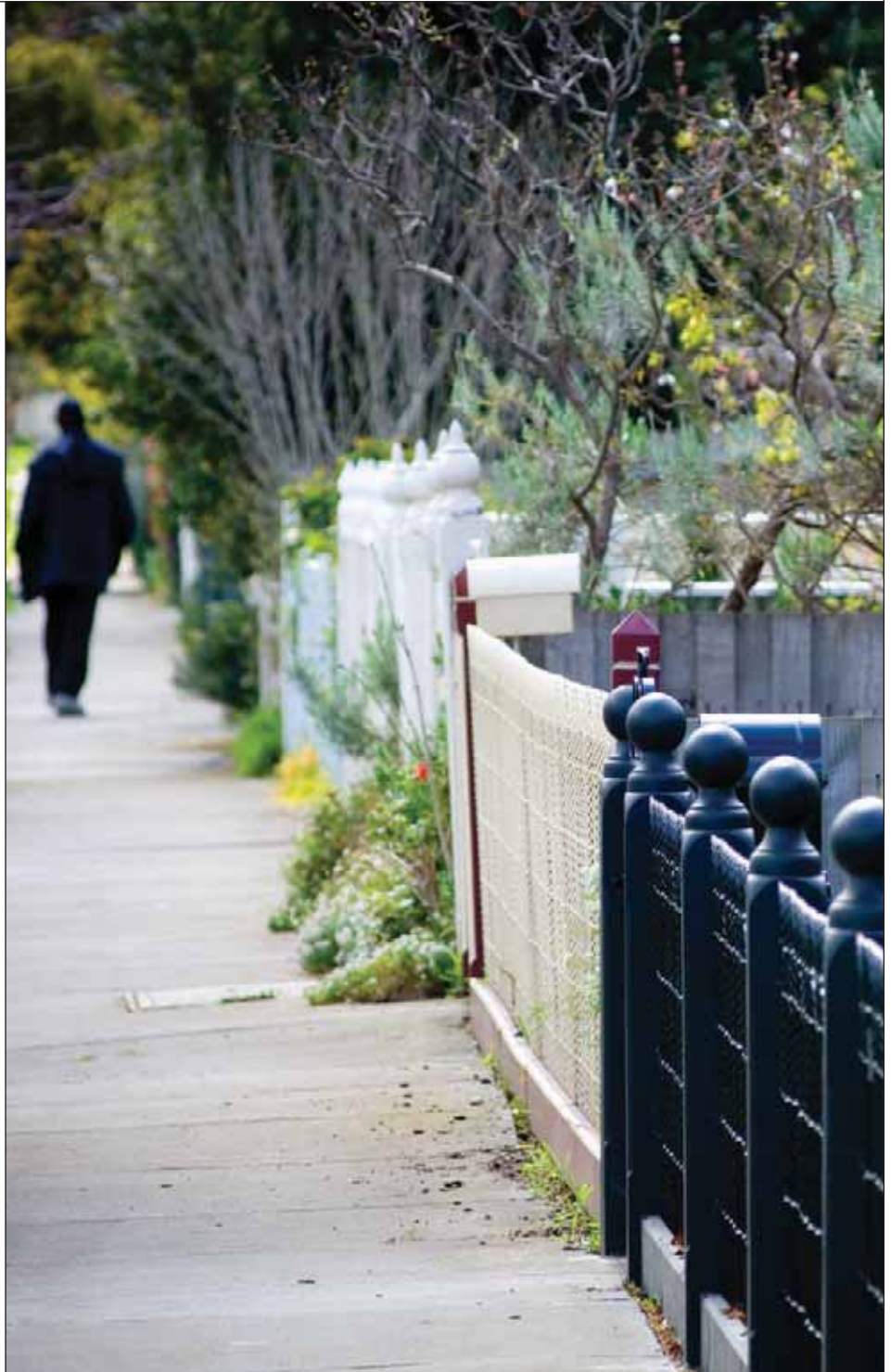
Action Area Six: Enhancing the regulator

- The VCGR will be required to consider a broader range of matters when determining an application for approval of a new gaming venue or determining an application for an increase in the number of machines in an existing venue.
- The Government will provide \$4 million to the VCGR for monitoring compliance with the industry code of conduct and to support industry in implementing the code.

Action Area Seven: Fostering gambling research

- The Government will act on the Victorian Gambling Research Agenda by providing a total of \$7.2 million for gambling related research.

*Other than a machine located in the Melbourne casino



01

ENVIRONMENT



Why take action on problem gambling?

Gambling activity grew dramatically in Victoria in the second half of the 1990s. This gave rise to significant concern about the harm caused by problem gambling.

Between 1996 and 1999 gaming machine expenditure grew at an average of 16 per cent per annum. By 1999 it was estimated that more than two per cent of the Victorian adult population were experiencing problems with their gambling. This meant 75,074 Victorians were estimated to be problem gamblers.

Victoria has the lowest density of gaming machines of any State except Western Australia. It has almost one-third the density of New South Wales and half that of Queensland and South Australia. Victoria also has some of the most stringent regulations controlling betting and gaming.

Yet the unavoidable fact is that some Victorians still have problems with gambling. The Government shares the concern many Victorians have about this and is committed to a coordinated, systematic and evidence-based approach to combat the very real effects of problem gambling.

Since coming to office in 1999, the Government has reduced the size of Victoria's gambling problem. In 2006 the growth rate of gaming machine expenditure has fallen to 3.3 per cent. The rate of problem gambling is now estimated by independent research to have halved to 1.1 per cent* of the Victorian adult population or 43,957 individuals.

* 2003 Victorian Longitudinal Community Attitudes Survey, Centre for Gambling Research, Australian National University

While our successes are significant, there is no room for complacency. If Victoria is to maintain momentum in addressing problem gambling then a new, targeted effort is needed. The Government believes that concerted action can further reduce and manage problem gambling more effectively.

Taking action on problem gambling sets out, for the first time, a broad framework to guide the development and implementation of our strategy to combat problem gambling. It is an integrated approach to consumer protection and to the prevention, early intervention and treatment of gambling related harm.

Taking action on problem gambling is a five year strategy covering the period between 2006-07 and 2010-11. It outlines the guiding principles and objectives that will drive Victoria's response to problem gambling and sets out the areas for action that the Government will pursue to meet those objectives.

It will enable the Government to respond more effectively to the challenges associated with problem gambling.

Taking action on problem gambling will also help the gambling industry and community to understand the Government's strategic direction, to engage more fully in the debate on how best to tackle problem gambling and commit to playing their part.

AVERAGE GROWTH IN GAMING MACHINE SPENDING



The Government believes that concerted action can further reduce problem gambling.

Victoria's gambling industry

The gambling industry worldwide is undergoing a period of rapid change, most notably through the emergence of new gambling technologies and the consolidation of industry players.

Victoria has not been immune from these trends. Over the last two decades we have witnessed rapid growth in the range of gambling products available to Victorian consumers.

When the Government was elected in 1999, there were already 30,000 electronic gaming machines across Victoria, a casino in Melbourne, a wagering and sports betting industry and an assortment of lottery and minor gaming products.

Since this time, we have seen the emergence of new gambling products. Online casinos, mobile phone technologies and other 'e-gambling' products are all reshaping Victoria's gambling industries and how they provide their services.

A marked consolidation of the industry nationally during this period has significantly reduced the number of operators as some move into other products or gambling markets in other jurisdictions, both interstate and overseas. This consolidation has seen the key operators in Victoria take on larger roles in the national and international gambling markets.

We cannot ignore the fact that Victoria's gambling industry makes a significant contribution to the Victorian economy in terms of employment, investment and tax revenue.

The gambling industry is a big employer in Victoria. Around 15,000 people are employed at clubs and hotels with gaming machines, the Melbourne casino and stand-alone TAB agencies.

The racing industry is an even bigger provider of jobs. According to a recent study, almost 50,000 Victorians are directly employed in the racing industry and another 25,000 are employed in support industries. These 75,000 jobs equate to around 30,000 full-time jobs. The racing industry is a particularly important source of employment in regional and rural communities.

In dollar terms, more than \$4 billion is spent on all forms of gambling in Victoria each year, representing two per cent of Gross State Product. This generates around \$1.5 billion in tax revenue for the State, helping to fund vital health and community services.

The racing industry alone is estimated to contribute more than \$2 billion to the Victorian economy each year, or around one per cent of the entire economy. Importantly, more than half of this economic value is generated in regional and rural communities.

