

VCGR NEWS

The newsletter of the Victorian
Commission for Gambling Regulation
Special edition May 2011

Responsible Gambling



Victorian Commission
for Gambling Regulation

Responsible Gambling Awareness Week 2011: 23–29 May

Contents

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Disclaimer

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Message from the Minister

Responsible Gambling Awareness Week 23–29 May 2011



THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT IS committed to a safe and responsible gambling industry. The Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition Plan for Gaming recognises that a range of initiatives are required to ensure a responsible gambling industry. The Government's commitment to the establishment of the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation, to a comprehensive pre-commitment scheme to be available for the use of gaming machine players and to the establishment of the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation will place Victoria in a strong position to respond to current and emerging challenges in the regulation of gambling, promotion of responsible gambling and reduction in gambling-related harm.

Critical to the success of a responsible gambling environment is the partnership between government, industry and the community. I am pleased to note that in Victoria these partnerships continue to grow and mature. Under the direction of the Responsible Gambling Ministerial Advisory Council, Responsible Gambling Awareness Week (RGAW) demonstrates the capacity of government, industry and the community to work together to support responsible gambling practices. RGAW is a unique partnership between government, industry and community sectors promoting a unified message – *gamble responsibly, stay in control*.

RGAW 2011 is an opportunity to raise community awareness of the importance of responsible gambling practices at a personal, venue and community level. It is also a time to encourage individuals to seek help to minimise gambling-related harm.

A particular focus of RGAW 2011 is emerging technology and the challenges it presents to responsible gambling practices. With the increasing popularity of sports betting and online betting this focus is particularly topical.

A keynote forum will be held in Melbourne on 23 May 2011 titled 'The new game: emerging technology and responsible gambling.'

Professor Jeffrey Derevensky will lead discussion on youth gambling online. Professor Derevensky is based at McGill University, Montreal, Canada and is renowned for his research in gambling studies and young people. Several other leading researchers will also participate in the forum, including Ms Janine Robinson, Advanced Practice Clinician/Educator from the Problem Gambling Institute of Ontario. Ms Robinson will discuss the cultural associations connected to sports betting and Ontario's approach to mitigate the possible harms. Industry representatives and community groups will also be involved, and a panel discussion will consider the impact of emerging technology and responsible gambling practices.

A number of local events are also taking place across Victoria to promote responsible gambling and I encourage you to get involved.

As part of RGAW, I will be attending the graduation ceremony for Gambler's Help Venue Support Workers. The Gambler's Help Venue Support Program aims to facilitate the ongoing development of responsible gambling practices and environments within the gaming industry. Whilst in opposition, the Liberal Nationals Coalition successfully secured funding for the program and continues to support this important initiative in government.

Industry and industry staff play an important role in promoting responsible gambling messages not only during RGAW but also throughout the year. I look forward to working with industry and the community to raise awareness of responsible gambling practices in Victoria and I encourage your participation in RGAW 2011.

A more detailed outline of RGAW events and information for the week is available at www.gambleaware.vic.gov.au

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael O'Brien".

**HON MICHAEL O'BRIEN MP
MINISTER FOR GAMING**

Message from the Chair



RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING Awareness Week 2011 provides a great opportunity for all industry stakeholders to collectively foster responsible gambling through a total industry focus on harm minimisation.

Raising awareness in this way focuses on the 'consumer demand' side of the equation and, through our awareness raising and educative efforts, empowers consumers and makes them better equipped for sound decision making.

Better education and decision making by the consumer will complement other measures such as bet limits, pre-commitment and other machine functionality.

In recent times, the VCGR has worked with the Government to implement a range of strategies to take action on problem gambling. These strategies have included the implementation of mandatory Responsible Gambling Codes of Conduct (Codes) for all commercial gambling licensees, the approval of two self-exclusion programs (SEPs), conducting a survey of gaming venue operators and staff on Responsible Gambling Codes and SEP implementation, and the establishment of the Responsible Gambling Project team which has been primarily focused on these issues. In particular, the team has developed and implemented well-structured initiatives including educative tools to assist commercial gambling licensees to

understand their responsible gambling obligations and to assist in identifying and promoting best practice.

The experience of the Responsible Gambling Project team suggests that Victoria's gambling industry has taken the appropriate steps to implement their Codes and SEPs. However, there is still some work to be done in teaching industry employees the practical skills they can use to identify and interact with potential problem gamblers.

The next 12–18 months will be an extremely busy time for the VCGR, a period during which we must transition to a new venue-based industry structure, integrate with alcohol regulation and move to a new facility.

Throughout this, we will not lose focus on the role we play in this critical area of responsible gambling and harm minimisation.

We look forward to working with all industry stakeholders over the coming months to ensure success.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Bruce Thompson', written over a light blue grid background.

BRUCE THOMPSON
CHAIR, VCGR

Fresh insights help those who aid problem gamblers

By Lauren Sarti

Across Victoria, Venue Support Workers are engaging with gaming venues in a bid to combat problem gambling and provide hands-on training in responsible gambling services for staff. Central to this work is strengthening the capacity of venues to foster responsible gambling.

In December 2009, the former Victorian Government announced funding for the next three years for more than 20 Gambler's Help Venue Support Workers (VSWs) to work with the gaming industry to facilitate and support the development of responsible gambling practices and environments.

VSWs come from a diverse background, including gaming venues, Crown Casino, the training sector, gaming operators and the community sector.

THE GAMBLER'S HELP VENUE Support Program provides training and support in responsible gambling practices and environments for gaming venue staff and management.

Launched in September 2010 by the Office of Gaming and Racing and financed by the Victorian Government, the program is consistent with approved industry Responsible Gambling Codes of Conduct and gives gaming venues access to a locally based Venue Support Worker (VSW) who is there to talk to venue staff and make sure training and support suits their needs.

VSWs work with duty managers, nominees, board members, managers and gaming attendants to foster responsible gambling in gaming venues.

A VSW has a number of roles, including training staff, running education sessions, raising awareness about how to recognise the signs of problem gambling, and outlining strategies on how staff can engage with patrons.

