



First Independent Gambling Research Conference

23-24 February 2026
Level 1 and 2, 440 Collins St, Melbourne

Final Program

Day 1 (23rd February 2026)

9.00 am to 10.30 am	Session 1	
10.30 am to 11.00 am	Morning tea	
11.00 am to 12.30 pm	Session 2 – Stream 1	Session 2 – Stream 2
12.30 pm to 1.30pm	Lunch	
1.30 pm to 3.00 pm	Session 3 – Stream 1	Session 3 – Stream 2
3.00 pm to 3.30 pm	Afternoon tea	
3.30 pm to 5.00 pm	Session 4 – Stream 1	Session 4 – Stream 2
5.00 pm to 7.00 pm	Networking event	

Day 2 (24th February 2026)

9.00 am to 10.30 am	Session 5	
10.30 am to 11.00 am	Morning tea	
11.00 am to 12.30 pm	Session 6	
12.30 pm to 1.30pm	Lunch	
1.30 pm to 3.00 pm	Session 7	
3.00 pm to 3.30 pm	Afternoon tea	
3.30 pm to 5.00 pm	Session 8	

Content:	Pages
Session overviews	2-9
Abstracts	10-40
List of delegates	41-42

The program table shows only presenting authors, due to space constraints. The full list of authors, full abstract text and funding declarations are shown after the tables.

The organising committee:

Prof Alex Russell (Convenor) (CQUniversity)
 Prof Matthew Rockloff (CQUniversity)
 Prof Nerilee Hing (CQUniversity)
 Prof Matthew Browne (CQUniversity)
 Dr Cathie Tulloch (CQUniversity)
 Dr Stephanie Merkouris (Deakin University)
 Prof Nicki Dowling (Deakin University)
 Dr Dan Myles (University of Melbourne)
 A/Prof Angela Rintoul (University of Melbourne)

First Independent Gambling Research Conference Program

Monday 23rd February 2026
Session 1 (9.00 am to 10.30 am)

Time (Melbourne time)	Day 1
	Opening Chair: Prof Alex Russell
9.00 am - 9.05 am	Prof Alex Russell (CQUniversity) <i>Welcome and housekeeping</i>
9.05 am – 9.35 am	A/Prof Charles Livingstone (Monash University) <i>The affective economy of gambling</i> Abstract on page 10
9.35 am - 10.00 am	Prof Matthew Rockloff (CQUniversity) <i>More Messages, More Harm: Experimental Evidence from a Real-World Betting Study</i> Abstract on page 11
10.00 am - 10.30 am	A/Prof Angela Rintoul (University of Melbourne) <i>Why are gambling-related suicides undercounted?</i> Abstract on page 12
10.30 am - 11.00 am	Morning tea

First Independent Gambling Research Conference Program

Monday 23rd February 2026
Session 2 (11.00 am to 12.30 pm)

Time (Melbourne time)	Day 1 - Stream 1	Day 1 - Stream 2
	Online gambling advertising Chair: Prof Matthew Browne	Treatment Chair: Prof Nicki Dowling
11.00 am - 11.30 am	Duminda Benthara Kottahachchi (CQUniversity) <i>Mobile App Related Gambling Marketing and Young Consumers: A Systematic Review</i> Abstract on page 13	Dr Chloe O Hawker (Deakin University) <i>Pulling out of gambling treatment: Research, service, practitioner, and client perspectives</i> Abstract on page 16
11.30 am - 12.00 pm	Prof Nerilee Hing (CQUniversity) <i>The 'Wild West' of wagering affiliate marketing and implications for gambling harm</i> Abstract on page 14	Amanda Weragoda (Flinders University) <i>Betting on a supervised Generative AI chatbot: Facilitating help seeking, early intervention and engagement in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy through Gabi.</i> Abstract on page 17
12.00 pm - 12.30 pm	Alexander Hanson (University of Alabama) <i>Betting Against the Odds: The Hidden Dangers of Online Gambling Promotions</i> Abstract on page 15	Joanna Maning (The Australian National University) <i>Co-designing culturally responsive interventions for affected others: Framework and early findings</i> Abstract on page 18
12.30 pm - 1.30 pm	Lunch	

First Independent Gambling Research Conference Program

Monday 23rd February 2026
Session 3 (1.30 pm to 3.00 pm)

Time (Melbourne time)	Day 1 - Stream 1	Day 1 - Stream 2
	Online gambling features Chair: Dr Dan Myles	Treatment Chair: Dr Stephanie Merkouris
1.30 pm - 2.00 pm	Mitchell Smart (University of Melbourne) <i>How does the availability of a cash out option influence risk taking when gambling?</i> Abstract on page 19	Dr Jemima Petch and Vicki Penner (Relationships Australia QLD) <i>Real-World Effectiveness of Gambling Help Counselling: Analysis of Two-Year Client Outcomes</i> Abstract on page 22
2.00 pm - 2.30 pm	Andrew M Camara (University of Warwick, Monash University) <i>The Cash Out Feature in Sports Betting: The Role of Subjective Control</i> Abstract on page 20	Dr Nick Kerswell (Lives Lived Well) <i>Amped Up: Methamphetamine and Emotional Urgency as Conditional Amplifiers of Gambling in a Treatment Seeking Population</i> Abstract on page 23
2.30 pm - 3.00 pm	Nicola Coalter (Charles Darwin University) <i>Ambient Betting: How sports wagering became routine and risk-laden for young men in Darwin, Northern Territory</i> Abstract on page 21	Georgia Delloso (CQUniversity) <i>Disentangling Alcohol from Polysubstance Use in Treatment-Seeking Adults: Why Substance Structure Matters for Gambling Research</i> Abstract on page 24
3.00 pm - 3.30 pm	Afternoon tea	

First Independent Gambling Research Conference Program

Monday 23rd February 2026
Session 4 (3.30 pm to 5.00 pm)

Time (Melbourne time)	Day 1 - Stream 1	Day 1 - Stream 2
	Gender, age and online gambling Chair: A/Prof Steven Threadgold	EGMs and a challenge Chair: Prof Nerilee Hing
3.30 pm - 4.00 pm	Dr Rohann Irving, A/Prof Steven Threadgold and A/Prof Julia Coffey (Flinders University and University of Newcastle) <i>Gendered gambling: Analysing masculinities and femininities in an Australian sports betting app</i> Abstract on page 25	Sarah Hare (Schottler Consulting Pty Ltd) <i>EGM volatility: The next strategic leverage point for gambling-harm minimisation in Australia and New Zealand?</i> Abstract on page 28
4.00 pm - 4.30 pm	Dr Rohann Irving (Flinders University) <i>Young men's smartphone sports betting: Digitisation and delocalisation</i> Abstract on page 26	Dr Kate Roberts (Gambling Impact Society NSW) <i>Unravelling the cats cradle: analysing EGM gambling through a sociomaterial lens -the case of NSW community clubs.</i> Abstract on page 29
4.30 pm - 5.00 pm	A/Prof Steven Threadgold and A/Prof Julia Coffey (The University of Newcastle) <i>The Gambling, Crypto and Share Trading Risk Nexus: Gambling apps and the financialisation of young people's lives</i> Abstract on page 27	Lauren Levin (Gambling Policy Hub) <i>Do we really need more research? An advocate's uncomfortable challenge</i> Abstract on page 30
5.00 pm - 7.00 pm	Networking event 440 Collins St, Melbourne	

First Independent Gambling Research Conference Program

Tuesday 24th February 2026
Session 5 (9.00 am to 10.30 am)

