

# Their Gambling, Your Life

## New Program for Significant Others

# GM

## GAMBLING MATTERS

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On Saturday 3rd October Gambler's Help Southern will launch "Their Gambling, Your Life", an innovative new program for people affected by someone else's gambling. The program will be held in East Bentleigh on four consecutive Saturday mornings.

Gambling problems can have a devastating impact on relationships for couples, families and friends. Gambler's Help Southern receives many calls from people who are worried about the gambling of someone close to them and who are looking for advice on how to help. Callers also express feeling frustrated, helpless and worried about the negative impact that gambling is having on their own lives.

Mary MacManus, Problem Gambling Counsellor, explains the development of the "Their Gambling, Your Life" program:

"When partners and family members call, usually the first thing they ask about is how to help the person who is gambling. Their own experience of the problem comes second. Many "significant others" carrying around a big burden and feel like they

have lost control of their lives. We want to help them to regain some control, so the program will look at ways they can make positive changes and also deal with stressful situations."

"When we looked into this issue we found that Dr. David Hodgins and his team at the University of Calgary, in Canada, have researched and implemented a program for concerned significant others. It's based on the Community Reinforcement and Family Training (CRAFT) model. This model teaches participants how to deal with some of the specific issues related to being close to someone with a gambling problem. 'Their Gambling, Your Life' is based on the Calgary program."

Session topics will include financial safety, understanding gambling, improving wellbeing and finding hope. Each participant will be provided with a workbook which includes worksheets and notes.

For more information or to register, call Gambler's Help Southern Intake on 9575 5353.

**The launch of the "Their Gambling, Your Life" program is a good fit with the current statewide Gambler's Help media campaign, which also targets affected others. The advertisement (see left) features a woman rehearsing what she will say to her partner about the impacts of his gambling.**

#### Woman:

**I've been putting this off, 'cos I think "oh, it'll be OK".  
But its not...and then today I get stuck at the supermarket with nothing in the account again.  
It's not fair on any of us.**

#### Voice over:

**Talking to a gambler about their problem isn't easy. So talk to us, before you talk to them. 1800 858 858**



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## GAMBLING MATTERS

**gambler's help**  
1800 858 858

**gambler's help southern**  
9575 5353

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

[www.ghsouthern.org.au](http://www.ghsouthern.org.au)

# Provider Education for CALD Workers

Gambler's Help Southern recently assisted the Victorian Multicultural Gambler's Help Program (VMGP) in the delivery of a training workshop for community and settlement workers. Held in August, the workshop focused on problem gambling in migrant and refugee communities. It included information on VMGP projects being undertaken in Somali, Eritrean and Iraqi communities.

Nial Wotherspoon, Gambling Counsellor and MyTien Lam, Community Educator, discussed ways of identifying problem gambling, referral pathways and preventative strategies.

Participants were encouraged to include questions on problem gambling as part of their client assessment process. As people may find it difficult to talk about their own or their loved one's gambling, it was emphasized that workers need to be mindful of the sensitive nature of the issue and to use appropriate questions.

Questions can be either direct or indirect. The client-worker relationship and the length of time the client has been attending may influence the type of questioning used. Many people, including people from CALD backgrounds, do not disclose their full problems during the initial contact. Generally, CALD clients tend to seek practical assistance first. When they have built up the trust with worker, they may open up about other issues.

Workers were advised that Gambler's Help offers secondary consultation to support them in working with clients with gambling-related issues.

Risk factors and protective factors for problem gambling were also discussed. For instance, it is recognised that issues such as social isolation and depression can be risk factors leading to problem gambling. Strong social supports and active participation in community and leisure activities can work as protective factors to prevent or reduce problem gambling.

**Spring Racing. If you plan to punt, get real by keeping your own gambling diary.**

How much are you prepared to spend this season? Record when you bet, how much you wager and \$ won or lost. Know what this season's racing is costing you.

*Provider Education is education, training and other professional development activities provided by Gambler's Help counsellors to health and welfare professionals likely to encounter people experiencing gambling-related harm.*

*The audience for Provider Education includes:*

- GPs
- Primary and allied health providers (public and private)
- Professionals in the community welfare and justice systems

*For more information about Provider Education services, contact Gambler's Help Southern Intake on 9575 5353.*

On 28th August the "Linking and Learning Festival" was held at Sages Cottage in Baxter. The event was organised by the Mornington and Frankston School Focussed Youth Services and promoted local services to teachers and school support staff including chaplains, welfare workers and nurses.