The services provided by VSWs complement local community education programs that continue to be carried out by community educators at Gambler's Help Services and Primary Care Partnerships, which promote responsible gambling in community settings, including gaming venues.

In Altona North, staff from local venues met at Millers Inn to see what they could learn. "It was really good," says Debbie Kurtov, the responsible gambling officer at Millers Inn. "We learned how to approach gamblers who may have a problem. It gave us a helpful insight into what to say and how to present options."

She thinks the VSW program is on the right track and praised the training as not being boring.

As for the future: "If I need anything I'll just give them [Gambler's Help] a buzz," she says.

On the other side of town, Ringwood-based Gambler's Help Eastern manager Jackie Bramwell is delighted to have three dedicated VSWs in her team. She says that, with concern over the rise in the number of problem gambling referrals in her area over the past year, she hoped that the VSWs could help with earlier detection of problem gambling at venues.

As advocates for a responsible gambling environment, part of the VSWs' role is to raise awareness of problem gambling services. Their role is not one of compliance and they have no direct contact with patrons.

Rather, they work as an interface between the community sector and gaming venues, providing education and resources to managers and venue staff about managing responsible gambling and building staff capacity to spot and act on problem gambling.

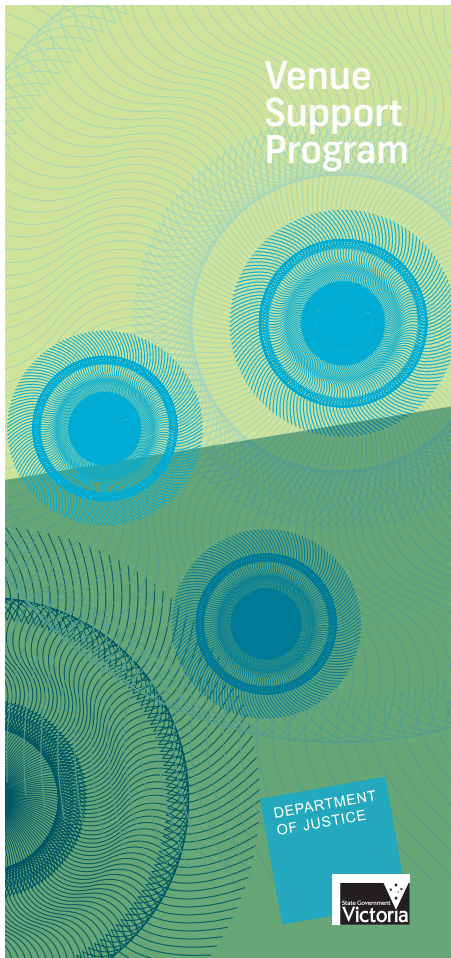
An encouraging example of how staff are being trained to recognise behaviour that may be associated with problem gambling and respond appropriately can be seen at the Clifton Springs Golf Club, where staff recently underwent training with their local VSW from Bethany.

David Milne, General Manager, found the trainer for his staff to be "very helpful... and knowledgeable," with the training covering all facets of the industry.

"The training was beneficial in that it offered the opportunity for all staff to receive information from a third party and allowed for sharing information in either direction and reinforced the importance of Gambler's Help support.

"It also gave staff an opportunity to express their views on being on the 'front line' within the industry."

The service was initially viewed with suspicion by Rachel Kenny, who manages the Deer Park Hotel. "When I first heard about it, I thought it was going to be a waste of time,



but I found it really helpful,” she says. “It’s good to know about Gambler’s Help and what happens when you call them, and how self-exclusion works.”

She is pleased, too, that she is kept informed about changes to legislation.

At the Melton Country Club, manager Neil Jordan is similarly enthusiastic. “To be perfectly frank,” he says, “I’m surprised at how good it’s been.

“When you have something new you are not sure how it will work. It’s getting us all in sync,” he says. “The training hit the mark, it was excellent.”

When it comes to staff knowing about Gambler’s Help Services, what they can deliver or how to make contact with them, Trevor Rice, VSW with St Luke’s Anglicare in Bendigo, sees a need for some improvement. “I don’t think the staff are fully aware of Gambler’s Help Services,” he says of the 23 venues in his area.

Rice says that when he first visited venues, some were hesitant. “Some are a little nervous when I first meet them but when I explain to them that I’m not there to check on them but to assist them they breath easy.”

Andrea Preiato from Bethany has visited the 36 venues in Geelong and surrounding areas. “All of the venues we have had meetings with made us feel extremely welcome, with some venues extending invitations to sit in on parts of staff meetings in case any staff wanted to know more about my role and what my service offers.”

Back at the Clifton Springs Golf Club, David Milne said they would like to see future training sessions use some real-life “positive examples” of problem gamblers who have recovered from their addiction and suggests that a special program could be created to “incorporate the inclusion of committee or board members as part of the training.”

“Our new staff also found the session very good in reinforcing issues of problem gambling that they would not have encountered.” Milne believes that if the industry is to continue to keep on top of problem gambling issues, the challenge will be to keep the training imbued with new ideas.

Stuart Barton, VSW from Gambler’s Help Northern, has really enjoyed using his industry background from four years at Tabcorp to foster relationships with venues in the Northern area. With the help of fellow VSWs, including newly appointed Stephen Paul, the Gambler’s Help Northern VSW team visited all the assigned venues in its program. Stuart and Stephen have seen the difference face-to-face contact can make in cementing a working relationship with gaming managers and their staff.

“Having visited all venues in our area in person, we have now offered a selection of training modules for staff to pick from,” Stuart says. “I see our relationships building further as staff get to know us and the training sessions we can deliver.”

So far, the training modules most popular with venues have been:

- An overview of Gambler’s Help services
- Identifying problem gambling behaviour
- Approaching patrons who show signs of problem gambling
- A review session of the gaming Codes of Conduct, this last module being targeted at more senior staff.

Kathy Magee, VSW for Gambler’s Help Eastern, has been delivering training sessions to venue staff in a catchment area that services 24 venues across the local government areas of Monash and Knox.

