STRATEGIC POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR GAMBLER'S HELP SERVICES

November 2008

Victoria
The Place To Be

CONTENTS

Introduction 2

1 Policy context 3

1.1 Growing Victoria Together 3
1.2 A Fairer Victoria 4
1.3 Taking action on problem gambling 4

2 The Gambler's Help service system 5

2.1 Regional Gambler's Help services 5
2.2 Gambler's Help Line telephone and web based services 5
2.3 Services to Indigenous Victorians 6
2.4 Services to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities 6
2.5 Problem Gambling Research and Treatment Centre 7
2.6 The Council of Gambler's Help Services (CoGHS) 7

3 Key challenges in the provision of problem gambling services 8

4 The way forward 9

4.1 The need to ensure responsiveness to complexity and the broader needs of the individual 9
4.1.1 Cross sectoral interventions 12
4.1.2 Common assessment practices 13
4.1.3 Service coordination and integration 13
4.2 The need to increase service access and service uptake 15
4.2.1 Improving the referral pathways 16
4.2.2 Providing more outreach 17
4.2.3 Increasing the service offer 17
4.2.4 Increasing the service access points 18
4.2.5 Increasing the hours of service 18
4.2.6 Making services culturally relevant 19
4.3 The need to intervene sooner rather than later 20
4.3.1 Early intervention 20
4.3.2 Prevention 21
4.4 The need to provide high quality, effective evidence based services 22
4.4.1 Planned approach to designing and delivering services 23
4.4.2 More consistent practice in delivering services 24
4.4.3 Improved performance management 25
4.4.4 Innovative practices 25

Introduction

The provision of problem gambling services to Victorians through funding the Gambler's Help service system is a central component in the government's integrated strategy to address problem gambling in Victoria. This cross government approach to problem gambling recognises the need for a broad human services system response. It also recognises the importance of partnerships in planning, delivering and evaluating local responses.

The Department of Justice's vision for these services places Gambler's Help at the forefront of service system and program design across the human services field in terms of:

- The monitoring of program impact and outcomes;
- Its contribution to the international evidence base for what works in problem gambling treatment;
- The breadth of service offerings that meet the needs of Victorians;
- Balancing the mix of prevention and treatment responses;
- The provision of integrated and seamless care to clients with complex needs; and
- The provision of culturally sensitive and effective programs to Indigenous clients and clients from diverse backgrounds.

Through work in these areas, the Victorian Government aims to position Gambler's Help services as world leaders in the provision of help options, prevention and treatment responses to problem gamblers.

The Gambler's Help strategic policy framework has been developed to progress the above goals. Its aim is to enhance the provision of specialist problem gambling services, with a view to preventing and reducing levels of problem gambling in Victoria, and reducing the harms associated with problem gambling.

This document provides the policy context for the provision of Gambler's Help services and the rationale for priority future directions for the recently redeveloped Gambler's Help service system.

This document forms one part of a suite of documents relevant to the delivery of Gambler's Help services. Gambler's Help providers will use this strategic policy framework to inform the implementation of Gambler's Help services. Its purpose is to underpin and give context to operations and performance. It identifies the goals and priorities of current operations, the evidence base that has shaped these operations, and areas for development. As such, the strategic policy framework will be used in conjunction with the Gambler's Help operational guidelines and the Gambler's Help performance management manual.

The *Problem Gambling Community Awareness and Education Strategy to 2010/11* provides an overarching strategy for the delivery of communication, partnership and education activities that complement the strategies in this document.

Policy context

The Department of Justice's response to addressing problem gambling reflects the objectives and policy context of *Growing Victoria Together* and *A Fairer Victoria – Strong People, Strong Communities* (*A Fairer Victoria*). Figure 1 illustrates how responses to problem gambling are embedded within this policy context.

Figure 1: Policy context for the delivery of problem gambling services

Growing Victoria Together	
High quality, accessible health and community services	Building friendly, confident and safe communities
⇩	
A Fairer Victoria – Strong People, Strong Communities	
Improving health and wellbeing	Developing liveable communities
⇩	
Taking action on problem gambling	
Action Area One	Action Area Three
Building better treatment services	Promoting healthy communities
⇩	
Strategic policy framework for Gambler's Help services	

1.1 Growing Victoria Together

In November 2001, the government launched its broad vision for the future, *Growing Victoria Together.* This publication describes the economic, social and environmental goals and actions that would go towards achieving this vision for Victoria. The refreshed edition, *Growing Victoria Together: A Vision for Victoria to 2010 and Beyond* (2005), outlines a vision for 'a stronger, more caring and innovative State'. It focuses on working more closely with the Victorian community to continuously improve services, community life and infrastructure. Elements of *Growing Victoria Together* that have provided directions for *Taking action on problem gambling: a strategy for combating problem gambling in Victoria* (*Taking action*) include:

- Working toward high quality, accessible health and community services. The emphasis is on ensuring that all Victorians receive appropriate services when they require them. Service delivery needs to address the fact that problem gambling issues and associated impacts affect not only the gambler themselves, but also their family and friends.
- Building friendly, confident and safe communities by facilitating strong support networks, services and infrastructure. It is recognised that stronger communities may act as a protective factor against the development of problem gambling issues.

1.2 A Fairer Victoria

A Fairer Victoria, launched in April 2005, outlines the Victorian Government's plan to address disadvantage within Victoria by creating opportunities and reducing the barriers to full participation in daily life experienced by those who are disadvantaged. The 5 to 10 year plan outlines the key social principles and the actions needed to improve the lives of disadvantaged people. *Taking action* is influenced by and interacts with all the key components of *A Fairer Victoria,* particularly the acknowledgement that social disadvantage may act as a determinant of problem gambling behaviour. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that global actions to reduce such disadvantage may contribute to a reduction in rates of problem gambling.

1.3 Taking action on problem gambling

The Victorian Government has clearly signalled its intention to make Victoria's response to problem gambling the most comprehensive and committed of any government in Australia. *Taking action* provides the overarching policy framework for this to happen.

Released in October 2006, *Taking action* combines public health, social regulation and consumer protection approaches to problem gambling. The government has committed funding of $132.3 million over five years to implement the broad range of strategies outlined in *Taking action.*

Both Action Area One, 'Building better treatment services' and Action Area Three 'Promoting healthy communities' provided the impetus for the redevelopment of the Gambler's Help service system that was undertaken in 2007. *Taking action's* primary focus is on fostering an effective Gambler's Help service system that includes public health measures designed to prevent problem gambling, as well as specialist intervention services for those requiring treatment for their problem gambling.

Within *Taking action,* the provision of effective Gambler's Help services is critical to the government's approach to combating problem gambling. It is therefore imperative that the best possible service system is in place to meet the diverse needs of problem gamblers and their families in Victoria.