Time (Melbourne time)	Day 2
	Gambling harm Chair: Prof Matthew Rockloff
9.00 am - 9.30 am	Prof Alex Russell (CQUniversity) <i>Welcome to Day 2</i> <i>Insights into population-level harm from recent prevalence studies</i> Abstract on page 31
9.30 am - 10.30 am	Panel Convenor: Morgan Schlotterlein (Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety) Panelists: Anna Bardsley (Co-founder GHLEE Gambling Harm Lived Experience Experts) Prof Matthew Browne (CQUniversity) Dr Anna Thomas (Deakin University) Dr Stephanie Merkouris (Deakin University) Dr Tanya Armstrong (ACT Government) <i>Measuring gambling harm into the future: a panel discussion</i> <i>Note: One hour session</i> Abstract on page 32
10.30 am - 11.00 am	Morning tea

First Independent Gambling Research Conference Program

Tuesday 24th February 2026
Session 6 (11.00 am to 12.30 pm)

Time (Melbourne time)	Day 2
	Gambling harm Chair: A/Prof Angela Rintoul
11.00 am - 11.30 am	Dr Dragan Rangelov (Swinburne University of Technology) <i>Effects of cognitive noise on the temporal dynamics of risky choices</i> Abstract on page 33
11.30 am - 12.00 pm	Dr En Li (CQUniversity) <i>Tree Based Modelling of Gambling Harm</i> Abstract on page 34
12.00 pm - 12.30 pm	Prof Matthew Browne and Dr Catherine Tulloch (CQUniversity) <i>The effect of gambling harm on health: A synthesis</i> Abstract on page 35
12.30 pm - 1.30 pm	Lunch

First Independent Gambling Research Conference Program

Tuesday 24th February 2026
Session 7 (1.30 pm to 3.00 pm)

Time (Melbourne time)	Day 2
	At-risk groups Chair: Kate Seselja
1.30 pm - 2.00 pm	Kristal Yeung (Queensland University of Technology) <i>A Tale of Two Sexes: a gendered analysis connecting gambling activity groups to mental wellbeing</i> Abstract on page 36
2.00 pm - 2.30 pm	Dr Edmond Fehoko (University of Otago) <i>Fatongia: Exploring the role of cultural practices and gambling motivations in Aotearoa New Zealand: A Tongan perspective</i> Abstract on page 37
2.30 pm - 3.00 pm	Dr Azamsadat Hosseini Shoabjareh (Australian National University) <i>The Impact of Risky Parental Gambling on Children's Delinquency: Pathways Through Financial Hardship and Parenting Practices</i> Abstract on page 38
3.00 pm - 3.30 pm	Afternoon tea

First Independent Gambling Research Conference Program

Tuesday 24th February 2026
Session 8 (3.30 pm to 5.00 pm)

Time (Melbourne time)	Day 2
	Gambling harm support Chair: Prof Alex Russell
3.30 pm - 4.00 pm	Monique N Gandhi (Deakin University) <i>Balancing Act: How Affected Others Support Themselves and Those Who Gamble</i> Abstract on page 39
4.00 pm - 4.30 pm	Judy Avisar, Catherine Simmonds OAM, Anna Bardsley (Self Help Addiction Resource Centre and GHLEE Gambling Harm Lived Experience Experts) <i>How the lived experience performances of Three Sides of the Coin educate professionals about gambling harm.</i> Abstract on page 40
4.30 pm - 5.00 pm	Prof Alex Russell (Central Queensland University) <i>Reflections, next directions, thanks and wrap-up</i>

Authors:

A/Prof Charles Livingstone (Monash University)

Title:

The affective economy of gambling

Abstract:

Commercial gambling relies on a broad ecosystem of interests deriving financial and other benefits from the consumption of the product. It is not simply the 'gambling industry' that steadfastly pursues its interests by various practices; we can see many associated businesses that derive significant benefits from association with the core activity of gambling. These include sporting organisations, broadcasters, social media platforms, 'good causes', financial institutions, software designers, manufacturers, social clubs, theatre and dance companies, content makers and designers, some academic actors, and governments. Maintenance of this ecosystem clearly depends on the rapid circulation of money and capital. However, it also relies on the circulation of affect – engagement in gambling products via the circulation of emotion or feeling. Affect is thus a key attribute of the socio-economic system that provides the framework for gambling's 'success' in encouraging akratic, or 'irresponsible' consumption, upon which gambling businesses and their ecosystem partners rely. As Massumi (2002) has argued, affect is a key infrastructural element of contemporary capitalism, providing the basis for emotional culture and its histories to merge with production (Karppe 2016). Fitzgerald (2020) asserts that the core of this is pain: which forms the basis for a 'vast array of economic activities' driving massive profits'. This paper argues that understanding and responding to the activities of this ecosystem requires an understanding of this affective economy, and its mode of circulation.

Project funding:

No funding was sought or provided for preparation of this talk.

Authors:

Prof Matthew Rockloff (CQUniversity) (presenting)

Prof Matthew Browne (CQUniversity)

Prof Nerilee Hing (CQUniversity)

Prof Alex M T Russell (CQUniversity)

Mr Vijay Rawat (CQUniversity)

Dr Philip Newall (University of Bristol)

Title:

More Messages, More Harm: Experimental Evidence from a Real-World Betting Study

Abstract:

Background: Sports and race betting is heavily promoted to account holders via email, SMS, app notifications and calls. Correlational studies link direct marketing with higher betting and harm, but heavier bettors may be targeted more often, and retrospective recall is biased.

Aim: Test whether opting out of direct marketing reduces betting frequency, expenditure and short-term harm in a naturalistic setting.

Design and Methods: Australian sports/race bettors who typically bet at least fortnightly were stratified by PGSI risk, age and gender and randomised to (i) opt out of direct marketing from all wagering operators (with proof) or (ii) continue receiving marketing as usual. Seven EMA surveys were completed every 48 hours for 14 days during a high-volume betting period, measuring number of bets, spend (AUD) and short-term harms (10-item adapted Short Gambling Harm Screen; past 48 hours). Participants were N=227 (mean age=45 years; 61.7% men); 52.0% were moderate-risk or problem gamblers (PGSI). Linear mixed-effects models were fitted using Yeo–Johnson transformations to address zero inflation and skew.

Results: Opt-out participants placed 23% fewer bets, spent 39% less and reported 67% fewer short-term harms than controls. Both groups showed weekend peaks, indicating direct marketing increases intensity more than timing.

Conclusions: Reducing direct marketing produced sizeable decreases in betting, spend and harm, providing rare experimental evidence of a causal role for direct marketing. Findings challenge claims that direct marketing merely shifts market share and instead suggest it efficiently extracts more spend from existing customers.

Project funding:

This presentation describes a Gambling Research Australia project funded by the Commonwealth, State, and Territory Governments and managed on their behalf by the New South Wales Department of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality, and Sport. The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Gambling Research Australia.

Authors:

A/Prof Angela Rintoul (University of Melbourne) (presenting)
Dr Scott Fitzpatrick (Australian National University)

Title:

Why are gambling-related suicides undercounted?

Abstract:

Systems to monitor harms are underdeveloped. The capacity of operators to exploit customers is increased by digital technologies that track customer activity and push marketing that encourages gambling. This study was designed to consider ways to improve the identification of gambling suicides to inform prevention efforts. We conducted 32 in-depth interviews in Australia. Participants were people who had survived a gambling-related suicide attempt, professionals working in death investigation, data custodians, researchers and lived experience advocates. Transcripts were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis and informed by our experiences reviewing Australian mortality datasets. Identifying a gambling-related suicide relies on manual review of evidence that might spontaneously emerge during the death investigation process. Few systems prompt death investigators or coders to capture whether gambling was a factor in a suicide. Social and cultural norms may discourage death investigators, clinicians and witnesses from considering gambling as a relevant factor in a suicide death. Sources of financial distress are rarely required to be identified, compounding the underestimation of gambling harms. In cases where gambling is noted, relevant detail that could inform prevention efforts - such as the gambling product that was the main source of harm - is not consistently recorded. Urgent efforts are needed to improve monitoring and surveillance of gambling suicides. Gambling operators hold transaction data that should be centrally accessible to regulators and death investigators to enable them to review account data in a centralized 'data vault'.

