

# Making Change Last

## GM GAMBLING MATTERS

Vol. 6 Iss. 3  
November 2007  
ISSN 1449-1923

We all make changes in our lives at various times, but how do we make them last? This is a key question for many people who are grappling with a gambling problem.

· "Can I really stop?"  
· "I've stopped for short times and then gone back to it; will I ever beat it?"  
Gambler's Help Southern counsellor, Robin Bart, recently attended Jeffrey Kottler's workshop "Making Changes Last". The session presented information and strategies that could be readily translated into problem gambling situations.

### **So when is change more likely to be sustained?**

#### **When there is a catalyst – often it's a crisis, trauma or fearful event.**

For many people who come to Gambler's Help, something has happened that precipitates them contacting the service for the first time. Often it's something which is outside of their usual or previous experience. It may have frightened or shocked them. They might not have enough money to pay for rent and no one left to borrow from. There may be a threat of eviction. Their spouse may have just found out and the relationship may be jeopardised. Work may be affected. Or they may have stepped over a moral line or legal line and feel ashamed. Whatever the event, it becomes a catalyst to do something different.

#### **When there is a sense of community – a "public commitment with witnesses".**

Often it helps to open up to family and friends, to disclose the problem. As well as offering them support regarding the gambling situation, support people can affirm the friend/relative's strengths and qualities, irrespective of the problem. Being open can also bring with it a sense of accountability – the commitment to change is strengthened by others knowing about the situation and the strategies in place. At the same time, the person's experience - the effort, the struggles, the successes - is validated by the support people.

#### **When an experience is novel or dramatic – stimulating a completely new outlook or approach.**

For some people the process of counselling is this completely new experience. For others, it might be an event outside of counselling which sheds light on what they are doing or gives them new meaning. Events at home, in the family or at work can somehow change the way they see themselves, the gambling or their life. Such an experience might be a coincidence, a series of events, an illness, an accident, a celebration or a conversation which just comes up unexpectedly.

#### **When the change is internalised – it becomes part of you, your thinking and lifestyle. It is a reinforcement and reward.**

Someone who has a problem with gambling may start to see themselves as "a gambler". All their activities and thoughts revolve around gambling and it can become part of their identity or a defining aspect of themselves. When they make changes they often rediscover activities and interests. People report that they do not even think about going gambling as they are focused on other aspects of life. They think and feel differently about themselves and what's happening around them. Some people find other ways to deal with problems and stresses in their lives and to value themselves. They may become more able to problem solve, to move on from their distressing past, live with their present and build a future.

#### **Ideas for making change last:**

- Expect to change.
- Do something different - don't wait for it to happen & don't keep doing the same things that haven't worked for you in the past.
- Make it personal – this is about you, what you're doing & what works for you.
- Get support & build in the rewards.
- Practice, practice, practice.
- Get feedback - use slip ups & mistakes to learn from & refine your actions.
- Use lots of different methods to approach the change & to make it stick.

#### **Lasting change can be achieved:**

"How good is this...I know where the feelings are coming from. It's from the past. I'm no longer stuck in there any more. I'm on the other side. I'm not overwhelmed".GHS Client