This strategic framework has been developed to guide the implementation of new initiatives and directions foreshadowed in *Taking action.*

2 The Gambler's Help service system

The Gambler's Help service system will remain the cornerstone of the government's response to problem gambling and will continue to provide a professional, free of charge service to all Victorians. In order to achieve a coordinated, systematic and evidence based approach to combating the effects of problem gambling, the Gambler's Help service system is delivered by means of both regional and state wide client services. These services are supported by a number of state wide capacity building organisations. Figure 2 (p.7) provides a representation of the Gambler's Help service system.

2.1 Regional Gambler's Help services

The purpose of the regional Gambler's Help problem gambling services is to provide the following integrated and coordinated services within each of the eight Victorian State Government Regions:

- **Problem gambling casework services,** including:
  - ***Problem gambling counselling*** with the objective of reducing and minimising the harm caused by problem gambling for problem gamblers and their families by providing evidence based interventions across a range of practice modalities and practice settings.
  - ***Specialist portfolio services*** with the objective of developing strong linkages across problem gambling and mental health, alcohol and other drug, and family services to enable greater coordination of care and integration of specialist service responses for individuals and families experiencing gambling related harm and co-morbid conditions.
- **Specialist problem gambling financial counselling** with the objective of stabilising and improving the financial situation of problem gamblers and their families by providing information, advice and practical support—and in so doing, supporting and facilitating positive behavioural change in relation to problem gambling.
- **A Community education program** with the objective of delivering a range of planned activities (underpinned by a needs assessment process) that increase awareness of problem gambling, responsible gambling and help services, and that build community resilience through awareness raising, information and education provision, health promotion and provider education programs.
- **Recovery Assistance Program (RAP)** with the objective of providing material and financial assistance to individuals and their families when gambling has resulted in financial crisis. The aim is to provide this assistance in a way that does not facilitate or subsidise gambling behaviour, but that ensures that essential living needs are met.

2.2 Gambler's Help Line telephone and web based services

The Gambler's Help Line is an integral component of the Gambler's Help service system. The Gambler's Help Line is a 24-hour, seven days per week telephone service providing information, referral, counselling and support to problem gamblers and their family members. Gambler's Help Line interfaces with Gambler's Help face-to-face problem gambling counselling and financial counselling services provided at the regional level. This service is available to all Victorians via a state wide 1800 number.

Since July 2007, the Gambler's Help Line has established a scheduled, therapeutic telephone counselling program for people who are experiencing difficulty with a gambling related problem, but for whom face-to-face therapeutic counselling services may present difficulties.

The Gambler's Help Line is currently expanding its services to deliver these core services online.

2.3 Services to Indigenous Victorians

The objective of this initiative is to establish and implement Gambler's Help services for Indigenous communities. A research and needs analysis project for health promotion and best practice services for Indigenous communities was commissioned by the Department of Human Services (DHS) in 2003. The project made two key recommendations to better meet the needs of Indigenous communities:

- The implementation of a preventative care model, with a focus on community development, and strategies including community education and working in partnership with communities; and
- The provision of an enhanced Indigenous-specific counselling service network.

Two Indigenous services have been funded to meet these needs.

2.4 Services to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities

The Centre for Culture Ethnicity and Health (CEH) is funded to deliver the Victorian Multicultural Gambler's Help Program to support the problem gambling sector to work effectively with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) clients and communities.

The program provides a range of capacity building and training activities, as well as resource development and dissemination, to improve knowledge and awareness of the needs of CALD communities in relation to problem gambling.

2 The Gambler's Help service system

2.5 Problem Gambling Research and Treatment Centre

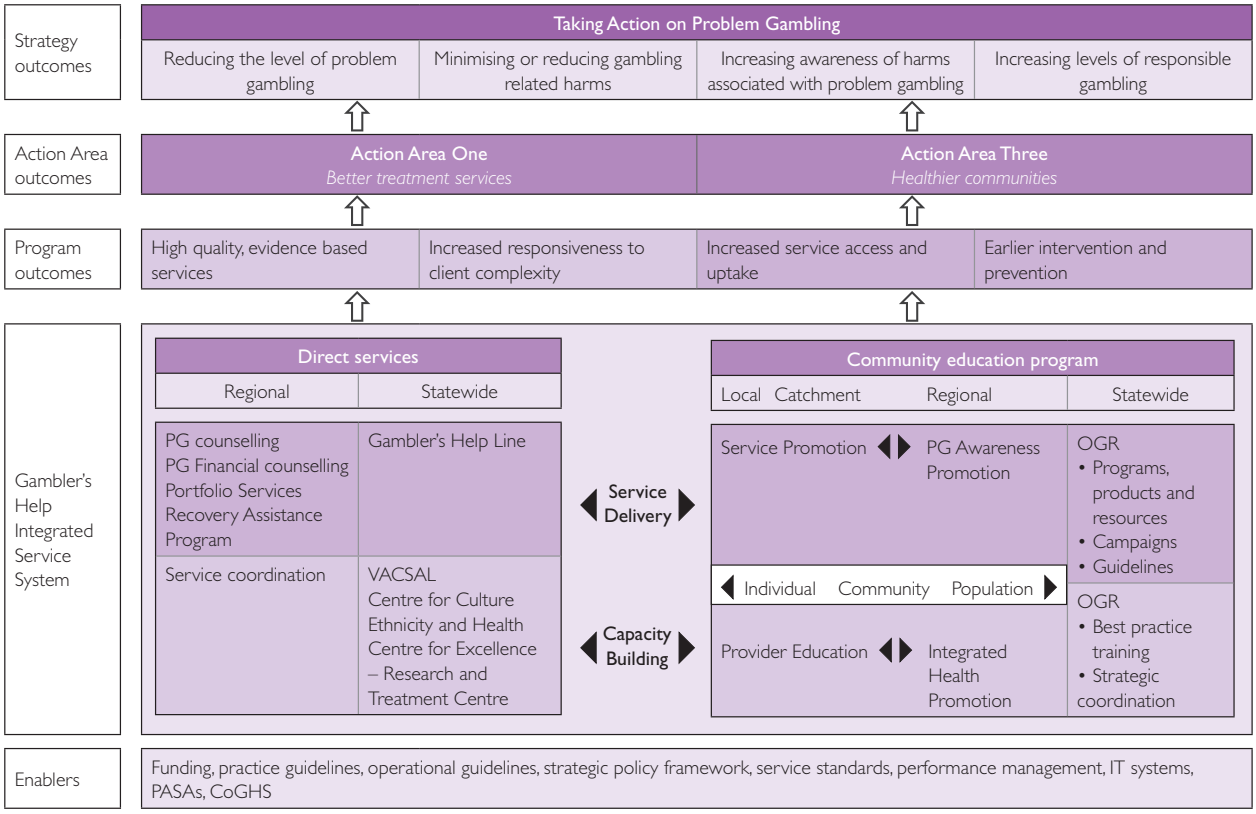
As part of *Taking action,* the Victorian Government has provided $4 million over four years to develop a problem gambling research and treatment centre (the Centre). The Centre will conduct research into interventions for people with gambling problems and others affected by these problems, with the objective of informing the design and delivery of treatment programs and the training of practitioners.