When visiting venues, Magee says she found staff to be well aware of problem gambling warning signs and the impact that problem gambling can have on the individual and their family, friends, community and workplace.



Gareth Hanlon, Venue Support Worker, Gambler's Help Southern and Shelley Didham, Director, Dick Whittington Tavern discuss the self-exclusion program

"The response to the training so far has been fantastic, both from staff and venue management," she says.

"Venue staff will talk openly about the issues and challenges they face in relation to the Responsible Service of Gaming... and the majority of staff have a good grasp of the role of Gambler's Help, the Codes of Conduct, self-exclusion programs and the pre-commitment strategies available to patrons."

At the Oakleigh Junction Hotel, venue manager Reece McCully rates the local VSW as friendly and proactive. "The training was beneficial to the staff because it refreshed memories on certain issues and also gave them more of an understanding about responsible gambling and the importance of documenting incidents."

He is keen to see continuing contact and refresher courses about changes in the industry and regulations.

Since 1 June 2009, the VCGR has been approving industry Codes of Conduct which, among other things, require operators to have regular contact with Gambler's Help agencies, and have annual or biannual meetings between their senior staff and/or board members or management and Gambler's Help. Meanwhile, Gambler's Help agencies are required to convene their annual venue staff training sessions.

Stuart Barton of Gambler's Help Northern says that it is part of the VSW's role to help venue staff respond to the mandatory requirements around Responsible Gambling Codes of Conduct and self-exclusion programs while still leaving the ultimate responsibility with the venue.

"The staff are much better at telling us what happens in reality on the gaming room floor and we can help out with pulling out the relevant Code of Conduct section to suggest improvements in their process or ways to

train staff to help meet their Code requirements," he says.

Andrea Preiato had an entirely different experience when training venue staff in Geelong and its surrounds, "I feel that the awareness of Codes of Conduct and self-exclusion programs is quite low and we as Venue Support Workers need to be able to build that capacity within the venue worker."

Gareth Hanlon works as a VSW with Gambler's Help Southern, which has 111 venues in its catchment of local government areas, covering about 1.2 million people. This represents a quarter of Greater Melbourne.

He has been building positive relationships with 29 venues in the local government areas of Glen Eira, Port Phillip and Stonnington, where he created training session plans and packages for each venue's individual needs.

With 13 years in the industry with Crown Casino, he had six years in the gaming machines department and customer contact centre and the rest with the Crown Responsible Gaming Support Centre as a Responsible Gaming Liaison Officer, and so is well versed in the realities of working in the gaming environment.

He gets great responses from venue staff and is encouraged by their knowledge of Gambler's Help services, Codes of Conduct and self-exclusion programs.

"A good example of this is with the RSLs, which have a dedicated welfare officer who provides services outside the realm of responsible gambling."

Hanlon says venue staff have genuine compassion for patrons exhibiting signs of problematic behaviour.

"On the whole they appear to be doing the very best they can when an incident occurs," he says, but he also stresses the need for staff to be given the opportunity to develop skills for interaction with such patrons and practise this on the floor.

Induction program for VSWs

The Office of Gaming and Racing and VCGR provide information and resources to the VSWs as part of their induction.

Andrea Preiato from Bethany found the induction process rigorous and thorough but quite daunting in the beginning. "By day three, it felt a lot clearer in the direction in which the roles were headed. The VCGR made everything clear in the compliance sense, as to where we stand within our roles."

Representatives of the VCGR briefed the VSWs on the role of the VCGR, key regulation around gaming machines, gambling regulation as it relates to responsible gambling practices, the Responsible Gambling Codes of Conduct,

an overview of Responsible Service of Gaming training, and the VCGR's compliance and investigative function.

Gareth Hanlon from Gambler's Help Southern has been extremely impressed with the strategic and methodical approach to the establishment of the new VSW program in his first six months.

As part of a comprehensive training program, the Office of Gaming and Racing has funded all the VSWs to complete the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

For more information about the Gambler's Help Venue Support Program or to find your local Gambler's Help Venue Support Worker visit www.problemgambling.vic.gov.au/venues ▶



Venue Support Workers during their induction program with VCGR representatives

The guest column is an opportunity to look at issues from a different perspective. Opinions expressed are those of the contributor.

Doing it for themselves – gamblers and self-regulation



Dr Anna Thomas is a research fellow in the Brain and Psychological Sciences Research Centre in the Faculty of Life and Social Sciences at Swinburne University of Technology. She has been a researcher in the gambling field for the past 10 years.

Dr Anna Thomas is the lead author of *Problem gambling vulnerability: The interaction between access, individual cognitions and group beliefs or preferences*.

For publication details see the listing in the References at the end of this article.

The full report is available at:

www.problemgambling.org.au/news.php

PEOPLE, IN THE MAIN, PREFER TO manage their own behaviour and this includes their behaviour in relation to gambling. Even amongst people who experience gambling problems, only a minority will ever seek formal treatment. The majority continue to try and self-manage their gambling. Given this, it is important to understand the processes people use to regulate their gambling. Once we find out more about how people manage their gambling we can use the information to educate the wider community and provide targeted assistance to those who are struggling to control their gambling.

Researchers at Swinburne University of Technology recently conducted a study examining the strategies that social and problem gamblers used to regulate their gambling. We firstly ran focus groups with different groups of gamblers asking them

about how they managed their gambling. This produced information about a range of self-regulation techniques, including distinct behavioural controls as well as ways of thinking about gambling that assisted in self-regulation.

We used that information together with existing literature around help seeking and self-regulation to construct a list of 20 items relating to different ways of self-regulating gambling. We surveyed 303 people using these items and then used Exploratory Factor Analysis techniques to see if the strategies could be clustered into meaningful groups. We found four distinct groups of self-regulation strategies, as follows:

- **Self-limiting strategies:** This related to the importance of placing limits around time and money spent gambling, considering the consequences of excessive gambling, and balancing gambling with other hobbies.
- **Social experience strategies:** This group of strategies related to the need to ensure that visiting venues remained a socially oriented rather than gambling-oriented experience, for example going to venues with friends, or choosing venues with non-gambling as well as gambling activities.
- **Avoidance strategies:** This group of strategies comprised efforts to avoid going to venues, and restricting access to money at venues.
- **Help-seeking strategies:** This final group of strategies involved serious efforts to control gambling by cutting up credit cards, self-excluding from venues and seeking professional assistance.