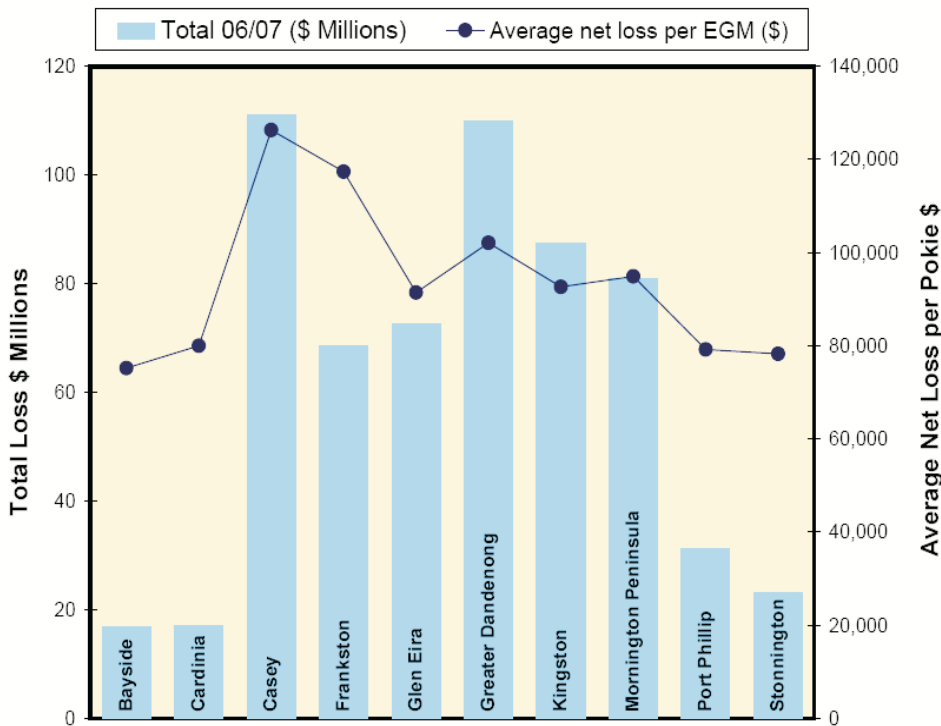


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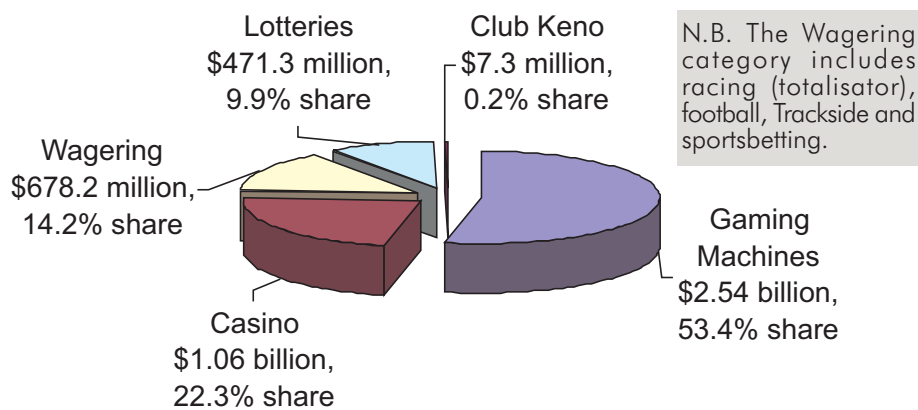
**Correction:** The graph "Pokies Losses in the South 06/07", printed in the last GM edition (Sept 07), contained an error in labelling. The corrected graph is reprinted below. Apologies - Editorial Team.

**Pokies Losses in the South 06/07**



## Where did our dollars go?

Gambling losses in Victoria exceeded \$4.76 billion in the last financial year, according to figures in the Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation (VCGR) Annual Report. This was an expenditure increase of 3.87% on the previous year. Gaming machines in hotels and clubs collected over half of the total losses, taking \$2.54 billion. Table games and gaming machines at Crown Casino took \$1.06 billion.



## SPORTS BETTING CHANGES

New provisions for betting on sporting & other events came into action in Victoria on 1 October. According to the VCGR, the amendments aim to "...increase the integrity of betting on approved sports events, to enable Sports Controlling Bodies to receive a share of the betting revenue generated by their sport & to foster the development of sport."

Under the new rules, the responsibility for approving events for betting purposes has been transferred to the VCGR, from the Ministers for Gaming & Racing. Matches or events associated with 19 sports are currently shown as approved events on the VCGR website. Sporting bodies can apply to the VCGR to be approved as a "Sports Controlling Body" for betting purposes.

Applicants must provide evidence that they have adequate rules, policies and procedures in place to ensure the integrity of the events in question. Sports Betting Providers are prohibited from offering bets on Victorian sporting events without a written agreement with the Sports Controlling Body regarding the sharing of information and the payment of any fees. This applies to both overseas and Australian-based betting providers. If a controlling body has not been approved, betting providers are able to offer betting without an agreement. The VCGR is responsible for resolving disputes when a betting provider and controlling body cannot reach an agreement. It can also prohibit certain betting arrangements.