Over 45 agencies were represented, including Good Shepherd Youth & Family Services, Anglicare, PenDAP, Peninsula Community Legal Service, Headspace, OzChild, Brotherhood of St. Laurence and the Equine Therapy Program.



Victorian Commission  
for Gambling Regulation

## UPDATE

### Gaming Venue Applications

#### **Bell's Hotel South Melbourne**

New venue with 40 machines  
Granted

#### **Tooraddin & District Sports Club Tooraddin**

Increase from 42 to 54 machines  
Forthcoming:  
date not listed

#### **Marine Hotel Brighton**

Increase from 40 to 50 machines  
Adjourned:  
date to be fixed

#### **The Bended Elbow Dandenong**

New venue with 60 machines  
Forthcoming



**Welcome to Stephen Brennan, who has joined the GHS team as a financial counsellor 3 days**

**per week. New to the community service sector, Stephen brings to the role 25 years of work experience in finance, banking, public accounting and taxation.**



GHS Community Educator, Michelle Brown, at the Linking & Learning Festival



# The Gambling Mind - turn off the Doing, turn on to Being

Sometimes it can be worthwhile to just stop for a moment to really enquire about the role of your own mind in leading a productive and happy life. Isn't your mind meant to assist you, to help you in times of need, to enable you be the best you can be, to succeed and to problem solve? Why is it, then, that at times it can even seem to be acting directly against you and your best interests - encouraging destructive thinking patterns and resulting in negative outcomes?

Perhaps an "untrained mind" is the real source of many of our actual and perceived failures and so much ongoing suffering. This article explores the role of the mind in the way we live and is based on an approach called "mindfulness". With mindfulness there is more emphasis on "being" and less on "doing". Slowing down is consciously and consistently practiced and embraced as a way to improve yourself. It may surprise.

Today many people live at a frenetic pace, managing work, family, relationships and planning the next thing to do. It seems hectic because it is. As a result our conscious minds appear very busy. For many of us, they are in overdrive - balancing all of our thought processes and mental events. In the mindfulness approach this is referred to as the busy or "Doing Mind".

This Doing Mind needs to be doing something most, if not all, the time. While this is fine to a point, if there is too much stimulation the mind gets used to this as a normal way of operating and may have difficulty slowing down and relaxing. It becomes preoccupied with "doing", thinking about things - the past, what did happen, and the future, what will happen. Rarely about the present, what is happening now. Try being still, both physically and mentally - it's probably the most difficult thing that anyone can do. (NB. Even if your body stops "doing" for an instant, your mind can remain preoccupied).

This is where gambling can seem appealing as a way of helping to quieten the mind - because when you gamble you are focusing your mind in the present, in the now, which helps you stop the "doing". However, we know with gambling that this quietening is temporary. Typically, when a gambling session is over, the "doing" and the suffering is often worse.

The Doing Mind can be caught between needing to do things - lots of things, even the destructive and unhelpful things - and thinking about what to do next. Either way this encourages a search for distraction to enable the busy mind to stay busy. We find it very hard to slow the mind down, to not "do" so much. Distraction can be closely connected to excessive gambling. Excessive gambling, we know, encourages distorted thinking which then leads to poor decision making. The search for more distraction continues the cycle.

Thoughts of what will happen or what did happen, the wins and losses, the chasing, the planning, deceits and the consequences can combine to preoccupy the mind to exhaustion. The Doing Mind again - lots of noise and

traffic, reacting to a busy world where constantly doing things is better than doing nothing; where reactivity comes before activity, reaction before action, doing before being. It rarely relaxes as it's all go, go, go. If we see ourselves as "human doings" this is fine, however, if we see ourselves as "human beings", we need to practice some more of that being.

There is often a well-practiced imbalance between doing and just being.

For example, the Doing Mind can see the present moment as merely a stepping stone to a future moment when we do something else. But the future never really arrives because it's always there, in the future. Over time this path is worn so deeply that awareness of the present remains blocked. In fact, we can learn very well to avoid and not really experience the present through constant distraction.