Project funding:

AR is funded by a Suicide Prevention Australia postdoctoral fellowship and the University of Melbourne.

Authors:

Mr Duminda Benthara Kottahachchi (CQUniversity) (presenting)

Dr En Li (CQUniversity)

Dr Anita Medhakar (CQUniversity)

Title:

Mobile App Related Gambling Marketing and Young Consumers: A Systematic Review

Abstract:

Background:

Mobile applications such as social media apps have become a major channel for gambling-related marketing activities. This systematic review aims to advance knowledge and understanding of the impacts of mobile app related gambling marketing on young consumers.

Methods:

Following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses guidelines we conducted a review of articles and reviews from the Scopus database. As a result eighteen papers were included in the final review.

Results:

This systematic review has led to the following results. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used in these studies, and most involved surveys or interviews. Most of these studies were related to Australia or the UK. The majority of these reviewed papers discussed online gambling and the effects of social media applications and highlighted that cultural and environmental factors, parents and peer groups and age restrictions play a major role in youth gambling. High exposure to social media applications regularises gambling activities and makes it hard for young consumers to avoid gambling-related content. This normalises gambling behaviours from an early age and leads to possible long-term problems, including problematic gambling.

Discussion and conclusion:

Gambling is easy to access, normalised, and offers many attractive features for consumers. These reviewed papers recommended social media-specific regulations need to actually crack down on gambling ads that lure young people into gambling. Policymakers need to tighten existing governing frameworks and implement the necessity for stronger age-verification systems, online content regulations, introduce more youth education and awareness initiatives.

Project funding:

This research project is supported under the Commonwealth Government's Research Training Program. I gratefully acknowledge the financial support provided by the Australian Government.

Authors:

Prof Nerilee Hing (CQUniversity) (presenting)
Prof Matthew Rockloff (CQUniversity)
Prof Matthew Browne (CQUniversity)
Prof Alex M T Russell (CQUniversity)
Mr Vija Rawat (CQUniversity)
Dr Lisa Lole (CQUniversity)

Title:

The 'Wild West' of wagering affiliate marketing and implications for gambling harm

Abstract:

Wagering affiliate marketing is a performance-based system where online wagering operators pay third parties (affiliates) to recruit and engage customers for them. Despite widespread use, it has attracted limited research attention in Australia and elsewhere. This exploratory Australian study aimed to capture key informant perspectives on 1) the key features of wagering affiliate marketing, and 2) how it may increase the risk of gambling harm.

Interviews were conducted with 44 individuals from 28 organisations representing wagering operators, wagering affiliates, gambling regulators and legal advisors, and gambling support providers. Based on thematic analysis, the findings identified numerous features in business and payment models used in wagering affiliate marketing that can increase the risk of gambling harm. Affiliate marketers are paid generous commissions by wagering operators to purposefully encourage new customers to bet and existing customers to bet more. In direct conflict with harm minimisation objectives, affiliate marketers are incentivised to target bettors with high-loss potential and people at-risk of gambling harm, and they engage in deceptive and predatory practices likely to attract vulnerable people. The current regulatory environment has limited capacity to monitor and prevent harmful and illegal practices, and is further hampered by both the scale of the affiliate industry, and its dynamic and hidden marketing practices.

The findings can inform future research to test relationships between gambling affiliate marketing and gambling harm. They can also prompt consideration of more effective regulation and ways to increase consumer awareness about misleading affiliate practices.

Project funding:

This study is a Gambling Research Australia project funded by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and managed on their behalf by the New South Wales Department of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport.

Authors:

Mr Alexander Hanson (University of Alabama) (presenting)
Prof Christine Ringler (University of Alabama)

Title:

Betting Against the Odds: The Hidden Dangers of Online Gambling Promotions

Abstract:

Online gambling firms rely heavily on promotional offers to attract, retain, and re-engage bettors. Unlike traditional promotions that provide clear and immediate value, gambling promotions often obscure or reduce expected value through free-play bonuses and rollover requirements. This research investigates how these promotions shape consumer decision making, how bettors interpret their value, and whether educational interventions can improve consumer understanding.

Study 1 uses secondary panel data to show that reload offers are systematically targeted toward bettors who recently lost or have lower net earnings, revealing that promotional exposure is concentrated towards consumers who can be their most vulnerable. Studies 2A and 2B demonstrate that even experienced bettors substantially overestimate the value of promotions involving free-play bonuses and rollover requirements. Studies 3A and 3B show that receiving a promotion increases deposit intentions by elevating optimism rather than by increasing perceived financial gain or reducing perceived risk.

Study 4 tests a simple odds-based comparison and finds that this educational intervention reduces deposits for low value promotions by decreasing optimism.

Study 5 evaluates a formal expected value education intervention and shows mixed effects: it helps some bettors identify low value promotions but increases optimism and deposit intentions among inexperienced gamblers.

Together, these findings extend promotional research by identifying a category of promotions whose true value is obscured, clarifying the psychological mechanism through which these promotions work, and testing when consumer education helps or harms. The results highlight important implications for public policy, consumer protection, and responsible gambling regulation.

Project funding:

No external funding was received for this research. All funding through the University of Alabama

Authors:

Dr Chloe O Hawker (Deakin University) (presenting)
Dr Stephanie S Merkouris (Deakin University)
Prof Nicki A Dowling (Deakin University)
Dr Anna C Thomas (Deakin University)

Title:

Pulling out of gambling treatment: Research, service, practitioner, and client perspectives

Abstract:

Many people in Aotearoa New Zealand experience gambling-related harm, with few seeking formal support, and many of those who do pull out of treatment early. Early disengagement from psychological gambling treatment may limit clinical benefit, but little is known about when, why, and with what consequences people leave treatment, or how services might better support retention. This project examined definitions, estimates, predictors, reasons, consequences, and potential solutions related to pulling out of formal psychological gambling treatment. Co-designed with people with lived experience of gambling harm, the project drew on four complementary studies: a scoping review of contemporary gambling research (66 studies), a service analysis of 10 years of routinely collected New Zealand gambling treatment data (n=18,642), an online survey and hui with gambling practitioners (n=15), and a client survey at pre-treatment and one-month follow-up (n=67). Pulling out of treatment was common - affecting around one in three clients - and typically occurred within the first one-to-two sessions. Few consistent predictors emerged, although individual factors and treatment-experience factors were relevant in some datasets. Clients and practitioners identified similar reasons for early disengagement, including practical barriers, low readiness, concerns about treatment, and in some cases, early goal attainment. Evidence regarding consequences was limited, but emerging findings suggest that early disengagement may be associated with poorer gambling and mental health outcomes. These findings highlight opportunities for services to strengthen early engagement, reduce logistical barriers, offer culturally responsive and flexible care, and support therapeutic connection from the outset to improve retention and outcomes.

Project funding:

Ministry of Health - Manatū Hauora Gambling Harm Research Programme

Authors:

Ms Amanda Weragoda (Flinders University) (presenting)
Prof Malcolm Battersby (Flinders University and Southern Adelaide Local Health Network (SALHN))
Dr Ben Riley (Southern Adelaide Local Health Network (SALHN) and Flinders University)
Dr David Smith (Flinders University)
Prof Michael Baigent (Southern Adelaide Local Health Network (SALHN) and Flinders University)
Ms Jayne Sessions (Southern Adelaide Local Health Network (SALHN))
Ms Fleur Clapham (Scalable Care, USA)
Ms Autumn Starfall (Scalable Care)

Title:

Betting on a supervised Generative AI chatbot: Facilitating help seeking, early intervention and engagement in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy through Gabi.