Source: [www.vcgr.vic.gov.au](http://www.vcgr.vic.gov.au); [www.justice.vic.gov.au](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au)



Victorian Commission  
for Gambling Regulation  
**UPDATE**

### Gaming Venue Applications

**Pakenham Football Social Club  
Pakenham**  
Increase from 38 to 44 machines  
**Approved 26 September**

**Berwick Springs Hotel  
Berwick**  
Increase from 65 to 85 machines  
**Approved 29 October**

**Tooraddin & District Sports Club  
Tooraddin**  
Increase from 42 to 54 machines  
**Hearing date to be arranged**

**Pakenham Lakeside Tavern  
Pakenham**  
New venue - 60 machines  
**Hearing date 4 December**

**Racers Entertainment Complex  
Pakenham**  
Increase from 92 to 105 machines  
**Hearing date 13 December**

[www.problemgambling.vic.gov.au/firststep](http://www.problemgambling.vic.gov.au/firststep)

**FIRSTSTEP**  
SELF HELP FOR GAMBLING ISSUES



# A BIG WIN

A Real Life Story - as told to Community Educator, MyTien Lam, by a GHS Client

I could not understand what actually led me to gamble at the casino and I couldn't believe how I headed myself into problem gambling...I've figured out that, initially, I went to just have some fun. Then, after gambling a few times and watching how other people played, witnessing their winnings and losses, I started to get interested.

Then, to skill up myself, I "invested" my time in the books and videos teaching people how to gamble and win. I felt certain I could do better than others. With my calculations and way of betting, I could win or at least get even and definitely should not lose any money. I tried on a few occasions and found that things worked well for me. However, eventually, after many times at the casino, I started to lose - either a little or a lot at each visit. After one year I had lost all my family savings!

At times I felt really worried about it but I was very much occupied with chasing back my losses and thinking of how and where to get money to do so. Although I didn't have to get a loan from the banks, my own and my family's spending was tightened up to leave me with some money for the casino. During that period, even though I knew about Gambler's Help support services from the radio and newspapers, I thought I wouldn't need any help...I always thought that one day, if I could only have a few thousand dollars, I would win back the few hundred thousand dollars I had lost...

When my wife discovered the shortage in our family finances and asked me about it, I had to admit my gambling to her. She was deeply disappointed when I told her about our financial situation! For a couple of days, the atmosphere at home was very heavy as my wife was crying and crying, and there was no communication between us.

Eventually we sat down and talked. She asked me about our financial losses in detail, discussed the impacts of my gambling on our emotions and on our nuclear and extended family. However, my wife has kept my gambling from my children's knowledge, as she didn't want them to feel let down by their own father!

Fortunately she was very determined and patient to work out strategies to help me stop gambling...She contacted Gambler's Help services about counselling for herself, then encouraged me to see a counsellor.

After two months attending counselling, where I could discuss my personal issues, reasons, worries and concerns with the counsellor, we have worked out some useful strategies to reduce my chance of lapsing. In addition, with my wife's strong support, and her suggestions and ideas - without nagging and criticism -we have come up with the following tasks to help me stay away from gambling:

- Participation in the self-exclusion program at the casino.
- My wife will manage our finances, something which I have been doing for more than twenty years since we were married.
- The whole family will reduce our visits to the casino, even for entertainment purposes like dining out or watching movies.
- I will spend more time on little tasks around the house to fill up my spare time.
- My wife and I will do things together in our free time, like gardening, reading and browsing the internet.

Up to now, I've noticed many positive changes in myself. I no longer think about chasing back my losses by returning to the casino to gamble. I no longer feel excited, thrilled or interested in the games when I see or read the casino ads on television or newspapers...Moreover, I've gained back the warm and happy family atmosphere. All my children are progressing well with their studies, which make me feel happy more than ever, and therefore, my decision to stay away from gambling, remains stronger than ever.

Of course, I know the desire and the passion to win drove me to this excessive gambling behaviour. The counselling, the suggestions and most of all, the counsellor's respect and willingness to listen have helped me understand myself better. The thoughtfulness, the love and respect from my wife has helped me win back the person I used to be.