2.6 The Council of Gambler's Help Services (CoGHS)

The Victorian Government has funded CoGHS since 2002/03 as the peak body representing Gambler's Help services. CoGHS acts as a conduit between government and Gambler's Help services and provides advocacy, information sharing and professional development activities for its members.

CoGHS membership comprises each Gambler's Help service auspice agency, along with the providers of the new state wide services for CALD and Indigenous communities. The CoGHS Board comprises a representative of each member organisation (most often the service coordinator) and is responsible for setting the overall strategic directions for the Council.

Figure 2: Gambler's Help service system



3 Key challenges in the provision of problem gambling services

The Gambler's Help service system has constantly evolved over its relatively short history to meet the needs of individuals, families and communities around gambling related harm. Since its inception, this evolution has been greatly enhanced by significant funding from the Victorian Government, expanding the capacity to develop and implement new programs that will better respond to these needs. Service development has also been driven by a community expectation that high quality services be available to all Victorians to provide help to individuals and their families to recover from problem gambling and its associated impacts.

The Gambler's Help service system is highly responsive in meeting the demand for problem gambling services across Victoria. Those clients who receive services from Gambler's Help report an ability to access services readily when they seek them. However, not all people with a gambling problem or experiencing the adverse effects of someone else's gambling will take advantage of Gambler's Help services. The problem gambling clients who do present to Gambler's Help services represent a small percentage of all problem gamblers in Victoria, and the number of family members taking up services represents an even smaller proportion of those who may benefit from professional support and information. Furthermore, those clients who do seek help often do so some considerable time after they first recognise the problem, by which time gambling and its associated problems have reached crisis point and much damage has been done.

Key issues

The need to provide problem gambling services to more Victorians is equalled only by the need to provide those services as early as possible. The challenge for Gambler's Help service delivery is increasing service uptake before at risk gambling becomes problematic.

Responding to client complexity and providing services within and across a broader system of care is also key to meeting the needs of problem gamblers and their families. The challenge is to develop and deliver services that are better integrated and coordinated across the range of health and human services.

4 The way forward

In 2007, the government undertook redevelopment and repurchasing of the state wide Gambler's Help problem gambling service system. The primary objective of the Gambler's Help redevelopment project was to create a more responsive and flexible service system that would meet the policy objectives outlined in *Taking action*. The redeveloped service system has been designed to employ an evidence based whole-of-community approach founded on objective analysis, research and experience from other program areas across government.

The redevelopment process identified that improvements to problem gambling service delivery must address the following key needs:

- To be more responsive to complexity and the broader needs of the individual;
- To increase service access and service uptake;
- To intervene sooner rather than later; and
- To provide high quality, effective evidence based services.

These key needs are discussed in the following sections.

4.1 The need to ensure responsiveness to complexity and the broader needs of the individual

Key issues

Problem gambling rarely occurs in isolation

There is evidence of co-morbid conditions for problem gambling

Problem gamblers present for services with complex and severe issues

Client complexity may prevent access to Gambler's Help services for some clients

Alcohol and drug services, family services and mental health services are priority areas for joint action

Government recognises the importance of integration within and across service systems, particularly for groups of people with complex needs. For Gambler's Help services, this is particularly relevant. There is now a considerable body of national and international literature regarding the relationship between problem gambling and a range of other social and psychological issues.

Problem gamblers present to Gambler's Help services with high levels of stress, guilt, depression, anxiety, debts, relationship breakdown, employment, drug, alcohol, ill-health and legal problems. These issues often co-occur, compounding the impact on the individual and the family, and frequently resulting in people presenting in crisis. A recent survey indicated that the majority of clients experience between four and seven other issues in addition to their gambling and only a significant minority report having no other issues.[1] These data allude to a distinct and significant cohort of clients presenting to problem gambling services with multiple and complex needs.

Client data collected by Gambler's Help services indicate that:

- 62 percent of problem gamblers present to specialist problem gambling services with financial issues;
- 45 percent with family issues;
- 56 percent with interpersonal related issues; and

[1] KMPG (2008) Review of the Victorian Problem Gambling Strategy: Client Survey Results, p.36 (unpublished)

- 20 percent with physical symptoms.

Despite the clear association between problem gambling and other issues, whether problem gambling causes someone to experience these adverse impacts or whether problem gambling appears as a *symptom* of a person with a broader set of problems remains unclear. Notwithstanding the difficulty in establishing causality, it is the multiplicity and range of issues with which problem gamblers present that is of most significance to the delivery of services.

Despite this complexity, only a small proportion of clients report accessing a number of other services in addition to Gambler's Help. Of those who did, only a small proportion were accessing these services prior to their involvement with Gambler's Help.

The available research literature highlights a number of key areas of concern in relation to problems closely associated with problem gambling. The most prominent areas for problem gambling service delivery are:

- Mental health
- Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD)
- Family services.

Mental health. There are clear associations between problem gambling and a range of mental health conditions, as well as substance abuse. Co-morbidity, the co-existence of two or more psychiatric conditions, is a common occurrence amongst problem gamblers, in both community and treatment populations.

Recent research undertaken by the Victorian Government funded Problem Gambling Research and Treatment Centre sought to further investigate the risk and protective factors associated with problem gambling.[2] Applying a range of measures to assess alcohol and tobacco use, depression, distress and health status, the researchers found that people with gambling problems also have a series of psychological and behavioural co-morbidities:

- 35.7 percent of problem gamblers had a 'severe mental disorder' as defined by scores on the Kessler K10;
- The rate of 'likely hazardous alcohol use' for those in the problem gambling group (as measured by the WHO AUDIT) was 50 percent;
- The risk of depression in the problem gambling group was 71.4 percent; and
- The rate of daily smoking in the problem gambling group was 57.1 percent.

The study concluded that problem gamblers not only need treatment for their gambling but also for a range of other problems.

Research undertaken by the Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre in 2006 also provides a valuable snapshot of the characteristics of problem gamblers in a psychiatric population. The study sought to determine the prevalence of suicidal ideas or behaviours and to examine the extent of hypothesised risk factors for suicide in people with gambling problems. The study found that:

- The prevalence of problem gambling in the psychiatric population was more than four times that of the general community; and
- Depression and substance abuse were commonly occurring problems among people with gambling problems.

[2] Thomas, S. and Jackson, A. (2008) Risk and Protective Factors in Problem Gambling (unpublished preliminary report)

4 The way forward

In light of this, the following recommendations were made:

- Education about the need for inclusion of screening for gambling problems for clients of mental health services is warranted; and
- The linkage of people with mental health and gambling problems with specialist problem gambling services is indicated to improve access to care and reduce the time it takes for this access to occur.

Family and relationship problems. Problem gambling impacts adversely on different areas of the individual gambler's health and wellbeing. These adverse impacts also extend into the family and beyond. Research indicates that on average, seven other people will be affected by one person's gambling problem. Accordingly, Gambler's Help services need to take into account the needs of families as a result of excessive gambling of a family member.

