

## **NSW Council on Problem Gambling**

### **1. Introduction**

The NSW Council on Problem Gambling is a non-profit, non-affiliated organisation whose only form of funding is through membership fees. It takes a neutral stand on gambling. It advocates and promotes responsible gambling. Both the Executive and wider membership offer their expertise and time on an honorary basis. There is a currently a membership of forty consisting of welfare and community agencies, counsellors, psychiatrists, psychologists, financial counsellors, academics, researchers, clergy and community workers. The New South Wales Council on Problem Gambling has acted as the peak body in NSW and has been at the forefront of community awareness and political lobbying since it's formation in 1986.

### **2. Aims and Objectives**

- ◆ To promote responsible gambling
- ◆ To take no position either for or against gambling
- ◆ Support the need for problem gamblers to receive recognition and treatment
- ◆ Assess trends in the gambling industry
- ◆ Promote community education aimed at government and community awareness on the nature of problem gambling
- ◆ Actively encourage the development of appropriate programs (and when required offer expertise) for the treatment of problem gamblers and their families
- ◆ Promote the awareness of problem gambling as a treatable disorder
- ◆ To inform individuals responsible for the administration of justice of the existence and affects of problem gambling
- ◆ To conduct seminars, meetings, conferences and awareness campaigns
- ◆ To disseminate printed information about problem gambling and it's effects
- ◆ To gather statistical information relevant to problem gambling
- ◆ Provide information on services and referral facilities

### 3. Effects on family and extended family

One problem gambler may effect up to 10 people.

Loss of trust

Family denies that the problem exists

Tends to minimise addressing the problem

Extra jobs to compensate loss of earnings

Lies/deceit

Marriage breakup

Financial chaos

Family breakdown

Power and control

Family illness

### 4. Bankruptcy

20% of clients seen at one agency for financial counselling filed voluntary bankruptcy due to their gambling addiction. These statistics will never show with Insolvency Trustee Service of Australia due to Bankruptcy Legislation, Section 271, due to the possible ramifications to the client.

#### Section 271 – Gambling or Hazardous Speculations

A person who has become a bankrupt after the commencement of this Act and:

(a) within 2 years before the presentation of the petition on which, or by virtue of the presentation of which, he or she became a bankrupt, whether the petition was presented before or after the commencement of this Act, materially contributed to, or increased the extent of, his or her insolvency;  
or

(b) during any period between the presentation of that petition and the date on which he or she became a bankrupt, lost any of his or her property; by gambling or by speculations that, having regard to his or her financial position at the time and any other material circumstance, were rash and hazardous, being

gambling or speculations not connected with a trade or business carried on by him or her, is guilty of an offence and is punishable, on conviction, by imprisonment for a period not exceeding 1 year.

### 5. Crime

The increase in demands for agencies to assist gamblers who have committed a crime, such as fraud, theft, embezzlement, to feed their gambling addiction. This in turn becomes costly to both government and the community. Often victims of

these crimes are unable to receive any compensation as the problem gambler is either in gaol or declare themselves bankrupt.

#### 6. Council's role

Gathering statistics from all agencies, doctors, Gamblers Anonymous (confidential) to monitor trends and social impact. Information circulated to all providers and others with an interest. More reliable form of gathering accurate statistics. Will influence funding bodies to meet the demand of the Local Government Areas and the needs of the community. The need for a full time projects liaison officer independent of all government and community based programs.

#### 7. Advertising

Balancing – government needs to be seen as caring and more balanced in it's approach, i.e. legislation to put in place measures to show that gambling is not a Win/Win, rather a Win/Lose. Restricted advertising in line with tobacco and alcohol.

#### 8. Inpatient treatment

Some health funds withdrawing support for their members who may have a gambling problem (private hospitals).

#### 9. Underage gambling

All gambling outlets to be held responsible and enforce legal age gambling.

#### 10. Counsellors' accreditation

The need for specialist training in the gambling addiction field. VTAB accreditation for all gambling counsellors.