Abstract:

While cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) is an effective intervention for individuals experiencing gambling disorder, help-seeking rates remain low. To address this gap, we developed a generative AI chatbot named Gabi. The therapist supervised AI chatbot was developed through co-design in Stage 1 with clinicians, researchers, and people with lived experience to ensure usability, clinical appropriateness, and relevance. In Stage 2 we tested Gabi in a pilot feasibility and acceptability trial with 31 gamblers from South Australia using an uncontrolled pre-post design to examine if the chatbot can facilitate harm-reduction and help-seeking. Gabi Stage 2 recruited these participants through two social media campaigns from the community and during a 28 day period 2 participants were triaged through to help services who otherwise would not have sought help. Stages 1 and 2 demonstrated early promise for intervention amongst those with low to moderate gambling severity. Building on these findings and previous research on CBT engagement we have ethics and governance approval to commence Gabi Stage 3, a single centre, open label, parallel arm, pilot randomised controlled trial in patients with problem gambling (n=66). Stage 3 will evaluate if a therapist supervised AI chatbot increases patients' engagement in CBT homework and subsequent clinical outcomes. This research highlights the potential of generative AI as a scalable, accessible tool to bridge the gap between evidence-based CBT and real-world help seeking. If effective, Gabi could represent a novel digital pathway for early intervention and harm reduction in gambling disorder.

Project funding:

Government of South Australia, Department of Human Services, Office for Problem Gambling

Authors:

Ms Joanna Maning (The Australian National University) (presenting)

Title:

Co-designing culturally responsive interventions for affected others: Framework and early findings

Abstract:

Recent Australian research has reinforced the impact of gambling harm on affected others, and also highlighted the disproportionately high gambling harm experienced by ethnic minority communities, alongside significantly lower help-seeking rates. Focusing on affected others may prove particularly effective within ethnic communities characterised by collectivist values and intra-community help-seeking. This project aims to develop evidence-based, culturally appropriate gambling harm supports, addressing a public health need and informing policy implementation across New South Wales (NSW) and/or the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). I will present on my PhD project that aims to generate information about gambling harm and related support needs for affected others in cultural and community-based contexts in NSW/ ACT.

The three-stage mixed-methods design includes: (1) quantitative secondary analysis of large datasets (Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey and The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children) to identify which specific ethnic minority communities are at heightened risk for gambling harm; (2) qualitative research via semi-structured interviews with support service staff and affected others from selected communities to identify patterns of gambling harm, and support needs specific to cultural contexts; and (3) co-design workshops to produce culturally appropriate responses to gambling harm for affected others. I will present preliminary findings from Australian data relating to gambling harm experienced by individuals from ethnically and linguistically diverse populations. I will also discuss this research in light of gambling policy and treatment responses specific to ethnically and linguistically diverse populations.

Project funding:

- Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship
- Sir Roland Wilson Scholarship funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services and the Sir Roland Wilson Foundation within the Australian National University.

Authors:

Mr Mitchell Smart (University of Melbourne) (presenting)
Dr Dan Myles (University of Melbourne)
Dr Daniel Bennett (University of Melbourne)

Title:

How does the availability of a cash out option influence risk taking when gambling?

Abstract:

In recent years, sports-betting platforms have introduced a variety of new products that take advantage of advances in digital technologies. One such product is 'instant cash out', a live betting feature that allows people to settle a bet early, before the relevant event has occurred (e.g., during a football match), in exchange for an immediate payout. The value of these offers are dynamically adjusted in response to in-game events so that the value of the offer increases as the bet becomes more likely to win and decreases as success becomes less likely.

Although marketed as a risk-reduction feature, recent evidence suggests that cash-out leads people to place riskier bets. In this talk, we will introduce the cash out feature and summarise some of this recent research. We will then present some novel evidence from three online experiments that use a controlled card betting task that incorporates a cash out feature.

Across these studies, we find consistent evidence that when people know the cash-out option will be available, they are willing to place riskier bets by staking larger amounts and selecting longer odds. We also present exploratory findings on the factors that motivate people to accept cash-out offers, and discuss individual differences in the use of the feature and their potential implications for gambling harm reduction.

Project funding:

ARC Future Fellowship FT240100555

Authors:

Mr Andrew M Camara (University of Warwick, Monash University) (presenting)
Prof Lukasz Walasek (University of Warwick)
Dr Daniel Bennett (The University of Melbourne, Monash University)
Prof Elliot A Ludvig (University of Warwick)

Title:

The Cash Out Feature in Sports Betting: The Role of Subjective Control

Abstract:

An emerging research priority for regulators is understanding how features of modern betting products contribute to gambling-related harm. A pertinent yet under-researched instance of this is the “cash out” feature in online sports betting platforms. The feature allows gamblers to settle their bet before the relevant event has concluded in exchange for a discounted but guaranteed payout. Cash out use has been associated with hazardous gambling and psychological vulnerabilities; relatedly, experimental evidence suggests that people place larger bets in gambling tasks when cash out is available. To understand how cash out may relate to gambling-related harm, it is important to clarify the psychological mechanisms underlying its effect on betting behaviour.

The present research achieves this objective by testing a commonly suggested hypothesis: that cash out encourages riskier betting behaviour by increasing the perceived control people have over their bet. An online sample completed an experimental card-betting task; on some rounds, cash out was available but the decision to accept or reject the offer was pre-determined by the experiment’s programming. Participants placed smaller bets on these automatic cash-out rounds relative to when they had control over the decision to cash out. Bet size on automatic cash-out rounds did not significantly differ on rounds in which cash out was unavailable. These results indicate that control plays a central role in the effect of cash out on risky betting behaviour, suggesting that subjective control could be a key construct for understanding the link between cash out and gambling-related harm.

Project funding:

This research was supported by a scholarship from the Monash-Warwick Alliance.

Authors:

Mrs Nicola Coalter (CDU) (presenting)
Dr George Stuart
Dr Pravina Shagar

Title:

Ambient Betting: How sports wagering became routine and risk-laden for young men in Darwin, Northern Territory

Abstract:

Online sports betting is one of the fastest-growing gambling products globally, yet little research has examined how it becomes culturally embedded in regional environments shaped by light-touch regulation. Darwin, the licensing hub for many of Australia's online wagering operators, represents a distinctive risk setting where high exposure meets limited oversight.

This qualitative study draws on 20 in-depth interviews with young men aged 18–35 who regularly bet on sports in Darwin. Using constructivist grounded theory and thematic analysis, we explored how betting becomes part of the social, emotional, and cultural fabric of everyday life.

Four themes emerged:

- (1) Sports betting is normalised as a masculine social practice, reinforced through peer rhythms and digital group dynamics;
- (2) Advertising constructs risk as fun and harmless, despite participants' awareness of its manipulative intent;
- (3) Emotional and relational harms are common but hidden, including guilt, distraction, insomnia, and reduced presence in relationships; and
- (4) Participants express strong cynicism toward the 'responsible gambling' paradigm, arguing that weak regulation and industry saturation normalise harm by design.

We introduce the concept of ambient betting to describe how harm accumulates quietly through routine, structural exposure rather than discrete episodes of excess. These findings challenge individualised notions of responsibility and highlight an urgent need for structural reform, including advertising restrictions, mandatory pre-commitment tools, and genuinely independent regulatory oversight.

This study positions Darwin as a microcosm of broader national challenges in online wagering and emphasises the importance of lived-experience research in shaping public health responses.

Project funding:

This research was for my masters in public health and supported by the Menzies School of Health Research, which provided participant reimbursement funding (up to AUD \$1,000).

Authors:

Steven Novak, Client Outcomes - Manager, Relationships Australia QLD
Dr Jemima Petch, Head of Practice, Relationships Australia QLD (presenting)
Vicki Penner, Gambling Help Services - Manager, Relationships Australia QLD (presenting)

Title:

Real-World Effectiveness of Gambling Help Counselling: Analysis of Two-Year Client Outcomes

Abstract:

Close to 30 Randomised Controlled Trials (RCT's) have been published on psychological interventions for harmful gambling. Overall, these controlled studies find interventions produce a medium effect size reduction in gambling severity and a small effect size on remission. In contrast, there are very few studies that report on the effectiveness of gambling interventions as commonly practised in the community (i.e., routine practice).