When a connection to the present is made, feelings arise which will be judged by the mind, and which you may very well not like. You may want to react and do something else, anything else. Don't! The present is now, this moment. The secret is to be aware of it and experience it, feel it and observe it without reacting - nothing more, nothing less - and this in turn is seeding the beginnings of improved awareness, of mindfulness. In counselling you may have an opportunity to access this awareness, to just slow down and be with yourself.

The problem gambling mind is a Doing Mind and often, a distracted mind. It can have distorted perceptions of time. There may be a perceived connection to the present, however the usual irony is that the mind can be zoned out and/or numb, simply losing or killing time. Many gamblers report that this is the state they seek - "me time". A time when no-one else can disturb them, no partner, no children, no responsibilities - a time when no-one can interfere. Frequently these minds hate boredom, which is obviously why gambling becomes so attractive as a time-filler and time-killer. But perhaps what these minds really hate is being.

Many people with a gambling problem become connected to something when gambling, though it's almost like a connection to another sort of being - a preoccupation with something else, another sort of self, not based in reality.

If you feel you don't like being with yourself then there may be an opportunity to change this. A chance to reduce the doing and increase the being.

If you're a gambler who wants constantly to "do" remember this is a very common consequence of a busy, Doing Mind. If you feel this picture fits you, give Gambler's Help Southern a call. This may be your opportunity to slow down the doing and discover another sort of being.

For more information about the mindfulness approach, contact Nial Wotherspoon, Problem Gambling Counsellor, on [n.wotherspoon@bbch.org.au](mailto:n.wotherspoon@bbch.org.au)

# 1/4 of Vic. Pokie spend lost in the South

Annual gaming expenditure data<sup>1</sup> shows that 24.5% of all Victorian pokie<sup>2</sup> losses in 2008/09 occurred in the Southern Metropolitan Region. In dollar terms, over \$664 million of Victoria's \$2.7 billion losses came from the south. The region finished the financial year with 111 gaming venues and 6,139 pokies. With \$19.2 million, the Seaford Taverner had the highest overall venue expenditure in the region. The Keysborough Hotel had the highest average per EGM take, at \$200,264 per machine.

<sup>1</sup> Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation; [www.vcgr.vic.gov.au](http://www.vcgr.vic.gov.au)

<sup>2</sup> EGMs in hotels and clubs, figures exclude Casino EGMs

Area	Total Net Loss	% change in loss in year to 08/09	Average Net Loss per EGM
Victoria	\$2,707,278,436	3.7%	\$101,124
Bayside	\$19,428,862	5.0%	\$86,350
Cardinia	\$18,578,404	6.2%	\$82,571
Casey	\$123,318,444	5.1%	\$137,173
Frankston	\$73,857,640	3.4%	\$123,922
Glen Eira	\$77,655,781	0.9%	\$100,330
Gr. Dandenong	\$121,121,651	4.4%	\$122,469
Kingston	\$90,074,552	1.9%	\$95,418
Morn. Peninsula	\$86,604,558	2.3%	\$102,856
Port Phillip	\$29,947,303	-0.2%	\$85,564
Stonnington	\$23,483,897	-1.1%	\$79,606

groups



## Their Gambling, Your Life

Are you affected by someone else's gambling?

Want to take back control of your life?

Our free four week program will work on specific skills to help you generate change and make a difference in everyday life. You will learn:

- How to deal with some of the specific issues around being close to someone with a gambling problem
- How to deal with distress
- Strategies to promote change in life

Saturday Dates: 3 October  
10 October  
17 October  
24 October

Time each Saturday of the program:  
09.15 to 12.30

Location: Bentleigh East

N.B. Participants need to attend all 4 sessions. Registration is essential.

**Call our Intake Worker on 9575 5353 for more details & to register**

## Notice to Networks and Workers

# Email Change: @bbch.org.au

Email addresses for Gambler's Help Southern staff have changed. Please update your address books.

Old address format:

first name initial.last name@ghsouthern.org.au

**New address format:**

**first name initial.last name@bbch.org.au**

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
- Secondary Consultation
- Multicultural Services

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 858 858.

**gambler's help southern**

**9575 5353**

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