

Summary of AYF discussion topic – Gambling

General thoughts on Gambling

Many of the posts submitted provided general views and attitudes towards gambling, commenting on both the positives and negatives. Some gambling was seen as good fun for example putting \$2 on a horse at the Melbourne cup, while technically gambling it was viewed differently as the focus was on the race not on the win or gambling big amounts of money. Young people did acknowledge that for every winner there were many more losers. Gambling was seen to be a very individual thing, which affects people in different ways, with respondents noting that not everyone who gambles becomes addicted to it. Some saw gambling as one of the few activities young people could do with friends anytime of the day or night; others believe that gambling is one of the most destructive concepts of society, leading to bankruptcy and unhappiness. The discussion topic covered the many varied forms of direct and indirect gambling such as, poker machines, lottery tickets, the races, casino gaming and online gambling.

The details below provide a summary of the general thoughts and views on gambling by respondents:

- Playing the pokies is something to look forward to; it provides entertainment, which is particularly important in regional areas where there may not be other forms of entertainment.
- I don't think gambling is a great deal of trouble, but ethically they don't put anything back into the community. Gambling takes from peoples' lives, leaving them sad and hopeless.
- Ethically, it is not very smart - it just a thing people do with friends. People need to find a substitute activity to occupy their time.
- Gambling is there to take peoples' money from them that could be put to better use e.g. buying clothes, books or helping to get a better education.
- Gambling is a remedy for feeling upset or down.
- It's quite problematic for individuals within our community. While people are initially drawn to casinos to catch up with friends, have a few drinks and gamble a little, over time someone may find themselves suddenly addicted to trying to win back their losses...starting a dreadful cycle.
- Gambling is something that can be just as addictive as drugs.
- Money is hard to find – there's no point gambling it away.
- The problem is that gambling is an impulsive action, just like when buying on impulse with a credit card, gambling creates an array of political, social or economical issues for Australian society.
- Gambling is becoming more and more part of everyday live for everyone - from the simple \$2 sweepstake for the Melbourne cup to the more obvious big bets and pokie addictions.
- Young people are becoming more immersed in this gambling culture. The simple risk taking behaviour of 'dares' and 'bets' among friends can soon lead to more serious gambling behaviour.
- In Casinos, the house always wins - if not on an individual level then on a mass scale. If people do anything to level the odds (like card counting), then that's frowned upon by Casino operators. At least in events like Poker tournaments, there is an element of skill involved, though mostly still blind luck and deception get you through.
- While socially people generally frown upon gambling, it doesn't mean that they do not do it themselves or have done it in the past. People need to realise that, with gambling, when someone wins money another person/other people will lose money. And if that loss is great enough it may put them into bankruptcy and may mean that they will have to rely on Government payments which is a burden to taxpayers as that money would be better spent educating people about gambling in the first place.
- Young people using gambling as a short cut for getting money and a way to multiply pocket money.
- The government needs to find ways of dealing with these issues before it's too late.
- Gambling is not primarily a youth problem. We are the victims. Young people are not Ministers in State Governments that allow poker machine revenue to become integral to the solvency of state coffers. Young people don't own casinos or shares in TAB Corp. Young people don't make the ads that push gambling onto vulnerable people. Don't bother trying to address gambling as a "youth" issue.
- There are some games etc, which clearly reflect on gambling and its "positivity", for example: Poker games where children and parents playing poker with fake chips. We should calling for restriction of accessibility of fake money for children, as it can only lead to the infection of gambling!
- European shows such as Las Vegas do not present a true picture of casinos. When you go to a casino people are not happy, they are sad and usually have insufficient funds to keep their addiction going.

The Impact of Gambling

While it was possible for some to see gambling as fun, those who had negative life experiences with gambling had a very different perspective. One young person described the impact their father's gambling had on their family. Gambling meant that his father had nothing to show for his life, no house, car, assets or close family. Other posts also identified the impact of gambling on the family life. Some of issues raised included being asked to loan money to support the gambling and having to watch a parent go down a path of destruction and denial. For one young person the negative experience of observing the impact of a gambling parent on the family has turned them off gambling. Another comment highlighted the insight gained from working behind the scene...“I also used to work for a sports club and

watched many people loading money into the pokies every day. Once you have worked behind the scenes collecting the money that goes into the pokies you never feel like playing them again.”

Here are a few more posted ideas on the impact gambling can have:

- When family members gamble it really can bring your house down. Gambling prevents people from buying what they need or buying a home.
- Clubs earn money off gamblers so they are not proactive at helping them to stop problem gambling.
- It's a psychological thing; while you know the chances are low, you tell yourself you still have a chance. We know the facts and all the horrible factors associated with gambling however, we feed off the thought that we have a chance of winning it back!
- Losing money is a hard thing to accept for young people specially when we work so hard for it and spend it so quickly. Once young people lose money (which they have earned) on gambling the first thing they want to do is win it back!
- The long-term effects of gambling can lead to depression, substance abuse and suicide.