WHAT IS PROBLEM GAMBLING?

The Government uses the following definition developed by Gambling Research Australia and endorsed by the Australian Ministerial Council on Gambling:

Problem gambling is characterised by difficulties in limiting money and/or time spent on gambling, which leads to adverse consequences for the gambler, others or for the community.

01

ENVIRONMENT



Why do we need a gambling policy?

In Victoria the gambling industry is legal and enjoyed by many Victorians.

However, the industry is tightly regulated and the Government's gambling policy is developed according to clear, unequivocal assumptions. These are that:

1 | Gambling creates external costs to the community

There is no doubt that some in the community experience significant harm from problem gambling and others are at risk of becoming problem gamblers. Those impacted by problem gambling can include the gambler's family and friends. As this harm results in a significant cost to the Victorian community, it is appropriate that the Government develops strategies to combat problem gambling and provides services to support problem gamblers, their families and friends.

2 | The Government should tax the gambling industry to provide services and other benefits to the Victorian community

The gambling industry is highly profitable and reaps the benefit of operating in a tightly regulated market in which the number of licensed participants is limited. It is within this context that the Government taxes the industry. The tax revenue raised from gambling should be used to address the harm caused by problem gambling and to deliver other benefits to Victorians such as health, education and other community services.

3 | Gambling products should be fair to consumers

Many people who gamble are unable to judge whether or not a particular gambling product is fair or whether they will receive winnings that might be owed to them. For this reason, it is crucial that government intervenes to ensure fairness and product integrity.

4 | Gambling can attract corrupt and criminal involvement

Society and democratic institutions are significantly damaged when illegal gambling takes root. The endemic corruption identified by Commissioner Tony Fitzgerald in Queensland was, for example, partly the result of illegal gambling operators protecting themselves from prosecution. Having a legal, crime-free gambling industry is the best way to minimise this real threat.

Gambling regulation seeks to balance the needs of recreational and problem gamblers.

Gambling and the law

The regulatory framework for gambling in Victoria specifically authorises certain gambling and makes other forms of gambling illegal.

The Acts regulating gambling in Victoria are:

- the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003*
- the *Casino Control Act 1991*
- the *Casino (Management Agreement) Act 1993*.

There are also regulations made under these Acts.

As the main legislative instrument, the Gambling Regulation Act aims, amongst other things, to:

- foster responsible gambling in order to minimise the harm caused by problem gambling
- accommodate those who gamble without harming themselves or others.

The Gambling Regulation Act establishes the independent regulator, the Victorian Commission of Gambling Regulation (VCGR).

It also sets out most of the taxes on gambling activities to be paid by the gambling industry. It establishes the Community Support Fund, which funds problem gambling services, research and other community services.

INDUSTRY SNAPSHOT

- 15,000 people are employed at clubs and hotels with gaming machines, the Melbourne casino and TAB agencies.
- More than \$4 billion is spent on all forms of gambling in Victoria each year.
- \$1.5 billion collected in tax revenue is used to fund vital health and community services.
- Around 85 per cent of gaming machine taxes – about \$4.4 billion since 1999 – was spent on health and community projects across every region in Victoria.

Helping problem gamblers and their families

Services for people with gambling problems and their families and friends are provided through an extensive network of community agencies. The Government funds these agencies to provide:

- problem gambling counselling
- financial counselling
- community education
- a 24-hour Gambler's Help line.

Services are provided in metropolitan, regional and rural locations. Specialist services are also provided to culturally and linguistically diverse and Indigenous communities.

02

KEY CHALLENGES



As a popular legal activity, gambling presents many challenges for government policy makers, industry participants and community advocates. These include:

Moral conflict

The community has a wide range of views about gambling and its place in our society. Whilst many Victorians enjoy gambling, others consider it to be morally questionable. The Government recognises that gambling occurs in every society and that the harm caused by criminalising gambling may be greater than the harm caused by legalising and regulating it.

Technological change and product convergence

The gambling industry is increasingly technologically sophisticated and the pace of technical innovation over the last three to five years has been extraordinary. The Government expects the pace of change to increase and our laws must keep pace with these changes.

Consolidation of the gambling industry

Since 2000, the number of gambling providers has more than halved. In the hotel sector, for example, more hotels (particularly those with gaming machines) are now in the hands of hotel groups than are owned by individuals.

Big operators have become even bigger. TABCORP, for example, was almost exclusively a Victorian business a decade ago; now it is a company with significant investments in most states and internationally. This consolidation presents

opportunities and challenges for the Government as it works to achieve its policy objectives.

Relationship between problem gambling and other critical social problems

Problem gamblers often have other health or lifestyle problems. For example, serious mental illness, depression, and drug or alcohol abuse may co-exist with a gambling problem. Understanding the nature of this relationship is critical to creating coordinated and responsive services for problem gamblers. This is a significant challenge for both government and service providers.

03

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The aim of the strategy set out in *Taking action on problem gambling* is to assist Government, industry and the community to respond more effectively to the challenges associated with problem gambling.

Taking action on problem gambling outlines the ways in which the Government will address the harm caused by problem gambling. The Government's problem gambling strategies will be informed by the following guiding principles:

1 | Net community benefit

Policies and strategies to address problem gambling must deliver a net community benefit to Victoria. The net benefit to the community will be measured by weighing up both social and economic considerations.

2 | A whole-of-community approach

The prevention and minimisation of the harm caused by problem gambling requires a whole-of-government approach. It also requires the involvement of individuals, industry, communities and not-for-profit organisations.

3 | A long-term approach

Problem gambling cannot be reduced overnight. It is a complex problem that requires a long-term investment and a coordinated approach. Problem gambling trends, and the effectiveness of strategies developed in response to those trends, may only emerge over time.

4 | An evidence-based approach

Policies and strategies designed to respond to the harm caused by problem gambling must be evidence-based. They should be well founded and based on objective analysis, research and experience, from both local and overseas sources.

5 | A multi-faceted approach

The complex nature of problem gambling requires a diverse range of responses that address problem gambling from public health, social regulation and consumer protection perspectives.

6 | Cultural relevance

The design and delivery of prevention and harm minimisation strategies must meet the needs of all Victorians, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse and Indigenous communities.

7 | Open and informed decisions

Decisions on gambling and strategies designed to respond to the harm caused by problem gambling should be informed and the reasons for decisions should be open and transparent.

Problem gambling strategies must deliver a net community benefit.

04

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

The Victorian Government will act on the following priority areas to reduce problem gambling and its effects on Victoria.

Each action area contains a number of initiatives. These initiatives build on the Government's past successes and will put Victoria at the leading edge of world efforts to address problem gambling.

The seven priority Action Areas

- 1 Building better treatment services
- 2 Ensuring a more socially responsible gambling industry
- 3 Promoting healthy communities
- 4 Protecting vulnerable communities
- 5 Improving consumer protection
- 6 Enhancing the regulator
- 7 Fostering gambling research



Problem gamblers and their families and friends have diverse needs. Providing a gambler's help service system that responds effectively to those needs is a key challenge for government.

An effective system should include public health measures designed to prevent problem gambling as well as specialist intervention services for those experiencing harm.

What we have done

The Government has a sustained record of addressing problem gambling through its problem gambling strategy, which integrates service delivery, community education and community partnerships.

The Government has increased funding for the problem gambling strategy, spending \$87.7 million since 1999.

Over \$54 million has been spent on services to help problem gamblers and their families. These funds have provided a comprehensive statewide gambler's help services system that comprises problem gambling counselling, financial counselling, local community education activities and a 24-hour telephone information and referral service.

More than 22,000 problem gamblers received counselling between 2002-03 and 2004-05, involving more than 130,000 hours of counselling.

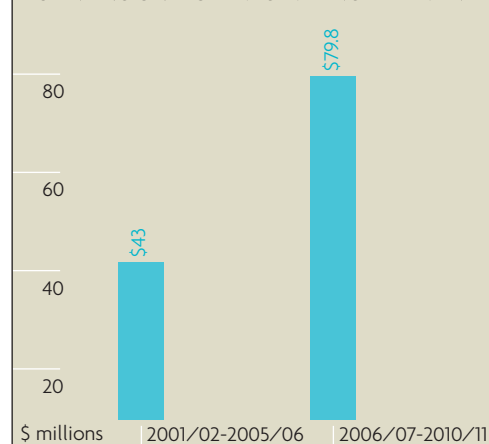
In 2002, the Government invested an additional \$12 million to improve gambler's help services through the delivery of:

- after hours services
- services to culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- services to Indigenous Victorians
- the recovery assistance program to provide material aid and other assistance to families in gambling related crisis
- better integration of telephone counselling and face-to-face services
- a gambling resource kit for healthcare professionals
- an online self-help pack for problem gamblers, their families and friends.

