



# Exploring Indigenous Gambling Understanding Indigenous Gambling Behaviour, Consequences, Risk Factors and Potential Interventions

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### INTRODUCTION

This research project was funded by Gambling Research Australia (GRA) under its 2007 Submission Based Grants System. The theme for this round of funding was Indigenous gambling and problem gambling.

A research team from the Centre for Gambling Education and Research at Southern Cross University was funded for a two-year project to conduct a qualitative study exploring various aspects of Indigenous gambling and problem gambling in several locations and Indigenous communities in New South Wales and Queensland.

The objectives of this research were to:

1. Examine Indigenous gambling behaviour, consequences, risk and protective factors, and potential interventions in several Indigenous communities in New South Wales.
2. Compare these to Indigenous gambling behaviour, consequences, risk and protective factors, and potential interventions in several Indigenous communities in Queensland.
3. Based on these comparisons, refine a conceptual model of different types of Indigenous gambling to better understand Indigenous gambling behaviour.
4. Utilise this model to analyse consequences, risk and protective factors, and potential interventions for each type of Indigenous gambling in order to inform gambling policy development.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review conducted for this study demonstrated that knowledge of Indigenous Australian gambling is scant and unreliable. Yet, Indigenous Australians have participated in gambling for over 300 years with Macassan traders first introducing card gambling (Breen 2008). Today, card games are still a widespread acceptable form of social recreation in Indigenous communities, while expansion of commercial forms of gambling, such as gaming machines, casinos and TABs, has broadened Indigenous participation in gambling (McMillen & Donnelly 2008). However, little public knowledge exists about most aspects of contemporary Indigenous gambling. The international knowledge base is meagre, providing little insight into Indigenous gambling as a socio-cultural activity, thus limiting prior theoretical developments in gambling to culturally narrow perspectives. There is an urgent need to build the knowledge base in relation to how Indigenous gambling problems are perceived, Indigenous community values and beliefs around gambling, Indigenous help-seeking behaviour, and culturally-sensitive resources for problem gamblers (Wynne & McCready 2004).

However, international research *has* found that Indigenous peoples are often at higher risk of gambling problems than non-Indigenous peoples. Epidemiological surveys of First Nation populations in Canada, the United States and New Zealand have described ‘alarmingly high’ rates of problem gambling (McGowan & Nixon 2004:7).

When gambling behaviour is considered on a continuum, from severe to no associated problems, these studies have found higher proportions of Indigenous populations to be at the problematic end of the scale. The scant research into gambling by Indigenous Australians also suggests higher problem gambling rates than for non-Indigenous Australians (McMillen & Donnelly 2008), where problem gambling is defined as 'difficulties in limiting money and/or time spent on gambling which leads to adverse consequences for the gambler, others, or for the community' (Neal, Delfabbro & O'Neil 2005:i).

In truth, little is definitively known about contemporary Indigenous gambling practices, their social, cultural, health and economic consequences, extent of gambling problems and associated risk factors. Only 13 studies specific to Indigenous Australian gambling have ever been published. Ethnographic studies have focused on Indigenous card gambling, each presenting a case of one remote community with limited generalisability (Altman 1985; Goodale, 1987; Hunter & Spargo 1988; Martin 1993; Paterson 2007). Only four published studies have focused specifically on Indigenous participation in commercial gambling. They obtained convenience samples of just 222 Indigenous people in New South Wales (Dickerson *et al.* 1996) and 128 in Queensland (Queensland Department of Families, Youth and Community Care 1996) to quantitatively analyse some aspects of gambling behaviour. An observational study of people of Indigenous appearance was also conducted in one casino (Foote 1996b) while Young and Stevens (2009) analysed secondary data linking negative life events and reported gambling problems among the Indigenous population by jurisdiction and remoteness.

The four other specific studies relied on key informant consultation to describe Indigenous gambling activities, speculate on impacts and recommend gambling health promotion and help services for Indigenous Australians (Cultural Perspectives 2005; McDonald & Wombo 2006; AH&MRC 2007; Christie *et al.* 2009). These were not underpinned by any empirical data on Indigenous gambling behaviour, although the consultations by Christie *et al.* (2009) were based in the Yolgnu community.

Non Indigenous-specific population surveys have also captured data on Indigenous gambling. These telephone surveys yielded small skewed samples of Indigenous respondents and so prevent meaningful conclusions (McMillen & Donnelly 2008); for example a statewide telephone survey of gambling in the Northern Territory excluded the two-thirds of Indigenous residents without a home phone, with the 126 responses representing only more affluent urban residents (Young *et al.* 2006). Two Queensland surveys found Indigenous people are over-represented amongst at-risk/problem gamblers, but no other Indigenous data were reported (Queensland Government 2005, 2008).

This limited research is reflected in inadequate culturally sensitive public health interventions for Indigenous gamblers (AH&MRC 2007). Yet considerable progress has been made in response to gambling problems amongst non-Indigenous Australians. Gambling industries have introduced measures to minimise harm, protect consumers and direct problem gamblers to assistance, while governments have provided regulatory oversight of these measures, constrained supply of gambling, and funded problem gambling treatment services. However, little is known about the efficacy or relevance of these public health measures for Indigenous Australian people and communities. Effective public health strategies need to be based on a

comprehensive community profile of the health problem to guide decisions about appropriate interventions (Hawe, Degeling & Hall 1990). This profile is sadly deficient for Indigenous Australian gambling, with little data to inform culturally appropriate public health campaigns, consumer education, preventative strategies and treatment services.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Approach, Cultural Considerations and Ethical Issues**

The research approach, cultural considerations and ethical issues were key factors in deciding on an appropriate research design.

Using a qualitative research design was considered a more culturally sensitive approach. Being based on appropriate communication styles and respectful cooperation, this approach provides rich in-depth data and valuable information for both parties. While a qualitative approach may not seem all that structured or even ‘a bit messy’, for Indigenous Australians it is a familiar and comfortable style because it is inclusive through a process of sharing (Hepburn & Twining 2005).

Indigenous cultural considerations when conducting research include being introduced to people, taking time to talk to and learn from people, identifying and using dominant communication styles and body language, developing active listening, ongoing consultation and feedback, and being respectful. It also involves recognising the traditional culture and history of local regions, seeking appropriate permissions, negotiating relationships, identifying negative *and* positive impacts, and reporting only what has been negotiated.

Three sets of ethical guidelines were particularly relevant for this research. The first provides a national statement on human research ethics generally (NHMRC 2007); a second guides Indigenous research in general (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies [AIATSIS] 2000); and a third focuses specifically on health-related Indigenous research (NHMRC 2003). The research responsibilities for abiding by these ethical and cultural considerations were not taken lightly. Issues such as privacy, confidentiality, safety, respectful communications, consent, feedback, equitable treatment, lack of deception, responsible stewardship of the research process and materials, and building of responsible relationships were considered vitally important. Ethical approval for the project was gained through the Southern Cross University Human Research Ethics Committee (ECN-08-007).

### **Geographic Scope**

This research focused on a variety of locations in two Australian states. In New South Wales, the geographic scope of the study comprised the area known as the Bundjalung Nation, comprising 17 communities based in the Northern Rivers. Major centres include Lismore, Baryulgil, Tabulam, Yamba, Casino, Cabbage Tree Island, Byron Bay, Tweed Heads, Nimbin, Coraki, Ballina, Evans Head, Kyogle, Maclean, Grafton and Box Ridge. This area was selected for its mix of discrete and suburban Indigenous communities, access to major forms of gambling, the researchers’ familiarity with the area and their well developed contacts with relevant Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and organisations.

The Queensland component of the study had been previously conducted by one of the research team (Helen Breen) for her PhD research in 2006-2009. This focused on three geographical areas, located across the width of the state - from a remote northern area, to a western regional town and district and a major city with many suburbs on the eastern seaboard. These three regions are known respectively as the Gulf, Eyre and Rainforest Regions of Aboriginal Australia (Horton 1996).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Even though this research was exploratory and qualitative, it was useful to commence with a tentative framework to guide the research, identify key constructs and illuminate relationships between them. Our research framework was based on Thomas and Jackson's (2004:44) model of influences on gambling behaviours and outcomes, but modified for the focus of this research. This model takes a public health perspective of gambling that recognises the role of multiple factors beyond the individual in influencing gambling behaviour. In explaining the various elements of their model, Thomas and Jackson (2004) note that:

- gambling uptake is influenced by both the propensity to gamble and contextual factors such as the availability of gambling products and services for people to exercise these propensities;
- propensity to gamble is influenced by a variety of factors, including psychological traits relating to the personal characteristics of the gambler, sociological factors relating to social and contextual influences on a person's gambling, and cultural factors which may influence a person's propensity to gamble and gambling preferences;
- gambling products and services also influence gambling uptake, particularly their availability, design, marketing and how well they meet the needs or expectations of their consumers;
- gambling outcomes and consequences include those that may occur at the level of the individual, family and community. Of major concern is the development of gambling problems and their associated negative consequences;
- risk, moderating and protective factors are associated with the propensity to gamble, gambling products and services, and gambling outcomes and consequences;
- interventions can be designed to reduce the risk factors and/or enhance the protective factors for each of the three elements in the model.

### **Research Methods for Objective One**

Because we were seeking to replicate Breen's (2009) methodology, we attempted to meet with and interview a broad range of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who belong to, have lived in, or identify strongly with, the selected Indigenous communities. These included Indigenous community representatives, members, gamblers and non-gamblers, and employees of relevant government, health, legal, social, community, financial and welfare agencies, as well as gambling counsellors and gaming venue managers with Indigenous gamblers as clients. Attaining a random

sample was not attempted nor considered appropriate; instead, we attempted to capture the experiences and views of a representative cross-section of interviewees. The research was conducted during 2008-2009, with feedback sessions held in May 2010.

Snowball sampling was used to extend an initial list of contacts from Indigenous people and organisations already known, where each person interviewed was asked if they could identify other organisations and people relevant to the research. Sampling of venue managers commenced by identifying all hotels and clubs in the geographic area, and then selecting 13 hotels and eight clubs known to be the most popular venues for Indigenous customers, whilst ensuring we had representation for each town or centre in the sampling area. We conducted an invited workshop with eight counsellors at the Northern New South Wales Gambling Counsellors' Forum to gather data and conducted interviews with two additional counsellors who had been unable to attend the workshop. This iterative process yielded interviews involving 169 Indigenous people, 21 non-Indigenous gaming venue managers and 10 non-Indigenous gambling counsellors.

The semi-structured interviews were mainly conducted by two researchers in workplaces, community and health centres and coffee shops. The exception were some interviews with men's groups, which were conducted solely by the only male member of the research team, Ashley Gordon. As an Indigenous person, Ashley also took the lead in all interviews with Indigenous people. They lasted between 30-60 minutes. In most cases, these interviews were not recorded, as this was considered too intrusive. Instead, extensive notes were taken. As noted above, the counsellors' data were collected through one workshop and two face-to-face interviews, while the venue managers' interviews were conducted either in person or over the telephone. The counsellor and manager interviews were digitally recorded.

All interview notes and recordings were transcribed, then coded with Nvivo software and analysed using thematic analysis. The thematic analysis was driven by the research model to provide an overarching structure to the themes extracted. Thus, the data were coded and analysed within the larger constructs of gambling behaviour, propensity to gamble, the influence of gambling products on gambling behaviour, the consequences of gambling and potential interventions. Within each of these larger constructs, specific themes and sub-themes were then identified.

## **Research Methods for Objective Two**

The data from north Queensland had been collected prior to project commencement (Breen, 2009), using a similar approach. Breen developed a preliminary list of contacts for each of her three study regions and gained permission from Elders, Traditional Owners, Land Councils and Tribal Councils or local Aboriginal Shire Councils to visit and conduct her research. Snowball sampling was then used to contact potential research participants. Additionally, Breen interviewed a sample of gambling counsellors and managers of gaming venues located in the three study regions.

In total, 108 people were interviewed in Queensland. Sixty of these were Indigenous Australians, while 14 were non-Indigenous Australians who had lived and worked in north Queensland Indigenous communities for many years. Breen also interviewed 14 gambling counsellors and 20 gaming venue managers in Queensland.

Participants were interviewed in offices, staff rooms, public institutions, cafes, coffee shops, hotels, and clubs, at events, in homes, on verandahs and in open spaces, parks and sports grounds. These interviews each took at least an hour. She took notes which were then read through with the interviewee to allow any corrections. Completed transcripts were returned to each person for verification either by email or post. These notes were then typed up for analysis, which proceeded in the same way as used for the New South Wales interview data. However, within each of the larger constructs identified in the research model, specific themes and sub-themes varied to reflect differences found in the study regions.

### **Research Methods for Objective Three**

Breen (2009) identified eight types of Indigenous gamblers from her north Queensland research – four card and four commercial types of gamblers labelled, social gambler, committed gambler, occasional binge gambler and exploited gambler. Similarly, thematic analysis of the New South Wales data identified typical gambler profiles in Bundjalung Country. These descriptive profiles then provided the basis for analysing risk and protective factors, consequences and potential interventions for each gambler type.

### **Research Methods for Objective Four**

Our adaptation of the Thomas and Jackson model (2004) and the gambler profiles identified provided a framework to analyse the research data to identify:

- risk and protective factors relating to the propensity of Indigenous people to gamble;
- risk and protective factors associated with card and commercial gambling products and services available to Indigenous people;
- risk and protective factors associated with gambling consequences and outcomes for Indigenous gamblers;
- the consequences of gambling; and
- potential interventions.

## **RESULTS FOR OBJECTIVE ONE**

Indigenous gambling behaviour, consequences, risk and protective factors and potential interventions were first analysed across six shires in Bundjalung Country, based on the interviews with 169 Indigenous people. Interviews with gaming venue managers were then analysed separately, as were the interviews with gambling counsellors. A synthesis of these analyses yielded the following key results.

### **Card Gambling Behaviour in Bundjalung Country**

Generally, card gambling across Bundjalung Country was believed to be in decline compared to previous card gambling activity. However, some pockets of card gambling were very obvious to respondents. For example, card gambling was reportedly quite prevalent or at least still occurring in certain locations in the Ballina,



Lismore, Byron/Tweed and Richmond Valley Shires, yet had all but ceased in the Kyogle and Clarence Valley Shires.

Where card gambling occurred, the strongest finding reported by most research participants was that women were the most obvious and visible participants. Extended family, social groups and visitors gambled together occasionally. Youthful card gamblers were present in one location. In most shires, card gambling was more irregular than regular, depending on the presence of an adequate number of people to make up a game. Card gambling sessions varied from short (a couple of hours) to long (all day, all night or several days). Expenditure varied from low (about \$5) to high (over \$200). A few people were said to gamble most of their pay. Concern was expressed by all groups of respondents about youth engaged in card gambling, particularly about youth developing patterns of gambling that may negatively affect their lives.

To win and to socialise were equally important as major motivations to gamble on cards. Less important motivations were to reduce boredom and to escape from problems.

Card gambling was mainly held in private homes, but some gambled in the open, especially within discrete Indigenous communities. There were striking differences reported in two adjoining shires. In the Richmond Valley Shire, local youth gambled on cards in the main street of one town. In the Kyogle Shire, local Elders had banned card gambling from their Indigenous community.

Positive consequences of card gambling were reported to include social connectedness with other Indigenous people, an occasional win and sharing in a social activity. Negative consequences included individual financial losses, borrowing from others and youth gambling.

### **Commercial Gambling Behaviour in Bundjalung Country**

Most Indigenous research participants reported commercial gamblers in Bundjalung Country to be men and women of all ages, older women, and younger social groups. Gaming venue managers saw gamblers more as social groups, comprising younger and older groups. However, their responses highlighted the visibility of male gamblers in shire towns and older female gamblers in shire villages as being an important point of difference. In contrast, counsellors reported more males as clients, especially older males. They also described their clients as people who had experienced significant childhood issues and people who gambled alone.

A shared finding for venue managers and counsellors was that most gamblers were in relationships. A shared finding between the Indigenous respondents and the counsellors was that gamblers were equally as likely to be employed as unemployed. Indigenous respondents and venue managers reported similar socio-demographic characteristics for TAB gamblers, bingo and keno players.

Generally, Indigenous commercial gambling, as reported by Indigenous respondents and gaming managers, was seen as a social activity engaged in by small groups. In contrast, for counsellors, gambling was seen as a solo activity.

Indigenous commercial gamblers were reported to prefer poker machines, TAB gambling, keno, bingo and equally poker tournaments and lottery products (in that order). A few gamblers were said to gamble on both cards and commercial gambling.

The most popular day for commercial gambling was said to be pay day and the few days afterwards. While a few gamblers gambled two or three times a week, the majority gambled weekly or fortnightly. Some gambled at weekends (TAB gamblers) and some gambled in the day time.

Most respondents said a typical poker machine session was a couple of hours spent at gambling with family or groups of friends. Less common were long gambling sessions and all day or all night sessions. However, in these long sessions, gamblers often spent all their money plus their winnings. TAB gamblers were more likely to gamble in very short sessions, but some called into the venue two or three times on race day.

Lower range gambling expenditure was more commonly reported than higher range expenditure. Many Indigenous people were said to have limited incomes and thus limited money to spend on gambling. However, higher amounts of money appeared to be spent on poker machines than on TAB gambling. For poker machines, expenditure reported for Indigenous gamblers was usually about 25 credits a spin, and \$5-\$300 per session, including spending an entire pay. For TAB gambling, expenditure was said to involve \$1-\$2 bets, with most people spending between \$5-20 spread out over a day of betting on racing and sports events. Some TAB gamblers pooled their funds and shared winnings. Indigenous respondents reported that, while the majority of gamblers were said to set limits for gambling or met their commitments first, some gambled with all of their money hoping to increase their income, especially unemployed people. Some borrowed from others to continue gambling. An exceptional increase in poker machine gambling was seen by managers in two shires, increasing from 20-50 cent stakes to \$1 stakes, with a recent national windfall payment.

There was a difference in the order of importance of similar commercial gambling motivations by different groups of respondents. For Indigenous respondents and counsellors, to win and then to socialise were the strongest motivations to gamble. For managers, the order was reversed. Other motivations were to escape, to reduce boredom, and fill in time (in that order). Based on their experiences, Indigenous respondents felt that gambling was a rite of passage at reaching 18 years, counsellors' believed trauma and mental health issues were motivations for gambling, while venues managers suggested alcohol consumption was a motivation for some.

The majority of Indigenous gamblers gambled in venues that were easy to access, comfortable, inclusive and affordable. People tended to avoid venues where they were asked for loans, felt uncomfortable or when they had no transport or no money. Those venues most popularly frequented by Indigenous gamblers were physically and financially accessible. The gambling products most preferred were those with low stakes and free offers, and which were easy to play with few literacy barriers.

### **Consequences of Gambling in Bundjalung Country**

Most respondents noted the most important positive consequence of Indigenous gambling was socialising. Socialising included meeting up with others and having a

yarn, sharing common interests, and enjoying some relaxation together. Other less important positive consequences were having an occasional win, some excitement and enjoyment, feeling accepted and comfortable, and reduced alcohol consumption.

In contrast, most respondents reported several prominent negative consequences of Indigenous gambling. These included financial hardship, family and relationship difficulties, the spread of negative impacts throughout the community, mental health problems and crime.

### **Risk Factors for Gambling in Bundjalung Country**

In this study, numerous risk factors were identified by the research participants. Those that increased the propensity to gamble included personal, family, financial, historical and cultural risks. Personal risks were seen as gambling to escape from grief and loss, from boredom, due to peer pressure, after consuming alcohol or drugs, from being unemployed and having time to gamble, from having literacy and numeracy problems, and to obtain relief from domestic violence and abuse. Family risks were said to include generational exposure to gambling, trans-generational learning about gambling, normalisation of youth gambling, parental absence and a lack of education generally, but particularly in budgeting and financial management. Financial risks were reported as: gambling to increase income and to repay gambling debts; gambling with borrowed money; being used to being poor so gambling losses made no great difference to living in poverty; a cycle of dependency; windfall payments that led to increased gambling for some; and a lack of budgeting skills. Historical risks were felt to include the longevity of gambling as an Indigenous leisure activity and humbugging, or borrowing from family and kin. Cultural risks were believed to be a loss of Indigenous values, culture, respect and discipline and a deterioration of traditional reciprocity when used for gambling.

Risks believed to be associated with gambling products and services were the physical and sensory experiences of gambling. These included the sound, light and visual features of poker machines, their attractive marketing and promotion and the emotional attachment some people have to a lucky machine or favourite form of gambling. Most other gambling products and services were easy to use. Access to the gambling environment was reported as usually easy and free services enhanced the appeal of staying in a venue. Social access and acceptance were also a risk for some gamblers.

Risk factors relating to addressing problematic consequences of gambling emerged as being intrinsic (personal) or extrinsic (external) factors. Intrinsic barriers were said to comprise shame, denial, living in poverty, fear, depression, grief and loss, addiction, unequal power relationships and cultural differences. Extrinsic barriers were reported to include a lack of culturally appropriate gambling help services, a lack of knowledge regarding gambling help services, poor access to gambling help, a lack of gambling education and awareness, concern about confidentiality of gambling help services, and that venue managers wait for a gambler to approach them before referring them to gambling help services.

## **Protective Factors for Gambling in Bundjalung Country**

Protective factors identified in relation to the propensity to gamble were categorised into personal, family, financial, historical and cultural themes. Personal protective factors were seen as being self-control in limiting gambling, self-respect, having a purpose in life and high aspirations, religious beliefs, being employed and earning money, learning from past experiences and being recognised as a local person. Family protective factors were reported to include having strong family influences, family values upheld, sharing alternative interests and time with family and friends outside gambling, positive relationships and education and training. Financial protective factors were said to be education and skills in financial management and small stakes betting. One historical protective factor was felt to be the ability to respectfully refuse to lend money to gamblers. Cultural protective factors were believed to be Elders acting as role models and people respecting and adhering to traditional Elders' example, cultural cohesion and cultural values.

In relation to gambling products and services, protective factors were felt to be an understanding of the odds of winning and a lack of transport to gaming venues. Protective factors associated with gambling consequences were said to be the ability to read and absorb responsible gambling messages and exclusion from gaming venues.

Protective factors relating to addressing negative consequences of gambling were believed to be knowing when to seek help, being older and more experienced in seeking help for problems, encouragement from others to seek help, and local knowledge such as knowing trustworthy sources of help. Extrinsic protective facilitators emerged as being the provision of culturally appropriate gambling help services, provision of gambling education and awareness specifically for Indigenous people, provision of appropriate budgeting and financial management education for Indigenous people, encouragement of male role models as community leaders, and a combination of Indigenous community strength and support for people who need assistance.

## **Suggested Interventions to Address Gambling Issues in Bundjalung Country**

Of the numerous suggestions for potential gambling interventions, the most important appeared the need for relevant and appropriate community education and awareness programs, culturally appropriate gambling help services, Indigenous specific responsible gambling resources, Indigenous trained counsellors and more flexible venue exclusion options. Indigenous role models could assist in these processes providing they were trained. Governments were expected to address these issues if they are serious about responsible gambling as a means of protecting Indigenous gamblers. Numerous other potential interventions were also suggested.

Common themes from responses from the Indigenous respondents, venue managers and counsellors included the need for good role models from Indigenous families and communities relating to responsible gambling and the need to educate and train Indigenous counsellors. Community services required resources for developing gambling help services that focused specifically on Indigenous gamblers, as well as creating health promotion and community awareness campaigns for Indigenous responsible gambling. The gambling industry and venues need to implement

exclusion policies and enforce their conditions as prescribed. The government was seen to be the source of funding for many worthwhile and valuable suggested interventions.

## **RESULTS FOR OBJECTIVE TWO**

Indigenous gambling behaviour, consequences, risk and protective factors and potential interventions were analysed by Breen (2009) across three regions in north Queensland, based on the interviews with Indigenous people, gaming venue managers and gambling counsellors. A synthesis of these analyses yielded the following key results.

### **Card Gambling Behaviour in North Queensland**

The majority of Indigenous Australians in north Queensland were reported to gamble on cards at some time. Women, family and extended family groups who gambled together on social occasions were the most obvious. Small groups of card gamblers were comprised of visitors and young, single, unemployed people. Pay day was the most popular day for card gambling, followed by a short shoulder period. Card gambling usually increased with irregular windfall payments and isolating weather conditions.

Card gambling session length depended on having money and a minimum number of players. Shorter sessions included a few hours or an evening of cards with family or social groups. Longer sessions included all day and/or all night games. Longer weekend sessions of high stakes card gambling were sometimes organised by entrepreneurs in regional towns and remote locations.

Card gambling expenditure in the lower range (less than \$25) usually involved gambling with discretionary or budgeted funds. Some intra-community recycling of winnings was evident in remote locations in lower expenditure card games. Higher range card gambling expenditure was said to be spending over \$25, sometimes even spending an entire wage. Occasional weekend 'binge' gambling was reported in the Gulf and Eyre regions and involved inter-community gambling where assets were sometimes substituted for money stakes.

Motivations to gamble were said to be to win and to socialise (equally). Less important motivations were to pass the time and to escape, or for distraction.

Access to card gambling in the Rainforest and Eyre regions was mostly in private homes and more often in the same home. In the Gulf region, access to card gambling was likely to be outside but in a sheltered, even secluded place. These sites were well-known.

Positive consequences of card gambling revolved around closer family relationships and social and cultural reassurance, while negative consequences highlighted financial hardship from losses and its consequential effects, including demand sharing, child neglect, violence and some exploitation.

## **Commercial Gambling Behaviour in North Queensland**

The most visible commercial gamblers were reported to be men and women, and older women, followed by mixed family groups, social groups and men. Some commercial gamblers also gambled on card games. Poker machine gambling was the preferred form by most commercial gamblers, followed by TAB, bingo and keno.

Gambling frequency peaked on pay day and some continued to gamble for a further couple of days. TAB gamblers usually gambled on weekends or at events. Frequent regular gamblers were said to gamble several times a week. Gambling plunges or 'binges' occurred on some weekends.

Duration of gambling sessions fell into two time periods – short sessions of a couple of hours and long sessions comprising all day and all night. Availability of funds and venue closing times often determined the end of longer gambling sessions.

Gambling expenditure in the lower range (less than \$50) was reported by more Indigenous research participants than higher range expenditure. Higher range expenditure (over \$50) was reported by gaming venue managers and gambling help counsellors. Some gamblers planned their gambling expenditure while others did not. Windfall payments precipitated increased expenditure.

Motivations for commercial gambling were reported as to win, socialise, escape, pass the time and relax (in that order). Gambling motivated by passing the time was reported by Indigenous respondents and gaming venue managers, but not by gambling help counsellors.

Commercial gambling products influenced gambling behaviour mainly in relation to access and availability and how well they met the needs of gamblers. Easy physical and social access were seen comprising close proximity, affordable prices, positive social attitudes and attitudes of acceptance. Lower proportions of Indigenous gamblers gambled in venues that had high prices, dress and membership entry barriers and where the social attitudes were patronising.

The gambling products themselves, their price and sometimes their promotion appeared different for women than for men. Poker machine gambling and bingo were particularly attractive to Indigenous women, while TAB gambling and some poker machine gambling were attractive for Indigenous men. Gambling products which accepted low stakes and were easy to play were popular. Preferred features of the gambling environment were said to be air-conditioning and comfortable facilities.

## **Consequences of Gambling in North Queensland**

For card gambling, positive consequences were reported to include social reassurance, family ties, membership of a collective culture and reduced alcohol consumption. For commercial gambling, positive consequences were seen as wellbeing, social interests, physical comfort, social connectedness and reduced alcohol consumption.

Negative consequences from card gambling were said to include financial losses, a pre-occupation with gambling, child neglect, domestic violence, demand sharing and some exploitation. For commercial gambling, negative consequences comprised financial hardship, neglect of children, domestic violence, an immediate loss of funds, demand sharing and some exploitation, and a cycle of gambling dependency.

## **Risk Factors for Gambling in North Queensland**

Risk factors associated with both card and commercial gambling in north Queensland were reported to include personal risks such as stress connected to grief and loss, Stolen Generation effects, a pre-occupation with gambling, the use of alcohol and drugs while gambling and structural conditions such as a lack of access to appropriate employment. Family risks were said to be generational exposure to gambling, normalisation of youth gambling and gambling taking priority over family and work. Financial risks included gambling to increase income, gambling with borrowed money, having few money management skills, long gambling sessions and windfall payments. Cultural and historical risks associated with card gambling were seen as the influence of traditional exchange systems in extending gambling and irrational beliefs about luck while playing cards.

Risk factors associated with access to card gambling were reported to be expanded availability of gambling stakes and the removal of cultural restrictions. Access to gambling was heightened when demand sharing using traditional reciprocity was common. Risk factors relating to commercial gambling products and services were said to be increased physical and social access and the exposure to comfortable gambling environments. The ready availability of gambling activities was perceived as heightening risk.

Risk factors for addressing problematic consequences of gambling were found to include poverty, shame and stigma, a reluctance to seek gambling help and negative attitudes towards gambling counselling. A further barrier was reinforcement of generational effects. Gambling was normalised for some Indigenous youth where they feel well equipped to avoid negative outcomes of gambling, yet reinforcement of cultural and social norms supporting unhealthy gambling may in fact contribute to a cycle of dysfunction and disengagement.

A lack of appropriate gambling help services, of adequate community education and awareness, holding negative attitudes to counselling, being anxious about confidentiality and a lack of gambler recognition of a gambling-related problem were further barriers.

## **Protective Factors for Gambling in North Queensland**

Protective factors associated with card and commercial gambling were reported to include personal self-control, social group control and religious beliefs. A family protective factor was seen as restricted access to gambling through family rifts. Culturally and historically protective factors linked to card games only were cultural cohesion, feelings of belonging and engagement with collective culture.

Protective factors relating to the gambling products themselves revolved around how gamblers interacted with the products and environment to maintain control over their gambling. Thus, protective factors were said to be setting time and money limits for gambling, family and social group self-regulation of gambling and choice of gambling type, with some using the available non-continuous forms of gambling only.

Facilitators or protective factors for addressing a gambling problem were found to be in personal recognition that gambling was a problem and having the capacity to do something about it. This was facilitated by: having the support of others; having role models (parents, grandparents, aunties, uncles, Elders or siblings); being related to

supportive others (family kin group, social and cultural support); and developing resilience (fostered by a combination of personal competence and social and cultural support from significant others).

External protective factors were identified as: having knowledge about gambling help services; the provision of local and culturally appropriate gambling help services; responsible gambling messages designed for Indigenous gamblers; local telephone help services with familiar language used; and money management education.

### **Suggested Interventions to Address Gambling Issues in North Queensland**

Valuable and important potential interventions were suggested by all groups of respondents in north Queensland.

The Indigenous respondents raised the need for open discussion about gambling and its ripple effects, the urgency for trained Indigenous liaison workers and gambling counsellors, the essential provision of education in budgeting and money management, and the return of traditional Indigenous values (social norms, leadership).

All groups of respondents agreed that counsellors were expected to provide culturally relevant gambling help resources and services and to cooperate with, inform and train other community services on Indigenous gambling matters.

The gambling industry and gaming venues were seen to be responsible for providing a safe environment with proper implementation of responsible gambling practices. They should withdraw media advertisements featuring gambling draws, winnings and winners, and support community education and gambling awareness projects. Gaming venue managers should be given some flexibility in providing local exclusion for a limited time.

Governments were said to be mandated to work towards improving structural conditions for Indigenous education, employment, housing and health, thus removing some underlying risk factors. More specifically, government efforts in monitoring gaming licensing in venues, funding gambling education and awareness promotions, providing Indigenous counselling, education, training and rehabilitation services were considered mandatory.

### **Comparison of Findings for Bundjalung Country and North Queensland**

Comparisons of Indigenous gambling behaviour, risk factors, consequences and potential interventions in north Queensland revealed that, while card gambling was similar to that in Bundjalung Country, it was far more popular in north Queensland. However, youth card gambling was prominent in one town in Bundjalung Country.

Commercial gambling was more popular in Bundjalung Country than in north Queensland, but findings were similar in many respects. Some contrasts were found in socio-demographic characteristics where more males were more likely to gamble in towns and older females in smaller villages in Bundjalung Country. The ready availability of commercial gambling and the popularity of poker machine gambling were linked to the higher number of venues, their marketing activities and appealing venue facilities in Bundjalung Country. While there were many risk and protective



factors in common with north Queensland, particular gambling risks faced by Bundjalung gamblers were personal (peer pressure and to escape from pressure) and cultural (loss of cultural values, respect and discipline). Particular protective factors assisting Bundjalung gamblers were familial (support and being local), cultural (being strong and able to reject humbugging) and gambling awareness (understanding gambling and its operations, and knowing that some gambling leads to problems).

Apart from similarities with north Queensland, negative consequences of gambling included mental health issues and crime for Bundjalung gamblers. While positive consequences were very similar in both locations, there was an absence of collective cultural wellbeing evident in the positive consequences of gambling found in north Queensland.

In terms of barriers and facilitators for addressing problematic consequences of gambling, these were both more individually-based and personal for gamblers in Bundjalung Country than in north Queensland.

There were many similar suggestions in both research sites for potential interventions to assist gamblers. Differences were seen in Bundjalung Country where people wanted responsible gambling measures strengthened and made more culturally specific for Indigenous gamblers. However, at the same time, these measures need to have some flexibility to meet local population needs.

## **RESULTS FOR OBJECTIVE THREE**

Addressing Objective Three involved developing conceptual models of different Indigenous gambler types, or profiles, both in Bundjalung Country and in north Queensland. These models were based on a continuum from healthy to unhealthy gambling, reflecting the gambling behaviours, motivations, influences and consequences that were apparent for these different types of gamblers.

From the research results into card gambling by Indigenous Australians in Bundjalung Country, two card gambler types emerged and were labelled social card gambler and committed card gambler. The social card gambler profile had the majority of support from research respondents. From the research into commercial gambling, three commercial gambler types or profiles emerged and were labelled: social commercial gambler; committed commercial gambler; and occasional binge commercial gambler. Evidence supporting the social gambler and committed gambler profiles was supplied by the majority of respondents.

### **Social Card Gamblers in Bundjalung Country**

Social card gamblers were, in the main, women but when groups of visitors arrived, social card games were played by women and men. In one location, local youth (male) were public card gamblers. They usually played with family, extended family and friends, with low stakes, sometimes \$1-\$2, in short sessions over a few hours, often in the evening. Key motivations were the desire to socialise, but also to win. Social card gambling was carried on in short sessions, a few hours, often in the evening. Social gamblers gambled in each others' homes or in well-known places outside. Local games played included 'two-three' and 'tick around'. Pay week generally produced more gambling. Winners kept their winnings. Consequences

included being socially connected to family and friends in undertaking an enjoyable Indigenous-based activity. Social card gambling appeared controlled by social norms of that group of players.

### **Committed Card Gambling In Bundjalung Country**

There was some evidence to suggest the presence of committed card gambling in parts of Bundjalung Country. Some card gamblers, both men and women, were reported to spend large amounts on cards (over \$200), with some spending all their pay or pension. A few borrowed money to continue card gambling and others were said to use beer as alternative stakes. Committed card gamblers gambled in long sessions, all day or all night. Although winning was said to be the main motivation, committed card gamblers were also believed to be seeking an escape from problems. Consequences were a large win (\$700-\$800) or loss of all funds. This was followed by borrowing from others until next pay day in a cycle of gambling and borrowing. Although committed card gambling was reported in pockets of Bundjalung Country by several respondents, it was not widespread and not obvious to most respondents.

### **Social Commercial Gamblers In Bundjalung Country**

Most social commercial gamblers were men and women, older women and small social groups. They gambled in groups for short sessions (one to three hours) on poker machines but if the group was mixed, then TAB gambling and keno were included. In the main, bingo players were women. Social commercial gambling was characterised by: lower gambling stakes; lower expenditure; social and winning motivations; and engagement with a social group who sometimes pooled stakes with shared winnings. Social commercial gamblers gambled on pay day and visited gaming venues where they felt at ease, which were reasonably close to town, and provided affordable services in a cool, pleasant environment. Consequences were reported to include socialising, the occasional win, enjoyment and excitement, physical and social comfort and reduced alcohol consumption. These gamblers appeared to enjoy gambling as a recreation within their time and financial limits.

### **Committed Commercial Gamblers In Bundjalung Country**

Committed commercial gamblers were reported to comprise mainly older women in smaller villages (often single venue villages) and men in towns. They were mostly people in relationships but they gambled alone. They preferred continuous gambling and played poker machines, although some gambled on the TAB as well. They gambled to win, using higher stakes and higher expenditure (over \$300 for some). Some also gambled on cards. Motivations were to win money, to hope for a big win with quick money, to zone out and escape from stress, grief and loss, and to reduce boredom. Committed gamblers gambled two or three times a week when they had funds. Length of gambling sessions could be all day or all night, depending on available resources. Committed gambling was most obvious on pay day and the following shoulder period. Gambling duration often depended on venue opening hours. Committed gamblers preferred venues where they could gamble alone and mainly out of sight. The opportunity for free spins and big prizes was appealing. They were described as being intensively involved in commercial gambling. Wins were said to produce excitement and losses often brought financial hardship. Financial hardship (lack of funds, debts and loans) sometimes led to demand sharing, and

family arguments about gambling loans, relationship problems over trust and the spread of negative ripple effects through the community. Committed commercial gambling was an individual activity, characterised by fast and continuous gambling, often motivated by the need for money to meet commitments and repay debts.

### **Occasional Binge Commercial Gamblers In Bundjalung Country**

There were a couple of reports of occasional binges on commercial gambling. These gamblers were said to be mostly men who usually gambled socially with family or social groups in a contained way with lower expenditure, but on occasions gambled intensively in a continuous style spending large amounts of money. Most binge gamblers used poker machines, but some used TAB gambling. Binge gambling was motivated by seeking to escape from stress, for time out and time away from home and as a distraction from recurring problems. Triggers for binge gambling were reported as low self-esteem and family difficulties (often resulting from feeling undervalued, depression, mental health issues and unresolved childhood problems). Some binge gambling was said to be alcohol induced gambling. While binge gambling provided temporary relief from stressors, binge gambling in this committed mode produced more adverse consequences, especially financial losses, than gambling in a social mode. Gambling binges ended when gamblers lost their money. Consequences were likely to rise and fall with episodes of binge gambling.

### **Comparison of Gambler Profiles**

From the research results in north Queensland, four Indigenous card gambler profiles emerged and were labelled: social gambler; committed gambler; occasional binge gambler; and exploited gambler (Breen 2009). The social gambler and committed card gambler profiles were the most prominent of the four. From the research results for commercial gambling by Indigenous Australians in north Queensland, four gambler types or profiles emerged and were labelled: social gambler; committed gambler; occasional binge gambler; and exploited gambler (Breen 2009). The social gambler and committed commercial gambler profiles were the most prominent of the four. These gambler profiles were then compared with those from Bundjalung Country

### **Comparison of Social Card Gambler Profiles Between Bundjalung and North Queensland**

In comparing the social card gambler profile for Bundjalung Country with that for north Queensland, many similarities were apparent in these gamblers' socio-demographic characteristics, in gambling frequency (weekly) and expenditure (low), in choice of gambling sites, in motivations, some outcomes and the social norms that control gambling. The social card gambler type was supported by most respondents in both locations. However, social card gamblers were in the majority in north Queensland and in the minority in Bundjalung Country. Differences were seen in relation to gambling session duration, where many north Queensland social card gamblers played long leisurely card sessions for low stakes, with children playing around the card ring, where alcohol was not tolerated and some redistribution of winnings was said to occur. Differences were also seen in outcomes for social gamblers in north Queensland where card games had a wide variety of family and

culturally cohesive outcomes, more than just the social outcomes reported in Bundjalung Country.

### **Comparison of Committed Card Gambler Profiles Between Bundjalung and North Queensland**

Similarly, a comparison of the committed card gambler profile for Bundjalung Country with that for north Queensland showed many similarities in these gamblers' socio-demographic characteristics, in gambling frequency (several times a week) and expenditure (high), in choice of gambling sites, in some motivations and some outcomes. The committed card gambler type was supported by the majority of respondents in north Queensland but by only a minority in Bundjalung Country.

Differences were seen in gambling duration, where in north Queensland some card games could last for two or even three days, with people coming and going from the game. These games, often held over a weekend, were said to be continuous with no breaks in play. The longest duration in Bundjalung Country was all day or all night. Additional motivations (apart from winning) for committed card gamblers in north Queensland were to develop a reputation for being lucky and for the status connected to being skilled at card gambling. An additional motivation in Bundjalung Country was to escape from problems and pressure. Differences were also seen in the variety of negative outcomes for committed card gamblers in north Queensland (apart from losses and borrowing), which were reported as demand sharing, child neglect, domestic violence and exploitation of disadvantaged others.

### **Comparison of Social Commercial Gambler Profiles Between Bundjalung and North Queensland**

Comparing the social commercial gambler profile in the two research locations shows many similar features. Socio-demographic characteristics, gambling preferences, frequency, duration, expenditure, some motivations and outcomes were almost the same. Differences were seen in Bundjalung Country where 18 year olds sometimes start gambling socially as a rite of passage into adulthood. As well, there was more variety in the gambling products available in Bundjalung Country, with social gamblers participating in poker tournaments and lottery products. In regards to the gambling environment, social gamblers gambled less in tourist precincts in north Queensland, but in Bundjalung Country less social gambling was engaged in where there were alcohol affected customers, a lot of humbugging occurring and little transport.

### **Comparison of Committed Commercial Gambler Profiles Between Bundjalung and North Queensland**

Committed commercial gambler profiles in both research locations were very much alike. Some differences were seen in the socio-demographic characteristics of committed commercial gamblers in Bundjalung Country where they were more likely to be older women living in small villages or men living in towns. Further, committed commercial gamblers in Bundjalung Country were more likely to be in a relationship. In regards to gambling products and services, committed commercial gamblers in Bundjalung Country found poker machine gambling, their features and their promotions very appealing and sometimes rewarding. Poker machine gambling presented no literacy or numeracy obstacles for them. In relation to the consequences

of gambling, negative outcomes included mental health issues and crime in Bundjalung Country.

### **Comparison of Occasional Binge Commercial Gambler Profiles Between Bundjalung and North Queensland**

Comparing occasional binge commercial gamblers, in Bundjalung Country these gamblers were mainly men, while in north Queensland they were mainly women. Although there were some similar motivations, contrasting motivations were low self-esteem and family difficulties reported in Bundjalung Country and feelings of not coping reported in north Queensland. Occasional binge commercial gamblers were similar in most other respects in the two research locations.

Three gambler types identified in Breen's (2009) north Queensland research but not in Bundjalung Country were the the binge card gambler, exploited card gambler and exploited commercial gambler. There was not sufficient evidence in the New South Wales research results to support these typologies. However, they are profiled briefly here for north Queensland.

### **Binge Card Gamblers In North Queensland**

Occasional binge card gamblers had characteristics of both social and committed card gamblers. Binge card gamblers usually gambled as social gamblers (smaller stakes, slower games), but occasionally had a gambling binge, and then gambled like a committed gamblers (higher stakes, faster games). Both women and men were occasional binge gamblers. They usually gambled socially with their family or social group in a controlled way, but sometimes gambled intensively like committed gamblers when away from home. Motivations for binges were to win money, for excitement, to escape from pressure, and for relief from grief and loss. Binge gambling was generally triggered by an event (attending a sports carnival or the arrival of visitors) and the availability of gambling. It provided gamblers with high excitement and a temporary escape from everyday worries and problems. Binge gambling was undertaken about three or four times a year. Some entrepreneurs organised card gambling competitions at events or organised inter-community card games every three or four months so gamblers had time to save. Gamblers paid about \$100 to join a game. Potential winnings were high, up to \$15,000, or even a vehicle could be won. There were few winners as games were played out until the pool was won. Consequences appeared a mix of those for the social and committed gambler, depending on opportunities to gamble and gambling uptake, but adverse consequences for losers may be long-lasting.

### **Exploited Card Gamblers In North Queensland**

The exploited gambler was usually a disadvantaged or disabled card gambler said to have short gambling sessions, in some cases only three hours, where they exhausted all their funds. They were invited to gamble on cards when they received their fortnightly payments by very experienced gamblers seeking money; sometimes heavy pressure was applied. Exploited card gamblers usually lost their money quickly and only gambled again on their next payday. These gamblers appeared to be social gamblers in motivation and propensity to gamble but, through exploitation by more experienced gamblers, suffered consequences similar to committed gamblers, including financial distress. Their opportunities for social interaction, to travel and

mix were limited. Some were not capable of resisting pressure or encouragement to gamble from stronger people.

### **Exploited Commercial Gamblers In North Queensland**

Some older and teenage social commercial gamblers were exploited by more experienced gamblers wanting or demanding funds for their own gambling. Two or three experienced gamblers were seen to stand behind a young or older gambler waiting for them to win before humbugging for money. Older people and Elders found it hard to refuse these very persistent demands, due to expectations of cultural reciprocity. Young people did not have the experience to refuse. While the propensity to gamble was socially motivated, the financial hardship and other consequences experienced by exploited gamblers were similar to those of committed gamblers.

## **RESULTS FOR OBJECTIVE FOUR**

In relating gambling consequences, risk and protective factors and potential interventions to different types of gambling, it is critical to recognise that gambling behaviour occurs on a continuum, from healthy to unhealthy gambling. Similarly, the consequences of gambling also occur on a continuum, from positive to negative. Influential factors on gambling range from protective to risk-enhancing, while interventions range from the prevention of gambling problems, through harm minimisation to treatment. Thus, in addressing Objective Four, the analysis did not attempt to identify consequences, risk and protective factors and interventions that are distinctive only to social, committed and binge gamblers, but instead recognised there is a gradation of these along the gambling continuum. Thus, the analysis developed several continua which linked consequences, risk and protective factors, and interventions with different Indigenous gambler profiles for Bundjalung Country.

The analysis revealed that committed gamblers faced many risks, had limited protection and experienced many and severe negative consequences from their gambling. In contrast, social gamblers were largely protected from many gambling risks by limiting their gambling and understanding that gambling was just a leisure pursuit. The occasional binge gambler faced variable risks, protective factors and consequences, although some longer-term negative consequences of gambling binges were felt.

Suggested interventions were also analysed on a continuum, from primary through secondary to tertiary interventions. Suggested interventions highlighted the need for general gambling education and awareness designed to reach Indigenous Australians to open the topic for general discussion. This would be followed by education and training of Indigenous liaison workers and Elders as a source of advice about gambling. Further, the supply of culturally appropriate information and materials should be provided to those seeking help.

Additional suggestions included the provision of culturally appropriate gambling help services and counselling, and the education and training of Indigenous counsellors. The provision of outreach programs and the linking of services including health, mental health, welfare, alcohol and drugs, and community education, with a range of other community services was supported.

For the gambling industry and gaming venues, there was an expectation that gambling would be provided within the spirit as well as the letter of the law covering responsible gambling. Indigenous specific messages and information were seen as important to target Indigenous gamblers in venues. Effective communication regarding exclusion and some flexibility with exclusion practices were suggested. Refresher courses in responsible gambling for managers and staff would improve responsible gambling standards in some venues.

Responsibility for most of these potential interventions was seen to fall on the shoulders of government to fund these suggestions. However, from a macro perspective, the impact of structural disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians generally, and by Indigenous people in Bundjalung Country in particular, is very apparent for some gamblers in their propensity to gamble to increase income and alleviate poverty. A lack of education, few job opportunities, unemployment, underemployment and a lack of appropriate community services, including gambling help counselling, heighten the risks faced by committed Indigenous gamblers. Yet these may be improved if governments and local Indigenous people work together to achieve better outcomes.

Suggestions to strengthen responsible gambling policies and practices indicate that more attention should be paid to their cultural relevance for Indigenous gamblers. The results from this investigation indicate that New South Wales responsible gambling policies, and the strategies and practices that flow from them, have limited relevance for some Indigenous gamblers facing risks with their gambling. For instance, a lack of consumer knowledge about the odds of winning is implicated in the risk of gambling to make money. In regard to aspects of community protection, responsible gambling signs and messages in gaming venues appear to have little relevance for some Indigenous gamblers, while the shame of admitting to a gambling problem is a risk for others. These research findings have clear implications for responsible gambling policy. Thoughtfulness and sensitivity to cultural nuances could improve the relevance of responsible gambling strategies and practices for Indigenous gamblers, particularly for committed gamblers. Similar conclusions can be drawn for north Queensland, although the prevalence of commercial gambling by Indigenous Australians there is tempered somewhat by their greater involvement in card gambling.

Thus, in terms of harm protection, harm prevention and health promotion, current responsible gambling policy could be amended to be more inclusive of Indigenous Australians. Based on proven sustainable Indigenous social health programs (Clapham *et al.* 2007), considerable investment in consultation, planning and designing of appropriate responsible gambling policy and strategies is required. This is best undertaken, according to Clapham *et al.* (2007) with policy makers in partnership with a range of Indigenous Australian people representing different communities and organisations. Collaboration is important in reducing exclusion and increasing participation.

The implementation of the resulting strategies would need to be sufficiently broad to cover both card and commercial gambling and to allow for specific tailoring for different communities. Regular monitoring and evaluation processes would ensure the ongoing relevance and sustainability of such strategies over time. Revision of responsible gambling policy and its strategic implications could improve the

protection and safety of Indigenous gamblers in Bundjalung Country. Achieving control over gambling is crucial for some Indigenous gamblers. These measures are essentially based on the principle of equity; that is, responsible gambling strategies and practices should be equally available to every gambler, regardless of cultural background.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the application of a public health approach to investigate gambling in Bundjalung Country, as pursued in this research, has highlighted the complexities of Indigenous gambling behaviours, motivations, risks, protective mechanisms and consequences for both card and commercial gambling. Importantly, this research has pointed out the opportunity for potential interventions at the macro and local levels to develop inclusive gambling policies, strategies and practices suitable for Indigenous Australians. These policies, strategies and practices, developed in cooperation with Indigenous Australians, could filter down into regions and communities, heightening protection of Indigenous gamblers through the active participation of Indigenous collaborators and other interested people. It is hoped that this research has provided a useful platform from which such actions can proceed.



# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This research project was funded by Gambling Research Australia (GRA) under its 2007 Submission Based Grants System. GRA (2007) identified the major objectives of this grants system as:

- to more closely link gambling research to policy development to ensure jurisdictions have access to quality research;
- to encourage research that is academically rigorous and innovative in its approach to provide a solid evidence base for jurisdictions to develop future gambling policies; and
- to re-invigorate gambling research by encouraging participation and input from a variety of disciplines in undertaking applied gambling research.

The theme for the 2007 round of funding was Indigenous gambling and problem gambling. GRA (2007) noted this is a broad topic encompassing several elements and identified the following key questions which were considered of most use to GRA within this topic:

- What is the extent of participation in gambling by members of the Indigenous communities and what is the nature of that participation?
- What types of gambling are preferred and why they are preferred?
- Are there cultural, linguistic, gender and demographic variations to both levels of participation rates and preferred gambling activities? What is the nature of these variations?
- What are the particular risk factors for Indigenous gamblers?
- What are the consequences of gambling and problem gambling behaviour on Indigenous communities?

A research team from the Centre for Gambling Education and Research was granted funding under this grants system to conduct a qualitative study exploring various aspects of Indigenous gambling and problem gambling in several locations and Indigenous communities in New South Wales and Queensland. The study illuminates, through analysing stories, oral accounts, interviews and consultative meetings, Indigenous people's experiences of gambling. Perspectives from gambling counsellors and gaming venue managers are also included. Aspects of gambling explored in this research include preferred gambling activities and venues, typical frequency, expenditure and session length, motivations for gambling, problem gambling behaviour, risk and protective factors, consequences, and potential interventions. An innovative model of Indigenous gambling behaviour guides the research and enables identification of different gambler typologies for both card gambling and commercial gambling. It also identifies influences on Indigenous gambling behaviours and outcomes, including risk and protective factors relating to the propensity to gamble, to the gambling products themselves, and to consequences of gambling. From these, appropriate interventions can be designed to lower risk factors and enhance protective factors. Comparisons are drawn amongst urban, regional and remote locations, amongst Indigenous communities, and between the two jurisdictions.

The study provides new information, being the first to examine Indigenous gambling in many of the proposed locations and communities, one of the few contemporary qualitative studies on Indigenous gambling, and one of the few to compare Indigenous gambling amongst different communities and jurisdictions. It also introduces and tests a conceptual model of Indigenous gambling to advance theory construction and validation.

This chapter now identifies the specific research objectives before explaining the structure of this research report.

## **1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The major objectives of this research were to:

1. Examine Indigenous gambling behaviour, consequences, risk and protective factors, and potential interventions in several Indigenous communities in New South Wales.
2. Compare these to Indigenous gambling behaviour, consequences, risk and protective factors, and potential interventions in several Indigenous communities in Queensland.
3. Based on these comparisons, refine a conceptual model of different types of Indigenous gambling to better understand Indigenous gambling behaviour.
4. Utilise this model to analyse consequences, risk and protective factors, and potential interventions for each type of Indigenous gambling in order to inform gambling policy development.

## **1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT**

This report is structured into seven chapters. Chapter Two reviews the relevant literature on Indigenous gambling, while Chapter Three explains the study's methodology. Chapter Four is the first of the results chapters, presenting findings from interviews with Indigenous respondents, gaming venue managers and gambling counsellors across six shires in Bundjalung Country in northern New South Wales. Chapter Five summarises the research results from Breen's (2009) prior research into Indigenous gambling in north Queensland, which used a comparable methodology and approach. It then compares the research findings between the two jurisdictions. Chapter Six develops, presents and compares conceptual models of Indigenous gambler profiles in north Queensland and in Bundjalung Country. The final chapter, Chapter Seven, considers the results in relation to prior research and synthesises them through developing various continua which link the consequences, risk and protective factors and interventions for gambling with different Indigenous gambler profiles as found in this study.

# CHAPTER TWO

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides some context for this study by providing an overview of the historical development of gambling within Indigenous Australian communities. The chapter begins with a short introduction highlighting key aspects of legalised gambling expansion in New South Wales. Following this, an examination of previous research into Indigenous gambling is provided for its relevance to this study.<sup>1</sup>

Legalised commercial gambling has existed in Australia from colonial times with the first horse races being officially conducted in New South Wales in about 1809-10 (Australasian Gaming Council [AGC] 2008). Then, in the early 1930s public lotteries were permitted for charities and hospitals only. A major transformation in the Australian gambling environment occurred between the 1950s and the 1990s. For example, in 1956, poker machines were legalised for use in New South Wales registered clubs. However, New South Wales was the only state to permit poker machines in licensed venues until the first casinos were built in Tasmania in 1982. In the early 1960s, state-operated TABs were introduced in most states and territories in an attempt to reduce illegal gambling. In New South Wales this occurred in 1963. Gambling on soccer pools commenced in Australia in the mid-1970s (1975 in New South Wales). About the same time, lotto was introduced in Australia (permitted in New South Wales in 1979), followed by instant lottery in 1982. In 1984, video gaming machines were legalised for use in New South Wales hotels. Following that, Keno was permitted in New South Wales in 1992 and sports betting in 1994. The first casino was built in Sydney in 1995 and hotels were allowed to have poker machines in 1997. By the late 1990s, many forms of gambling were legally accessible to adults in New South Wales cities, regional towns and most remote regions (AGC 2008; McMillen 1996; OESR 2008; Tasmanian Gaming Commission 2004)

With expanding opportunities to gamble, gambling expenditure has also expanded. Total annual gambling expenditure for 2006-07 in Australia exceeded \$18 billion (OESR 2008). For the same period, gambling expenditure in New South Wales was the highest in Australia at approximately \$7.3 billion, up 3.5 per cent from 2005-06 (OESR 2008). Poker machines attract most gambling expenditure in New South Wales followed by TAB and then casino gambling (OESR 2008).

The effects of gambling, particularly the effects of gambling-related problems, have been a focus for broad public health-driven political and academic investigation (see for example, the Productivity Commission 1999, 2009; IPART 2004). Three key reasons for investigating the effects of gambling on a broad range of people are: to develop a deeper understanding of the consequences of the expansion of gambling; to identify the public health implications of gambling for different groups; and to develop policies and strategies that prevent or minimise gambling-related harm.

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<sup>1</sup> The authors are aware of the debate around titles used to describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Alternative terms such as Indigenous, Aboriginal, Koori and Murri are in common use. In this literature review, we use the terms Indigenous Australians and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ATSI) interchangeably.

A number of prevalence studies have examined gambling patterns, trends and consequences amongst the general population and the New South Wales population (ACNielsen 2006; Productivity Commission 1999, 2009). They have revealed information about the effects of gambling expansion, opportunities to gamble and the consequences of gambling for non-Indigenous populations. However, responses from smaller sub-groups, like Indigenous Australians, have proved more difficult to capture (Young *et al.* 2006a).

## 2.2 AN OVERVIEW OF THE AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS POPULATION

At the last Australian Census, there were 517,200 ATSI people or about 2.5 per cent of Australia's population of 20 million people, with the ATSI population growing at more than twice the rate of the non-Indigenous population (ABS 2006). Indigenous households tend to be larger than Australian households with a higher number of dependent children per household (ABS 2006). Indigenous Australians are a relatively young population, with a median age of 21 years compared to 36 years for the non-Indigenous population. Over one-quarter (27 per cent) live in remote or very remote parts of Australia, compared with 2 per cent of non-Indigenous Australians, while about 30 per cent live in major cities (ABS 2006). Household make-up, socio-demographic characteristics and residence patterns are strikingly different for Indigenous Australians compared to non-Indigenous Australians.

In New South Wales, the Indigenous population is approximately 148,200 people or about 2.2 per cent of the New South Wales population (ABS 2006). New South Wales has the largest Indigenous population in absolute numbers. About 38 per cent of the Indigenous population in New South Wales is aged 14 years and under; which is around twice the number of non-Indigenous children (19 per cent) (ABS 2006). In contrast, there are fewer Indigenous Australians aged 65 years and over in New South Wales, three per cent compared to 14 per cent for the non-Indigenous population (ABS 2006). Further, about 42 per cent of the Indigenous population lives in cities, 53 per cent in the inner and outer regional areas and about 5 per cent in remote or very remote areas (ABS 2006). Thus, the proportion of Indigenous people in the New South Wales population is slightly less than the national average but, like the national trend, is a relatively young population. Additionally, the major proportion of the New South Wales population lives in regional areas.

Indigenous Australian people are at a disadvantage in Australian society as seen through a range of socio-economic factors which impact on their health and welfare (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence 1999). Indigenous Australians suffer a greater burden of ill-health, disability and reduced quality of life and have a high incidence of social problems (Norris, 2001; Hepburn & Twining 2005). Over three-quarters of Indigenous people aged 15 years and over consider their health to be 'good to excellent'; nevertheless in 2004-05 those reporting their health as 'fair or poor' was nearly double the rate of non-Indigenous Australians (ABS 2006). In terms of health risks, while 50 per cent of Indigenous adults were daily smokers, about twice the rate of non-Indigenous adults, Indigenous and non-Indigenous adults reported similar rates for drinking alcohol at risky or high risk levels (ABS 2006). Indigenous peoples generally are more likely than non-Indigenous peoples to live below the poverty line, to be unemployed and to be less educated (Banks 2003). These social and health concerns affect every aspect of the lives of Indigenous families and communities.

Embedded within Indigenous social and health concerns are the issues of gambling and problem gambling by Indigenous Australians. Most Australian adults, about three in four, participated in gambling in some form in 2008 (Productivity Commission 2009). However

the proportion of Indigenous Australian gamblers is not known. Further, the impacts of gambling and problem gambling, and the ripple effects these have on Indigenous Australians, their families and the communities in which they live, are not well understood (Amies 1999; Phillips 2003). As later sections of this chapter will demonstrate, limited research has been conducted on these issues.

However, overseas studies suggest that Indigenous peoples are often at higher risk of gambling problems than are non-Indigenous peoples. For example, in New Zealand being of Maori or Pacific ethnicity is a risk factor for developing problem gambling (Ministry of Health 2006). In Canada, there is growing evidence that a greater proportion of Aboriginal people experience gambling problems from 'high-stakes' gambling than do members of non-Aboriginal populations (Belanger 2006). This higher risk may also be faced by Indigenous Australians, if Pearson's (2005) assertion is correct. Pearson (2005) asserts that a history of dispossession, trauma, racism and passive welfare has made Indigenous Australian people more susceptible to addictions.

The scant research that has been conducted into gambling concerning Indigenous Australians suggests higher rates of problem gambling, where this has been measured, than amongst the non-Indigenous population. It also suggests that gambling activities and behaviours amongst Indigenous Australians, and the impacts of their gambling, have distinctive features when compared to the general Australian population. Later sections of this chapter review this research. But first, the development of gambling within Indigenous Australian communities is summarised to provide an historical context to this review.

### **2.3 THE INTRODUCTION OF GAMBLING TO INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITIES**

Given Australia is a large island continent with many ports of entry, historical accounts of early Indigenous gambling are sketchy. However, it seems that gambling has been a popular pastime among Indigenous Australians for a long time (Berndt & Berndt 1977). A review of historical sources shows that gambling was undertaken by different Indigenous groups in a variety of ways in various regions of Australia.

Steane *et al.* (1998) contend that the early presence of gambling in some Indigenous communities in the north included wagering over animal carcasses, clothing and other items. A review of history on early visitors to northern Australia and gambling (see for example, Roth 1897; Moseley 1935; Berndt & Berndt 1947; Haebich 1988; Haagen 1994) suggests that Steane *et al.* (1998) have ignited debate about the generally held view that gambling was introduced into Australia by British colonists in the late 1700s. Recently, Lynch and Veal (2006:347) wrote that, while gambling was unknown in pre-contact times and not part of traditional Aboriginal society, card playing and gambling on cards '... was introduced to Aboriginal communities during the early period of contact with outsiders' (Lynch & Veal 2006). Taking this idea one step further, Binde (2005:6) states that 'in Melanesia, Australia and New Zealand, there was virtually no gambling .... Some Aboriginal groups of northern Australia gambled at cards at the first time of contact with Europeans, a practice introduced by Asian traders'.

Indigenous Australians in the north had repeated and lengthy associations with Torres Strait Islanders, Melanesians and Indonesian traders and fishermen (Berndt & Berndt 1969), but particularly those from Macassar in south Sulawesi (Brady 2004). These visitors came annually in fleets of praus, settled in the north during the 'wet' season and returned home in the 'dry'. While here, they employed and traded with Indigenous Australians, gathering

trepaning for Chinese markets. In some cases local Indigenous people went to Macassar on their annual return, to live for a season (Harney 1969) and these visits influenced the ways of Indigenous Australians. They adopted new ideas and practices, such as carving wooden figures, exotic songs and even myths, adapting them to their way of life (Blainey 1975). The Macassan visitors introduced card games and card games. Cards were played for gain where the winnings were used to procure resources. Cards were also played for recreation (Berndt & Berndt 1977). Breen (2008) argues that for over two hundred years – from about 1675 – the Macassans introduced card games and gambling to Indigenous Australians in pockets of northern Australia.