Statistical tests showed that, on average, problem gamblers were more likely to use self-limiting, avoidance and help-seeking strategies than non-problem or social gamblers. Both social and problem gamblers were equally likely to use social experience strategies. The biggest difference was in terms of avoidance. In other words, problem

gamblers were much more likely to use strategies to avoid gambling altogether than were non-problem gamblers. These results suggest that people will use a range of different strategies to manage their gambling and that people who are experiencing problems controlling their gambling will put more effort into trying to regulate behaviour.

Interestingly, the study also found that the most common strategies used by both problem and social gamblers were self-limiting strategies, including the need to place limits around time and money spent gambling. Pre-commitment has become a hot topic in Australia and the Victorian Government intends to introduce a voluntary pre-commitment scheme by 2015–16. Pre-commitment may assist people to regulate their own gambling by ‘normalising’ the process and encouraging everyone to think about how much time and money they want to spend gambling and then proactively set these limits before they start gambling. ▀

Acknowledgement is given to the Office of Gaming and Racing, Department of Justice (Victoria), which funded this research.

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Codes and self-exclusion programs – two years on

VICTORIA'S RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING Codes of Conduct (Codes) and self-exclusion programs (SEPs) have been running for almost two years. In that time the VCGR has approved 16 Codes for operation across the gambling industry as well as two self-exclusion programs which operate in gaming venues.

Mandatory Codes and SEPs were introduced to foster responsible gambling and strengthen the level of customer care provided to consumers.

To facilitate the implementation of Codes and SEPs, the VCGR established a Responsible

Gambling Project team in January 2009. The team has worked closely with the commercial gambling industry to guide the development and implementation of Codes and SEPs. The team has developed a number of tools to educate industry about the importance of responsible gambling and to help them comply with their obligations.

Each Code and SEP includes an annual review requirement. The 2010 reviews highlighted a number of potential areas for improvement which led to a number of Code and SEP amendments being approved by the VCGR.

The requirement to routinely review Codes and SEPs promotes continuous improvement to ensure best practice in Victoria's gambling industry. While the industry is required to undertake an annual review, the VCGR hopes all licence holders regard the evaluation of the way their Codes and SEPs are operating as a continuous process and make any appropriate changes to strengthen their commitment to responsible gambling.

The VCGR will continue to educate and assist industry with their Code and SEP obligations, and thereby promote a disposition of social responsibility amongst Victoria's gambling providers. ▶

Towards 2012 and more – the VCGR at Clubs and Hotels Expo 2011

VCGR Industry Information Sessions: 'Towards 2012'

Did you take part in the gaming entitlements auction?

The VCGR will be holding information sessions to provide venue operators and the broader industry with an update on the arrangements that will operate from 2012.

The sessions will include a presentation on the progress towards the new arrangements and key considerations for venue operators in preparing for them. There will be an opportunity to ask questions of representatives from the VCGR and Department of Justice.

Session 1: 31 May, 11.30am – 12.30pm

Session 2: 1 June, 11.30am – 12.30pm (repeat of session 1)

Bookings: Places are limited. See booking information under 'Expo details.'

Department of Justice (and VCGR) – Exhibition Stand

Do you manage or operate a gaming venue? Are you the nominee of a gaming venue?

VCGR representatives can provide information on licensing requirements, venue obligations and a range of gaming-related and compliance matters.

A Gambler's Help Venue Support Worker will be available to discuss potential training opportunities and development of your staff in identifying and responding to patrons showing signs of problem gambling and in implementing the Responsible Gambling Codes of Conduct.

Complimentary show bags will be available to attendees who visit the stand.

Location: Stand No. 103

Expo details

Dates: 31 May – 1 June 2011

Venue: The Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre

Times:

Tuesday 31 May, 9.00am–5.00pm

Wednesday 1 June, 9.00am–4.00pm

Cost: Admission is free (registration essential)

Host: The Clubs and Hotels Expo is organised by Exhibition Management Pty Ltd

Bookings: To organise your free entry badge for the Clubs and Hotels Expo, and to book your place a VCGR information session, visit www.clubsandhotels.com.au

Further information: Phone the VCGR on (03) 9651 3033, visit www.vcgr.vic.gov.au/events, or phone Exhibition Management on (03) 9699 4699

Venue details: For a map to the site visit www.clubsandhotels.com.au (paid parking is available)



Victorian Commission
for Gambling Regulation



Department of
Justice

A fresh look at self-exclusion

Fresh information is now available for those seeking advice about the self-exclusion program provided by hotels and clubs in Victoria.

The new brochure – produced by the Australian Hotels Association and ClubsVic in collaboration with the Gambler's Help Self-Exclusion Support Program – attempts to answer some of the more frequently asked questions people have about self-excluding. It tells people where to get more information and support and how they can join the program. The basic information is also available in a smaller, wallet-sized leaflet in nine community languages.

The new brochure has been sent to venue managers. They are encouraged to give it to customers seeking information about what they can do to control their gambling. The brochure is also available from all Gambler's Help agencies and many community agencies. General practitioners throughout the state have also received it in an attempt to increase their knowledge of services available to their patients.

Self-exclusion is generally thought of as a self-help program, but people on the program can receive support in a number of ways. Gambler's Help self-exclusion support workers are becoming available in rural offices of Gambler's Help to supplement the service offered out of Gambler's Help City

to metropolitan and regional Victoria. People can also choose to receive support from the Peer Connection Program (phone 1300 133 445). Also available is a booklet called *Strategies to support your self-exclusion*, which people receive at their self-exclusion interview.

People who have joined self-exclusion programs both in Victoria and overseas report a significant reduction in the negative consequences of gambling on their social life, their finances, their work performance and their mood.