Research has described a range of negative health and social consequences for family members associated with adult problem gamblers. These effects have been identified in partners, siblings, children and parents. Family issues include dysfunctional relationships, loss of family income, neglect, violence and abuse. The key themes in the research are as follows:

Family breakdown. The Productivity Commission's National Gambling survey suggested that just under one in ten problem gamblers reported a split with partners due to gambling. This was 90 times higher than for non-problem regular gamblers.

Impact on Children. Studies support the view that children who live in an environment where gambling is a problem may be exposed to consequences of financial difficulties, marital discord, and inconsistent and confusing parental behaviour. These children may become socially isolated, physically and emotionally deprived, feel abandoned, angry, depressed and suicidal. Studies also suggest children of problem gamblers may suffer from stress related illnesses such as asthma and allergies and perform poorly in school due to anxiety about themselves and the stability of their family.

Transgenerational effects. A number of other researchers have also shown a link between parental problem gambling and the likelihood of the child taking up gambling in later life, with children of problem gamblers four times more likely to gamble than their peers. Recent research into risk and protective factors found that 42.9 percent of problem gamblers had an immediate family member with problem gambling behaviours as opposed to only 14 percent of non-problem gamblers. Studies clearly indicate that heightened levels of parental gambling are associated with greater frequency, earlier onset and elevated incidence of problem gambling in children and adolescents.

Alcohol and drug issues. Studies have also noted high rates of co-morbidity with drug and alcohol problems. For example, Maccallum et. al. reported that 24 percent of treatment seeking problem gamblers had alcohol abuse problems.[3] Lesieur found that 15 percent of alcoholics also had a gambling problem.[4] Data from treatment providers in the Netherlands suggested that 7.7 percent of problem gamblers seeking help had a secondary alcohol problem and 8.9 percent a drug problem.[5] Just as treatment for other dependencies may need to take account of secondary gambling problems, so too must counselling for problem gambling deal with co-morbidities. Problem gambling may exacerbate other dependencies, which in turn may exacerbate problem gambling.[6]

These co-morbidities require of services a greater responsiveness to the complexity of issues that problem gamblers may be experiencing.

[3] F. Maccallum et. al. (2003) 'Pathological gambling and co-morbid substance abuse' ANZJP 36 411-15, in ibid.
[4] H. Lesieur et. al. (1986) 'Alcoholism, drug abuse, and gambling' ACER 10 33-38, in ibid.
[5] Productivity Commission Inquiry Report (1999) 'Australia's Gambling Industries' Report No. 10 AusInfo Canberra. p.7.25
[6] Ibid.

PRIORITY ACTIVITIES AND ENABLERS

4.1.1 Cross sectoral interventions

'Joining up services to meet the needs of clients'

Where problem gambling is identified within other specialist service systems, it is not likely to be the most significant presenting issue for the individual or for the worker. Referral to Gambler's Help services may be more likely to result in non-attendance or early dropout for this cohort.

New approaches are required that will develop strong linkages across service boundaries. These linkages will enable greater coordination of care and integration of specialist service responses for individuals and families experiencing gambling related harm. This is important for providing a service to problem gamblers, particularly those with complex needs who are less likely to take up specialist problem gambling services. Problem gambling may be one factor in a complex array of interpersonal, intrapersonal and health problems. From this perspective, the problem gambling may be seen as a low order priority for an individual in addressing their needs. Presentation to services requires some insight into the gambling behaviour, but for some clients, the more immediate impacts of problem gambling may be more salient than concerns about the underlying behaviour.

This cross sectoral work needs to focus on alternative engagement options for people who experience gambling related issues. It must also give the opportunity to clients to maintain their primary therapeutic relationships in other services, while still receiving a specialist problem gambling intervention involving Gambler's Help services.

New directions

Government will continue to progress this cross program work at an interdepartmental level to ensure that the opportunities for cross sectoral responses to problem gambling are in place on the ground.

Problem gamblers may present to other services to address the impacts of their problem gambling. A specialist portfolio services program will operate that locates Gambler's Help staff at the nexus of specialist problem gambling and the broader system of care. Funding has been provided to Gambler's Help services for a specialist portfolio services program, with dedicated specialist positions that will work in collaboration with mental health services, alcohol and drug services, and family services to progress this collaborative work. These dedicated workers will undertake relationship building, planning and capacity building activities, as well as developing direct client services in partnership with these priority program areas.

4 The way forward

4.1.2 Common assessment practices

'Understanding and meeting the presenting need'

A formal assessment process is an integral component of any service delivery program. It provides the basis for developing a case plan that meets the presenting needs of clients. A thorough assessment at the beginning of the intervention allows services to measure the effectiveness of the intervention at various points, and provides a basis for assessing the impact of subsequent treatment. As there have been no standard or common assessment procedures in the past, it is not clear to what extent the holistic needs of Gambler's Help clients are complex, or indeed severe, despite what is known about co-morbid and co-presenting issues.

Assessment should begin in the first session with the individual and include use of a valid screening tool, the results of which give an indication of the extent of the problem. Within an integrated service system, there are advantages in the application of the same screening tool across agencies, particularly as it will be necessary to undertake pre and post assessment of the client to measure effectiveness outcomes.

Recording the screening results for all individuals provides:

- One form of data pertaining to the profile and intensity of need for services; and
- A baseline measure to inform a subsequent assessment of outcomes at case closure and at follow up points.

An assessment protocol ensures that processes expected to be used during this process are consistently implemented. This protocol includes items such as:

- Provision of information pertaining to personal rights, such as privacy, consent and complaints;
- The processes for establishing agreement with the individual regarding contact mechanisms (for example, whether or not the individual wishes to be contacted at home); and
- An assessment of any potential risks for the counsellor associated with providing subsequent sessions in an external setting (for instance in client's home).

Assessment can also be used to provide further indications as to the extent of the presenting problems. Within an integrated service system, consistent screening and assessment processes across providers also allow the monitoring of outcomes within the service system.

4.1.3 Service coordination and integration

'Integrating with the broader system of care providers'

There is increasing recognition of the importance of integration within service systems, particularly for groups of people with complex needs. Gambler's Help services operate within a broader human services system in which there are diverse agencies, programs and types of providers. For example, GPs are a professional group that has the potential to play a significant role in identifying and responding to problem gambling presentations.

Strengthening the linkages with other services and providers potentially results in increased appropriate referrals to Gambler's Help. As connections with other services and providers strengthen, partnerships with relevant services can be forged to provide holistic approaches to the management of clients with complex service needs. Many people with gambling problems have multiple needs, and the potential to provide an integrated approach to meeting the

spectrum of their service needs is maximised through effective partnerships with multiple services.

Integration and coordination with agencies involved in the Department of Human Services Primary Care Partnerships (PCP) platform is essential. This is on account of the multiplicity of presenting issues of problem gamblers and the public health framework within which problem gambling services sit. The framework and resources available through the PCP initiative are both relevant to problem gambling services and readily integrated, doing away with the need to re-invent approaches to needs identification, assessment and care planning.