The aim of this presentation is to share the outcomes for clients attending the Relationships Australia QLD Gambling Help counselling service over the last two years. We will present data on client risk profile, including levels of psychological distress and domestic and family violence. Our pre-post service outcomes data covers change in gambling severity as reported on the Problem Gambling Severity Index, money and time spent on gambling, and change as reported on the Gambling Recovery Star. Through thematic analysis of qualitative session data, we will also explore key themes that help us understand client presentations, session foci, and outcomes. Our outcomes are compared to other published effectiveness and efficacy studies.

Data from such a large-scale real-world intervention dataset offer ecological validity and generalisability and compliment knowledge gained from RCT's to further our understanding of what works and opportunities for continued research and service improvement.

Project funding:

Relationships Australia Qld Gambling Help Service is funded by the Queensland Government through the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation, Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

Authors:

Dr Nick Kerswell (Lives Lived Well) (presenting)

Title:

Amped Up: Methamphetamine and Emotional Urgency as Conditional Amplifiers of Gambling in a Treatment Seeking Population

Abstract:

Background:

Gambling harm is frequently under-identified within alcohol and other drug (AOD) services, despite high levels of co-occurrence. Many people experiencing gambling-related harm present to treatment for substance use or psychological distress and do not actively seek gambling-specific support. While impulsivity is commonly cited as a shared risk factor, treating it as a unitary construct may limit its usefulness. At Lives Lived Well (LLW), gambling harm is integrated into routine AOD care through shared screening, formulation, and intervention pathways, rather than stand-alone referrals. This paper outlines the empirical rationale underpinning this approach.

Method:

We synthesised findings from two large-scale analyses of routine outcome data collected in Australian treatment settings. We examined whether specific impulsivity traits mediated the relationship between psychological distress and gambling severity, and whether substance-related harms moderated these pathways using hierarchical regression and moderated mediation models.

Results:

Emotional urgency (both negative and positive) consistently mediated the association between psychological distress and gambling severity. Methamphetamine-related harms uniquely amplified this pathway, strengthening the urgency–gambling association. Alcohol and cannabis-related harms did not demonstrate comparable moderating effects. Other impulsivity traits showed weak or inconsistent associations.

Conclusions:

These findings inform Lives Lived Well's integrated practice model, in which gambling harm is identified and addressed within existing AOD treatment contacts. Rather than relying on gambling-specific referral pathways, clinicians are supported to assess emotionally driven gambling risk as part of routine formulation, particularly for clients experiencing methamphetamine-related harms. This approach improves access to gambling harm support among people unlikely to seek gambling treatment directly.

Project funding:

The funding for this work was provided entirely by Lives Lived Well.

Authors:

PhD Candidate Georgia Dellosa (CQUniversity) (presenting)
Prof Matthew Browne (CQUniversity)
Prof Alex M T Russell (CQUniversity)
Dr Nick Kerswell (Lives Lived Well)

Title:

Disentangling Alcohol from Polysubstance Use in Treatment-Seeking Adults:
Why Substance Structure Matters for Gambling Research

Abstract:

Few people seek treatment specifically for gambling, yet a substantial proportion of people accessing alcohol and other drug (AOD) services experience elevated gambling risk. AOD settings therefore represent a critical context for identifying populations at increased risk of gambling harm. However, gambling research related to treatment samples often models substance use as alcohol alone, as individual substances, or as broad indicators of polysubstance involvement, with limited empirical testing of whether these constructs reflect distinct or shared patterns of substance involvement. How substance use is specified in AOD samples has direct implications for how gambling is modelled and interpreted.

This study provides a measurement foundation for modelling substance use by examining the latent structure of recent substance involvement among 18,361 adults entering publicly funded AOD services. WHO-ASSIST severity bands for 11 substances were analysed using ordered-categorical CFA (WLSMV), comparing models including and excluding alcohol, with measurement invariance tested across gender and age.

A single-factor model including all substances fit poorly, with alcohol showing a near-zero loading. In contrast, involvement across ten non-alcohol substances was well captured by a single polysubstance factor that was invariant across gender and age. Three clinically interpretable substance pairings (methamphetamine–GHB, opioids–sedatives, cocaine–MDMA) accounted for additional covariation beyond the general pattern.

These findings indicate that alcohol involvement, drug-specific use, and polysubstance patterns are empirically distinct constructs. For gambling research conducted within AOD settings, this highlights the importance of establishing how substance involvement is structured before examining its relationship with gambling outcomes.

Project funding:

This PhD project is supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship (doi.org/10.82133/C42F-K220) and a Gambling Research Capacity Grant from the New South Wales Office of Responsible Gambling.

Authors:

Dr Rohann Irving (Flinders University) (presenting)
A/Prof Steven Threadgold (The University of Newcastle) (presenting)
Prof Nicholas Carah (The University of Queensland)
A/Prof Julia Coffey (University of Newcastle) (presenting)

Title:

Gendered gambling: Analysing masculinities and femininities in an Australian sports betting app

Abstract:

Smartphone sports betting continues to grow in prominence as a leisure practice in Australia, particularly among young men. Amid this rise in popularity, social researchers are increasingly attuned to sports betting's gendered representations, particularly the ways sports betting is intertwined with ideas of Australian masculinity. Though much research exists on sports betting practices themselves, there is currently little sociological work that investigates how gender is produced in digital smartphone environments in which sports betting takes place. Given the methodological challenges associated with exploring these spaces, the walkthrough method has emerged as a means of undertaking cultural analysis of smartphone app interfaces that might otherwise remain hidden in qualitative research. This paper utilises this method to present a gendered digital analysis of Sportsbet, a popular Australian betting app. In doing so, it not only provides an overview of the app's everyday use but also a sociological analysis of the gendered dynamics that are communicated and reinforced within these digital spaces. While sports betting apps are sites where masculinities are produced and reinforced, this research captures how novelty-bet aspects of these apps also point to early departures from these exclusively masculine representations. Our utilisation of the walkthrough method reveals some key aspects of the ways an increasingly normative online practice – sports betting – is undergoing a gendered shift as wagering operators seek to further normalise betting practices among broader segments of Australian society.

Project funding:

Australian Research Training Program Stipend

Authors:

Dr Rohann Irving (Flinders University) (presenting)

Title:

Young men's smartphone sports betting: Digitisation and delocalisation

Abstract:

Sports betting is a growing and concerning phenomenon in modern Australia, where it is particularly popular among young men. This presentation draws from in-depth interviews with ten young male sports bettors in seeking an understanding of the practice's place and meaning within their everyday lives and friendships. Engaging with gender scholarship in both gambling and sports studies, this work investigates how men are socialised into gambling on sports, and the role of smartphone technologies in facilitating their betting practices. Previous work has identified pubs and betting shops as leisure spaces which localise men's homo-social bonding through sports spectatorship and alcohol consumption. Modern sports betting similarly acts to facilitate men's socialisation through gambling consumption. However, the digitisation of this practice via smartphone technologies also 'delocalises' betting among friendship circles. The borders between men's gambling and non-gambling spaces are blurred, thus resulting in new and complex ways in which sporting and gambling masculinities are negotiated and performed by young men.