In the south east and eastern seaboard of Australia, British colonists brought gambling with them on the first fleet (Todd 1985). Early British arrivals in Australia were mostly army personnel, sailors and convicts, groups likely to gamble, given long sea voyages on small ships with few opportunities for recreation. On arrival in Australia, the new environment was very challenging and harsh. Gambling provided an escape from the rigors of life and quickly became a popular pastime from the beginnings of the colony at Port Jackson, Sydney (Brady 2004). The convicts played poker and a variety of dice games, plus pitch-and-toss with pennies (Rolls 1992).

## **2.4 FIVE PHASES OF GAMBLING DEVELOPMENT IN INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITIES**

From these early beginnings, five phases of the history and development of Indigenous Australian gambling have been analysed by Foote (1996a) and are summarised below.

### **Socialisation**

In this phase (described above), Asian fishermen and traders and latterly Europeans influenced Indigenous Australian gambling. Card games were a dominant social activity. Gambling motivations for card playing were for desirable commodities (tools and food) as a result of outside exposure and adaptation (Berndt & Berndt 1947).

### **Exploration**

This second phase saw gambling skills development amongst Indigenous Australians in order to facilitate acquiring further goods and resources. Gambling changed the communal nature of sharing resources within Indigenous groups. This meant that some individual Indigenous people began to own and retain personal items. Altman (1985) notes that gambling goes against the traditional ‘anti-surplus and anti-accumulation ideology’ of Indigenous Australians. Further, he observes that goods or money accumulated by an individual from gambling winnings were clearly the property of that individual, whereas those accumulated by other means were the property of the group according to traditional community ownership (Altman 1985). During this second phase, Foote (1996a) explains, settlement of land by European immigrants meant that traditional hunting grounds became less extensive and harder to access. Traditional food gathering and building of shelters were similarly restricted. Indigenous Australians sought to acquire goods and resources in other ways as their traditional food and shelter resources decreased and their basic survival needs became more urgent.

## Utilisation

The need for resources became greater as Indigenous Australians, dispossessed of their land, needed money to function in a non-Indigenous world. This was particularly the case given a lack of official status and therefore difficulty of accessing paid work, health care, housing and schools. Foote (1996a:185) notes that gambling became ‘the socially acceptable means of acquiring the resources necessary for living. The card ring became institutionalized as a way to escape the traditional resource distribution and reciprocal obligations’. Card rings mostly used cash as the medium of exchange, although alcohol and tobacco were sometimes used. Card playing came to be seen as an economic activity, while also filling a social role, bolstering social position (Zimmer 1987). Card playing was compared to hunting and gathering, as the central role of card playing is the acquisition of resources (Zimmer 1987; Hunter & Spargo 1988). Card ring games were organised to help purchase food and rent for those in need, to purchase resources for traditional ceremonies or for the common good. Foote (1996b) uses the example of buying a community car or paying for emergency medical funding for people in that particular Indigenous group.

## Age of Innocence

This fourth phase occurred from approximately the late 1970s to the mid-1990s (Foote 1996a). During this time, Indigenous gambling shifted emphasis from economic necessity to a social activity with social motivations. Mining royalties were beginning to be paid to Indigenous Australians although unemployment was high. Foote (1996b) describes large card ring gatherings in Darwin’s parks that were alcohol free and well organised. The rings were run with permission of the local council, provided the games stayed within city council regulations.

Non-commercial or community gambling on card games has many features that make it particularly suited to Indigenous people and contribute to its popularity. Playing card games is an accessible pastime (Altman 1985), encourages social interaction (Zimmer 1987) and, importantly, promotes resource redistribution (Foote 1996b) when or if winnings are retained within the group of players or that particular Indigenous group. Yet, self interest is inherent in card gambling. Card players in remote Kimberley communities who are identified as regular losers are welcomed at card games. Frequently the elderly and the infirm are invited to play as they have money and they attain a certain amount of respect for being a good loser (Hunter & Spargo 1988).

## Mainstreaming

The fifth phase (Foote 1996a) is mainstreaming where, from the mid 1990s, non-Indigenous forms of commercial gambling became very popular with Indigenous Australians. To illustrate this trend, few Indigenous Australians gambled at the Darwin casino in the 1980s (Goodale 1987). However, by the mid-1990s, Hunter (1993) reported that Indigenous Australians were equally at home on race tracks, in casinos or in playing cards in card rings. The increasing liberalisation of gambling in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century accompanied these changes, and increased the accessibility of commercial forms of gambling in hotels, clubs, casinos, newsagents and TABs and via the telephone and internet. At the same time, many Indigenous Australians began to move into towns where gambling venues proliferated. Foote (1996b) notes that, unlike poker machines, scratch cards and lotteries, card rings keep the money (or losses) within local communities. Foote (1996b) warns that leakage of gambling losses from commercial forms of gambling leads to impoverishment for Indigenous people.

Community card gambling and the transition from cards to commercial gambling amongst Indigenous Australians have not been widely investigated. The ensuing section of this chapter reviews the research in this area.

## **2.5 SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC RESEARCH INTO GAMBLING BY INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS**

Table 2.1 provides a summary of relevant published research conducted specifically into gambling by Indigenous Australians, where it is immediately apparent that this research effort has been limited in number, scale and scope. Non Indigenous-specific population telephone surveys have also captured some data on Indigenous gambling. However, these telephone surveys yielded small skewed samples of Indigenous respondents, so prevent meaningful conclusions (McMillen & Donnelly 2008). For example, a statewide telephone survey of gambling in NT excluded the two-thirds of Indigenous residents without a home telephone, with the 126 responses representing only more affluent urban residents (Young *et al.* 2006). Two Queensland surveys found Indigenous people are over-represented amongst at-risk and problem gamblers, but no other Indigenous data were reported (Queensland Government 2005 2008).



**Table 2.1: Summary of published research into gambling by Indigenous Australians**

Year	Author/s	Approach	Objectives	Sample	Key Findings	Limitations
1985	Altman, J.	Qualitative, anthropological study.	To understand why the Gunwinggu people at Momega camp (Arnhem Land, NT) gamble and the ramifications of their card gambling activities.	30-45 people with whom the author lived for 9 months in 1979-80.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gambling modified anti-surplus, anti-accumulation ideology to redistribute cash.</li> <li>• Gambling valued as a leisure activity.</li> <li>• Elders' authority tested by gamblers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited to economic functions only.</li> <li>• Conducted on an outstation in one small remote community.</li> </ul>
1987	Goodale, J.	Qualitative, anthropological study.	To examine the card gambling activities of Tiwi women and men in the Northern Territory.	About 300 Tiwi people residing in the town of Milikapiti where the author lived during 1954 and 1980-81, with frequent visits in 1986-87.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tiwi women see gambling as a low risk, high status activity which equates to foraging for daily sustenance.</li> <li>• For Tiwi men, gambling resembles hunting, a high risk, high status activity where success is less likely.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducted in one small remote NT community.</li> </ul>
1988	Hunter, E. & Spargo, R.	Observation and quantitative study.	To describe gambling among Indigenous Australians in the Kimberley region of Western Australia.	A random survey of 192 ATSI people using the Hopkins Symptom Checklist (HSCL) 25 for anxiety and depression.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• About half of the sample were gamblers.</li> <li>• Card gambling can result in compromised nutrition, impaired parenting, higher anxiety scores, and the entrenchment of resource use patterns that detract from the planned development of the entire community, e.g. demand sharing, inability to save for planned expenses, contributes to a cycle of dependency.</li> <li>• Card gambling is a major focus of socialisation and discourse, plus a source of credit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The HSCL 25 survey was only conducted as a work-in-progress, being part of a larger project with a sample of 637 Indigenous Australians in one region of Western Australian.</li> <li>• Gambling descriptions are based on observations made while working in the medical field in Kimberley communities.</li> </ul>

Year	Author/s	Approach	Objectives	Sample	Key Findings	Limitations
1993	Martin, D.	Qualitative ethnographical study.	To research relationships within contemporary Aboriginal groups and the intercultural zone between them and wider society.	Wik people, at Aurukun on Western Cape York, north Queensland, where the author lived for 12 months.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Card gambling has become a way of accumulating and maintaining social relationships.</li> <li>• Money is used to transform surplus cash into social capital, as Wik people disapprove of an obsession with money.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducted in one small remote north QLD community.</li> </ul>
1996	Dickerson, M., Allcock, C., Blaszczyński, A., Nicholls, B., Williams, J. & Maddern, R.	Phase 1: quantitative survey.  Phase 2: qualitative using in-depth interviews.	Part of a larger study to examine the socio-economic effects of gambling on individuals, families and communities, including the costs of problem gambling in NSW.	Phase 1: 222 ATSI people in 2 cities and 3 country areas in NSW. Phase 2: weekly ATSI gamblers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over 50% of ATSI men and women gamble weekly, while 15% don't gamble at all.</li> <li>• Poker machines are popular.</li> <li>• ATSI gambling frequency and participation was significantly higher than for NSW non-ATSI gamblers.</li> <li>• Gambling seen as an enjoyable leisure activity.</li> <li>• Negative impacts were high.</li> <li>• Problem gambling estimated at about 11% of the Indigenous people surveyed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The concepts underlying negative impacts and problem gambling were not reported as being validated by Indigenous respondents through any system of feedback or follow-up contact.</li> </ul>
1996	Queensland Department of Families, Youth and Community Care	Quantitative & qualitative study.	To investigate the social & economic impacts of the introduction of gaming machines on ATSI communities in Queensland.	Survey of 128 ATSI gamblers in Cairns licensed venues. Survey of 17 ATSI gamblers at the Yarrabah PubTAB. Consultations and public meetings in north Queensland with government and non-government organisations, health and welfare agencies. Consultative committee set up to guide the project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Cairns, average weekly expenditure by ATSI gamblers in venues was 20% of income.</li> <li>• Gambling linked to raising debt levels for families and putting relationships at risk.</li> <li>• Commercial gambling was taking precedence over card gambling in Yarrabah.</li> <li>• Reduced funds available within the community.</li> <li>• Alcohol consumption and alcohol induced violence were reduced.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited to gamblers in licensed venues.</li> <li>• A high weight given to regular, weekly gamblers in venues. Thus, upwards bias to spending estimates.</li> <li>• Yarrabah sample limited to 17 gamblers.</li> </ul>

Year	Author/s	Approach	Objectives	Sample	Key Findings	Limitations
1996 <sup>b</sup>	Foote, R.	Participant observation	To investigate Aboriginal gambling modes and attendance at the Darwin casino.	28 unobtrusive observations were recorded twice a day for 14 days for attendance in 4 casino gaming zones – total of 695 people observed. 4 zones were poker machines, keno, blackjack/poker and roulette/money wheel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal women preferred poker machine zones. They also attend the casino more regularly than men.</li> <li>Attendance at keno, blackjack/poker and roulette/money wheel was more regular than poker machines.</li> <li>Attendance at poker machine zones strongly correlated with high and low of cash flows.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited identification of Indigenous Australians by the one researcher's visual and auditory senses.</li> <li>In the observation period, only attendance was investigated - not gambling participation, expenditure, number or duration of sessions.</li> </ul>
2005	Cultural Perspectives	Qualitative study.	To examine Indigenous health promotion and service delivery. To review problem gambling health promotion and services targeted at Indigenous communities. To identify potential new services.	15 interviews with Indigenous health and gambling help services in Victoria. 6 interviews with problem gamblers in Victoria. 4 interviews with families of problem gamblers in Victoria.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ATSI problem gamblers, both male and female, preferred playing poker machines.</li> <li>Problem gambling impacts the gambler and their families in 3 main areas: financial hardship, relationships and emotional wellbeing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very small sample.</li> <li>Study limited to problem gambling impacts, help seeking and gambling help services only.</li> <li>No other gambling patterns examined.</li> </ul>
2005	Queensland Department of Corrective Services	Quantitative study.	To examine the prevalence of problem gambling in the Queensland community corrections population.	A stratified sample of 580 people were surveyed from almost 12,000 of the total Queensland community corrections population. The Indigenous Australian proportion was 109 people - 83 men (14.4%) and 26 women (4.8%).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proportion of non-gamblers was higher among ATSI than non-ATSI respondents.</li> <li>Proportions of problem and moderate risk gamblers were higher among ATSI than non-ATSI respondents.</li> <li>Impact of card schools in 3 remote communities was reported as being related to a high rate of moderate risk gambling.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sample restricted to people on community corrections orders.</li> <li>Small sample of ATSI people.</li> <li>Remote community results were based on only 24 responses.</li> </ul>

Year	Author/s	Approach	Objectives	Sample	Key Findings	Limitations
2006	McDonald, H. & Wombo, B.	Qualitative study.	To identify and analyse the range of issues related to Indigenous gambling (cards and commercial gambling). To identify appropriate research direction, remediation strategies and policies in relation to social issues arising from gambling.	Several semi-structured interviews with key informants in 4 Northern Territory towns. Open-ended questionnaire for staff (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) from 64 organisations providing services to Indigenous Australians.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided descriptions of card and commercial gambling.</li> <li>• Described positive and negative impacts of gambling.</li> <li>• Suggested research paths include gambling habits, casino study, ATSI psychology, policy and intervention, financial and gambling literacy, and help-seeking.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No interviews targeted at Indigenous gamblers, although some Indigenous study participants were gamblers.</li> </ul>
2006	Queensland Department of Corrective Services	Qualitative study.	To understand the nature, extent and impacts of gambling in remote communities by offenders on community corrections orders, probation and parole. To develop appropriate intervention services to reduce re-offending.	A group of community representatives (Council, Elders, teachers, police, justice group, community and government sector workers) in 3 remote north Queensland Indigenous communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gambling (cards &amp; commercial) in ATSI communities is said to be widespread and prominent.</li> <li>• Card schools are popular with women, who play regularly and for large sums.</li> <li>• Social costs reported as: problem gambling, substance abuse, violence, child neglect and poverty.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of meetings and interviews is not clearly stated.</li> <li>• It appears that only 1 visit was made to each of the 3 remote Indigenous communities.</li> <li>• Very limited contact with participants.</li> <li>• No obvious feedback or follow-up contact to validate results with respondents.</li> </ul>
2006	Young, M., Abu-Duhou, I., Barnes, T., Creed, E., Morris, M., Stevens, M. & Tyler, B.	Quantitative study.	To assess participation in, and attitudes towards, gambling in the Northern Territory.	Telephone survey of 1,873 Northern Territory residents with 37% response rate. ATSI sample was 126 people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Card gambling is pervasive but varies from place to place.</li> <li>• Card gambling is becoming less re-distributive and more problematic.</li> <li>• Commercial gambling appears to draw money from card gambling and create leakage from ATSI communities.</li> <li>• Problem gambling inter-related with other social issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under- representation of a significant section of the population, as only 126 out of 33,000 ATSI people in NT responded to survey.</li> <li>• Results limited to urban, affluent ATSI people who had a working phone in their home during the survey.</li> </ul>

Year	Author/s	Approach	Objectives	Sample	Key Findings	Limitations
2007	Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW.	Qualitative study involving community consultation.	To identify and characterise Indigenous gambling. To inform the establishment of gambling help services and programs to prevent and alleviate gambling related problems.	98 Indigenous and non-Indigenous people from health, drug, alcohol, welfare and gambling help services in 9 locations across NSW.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gambling is a common and widely accepted activity for ATSI people.</li> <li>• Women were said to prefer poker machines, bingo and cards while men prefer wagering.</li> <li>• Gambling related problems were reported as financial hardship, child neglect, family arguments and crime.</li> <li>• Shame and stigma are said to deter gamblers from using current gambling help services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The first ever investigation of ATSI gambling by an ATSI organisation missed the chance to talk to gamblers.</li> <li>• Thus, the research focus was narrow and limited to anecdotal accounts by those helping others with gambling related problems.</li> </ul>
2008	Stevens, M.	Quantitative study.	To investigate relationships between gambling problems and negative life events, and to examine demographic, socio-economic and socio-cultural correlates of reported gambling problems in the Northern Territory (NT).	Using logistic regression, analysis was conducted on the results of two ABS national surveys, the <i>2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSIS)</i> and the <i>2002 General Social Survey (GSS)</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 31% of Indigenous Australians living in remote locations report that they, their family, or close friends had been affected by gambling-related problems in the year before the survey, compared with 13% living in non-remote areas. For the general NT population living in non-remote areas, the estimate was significantly less at 3.5%.</li> <li>• The analysis found a consistent link between excessive gambling and other negative life issues such as alcohol and drug problems, violent crime and contact with police for both the Indigenous and general NT population.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No primary data used &amp; secondary data now 7 years old.</li> <li>• Scope differences between the GSS &amp; NATSIS (non-remote v. all NT).</li> <li>• Unmeasured variables (community size, location) confound results.</li> <li>• Estimates biased upwards in discrete community sample due to greater social connectedness (kin groups), in remote locations.</li> <li>• Unclear if gambling problems are associated with remote card games or with people travelling to towns to gamble on commercial gambling.</li> </ul>

Year	Author/s	Approach	Objectives	Sample	Key Findings	Limitations
2009	Fogarty, M.	Qualitative study.	To investigate impacts of card games in a remote Indigenous community & the context of remote Indigenous peoples' experiences of regulated gambling in a large urban venue.	A remote Northern Territory Indigenous community where the author lived for 15 months.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem gambling is closely linked to people neglecting, rejecting or threatening social relationships &amp; obligations.</li> <li>• Problem gambling is characterised by individuated gambling for both cards &amp; commercial gambling by remote Indigenous peoples.</li> <li>• Gambling screens do not capture the complexity of Indigenous problem gambling.</li> <li>• Gambling does not drive mobility; it is incidental to travelling to urban centres.</li> <li>• Gamblers discourage alcohol use while gambling.</li> <li>• Cards &amp; commercial gambling is dominated by women.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducted in only one small remote community and only one urban venue in the Northern Territory.</li> </ul>
2009	Young, M. & Stevens, M.	Quantitative study	To provide a nationwide assessment of the correlates of reported gambling problems amongst the Indigenous Australian population.	Factor analysis was conducted on Negative Life Event Scale (NLES) from the ABS to find gambling problems related to other negative life events. Using multivariate adjusted logistic regression models, analysis was conducted on ABS national surveys, <i>2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSIS)</i> , the <i>2004/5 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS)</i> and the <i>2000 and 2006 General Social Survey (GSS)</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant correlates of reported gambling problems for the Indigenous Australian population fall under six domains: 1) regional, 2) demographic (household structure and crowding, and gender), 3) socioeconomic (household/personal income and cash flow problems), 4) social networks (attendance and participation in social and cultural activities), 5) social and community safety (youth gang problems, alcohol problems, physical assault problems for remote and family violence and theft and break-ins for non-remote), and 6) health (self-reported health).</li> <li>• Reported gambling problems for Indigenous Australians averaged 13.5%.</li> <li>• Indigenous Australians living in remote regions reported more gambling problems than in non-remote regions except for NSW.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No primary data used.</li> <li>• Unmeasured variables (i.e. community size, location) confound results.</li> <li>• Potential measurement error based on social norms existing in a community.</li> </ul>

Year	Author/s	Approach	Objectives	Sample	Key Findings	Limitations
2009	Christie, M., Greatorex, J., Gurruwiwi, D., Djirrimbilpilwuy, F., Galathi, J., Gapany, D., Garngulkpuy, J., Guthadjaka, K., Gurrumuwuy, C., Gumbala, I., Lawurra, E., Dhamarrandji, M., Gumbala, M., Nyunyunu, M., Gaykamanu, W., Guyula, Y.	Case study consistent with traditional Yolgnu practices of negotiation & agreement making	To provide a genuine Yolgnu perspective on gambling practices, the meaning of problem gambling, and potential interventions strategies	14 Yolgnu consultants in discussions & feedback among themselves & in their communities through a planning meeting, a workshop, speaking & writing reflections on video, using English and Yolgnu languages, to come to some agreement to present findings at a symposium on gambling research. Feedback sessions are yet to be held.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Card gambling was introduced by the Macassans and perceived initially as play, then ceremony, followed by money, then a cause of distress.</li> <li>• Boredom, depression, kin &amp; social connectedness, the need for extra income motivates card &amp; commercial gambling.</li> <li>• Commercial gaming venues provide a neutral place to meet others.</li> <li>• Card gambling provides a natural space to socialise with others, especially for ex-mission residents who are estranged from their own custodial lands.</li> <li>• Money lost in card gambling in communities circulates around &amp; people look after others.</li> <li>• Money lost in commercial gambling is lost forever.</li> <li>• When gambling is a problem it affects everyone, not just the gambler.</li> <li>• Excessive gambling is a spiritual problem called addiction by non-Indigenous Australians.</li> <li>• Excessive gamblers opt out of active community involvement, become disempowered &amp; alienated from kin &amp; country &amp; can become caught in a cycle of gambling &amp; depression.</li> <li>• Outside solutions might make the cause of the gambling problems worse. More opportunities for Yolgnu to live on their own land with their kin would see less gambling problems.</li> <li>• Governments should focus on alleviating conditions (poverty, boredom, unemployment) that lead to excessive gambling.</li> <li>• Governments should support &amp; restore traditional Yolgnu clan authorities to deal with this in the Yolgnu way.</li> </ul>	Conducted with just one group of Indigenous Australians, the Yolgnu Matha in NT.

Source: adapted and extended from Hing, Breen and Gordon (2009).

Having provided an overview of studies conducted into gambling by Indigenous Australians, this chapter now turns to reviewing the literature in relation to specific aspects of Indigenous gambling that are relevant to the current study – problem gambling, card gambling, commercial gambling, the impacts of gambling and help-seeking behaviour amongst Indigenous Australians.

## **2.6 PROBLEM GAMBLING AMONGST INDIGENOUS PEOPLES: SOME INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE**

Most prevalence studies researching gambling and problem gambling tend to examine the general population or dominant cultural group in a particular area. For instance, Wynne and McCready (2004) maintain that these studies usually describe the prevalence, nature and characteristics of the dominant population's gambling activities and the incidence of problem gambling, but that few focus on the same topics in sub-cultural groups. These sub-cultural groups might include the elderly, youth, minorities, ethno-cultural groups, non-English speaking, First Nations and Aboriginal peoples.

Amongst First Nations or Aboriginal peoples, there is evidence to suggest that gambling is very attractive and that problem gambling prevalence is higher than amongst the general population (Korn 2000; Stinchfield 2000; Wynne 2004). For example, Volberg and Abbott (1997) found that Indigenous people experience gambling problems three to four times more than experienced by the general population. In New Zealand, the *2003 National Problem Gambling Survey* found that Maori are over-represented in statistics recording presentation to counselling services and telephone helpline calls at more than double their representation in the general population (Paton-Simpson Gruys & Hannifin 2004). Being of Maori or Pacific ethnicity was implicated as a risk factor for developing gambling-related problems in New Zealand (Ministry of Health 2006). While some First Nations people in the US have successfully established casinos on their land as a means of raising money to fund their future, other First Nations people in disadvantaged circumstances have been found by Volberg (1993) and Elia and Jacobs (1993) to experience high rates of regular and heavy gambling. Using the Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI), Wynne (2004) reports that the results of three research studies into gambling amongst Canadian Aboriginal people show consistent over-representation in both the low and moderate risk categories, as well as the problem gambling category.

In a review of 11 empirical research studies on problem gambling among North American Aboriginal populations, Wardman, el-Guebaly and Hodgins (2001) found that Aboriginal adults and teenagers have higher rates (between two and 15 times) of problem gambling than the general population and that stressful situations and gender were associated with problem gambling behaviours. Living on a reservation with accompanying lack of alternative recreation, a lack of employment and education opportunities, and a need for higher income were all identified and associated with stressful situations. A further stressful situation identified was living with grief, for instance, where Aboriginal children had been sent to boarding schools, where some suffered abuse, some banned from practising their culture and many did not learn parenting skills. Other studies have found that, in comparison to the general female population, Aboriginal females are more likely to be problem gamblers (Cozzetto & Larocque 1996; Dyall 2004). Wardman *et al.* (2001) concluded that the influence of Aboriginal culture on gambling prevalence rates was yet to be studied, but deserving of research.



From the results above, it is expected that gambling problems are also prevalent amongst Indigenous Australians, given their history of invasion, dispossession, trauma, grief and poor socio-economic circumstances.

## 2.7 PROBLEM GAMBLING AMONGST INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

To date, there has been no national or state-wide prevalence study of problem gambling specifically amongst Indigenous Australians. However, two sets of general population surveys have had sample sizes large enough to examine gambling amongst Indigenous peoples, and have obtained random samples from which results can be generalised. The first of these is the Productivity Commission Report (1999), and the second comprises the three Queensland Household Gambling Surveys.

In Australia, the first truly national gambling survey was conducted for the Productivity Commission (1999). The sample included about 10,600 telephone interviews, stratified by age, gender and area. They were distributed across each state and territory in urban and rural regions in proportion to the population. Using the South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS) (Lesieur & Blume 1987), the level of problem gambling was found to be high amongst ATSI people, with ATSI people representing 2.4 per cent of all problem gamblers surveyed, but only 1.6 per cent of all gamblers surveyed, and 1.0 per cent of all non-gamblers surveyed. However, given the telephone survey methodology, the representativeness of these data for Indigenous people may be questionable.

In Queensland, three state-wide surveys have now been conducted, collecting information about Queensland people regarding their gambling behaviours and attitudes and the impacts of gambling. Along with other questions, the Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI) is used to distinguish between five groups: non-gamblers, non-problem or recreational gamblers, low risk gamblers, moderate risk gamblers and problem gamblers.

For the *Queensland Household Gambling Survey 2001* (Queensland Government, 2002), over 13,000 random telephone interviews were completed with Queensland adults. Of these, 2.8 per cent were with people who identified themselves as of ATSI origin. However, limited analysis was reported relating specifically to these people, with the key findings being:

- About 15 per cent of the Queensland population were non-gamblers. Of this group, 1 per cent identified themselves as ATSI people.
- Over 73 per cent of the Queensland population were non-problem or recreational gamblers. Of this group, 1 per cent identified themselves as ATSI people.
- Over 8 per cent of the Queensland population were low risk gamblers. Of this group, 3 per cent identified themselves as ATSI people.
- About 2.7 per cent of the Queensland population were moderate risk gamblers. Of this group 7 per cent identified themselves as ATSI people.
- 0.83 per cent of Queensland adults were problem gamblers. Of this group, 3 per cent identified themselves as being ATSI people.
- No significant differences were found between the above results and those which would be expected given the proportion of ATSI people in the Queensland population. Small sample sizes of ATSI people limited this analysis.

For the *Queensland Household Gambling Survey 2003-04* (Queensland Government 2005), over 30,000 random telephone interviews were conducted across 30 regions throughout

Queensland, with a minimum of 1,000 interviews in each region. In contrast to the previous survey (Queensland Government 2002), this survey combined ATSI and Australian South Sea Islander peoples to improve the reliability of findings. As well, this survey discounted buying a raffle or art union ticket as gambling (Queensland Government, 2005). Key findings were:

- Almost 20 per cent of the Queensland population were non-gamblers. Of this group, 2.6 per cent identified themselves as ATSI or Australian South Sea Islander people.
- Over 72 per cent of the Queensland population were non-problem or recreational gamblers. Of this group, 2 per cent identified themselves as ATSI or Australian South Sea Islander people.
- Over 5 per cent of the Queensland population were low risk gamblers. Of this group, 5.9 per cent identified themselves as ATSI or Australian South Sea Islander people, a statistically significant over-representation when compared to the ATSI population in Queensland.
- About 2 per cent of the Queensland population were moderate risk gamblers. Of this group 5.1 per cent identified themselves as ATSI or Australian South Sea Islander people, a statistically significant over-representation when compared to the ATSI population in Queensland.
- 0.55 per cent of Queensland adults were problem gamblers. Of this group, 7.6 per cent identified themselves as being ATSI or Australian South Sea Islander people, a statistically significant over-representation when compared to the ATSI population in Queensland.

ATSI and Australian South Sea Islander people were over-represented in the low risk, moderate risk and problem gambling groups.

For the *Queensland Household Gambling Survey 2006-07* (Queensland Government 2008), over 30,000 random telephone interviews were again conducted in 30 Queensland regions, with quotas for each region based on a proportional population basis. Key findings were:

- Almost 25 per cent of the Queensland population were non-gamblers. Of this group, 2.6 per cent identified themselves as ATSI or Australian South Sea Islander people.
- About 67 per cent of the Queensland population were non-problem or recreational gamblers. Of this group, 1.3 per cent identified themselves as ATSI or Australian South Sea Islander people.
- About 5.7 per cent of the Queensland population were low risk gamblers. Of this group, 3.0 per cent identified themselves as ATSI or Australian South Sea Islander people.
- About 1.8 per cent of the Queensland population were moderate risk gamblers. Of this group 5.6 per cent identified themselves as ATSI or Australian South Sea Islander people, a statistically significant over-representation when compared to the ATSI population in Queensland.
- 0.47 per cent of Queensland adults were problem gamblers. Of this group, 2.9 per cent identified themselves as being ATSI or Australian South Sea Islander people.
- ATSI and Australian South Sea Islander people were over-represented in the moderate risk gambling group only.

The results of these three surveys seem to indicate a higher prevalence of gambling problems amongst ATSI or Australian South Sea Islander peoples. Further, because the surveys were conducted by telephone, the sample is likely to be biased to more affluent Indigenous respondents who are more likely to have a home telephone. Thus, gambling problems in the Indigenous population may be under-estimated in these surveys. Mainstream responsible gambling strategies may not be appropriate to meet the needs of ATSI or Australian South Sea Islander peoples.

Several other studies have measured problem gambling amongst ATSI peoples, but only with relatively small, non-representative samples of particular sub-groups. A study of 222 ATSI people in two cities and two country areas of New South Wales (Dickerson *et al.* 1996) estimated a problem gambling rate of about 11 per cent of the Indigenous people surveyed. Hockings, Young, Falconer and O'Rourke (2002) conducted a study of problem gambling amongst 178 Queensland prisoners and found that non-ATSI men had the highest prevalence (21.4 per cent), followed by ATSI females (16.7 per cent), with ATSI men having the lowest prevalence of problem gambling (14.3 per cent). They noted that all of these rates are extremely high and also point to a possible higher propensity for gambling problems amongst ATSI women, a pattern also noted by Phillips (2003).

An investigation of a stratified sample of 580 people from the Queensland community corrections population, including 109 ATSI people (Queensland Department of Corrective Services 2005), found that non-gamblers were more common amongst ATSI (18 per cent) than non-ATSI (14 per cent) people. However, problem gamblers were also more common amongst the ATSI respondents (13 per cent) compared to the non-ATSI counterparts (8 per cent). A similar pattern was found for moderate risk gamblers (ATSI = 17 per cent; non-ATSI = 11 per cent).

In 2003-04, the Queensland Government conducted a survey of gambling and problem gambling in the Indigenous Cherbourg Community. While some aspects of the methodology for this project were revealed at the National Association for Gambling Studies Conference in 2004, the project's results have not yet been released (Ames, Bell & Firman 2004).

Recently, a research project, *Reported Gambling Problems in the Indigenous and Total Australian Population* by Young and Stevens (2009) used secondary statistical data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics to investigate factors that correlate with gambling-related problems among the Indigenous Australian population. Compared to the non-Indigenous population, socio-economic variables of income, educational attainment and tenure type all had independent associations with self-reported gambling problems for Indigenous gamblers. Gambling problems for Indigenous Australians were reported to average 13.5 per cent, about six times higher than that for the Australian population overall when reported by the Productivity Commission (1999). Higher rates were reported in the Northern Territory (24 per cent), South Australia (16 per cent) and Queensland (14 per cent). Lower rates were reported in WA (11.1 per cent), New South Wales (10.8 per cent), ACT/TAS combined (8.4 per cent) & VIC (8.3 per cent) (Young and Stevens 2009:57). Indigenous Australians living in remote regions reported more gambling problems than in non-remote regions, except in New South Wales. In non-remote areas, being female and/or living in an all-Indigenous household was linked with more gambling problems. These analyses, Young and Stevens (2009: ix) argue, constitute the first empirical analysis of reported gambling problems across Australia for the Indigenous population. Important variations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians experiencing gambling-related problems were found to be based on multi-family households, income, social connectedness, and community problems including violence. While such empirical research has helped to quantify the extent of gambling

problems for Indigenous gamblers, it has not contributed to any in-depth or qualitative understanding of risk factors associated with gambling-related problems, or interventions that might influence a reduction in gambling risk for Indigenous gamblers.

## 2.8 CARD GAMBLING AMONGST INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

Card games have historically been the most popular type of gambling for ATSI people, introduced by the Macassan traders from about 1700 and played for recreation and for gain, with winnings used to procure fresh provisions and to obtain additional manpower (Berndt & Berndt 1977). Traditionally, it has been viewed as a convivial shared activity.

Modern card gambling has a number of features that make it particularly suited to ATSI society and therefore contributes to its popularity. Card games have been identified as being accessible, seen as a pastime, as encouraging social interaction and, importantly, promoting 'resource redistribution' (Altman 1985; Christie *et al.*, 2009; Fogarty 2009; Foote, 1996b; Hunter & Spargo 1988), particularly of welfare payments. In addition, big winners are expected to share their winnings with others (Martin 1993). Therefore, gambling on card games can be seen as an economic activity, although it also fulfils a social role, where it can be used to bolster social position (Zimmer 1987). The Productivity Commission (1999) also noted that community card games are very popular socially in ATSI communities and have a redistributive function of shifting resources within a group of gamblers while remaining in the community.

As noted earlier, card playing has been likened to hunting and gathering, as a central role of this activity is the acquisition of resources (Zimmer 1987; Hunter & Spargo, 1988). Women in particular refer to card playing as 'hard work' (Goodale 1987). Perhaps for this reason, ATSI women's participation in gambling appears to be higher than men's (Phillips 2003). Card games are used to generate funds for family use, for funerals, to pay off debts and for consumer goods (Martin, 1993). Once the gambler is unable to accumulate further money playing cards, members of the household might go fishing or gathering instead (Zimmer 1987), although increasing urbanisation of ATSI people and loss of traditional skills would render this task less likely.

Yet gambling on card games has also been seen as contributing to the demise of ATSI society (Berndt & Berndt 1969). When expenditure is diverted from other household necessities, such as clothing, food and rent, ATSI health and wellbeing suffers. Gambling on card games is associated with poor nutrition in some ATSI communities, which in turn is associated with high morbidity (Hunter & Spargo 1988). Non-stop card games, lasting several days and nights, have also been linked to domestic violence (Tsey *et al.* 2004), child neglect (Goodale 1987), school absenteeism (Johns, 2006), and harassment of non-gamblers for money, food and everyday items (McKnight 2002). Further, Hunter (1993) maintains that card games played early in life can normalise gambling as a way of life, lead to anxiety and indebtedness, and undermine community development.

The contemporary popularity of card playing has more recently been highlighted by a Queensland Department of Community Corrections' study (2005) which found that the ATSI people on community corrections orders in their sample were significantly more likely to have played card games for money (19 per cent) than the non-Indigenous respondents (8 per cent). They were also significantly more likely to have played card games for money as their most dominant gambling activity (8 per cent) than their non-Indigenous counterparts (1 per cent). Further, the Indigenous respondents were significantly more likely to have played cards as their first ever gambling activity (14 per cent) compared to the non-Indigenous

respondents (5 per cent). The researchers concluded that these figures reflect the ‘influence of so-called “card schools” or “card pits” in Indigenous communities’ (Queensland Department of Corrective Services 2005:27). They also conducted a very limited survey in three remote communities – Aurukun, Pormpuraaw and Yarrabah – with a total of 24 responses. The popularity and prevalence of community card gambling, the most significant difference for the remote communities, was considered a contributing factor to behaviours that eventually lead to some remote ATSI people becoming subjected to a Community Corrections order (Queensland Department of Corrective Services 2005).

Young *et al.* (2006) have also provided a recent perspective on Indigenous card playing for money. They noted it is pervasive in the Northern Territory, but varies from place to place. They also noted it is becoming less redistributive and more problematic.

## 2.9 COMMERCIAL GAMBLING AMONGST INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

Several studies shed some light on patterns of Indigenous gambling on commercial activities. The Productivity Commission (1999) was told in submissions that, with the expansion of gambling in the 1980-90s, ATSI people took up the opportunity to gamble on modern forms of gambling, as did the general population. In some communities, card games fell in popularity while modern gambling took precedence.

The effects of modern commercial gambling, such as those on gender participation and expenditure patterns, have become obvious. Foote’s (1996a) observational research at the Darwin casino recorded the attendance patterns of ATSI people against four spatial and gambling areas: gaming machines; keno; blackjack/poker; and roulette/money wheel. He found that women outnumbered men by a ratio of two to one in the gaming machine gaming area; that women recorded more regular attendances at the casino; and that overall attendance peaked the day after welfare payments were made.

In New South Wales, Dickerson *et al.* (1996) found that ATSI men preferred racing and poker machines while women preferred poker machines, lottery, pools and bingo. These ATSI gamblers reportedly participated more frequently in gambling activities than did other gamblers in New South Wales. Their weekly gambling expenditure was about \$100 or more, again higher than other gamblers in New South Wales.

A survey of 128 ATSI gamblers recruited from gambling venues in Cairns (Queensland Department of Families, Youth and Community Care 1996) found that 78 per cent preferred gaming machines, 11 per cent preferred Lotto/lottery, 7 per cent favoured TAB gambling and 4 per cent preferred cards and bingo. While men and women preferred gaming machines equally, only 20 per cent of women preferred the TAB. From an average gambling expenditure of \$60 per week, about half (\$30) was spent on gaming machines. Furthermore, before gaming machines were introduced, 29 per cent of the sample had not gambled before. The same study examined the gambling preferences of six females and 11 males who were surveyed in the PubTAB in Yarrabah. They spent on average about \$140 per fortnight on gambling at the PubTAB, and on gaming machines and card games, from an income of \$423 per fortnight. The researchers concluded that, while the introduction of additional forms of gambling offered more leisure and entertainment opportunities, ATSI Australians were not sharing in the economic benefits. Of more concern, ATSI people were incurring disproportionate negative social and economic effects from gambling (Queensland Department of Families, Youth and Community Care 1996).

In 2002, a Queensland Department of Corrective Services study examined gambling amongst the state’s population of women prisoners in custodial Correctional Centres (Hockings,

Young, Falconer & O'Rourke 2002). Of the 212 participants in this survey, 53 (25 per cent) identified as ATSI women. These women showed high levels of risk taking behaviour, including regular gambling (more than three times a week) in the 12 months before entering prison. They preferred gaming machines, casino games and card games. Their source of money for gambling was often crime, followed by social security payments. Many felt that their gambling problems were inherited, having a family background of regular gambling.

In Darwin, the casino and other licensed venues are seen as neutral spaces for Yolgnu people to meet each other. Appealing venue features include air-conditioning and an exciting atmosphere. Yolgnu people overwhelmingly participate in poker machine gambling (Christie *et al.* 2009).

In summary, Indigenous Australians appear to have taken up commercial gambling activities as their accessibility has become more widespread. While some remote communities have no access to commercial forms of gambling, unless by telephone or internet, those located in or near cities and towns have ready access to these opportunities to gamble. However, in the absence of large-scale population studies of Indigenous gambling, the current knowledge of Indigenous gambling on commercial activities is meagre.

## 2.10 IMPACTS OF GAMBLING FOR INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

Gambling is seen as a pleasurable leisure and recreation activity by many ATSI people, as it is by many in the general population of Australia (AH&MRC 2007; Queensland Department of Families, Youth and Community Care 1996). Gambling can produce positive impacts, relating to issues such as (but not limited to): being social (Phillips 2003), providing time away from the demands of home (Foote 1996b), supporting cultural relationships (Goodale 1987), redistributing some economic resources (Altman 1985; Christie *et al.* 2009), self-regulated recreation (Paterson 2007), having the opportunity to win and so being perceived as a 'big person' with money to lend, being lucky or showing 'thup', using bush medicine or magical means to influence the outcome of events, experiencing animation and enthusiasm (Martin 1993), and reduced alcohol use when money is spent on gambling (Hunter 1993).

Gambling can also produce negative impacts, relating to issues such as (but not limited to): diversion of money from household budgets, time consumption, a preference for continuous gambling, disagreements about gambling on community land (Queensland Department of Families, Youth and Community Care 1996), neglect of children and relationships (Phillips, 2003), poor nutrition and health problems (Hunter & Spargo 1988) and funds lost from host communities to commercial gambling (McMillen & Togni 2000). If problem gambling develops, its impacts can include: domestic violence; poverty and crime (Queensland Department of Corrective Services 2006); social isolation (McDonald & Wombo 2006); unemployment (Young *et al.* 2006); borrowing and debts (Queensland Government 2008); depression (AH&MRC 2007); and addiction (Christie *et al.*, 2009).

While knowledge about the impacts of gambling for ATSI people is sketchy, inconsistent and inconclusive, the impacts arising from commercial gambling are generally perceived to be more negative and extensive than those arising from card gambling (McMillen & Donnelly 2008). This was recognised by the Liquor and Gaming Commissioner in South Australia who, in 1998, refused a gaming machine licence for a hotel in the vicinity of two remote ATSI communities based on several grounds, including the drain of money from communities already hurt by alcohol expenditure, and the potential increase in violence and anti-social behaviour (Brady 2004). In this unusual incidence, the negative impacts were clearly considered to outweigh any benefits. However, there have been no published studies

that have comprehensively examined the impacts of gambling for Indigenous Australians or provided a cost-benefit analysis of its net benefit.

## 2.11 HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR AMONGST INDIGENOUS GAMBLERS

In Australia, the proportion of problem gamblers who seek formal counselling or assistance for their gambling problems is low, at around 10 per cent in any twelve month period (Delfabbro 2008). It is not known what proportion of Indigenous problem gamblers seek this help. Yet, there is evidence from some overseas studies that Indigenous people under-present to gambling help services (Abbott, 2001). This has been supported anecdotally in Queensland, with thirteen gambling help counsellors articulating this view to the researchers (Breen 2007). In Victoria, mainstream gambling help services are also not well used by Indigenous gamblers as they may not be considered as culturally appropriate (Cultural Perspectives 2005). This supports earlier similar findings by McMillen *et al.* (2004) in a very small study in the Australian Capital Territory. In New South Wales, the AH&MRC (2007) reported that shame and stigma can prevent ATSI people from seeking help.

Australian ATSI communities have different relationships to those that exist within non-ATSI societies. In ATSI communities, a whole of community approach is taken toward the resolution of issues. As such, problems that are individualised in non-ATSI communities are dealt with communally in ATSI communities before they are recognised as a 'crisis' (Taylor, Cheers, Weetra & Gentle 2004). However, there is evidence that community solutions to ATSI social issues are difficult to implement (Taylor *et al.* 2004). For example, ATSI participants in the Community Corrections survey (Queensland Department of Corrective Services 2005) reported that gambling winnings were used to support their families. Poverty is often associated with greater financial risk-taking due to the psycho-economics of gambling (Shaffer, Freed & Healea 2002). Winning is perceived as having the potential to radically change the lives of the poor, much more so than the effect it may have on wealthy people. This psycho-economic drive underpins the attempts that disadvantaged people will make to support their family and improve their living conditions. However, this drive may be a barrier for getting help for gambling problems.

Yet, a willingness to take action has been documented by Christie *et al.* (2009). People from the Yolgnu Aboriginal Community suggest that community-based negotiated development projects would alleviate structural conditions which lead to excessive gambling. They maintain that with the restoration of traditional authority based on their traditional lands and with their kin folk, they could attempt to deal with gambling so that it is less problematic.

A further willingness in seeking gambling help from a free gambling help program was supported by 50 per cent of the ATSI participants and only 37 per cent of the non-ATSI participants in a Community Corrections survey (Queensland Department of Corrective Services 2005). Unfortunately, there are very few ATSI counsellors providing gambling help services across Australia. The New South Wales report by the AH&MRC (2007) called for culturally specific gambling services that emphasise preventative strategies. The provision of culturally appropriate counselling and gambler's help services for ATSI people was also advocated by Steane *et al.* (1998), Amies (1999) and the Queensland Department of Corrective Services (2005).

## 2.12 SUMMARY

Indigenous Australians have participated in gambling for over 300 years with Macassan traders first introducing card gambling (Breen 2008). Today, card rings are still a widespread acceptable form of social recreation in Indigenous communities, while expansion of commercial forms of gambling, such as gaming machines, casinos and TABs, has broadened Indigenous participation in gambling (McMillen & Donnelly 2008). Yet little public knowledge exists about most aspects of contemporary Indigenous gambling. The international knowledge base is meagre, providing little insight into Indigenous gambling as a socio-cultural activity, thus limiting prior theoretical developments in gambling to culturally narrow perspectives. There is an urgent need to build the knowledge base in relation to how Indigenous gambling problems are perceived, Indigenous community values and beliefs around gambling, Indigenous help-seeking behaviour, and culturally-sensitive resources for problem gamblers (Wynne & McCreedy 2004).

However, international research *has* found that Indigenous peoples are often at higher risk of gambling problems than non-Indigenous peoples. Epidemiological surveys of First Nation populations in Canada, the United States and New Zealand have described ‘alarmingly high’ rates of problem gambling (McGowan & Nixon 2004:7). When gambling behaviour is considered on a continuum, from severe to no associated problems, these studies have found higher proportions of Indigenous populations to be at the problematic end of the scale. The scant research into gambling by Indigenous Australians also suggests higher problem gambling rates than for non-Indigenous Australians (McMillen & Donnelly 2008), where problem gambling is defined as ‘difficulties in limiting money and/or time spent on gambling which leads to adverse consequences for the gambler, others, or for the community’ (Neal, Delfabbro & O’Neil 2005:i).

In truth, little is definitively known about contemporary Indigenous gambling practices, their social, cultural, health and economic consequences, extent of gambling problems and associated risk factors. Only 13 studies specific to Indigenous Australian gambling have ever been published. Ethnographic studies have focused on Indigenous card gambling, each presenting a case of one remote community with limited generalisability (Altman 1985; Goodale, 1987; Hunter & Spargo 1988; Martin 1993; Paterson 2007). Only four published studies have focused specifically on Indigenous participation in commercial gambling. They obtained convenience samples of just 222 Indigenous people in New South Wales (Dickerson *et al.* 1996) and 128 in Queensland (Queensland Department of Families, Youth and Community Care 1996) to quantitatively analyse some aspects of gambling behaviour. An observational study of people of Indigenous appearance was also conducted in one casino (Foote 1996b) while Young and Stevens (2009) analysed secondary data linking negative life events and reported gambling problems among the Indigenous population by jurisdiction and remoteness.

The four other specific studies relied on key informant consultation to describe Indigenous gambling activities, speculate on impacts and recommend gambling health promotion and help services for Indigenous Australians (Cultural Perspectives 2005; McDonald & Wombo 2006; AH&MRC 2007; Christie *et al.* 2009). These were not underpinned by any empirical data on Indigenous gambling behaviour, although the consultations by Christie *et al.* (2009) were based in the Yolgnu community.

Non Indigenous-specific population surveys have also captured data on Indigenous gambling. These telephone surveys yielded small skewed samples of Indigenous respondents and so prevent meaningful conclusions (McMillen & Donnelly 2008); for example a statewide telephone survey of gambling in the Northern Territory excluded the two-thirds of



Indigenous residents without a home phone, with the 126 responses representing only more affluent urban residents (Young *et al.* 2006). Two Queensland surveys found Indigenous people are over-represented amongst at-risk/problem gamblers, but no other Indigenous data were reported (Queensland Government 2005, 2008).

This limited research is reflected in inadequate culturally sensitive public health interventions for Indigenous gamblers (AH&MRC 2007). Yet considerable progress has been made in response to gambling problems amongst non-Indigenous Australians. Gambling industries have introduced measures to minimise harm, protect consumers and direct problem gamblers to assistance, while governments have provided regulatory oversight of these measures, constrained supply of gambling, and funded problem gambling treatment services. However, little is known about the efficacy or relevance of these public health measures for Indigenous Australian people and communities. Effective public health strategies need to be based on a comprehensive community profile of the health problem to guide decisions about appropriate interventions (Hawe, Degeling & Hall 1990). This profile is sadly deficient for Indigenous Australian gambling, with little data to inform culturally appropriate public health campaigns, consumer education, preventative strategies and treatment services.

### **2.13 CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

The literature review presented in this chapter has demonstrated that knowledge of Indigenous gambling is scant and unreliable. Yet a plea has been made for sound Indigenous policy-making informed by realism and empirical evidence (Altman 2006). In relation to gambling, there has been a call for research into the patterns and impacts of Indigenous gambling at the national level by the Australian Government's Ministerial Council on Gambling. It is now one of seven key strategic priorities for gambling research (Gambling Research Australia 2004). Specifically, there is a need for New South Wales-based Indigenous gambling research, as New South Wales is characterised by a high Indigenous population and one that is very young. The majority of Indigenous people in New South Wales live in regional areas. Further, New South Wales has the longest history of commercial gambling, the longest period of poker machine gambling availability and the highest state and territory gambling expenditure in Australia. The nature, extent and impacts of gambling may be very different for Indigenous Australians in New South Wales compared to Indigenous Australians elsewhere in Australia. There may be particular issues in a New South Wales regional area not present elsewhere.

This study seeks to address some of these issues by examining Indigenous gambling and applying an innovative model for understanding Indigenous gambling behaviour, risk factors, consequences and potential interventions for Indigenous Australians in regional northern New South Wales, in Bundjalung Country. The next chapter describes the research methods used to achieve this.

# CHAPTER THREE

## METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the methodology utilised in this study. The chapter commences by outlining several key considerations in the research design, including the research approach and cultural and ethical issues. The geographical scope of the study is then outlined and the theoretical framework discussed. The research methods used for the sampling, data collection and data analysis in relation to each of the four research objectives are explained.

### 3.2 CONSIDERATIONS IN THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The research approach, cultural considerations and ethical issues were key factors in deciding on an appropriate research design, as discussed in this section.

#### 3.2.1 Research Approach

Gambling research generally can be regarded as a sensitive topic, but gambling research within Indigenous Australia is in fact a very sensitive topic, investigating an issue that some may think is best left uninvestigated. A sensitive research project potentially poses a threat to participants who may suffer shame, embarrassment and other unwelcome consequences from the investigation. Additionally, it potentially poses a threat to the researchers who may lack access to the research participants, have limited local awareness, face an inability to build trust, suffer from concealment of factual information, and thus produce deficient results (Renzetti and Lee 1993). Problems raised by a sensitive research topic do not mean that it should be ignored, because sensitive research often addresses society's most pressing issues. However, an appropriate research design is needed – one that will reveal these pressing issues so that action can be taken to ameliorate any negative effects.

Both qualitative and quantitative research designs attempt to capture an individual's point of view. While quantitative research generally relies on large numbers of people to provide their views and inferential empirical methods and materials to produce results, qualitative research usually relies on much smaller numbers of people but on getting close to the participants to gather their point of view through detailed interviewing and observation (Denzin & Lincoln 2000). While the dominant methodological approach for gambling research has been positivist, based on quantitative studies (Borrell & Boulet 2005), this approach does not always produce an understanding of people in their social environments. Since gambling research amongst Indigenous peoples is a sensitive topic where the importance of appropriate communication and interpersonal skills is vital, qualitative research suits the small scale, but in-depth investigative nature of this project.

Taking a qualitative research approach to investigate gambling by Indigenous Australians has the support of other researchers. For example, in her research with Tiwi women who gamble to supplement their household income, Goodale (1987) spent her time interviewing, observing and participating in life on Melville Island. Researching gambling by Indigenous Australians in the Northern Territory, Steane, McMillen and Togni (1998) acknowledged that research must be attentive to culture and communication styles. Given the non-dyadic conversation style of some Indigenous Australians, where listening is very important, Steane

*et al.* (1998) suggested six qualitative research protocols for appropriate conduct including: being introduced through informal networks; following leads provided by others (similar to a snowball effect); having a relaxed atmosphere with an informal interview structure; making observations and getting genuine feedback on the same to contribute to the richness of material collected; consulting with the community to minimise cultural bias and misinterpretation; and, reporting only what is found, specifying results to that group of Indigenous Australians only. Steane *et al.* (1998) explain that by checking and re-checking the accuracy of the phrases or ‘sloppy’ verbal communication used by card players while playing cards in the Northern Territory, the true meanings of their data emerged. The validity of this qualitative approach derives from its phenomenological roots, from which theory is able to be constructed (Schwant 2003).

In contrast, a quantitative study of gambling in the Northern Territory (Young *et al.* 2006) found that only a small and highly skewed sample of Indigenous Australians responded to a telephone survey, precluding any reliable estimates of gambling or problem gambling. The authors concluded that alternative methodologies, particularly qualitative research, were needed to elicit any reasonable information about gambling by Indigenous Australians.

Using a qualitative research design is thus a more culturally sensitive approach. Being based on appropriate communication styles and respectful cooperation, this approach provides rich in-depth data and valuable information for both parties. While a qualitative approach may not seem all that structured or even ‘a bit messy’, for Indigenous Australians it is a familiar and comfortable style because it is inclusive through a process of sharing (Hepburn & Twining 2005).

### **3.2.2 Cultural Considerations**

Indigenous Australian communities have different relationships to those that exist within non-Indigenous Australian society. A whole of community approach is taken towards the resolution of many issues and as such, problems that are individualised in non-Indigenous Australian communities are dealt with internally by Indigenous Australian communities before they are recognised as a ‘crisis’. This means that the approach to researching and describing gambling, gambling problems and their impacts amongst Indigenous Australian peoples is necessarily different to that for non-Indigenous Australians, and is dictated primarily by cultural considerations.

Indigenous cultural considerations when conducting research include being introduced to people, taking time to talk to and learn from people, identifying and using dominant communication styles and body language, developing active listening, ongoing consultation and feedback, and being respectful. It also involves recognising the traditional culture and history of local regions, seeking appropriate permissions, negotiating relationships, identifying negative *and* positive impacts, and reporting only what has been negotiated. Similar considerations have been identified as important for Indigenous research by several gambling researchers, both in Australia and overseas (e.g. Volberg 1993; Volberg & Abbott 1997; Dickerson, Allcock, Blaszczynski, Nichols, Williams & Maddern 1996a; Steane, McMillen & Togni 1998; McMillen 1999; Phillips 2003; Wynne & McCready 2004; Bellringer, Cowley-Malcolm, Abbott & Williams 2005; McMillen & Donnelly 2008). Thus, Indigenous research needs to be culturally sensitive and ethically conducted, especially when conducted by non-Indigenous researchers (McMillen 1999).

### 3.2.3 Ethical Considerations

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) (2007:3) notes that ‘all human interaction, including the interaction involved in human research, has ethical dimensions’. In recognition that ethical conduct cannot be completely prescribed, the NHMRC explains it involves ‘acting in the right spirit, out of an abiding respect and concern for one’s fellow creatures’ (2007:3). Thus, ethical guidelines tend to articulate core values and principles, rather than rigid sets of rules.

Three sets of ethical guidelines are particularly relevant for the research described here. One provides a national statement on human research ethics generally (NHMRC 2007); a second guides Indigenous research in general (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies [AIATSIS] 2000); and a third focuses specifically on health-related Indigenous research (NHMRC 2003).

The generic Australian guidelines for all research involving people is the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (NHMRC 2007). It identifies four sets of values that underpin ‘an ethos that should permeate the way those engaged in human research approach all that they do in their research’ (NHMRC 2007:3). These values are respect for human beings, research merit and integrity, justice and beneficence (NHMRC 2007:11).

Also generic to all human research projects, but specific to research involving Indigenous peoples, the *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies* (AIATSIS 2000) are primarily intended to guide research sponsored by AIATSIS, but have received wider adoption (AIATSIS 2003). They are underpinned by 11 principles relating to consultation, negotiation and mutual understanding, respect, recognition and involvement, and benefits, outcomes and agreement (AIATSIS 2000: n.p.)

Specific to health-related research, the NHMRC published its *Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research* (2003). These were developed in response to ‘continuing concerns from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples about poor consultation, lack of communication and infringement of deeply held values arising from cross-cultural insensitivity — despite researchers’ compliance with the legal requirements of ethical guidelines’ (NHMRC 2003:4). These guidelines recognise that ‘responsibility for maintaining trust and ethical standards cannot depend solely on rules or guidelines’ (NHMRC 2003:4), and instead promote the six core principles of reciprocity, respect, equality, responsibility, survival and protection, and spirit and integrity.

For health research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, both the above NHMRC guidelines (2003, 2007) apply. However, the AIATSIS guidelines (2000) also enhanced our understanding and navigation through the research process.

The research responsibilities for abiding by these ethical and cultural considerations were not taken lightly in this research project. Issues such as privacy, confidentiality, safety, respectful communications, consent, feedback, equitable treatment, lack of deception, responsible stewardship of the research process and materials, and building of responsible relationships were considered vitally important.

Ethical approval for the project was gained through the Southern Cross University Human Research Ethics Committee, approval number ECN-08-007.

### 3.3 GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE OF THE STUDY

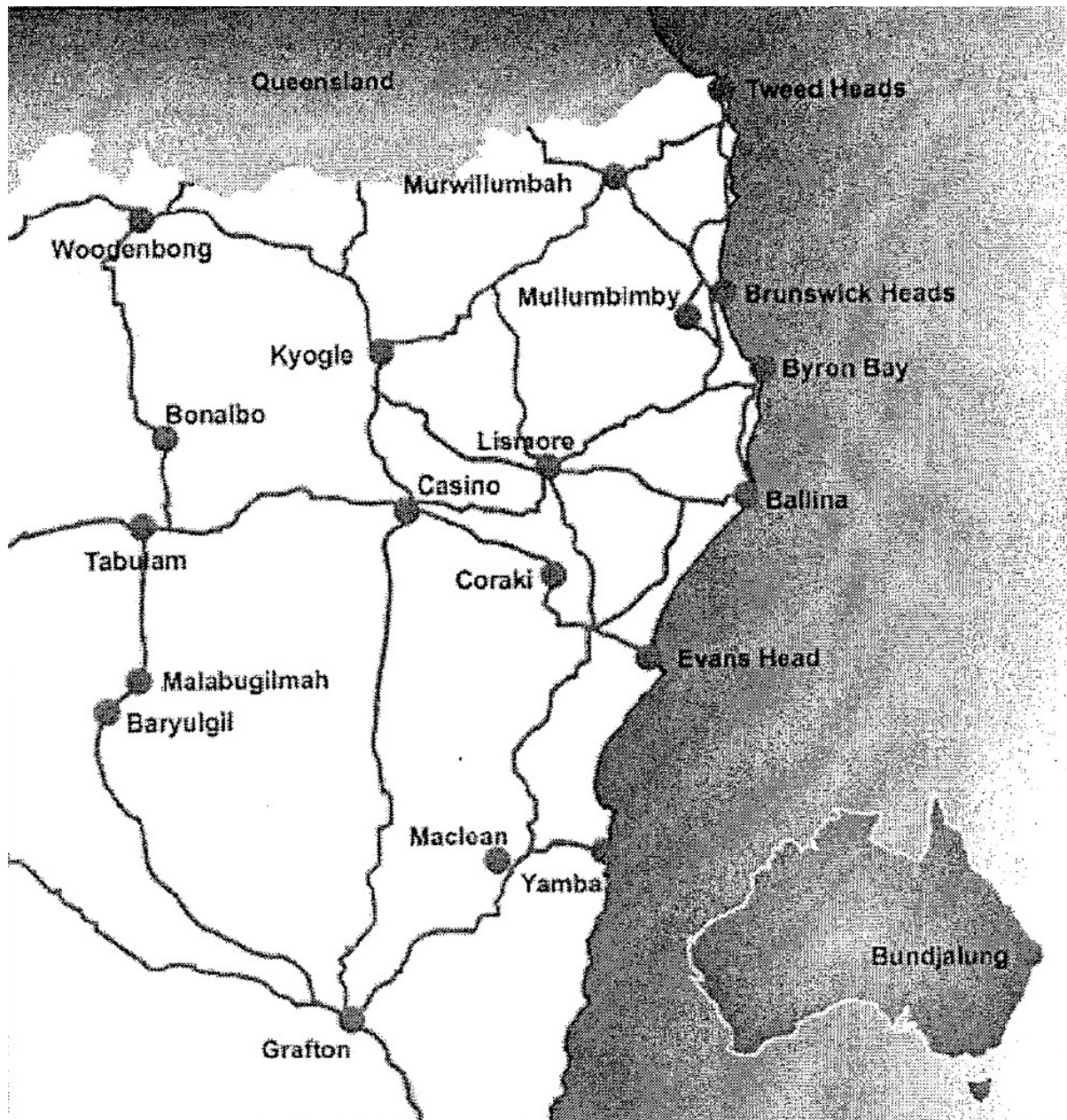
As noted earlier, this research focused on a variety of locations in two Australian states. In New South Wales, the geographic scope of the study comprised the area known as the Bundjalung Nation, comprising 17 communities based in the Northern Rivers. Major centres include Lismore, Baryulgil, Tabulam, Yamba, Casino, Cabbage Tree Island, Byron Bay, Tweed Heads, Nimbin, Coraki, Ballina, Evans Head, Kyogle, Maclean, Grafton and Box Ridge (Figures 3.1 and 3.2). This area was selected for its mix of discrete and suburban Indigenous communities, access to major forms of gambling, the researchers' familiarity with the area and their well developed contacts with relevant Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and organisations. The location close to Southern Cross University where the researchers are based also helped to keep the project cost effective.

**Figure 3.1: Location of the Bundjalung area**



Source: [http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/aboriginal\\_studies\\_press/aboriginal\\_wall\\_map/map\\_page/map\\_detail-f4](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/aboriginal_studies_press/aboriginal_wall_map/map_page/map_detail-f4)

Figure 3.2: Major towns and villages in the NSW study area



Source: <http://www.bundjalungcultural tours.com.au/map.html>

In Queensland, data on Indigenous gambling behaviour, risk and protective factors, community consequences and potential interventions were previously collected and analysed by one of the researchers (Helen Breen) for her PhD research. Breen's PhD research was conducted during 2006-09 and involved over 100 semi-structured interviews with a broad range of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who belong to, have lived in, or identify strongly with, Indigenous communities. These included Indigenous representatives, community members and gamblers, people working for government, health, legal, community, financial and welfare agencies, as well as gambling counsellors and gaming venue managers who have Indigenous gamblers amongst their clients. Breen's research focused on three geographical areas, located across the width of the state - from a remote

northern area, to a western regional town and district and a major city with many suburbs on the eastern seaboard. These three regions are known respectively as the Gulf, Eyre and Rainforest Regions of Aboriginal Australia (Horton 1996). The Queensland data from Breen's PhD will be summarised in this report to form a basis for comparison with the New South Wales data collected.

### 3.4 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Even though this research project was exploratory and qualitative, it was useful to commence with a tentative framework to guide the research, identify key constructs and illuminate the relationships between them. This section explains the theoretical framework relevant to this study.

Our research framework was based on Thomas and Jackson's (2004:44) *Model of Influences on Gambling Behaviours and Outcomes*, but modified for the focus of this research. Their model (Figure 3.3) takes a public health perspective of gambling that recognises the role of multiple factors beyond the individual in influencing gambling behaviour.