Action Area 01

Building better treatment services

SPENDING ON PROBLEM GAMBLING TREATMENT



\$79.8 million for problem gambling treatment services.

ACTION AREA 01

GAMBLER'S HELP IN VICTORIA: A SNAPSHOT

- 17 gambler's help services operate from around 100 locations throughout Victoria.
- More than \$400,000 was distributed in material aid and recovery assistance to problem gamblers and their families.
- Additional funds were provided to establish specialist statewide services for both culturally and linguistically diverse and Indigenous communities.
- Gambler's help services deliver 60,000 hours of counselling and financial counselling a year.
- About 75 per cent of clients live in metropolitan Melbourne and 25 per cent live in regional and rural Victoria.
- About 20 per cent of clients were a friend or family member of a problem gambler.
- Gambler's help services dealt with over 7,800 clients in 2004-05.
- About half the clients have health or lifestyle issues as well as a gambling problem.
- A statewide network of community educators provides local responses and targets vulnerable communities.
- More than 10,000 calls are received each year by Gambler's Help Line.



What we will do

The gambler's help service system will continue to be based on the following service delivery principles:

- services will be spread across Victoria to ensure immediate and equitable access for rural, regional and metropolitan communities
- service hours will cater to all client needs, including after hours
- services will, where possible, be co-located with other relevant health and welfare services to ensure a holistic approach to case management and referral
- a range of services will be provided, including telephone counselling, face-to-face counselling and advice and referral
- services will cater for and be responsive to the needs of all Victorians, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Indigenous communities, and isolated communities such as prisoners, youth, older people and new migrants
- culturally specific programs will operate alongside mainstream services.

Building better treatment services

The gambler's help service system will continue to be the cornerstone of the Government's response to problem gambling. It will continue to be provided free of charge to all Victorians.

The Government will provide \$79.8 million for gambler's help services over five years between 2006-07 and 2010-11. This is an overall increase of \$36.8 million compared to the previous five financial years, an average increase of \$7.4 million a year.

Funds will be provided as follows:

Enhanced problem gambling treatment services

The Government will provide \$53.6 million over five years for direct counselling services across Victoria. This will enhance the existing 24-hour help line to give Victorians improved access to telephone-based counselling. It will bring total counselling provided to 100,000 hours a year and provide at least 40,000 additional hours of problem gambling treatment and support over five years.

As part of this commitment, the Government will provide an immediate increase of \$750,000 in funding to areas of high demand and bolster services in:

- the southern metropolitan region of Melbourne
- the northern metropolitan region of Melbourne
- the Monash local government area.

Online treatment

The Government will provide \$500,000 to develop a new, integrated internet based support service to provide online counselling and self-help tools.

Build on existing after hours capabilities

\$2.1 million will be provided over five years to expand after hours gambler's help services. It will support an on-call system of counsellors to assist venues and problem gamblers around the clock when they need immediate assistance.

Enhanced service model for culturally diverse and socially isolated people and communities

The Government will provide \$500,000 this financial year for the development of new services for culturally diverse and socially isolated communities to address gaps identified in the current system.

Funding will provide services for:

- recently arrived migrants
- isolated women
- people in the corrections system
- Indigenous communities.

Case management and mobile counselling

The Government will allocate \$4.3 million over five years to improve existing case management and referral systems. These changes will enable a person seeking counselling to make an appointment to see a gambling counsellor at any time and from any place in the state. They will also provide better data and service management.

Victoria has a comprehensive statewide gambler's help services system.

ACTION AREA 01

Centre for Excellence in Problem Gambling Treatment

The Government will allocate \$4.2 million over five years to a joint venture between the University of Melbourne and Monash University to create a world-leading Centre for Excellence in Problem Gambling Treatment. The Centre will:

- conduct cutting-edge research into problem gambling treatment approaches
- develop new clinical practices
- train new and existing staff working in gambler's help services
- establish a postgraduate qualification in problem gambling treatment
- conduct a sustained epidemiological study of the various forms of gambling
- provide training on problem gambling to industry on a commercial basis.

Culturally and linguistically diverse and Indigenous services

The Government is a leader in providing community-specific problem gambling services to culturally and linguistically diverse and Indigenous communities. Over five years, \$4.9 million will be invested in maintaining and enhancing these services.

Community support trial

The Government will provide \$300,000 for a pilot program to provide a wider range of sentencing options for problem gamblers who come into contact with the criminal justice system. The program will ensure that problem gamblers and those most affected by their problem gambling have the best chance of reconciliation and remediation.

Enhanced support for affected families

The Government will create a new program focussed on the families of problem gamblers who face severe hardship as a consequence of the problem gambler's behaviour. This new Families Support Program will include the old Recovery Assistance Program. It will receive \$4.8 million over five years to provide material aid to problem gamblers and their families.

Program management and development

The Government will invest \$4.2 million over five years to manage the Government's problem gambling services program. Within this, \$3.8 million will be provided over four years from 2007-08 to develop a Problem Gambling Program Management Unit. The unit will ensure problem gambling services remain efficient and effective and that taxpayers receive value for money.

System reform and data transparency

The Government will provide funding of \$350,000 this financial year to improve data on the use of problem gambler's help services by:

- producing client profile and data reports for the period since 2002-03 (last published data available)
- improving the existing data collection system.

\$4.9 million towards services for culturally and linguistically diverse and Indigenous communities.



ACTION AREA 01

Putting the pieces back together: a problem gambler's story

A year ago the only relationship in Kate's life was the all-consuming one with a poker machine at her favourite club.

In the six months that followed until she picked up a phone to get help, the rest of her life simply fell away.

The intensity of the relationship plunged Kate into turmoil. By her own admission, Kate was in a dark pit and unable to control her gambling or her life.

Fear, panic, guilt, shame and depression followed each lengthy session at the pokies.

"I started gambling because it seemed to give some release from the stress and anxiety in my life. I had paid off my house and I had money to spare. But it very quickly went from me wanting entertainment after work to looking to gamble.

"I would be thinking about it all the time at work. I just couldn't wait to get there. If I could, I would be there every day 24 hours a day."

She kept her relationship with the poker machines a deep secret.

A decision to return to study part-time was the lifeline Kate threw herself.

"Everything I valued had been undermined. I wanted this to stop and, one particularly black day, I called Gambler's Help Line, looking for a quick answer to my problems.