Venues can order copies of the brochure from the Gambler's Help Self-Exclusion Support Program: Phone 03 9653 3250.

 <p>Self-Exclusion</p>	<p>Self-Exclusion Kumar makinelerinde oynamaktan kendinizi menetmeniz ile ilgili program Bilgi edinmek için aşağıda belirtilen kurumları arayın:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avustralya Oteller Demeği 03 9654 3491 • ClubsVic: 1800 641 503 • Kumar Bağımlıları Yardım Hattı: 1800 858 858 • Kumar Bağımlıları için Kendini Menetme Programı: 03 9653 3250 • Herhangi bir tesiste çalışan personel <p>Auto-Exclusión Un programa para auto-excluirse de jugar en máquinas de póker Para mayor Información contacte a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asociación de Hoteles de Australia: 03 9654 3491 • ClubsVic: 1800 641 503 • Ayuda para Jugadores: 1800 858 858 • Programa de Ayuda para Apoyar a Jugadores Auto-excluidos: 03 9653 3250 • Personal en cualquier lugar de juego 	<p>स्वयं अपवर्जन एक कार्यालय जिसके द्वारा आप अपने आपको पोकर (जुए की) मशीनों से अपवर्जित रखेंगे।</p> <p>जानकारी के लिए संपर्क करें : ऑस्ट्रेलियन होटल्स असोसिएशन : 03 9654 3491</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • क्लब्स विक : 1800 641 503 • जुए हेतु सहायता (गैबलसर हेल्प) : 1800 858 858 • जुए हेतु सहायता व स्वयं अपवर्जन समर्थन कार्यक्रम : 03 9653 3250 • किसी भी स्थल (जहाँ जुआ खेला जा रहा है) के कर्मचारी <p>Free and confidential 24 hour service. Deaf, hearing or speech impaired TTY 1800 777 706. Interpreting services available</p> <p>gambler's help 1800 858 858</p> <p>gamblerhelponline.org.au</p> <p>take the problem out of gambling</p> <p>Victorian Government © 2010</p>	 <p>Self-Exclusion</p>
			

Choosing the path to 2012

By Kevin Childs

As next year's sweeping changes draw near, hotel executives, club officials, and members too, are having to decide how they will steer their course to 2012 and beyond. For most, this involves choosing one of three options: whether to run their gaming machine business themselves, use outside help, or join a new cooperative.

THE 7000-MEMBER MULGRAVE Country Club is one club going it alone in the changeover. "The board decided not to spend money on a third-party provider," says general manager Kerry Scarlett.

Clubs in South Australia, New South Wales and Queensland have managed on their own, she said, so her club believed it was up to it.

While recognising that "there is a lot that we have to be on top of," she says the decision was based on a desire to keep money in the community and give back more.

Scarlett says educating staff about compliance will be one step, but is comforted by the knowledge that VCGR staff are just a phone call away.

Tony Parsons, general manager of gaming operations with the HLM Group – which runs the Welcome Stranger and Mail Exchange hotels in the city, the Lower Plenty Hotel, Epping Plaza Hotel and the Watergardens Hotel at Taylors Lakes – says there were "huge unknowns" in deciding whether or not to link with a third party. Among the options available were to partly or wholly use a third-party operator, combine with other venue operators in engaging a third party, or go it alone.

HLM already uses a third-party operator, Leigh Barrett & Associates, to manage their responsible gambling requirements. "We use them as a second set of eyes," says Parsons. "They do spot audits and training on the Code of Conduct and Responsible Gambling services. We will continue to use Leigh into the future but for the rest of our operations we've decided to go it alone."

The RSL's 3000-odd machines will be overseen by a third party. With the number of machines at sub-branches ranging from 10 to 100, the RSL put a lot of work into its decision, setting up a post-2012 steering committee of officers and senior staff from its Collins Street headquarters, Anzac House, to act as a sounding board.

"The RSL wanted to make the transition as soon as possible," says its Victorian branch chief operations officer, Brian Cairns. "Pre-commitment and responsible gambling were part of our thinking [on the issue], plus the technology."

The RSL is using Tabcorp Gaming Solutions to manage 7000 machines. Tabcorp Gaming Solutions, or TGS as it's also known, has a battery of services including helping to train staff in aspects of responsible gambling. It offers an online marketing kit and a patrons loyalty program (which is not linked to gaming).

Another firm providing a range of services is Progressive Venue Services, set up to aid venue operators in the transition to the new regime. The company's responsible gambling manager, Andrew Jeynes, says it also looks at how operators meet the requirements of Codes of Conduct.

The 5000-member Ballarat Leagues Club will use this company and, as a result, looks forward to finding smarter ways to do things.

Roger Howlett, the club's venue manager, says an emphasis has been on staff training and looking at the operation of Codes of Conduct and self-exclusion programs.

"This process has made every venue look at how they do things and then make improvements," he says.

Howlett looks forward to getting help in dealing with the local council and even in the distribution of funds.

The Elsternwick Club, a small suburban club with 400 bowling members, is using the third-party operator TGS to ensure a seamless operation that outlives its board, says chairman Johnnie Walker.

“This offers the club a real sense of security from early on in the piece. TGS have been extremely helpful in contributing to our ongoing strategic analysis of our business. We see them as a willing and contributing partner who will help us with the management of our gaming operations over the next decade or so.”

Among the issues confronting this club were the cost of the entitlements, the cost of new or replacement gaming machines, and how to best achieve a return on its investment in machines.

Before signing, the issue was put to the board and then to the members to be voted on at a general meeting.

Walker, a former Clubs Victoria president, adds: “It is important that whoever you line up with has a thorough knowledge and a deep understanding of their business. They must have a strong track record, wide and detailed gaming experience and immediate access to a range of resources. That allows us to concentrate on responsible gambling initiatives and maintaining best-practice duty of care for our members.”

Another group of clubs and hotels set up a cooperative called Frontier Hospitality, which covers 1200 machines. The group includes

the Collingwood and Richmond Football Clubs, Dandenong Club, the Moe Racing Club, Morwell’s Italian Australian Club, the Nagambie Rowing Club, Licensed Club Management and venues including the Shamrock Hotel in Bendigo, Hogan’s Hotel in Wallan, and those in the Gauci family group – the Victorian Tavern at Gisborne, the Lilydale Crown Hotel and the Courthouse Hotel, Bacchus Marsh.