**Figure 3.3: Thomas and Jackson's Model of Influences on Gambling Behaviours and Outcomes (2004)**



Source: Thomas and Jackson, (2004:44)

In explaining the various elements of their model, Thomas and Jackson (2004) note that:

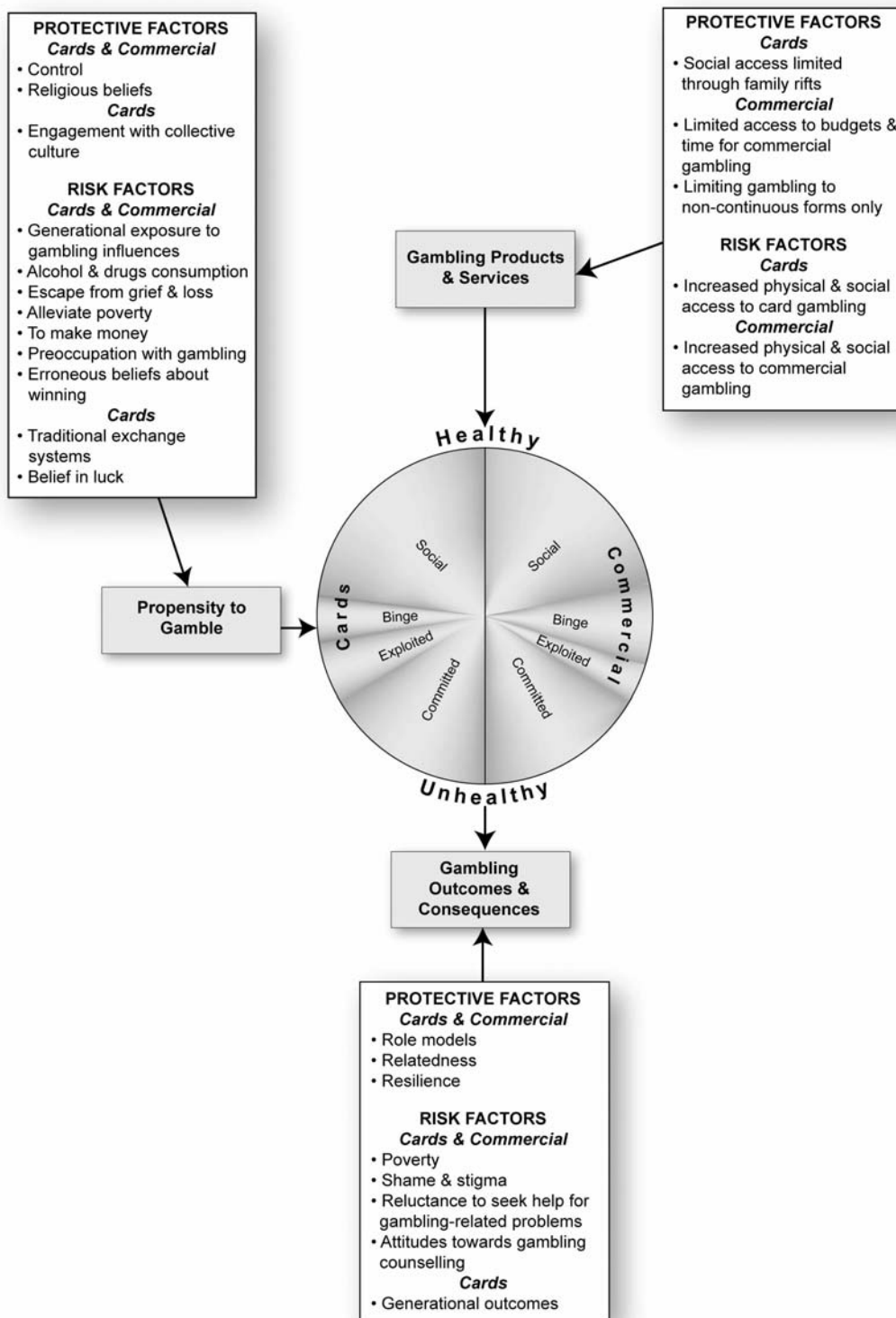
- gambling uptake is influenced by both the propensity to gamble and contextual factors such as the availability of gambling products and services for people to exercise these propensities;
- propensity to gamble is influenced by a variety of factors, including psychological traits relating to the personal characteristics of the gambler, sociological factors relating to social and contextual influences on a person's gambling, and cultural factors which may influence a person's propensity to gamble and gambling preferences;

- gambling products and services also influence gambling uptake, particularly their availability, design, marketing and how well they meet the needs or expectations of their consumers. Factors such as the geographical distribution of gambling products, their accessibility, the nature of the products themselves, and the context in which they are offered, are proposed as potentially influencing gambling uptake;
- gambling outcomes and consequences include those that may occur at the level of the individual, family and community. Of major concern is the development of gambling problems and their associated negative consequences;
- risk, moderating and protective factors are associated with the propensity to gamble, gambling products and services, and gambling outcomes and consequences;
- interventions can be designed to reduce the risk factors and/or enhance the protective factors for each of the three elements in the model.

An outcome of Breen's PhD research (2009) was an adapted version of the Thomas and Jackson (2004) model. Breen's model of Indigenous gambling, based on data she collected in north Queensland, illuminates eight different types of gamblers. Her research also identified differences across these eight types of gamblers in terms of gambling activities, gender, demographic and geographical variations, associated risk and protective factors, and individual and community consequences. This research project will compare Breen's findings from Queensland to the data collected in New South Wales to test and refine Breen's model, shown in Figure 3.4.



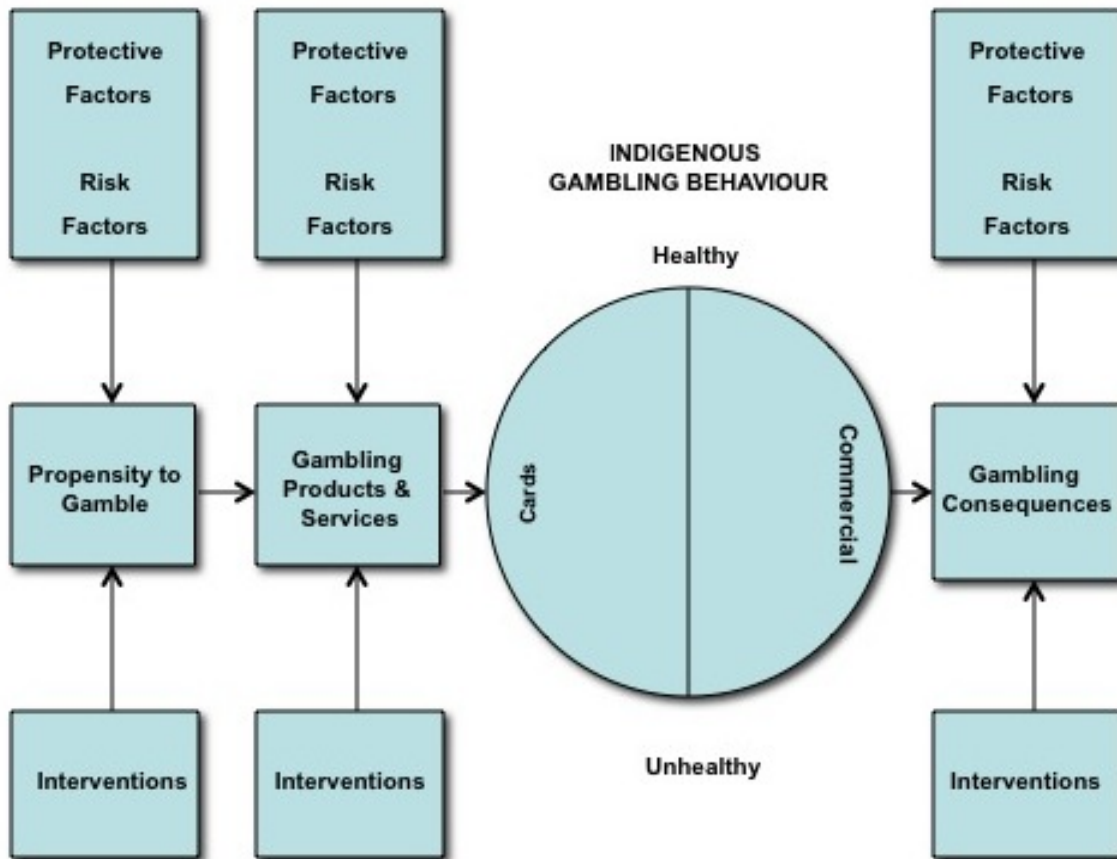
Figure 3.4: Breen’s model of Indigenous gambling in north Queensland



Some adjustments were made to Breen’s model of Indigenous gambling to better reflect the focus of the current study, as shown in Figure 3.5. Specifically, Figure 3.5 adds interventions to the model, as an explicit part of this investigation. Additionally, because Breen’s model was not conceptualised as generalisable beyond north Queensland, her specific gambler types

and risk and protective factors are not identified in Figure 3.5 to reflect the possibility that these may well be different in Bundjalung Country. In summary, Figure 3.5 presents the *analytical model* that will be used for the proposed project. As explained below, the primary data collected in New South Wales and Queensland will provide the basis for this analysis.

**Figure 3.5: The research model**



### 3.5 RESEARCH METHODS FOR EACH RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The specific data collection methods to address each research objective are now explained.

#### 3.5.1 Research Methods for Objective One

The first research objective was to examine Indigenous gambling behaviour, risk factors, community consequences and potential interventions in several Indigenous communities in New South Wales.

#### Sampling

As noted earlier, the Indigenous communities in New South Wales this project focused on are those in the Bundjalung Nation in Northern New South Wales. Because we were seeking to replicate the methodology used by Breen in her PhD research, we attempted to meet with and

interview a broad range of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who belong to, have lived in, or identify strongly with, the selected Indigenous communities during 2008-2009. These included Indigenous community representatives, members, gamblers and non-gamblers, and employees of relevant government, health, legal, social, community, financial and welfare agencies, as well as gambling counsellors and gaming venue managers who have Indigenous gamblers amongst their clients. Given this was exploratory, qualitative research, attaining a random sample was not attempted nor considered appropriate; instead, we attempted to capture the experiences and views of a representative cross-section of interviewees.

Sampling of Indigenous people for interviewing commenced by using the Yellow Pages, local government websites and our local contacts to identify Indigenous-managed organisations and non-Indigenous managed organisations likely to provide services for Indigenous people and have Indigenous employees. We then telephoned each organisation to explain the project and request interviews with Indigenous employees and Indigenous clients (where relevant). During the initial telephone contact and/or during the interview, these organisations were able to identify other organisations and people relevant to the research. We then contacted these people for an interview. This was an iterative process over about 12 months during 2008-2009. It was effective because people in these organisations know, through professional and social contacts, who else is able to provide useful data for the research.

Sampling of gambling counsellors occurred in two ways. First, we were invited to conduct a workshop to gather data on Indigenous gambling for the project at the Northern New South Wales Gambling Counsellors' Forum, held at Coffs Harbour on 17 June 2008. Eight gambling counsellors who worked within the nominated geographic area for this study attended the two hour session. Second, we conducted interviews with two gambling counsellors from the Northern Rivers Gambling Service who had been unable to attend the workshop.

Sampling of venue managers for interviews commenced by identifying all hotels and clubs in the geographic area. From this list, our own local knowledge and by telephoning venues if we were unsure, we sampled 13 hotels and eight clubs known to be the most popular venues for Indigenous customers, whilst ensuring we had venue representation for each town or regional centre in the sampling area.

In summary, while the target was to achieve up to 60 interviews, we conducted 103 interviews involving a total of 200 interviewees. They comprised 169 Indigenous people, 21 non-Indigenous gaming venue managers and 10 non-Indigenous gambling counsellors. Of these interviewees, 93 were male and 107 were female. Table 3.1 lists the interviews by the number of male and female participants, whether they were Indigenous or not and the group or organisation they were associated with.

**Table 3.1: NSW interviews by group or organisation**

No. of Male Interviewees	No. of Female Interviewees	Indigenous?	Type of Organisation
1	2	Yes	Aboriginal aged and disabled care service
	1	Yes	Aboriginal child and family network
1	3	Yes	Aboriginal community centre
2	1	Yes	Aboriginal community centre
2	2	Yes	Aboriginal community health centre and outreach
	3	Yes	Aboriginal community organisation
1		Yes	Aboriginal community organisation
	1	Yes	Aboriginal cooperative
	2	Yes	Aboriginal cooperative
1		Yes	Aboriginal cooperative
	6	Yes	Aboriginal cooperative
1		Yes	Aboriginal cooperative
1		Yes	Aboriginal cooperative
	1	Yes	Aboriginal cooperative
1		Yes	Aboriginal corporation, CDEP, housing
	1	Yes	Aboriginal early intervention centre
1	1	Yes	Aboriginal family services
	1	Yes	Aboriginal health centre
1	2	Yes	Aboriginal health services
	1	Yes	Aboriginal newspaper
2		Yes	Adult community education
1		Yes	CDEP worker
	1	Yes	Community aged care
	2	Yes	Community centre
1	3	Yes	Community health centre
	1	Yes	Community leader
4	1	Yes	Community leaders
	2	Yes	Community members
1	1	Yes	Community members
1	1	Yes	Community members
5	4	Yes	Community members
	3	Yes	Community Services and Programs
1		Yes	Community transport
	1	Yes	Community Transport service
	1	Yes	Department of Education
	2	Yes	Development council
1	2	Yes	Drug and Alcohol Centre
1	1	Yes	Education
	1	Yes	Educational institution
	2	Yes	Educational institution
1		Yes	Educational institution
	1	Yes	Employment consultant
1	2	Yes	Employment service
1		Yes	Employment service
	2	Yes	Family intervention centre
	2	Yes	Family worker, domestic violence worker
	1	Yes	Government department
	1	Yes	Government department
1	2	Yes	Government department
1		Yes	Government department
1		Yes	Hospital
	2	Yes	Lands council
1		Yes	Lands council
	1	Yes	Lands council
	1	Yes	Lands council

No. of Male Interviewees	No. of Female Interviewees	Indigenous?	Type of Organisation
1		Yes	Lands council
	3	Yes	Lands council
3	3	Yes	Lands council
1	2	Yes	Legal Aid
	1	Yes	Legal centre
	1	Yes	Legal service
4		Yes	Medical centre
2		Yes	Men's group
12		Yes	Men's group
1		Yes	Men's group, lands council
	1	Yes	Mental health service
4	1	Yes	National Parks & Wildlife Service
	1	Yes	Primary school
	1	Yes	Primary school
2	2	Yes	Public school
	1	Yes	Regional health service
1		Yes	Rehabilitation centre
	1	Yes	Shire council
	1	Yes	Shire council
	1	Yes	Shire council
4		Yes	Unemployed men
1		Yes	Welfare service
	2	Yes	Women's refuge
	1	Yes	YWCA
1		No	Gambling counsellor
1		No	Gambling counsellor
4	4	No	Gambling counsellors
	1	No	Club manager
	1	No	Club manager
1		No	Club manager
	1	No	Club manager
	1	No	Club manager
	1	No	Club manager
1		No	Club Manager
1		No	Club Manager
1		No	Hotel manager
1		No	Hotel manager
1		No	Hotel manager
1		No	Hotel manager
	1	No	Hotel manager
1		No	Hotel manager
	1	No	Hotel manager
1		No	Hotel manager
	1	No	Hotel manager
1		No	Hotel manager
1		No	Hotel Manager
1		No	Hotel Manager
1		No	Hotel Manager
1		No	Hotel Manager

Table 3.2 shows interviews by geographic location, in terms of both the town/community and their grouping into shires for data analysis. Please note that these data are not combined with those in Table 1 as to do so would potentially allow individual interviewees and organisations to be identified.

Table 3.2: NSW interviews by town/community and shire

No. of Male Interviewees	No. of Female Interviewees	Indigenous?	Town/Community	Shire/Area
4	4	No	All areas	All
	1	Yes	Ballina	Ballina
	1	Yes	Ballina	Ballina
	1	Yes	Ballina	Ballina
1	1	Yes	Ballina	Ballina
1	2	Yes	Ballina	Ballina
1	1	Yes	Ballina	Ballina
	2	Yes	Ballina	Ballina
2	2	Yes	Ballina	Ballina
	1	No	Ballina	Ballina
1		No	Ballina	Ballina
1		Yes	Cabbage Tree Island	Ballina
1		Yes	Cabbage Tree Island	Ballina
1		Yes	Cabbage Tree Island	Ballina
1	1	Yes	Cabbage Tree Island	Ballina
	1	Yes	Cabbage Tree Island	Ballina
	1	Yes	Cabbage Tree Island	Ballina
	1	Yes	Cabbage Tree Island	Ballina
1		No	Wardell	Ballina
1		No	Bangalow	Byron/Tweed
1		No	Bangalow	Byron/Tweed
1		No	Brunswick Heads	Byron/Tweed
1		Yes	Byron Bay	Byron/Tweed
4	1	Yes	Byron Bay	Byron/Tweed
	1	Yes	Byron Bay	Byron/Tweed
1		No	Byron Bay	Byron/Tweed
	2	Yes	Mullumbimby	Byron/Tweed
1		No	Mullumbimby	Byron/Tweed
1		No	Mullumbimby	Byron/Tweed
	6	Yes	Tweed Heads	Byron/Tweed
1	3	Yes	Tweed Heads	Byron/Tweed
3	3	Yes	Tweed Heads	Byron/Tweed
1	2	Yes	Tweed Heads	Byron/Tweed
1	2	Yes	Tweed Heads	Byron/Tweed
5	4	Yes	Tweed Heads	Byron/Tweed
2	1	Yes	Tweed Heads	Byron/Tweed
	1	No	Tweed Heads	Byron/Tweed
	1	No	Tweed Heads	Byron/Tweed
	3	Yes	Grafton	Clarence Valley Shire
1		Yes	Grafton	Clarence Valley Shire
1		Yes	Grafton	Clarence Valley Shire
1	2	Yes	Grafton	Clarence Valley Shire
1		Yes	Grafton	Clarence Valley Shire
	1	Yes	Grafton	Clarence Valley Shire
1		Yes	Grafton	Clarence Valley Shire
1	2	Yes	Grafton	Clarence Valley Shire
4		Yes	Grafton	Clarence Valley Shire
1		Yes	Grafton	Clarence Valley Shire
	1	Yes	Grafton	Clarence Valley Shire
4		Yes	Grafton	Clarence Valley Shire
	1	No	Grafton	Clarence Valley Shire
1		No	Grafton	Clarence Valley Shire
	2	Yes	Maclean	Clarence Valley Shire
4	1	Yes	Maclean	Clarence Valley Shire
1		No	Maclean	Clarence Valley Shire

No. of Male Interviewees	No. of Female Interviewees	Indigenous?	Town/Community	Shire/Area
2		Yes	Kyogle	Kyogle
	1	No	Kyogle	Kyogle
1		No	Kyogle	Kyogle
	1	Yes	Tabulam	Kyogle
1		No	Tabulam	Kyogle
	2	Yes	Woodenbong	Kyogle
1		Yes	Woodenbong	Kyogle
1		Yes	Goonellabah	Lismore
	1	Yes	Goonellabah	Lismore
	2	Yes	Goonellabah	Lismore
	3	Yes	Lismore	Lismore
1		Yes	Lismore	Lismore
	1	Yes	Lismore	Lismore
	1	Yes	Lismore	Lismore
	2	Yes	Lismore	Lismore
	2	Yes	Lismore	Lismore
	2	Yes	Lismore	Lismore
	1	Yes	Lismore	Lismore
	1	Yes	Lismore	Lismore
	1	Yes	Lismore	Lismore
	1	Yes	Lismore	Lismore
1		Yes	Lismore	Lismore
	2	Yes	Lismore	Lismore
	1	Yes	Lismore	Lismore
1		Yes	Lismore	Lismore
	1	Yes	Lismore	Lismore
1	2	Yes	Lismore	Lismore
	1	No	Lismore	Lismore
	1	No	Lismore	Lismore
	1	Yes	Nimbin	Lismore
	1	No	Nimbin	Lismore
	1	Yes	Casino	Richmond Valley
2	2	Yes	Casino	Richmond Valley
1		Yes	Casino	Richmond Valley
	1	Yes	Casino	Richmond Valley
1	1	Yes	Casino	Richmond Valley
1	3	Yes	Casino	Richmond Valley
	1	Yes	Casino	Richmond Valley
	2	Yes	Casino	Richmond Valley
	1	Yes	Casino	Richmond Valley
1		No	Casino	Richmond Valley
1		No	Casino	Richmond Valley
1		Yes	Coraki	Richmond Valley
	3	Yes	Coraki	Richmond Valley
2		Yes	Coraki	Richmond Valley
12		Yes	Coraki	Richmond Valley
	1	Yes	Coraki	Richmond Valley
1		No	Coraki	Richmond Valley

## The Interview Process

Interviews with the 169 Indigenous people were conducted mainly on the premises where they worked or attended the organisation as clients (e.g. community and health centres), although a few were conducted in coffee shops. One was conducted with a family group in their home. After explaining the project and providing a project overview (Appendix A), the participants were asked to complete an informed consent form (Appendix B), before the interview was conducted.

The interview questions were arranged into ten key areas, with the full interview schedule contained in Appendix C:

- The organisation (if applicable), including its general role, role with Indigenous people who gamble and whether uncontrolled gambling is common amongst the organisation's clients.
- The local area, to establish which area the interviewee would rather discuss and/or was most knowledgeable about in relation to gambling.
- Card gambling, including types of games Indigenous people play in the nominated area, and who, where, how often, how long and why they play and how much they spend.
- Commercial gambling, including types of gambling Indigenous people gamble on in the nominated area, and who, where, how often, how long and why they play and how much they spend.
- Risk factors for those who gamble heavily or out of control, with prompts for personal, family, friends, financial, historical, cultural and gambling product influences on these.
- Protective factors which influence those who do not gamble or gamble responsibly, with prompts for family, friends, financial, cultural and gambling product influences on these.
- Consequences of gambling, including positive and negative outcomes for individuals, families and communities.
- Dealing with a gambling problem, including facilitators and barriers, with prompts for family, friends, financial, cultural and gambling product influences on these.
- Help-seeking for gambling problems, including whether people would seek help, where from, barriers and facilitators.
- Possible interventions, including those that Indigenous communities, community services, the gambling industry and governments might introduce.

These interview questions were posed in a semi-structured way and were, in the main, conducted by at least two members of the research team. The exception to this were some interviews with men's groups, which were conducted solely by the only male member of the research team, Ashley Gordon. As an Indigenous person, Ashley also took the lead in all interviews with Indigenous people. The interviews lasted between 30-60 minutes. In the majority of cases, these interviews were not digitally recorded, as it was felt this might be considered too intrusive and therefore stymie the conversation. Instead, extensive notes were taken which were later transcribed.



The focus group with the eight non-Indigenous gambling counsellors was conducted over two hours. It was very interactive and covered the following seven areas, with the slides used contained in Appendix D. For each topic of discussion, the researchers also shared their knowledge and experiences of Indigenous gambling so that process was also an informative exercise for the counsellors. The focus group was digitally recorded and later transcribed by a professional transcription service.

- Profiles of any Indigenous clients they have seen, in terms of number, socio-demographic characteristics, and the nature of commercial and card gambling activities.
- Factors that influenced their propensity to gamble, with prompts for personal, contextual, historical and cultural factors.
- Features of gambling products that encouraged these clients to gamble, with prompts for accessibility, game design, marketing, the gambling environment and consumer appeal.
- Consequences of these clients' gambling, with prompts for individual, family and community consequences, and factors that exacerbate negative consequences.
- Possible interventions that would work best for these clients, with prompts for interventions relating to propensity to gamble, gambling products and consequences of gambling.
- Help-seeking, in terms of barriers and facilitators for Indigenous people.
- Anything else that community, health and welfare organisations could do to assist Indigenous people with gambling problems.

The interview schedule used for the other two gambling counsellors was very similar to the focus group topic areas, and is contained in Appendix E.

The interviews with the 21 gaming venue managers were all conducted individually. Five were conducted on-site in the venues, while the remainder were conducted by telephone. All were digitally recorded and later transcribed by a professional transcription service. The interview schedule is contained in Appendix F and included the following main areas:

- Background of the interviewee, including position, tenure and knowledge and links with local Indigenous people and communities.
- Indigenous gamblers in the venue, in terms of proportion of customers, who gambles, types of gambling, frequency, timing, duration, expenditure, alone/in groups, motivations, any card gambling.
- Risk factors, with prompts for alcohol, socio-economic circumstances, time available, peer pressure to gamble, etc.
- Assisting responsible gambling amongst Indigenous gamblers, in terms of efficacy of current responsible gambling measures, being approached for assistance, and any cultural barriers.
- Future strategies to reduce negative impacts and encourage responsible gambling amongst Indigenous people, in terms of what might be done by venues, governments, community services and Indigenous communities.

## Data Analysis

All interview recordings and notes were transcribed in preparation for thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a way of understanding textual data by identifying, analysing and reporting on thematic patterns in the data (Borrell 2008). The researcher asks, what is the meaning of this text? To address this question, the researcher analyses the data for specific themes, aggregating information into large clusters of ideas and providing details that support the themes (Creswell 2007). It aims to illuminate and bring some underlying coherence to the topic – to unfold meaning.

The process necessitates the researcher becoming immersed in the data, identifying features relevant to the research objectives and producing codes that reflect these features (Boyatzis 1998). In this analysis, Nvivo software V.8 was used to code each interview, helping to reduce the amount of material to be analysed by grouping together the data on each topic discussed or raised within each interview transcript. Following this, themes across the interviews start to develop and the analysis of the data deepens. A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research objectives and is represented as a patterned response or meaning within a data set (Braun & Clarke 2006). A key theme is one found to be consistently repeated across a data set or one which answers important analytical questions which drive the research (Braun & Clarke 2006).

In this research, the thematic analysis was driven by the research model (Figure 3.5) to provide an overarching structure to the themes extracted. Thus, the data were coded and analysed within the larger constructs of gambling behaviour, propensity to gamble, the influence of gambling products on gambling behaviour, the consequences of gambling and potential interventions. Within each of these larger constructs, specific themes and sub-themes were then identified.

### 3.5.2 Research Methods for Objective Two

The second research objective was to compare Indigenous gambling behaviour, risk factors, community consequences and potential interventions in several Indigenous communities in New South Wales to those in several Indigenous communities in Queensland.

## Sampling

Sampling to obtain the New South Wales data has been explained above. This section explains the sampling to obtain the Queensland data, which had already been collected for Helen Breen's PhD research, prior to our collection of the New South Wales data. As noted earlier, the Queensland data were collected in three geographic areas of north Queensland, selected to provide a geographic cross-section of perspectives on Indigenous gambling. These were a remote northern area (Gulf Region), a western regional town and district (Eyre Region), and a major city with many suburbs on the eastern seaboard (Rainforest Region). These three regions contrasted with each other in terms of location, population density and gambling opportunities. Please note they have not been identified in Breen's PhD research as was agreed with her interviewees.

- In the remote northern area, communities and towns are very small and remote. The population is local, stable and thinly spread across sweeping areas. People are often physically isolated by extreme weather conditions, but are mobile in that some travel to larger regional centres for specialist medical services, sport, education and training. People can gamble on community card games but only have access to commercial gambling while visiting in town or by (generally unreliable) telephone or internet.

- The western regional town is the main population and service centre for the region. The population of the town and surrounding district is made up of local people and transient mine workers. It is surrounded by smaller communities and villages accessible by road and air. People can gamble on community card games and have access to most forms of commercial gambling, except for casino table games, in local hotels, clubs, TAB outlets, lottery agencies, by telephone and the internet.
- In the north-eastern seaboard city and its suburbs, the population is large, cosmopolitan and made up of local people and tourists. People can gamble on community card games and have access to all forms of commercial gambling, including casino table games. Transport is widely available.
- In addition to these three geographic areas, a small number of interviews could not be categorised as pertaining to only one of the three areas. These interviews were with people in Brisbane and Townsville who were knowledgeable about gambling by Indigenous people in north Queensland, either through having lived or worked there.

To obtain a sample who would provide in-depth information, Breen developed a preliminary list of contacts for each region by approaching any group thought to be knowledgeable about Indigenous gambling for contacts and through using the Yellow Pages. Depending on advice from these initial contacts, letters were sent to Elders, Traditional Owners, Land Councils and Tribal Councils or local Aboriginal Shire Councils to seek permission to visit and conduct this research project. After permission was granted, snowball or chain sampling was used to contact potential research participants. Each knowledgeable person was asked to nominate further people or organisations for consultation. This process continued until saturation point was reached and no new nominations were being made. Additionally, Breen interviewed a sample of gambling counsellors and managers of gaming venues located in the three study regions.

In total, 108 people were interviewed. Sixty of these were Indigenous Australians, comprising 35 women and 25 men. Fourteen were non-Indigenous Australians who had lived and worked in north Queensland Indigenous communities for many years. Breen also interviewed about one-half of the gambling counsellors in the state (14) and 20 gaming venue managers. Table 3.4 shows the Queensland interviews by study site, group and whether the interviewee was Indigenous or not.

Table 3.4: QLD interviews by site and group/position

Site	No. of People interviewed	Indigenous?	Group or position
A	1	Yes	Aged care
A	3	Yes	Child safety
A	2	Yes	Community health
A	6	Yes	Community members
A	2	Yes	Counsellors
A	1	Yes	Education
A	2	Yes	Elders
A	1	Yes	Employment
A	1	Yes	Environmental protection
A	2	Yes	Federal public servant
A	1	Yes	Health Services
A	1	Yes	Homeless services
A	2	Yes	Legal services
A	1	Yes	Local government
A	2	Yes	Rehabilitation
A	2	Yes	Religious pastor
A	2	Yes	Social worker
A	1	Yes	Sport & recreation
A	1	Yes	Traditional Owner
A	4	No	Gambling help counsellor
A	1	No	Mental health
A	1	No	Federal public servant
A	1	No	Legal aid
A	1	No	State public servant
A	13	No	Gaming venue manager
B	1	Yes	Child safety
B	5	Yes	Community members
B	2	Yes	Counsellors
B	2	Yes	Domestic violence services
B	1	Yes	Elder, legal services
B	1	Yes	Family support
B	1	Yes	Federal public servant
B	1	Yes	Housing
B	1	Yes	Rehabilitation
B	2	Yes	State public servant
B	1	Yes	Tribal council
B	3	No	Gambling help counsellor
B	1	No	Counsellor
B	1	No	Religious pastor
B	1	No	Community development
B	7	No	Gaming venue manager
B	1	No	Family support
B	1	No	Centrelink
B	1	No	Trainer
C	2	Yes	Community members
C	1	Yes	Justice group
C	1	Yes	Nurse
C	1	Yes	Traditional owner, local government
C	1	No	Corrective services
C	1	No	Local government
C	1	No	Youth worker
D	1	Yes	Legal services
D	2	Yes	Problem gambler
D	7	No	Gambling help counsellor
D	1	No	Legal aid

## The Interview Process

In-depth semi-structured interviews were used, based on the interview schedule presented in Appendix G, with key areas being:

- Card gambling behaviour, including socio-demographic characteristics of players, games played, where, how often, how long, expenditure and motivations.
- Commercial gambling behaviour, including socio-demographic characteristics of players, games played, where, how often, how long, expenditure and motivations.
- Risk factors, in relation to propensity to gamble and the influence of gambling products on gambling behaviour.
- Protective factors to help people gamble responsibly or abstain from gambling.
- Positive consequences of gambling, including social, financial, recreational, cultural and health consequences.
- Negative consequences of gambling, including social, financial, employment, recreational, cultural, health and problem gambling consequences.
- Potential interventions, including barriers and facilitators for help-seeking, and what Indigenous communities, the gambling industry, governments, and community services, welfare and health agencies might do.

The participants were asked where and when they wanted to be interviewed and the interviews were subsequently conducted in settings including offices, staff rooms, public institutions, cafes, coffee shops, hotels, and clubs, at events, in homes, on verandahs and in open spaces, parks and sports grounds.

Breen's interviews took at least an hour each to complete. She took notes during each interview, which would then be read through with the interviewee to allow any corrections to be made. In some instances, sensitive quotes were deleted and at other times information was added to describe an issue in more depth. This inspection often extended the original interview. After the interview, completed transcripts were returned to each person for verification either by email or post. If there was no response, a phone call or an email to the person followed to enquire about their reaction to the transcript. This generally resulted in further clarification or satisfaction. These notes were then typed up for analysis.

## Data Analysis

The process for coding and thematically analysing the Queensland interview data was the same as used for the New South Wales interview data, and has been described above. This facilitated the comparative analysis between the New South Wales and Queensland data, given that both analyses were driven by research models based on the Thomas and Jackson (2004) model (Figure 3.3). Thus, both Queensland and New South Wales data were coded and analysed within the larger constructs of gambling behaviour, propensity to gamble, the influence of gambling products on gambling behaviour, the consequences of gambling and (for the New South Wales data) potential interventions. However, within each of these larger constructs, the specific themes and sub-themes identified varied to reflect differences found in the study regions.

### 3.5.3 Research Methods for Objective Three

The third research objective was to draw on the comparisons conducted for Objective Two to refine Breen's conceptual model of different types of Indigenous gambling to better understand Indigenous gambling behaviour.

Helen Breen's PhD research on Indigenous gambling in Queensland utilised thematic analysis to identify eight types of Indigenous gamblers, as shown in Figure 3.4 – four card and four commercial types of gamblers labelled, social gambler, committed gambler, occasional binge gambler and exploited gambler. Similarly, thematic analysis of the New South Wales data for this research will be utilised to identify typical gambler profiles in Bundjalung Country. As explained below, these descriptive profiles provide the necessary basis for analysing risk and protective factors, consequences and potential interventions for each gambler type. Thus, it is important to ensure that the model of types of Indigenous gamblers is as all-inclusive as possible. Therefore, the analysis relating to this objective will draw on the New South Wales data to refine the model developed for Queensland. It may well be that additional or different types of Indigenous gamblers will be identified by extending the empirical basis of the model beyond the geographical areas and Indigenous communities Breen previously examined.

### 3.5.4 Research Methods for Objective Four

The fourth research objective was to utilise the refined model of Indigenous gambling to analyse risk and protective factors, community consequences and potential interventions for each type of Indigenous gambling to inform gambling policy development.

As noted earlier, our proposed research model in Figure 3.5 is adapted from Thomas and Jackson's (2004) *Model of Influences on Gambling Behaviours and Outcomes* (Figure 3.3). The Thomas and Jackson model is particularly instructive in drawing attention to risk and protective factors and potential interventions relating to the propensity to gamble, to the gambling products and services themselves, and to the outcomes and consequences of gambling. Once risk and protective factors have been identified, the model can be a guide for attaining greater specificity in targeting interventions to prevent or minimise the negative consequences of gambling.

Our adaptation of the Thomas and Jackson model (2004) therefore provides a framework to analyse the research data to identify:

- risk and protective factors relating to the propensity of Indigenous people to gamble;
- risk and protective factors associated with card and commercial gambling products and services available to Indigenous people;
- risk and protective factors associated with gambling consequences and outcomes for Indigenous gamblers;
- the consequences of gambling; and
- potential interventions.

## 3.6 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter has explained the methodology used in this study. It commenced by outlining several key considerations in the research design, including the research approach and cultural and ethical issues. The chapter then outlined the geographical scope of the study and discussed the theoretical framework adopted. The research methods used for the sampling,

data collection and data analysis in relation to each of the four research objectives were then explained.

The next chapter is the first of the results chapters and presents and analyses the data pertaining to Objective One.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

# **INDIGENOUS GAMBLING IN BUNDJALUNG COUNTRY: GAMBLING BEHAVIOUR, CONSEQUENCES, RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS, AND POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the results for Research Objective One, which was to examine Indigenous gambling behaviour, consequences, risk and protective factors and potential interventions in several Indigenous communities in New South Wales.

It commences by presenting the results of interviews with Indigenous people across the six shires in the study area, followed by those with gaming venue managers and gambling counsellors in Bundjalung Country in northern New South Wales. A comparative analysis, across shires and interview groups, concludes the chapter.

### **4.2 RESULTS OF INTERVIEWS WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN THE BALLINA SHIRE**

In the Ballina Shire, we conducted 15 interviews for this project involving 24 Indigenous people, as well as individual interviews with three non-Indigenous gaming venue managers. This section presents the findings from interviews with the 24 Indigenous people. Findings from the interviews with venue managers are presented in a later section.

An overview of the Ballina Shire is presented first, followed by findings relating to gambling on cards and commercial gambling activities. Consequences of gambling are then discussed in terms of gambling problems and positive and negative consequences, before findings on risk and protective factors are presented. A discussion of barriers and facilitators for addressing gambling problems and potential interventions concludes this section.

#### **4.2.1 Overview of Ballina Shire**

Ballina Shire is located on the New South Wales Far North Coast. The shire is about 2.5 hours drive south of Brisbane, 9 hours drive north of Sydney or 1.5 hour flying time from Sydney. The shire is in a rural-coastal locality and enjoys a temperate to sub-tropical climate. The shire has a strong tourism and fishing industry, a growing commercial centre, and produces sugar, macadamia nuts, dairy, beef, avocado and stone fruit. It contains the towns and villages of Ballina, Lennox Head, Alstonville, Wollongbar and Wardell. It has an area of 487 square kilometres and an approximate population of 40,000 people. The shire has an ageing population with 1 in 4 people aged 60 or above. Approximately 20 per cent of the shire is in the 0-14 year age group, while 2.1 per cent of the shire population is of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent.

The Ballina Shire also contains the Aboriginal Community of Cabbage Tree Island, where Indigenous people farmed and lived in self-sufficient communities until the island was set up as an Aboriginal reserve and later a station. A community survey undertaken in 1996 estimated that there were 749 Aboriginal people on Cabbage Tree Island. A total of 26 houses are located on the island, all owned by the Jali Local Aboriginal Lands Council

<http://www.ballina.nsw.gov.au> [accessed on 10 October 2009]



<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/nswcultureheritage/cabbagetree.htm> [accessed 10 October 2009]

<http://www.daa.nsw.gov.au/communitydevelopment/nov05/CabbageTree.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2009]

#### **4.2.2 Card Gambling Behaviour**

Card gambling amongst Indigenous Australians in the Ballina Shire was reported as occurring ‘a lot’ in certain locations, both ‘under trees’ and ‘in houses’. Card gamblers appeared to cover all ages and both sexes, although there was reasonable agreement that it involved ‘mainly women’, ‘mainly middle aged’ people and ‘a lot more older people’. However, some interviewees commented that card gambling can also involve ‘a lot of younger players’, with some respondents noting that ‘kids eight or nine years’ and ‘high school kids’ play cards, and that ‘younger people are starting to learn from their mob’. Others also noted that, while ‘women were the main players’, card gambling attracted ‘some men’.

These card games were said to occur ‘two to three times a week’, ‘weekly’ and ‘usually monthly’, with this variation perhaps explained by the comment that card gambling can ‘go through a phase [with] card games played regularly for a few months, and then no games for a while’. It was reported that these card games ‘go for ages’, ‘for more than three hours’ and ‘sometimes all day’ and ‘all night’.

In terms of expenditure, indicative comments were that people ‘spend their whole pay sometimes’, ‘can gamble more than half their pay’, ‘over \$100 per game’ and ‘over \$200 a week’. One commented they have ‘been asked to cash \$50 at a time’, another that they had ‘seen full pensions go through on cards’, while another ‘wonder[s] where the money comes from’. However, clearly not all players lose, and ‘some walk away with \$700-\$800 from a \$20 start’.

There was strong agreement that this card gambling is motivated by social reasons, being a ‘social thing’, a ‘way of getting together’ to ‘yarn, joke’ and that the ‘best stories are there’ at card games. However, one respondent also noted that card gambling is motivated by ‘boredom’ and hope of a ‘big win’.

#### **4.2.3 Commercial Gambling Behaviour**

The Indigenous interviewees in the Ballina Shire spoke mainly about two types of commercial gambling – poker machines and betting on the TAB, although Keno and poker tournaments were also mentioned in passing.

##### **Poker Machine Gambling**

There was a general consensus amongst those interviewed that Indigenous people of ‘both sexes’ played poker machines, although a few respondents noted it attracted ‘more female’ than male players. There was also widespread agreement that people of ‘all ages’ played the machines, although perhaps with a bias towards ‘younger people’. Another noted the typical age range was ‘20-50 years’. One respondent also commented that poker machines attracted both the ‘employed and unemployed’.

When asked about the timing and frequency of poker machine gambling, many comments linked these to pay days. Several interviewees noted that the timing of poker machine gambling is linked to pay cycles, with indicative comments being on ‘pay days and for days afterwards’, ‘pay week is a big week’ and ‘pay day is the main time’. The shoulder period

after pay day when poker machine gambling seems more likely to occur was reported as being ‘a few times a week – more than three’, ‘usually three times a week’ and ‘at least once or twice a week’. However, frequency of gambling ‘depends on how much money they have’, with some people gambling only on pay day but they ‘stay there till they’re broke’, while others gamble ‘weekly or at least twice a week; as long as the money lasts’. However, one respondent noted that workers tend to gamble only on Fridays and Saturdays, and another that ‘younger people mostly play weekly’. Two other respondents said that people gambled on poker machines ‘anytime’ and one that they do so ‘when money is available, not necessarily linked to payday’.

The most frequently reported duration of poker machine gambling sessions was more than two-three hours (e.g. ‘more than three hours’, ‘easily more than two to three hours’, ‘more than three hours playing’). However, some respondents spoke of people who ‘sit there all day’ and ‘go there when it opens till it’s [their pay’s] all gone’. One summed up the variation by saying ‘some gamble a long time, others only a short time’.

Not surprisingly, expenditure on poker machine gambling varied amongst different types of people. One noted a difference between ‘unemployed – at least half their pay, but depends on whether they have kids or not and whether they have other responsibilities [and] workers who have more responsibility, tend to pay bills’. Another noted that ‘some set limits of money to spend; others gamble 70-80 per cent of their pay’, and another that expenditure varies between ‘all of pay till it’s gone, some who gamble smart, some don’t gamble at all’. However, several respondents spoke of people who ‘spend all their pay/money’, those who ‘spend all they have’, and ‘a lot will do all their pay’. Another estimated that ‘most gamblers spend 80 per cent of their pay’, while one commented that some gamblers spend ‘sometimes all of their pay [as they] want to feed it more in hope to get money back’. Where the interviewees estimated actual expenditure, this ranged from ‘often over \$200’ and ‘easily more than \$200 a week’ to ‘more than \$300 a week’.

Numerous reasons for gambling on poker machines were identified. The most commonly mentioned was escape, such as ‘from their kids for a while, escape from relationship problems, money problems’, to escape ‘from problems, the stress of family’, ‘to escape reality’, ‘to get out of home’, for ‘zoning out’ and for ‘stress relief – a place to be on your own’. One person described that when playing the machines the ‘brain switches off’ enabling ‘avoidance, escape, no one talks to you, leave you alone when playing’. Similarly, a few others talked about the opportunity to ‘relax, get away’, ‘to relax and escape from problems’, to have ‘peace and quiet’ and ‘to relax after work’. One person described how poker machine gambling is attractive ‘if you haven’t got much in your life [because it is] a night out, release, escape, be away from the carry on’.

The majority of interviewees also noted a key motivation for playing poker machines was ‘to win money’, ‘a chance to win, big pay’, ‘to win money and to win big’ and ‘hoping to get the big money’.

Several respondents also noted boredom as a motivator, with gambling being a way to ‘pass the time’ and ‘socialise when bored’. A few others also mentioned the ‘social aspects’ of gambling, with gambling providing opportunities for a ‘social get together’. Others commented that playing poker machines also enabled gamblers to ‘use alcohol’, ‘have a drink, have a press’, ‘to socialise and have a drink’, as people ‘tend to drink as well as gamble’ and ‘people like to drink when gambling’. However, one interviewee noted that ‘during the day people do not drink, but at night time [it] will pick up and also during weekends’.

## TAB Betting

In relation to TAB betting, there was strong agreement that this involved ‘mostly men’ aged ‘25 years or older’ as ‘young fellas don’t have enough time to study the form’. However it was also reported that you ‘don’t see a lot of really old people’ at the TAB’. This TAB betting occurred at ‘the pub’, ‘TAB agency’ and also clubs due to cheaper drinks, but also ‘on the phone’. One person commented that ‘a lot have Austar, phone TAB’, while another participant said he ‘uses the internet’ for TAB betting.

The TAB betting discussed by the interviewees appeared regular ‘if they can afford it’, ‘three or four times per week, through the phone as have family and can’t get out at night’ and from ‘12pm – 5pm at [X] pub – I’ve heard of people who do this most days’. Duration of betting sessions also appeared quite lengthy, with some related comments being they ‘would sit there all day’, ‘stay there for as long as others do on pokies’, and they ‘gamble all the time’. However, one person noted that older men ‘have more sense’ and do not spend ‘as much time at the TAB’ as other age groups.

Typical expenditure on TAB betting was unclear, but was said by one person to be ‘less than on machines’, and alternatively by another ‘the same amount or even more’ compared to poker machine expenditure. One commented that people would bet on the TAB ‘sometimes with a group till they’ve all got nothing’.

This TAB betting was reported as motivated by a range of reasons, including ‘mostly for money – they don’t even watch the races’. However, other motivators identified comprised ‘social aspects’, ‘boredom’, ‘escape from problems’, ‘hot tips’, ‘increased confidence by picking winners’ and because it is ‘not as big an outlay of money’ as the poker machines. One commented about ‘a change of lifestyle; when people get older instead of going to the pub, they go home and watch the races’.

### 4.2.4 Consequences of Gambling

The consequences of gambling were discussed by the interviewees in terms of gambling problems, and positive and negative outcomes of gambling.

#### Gambling Problems

The interviewees were asked ‘Is gambling a problem here?’. It is notable that all interviewees said yes, with some stronger comments being there is a ‘major gambling problem in this community’, ‘yes, big problem’ and ‘yes, major’. However, some comments were more nuanced, such as ‘some people have a problem with gambling’ and ‘gambling is a problem in communities, on pension day’. One story was told of a woman who had lost \$50,000, her life savings, on gambling and of a couple who had moved away from a community specifically to get away from gambling. One person contended that ‘gambling is out of control for most Aboriginal people who gamble’.

When asked what types of gambling cause problems, the majority of interviewees responded ‘poker machines’, six also noted the TAB and three people mentioned gambling on cards and marbles. Keno and poker tournaments were also mentioned in passing.

#### Positive Consequences

Most interviewees identified several positive outcomes of gambling, although one respondent said there were ‘not a lot’ of positive consequences, while another felt there were ‘none’.

About half the interviewees noted the social benefits that can arise from gambling, where it involves ‘social interaction’, a ‘social outing’ and ‘meeting up with mates’, perhaps accompanied by ‘a cheap meal’. As one respondent commented, ‘if you can manage it, then it is an enjoyable social activity’. For another, the social enjoyment was clearly attractive, as you ‘end up putting \$5 in just to have a yarn’. About one-third of the respondents also noted the ‘fun’, ‘enjoyment’ and ‘entertainment’ that can be derived from gambling. About one-quarter also commented that gambling can be ‘relaxing’, allowing the person to ‘get away from things’, ‘have some time out’ and gain some ‘release from stress’.

Other positive consequences of gambling mentioned only once each were the opportunity to ‘sometimes get dressed up to go to the races’, that with ‘some venues, the money goes back to community’, that it is good ‘when they win’.

### **Negative Consequences**

Amongst several types of negative consequences of gambling, two mentioned in all the interviews were financial problems and relationship problems, although clearly these are linked.

Numerous negative financial consequences of gambling were noted. One was not being able to pay the rent (‘not paying rent’, ‘spend rent money’, ‘difficulty paying rent especially if on welfare’), which can lead to ‘eviction’, ‘homelessness’ and having ‘to rely on refuge or family’, which can be ‘devastating’. One interviewee spoke of ‘one woman who just got evicted from her house because of gambling because she couldn’t pay her rent’. Not being able to pay other bills, such as for electricity, was also raised, as was inability to buy groceries, leading to ‘no food at home’. Several respondents suggested this can lead to a cycle of borrowing and debt, as some gamblers may be ‘always broke, trying to get money’. However, ‘borrowing does not help’ and leads to having ‘debt collectors on your back’ and more ‘financial hardship’.

Gambling, along with its negative financial consequences, is also linked to relationship problems. These were explained as including ‘arguments’, ‘domestic violence’, ‘the silent treatment’, ‘family problems’, ‘family break-ups’, ‘conflict’, ‘aggression’ and ‘stress’. Another noted that gambling can lead to ‘constantly getting nagged’ by significant others, such that some gamblers then ‘go gambling to get away’. This highlights particular difficulties when ‘some people gamble, some not’ which leads to ‘arguments [about] not spending money correctly’. One interviewee also noted that ‘borrowing money ... can then destroy friendships’. Two respondents commented that relationship issues caused by gambling can be exacerbated when alcohol is also involved. One noted that a consequence of gambling can be ‘domestic violence when mixed with alcohol’ and another that ‘if you are used to alcohol, then you will get cranky if you have to go without’ if the money has been spent on gambling.

The majority of interviewees identified the emotional toll on gamblers when they lose money on gambling. This included ‘shame’, ‘loss of self-respect’, ‘lack of confidence’, feeling ‘sad’ and ‘depression’, with these affecting ‘their mental health’, leading to a ‘self-destructing spiral’ where people can ‘lose track of responsibility’ and have gambling ‘take over their lives’ with ‘no turning back’. One respondent noted that depression about gambling losses can lead to ‘more alcohol consumed because they lost so they’re more depressed’, leading to a ‘cycle of depression’. Another noted that gambling losses means some gamblers ‘might have to go to Vinnie’s [which leads to] lower self esteem, shame and guilt’. Another related how they ‘knew one fellow who lost his whole pay’ and that this was ‘stressful plus the stress of telling the partner’.

In eight interviews, the impacts of gambling on children were also raised, with gambling sometimes leading to ‘kids suffering’ as there is ‘no money for kids’ schooling or food’, ‘kids can’t afford uniforms’, ‘no money for school fees’, ‘kids miss out on food, clothing and entertainment’ and ‘kids not getting the essentials sometimes’. One person also commented about gambling ‘leading to stealing and crime by kids if they are hungry and not supervised’.

In five interviews, the ‘ripple effect for every gambler who gambles everything’ was raised, as this has a ‘big impact on the community’, ‘affects the whole community’, and is seen as ‘dividing communities’, such as when people ‘borrow from others to gamble or to pay for food for their family’. One person lamented that ‘gambling is controlling our people rather than us controlling gambling’.

#### **4.2.5 Risk Factors for Gambling**

The interviewees were asked ‘Thinking about gambling amongst the Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients, what are the things that might influence some to gamble heavily or out of control?’. In alignment with Thomas and Jackson’s model (2004), their responses are grouped below into risk factors relating to the propensity to gamble, to the gambling product and the gambling environment, and to the consequences of gambling.

##### **Risk Factors Relating to the Propensity to Gamble**

Risk factors relating to the propensity to gamble encompassed personal factors, family influences, peer pressure, financial circumstances, historical and cultural factors.

Several themes emerged from the interviews in relation to personal risk factors. The major one was stress, where gambling heavily may be prompted by a need ‘to escape from reality and problems’, to ‘get away from environment at home’ and to ‘get away from Aboriginal meetings and negative gatherings, so they can relax and escape’ by having some ‘alone time’. One interviewee explained that ‘if win, [this] creates a particular feeling; for 10 minutes you are stress free’. A second personal risk factor was seen as unemployment and the accompanying ‘boredom’, as ‘people don’t work five days a week, only two days a week. What else do you do?’ Boredom in general was also considered a risk factor, as ‘here, not much on for entertainment; kids roam the streets and when they get old enough they go to the club’. One person also added that ‘low literacy means people don’t read as a pastime. Alcohol consumption was considered another personal risk factor, where the ‘big majority of these gamblers are big drinkers’ and because ‘the more people drink, the more they gamble’.

Two types of risk factors for heavy or uncontrolled gambling were seen as emanating from the family. The first was exposure to gambling and gamblers during childhood, as ‘kids learn the behaviour from parents and older generations’ and ‘kids copy peoples’ behaviours when it’s generational; it is very hard to break the cycle’. One respondent summed this up thus: ‘if your mother did it, then what’s wrong with it?’ This person felt that ‘parenting skills’ were a key influence. Another commented that it ‘goes back to cards; trans-generational learning’, where childhood exposure to gambling can occur during card games. The second type of family influence was not necessarily during childhood, but simply that ‘when gambling is big in a family, it can influence people to gamble more’. One person commented that ‘family, if you start winning, they bring you back to gamble more’, implying family pressure to gamble. In other cases, family introduce people to gambling. For example, one interviewee related being ‘introduced to poker machines by my mother when I was 18’.

Another risk factor appears to arise from peer pressure. For example, one interviewee commented that friends ‘won’t talk to you unless you’re with them when playing the

machines'. Similarly, another explained that they 'go to a venue with friends, and the next thing they are all on machines. If I want to talk to them I have to go over to machines too. Then next thing you are putting money in too'. One described gambling as 'part and parcel of people's lifestyles. It is something that is so entrenched'. Others related how friends can introduce people to gambling ('never played machines, but I'll show you') and that people are sometimes 'encouraged to go halves in betting on machines'. One interviewee referred to this peer pressure by saying 'many Aboriginal people are just following other Aboriginal people', while another described how 'gambling is passed on group to group, family to family'. One interviewee lamented that 'role models, more leaders – these are lacking in our Aboriginal communities', while another raised the point that 'gambling is always talked about in a positive way; what are you doing tomorrow night? I am going for a press'.

Some risk factors were related to the poor financial circumstances of some Indigenous people. As one person said, 'the broker you are, the more you need the money. Therefore you keep playing, a cycle'. Another considered that 'Aboriginal people are always broke and are always looking for a quick fix even if they have only \$5 left'. Some gamblers 'believe it will help get rid of all their problems' and 'dream to get more money' from gambling. Related to this is that some Indigenous people are 'not educated in money management' and 'live day by day'. One respondent had observed that 'when people first get a job, then the first time they have money, getting a big pay and going out drinking and gambling'.

Certain historical and cultural issues were considered risk factors for heavy gambling. One was 'loss of culture' and 'loss of cultural practices' where Indigenous people 'used to sing and dance, but now gamble instead', with 'cards and gambling' and 'now machines' being 'a new way of social gathering'. Another respondent noted that 'Aboriginal people liked to play cards a lot. It was very popular', suggesting this may have laid foundations for the continued popularity of gambling, including on commercial forms.

### **Risk Factors Relation to Gambling Products and Services**

Risk factors were identified in relation to the gambling product. The attractive features of poker machines were noted by several respondents, who explained that 'Aboriginal people like the features of the machines, such as free spins' and that people 'like the noise, lights, jackpots and features'. One interviewee explained 'it is the music' that is attractive for her, while others just like 'the poker machine itself'. One person explained this appeal thus: 'get free spins, triples the prize, incentives to encourage more spins, not satisfied till you get those free spins to get bigger payout'. One noted that people 'like to play their favourite machine' and another that people 'like different games, fun, pretty noise, know the music'. It appeared that erroneous beliefs around how poker machines work also were a risk factor that encouraged heavy gambling, where people 'like to go to the same machines for luck because they think they know what features are needed to win' and where 'people believe you win money on machines after a win, that is, have a win and believe it's easy to win so they keep playing'. Another alluded to superstitious beliefs when relating how a gambler might say 'what did you come and talk to me for? I was winning; now I have stopped winning because you started talking to me'. As one person explained, 'people don't know the probability of a machine to pay and don't understand the outcomes of losing money'.

Other risk factors related to the gambling environment in venues. These included 'easy access to pubs and clubs', as 'pubs, clubs are very, very accessible' and they are 'easy to get to; people can walk to the pubs and clubs'. One interviewee also explained that 'poker machines were not in pubs and so Aboriginals gamble more [now that they are]. Before, not many were members of clubs, but regularly went to pubs'. It was also noted that people 'like

the clubs and pubs because they are air-conditioned and they can get a feed', with one person noting that 'air conditioning is only in the poker machine area'. The fact that 'you can drink alcohol' and that 'staff look after you' were also seen as attractive venue features that may increase the risk for some gamblers. In terms of access, the availability of Austar, telephone and internet gambling was seen to facilitate TAB betting.

### **Risk Factors Relating to the Consequences of Gambling**

Risk factors relating to the consequences of gambling largely encompassed barriers faced in addressing a gambling problem. Both intrinsic and extrinsic barriers were raised by the Indigenous respondents. Intrinsic barriers are the personal barriers of the individual, with the key one identified as shame where people 'don't want to admit they have failed'. Shame was noted in all 15 interviews as 'a big thing' that means 'some won't admit they have a problem' or seek help to address it. Most interviewees noted it was 'very hard to ask for help'. This was because of 'shame, embarrassment and pride', with 'especially boys and men' being 'too proud'. Additionally, help seeking is hindered because Aboriginal people are 'naturally a shy race', because 'Aboriginal people do not like to talk to people about their problems' as 'through history they are told to keep their problems to themselves'. Thus, many people feel 'unable to share problems' and some 'hide problems from family and kids'. A different barrier was raised by one interviewee, who said:

Seeking out help is more than shame and denial. There is an element of victim mentality; self esteem has a role here, it's missing. They may not have a sense of worthiness, confidence or self esteem. Without this, may not see themselves as worthy to get help.

Fear was another barrier to people addressing a gambling problem, as some may be 'afraid of the repercussions of what could happen if people find out about their gambling problems' and because 'they feel they are a bad parent if they come for help'. One interviewee felt that Aboriginal people are not familiar with counselling, so there is also 'fear of the unknown'.

Some interviewees saw heavy gambling as an addiction so that 'problem gamblers are out of control and don't think of no one else' and they are 'compulsive liars, always borrowing money'. Another noted that 'people tend to hide their addictions'.

However, about half the interviewees considered that people sometimes 'don't recognise they have a problem' with gambling. One reason for this is that gambling is normalised, where they 'don't know any different; fathers and uncles did it so they think it's normal' as gambling is 'what is the normal thing to do, part of everyday life'. A few others considered that problem gamblers can be 'in denial' where they 'don't think they have a problem'.

Personal circumstances can also influence whether people attempt to address a gambling problem. Three interviewees noted being used to poverty is a barrier, where 'many people are used to being broke', some are 'always in debt; it's a way of life, people get used to it', and people are 'used to living in poverty and with hardship and struggle – cannot get out of this thinking; learned this all their life'. One interviewee also raised the problem of cycles of dependency, giving the example of a 'neighbour [who] is a gambler but won't get help because of her relationship with her drug addict partner; cycle of dependency'.

Social circumstances also appear influential, with four respondents noting peer pressure as a deterrent to curtailing their gambling, as gambling is 'normalised', 'everyone is doing it', people 'go out with the mob' and gambling is 'a trend'. One person also explained that 'if you stop gambling, people from your mob might think that you think you are better than them' and another that 'if someone wants to stop, it is difficult because of their peers, family and relatives, as they will often ask them to gamble with them'. People trying to curtail their

gambling therefore ‘worry about what happens if they’re not gambling; what do I give up? The social side?’

Extrinsic barriers to addressing a gambling issue related to lack of culturally appropriate services, lack of knowledge of avenues for help, and logistical issues around accessing help services. In all 15 interviews, concerns were raised about lack of appropriate help services for Indigenous people. A key issue was that people ‘don’t like seeing non-Indigenous people [for help]’, they ‘don’t like going to non-Aboriginal services’ and they are ‘not going to the white organisations or person’ as they are ‘not comfortable with a non-Aboriginal counsellor’. One person felt this was particularly the case for ‘older ones [who] really like Aboriginal services with Aboriginal staff’. Three respondents also noted that Indigenous people ‘don’t want to talk about it on the phone’ and ‘would not ring any support for help’.

A few interviewees also lamented the lack of community education around gambling, both in general and specifically for Indigenous Australians. One person explained this thus: ‘problems are that in this country generally, there are fits and starts with information about gambling, but not as concentrated an effort to stop gambling as with drinking and smoking and drugs’. Another was critical that there is ‘no conversation about gambling with children from a young age – compared to drugs, drinking and safe sex’. Another simply said ‘there are no long term measures’.

Related to this is that about one-third of the interviewees also felt there was lack of knowledge about avenues for help with a gambling problem, as people ‘don’t know where to get help’, ‘don’t know of any gambling services here’, some ‘can’t read a sign [in venues] if uneducated’, and because ‘self exclusion is not well known to Aboriginal people’. Additionally, three interviewees from the discrete Aboriginal community in Ballina Shire noted logistical problems with accessing help, where ‘travelling to services is a problem’ as ‘access to this community is hard’.

#### **4.2.6 Protective Factors for Gambling**

The interviewees were asked ‘Thinking about gambling amongst the Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients, what are the things that might influence them to not gamble or to gamble responsibly?’. In alignment with Thomas and Jackson’s model (2004), their responses are grouped below into protective factors relating to the propensity to gamble, to the gambling product and the gambling environment, and to the consequences of gambling.

##### **Protective Factors Relating to the Propensity to Gamble**

Protective factors relating to the propensity to gamble were seen to emanate from personal factors, money management skills, having other interests, and positive family influences.

Several themes emerged from the interviews in relation to personal protective factors, and these appeared of roughly equal importance. One was personal values, having ‘high values’ and ‘self-respect and respect for others’. Another was self-control, that is ‘willpower’, ‘control’, being able to ‘set limits’ and to ‘learn from their mistakes’. Employment was considered a protective factor lowering the propensity to gamble, as ‘people who work learn to control their money’ and conversely, ‘people who do not work hard to earn their money don’t value it as much as someone who works for it’. Thus, ‘people who work more tend not to be the regular gamblers. They value their money more than others’. Others also commented that people who ‘value their money’ and who are ‘aware of the value of money’ ‘don’t want to waste their money in the poker machines’.



Related to this was the importance of budgeting skills and money management. This was discussed in terms of ‘paying bills first’ before gambling, sticking to a gambling budget (e.g. ‘she set herself a limit of \$20 then, and still sticks to it now’; ‘set a limit, pay bills first, and only gamble with what is left over’), and using strategies to control expenditure, including ‘money limits each day’, ‘leave key card at home to limit the money spent’ and one person who ‘gives his money to his dad who helps him budget’. One respondent also noted that a protective factor was when ‘people learn to spend their winnings on important things like kids, food, etc. – they budget’. Thus, being able to ‘prioritise your spending’, ‘money management’, ‘budgeting’ and being able to ‘decide to put money to good use, know how to do this’ were seen as critically important.

Another protective factor was having other interests, apart from gambling. As one interviewee commented, ‘if you’ve got stuff in your life that’s meaningful, then you don’t need to gamble’. Thus, some respondents advocated ‘alternative activities’ and to ‘do something else, have an open mind, spend time with family, social outings, education and parenting classes’. That is, ‘Aboriginal people should look to replace gambling with something else – other options to relax, escape when bored’, noted one person.

Having family around you was also considered a protective factor, mentioned in over half the interviews. This occurs because the ‘partner pulls you up’ and because ‘some families pull one another into line’, and also because having ‘kids, family help people see things that are more important’, leading to ‘different home life and values’, ‘responsibilities, such as kids’, ‘values towards their kids’ and ‘family and kids – put money towards them first’. Another interviewee also noted that ‘age can make a difference’, where older people tend to gamble less.