The adoption of the PCP framework and tools will improve continuity of care and increase responsiveness to users of Gambler's Help treatment services. It is part of an approach that seeks to strengthen working relationships between Gambler's Help services and the range of other health and human services agencies.

Working closely with PCPs brings consistency to service coordination, and allows Problem Gambling services to maximise the efficacy of all components of this operational framework. It enhances the robustness and value of each stage of client interaction: from initial contact and needs identification, through to service specific, specialist and comprehensive assessments, and coordinated care planning.[7]

New directions

Through more active involvement in PCPs and by adopting and using the Service Coordination principles and practices, Gambler's Help agencies will have a set of mechanisms in place at the nexus of specialist problem gambling services, and a broader system of care for the referral of clients with complex and multiple needs.

The PCP framework will greatly assist other health and welfare professionals to identify problem gambling and make referrals to Gambler's Help. As well, Gambler's Help providers will identify the broader range of presenting issues for their clients, and more easily make cross referrals with the use of common referral tools and protocols. These referral processes are intended to ensure a more seamless, client centred approach to responding to the multiple needs of problem gamblers and their families.

Additionally, Service Coordination offers new opportunities for care planning to occur across services, so that specialist problem gambling interventions can integrate effectively with the other needs of the client through inter-agency care plans.

[7] DHS (2001) Better Access to Services – A Policy and Operational Framework

4 The way forward

4.2 The need to increase service access and service uptake

Key issues

Client numbers for problem gambling counselling are trending slightly downwards

A significant but comparatively small percentage of problem gamblers seek help

Service uptake can be improved by addressing service access barriers

Referral rates across Gambler's Help services and other health and welfare professionals appear low, given client complexity

Some people affected by gambling may not be ready to seek counselling but may be interested in exploring options

There are three main pathways to help for clients: self referral, professional referral and outreach of the service to the client. Further strengthening each of these pathways is important for ensuring that services reach their intended target groups.

Client numbers have slightly decreased for problem gambling counselling in recent years, while increasing for financial counselling over the same period. Overall, the number of clients across the two Gambler's Help programs has remained stable over the past five years. Renewed effort in increasing the uptake of Gambler's Help services is required, particularly improving access to problem gambling counselling services.

To understand better the challenges in increasing service uptake, it is useful to know how problem gamblers and their families access Gambler's Help services. It is also useful to know why some problem gamblers do not access available services. In order to increase service uptake services must be accessible to those who need them, when they need them. Services must also be highly responsive to the particular needs of the client and their levels of motivation and readiness to make change.

Professionals in other practice settings have a role to play in identifying problem gambling in the context of their own practice and making referrals to Gambler's Help services. However, in a recent survey in Eastern metropolitan Melbourne,[8] of 44 community services staff responding to a questionnaire, none reported methods in place specifically to identify gambling related problems. Gambling was identified only when the client self identified. This is of concern given that many people with a gambling related problem do not disclose due to the shame and stigma associated with gambling.

There is recognition among community service workers that more training is needed, as well as greater capacity to collect data concerning clients with a gambling related problem. Community service providers may have suspicions about clients having a gambling related problem, but not know how to further investigate and respond.

[8] Graffam, J. and Southgate, R. (2005) From Pokies to Problems: Gambling and the Impact on Community Services in Eastern Melbourne,

PRIORITY ACTIVITIES AND ENABLERS

4.2.1 Improving the referral pathways

'Opening all available doors'

Self referral. The majority of clients of Gambler's Help services are self referred or have been referred by a friend or family member. This pathway is reliant on the ability to recognise the potential risk of gambling behaviour in oneself or another, and an awareness of the services available to respond to problem gambling. Moreover, help seeking for some people may be further complicated by a number of other issues, such as:

- *Shame and stigma.* Problem gamblers may perceive that others will judge them harshly, and this can often prevent them from seeking help.
- *Fear of speaking up.* It is difficult for gamblers to admit that they have a gambling problem. This fear can be magnified in small communities, where confidentiality is difficult to guarantee. Problem gambling counsellors, particularly in rural and migrant communities, recognise this as an issue for their clients.

New directions

Community education is also critical in raising awareness of the risks and signs of problem gambling, so that people can recognise when their gambling is causing them or others in their life harm. It is also important in promoting services so that people understand where they can go to seek the help they need.

A Problem Gambling Community Education and Awareness Strategy developed by the Department of Justice will underpin and inform community education activities undertaken as part of the program.

The Problem Gambling community education program delivered by Gambler's Help has a clear role to play as part of the broader community education strategy in reducing shame and stigma, so that more people will feel comfortable to seek the help they require. The way that Gambler's Help services are located and promoted is also important in ensuring the fear of being identified as a problem gamblers is minimised.

Professional referrals. The proportion of referrals to Gambler's Help services from other non-problem gambling health and welfare professionals is low. Problem gamblers' patterns of concurrent or sequential help seeking to meet their multiple and holistic needs across services are unknown. However, it is likely that health and welfare workers outside the Gambler's Help service network are often the first port of call for people seeking help. Workers in these other settings may not be aware of how to identify problem gambling or how to respond appropriately.

New directions

The introduction of a 'provider education' program will provide information and training to other professionals to help them recognise the signs of problem gambling, make appropriate referrals and coordinate responses to clients' needs with Gambler's Help counsellors. This will be further strengthened by the adoption of Service Coordination principles and practices that will more effectively link Gambler's Help services with other health and human services.

4.2.2 Providing more outreach

'Bringing the service to the client'

Outreach provides support for problem gamblers and their families in the home or community environment. It may be the preferred approach for ongoing work with the client or family due to issues such as transport or disability, or when the home is an appropriate location for the intervention. While centre based services may be appropriate for particular interventions, other interventions may be more effective if conducted outside a professional environment. Where shame and stigma prevent the client presenting for centre based counselling, outreach may provide an opportunity for the client to receive a service they would not otherwise pursue.

New directions

Gambler's Help services will develop processes to strengthen delivery of 'out-of-office' services. This will increase flexibility in service delivery while ensuring the safety of workers.

4.2.3 Increasing the service offer

'Providing more choice'

In addition to increasing accessibility through improved client pathways to services, Gambler's Help programs need to be responsive to the range of needs that people have in relation to their problem gambling. It is well accepted that help seeking behaviour is largely determined by an individual's 'readiness to change'. That is, while some people have acknowledged that their gambling is causing them harm and are ready to address the behaviour, others may not be ready to commit to counselling and may prefer less intensive or confronting assistance at that point.

By broadening the range of services to include less intensive, self paced and more accessible offerings, it is intended that clients who may otherwise not commit to face-to-face counselling will address their gambling behaviour and that this will take place earlier.

It is therefore important that the range of services gives individuals options that they are comfortable with. That is, rather than making an open disclosure of the gambling problem to a professional counsellor, someone concerned with their gambling may prefer to explore issues online where their identity need not be disclosed. They may choose to access self help materials that will allow them to explore the issues at their own pace without fear of being identified as having a gambling problem.