Project funding:

Australian Research Training Program Stipend

Authors:

A/Prof Steven Threadgold (University of Newcastle) (presenting)
Prof Roger Burrows (University of Bristol)
Dr Julia Cook (University of Newcastle)
A/Prof Julia Coffey (University of Newcastle) (presenting)

Title:

The Gambling, Crypto and Share Trading Risk Nexus: Gambling apps and the financialisation of young people's lives

Abstract:

In our recent survey of 1000 young people in Australia that began our ARC DP project 'Young People, Fintech Use and Future Financial Security', we found that 45% had used a gambling app in the last 12 months, just under 60% of males and just over 30% of females. Further scrutiny showed that using gambling apps resulted in distinctions in self-reported risk attitudes, financial confidence and financial stress. Gambling apps were further associated with higher rates of crypto and share trading apps. Those who did not use gambling, crypto or share-trading apps were disproportionately concentrated among respondents who preferred low risk. By contrast, respondents engaged in crypto, share trading, and especially combinations of gambling, crypto and shares were much more likely to describe themselves as willing to take above average or substantial risks. The most intensive users of these products - those combining gambling, crypto and share trading - stood out as the most risk-oriented group but also had a higher level of financial stress. From these findings we sketch out some figures of financial practices including 'stable optimists', 'resilient strivers', the 'cautious middle', and the 'stressed and strugglers'. We argue that fintech is a key driver for the financialisation of everyday life and the training ground for the Minskyian household, where management, speculation and gambling dispositions form distinctions in young people's financial practices.

Project funding:

ARC DP

Authors:

Psychologist Sarah Hare (Schottler Consulting Pty Ltd) (presenting)

Title:

EGM volatility: The next strategic leverage point for gambling-harm minimisation in Australia and New Zealand?

Abstract:

In late 2025, the Australian and New Zealand Gaming Machine National Standard (GMNS 12.1) was updated to introduce several new harm-minimisation limits, including: (i) a maximum of 20 free spins, (ii) a cap of 5 multipliers, and (iii) a maximum reel-spin prize of 5x the base prize. These changes reflect a growing recognition that structural characteristics influence risky EGM play.

While these changes certainly reflect current research on the harm of EGM structural characteristics, this paper argues that manufacturers are likely to circumvent these standards. In addition, it highlights how EGM volatility may be a more direct and durable regulatory level for harm-minimisation and a future priority for the next version of the Australian and New Zealand Gaming Machine National Standard (GMNS 12.1).

This presentation will explain the reasoning behind these thoughts and why this may be a more effective way to minimise gambling harm than changes to other EGM structural characteristics.

Project funding:

My own ideas only (NIL) (Conceptual paper)

Authors:

Dr Kate Roberts (Gambling Impact Society NSW) (presenting)

Title:

Unravelling the cats cradle: Analysing EGM gambling through a sociomaterial lens – the case of NSW community clubs

Abstract:

Australians lose \$32.1 billion annually to gambling, including \$16.1 billion lost through electronic gambling machines (EGMs). Per adult resident, we are the biggest losers in the world. New South Wales is the key site of EGM gambling in Australia, with 89,269 in NSW, of the nation's 186,188 EGMs. Most NSW EGMS are found in registered 'not for profit' community clubs.

The estimated social costs of gambling in Australia is \$4.7 billion p.a. – including adverse financial impacts, emotional and psychological costs, relationship and family impacts, productivity loss and work impacts.

This paper presents findings from a collaborative study undertaken with the Gambling Impact Society (NSW) - a peer led health promotion charity. This is research with an advocacy focus, as such the voices and perspectives of people with lived experience of gambling harms are foregrounded.

Informed by practice theory and applying a sociomaterial lens, the study explores gambling practices, discourses and policies, and illuminates how gambling arrangements contribute to the phenomena of problem gambling and gambling harms. The study examines the entangled web of social, technological, institutional, political and environmental arrangements which produce gambling harms and illustrates how these are not separate and distinct but intra-woven and enmeshed, with each component creating the conditions for the others to exist. The implications of these arrangements for individuals, families, community members, researchers, regulators, government bureaucracies and policymakers are considered.

Project funding:

PhD Thesis Research - no external funding other than Commonwealth student support (\$3,000)

Authors:

Lauren Levin (Gambling Policy Hub) (presenting)

Title:

Do we really need more research? An advocate's uncomfortable challenge

Abstract:

You finish your research with 'more research needs to be done'. You warn of unintended consequences. You apply for the next grant. The years pass. Does anything change? But what you do matters and your voice matters.

This presentation looks at what Australia can learn from the European and UK gambling and financial regulators. It aims to share new ideas, to raise expectations and to challenge thinking.

If we were to adopt one new call to action, what would that be?

The presenter is a consumer lawyer who has worked within the financial hardship-consumer law movement for many years, and in 2022 travelled to Europe on a Churchill Fellowship to learn about 'what works in gambling regulation.'

Project funding:

No funding

Authors:

Prof Alex M T Russell (Experimental Gambling Research Laboratory, CQUniversity) (presenting)

Prof Matthew Browne (Experimental Gambling Research Laboratory, CQUniversity)

Prof Matthew Rockloff (Experimental Gambling Research Laboratory, CQUniversity)

Prof Nerilee Hing (Experimental Gambling Research Laboratory, CQUniversity)

Georgia Dellosa (Experimental Gambling Research Laboratory, CQUniversity)

Title:

Insights into population-level harm from recent prevalence studies

Abstract:

Gambling prevalence studies provide our best estimates of gambling behaviour, problems and harm in our populations, including how they change over time. These studies provide guidance around what a jurisdiction may wish to focus on, such as particular groups or gaps in help services.

Our understanding of gambling problems and harm has developed. Most studies have included the Problem Gambling Severity Index, which measures gambling problems. This measure conflates harm that stems from one's own gambling (e.g., financial issues) with behavioural dependence (e.g., chasing losses). Over the last decade, our research team has developed measures that focus only on gambling harm. Two measures have been developed. The GHS-10 measures harm from one's own gambling, while the GHS-10-AO measures harm experienced due to somebody else's gambling. These measures have been incorporated into recent prevalence studies, along with a bespoke measure of legacy harm: harm experienced due to gambling that occurred more than 12 months ago.

In this talk, we will discuss our work on the recent NSW and ACT prevalence studies, with a focus on new insights in relation to gambling harm. These findings provide the most comprehensive picture of gambling harm to date, including estimates of the proportion of the population currently experiencing harm due to gambling. We will also discuss insights from these studies, such as which forms of gambling are associated with the most harm and the gendered nature of harm experienced by people from their own gambling compared to harm experienced by people from someone else's gambling.

Project funding:

NSW Responsible Gambling Fund and ACT Gambling and Racing Commission

Panel Convenor:

Morgan Schlotterlein (Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety)
(presenting)

Panelists:

Anna Bardsley (Co-founder GHLEE Gambling Harm Lived Experience Experts)
Prof Matthew Browne (CQUniversity)
Dr Anna Thomas (Deakin University)
Dr Stephanie Merkouris (Deakin University)
Dr Tanya Armstrong (ACT Government)

Title:

Measuring gambling harm into the future: a panel discussion

Abstract:

Public health responses to gambling are increasingly moving beyond a narrow focus on “problem gambling” towards understanding gambling harm as a population-level issue that affects individuals, families, and communities. While the measurement tools and approaches used in gambling research are evolving, the most widely used measurement tool, the Problem Gambling Severity Index, remains focussed on problem gambling and measuring behaviours rather than harm. Through a panel discussion involving researchers, practitioners, and people with lived experience of gambling harm, the session will explore how gambling harm is currently measured and communicated, and what needs to change in the way the negative impacts of gambling are measured to support a stronger public health response.

Project funding:

No direct funding.