### **Protective Factors Relating to Gambling Products and Services**

Two interviewees in the Ballina area identified protective factors relating to the gambling product and environment. One noted that a protective factor was to ‘learn more about how you don’t win on a poker machine’, although another disagreed, saying that ‘knowing the odds wouldn’t help much as people still want the escape’. One interviewee commented ‘Gamblers’ Anonymous – see the stickers’, implying that these stickers on the gaming machines in New South Wales might help protect people or prompt them to seek help.

### **Protective Factors Relating to the Consequences of Gambling**

Protective factors relating to the consequences of gambling largely encompassed factors that facilitated people in addressing a gambling-related problem. Three facilitators were raised in the interviews – availability of appropriate services, education, and encouragement from others to seek help.

Several interviewees lamented the lack of Aboriginal services and counsellors, advocating ‘more Aboriginal people to contact’, ‘gambling help groups for Aboriginal people’, ‘Koori services they can go to’ and a ‘helpline phone service for Aboriginal people’. One person explained that ‘positives of this is there would be a lot of things they wouldn’t have to explain to the counsellor, like the cultural side of things, things that happen at home, etc’. However, ‘confidentiality problems with Aboriginal counsellors’ was raised as a potential issue because if the counsellor was ‘from the community ... they would know them [raising] fear of people knowing about your business’. Thus, several people felt strongly that an Aboriginal counsellor should ‘not be from the community’ as you ‘don’t want the Indigenous counsellor to know people too well’.

In contrast, a few interviewees were doubtful about how effective an Aboriginal service or counsellor would be. For one, this was because ‘it’s so difficult to get people to services, except when major crisis or tragedy happens. Sometimes both partners gamble’. For another, this was because ‘Aboriginal people would not use gambling services – they fear having no money for alcohol food, socialisation. It’s hard to talk to someone about gambling’.

In relation to Indigenous people accessing non-Indigenous gambling help services, one interviewee pointed out that ‘gambling services will only work if staff at the gambling counselling services are culturally trained and can communicate with Aboriginal people’, and another that that ‘confidentiality and trust with counsellor’ were vital.

Some respondents focused on community education and consumer information as facilitators for addressing a gambling issue. One felt it needed ‘shock tactics for gambling, like with smoking advertisements. It’s not seen as a problem’ and another that ‘people don’t read pamphlets; TV ads are much better, t-shirts, teacups with message on’. Another simply advocated ‘education about gambling problems’, and another that this should ‘start ... in high school and TAFE. Years 11 and 12 would be good, even year 10’. A third supported ‘advertising of the Northern Rivers Gambling Service and Lifeline [as] people here in this area should know about these services’.

Three interviewees noted people could be encouraged by others to address a gambling problem, perhaps ‘doctor or family first’ or a ‘Bunjum family worker if available’, with ‘family pushing them into getting help’.

#### **4.2.7 Suggested Interventions to Address Gambling Issues**

The interviewees were asked ‘What can be done to reduce the negative impacts and encourage responsible gambling amongst Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients?’. These were discussed in terms of what Indigenous communities, community services, the gambling industry and governments could do, but there was a good deal of overlap in what was discussed.

#### **Indigenous Communities**

When asked what Indigenous communities could do, there were strong feelings that gambling and gambling problems needed to be discussed more openly within the community to ‘get our people talking about it’. There were suggestions to ‘talk about the issue’ and ‘talk more about it, especially individual stories’. One respondent pointed out that ‘Aboriginal families raise children with less boundaries. When they grow up they are expected to know everything’ and this was considered a ‘problem’.

Many interviewees saw the need for community action, such as ‘getting out and getting involved. Start talking about gambling issues and then act on it’ and to ‘be fair dinkum, get things done’. One expressed that ‘people should not blame, but start owning up and working together to move forward’ and this might involve ‘less chiefs, more Indians’ and ‘Aboriginals working together’ to ‘think positive, let people use ideas’.

‘More awareness around gambling’, as referred to above, might be achieved through community education. Several interviewees had specific ideas about community education, variously saying it could ‘target people who receive a good wage and those who are unemployed’ and the ‘younger ones’ to ‘promote that [turning] 18 does not mean automatic drinking and gambling’. Other thoughts on community education were that it should be ‘about gambling and about alcohol, as drinking can lead to gambling’, it should ‘educate on the consequences of gambling and what happens when you lose your money’, it should

‘educate our people on the impacts of gambling’, and help people ‘recognise the issues and problems gambling can cause’ and ‘its impacts on people, families and communities’. Others thought there was a need to ‘link gambling to other problems like drinking and health’ and that gambling ‘affects our mental health’. This might help overcome concern that ‘gambling is not seen as a big issue, not linked to other influences such as crime, drugs and alcohol. Depression can be an issue with gambling’.

Having ‘more Aboriginal counsellors, more educators’, ‘more Aboriginal people in the help service industry’ and ‘Aboriginal pamphlets’ would facilitate community education as well as help seeking, as would ‘more people trained in gambling to help provide further information, support and counselling’. One person thought they ‘might talk to the principal at the school’ to see if there were opportunities for gambling awareness education there.

Other broader strategies suggested were better ‘education of Aboriginal people’ and to ‘start addressing the issues/problems that is causing people to gamble’.

### **Community Services**

When asked what the community services sector could do to reduce the negative impacts and encourage responsible gambling amongst local Indigenous people, many interviewees reiterated the need for culturally appropriate gambling help services, as discussed earlier. About one-third of the interviews also raised the need for other community services to become more aware of gambling issues, as addressing gambling problems ‘needs to be part of the whole attack’. This could be done by these services asking people ‘does this happen in your family?’ and by putting up ‘signs in their offices’. One respondent was critical that a local alcohol rehabilitation centre ‘only asks one question about gambling in the assessment for clients’. Involvement of other services in identifying gambling problems was seen as important, because people ‘don’t realise they have a problem unless they’re told about it or the signs’.

There was a strong call for existing community services to provide more community education about gambling, to ‘promote more gambling education’, to provide ‘more promotional materials and help strategies for families who are supporting the gambler’, to ‘point them in the right direction’, and even to suggest ‘tough love’ to families supporting problem gamblers. One person from a discrete community away from the major town centres was critical that ‘gambling counselling services locally don’t come to the community – they’re just not visible’. Others felt that community education could be done through ‘community activities, like barbeques’, through ‘workshops involving cultural, social activities and gatherings’, and that this ‘education and awareness ... would be beneficial if it was Aboriginal-specific’. Another considered that ‘advertising should be harder hitting for Aboriginal people, that is, how gambling can destroy lives; need to provoke change – wake us up’, as ‘if they don’t knock it on the head now, it will get out of control’.

Two interviewees also felt a role for community services was in providing ‘money management advice’ or ‘money management counselling’. Conversely, another felt that ‘black fellas don’t like people telling them how to spend their money’ and so ‘would not use a financial management officer – I’ve never seen an Indigenous person at Centrelink use financial management services’.

### **Gambling Industry and Venues**

When asked what the gambling industry and venues could do, suggestions were raised in several areas. In one-third of the interviews, it was noted that gaming venues could more actively promote avenues for help for people with gambling problems, such as having ‘bigger

signs for the helpline’, by having ‘more signs’ to ‘advertise that help is available’, by having ‘more information about gambling not just coasters, stickers, etc’, ‘by providing ‘more education on the probability of winning’, and by advising of ‘the effects that gambling can cause people, especially the Indigenous perspective’. It was also suggested there was a need to ‘advertise Indigenous material that is specific to Aboriginal communities’ and to ‘educate our people about self exclusion and that this only means gambling; you can still eat, drink and socialise’. A few suggestions were also made for how venues could assist in gambler education outside the venue, specifically to ‘donate money to help promotion or phone line’ and to ‘increase machine money to go back into education/help’. Another felt that the industry could ‘put more money back into community groups, [and have] family fun days, social activities, more family activities’.

Comments were made in relation to other aspects of the gaming environment. One was the need for ‘clocks on machines’. The other was a criticism of a large local club which now it ‘has been renovated, you have to go past the machines to reach the food area with your kids; you can see and hear the machines while you are eating’. Similarly, another interviewee commented that the ‘positioning of poker machines in clubs and pubs [is] in the wrong place. Too easy to access’. One interviewee would like venues to ‘limit the size of the notes for a poker machine’.

One respondent felt venues should proactively intervene with patrons, explaining that ‘no one ever asks you to stop putting money in machine’ and that this was different to ‘RSG legislation, different than alcohol, where venues can make you stop drinking’. However, this person felt that venues ‘could advise patrons to walk away or stop gambling rather than make them stop’. A cynical comment was made that venues ‘love blackfellas, especially country pubs’, presumably because they contribute to gambling revenue, especially ‘the [X] pub which is full of Koori people, especially the gaming room’. Other respondents considered that venues could provide ‘more functions like pool competitions’ and ‘more bands, other social activities’ as there are ‘not enough activities for people – needs to be entertainment, trivia, karaoke nights to get them away from the poker machines’.

## **Governments**

When asked what governments could do, most interviewees reiterated their previous suggestions for more community education about gambling, with one person also noting programs were needed ‘in schools, taking the younger generation and make them aware of it, for example guest speakers about problems and education about probabilities’.

In addition to this, there were calls for further funding of community service agencies that assist Indigenous people, with one person suggesting that governments need to ‘get more out of the money, better value than distributed as small amounts to lots of agencies’. Another suggested that extra funding could come from ‘individual clubs’ via the New South Wales Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing.

Calls were also made for more funding for Aboriginal people and groups, such as ‘funding for Aboriginals to target Aboriginal communities, roles like counsellors, educators, facilities and Aboriginal Men’s Groups’ and, similarly, ‘funding to employ Aboriginal people to provide education, awareness and counselling for Aboriginal people’ and to ‘promote education and awareness through schools, Aboriginal services and health services. More Aborigines should be employed to provide education, awareness and to assist with referrals to a counselling service’.

A few interviewees suggested some more interventionist approaches to gambling issues. One thought that ‘Centrelink should do more about money being spent and making families more accountable’, while another contended that government needed to ‘set up task force to deal with this gambling issue’ and that it ‘needs to be long term fix, not short term fix’. One person suggested that ‘governments need to think about some of their decisions. \$5,000 to have a baby, bonus to families etc, not useful to Aboriginal people, used for alcohol, gambling etc’. Another respondent felt it would be useful to ‘make it more expensive to gamble’ through ‘more tax’, so ‘free help services could be funded from extra tax’.

#### **4.2.8 Summary for Ballina Shire**

Card gambling was a gambling activity conducted in pockets of the Ballina Shire. Card gambling behaviour and motivations were very similar to those for commercial gambling except for reports about youth gambling on cards. Poker machine gambling was the most popular form of commercial gambling as reported by the majority of respondents. A great variety of people gambled on poker machines, usually on pay day, either weekly or fortnightly. TAB gambling was preferred by men who gambled in either short, quick sessions or stayed all day. Motivations to gamble included to escape, relax, win money, reduce boredom and socialise. Many people gambled for two-three hours on poker machines, but this often depended on their budget and income.

Poker machine gambling was seen as a major cause of gambling-related problems in the Ballina Shire for Indigenous gamblers. Negative consequences included financial problems and relationship difficulties. Positive consequences included social interaction and relaxation. Risk factors associated with the propensity to gamble were believed to be personal factors (escape, literacy problems, alcohol consumption while gambling), family influences (generational learning about gambling through family exposure, peer pressure), poor financial circumstances, and loss of cultural values and practices. Risk factors relating to the gambling products and services were the appeal of poker machines and the attractiveness of gaming venues. Risk factors relating to the consequences of gambling encompassed barriers to addressing gambling problems, including shame, fear, addiction, non-recognition of gambling problems, being caught in a cycle of dependency, a lack of culturally appropriate gambling help services and a lack of knowledge of where to find help.

Protective factors associated with the propensity to gamble were said to be personal control, money management skills, having alternative interests and strong family influences. Protective factors relating to gambling products and services were barely raised. Protective factors relating to the consequences of gambling encompassed facilitators to assist in addressing gambling problems. These were believed to be gambling community education and awareness campaigns, appropriate gambling help services and encouragement from others to seek help.

Suggested interventions to reduce negative gambling impacts included talking openly about Indigenous gambling, developing an awareness of the links between gambling and other problematic issues for Indigenous people, the provision of appropriate gambling help services, outreach programs to go to Indigenous groups and communities, active promotion of responsible gambling in venues for Indigenous gamblers, avenues for limiting money for poker machine gambling, school education programs about gambling and responsible gambling and funding Indigenous groups for training and education in community gambling awareness and counselling positions.

### **4.3 RESULTS OF INTERVIEWS WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN THE LISMORE SHIRE**

In the Lismore Shire, we conducted 20 interviews for this project involving 28 Indigenous people, as well as individual interviews with two gaming venue managers. This section presents the findings from interviews with the 28 Indigenous people. Findings from the interviews with venue managers are presented in a later section.

An overview of the Lismore Shire is presented first, followed by findings relating to gambling on cards and commercial gambling activities. Consequences of gambling are then discussed in terms of gambling problems and positive and negative consequences, before findings on risk and protective factors are presented. A discussion of potential interventions concludes this section.

#### **4.3.1 Overview of Lismore Shire**

Lismore is the regional centre of the Northern Rivers region and is located in the hinterland on the Far North Coast of New South Wales, stretching over an area of 1267 km<sup>2</sup>. The Shire of Lismore includes the villages of Nimbin, Modanville, Clunes, Dunoon, Eltham, Bexhill and Rosebank. From Lismore it is approximately a one hour drive to the Gold Coast and around a one hour flight to Sydney from Lismore's regional airport. The complete shire is home to 44,225 people with the population of the urban area of Lismore being 27,067 or 61.2 per cent of the whole population. Thirty-eight per cent of the residents of the shire live in surrounding villages or rural areas. The median age of the general Lismore population is 39 years. Four per cent of the residents in Lismore Shire are Indigenous people with 58.5 per cent of these people being 0-24 years old, which brings the median age of the Indigenous population to 19 years.

The largest industries in the shire are health care (North Coast Area Health Service), retail trade and education and training (Southern Cross University, TAFE). Another strong industry is agriculture, forestry and fishing with its focus on timber and wood products, sugar, dairy products and cattle as well as macadamia, coffee and tea tree plantations. The unemployment rate in Lismore is 9.2 per cent for non-Indigenous residents and 25 per cent for Indigenous residents, with Indigenous people between 15-24 years of age having the highest of unemployment rate (30 per cent).

<http://investinlismore.com.au> [accessed on 14 December 2009]

<http://www.lismore.nsw.gov.au> [accessed on 14 December 2009]

#### **4.3.2 Card Gambling Behaviour**

In the Lismore Shire, card gambling was reported to be 'small nowadays compared to the old days'. One interviewee said 'I don't know anyone here who plays cards'. However, most acknowledged there are 'some cards played' and one person said 'the one [gambling] that worries me is cards'. Some common comments were 'all ages, teenagers to older people, women and men' often play in 'social games with some big games on pay day'. It was noted that card gambling usually occurred 'at someone's house and people will just congregate there and have a game'. An observation was that 'younger women like card gambling at someone's house with \$5 or \$10'. It was apparent that 'card rings' were often played with 'cousins or friends of cousins'. One interviewee recalled recently being 'invited to four or five card games in the last four weeks' with 'mainly women and mainly in houses'. Motivations to gamble on card games were described as 'social, play with friends and family'

and ‘chasing the big win’. It was also reported that gambling ‘seems to numb the reality of peoples lives and they can escape from their problems’.

Indicating expenditure for card gambling, one interviewee commented people can ‘spend more than 80 per cent of money’ and this ‘depends on who has money, can be small or big’ stake games. It was common for people to play with ‘a lot more than \$20’ and it was suggested that people ‘usually play when they get their pay or their pensions and often will gamble all or nearly all away over two or three days after pay day’. However, it was noted that expenditure varied considerably as often it ‘depends if people can borrow from others’.

### **4.3.3 Commercial Gambling Behaviour**

The Indigenous interviewees in the Lismore Shire said that poker machine gambling was the ‘most popular in this community’ followed by TAB and Keno. However, it was also implied that ‘card gambling and commercial gambling ... they kind of go hand in hand. If you do one, you’re probably more likely to do the other’.

#### **Poker Machine Gambling**

In regards to who gambles on poker machines, it was broadly acknowledged that while ‘a mixture of males and females’ and ‘all ages from 18 years up’ gamble on poker machines, it is believed that it was more prevalent amongst ‘older women, 30 plus [years who] get the bug for gambling’. A typical response regarding age was ‘mainly 35-55 years, but some younger ones’.

Attracting ‘both unemployed and employed’, Indigenous people were said to ‘start young with cards and grow up with it, then go to poker machines’. It was suggested it was the ‘first thing people do at 18, not drink ... [they] go to gamble’. Most respondents agreed that young people ‘often gamble in groups, sometimes with partners on a Friday night’ or ‘together as a couple, mostly weekends [on] Thursday, Friday, Saturday’. On the other hand, people gambled ‘depending on money available, [and it] can be anytime, or day in the week’. When further discussing timing and frequency of commercial gambling, there was overall agreement that ‘they mostly play when they have money ... on payday or pension day ... weekly, fortnightly’. Others agreed that ‘pay day is a big day, tapering over seven days for some ... making it last’. It was also reported that ‘women might stay for a long time in the hope of a win ... if they are working, then can spend a long time’.

For some, there appeared to be two groups, younger people and older people. It was noted that for younger people ‘they don’t have patterns’ for when and how often they gamble. However, for ‘the older ones, it is mostly a weekly thing ... it might be their only outlet’. It was suggested that mostly ‘they don’t drink, but they do gamble’ and there was evidence of older people exhibiting a ‘pattern and their limits with money; [they are] more pulled back’. The duration of poker machine playing was varied, ‘some go for a small time, where some go for hours on their own’. Yet, generally, many would gamble for ‘more than two to three hours’ and ‘probably two to three times a week’. Indeed, the ‘over 40 age group spend more time gambling, over four hours a day, three times a week, even if it’s only \$5’.

Interviewees believed men ‘spend equally as much on machines as TAB [which] may be three quarters of their pay’. Others suggested individual expenditure could be as much as ‘85 per cent at least of pay, sometimes more’, and ‘some spend [their] whole pay’ on gambling. It was felt that, while some Indigenous gamblers ‘sometimes do food shopping first, others leave food shopping then have no money for it’. This resulted in some gamblers who ‘ask for loans and food’ which was very difficult as they were ‘embarrassed about exposing how

much they spend'. Unfortunately, exploitation was also reported as 'some carers spend clients' money' and it was an 'easy day out for the carer at the club'. While 'money is taken out of bank account(s) for food, furniture, etc', there was a report that 'some mental health clients have no food as it is being gambled'.

Gambling motivations were reported to include the thrill of winning money, to pass the time when not working, to reduce boredom, for socialising and to escape. It was reported that there was a lot of debt in the Lismore Shire; people were 'trying to cope with debt by gambling'. One person noted that, while 'it gives them a good feeling if they get a big win for their family'. Many gambled on poker machines as 'an outlet to forget everything and escape the daily grind and family issues'. There was an overwhelming view that 'our people don't have much', and they noted there was not much work available in Lismore. It was considered 'hard to compete with the mainstream population for scarce jobs'. It was commonly acknowledged that 'unemployment is high in 15 to 19 year olds ... jobs and employment here is hard'. Therefore, it was felt that Indigenous people 'lose confidence after many years of being like this' and had 'low esteem' which 'can lead to gambling, alcohol and depression'. Interviewees suggested there was 'lots of social gambling, have a little win every now and then' creating a 'level of camaraderie [and] loan each other a few dollars in a sense of community'.

Interviewees predominantly believed social gambling was a way of maintaining 'social connections' to 'reduce isolation' that in turn gives a 'feeling of inclusion ... normal to have a few beers and a press'. This appeared particularly relevant 'for older people, [who] don't have a lot of public transport'. It was emphasised that 'there is a lack of activity for the 30 plus year olds' as 'the middle years are not as well-catered for as youth is and they make their own fun'. Thus, they are said to have a 'usual weekly get together at clubs'. However, it was recounted that 'middle aged people gamble to escape ... got kids, bills, mortgages, grand kids' and there was a 'mix of gambling and drinking to hide and to forget'. Even though, it was noted by one person that the 'majority are on Centrelink payments and can't afford it, they do it for a break away'.

Regarding the gambling product, one interviewee believed 'the machines are really well marketed and are very attractive visually; they are in a loud, visually appealing place where people can just "zone out"'. Another commented that 'poker machines are very attractive to gamblers ... the lights and music particularly ... the music sings to people, it calls them in'. It was considered that the 'underpinning idea is the "messiah", that someone is going to come and save them and solve all their problems, to get them away from the problems'. While there was a general 'belief that you will win and might make more money', some realised this 'also creates more problems'.

### **TAB Betting**

In the Lismore Shire, it was reported that men participated in TAB gambling. In terms of frequency and timing, 'pay day and Saturday' were said to be the main times for gambling at the TAB. One comment indicated that 'for some it's a weekend thing that they do casually, and some people that have problems, it's throughout the week'. Other comments suggested that some people only gambled at the TAB 'maybe on Saturday, they might do it or every fortnight or when the big races are on'.

In regards to TAB gambling expenditure, it was generally agreed that 'people don't spend as much time or as much money on TAB' as they do on the poker machines because TAB gambling was 'not as fast as machines, not as damaging'. Accounts of people who 'bet less money, \$1-\$2 bets' suggested that TAB gamblers were 'more steady with money and spread



it over time and gamble with less money’, it was ‘usually smaller amounts than pokies ... expenditure can be \$10’. One respondent reported that the ‘punters’ club have a limit on how much they can put in and was a very responsible activity’, and was purported to be a ‘reconnection to relatives’ as they had ‘learnt to bet with parents’. Another said this was an important ‘social aspect ... reconnection and common denominator for the group to pool resources for bets’.

The predominant motivation for Indigenous TAB gamblers in the Lismore Shire was reported to be for ‘social activity, to meet with friends and relatives, talk about issues and catch up’. One person said ‘I think it’s a bit of a stress relief, it’s kind of, go down there and have a bet, you know’. Interviewees believed Indigenous TAB players wanted to ‘reduce social isolation, to blend in’ and were ‘all looking for social acceptance’ as they ‘want to be together and don’t want to be seen as different’. However, while TAB gambling was reportedly ‘not a money thing, more an escape’, one respondent described ‘the “rush” ... the excitement motivates them to bet on horses’.

### **Other Commercial Gambling**

Keno was reported to be ‘popular with all groups when they are out socially at a club or pub’ but it was said that mainly women participated in this form of commercial gambling. It was also noted there was ‘lots of TV advertising for keno and kids are attracted to it’.

Bingo was said to be ‘popular for some’ and, while enticing ‘regular weekly players, a few might travel to big games in Brisbane for big money prizes’. One person commented that ‘bingo would be another one a lot of our families access and use’. However, it was suggested that it was ‘not a place where they’d spend a lot of money’.

### **4.3.4 Consequences of Gambling**

The consequences of gambling were discussed by the interviewees in terms of gambling problems, and positive and negative outcomes of gambling.

#### **Gambling Problems**

The interviewees were asked ‘Is gambling a problem here?’ The majority of respondents believed there was a considerable gambling problem amongst Indigenous people in the Lismore Shire. Most comments indicated that ‘gambling is an issue across the board’. It was suggested it was predominantly ‘more so maybe for 40s and under to the young ones’ and for ‘women players’ who exhibited problematic gambling behaviour. In addition, some implied that particularly ‘for low socio-economic levels [there was] definitely an issue with gambling’. Others commented that ‘gambling is everywhere ... all cultures and religions in Australia’ and gambling-related problems were ‘not something that is obvious between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people’.

#### **Positive Consequences**

Several interviewees identified ‘social benefits’ as being the main positive outcome of Indigenous gambling in the Lismore Shire. Whilst gambling was considered a ‘social outing with family and friends that brings families together’, it also helped ‘overcome boredom’. Gambling was largely viewed as a positive experience ‘if they have a win to help family out and buy new things’. Winning created excitement because ‘when they win money [there is] joy’. ‘Bingo’, in particular, was said to have positive consequences as ‘it brings people together ... contributes to community’.

For some Indigenous people, gambling was perceived to allow ‘some sort of control in your life’. For example, ‘for someone who has been controlled by her partner, gambling gives her some control over her life; there’s no one looking over her shoulder while there’. However, about half of the respondents were adamant that there were absolutely ‘no positive aspects of gambling’.

### **Negative Consequences**

Numerous negative consequences were discussed during the interviews, with the main points being mental health, and depression in particular, but also financial and family problems, negative community outcomes and crime.

In regard to mental health and depression, it was considered that individual Indigenous people in Lismore were ‘always trying to escape but are not able to deal with their problems’. When gambling to ‘escape’, many ‘lose sense of reality and sense of money’. Hence, ‘depression is a big thing ... quite depressed from heavy gambling’. Many of those interviewed felt having no money and low self-esteem ‘can lead to depression, physical problems, no food, lose weight, stress’. It was also contended that ‘some people may just have addictive personalities and may not be aware of their problems’.

Financial problems were apparent for Indigenous people experiencing gambling-related concerns. One person said that financial problems can lead to alienation from family and friends because they owe money and then lose family contact. It was noted that ‘poker machines are completely anti-social and that changes relationships as they are always asking for money’. Men in particular were said to find that they ‘cannot support family the way they should’ and this can follow with a ‘breakdown in family’. Financial hardship caused by gambling meant that some Indigenous people suffer poverty as they ‘can’t repay loans ... have debts ... bills not paid’. Gambling debt created ‘negative effects’ such as ‘utilities cut off, arguments and domestic violence, kids’ behavioural problems with no supervision at home, parents at venue; mortgage not paid, eviction, homelessness’. Indeed, family problems were evident in interviewee responses with domestic violence being a significant issue. Many respondents felt gambling ‘can be a precursor to domestic violence’ and recounted the high incidence of ‘fights in families ... with partner, family, especially when mixed with alcohol’. There was significant concern that these ‘emotional problems affect children’. Many comments implied there was consistently ‘no money for kids and food scarce’ or ‘no food in the house ... cannot feed kids’. It appeared a common feeling that gambling for Indigenous people in the Lismore Shire ‘creates dysfunction in family’ and meant that people ‘cannot meet basic needs, affecting ability to be good parents, child neglect, abuse of kids as a result of stress over losses, no formula for baby’. Most respondents recognised that families of Indigenous gamblers were ‘eating poorly with low nutrition and fast food’ and that ‘kids miss out on things ... they don’t get what they need ... school excursions, good lunch, clothing and public transport’. One consequence was that ‘DOCS get involved if kids go to school hungry or dirty’.

Negative community consequences were acknowledged by most respondents to be broad, as ‘anything that affects the individual also affects the community’. One interviewee remarked this was a ‘close knit community ... therefore it’s affected as well as creates pressures on other people’. In particular, the ‘loss of housing, cannot pay rent, eviction from house’, creates cultural obligations for other families for housing and finances ‘to help out’. It was thought by some that some Indigenous people in the Lismore Shire were ‘asking for food packages’ and caught in a ‘generational cycle of dependency and welfare’. Conversely, one

person said there were ‘no resources to access, and if so, too slow to arrive, for example, emergency supplies, food parcels’.

While there was ‘an underlying issue here’, it was implied that for some Indigenous people the negative effects of gambling participation also gave rise to ‘fraud and crime’ because ‘if you have no money, if family has no money ... desperation leads to some crime’. One conspicuous negative consequence related to crime was reported as ‘Centrelink fraud’ and ‘nine out of ten times in the court, Centrelink fraud ... [was] usually based on gambling problems’. Other evidence was given that ‘stealing food and money, gambling and drinking gets transferred to kids as they watch that behaviour’.

#### **4.3.5 Risk Factors for Gambling**

The interviewees were asked ‘Thinking about gambling amongst the Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients, what are the things that might influence some to gamble heavily or out of control?’. In alignment with Thomas and Jackson’s model (2004), their responses are grouped below into risk factors relating to the propensity to gamble, to the gambling product and the gambling environment, and to the consequences of gambling.

##### **Risk Factors Relating to the Propensity to Gamble**

Risk factors relating to the propensity to gamble encompassed those stemming from personal factors, family issues, financial circumstances, and historical and cultural factors.

Several personal risk factors which exacerbated heavy gambling were identified as revolving around unemployment, the ‘lack of jobs and opportunities’ and the accompanying ‘boredom’. While respondents recognised that ‘people who work don’t have time to gamble’, it was noted that in the Lismore Shire there was ‘only CDEP work available’ and therefore Indigenous people ‘have a lot of time on their hands’. This was said to lead to ‘low self esteem and a lack of confidence’.

Equally significant, another personal risk factor was described as ‘escapism’ as it was noted that gambling offered a good platform to escape, in particular ‘after a fight or an argument’. One interviewee believed there were ‘issues at home to get away from’. Therefore, gambling provided ‘a place to not have to think’. It was noted that ‘some are trying to get away from physical, mental and emotional abuse’.

Relative to family risk factors, there was strong contention that gambling was generational. Respondents said this was ‘creating a learnt behaviour for family, over generations’. The majority of interviewees believed that ‘grandparents and parents gamble and kids pick up what their parents do’. One respondent said ‘they’ve been exposed to gambling all their lives ... there used to be travelling 2-Up schools around here’. This generational exposure to gambling has helped to create gambling as ‘a social norm’.

In relation to financial situations, respondents explained there was a ‘cycle of getting stuck in a rut’ and Indigenous people appeared to accept a certain ‘comfort level living in poor circumstances’. One person stressed ‘there’s a lack of financial understanding and management, budgeting that some of our families don’t know or aren’t fully aware of or don’t practise’. It was explained throughout the interviews that ‘some may not think they have a problem’ as it was a ‘normal situation to be short of money and borrow’. It appeared to be a major concern that ‘our people are often broke and therefore always look for the quick fix’. However, it was said that more often than not they ‘have a win and want to try their luck again, and the next thing ... they’ve got debts’. One said that this ‘kind of starts a bit of a

cycle too. Once you get into it, you just keep going back for more and they think they're going to win, but they end up paying more money than they do when they do win'.

Another risk factor was associated with historical and cultural issues. Some felt that 'gambling has a cultural appeal, it's a way to win and the social interaction is not as important as this'. However, others believed that when 'stepping into mainstream community, [frequently] cultural values fall away with alcohol consumption and drugs and gambling'. One person noted there was an overwhelming risk that 'if you hang out with others at the venue, then you either gamble or are asked for money to support others gambling, especially younger people'.

### **Risk Factors Relation to Gambling Products and Services**

One gambling product, poker machines, was found to be a considerable risk for some gamblers in the Lismore Shire. It was noted that the 'machines, free games, lights and music, visual stimulation, mermaids blowing bubbles are very appealing'. Another respondent agreed that the 'features and technology of machines ... free spins' ensured they are 'easy to play and press'. The majority of interviewees contended it was not only the 'stimuli of machine is attractive' but that they 'look for favourite machines, one that goes off, it pays all the time'. Some people felt there was 'a belief that this day is their lucky day [and] the machine is their lucky machine'. Conversely, some purported that the risk was the 'poker machine features [because they] play head games with you, translate money into credits and you lose your sense of money and values'.

Equally considered a risk for some Indigenous gamblers was the gambling environment as most people said 'accessibility to gambling' was easy. The majority of interviewees implied that, in the Lismore Shire, gambling venues were mostly 'within walking distance or a five minute drive'. One person said 'there are two venues in walking distance from where I live and this is part of problem ... too many poker machines ... very easily accessible'. It was commented that 'hiding it won't make a difference. If they are going to do it, they'll find it (gaming room)'. However, it was believed that 'they could reduce the number of machines available and that would help'.

Others found that 'clubs always have marketing stuff to keep you in there' and the 'venue advertisements, things you can win, free coffee' were all risk factors for some Indigenous gamblers. One participant said that people 'get sucked in by lights and surroundings of a comfortable venue ... air conditioned ... [with] no hassles'. Indeed, most interviewees agreed that 'venues are appealing because you can drink and socialise' and 'it's all there ... meeting place, alcohol, food, gambling'.

### **Risk Factors Relating to the Consequences of Gambling**

Risk factors relating to the consequences of gambling largely encompassed barriers faced in addressing a gambling problem. Both intrinsic and extrinsic barriers were both raised. Intrinsic barriers, being the personal barriers of the individual, were reported to be shame, denial and poverty. These barriers were explained as being a 'generational pattern as it is an historical thing for Aboriginal people to not seek help for anything, so it's all linked from before 1967 (referendum)'. It was reported that 'bad and good things are passed down through generations and the pain of Koori people is ingrained in mentality'. This was said to 'make people suspicious of asking for help as it might confirm all those historical abuses'.

The majority of interviewees said there was significant 'shame to admit a problem ... can't tell mum or anyone ... difficult to open up'. There appeared a 'fear of admitting they have a problem... I think their pride as well as people are ashamed and don't want people to know'.

One respondent suggested this ‘sense of shame and a fear of judgement [lead to] an unwillingness to admit to having a problem and a “less than” self-view which needs to be offset by positive support and reinforcement of each other’. While most Indigenous gamblers were ‘worried it will get back to their family (privacy issue)’, it was recounted by one participant that ‘women [are] told it’s men’s business (if a man has a gambling problem) therefore she can’t talk to him about it’. One interviewee said it ‘makes her wild they use “men’s business” to black out what they don’t want us to know’.

Further, ‘generational learning means everybody is doing it ... gambling is normalised’ and so for many it’s ‘not seen as a problem’. A significant ‘lack of leadership and effective parenting’ meant it was ‘hard to break cycle when everyone else is doing it ... non-conformity’. Some interviewees noted there was a ‘lack of education about gambling and its effects’ and therefore, as one person noted, ‘Aboriginals do not think about consequences from gambling, for example rent money, kids’ food. Aboriginal people believe more in the quick fix ... instant gratification measures’. Therefore, it was lamented that there were ‘continual battles to educate parents on the importance of educating kids’.

Some respondents believed that ‘most people with a problem don’t even realise they have a problem’ or purport ‘that it’s under control’. Therefore, while many Indigenous gamblers were seen to have an addiction, ‘they will not face reality [they are] in denial about a gambling problem’. For others, ‘there might be a lack of awareness of the realities of gambling’ as they appeared to be ‘managing ... it’s a bit of a hobby or something to do’. However, it was contended by one interviewee that often they have ‘replaced one addiction (alcohol) with another (gambling)’.

Extrinsic barriers to addressing a gambling issue related to a lack of culturally appropriate services, lack of knowledge of avenues for help and logistical issues around accessing help services. In all the interviews, concerns were raised about lack of appropriate help services for Indigenous people. A key issue was that people thought there were generally ‘not enough services (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) to help people with gambling problems’. Most respondents held the opinion that the ‘mainstream organisations are not addressing Aboriginal issues ... are not culturally appropriate’ and indeed, ‘not capable of addressing Aboriginal gambling issues’. It was considered there was a ‘need for cross-cultural services as a lot of services are not culturally appropriate’.

While some said there was a ‘lack of knowledge of where to go, who to go to and what’s out there’, it was evident that there was ‘not enough education and awareness to let people know about services’. The majority of the interviewees conversely believed Indigenous gamblers ‘would have knowledge of helpline but wouldn’t use it’ because ‘[Aboriginal] people don’t always want to admit to a white person that they have a problem ... They won’t go to white fellows as they feel they will be judged’ and thus ‘people aren’t using the services’. One respondent suggested that they ‘prefer Aboriginal help for problems’ but if there was not a ‘black face in the service, then the first step will not be taken into that service’. Nonetheless, some interviewees believed that Indigenous people must ‘learn to take up services that are offered’.

On the other hand, it was commonly thought that barriers were ‘not knowing where to go’ or being ‘unwilling to access services and get help’ because of ‘low self-esteem, shame and reluctance to admit to their problem and to talk about it’. Indeed, the barriers of ‘confidentiality and trusting services’ were frequently raised as ‘they don’t trust that it will be confidential as those in Indigenous services’. This was because ‘everyone knows everyone in Lismore, so afraid of confidentiality being breached’. While it was recognised that ‘an Indigenous person might be best as a counsellor’, it was thought that ‘some people might like

to go to an independent person they don't know'. For example, one interviewee recounted that they 'had a relative with a gambling problem some time ago ... not from here ... and they were too ashamed to talk about it and knew everyone would know them. We ended up phoning Gamblers Anon to get help. She didn't even know they had a problem'.

#### **4.3.6 Protective Factors for Gambling**

The interviewees were asked 'Thinking about gambling amongst the Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients, what are the things that might influence them to not gamble or to gamble responsibly?'. In alignment with Thomas and Jackson's model (2004), their responses are grouped below into protective factors relating to the propensity to gamble, to the gambling product and the gambling environment, and to the consequences of gambling.

##### **Protective Factors Relating to the Propensity to Gamble**

Protective factors relating to the propensity to gamble were seen to emanate from personal factors, family influences, and education and money management skills.

Several equally important themes emerged from the interviews in relation to personal protective factors. It was said that 'personal discipline to set limits was a very individual trait that came with maturity ... learning values, learning respect'. One interviewee said that Indigenous people could 'control gambling by a sense of reality ... don't have that money to throw away'. One comment suggested that 'non-gamblers have been gamblers and given it away or seen the effects of gambling on others and not gone there'. Some described that they 'see and learn from experience, saw losses in others and did not want to be like that'. While for some, 'a big win has brought reality and people give some to others to save [the winnings]', others agreed that many 'recreational and non-gamblers stop playing through experience of losses'.

While 'values ... value of money and time' was broadly described as a protective factor, employment was said to have a strong influence in decreasing the propensity to gamble as 'work is hard ... don't have time to gamble'. While 'some people never pay back', the general consensus was that people 'value their money more if it's earned' and 'the harder you work for your money the less likely you are to give it away for gambling'. Even as 'some people fall back on family to help out, especially when they have had gambling losses ... lots of uncles and aunties ask for a spare \$20', many have 'learnt to start refusing requests'. However, it appeared difficult for those 'evolving to say no' because it was said that many are 'brought up to share what you have with others'.

Family influences meant there were no 'hit ups' for gambling for some people as they have a priority for their family. One interviewee asserted that some people 'make sure family is a priority for money ... always leave enough in the budget for family expenses'. Therefore, strong family connections and 'family education' were considered protective factors, particularly 'family role models ... mother and father are non-gamblers'. With concern that 'there is a lack of self-esteem and self worth and of a vision for their lives', respondents recognised that 'goals and good role modelling can help a lot'. Many thought it important to provide 'responsibility as a parent, kids need to see parents "walk the walk"... "monkey see, monkey do" to set a good example'. One participant said that 'sports activity ... alternative activities are a way out as these created emotional wellbeing [which] is more stable'. Hence, as one person stated the 'value of work and money is important' in protecting Indigenous families in the Lismore Shire.

Themes relating to education were discussed as protective factors during the interviews. One respondent said 'it's a hard one 'cause, you know, I see family members that do it (gambling) and they're quite well aware of it ... it's not like they're not educated or not aware'. It was believed by some that it would be beneficial 'knowing how much they're losing ... and how that money is being wasted really and how they're not really winning much from it'. It was also implied that 'they mightn't gamble because of a fear of losing all their money and so having none to buy alcohol with' as it was commonly reported that Indigenous people appeared to lack education in 'budgeting and money management'. Further, one interviewee suggested education needed to encompass the 'victimology of gambling, understanding the triggers, for example debt, power, providing for family, arguments, alcohol etc'. Thus, 'education and knowledge to make good decisions and good choices' along with 'education and awareness about alternatives - yoga, water aerobics, trips away' were thought to be essential protective factors for Indigenous gamblers.

### **Protective Factors Relating to Gambling Products and Services**

In regard to the gambling product and environment, one person was concerned that while 'they've got signage there [at venues], I don't know whether advertisements are aimed towards Aboriginal people'. One respondent acknowledged that 'legislation really helps with limits on spending and this should be tighter'. Another suggested that another protective factor would be to 'make machines less attractive ... reduce visual stimuli'.

### **Protective Factors Relating to the Consequences of Gambling**

Protective factors relating to the consequences of gambling largely encompassed factors that facilitated people in addressing a gambling-related problem. Those raised in the interviews were availability of appropriate services, followed by gambling awareness and financial education. Most interviewees raised concerns regarding a lack of Aboriginal services and counsellors in the Lismore Shire. As it was evident that 'people did not go to non-Indigenous services before now', they strongly believed they 'need more Indigenous services'. Respondents felt it was important to provide a 'non-judgemental service that needs to be an appropriate place and service'. When asked whether 'an Aboriginal service, would it get used?' one interviewee said 'possibly if people knew about it and it was culturally appropriate'. Further, it was thought that 'an Aboriginal service would need someone from out of town, but Aboriginal'.

It was also contended that the 'Aboriginal population need to be informed about health promotion; intervention services could be promoting this on family days and public health events'. Additionally, one interviewee felt that 'group awareness sessions would be good, as when it's individual [sessions], they think they are being singled out'. The majority of comments agreed that Indigenous people 'need education about gambling' and 'money matters ... financial education'. Another possible way to educate Indigenous gamblers was thought to be the responsibility of 'clubs and pubs ... like the smoking campaigns ... they could do something similar to keep kids out of venues because this becomes a normal activity for kids growing up'.

#### **4.3.7 Suggested Interventions to Address Gambling Issues**

The interviewees were asked 'What can be done to reduce the negative impacts and encourage responsible gambling amongst Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients?' These were discussed in terms of what Indigenous communities, community services, the gambling industry and governments could do.

## Indigenous Communities

When asked what Indigenous communities could do, there were strong feelings that gambling and gambling related problems be addressed ‘from a whole community side ... we need to ensure that Aboriginal people are being assisted and helped’. Common interviewee responses suggested ‘more talking ... more information so people know who to contact and who the available services are’. It was felt that to ‘start talking about gambling would get it out in the open for a start’.

It was pointed out that the community needs to talk about the problem more, and that ‘more support groups to talk about gambling’ are needed. Public promotion and community awareness programs to help Indigenous gamblers understand the impacts of gambling and explain the effects of gambling on others were seen to be beneficial. One person suggested they ‘run an education one day free workshop on gambling [as] others do this ... such as sexual health, nursing, drugs and alcohol’. It was thought they could ‘get a person who has been through gambling rehab. to talk about their experiences to others’. Thus, ‘people can be encouraged to start to take responsibility for themselves and for members of their community’.

Respondents recognised that the Indigenous community ‘need re-parenting’ as there was ‘little guidance for young parents now’. Money management and budgeting skills were also felt to be lacking. In addition, it was thought that to ‘have good role models and leaders would promote leadership and culture’. Another said that ‘leading by example to provide positive role modelling can come from getting more education and empowering and strengthening people to take their own steps forward’. Additionally, one respondent believed that ‘kids can be taught about gambling earlier while they are at school’.

One respondent thought that co-operation would help as ‘this community is too fractionalised to work together, too many outside groups from other places, other families’. It was further claimed that ‘a lack of cultural strength or divisiveness defeats and diminishes the strength of the community’.

## Community Services

When asked what the community services sector could do to reduce the negative impacts and encourage responsible gambling amongst local Indigenous people, the emergent three key themes were related to cultural appropriateness of services, linking other problems to gambling, and community education and awareness initiatives.

As discussed previously, most interviewees reiterated a ‘lack of appropriate and cultural services for Indigenous... [and that we] need Indigenous services staffed by Indigenous people to make people feel comfortable’. Indeed, one interviewee contended that ‘counselling scares our mob’. Hence, respondents overwhelmingly agreed there was a ‘preference for counselling services that is owned and run by an Aboriginal organisation [employing] Aboriginal specific workers that are gambling trained to provide education counselling and facilitate recovery’. One person stressed that ‘Indigenous people should be trained and in Indigenous support services to educate other Aboriginal people or it could be an Aboriginal person working in a mainstream organisation’. However, comments strongly suggested that, as noted by one participant, ‘if we had the money we could do anything as far as activities go to this service, to deal with gambling problems’. There were suggestions of ‘programs on the side’ that would ‘provide alternatives, diversionary programs first, tackle gambling second’. However, one person said that ‘funding is very limited ... cannot do anymore’.



This was followed with substantial concern in ‘tackling the hidden factors/indicators that are relevant to Aboriginal people’. It was thought that ‘holistic services are important, to help the whole person and to create better networking at the grass roots level would improve the referral system’. Interviewees commonly believed that ‘all community services can be linked. Additionally, there were suggestions that, while ‘health and family support workers should be able to ask about gambling’, they would ‘need gambling training for screening gambling problems, picking up signs of gambling problems, like smoking and domestic violence – smoke check, gambling check’. Respondents believed this should follow to ‘then, link to counselling services or financial counsellors, link to community support groups, link to budgeting help’.

Another strong point made during the interviews was that ‘there needs to be more community talk about gambling. It’s the lesser of the three evils (alcohol, drugs, gambling) and people hide it’. Respondents considered that ‘raising the profile of Indigenous gambling issues was important to educate and make Indigenous people aware of risks of gambling’. Another person implied that ‘community services need to raise awareness of gambling and its effects and do some promotion on getting message on how the extended family is affected by gambling in Aboriginal community’. Subsequently, ‘community services could do more awareness education as long as it is culturally appropriate’. One person stressed the importance to ‘start educating communities about gambling particularly with Koori messages about gambling and its effects so that Indigenous gamblers get the message’.

### **Gambling Industry and Venues**

When asked what the gambling industry and venues could do, several suggestions were raised in regard to responsible gambling practices. Firstly, it was said that industry and venues should ‘have a serious look at gambling ... define responsible gambling like responsible alcohol’ and ‘the RG (responsible gambling) policy should be a lot stronger’. It was commonly thought that this had ‘already started by reducing the number of poker machines and that bringing in smoking laws was a good start’. While, one interviewee believed gambling was a ‘whole community issue and no specific Aboriginal signage is needed’, another conversely suggested a need for ‘more signage that is Aboriginal specific for Aboriginal people and an Indigenous gambling help line’. It was also reflected by others that they ‘don’t think anyone (Aboriginal) would use the responsible gambling cards in pubs and clubs’.

Respondents noted there were ‘not enough Aboriginal workers in hospitality who could raise gambling issues for Indigenous gamblers’. It was believed that industry and venues ‘can provide much more awareness of gambling that is more focused and appropriate to Aboriginal people’ and could provide a ‘promotional campaign focused towards Aboriginal people’. Interviewees supported ‘better exclusion programs as people are not aware of these’. Describing ‘self-exclusion as very important providing it is “black friendly”’, interviewees said venues should ‘promote exclusion programs and enforce it’. For example, one person knew of two others who ‘even excluded them from taxi services taking them to venues ... shame works’. On the other hand, another felt it would be better ‘to keep it mainstream, otherwise it kind of singles us out if we have specific things, that we have the issue’. While there were suggestions to ‘limit poker machines’, it was further contended that ‘every person should have a limit for gambling’. Another interviewee recommended that if gamblers ‘cannot get money out of machines, just a credit slip and have to go to cashier to get \$6 just to play it out it would be too much trouble’.

It was noted that, by acknowledging ‘features on machines draw people in ... they suck people in’, industry and venues could make access more difficult. While it was said to be common to see ‘people rub the screen, kiss their hand, press in a particular way, and do everything to bring luck for a win’, there was a ‘need to do something if someone is sitting and gambling at a poker machine all day’. It was noted that ‘people in “the zone” need reminders of the time by manager and staff’ who should ‘go up to them and have a chat ... break the pattern’.

Lastly, it was suggested that the only way to curb gambling in venues was to ‘get rid of poker machines’ with one person stressing they should ‘blow up the pokies’ but further admitting a ‘black market would appear’.

## **Governments**

When asked what governments could do, most suggestions revolved around gambling regulations, the provision and funding of appropriate services, and community education. Most interviewees felt that gambling was an ‘overdue area that needs attention’ as ‘government levies do not make up the difference between a person’s world being torn apart by gambling’. It was suggested that ‘government could be less ambivalent to the problem by establishing a whole of government approach through health, police’. In particular, ‘stronger ties need to be seen between gambling and crime and gambling and other problems’. Some respondents also believed that to strengthen RSG and RCG and improve staff training in an effort to make staff and managers more responsible would be of assistance to many Indigenous people exhibiting problematic gambling behaviour.

Calls were made for ‘tough regulations about money limits in a 24 hour period for spending on gambling’ and most respondents thought that the ‘state government could put limits on how much people gamble’. Several people commented that governments should ‘put a freeze on spending heights’ by introducing either ID cards or voucher cards to limit spending, or even, as noted by one participant, ‘smart cards linking spending per session’. While one interviewee believed they should ‘take 80 per cent of poker machines out’, they also noted there should be a ‘limit on how much a gambler can put in the machine, especially note acceptors as no one can see how much you put in ... secret’ and that it would better with only coins. Others also agreed it would reduce spending by going ‘back to coins only’ by having ‘no note acceptors’ and ‘no ATMS in venues’.

In addition, interviewees considered it important for governments to collaborate with the gambling industry to set up support services and programs. Indeed, it was thought programs could ‘set up a system to cover life’s essentials ...’. One interviewee firmly stated that ‘definitely, I think they (governments) could help in lots of ways in the sense of promoting the awareness of it and maybe promoting or initiating other services that aren’t ... or ensuring that our mob are accessing these services or changing those services to reach out to our communities’.

While ‘programs to educate people about gambling in communities come first’, it was recognised by several respondents that community services ‘need funding for Aboriginal counsellors in agencies and funding to provide more community activities that may assist the communities from being bored in camp’. It was firmly contended that ‘while governments are making money from gambling they are never going to stop. They should recycle more money from the machines to the services to deal with the problems ... clean up the mess’.

#### 4.3.8 Summary for Lismore Shire

In the Lismore Shire, poker machines were said to be the most popular form of gambling for all ages and both genders. Attracting both employed and unemployed, gambling was popular on pay day or pension day. Most gamblers generally gambled for more than two to three hours, two to three times a week. For some, gambling participation occurred anytime or day of the week and expenditure varied considerably as it often depended if people could borrow from others.

Motivations for gambling included generational influences, to socialise, to win money, to reduce boredom and to escape from every day issues. Most respondents believed gambling was a problem in the shire for some people, with the young ones and women players exhibiting the most problematic gambling behaviour. Social benefits were recognised as the main positive consequence as it brings families together and overcomes boredom. To a lesser degree, it was reasoned that contributions to the community were a positive outcome. On the other hand, it was clear the negative consequence outweigh the positive outcomes and included mental health and depression issues, financial and family problems, negative community outcomes and crime.

Risk factors associated with the propensity to gamble were described as being personal (unemployment, escapism, desperation and isolation); and family (generational risk and social norm of gambling) and were also connected to financial and historical/cultural circumstances. In addition, other risks factors were associated with the gambling product and gambling environment (features and technology of poker machines along with the accessibility and comfort of venues as a meeting place with alcohol, food and gambling). Risk factors relating to the consequences of gambling encompassed barriers to addressing gambling problems. Intrinsic barriers were said to be shame, denial and poverty with all three explained as generational learning. Extrinsic barriers were described as a lack of culturally appropriate services, lack of knowledge of avenues for help, along with logistical issues around accessing help services.

Protective factors relating to the propensity to gamble were seen to emanate from personal factors, family influences, and education and money management skills. Protective factors relating to gambling products and services were barely raised. Protective factors relating to the consequences of gambling encompassed facilitators to assist in addressing gambling problems.. These were considered to encompass the availability of appropriate services, community education and awareness programs and financial management education.

In terms of potential interventions, Indigenous communities in the Lismore Shire were believed to need more community 'talk' with improved community education to empower and strengthen people to take steps forward and create positive role models. Community services were called on to provide culturally appropriate services and employ Indigenous staff and these services need to link other health and family issues to gambling and provide holistic care.

The gambling industry and venues were perceived to need a serious review of responsible gambling and many interviewees advocated a reduction in poker machine numbers. Likened to strict measures in place for the responsible service of alcohol, respondents supported the promotion of gambling limits. Governments were called upon to collaborate with industry to strengthen RCG and improve staff training in an effort to make managers and staff more responsible. It was firmly contended that governments should recycle more gambling revenue back into the community to deal with the problems.

## **4.4 RESULTS OF INTERVIEWS WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN THE BYRON AND TWEED SHIRES**

In the Byron and Tweed Shires, we conducted nine interviews for this project involving 38 Indigenous people, as well as individual interviews with three gaming venue managers. This section presents the findings from interviews with the 38 Indigenous people. Findings from the interviews with venue managers are presented in a later section.

An overview of the Byron and Tweed Shires is presented first, followed by findings relating to gambling on cards and commercial gambling activities. Consequences of gambling are then discussed in terms of gambling problems and positive and negative consequences, before findings on risk and protective factors are presented. A discussion of potential interventions conclude this section.

### **4.4.1 Overview of Byron and Tweed Shires**

#### **Byron Shire**

The Byron Shire includes an area of 566 km<sup>2</sup> and is located on the Far North Coast of New South Wales, just north of the Ballina Shire. Apart from its centre, Byron Bay, it encompasses the towns and villages of Bangalow, Ocean Shores, Mullumbimby, Brunswick Heads, Clunes, Suffolk Park, Broken Head, Billinudgel, Federal and Eureka. The shire has a total population of 28,766 people with an Indigenous population of 445, which is 1.5 per cent of the whole population. Its main industry is tourism, which reflects the highest employment rates being in accommodation, cafes and restaurants and retail. Another large industry is agriculture supplying tropical fruits, sugar cane and macadamias. The unemployment rate for Byron shire is 11.1 per cent.

<http://www.bayweb.com.au> [accessed on 14 December 2009]

<http://www.byron.nsw.gov.au> [accessed on 14 December 2009]

<http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au> [accessed on 14 December 2009]

#### **Tweed Shire**

Located on the Far North Coast of New South Wales, the Tweed Shire lies across the New South Wales/Queensland border. Its regional centre is Tweed Heads with the towns and villages of Murwillumbah, Uki, Pottsville Beach, Hastings Point, Kingscliff, Mooball, Banora Point, Fingal and Tyalgum included in the shire. The population is 79,321 with 2,334 (2.9%) Indigenous people living in the area. The median age for residents is 44 years. While the non-Indigenous population contains 23,108 people aged between 0-24 years compared to 27,450 people aged 55 years and over, the Indigenous population includes significantly more young people. There are 1,328 Indigenous people aged between 0-24 years in comparison to only 217 aged 55 years and over. In the Tweed Shire the leading industries based on employment are retail, health care and social assistance, construction, accommodation and food services as well as education and training. The overall unemployment rate for the Shire is 36.4 per cent which, compared to the New South Wales unemployment rate of 5.9 per cent, is extremely high.

<http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au> [accessed on 14 December 2009]

<http://www.tweed.nsw.gov.au> [accessed on 14 December 2009]

#### 4.4.2 Card Gambling Behaviour

In the Byron/Tweed Shires card gambling was reported by three interviewees as being ‘not done now ... fallen away as a practice’. One person said ‘old fellas used to always play cards ... they used to play cards every single night [and] it wasn’t too bad. They used to get out, play the cards and sing ... more of it that way’. Another recalled ‘before the last 10 years it was housie and cards’.

The third interviewee recounted that ‘cards were played in the old days at someone’s house ... a social thing’. This person remembered ‘adults only played cards at Nan’s house on Friday nights’ and that ‘kids had to sit away from the table ... not allowed to play’. However, nowadays it was ‘older people like the cards ... men and women’ and ‘play cards all the time, sometimes daily ... [they] carry cards around with them and play even if they have no money to gamble on’. Indigenous people here favoured one particular ‘type of game’ referred to as ‘tick around’ and they ‘usually drink while playing cards’. Motivations to participate in card gambling were ‘to win money and to socialise’.

#### 4.4.3 Commercial Gambling

The Indigenous interviewees in the Byron and Tweed Shires predominantly discussed poker machines as being the favoured form of gambling. TAB, Bingo and Lotto were mentioned to a lesser degree.

##### Poker Machine Gambling

Poker machine gambling was reported to be the most popular form of commercial gambling in these two shires. Referring to gambling as ‘a deep down cultural thing’ and ‘an accepted thing by Aboriginal people’, it was suggested that ‘when there is plenty [of money]’, it began ‘burning holes in their pocket’. While most Indigenous people ‘can’t put it in their pocket or bank and save it’, it was felt ‘most of them here don’t gamble much compared to other places’.

However, for others in this community ‘a lot of them are members of clubs and go for the draws or members’ draw and they end up wandering in to the pokie room ... and that’s the thing, because there’s nothing else to do. If you go into town and say, where are we going to have lunch? The club ... it’s cheap food ... we’ll go get some food at the club’. Interestingly, one interviewee recalled that ‘when NSW had poker machines, the entire QLD mob came over this way and played them. Now that poker machines have come over there, they’re all spread out’.

Although the majority of interviewees thought that poker machine gambling was undertaken by ‘both men and women’, some reported that ‘pokies are more female’, ‘mainly now women ... made jump over to machines’. There had been a ‘shift from older ones to include all ages’. With most agreeing that ‘pretty much all ages’ gamble on poker machines, it appeared that participation was ‘high amongst young men and older women’. Conversely, others commented that ‘I actually know a lot of young males that like to have a press, more so than the women’ and it was ‘more younger [and] middle aged ... not many older people gamble’. Some respondents observed ‘older ones can manage it ... still pay their bills and set their budgets’, while ‘younger ones might gamble to win enough to pay their rent’.

Respondents agreed that both employed and unemployed Indigenous people gambled on poker machines. For those unemployed ‘some will gamble as soon as they have some money’ and it was ‘usually all their unemployment benefits, for example, more than \$200 a week if they have it’ and ‘some over \$400’. One person said they ‘have seen people put their whole

pay in' and 'they're broke the next day'. Others observed 'some of them do that \$1 a hit', or '\$20 a hit... they lose \$5 every time they press that button'. Several comments acknowledged that 'they can only gamble once a fortnight or until the money runs out and then for the next couple of weeks, they've got nothing'. Some were concerned that Indigenous gamblers 'spend all their money before they even get it'. Some people 'borrow off others in the household' and 'by the time payday comes, they've got to pay everyone back and then they're broke for the next fortnight'. One person questioned, 'How can you live like that?' Another asked 'How can they afford it on the dole? I'm working and I can't afford to do this?' In particular, it was noted that 'younger males who are parents, play pokies in some difficult patterns'. Conversely, amongst those who were employed, interviewees observed 'boys in labouring, because they're earning a lot of money' and 'they have no responsibility', some gamble 'every pay day and the days after that'. Most respondents envisaged that gamblers would spend 'easily more than \$100 [as] I know boys that slip \$50 in and another \$50 in ... I've seen people slip in \$50, \$50, \$50, \$200'.

While 'pay day' was said to be the biggest day for gambling to take place either 'weekly or fortnightly', some people gambled 'a couple of times a week' and some 'every day or second day'. The duration of each gambling session was believed to be 'often more than three hours', although it 'can be longer if they still have money to gamble'.

Motivations for gambling on poker machines were reported as to win money, to reduce boredom and to socialise, escaping every day life issues, and to a lesser degree, addiction. The predominant motivation appeared to be to 'win money'. Some gamblers were reported to be 'always broke ... some living in poverty and need money to improve life'. They were said to 'think they're going to win [so] money is a motivator'. One respondent recounted that 'the ones I know who gamble, they do it to try and get more money to pay bills'. Most comments suggested that Indigenous people believed gambling would provide 'quick money', 'a quick buck [to] to get rich' and that 'the "big win" entices people to gamble ... some started when their friend has had a big win'. A common motivator was believed to be 'if you win once you think you can do it again [and people] get sucked in to try and win money [to] pay debts'. While they were always 'thinking about winning money', gamblers often end up 'chasing the losses' and trying to 'pick up losses and lack of self control'.

Furthermore, it was said that 'everything costs money (e.g. sporting equipment and teams) ... can't afford this ... [and become] bored. It was a common belief amongst interviewees that because 'a lot of people are unemployed ... they gamble to win money and they have more time on their hands'. This was thought to lead to 'lack of self-esteem [being] a problem as some don't feel useful, they think they don't make a difference in the community ... so they may as well sit in the club and press'. Indeed, 'fellows that come in on the bus, they ... do the shopping then there's nothing to do'. Therefore, boredom was a strong motivator to gamble for Indigenous people in the Byron and Tweed Shires.

Moreover, it was contended that when 'you turn 18, you go to the clubs, and you go to the pubs. That's what mum did, that's what dad did, that's what nan did'. People 'like the venues' as it was a place to 'socialise'. This was 'generational learning ... people are learning from parents, relatives and Elders that gambling is a normal thing to do' especially when 'people don't like the home environment'. However, some respondents felt gambling '... starts off being sociable' and 'fun ... entertainment' to be 'with mates', 'it would develop into an obsession, probably'. Conversely, one person pointed out 'you can't socialise when you're playing the pokies. You're looking at a machine so how're you socialising there?' This person also felt 'it's not cultural ... it's personal choice ... there's nothing cultural about that'.

On the other hand, gambling was then seen by several respondents to be associated with ‘escapism ... hiding from not being able to problem solve’ or the ‘routine ... life at home’. One person questioned, ‘Isn’t it the same reason that all gamblers gamble?’ A couple of interviewees believed that ‘when gambling they are in a different world ... escape, release from other issues...relax and chill out’. Many gamblers were felt to be ‘escaping problems ... maybe social issues [or] family issues’ and ‘... escape from us kids!’. Importantly, one person said that gambling ‘might start out to be an escape, go to the club for an hour to get away from things, but it might increase and start losing rent money etc’.

A few interviewees implied that gambling, for some, had become a ‘habit on a certain day each week’ because ‘... a lot of our mob do now play the pokies but don’t drink’. Others went further and suggested that ‘it’s a psychological thing’ and ‘it’s an addiction for some people’. One person recounted their personal experience ‘only go over for a flutter on the pokies with dad and I can remember just sitting there just hitting this button, it would wake me up. Like when you’re driving and you get to somewhere without realising that you did it’.

### **TAB Betting**

Although TAB was mentioned less than poker machine gambling, interviewees reported it was a popular form of gambling, mainly for men. At the TAB ‘it’s probably the males who go in and sit in the club ... my partner might like to punt too’. This person continued by saying that ‘I find that in the pubs, it’s usually men sitting around’. One interviewee said ‘I’ve got a couple of friends who sit in at the pub ... ladies ... and they’ll also have their Saturday afternoon there because it’s easy access ... it’s easy to do’. It was seen to be easier to gamble on the TAB in hotels ‘if you’re going to a club you’ve got to get up and get dressed but if you’re going to a pub and rock in there in whatever you want’. Talking about family members, one person said that ‘horses’ were ‘absolutely...a big part of my brother’s life ... he loves to punt’. Another male respondent said ‘horses’ were also their favoured form of gambling and both gamblers had ‘a bookie they can ring’ and they do this on a ‘weekly’ basis.