The range of services offered by the Gambler's Help service system will be expanded over time to increase the ways in which people can obtain information and support for their gambling problems. These services will include:

New directions

A therapeutic telephone based counselling program.

Online information, counselling and support, 24 hours, 7 days a week.

An email based support program, aimed at supporting clients to sustain the changes they have made in more formal modes of counselling.

Peer support programs that will provide support for recovering problem gamblers, delivered by ex-problem gamblers with the 'lived experience' of problem gambling.

4.2.4 Increasing the service access points

'No wrong door to Gambler's Help services'

The wide range of presenting issues for problem gamblers across the areas of primary health, family services, drug and alcohol and mental health domains signals the need for an integrated service system that can respond appropriately to a range of needs. Given the wide range of presenting issues for problem gamblers, the problem gambling service system needs to facilitate easy access entry points for clients from a range of other service systems. Similarly, problem gambling services require a set of relationships with services in the primary, community and mental health sectors in responding holistically to the needs of problem gamblers, their families and friends.

New directions

By integrating more closely with the Service Coordination practices of Primary Care Partnerships (PCPs), the potential for problem gambling to be identified as a co-presenting issue in other service systems is increased. These practices will be underpinned by the introduction of provider education services that will train other professionals to use recognised screening tools and make referrals to Gambler's Help services, with the client's consent.

An integrated Information Technology platform, with the PCPs Service Coordination Tools at the front end, will be used by all Gambler's Help providers to integrate effectively with the case management and referral processes of other agencies.

4.2.5 Increasing the hours of service

'Services available when they are needed'

A significant proportion of people seeking help in relation to their gambling or the gambling of another are in full time employment or have other commitments. In order to be able to access assistance, services need to be accessible at a time that does not conflict with other responsibilities.

While the government makes available problem gambling information, support and advice to all Victorians 24 hours a day, seven days a week through funding to the Gambler's Help Line, Victorians should also have access to local ongoing face-to-face counselling services that are responsive to clients' time commitments.

New directions

Gambler's Help services will provide services that are more flexible in working around the other commitments that clients have by providing before and after hours services during the working week, and where possible, on Saturday mornings.

4 The way forward

4.2.6 Making services culturally relevant

'Looking through a cultural lens'

There is limited empirical research evidence concerning the role of culture in gambling. What research is available suggests there may be important cultural variations in gambling behaviours, problem gambling prevalence and help seeking. It is imperative that cultural competency underpin effective service delivery if Gambler's Help services are to expect adequate service uptake from CALD and Indigenous communities.

A study undertaken in 2000 showed much higher rates of problem gambling in the non-English language groups examined than in the general Australian community.[9] Gambler's Help providers need to plan and deliver services that are respectful of and responsive to these cultural variations. Gambler's Help providers need to be responsive to issues of cultural and linguistic diversity. This may be through accessing cultural competency training, the provision of translating and interpreting services, in-language counselling and casework services, and shared care/co-counselling arrangements with ethno-specific community agencies.

CALD communities are not homogenous. The needs of each cultural group across Victoria in relation to problem gambling vary significantly. A culturally competent, sensitive and responsive service system is needed to meet the needs of both established and newly arrived communities.

Cultural relevance is also a significant consideration in providing effective and accessible services for Indigenous people. Several barriers are known to impede Indigenous use of mainstream and community controlled services. These include issues around trust, shame and stigma, lack of clarity about what services do, and about what can be expected from them.

While empirical research is limited, problem gambling prevalence estimates among Indigenous people range up to 15 times greater than for the general Australian population. Furthermore, Indigenous communities exhibit many of the risk factors associated with problem gambling. For this reason, service planning and delivery need to be cognisant not only of cultural issues and barriers, but also of structural factors such as generational economic disadvantage, levels of employment and education.

Collectively, the Gambler's Help service system needs to be able to support Indigenous communities to build service capacity and to support Indigenous people and families to access culturally competent mainstream and Aboriginal-specific problem gambling services.

New directions

Responsiveness to needs and issues specific to culture and language is required in the provision of both direct services to Gambler's Help clients and community education activities. To build capacity around CALD problem gambling, Gambler's Help providers will be facilitated by the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health (CEH). CEH acts as the central conduit that is funded to provide information and advice in the areas of service planning, design and capacity building.

For Indigenous communities, several initiatives have been undertaken that seek to address the dual challenges around direct service delivery and community education. Using a range of demographic and community profiling tools, Regional Needs Analyses allow Gambler's Help services to identify Indigenous needs at a local level, and optimise regional resources to meet these needs. Community Education Plans help services to target identified groups and needs in the community, including services addressing Indigenous communities. Additionally, two specialist services have been funded to provide direct services to Indigenous communities and to work with Gambler's Help Services.

[9] Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority (2000) The Impact of Gaming on Specific Cultural Groups

4.3 The need to intervene sooner rather than later

Key issues

There is often a significant time delay between problem recognition and action

Delayed action often results in 'snowballing' of impacts and ensuing crisis

Working 'upstream' can protect against the development of gambling problems

Intervening sooner prevents the development of problem gambling ('prevention') and minimises the harm that might otherwise arise from unchecked problem gambling behaviour ('early intervention'). Priority areas for action include raising community awareness about problem gambling, training other professionals to identify and link people into Gambler's Help services, and service system design and service delivery that increase the chance of individuals taking up services when they first need them, and not when they are in crisis.

PRIORITY ACTIVITIES AND ENABLERS

4.3.1 Early intervention

'Acting early to minimise the harms of problem gambling'

Published international research indicates that an average of five years elapses between the experience of the initial problem caused by gambling and the first attempt to seek treatment. A recent survey of clients of Gambler's Help services found that clients typically wait six months or more from the time they first realise they have a problem to when they contact Gambler's Help. Regardless of the duration of the delay in help seeking, it is likely that problems for the gambler escalate as the behaviour continues untreated during this time, resulting in increased complexity and severity when individuals then finally present to services.

New directions

Providing services sooner rather than later is made possible by providing service and health promotion information through the community education program to people in known at risk groups. This information will help them to recognise the early signs of a gambling problem and make them aware of available services to take early action to address the problem before it escalates. Increasing the awareness and knowledge of other health professionals is key to identifying problem gambling at different points in the service system. Training professionals likely to come into contact with clients with problem gambling issues is important so that they know what to look for, and how to respond.

Providing services earlier also means removing the barriers to help seeking, by making services more accessible, more relevant, more responsive, and by offering a greater range of service options.

4 The way forward

4.3.2 Prevention

'Acting before the problem sets in'

Research is beginning to provide a clearer understanding of the range of factors that are associated with problem gambling. It remains unclear whether these factors are precursors to problem gambling, whether they arise as a result of problem gambling, or whether they simply coexist without any causal relationship. Regardless of the relationship, they are observed at significantly different levels amongst people with a gambling problem than amongst non-problem gambling groups. These factors may either be protective (that is, the presence of the factor will protect against problem gambling development) or pose a risk to the individual (that is, the presence of the factor will increase the likelihood of a problem developing).