Gambling – issues and suggestions

A broad range of issues were raised together with some thoughtful suggestions on how to reduce the impact of gambling on individuals and our society. Comments indicated that it was ridiculous to be able to use credit cards for gambling; arguing that the only thing a credit card should be used for is goods and services “with a credit card you can keep spending till you're in so much debt you're soon too deep to get yourself out”. Some argued that if the government is serious about reducing the harm of gambling, they should look at how it is promoted in our society, through lotteries, TAB and poker machines. A number of posts focused on poker machines, calling for a reduction in the number of poker machines in any one venue or only allowing poker machines in casinos. A number of posts strongly advocated for the need to utilise the tax revenue from gambling to fund community grants and provide rehabilitation for the victims of addiction and their families. The posts also discussed the risks associated with tightening restrictions on gambling, one person felt that this could potentially create an underground scene or black market, and a number of people indicated that no matter what strategies were put into place people will not stop gambling. Overall, however, the posts did highlight a need to address and reduced the negative consequences of gamble.

More of the post ideas have been listed below:

- Hire people to work at gaming venues to watch for people who may be gambling too much and offer counselling.
- TV ads are not that effective, as most people see advertisements as annoying.
- Restrict Centrelink payments or replace them with vouchers so the money cannot be wasted on gambling.
- Under 18 year olds should not be employed to sell or promote gambling, for example underage people should not be able to sell lottery tickets as part of their checkout duties.
- In NSW you need to be over 18yrs and hold a responsible conduct of gambling certificate. The QLD state government needs money; they should be supported by the commonwealth not to derive it from irresponsible gambling practices.
- In QLD clubs people are allowed to smoke while playing the pokies and they are given "complimentary" food and drinks, this is not the case in NSW.
- A little label on a pokie machine isn't going to stop a young person from gambling.
- The government needs to find a better solution to generating revenue rather than ruining the lives of generation Y.
- Stricter rules should apply to organisations that offer gambling and the amount of places that offer gambling need to be restricted.
- Lotto is nothing more than a way to tax people even more. Allowing TABs and Pokie machines (thankfully not as widespread in WA!) contributes to the problem. The problem is however even more widespread and ingrained into our society. The Stock Market is little more than a global gambling operation. The concept of Insurance is a form of gambling (You say "I'll bet you \$X a year that I crash my car!" and the insurance company says "Deal!" while rubbing their hands together).
- It's up to the individual to not buy into it – therefore we need teaching people about how to spot a scam no matter how bright and colourful.
- The best way of preventing people from gambling is to take the emphasis off money and put more emphasis on the thrill of gambling or the physiology behind gambling.
- Decrease the amount of money gambling machines are able to receive (e.g. from \$2 to \$1).
- Pubs and clubs should ensure that other forms of entertainment are available to young people e.g. video games and pool tables. Not having these other activities leaves some young people vulnerable to becoming pokie addicts especially when pokie machines take up more than half the pub where a lot of alcohol is served.
- Awareness raising is the main thing, the sooner people learn what gambling can do to them or what it is they are doing to themselves the more they will want to progress towards a better future.
- The truth is the government/s make so much tax revenue from gambling, hardly any of which actually goes into helping those addicted or affected, that I really find it hard to believe they want to fix the problem!

- To quote the Whitlams, "blow up the pokies and drag them away, 'Cause they're taking the food off your table" Is our government strong enough to make the tough calls?
- The government has double standards on gambling! How can you be against gambling and have at the same time a public holiday for a horse race which involves and encourages gamble. If the Australian Government is serious about gambling, Melbourne Cup Day should not be a public holiday. Instead, we could celebrate something far more constructive and positive!
- Targeting the situation as a whole is not necessarily the way to do it – if you make something forbidden it only adds to the appeal, if you tell someone they can't gamble then they will find other methods and places to gamble. There's nothing wrong with the occasional 'flutter' as long as you know your limit.
- Punishment is not the answer, we're looking at people with severe emotional and psychological problems and in extreme cases some take their own lives. We should help the individual, offer every possible solution whether it be to have extensive therapy sessions, TV ads showing the affects on them and their families or the harshest of shock tactics. Either way we need to help the individual and not punish them or everyone else for someone else's misfortunes and problems.
- Advertise more adds on TV where youths talk about the effects of gambling.
- Individuals should be allowed to instate self-imposed limits on their total gambling at any venue.
- All gambling venues with pokies should install a national card system that tracks total gambling, and allows individuals to set personal limits. Many casinos and large cards already implement this to calculate how much gambling individuals do to award them "prizes" and other incentives to gamble more.
- You can't help someone who isn't prepared to help themselves.

Internet Gambling – issues and suggestions

In line with the general comments on gambling there were a number of posts that raised concern about accessing credit to participate in online gambling. It was suggested that online gambling providers should only allow participants to EFT funds from cheque and savings accounts, with the aim of helping people to minimise betting beyond what they can afford. There were also concerns raised about the credibility of gaming operators on the internet, and due to the nature of internet gambling there was no one to talk to about any concerns. One post raised the issue of the multi jurisdictional aspect of online gambling and the problem this causes in terms of implementing uniform legislation.

Other views posted included:

- Australia is heading in the wrong direction. Online gambling in sport is the fastest growing area of gambling in Australia, and far from legislating to slow or halt the growth, governments around Australia are helping it along.

Thank you for taking the time to share your views.