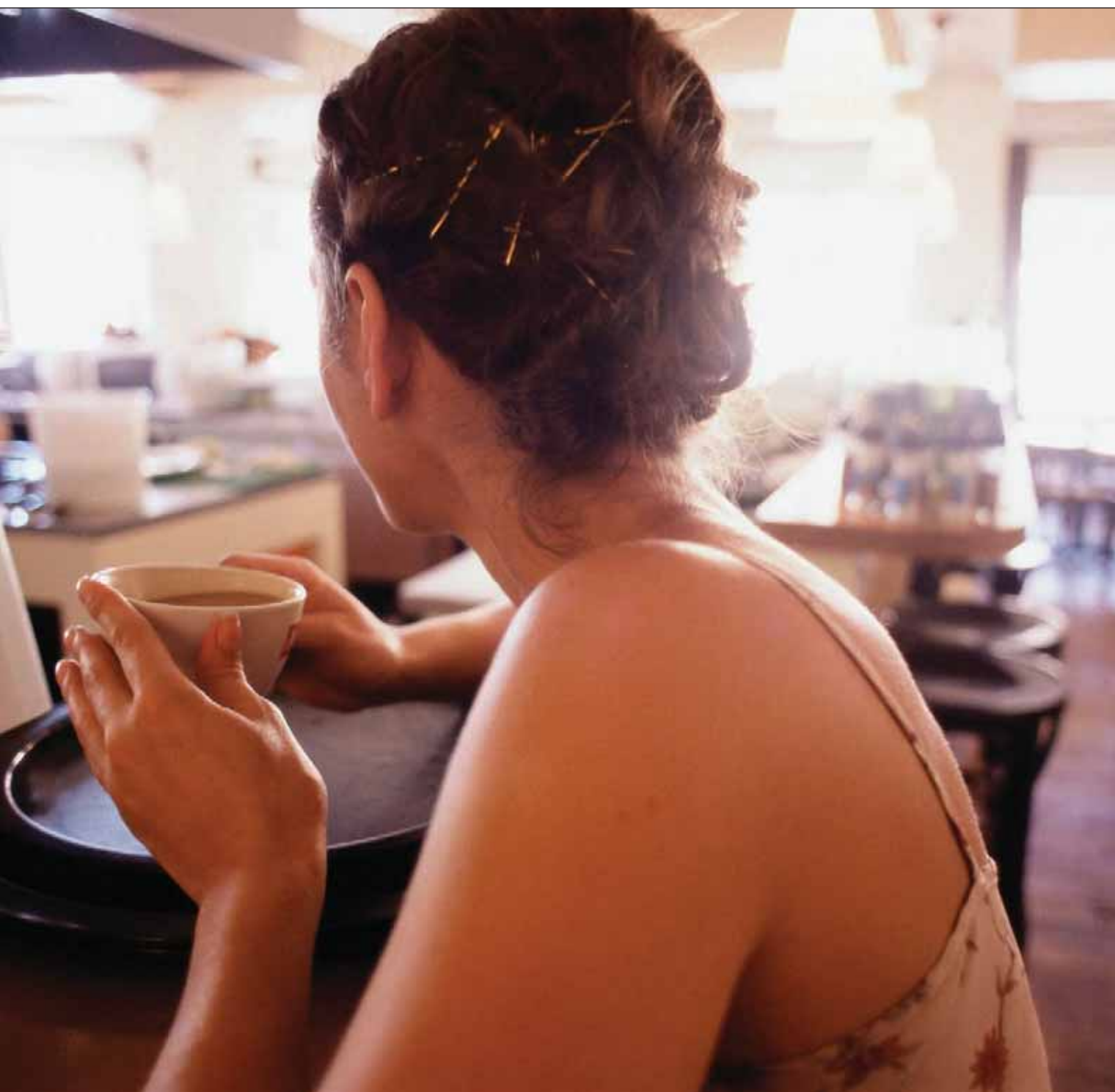
"Making the call wasn't so hard because I was talking to someone in confidence and they understood. Discovering that there was no magic pill that would make everything right for me was hard."

Kate began regular counselling with Gambler's Help and over 12 months has been able to put the pieces of her life back together "just as if they were a puzzle."

"Counselling is the long-term solution. You can get help with techniques to limit your gambling when it is out of control. But, for me, counselling has been a great personal breakthrough. I am becoming aware of what caused my gambling to get out of control in the first place."

Kate is still in counselling and her infrequent visits with friends to the pokies now fit the category of responsible gambling.

"...counselling has been a great personal breakthrough. I am becoming aware of what caused my gambling to get out of control in the first place."





Action Area 02

Ensuring a more socially responsible gambling industry

Minimising the harm caused by problem gambling requires the active involvement of the gambling industry.

Whilst government is responsible for the regulatory framework – including the licensing and monitoring of industry participants – industry must do more than simply comply with its legal obligations. The industry has a responsibility to ensure that consumers understand the risks of excessive gambling and that gambling environments encourage responsible gambling.

What we have done

The Government has encouraged a more responsible gambling industry by:

- establishing the Responsible Gambling Ministerial Advisory Council to engage industry participants in the debate surrounding problem gambling
- making training in the responsible service of gambling compulsory for all staff employed in the gaming machine area of a gaming venue or the Melbourne casino
- supporting the staging of Responsible Gambling Awareness Week.

What we will do

An industry code of conduct

The Government is continuing to work with industry and community advocates on gambling to develop a single code of conduct for the Victorian gambling industry.

The Government has given the Responsible Gambling Ministerial Advisory Council the task of developing this industry code.

The Council will finalise the code by the end of 2006 and the Government will work with all parties to implement it during 2007.

The code will be supported by an enforcement system that will reward operators that adhere to the code while penalising those who fail to ensure responsible gambling practices.

Responsibility for monitoring and enforcing the code will be given to the independent regulator, the Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation (VCGR).

The VCGR will be required to establish a code of conduct education and compliance unit to implement and monitor the new code. This unit will also be responsible for educating the gambling industry about the code and helping to implement the code in individual gambling businesses.

Tackling problem gambling requires the active involvement of the gambling industry.

What the industry code will cover:

- provision of information to consumers about problem gambling and help services
- how venue staff interact with customers and the community
- information about self-exclusion procedures
- designing and managing venues to promote responsible gambling
- policies about financial transactions with customers
- encouraging advertising and promotions that promote responsible gambling messages.

Working together to combat problem gambling: the Responsible Gambling Ministerial Advisory Council

- The Council was established to provide advice to the Government, through the Minister for Gaming, on responsible gambling.
- Its first meeting was held on 18 January 2005.
- The Council has 18 members from diverse backgrounds including the gambling industry and community advocacy groups.
- The Council and its working groups have met 75 times to date.
- Key achievements to date include:
 - recommendations for gaming venue staff training
 - advancing an industry code of conduct
 - supporting the establishment of Responsible Gambling Awareness Week
 - contributing to a review of gaming machine player information materials
 - developing principles to help improve self-exclusion programs
 - developing a new Victorian Gambling Research Agenda.

ACTION AREA 02

Gamble responsibly. Stay in Control. Responsible Gambling Awareness Week

- Responsible Gambling Awareness Week is a partnership between government, industry and community groups.
- Its key objective was to raise community awareness of the importance of responsible gambling at a personal, community and venue level.
- The key theme was “Gamble Responsibly. Stay in Control.” – to highlight to recreational gamblers that when they gamble they should do so responsibly and stay in control.
- Clubs, hotels, community centres, gambling venues, sporting facilities and church centres promoted responsible gambling to their patrons and visitors.
- Posters, brochures, tent cards and coasters were displayed and made available at gambling and gaming locations around the state, including hotels, clubs, TAB and Tattsлото outlets, the Melbourne casino and community centres.
- Awareness and education campaigns were held for staff in gaming venues throughout the week.
- Activities coincided with the *Think of What You’re Really Gambling With* campaign, which involved extensive television, radio and press exposure.





*Strengthen the industry
self-exclusion program*

The Government will provide \$2.6 million over five years to gambler's help agencies to train staff to attend self-exclusion interviews and assist in the management, monitoring and ongoing support of people choosing to self-exclude from gaming venues.

The program is a partnership between gambler's help agencies and the members of the Victorian Gaming Machine Industry. A pilot program has already begun and full implementation of the program will progress during 2006-07.

The Government will immediately provide additional funds for two self-exclusion officers for rural and regional Victoria in an enhanced self-exclusion pilot. Funds will also be provided for an external evaluation of the pilot project, to be led by a prominent gambling researcher.

The Government will work with the gambling industry to improve the system of self-exclusions so that people entering gaming venues are more likely to be detected and receive better support during the course of their exclusion.

The Government and industry will also work to make statewide exclusions more effective for consumers who wish to exclude themselves from all gaming venues across the state.

*Resourcing the Responsible Gambling
Ministerial Advisory Council*

The Government will provide \$1.2 million to resource the Responsible Gambling Ministerial Advisory Council to continue its advisory role to the Government on responsible gambling issues.

The Government will work with the gaming industry to improve the system of self-exclusion.



Action Area 03

Promoting healthy communities

Encouraging more responsible gambling behaviour across the community is an important complement to providing effective gambler's help services.

To promote healthy communities, we first need to enable communities to identify the risks of problem gambling and equip them to take action to mitigate problem gambling behaviour in its early stages.

Policies and strategies therefore need to target both individuals who have a problem with gambling and the broader community.

What we have done

Communication strategy

The Government has committed an estimated \$19.5 million to the *Problem Gambling Communication Strategy* since 2000.

The *Think of What You're Really Gambling With* advertising campaign has been the cornerstone of the strategy. The campaign has increased awareness of the risks associated with problem gambling in the Victorian community, with awareness of the advertising campaign peaking at 96 per cent and awareness of the tag *Think of What You're Really Gambling With* peaking at 88 per cent.

In October 2005, the Government launched the *Questions* campaign, setting a new direction that significantly broadened the scope and focus of the campaign messages to include early intervention, risk awareness and consumer protection strategies.

There is a clear correlation between campaign activity and an increase in calls and referrals to the Gambler's Help Line and counselling services.