The risk factors include:

- Having a serious mental disorder;
- Having an immediate family member with a gambling problem;
- Being depressed;
- Consuming alcohol at hazardous levels;
- Having been divorced;
- Being a daily smoker; and
- Having low social capital.

Social capital measures the extent to which people are connected with and supported by their friends, family and local communities. Having social and family supports, or conversely the lack of them, is therefore an important protective or risk factor for problem gambling activity. Identifying individuals and communities with low social capital provides opportunities to target health and service promotion and to develop community level programs that are designed to build people's connections with family, community and society.

'Upstream' problem gambling health promotion refers to health promotion activities that look more broadly than just the gambling behaviour. Working upstream means that a person's overall social wellbeing is being considered. This is done with a view to increasing protective factors and reducing risk factors associated with problem gambling. For example, an upstream activity would be working with other partners on mental health and wellbeing activities and social connectedness.

The term 'integrated health promotion' refers to agencies and communities in a Primary Care Partnership (PCP) catchment (or local area) working together to integrate a mix of health promotion interventions and capacity building strategies. Integrated health promotion addresses priority health and wellbeing issues identified in that catchment. The health promotion interventions are based on the social model of health and the Ottawa Charter, and focus on the social determinants of health at a population level.

Leveraging off a broader set of health promotion activities across community services through integrated health promotion may present new opportunities for better health promotion effort that has the potential to increase protective factors and reduce risk factors for problem gambling. These activities may include common planning processes, capacity building approaches, and enhanced coordination of health promotion across relevant health and human services.

The Gambler's Help service system can benefit from effective and productive partnerships with other organisations. They can also contribute to the realisation of broad health objectives such as promoting mental health, wellbeing and social connectedness.

New directions

The established capacity building, change management, planning and best practice approaches of the Primary Care Partnerships (PCPs) Integrated Health Promotion program will be harnessed. This will be in addition to a refocusing of community education activity undertaken by Gambler's Help services. The community education program will be spread across a continuum of activity. Within this framework, the 'upstream' prevention will occur as part of integrated health promotion, and the more targeted 'downstream' health and service promotion to at risk groups will be delivered by Gambler's Help services.

The Department of Human Services PCPs provide an already well established platform across a number of service systems, through which to drive collaborative approaches and strengthen integrated health promotion in the problem gambling area. Local Gambler's Help agencies will be required to work with PCPs to ensure local initiatives are planned, delivered and evaluated as part of integrated health promotion.

Additionally, problem gambling funding provided by the Department of Justice directly to PCPs will ensure that problem gambling will receive priority attention and that an enduring and effective partnership with Gambler's Help services will develop. This is important in ensuring sustainable responses to problem gambling issues across the health and human service system.

4.4 The need to provide high quality, effective evidence based services

Key issues

There is a lack of published research about treatment effectiveness in problem gambling

Historically, data collection has focused on measuring service activity rather than client or service outcomes

Strengthening the outcome focused evidence base and embedding these learnings into future service delivery models and service practice will result in a more responsive and effective service system

Available literature confirms that problem gamblers who seek help from services generally experience improvement. However, systematic research on treatment effectiveness is considerably underdeveloped. The Victorian Government is committed to strengthening the capacity of Gambler's Help services to deliver evidence based service responses through continuing to fund independent state wide gambling treatment and prevention research.

Gambler's Help services have a valuable role to play in contributing to the international evidence on service effectiveness. To date, however, this capacity has been hampered by the output based focus of performance management activities. Specifically, there has been a notable absence of agreed quality, outcome and impact measures, particularly relating to community education activities.

Concomitantly, associated data instruments and data collection approaches, including client satisfaction surveys, have

4 The way forward

been inconsistently developed and implemented across the state. These inconsistencies, in combination with the lack of an effective feedback loop to service providers for data captured, have significantly impeded service planning and quality improvement at the local as well as sector level.

4.4.1 Planned approach to designing and delivering services

'Understanding and responding to need'

Significant changes are required to enhance the ability of the problem gambling sector to answer key questions relating to the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery and to use this information to drive service delivery improvements.

Evidence based service planning based on a rational and formal approach to needs assessment requires a more consistent application across the service system. This is critical to ensuring that service delivery is more closely aligned with the needs of the community and with practice approaches that have been shown to work best in meeting those needs.

There is a requirement for more of Gambler's Help service activity to be plan based, and informed by a formal process of needs assessment. This includes both direct services to clients as well as the range of funded community education and partnership service activities.

Through close involvement with integrated health promotion processes, Gambler's Help services will work with Primary Care Partnerships. They will provide expert advice on problem gambling health promotion deliverables, to ensure that the problem gambling community education program is coordinated with a range of planning processes undertaken at the local level.

New directions

Improvement in this area will focus on building the capacity and capability of Gambler's Help services to plan effective service delivery and have a highly skilled workforce to deliver these services.

Gambler's Help providers will develop plans for service delivery activities based on a common needs assessment process undertaken triennially. Gambler's Help services will draw on the needs assessment to inform service configuration and program design so that it best responds to the needs of vulnerable communities, including CALD and Indigenous.

This comprehensive needs assessment process will inform the development of annual plans for community education and direct client services. It will draw on a number of sources of information relevant to the incidence and prevalence of problem gambling as well as the views of relevant stakeholders in the provision of services to clients.

4.4.2 More consistent practice in delivering services

'Finding a common approach that works'

In moving towards a more effective and integrated service system, Gambler's Help services will move toward greater consistency in practice, while ensuring there is sufficient flexibility in responding to the needs of different client groups.

A variety of service delivery mechanisms exists to assist Gambler's Help services to determine the nature and extent of problem gambling issues and apply the most appropriate intervention. It is desirable however, that these assessments and interventions be applied to all clients through a consistent casework process across the service system.

A recent review highlighted that there are varied processes for intake, referral, assessment, management and follow up of clients.[10] As a result, an inconsistent standard of information is being collected relating to problem gamblers and their associated issues across services. Referrals currently come from multiple sources. Providers apply differing intake processes to referrals they receive, and document referral processes variably. Similarly, referral processes to other health and human service professionals vary and would benefit from formalisation and strengthening across the sector.

Some Gambler's Help agencies provide a maintenance service as a follow up service following more intensive treatment. However, follow up processes are undertaken across the sector on a differing basis, and are usually used for clients who may have missed an appointment rather than as a mechanism to provide ongoing support to a client.

New directions

A client focused approach concerned with the range of presenting issues is the preferred approach to service delivery. Effective intake, initial assessment and ongoing assessment will facilitate the engagement of clients with services and promote effective intervention. Problem gambling casework will be underpinned by common assessment practices to inform decision making about the types of services and interventions that are specific to the needs of individual clients. Clients will be actively involved in the development, implementation and review of case plans.