GHS welcomes Tom Reiser to the Community Education team. Tom will be with the program until 30 June 2008 and is covering the local government areas of Cardinia, Kingston and Bayside. Currently Tom is focusing his energy on the delivery of Problem Gambling Resource Kits to targetted professionals in our catchment area. The kit has been developed by the Department of Justice to assist a broad range of health and welfare workers respond to problem gambling in their day-to-day work.



GHS and BBCHS recently farewelled Keith Don. Keith worked as a GHS community educator for many years, before becoming IT Coordinator for the community health service in more recent times. Keith was highly regarded for his work in both roles. His knowledge of the gambling sector, poker machines in particular, was invaluable to GHS, the Gambler's Help network and our communities of interest. His input to working groups was often sought, including the Responsible Gambling Ministerial Advisory Committee. Amongst many projects, Keith's IT & Communications expertise launched our website, redeveloped our newsletter and redefined our communications systems. Keith's contribution was immense and his departure has left a noticeable gap. We wish him well.

# Round 3 Problem Gambling Community Partnership Grants

11 organisations were successful in their applications to the State Government's Problem Gambling Community Partnership Projects Grants Scheme. They are:

- Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre
- Central Highlands Community Legal Centre
- Co.As.It (Italian Assistance Association)
- Geelong Theatre Company
- Incolink
- Inner East Community Health Service
- Maltese Community Council of Victoria
- Victoria Police (City Region)
- Victorian Arabic Social Services
- Victorian Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (VACRO)
- Women's Health in the North (WHIN)

## Celebrating Mental Health

The Community Education Team were kept extremely busy in October, being out'n'about at various festivals held during national mental health week.

The inaugural "Celebrate Mental Health" walk and festival was held at Cheltenham Park in the City of Kingston. Organised by Reach Out Southern Mental Health and a range of local community organisations, the event included agency marquees and workshops on strength training, tai chi and laughter. The Victoria Police "Code 1" band and Pipe Band provided excellent entertainment for the crowd.

The City of Casey and the Cardinia Men's Health Action Group combined to hold "Stress and the City" - an evening men's health forum in Pakenham. Many community agencies set up information stalls and all participants received a showbag of information. The key speaker for the forum was celebrity and former Australian cricketer, Merv Hughes.

Alongside the Dandenong market, Eastern Region Mental Health Association (ERMHA) organised a Mental Health Fun Day. Community agencies staffed information stands and the audience was treated to fantastic music, including a set by the Bipolar Bears, as well as some live wrestling. Much GHS promotional material was distributed at the three events.



Gambler's Help Southern provides free, confidential, professional support for gamblers, their families and others affected by gambling.

Services available include:

- Counselling for gambling related issues
- Financial Counselling
- Community Education & Development
- Professional Development
- Multicultural Services

We can also provide a wide range of resources and information such as:

- Self-help guides
- Materials for families & friends
- Brochures, posters & other display materials
- Personal stories
- Statistics & research
- Materials in community languages

All staff are qualified professionals and have experience dealing with gambling issues.

If you have concerns about your gambling, or the gambling of a family member or friend, call Gambler's Help Southern Intake between 9.30 am and 4.30 pm on 9575 5353 or the Gambler's Helpline which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on 1800 156 789.

**WANTED - FEEDBACK  
ON GM: GAMBLING MATTERS  
Go to [www.ghsouthern.org.au](http://www.ghsouthern.org.au)  
and follow the FEEDBACK link**

**GAMBLER'S HELP™ 1800 156 789**

**SOUTHERN**

GM: Gambling Matters is the official newsletter of Gambler's Help Southern, PO Box 30, Bentleigh East, VIC. 3165  
Email: [gm@ghsouthern.org.au](mailto:gm@ghsouthern.org.au) Web: [www.ghsouthern.org.au](http://www.ghsouthern.org.au)  
Operating in: Bayside, Cardinia, Casey, Frankston, Glen Eira, Greater Dandenong, Kingston, Mornington Peninsula, Port Phillip, Stonnington