Key achievements of the communication strategy include:

- creating and promoting Gambler's Help as a single 'brand' for problem gambling services
- implementing four phases of the *Think of What You're Really Gambling With* advertising campaign which reached 96 per cent awareness amongst the Victorian public
- producing a diverse range of information materials for people affected directly and indirectly by problem gambling
- providing information about problem gambling in gaming venues
- supporting Responsible Gambling Awareness Week in 2006 to raise awareness of responsible gambling practices
- developing learning materials for at risk youth and a school resource kit to assist school communities when problem gambling becomes an issue.

Community partnerships

The Government's *Problem Gambling Community Partnership Strategy* aims to bring together people and organisations to improve understanding of problem gambling issues and risks and to assist them in helping individuals and their families affected by problem gambling.

The strategy also aims to reduce the shame and stigma associated with

Bringing people and organisations together to improve understanding of problem gambling.

Partnerships: some examples of how we are working with communities to combat problem gambling

CPA Australia partnership

The Government has worked in partnership with CPA Australia since 2004 to help the organisation and its members become leading advocates on problem gambling issues in the workplace. By raising awareness of the emotional and financial impacts of problem gambling amongst chartered practising accountants, these professional advisers are better equipped to encourage employers to be more proactive on the issue within the workplace.

Essendon Football Club partnership

The Government has joined forces with Essendon Football Club to promote responsible gambling and raise awareness of the impacts of problem gambling among club members, supporters and the broader community. The partnership has a particular focus on educating young people on the risks associated with gambling.

Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre partnership

The Government provided a grant to Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre to work with local young people at risk of developing gambling problems. The 12-month project incorporated education on risky behaviours such as gambling into their existing English literacy programs, youth groups, camps and mentoring programs for Horn of Africa men and young people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Incolink partnership

The Government formed a partnership with Incolink, a joint enterprise of employer associations and unions that supports workers in the building industry, to address gambling issues in the industry. Research conducted amongst 272 apprentices revealed that gambling was an issue for this group. The partnership produced a DVD and information kit for use in the apprenticeship training environment. The kit includes information on how to identify problem gambling and where to go for advice and support.

ACTION AREA 03

problem gambling by emphasising the ability of individuals and the community to address problem gambling and to discuss its impacts.

Under the strategy, the Government works with a broad range of community-based organisations to:

- target gamblers who are at risk
- encourage people to adopt preventative measures so that gambling problems do not develop or escalate
- promote the counselling and support services available, and how easy they are to access before gambling triggers a crisis
- foster community discussion on problem gambling.

The Government has provided \$2.9 million to 60 diverse community organisations, including the Women's Information and Referral Exchange and the Chinese Health Foundation of Australia, to build community knowledge of, and resilience to, problem gambling.

Community advocacy

In January 2006, the Government announced funding to establish the *Community Advocacy for Responsible Gambling* project to be run by Community Action on Pokie Problems with support from the Victorian Local Governance Association.

The project is an exciting step forward in advocacy on responsible gambling in Victoria. It aims to enhance local community and council participation in the debate on gambling and their capacity to inform policy development in this area.

What we will do

Building on successes

The Government will commit \$37.5 million to further develop the *Problem Gambling Community Awareness and Education Strategy* between 2006-07 and 2010-11.

The strategy seeks to change attitudes and address high-risk behaviours associated with problem gambling and is based on:

- early intervention and prevention in relation to problem gambling
- promotion of available help and support services
- building community resilience, trust and networks
- risk awareness and consumer protection.

These themes are incorporated into the five initiatives below.

Statewide community education and awareness campaigns

The Government will invest \$24 million over five years in a statewide community education and awareness campaign. Future campaigns will seek to raise community awareness of the importance of responsible gambling practice at the personal, community and venue levels, and of the risks associated with new forms of gambling such as internet gambling and telephone gambling.

Within this, the Government will spend \$6.3 million in 2006-07 on the *Questions – Think of What You're Really Gambling With* advertising campaign, Responsible Gambling Awareness Week 2007, in-venue

advertising and a partnership with Radio Sport 927.

Community education and health promotion

The Government will provide \$580,000 this financial year to improve community access to information.

Funding will be provided to coordinate and develop:

- information and service promotion materials
- community education initiatives.

This will include funding for a centrally located community education liaison officer, who will act as a conduit for community education activities, and for the production of community education and promotional materials.

The Government will also provide funding for the production and distribution of the *Self Assessment Problem Gambling Screen*. This pamphlet contains a series of questions that indicate whether a person may have a problem with gambling. It will be distributed to the community via doctors' surgeries, community health centres, pubs and clubs.

Local community education, services, marketing and promotion activities

The Government will provide \$5 million over five years to deliver community education activities in local communities across Victoria.

\$24 million to raise community awareness of the importance of responsible gambling practices.

Local campaigns, based on the needs of communities, will be developed to improve community resilience to the development of problem gambling. These campaigns will deal with all stages of problem gambling from prevention and early intervention through to referral to local services for counselling and support.

School-based learning programs

The Government will commit \$1.4 million over five years for the development of school-based learning programs that build on the work already undertaken over the past two years.

The programs will raise awareness within school communities of problem gambling and its impacts, and enhance the health and social well being of students affected or potentially affected by gambling.

Strategies will also be designed to reach young people disengaged from mainstream schools.

Partnerships

The Government will invest \$4.6 million over five years to build on the work already undertaken through the community partnerships strategy.

Building community advocacy on gambling issues

The Government will provide an additional \$2 million over five years for community advocacy for responsible gambling to ensure that there is a strong and viable community voice on gambling issues.





Action Area 04

Protecting vulnerable communities

Some communities are more at risk than others from the harm caused by problem gambling.

In Victoria, there is a significant concentration of gaming machines in areas of high socio-economic disadvantage. These communities are particularly at risk from the harm associated with problem gambling and often have multiple indicators of disadvantage, including:

- low levels of workforce participation and income
- lower educational and literacy levels
- public health risks associated with a higher incidence of smoking and alcohol abuse.

The Government is committed to effectively managing the distribution of gaming opportunities to better protect the communities most at risk from problem gambling.

What we have done

The Government first introduced regional caps on gaming machines in 2001 to protect vulnerable regions in Victoria from high concentrations of gaming machines.

Regional caps seek to limit access to gambling opportunities in vulnerable communities. Research suggests a significant connection between greater accessibility – particularly to gaming machines – and an increased prevalence of problem gambling.

Communities that are identified as more vulnerable to the harm caused by problem gambling may have a combination

of risk factors, such as being highly disadvantaged, having access to significant numbers of gaming machines and higher than average spending on machines.

The five regions capped under the 2001 regional caps policy are:

- Maribyrnong Plus (incorporating the City of Maribyrnong and parts of the cities of Brimbank, Hobsons Bay and Melbourne)
- Darebin Plus (incorporating the City of Darebin and parts of the cities of Whittlesea, Hume, Moreland and Banyule)
- Greater Dandenong Plus (incorporating the City of Greater Dandenong and parts of the cities of Monash and Casey)
- Bass Coast Shire
- City of Latrobe.

The caps impose a limit on the number of gaming machines that can be located in a capped region. Any gaming machines in excess of this level were removed from the region at the direction of the Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation (VCGR).

The regional caps have stopped the growth of gaming machines in some of Victoria's most vulnerable communities and seen the removal of 406 gaming machines from these regions.

In the period 2000-01 to 2003-04, total gaming machine spending in the five capped areas fell 5.4 per cent, compared with a statewide decline of 3.2 per cent.

The Government has since consulted widely with the community on regional caps through the Regional Electronic

Better protection for communities most at risk.

Gaming Machine Caps Review Panel.
The Panel found that the Government's regional caps policy was an important component of its ongoing problem gambling strategy.

A separate Supplement on the Government's response to the Panel's recommendations has been produced in association with this strategy.

What we will do

New regional caps

The Government committed to double the number of capped regions and extend the boundaries of the existing metropolitan capped regions in 2002.

The Government will implement this commitment and cap gaming machine numbers in more communities at risk from the harm caused by problem gambling. Nineteen regions across metropolitan and regional Victoria will be capped, increasing the number of local government areas covered by regional caps from 14 to 20.

The maximum number of gaming machines permitted in capped regions will be 10 machines per thousand adults.

The Government will also freeze the density of gaming machines in capped regions that currently have below 10 machines per thousand adults at their current density level to prevent further growth of gaming machines in these communities.