### **Bingo Playing**

It was noted that some people ‘go to bingo to get away from home to chill out and relax’ and ‘... regular people ... you see them all the time’. One person described how ‘we take it in turns to take an aunty to bingo and on those times that I have taken her to bingo ... in the break they go in and they go in afterwards ... and I go in and watch’. Another recalled:

My grandfather used to gamble and would start off by taking us all to bingo. We would go to bingo, that church at the back there, the Seventh Day Adventist, then all of us kids and all of our sisters and daughters, he would take all of us kids and we would go to bingo. We were taught how to play bingo when we were kids and then from that any of our social occasions when we would take Nan out for her birthday or anything like that, would involve taking her to a bingo game and pokies.

#### **4.4.4 Consequences of Gambling**

The consequences of gambling were discussed by the interviewees in terms of gambling problems, and positive and negative outcomes of gambling.

#### **Gambling Problems**

The interviewees were asked ‘Is gambling a problem here?’ The majority of respondents felt it was a problem and it was thought ‘a serious problem ... for some’. One respondent contended there was ‘heavy gambling to problematic levels’ by Indigenous people in these

two shires. It was acknowledged that ‘some people are pretty well off before they start gambling then they end up with nothing’. One person said they ‘know of a person’s partner who is waiting outside clubs when it opens ... never any food in the house’. Conversely, two commented that gambling was a problem for ‘just a few people’.

### **Positive Consequences**

Only two respondents identified positive outcomes of gambling. One thought that gambling was an ‘outlet for some ... the only outlet they might have ... what you were brought up with, your history ... your culture’. Gambling also created a ‘social meeting place’ for some people. The other interviewee felt that ‘the gambling fund is the only thing I think is good about the gambling’ and likened it to ‘WA [where] they have a Lotteries Commission which is also a funding agency where ... community organisations can apply to and buy equipment’.

### **Negative Consequences**

While a variety of negative consequences of gambling were mentioned, the majority were linked to three dominant themes. These were financial hardship, family and relationship difficulties and to a slightly lesser degree, personal well being and mental health issues.

Negative financial consequences of gambling were described in most interviews as encompassing ‘debt’, ‘borrowing’, ‘lose their homes’ and ‘crime’. A common comment was ‘the biggest one is debt, financial hardship’ and ‘they just don’t tell anybody’. High levels of debt meant that ‘people borrow and lend’ and this frequently caused ‘arguments over money’. Gambling was believed to cause many ‘money problems’ with ‘loss of money’ resulting in ‘no money for petrol’ and ‘not paying bills’. One interviewee was concerned about a lack of money management skills of those ‘younger [who] can’t financially operate [and] don’t contribute ... should contribute to household’.

One respondent suggested that when ‘rent money goes’ a person ‘might not know their partner has a problem until they get evicted from home due to not paying rent’. Furthermore, some gamblers resorted to ‘hocking your own stuff, but then don’t get it back’ or they were ‘selling their items and other people’s for money’. Indeed, one interviewee was dismayed that ‘after bonuses were paid, a lot of people bought TVs then hocked them a few months later for drinking and gambling’.

Crime linked to gambling included ‘stealing and increasing crime rate’ and ‘people ripping off their workplace’. There was an account of ‘one person at [X] ... she had a really bad gambling problem. She started ripping off Centrelink [and] got caught big time. She ripped off Centrelink to feed her gambling problem’.

Family and relationship difficulties were equally as important as financial hardship stemming from problematic gambling behaviour. These were reported to be ‘relationship problems’, ‘family break ups’, ‘domestic violence’ and ‘child neglect’. Relationship problems ‘with kids and partners’ was thought to be ‘no different to alcohol ... the stress on relationships’ and occurred because many gamblers ‘lie to their family about their bank accounts [and] their credit cards’.

Some interviewees felt gambling ‘destroys people’s social life, especially with family, as the gambler is always absent from home’ and also their ‘sex life deteriorates with their partner’. For some, relationship problems appeared to lead to ‘domestic violence’ and ‘verbal abuse’. Comments were made that ‘arguments with partners and people who borrow money off each



other [create a] strain on relationships ... when money's not returned' and that this 'affects friendship if debts aren't paid back'.

One effect on some children was reported to be 'neglect'. While many gamblers were felt to 'lie and cheat', they also 'might forget to bring groceries home, leave it at Woolies' and then there was often 'no food, groceries in the house', 'no food in the fridge' and no 'food for kids'. One respondent said 'you see kids sitting in the cars outside the club' so no one was 'supporting children'. A couple of respondents believed gamblers were 'poor role models' and there was 'no child supervision so kids are left alone at home or free to walk the streets'. Hence, 'they (gamblers) lose their families ... [and/or] respect of their loved ones' and gambling 'can break up families and stuff like that'.

In regard to personal well being and mental health issues, a few respondents believed gambling caused 'a whole lot of social problems' and a 'lack of motivation ... not creative with time'. Some gamblers experienced a 'loss of cultural values or true values' and were said to suffer from 'low self esteem'. It was suggested that 'if you're losing [it becomes] easy to chase money ... to become angry with themselves [and] leads to violence' which creates stress. Some respondents believed that gambling led to 'mental health problems', including depression, particularly those who suffer 'from addiction'. On the other hand, one person suggested 'people who are already down would gamble' and these negative consequences had led to 'in some cases ... I've got to say, suicide'.

#### **4.4.5 Risk Factors for Gambling**

The interviewees were asked 'Thinking about gambling amongst the Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients, what are the things that might influence some to gamble heavily or out of control?'. In alignment with Thomas and Jackson's model (2004), their responses are grouped below into risk factors relating to the propensity to gamble, to the gambling product and the gambling environment, and to the consequences of gambling.

##### **Risk Factors Relating to the Propensity to Gamble**

Risk factors relating to the propensity to gamble are grouped below into those that derive from financial circumstances, personal and family influence and cultural factors.

A theme that was identified concerned financial factors including poverty for some. One respondent asserted that 'Aboriginal people learn to live in a poverty cycle, for some this is their life'. Another said that financial factors can have particular concerns for younger people, as 'younger ones tend to spend more as they do not have the experience with money [while] older people learn from experience and learn their limits'. Some believe that when people are unemployed – 'not actually going out to a job' – money is not as valued as '[they are] not earning that money so they don't value that money'. It was felt that those in employment value their money a lot more. In addition, one participant said that unemployment and 'being on the dole' was generational 'they see their parents grow up on the dole. They grow up on the dole, their kids grow up on the dole'. Therefore influence of family was seen to be a strong risk factor concerning financial issues, and in turn for gambling through 'learning from the family'. One participant, for instance, pointed out that she learnt to gamble from her grandfather. Another said the 'younger ones see the older generation do it, and some learn from Elders'.

One person spoke about 'the cultural side' of gambling, 'because you look historically and the Elders would teach the young ones and what we would learn had come through the Elders'. However, it was noted this was now changing, that 'we're still in that process of

change'. Another interviewee also spoke about culture and the Elders' role within community where 'maybe they're not speaking to the people that much. But the eyes can see the aunties down there in the club'.

### **Risk Factors Relation to Gambling Products and Services**

The gambling environment was also identified as a major risk factor in the Byron and Tweed Shires. For example, one person said 'when you're younger it's like entertainment with the venue where they have music ...' Others agreed, pointing out that 'the venue, it's a one stop shop. You can go and get fed, you can have a drink and you can play the pokies', while another said, in relation to the venue, 'you can sit there and relax, watch your Keno, watch the TV, the footy'.

Several participants spoke about club promotions designed to increase gambling where people can purchase a meal and part of the deal is to be given money to use on the poker machines. For instance, it was noted that one promotion offers a \$10 meal and 'they give you \$2 to go and put it in the pokie machine'. One participant asserted 'it's the only time I've really had a press', while another said 'it's like, here's \$2 to go and get addicted. Here's your lunch and addiction'. Another spoke of a promotion while gambling where players are given raffle tickets.

Easy accessibility to venues was also identified as being a risk factor. One interviewee commented that poker machines are 'everywhere you go', while another said 'it doesn't help that every two steps you take there's pokies'.

The gambling product was spoken about as being an important risk factor for gambling. Indeed, there were several comments made in relation to poker machines. For instance, one person explained 'the lights are flashing, it's also a social thing'. Another participant commented that 'it's not just the gambling, people like all the bright colours; it's all the bright lights, it's all the flashing'. Another said that the gambling venue and poker machines are designed to attract people, 'the lights, the colours, the music, everything. It's designed to make you want to be there'. One participant likened the poker machines and gambling, with 'all the lights and sounds' to Pavlov's psychological experiments concerning classical conditioning saying, 'it's like a bunch of Pavlov's dogs salivating. It's the same thing with gambling machines, whenever you win ... all the lights and noises and everything goes off'. Another commented that 'gambling can be because of lights and music – it "collects the brain" and you need to gamble again'.

### **Risk Factors Relating to the Consequences of Gambling**

Risk factors relating to the consequences of gambling largely encompassed barriers faced in addressing a gambling problem. The intrinsic (personal) barriers were seen as shame and a lack of personal responsibility. Extrinsic barriers included gambling being seen as a 'social norm' and a lack of knowledge about gambling support services.

Gambling is largely considered a 'hidden problem' with people denying a problem exists. One participant said that, unlike alcohol problems, 'people can hide gambling problems'. Another pointed out that 'Aboriginal people are not acknowledging that gambling is a problem or causing any issues because it's not spoken about'. It was felt that gambling as a problem needs to be brought out into the open. One person noted that 'I think our communities need to talk about it and just understand gambling could be causing serious problems for some people'. Other barriers linked to the 'hidden' nature of the problem were identified as 'shame', lack of 'dignity' and 'personal responsibility'. Shame was noted as being 'a big one', 'the shame is big for us', while others said that shame and denial go hand

in hand. Another interviewee said that gambling ‘takes away their dignity [because] they’re not providing for the family’. In relation to people not taking personal responsibility, one person spoke about how ‘the younger ones, more males, would rather gamble and have a good time than buy food, pay rent, [they] lack responsibility’. Another said that ‘people don’t know when to stop; they can’t say “that’s enough”’.

One person felt that many of the issues concerning gambling related to Indigenous values. This person noted that ‘our values are a whole lot of different values. We value family and those things and money is down the list a bit’. In addition, gambling is seen as ‘socially accepted right across the board’. Indeed, it was reported that ‘gambling is seen as a common activity for Aboriginal people to do’.

A final barrier to addressing gambling problems concerned services. In particular, it was highlighted that gambling problems need to be addressed in relation to other issues and services, including financial services and welfare services. For instance, one participant pointed out that ‘they’re not linking gambling to financial hardship, debts not being paid’, while another said that ‘integrated services would be better’. Services need to link across various sectors. Others did not know what services are available, with one person claiming that ‘some Aboriginal people don’t know how to look for help’.

#### **4.4.6 Protective Factors for Gambling**

The interviewees were asked ‘Thinking about gambling amongst the Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients, what are the things that might influence them to not gamble or to gamble responsibly?’. In alignment with Thomas and Jackson’s model (2004), their responses are grouped below into protective factors relating to the propensity to gamble, to the gambling product and the gambling environment, and to the consequences of gambling.

##### **Protective Factors Relating to the Propensity to Gamble**

Protective factors relating to the propensity to gamble are grouped below into financial factors including budgeting and being employed, family influence, role models and the influence of religion.

Many participants spoke about financial issues such as ‘budgeting skills’ and ‘valuing money’ through earning it from working as protective factors. For example, one person made the point that having employment can improve people’s lives as they have food, transport, etc. and do not want to lose it on gambling. A participant noted that ‘because you work, you value your money more and you’re busy [and you’re] too tired to gamble’, while another said ‘once people start working they break away from the group of people who drink and gamble’. Others stressed the importance of budgeting. For example, one person said ‘I was always taught to pay my bills first and then, whatever you’ve got left over you can do what you want with it’. In relation to education and learning budgeting skills, one person noted that ‘people can learn to budget and so ensure their money is spent effectively’. Another has set up automatic deductions from their pension to ensure essential items are paid first and then they can spend what is left over. One person commented that ‘I just don’t like losing money ... When you weigh up the odds and how many times people win and how many times people don’t it doesn’t add up’.

Good role models were emphasised as being important protective factors for gambling. For example, families were noted as being important role models for their children, as ‘education starts in the home, parents need to be effective role models’. With good role models ‘kids

grow up to value hard work and money, education, good food, have a vehicle, employment' and 'children learn from experience, learn to live with gambling by parents having no tucker'. Some spoke about their childhood and how they 'don't want that for my kids, gambling and drinking, as seen in my parents' behaviour'. Another said they refuse to gamble because 'my mum used to be at the club every day...we'd be left with no food, no nothing. So neighbours would be looking after us'. Therefore, people have also learnt not to gamble through past experience because 'people see what's destroyed'. Some participants noted that parents also need to be supported, that there is a need 'to look after parents as well as kids, being nurtured and taught', to 'teach them how to be better parents'.

A final factor discussed was the church and religion. Five people spoke about how 'the church and religion plays a big role' as a protective factor for gambling. Others talked about 'the church role here, the religious influence' and how the 'church is strong'. One person finds strength through attending church services, saying 'I've been going to church since I was little'.

### **Protective Factors Relating to Gambling Products and Services**

No protective factors relating to the gambling product or environment were raised by the interviewees.

### **Protective Factors Relating to the Consequences of Gambling**

The key facilitator for addressing gambling problems raised in the interviews was the need for culturally appropriate services staffed with Indigenous counsellors, as it was noted that Indigenous people 'do not access mainstream services'. However, it was highlighted that a first measure is ensuring that people are aware of what services are available: 'they need awareness of where they can get help – awareness is the crux of everything'. One person noted that 'there's only one thing that I know of and that's the Gambling Hot Line and that's about it'.

One suggestion in relation to services was having separate services for men and women, such as a 'men's group and a women's group', as issues may be best addressed in different ways. It was pointed out that this would be a culturally appropriate measure. Another said that if the community wants to have Aboriginal counselling available then 'the push really has to come from the community to say we want gambling counsellors'.

In addition, it was noted that 'resources have to be there at the time, if [they're] not there when you want to go to a service, when I'm ready for it, I won't go back if no one's there'. Another pointed out that if people attend a service and then get referred on to another service, they didn't know 'whether they'd take the next step'. Therefore there needs to be support to assist people to take the next step, similar to a case worker.

Another participant noted that 'gambling is a wellbeing issue' and so services need to assist people with this in mind, taking the whole situation into account, while another spoke about how 'healing centres' are available in some places. This participant said that 'healing centres ... that is where gambling needs to be placed'.

#### **4.4.7 Suggested Interventions to Address Gambling Issues**

The interviewees were asked 'What can be done to reduce the negative impacts and encourage responsible gambling amongst Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients? Responses are discussed in terms of what Indigenous communities, community services, the gambling industry and what governments can do.

## **Indigenous Communities**

When asked what the Indigenous communities could do, there were many responses concerning ‘community education’ and ‘awareness’. A common response was, ‘we need to raise awareness about issues on gambling’. Some suggestions to bring about community awareness about gambling issues included: ‘have a community meeting for discussions’; ‘more social programs’; and ‘start educating young people at schools, and at sport and cultural activities’. One person pointed out that ‘it’s got to be a community education, the whole community’.

Again the importance of cultural awareness concerning education programs was emphasised. One person said that ‘we need to bring culture back in, how we used to deal with things in the old days, traditionally’. Another made the point that non-Indigenous workers and counsellors in community services should undergo appropriate training and that this ‘should be compulsory – Black fellas access community services, therefore these services need to be able to help, therefore they need awareness training’.

## **Community Services**

When asked what the community services sector could do to reduce the negative impacts and encourage responsible gambling amongst local Indigenous people in the Byron and Tweed Shires, again people noted the need for Indigenous services. One interviewee said ‘I won’t visit non-Indigenous help’, while another agreed, saying they would not go to a non-Indigenous service for ‘fear of being stigmatised’. Similarly, another said ‘I think you need to have black people there’. One person pointed out that they don’t know if a ‘white fella can understand where they’re coming from’. In addition, it was stressed that confidentiality is vital.

## **Gambling Industry and Venues**

When asked what the gambling industry and venues could do, more funding available for culturally appropriate information and awareness campaigns was advocated. It was suggested that these campaigns could be partly funded through profits from poker machines. In addition, more education programs need to be conducted within the community itself. These programs could be provided to children and young people at schools and it was suggested that education for parents could similarly be provided.

## **Governments**

When asked what governments could do, interviewees spoke about funding for counsellors and educators, and again it was emphasised that these need to be Aboriginal focused. One interviewee said ‘the one thing I’d like to see is cultural development, community development from all different organisations’. A further point was raised about linking the various organisations, so that people can ‘go in-between organisations’.

One person said it is easier to make changes ‘from the top down than from the bottom up’. Similarly, another participant asserted that ‘you need someone to champion [change], to run with it at the highest level’.

A final suggestion was in relation to access to poker machines which were thought to be far too accessible. One person said that they should be taken out of hotels or at least ‘I don’t think they need to be in every pub’. It was suggested that poker machines be ‘only in clubs’.

#### **4.4.8 Summary for Byron and Tweed Shires**

In the Byron and Tweed Shires, it was noted that people gamble mostly on poker machines; however, card gambling and the TAB were also discussed. Demographically, it was thought that both men and women, employed and unemployed and ‘pretty much all ages’ gamble on poker machines. The amount of money spent on gambling was said to vary considerably. Pay day was reported as being the biggest day for gambling to take place, either weekly or fortnightly. Motivations for gambling were reported as being to win money, reduce boredom and socialise, escape every day life issues, and to a smaller degree, addiction.

Positive consequences of gambling included creating a ‘social meeting place’ in the Byron and Tweed Shires. Negative consequences of gambling discussed by participants were linked to three dominant themes, which were financial hardship, family and relationship difficulties, as well as wellbeing and mental health issues.

Risk factors associated with the propensity to gamble included being unemployed (again linked to financial concerns), family influence. Certain aspects of the gambling product and environment, along with easy accessibility and gambling promotions, were considered risk factors emanating from the gambling products and services themselves. Risk factors relating to the consequences of gambling encompassed barriers to addressing gambling problems, including shame, a lack of personal responsibility, gambling seen as a social norm, and a lack of services, as well as lack of knowledge about available services. The point was also raised that gambling problems need to be addressed in relation to other issues and services.

Protective factors associated with the propensity to gamble were perceived as having good budgeting skills, being employed, having positive role models and the impact of religion. No protective factors associated with gambling products and services were identified. Protective factors relating to the consequences of gambling encompassed facilitators to assist in addressing gambling problems. These were seen as the provision of more community education programs, as well as culturally appropriate and accessible services.

Interventions to address gambling issues at a community level mainly concerned the need to raise community awareness in the Byron and Tweed Shires about problem gambling issues. It was emphasised that programs need to be culturally appropriate. Participants advocated for the gambling industry to make funding available for culturally appropriate awareness campaigns. It was suggested that these campaigns could be partly funded through poker machine profits. It was pointed out that governments need to address the need for more Aboriginal counsellors and educators.

### **4.5 RESULTS OF INTERVIEWS WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN THE KYOGLE SHIRE**

In the Kyogle Shire, we conducted four interviews for this project involving seven Indigenous people, as well as individual interviews with three non-Indigenous gaming venue managers. This section presents the findings from interviews with the seven Indigenous people in three sites, two Indigenous communities and one town location. Findings from the interviews with venue managers are presented in a later section.

An overview of the Kyogle Shire is presented first, followed by findings relating to gambling on cards and commercial gambling activities. Consequences of gambling are then discussed in terms of gambling problems and positive and negative consequences, before findings on risk and protective factors are presented. A discussion of potential interventions concludes this section.

#### 4.5.1 Overview of Kyogle Shire

Kyogle Shire contains the towns and villages of Kyogle, Bonalbo, Cawongla, Wadeville, Tabulam, Mallanganee, Wiangaree, Grevillia and Woodenbong as well as the Indigenous communities of Muli Muli and Jubullum. It is located west of Lismore Shire on the Far North Coast of New South Wales. The population in total is 9,256 people including 539 Indigenous people. Indigenous people comprise 5.8 per cent of the total population which is high compared to an Australian average of 2.8 per cent. Sheep, beef cattle and grain farming, education, health care and dairy cattle farming are the main employing industries in Kyogle Shire.

<http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au> [accessed on 14 December 2009]

<http://www.kyogle.nsw.gov.au> [accessed on 14 December 2009]

#### Muli Muli

Muli Muli is an Indigenous community located around five kilometres south west of Woodenbong and has a population of 183 people. There are 41 dwellings in Muli Muli, three of which are currently purchased (includes a rent/buy scheme) and 38 houses which are rented by residents. The average household size in Muli Muli is rather high with 4.2 persons, compared to an average household size of 3.4 for Indigenous households Australia wide. Only 42 of 107 people in the community aged 15-64 are employed; the majority of residents in this age group are unemployed or not in the workforce.

<http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au> [accessed on 16 December 2009]

#### Tabulam / Jubullum

The Indigenous community of Jubullum is located around 85 kilometres south west of Kyogle and about five kilometres west of Tabulam. In 1996, a total of 263 Indigenous people were living in the community of Jubullum and the town of Tabulam. There are 39 Indigenous-owned dwellings, of which four are rented to Indigenous residents in Tabulam and 35 are rented to Indigenous people in Jubullum.

<http://www.daa.nsw.gov.au> [accessed on 16 December 2009]

#### 4.5.2 Card Gambling Behaviour

Card gambling among Indigenous Australians in the Kyogle Shire was reported to have ceased. In the past, people played cards or ‘pups’ down under a particular tree, ‘the same people all the time’. Visitors would travel from Box Ridge and Casino to Tabulam to play cards in pension week. However, this reportedly does not happen now.

At Muli Muli many years ago, cards were ‘a problem here’; however the ‘Elders confronted players in early days and stamped it out’. Cards were perceived to introduce children to gambling which was ‘not a good lifestyle’.

#### 4.5.3 Commercial Gambling Behaviour

The Indigenous interviewees in the Kyogle Shire spoke mainly about the popularity of poker machine gambling as being ‘the big one’ in ‘local pubs and clubs’ but two mentioned some occasional TAB horse racing and football betting.

## **Poker Machine Gambling**

The majority of respondents agreed that both ‘males and females’ gambled on poker machines. The gamblers were described as mostly ‘younger ones, no one over 40 years’. However, in one location, female poker machine players were identified as ‘middle aged and older’. In another location, ‘big gamblers’ were seen as single gamblers.

Asked about the timing and frequency of poker machine gambling, many respondents tied these to ‘pay day and the few days after’. Gambling was likely to be a ‘weekly event’ linked to ‘CDEP paid weekly’ or fortnightly linked to ‘pension day’ and also to ‘parent’s allowance’ payments.

Gambling expenditure varied amongst different gamblers from higher to lower expenditure. Some gamblers ‘spend a lot, but not all the time and not many’. Others were said to spend ‘\$100 or even whole cheque’. In contrast, most gamblers ‘don’t gamble too much money, [and are] able to pay bills, buy food, clothes, school and kids’. These lower expenditure gamblers were perceived to have ‘their priorities in order’ and to gamble ‘only when they have that bit extra’. One person explained, ‘I don’t gamble very much money, fortnightly event, meet other commitments first’.

However, the effect of a windfall payment was noted as having gambling outcomes. ‘Poker machines, play expenditure went up with Rudd government (Federal) payment before Christmas. Normally play 20c and 50c – been playing dollars with these payments’, observed one person.

Of the reasons given for gambling on poker machines, the motivators were said to include: to win; to escape; for social reasons; to reduce boredom; and because people learnt to gamble from ‘their older mob’ (in that order). The most commonly mentioned gambling motivation was to win money ‘looking for a win, a big one’, ‘to win ... if they don’t have much to start with, might get lucky’, ‘a way to get extra money’ and ‘try to win some money’. The next most prominent reason for gambling on poker machines was to escape. Escape was described as ‘struggles at home, escape’, ‘go to a venue to escape ... get away from drinking at home’ and ‘escape from children at home’. Of lower importance, poker machine gambling was also reported to be motivated by ‘social reasons’ and gambling was identified as ‘a social outing’ and ‘entertainment, not much to do up here’. This was closely followed by boredom as a motivator ‘bored, nothing to do’. Of interest, one person suggested that a gambling motivator was their ‘inheritance’, that is, they ‘learnt it from their older mob’.

### **4.5.4 Consequences of Gambling**

The consequences of gambling were discussed by the interviewees in terms of gambling problems, and positive and negative outcomes of gambling.

#### **Gambling Problems**

The interviewees were asked ‘Is gambling a problem here?’ Contrasts in the Kyogle Shire were revealed when the majority of interviewees in one Indigenous community and the town answered ‘yes’, and in a different Indigenous community where the majority of interviewees said ‘no, people don’t gamble in this community’. In the former community, respondents said ‘yes, poker machines at the local pub, horses’. In the latter community with no reported gambling problems, people said ‘gambling is under control here’. In fact, local Elders refused to allow gambling in the community and being relatively isolated, transport was needed to visit commercial venues.



## Positive Consequences

Two interviewees living in the local town identified positive outcomes of gambling as ‘fun, enjoyment, social outcomes’. They later identified that ‘having a meal’ in a venue which had ‘everything available’ was a social benefit. In contrast, several people in the two Indigenous communities said ‘No [positive consequences] come back to this community’ from gambling.

## Negative Consequences

Several negative consequences of gambling mentioned in most interviews were financial problems, relationship difficulties and domestic violence.

Of the negative financial consequences reported, lack of money to meet daily requirements was most obvious, with one person stating that some people have ‘no groceries, clothing, no lunch for kids at school’. The sister of one respondent had visitors (gamblers) constantly staying in her house and they only ‘bring alcohol, not groceries, no payment, but help each other out’.

Relationship difficulties were said to comprise ‘strained relationships’ where in some cases ‘aunties and uncles step in and look after kids, share in a cycle of care’. Recently a father needed to remove his children from their mother who was ‘drinking and gambling’. Domestic violence resulted in some ‘arguments, don’t think about tomorrow’ and further ‘a lack of respect to themselves and responsibilities’.

### 4.5.5 Risk Factors for Gambling

The interviewees were asked ‘Thinking about gambling amongst the Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients, what are the things that might influence some to gamble heavily or out of control?’. In alignment with Thomas and Jackson’s model (2004), their responses are grouped below into risk factors relating to the propensity to gamble, to the gambling product and the gambling environment, and to the consequences of gambling.

#### Risk Factors Relating to the Propensity to Gamble

Risk factors relating to the propensity to gamble encompassed those emanating from personal and family factors.

A ‘lack of education’ was seen as a personal and lifetime risk for some gamblers. A couple of respondents said that ‘teenagers don’t go to school’ and that there were ‘blockages and barriers all the way, no help from education department’. One interviewee stated that her nephew ‘went to school in Year 7 for one week and left’. As a consequence, other respondents reported that ‘numeracy and literacy problems’ were high. In this location, about ‘50 per cent of everyone here cannot read or write, cannot read signs in pubs’.

In some families, constant exposure to gambling by other family members demonstrated that ‘kids learn from experience, to do and follow gambling or to reject gambling’. One person called this ‘generational learning’. It was noted that some families ‘gamble together as a family group, depend on different cycles of money so they may have money all the time’.

#### Risk Factors Relation to Gambling Products and Services

In the Indigenous community where gambling posed few or no problems, risks were identified in relation to gambling advertising. Gambling advertising was seen as ‘very attractive and is in your face all the time’. Advertising of ‘scratchies, poker machines, lottery, lotto, races etc.’ was a risk for one local person. This person was reported to be ‘very lucky at

winning, but he has nothing to show for it'. The community leaders 'moved him from being the bus driver to keep the example away from the kids; found him another job in community'.

### **Risk Factors Relating to the Consequences of Gambling**

Risk factors relating to the consequences of gambling largely encompassed barriers faced in addressing a gambling problem. All barriers to addressing gambling problems raised were by the interviewees from the local town and the Indigenous community where gambling was seen as somewhat problematic. Both intrinsic and extrinsic barriers were mentioned.

Intrinsic barriers were personal difficulties faced by gamblers including shame, depression and grief and loss. 'Shame' was noted in the majority of interviews as 'embarrassment' and 'a loss of self-esteem'. This led to some people living in 'denial' that they had a problem with gambling. People 'find it hard to admit ... a problem (with gambling)'. One interviewee said heavy and continuous gambling by one local gambler on the same poker machine all the time was 'a devil on her shoulder'. For other gamblers, 'depression, schizoid and paranoid' comorbidities were barriers to their seeking gambling help. People 'who cannot deal with grief and loss' in ordinary circumstances were felt to not be able to deal with pressure from gambling-related problems. Where there had been 'a lot of deaths in the community, some suicides, some accidents' then grief and loss were apparent. It was noted that following these sad events 'no counselling was available' and gambling provided an opportunity 'to drown sorrows'.

Extrinsic barriers to addressing gambling problems were linked to a lack of gambling education and awareness. One person said there was 'no awareness in community of gambling problems' and 'no programs in place for alcohol, drugs and gambling'. Further, Indigenous gamblers 'won't go into non-Indigenous services because confidentiality [is] a problem'. There was some fear about this as a men's group had been disbanded in the recent past because of 'confidentiality issues'. A dearth of 'culturally appropriate gambling help services' was seen as a barrier. Additionally, logistical problems with 'isolation and no transport' made it difficult to access gambling help.

### **4.5.6 Protective Factors for Gambling**

The interviewees were asked 'Thinking about gambling amongst the Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients, what are the things that might influence them to not gamble or to gamble responsibly?'. In alignment with Thomas and Jackson's model (2004), their responses are grouped below into protective factors relating to the propensity to gamble, to the gambling product and the gambling environment, and to the consequences of gambling.

#### **Protective Factors Relating to the Propensity to Gamble**

Responses from one Indigenous community where gambling was said to present few or no problems are grouped below into protective factors including personal self-esteem, family values, cultural cohesion, Elders as role models, religious beliefs, and gaining education and skills. Following this, responses from the other Indigenous community and town where gambling is reported to produce some problems, are reported.

Several themes emerged from the interviews in relation to personal protective factors, and these appeared to be of equal importance. One was personal values, having 'self-esteem, pride and self-respect'. Another was 'control' and 'valuing things that are important in life'.

Related to this was the importance of family values. Family values were expressed as ‘hav(ing) values that look after and nurture family and community’ and ‘a strong family culture’. In this community, it was felt ‘parents need to have skills’ and there were avenues for this to be provided. Elders ‘remind parents to look after children’ while ‘aunties and uncles’ help when needed’. Education is provided for families through community education and men’s and women’s groups.

Cultural cohesion was considered to be very important in this relatively isolated community. There was a ‘strong Elders’ presence in this community’ and ‘cultural values [are held] by both men and women’. As a source of power and wisdom, ‘Elders play an important role as a source of advice and authority’.

As role models, Elders were reported as ‘leaders and role models, able to correct people who stray off the path’. Because the local Indigenous ‘culture is still strong’ and the ‘Elders’ authority is respected’, some people were said to ‘come back to [the] community to get help, get advice from Elders’. While there may not be ‘many outside services ... Elders point people in the right direction to get help’. Here, it was said ‘[we] look after our own’.

Religious beliefs were firm in this relatively isolated Indigenous community. The ‘church has a strong influence’. Here, there was ‘a reverend and two pastors’ assisting the community. There was a large ‘Christian based community’ where they ‘have big church rallies each year, all get together’. Further, with the ‘big church influence here, people are not gamblers’.

Community education was seen as providing everyone here with skills and education to make the most of their lives. Examples provided were ‘women’s group is going to set up programs on a nearby farm, have regular meetings’ and ‘men’s group comes up from Casino every couple of months’. Additionally, there was a ‘TAFE plumbing course for young boys’, there were ‘computer courses two days a week at the community centre’ and people were ‘learn(ing) to budget’. For school children, the school ‘coordinator targets school kids to keep them involved; youth groups active’.

From the local town and the other Indigenous community, interviewees said that ‘protection’ was found in having ‘a purpose in life through education, employment’ but equally as important were ‘cultural values [which are] often kept close to the heart’.

### **Protective Factors Relating to Gambling Products and Services**

No protective factors associated with gambling products and services were identified by the Indigenous interviewees.

### **Protective Factors Relating to the Consequences of Gambling**

A facilitator for addressing gambling problems raised in the interviews was said to be Indigenous community strength and support. Community strength was reported from the Indigenous community where gambling was seen to present few or no problems, as it was stated by one participant that ‘community groups get together and work together. Get all groups together, talk about issues and target problems early to stop problems’. An example of support was recounted as a gambler who ‘tried to kick the habit and came to live here and gave it up’. In this case ‘the influence of a strong community’ helped this person because they ‘dealt with this at a community level’.

In contrast, in the town and a community where gambling was seen as somewhat problematic, facilitators were seen to strengthen the community through having male role models. There was a need expressed for more male leaders in these two locations. Several people said ‘men are missing from ... this community’ and there are ‘very few men here as

role models'. Men were missing due to young deaths, accidents and 'some young boys, teens are in juvenile detention centre in Grafton'. While very capable women were leading one community, there was a 'need for community leaders [to] build culture' for men to balance the leadership roles and to make up the 'loss of (male) culture'. The need for male role models was seen as one way to strengthen this community and give young males some aspirations to become leaders in the future.

#### **4.5.7 Suggested Interventions to Address Gambling Issues**

The interviewees were asked 'What can be done to reduce the negative impacts and encourage responsible gambling amongst Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients?' These were discussed in terms of what Indigenous communities, community services, the gambling industry and governments could do, but there was a good deal of overlap in what was raised.

#### **Indigenous Communities**

When asked what Indigenous communities could do, most of the interviewees suggested the need for community education and awareness about gambling and gambling problems and the need to return to Indigenous cultural values including effective parenting. However, no responses were reported from the one Indigenous community where gambling was seen as producing few or no problems.

In regards to community education and awareness, there were suggestions to 'acknowledge the problems' and get some activities started to begin the education process. Several respondents pointed out that 'community education ... appropriate posters, signs' would be useful for adults within their town and community. For children, suggestions were made to use previously successful programs and build on them to develop gambling education and awareness. These might include 'kids' space program ... do community activities with kids [like] build lanterns for Naidoc Week parade'. It was noted that these programs may be useful in 'giving kids a purpose in life'.

At a more basic cultural level, some people saw the need for getting back to Indigenous 'cultural values', that is going 'back to caring and sharing as we did before'. Further, 'strong role models in parents' and 'effective parenting' were needed. One important solution to many problems including gambling was 'parents gotta lead and then kids can find their own way'.

#### **Community Services**

In making suggestions for what the community services sector could do to reduce the negative impacts and encourage responsible gambling amongst local Indigenous people, most interviewees reinforced the need for culturally appropriate gambling help services and materials. One suggestion included the need for a 'community health Aboriginal worker who may need gambling training for this ... community' because Indigenous gamblers may not go to a non-Indigenous agency. Further, any gambling promotional material needed to include 'Aboriginal specific signs and messages [especially] in venues'.

Although it was recognised that 'culturally appropriate services' were important, in one location a non-Indigenous doctor was a 'trusted source' of help for local Indigenous people. This doctor, the only one who lived in this relatively isolated location, had treated local Indigenous and non-Indigenous people for well over thirty-five years and knew everyone. In this case, a non-Indigenous professional was seen as an appropriate source of help.

## **Gambling Industry and Venues**

When asked what the gambling industry and venues could do, only one comment was made. A dismayed long term and permanent resident of one Indigenous community asked and answered cynically ‘pubs and clubs do? Racist publican won’t do anything, just making money from us, as long as Aboriginal people keep spending their money there, gold mine’. A lack of confidence that this publican would adopt a more balanced attitude appeared to inspire sadness for the future.

## **Governments**

When asked what governments could do, most interviewees reiterated their previous suggestions for community education and assistance for gambling issues but also for structural issues such as employment, education and training to be addressed.

In terms of community education and assistance, there were calls for the government ‘to take the issue [of Indigenous gambling] seriously as an issue to be tackled’. Interventions, such as the provision of ‘Aboriginal counsellors’, ‘funds over the long term specific to Aboriginal people’ and ‘funding ... services’ were suggested as something the government could provide.

In the long term, structural problems needed government attention. The role of employment was described in one location as ‘most gangs here don’t work and have never worked in their life’. Additionally, there were ‘not enough Aboriginal faces working in local shops’ in the town. For some there were ‘CDEP and Greencorp, only work two days, and only for some’. The call for genuine efforts in securing appropriate employment, education and training’ was seen as a reasonable request for governments to in order to solve many problematic issues, including gambling.

### **4.5.8 Summary for Kyogle Shire**

Kyogle Shire was a shire of divergent contrasts. Of the three interview sites, respondents in two locations (an Indigenous community and a town) reported that gambling was a problem there, while in another Indigenous community gambling was reported to cause few or no problems. In this particular community, gambling was not allowed (the authority of the Elders was strong and respected) and people were reasonably isolated from commercial venues. Many interview responses were based on these contrasting scenarios.

Card gambling has been replaced by poker machine gambling in the Kyogle shire. Men and women were said to gamble on poker machines, although older female gamblers were obvious gamblers in one location. Most gamblers gamble on pay day, weekly or fortnightly. Many gamblers spend what they can afford although a few are higher end gamblers. The strongest gambling motivation was said to be to win money. Positive consequences of gambling included fun and socialising. Negative consequences of gambling were financial problems, relationship difficulties and domestic violence.

Risk factors associated with the propensity to gamble were perceived as a lack of education, and exposure to gambling by family members, while those relating to the gambling product focused on the effects of gambling advertising. Risk factors relating to the consequences of gambling included personal difficulties faced by gamblers experiencing shame, depression, and grief and loss. An extrinsic barrier to addressing gambling problems was reported as a lack of gambling education and awareness.

Protective factors associated with the propensity to gamble were seen as personal self-esteem, family values, cultural cohesion, Elders as role models, religious beliefs, and gaining some education and skills. Protective factors relating to gambling products and services were not identified. Protective factors relating to the consequences of gambling encompassed one facilitator to addressing gambling problems – Indigenous community strength and support.

Suggested interventions included: the need for community education and awareness about gambling; a return to Indigenous cultural values including effective parenting; supply of culturally appropriate gambling help services and materials; more balanced attitudes by gambling managers; provision of assistance for gambling issues; and structural issues addressed such as provision of employment, education and training.

## **4.6 RESULTS OF INTERVIEWS WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN THE RICHMOND VALLEY SHIRE**

In the Richmond Valley Shire, we conducted 13 interviews for this project involving 35 Indigenous people, as well as individual interviews with three non-Indigenous gaming venue managers. This section presents the findings from interviews with the 35 Indigenous people, conducted mainly in two locations. Findings from the interviews with venue managers are presented in a later section.

An overview of the Richmond Valley Shire is presented first, followed by findings relating to gambling on cards and commercial gambling activities. Consequences of gambling are then discussed in terms of gambling problems and positive and negative consequences, before findings on risk and protective factors are presented. A discussion of potential interventions concludes this section.

### **4.6.1 Overview of Richmond Valley Shire**

Richmond Valley Shire is located on the Far North Coast of New South Wales and stretches from its regional centre Casino to the coastal town of Evans Head. It also includes the towns and villages of Coraki, Whiporie, Woodburn, New Italy, Broadwater, Mongogarie and Stratheden.

Approximately 21,300 people live in the shire and 1,238 of them are Indigenous. About 78 per cent of the Indigenous population is employed, the majority in Casino and Coraki. The majority of Indigenous people in the Richmond Valley are Christians (69 per cent) and less than one per cent practise traditional Aboriginal religions. The main industries in the Richmond Valley Shire are meat and meat product manufacturing, education, sheep, beef cattle and grain farming, health care, and cafes and restaurants.

<http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au> [accessed on 14 December 2009]

<http://www.richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au> [accessed on 14 December 2009]

### **4.6.2 Card Gambling Behaviour**

Card gambling was said by nearly half of the respondents to be conducted in both locations visited in the Richmond Valley Shire. ‘Yeah, they play cards. We’ve got 13 isolated communities in our (Far North Coast) area here ... depends on what area you come from’, explained one person. Historically, Indigenous gamblers travelled to Lismore, Coraki and Cabbage Tree Island to play cards but this has declined to ‘not as big as it used to be’. In the

old days, 'kids living on a mission gambled on cards to get food, 12 years old'. In some cases they 'started with ten cents and won \$12.00. Big families were poor and could not make ends meet'. Cards provided daily essentials for some families.

Nowadays, adults and youth gambled on 'cards for money' in the Richmond Valley Shire where 'everyone can play'. Adult card gamblers included 'local men and women' of 'all ages'. Youth card gambling was mostly a male pursuit. Young card gamblers, some aged 'five or six years old' but more likely 'nine or ten years old' begin card gambling when they 'learn from the older blokes'.

Card gambling was mostly 'play(ed) in street and houses' or 'usually in someone's house but can start-up out in the paddock'. However 'some kids play with lunch money at school'.

The timing and frequency of card gambling was likely to be weekly: 'cards in our community ... pay week'. Card gambling 'is big' and 'weekly games ... [last] a minimum of two hours'. There may be 'a parallel game going on with the kids', beside the adult game. 'This is where they learn the ways of gambling' commented one respondent. Motivations for card gambling were said to be 'for money' and 'to get more money and to socialise'.

Concern about youth gambling on cards was expressed by many interviewees. One person was worried about lifetime gambling patterns being established for very young card gamblers as '80 per cent young kids play cards for money, sets them up for later patterns of gambling'. This was supported by another who saw an easy transition from cards to commercial gambling, as 'kids start playing cards in the street in the open, very young. Underage gambling on cards in main street; at 18 they go to venues'. Further, card gambling was a regular practice where some 'kids play in street nearly every day, 16 year olds' and 'kids play a lot of cards'. Motivations for youth card gambling were said to be 'to win money' and 'the young ... they gamble because they want to buy (throw in) for alcohol and marijuana. Parents know and don't care; 16 year olds are doing this'.

### **4.6.3 Commercial Gambling Behaviour**

The Indigenous interviewees in the Richmond Valley Shire spoke mainly about one type of commercial gambling – poker machines. Other forms of gambling mentioned to a much lesser extent were betting on the TAB (mostly horse racing), lotteries, scratchies, bingo and football betting.

#### **Poker Machine Gambling**

Nearly half of all the Richmond Valley interviewees agreed that poker machine gambling was the most popular form of commercial gambling in the shire. Although poker machine gambling was undertaken by both 'men and women', a few people reported that 'older women, over 45 years' and some 'younger mothers' were particularly attracted to poker machine gambling. Historically, the gambling gender balance had changed: 'over the past, men gambled and women stayed at home. Women gradually joined in the gambling and drinking'. There was agreement that 'all ages' gambled on poker machines. Additionally, employed and unemployed people were likely to gamble: 'it's not just people that are unemployed ... its working people as well ... work in community organisations as well as government agencies'.

Referring to the timing of poker machine gambling, many respondents said that this was tied to 'pay day' either 'once a week or once a fortnight'. For isolated people, pay day is the only time 'they get to go to town'. While pay day was the 'biggest day', some people also

gambled in the following shoulder period 'a few days later if they have money' or 'usually around pay day and two or three days after'.

Frequency of gambling depended heavily on 'when the money is available' and 'when they get money'. While most gamblers gamble 'weekly' or 'fortnightly', some gamblers 'would easily play for three days a week' and others 'play every day if they have the money'. The availability of money for gambling was occasionally linked to borrowing from 'anyone else they can bite'.

The duration of gambling sessions was observed by most respondents to be about three hours: 'most spend around two to three hours a day when they have the money'. However, the duration range was reported to be broad. One person commented they gamble 'till they're broke, so that could be anywhere from half an hour to four or five hours depending on whether people have a win or not'. Another remarked 'the hours range ... with gambling, you could either be there for an hour, you could be there for 10 hours depending on how quick it takes to get rid of your money'. The friend of 'two big gamblers' said that they could 'go all day, six hours'. He continued later 'but not all big gamblers'. A few gamblers extended their sessions when '... their money is gone ... some scam money from others'.

Expenditure on poker machine gambling was explained as ranging from high to low. High end expenditure involved spending 'their whole pay' regardless of the source, 'whether that's an unemployment pay or whether that's a general working pay, I've seen Aboriginal people ... put their whole pay through it and be scratching the next week'. Other people estimated high gambling expenditure as 'more than \$200 a week if they have it' and 'more than \$100 spent each time'. In contrast, low gambling expenditure was reported to be about '\$50 each time' and even '\$5-\$10'. One respondent connected gambling expenditure with gambling motivations saying 'people who are addicted spend everything, all their pay. People who are in control only spend what they can afford'.

Motivations for gambling on poker machines were reported to include: to socialise, to win money, to escape from reality and for stress relief, addiction and to reduce boredom (in that descending order). The most commonly mentioned motivation was 'to socialise'. In 'pubs and clubs' one person observed 'you'd see ... big numbers of Aboriginal people ... that's a big thing for us, knowing the people that are there'. One person noted that socialising while gambling felt like they were 'being accepted by everyone else [so] people keep doing it'. Gambling was reported as 'relaxing ... a relief ... a social activity that includes having a drink in the pub ... club'. Many 'older people' were recognised as social gamblers.

To 'win money' was the second most commonly mentioned gambling motivation. For some gamblers this involved 'hoping to drag in the big one', 'chasing money, try to win' and 'to win money, to buy food'. People who were 'always broke ... living in poverty ... need money to improve life'. They sometimes gambled because they were 'used to being broke, not having much, just the CDEP money'. Gambling was seen as 'a quick way to make money'. For others, winning money led to more gambling 'try to win money but then spend the winnings back again'.

Gambling was also seen as 'an escape from reality' and as a source of 'relief from stress'. Some 'parents use gambling as an escape from their responsibilities' and as an 'escape and relief from the kids'. When 'people don't like the home environment, poor conditions ... they often prefer to be at a pub or club'. Others used time spent at gambling to 'escape from problems' and to 'stress out' for a while. For people who are 'extremely stressed' and suffering from 'loneliness, pain and trauma', gambling provided some relief.



A few respondents mentioned that some gambling was motivated by an ‘addiction’ to gambling, while others suggested that people gambled from ‘boredom’ as they ‘had little to do’ or were ‘unemployed’. One or two respondents felt that gambling provided people with some ‘excitement’ in life.

#### **4.6.4 Consequences of Gambling**

The consequences of gambling were discussed by the interviewees in terms of gambling problems, and positive and negative outcomes of gambling.

##### **Gambling Problems**

The interviewees were asked ‘Is gambling a problem here?’ The majority of interviewees said ‘yes’, with some comments being ‘gambling is a problem, for children – cards, for adults – poker machines’ and ‘yes, we do have an issue with problem gambling here’. Others said that gambling ‘was a source of real concern’ in the Richmond Valley Shire. A diversity of problems was reported in two different cases. One injured person ‘spent their compensation payments on gambling’ while another ‘spends their money on themselves rather than lending it to their mob, so they gambled’.

When asked what types of gambling cause problems, most of the interviewees responded ‘poker machines’ and cards for younger gamblers.

##### **Positive Consequences**

Several respondents identified positive outcomes of gambling including ‘socialising’ and being able to ‘relax’ in and ‘air-conditioned [venue] ... a place to socialise’. At the venue, gamblers usually find ‘a nice environment ... cool’. While in the venue people can ‘drink and gamble together’. There is usually a ‘good variety of gambling forms, lots of events to bet on’. Some ‘clubs and pubs promote themselves’ as ‘pleasant’ places which are ‘easily accessible ... in the middle of town, close to shops and you can walk’ to get to them.

##### **Negative Consequences**

While a variety of negative consequences of gambling were mentioned, three major themes arose in the majority of interviews. These were financial hardship, family and relationship difficulties and to a lesser extent, mental health problems, although these were closely linked.

Negative financial consequences of gambling were noted in many interviews as ‘debts’, ‘borrowing from relatives’, ‘homelessness’ and ‘crime’. A family support worker said ‘from my work ... my own life ... and my family experience, I know people are struggling with debt because of gambling’. High levels of debt meant that some gamblers were ‘always borrowing’. In families, ‘borrowing from one another ... starts in-fighting in families because you borrow ... from a family member to go out and gamble and then you’ve lost it and can’t pay it back. Then families don’t talk to each other’. Financial hardship where ‘rent doesn’t get paid’ resulted in ‘homelessness’ for some and ‘overcrowded housing’ for others. Crime linked to gambling was explained as ‘stealing’, ‘shoplifting and petty crime by hungry kids’ where ‘jewellery and bikes will be gambled, or stolen to gamble, if kids have no money’.

Family and relationship difficulties were equally as important as financial hardship emanating from gambling-related problems. These were reported to include ‘relationship problems’, ‘family breakdown’, ‘domestic violence’, ‘child neglect’ and ‘exploitation’. Relationship problems such as ‘arguments’ and ‘verbal abuse’ about gambling were attributed by some to ‘marriage and relationship breakdowns’. Further, gambling was

believed to be ‘breaking our families down ... look at some of the issues for us as Aboriginal people ... well, gambling’s right up there ... it’s breaking down families’. Additionally, it was noted that ‘violence is huge because of gambling’ especially ‘if one person’s got a problem, then obviously that person’s trying to hide that problem from the other partner, then that leads from one thing to another’. What followed was said to be ‘verbal and physical abuse’ and ‘domestic violence in families’. Another negative consequence of gambling was reported to be child neglect. This was described by several respondents as gambling ‘taking food out of kid’s mouths and that then places kids at risk’, ‘unable to buy clothes’, ‘kids don’t go to school’, ‘kids are unsupervised at home’ and at home alone ‘baby sitting’. Exploitation was seen as a consequence of gambling where some ‘young boys learn violence from dad, standing over mum’ and others demand resources by ‘standing over other people for money’.

The impacts of gambling on mental health were also raised, with gambling losses sometimes ‘affecting self esteem and mental health’. A couple of people said heavy gamblers experienced ‘mental illness’ resulting in ‘depression’. In fact, one person suggested ‘people can get that desperate, suicide is an option’. This was sadly summarised by a respondent as ‘no one is putting brakes on the gamblers’.

#### **4.6.5 Risk Factors for Gambling**

The interviewees were asked ‘Thinking about gambling amongst the Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients, what are the things that might influence some to gamble heavily or out of control?’. In alignment with Thomas and Jackson’s model (2004), their responses are grouped below into risk factors relating to the propensity to gamble, to the gambling product and the gambling environment, and to the consequences of gambling.

##### **Risk Factors Relating to the Propensity to Gamble**

Risk factors relating to the propensity to gamble encompassed personal and family factors, financial circumstances, and historical and cultural factors.

In relation to personal risk factors, two important risks that exacerbated heavy gambling were identified as escape from dealing with grief and loss and stress, and less importantly, unemployment. Explaining escape from ‘grief and loss’ as a risk, one respondent said ‘memories come up from the past and people push the memories down’ and another observed ‘people turn to something - drinking, drugs, gambling - when the old memories surface’. In particular, ‘males don’t deal with their grief, they cannot express themselves. A mix of frustration and not knowing how to handle a difficult situation, especially for men, results in trouble, for some it’s gambling’ and men also ‘... keep stuff bottled up’. For women, escape from stress arose when they ‘did not deal with pain from earlier domestic violence, took up gambling to deal with pain, want to feel good, to find “time out”’ and as an ‘escape from teenage girls’ and elderly parents’ responsibilities, to get away on our own’. Gambling provided ‘time out alone’ and the opportunity to ‘zone out’ for both males and females. Regarding unemployment, ‘many people are unemployed so [they] choose to gamble when bored’ and ‘unemployment, time on hands ... boredom’. Having ‘time ... plenty of time’ and being unemployed were considered risks.

Family risk factors were reported to include the extended effects of ‘generational’ exposure to gambling within family circles and normalisation of children’s gambling. Repeated mentions were made about ‘generational learning’ in regard to ‘learning from parents, relatives and Elders that gambling is a normal thing to do’ and learning to gamble ‘from Elders at a young age’. Regular gambling exposure in the ‘family environment’ was explained as ‘people from my generation, they’ve grown up in families where mum and dad

have been big gamblers' and it just becomes ... a bit normal ... that's what mum and dad did and that's where they end up'. One person described normal social interactions associated with the card games:

You grow up with a gambling circle that includes your family and friends and through the interaction with family and the others you learn about gambling early. This gets carried on because the circle is also a social discussion group where community issues are talked over as well as gambling.

An added risk is that youth may see card gambling as an easy and normal way to make money. Gambling income for children was reported as 'kids are gambling in the street, can win \$200-300 or even one kid won \$600'. Further, one person lamented there was a 'lack of respect, no respect for Elders who tell kids to stop'. Efforts to reduce risks were said to be rejected by some young gamblers.

Poor financial circumstances were identified as risk factors associated with some Indigenous gambling. Several people commented that 'Aboriginal people are used to being broke and having no money, so when gambling and the money is gone they do not seem to worry', it was 'acceptable to be poor in Aboriginal community' and 'some learnt to live in Struggle Street, used to having nothing'. Explaining budgeting problems tied to gambling one person felt people had '... not learned to control things in the welfare cycle, need to learn skills, went from rations on a mission to money. Need to learn to budget'. Others suggested 'money is not valued by many Indigenous people, generally money [is] there to be spent' and 'they don't value the money, have no trust in banks'.

Indigenous historical and cultural issues, particularly 'loss of culture and cultural values', were relevant as risk factors for some gamblers. Some respondents were saddened by 'a whole generation of Elders, died early' and 'some people have never had Elders to nurture them'. Thus, years ago ... there was no alcohol and gambling ... not the case now' in some locations. Nowadays people 'see others gamble, hear others talk about their wins'. As a result, some interviewees believed that the 'community [was] losing some of the old values and discipline of the old people' because 'keeping values and culture, these are the hard things to learn' and there were 'less numbers of Elders to get advice'. One person asked 'how can you care and share for somebody when you're putting your pay in a poker machine?'

### **Risk Factors Relation to Gambling Products and Services**

In regard to the gambling product, some respondents saw the visual appeal and novelty features on poker machines as exacerbating risk factors for Indigenous gamblers. Observations supporting this were 'poker machines are very attractive for visual people, Indigenous Australians are very visual people', 'some people like particular machines, they're pretty and have extra features; sounds and they think the machine is lucky' and 'many Aboriginal people like the machine and the noises it makes'. Appeal was described as 'poker machines, set up so it's easy to draw people in like a magnet', 'poker machines hypnotise people, bells and lights' and 'combinations of features of the machines are attractive, adrenaline rush and emotional connection with machines, excitement'. Gambling on poker machines 'was a novelty for some new players' and had taken over from 'fishing etc. [which] in the past filled in time'.

The gambling environment was perceived to hold some risks for gamblers. In terms of social comfort, the 'venue atmosphere is very social, meet friends', 'always find your relatives in a pub or club' and 'venue is comfortable, a meeting place, escape from kids who are hanging around outside'. For physical appeal, the 'venue [is] air conditioned ... where it's hot', 'easy access' and 'poker machines in the indoor/outdoor area for smokers, very easy to get access'.

## Risk Factors Relating to the Consequences of Gambling

Risk factors relating to the consequences of gambling related to barriers faced in addressing a gambling problem.

Intrinsic barriers, or the personal barriers of the individual, were reported to be denial, shame and poverty (in that order). Denial was explained as ‘many won’t ask for help because they do not admit they have a problem’ or ‘won’t acknowledge they have a problem’. Denial was perceived to be closely linked to ‘shame; there’s a definite shame attached to it. I think it’s hard for someone to admit they’ve got a problem’ and thus ‘can’t talk about it’. Gamblers were said to be ‘ashamed to ask for help and get defensive about their problems’. This was partly due to ‘pride’ and partly because ‘ways to resolve problems and arguments were removed in the oppression of our culture; it was not replaced, left with no way to resolve problem’.

Another personal barrier to addressing a gambling problem was ‘being broke’ or living in poverty. Some Indigenous gamblers were ‘used to being poor’ to ‘day to day living’ and being ‘comfortable living with low incomes’. The ability to ‘borrow from family with food and support’ and some reliance on ‘extended families [who] take on the role of feeding kids’ meant ‘the gambler is not challenged’. Additionally, unchallenged gambling appeared to influence others: ‘it is hard to stop when everyone gambles’.

Extrinsic barriers in addressing gambling issues were related to a lack of appropriate gambling help services for Indigenous gamblers and concerns about confidentiality of general health services. In the majority of interviews, a lack of ‘culturally appropriate services’ was described first as being ‘no awareness to Aboriginal people about the services available’ and second ‘services don’t cater for Aboriginal people and that’s being honest’. Further, people ‘wouldn’t go to non-Indigenous services’ because ‘Aboriginal people do not have confidence in non-Indigenous services, especially gambling counselling services as they are rarely used or talked about’. In some relatively isolated locations they would have to travel long distances to access a service as ‘the mob wouldn’t ring G-Line’. In terms of the gambling help line, one person asked rhetorically:

If gambling’s a problem and if you have a problem then ring 1300 or whatever? What Aboriginal person’s going to do that? Some of our mob haven’t even got a phone let alone can dial a number and talk to someone on the end of a line. That’s never going to happen.

### 4.6.6 Protective Factors for Gambling

The interviewees were asked ‘Thinking about gambling amongst the Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients, what are the things that might influence them to not gamble or to gamble responsibly?’. In alignment with Thomas and Jackson’s model (2004), their responses are grouped below into protective factors relating to the propensity to gamble, to the gambling product and the gambling environment, and to the consequences of gambling.

#### Protective Factors Relating to the Propensity to Gamble

Protective factors relating to the propensity to gamble emerged as personal control, religious beliefs, family influences and education and financial management.

Several themes in relation to personal control were said to be protective factors associated with gambling. One theme was self-control or ‘strong will power’. Another was ‘resilience’ developed by ‘learn(ing) from experience’. Having ‘seen destruction brought about by gambling and learnt from their mistakes’ one person said a friend ‘signed [his] pension over

to [his] father to make sure money was safe for family'. Personal control was also seen as being capable of obtaining and maintaining 'employment', having a 'strong work ethic' and as a side issue a 'lack of time (to gamble) when at work'. Employment was believed to be protective in teaching people to 'value money [and encourage] saving money for other things' and 'value ... money for ... essentials, needs are met'. Generally, workers were considered 'to value money more when they earn it' and 'they also don't have as much time to go to the pub or club'.

Religious beliefs were perceived as important in protecting some gamblers. In parts of the Richmond Valley 'religion was strong'. Several respondents considered 'religion plays a role for some people' who found 'protection in religion'. For example, one Elder (a former heavy gambler) recalled 'when I go to the front of that club, I saw the entrance of the church, couldn't walk past as I saw the spirit'. She said she had never been back inside the club again. Other people suggested a combination of 'religion and strong family background' was protective.

Related to this point was strong family influence. 'Family responsibilities', 'effective parenting' and 'parents ... example' were considered to be important protective factors. People commented that 'people's values change, their children's welfare, schooling, paying bills etc.' became a priority. For others it was grandchildren as 'values changed when grand children came along'. Others saw this influence being extended 'Elders are a source of good advice and guidance for Aboriginal community' and 'youth groups for kids like PCYC in local area'. One person observed 'family upbringing ... plays a big part'. Combining many of these exemplars, an Indigenous educator said 'when people come to TAFE, single mums build up a social life and a learning routine, kids see that education model and they value education and mothers get confidence to go on – end up with employment and become good role models for their kids'.

Following on from this, a combined protective factor was reported to be 'education' and learning 'financial education' skills. Several respondents commented 'people learn to budget ... ensure their money spent effectively', sometimes because 'past experience of "having a press" and having no money'. Others were 'taught to budget', had some 'financial education' and learnt to 'manage their money better than others'. Although money skills were an 'individual thing, decisions on how to spend their money', some people were seen to 'know their cut off point' and 'set limits and do a budget for gambling'.

### **Protective Factors Relating to Gambling Products and Services**

No protective factors were identified in relation to the gambling product or environment.

### **Protective Factors Relating to the Consequences of Gambling**

Several protective factors were raised in the interviews as being important and appropriate for assisting in addressing Indigenous gambling-related problems. These were reported to be community education and awareness for gambling, financial management education and the provision of culturally appropriate gambling help services.

Some respondents focused on 'increasing community education and awareness about gambling' as addressing a gambling issue. Some felt that education and awareness programs could target 'leaders' first and then 'target schools before kids get to be teenagers'. Others believed 'we need to start talking about gambling and the problems it can cause ... start linking it with other Aboriginal services in the community'. There needed to be 'talk about its links to other issues such as child neglect' and 'awareness of the end result, child removal if the situation is really bad with gambling'. Further, education was seen to be 'the road to

getting people on the road to getting their lives back together'. Suggestions from the interviewees about types of effective community education and awareness strategies included: 'promotion ... (like) alcohol free day, national day, a gambling free day', 'use of football, Aboriginal Knock-Out', 'Naidoc Week to put message about', 'good role models (sports people) to promote gambling awareness on television and in the media' 'workshops' and 'get groups together at the new Community Centre ... women's groups as social gatherings, more community activity ... do more for ourselves to offset boredom'.

Financial management education, the 'need for budgeting skills to manage money so they have enough money to meet bills as they are due', was also reported to be an important facilitator. Some said 'Aboriginal people live from week to week; need to aspire to something higher' and that 'appropriate money management and budgeting education and training' could help with this issue. In one location, residents said 'the new Community Centre ... could provide ... workshops on finance and gambling, financial management ... ways for the family to find out how much money is spent on gambling'.

Culturally appropriate gambling help services were raised as facilitators for addressing gambling problems. Generally, it was felt that 'non-Indigenous services are not appropriate', that 'Aboriginal gambling help services are needed' because Indigenous gamblers were 'more inclined to go to Aboriginal services'. One respondent said that they 'feel like they are being judged by non-Indigenous services'. In contrast there was some concern about 'problems with confidentiality', particularly 'confidentiality of services within Aboriginal providers'. Thus, while Indigenous provided services were seen as important to assist Indigenous gamblers, confidentiality associated with those services was perceived as a barrier by some.

#### **4.6.7 Suggested Interventions to Address Gambling Issues**

The interviewees were asked 'What can be done to reduce the negative impacts and encourage responsible gambling amongst Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients?' These were discussed in terms of what Indigenous communities, community services, the gambling industry and governments could do.

#### **Indigenous Communities**

When asked what Indigenous communities could do, there were strong feelings that family and community cohesion could be strengthened to redress gambling-related difficulties. Many saw that 'values for family need to be articulated and followed' and a requirement 'to get back to respecting cultural values and Elders'. Going forward, some suggested 'local people can help local people' with gambling. As one person remarked, 'you've got to look at gambling in the sense for Aboriginal people; it takes in more factors than just mum, dad and the three children. It's the family, the extended family and the wider community'. For that reason 'family political interests should be put aside in favour of the community's interests ... a need for common goals'. Stronger community cohesion could be assisted by supporting 'aspirations for families ... [to] work to get ahead'.

#### **Community Services**

When asked what the community services sector could do to reduce the negative impacts and encourage responsible gambling amongst local Indigenous people, three key themes emerged: to include gambling questions in health assessments, to train Indigenous gambling counsellors and to undertake more appropriate community education and awareness strategies (in that order).