Chairing the cooperative is Collingwood’s Dale Curtis, general manager of gaming and legal at the club.

“All members of the cooperative were part of a transparent, thoroughly researched study of transition to post-2012, with a strong focus on regulatory compliance and harm minimisation,” says Curtis.

“We want to be closer than the cutting edge,” he adds, “we want to be at the bleeding edge.” We will be taking our RSG and harm minimisation strategies very seriously, with the engagement of external service providers to review programs and protocols and to act as ‘challenge agents’ for their improvement.

Stephen Hodge, general manager at Morwell’s Italian Australian Club, says that as part of the transition all his gaming staff will do a refresher course in responsible gambling. This training will continue every two years.

These are just some examples of how venues are laying the groundwork for the post-2012 environment. It is important that venue operators think about the option that suits them best and make decisions about this ahead of next year’s changeover. ▀

What to watch for with a third-party service

The VCGR does not recommend any particular service provider.

Venue operators need to determine their need for third-party venue services and negotiate acceptable terms. It is illegal to calculate payment terms by referring to gaming machine revenue.

Operators may engage service providers for advice or services for machines and for the operation of venues, but the providers cannot operate machines. In some circumstances, a venue service provider may become an associate of the venue operator and may therefore require VCGR approval. By law a person listed on the Roll of Manufacturers and Suppliers, or an associate of a person listed on the Roll, may not be an associate of a venue operator.

It remains the venue operator’s responsibility to ensure that the conduct of the service providers and the outcome of their actions comply with the regulations.

How the VCGR decides where gaming machines go

The VCGR uses detailed information to decide whether gaming venues can increase their number of gaming machines or if a new gaming venue can be established.

The merits of each application are examined at a public hearing. Prior to a hearing, VCGR staff produce a detailed analysis of the local area in which the venue is located to identify the potential economic and social impact of any change.

A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT STATISTICS and indicators are taken into consideration when producing these reports. The VCGR looks at published figures on housing stress, levels of disadvantage, economic vulnerability, unemployment, homelessness and crime. These statistics are obtained from a variety of sources including the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Department of Planning and Community Development, and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

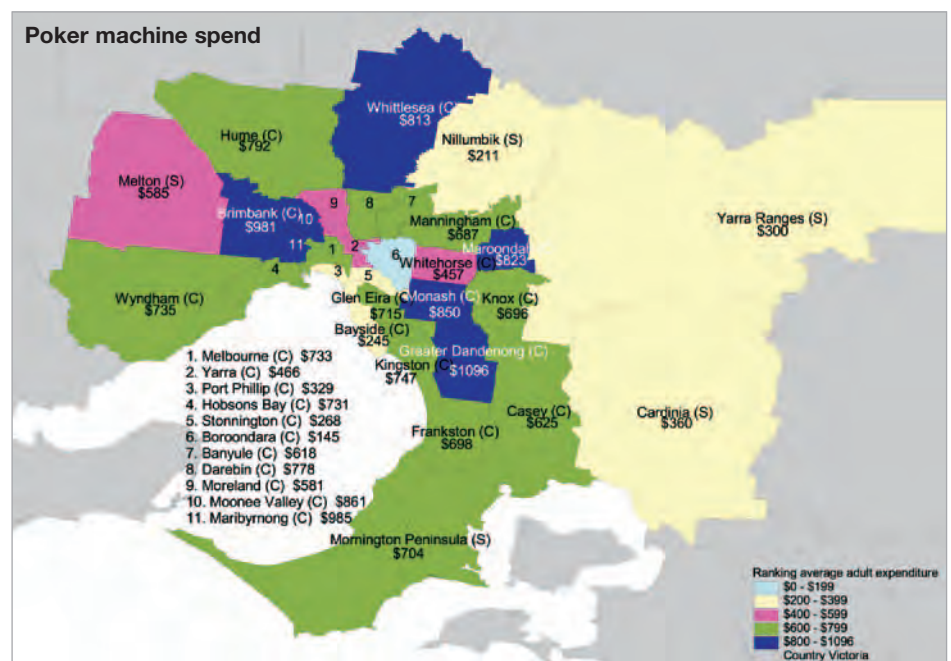
The VCGR also analyses gaming machine expenditure. Current levels of gaming machine expenditure are examined and compared against state, regional and metropolitan averages, as well as the potential impact an application may have on that level of expenditure. The VCGR also performs a trend analysis looking at quarterly gaming machine expenditure figures over a five-year period.

The number of gaming machines per 1000 adults within a local government area is also

examined. It is the Victorian Government's policy that all local government areas must have fewer than 10 gaming machines per 1000 adults.

Applicants must submit detailed information about their application, as well as their own economic and social impact analysis. Local councils are provided with an opportunity to make a submission about how an application might impact upon their municipality. Applicants and councils may also appear at a public hearing to present evidence in relation to an application.

All applications submitted to the VCGR after 1 January 2011 for either an increase in gaming machines or to establish a new gaming venue can be viewed on the VCGR's website. Making this information available allows the public to see what information is lodged in support of an application. Public comment is also invited so that the VCGR's Commissioners are made aware of the community's attitude toward new gaming machine proposals in the course of their decision making. ▸



Average expenditure per adult on poker machines, 2009–10 financial year

Bingo – a social world where speed is the challenge

Over the course of a year about 260,000 customers roll up to the Fawkner Bingo Centre.

At its helm is David Harrison, who for 23 years has run a team of duty managers, bingo staff, security and catering staff, currently numbering 27, that oversees the centre, which has the State's highest turnover.

Seven nights and six days a week, bingo players turn up for four 40-minute sessions of bingo. Each session generally consists of either 10 or 15 games.

As vice-president of the Bingo Industry Association, which represents 18 operators in the State, Harrison helped introduce the Bingo Industry Association Code, which is written to help staff and management spot problem gamblers and sets out an appropriate course of action to tackle the situation.

