



Asian student gambling plague exposed

By Michelle Wiese Bockmann

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A 17-YEAR-OLD school student from China lost more than \$40,000 in five months at an Adelaide casino, exposing widespread but hidden gambling addictions among Asian students studying in Australia.

Underage Year 10 student "Brian", who cannot be identified, said he used fake Hong Kong identification to enter the Skycity Adelaide Casino along with other overseas secondary school students, losing two years' tuition and up to \$20,000 in one week.

His distraught mother, Min, who flew in this week from Guangdong province, tearfully explained that she and her husband had borrowed from parents and siblings to send their only son to Australia for a decent education.

The incident had implications for Australia and for Adelaide as a safe destination for Chinese students, according to Robin Fan, a gambling counsellor with the Overseas Chinese Association.

Mr Fan said young, isolated and underage students were required by immigration officials to keep large sums of money in local bank accounts, Mr Fan said.

"They are lured to the gambling table," he said.

"I hear from the classmates and friends of many about the problem gamblers ... and some of them are very young. One university student lost around \$200,000."

He said Brian's loss was the largest and most serious he had heard about among Chinese secondary school students, who comprise half of Adelaide's overseas student population.

He has dealt with 500 cases of gambling addiction in the overseas Chinese community since 1997, and says most students are deported or quietly brought home to China by mortified parents.

Education Adelaide, a state government body that promotes Adelaide as a destination for overseas students, described Brian's case as a "wake-up call".

"This highlights the need that there are young people here who are more vulnerable and we should do all we can to ensure that they understand how to management their money," said Education Adelaide CEO Patrick Markwick-Smith.

A spokeswoman for the casino said it was "a bit premature" to consider returning the money if there was no proof that it had been gambled illegally by an underage student.

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