Gaming machines in Victoria: the facts

- A maximum of 27,500 gaming machines are permitted to operate in Victoria outside the Melbourne casino.
- At 30 June 2006, 27,147 gaming machines were located in 521 venues.
- There are currently 6.92 gaming machines per thousand adults in Victoria.
- Victoria has the lowest density of gaming machines of any state or territory in Australia, apart from Western Australia which has no EGMs outside the casino*.
- Victoria's density of gaming machines is almost one third that of NSW and almost half that of QLD and SA.
- 248 hotels have gaming machines, which equates to just 13 per cent of total licensed hotels in Victoria (1,963).
- 272, or just 13 per cent of the 2,117 licensed clubs in Victoria operate gaming machines.
- Growth in spending on gaming machines has declined to an average annual rate of 1.9 per cent over the past three years, compared with 16 per cent in the three years to 1999.
- Spending is now \$3 billion lower than it would have been had spending continued to grow at 16 per cent.
- Around \$1 billion was collected in gaming machine taxes in 2005-06.
- Gambling taxes comprised 7.1 per cent of all government revenues in 1998-99. In 2006-07, gambling taxes will contribute just 4.8 per cent.
- Around 85 per cent of the Government's gaming machine taxes – or \$4.4 billion in the six years to 2005-06 – were allocated to health and community projects across every region in Victoria.

* Australian Gambling Statistics

ACTION AREA 04

The new capped regions

- Ballarat
- Banyule (partially capped)
- Bass Coast
- Brimbank (partially capped)
- Casey (partially capped)
- Darebin
- Greater Dandenong
- Greater Geelong (including the Borough of Queenscliffe)
- Greater Shepparton
- Hobsons Bay
- Hume (partially capped)
- Latrobe
- Maribyrnong
- Melbourne (partially capped)
- Monash (partially capped)

- Moonee Valley
- Moreland (partially capped)
- Warrnambool
- Whittlesea (partially capped)

An estimated 540 gaming machines will be removed from capped regions under the new policy. They will be available for relocation to other local government areas subject to the normal application and approval processes of the VCGR.

All excess gaming machines in the capped regions will be removed over the next 12 months.

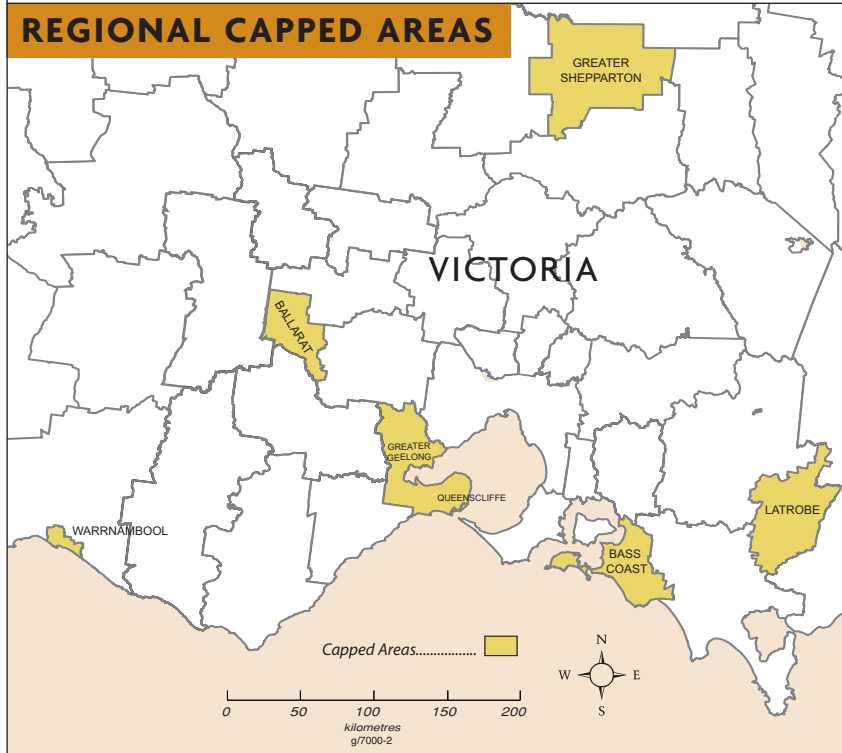
Setting a maximum density for local government areas

By 2010, the maximum density of gaming machines for all other local government

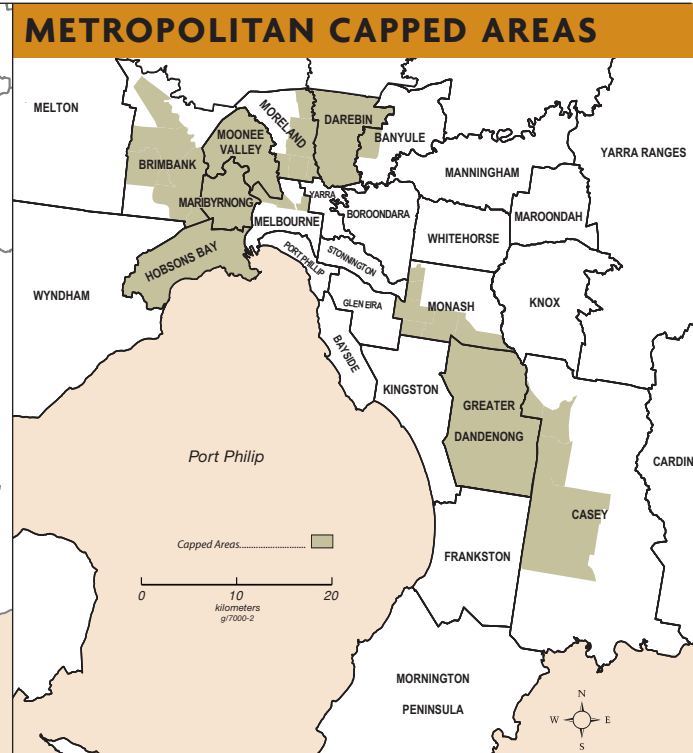
areas (with the exception of the central business district, Southbank and Docklands in the City of Melbourne), will be set at 10 gaming machines per thousand adults, with areas below 10 gaming machines per thousand adults able to increase machine numbers up to the maximum density.

Local government areas with a density above 10 will have excess gaming machines removed. It is expected that the local government areas of Central Goldfields, East Gippsland and Wellington will have gaming machines reduced by about 40 machines in total across all three local government areas based on current density and population figures.

REGIONAL CAPPED AREAS



METROPOLITAN CAPPED AREAS



Protecting local government areas from high concentrations of gaming machines.



The maximum density will prevent high concentrations of gaming machines occurring in local government areas in the future.

The density will be regulated by the VCGR.

Destination gaming zone

The tourism and destination gaming zone comprising the central business district, Southbank and Docklands precincts in the City of Melbourne will be maintained and will be exempt from the maximum density for local government areas.

Destination gaming venues

In response to community and industry support for destination style gaming venues, the Government will examine destination gaming arrangements.

Destination gaming is a style of gaming venue that encourages pre-determined decisions to gamble.

Findings in a number of research reports suggest that less gaming venues might reduce problem gambling by making it less likely that problem gamblers will attend venues on impulse alone.

The Regional Electronic Gaming Machine Caps Review Panel also recommended that the Government examine options to restructure the gaming industry in a way that makes gaming venues less accessible to vulnerable communities, shifting towards more destination gaming venues, such as racetracks, and resulting in fewer venues across Victoria.

The Government will investigate whether destination style gaming will deliver a

net community benefit to Victoria. The investigation will examine the suitability of gaming venues at racetracks to destination style gaming and will look at a broad range of issues, including:

- ownership and control
- location and size (i.e. away from shopping centres, residential areas etc.)
- other entertainment and leisure facilities that should also be available at the venue
- a reduction in the number of gaming venues
- compliance and responsible gambling controls and conditions.

It will be a medium-term project based on objective analysis, research and experience locally and from other jurisdictions.

The Government will release a discussion paper and consult broadly with the industry and the community regarding destination gaming proposals.

If the investigation indicates that destination gaming is likely to deliver a net community benefit to Victoria, the Government will trial destination gaming arrangements at a limited number of venues selected following industry and community consultation.

Giving greater control to local councils

The Government will give local councils greater say in the placement of gaming machines in their communities. Changes to the Victoria Planning Provisions mean that a council planning permit will be required for any new gaming venue or for any increase in the number of gaming machines at an existing venue.