First, there was a strong call for a short gambling screen to be included in ‘health assessments’ by general health professionals. Respondents said ‘they do not ask about gambling, only ask about alcohol and drugs’ and there was a ‘need to ask gambling questions from their clients’ to become ‘part of service delivery’. Further, some people suggested the need to ‘ask gambling questions associated with other problems such as relationship breakdown and debt problems’ and that there should be an ‘interlinking between ... services on gambling’. By doing this, some suggested that ‘treatment of the cause, not symptoms’ might eventuate and the gambler would get effective gambling assistance.

The second theme was a reiteration of the need for culturally appropriate gambling help services, as discussed earlier. Addressing gambling problems by training ‘more Indigenous people ... based in the Aboriginal Medical Health Services’ where people ‘get to know the helper, local helper’ would be a solid start. This would include ‘public awareness education’, ‘workshops’ and ‘assessment of clients’, all provided together in the same place. It would ‘focus services on Aboriginal people and have these services run by us’.

The third theme was for existing community services to provide ‘common sense education and awareness of the problem that is appropriate to Aboriginal people’ and to undertake ‘cultural awareness’ training.

### **Gambling Industry and Venues**

When asked what the gambling industry and venues could do, several amendments to responsible gambling practices were proposed. First, respondents felt that current responsible gambling measures could be improved. Some people said ‘note acceptors, should not take \$50 note, like Queensland’, while others recommended responsible gambling signs ‘in Goori colours and design – for Goori people are visual, need to make signs etc. to get and attract Indigenous attention’. This was because ‘a lot wouldn’t know where to go ... need to be appropriate to Aboriginal people’.

Second, people supported more specific responsible gambling measures be added to those in existence. For example, some wanted ‘more community consultation on gambling, media advertising’ and felt they were not consulted about gambling issues by the industry or government. Others suggested ‘to set up an Indigenous hot line’ for gamblers in distress. Further, the industry could fund ‘an educational program’ with some adult programs focused ‘on money management’ and some targeted ‘at schools, get at kids’ with ‘education and workshops for schools’.

### **Governments**

When asked what governments could do, most suggestions centred on government providing adequate, targeted resources and materials for community education and awareness on gambling issues and for ‘sustained initiatives, not short term’ programs that do little to solve long term problems.

Apart from funding Indigenous gambling counsellors, as mentioned previously, the government could provide training to multi-skill drug and alcohol Indigenous counsellors to deal with gambling problems. This would share the load that is sometimes ‘too stressful’ for one counsellor. Materials for community education and awareness required thoughtful development:

The state government needs to use some of those dollars to be able to build the resources that are more appropriate ... the most effective tool used for our people ... are videos, DVDs. You gotta be visual ... 60 per cent of our communities are illiterate ... so you’ve got to give a bit of visual out there, whether it’s through making DVDs or whatever so that people can run it and train people in their own

community about what can happen for people that get addicted to gambling. Further, gambling messages in the resources need to be real hard-hitting educational stuff for our people in our communities that hits home.

Some felt to ‘incorporate gambling into alcohol and tobacco programs’ would target multiple addictions which are sometimes shared within the same group of people.

State governments could also ‘put more funding back into communities of the gambling revenues’ that arise there. A return of funds to the place of origin was felt to be one way ‘to provide more Aboriginal people into positions where they can tackle gambling issues’. A ‘lack of representation in government’ and the ‘need to regulate properly’ were seen as requiring ‘commitment by government, serious commitment’. In fact, one person proposed the setting up ‘of a state body to focus on Aboriginal gambling and to look at laws, education, programs and representation’ as a way forward.

#### **4.6.8 Summary for Richmond Valley Shire**

Richmond Valley was reported to be a shire where, in the main, adults gambled on poker machines and young people gambled on cards. Gambling was popular on pay day and undertaken by the majority on a weekly or fortnightly basis. Most people spent two or three hours at gambling and gambling expenditure depended on people’s budget. Motivations for gambling included to socialise, to win money, to escape, for stress relief and to reduce boredom.

The majority of respondents felt that gambling was a problem in the shire for some people. Although they recognised positive consequences of socialising in a pleasant, comfortable venue environment, they also saw negative consequences of financial hardship, family and relationship difficulties, and for some, mental health problems.

Risk factors associated with the propensity to gamble were reported to be personal (grief and loss, stress and unemployment) and family (generational exposure to gambling and normalisation of children’s gambling) issues. Risk factors were also associated with poor financial circumstances, historical (loss of Elders) and cultural matters (loss of values). Additional risk factors were perceived to be associated with poker machines (appealing, some erroneous beliefs about winning) and the gambling environment (access and comfort level). Risk factors relating to the consequences of gambling encompassed intrinsic barriers to addressing gambling problems, including personal denial, shame and poverty. Extrinsic barriers were identified as a lack of appropriate gambling help services for Indigenous gamblers and a concern about confidentiality.

Protective factors associated with the propensity to gamble and linked to personal factors were seen as having self-control, being employed and having strong religious beliefs. Family protective factors were perceived as a strong family influence, a supportive extended family and good role models. No protective factors were identified in relation to gambling products and services. Protective factors relating to the consequences of gambling encompassed facilitators to assist in addressing gambling problems. These were believed to comprise community education and awareness programs, financial management education and the provision of culturally appropriate gambling help services.

Suggested interventions to address gambling problems were made by the majority of respondents. Indigenous communities were seen to need to become more cohesive, respect cultural values and to support families who were trying to improve their lives. Community services needed to include a gambling screen in their health assessment check-lists and try to use Aboriginal Medical Health Services for their base to reach Indigenous clients. The



gambling industry was seen as needing to be more effective in their responsible gambling measures for Indigenous gamblers but also in tackling more broadly some community-based initiatives such as providing education for gamblers and for school children. Indigenous people would like to be involved in the design and delivery of these industry interventions. State governments were said to be important stakeholders who needed to fund and supply appropriate and targeted materials and resources for community education and awareness about gambling. Further, the state government should call on Indigenous people for their advice about effective responsible gambling policies and practices, to get a sound appreciation of the variety of situations faced by Indigenous gamblers.

## **4.7 RESULTS OF INTERVIEWS WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN THE CLARENCE VALLEY SHIRE**

In the Clarence Valley Shire, we conducted 14 interviews for this project involving 31 Indigenous people, as well as individual interviews with three non-Indigenous gaming venue managers. This section presents the findings from interviews with the 31 Indigenous people. Findings from the interviews with venue managers are presented in a later section.

An overview of the Clarence Valley Shire is presented first, followed by findings relating to gambling on cards and commercial activities. Consequences of gambling are then discussed in terms of gambling problems and positive and negative consequences, before findings on risk and protective factors are presented. A discussion of potential interventions concludes this section.

### **4.7.1 Overview of Clarence Valley Shire**

The Clarence Valley Shire includes an area of 10,440 km<sup>2</sup> and contains the towns and villages of Grafton (the regional centre), Maclean, Yamba, Iluka, Nymboida, Wooli and Minnie Water. The Clarence Valley Shire is located on the Mid-North Coast of New South Wales and is approximately 600 km north of Sydney.

The regional centre of the Clarence Valley Shire is Grafton which has a regional airport as well as rail services to Sydney and Brisbane. The total population of the Clarence Valley Shire is 48,146 people, with 4.8 per cent of those, 2,307 people, being Indigenous. The major industries in the Clarence Valley are sugar cane, commercial fishing, beef cattle, tourism, timber production and retail.

<http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au> [accessed on 14 December 2009]

<http://www.clarence.nsw.gov.au> [accessed on 14 December 2009]

### **Baryulgil Square**

Baryulgil Square is located approximately 80 kilometres north west of Grafton. The people living in the community belong to the Bundjalung tribe and settled in the area in the early 1900s. Around 1940, Hardie Trading opened an asbestos mine which was first discovered in 1918. Most people (95%) working in the mine for Hardie Trading were Indigenous people from the community. In 1968, the first worker of the mine launched an application for compensation to the Workers' Compensation Board. Afterwards, the mine was inspected several times and more and more workers became aware of the dangers of the asbestos dust. In 1979, the mine was closed and the government founded an asbestos free community

(Malabulgilmah) for the residents of Baryulgil Square. A majority of residents left the community in the early 1980s. Today 95 Indigenous people live in Baryulgil Square.

<http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au> [accessed on 16 December 2009]

### **Malabulgilmah**

The indigenous community of Malabulgilmah is located around 5 km away from Baryulgil Square north west of Grafton and has a population of around 150 people. It was founded in 1980 to offer the residents of Baryulgil Square an alternative to their asbestos polluted community. Most of the families living in Baryulgil Square moved to Malabulgilmah in 1981.

[www.indigenous.gov.au/sra/fact\\_sheets/nsw15.pdf](http://www.indigenous.gov.au/sra/fact_sheets/nsw15.pdf) [accessed on 16 December 2009]

#### **4.7.2 Card Gambling Behaviour**

Card gambling amongst Indigenous Australians in the Clarence Valley Shire was generally reported to no longer take place, with one interviewee stating that ‘there are no card games played in this area, only on previous missions where there are no pubs and clubs’. It was acknowledged that, in the past, card gambling ‘used to be in the community’. However, not all agreed that card gambling had ceased. One respondent said that cards are still played in the area, claiming that ‘groups of girls in [X] gamble heavily with cards’.

Cards were also reported as being a social event played within families, ‘with aunts and uncles’, with people there to ‘look after the kids’. One respondent said that children had learnt from their parents, ‘learnt from growing up with it [when] dad played cards on the flat’.

While card gambling was generally identified as purely the domain of women, ‘growing up, all mothers played cards – the kids were there, but no men’, others noted that men also gambled on cards. In addition, it was claimed that gambling on cards was a way that ensured ‘money stayed in the community’.

#### **4.7.3 Commercial Gambling Behaviour**

The Indigenous interviewees in the Clarence Valley Shire mainly spoke about poker machine gambling situated in ‘pubs and clubs’ with one respondent claiming that ‘all the pokie rooms are full’. Several mentioned the TAB and two mentioned ‘the horses’, but neither were spoken about in any depth.

### **Poker Machine Gambling**

Demographically, poker machine gambling was believed to be widespread. For instance, most respondents believed both men and women and Indigenous people of ‘all age groups’ gambled on poker machines. Others felt that poker machine gambling mainly involved ‘middle aged people between 35 and 50’. Conversely, others reported that younger people (aged 20 to 40) gambled more on poker machines, ‘not the elderly’. Several participants said that poker machine gamblers included ‘both employed and unemployed, [it makes] no difference’. One person said that ‘unemployed people are the biggest gamblers and take chances, employed people value their money’.

Some respondents thought that gambling activities varied according to gender and age. For example, one person said there are ‘mainly women at the pokies [and] men at the TAB’. Another agreed that ‘women play the pokies more than men do’, while another said that

middle-aged women predominantly participate in poker machine gambling while middle aged men usually gamble on the horses. However, as noted, views were mixed. For example, one person said that ‘pokies are the biggest, for both men and women’.

The amount of money gambled on poker machines was a concern for some respondents, with one person claiming that ‘for some they might spend the majority of their pay on gambling’, while another was fearful because some ‘gamble whatever they have got, go without food, and won’t pay bills etc.’ Another said they ‘easily spend \$100 a week’ on poker machine gambling. One unemployed person on Centrelink benefits said that ‘you’re there when you get your payments’.

The amount of time spent gambling on poker machines varied significantly. For example, one respondent said they gambled on poker machines ‘weekly or once a fortnight’, with another noting that it was a weekly activity for them. However, another said they play poker machines ‘most days, depending on the family’.

In relation to timing, ‘pay day’ is a popular day for poker machine gambling, with the following responses highlighting this point: ‘[I play on] pay day mostly’; ‘people go on pay days when money is available’; and ‘it’s a weekly activity on pay day’. With pay day not being uniform, one person noted that people often wait for others to get paid and ‘create a ripple effect of borrowing from one another’.

There were various reasons given for gambling on poker machines. A popular motivation was to relieve ‘boredom’ as ‘there is nothing to do in the community’. Another agreed, saying they believed the main reason for gambling is ‘probably boredom’. Many interviewees also noted that a key motivation for playing poker machines was ‘to win and ... beat the machine’. Others agreed saying they play ‘to win money’, ‘hope to win some money’, as well as one person who said they play to ‘chase wins to pay bills’. In relation to age and motivation to gamble on poker machines, one participant noted that young people, in particular, were predominantly motivated ‘to win’.

Some spoke of poker machine gambling as an addiction. The following quote emphasises this point:

We talk about the boredom and trying to get a quick fix but after a while it’s kind of, it’s addictive. You’re addicted to it. I’m not a gambler but I can just imagine it’s like opal, mate. People see opal in their mind, they want a big strike.

‘Big wins’ were identified as being a trigger for addictive gambling patterns for some people: ‘big payouts lead to addictions’; ‘[poker machine playing is a] habit, an addiction’; and ‘[it’s] like a ciggie, addictive’.

The issue of ‘escape’ and mental health concerns were also linked for some people. For instance, a respondent noted that someone they know with bipolar disorder gambles on poker machines as an escape hoping they will win to alleviate stress. Another spoke about gambling and ill health, including mental disorders:

It’s just a way to get away from the terms of life. There are some horrific, in terms of lifestyle, there’s a lot of suicide; there’s a lot of death, a lot of failing health around the place. Escapism to get away from that stuff.

One person noted that depression, in particular, can be a reason to gamble, as some people become depressed when they can’t pay the bills and so gamble to ‘get relief’.

Poker machine gambling was commonly seen as an ‘escape’, as ‘it helps people not to think, to zone out’. Tied to this notion of escape is the ‘exposure to the environment’. These environmental exposures include the sounds and the lights of the machines that are seen to

facilitate this escape. Some frequent the same poker machine each time they gamble: ‘I know a person who will always go to the same machine for the features and sounds’.

#### **4.7.4 Consequences of Gambling**

The consequences of gambling were discussed by the interviewees in terms of gambling problems, and positive and negative outcomes of gambling. These are reported below.

##### **Gambling Problems**

The interviewees were asked ‘Is gambling a problem here?’ Most respondents indicated that gambling is a problem in the Clarence Valley Shire with some responses stronger than others. For instance, one person said ‘yes, it’s a serious problem’, another ‘as soon as they are 18 they are off to “have a press”’. On the whole, gambling was thought to only be ‘a problem for some’ and ‘yes, some do, some have problems’.

When asked what types of gambling cause problems, most interviewees responded ‘poker machines’. Other types of gambling were also considered problematic. For instance, two people mentioned that the ‘TAB is popular’ while five mentioned ‘horses and the races’, ‘horses, trots, dogs, but pokies are the biggest’.

##### **Positive Consequences**

Two positive consequences identified by participants were the ‘social aspects’ of gambling and gambling as a form of ‘relaxation’. One respondent explained that ‘it’s a social thing to gamble while having a drink’. One person noted that ‘some people gamble in groups – social and family groups’ or as ‘social entertainment’. Another said they ‘take mum to the club – it’s time out and escape for the week’. Clearly, going to a club or a hotel to play a poker machine is seen by some as a ‘social activity’, ‘for some people it’s an outing’. For the following respondent having a drink and playing the poker machines go hand-in-hand: ‘All your mates and everyone else is there. If you’re going to have a beer then you’re going to have a press to be sociable with them’. One person said that ‘some Elders go to “chill out” in front of a pokie’, while another said they gamble to ‘relax and unwind’. Another agreed saying that ‘it’s social to get together to drink and laugh, relax and escape’.

Others said that the venues are a pleasant environment, ‘the venue – it’s air conditioned’. Another agreed, saying that the venues provide ‘access to cheap drinks, keno, horses, pokies, air conditioning’.

##### **Negative Consequences**

Several negative outcomes were identified, with all interviews highlighting ‘financial problems’, as well as another key concern – that of relationship problems. Mental illness was also discussed. All these problems can, however, be seen to be closely linked.

Debt and borrowing were identified as negative financial consequences. One respondent was concerned that ‘some cannot pay bills so there is debt and financial hardship’. Another had similar concerns identifying ‘debt and borrowing’ as major consequences. Other concerns were for children: ‘there’s no money for school and lunches’, ‘some gamble all their money and children miss out’.

Crime was also linked to gambling, especially ‘theft’, as ‘there is stealing and increasing crime rate’. Some spoke about children and crime, which mainly involved ‘stealing’. One

person said that ‘kids commit crime, often for food’. Another said that gambling and financial problems cause ‘kids to suffer, there’s no discipline, [which] causes crime’.

Others raised the issue of financial consequences that lead to housing problems such as poor housing conditions, ‘overcrowded housing’, ‘evictions’ and sometimes to ‘homelessness’. It was noted that people get into debt and get behind in rent, and that ‘shelter is not always good’.

Others raised the issue of how borrowing and debt increases ‘feelings that go with that, low self esteem’, which is also linked to mental health concerns. Indeed, self esteem concerns were raised by several participants, ‘many Aboriginal people have low self-esteem’, said one.

Closely linked to financial concerns were relationship problems, with ‘arguments and anger over losing money’ highlighted. One person explained that ‘one partner will lose everything and arguments will occur [leading to] family breakdown’. Others mentioned domestic violence within relationships as going hand in hand with gambling and financial worry as ‘there’s a lot of conflict, domestic violence. People don’t have a win, they just blow their money, and they’re going to start taking it out on the missus’. Others agreed that gambling can contribute to ‘break-ups and domestic violence’.

Mental health issues and mental illness were raised as concerns in nine interviews and it was noted that ‘there’s a lot of mental illness in our community but it’s not really being acknowledged’. Mental illnesses identified in the interviews included ‘depression’ and general ‘stress’, bipolar disorder, alcohol dependence and suicidality, as well as gambling as an ‘addiction’. For instance, one participant said that ‘gambling becomes an addiction and it becomes controlling’ while another said that ‘gambling causes more stress’. Mental illness and gambling problems can have particular concerns; as noted by one participant, ‘[there’s] mental illness and then they can’t look after kids and family’.

#### **4.7.5 Risk Factors for Gambling**

The interviewees were asked ‘Thinking about gambling amongst the Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients, what are the things that might influence some to gamble heavily or out of control?’. In alignment with Thomas and Jackson’s model (2004), their responses are grouped below into risk factors relating to the propensity to gamble, to the gambling product and the gambling environment, and to the consequences of gambling.

##### **Risk Factors Relating to the Propensity to Gamble**

Risk factors relating to the propensity to gamble derived from unemployment and financial circumstances, family influences, peer pressure, and historical and cultural factors.

A major theme identified by participants was concerns about unemployment. These included financial issues and boredom due to excess time. One person explained that ‘[gambling is] linked to unemployment, they have more time to gamble’, while another said that ‘unemployed people, some spend everything they have (leading to financial issues), and they have time and energy to gamble’. However, it was noted that ‘getting a job is hard enough’. This in turn can impact on self-esteem because ‘people think that they are not good enough to get a job’. Another said that unemployment is linked to lack of work experience and being Indigenous; ‘you need experience and no-one gives Indigenous a go’. One respondent explained that ‘people give up, lose motivation and drive’. Another associated unemployment to the wider community, saying that ‘it’s normal not to have a career ... [and people are] used to having no money’. One person said that financial hardship ‘has gone down from generation to generation. It’s not dealt with, it’s on-going’. Being financially pressed can

exacerbate gambling problems leading to ‘desperation for money – hoping to win “the big jackpot” one day’.

Family influence and generational learning were identified as risk factors. Gambling was said to be learnt from parents and grandparents, where people ‘learn from experience, brought up with it’, while other respondents said that gambling is ‘generational, what mum and dad do’ and ‘kids learn to drink and gamble from their parents ... Then these kids have their own kids and their habits continue’. The generational learning was also identified earlier in relation to cards where it was reported as being a social event played within families, ‘with aunts and uncles’. One respondent said that children had learnt from their parents, that the ‘young learn how to gamble, don’t listen to Elders’.

One person identified issues related to gambling as a ‘circle’ involving low self-esteem that leads to drink and drugs etc.’ In a similar vein, another noted that some Aboriginal people are ‘vulnerable to making poor choices – most want to get out of the cycle’. On a societal level, one person noted that ‘in today’s society [a lot of] Aboriginal people can’t afford [material items] ... [which] builds frustration and puts people down ... we’re not important to society’.

Historical and cultural factors were also identified as being a risk factor. For instance, some spoke about men, in particular, and believe that some Aboriginal men have ‘lost their way’, and ‘Aboriginal men had a role in society, now they don’t’. Similarly, another said, ‘men have lost their role in the community’. Another person felt there is a ‘lack of leadership, there is a struggle to find great leaders in the community. Elders are not just older people, they have to earn their position’.

Peer pressure, especially for young people, was another risk factor spoken about by several respondents, where ‘there’s peer pressure on you [to gamble]’. Similarly, another participant identified peer pressure as a risk factor as it can prevent help seeking: ‘peer pressure, if it’s widely played in the community it makes it difficult for someone to seek help; often they will alienate themselves from their family and mob’. Another said, in relation to peer pressure, ‘some say you’re acting white – “too good for us, hey brother”’.

### **Risk Factors Relation to Gambling Products and Services**

In relation to the gambling product itself, some participants saw poker machines as risk factors for some Indigenous gamblers. For example, it was noted that the ‘lights and sounds’ of the poker machines are seen as appealing to some. This sentiment was noted by the following participant: ‘the machine is attractive, the noise of the machine’.

Similarly, the gambling environment was perceived as being a risk factor for some due to easy accessibility to clubs and hotels. One respondent said ‘there are three pubs and three clubs locally’, while another noted ‘there are lots [of clubs and pubs] in Grafton, maybe 38’. Another risk involving the gambling environment is the easy access to money facilities, such as ATMs situated in venues. In addition, it was noted that ‘the machines have note acceptors which make it easier [to gamble].

### **Risk Factors Relating to the Consequences of Gambling**

Both intrinsic and extrinsic risk factors were raised in relation to addressing gambling problems. Intrinsic (personal) barriers were seen as denial, shame and pride. Extrinsic barriers included those concerning gambling support services and gambling as an accepted social norm.

Most respondents said that ‘denial’ was a key barrier to seeking help. Some ‘don’t believe they have a problem [and] don’t realise that they need to go to a counsellor’, while another

agreed saying ‘people live in denial’. Another pointed out that ‘they’ve got to recognise they’ve got a problem and a lot of them don’t ... to them it’s a lifestyle’. Similarly, another person said that ‘gambling, a lot of people don’t think it’s a problem – because it’s a social thing’.

Gambling appears not to be discussed within the community. As pointed out in one interview ‘it’s not seen as a problem because it’s not spoken about’ with similar sentiments raised in other interviews. One reason for not talking about gambling was identified by one participant as ‘shame’, ‘don’t talk about it as a community – don’t want others to know’. Therefore, shame was equally identified as being a barrier to addressing gambling problems (‘shame, you think I am going to tell them that?’). Another said that they would be ‘too ashamed to go to a service – possibly more likely to go to an Aboriginal service though’. Shame and denial are often hidden within communities. Linked to denial and shame is ‘pride’, which was identified as a reason for some Indigenous people not accessing services (‘pride ... hard to talk about’). Another said it is pride that prevents Indigenous people contacting services, ‘not blackfellas, not call gambling helpline’.

Gambling problems were identified as being connected to broader, extrinsic issues such as appropriate gambling support services. Lack of knowledge about what services are available was one issue raised concerning services (‘don’t know where to go’). Another similarly said, ‘people don’t know about gambling help services, what ones are available’, while another said they did not know of any services, ‘there are no services here - just the phone line’. In particular, the point was raised that there are ‘no Indigenous friendly agencies’ and ‘Aboriginal people don’t have confidence in non-Aboriginal services’. In addition, people need to have assurance that the services they approach will be discreet: ‘people have to have confidence in someone else to help them’. Confidentiality in relation to services was therefore also a concern, as ‘people won’t get help because they don’t want people to blab’, and ‘some don’t want to go to a service due to worry about confidentiality’. One person noted that ‘men are very reluctant to seek services’.

Another barrier raised to addressing gambling problems is that gambling is very much seen as ‘normal’ or a ‘social norm’, where ‘gambling is seen as a normal thing to do. For many people it’s a routine to be going down to the pub or club’. Another said that ‘gambling is seen as a common activity for young and older Aboriginal people to do’.

#### **4.7.6 Protective Factors for Gambling**

The interviewees were asked ‘Thinking about gambling amongst the Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients, what are the things that might influence them to not gamble or to gamble responsibly?’. In alignment with Thomas and Jackson’s model (2004), their responses are grouped below into protective factors relating to the propensity to gamble, to the gambling product and the gambling environment, and to the consequences of gambling.

##### **Protective Factors Relating to the Propensity to Gamble**

Protective factors relating to the propensity to gamble are grouped below into those including financial management skills, family influences, positive role models, and religious beliefs.

Financial management and budgeting skills were the predominant protective factors spoken about – to ‘plan ahead for important expenses in life’. One participant said that ‘people learn to budget and so ensure their money is spent effectively’. Another noted: ‘I spend only so much because I’ve earned that and it’s hard to get it. And I have to use it for other things

first', while another said 'I value my money too much. I manage what I can spend on the pokies. I'll put \$10 in and have a go. That's it, that's gone'. Clearly, budgeting skills were seen as key to financial management as noted in the following comments: 'I know I have bills to pay and don't want to go scrounging for money'; 'I only use money that is leftover after expenses are paid'; and 'I pay everything before gambling'. One strategy identified for effective budgeting was having major expenses taken out of wages and Centrelink payments so that bills and so forth are paid first: 'the majority of people have expenses taken out of their pay or pension cheque first, electricity, phone bills etc.'

Positive role models were identified as being important protective factors for gambling, particularly in the family as people 'learn from family, good habits'. Another said that 'good parents teach children not to [gamble]. Likewise, 'people who had a good upbringing tend not to have problems'. Having a deep seated responsibility towards children and family was seen as an important protective factor: 'responsibility to family lifestyle and management, and effective and positive parenting'. Another said that 'children change your life as a number one priority'. In addition, mentors outside the family were also identified as being important role models, 'maybe good teacher, an aunt or uncle who takes a bit of time'. Also having role models who are employed and working hard towards goals was seen as a protective factor for gambling.

Religion and religious beliefs and influences were mentioned in two interviews as protective factors for gambling. One respondent felt that 'religion protects some people. Church people don't gamble'. Another noted, from a cultural perspective, that 'some Elders are church oriented'.

### **Protective Factors Relating to Gambling Products and Services**

No gambling product-related protective factors were identified by the interviewees.

### **Protective Factors Relating to the Consequences of Gambling**

Two key facilitators for addressing gambling problems were raised in the interviews: community education and community development; and culturally appropriate, confidential and accessible services.

Community education programs and community development were seen as crucial facilitators for addressing gambling problems. Educational programs need to embrace Indigenous culture and 'go to the people' and 'go out and engage with the community'. One suggestion included 'information days with a barbeque to spread community education and awareness about gambling. This could be done with quite a few other organisations. Lots of people would love to come along when there's a feed'. Another suggested that programs addressing gambling problems could be introduced in high schools 'like drug and alcohol programs'.

Culturally appropriate services that are specially directed to Indigenous people were also identified as being a key facilitator for addressing gambling problems. These services would need to employ Indigenous workers. For instance, one person said 'we need to have a Koori phone line – like a hot line [that has] an Aboriginal counsellor'. It was noted that 'people depend on services for help'. Awareness of the availability of what services can be accessed is important, as 'people need to know where to find them (the services)' and 'people need to know what is available'. Services also need to be available at a community level, as 'communities need local services taking responsibility to actually provide the service they are supposed to'. Another reiterated this point saying that 'services would have to come to the community'. One person said they liked to 'talk to someone face-to-face'. In addition, issues



need to be dealt with immediately as people ‘need immediate attention – [otherwise they] don’t come back, don’t bother’.

It was noted that services also need to work together, to be linked and integrated including health and welfare services, where ‘all linking groups need to come together’ and ‘sharing information between organisations that refer across areas’ is important. Confidentiality when attending services, as noted earlier, was also identified as important as people ‘don’t want others to know’.

#### **4.7.7 Suggested Interventions to Address Gambling Issues**

The interviewees were asked ‘What can be done to reduce the negative impacts and encourage responsible gambling amongst Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients? These were discussed in terms of what Indigenous communities, community services, the gambling industry and governments can do.

##### **Indigenous Communities**

When asked what Indigenous communities could do, there were many responses concerning community education. One person said it was important to ‘make the community aware and educate them about gambling’. It was felt that the starting point involved first recognising gambling as being a problem within the Indigenous communities and then ‘start talking about gambling and the problems it can cause’, while another said ‘silence is an issue, we should be asking questions’. Some suggestions to facilitate community awareness included having ‘fun days, barbeques, that’s where people talk’, and educating people about gambling issues ‘in workshops in the schools’. Other suggestions were: ‘a big youth forum for the community’; and ‘use Lands Council to spread community awareness about gambling’. Another respondent noted that the most cogent way to educate people about the harms and risks associated with gambling at a community level is by learning from others who have personal experience with the issues; ‘people who have had a gambling problem should educate and inform other Aboriginal people of what they went through’. It was stressed that community education needs to be culturally appropriate, utilising ‘Indigenous contacts’ within programs.

Another important point raised in the interviews was that programs and services need to link with others, to ‘link gambling to other services, ask gambling questions’. This is because, issues are all connected, as highlighted by one respondent: ‘gambling, drugs, alcohol, [they] all fall in together’. Another pointed out that ‘mob needs holistic support’. All aspects need to be identified and supported, including employment opportunities, educational programs, health, the provision of housing and welfare services, where ‘we need to start linking [gambling] with other Aboriginal services in the community’. One person suggested that one way to achieve this was to ‘attach education to the medical service’.

Crucially, this holistic support should include broader cultural aspects, as ‘we need to restore cultural pride’. One interviewee said that ‘young people have lost traditional respect’, while another said that young people need to ‘learn from the Elders’. A significant point raised in relation to this was that ‘Elders need education to help their own people’.

##### **Community Services**

When asked what the community services sector could do to reduce the negative impacts and encourage responsible gambling amongst local Indigenous people, many respondents reiterated the need for services that are culturally specific: ‘got to be Indigenous way, not colonial way’. Indeed, there were many responses that expressed a similar sentiment, ‘people

shy away from non-Indigenous services'; 'some need to speak to Indigenous help'; 'you need more Aboriginal people there [in services], whether it's psychologists or [other] mental health workers'; 'we need more Aboriginal counsellors'; and 'why won't our people ring that number? Because it's got no Aboriginal staff on it'.

### **Gambling Industry and Venues**

When asked what the gambling industry and venues could do, more community education programs were identified as a way to address gambling problems. One suggestion was that venues could 'display posters' and have books and other materials available. Another proposed that education could involve listening to first hand experiences of other problem gamblers: 'from someone that has had a lot of money and lost it all and ended up down the gutter'. Another expressed a similar sentiment 'a lot of the young fellas ... like to hear it from somebody who's been there and done that'.

### **Governments**

When asked what governments could do, interviewees spoke about 'education and training', as well as 'awareness' of the problems and issues associated with gambling '[governments need to] provide relevant community education and awareness'. Education about money management was an important issue raised, as 'people need to learn to budget'. One person said that people need to be educated about the issues early on to 'start education in primary school [so it] becomes accepted, routine'. Similarly, another said that gambling needs to be addressed in early 'education of kids in schools about gambling'. Some spoke about needing to provide relevant and appropriate 'specific Indigenous education', with the local Indigenous community to 'provide relevant community education and awareness'.

Linked to the issues of education and awareness was the need to 'educate non-Indigenous services as well'. One person said that education and training are needed so that local people can provide counselling, while another said there is a need for 'funding for Indigenous people to be trained in the local area so there is more understanding in the community', 'funding to provide more Aboriginal people in positions where they can tackle gambling issues'. People working in services 'will be listened to if they are equipped with educated understanding and knowledge'.

Funding was clearly highlighted as being essential to the provision of any education and awareness programs, with twelve interviewees speaking about funding and the types of funding required. One said:

Put some money into it. It's just a matter of actually trying to focus on the issue. I don't think that people realise how much of an impact gambling has in communities. ... The pubs are close, you go there and what are you going to do there? Drinking and tapping the machine.

Community development activities were also highlighted and clearly linked to education, training and awareness programs. Community workers are needed to assist with education and awareness, with one person identifying the pressing need to provide 'local Indigenous educators and gambling liaison people to work in individual communities'. Similarly, another pointed out that community workers should 'go to the people, get into the community'. Linked to this is that community workers need to operate at the 'ground level', 'employ more people on the ground, can't make decisions in offices'. A final point raised in relation to community education is that there is a 'need to educate non-Indigenous services as well'.

It was importantly highlighted that governments must address employment creation and opportunities; more jobs are urgently required, 'put blackfellas in jobs'. Indeed, employment

and unemployment were concerns raised within other areas of the interviews as a pressing concern as ‘people fall into a rut of unemployment’.

Other strategies suggested included making access to poker machine harder by ‘getting machines out of pubs or reduce keno, TAB and poker machines’. Another suggested ‘grants to combat gambling’, while another said that ‘we need scholarships and bursaries’. ‘Aboriginal specific advertising campaigns for gambling’ were also identified as a strategy governments could use. Finally, one person noted that ‘more research with results given to appropriate people’ was needed.

#### **4.7.8 Summary for Clarence Valley Shire**

In the Clarence Valley Shire, it was noted that people gamble mainly on poker machines, including men and women, young people and older people. The amount of time spent gambling in the shire varied significantly from weekly or once a fortnight to most days. Gambling was most common on pay day. Most respondents believed that gambling was a problem for some people. It was suggested that some people budget to avoid financial concerns and only spend what they can afford. However, it was noted that there is considerable financial stress concerning gambling for some people in the Clarence Valley Shire.

Motivations for gambling included winning money, to socialise, to relieve boredom and to escape. Positive consequences included the social aspects of gambling and as a form of relaxation. Negative consequences of gambling included financial hardship, relationship problems and mental health issues for some people.

Risk factors associated with the propensity to gamble included being unemployed, generational exposure to gambling, and peer pressure. Other risk factors included those concerning the gambling environment such as easy access and comfortable surrounds (such as air conditioning). Some people identified risk factors concerning poker machines themselves such as the lights and sounds. Risk factors relating to the consequences of gambling comprised various barriers to addressing gambling problems, including personal issues such as denial and shame, lack of services and lack of knowledge about what services are available.

Protective factors associated with the propensity to gamble were perceived as being employed, having good role models (family and others), good financial management skills and education and, to a smaller extent, religious beliefs. No protective factors relating to the gambling product were identified. Protective factors relating to addressing the consequences of gambling were identified as community education and culturally appropriate and accessible services.

Interventions to address gambling issues at a community level included introducing community awareness programs that are culturally appropriate. It was suggested that a holistic approach is needed that links services with each other (gambling, counselling, health, welfare) and includes a broader cultural aspect to help restore pride. Participants said the gambling industry needs to provide community education to gamblers. It was felt that governments need to make funding available to provide more employment, as well as educational programs. These programs would need to address gambling issues for Indigenous people and funding for Indigenous positions where gambling issues can be tackled.

## 4.8 RESULTS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH GAMING VENUE MANAGERS

This section presents results from interviews with gaming venues managers and which pertain to Research Objective One. An overview of the sample of managers is presented first, followed by findings relating to gambling behaviour on cards and commercial gambling activities. For commercial gambling, which was the main focus of the manager interviews, the results are analysed in relation to propensity to gamble, gambling products and services, and gambling consequences. Risk and protective factors for gambling are then analysed. A discussion of potential interventions and a summary of findings conclude this section.

### 4.8.1 The Sample

Twenty-one non-Indigenous gaming managers or licensees were interviewed for this research across six local government shires in Bundjalung Country. There were eight club managers and thirteen hotel managers, mostly males. Not all localities had registered clubs, but all of them had hotels with some form of commercial gambling available. The industry experience of these managers ranged from four months to twenty-eight years, but the median was around ten years. Their positions included poker machine supervisor, duty manager, operations manager, secretary manager and licensee/manager. They were interviewed individually, either face-to-face or by telephone, depending on their availability and preference.

In asking about knowledge or links with the local Indigenous community, most managers said they knew their local regular Indigenous customers. A variety of responses indicated that some managers had lived in Bundjalung Country all their lives and knew many local Indigenous people through joint school and sport, social and work activities. Other managers knew Indigenous community leaders through membership of community committees or sports sponsorship.

The gaming venue managers were asked to estimate the proportion of their venue's gamblers who are Indigenous. Their responses fell into three groups: a larger proportion of about 70 per cent; a medium proportion of about 35 per cent; and a small proportion of less than one per cent. In some small villages, an Indigenous community was located nearby and comprised a major proportion of that local population. Additionally, the venue was the only one for some distance and public transport was not readily available. In these cases the Indigenous gambler proportions appeared proportionally large, about 70 per cent. In some towns, hotels seemed to be more popular than clubs, even though they had smaller gaming installations. However, the customer base there was seen to be founded on social acceptance and group norms. For example one manager said:

A couple of hotels in town who are probably frequented more by ... (Indigenous) males. I don't think that's an Indigenous issue for them that they go to places in groups but it's the culture, that sort of age group I suppose, more a pub sort of culture who don't like being told their attire must be to a certain standard.

Hotels such as these appeared to have an Indigenous gambler base in the proportional middle range of about 35 per cent. In big venues with the largest gaming installations, the proportion of Indigenous gamblers amongst all gamblers appeared small, less than one per cent. A manager of one large venue commented that their proportion of Indigenous gamblers was 'nothing different' to the general proportion of any group of people there. A club manager pointed out that all clubs (large and small) had rules which dictated entry conditions, so that 'coming into the clubs is a lot more difficult as far as dress regulations and membership requirements. We obviously do turn a lot of people away because they don't meet our requirements'.

### 4.8.2 Card Gambling Behaviour

Managers were asked if their Indigenous gambler customers gambled on cards in their venue or in their town. The overwhelming majority responded with a 'no' to both these queries. A couple of managers reported they had heard about Indigenous card games but only 'outside the venue' and 'separate from us'. Separating regulated from unregulated gambling, one person said 'that's out there and I'm in here'. However in one town, a manager said 'I have seen it around town' and that these gamblers 'would be younger'. Youth card gambling was observed by one manager who said 'I've seen ... playing cards ... kids at one of the bus stops' and 'young Indigenous kids play cards outside'. As an observation, the researchers chatted a couple of times to some Indigenous teenage youth who were gambling on cards in the bus stop shelter. They were playing a game called 'two-three', somewhat similar to 'kabu' as seen played in north Queensland.

### 4.8.3 Commercial Gambling Behaviour

This section presents results from the venue manager interviews relating to commercial gambling behaviour, including participation, frequency, time patterns, session length and expenditure. Popular forms of commercial gambling for Indigenous patrons were said to be poker machine gambling, TAB gambling, bingo and keno, in that order. Most gaming venue managers reported that poker machines were the most popular form of gambling in their venues: 'just the pokies' and 'poker machines are the biggest'. The second most popular form, TAB gambling, was not available in every venue but available in most towns and villages either through the telephone or the internet. In venues where both poker machines and TAB gambling were available, managers said that poker machines dominated, where 'essentially it is the pokies over the TAB'. However, in a few venues, a choice might be made: 'it's either poker machines or the TAB' or in some cases 'both TAB and pokies' were used. Depending on the availability of other forms, the third most popular form of gambling in venues was keno, followed closely by bingo. Summarising gambling participation, a manager said 'not all ... gamble. I suppose most of them that [do] gamble, they gamble on the pokies more than the TAB'.

Gambling frequency, according to these gaming venue managers, varied from almost every day to once or twice a month for their Indigenous gambling customers. One manager explained this was 'no different to any other customer in the venue, nothing different about Indigenous gamblers'. It was reported that some Indigenous patrons gambled 'a couple of times a week' and 'every second or third day'. One manager said that in her venue some customers came in 'three or four times a week but not always to gamble; some just come to use the venue'. In a small village with just one venue, the manager said 'very few gamble more than three days a week, but one comes in three or four times a week'. Instead, most gamblers were reported to gamble 'once a week' or 'once a fortnight for some'. Bingo participants played regularly whenever sessions were operated. A manager from one large shire observed the variability in gambling frequency as 'they seem to have spats ... sometimes you'll get them all week and then you won't see them again for a month and then you'll only see them for two days in that month'. Another said, 'we only have our core people who do it here and I wouldn't call them heavy gamblers'. Gambling frequency was summarised by one manager as 'many people will gamble when they have money'.

When asked about gambling time patterns, several time frames became obvious from the managers' responses. These included pay day and a short shoulder period following pay day. 'Pay day' was the most popular day mentioned by most managers, and produced 'a spike' in gambling participation. One manager described this peak thus: 'if you have a look at

Wednesday, we call it Wednesday-itis, definitely from 10 in the morning through till 4-ish in the afternoon, give or take'. In another venue it was reported that 'you get a burst on pay days in the morning from 10am to probably 11.30-12 noon and then you probably wouldn't get any'. The day after pay day was also said to be popular for gambling: 'pay day once a fortnight and the day afterwards'. In some venues this was Wednesday and Thursday, in others it was 'Friday and Saturday night, evenings but not late'. In one small village, a manager described the usual gambling pattern as 'the vast majority ... come in on a Friday ... We don't get many ... on a Monday, Tuesday ... Saturday we'd probably see more people coming in on the TAB'. Yet in a large town, another manager did not see any pattern emerging, noting that 'on Wednesday we do a big members' draw here so it's always a busier night, the Wednesday; Thursday, Friday, Saturday, but they don't; it's not as if we see any more Indigenous people on specific days'.

Daytime gambling, in the mornings and afternoons, was reported to be more obvious by some managers: 'it's usually through the daytime and they're gone by the evening' and 'we know about lunchtime on the Wednesday every fortnight they start to filter in bit by bit'. Other comments such as '... never here late at night' and 'always mornings' confirmed day time gambling patterns.

Daytime gambling was also linked to TAB gambling. A manager commented that 'it's more they come in for the day on the punt; it's about the punt for them. They go from the TAB then they put a few bets on and then they go into the pokie room'. Another said that 'it's mainly Wednesday, Thursday because you've got bigger races. They're going for a bigger pool win in their trifectas and so on'. Yet another manager saw that 'Saturday, mainly in the morning' was a big day for TAB gamblers.

The length of gambling sessions was described by gaming venue managers as ranging from short to long, from '30 minutes' to 'some stay all day'. Most managers reported that shorter sessions were much more likely and more obvious than longer sessions amongst Indigenous gamblers. Shorter sessions were said to be 'a couple of hours', while longer sessions were reported as 'all day ... make it a day out' and staying until 'closing time'. Shorter sessions occurred 'in short spurts, in and out during the day' where people 'tend to come in, "have a flutter" while they buy something else, then leave'. Others said that shorter sessions were 'two hours' and 'about three hours would be an average'. Interestingly one manager remarked on gender preferences linked to gambling duration, where 'women sit there and play on the poker machines for longer than men. They might play for two-three hours. Men [gamble] in a quick stint [and] leave to do something else'. Another person commented that gambling duration often depended on the type of game: 'people come down for a Saturday afternoon to have a social with friends on the TAB ... might be down here for a three hour period of time whereas the machines ... the average play for the majority of people would be less than that'.

Gambling expenditure by Indigenous gamblers was reported to range from low to high. Most managers said that low expenditure was much more common for Indigenous gamblers than high expenditure. 'They don't really have a lot at their disposal so it is small betting' said one manager of a large venue, while another commented 'from my experiences here, they don't spend a lot'. In one small village with a single gaming venue the manager said this 'could be as little as a dollar; they walk in and throw a dollar in on some occasions'. In the case of poker machine gambling in a large town, it was noted that 'they don't gamble big. The basic gambler likes 25 credits a spin' and in another venue in the same town it was noted by one manager:

I find that these guys, they're more sensible when it comes to gambling as in I think it might be because of their money flow or whatever ... I've noticed that if they win something, they'll collect it and they'll leave straight away. They're not the type of ones where they win and keep playing.

In relation to TAB gambling expenditure, one manager said 'they come in ... they spend a maximum of \$1-\$2 a bet on a race and they're pretty much in there for more the atmosphere'. A venue manager in a small village with an Indigenous community located nearby reported:

If they're playing the pokies, like a \$2 press is big money for them. It's the same as the races. Most of them bet in \$1, \$1.50, \$3 ... They very seldom put a large amount of money on the TAB and ... when they're playing the pokies ... they'd be only playing \$2.

To put a figure on the actual dollars spent indicating low gambling expenditure, managers estimated 'a minimum of \$5-\$10 and maximum of say \$50. It's closer to \$5-\$10, nine times out of ten' and '\$10-\$20 ;there are some people who come in and they'll only put \$20 through and keep re-cycling it'. For bingo, one manager explained 'I think to buy a full book, which is an hour and a half's entertainment, 20 games I think is around the \$15 mark'. Low gambling expenditure appeared to vary from about \$5 to \$20 for each session.

In contrast, high gambling expenditure by 'pretty big punters' meant that some Indigenous patrons 'gamble until they've run out of money'. It was noted that some will 'come back to the change box and they'll give you the last few coins out of their purse ... or they'll go out to their car and their ashtray'. Other gamblers were seen to 'just continue if they win and put it all back'. In terms of gambling dollars spent, managers estimated that 'some can spend a couple of hundred dollars' and 'some [spend] all of their pension, but a lot of people would spend over \$200-\$300 if they had it'. Linking figures to high expenditure, one manager said 'I would say that there'd be other more extravagant ones that put \$100s through ... rare exceptions. I'd say \$50-\$100 most of them'. Only one manager said that he had 'no idea' what Indigenous gamblers might spend on gambling, while another commented that 'the situation is the same for Indigenous and non-Indigenous gamblers'.

#### **4.8.4 Propensity to Gamble**

This section presents results relating to the socio-demographic characteristics and motivations of Indigenous gamblers as identified by the gaming venue managers. Between them, the twenty-one gaming venue managers reported that Indigenous customers in their venues were broadly anyone and everyone. One manager said he saw 'a big range, married and single, employed and unemployed', while another observed 'across the board, customers would include males, females ... full range of people 18-70 years'. There appeared two main age groups into which many gamblers were clustered; a younger group aged about 18-30 years and an older group aged about 50 years and over. Most managers reported more male than female gamblers in their venues. An exception was found in several small villages with only one venue and in close proximity to an Indigenous community. In these venues, more female gamblers were reported than males. In terms of marital status, managers said Indigenous gamblers were likely to be married, in a de facto relationship, single or divorced. However, slightly more weight was given to being in a relationship than being single. In relation to the employment status of gamblers, it was reported by managers that being unemployed was a little more likely than being employed.

Most managers reported that the majority of Indigenous gamblers tended to gamble in groups, or at the very least in couples. Gambling in groups was seen as socialising by managers: 'well the whole group was in that pokie machine room and once again it was probably one or two out of that group that were actually playing. Whereas the rest is quite social; they'll just sit around the room and have a chat and have a drink'.

In addition, there appeared to be younger groups and older groups of gamblers. It was reported that younger groups are different in their gambling patterns. One manager said that 'because they're young I guess they don't have as much money as some older people do, so they tend to all congregate around one and have a bit of fun together'. The manager of a large venue commented on a rite of passage concerning the link between turning 18 years and gambling: 'it seems to be like the day you turn 18, you can be a member of the [X]. And each year we have this new wave of 18 year olds ... It's like here we go, here's the latest lot of 18 year olds coming in'.

Older groups of gamblers were described thus:

On a Friday night if they come in a group, and it's usually one or two in that group would gamble and the rest just stand around them and watch them and encourage them or have a bit of a joke with them. So it's not like ... if there are half a dozen of them in that group, there'd be probably only one or two playing the machines.

Another manager said 'couples or small groups, nearly always small groups' gamble in her venue, while another observed that even if people come to the venue alone 'they wind up as a few in here'.

Venue managers reported that gambling motivations appeared to be to socialise, to win money, to fill in time and reduce boredom, and because of the influence of alcohol (in descending order of importance). Most managers said that Indigenous patrons gamble in their venues to socialise and enjoy common interests together. Several comments supporting this motivation were: 'it's a social outing', 'some people come and do it for socialising', and 'the gaming side is not their major motive ... it's a social thing where they can talk to the people beside them'. Giving an example of socialising, a manager recalled events of that week, when 'they came in, there were probably about a dozen of them, they're all mates and then they put a few dollars in the pokies, had a few drinks and then they just wandered off'.

To win money was the second most important motivation mentioned by about half the managers. For Indigenous gamblers 'a quick buck would really be it', while others saw it as 'a chance of turning a little into potentially something that would be a bit more meaningful to them'. For some Indigenous gamblers, managers perceived gambling as 'just a way to earn money' and 'a little bit of easy money'. Another manager talked about poker machine gambling and winning as the reason for gambling, 'like everyone else does. They want to win money. The ones that do play the machines are the regular ones. They enjoy the pressing. That's what they call it'. From a large venue in a large town, winning money to make up for losses was said to be 'obvious, to chase money', where 'we have some people (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) who will be here till close one night and they'll be back the next morning and they're obviously chasing money that they've put in'. For just Indigenous gamblers it was reported that some 'come down for a fair dinkum gamble'.

To fill in time and reduce boredom was the third most common motivation reported by managers for Indigenous gambling. Comments reflecting this theme included: 'nothing much to do and too much time', and 'they probably have time on their hands ... the younger ones'. Remarks such as 'nothing else to do' and 'more something to do with their time' implied having a lot of spare time, being bored, being unable to find appropriate employment and even not much else to do in the venue. For instance, one manager said:

I think it's a combination of things. Probably very little to do and there's not real employment so they've only got a couple of bucks so why not try and turn it into something else? The smaller bettors, yeah they're just trying their luck. I don't think their motivation is anything different to the general population.



Similarly, another said ‘I think it’s free time, boredom ... the major issue for the community is lack of employment ... they come here out of boredom for the gambling side of it’. In terms of variety in venue activities, one manager noted that ‘I think anyone that comes in here, apart from getting a drink and having something to eat, there’s nothing else to do but play the pokies’. Another two people observed ‘it would be a bit of entertainment and killing time. I don’t think they’re chasing the big dollars, the ones that come in here anyway’ and ‘boredom, it’s a little bit of entertainment. I think that’s mainly it’.

One manager saw the consumption of alcohol as an influencing factor in gambling by Indigenous customers, ‘I think it’s ... alcohol related’. However, another countered this with ‘I don’t think alcohol has got any reason ... if they’re intoxicated or whatever, they don’t tend to do it any more than ... I don’t think it’s a motivation to do it’. Another manager suggested that alcohol consumption was more important, where ‘they’re more interested in alcohol than gambling’. The role of alcohol in motivating gambling is unclear from these managers’ responses.

#### **4.8.5 The Influence of Commercial Gambling Products and Services**

Results in regard to the influence of gambling products and services on gambling behaviour are reported as in terms of access to and availability of commercial gambling, and meeting the needs of Indigenous women and men gamblers.

The gaming managers’ descriptions of physical and social access to commercial gambling by Indigenous gamblers in Bundjalung Country appeared to centre on place and proximity, access to transport, the number of gambling products and gambling opportunities, prices, a comfortable environment, social acceptance and sports sponsorship. In some locations, venue access depended on place. Close proximity to the centre of town provided ‘convenience and access’. In one place, two clubs were on the outskirts of the town, ‘whereas the three hotels are all right in the middle and easy walking distance to each other’. These three hotels were popular congregation places for Indigenous gamblers. In a different place, a hotel manager in the main street said ‘we do have a pub across the road and they do like to hop in-between one another. If that means they’re playing at one or playing at another, I don’t know’.

Access to transport was a major issue where little public transport was available. Some Indigenous communities had a small bus available. One manager explained

Generally what you see ... is there’ll be a group that’s dropped off from a community transport bus which, for some reason, drops them right out the front of my door. But then those people come in a group and from there they seem to go off and come back and new ones come in.

The number of gambling products and opportunities available was a factor influencing access. For example, two managers in one place commented that one particular venue was popular as it had ‘a bigger [gaming] area [and] because they’ve got a TAB’. In a different location, another two managers observed that the ‘biggest venue in town’ was the most popular for Indigenous gamblers. Explaining the influence of the number of gambling opportunities, a manager in a small village venue described Indigenous gamblers visiting a large venue in a large town nearby as:

They gamble in [X], a lot of them are members or social members of [X] and they like the jackpot or whatever they get on the Thursday night. A lot of them do go in for that. And some of the ones who do go in for that are non-drinkers anyway. I’ve been in there and I’ve seen them playing the pokies. They play them around a bit.

The price of venue products and services appeared to be influential for some. One manager said ‘I think here because we do have cheaper drinks; that does sort of help them when they come in [and] they’re more often than not having a drink while they gamble’.

A comfortable environment and social acceptance was seen as appealing to some Indigenous gamblers. One manager in a large town remarked ‘it’s warm, they’ve got a comfy chair, and they’re off the street, maybe away from the coppers. Maybe even just away from the other people who live on the street because there are loads of arguments that go on out there’. Another manager in a small town made similar observations: ‘I don’t know what sort of home life they have. Maybe they don’t have a home. I know a lot of the Aboriginal people in [X] do live on the street’. A feeling of comfort and acceptance was perceived to appeal to some gamblers.

One manager believed that access to one venue in her town was based on its sponsorship of Indigenous sports teams. ‘I’ve noticed another venue in town, they sponsor the rugby league and the Aboriginal community seem to have reasonably large ties with the rugby league in the area’, she said. Loyalty to a sponsor appeared to influence this choice of venue. Three managers felt that Indigenous gamblers preferred gambling in hotels rather than clubs. This was because there appeared fewer standards and rules imposed by hotels in regards to meeting entry requirements.

The use of gambling products and services is based on meeting people’s needs and expectations, their appeal and price. From the managers’ responses, gambling products and services appear to have different appeals for Indigenous women compared to Indigenous men. For instance, Indigenous women were reported to prefer poker machine gambling, bingo, some TAB gambling and some keno (in that order). Several managers remarked that ‘the females will tend to just play the pokies’ and ‘women play the poker machines probably more than what the males do’. Others said that women ‘certainly play bingo’ and that bingo was a low cost form of gambling especially ‘if they’re in a group having a girl’s night out or something’. For keno, it was noted that ‘both genders do Keno’ and ‘keno’s a \$1 game’. Another felt that ‘women and men do bet on the TAB’. In contrast, several managers noted that, for TAB gambling, ‘you don’t see many girls on the horses’ and ‘the men are more into horse races but the girls mainly the machines’.

Gambling products and services that men were reported to prefer were TAB and poker machine gambling, with some gambling on keno. In one town, managers said that ‘[men] gamble on TAB and then pokies as well’ and ‘men bet on the TAB’. As well, ‘more of the males will definitely play the TAB and the pokies’ and ‘both TAB and pokies’. TAB gambling was seen as low expenditure gambling when men would mostly bet in \$1 stakes, where ‘\$5 is a large bet for them. If they get a \$1 change they’ll have a \$1 mystery or trifecta or whatever’. Another commented ‘... with keno you can’t spend a lot of money’.

#### **4.8.6 Consequences of Commercial Gambling**

The outcomes and consequences of gambling can be positive or negative depending on the gambler’s level of uptake and their social, cultural and financial resources (Thomas & Jackson 2004).

##### **Positive Consequences**

Positive outcomes and consequences of gambling as noted from the responses of the gaming managers were sharing common interests in sport, social connectedness and reduced alcohol consumption. Explaining the motivation to gamble as ‘socialising with others who share a

common interest (sport)' one manager said 'one group that comes in ... on a Friday, Saturday ... during the footy season ... sit and watch the footy because we've got all the different channels for them to watch'. This manager further added that 'they might have a little game on the pokies and couple of drinks. So they do a bit of both, so it's a social thing'. In another venue, the manager reiterated this motivation, saying 'a couple of times we had a group in ... and that was for football, so quite a few on them came in after footy on that day ... players too'.

In terms of social connectedness, one person observed that it depends what's happening at the time, 'if they're here for a funeral, an Aboriginal funeral, or a wake or the footy is on at night or a fight is on or whatever, they might punt on keno while that's on'. Another manager said that Indigenous social groups stay together whatever venue they are visiting: 'most of them ... they come and go. They might go out and have a punt on the horses and have a few bets and go out and have a smoke ... A lot of them don't stay here long'. Another said that 'when they had that big Indigenous football match we had a lot there then'. Similarly, a manager in a different place observed 'there's always a group with some common people, but there're other ones coming and going'.

While reduced alcohol consumption was reported as being an outcome of gambling, associated differences and contradictions were revealed. Talking about gamblers drinking alcohol while gambling, several managers indicated that 'a fair few of them don't actually drink (alcohol)' and 'the ones that I can think of tend not to drink'. Yet others said 'it's a bit hard to say', 'they drink when they're gambling, yes!', and 'some make mistakes on what they've got on their machines because they've had so much to drink. They just get a bit confused where they were playing or what they had'. The influence of alcohol consumption and gambling outcomes appear mixed.

### **Negative Consequences**

Negative consequences of gambling were said to include increased gambling due to the consumption of alcohol, financial hardship, living on loans, and parental absence. In contrast to the positive consequences noted above, some managers raised two issues regarding increased alcohol consumption and gambling. It was noted that some people gamble to obtain alcohol: 'some gamble so if they win they can buy more alcohol. This method also promotes larger outlays in hope to drink larger amounts or quality of alcohol'. Some managers noted that others 'increased gambling due the consumption of alcohol' and 'it was apparent that a greater proportion of Indigenous gamblers were heavy drinkers and thus more likely to gamble until their funds were exhausted'. One person summarised this as 'generally the nature of alcohol is it breaks down those inhibitors and so on and it takes common sense out of the [gambling] equation'.

Some gamblers experience financial hardship as a result of their gambling, where 'gambling is causing more problems for Aboriginal people and the people I see in my pub are spending too much money'. A reliance on charity was one outcome of financial hardship following gambling: 'I've seen them play the pokie machines and then go to Vinnies (St Vincent de Paul) and get food vouchers'. In one small town, one manager said they had seen 'Aboriginal people at a bank and then they went into Lifeline ... they'd ...been gambling and then they've been to a welfare agency and got money for groceries'.

For those who had lost their funds, living on loans or borrowed money was one way people managed financially until next payday. One manager said:

Specifically with them and their family group ... they all lend and borrow off each other. One half of the group will be propping up the other half of the group on week one and then on week two it will

switch and it will revolve around in this circle. It's like this mini-economy, I guess, of money lent and borrowed.

Another manager saw this as a 'lack of education in controlling their money'.

Some gambling parents were said to become so immersed in their gambling that they 'forget their responsibilities to their children'. One manager observed that:

We have had people call at the front door at different times by their children (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) ... Mother's giving them so many dollars to go and get video games or whatever and they've come back and a few hours later mum is still there ... there are significant problems for Aboriginal people in relation to gambling.

#### **4.8.7 Risk Factors for Gambling**

Results from the manager interviews are presented for risk factors associated with the propensity to gamble, the influence of gambling products and services, and the consequences of gambling for Indigenous gamblers in Bundjalung Country.

##### **Risk Factors Relating to the Propensity to Gamble**

Risk factors associated with the propensity to gamble include generational issues, peer pressure, the influence of alcohol in initiating and increasing gambling, gambling to overcome structural issues such as unemployment, gambling with borrowed money and the effect of windfall payments.

Generational influences were reported a risk factor associated with the propensity to gamble by these gaming managers. One manager suggested that 'young kids in particular ... become their environment. They're brought up where mum and dad have a drink ... and gamble too much'. The lesson from this appeared to be 'while it's not necessarily a learned thing from one generation to the next, if it's seen to be OK for the older generation to do it, the younger ones automatically think, that's cool'. Another view implied gambling was a rite of passage:

I suppose the biggest problem would be if they go in the machine room, the kids will come and try and look through the window. And they'll say to me, 'next year I'll be allowed in the hotel'. It's like that's about all they've got to offer. Obviously their parents are gambling and drinking.

This view was supported by another manager in another town who said that 'sometimes the family will come in and say "this is such and such and he's turned 18 today" and they're having drinks and whatever and playing the poker machines'.

Peer pressure was seen by several managers as increasing the propensity to gamble, with one manager noting 'I think perhaps peer pressure might play a role in it ... due to the fact that most of the ones we see are young' and later he continued 'young people take more risks with gambling'. Regarding TAB gambling, one manager believed that 'peer pressure can play a part in the more social TAB style of gambling, where a group will discuss the form of runners and make group decisions about bets'.

With alcohol consumption being a catalyst for initiating gambling, one manager believed that 'typical behaviour may include drinking and gambling concurrently, hiding any wins from friends and family and also borrowing money from friends and family'. Another person said 'alcohol is definitely a risk factor. This is not an Indigenous specific problem. Problem gamblers who lose their ability to reason due to alcohol consumption are always going to be in trouble'.

Alcohol consumption was implicated with increasing gambling. 'The younger ones might ... have a few drinks and then they all get a bit jolly and if a mate comes in and encourages them

or whatever, they might spend a little bit more’, observed one manager. Another commented that:

Generally, I don’t think that’s just something for the Indigenous community. I think the effects of alcohol impair people’s judgement ... it’s a well known fact that the more alcohol you drink the more risky your behaviour can become. Whether or not it probably ties into other socio economic factors when they have more time on their hands and perhaps they’re drinking more and say ‘I’ve got \$20 here and I’m going to try and turn it into \$100’. That probably does have an effect; the more they drink would have some impact.

With alcohol risks overshadowing gambling risks, one manager felt that alcohol is linked to the issues ‘without a doubt’. This manager said ‘you just can’t tackle one without the other ... it may be the case of turfing them out because of intoxication ... but they have done more [gambling] than they wanted to’. In contrast, other managers perceived that alcohol consumption is much more important than gambling, as ‘alcohol is probably the biggest part of their life’ and ‘alcohol is a huge problem’.

Gambling to overcome structural issues and unemployment, or a lack of participation in the economy, affects people’s lives and income levels. Arising from structural disadvantage, some managers saw unemployment as a risk and thought that ‘you can’t tackle the gambling without looking at other things and it doesn’t matter whether you’re black or white, it comes down to employment’. Unemployment and plenty of spare time to gamble were mentioned by several managers in a broad range of locations. Comments included: ‘I just think it’s because they’ve got nothing else to do and they’re not out working, they don’t have to pay a lot of bills so they’ve got the disposable income to do it’; ‘I think their gambling goes with the flow of money and I think it’s the time that they have available. I suppose the biggest problem is the lack of employment’; and ‘in the daytime there’s nothing to do other than come to places like clubs and pubs. If they’ve got the money then they’ll do it, or they will just lay low’. In a small town, one manager remarked on family unemployment cycles, saying ‘I think unemployment is a huge problem ... I suppose of really not being able to break out of the parent’s and grandparent’s cycle’.

Gambling with borrowed money was perceived as a risk by some managers. It was reported that ‘many Aboriginal people have a system’, and ‘it’s [about] knowing when other people are being paid so they can finance their activities’. One person said that ‘it is designed to have a group of people who they can drink and gamble with each time on a more regular basis’. One manager who had worked in several large venues throughout New South Wales noted ‘my observations ... were that people who were least able to support drinking and gambling were those most likely to be damaged by the practices’. In addition, this manager said that many of these people had no ‘employment and would visit ... any time of the day or night. Quite often these people ... with little or no cash would rely on the generosity of others to firstly drink and then gamble’.