VCGR News spoke to David Harrison and the centre's responsible gambling officer Brian Hunt.



David Harrison, Manager, Fawkner Bingo Centre

David, would you explain the structure of a bingo centre and the various jobs?

My team consists of myself and Anna as managers, an assistant manager, two duty managers, bingo assistants, car park attendants, security staff and catering staff. Bingo centre staff are responsible for calling numbers, selling books, checking tickets and paying prizes.

What does your job involve?

I am responsible for running each session. My role involves ensuring that the sessions are running smoothly and in accordance with the legislation. I also need to make sure that my staff are performing their required duties. In bingo, because it is fairly fast these days in the way the numbers are called out and the speed of the numbers, you really need the staff on the floor who are stopping the game to be on the ball.

I am responsible for making sure that the running sheets are complete for the VCGR, with the profits at the end of each session going into the community and charitable organisations' bank account. I ensure that the regulations are complied with, and tend to the operating aspects of the business on a day-to-day basis.

We do have the occasional dispute, when somebody wants their favourite seat or over

other small issues, but they are relatively minor.

We offer a good meal for a good price and people often eat meals at their table, so they can hang on to their seat.

What's the busiest time of day?

The busiest time of the day or night is definitely right before the session begins. By 11am there will be 200 to 300 people lining up in the queue for bingo books. As the week goes on, it gradually builds. At night, we get around double the daytime crowd.

How many people would you get on an average day and how long do sessions last?

At nights we are open from 7pm to 10pm, and will get anywhere between 400 and 700 people. We average approximately 5000 to 5500 customers a week. A session generally lasts around 30–40 minutes.

What kinds of responsible gambling provisions do you have in place at the Fawkner Bingo Centre?

We have put up notifications around the hall and at the ticket office about the Code of Conduct, with the name of our nominated responsible gambling officer, should a customer have issues. We have a folder with all the information that we are required to have for the VCGR inspectors, along with our responsible gambling register, and information and contact details for Gambler's Help. The rules of play are generally well understood, but we do have copies available upon request.

It's not just about us making money as an operator; bingo is for the community and charitable sector and not-for-profit organisations to be able to make money. The better we perform on their behalf, the more we can provide them with their money into their individual organisations.

Have you seen any changes since the introduction of the mandatory Code of Conduct on 1 June 2009?

Out of all the gambling industry, perhaps bingo is the least affected by problem gambling. The bingo industry has the advantage that people know exactly what they are going to spend when they come into the place and it's not like they are going to keep pulling money out. It's controlled spending.

Since the introduction of the new legislation, any wins of \$1000 and over have to be provided to a customer by cheque. This is probably a safer, more secure system to have in place. You don't want people walking out of here with a lot of cash, especially at night time from a security point of view. But we also have CCTV cameras around the building, which is all part of our in-house security.

What is the future for bingo?

Well, if you look at a centre like ours, then the future seems bright. For centres that have the capacity, like ours, then we have the ability to seat more people, and sell more tickets.

The new regulations allow us to compete more than we used to be able to. Bingo was here long before pokies and Crown Casino came into Victoria. There was always some form of bingo. Since the introduction of the VCGR, bingo is closely monitored, which keeps the industry and its participants very honest.

I've seen so many changes over the years. When I first started in bingo, you could only sell 500 books per session. Then it was changed to 600, then to 1000 books before it was deregulated so that you could sell up to 10,000 dollars worth of books per session. Now you can sell an unlimited number of books and we don't have to turn people away. You can keep accommodating people if they want to play.

What are the problem gambler's warning signs?

If we see somebody going around asking customers for money or asking staff if they can have credit, then that would be regarded as a problem gambling incident. If we spot this, then we put a stop to it straight away. But these kinds of incidents are extremely rare nowadays.

If we have any major issues we will speak to staff at the VCGR.

What types of customers do you get?

It's a mixed demographic; it's a very diverse clientele.

We get people travelling from Dandenong, Frankston and Geelong to come to the centre, even though there are centres over there, because of the prize money we can offer.

The myth of the blue-rinse brigade – that's gone; you do get the older people during the day, but at night time you get more of the serious bingo player.

The perception that only women play bingo is also a myth. At night it's almost a 50/50 split between male and female. And I'd say that the average age group of players would be between 35 and 50.

Are you seeing an impact on bingo due to the introduction of programmable electronic ticket machines and the trend of electronic bingo?

We haven't tried it here, although we are able to. I know there are a few venues in the area that have tried it.

The machines allow you to buy extra tickets and play multiple tickets at a time. The tickets are programmed into the machine before the person starts play and the machine actually plays the tickets for them. Unless you buy your traditional tickets, you need to be willing to just sit there and look at the machine.

For us, perhaps because we have been here so long, the whole idea of bingo, we believe, is that it's social.

For our particular venue, and our specific clientele, the fun of bingo is marking numbers with a pen and being on the ball, keeping up with a call. You get people playing six or 10 books at once, which is challenging enough. So, I'd be a bit worried about electronic bingo, because while it has the potential to increase their spend, our patrons are used to having a controlled spend.



Brian Hunt, Customer Liaison and Responsible Gambling Officer, Fawkner Bingo Centre

Aged 27, Brian has been with the Fawkner Bingo Centre for two-and-a-half years.

What type of training do you receive on the job?

The Bingo Industry Association conducted scheduled meetings about the introduction of the Responsible Gambling Code of Conduct for commercial bingo operators. I was briefed on the meetings and kept up to date with the Code as it was developed. I also followed up on some of the different responsible gambling initiatives provided by community sector organisations such as Gambler's Help, and put together my responsible gambling folder and register. I have Gambler's Help contact details and the brochures and business cards available for customers who require assistance.

All the training is on the job, and because bingo is a niche market you need to learn

it on the job. To work in bingo, you need to be licensed as a Gaming Industry Employee but we don't have mandatory Responsible Service of Gaming training from a training provider, the way gaming venue employees do.