Action Area 05

Improving consumer protection

Some gambling products have inherent risks. The Government believes that consumers must be able to make an informed choice to use these products and take personal responsibility for the consequences.

However, it must also be recognised that these choices often have a significant impact on individuals, their families and friends. For this reason, safety nets are required.

There is strong evidence that the features of some gambling products make them inherently more risky than others. Consumer protection measures are therefore needed to:

- provide information to consumers that reinforces their ability to make informed gambling decisions
- limit gambling product designs that have been shown to be unsafe.

The Government is also mindful of how such measures impact on the gambling consumer's right to engage freely in a legitimate recreational activity.

What we have done

The Government has a substantial track record in consumer protection and leads the nation in adopting balanced measures that protect gambling consumers and create safer gambling products. These measures include:

- requiring electronic gaming machines to display information about the odds of winning and the amount of time and money spent by the player
- requiring clocks to be displayed on all gaming machines

- setting a maximum bet limit of \$10 on all gaming machines*
- banning gaming machines accepting \$100 bank notes*
- capping 'spin rates'
- banning autoplay facilities on gaming machines
- banning 24 hour gaming venues other than the Melbourne casino
- banning gaming machine advertising and restricting signage.

What we will do

Limiting access to ATMs and EFTPOS

By 2010, the Government will require the removal of any automatic teller machine (ATM) in a gaming venue, or within 50 metres of an entrance to the Melbourne casino gaming floor, that does not limit the amount that a customer can withdraw to \$400 in total per day.

The Government will also work with the gaming industry to implement per transaction and per customer limits on cash advances via EFTPOS facilities.

These measures are designed to provide a safety net for those consumers who engage in episodic or 'binge gambling'.

The measures reflect research conducted by the Australian National University Centre for Gambling Studies in 2004 which concluded that a daily limit on the amount that can be withdrawn from ATMs would be a more effective strategy than the removal of ATMs from gaming venues.

** does not apply to gaming machines exempted until 2008 and to certain gaming machines in the Melbourne casino*

Problem gambling has declined from 2.14 per cent in 1999 to 1.12 per cent in 2003.

Gaming venues: then and now

- In 1999 there were 133 venues licensed to operate 24 hours a day. Today, there are no such venues other than the Melbourne casino.
- In 1999 a person could walk into a venue, withdraw \$1000 in \$100 notes from an ATM, feed them straight into a machine, bet as much per spin as the machine's capacity would allow and stay there all day and night without a break.
- Now a person has to leave the gaming area to access an ATM, can withdraw no more than \$200 at a time, cannot feed \$100 notes into a machine, cannot bet more than \$10 per spin, needs to leave the gaming area if they want a cigarette and has to stop gambling when the gaming room closes as there are no longer any 24 hour gaming venues outside the Melbourne casino.
- Research shows that the prevalence of problem gambling in the Victorian population has declined from 2.14 per cent in 1999 to 1.12* per cent in 2003.

* 2003 Victorian Longitudinal Community Attitudes Survey, Centre for Gambling Research, Australian National University

Gaming machines: did you know?

By law in Victoria a gaming machine must:

- display instructions that are clear and unambiguous
- have an interval between spins of at least 2.14 seconds*
- use meters that display player entitlements (i.e. credit, bet, win) simultaneously in both dollars and cents and in credits
- clearly display the time of day on the machine
- not give the impression to players that their skill can influence the outcome of the game or improve their odds of winning
- not contain artwork that is indecent or offensive
- not suggest that playing the game is likely to improve a person's social status, make them more attractive to others or result in financial betterment
- not contain artwork or a game name that is factually incorrect, misleading or deceptive
- not describe money spent playing the game as an 'investment'
- not suggest that a person's chances of winning a prize are influenced by the length of time that they play the machine
- not allow a bet per spin above \$10*
- not accept \$100 notes*.

* does not apply to gaming machines exempted until 2008 and to certain gaming machines in the Melbourne casino

ACTION AREA 05

Halving maximum bet limits

The Government will reduce the maximum bet on gaming machines from \$10 to \$5. This limit will apply to all machines outside of the Melbourne casino.

Prohibiting products or practices that encourage risky behaviours

The Government will give the Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation (VCGR) the power to prohibit a product or practice that encourages consumers to engage in behaviours associated with problem gambling.

For example, the VCGR may issue a direction banning electronic gaming machine tournaments that offer prizes to the person who accumulates the most credits during the course of the tournament. This is because these tournaments may encourage consumers to engage in extended and uninterrupted periods of play inconsistent with responsible gambling practice.

The VCGR's power will apply to all gambling types regulated by the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* including electronic gaming machines, wagering, lotteries, trade promotions and community and charitable gaming.

Ban new products inconsistent with this strategy

The Minister for Gaming will be given new powers to ban any gambling product that is designed to explicitly avoid or undermine any aspect of the Government's responsible gambling policy or legislation.

Reducing the maximum starting credits by 90 per cent

The Government will reduce the maximum amount that a player can put into a gaming machine at the start of play by 90 per cent from \$9,949 to \$1,000.*

There is evidence to suggest that the current maximum far exceeds an average player's requirement.

Requirement for payment of winnings by cheque

The Government will require all winnings on a non-casino gaming machine above \$1,000 to be paid entirely by cheque. This will stop winnings over \$1,000 being paid partly by cheque and partly in cash, with the latter at risk of being reinvested immediately in a gaming machine.

*Other than a machine located in the Melbourne casino

The maximum bet on gaming machines will be reduced from \$10 to \$5.



Access to cash in gaming venues

Recent research shows that:

- there is limited evidence to support the removal of ATMs from gaming venues*
- a daily limit on the amount that can be withdrawn from ATMs would be a more effective and acceptable strategy*
- regular and problem gamblers tend to access ATMs at gaming venues more frequently than do recreational and non-gamblers*
- access to cash is a “common trigger” to overspend limits #
- moderate-risk and problem gamblers make significantly more withdrawals from an ATM than non-problem or low-risk players^
- both gaming machine players and venue managers regard the proposal to further reduce ATM withdrawal limits – and to limit withdrawals to one transaction per day – as potentially effective measures to mitigate problem gambling^
- most gaming machine players access an ATM at least once during a gambling session^
- gaming venue managers agree that venue-based ATM users are most likely to spend their withdrawals on playing gaming machines^
- there is insufficient evidence to support a complete prohibition on electronic cash withdrawal facilities in gaming venues.~

* 2005, Evaluation of Electronic Gaming Machine Harm Minimisation Measures Final Report, commission by the Gambling Research Panel

* 2004, The use of ATMs in ACT Gaming Venues: an empirical study, Centre for Gambling Research, Australian National University

2006, Analysis of Gambler Pre Commitment Behaviour, commissioned by Gambling Research Australia.

~2004, Gambling: Promoting a culture of responsibility, Final Report, Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal



Action Area 06

Enhancing the regulator

An independent regulator with the right powers and resources is vital for ensuring the risks associated with gambling are minimised.

Regulation of the gambling industry in Victoria is the responsibility of the Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation (VCGR). The VCGR:

- licences and ensures the probity of industry participants
- approves new gambling products, games and rules for games
- issues permits authorising certain gambling activities
- carries out inspections to ensure compliance with the law
- conducts investigations
- prosecutes offences and takes disciplinary action for regulatory breaches
- advises the Minister for Gaming on community concerns about the social and economic impact of gambling.

What we have done

The Government has:

- simplified the regulatory framework by consolidating eight different gambling Acts into one to create the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003*
- created the new independent regulator, the VCGR

- given the VCGR improved powers for monitoring compliance with the law and expanded the enforcement actions available to the VCGR to include the right to issue infringement notices for certain offences
- improved the capacity of the VCGR to exchange information with other law enforcement agencies
- strengthened the VCGR's capacity to prosecute illegal betting offences.

What we will do

Matters for consideration in gaming machine applications

The Government will require that the VCGR consider a broader range of matters when determining an application for a new gaming venue or to increase the number of machines in an existing venue.

The Government will review the scope of matters for VCGR consideration in consultation with industry, local councils, the community and the Responsible Gambling Ministerial Advisory Council.

An independent regulator is vital for ensuring the risks associated with gambling are minimised.

The review will consider the breadth of existing matters the VCGR must consider and the evidence that an applicant must provide in support of an application, as well as the role that local councils and other interested parties should play in the decision-making process.