Authors:

Dr Dragan Rangelov (Swinburne University of Technology) (presenting)
Mr Andrew McKay (The University of Queensland)
Prof Jason B Mattingley (The University of Queensland)

Title:

Effects of cognitive noise on the temporal dynamics of risky choices

Abstract:

Real-life choices often require striking a balance between the value of choice outcomes and their likelihood. When taking out flood insurance, for example, it is important to consider both the cost of any damage and the probability of flooding. 'Rational choice theory' assumes that risky choices rely on an optimal integration of choice values with their probabilities. The literature is replete with examples of irrational, biased choices, and these observations have motivated piecemeal modifications of the theory. A recently proposed 'cognitive imprecision theory' can account for most reported biases in a principled fashion by assuming that noisy subjective representations of choice value and probability are integrated optimally. Here, we developed a novel perceptual game to test a key prediction of this theory, namely, that the temporal dynamics of risky choices and their neural correlates should co-vary with cognitive noise. Forty healthy, adult humans first estimated the average orientation of a briefly presented circular array of twelve differently oriented gratings and then chose to either play the game or not (risky and safe choices). If they chose to play, they were awarded points proportional to the average orientation in that trial. Noise was manipulated by randomly switching between high and low variability in the orientations of displayed gratings. Computational modelling of behaviour showed that cognitive noise impacted estimates of loss and risk aversion. Similarly, multivariate feature-specific analyses of functional brain activity showed an effect of noise on the precision of neural value representations, lending neurobiological support to the cognitive imprecision theory.

Project funding:

ARC DP220104008 to JBM and DR; ARC DP260101363 to DR and JBM

Authors:

Dr En Li (CQUniversity) (presenting)
Prof Alex M. T. Russell (CQUniversity)
Prof Nerilee Hing (CQUniversity)
Prof Matthew Browne (CQUniversity)
Prof Matthew Rockloff (CQUniversity)

Title:

Tree Based Modelling of Gambling Harm

Abstract:

Gambling consumption has caused multi-faceted and significant amount of harm on consumers around the world, including in Australia. Literature has suggested that gambling harm experienced by consumers can be associated with a variety of risk factors. The purpose of the present project was to identify the impacts of some of those factors and particularly untangle their interactive effects on gambling harm experienced by Australian consumers. To fulfil this purpose, data from a large national telephone survey in Australia was modelled, through the implementation of the conditional inference trees, a powerful approach in terms of uncovering interactions. This process of tree based modelling led to the generation of two conditional inference trees, including one classification tree differentiating consumers experiencing any level of gambling harm from those experiencing no gambling harm, and a second classification tree differentiating consumers experiencing high level of gambling harm from those experiencing lower level of gambling harm or no harm. In addition, factors such as gambling type, income, marital status, gender, or having Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island origin emerged to play important roles in the generated trees. The findings of the present project present a clear picture or pathway in terms of which risk factors or which combinations of them would lead to heightened gambling harm. These findings can also be applied by policy makers, social marketers, or gambling support service providers in addressing or reducing harm caused by gambling consumption.

Project funding:

This study is a Gambling Research Australia project funded by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and managed on their behalf by the New South Wales Department of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport.

Authors:

Prof Matthew Browne (Experimental Gambling Research Laboratory, CQUniversity)
(presenting)

Dr Catherine Tulloch (Experimental Gambling Research Laboratory, CQUniversity)
(presenting)

Title:

The effect of gambling harm on health: A synthesis

Abstract:

Background: Quantifying gambling-related harm is essential for the economic and population health modelling of gambling's impacts. However, measuring health-related quality of life (HRQoL) disutility remains challenging due to divergent elicitation methods.

Methods: This study synthesises existing research to address the methodological tension between direct methods, which capture gambling-specific impacts but are prone to attribution bias at lower levels of harm, and indirect methods, which offer unbiased scaling but often lack sensitivity to severe gambling harm. We propose a novel hybrid synthesis approach that leverages the complementary strengths of both.

Results: A meta-analysis of direct elicitation studies established a consistent maximum HRQoL disutility of approximately 0.45 for severe gambling problems and 0.40 for affected others. Using these values as a consensus anchor, we applied the relative "shape" of the harm curve derived from indirect studies to map impacts across the full spectrum of harm. This resulted in a standardised set of disutilities for the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) and the Gambling Harm Scale (GHS-10/GHS-10-AO).

Discussion and Future Directions: The findings are further contextualised by a recent approach (Luquiens et al., 2025) that utilised a methodology allowing for states "worse than death". While their theoretical worst-state utility of -1.48 is not directly comparable to our work, it provides important external validation that traditional measures likely under-represent the most severe experiences of gambling harm. Future research should focus on empirically linking these modern utility valuations to established epidemiological data.

Project funding:

Victorian Government.

Authors:

Ms Kristal Yeung (Queensland University of Technology) (presenting)

Title:

A Tale of Two Sexes: a gendered analysis connecting gambling activity groups to mental wellbeing

Abstract:

This talk explores sex-based differences in gambling activity groups and their relationship to mental wellbeing, based on a study analysing data from the 2022 wave of the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey.

The study found that gambling activity groups were indirectly associated with lower mental wellbeing through problem gambling symptoms across males and females. Men who engaged in multiple gambling activities with high spending tended to have better mental wellbeing than those primarily gambling on lotteries. In contrast, women's mental wellbeing did not differ across the gambling activity groups.

The findings suggest that the interplay of behavioural patterns and problem gambling symptoms should be considered to understand how gambling may negatively affect mental wellbeing. They also show that males and females may not share the same gambling experience, leading to different outcomes in mental wellbeing.

The analyses employed a range of modelling strategies to examine mechanisms that may link gambling activity groups to mental wellbeing. Gambling activity groups were derived using latent class analysis to capture patterns in gambling types and associated spending levels. This talk will take you through the study in detail and invite discussion on its implications for research, practice, and policy.

Project funding:

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Authors:

Dr Edmond Fehoko (University of Otago) (presenting)
A/Prof Maria Bellringer (AUT University)
Emeritus Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop (AUT University)

Title:

Fatongia: Exploring the role of cultural practices and gambling motivations in Aotearoa New Zealand: A Tongan perspective

Abstract:

This paper draws on findings from a doctoral study examining Tongan men's experiences and perceptions of gambling and problem gambling in Aotearoa New Zealand. The study explores how cultural, familial, and religious obligations shape gambling behaviours, with particular attention to the role of fatongia within transnational Tongan lives. Gambling emerged as a negotiated and relational practice, situated within aspirations to fulfil responsibilities to family, church, and community under conditions of financial constraint. A total of 46 Tongan men were recruited through churches, cultural spaces, and community groups. Participants included first-generation migrants who arrived in New Zealand, as well as New Zealand-born Tongans. Qualitative data were generated through in-depth interviews and analysed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, enabling exploration of both lived experiences and shared cultural meanings associated with gambling. Participants' accounts identified fatongia as a central organising framework shaping everyday decision-making and economic behaviour. Fatongia was described as the responsibility to fulfil obligations to the fāмили (family), siasi (church), and fonua (nation), including the provision of money, food, and cultural gifts, particularly during significant life events such as weddings, funerals, birthdays, and graduations. These obligations were understood as reciprocal, grounded in ideals of mutual dependence, sacrifice, service, and loyalty. Gambling was perceived as a means to meet these expectations, particularly in contexts of migration where remittances, church donations, and extended family support were viewed as non-negotiable cultural responsibilities. Further research is required to inform culturally grounded gambling harm prevention approaches responsive to Tongan men's lived realities.

Project funding:

Self-funded

Authors:

Dr Azamsadat Hosseini Shoabjareh (ANU Centre for Gambling Research, Australian National University, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, Australia) (presenting)

Dr Aino Suomi (ANU Centre for Gambling Research, Australian National University, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, Australia)

Prof Ben Edwards (ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods, Australian National University, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, Australia)

Title:

The Impact of Risky Parental Gambling on Children's Delinquency: Pathways Through Financial Hardship and Parenting Practices

Abstract:

Parental gambling has increasingly been recognised as a source of strain within families, yet its implications for children's behavioural outcomes remain underexplored. This study examines the long-term effects of risky parental gambling on children's delinquent behaviour and explores potential family-based pathways through which this association may operate. Drawing on General Strain Theory (GST) and the Stress–Strain–Coping–Support (SSCS) model, we propose a conceptual framework in which risky parental gambling functions as a primary stressor, contributing to financial hardship and disruptions to parenting practices that may, in turn, increase the risk of child delinquency. Using data from 2,993 children in Cohort B of the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC), this study links risky parental gambling, measured using the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) at Wave 7 (2016), with children's delinquency outcomes at Wave 8 (2018). Structural equation modelling (SEM) is employed to assess both direct and indirect associations between parental gambling and child delinquency, while accounting for key socio-demographic characteristics. Findings suggest that risky parental gambling is associated with higher levels of subsequent child delinquency, both directly and indirectly through increased financial hardship and worsened parenting practices. These results highlight parental gambling as an important yet underexamined family stressor with implications for children's behavioural development.