Before I started here, I was working in trade promotions in gaming venues so I had a bit of experience working with gaming venues, but there is a big difference between what is required for a gaming venue and a bingo centre.

Have you ever had a customer with a gambling problem?

I haven't been approached by anyone with a gambling problem as yet, but that's not to say it won't happen. It's very fortunate in the bingo industry because we are limited in our session times. Customers can't just come and spend all day here, and in this way, we have an advantage over other forms of gambling. Also, customers are limited as to what they can play. People can't drop \$500 or \$1000 at a time because they cannot physically play that many books, and they don't have a window of opportunity to be able to, so it's very controlled.

We don't come across a lot of big issues. Some regulars do come every day but they tend to cut back on the amount of books that they play just so they can come and see their friends and have a day out.

We don't have an ATM on the premises, so they don't have access to cash. What that means is that our customers need to set a limit before they walk in the door. Having no

access to cash sets a lot of limits. We could have an ATM but we choose not to.

What makes a good bingo employee?

A lot of patience, an outgoing nature, people skills, building relationships with customers, knowing when to interact with them. There are a lot of things happening at once in a bingo centre: responsible gambling officer, cashier, selling books, checking tickets, bingo calls, calling numbers, administrative work, writing cheques for winnings and jackpots, and marketing and promotions. So [it's a matter of] being able to juggle a number of tasks at once.

What are the most challenging aspects of the job?

We are under a lot of pressure and things work according to certain times for each of the sessions, so the challenges are delivering sessions to a timed program. It is an exciting industry. Another challenge would be staying in touch with the regulations, the minimum and maximum payouts (we cannot pay out in excess of 90 per cent of our proceeds in a given week). There are a lot of things that you need to be mindful of and the regulations are very strict.

What are the most rewarding aspects of the job?

Some of the relationships that we have been able to build with the regular clients over the years. For instance, during the day, you get a lot of the seniors and it's very social and I share a lot of interaction with customers, so I think it's the strong relationships with the customers. ▸

Compliance update

MANDATORY RESPONSIBLE Gambling Codes of Conduct and self-exclusion programs were introduced on 1 June 2009.

As part of their regular inspections, VCGR compliance officers check that all commercial licence holders continue to fulfil their obligations under these programs.

Inspections are revealing that many gaming venue operators are unaware of, or have forgotten about, these requirements.

Most common breaches

1. Not having a copy of the Responsible Gambling Code of Conduct available (in English)
2. No reference to the website www.understandingmoney.gov.au
3. Failure to maintain a responsible gambling register
4. Failure to have a responsible gambling officer available at all times when the venue is open
5. Not displaying the Code's responsible gambling message

Source: Compliance and Investigation Branch, VCGR as at 1 March 2011.

Under the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003*, it is a condition of a Venue Operator's Licence that a Code of Conduct, which has been approved by the Commission, is implemented. Failure to do so could lead to prosecution. If a Code has been implemented but not all the requirements are being met, this could lead to disciplinary action.

Helping venue operators with compliance

The VCGR has produced a range of educational material to assist industry members to comply with their responsible gambling obligations. This includes best practice guidelines, fact sheets on Codes of Conduct and self-exclusion programs and how to maintain a responsible gambling register, a self-assessment checklist, and a guide to problem gambling resources.

Fact sheets and guidelines can be download from the responsible gambling section of the VCGR website at www.vcgr.vic.gov.au/responsiblegambling/publications. Responsible gambling information kits will also be available from the VCGR information stand at this year's Clubs and Hotels Expo. For more information visit www.clubsandhotels.com.au



News in brief

Register guideline now available

A new resource has been released by the VCGR to help venues maintain their responsible gambling register.

It is a requirement of the Responsible Gambling Codes of Conduct (Code) and self-exclusion programs (SEPs) that all venues maintain a responsible gambling register.

Recording Code and SEP-related information in the register allows venues to satisfy all the responsible gambling reporting requirements within the one document and reduces the likelihood of non-compliance.

A well-maintained register demonstrates a commitment to fostering responsible gambling and allows VCGR inspectors to efficiently determine whether venue operators are meeting their Code and SEP obligations.

The guideline provides information on what needs to be recorded and offers an example of how clubs and hotels can set out their registers so that staff can easily record responsible gambling matters.

The Responsible Gambling Register resource is available for download from the Responsible Gambling section of the VCGR website at www.vcgr.vic.gov.au/responsiblegambling

New surveys – gaming venues and bingo centres

In 2010 the VCGR's Responsible Gambling Project team conducted 200 surveys with gaming industry employees in 125 venues throughout Victoria. The VCGR also conducted an online survey of venue operators and venue managers, which received a 44 per cent response rate.

The surveys were designed to help the VCGR understand the experiences of gaming venue staff in implementing a Code of Conduct and self-exclusion program in their venue and to ascertain how well obligations were being met.

The VCGR is conducting more surveys during the first half of 2011 on the operation of responsible gambling measures in venues. As well as surveying venue operators and managers, bingo centre staff will be included to gauge how the responsible gambling obligations are impacting their industry.

Industry review time

All relevant persons responsible for implementing Responsible Gambling Codes of Conduct and self-exclusion programs are required to undertake a review of their Code and SEP at least once per year.

There are a number of ways a review can be completed. It can be done independently, coordinated by an industry body, or outsourced to a third-party gambling service provider. The VCGR has developed guidelines to assist in the completion of reviews. These guidelines are available at www.vcgr.vic.gov.au/responsiblegambling

Industry reviews help the VCGR evaluate whether Codes and SEPs are operating effectively and promoting best practice in Victoria's gambling industry. Reviews also provide industry with an opportunity to reflect on their responsible gambling commitments and highlight possible improvements.

All industry reviews must be submitted to the VCGR by no later than Friday 29 July 2011.

Follow these tips before you gamble

- Set a limit and don't exceed it
- Don't let gambling take over your life



RESPONSIBLE **GAMBLING** AWARENESS WEEK

gambler's **help** 1800 858 858 www.gambleaware.vic.gov.au

Responsible Gambling Awareness Week is a partnership between industry, local government, the community sector and the Victorian Government.