Windfall payments appeared to one manager to stimulate increased gambling:

Oh yeah! The pokie stimulus package! That was brilliant. That was my biggest cashbox taking in twelve months on those few days. Absolutely no doubt I would almost bet my bottom dollar that maybe 25-30 per cent of that money in its entirety went through machines somewhere.

In contrast, another manager said, ‘I haven’t really noticed ... a great deal of difference in spending’.

### **Risk Factors Relation to Gambling Products and Services**

Risk factors seen to be associated with increasing access to, and use of, gambling products and services were: the co-location of alcohol and gambling consumption; and the ease of use

of some gambling products. Co-location of alcohol and gambling consumption in licensed venues was seen as a risk by some venue managers with one claiming that ‘congregating is a cultural thing without a doubt. Now the problem is they’re meeting and congregating in a place that punches out drinking and gambling. So that’s a problem ... doing it in a place that doesn’t help’.

The ease of use of poker machines and a lack of understanding of how they operate was seen as a risk for some Indigenous gamblers. A manager in a large town said ‘I think there’s just probably not a lot of education on it and just the fact that they’re so accessible’. It was noted that some people ‘... may not understand probability of games’. In a small village one manager felt that ‘Money doesn’t have a lot of meaning ... I think the poker machines take away the meaning of money because once you put your money in, it’s only symbols’.

### **Risk Factors Relating to the Consequences of Gambling**

The managers perceived both intrinsic and extrinsic obstacles that prevented Indigenous gamblers from addressing gambling-related problems. Two intrinsic, or personal barriers, mentioned in interviews included a failure to recognise that a problem exists and shyness, shame or reluctance to disclose a gambling-related problem. Three extrinsic or external barriers said to be faced by the gambler were the need to approach a venue manager for gambling assistance, a lack of awareness regarding responsible gambling signs and messages, and lack of culturally appropriate services.

A failure to recognise a gambling-related problem was seen by a couple of managers as a barrier to seeking help, as ‘until they realise they have a problem, nothing’s going to change’ and ‘they talk to me about a few different things but they won’t ever admit they’ve got a problem’. One person raised the problem of a dependency cycle ‘at the end of the day, to break the vicious cycle ... until that person says, puts their hand up and says “yeah I understand that I can make better choices”. that’s where it’s all going to start’.

Shyness was seen to be a natural barrier for some Indigenous gamblers: ‘yeah, they don’t really speak up, they don’t really ask for help’ and ‘they’re just too shy to ask ... maybe it’s a bit of a shy thing’. Another two managers saw hesitancy as a cultural barrier ‘... probably because of their culture .... they think they’re a bit different, a bit more hesitant’ and ‘... because that’s not in their culture. They’re very shy lots of times’.

In addition, shame and stigma played a role. One manager felt ‘Aboriginal people ... there is a stigma to admit they have a problem, shame’. Other managers commented: ‘... a sense of shame or that type of thing if they’re seen’ and ‘in terms of gambling and all of that, there’s a big shame thing as well’. Even in a large venue, one manager acknowledged Indigenous gambling problems as ‘embarrassment’.

An extrinsic barrier seen by some managers was that they had to wait until they were approached to get help for a customer experiencing problems with their gambling. It was noted that ‘they’ve got to come to us. It’s totally different to the drinking side of things. We can say to them “you’re getting a little intoxicated”, we’re not allowed to approach customers who we think are putting too much money in. They have to come to us. We are not allowed by law to say anything’. Another noted that ‘everyone actually comes to us. We can’t go to people. They have to come and ask us’.

Lack of reading and low understanding of the responsible gambling messages and signs was a barrier identified by some managers, as ‘some may not read signs or even understand the message’ and ‘I don’t think many people read the signs’. One manager explained:

We have signs on every poker machine which is law and just watching a lot of poker machine players, they just focus on the reels going round and round and some people, Aboriginal, non-Aboriginal, you ask them to witness something, sign a bit of paper for the next person who's won a jackpot, they just focus on the reels going round and lots don't even turn their head. They will turn their head to sign the paper but they keep going seeing what's in front of their eyes.

Additionally, exclusion from gambling was seen as misunderstood and a piecemeal practice by some managers. 'Some [excluded gamblers] try to come back in. And usually if it is a behaviour thing, they don't usually understand. They don't think they've done anything wrong', said one person. A manager in a small town observed on her visits to the nearest large town 'with the self exclusions here, I'll occasionally go to [X] and I'll know that someone's excluded from our club and yet I'll go to [X] and that person's down there sitting on the machine the whole day'.

Managers perceived there was also a reluctance to seek gambling help due to 'services not being culturally appropriate'. Additionally, it was highlighted that Indigenous gamblers may be reluctant to seek help from a non-Indigenous counsellor: 'if they do have a serious problem then it might be hard to seek help from a white person' and 'possibly not willing to see a non-Indigenous counsellor'.

#### **4.8.8 Protective Factors for Gambling**

Protective factors are discussed in relation to the propensity to gamble, the influences of gambling products and services, and addressing the consequences of gambling.

##### **Protective Factors Relating to the Propensity to Gamble**

Protective factors associated with the propensity to gamble were reported as being recognised as a local person, the ability to manage money, cultural obligations, strong role models, and cultural cohesion.

Being recognised as a local person appeared a protective factor for some Indigenous gamblers. One manager said 'the locals around here, they're really, really good people but every now and again I'll get some who must have come from out of town and that's when I have a problem'. A different manager said 'there's one lady, I see her every now and then and I'll say, "listen you've been on here for a fair while. I think it's time for you to go home". And she's like, "yeah, yeah no worries". And off she'll go'.

Some Indigenous gamblers had developed protective ways to manage their money and cultural obligations at the same time. A manager in one popular venue observed 'you see it sometimes where they'll purposely not have all their money in their wallet because they know they just feel obligated to lend it out or shout someone a beer or whatever'. In another venue in a small town, one manager said 'we have some people who get payouts and they'll look around and say "just making sure nobody's around wanting some of my money"'.

Strong role models were also believed to be protective. One manager revealed:

I tell you why ... this community and this area is really, really strong. It's one of the best areas I've seen. I'm only 30 this year and I haven't been around the world yet but this community here is really tight ... everyone helps out everyone. Everyone gets that vibe. I notice with young kids it's a completely different thing but with the adults they're all, everyone is there to help each other out. So if someone's been a bit out of control there's always someone there that's going to pull them in or look out for them. That's what I do find in this area.

In a small village, a manager said 'very few of the male Elders play the pokies' and in a neighbouring village it was noted that 'role models are very important in society'. Of interest,

one manager said that ‘a lack of role models’ was problematic. In this particular small town, the Indigenous youth worker was barred from the venue for alcohol and violence issues. Managers felt that this youth worker was not the ‘right person in the right position to help’.

Cultural cohesion was seen to be a protective factor as it connected Indigenous people through their communal care for each other. One manager saw this as ‘looking out for each other’. Another spoke about cultural group cohesion: ‘I think the young people that we see the majority of it’s more of a social, entertainment value for them, but they’re not coming in and spending all day here playing the machines’. This person further noted ‘they’ll come in with their group, spend their money, win or lose and then move onto other areas ... where there’s some live music or perhaps to another venue altogether’. In a large town and a large venue, a manager observed ‘because they’re all together all the time ... they’re always in a group of two or three. It’s out in the open; it’s not as if they’re doing it secretly’. Similarly, another observed ‘one of the things I really admire about them ... they do see everybody as family’. Where Indigenous communities were seen as supportive, they were perceived as having ‘an advantage rather than a disadvantage’ to work for the benefit of all members.

### **Protective Factors Relating to Gambling Products and Services**

Protective factors associated with gambling products and services were identified as low stakes gambling and limited physical access to gambling.

Using low stakes helped to limit overall gambling expenditure. For one manager, discretionary spending seemed to be stretched to cover desired purchases:

Nine times out of ten if they buy a carton of beer for \$35 and they give you \$40, or if you give them a \$5 note they’ll ask you to give them five singles. If you give them \$1 coins or whatever change they get they’ll normally just put it in the pokies and drop that \$2 or \$4 in. Not all the time but a lot of the time they do. Sometimes they win and it pays for that carton of beer they just bought.

Another said, ‘its small money’ and later continued ‘I haven’t seen them (gamble) very big, only little’.

Limiting physical access to gambling appears facilitated by distance and lack of transport. In one small village, a manager has to control access to his venue as part of his ongoing licence requirement. He said, ‘we have a courtesy bus and we run them back home to [X]. The others will normally come in and have a few drinks. That’s part of our license. The police require us to have a courtesy bus’.

### **Protective Factors Relating to the Consequences of Gambling**

Facilitators for addressing gambling problems raised in the managers’ interviews included local knowledge, being older and more experienced in seeking help, and managers who understood the needs of regular customers. A couple of managers also mentioned self-exclusion as a facilitator.

Local knowledge and being a local person appeared to facilitate pathways for addressing a gambling problem. As one manager said ‘they all seem to like me because I’ve been here so long and being older as well ... I get on with them really well’. In contrast to the barriers mentioned earlier, another manager said ‘... they state their mind to us quite freely’.

An understanding of a venue’s regular customers assists managers in addressing problems with alcohol and gambling. One explained that ‘... one of them is my favourite guy, he’s a great bloke, he tells me “... if I ever ask you for a drink mate, you know what to do”’. This manager further explained ‘I’m to put him in my report book because he’s never allowed to have a drink ... I think if [others] did that they would feel comfortable because they know us



pretty well in here and they're just a nice group of people'. Another manager reflected '... if they've got a problem they will try and stop and ask for help'.

For one manager, age and life experience was important as older people were felt to seek assistance more than younger people: 'an elderly person, yes ... is a bit more conscious of where their money's going and has to worry about it a bit more ... In terms of a younger person, I don't think that would be factored in at all'.

Indigenous gamblers were reported to ask for help if they needed it. Managers remarked, 'they usually come and tell us. They know what's acceptable and what's not' and 'I've had people ask me about the schemes and you try to steer them in the right direction but I think they prefer the privacy of going to a counsellor or some organisation like that'. Yet, this was contrary to other managers' comments, such as 'no. not the Indigenous people, no' and 'I can't remember Aboriginal ones at all who have'.

Exclusion, both formal and informal, was seen by some managers as helping to address a gambling problem. One manager in a small town who had an Indigenous gambler self-exclude recounted 'a while ago he did self exclude himself from the TAB but we actually kept that within the venue ... he stopped drinking as well ... I think he's gambling more sensibly'. Another manager in a large town reported 'we've had one Aboriginal female come and do a self exclusion. We've also had a parent of an Aboriginal male come and see us. We can certainly provide the resources, the gambling helpline numbers'.

#### **4.8.9 Suggested Interventions to Address Gambling Issues**

When asked what could be done to reduce negative consequences of gambling for Indigenous gamblers, managers made suggestions for actions by Indigenous communities, community services, the gambling industry and governments.

##### **Indigenous Communities**

For Indigenous communities, managers felt that leadership, Indigenous counsellors and education would assist in reducing the negative consequences of gambling. Managers suggested, 'lead by example ... have maybe someone from the Elders or whoever who can bring them in and maybe talk to somebody here', 'in my experience marginalised people don't like being told what to do by the majority ...', and 'Indigenous people ... would be more responsive to entreaties from respected and responsible people that they identify with'. Referring to supportive leadership, one manager felt Indigenous gamblers '... get great support from Elders, grandparents, aunties ... that's where governments should spend money'.

Leadership by Elders produced mixed responses because 'every younger generation in every society breaks away from the Elders at some stage ... the Elders only have a certain part to play'. One manager commented 'Elders ... have to lead by example and not by instruction' and another 'some Elders ... come in payday and drink heaps of alcohol and punt away'. In contrast, others said 'we have some outstanding Aboriginal blokes in town here' and 'people who are really successful ... need to make a feature of these people'.

Training Indigenous gambling counsellors was considered a suitable measure. One manager said that 'all of those people from that circumstance feel more comfortable talking to someone who's come from that circumstance and gone through it'. From a large town, one manager commented 'fund Indigenous gambling help services' while in a small town another suggested 'provide funding back to local communities to begin addressing the issues'.

In a more general sense, education was seen to be a way forward, as ‘... it’s probably the cycle that the Indigenous community find themselves in. It’s a very difficult thing to break without proper education’. Another person agreed, noting ‘education is the most powerful thing we have available to us’.

### **Community Services**

For community services, the managers felt that existing local services were doing a good job but could do more if resources were available. One manager commented:

Lifeline and Northern Rivers Gambling Service ... these ads they have on TV, I think shock value is sometimes better whether it’s a car accident, drinking ... I would like to see something on TV just showing some of those ads where the dad goes home and has to explain to his child that he’s got no money. That would do more than having a leaflet.

Additionally, another considered that ‘community education and awareness was needed within Indigenous communities’ regarding gambling education. This would help with ‘problem solving’ rather than ‘fire fighting’.

The availability of help was seen to be important for all gamblers. For instance, one person commented ‘at least there’s visibility at the venues ... they know that there’s an option. And certainly it’s highly visible and that visibility is seen for Aborigines and white people. I think there’s help for them if they need it’.

### **Gambling Industry And Venues**

When asked what the gambling industry could do, two themes emerged – talking to customers and giving them advice, and communication associated with exclusion.

A few managers said they talk to some of their customers, giving them advice about starting gambling and continuing gambling. In a small village venue, one manager said ‘the young generation they do it but I tend to tell them, when you’re old enough you don’t want to be going in there because it doesn’t work’. This manager explains to the younger people that ‘your chance of winning is very limited and don’t get involved in it otherwise you’ll never have any money’. In a large town venue, another manager remarked, ‘if I think that someone has a problem, I’ll go out and give them a card’.

In terms of exclusion and a duty of care with gambling, one manager felt personal communication was important: ‘... a customer should be able to come in and if they didn’t want to go further ... they could come and speak to me, give me a photo, give me a big rundown about them and I feel it’s my duty with my staff and that’s a way of going through a different way’. Others confirmed the value of personal contact: ‘I feel ... they still don’t understand exactly, they come to me and they just want to deal with me direct. But they can ring up the G-line and organise it all themselves’ and ‘I find that if hotel managers could go through the procedure and dealing with them ... say if you’ve been serving someone for five years and they’ve realised they had a gambling problem, they really would prefer to come to me about it and just deal with me about it’. Yet there was some contradiction on this issue. For example, one manager said ‘... very few people approach the licensee of the venues themselves. Generally they do it through the Lifeline or whatever the organisation is’.

### **Governments**

Managers suggested governments do more in terms of improving structural conditions, such as improving employment, education, effective communication and responsible gambling strategies and practices. Some managers called for efforts in employment ‘... to break the

cycle. It doesn't matter if it's the Indigenous community or long term unemployed white Australians, but we've got to break the cycle'. Calls were made for improved education opportunities: '... there's got to be more educational opportunities and more employment opportunities' and 'get more of the Aborigines more actively involved in their own life ... There's got to be a high incidence of education and a high incidence of employment'.

In one small town the local police were seen as leading a way forward in promoting effective communication with Elders. One manager reported:

They are trying to do a little bit because we've had a little trouble around here with the juveniles and I think with the new local Sergeant and everything, he's communicating with the Elders and the Elders are trying to do a little bit more, bringing some of the juveniles to justice.

In regards to improving responsible gambling strategies and practices, the reaction was mixed. Nine managers felt these strategies were not working while five felt they helped. From a range of locations, negative comments about posters and signage included '... we had that gambling week with the posters and that ... I stuck the stickers all over the machines. There was no feedback ... they didn't even notice' and 'signage only has a very small effect really at the end of the day ... we're bred to ignore most advertising now because it's thrust at us ... we can quite easily just tune out'. Reasons provided for ignoring the posters and signage included small bets and irrelevance, where 'they wouldn't read them. The amount they put in ... we've only got one lady who really actually hits them hard. The rest would only put a few bucks here and there' and 'as far as the signage goes; I don't think they read any signs ... I think it's just totally irrelevant'.

In contrast, some managers felt that responsible gambling strategies and practices helped a few gamblers. With responsible gambling signage it was felt that 'yes ... because of the signage and self exclusion ... I think it helps everyone a little bit. We have the cards on every single machine, I think they probably would' and 'they definitely do notice it'. Further, some managers believed that self-exclusion was effective. From a large town, one manager said 'we do have quite a few people who are on our self-exclusion list'. From a small town, another explained 'I've had three people that were middle aged who were impulsive gamblers and they took it out at the venue where they couldn't play the pokies ... they got me to do it for six months. If they come in, it's up to me to tell them to get out of the pokie machine room'.

Some managers had additional suggestions, such as combining alcohol and gambling issues in a state-wide intervention approach. One manager said that alcohol and gambling are 'serious issues, especially among the Indigenous population'. Others maintained that the responsible conduct of gambling course should be combined with the responsible service of alcohol course and be updated or refreshed every two years. Cultural awareness training was brought up as a topic for inclusion in the RSA and RCG education of venue managers and staff 'so that you all understand each other'. While some managers saw value in cultural awareness education, others felt that it would be 'a waste of time'.

#### **4.8.10 Summary of the Gaming Venue Manager Interviews**

In the venues where 21 managers were interviewed, the proportions of Indigenous gamblers amongst the venue's gamblers was variously reported as less than one per cent (large venues in large towns), about 35 per cent (popular venues for Indigenous customers), and about 70 per cent (small villages with large Indigenous populations).

Overall, poker machines, TAB gambling, bingo and keno were popular forms of gambling undertaken by Indigenous gamblers in the Bundjalung region. Gambling was a regular

weekly or fortnightly activity, mostly on pay day. Shorter sessions were more obvious than longer sessions. Lower expenditure was reported more than higher expenditure. While people of all ages gambled, males in larger towns and females in smaller villages were reported as obvious. Many Indigenous gamblers gambled in social groups. Motivations to gamble included to socialise, to win money, to fill in time and reduce boredom, and due to the influence of alcohol (in that order). Access to gambling depended on proximity to gambling opportunities, transport, number and variety of gambling products available, prices, a comfortable environment, social acceptance and sports sponsorship. Positive consequences of gambling were said to be: time to share common interests in sport; social connectedness; and reduced alcohol consumption. Negative consequences of gambling were reported as: increased gambling due to increased consumption of alcohol; financial hardship; living on loans; and parental absence.

Risk factors associated with the propensity to gamble were said to be: generational issues; peer pressure; the influence of alcohol in initiating further gambling; gambling to overcome structural issues including unemployment; gambling with borrowed money; and the effect of windfall payments. Risk factors associated with gambling products and services included increased access to gambling with the co-location of alcohol and gambling and ease of use of poker machines. Those associated with addressing negative consequences of gambling were both intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic barriers were reported by managers to comprise: a failure to recognise a gambling problem; and shyness, shame or reluctance to disclose a gambling-related problem and seek help. Extrinsic barriers were reported as the need to approach a venue manager for gambling assistance, lack of awareness of responsible gambling signs and messages, and lack of culturally appropriate services.

Protective factors associated with the propensity to gamble were reported as being recognised as a local person, and being able to simultaneously manage money and cultural obligations, having strong role models, and cultural cohesion. Those associated with gambling products and environments were limited physical access to gambling, low stakes gambling, and self-exclusion. Protective factors for addressing problematic consequences of gambling were considered to include local knowledge, managers who understood the needs of regular customers, being older and more experienced in seeking help, and self-exclusion.

Suggestions for further interventions by the Indigenous community were improved Indigenous leadership, training of Indigenous counsellors and improved community education. For community services, more resourcing of existing local services was advocated. For the gambling industry and venues, suggestions were made for greater efforts to talk to customers and give them advice, and for more effective communication associated with exclusion. For governments, more could be done to improve employment and education outcomes, along with more effective communication about responsible gambling, including responsible gambling strategies and practices.

#### **4.9 RESULTS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH GAMBLING COUNSELLORS**

This section presents results from interviews with gambling counsellors and which pertain to Research Objective One. An overview of the sample of counsellors is presented first, followed by a profile of their Indigenous clients and their gambling behaviour on cards and commercial gambling. Risk and protective factors are then detailed. A discussion of potential interventions and a summary of findings conclude this section.

### 4.9.1 The Sample

Many of the gambling help counsellors in Northern New South Wales belong to the Northern New South Wales Gambling Counsellors' Forum. The Forum holds quarterly meetings in a central location. A two-hour information sharing and gathering session was held with seven counsellors at their June 2008 meeting on the topic of Indigenous gambling and their experiences with Indigenous problem gamblers. This was followed by two individual interviews with Forum members who were absent from the June meeting. Thus, nine gambling counsellors have contributed to this research.

### 4.9.2 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Indigenous Clients

Amongst them, the nine counsellors reported they had assisted 19-20 Indigenous gamblers in the past three years. Approximately two-thirds of the Indigenous gamblers were male and one-third female. Gambler ages ranged from 25-55 years, with females being slightly younger (25-50 years) than males (30-50+ years). One counsellor remarked that 'very few young people' present at their service, even though statistically younger people are more likely to experience problems with gambling. Most clients were married or in a relationship. Many had children and some had grand-children. They were equally likely to be employed as unemployed.

Regarding the range of clients, one counsellor said that Indigenous gambler clients could be 'right across the board'. This ranged from high profile people with 'high paying jobs' and 'Elders' to 'extremely marginal' people, some with major mental health and physical health problems and others who engage in crime.

Many of the Indigenous gambler clients had suffered from significant childhood issues, such as being removed from their family or being abused (emotionally, physically or sexually). As a child, one client was 'plucked off the street and shipped off to Melbourne'.

Indigenous gambler clients tended to gamble 'on their own'. Although there was an 'illusion' of socialising in a gaming venue, it was noted by some counsellors that 'in fact there's no social interaction'.

### 4.9.3 Card Gambling Behaviour

Popular card games were identified by the counsellors as being poker and twenty-one. Occasionally some dice games were played. Card gambling was said to occur when people are out and about, walking in the street, talking and visiting others. One counsellor commented 'these things [card games] happen because of social interaction'. Card games were set up 'on corners in the street'. People just 'throw a blanket down and play cards'. Card gambling expenditure was not always perceived as spending money on gambling when 'in a lot of people's eyes, the card game on the corner ... and the private casino, that's not gambling'.

In terms of the propensity to gamble, in one location where card gambling was reportedly prominent, part of the community was very mobile as 'the community moves in and out all the time', while another part of the population was permanent. Card gambling here was said to be 'a social thing ... and transient'. People played cards when they were together. It was very sociable. Motivations for card gambling focused on the opportunity for social interaction. Cards were not seen 'so much as gambling but ... a way to have some fun and see some people and chat with people'. Card gambling was also motivated by 'getting the big win' for a small outlay.

Access to card games depended on access to money; ‘access is there at the drop of a hat depending on whether they’ve got money’, remarked one counsellor. In addition, it was reported that people might use other gambling stakes such as ‘beer ... favours’.

In terms of consequences, it was thought that card gambling was mainly a form of social interaction. One counsellor’s client was reported to be experiencing gambling-related problems with cards in his community. This person was gambling on card games in a private house, referred to as a ‘casino’. It provided a variety of casino-style gambling opportunities, including cards. For this gambler, gambling to make money was reported to be important, reportedly saying ‘if I win \$5000, I have learnt to make money fast’.

One risk factor seen to be associated with the propensity to gamble was a generational influence. When they were younger, some Indigenous clients played and gambled on cards, ‘it was part of their community’. With ‘children ... learning’ from being exposed to card gambling as youth, some people grew up and went ‘into pubs and clubs’. Adult gambling appeared a ‘follow on acting from those childhood issues’. However, most clients no longer played cards as they preferred poker machine gambling.

#### **4.9.4 Commercial Gambling Behaviour**

Poker machine gambling was reported as the most popular form of gambling for these counsellors’ Indigenous clients. They noted that gambling was ‘mostly just the pokies’ and ‘all on poker machines’. A few clients were said to prefer TAB gambling. This had somewhat increased because ‘they can’t smoke in the hotel and club, so now ... horse racing is popular’. One counsellor had a client who experienced gambling-related problems with bingo ‘played in clubs and pubs’.

In terms of frequency, it was reported that some clients spent all their money on the day it arrived and ‘they would have been broke by the end of the week’. Most counsellor’s clients gambled ‘on pay day’, weekly, fortnightly or monthly. While clients gambled in ‘clubs and the pubs’, in one location private gambling on casino games was available. In regards to duration, some clients gambled as an ‘all night affair’. They often played ‘for as long as it [money] would last’. By the time the counsellors were involved, many clients were ‘in debt’. Some spent ‘most of their money’ or ‘most of their income’ on poker machine gambling or ‘more than they could afford’.

The counsellors reported that most of their Indigenous clients were men. Some were unemployed, while others had full time jobs in well-paid positions. A couple of Indigenous clients identified themselves as ‘binge gamblers’ because they gambled ‘when money is available’. Money was usually available fortnightly, so they tended to gamble fortnightly.

Motivations to gamble were reported to include: having a big win; to win money; to hope for a win; to socialise; trauma; from boredom; and to escape from pressure and mental health problems.

It was reported that, generally, clients gambled to have ‘a big win’ or a ‘significant win’. For some clients a big win ‘creates ... popularity’. It produced ‘self-esteem’ and affirmed the ‘self-worth’ of a person. The identification of being a winner raised the ego of the gambler. A big win was said to be a ‘ticket to success’ and a way to ‘get some quality items for the family’. The chance to win money ‘seems like a magical kind of prospect’ because turning ‘\$100 into \$1,000 ... could for one week buy lots of power’. Escaping from unemployment and a ‘hopeless kind of reality’ with \$1,000 can ‘buy your friends’ drinks ... buy favours ... buy lots of love and affection ... suddenly for one week you become the most popular

person in the village'. It was about the chance of 'getting the big win for a small outlay in a short session'.

Some counsellors identified that 'the hope' and possibility of a win 'brings a sparkle to the day'. This was especially important for clients who felt 'depressed and that there is nowhere to go'. That sense of hope, expectation and looking forward came with 'a sense of excitement'. That excitement was tinged with a sense of 'fear' when the client knew they should not be gambling. One counsellor perceived this produced 'an incredible cocktail of feelings'.

Others gambled for 'socialising' although some counsellors saw this as misapprehension. Gamblers thought they were socialising but were not interacting with others. Counsellors suggested that a social need for some gamblers may just be having other people around them.

Some clients gambled because of underlying 'serious trauma', especially where there was 'lots of trauma in the family'. For one client, a 'tragic death in the family' was an issue associated with gambling. For others, it was 'the whole spectrum of abuse'. Some counsellors found 'very high percentages of clients have been sexually abused', others had to cope with 'serious domestic violence' and 'abandonment as a child'.

Some clients were said to gamble out of boredom or not having much meaning in their lives, no goals to achieve. One counsellor suggested this was actually 'a sense of depression', especially when tied to being a middle-aged male, with few skills and limited work opportunities.

Another couple of clients were reported to gamble to escape from pressure and internal stress. In one instance, a gambler felt as if he was required to meet the needs of everyone else at the expense of his own needs. This was followed by 'feeling angry', 'sorry for himself' or 'resentful'. Because his own needs were being ignored, he gambled for some 'time out'. This escape helped reduce the immediate pressure on him but led to longer term gambling-related problems and a need for counselling.

Some gamblers in counselling suffered from mental and physical health problems. They became marginalised even when supported by their community and health services. Some marginalised people gambled out of 'loneliness'. One client found it 'difficult to connect to people and so he used to connect with the [poker] machine'. He was 'happier' when he was gambling.

The counsellors also reported that the gaming environment was attractive and 'welcoming' for Indigenous clients. This included the marketing, the presentation, the gambling and the game designs. One counsellor described features of the gambling environment as 'it's kind of pleasant, air conditioned in summer ... you can buy a cheap lunch ... You could say, metaphorically speaking ... you kind of pay for a womb for a few hours in which to hide away from reality. It's a ... cosy kind of place'. Another counsellor explained gaming venues as 'warm ... air conditioned', a place with good facilities 'where you can get a feed'.

For poker machine gamblers, there was a 'sense of magic' in the symbols, the noise, the sounds and 'the drops that are happening'. The nature of the 'intermittent reward' from poker machines was very attractive but unpredictable. Important physical aspects of poker machines were 'their ease of use'. Poker machines did not require 'a great deal of intelligence', so if people have 'literacy issues' they could still go into a venue and use the poker machines 'just the same as everyone else'. Some clients found the gambling atmosphere 'terrific'.

One counsellor reported one client who ‘loves horses’ and the faster they ran the more he enjoyed racing. It did not matter what he won, he ‘just bets on the next horse coming in’. It was his enjoyment and socialising, but he just ‘couldn’t stop’. He lived on the land and had worked with horses all his life.

#### **4.9.5 Consequences of Gambling**

The outcomes and consequences of gambling were said to be mostly negative, but there was one positive outcome for these clients. Acceptance and comfort was important to Indigenous gamblers. Some people felt that gambling was ‘familiar and welcoming’. A win at gambling meant that some funds could be given ‘to relatives’. Some clients found that gambling was inclusive through acceptance and a feeling of comfort.

Negative outcomes and consequences were reported to include relationship difficulties and debts. Several counsellors reported relationship breakdowns in couples where one was experiencing gambling-related problems. By spending more than they could afford, some men ‘put a strain’ on their relationships. They were living off the income of ‘their wives’.

Several Indigenous clients were said to have accumulated credit card debt. These clients had more than one credit card, with one having ‘six cards’ at once. In this case, people tried to pay off debt with one card, then another card, like ‘a hamster on the wheel’. They actually paid off nothing but the interest kept growing. After a big win, clients were ‘always chasing their losses’. They ‘chase it and try to get it back’, said counsellors.

#### **4.9.6 Risk Factors for Gambling**

Risk factors are discussed in relation to the propensity to gamble, the gambling products and services themselves, and the consequences of gambling.

##### **Risk Factors Relating to the Propensity to Gamble**

Personal and behavioural risk factors were reported to be: unemployment; use of alcohol and other drugs while gambling; the experience of grief and loss; domestic violence; and being a victim of abuse. Social, contextual and cultural risk factors were reported by counsellors to be: meeting people in a gaming venue; gambling with borrowed money; and ‘humberging’.<sup>2</sup>

A couple of unemployed clients in counselling were reported to have plenty of spare time to gamble and usually spent ‘more than they could afford’. Their spouses supported them financially, but this led to feelings of ‘displacement and uselessness’. Being unemployed and having spare time was seen as a risk factor by some counsellors.

A few clients consume alcohol, marijuana and smoke tobacco while gambling. Some had ‘multiple addictions’. One person observed ‘oh, yes, they all drink’. One 50 year old female gambler in counselling had been a chronic alcoholic ten years previously. Her past alcohol use ‘affected her mental capacity’.

Some clients were affected by grief and loss, particularly experienced as a child. Memories of the Stolen Generation were reported to be ‘still quite fresh in their minds’, with that ‘horrible experience’ perceived as passed down ‘to another generation’. The experience suggested that the child being taken away was not important to their parents, their aunties and uncles. A loss

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<sup>2</sup> Humberg – a commonly used word by Indigenous Australians in referring to the harassment and pestering of people for money with the expectation of receiving it (McKnight 2002; McDonald & Wombo 2006).



of contact with ‘siblings and extended family’ meant that life ‘becomes a bit fragmented’. The culture around the Stolen Generation was still being revealed and the effects were noted as long-term.

Many counsellors mentioned that domestic violence exacerbated gambling-related problems for clients. For some, ‘gambling helped with those feelings’. Counsellors felt they only ‘see the tip of the iceberg’ in regard to the influence of ‘domestic violence’, including sexual, verbal and physical abuse. Domestic violence usually affected parents, spouses and children. In addition, a couple of counsellors described their clients as having ‘low self-esteem’. Many of these clients were emotionally and physically abused as children. Some were in abusive adult relationships.

In regards to social, contextual and cultural risk factors, one person, who was abstinent from gambling for two years, recently found himself with spare time waiting to meet someone in a hotel which had gambling available. He spent \$400 and ‘it stung him really badly’.

Gambling with borrowed money was seen as a risk by counsellors. Some gamblers had large debts on credit cards as a consequence of their gambling. The time for some debt-laden clients to see a counsellor was when they ‘would have money owing on credit cards, to their friends’. They were seeing a counsellor out of ‘desperation’ to get their financial circumstances sorted out. For example, one gambler with a husband in gaol was struggling to meet her commitments, plus she had accumulated a large, unmanageable debt. She had lost her job as a cleaner, but had fortunately trained as a carer for aged Indigenous people. She was desperate to get the new position as it would help her manage her debts. She was successful with her application but needed further counselling to get her gambling under control. This was seen as unlikely as her spare time was now limited.

Some clients were said to gamble with money borrowed from family. For one family, problems were caused when one son borrowed regularly from his parents. Their other sons were annoyed and worried about their parents. The parents were in tears at the counselling session as their financial situation was very difficult. The gambler’s mother insisted that she cannot refuse to help her son when asked, saying ‘I can’t do that to my son’.

Humbugging refers to the harassment and pestering by Indigenous gamblers for money or goods with the expectation of receiving the same. It is based on traditional Indigenous reciprocity when people lived and shared resources as hunter-gatherers. It was noted it is very difficult to say no ‘because it goes against Aboriginal cultural norms’ and it constituted a ‘serious offence’. The sense of ‘I owe you and you owe me’ was very real. This sense of reciprocity was seen in the ‘extended family community’. Strong feelings and norms associated with ‘tribal culture’ were difficult to change with a ‘dysfunctional gambler’.

### **Risk Factors Relation to Gambling Products and Services**

Physical and social access to commercial gambling were said to be important influences for gambling uptake by Indigenous gamblers in counselling. Some counsellors saw physical and sensory experiences as being very critical risks for poker machine gambling. Poker machine gambling was seen to provide a mechanism for some clients to gain an adrenaline rush. Seeking an adrenaline rush was described as the first win, taking people to a plateau. After a few wins a sense of excitement started to build. More money was spent in winning and losing because ‘that’s how poker machines are designed’. The gambler reached a certain point of excitement. An adrenaline rush took the person out of themselves: ‘it’s an out of body experience and it’s addictive’. It brought a sense of excitement, expectation, hope, noise and images. The electronic lights ‘come into your eyes and brain’ and it was noted that people

may become 'hypnotised'. Even when gamblers were losing money and wanted to stop gambling, the 'audio and visual bio feedback' influenced them to keep going; if the poker machines were silent, they may have been able to leave.

### **Risk Factors Relating to the Consequences of Gambling**

Risk factors relating to the consequences of gambling largely encompassed barriers faced in addressing a gambling problem. Barriers to addressing a gambling problem were reported by counsellors to include having secretive and negative attitudes towards counselling, cultural differences, power relationships, lack of awareness of services, and inadequacies of self-exclusion.

It was reported that some Indigenous clients were 'quite secretive' about seeing a gambling counsellor and did not want anyone to know about their counselling. Further, attitudes to counselling were problematic for some people. Several clients found the 'white Anglo-Saxon context' in which counselling was available uncomfortable. The language, concepts and ideas were 'different' and the services offered were 'strange' and even 'unreal'.

Counsellors saw barriers for their Indigenous clients in gaining trust, in using plain English language, in power relationships and in allocation of time. For example, one counsellor said 'to work with ... Aboriginal community ... you need to have trust ... [use] plain English'. Another asked, 'Why should they trust you when they have been subjected to, and have experienced, systemic mistrust?'

In terms of power relationships, others said their Indigenous clients 'feel intimidated in an office by the way it is set up and the power'; they did not feel 'comfortable'. A counsellor needed time to go 'into this person's environment', to become known and trusted. One person explained more about the limitations of counseling Indigenous clients: 'to see someone for fifty minutes every two weeks and to connect with that person on that level, it's very hard work'. Further, clients who are referred to counsellors through the legal system may feel even less motivated to find solutions than voluntary clients.

Further, some counsellors said that, although they had their signage up in venues and ran some television advertisements, some gamblers did not 'know about our services'.

Several shortcomings of self-exclusion were noted as barriers to addressing a gambling problem. Counsellors said a threat in a small town or community was privacy as there may be only three or four venues in town. When a client has admitted they have a problem with their gambling, they often did not want everyone to know. It was noted that everyone in those venues must know who was excluded.

Self-exclusion was perceived as superficial and a further risk for the client if not implemented carefully. One counsellor had an Indigenous client self-exclude because the client felt that was the only way she could stop gambling, even though she said 'I think I'm going to label myself'. However, one day she walked into the venue, gambled all her money on a poker machine and no-one stopped her, even though her photograph was sitting behind the bar. She rang the counsellor and said 'forget about self exclusion, I've just proved it doesn't work'. A similar story from another counsellor ended with 'there was no question they knew who she was. My own view was it was all about money on their part'. Further problems were raised with the wording of the exclusion documents for many people, including Indigenous clients. The terminology seemed to indicate that the gambler had done something wrong and that now they are going to do something good: 'it's quite judgmental'.

#### **4.9.7 Protective Factors for Gambling**

The counsellors' responses are grouped below into protective factors relating to the propensity to gamble and to the consequences of gambling. None associated with the gambling product were identified.

##### **Protective Factors Relating to the Propensity to Gamble**

Protective factors associated with the propensity to gamble were said to be employment, high aspirations and strong relationships.

Having high aspirations were thought to be important by counsellors. One client, with high aspirations who had received nine months of counseling, had moved from unemployment to full-time employment. While in counselling he did some training to get ready for employment. He now abstains from gambling, but has had one slip back. Fortunately, he returned to the counsellor to get further assistance.

Most counsellors said that relationships were very important for Indigenous clients. Coming from a 'culture where money is not the most important possession that you have, it's actually relationships' allowed them to focus on relationships. For example, one counsellor spoke about a female client who was feeling neglected at home and went to the local club to gamble. With her credit card at the limit, she went for financial counselling. Her partner was asked to attend as well and after 10 or 12 sessions they exited counselling feeling that life had improved.

##### **Protective Factors Relating to Gambling Products and Services**

No protective factors associated with the gambling product were identified.

##### **Protective Factors Relating to the Consequences of Gambling**

Facilitators for addressing a gambling-related problems were said to include being able to overcome any associated shame to seek counselling, appropriate counselling, counsellors providing a welcoming experience, and effective self-exclusion.

Several counsellors reported positive outcomes by Indigenous clients who had overcome their shame and sought counselling. One client took up 20 sessions. Some had refrained from gambling altogether.

The usefulness of counselling was explained by one counsellor as being able to assist an Indigenous client in identifying events in their life for themselves that have sparked gambling problems. For clients, it was like 'turn(ing) the light on'. For example, one particular client had suffered much loss, been physically abused and felt that he had never experienced parental love. His father was a violent alcoholic and his mother was abusive. He believed that he didn't get the love that would have given him 'a good start in life'. With assistance, this client was able to identify how he had made decisions to arrive at where he was in life. When people can see this, they often say 'now I understand why.'

Some Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients had to reach 'rock bottom or have a crisis' before they contacted counsellors. Often this was a financial crisis. Counsellors reportedly had to be careful not to delve too much in the first session, because clients could 'get frightened away by that' and not return.

Further, when counsellors recognised that their Indigenous clients were due for an appointment, they had to be alert to the timing and the stress involved for them. One person said 'we've recognised some ... walking around the block a couple of times [and we say]

“come in and have a cup of tea”. For some counsellors, installing Aboriginal art in their offices and rooms had made a difference. The art was recognised as ‘beautiful’ and allowed Indigenous clients to see that their culture was acknowledged.

Another counsellor had an Indigenous client self-exclude and this was very successful for him. However a different person self-excluded from some venues and not others in the same town and it was not successful at all.

#### **4.9.8 Suggested Interventions to Address Gambling Issues**

Counsellors made suggestions about what the Indigenous community, community services, the gambling industry and governments could do to improve the future.

#### **Indigenous Communities**

It was suggested that Indigenous communities could make better use of role models. People are already using strong role models for other areas. Bringing in role models, like Cathy Freeman, for example, was considered important.

#### **Community Services**

Counsellors were asked what interventions they felt would work to assist Indigenous gamblers. Their responses included referrals, liaison workers, home visits, outreach programs, financial counselling, addictions training for counsellors, making links with rehabilitation centres and attending inter-agency meetings

Referrals were made to gambling counsellors by the courts and by other agencies such as the Salvation Army because these agencies felt that specific gambling help was needed for some people. However, some counsellors felt they needed to have an Indigenous liaison person to act as an intermediary for them. Liaison workers are able to explain what happens in counselling, reduce anxiety and ‘introduce people to us and support people seeing us’, said the counsellors.

However, care needed to be taken with the choice of liaison personnel, to acknowledge tribal differences and loyalties between Indigenous families. One counsellor suggested that a combination of gambling help counselling services use several liaison people and encourage ‘some movement’ between them in different towns and communities to reduce this concern. Another said that the liaison people needed to be seen by the Indigenous community as ‘a healer’, someone who is strong and non-judgmental. If the liaison people came from a ‘healing perspective’, then being from a different tribe or family ‘would not be relevant’ as this would transcend that concern.

In some Indigenous communities where distances were great, where transport was limited and access to services was difficult, some gambling help counsellors did ‘home visits’. This facilitated the counselling process and continued with follow-up strategies.

Visiting local Indigenous communities and letting people know what they do was also helpful. One gambling counselling service provided an outreach program, ‘taking services to the community rather than waiting for the community to come to the service’. It was suggested that maybe that outreach service could be duplicated in other locations.

Some gambling counsellors saw financial counselling as being very important. One successful client was referred to financial counselling to unravel his gambling debts. Last seen, ‘he was getting that untangled and he was on track with what he wanted to do’. Another client was ‘overwhelmed with debt’ as gambling ‘possessed her’. After negotiating with the

finance company, with help she was able to keep her car and start a program of repayments. One counsellor suggested the appointment of guardianship for one gambler, to try to have his finances managed on his behalf.

It was noted that most gambling counsellors working with Indigenous clients should be 'addictions counsellors' assisting with gambling, alcohol and other drugs. Additionally, most needed to be social workers, to assist these gamblers and their family. These two roles were considered important.

Having made links with an Indigenous rehabilitation service, one counselling service had provided material for the rehabilitation service to start routinely assessing their clients for gambling-related problems. A positive assessment would mean an automatic referral for at least one gambling counselling session.

Other counsellors suggested that attendance at inter-agency meetings (such as housing) raised public awareness of what they did for people. This was especially the case if counsellors spoke at the meeting and handed out their literature. Others belonged to health, medical and welfare networks and joined in their activities such as open days to distribute gambling awareness information. One counsellor was invited to an open day on the basis of past work done with 'suicide intervention'. They were able to add further information about their gambling services. More broadly, counsellors felt that they could, if funded, provide better and more appropriate information to schools, TAFE colleges, Aboriginal legal services and other relevant organisations.

### **Gambling Industry and Venues**

It was noted that the gambling industry is not likely to do anything unless forced by the government. However, they could provide limited exclusion for a certain amount of time. For small towns, especially, it was thought that this could be a very effective strategy.

### **Governments**

The counsellors said that governments should put resources into training and educating Indigenous and non-Indigenous mental health workers and other specialists, and into family conferencing. It was noted that early intervention through the work of the Aboriginal Mental Health Service was necessary, but first there was a need to train Indigenous workers to work with addictions. Interventions for addiction closely link with gambling-related problems. It was noted that putting money into mental health and focusing on Indigenous addictions would be really useful. In addition, training non-Indigenous social workers and alcohol and drug addiction counsellors who are able to build links and relationships within Indigenous communities would also be very helpful. This would allow sufficient time for relationships to build between counsellors and clients.

It was noted that family conferencing was important for Indigenous people in some places. For instance, in New Zealand, Maori counsellors operate family conferencing. They used the tribal system in a positive sense and addressed the original problematic issue not the symptom. In Australia, the advice of Elders would be vital. In some ways, this is similar to Circle Sentencing where everyone goes into the circle, the victims and the perpetrators, people who are most affected. All views are gathered and, instead of going to the courts, the matter is addressed at the Circle.

#### **4.9.9 Summary of the Gambling Counsellor Interviews**

In summary, nine counsellors in northern New South Wales reported that they saw on average, two Indigenous clients each over the past three years. Clients were more likely to be male and older. Card gambling was reported as a popular social activity in some locations. However, a risk factor associated with card gambling was recognised as generational influences linked to exposure to card gambling as a youth.

Gambling on poker machines was reportedly the most popular form of commercial gambling, followed by TAB gambling, and bingo. The counsellors' clients usually gambled whenever they had money, spending more than they could afford. Their gambling motivations centred on winning, although socialising, boredom, escape, trauma and mental health conditions were also mentioned. Poker machines were said to be very appealing and easy to use amongst the counsellors' clients. The atmosphere in venues considered comfortable, welcoming and inclusive. Outcomes and consequences of gambling were both positive (feeling accepted) and negative (relationship difficulties and gambling debts).

Risk factors associated with the propensity to gamble included unemployment, the use of alcohol and drugs while gambling, the experience of grief and loss, domestic violence, being a victim of abuse, meeting up with people in gaming venues, gambling with borrowed money and humbugging. Risk factors associated with gambling products and services included physical and social access to gambling, including sensory perceptions while using poker machines. Risk factors relating to the consequences of gambling encompassed barriers to addressing gambling problems, and were reported to include having secretive and negative attitudes towards counselling, cultural differences, unequal power relationships, lack of awareness of services, and inadequacies of self-exclusion.

Protective factors relating to the propensity to gamble included employment, high aspirations and strong relationships. None were associated with the gambling product or environment. Those associated with the outcomes and consequences of gambling included being able to overcome any associated shame to seek counselling, appropriate counselling, counsellors providing a welcoming experience, and effective self-exclusion.

Interventions suggested by counsellors were: referrals from a broad range of agencies; liaison workers; home visits; outreach programs; financial counselling; addictions training for counsellors; and making links with rehabilitation centres and other health and welfare agencies. Governments could fund training and education for Indigenous mental health workers and other health and welfare specialists, along with schemes such as family conferencing. Indigenous communities could use their own role models more effectively for promoting good health. Further, the gambling industry could be more innovative with exclusion in small towns.

#### **4.10 SYNTHESISED FINDINGS ACROSS SHIRES AND INTERVIEW GROUPS**

This section synthesises the interview findings across the six shires and the groups who were interviewed – the Indigenous respondents, gaming venue managers and gambling counsellors. Differences between shires and respondent groups are highlighted where they were apparent.

##### **4.10.1 Card Gambling Behaviour**

Generally, the popularity of card gambling across Bundjalung Country was believed to be in decline compared to people's memories of previous card gambling activity. However, there

were pockets of card gambling that were very obvious to respondents in this research. For example, card gambling was reported as being quite prevalent or at least still occurring in certain locations in the Ballina, Lismore, Byron/Tweed and Richmond Valley Shires, yet as having all but ceased in the Kyogle and Clarence Valley Shires.

Where card gambling occurred, the strongest finding reported by the majority of research participants was that women were the most obvious and visible participants. Extended family, social groups and visitors gambled together occasionally. Youthful card gamblers were present in one location. In the majority of shires, card gambling was more irregular than regular, depending on the presence of an adequate number of people to make up a game. Card gambling sessions varied from short (a couple of hours) to long (all day, all night or several days). Card gambling expenditure varied from low (about \$5) to high (over \$200). A few people were said to gamble most of their pay. Concern was expressed about youth engaged in card gambling from all groups of respondents, particularly about youth developing patterns of gambling that may negatively affect their lives.

Comparing gambling motivations, it was noted that to win and to socialise were equally important as major motivations to gamble on cards. Counsellors reported that to socialise was the strongest card gambling motivation. Less important motivations were to reduce boredom and to escape from problems.

Card gambling was mainly held in private homes but some gambled in the open, especially within Indigenous communities. There were striking differences reported in two adjoining shires. In the Richmond Valley Shire, local youth gambled on cards in the main street of one town. In the Kyogle Shire, local Elders had banned card gambling from their Indigenous community.

From the research results, positive consequences of card gambling were reported to include social connectedness with other Indigenous people, an occasional win and sharing in a social activity. Negative consequences included individual financial losses, borrowing from others and youth gambling.

Table 4.1 summarises key findings for card gambling in Bundjalung Country and distinguishes between those derived from the interviews with Indigenous people and those with gambling counsellors and venue managers.

**Table 4.1: Key aspects of Indigenous card gambling in Bundjalung Country from the Indigenous, counsellor and manager interviews**

	Indigenous Respondents	Counsellors	Venue Managers
<b>Main participants</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women</li> <li>• Youth</li> <li>• Everyone: visitors, older people, groups of extended family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth</li> <li>• Extended family</li> <li>• Social groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth</li> </ul>
<b>Frequency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two or three times a week</li> <li>• Pay day</li> <li>• Weekly</li> <li>• Monthly</li> <li>• Irregular phases of card playing tied to the arrival of visitors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irregular phases of card playing linked to: social opportunity or the arrival of visitors</li> </ul>	
<b>Duration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shorter sessions: a couple of hours</li> <li>• Longer sessions: all day or all night</li> </ul>		
<b>Expenditure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower range: \$5</li> <li>• Higher range: &gt; \$200</li> </ul>		
<b>Motivations (in descending order of importance)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To win &amp; to socialise</li> <li>• To reduce boredom</li> <li>• To escape</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To socialise</li> <li>• To win</li> </ul>	
<b>Location &amp; access</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private homes</li> <li>• Under trees</li> <li>• In the paddock</li> <li>• In the street (youth)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the street</li> <li>• Readily available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the street</li> </ul>
<b>Positive consequences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social connectedness</li> <li>• An occasional win</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social activity</li> </ul>	
<b>Negative consequences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual financial losses</li> <li>• Family &amp; community borrowing</li> <li>• Youth gambling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of stakes other than money</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth gambling</li> </ul>

#### 4.10.2 Commercial Gambling Behaviour

The majority of Indigenous research participants reported commercial gamblers in Bundjalung Country to be men and women of all ages, older women, and younger social groups. Gaming venue managers saw gamblers more as social groups, comprising younger and older groups. However, their responses highlighted the visibility of male gamblers in shire towns and older female gamblers in shire villages as being an important point of difference. In contrast, counsellors reported more males as clients, especially older males. They also described their clients as people who had experienced significant childhood issues and people who gambled alone.

A shared finding for venue managers and counsellors was that most gamblers were in relationships. A shared finding between the Indigenous respondents and the counsellors was that gamblers were equally as likely to be employed as unemployed. Indigenous respondents



and venue managers reported similar socio-demographic characteristics for TAB gamblers, bingo and keno players.

Generally, Indigenous gambling, as reported by Indigenous respondents and gaming managers, was seen as a social activity engaged in by small groups. In contrast, for counsellors, gambling was seen as a solo activity.

Indigenous commercial gamblers were reported to prefer poker machines, TAB gambling, keno, bingo and equally poker tournaments and lottery products (in that order). A few gamblers were said to gamble on both cards and commercial gambling.

The most popular day for commercial gambling was said to be pay day and the few days afterwards. While a few gamblers gambled two or three times a week, the majority gambled weekly or fortnightly. Some gambled at weekends (TAB gamblers) and some gambled in the day time.

The majority of respondents said a typical poker machine session was a couple of hours spent at gambling with family or groups of friends. Less common were long gambling sessions and all day or all night sessions. However, in these long sessions, gamblers often spent all their money plus their winnings. TAB gamblers were more likely to gamble in very short sessions, but some called into the venue two or three times on race day.

Lower range gambling expenditure was more commonly reported than higher range expenditure. Many Indigenous people were said to have limited incomes and thus limited money to spend on gambling. However, higher amounts of money appeared to be spent on poker machines than TAB gambling. For poker machines, expenditure reported for Indigenous gamblers was usually about 25 credits a spin, and \$5-\$300 per session, including spending an entire pay. For TAB gambling, expenditure was said to involve \$1-\$2 bets, with most people spending between \$5-20 spread out over a day of betting on racing and sports events. Some TAB gamblers pooled their funds and shared winnings. Indigenous respondents reported that, while the majority of gamblers were said to set limits for gambling or met their commitments first, some gambled with all of their money hoping to increase their income, especially unemployed people. Some borrowed from others to continue gambling. An exceptional increase in poker machine gambling was seen by managers in two shires, increasing from 20-50 cent stakes to \$1 stakes, with a recent national windfall payment.

There was a difference in the order of importance of similar commercial gambling motivations by different groups of respondents. For Indigenous respondents and counsellors, to win and then to socialise were the strongest motivations to gamble. For managers, the order was reversed with to socialise, and then to win, the order of motivations reported. Other commercial gambling motivations were to escape, to reduce boredom, and fill in time (in that order). Based on their experiences, Indigenous respondents felt that gambling was a rite of passage at reaching 18 years, counsellors' believed trauma and mental health issues were motivations for gambling, while venues managers suggested alcohol consumption was a motivation for some.

The majority of Indigenous gamblers gambled in venues that were easy to access, comfortable, inclusive and affordable. People tended to avoid venues where they were asked for loans, felt uncomfortable or when they had no transport and no money. Those venues most popularly frequented by Indigenous gamblers were physically and financially accessible. The gambling products most preferred were those with low stakes and free offers, and were easy to play with few literacy barriers.

Table 4.2 summarises key findings for commercial gambling in Bundjalung Country and distinguishes between those derived from the interviews with Indigenous people, gambling counsellors and venue managers.

**Table 4.2: Key aspects of Indigenous commercial gambling in Bundjalung Country from the Indigenous, counsellor and manager interviews**

	<b>Indigenous Respondents</b>	<b>Counsellors</b>	<b>Venue Managers</b>
<b>Socio--demographic characteristics</b>	Poker machines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Men &amp; women of all ages</li> <li>Older women</li> <li>Younger social groups</li> <li>Employed &amp; unemployed</li> </ul> TAB gambling: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Men</li> <li>Younger groups</li> </ul> Bingo: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women</li> </ul> Keno: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women</li> <li>Mixed social groups</li> </ul>	Poker machines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Younger social groups (18-30 yrs)</li> <li>Older social groups (50+ yrs)</li> <li>More males (in town)</li> <li>More older females (in villages)</li> <li>In relationships</li> <li>Unemployed</li> </ul> TAB gambling: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Men</li> </ul> Bingo: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women</li> </ul> Keno: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mixed social groups</li> </ul>	Poker machines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More males</li> <li>Older males (30-50 yrs)</li> <li>In relationships</li> <li>Employed &amp; unemployed</li> <li>People who have experienced significant childhood issues</li> <li>People who gamble alone</li> </ul>
<b>Preferred activities (in order of prominence)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poker machines</li> <li>Tab gambling</li> <li>Keno</li> <li>Bingo</li> <li>Poker tournaments &amp; lottery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poker machines</li> <li>Tab gambling</li> <li>Bingo</li> <li>Keno</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poker machines</li> <li>Tab gambling</li> </ul>
<b>Frequency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2-3 times a week</li> <li>Pay day</li> <li>Short shoulder period after pay day</li> <li>Weekly</li> <li>Fortnightly</li> <li>Weekends for social groups</li> <li>When people have money</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pay day</li> <li>Short shoulder period after pay day</li> <li>Weekly</li> <li>Fortnightly</li> <li>Weekends for TAB</li> <li>Daytime gambling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pay day</li> <li>'Binge gambling' when people have money</li> </ul>
<b>Duration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shorter sessions: 1-3 hours</li> <li>Longer sessions: all day or all night</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2-3 hours typical session</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As long as money is available.</li> </ul>
<b>Expenditure</b>	Poker machines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lower range: \$5</li> <li>Higher range: \$300 or whole pay</li> </ul> TAB: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small bets</li> <li>\$10 a session</li> </ul>	Poker machines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Average bet: 25cents</li> </ul> TAB: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Average bet: \$1-2</li> <li>Range \$5-20 a session</li> </ul>	Poker machines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most of their money</li> </ul>
<b>Motivations (in order of prominence)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To win</li> <li>To socialise</li> <li>To escape</li> <li>To reduce boredom &amp; fill in time</li> <li>Rite of passage at 18 years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To socialise</li> <li>To win</li> <li>To reduce boredom &amp; fill in time</li> <li>Alcohol induced gambling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To win money</li> <li>Hope for a win</li> <li>To socialise</li> <li>Effects of trauma</li> <li>Boredom</li> <li>Escape</li> <li>Mental health issues</li> </ul>

	<b>Indigenous Respondents</b>	<b>Counsellors</b>	<b>Venue Managers</b>
<b>Attractive gambling product features</b>	Poker machines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lights, sounds, features</li> <li>• Game variety</li> </ul> Prices – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low stakes games</li> </ul> Promotions – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free spins</li> <li>• Jackpot prizes</li> <li>• Free raffles</li> <li>• Free member draws</li> </ul>	Products (in order of preference) – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poker machines, bingo &amp; some keno for women</li> <li>• TAB gambling, poker machines &amp; some keno for men</li> </ul>	Poker machines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intermittent rewards, easy to play, few literacy barriers</li> <li>• No interaction with others</li> </ul>
<b>Access issues</b>	Ease of access: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible meeting place for socialising</li> <li>• Cool, comfortable &amp; relaxing</li> <li>• Affordable meals &amp; alcohol</li> <li>• Inclusiveness</li> </ul> Less access: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requests for loans from others in venue</li> <li>• Patronising or racist attitudes</li> </ul>	Ease of access: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to venue &amp; proximity</li> <li>• Comfortable &amp; affordable</li> <li>• Social acceptance</li> <li>• Sports sponsorship</li> </ul> Less access: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alcohol affected customers</li> <li>• Lack of transport</li> </ul>	Ease of access: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcoming</li> <li>• Air-conditioned</li> <li>• Cheap meals</li> <li>• Able to escape from people</li> </ul> Less access: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of money</li> </ul>

### 4.10.3 Consequences of Gambling

The consequences of gambling can be positive or negative depending on the gambler's level of gambling uptake and their social, cultural and financial resources (Thomas & Jackson 2004).

The majority of respondents said the most important positive consequence of Indigenous gambling was socialising. Socialising included meeting up with others and having a yarn, sharing common interests, and enjoying some relaxation together. Other less important positive consequences were having an occasional win, some excitement and enjoyment, being accepted and comfortable and reduced alcohol consumption. In contrast, the majority of respondents reported several prominent negative consequences of Indigenous gambling. These included financial hardship, family and relationship difficulties, the spread of negative impacts throughout the community, mental health problems and crime. Table 4.3 summarises these results. Because the three groups of interviewees gave very similar responses, the consequences of gambling they identified are combined in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3: Summary of the consequences of Indigenous gambling in Bundjalung Country from the Indigenous, counsellor and manager interviews**

	<b>Combined Indigenous People's, Counsellors' and Managers' Responses</b>
<b>Positive consequences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socialising</li> <li>• Win money</li> <li>• Excitement &amp; enjoyment</li> <li>• Social and physical comfort</li> <li>• Reduced alcohol consumption</li> </ul>
<b>Negative consequences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial hardship (losses, debts, loans)</li> <li>• Family difficulties (including child neglect)</li> <li>• Relationship problems (abuse, violence, breakdowns)</li> <li>• Spread of negative impacts throughout the community (demand sharing)</li> <li>• Exploitation of disadvantaged others</li> <li>• Mental health issues (depression, anxiety, addiction)</li> <li>• Crime (fraud, theft)</li> </ul>

#### 4.10.4 Risk Factors for Gambling

In this study, numerous risk factors were identified by the research participants. Those that increased the propensity to gamble included personal, family, financial, historical and cultural risks. Personal risks were seen as gambling to escape from grief and loss, from boredom, due to peer pressure, after consuming alcohol or drugs, from being unemployed and having time to gamble, from having literacy and numeracy problems, and to obtain relief from domestic violence and abuse. Family risks were said to include generational exposure to gambling, trans-generational learning about gambling, normalisation of youth gambling, parental absence and a lack of education generally, but particularly in budgeting and financial management. Financial risks were reported as: gambling to increase income and to repay gambling debts; gambling with borrowed money; used to being poor so gambling losses made no great difference to living in poverty; a cycle of dependency; windfall payments that led to increased gambling for some; and a lack of budgeting skills. Historical risks were felt to include the longevity of gambling as an Indigenous leisure activity and humbugging, or borrowing from family and kin. Cultural risks were believed to be a loss of Indigenous values, culture, respect and discipline and a deterioration of traditional reciprocity when used for gambling.

Risks believed to be associated with gambling products and services were the physical and sensory experiences of gambling. These included the sound, light and visual features of poker machines, their attractive marketing and promotion and the emotional attachment some people have to a lucky machine or favourite form of gambling. Most other gambling products and services were easy to use. Access to the gambling environment was reported as usually easy and free services enhanced the appeal of staying in a gambling venue. Social access and acceptance were also a risk for some gamblers.

Risk factors relating to addressing problematic consequences of gambling emerged as being intrinsic (personal) or extrinsic (external) factors. Intrinsic barriers were said to comprise shame, denial, living in poverty, fear, depression, grief and loss, addiction, unequal power relationships and cultural differences. Extrinsic barriers were reported to include a lack of culturally appropriate gambling help services, a lack of knowledge regarding gambling help services, poor access to gambling help, a lack of gambling education and awareness, concern about confidentiality of gambling help services, and that venue managers wait for a gambler to approach them before referring them to gambling help services.

Table 4.4 summarises and combines the risk factors identified by the three interview groups, as substantial similarities were apparent.

**Table 4.4: Summary of risk factors for Indigenous gambling in Bundjalung Country from the Indigenous, counsellor and manager interviews**

	<b>Combined Indigenous People's, Counsellors' and Managers' Responses</b>
<b>Propensity: Personal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Escape from grief &amp; loss</li> <li>• Relief from violence &amp; abuse</li> <li>• Accede to peer pressure</li> <li>• Under the influence of alcohol or other drugs</li> <li>• Being unemployed and having time to gamble</li> <li>• Gambling to reduce boredom</li> <li>• Lack of education (literacy &amp; numeracy problems, lack of budgeting skills)</li> </ul>
<b>Propensity: Family</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generational exposure to gambling influences</li> <li>• Trans-generational learning about gambling</li> <li>• Normalisation of youth gambling</li> <li>• Parental absence</li> </ul>
<b>Propensity: Financial</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gambling to increase income</li> <li>• Gambling to repay debts</li> <li>• Gambling with borrowed money</li> <li>• Cycle of dependency</li> <li>• Being used to living in poverty</li> <li>• Windfall payments increasing gambling</li> </ul>
<b>Propensity: Historical &amp; cultural</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of Indigenous values, culture, respect &amp; discipline</li> <li>• Deterioration of traditional reciprocity when used for gambling</li> </ul>
<b>Gambling products &amp; services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical &amp; sensory experiences associated with gambling</li> <li>• Sound, light &amp; visual features of poker machines</li> <li>• Emotional attachment to 'lucky' poker machines, easy to play, free games, note acceptors</li> <li>• Attractive venue marketing &amp; promotion</li> <li>• Easy physical access</li> <li>• Easy social access</li> </ul>
<b>Consequences: Intrinsic barriers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shame &amp; denial</li> <li>• Poverty</li> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Grief &amp; loss</li> <li>• Addiction</li> <li>• Unequal power relationships</li> <li>• Cultural differences</li> </ul>
<b>Consequences: Extrinsic barriers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of culturally appropriate gambling help services</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge about &amp; access to gambling help</li> <li>• Lack of gambling education &amp; awareness</li> <li>• Concern over confidentiality of gambling help services</li> <li>• Venues wait for gambler to act before referral to gambling help services</li> </ul>

#### 4.10.5 Protective Factors for Gambling

Protective factors identified in relation to the propensity to gamble were categorised into personal, family, financial, historical and cultural themes. Personal protective factors were seen as being self-control in limiting gambling, self-respect, having a purpose in life and high aspirations, religious beliefs, being employed and earning money, learning from past experiences and being recognised as a local person. Family protective factors were reported to include having strong family influences, family values upheld, sharing alternative interests

and time with family and friends outside gambling, positive relationships and education and training. Financial protective factors were said to be education and skills in financial management and small stakes betting. One historical protective factor was felt to be the ability to respectfully refuse to lend money to gamblers. Cultural protective factors were believed to be Elders acting as role models and people respecting and adhering to traditional Elders' example, cultural cohesion and cultural values.