Project funding:

NA

Authors:

Ms Monique N Gandhi (Deakin University) (presenting)
Prof Nicki A Dowling (Deakin University)
A/Prof Simone N Rodda (Auckland University of Technology)
Dr Anna C Thomas (Deakin University)
Dr Chloe O Hawker (Deakin University)
Dr Stephanie S Merkouris (Deakin University)

Title:

Balancing Act: How Affected Others Support Themselves and Those Who Gamble

Abstract:

Problem gambling affects not only the individual who gambles, but also their friends, family, and wider community, collectively referred to as affected others (AOs). Despite experiencing substantial financial, relational, and psychological harms, AOs remain underrepresented in treatment settings. Emerging evidence suggests that AOs have dual needs: support to manage their own harm, alongside guidance on how to support the person who gambles. This study explored (1) how partners and non-partners manage gambling-related harm for themselves and support the person who gambles, and (2) whether these strategies differ by relationship type. Forty-four AOs participated in semi-structured interviews, which were thematically analysed. Three overarching themes captured how AOs navigate gambling-related harm within a dual-needs framework. First, supporting oneself, including strategies such as talking to others, seeking professional support, distancing, and boundary setting. Second, pushing for change in the person who gambles, reflecting efforts to motivate or influence behaviour change. Third, desired supports, highlighting preferences for accessible, AO-focused resources that address both personal wellbeing and the support role. Clear relational differences emerged. Partners more commonly adopted direct strategies such as ultimatums and financial controls, whereas non-partners tended to assume advisory and emotionally supportive roles. These findings underscore the importance of developing tailored interventions that account for relationship context and the dual support needs of diverse AO groups.

Project funding:

NA/ none- PhD Project

Authors:

Ms Judy Avisar (Self Help Addiction Resource Centre) (presenting)
Catherine Simmonds OAM (Self Help Addiction Resource Centre) (presenting)
Ms Anna Bardsley (Co-founder GHLEE Gambling Harm Lived Experience Experts) (presenting)

Title:

How the lived experience performances of Three Sides of the Coin educate professionals about gambling harm.

Abstract:

Deakin University in collaboration with Three Sides of the Coin (3SOC) evaluated the use of lived experience performances as an education tool for professionals. Three Sides of the Coin empowers people with lived experience of gambling harm to educate the community and professionals about gambling harm and its intersection with alcohol and other drug use, mental health, family violence and crime. The purpose is to reduce stigma, humanize the people behind the addiction, increase help-seeking, and frame gambling as a public health issue, as well as encourage services to routinely screen for gambling.

This presentation will explore how being fully immersed in the lived experience of gamblers and affected others through performance was a powerful way for professionals to connect with the issues at an emotional and cognitive level. The evaluation showed there was an increase in the understanding of gambling harm, as well as changes in attitudes and practice among professionals including a greater empathy and confidence to ask about gambling, and a willingness to discuss gambling harm and support those affected.

The research findings will be complemented by a short artfully crafted 3SOC Recovery Gamble monologue, exemplifying the power of lived experience stories in understanding the intersectionality of gambling addiction.

The research was published in the Journal of Gambling Studies:
<https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s10899-023-10223-0.pdf>

Project funding:

Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation

List of delegates

Sorted by surname

Name	Organisation
Ashani Abayasekara	Monash University
Maria Abou Abdallah	Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety
Missy Ali	Holstep Health
Kelly Allen	IPC Health
David Arkell	VGCCC
Dr Tanya Armstrong	ACT Government
Geneva Atkinson	Each
Geneva Atkinson	Each
Judy Avisar	Self Help Addiction Resource Centre
Dr Megan Bailey	Flinders University
Natalie Barbir	Liquor & Gaming NSW
Anna Bardsley	Co-founder GHLEE Gambling Harm Lived Experience Experts
Prof Malcolm Battersby	Flinders University
Dr Daniel Bennett	University of Melbourne
Jane Bennetto	Holstep Health
Harry Bessas	Each
Rosa Billi PSM	Head of Research, VRGF (Retired)
Sarah-Jane Blunt	IPC Health Gamblers Help
Linda Borner	Cafs
Bree Boroje	Services Australia
Prof Mathew Browne	Experimental Gambling Research Laboratory, CQUniversity
Amanda Burns	Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety
Hannah Caine	Ipsos
Andrew Camara	University of Warwick, Monash University
Diana Casis	Each
Kevin Chan	Each
Sonia Chen	New Zealand Ministry of Health
Chipo Chiyangwa	Latrobe Community Health Services
Nicola Coalter	CDU and Pragmatic Practice
A/Prof Julia Coffey	University of Newcastle
Kate da Costa	Wesley Mission (NSW)
Danielle De Melis	VGCCC
Georgia Dellosa	Experimental Gambling Research Laboratory, CQUniversity
Annette Devereaux	Financial Counselling Victoria
Prof Nicki Dowling	Deakin University
Claire Emmanuel	Better Health Network
Dr Gavin Faunce	Liquor & Gaming NSW
Dr Edmond Fehoko	University of Otago
Laura Forbes	Monash University
Monique Gandhi	Deakin University
Dr Nancy Greer	Australian Institute of Family Studies
Kathryn Hammond	IPC Health Gamblers Help
Alexander Hanson	University of Alabama
Sarah Hare	Schottler Consulting Pty Ltd
Simon Harrex	Victorian Local Governance Association
Dr Chloe Hawker	Deakin University
Prof Nerilee Hing	Experimental Gambling Research Laboratory, CQUniversity
Dr Anastasia Hronis	University of Technology Sydney
Ken Hunt	Australian Communications and Media Authority
Bareerah Hussaini	Australian Communications and Media Authority
Alyssa Huxtable	Monash Council
Dr Rohann Irving	Flinders University
Elizabeth Ives	Swinburne University
Jun Heng Kau	Cafs
Sean Kearney	Each
Dr Nick Kerswell	Lives Lived Well
Louis Kling	Australian Institute of Family Studies
Duminda Benthara Kottahachchi	CQUniversity
Lauren Levin	Gambling Policy Hub

First Independent Gambling Research Conference Program

Dr En Li	Experimental Gambling Research Laboratory, CQUniversity
Mansueta Liouas	Anglicare Victoria
Lan Liu	Each
A/Prof Charles Livingstone	Monash University
Joanna Maning	ANU
Shaun McDonough	
Dr Stephanie Merkouris	Deakin University
Louise Monaghan	Department of Health
Dr Dan Myles	University of Melbourne
Nelson Nghe	Artist / Advocate
Vicky Northe	CQU and Parkbench Therapy
Russell Northe	Gambling Harm Lived Experience Experts
Stacey O'Neil	Cafs
Dr Jane Oakes	Parkbench Therapy
Belinda Opie	Gambler's Help IPC Health
Tanvi Pappu	Australian Institute of Family Studies
Vicki Penner	Relationships Australia Qld
Dr Jemima Petch	Relationships Australia Qld
Tony Phillips	
Emma Pinter	Liquor & Gaming NSW
Lucas Poore	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts
Dr Dragan Rangelov	Swinburne University of Technology
Dr Jemimah Ride	Monash University
A/Prof Angela Rintoul	University of Melbourne
Jan Roberts	Cafs
Dr Kate Roberts	Gambling Impact Society NSW
Prof Matthew Rockloff	Experimental Gambling Research Laboratory, CQUniversity
Heidi Rose	Department of Health
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