Implementation of industry code of conduct

The Government will provide \$4 million to enable the VCGR to monitor compliance with the gambling industry code of conduct and support the industry in implementing the code.

Protecting Victorians: The Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation

In 2005-06 the VCGR:

- conducted 677 investigations
- prosecuted 10 offences in the Magistrates' Court
- took disciplinary action against 114 industry participants
- conducted 3,081 inspections and audits
- supervised 990 lottery draws
- investigated 49 gaming venue consumer complaints
- approved 409 modifications to gaming machine areas of gaming venues
- investigated 72 consumer complaints relating to the conduct of gaming in the Melbourne casino
- determined eight appeals against exclusion orders issued by the Melbourne casino
- considered seven applications for new gaming venues and 14 applications for an increase in gaming machines at existing venues
- approved 34 amendments to the rules of the games that can be played in the Melbourne casino
- held 86 meetings
- held 53 inquiries and hearings.



Action Area 07

Fostering gambling research

Sound research is critical to the development of policies and actions that respond to the harm caused by problem gambling. The Government's approach is to strengthen and better link gambling research to gambling policy development to ensure policies are relevant, evidence-based and effective.

The Government's research and evaluation program will:

- create a better understanding of problem gambling and how people, products and environments interact
- identify policies that might be more effective and what might go wrong
- enhance the capability of the university sector to undertake high quality gambling-related research
- begin to build an integrated knowledge base on how gambling and problem gambling sit in the broader social and cultural context.

What we have done

The Government has established the *Victorian Gambling Research Agenda* to address critical gaps in research knowledge including: accessibility, youth gambling, effective treatments, emerging technologies, gambling and depression, and early interventions.

The agenda was developed and endorsed by the gaming industry, community advocates on gambling and local governments through the Responsible Gambling Ministerial Advisory Council. It was also informed by leading Australian independent gambling researchers.

A key aim of the research agenda is to commission research that investigates:

- the nature and extent of gambling activities in Victoria
- effective measures to maximise the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities while seeking to minimise the harm that may be related to gambling.

All problem gambling research commissioned by the Government is now subject to a thorough peer review process to ensure it is rigorous.

In June 2006, the Government initiated the *Submission Based Grants System for Gambling Research 2006 Pilot*, focusing on accessibility as a priority area in the research agenda. The grants system aims to re-invigorate gambling research by encouraging participation and input from a range of disciplines.

The Government has also supported Gambling Research Australia and the national gambling research program through the provision of secretariat leadership.

Since 2000-01 the Government has provided over \$2.3 million for gambling related research across 17 projects, which are publicly available on the website www.justice.vic.gov.au

\$7.2 million towards gambling research.

What we will do

The Government will invest \$7.2 million over five years on gambling research.

The funding will see the Government continue to lead the way in independent gambling research initiatives and will significantly contribute to a better understanding of problem gambling and how to help problem gamblers.

The research will be consistent with the *Victorian Gambling Research Agenda*.

Longitudinal Epidemiological Study

The Government will invest \$1 million in a sustained epidemiological study of the various forms of gambling available in Victoria to better understand how problem gambling develops.

The study will enable the tracking of specified population groups including women, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, at-risk gamblers and problem gamblers, and will be the first Victorian study to gather information on how the problem gambling population is changing.

Ongoing funds for independent research

The Government will provide \$3 million over five years to the *Independent Gambling Research Grants Program*, enabling it to oversee and steer the research process, while encouraging relevant investigator-initiated research and facilitating collaboration from researchers located at different universities.

Continued support of Gambling Research Australia

The Government will continue to support national gambling research arrangements by providing funding of \$1.2 million over five years towards research secretariat services.

Through this role, Victoria is the main driver of the national research agenda, developing research proposals and ideas for consideration by Gambling Research Australia and managing research projects undertaken.

Research on emerging and strategic issues

The Government will provide \$2 million to invest in research on emerging and strategic gambling issues to encourage well-informed, evidence-based debate on these issues, and inform Government consideration of regulatory and policy issues that arise.

Maintain a close connection between policy and the research agenda

The Government is committed to maintaining a close connection between policy and research by retaining the role of the Responsible Gambling Ministerial Advisory Council in informing future research agendas.

Informing the debate: key research themes of the Victorian Research Agenda

- Accessibility to gambling products
- Youth gambling
- Effective treatments
- Emerging technologies
- Gambling and depression
- Early interventions

05

COMMITMENT TO PROGRESS

The Government is committed to monitoring and reporting on the effectiveness of its strategies to combat the harm caused by problem gambling.

To this end, the Government will report on a regular basis to the Victorian community on:

- the implementation of this strategy
- the delivery of services to problem gamblers and their families
- the incidence of problem gambling and the level of participation in, and expenditure on, gambling in the community.

Monitoring strategy progress

The Government undertakes to implement the actions set out in this strategy.

The Government will undertake a review of this strategy and the effectiveness of its implementation in 2010.

Reporting on service delivery

The provision of better services to problem gamblers, their families and others affected by problem gambling is a priority for this Government.

The Government will evidence its commitment by providing regular and transparent information on:

- the services provided including:
 - the number of calls to gambler's help telephone services

- the number of clients receiving problem gambling and financial counselling services
- the total number of service hours delivered
- the number and type of community education activities conducted
- the demographics of clients using the services
- services provided to culturally and linguistically diverse and Indigenous communities
- the quality and outcome of the services provided.

Reporting on gambling within the Victorian community

The Government has moved to make the reporting of research and gaming machine expenditure statistics much more transparent and accessible. This data is now freely available via the Department of Justice and VCGR websites.

The Government will also provide regular information to the community on the major indicators of gambling activity in Victoria, as well as the incidence of problem gambling, to communicate its progress in combating the harm caused by problem gambling and to better inform the community debate.

The Government is committed to monitoring and reporting on the effectiveness of its strategies.



APPENDIX	GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT IN <i>TAKING ACTION ON PROBLEM GAMBLING</i>
Program Initiative	(,000) 5 Year Funding 2006-07 to 2010-11
Building better treatment services	\$79,847
Treatment services	\$53,598
Online treatment	\$500
Building on existing after hours service capacity	\$2,147
Enhanced service model for culturally diverse and socially isolated people and communities	\$500
Case management and mobile counselling	\$4,335
Centre of Excellence in Problem Gambling Treatment	\$4,177
Culturally and linguistically diverse and Indigenous services	\$4,912
Community support trial	\$300
Support for affected families – material aid/RAP	\$4,814
Program management and development	\$4,214
System reform and data transparency	\$350
Ensuring a more socially responsible gambling industry	\$3,799
Strengthen the self-exclusion program	\$2,630
Resourcing the Responsible Gambling Ministerial Advisory Council	\$1,169
Promoting healthy communities	\$37,488
Statewide community education and awareness campaigns	\$23,967
Community education and health promotion	\$580
Local community education, services, marketing and promotion activities	\$5,000
School-based learning programs to raise awareness within school communities of problem gambling	\$1,390
Partnerships	\$4,586
Building community advocacy on gambling issues	\$1,965
Enhancing the regulator	\$4,000
Implementation of industry code of conduct	\$4,000
Fostering gambling research	\$7,182
Longitudinal epidemiological study	\$1,000
Ongoing funds for independent research	\$3,000
Continued support of Gambling Research Australia	\$1,182
Research on emerging and strategic issues	\$2,000
Total funding	\$132,316
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STARTING TO PUT YOUR GAMBLING FIRST?



ON MOST DAYS DO YOU THINK ABOUT GAMBLING?
DO YOU SOMETIMES GAMBLE MORE THAN YOU CAN AFFORD?
DO YOU TRY TO WIN BACK YOUR LOSSES?
DO YOU MAINLY GAMBLE ALONE?
DO YOU GAMBLE WHEN YOU'RE NOT ENJOYING IT?
HAVE YOU TRIED TO CUT BACK GAMBLING BUT CAN'T?
DO YOU SOMETIMES GAMBLE TO OVERCOME BOREDOM?
DO YOU LOSE TRACK OF TIME WHEN GAMBLING?
DO YOU GAMBLE TO TAKE YOUR MIND OFF PERSONAL ISSUES?

If you answer yes to any of these questions, you may be heading towards a gambling problem.

GAMBLER'S HELP 1800 156 789

THINK OF WHAT YOU'RE REALLY GAMBLING WITH

www.problemgambling.vic.gov.au

Hearing impaired only should call TTY 1800 777 706
A Community Support Fund Initiative

