

## Extra funding to help address growing wait lists

Gambler's Help Southern is to receive \$10,000 top-up funding to help tackle the service's waiting list blow-out. The Minister for Community Services, Sherryl Garbutt, made the announcement at the Bentleigh Bayside Community Health Service on Monday 8 December. High demands on the program's problem gambling counselling and financial counselling services have led to ongoing waiting lists of between 50 and 90 people in the southern metropolitan region.

Mr. Chris Freethy, the Manager of Gambler's Help Southern, explained that the service has averaged 25% of Victoria's problem gambling clients, on 14% of the state's funding for problem gambling. Victorian Gambler's Help Services are resourced through the State Government's Community Support Fund.

"There are never enough appointment slots to meet demand. We are at and beyond capacity", he said after the announcement. "Response times are critical. We are experiencing an increase in clients whose lives have been devastated by their actions or the actions of a gambling partner or family member."

The funds will be used to provide additional counselling appointments and support in hot-spot areas, reducing the waiting list down to acceptable levels.

Mr. Freethy concluded by saying, "We are grateful that the Minister and the Department of Human Services have recognised our dilemma. This will give us a good head start in 2004."