New data collection and follow up practices will see Gambler's Help services make contact with clients who have completed care plans. This will be to monitor how they are managing their gambling problems after they have completed treatment.

The Gambler's Help service system will work together to make systematic improvements to casework methods in the areas of referral, intake, assessment, secondary consultation, maintenance and follow up practices. They will collaborate with Primary Care Partnerships member organisations and other providers in the broader system of care, to achieve greater service integration at various phases in the casework process. Likewise, local Gambler's Help services will improve integration with the Gambler's Help Line to ensure seamless and coordinated service delivery.

Clear operational guidelines in relation to the model of service delivery will underpin these common approaches.

[10] KPMG (2007) Review of the Victorian Gambling Strategy: Service Delivery Model, p.12 (unpublished)

4.4.3 Improved performance management

'Monitoring the delivery of effective, quality services'

At the core of improved performance management is a performance management manual that ensures accountability and continuous improvement in the delivery of programs and services. It provides the tools and processes to measure whether service delivery is meeting the objectives of the Gambler's Help service system as a whole.

The Victorian Government's policies *Growing Victorian Together* and *A Fairer Victoria* provide a strong context for a focus on service quality. A quality culture, underpinned by a commitment to evidence and learning, is important for all service delivery systems, including Gambler's Help services, and is a key aspect of an effective performance management approach. It would incorporate quality standards and the measurement of Key Performance Indicators. It would also improve partnership arrangements between Program and Service Advisers (PASAs) and funded agencies in relation to understanding the specific opportunities and constraints to local service delivery.

OGR is committed to working closely with the Gambler's Help sector to develop and implement a comprehensive performance management framework. This framework would underpin the introduction of sector wide outcome based performance assessment, quality assurance and continuous improvement measures.

New directions

Greater emphasis on service improvement in addition to accountability.

Key performance indicators that clearly distinguish between outcome achievement and service delivery performance.

Performance monitoring and self assessment by providers as well as regular performance feedback and assessment by the Office of Gaming and Racing.

Further development of evaluation at the practice, program and strategy levels.

4.4.4 Innovative practices

'Thinking outside the square'

In the absence of clear evidence to inform the delivery of effective services, a culture of learning is needed that will allow the testing of service innovations, build the evidence base, and respond to problem gambling in creative ways. Recognising that innovative approaches often come from the grass roots up, a new innovation program is being developed that will provide support for the systematic evaluation of new and emerging practice and service innovations.

New directions

A submission based Problem Gambling Innovation Grants Program will be established. This will support the development and evaluation of innovation projects that will augment the evidence base on problem gambling and improve organisational capacity to respond effectively to problem gambling.

The Program will be a key enabler in driving many of the developmental and change management requirements of the new Gambler's Help service model.

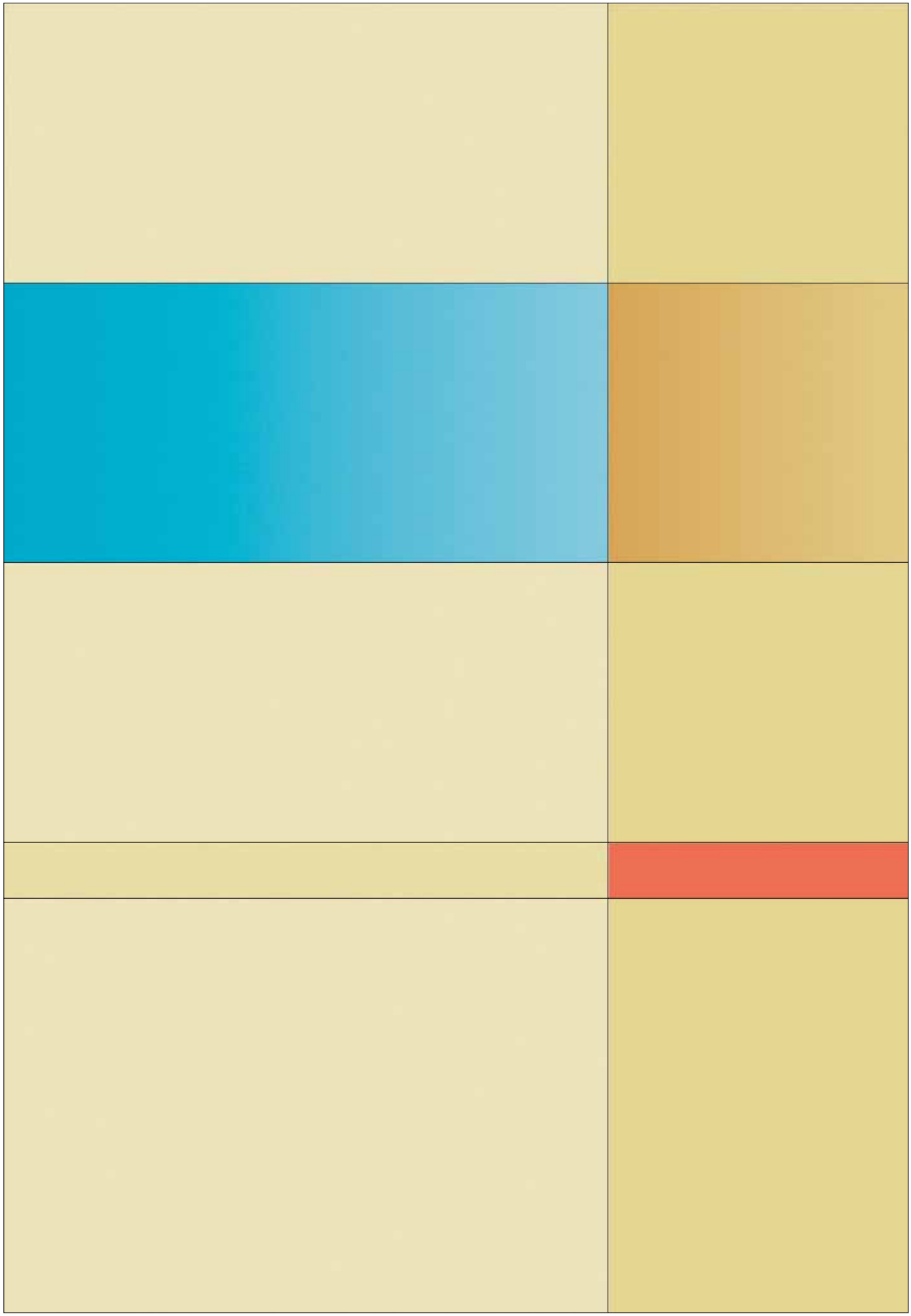
Authorised by the Victorian Government, Melbourne.

Department of Justice
121 Exhibition Street Melbourne 3000

November 2008

© Copyright State of Victoria, Department of Justice 2008

This publication is copyright. No part may be reproduced by any process except in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Designed by Think Productions
3/2-6 New St Richmond 3121

Printed by Stream Solutions
Level 3 157 Spring Street Melbourne 3000