In relation to gambling products and services, protective factors were felt to be an understanding of the odds of winning and a lack of transport to gaming venues. Protective factors associated with gambling consequences were said to be the ability to read and absorb responsible gambling messages and exclusion from gaming venues.

Protective factors relating to addressing negative consequences of gambling were believed to be knowing when to seek help, being older and more experienced in seeking help for problems, encouragement from others to seek help, and local knowledge such as knowing trustworthy sources of help. Extrinsic protective facilitators emerged as being the provision of culturally appropriate gambling help services, provision of gambling education and awareness specifically for Indigenous people, provision of appropriate budgeting and financial management education for Indigenous people, encouragement of male role models as community leaders, and a combination of Indigenous community strength and support for people who need assistance.

Table 4.5 combines the protective factors identified by the three groups of interviewees, given their similarities.

**Table 4.5: Summary of protective factors for Indigenous gambling in Bundjalung Country from the Indigenous, counsellor and manager interviews**

	<b>Combined Indigenous People's, Counsellors' and Managers' Responses</b>
<b>Propensity: Personal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal control (set limits for gambling)</li> <li>• Self-respect</li> <li>• Having a purpose in life, high aspirations</li> <li>• Religious beliefs</li> <li>• Employment, earning money</li> <li>• Learn from past experience</li> <li>• Being recognised as a local person</li> </ul>
<b>Propensity: Family</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong family influences, role models, values upheld</li> <li>• Share alternative interests &amp; time with family &amp; friends outside gambling</li> <li>• Positive relationships</li> </ul>
<b>Propensity: Financial</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education &amp; skills in financial management</li> <li>• Small stakes betting</li> </ul>
<b>Propensity: Historical &amp; cultural</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn to respectfully refuse to lend money for gambling</li> <li>• Elders seen and heeded as role models</li> <li>• Cultural cohesion</li> <li>• Cultural values</li> </ul>
<b>Gambling products &amp; services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the odds of winning</li> <li>• Lack of transport to venues</li> <li>• Read &amp; understand gambling help messages</li> <li>• Exclusion</li> </ul>
<b>Consequences: Intrinsic barriers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowing when to seek help for gambling-related problems</li> <li>• Being more experienced in help-seeking</li> <li>• Encouragement from others to seek help</li> <li>• Local knowledge</li> </ul>
<b>Consequences:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of culturally appropriate gambling help services</li> <li>• Provision of gambling education &amp; awareness</li> </ul>

<b>Extrinsic barriers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of budgeting &amp; financial management education</li> <li>• Encouragement of male role models as community leaders</li> <li>• Indigenous community strength &amp; support</li> </ul>
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#### 4.10.7 Suggested Interventions to Address Gambling Issues

In order to reduce negative impacts and encourage responsible gambling, respondents were asked to suggest interventions that they felt would work in Bundjalung Country. Responses from Indigenous respondents, venue managers and counsellors are summarised and grouped into suggested actions for Indigenous communities, community services, the gambling industry and venues, and governments, as shown in Table 4.6.

Common themes emerging from all three groups included the need for good role models from Indigenous families and communities relating to responsible gambling and the need to educate and train Indigenous counsellors. Community services required resources for developing gambling help services focused specifically on Indigenous gamblers as well as creating health promotion and community awareness campaigns for Indigenous responsible gambling. The gambling industry and venues needed to implement exclusion policies and enforce their conditions as prescribed. The government was seen to be the source of funding for many worthwhile and valuable suggested interventions.

**Table 4.6: Summary of potential interventions to address Indigenous gambling issues in Bundjalung Country**

	Potential Interventions
Indigenous responses	<p>By Indigenous communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open discussion about gambling</li> <li>• Broad community education on gambling impacts and links to other issues</li> <li>• Educate &amp; train Indigenous counsellors</li> <li>• Education in budgeting and money management</li> <li>• Generally, better education for Indigenous people</li> <li>• Arrange alternative leisure activities</li> <li>• Cooperation among different Indigenous groups</li> <li>• Return to &amp; respect for Indigenous cultural values of caring &amp; sharing</li> <li>• Responsible parenting &amp; role models</li> </ul> <p>By community services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide culturally appropriate gambling help services</li> <li>• Provide holistic services to grasp any other linking problematic issues</li> <li>• Involve the family of the gambler in some sessions</li> <li>• Provide general community gambling education through workshops and other public information sharing activities</li> <li>• Provide outreach services to more isolated locations</li> <li>• Include gambling in health screens</li> <li>• Provide non-Indigenous staff with cultural awareness training</li> </ul> <p>By gambling industry and venues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide Indigenous specific responsible gambling signs and messages, actively promote avenues for help for Indigenous gamblers</li> <li>• Provide funds for community education and awareness activities</li> <li>• Provide more social activities in venues</li> <li>• Remove poker machines from public areas</li> <li>• Remove or limit note size for poker machines</li> <li>• Have a time break when poker machine gambling or after spending a set amount</li> <li>• Remind people of the time for those who have been gambling for a very long period</li> <li>• Adhere to responsible gambling policy and legislation</li> <li>• Implement exclusion programs and enforce them</li> <li>• Employ Indigenous hospitality staff</li> <li>• Reduce racism in venues</li> </ul>

	Potential Interventions
Indigenous responses (cont...)	<p>By governments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficient funding of community service agencies to visit schools, community centres for community education and awareness</li> <li>• Fund public awareness campaigns for Indigenous people using visual aids, promotional posters and multiple channels to get the message out</li> <li>• Fund education for budgeting and money management workshops</li> <li>• Fund the training &amp; employment of Indigenous counsellors</li> <li>• Strengthen responsible gambling policy and practices to make managers and staff more responsible</li> <li>• Introduce limits on gambling expenditure by removing note acceptors and ATMs and introduce smart cards, ID cards or vouchers</li> <li>• Recycle funds sent to government as gambling taxes back to communities which generated the funds to support gambling help</li> <li>• Support Indigenous employment programs</li> <li>• Serious commitment by government is needed</li> </ul>
Counsellors	<p>By Indigenous communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use strong role models, especially male role models</li> </ul> <p>By community services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous liaison people for referrals</li> <li>• Resources for home visits</li> <li>• Resources for outreach programs in communities</li> <li>• Resources for financial counselling services</li> <li>• Addictions training for all counsellors</li> <li>• Close links with rehabilitation services</li> <li>• Inter-agency cooperation</li> </ul> <p>By gambling industry and venues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to be forced to act</li> <li>• Could provide limited exclusions in small towns, improve access to exclusion</li> </ul> <p>By government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource education of Indigenous counsellors, mental health &amp; addiction workers</li> <li>• Resource education of non-Indigenous mental health &amp; addiction workers</li> <li>• Resource family conferencing services, similar to circle sentencing in law courts</li> </ul>
Venue managers	<p>By Indigenous communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead by example, Elders, grandparents, role models</li> <li>• Training Indigenous gambling counsellors and gambling help services</li> <li>• Generally, better education for Indigenous people</li> </ul> <p>By community services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More resources for gambling help services</li> <li>• Public promotion and education campaigns about the impacts of gambling</li> </ul> <p>By gambling industry and venues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talking to customers and giving them advice</li> <li>• Appropriate explanations about exclusion, more flexibility with exclusions</li> </ul> <p>By government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving structural conditions thus increasing employment &amp; education opportunities for Indigenous people</li> <li>• Cooperation between departments</li> <li>• Communication about effective responsible gambling policies and practices including signage &amp; exclusion</li> <li>• Combining alcohol &amp; gambling in state public promotion campaigns</li> <li>• Revise, refresh &amp; update responsible gambling courses every two years</li> </ul>



#### 4.11 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a comparison and analysis of Indigenous gambling in six shires in Bundjalung Country: Ballina; Lismore; Byron/Tweed; Kyogle; Richmond Valley and Clarence Valley, as well as by the three different groups of respondents. It has examined card and commercial gambling activities, behaviour and motivations, the consequences of gambling, risk and protective factors associated with gambling, and suggested interventions to address gambling issues.

The results indicate that card gambling had declined in popularity while commercial gambling has grown. Contrasts were obvious across the six shires, with cards banned in one community and being openly played by youth in one town's main street. Card gambling was seen as a social activity by the majority of respondents.

Commercial gambling was engaged in by men and women of all ages. It was considered a social activity for the majority of Indigenous gamblers, with people often gambling in family and social groups. Poker machine gambling was the most preferred form of commercial gambling and pay day was a peak day for gambling. Most Indigenous gamblers spent what they could afford on gambling, with a minority spending all they had, even borrowings. Most people gambled to win, to socialise and to escape. They went to venues that were accessible and inclusive that had a range of gambling products and services at affordable prices that were easy to play. The most important positive consequence of gambling was socialising, while negative consequences revolved around financial losses, relationship problems and the distribution of negative effects throughout families and communities.

Risk and protective factors associated with gambling were centred on: personal escape vs self-control; generational exposure to gambling vs strong family influences; gambling to increase income vs gambling within a budget; humbugging for gambling funds vs refusal to lend funds for gambling; loss of cultural values vs cultural cohesion; and the attractive appeal of gambling products and services vs understanding how gambling products and services work. The main barriers to addressing the negative consequences of gambling of shame and denial were compounded by a lack of culturally appropriate gambling help services. Important facilitators of recognising gambling-related problems were addressed with relevant gambling help assistance. Of the many suggested gambling interventions, the most important appeared to be the need for Indigenous role models and Indigenous trained counsellors, culturally appropriate gambling help services, relevant community education and awareness promotions, Indigenous specific responsible gambling resources and more flexible exclusion options. However, numerous other potential interventions were also suggested.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

# **COMPARISONS BETWEEN INDIGENOUS GAMBLING IN NORTH QUEENSLAND AND BUNDJALUNG COUNTRY**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the results for Research Objective Two, which was to compare Indigenous gambling behaviour, consequences, risk factors and potential interventions between several Indigenous communities in north Queensland and those under study in northern New South Wales.

The north Queensland study, conducted by Breen (2009), is first described and then a summary of findings relating to gambling on cards and commercial gambling activities is presented. Positive and negative consequences are discussed, before findings on risk and protective factors and potential interventions are presented. These findings are then compared to those for gambling in Bundjalung Country. The chapter concludes with an analysis of these comparisons.

### **5.2 NORTH QUEENSLAND RESULTS**

Section 5.2 summarises key findings from the north Queensland study by Breen (2009).

#### **5.2.1 The Sample**

In north Queensland, Breen (2009), using qualitative methods and purposeful sampling, conducted interviews with 60 Indigenous and 14 non-Indigenous Australians, 14 gambling help counsellors and 20 gaming venue managers. Most interviews were held with individuals, and many were iterative. Permission was sought and approval granted for this research from various senior Indigenous Australians, Elders and Traditional Owners, and/or from representatives of leading Indigenous organisations in three north Queensland locations.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous people from three northern regions of Queensland provided a cross-section of perspectives on Indigenous gambling. They were located across the width of the state – from a remote northern area, to a western regional town and district, and a major city with many suburbs on the eastern seaboard. These three regions, the Gulf, Eyre and Rainforest Regions of Aboriginal Australia (Horton 1996) contrast in terms of location and gambling opportunities. In the Gulf region Indigenous gamblers have access to card gambling but are without reliable telecommunication systems and have almost no access to commercial gambling unless they travel long distances. In the Eyre region, Indigenous gamblers have access to card gambling and, except for casino games, to most forms of commercial gambling in local hotels and clubs, in newsagencies and TAB agencies, and by telephone and the internet. Distances between towns and settlements are long. In the Rainforest region, Indigenous gamblers have access to card gambling and to all forms of commercial gambling, including casino games.

#### **5.2.2 Card Gambling Behaviour**

The majority of Indigenous Australians in north Queensland were reported to gamble on cards at some time. Women, family and extended family groups who gambled together on

social occasions were the most obvious gamblers. Small groups of card gamblers were comprised of visitors and young, single, unemployed people. Pay day was the most popular day for card gambling, followed by a short shoulder period. Card gambling usually increased with irregular windfall payments and isolating weather conditions.

Card gambling session length depended on having money and a minimum number of players. Shorter sessions included a few hours or an evening of cards with family or social groups. Longer card gambling sessions included all day and/or all night games. Longer weekend sessions of high stakes card gambling were sometimes organised by entrepreneurs in regional towns and remote locations.

Card gambling expenditure in the lower range (less than \$25) usually involved gambling with discretionary or budgeted funds. Some intra-community recycling of winnings was evident in remote locations in lower expenditure card games. Higher range card gambling expenditure was said to be spending over \$25, sometimes even spending an entire wage. Occasional weekend 'binge' gambling was reported in the Gulf and Eyre regions and involved inter-community gambling where assets were sometimes substituted for money stakes.

Motivations to gamble were said to be to win and to socialise (equally). Less important motivations were to pass the time and to escape, or for distraction.

Access to card gambling in the Rainforest and Eyre regions was mostly in private homes and more often in the same home. In the Gulf region, access to card gambling was likely to be outside but in a sheltered, even secluded place. These sites were well-known.

Positive consequences of card gambling revolved around closer family relationships and social and cultural reassurance, while negative consequences highlighted financial hardship from losses and its consequential effects, including demand sharing, child neglect, violence and some exploitation.

### **5.2.3 Commercial Gambling Behaviour**

The most visible commercial gamblers were reported to be men and women, and older women, followed by mixed family groups, social groups and men. Some commercial gamblers also gambled on card games. Poker machine gambling was the preferred form of gambling by the majority of commercial gamblers, followed by TAB, bingo and keno.

Gambling frequency peaked on pay day, either weekly or fortnightly, and some continued to gamble for a further couple of days. TAB gamblers usually gambled on weekends or at events. Frequent regular gamblers were said to gamble several times a week. Gambling plunges or 'binges' occurred on some weekends.

Duration of gambling sessions fell into two time periods – short sessions of a couple of hours and long sessions comprising all day and all night. The availability of funds and venue closing times often determined the end of longer gambling sessions.

Gambling expenditure in the lower range (less than \$50) was reported by more Indigenous research participants than higher range expenditure. Higher range expenditure (over \$50) was reported by gaming venue managers and gambling help counsellors. Some gamblers planned their gambling expenditure while others did not. Windfall payments precipitated increased expenditure.

Motivations for gambling by Indigenous commercial gamblers were reported as to win, to socialise, to escape, to pass the time and for relaxation (in that order). Gambling motivated by

passing the time was reported by Indigenous respondents and gaming venue managers, but not by gambling help counsellors.

Commercial gambling products and services influenced gambling behaviour mainly in relation to their access and availability and how well they met the needs of gamblers. Easy physical and social access were seen comprising close proximity, affordable prices, positive social attitudes and attitudes of acceptance. Lower proportions of Indigenous gamblers gambled in venues that had high prices, dress and membership entry barriers and where the social attitudes were patronising.

In meeting people's needs, the gambling products themselves, their price and sometimes their promotion appeared to be different for women than for men. Poker machine gambling and bingo were particularly attractive to Indigenous women, while TAB gambling and some poker machine gambling were attractive for Indigenous men. Gambling products which accepted low stakes and were easy to play were popular. Preferred features of the gambling environment were said to be air-conditioning and comfortable facilities.

#### **5.2.4 Consequences of Gambling**

Gambling consequences were explained as positive and negative outcomes of gambling in north Queensland.

##### **Positive Consequences**

For card gambling, positive consequences were reported to include social reassurance, family ties, membership of a collective culture and reduced alcohol consumption. For commercial gambling, positive consequences were seen as wellbeing, social interests, physical comfort, social connectedness and reduced alcohol consumption.

##### **Negative Consequences**

Negative consequences from card gambling were said to include financial losses, a pre-occupation with gambling, child neglect, domestic violence, demand sharing and some exploitation. For commercial gambling, negative consequences comprised financial hardship, neglect of children, domestic violence, an immediate loss of funds, demand sharing and some exploitation, and a cycle of gambling dependency.

#### **5.2.5 Risk Factors for Gambling**

Risk factors relating to the propensity to gamble, to the gambling product and the gambling environment, and to the consequences of gambling are summarised below from the north Queensland findings (Breen 2009).

##### **Risk Factors Relating to the Propensity to Gamble**

Risk factors associated with both card and commercial gambling in north Queensland were reported to include personal risks such as stress connected to grief and loss, Stolen Generation effects, a pre-occupation with gambling, the use of alcohol and drugs while gambling and structural conditions such as a lack of access to appropriate employment. Family risks were said to be generational exposure to gambling, normalisation of youth gambling and gambling taking priority over family and work. Financial risks included gambling to increase income, gambling with borrowed money, having few money management skills, long gambling sessions and windfall payments. Cultural and historical

risks associated with card gambling were seen as the influence of traditional exchange systems in extending gambling and irrational beliefs about luck while playing cards.

### **Risk Factors Relation to Gambling Products and Services**

Risk factors associated with access to card gambling were reported to be expanded availability of gambling stakes and the removal of cultural restrictions. Access to gambling was heightened when demand sharing using traditional reciprocity was common. Risk factors relating to commercial gambling products and services were said to be increased physical and social access and the exposure to comfortable gambling environments. The ready availability of gambling activities was perceived as heightening risk.

### **Risk Factors Relating to the Consequences of Gambling**

Risk factors for addressing problematic consequences of gambling were found to include poverty, shame and stigma, a reluctance to seek gambling help and negative attitudes towards gambling counselling. A further barrier was reinforcement of generational effects. Gambling was normalised for some Indigenous youth where they feel well equipped to avoid negative outcomes of gambling, yet reinforcement of cultural and social norms supporting unhealthy gambling may in fact contribute to a cycle of dysfunction and disengagement.

A lack of appropriate gambling help services, of adequate community education and awareness, holding negative attitudes to counselling, being anxious about confidentiality and a lack of gambler recognition of a gambling-related problem were further barriers.

#### **5.2.6 Protective Factors for Gambling**

Responses from the north Queensland interviewees are grouped below into protective factors relating to the propensity to gamble, to the gambling product and the gambling environment, and to the consequences of gambling.

#### **Protective Factors Relating to the Propensity to Gamble**

Protective factors associated with card and commercial gambling were reported to include personal self-control, social group control and religious beliefs. A family protective factor was seen as restricted access to gambling through family rifts. Culturally and historically protective factors linked to card games only were cultural cohesion, feelings of belonging and engagement with collective culture.

#### **Protective Factors Relating to Gambling Products and Services**

Protective factors relating to the gambling products themselves revolved around how gamblers interacted with the products and environment to maintain control over their gambling. Thus, protective factors were said to be setting time and money limits for gambling, family and social group self-regulation of gambling and choice of gambling type, with some using the available non-continuous forms of gambling only.

#### **Protective Factors Relating to the Consequences of Gambling**

Facilitators or protective factors for addressing a gambling problem were found to be in personal recognition that gambling was a problem and having the capacity to do something about it. This was facilitated by: having the support of others; having role models (parents, grandparents, aunties, uncles, Elders or siblings); being related to supportive others (family

kin group, social and cultural support); and developing resilience (fostered by a combination of personal competence and social and cultural support from significant others).

External protective factors were identified as: having knowledge about gambling help services; the provision of local and culturally appropriate gambling help services; responsible gambling messages designed for Indigenous gamblers; local telephone help services with familiar language used; and money management education.

### **5.2.7 Suggested Interventions to Address Gambling Issues**

Valuable and important potential interventions were suggested by all groups of respondents in north Queensland. Their responses are summarised and grouped into common themes.

The Indigenous respondents raised the need for open discussion about gambling and its ripple effects, the urgency for trained Indigenous liaison workers and gambling counsellors, the essential provision of education in budgeting and money management, and the return of traditional Indigenous values (social norms, leadership). All of these measures were seen as important for Indigenous people to encourage and adopt in addressing gambling issues.

All groups of respondents agreed that counsellors were expected to provide culturally relevant gambling help resources and services and to cooperate with, inform and train other community services on Indigenous gambling matters.

The gambling industry and gaming venues were seen to be responsible for providing a safe environment with proper implementation of responsible gambling practices. They should withdraw media advertisements featuring gambling draws, winnings and winners, and support community education and gambling awareness projects. Gaming venue managers should be given some flexibility in providing local exclusion for a limited time.

Governments were said to be mandated to work towards improving structural conditions for Indigenous education, employment, housing and health, thus removing some underlying risk factors. More specifically, government efforts in monitoring gaming licensing in venues, funding gambling education and awareness promotions, providing Indigenous counselling, education, training and rehabilitation services were considered mandatory.

## **5.3 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS BETWEEN QLD AND NSW**

Section 5.3 summarises and compares key research findings for north Queensland and Bundjalung Country in northern New South Wales, using comparative tables, followed by discussion of the main similarities and differences.

### **5.3.1 Card Gambling Behaviour**

Table 5.1 summarises key findings from both research regions in relation to card gambling behaviour.

**Table 5.1: Key aspects of card gambling behaviour in Bundjalung Country and north Queensland**

	<b>Bundjalung Country</b>	<b>North Queensland (Breen 2009)</b>
<b>Main participants</b>	A minority of Indigenous Australians gamble on cards occasionally, especially: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women</li> <li>• Youth</li> <li>• Social groups of visitors, older people &amp; extended family</li> </ul>	A majority of Indigenous Australians gamble on card games occasionally: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Women</li> <li>▪ Everyone</li> <li>▪ Groups of family</li> <li>• Groups of visitors &amp; groups of young people</li> </ul>
<b>Frequency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two or three times a week</li> <li>• Pay day</li> <li>• Weekly</li> <li>• Monthly</li> <li>• Irregular phases of card playing tied to social opportunity &amp; visitors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pay day</li> <li>▪ Post pay day shoulder period</li> <li>• Isolating climatic conditions in remote locations</li> </ul>
<b>Duration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shorter sessions: a couple of hours</li> <li>• Longer sessions: all day or all night</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shorter sessions (some exploitative)</li> <li>• Longer sessions (low stakes &amp; high stakes)</li> <li>• Weekend card gambling sessions/ occasional 'binge' gambling</li> </ul>
<b>Expenditure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower range: about \$5</li> <li>• Higher range: over \$200</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower range: &lt;\$25</li> <li>• Higher range: &gt; \$25</li> <li>• Prompted by entrepreneur organised inter-community card games</li> <li>• Prompted by irregular financial catalysts</li> <li>• Use of stakes other than money</li> </ul>
<b>Motivations (in descending order of importance)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To win &amp; to socialise</li> <li>• To reduce boredom</li> <li>• To escape</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To win &amp; to socialise</li> <li>• To pass the time</li> <li>• To escape &amp; for distraction</li> </ul>
<b>Location &amp; access</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private homes</li> <li>• Under trees</li> <li>• In the paddock</li> <li>• In the street (youth)</li> <li>• Readily available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private homes</li> <li>• Public outside sites but sheltered</li> <li>• Readily available well-known sites</li> </ul>
<b>Positive consequences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social connectedness</li> <li>• Social activity</li> <li>• An occasional win</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social and cultural reassurance</li> <li>• Closer family/ extended family links</li> <li>• Enhanced collective culture</li> <li>• Reduced alcohol use</li> </ul>
<b>Negative consequences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual financial losses</li> <li>• Family &amp; community borrowing</li> <li>• Youth gambling</li> <li>• Use of stakes other than money</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial hardship</li> <li>• Child neglect</li> <li>• Domestic violence</li> <li>• Demand sharing, family and community borrowing</li> <li>• Exploitation of disadvantaged others</li> </ul>

Card gambling was seen as a specific Indigenous leisure pursuit in both Bundjalung Country and in north Queensland. Participation in card gambling appeared far greater in north Queensland due to: the lack of access to commercial gambling in some parts; the sparse population; long distances between towns and settlements; the existence of multiple Indigenous communities; and the isolating effects of extreme weather conditions.

The socio-demographic characteristics of card gamblers were very similar in the two research sites, including women, small social groups and visitors. The exception was youth gambling on cards which was conducted openly in the main street of a town in Bundjalung Country. Card gambling behaviour, including its frequency, duration and expenditure, was reasonably similar in both research locations. Three main differences for north Queensland were the presence of weekend card sessions, entrepreneur organised card games and exploitation of card gamblers. Weekend and entrepreneur organised card gambling was often called 'binge' gambling. Some exploitation of others reported to occur in card gambling in north Queensland, was not reported in Bundjalung Country. Card gambling was more accessible and readily available to people in north Queensland. Motivations for card gambling and its positive and negative consequences were very similar for both research sites. Positive cultural consequences arising from card gambling were found to be more extensive in north Queensland.

### 5.3.2 Commercial Gambling Behaviour

Table 5.2 summarises key findings from both research regions in relation to commercial gambling behaviour.

**Table 5.2: Key aspects of commercial gambling behaviour in Bundjalung Country and north Queensland**

	Bundjalung Country	North Queensland (Breen 2009)
<b>Main participants</b>	Poker machines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Men &amp; women of all ages</li> <li>• Older women</li> <li>• Younger &amp; older social groups</li> <li>• More males (in town)</li> <li>• More older females (in villages)</li> <li>• Employed &amp; unemployed</li> <li>• In relationships</li> </ul> TAB gambling: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Men</li> <li>• Younger groups</li> </ul> Bingo: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women</li> </ul> Keno: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women</li> <li>• Mixed social groups</li> </ul>	Poker machines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women</li> <li>▪ Small groups: family and social groups</li> <li>• Some gamble on both cards &amp; poker machines</li> </ul> TAB gambling: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Men</li> </ul> Bingo: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women</li> </ul> Keno: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women</li> </ul>
<b>Preferred activities (in descending order of prominence)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poker machines</li> <li>• TAB gambling</li> <li>• Keno</li> <li>• Bingo</li> <li>• Poker tournaments &amp; lottery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Poker machines</li> <li>▪ TAB gambling</li> <li>• Bingo</li> <li>• Keno</li> </ul>
<b>Frequency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-3 times a week</li> <li>• Pay day</li> <li>• A short shoulder period after pay day</li> <li>• Weekly</li> <li>• Fortnightly</li> <li>• Weekends for social groups &amp; TAB</li> <li>• 'Binge gambling' when money is available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Several times a week</li> <li>▪ Pay day</li> <li>▪ Post pay day shoulder period</li> <li>▪ Weekend 'binge' gambling</li> </ul>



	<b>Bundjalung Country</b>	<b>North Queensland (Breen 2009)</b>
<b>Duration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shorter sessions: 1-3 hours</li> <li>• Longer sessions: all day or all night</li> <li>• As long as money is available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shorter sessions: a couple of hours</li> <li>• Longer sessions: all day or all night</li> <li>• As long as money is available</li> </ul>
<b>Expenditure</b>	Poker machines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower range: \$5</li> <li>• Higher range: \$300 or whole pay</li> <li>• 25 cents average bet</li> </ul> TAB: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small bets, average \$1-\$2</li> <li>• Range \$5-\$20 a session</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower range expenditure: &lt;\$50</li> <li>• Higher range expenditure: &gt;\$50</li> <li>• Windfall payments: cycle of feast and famine</li> </ul>
<b>Motivations (in descending order of importance)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To win</li> <li>• To socialise</li> <li>• To escape (from trauma &amp; problems)</li> <li>• To reduce boredom &amp; fill in time</li> <li>• Rite of passage at 18 years</li> <li>• Alcohol induced gambling</li> <li>• Mental health illness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To win</li> <li>• To socialise &amp; to escape</li> <li>• To pass the time</li> <li>• Relaxation</li> </ul>
<b>Attractive gambling product features</b>	Prices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low stakes games</li> </ul> Promotions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poker machine free spins &amp; jackpot prizes</li> <li>• Free raffles</li> <li>• Free member draws</li> </ul> Products (in order of preference) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poker machines, bingo &amp; some keno for women</li> <li>• TAB gambling, poker machines &amp; some keno for men</li> <li>• Poker machines: intermittent rewards, easy to play, variety of games, note acceptors</li> <li>• Few literacy barriers</li> <li>• No interaction with others for some</li> </ul>	Prices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low stakes games</li> </ul> Promotions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attractions of poker machines for some</li> </ul> Products (in order of preference) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poker machines, bingo &amp; keno for women</li> <li>• TAB &amp; poker machines for men</li> <li>• Easy to play</li> </ul>
<b>Access issues</b>	Ease of access: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible meeting place for socialising</li> <li>• Cool, comfortable &amp; relaxing</li> <li>• Affordable meals &amp; alcohol</li> <li>• Social inclusiveness</li> <li>• Access to venue &amp; proximity</li> <li>• Sports sponsorship</li> <li>• Able to escape from people</li> </ul> Less access to the gambling environment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requests for loans from others in venue</li> <li>• Patronising or racist attitudes</li> <li>• Lack of money</li> <li>• Alcohol affected customers</li> <li>• Lack of transport</li> </ul>	Ease of access: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ease of access</li> <li>• Convenient location</li> <li>• Affordable prices</li> <li>• Comfortable setting</li> <li>• Welcome attitudes</li> <li>• Social inclusiveness</li> </ul> Less access to the gambling environment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High prices</li> <li>• Entry barriers</li> <li>• Tourist precinct</li> <li>• Patronising attitudes</li> </ul>

Commercial gambling participation appeared more prominent in Bundjalung Country than in north Queensland. Reasons for this include: greater population numbers and concentrations; more towns and communities in closer proximity to each other; relatively better and cheaper transport links; more gaming venues; and more gambling opportunities available.

There were many similarities in socio-demographic characteristics of commercial gamblers in both research sites, including women, and mixed and social groups. Differences were seen in Bundjalung Country where more males were said to gamble in towns and older females in single venue villages close to Indigenous communities. Further, more groups of people were said to gamble on TAB, bingo and keno in Bundjalung Country, possibly linked to availability and access. While some people gambled on both cards and commercial gambling in north Queensland, there was far less mention of this in Bundjalung Country.

Gambling behaviour, including preferences, frequency, duration and expenditure, was reasonably similar in both research sites. However, gambling motivations in Bundjalung Country included some youthful rite of passage motivations when turning 18 years, people affected by alcohol and those with mental health problems – all gamblers with less capacity to make responsible gambling decisions. The domination of poker machine use was obvious in Bundjalung Country compared to north Queensland. There were many more gambling promotions offered and more variety in promotions in Bundjalung Country, possibly reflecting more clubs and club memberships there.

### 5.3.3 Consequences of Gambling

Table 5.3 summarises key positive and negative consequences of gambling in Bundjalung Country and north Queensland.

**Table 5.3: Main positive and negative consequences of commercial gambling in Bundjalung Country and north Queensland**

	Bundjalung Country	North Queensland (Breen 2009)
<b>Positive consequences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socialising</li> <li>• Win money</li> <li>• Excitement &amp; enjoyment</li> <li>• Social &amp; physical comfort</li> <li>• Reduced alcohol consumption</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social &amp; cultural reassurance</li> <li>• Having social interests</li> <li>• Closer family ties</li> <li>• Enhanced collective culture</li> <li>• Wellbeing, social &amp; physical comfort</li> <li>• Social connectedness</li> <li>• Reduced alcohol use</li> </ul>
<b>Negative consequences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial hardship (losses, debts, loans)</li> <li>• Family difficulties (including child neglect)</li> <li>• Relationship problems (abuse, violence, breakdowns)</li> <li>• Spread of negative impacts throughout the community (demand sharing)</li> <li>• Exploitation of disadvantaged others</li> <li>• Mental health issues (depression, anxiety, addiction)</li> <li>• Crime (fraud, theft)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial losses &amp; hardship</li> <li>• Child neglect</li> <li>• Domestic violence</li> <li>• Demand sharing (from family and community)</li> <li>• Exploitation of disadvantaged others</li> <li>• Creating a cycle of dependency</li> </ul>

Comparing positive and negative consequences of gambling, there appeared more positive consequences reported in north Queensland, particularly those focused on enhanced collective culture, wellbeing and social connectedness. Additionally, there appeared more negative consequences reported in Bundjalung Country, especially mental health issues and crime. On balance and overall, Indigenous gamblers in north Queensland seemed to experience more positive consequences and less negative consequences than those in Bundjalung Country.

### 5.3.4 Risk Factors for Gambling

Table 5.4 summarises the main risk factors for gambling identified by respondents in Bundjalung Country and north Queensland.

**Table 5.4: Main risk factors for gambling in Bundjalung Country and north Queensland**

	<b>Bundjalung Country</b>	<b>North Queensland (Breen 2009)</b>
<b>Propensity: Personal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Escape from grief &amp; loss</li> <li>• Relief from violence &amp; abuse</li> <li>• Accede to peer pressure</li> <li>• Under the influence of alcohol or other drugs</li> <li>• Being unemployed and having time to gamble</li> <li>• Gambling to reduce boredom</li> <li>• Lack of education (literacy &amp; numeracy problems, lack of budgeting skills)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Escape from grief &amp; loss</li> <li>• Escape from Stolen Generation aftermath</li> <li>• Under the influence of alcohol or other drugs</li> <li>• Preoccupation with gambling</li> <li>• Gambling to alleviate poverty (unemployment, time to gamble).</li> <li>• Erroneous beliefs about winning</li> </ul>
<b>Propensity: Family</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generational exposure to gambling influences</li> <li>• Trans-generational learning about gambling</li> <li>• Normalisation of youth gambling</li> <li>• Parental absence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generational exposure to gambling influences</li> <li>• Trans-generational exposure to gambling influences</li> <li>• Normalisation of children's gambling</li> <li>• Prioritising gambling over work &amp; family</li> </ul>
<b>Propensity: Financial</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gambling to increase income</li> <li>• Gambling to repay debts</li> <li>• Gambling with borrowed money</li> <li>• Cycle of dependency</li> <li>• Being used to living in poverty</li> <li>• Windfall payments increasing gambling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gambling to increase income</li> <li>• Lack of budgeting &amp; financial management skills</li> <li>• Gambling with borrowed money</li> <li>• Long gambling sessions</li> <li>• Windfall payments increasing gambling</li> </ul>
<b>Propensity: Historical &amp; cultural</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of Indigenous values, culture, respect &amp; discipline</li> <li>• Deterioration of traditional reciprocity when used for gambling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belief in luck (contributing to personal status &amp; winning)</li> <li>• Traditional exchange systems (use of complementary exchange system, subsistence)</li> <li>• Abuse of traditional reciprocity</li> </ul>
<b>Gambling products &amp; services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical &amp; sensory stimuli associated with gambling</li> <li>• Sound, light &amp; visual features of poker machines</li> <li>• Emotional attachment to 'lucky' poker machines, easy to play, free games, note acceptors</li> <li>• Attractive venue marketing &amp; promotion</li> <li>• Easy physical access</li> <li>• Easy social access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanded access through use of alternative stakes</li> <li>• Ignoring cultural avoidance laws</li> <li>• Increased physical &amp; social access to commercial gambling</li> <li>• Ready availability of gambling</li> </ul>
<b>Consequences: Intrinsic barriers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shame &amp; denial</li> <li>• Poverty</li> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Grief &amp; loss</li> <li>• Addiction</li> <li>• Unequal power relationships</li> <li>• Cultural differences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poverty (debt accumulation, deprived children, physical &amp; social isolation, reliance on others for transport)</li> <li>• Shame &amp; stigma</li> <li>• Reluctance to seek gambling help</li> <li>• Reinforcement of generational, social &amp; cultural norms supporting unhealthy card gambling by youth</li> <li>• High alcohol consumption</li> </ul>
<b>Consequences: Extrinsic barriers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of culturally appropriate gambling help services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative attitudes to gambling counselling</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of knowledge about &amp; access to gambling help</li> <li>• Lack of gambling education &amp; awareness</li> <li>• Concern over confidentiality of gambling help services</li> <li>• Venues wait for gambler to act before referral to gambling help services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of culturally appropriate gambling help services</li> <li>• Lack of access to gambling help</li> </ul>
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Many risk factors were common to both research sites. Points of difference were seen in personal factors such as peer pressure, relief from violence and abuse and a lack of education in Bundjalung Country, which contrasted with a preoccupation with gambling, erroneous beliefs about winning and relief from Stolen Generation loss in north Queensland. Family and financial risk factors were very similar in both locations. Historical and cultural risks were linked to traditional Indigenous beliefs in luck, exchange systems and subsistence living in north Queensland, while in Bundjalung Country, these risks were linked to long-held gambling practices and norms and loss of Indigenous values, respect and discipline.

Risks associated with gambling products and services, especially poker machines, were much more prominent in Bundjalung Country. Risks associated with the gambling environment were similar, being increased physical and social access. Overall, risks for Indigenous gamblers in Bundjalung Country were more likely associated with the ready availability and wide variety of gambling opportunities on offer, attractive features of gambling products and services, in particular poker machines, easy access to gambling products and services, and a choice of a great many gaming venues.

Particular barriers for Indigenous gamblers to address problematic consequences of gambling in Bundjalung Country were the highly personal issues of depression, grief and loss, addiction, perceptions of unequal power relationships and cultural differences, compared to more social barriers for gamblers in north Queensland. Even the extrinsic barriers for Bundjalung gamblers were concerned with the gamblers' own personal attributes, with gamblers having little trust in the confidentiality of services and little confidence in approaching a venue manager for gambling assistance.

### 5.3.5 Protective Factors for Gambling

Table 5.5 summarises the main protective factors for gambling identified by respondents in Bundjalung Country and north Queensland.

**Table 5.5: Main protective factors for gambling in Bundjalung Country and north Queensland**

	<b>Bundjalung Country</b>	<b>North Queensland (Breen 2009)</b>
<b>Propensity: Personal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal control (set limits for gambling)</li> <li>• Self-respect</li> <li>• Having a purpose in life, high aspirations</li> <li>• Religious beliefs</li> <li>• Employment, earning money</li> <li>• Learn from past experience</li> <li>• Being recognised as a local person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Control</li> <li>• Setting limits</li> <li>• Self-discipline</li> <li>• Social group self-regulation</li> <li>• Religious beliefs (non-gamblers, reformed heavy gamblers).</li> </ul>
<b>Propensity: Family</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong family influences, role models, values upheld</li> <li>• Share alternative interests &amp; time with family &amp; friends outside gambling</li> <li>• Positive relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access limited through family rifts</li> <li>• Feelings of belonging</li> </ul>
<b>Propensity: Financial</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education &amp; skills in financial management</li> <li>• Small stakes betting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to contain budget for gambling</li> </ul>
<b>Propensity: Historical &amp; cultural</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn to respectfully refuse to lend money for gambling</li> <li>• Elders seen and heeded as role models</li> <li>• Cultural cohesion</li> <li>• Cultural values</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement with traditional collective culture</li> <li>• Cultural cohesion</li> </ul>
<b>Gambling products &amp; services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the odds of winning</li> <li>• Lack of transport to venues</li> <li>• Read &amp; understand gambling help messages</li> <li>• Effective exclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited time for commercial gambling.</li> <li>• Limiting gambling to non-continuous forms only</li> <li>• Family &amp; social group regulation</li> </ul>
<b>Consequences: Intrinsic barriers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowing when to seek help for gambling-related problems</li> <li>• Being more experienced in help-seeking</li> <li>• Encouragement from others to seek help</li> <li>• Local knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having Indigenous role models</li> <li>• Relatedness to family &amp; extended family</li> <li>• Developing resilience (personal competence &amp; support from others)</li> </ul>
<b>Consequences: Extrinsic barriers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of culturally appropriate gambling help services</li> <li>• Provision of gambling education &amp; awareness</li> <li>• Provision of budgeting &amp; financial management education</li> <li>• Encouragement of male role models as community leaders</li> <li>• Indigenous community strength &amp; support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of a local liaison person &amp; local gambling help services</li> <li>• Provision of community-specific gambling education and awareness</li> <li>• Responsible gambling materials with Indigenous art &amp; messages</li> <li>• Local telephone helpline service</li> </ul>

Protective factors for both research sites had much in common, which were being in control, setting limits and religious faith. The most obvious difference for personal protective factors was the regulation of gambling by a gambler's social group in north Queensland. However, in Bundjalung Country, being a local gambler meant that others (Indigenous gamblers, venue managers) might remind or advise them to limit their gambling. Family protective influences were strong in Bundjalung Country. Financial, historical and cultural protective factors were broadly the same in both research sites. Protective factors associated with gambling products and services and the gambling environment in Bundjalung Country were linked to understanding gambling odds, recognising responsible gambling messages and understanding

exclusion. In contrast, in north Queensland, protective factors were associated with limiting gambling and informal self-regulation by family and social groups.

Overall, protective factors for Indigenous gamblers in Bundjalung Country were more likely to be associated with strong family and local influences, being culturally able to reject humbugging, having restricted access to gambling, knowing the odds of winning at gambling, and understanding that some gambling leads to problems and even exclusion.

Facilitators for addressing negative consequences of gambling were similar between the two sites, but those specific to Bundjalung gamblers were also highly personal, compared to more family and culturally related facilitators in north Queensland. Extrinsic facilitators in Bundjalung Country were related to education, male role models and community support.

Overall, barriers and facilitators for gamblers in addressing problematic gambling consequences in Bundjalung Country were more individual and personal in nature, while in north Queensland they were more collective.

### 5.3.6 Suggested Interventions to Address Gambling Issues

Table 5.6 summarises suggested interventions to address gambling issues identified by respondents in Bundjalung Country and north Queensland.

**Table 5.6: Suggested interventions for addressing gambling issues in Bundjalung Country and north Queensland**

	Bundjalung Country	North Queensland (Breen 2009)
<b>Indigenous responses</b>	<p>By Indigenous communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion and understanding of gambling impacts and links</li> <li>• Encourage Indigenous counsellors</li> <li>• Attend budgeting workshops</li> <li>• Cooperation among Indigenous groups</li> <li>• Respect for Indigenous cultural values of caring &amp; sharing, parenting &amp; role models</li> </ul> <p>By community services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide culturally appropriate gambling help services, community education &amp; outreach services</li> <li>• Develop holistic services to deal with further problematic issues (family, health, mental health, education)</li> <li>• Conduct cultural awareness training for non-Indigenous workers</li> </ul> <p>By gambling industry and venues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge &amp; provide specific Indigenous responsible gambling help (messages, reminders)</li> <li>• Undertake local community education and awareness including exclusion processes</li> <li>• Responsible placement of gambling products &amp; services</li> <li>• Positive attitudes to &amp; employment strategies for Indigenous people</li> </ul>	<p>By Indigenous communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open discussion about gambling &amp; its impacts</li> <li>• Train Indigenous counsellors</li> <li>• Attend budgeting education</li> <li>• Develop social norms around gambling</li> <li>• Promote healthy living</li> <li>• Return to traditional values &amp; build on strengths</li> </ul> <p>By community services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on gambling education &amp; awareness campaigns, use shock tactics</li> <li>• Inform health &amp; mental health services about gambling problems</li> <li>• Promote generational change programs for long-term effects</li> </ul> <p>By gambling industry and venues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limit access to gambling (smart cards, time limits)</li> <li>• Ban TV advertising of gambling winners &amp; winnings (e.g. lottery products, TAB, sports events)</li> <li>• Provide responsible gambling messages in Kriol/Creole</li> </ul> <p>By governments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund targeted public education &amp; community awareness campaigns highlighting gambling ripple effects</li> <li>• Remove structural barriers (employment, education housing, health care)</li> <li>• Provide adequate rehabilitation services</li> </ul>

	<b>Bundjalung Country</b>	<b>North Queensland (Breen 2009)</b>
<b>Indigenous responses (cont...)</b>	<p>By governments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund public awareness &amp; community education campaigns for Indigenous gamblers, target all ages</li> <li>• Provide money management workshops</li> <li>• Train &amp; employ Indigenous counsellors</li> <li>• Strengthen venue responsible gambling practices</li> <li>• Introduce gambling expenditure limits</li> <li>• Support Indigenous jobs</li> </ul>	
<b>Counsellors</b>	<p>By indigenous communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage strong role models</li> </ul> <p>By community services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous liaison people for referrals, home visits, outreach programs</li> <li>• Resources for financial counselling, health screening &amp; addictions training for all counsellors</li> <li>• Cooperation with rehabilitation &amp; other agencies</li> </ul> <p>By gambling industry and venues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be forced to act responsibly</li> <li>• Provide limited local exclusions</li> </ul> <p>By governments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource education of Indigenous &amp; non-Indigenous counsellors, mental health &amp; addiction workers</li> <li>• Resource family conferencing services</li> </ul>	<p>By indigenous communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage traditional values &amp; skills</li> <li>• Cooperation with community services to develop gambling, budgeting &amp; parenting resources</li> <li>• Encourage children's education</li> </ul> <p>By community services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use multiple approaches for gambling prevention, protection &amp; treatment for indigenous people</li> <li>• Encourage Indigenous counsellor training</li> <li>• Promote financial counselling, health screening &amp; addictions training for all counsellors</li> </ul> <p>By gambling industry and venues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build community links</li> <li>• Actively approach gamblers</li> <li>• Remove intoxicated gamblers</li> </ul> <p>By governments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate Indigenous counsellors</li> <li>• Consult &amp; resource Indigenous gambling education &amp; awareness campaigns</li> <li>• Improve structural conditions</li> <li>• Spread lump-sum payments</li> </ul>
<b>Venue managers</b>	<p>By indigenous communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership &amp; role models</li> <li>• Train indigenous gambling counsellors &amp; help services</li> <li>• Better education for indigenous people</li> </ul> <p>By community services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources for gambling help services, promotion &amp; education campaigns</li> </ul> <p>By gambling industry and venues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise customers fully &amp; appropriately on exclusion processes</li> </ul> <p>By governments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve structural conditions for indigenous people</li> <li>• Cooperation &amp; communication about effective responsible gambling policies and practices</li> <li>• Regular updates of responsible gambling courses</li> <li>• Combine alcohol &amp; gambling in state public promotion campaigns</li> </ul>	<p>By indigenous communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet family &amp; parenting responsibilities</li> <li>• Community leadership &amp; role models</li> <li>• Encourage education</li> </ul> <p>By community services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide gambling help services, promotion &amp; education campaigns</li> <li>• Provide budgeting skills</li> </ul> <p>By gambling industry and venues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite counsellors to be in venues at set times</li> </ul> <p>By governments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve structural conditions</li> <li>• Closer supervision of gambling &amp; alcohol licensing</li> <li>• Compulsory responsible gambling courses include an indigenous component</li> </ul>

Similar potential interventions were suggested by all groups of respondents and across both locations for Indigenous communities, community services, the gambling industry and governments. Indigenous communities were expected to respect and care for each other, to begin to discuss gambling openly, to heed Elders' advice, to encourage cooperation, to care for families and children, and to manage their lives, responsibilities and money in healthy ways. Community services were expected to be culturally aware of Indigenous clients' needs, to provide appropriate holistic services, to encourage education and training of Indigenous counsellors and to cooperate with other services and referrals. The gambling industry and gaming venues were expected to act responsibly and legally in providing gambling, to develop responsible gambling policies and practices relevant to Indigenous people including exclusion, to undertake community engagement with Indigenous groups, and to provide employment for Indigenous people and support gambling education and awareness projects. Governments were expected to resource specific protection, prevention and promotion strategies and practices to address negative consequences of Indigenous gambling, to fund the training and education of Indigenous counsellors and to redress the structural disadvantage in health, housing, education and employment that can be a catalyst for extended gambling.

Some differences were noted between potential interventions in north Queensland and Bundjalung Country. In Bundjalung Country, there was an emphasis on strengthening responsible gambling strategies in venues by giving venue managers some leeway in introducing local but limited exclusions, by regular updates and refreshers of responsible gambling courses, by effective communication of responsible gambling messages, exclusion availability and processes, and by awareness of the needs of local Indigenous groups. In north Queensland, the emphasis was less on responsible gambling and more generally on promoting healthy living, encouraging generational change in gambling behaviors and encouraging education as a basis for this. These differences reflect the maturity and dominance of the commercial gambling market in Bundjalung Country and the acceptance of responsible gambling as a measure to address gambling problems. However, suggestions to strengthen responsible gambling policies and practices, including local exclusions, indicate the real and immediate need for responsible gambling policies and practices to be overhauled, be given more attention and made culturally relevant for Indigenous gamblers.

#### **5.4 CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

This chapter has addressed Research Objective Two, which was to compare Indigenous gambling behaviour, consequences, risk factors and potential interventions between several Indigenous communities in north Queensland and those under study in northern New South Wales.

Results from Breen's research into gambling in north Queensland were first summarised, before a comparative analysis was undertaken of these research findings with those for Bundjalung Country in northern New South Wales

Commercial gambling was found to be far more prevalent in Bundjalung Country than card gambling, while in north Queensland there was more balance between the two. Gambling in Bundjalung Country appeared to be an individualistic pursuit but in north Queensland it appeared a more collective activity. With more opportunities for, and easy access to commercial gambling, gamblers seemed to face more gambling-related risks in Bundjalung Country. Numerous interventions were proposed to address these risks.



## **CHAPTER SIX**

# **CONCEPTUAL MODELS OF INDIGENOUS GAMBLER PROFILES IN NORTH QUEENSLAND AND BUNDJALUNG COUNTRY**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the results for Research Objective Three, which was to refine a conceptual model of different types of Indigenous gambling to better understand Indigenous gambling behaviour, based on the preceding comparison of the Queensland and New South Wales research findings.

A model of Indigenous gambler profiles in north Queensland was developed by Breen (2009) based on qualitative research in that region. This is described and summarised in relation to card and commercial gambling. Following this, a model of Indigenous gambler profiles is presented for people in Bundjalung Country. These models are then compared and analysed.

### **6.2 A GAMBLING CONTINUUM**

Taking a public health approach to gambling, Korn and Shaffer (1999) proposed a spectrum of gambling behaviours from healthy to unhealthy gambling. Healthy gambling was represented as a pleasurable experience in a low risk situation where people know the odds of winning and spend reasonable amounts of money (Korn & Shaffer 1999:330). Unhealthy gambling was represented as including gambling-related problems. Similarly, the Productivity Commission (1999:6.1) noted it was 'very important to see problem gambling as a continuum – with some people having moderate problems and others more severe ones'. The Productivity Commission's (1999) continuum ranged from no-problem gambling or level 1 gamblers at one end (most people), to moderate gambling problems or level 2 gamblers in the middle (a minority group), to severe gambling problems or level 3 gamblers at the other end (a small group). Thus, using a continuum to plot and describe different groups of gamblers based on their gambling behaviours from healthy to unhealthy, and from no problems to severe problems, has been valuable.

In her north Queensland investigation, Breen (2009) developed eight typical Indigenous gambler profiles based on a continuum of healthy to unhealthy gambling behaviours, motivations, influences and consequences. These were created for card and commercial gamblers and are now presented.

### **6.3 INDIGENOUS CARD GAMBLER PROFILES IN NORTH QUEENSLAND**

From the research results in north Queensland, four Indigenous card gambler profiles emerged and were labelled: social gambler; committed gambler; occasional binge gambler; and exploited gambler (Breen 2009). The social gambler and committed gambler profiles were the most prominent of the four.

### **6.3.1 Social Card Gamblers In North Queensland**

Social card gamblers were mostly women, although visitors who gambled socially might include men and women. Women gambled on cards for long sessions and usually played with people they knew, family and friends. They generally gambled with low stakes, less than \$25. Social card gamblers were motivated to gamble by opportunities to socialise, pass the time and enjoy the occasional win. Social card gambling was time-consuming and included much talking and sharing news. Children played around the outside of card games but were watched. Social card gambling was limited by having breaks in games for food and drink preparation, eating and meeting children's needs.

Social card gamblers gambled in each others' homes or in well-known places outside. While long, leisurely low-stakes gambling was the norm, pay week saw increased gambling and higher stakes. Social card gambling appeared to be informally regulated by group social and collective norms. Winners kept their winnings but were expected to play until the end of the session so losers had an opportunity to win something back. Redistribution of winnings occurred over a long time when members of the group remained constant.

Gambling consequences for social card gamblers included feeling comfortable and undertaking an activity that belonged to Indigenous Australians. Being members of a collective culture, social card gambling appeared to enhance the network of social relationships within family groups and the community, especially when card games were held to raise funds for charity. Safety was maintained as drinking alcohol was frowned upon by these gamblers. These findings indicate that social card gambling in north Queensland was mostly a collective yet contained gambling activity mainly involving familiar intra-community groups of players.

### **6.3.2 Committed Card Gamblers In North Queensland**

Committed card gamblers were both men and women who gambled in long sessions on card games during the evenings and at weekends. They usually gambled when the pool of money was large enough to spark interest in winning. Committed card gamblers generally gambled with high stakes and with other committed gamblers, even those of whom their families did not approve. Motivations underpinning committed card gambling included the opportunity to win money, to increase income, to gain a reputation as a skilled player, to acquire the status of a lucky gambler and for excitement and distraction.

Committed card gamblers gambled with almost anyone so long as they had the stakes. Some gamblers negotiated around avoidance laws in order to gamble. Their card games were often noisy as the stakes rose and the pool grew. Children on the edge of these games were sometimes overlooked. Alcohol was consumed by spectators. While men often spent their winnings on alcohol after the games, women were more likely to use winnings for food or household items.

Card gambling behaviour was linked to availability and the capacity to gamble. Availability and access in some remote Gulf regions was easy, with less access in the Rainforest region. Committed gamblers gambled in the same home or same secluded place outside. In a home, the host was normally paid a small proportion of the gambling pool for providing hospitality, as was the entrepreneur who may have organised the gambling. More gambling occurred on pay night, in the following shoulder period and at weekends. Stakes other than money (assets) were used. Winners kept their winnings, usually large amounts of money or valuable assets. However, winners were often subjected to humbugging by losers, which culturally

was hard to refuse. Many committed card gamblers gambled until their funds were exhausted. When this occurred, they often borrowed to keep on gambling.

For committed card gamblers, gambling yielded positive outcomes when large amounts of money were won and the excitement at games was shared, but negative consequences were more pronounced. These included financial losses, child neglect, health concerns, demand sharing, domestic violence and some opportunistic exploitation of weaker people to get funds for gambling.

Committed card gambling took place over frequent long sessions at both inter-community and intra-community sites. It was characterised by: individual gambling motivated to win money; long sessions; high gambling stakes; fast games; continuous play; anxiety-laden demand sharing requests; and some people ignoring cultural relationship laws.

### **6.3.3 Occasional Binge Card Gamblers In North Queensland**

Occasional binge card gamblers had characteristics of both social and committed card gamblers. Binge card gamblers usually gambled as social gamblers (smaller stakes, slower games), but occasionally had a gambling binge, and then gambled like a committed gamblers (higher stakes, faster games). Both women and men were occasional binge gamblers. They usually gambled socially with their family or social group in a controlled way, but sometimes they gambled intensively like committed gamblers when away from home. Motivations for binges were to win money, for excitement, to escape from pressure, and for relief from grief and loss. Binge gambling was generally triggered by an event (attending a sports carnival or the arrival of visitors) and the availability of gambling. It provided gamblers with high excitement and a temporary escape from everyday worries and problems.

Binge gambling was irregular or sporadic, undertaken about three or four times a year. Some entrepreneurs organised card gambling competitions at events where they knew gamblers would have money or they organised inter-community card games every three or four months so gamblers had time to save. Gamblers paid about \$100 to join a game. Potential winnings were high, up to \$15,000, or even a vehicle could be won. There were few winners as games were played out until the pool was won. The consequences of binge gambling appeared a mix of those for the social and committed gambler, depending on opportunities to gamble and gambling uptake, but adverse consequences for losers may be long-lasting.

### **6.3.4 Exploited Card Gamblers In North Queensland**

The exploited gambler was usually a disadvantaged or disabled card gambler said to have short gambling sessions, in some cases only three hours, where they exhausted all their funds. Exploited card gamblers were invited to gamble on cards when they received their fortnightly payments. Invitations were issued by very experienced gamblers seeking money and sometimes heavy pressure was applied. Exploited card gamblers usually lost their money quickly and only gambled again on their next payday. These gamblers appeared to be social gamblers in motivation and propensity to gamble but, through exploitation by more experienced gamblers, suffered consequences similar to committed gamblers, including financial distress. Their opportunities for social interaction, to travel and mix were limited. Some were not capable of resisting pressure or encouragement to gamble from stronger people.

## **6.4 INDIGENOUS COMMERCIAL GAMBLER PROFILES IN NORTH QUEENSLAND**

From the research results for commercial gambling by Indigenous Australians in north Queensland, four gambler types or profiles emerged and were labelled: social gambler; committed gambler; occasional binge gambler; and exploited gambler (Breen 2009). The social gambler and committed gambler profiles were the most prominent of the four.

### **6.4.1 Social Commercial Gamblers In North Queensland**

Most social commercial gamblers were women. They gambled in groups for short sessions (two or three hours) on poker machines, but also on bingo and keno. If the group was of mixed gender, then TAB gambling was included. Social commercial gambler groups comprised family and friends.

Motivations for social commercial gambling included to socialise, to pass the time, to relax and enjoy the occasional win. Those gambling usually met up for conversation, entertainment and time out from other pressures. Gambling expenditure was usually in the lower range (less than \$50). Some social gamblers pooled their money, played as a group and shared winnings.

Social gambling behaviour was linked to the availability of, and access to, gaming venues as well as venue characteristics and player preferences. Social gamblers attended gaming venues to spend time in a place where they felt welcome, where prices were affordable and facilities were comfortable. Venue characteristics, such as inclusiveness, proximity, air-conditioning and free tea and coffee, were important. Social gamblers mostly gambled on pay day and a few days following. They budgeted for their gambling. This social gambling appeared informally regulated by social group norms. Groups of poker machine players gambled together and played low denomination or one cent games, a strategy that venue managers called time-based play. Most TAB gambling occurred at weekends, with much group discussion about the likely prospects of races and sports events. For bingo sessions, gambling generally included a two hour session, once or twice a week. Bingo player groups often consisted of close knit relatives who played as individuals but identified as a group.

The consequences of social commercial gambling included social wellbeing and connectedness with family and friends. Social commercial gamblers were usually low consumers of alcohol. This group of gamblers appeared to allocate their time and have a set budget for gambling – they enjoyed gambling in a collective, sustainable way. Social commercial gambling was characterised by: lower gambling stakes; lower denomination games; social and recreational motivations; and engagement between and within a regular group of players who sometimes pooled stakes with shared winnings.

### **6.4.2 Committed Commercial Gamblers In North Queensland**

Committed commercial gamblers included both women and men. They often played alone but might be connected to a social group in a gaming venue. Most committed gamblers preferred continuous gambling and played poker machines. They gambled to win money and used high stakes (over \$50) when available.

Committed commercial gamblers were motivated to win money, seek a large windfall, increase income, break the system or the bank, to gain status as a winner, for excitement and an adrenaline rush, and to escape from stress, grief and loss. Committed gamblers gambled whenever they had money and often played until their money was exhausted, believing that a

win was close. Length of gambling sessions usually depended on money supply. Committed gamblers were intensively involved in commercial gambling as individuals.

The influence of commercial gambling products and services on gambler behaviour was linked to availability and access to gambling and venue characteristics. Commercial gambling was not easily available in the Gulf region. Gambling duration often depended on venue opening hours and some committed gamblers moved from venue to venue chasing gambling time. Committed gamblers preferred venues where some privacy was available. The opportunity to win jackpots was said to be attractive. Committed gambling tended to peak on pay day, but receipt of irregular windfall payments increased gambling activity. Winners were often subject to humbugging by losers.

The consequences of committed gambling included wins and losses. High losses were usually accompanied by financial hardship which could lead to demand sharing. Losses also led to a dependency on gambling and to family dysfunction, including child neglect and domestic violence for some. The findings indicated that committed card gambling was an individual activity characterised by fast and continuous gambling sessions motivated by the aim of making money and the need for money to meet commitments.

#### **6.4.3 Occasional Binge Commercial Gamblers In North Queensland**

Occasional binge commercial gamblers showed combined characteristics of the social commercial gambler and the committed commercial gambler. Occasional binge commercial gamblers were mostly women. They usually gambled socially with family or social groups in a controlled way with lower expenditure, but on some occasions they gambled intensively on poker machines with higher expenditure and in a continuous style. Binge gambling was motivated by seeking escape from stress, time out away from home, and distraction from recurring problems. Binge gambling was often triggered by feelings of not coping (such as loneliness, grief and loss, being a member of the Stolen Generation, a mental health crisis, pressure at work, retrenchment, poverty and funerals). Binge gambling episodes ended when gamblers lost their money. Winnings tended to be spent on further gambling. Binge gambling in a committed mode produced more adverse consequences than gambling in a social mode.

Occasional binge gambling facilitated problem avoidance for a short time, possibly reducing negative emotional states. Difficulties related to binge gambling were likely to rise and fall with the need to escape from stress and resulting episodes of binge gambling.

#### **6.4.4 Exploited Commercial Gamblers In North Queensland**

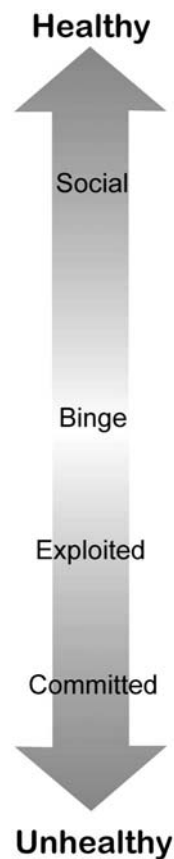
Some older and teenage social commercial gamblers were exploited by more experienced gamblers wanting or demanding funds for their own gambling. Two or three experienced gamblers were seen to stand behind a young or older gambler waiting for them to win before humbugging for money. Older people and Elders found it hard to refuse these very persistent demands, due to expectations of cultural reciprocity. Young people did not have the experience to refuse. While the propensity to gamble was socially motivated, the financial hardship and other consequences experienced by exploited gamblers were similar to those of committed gamblers.

### **6.5 A CONTINUUM OF GAMBLER TYPES IN NORTH QUEENSLAND**

These eight gambler profiles can be displayed on a continuum from healthy to unhealthy gambling, as per Korn and Shaffer (1999). This gambler continuum developed by Breen

(2009) for north Queensland depicts the social gambler positioned at the healthy end of the continuum, while the committed gambler is positioned at the opposite or unhealthy end. In the middle is the occasional binge gambler, because he or she wavers between social and committed gambling, depending on gambling motivations and opportunities. The exploited gambler is positioned towards the committed gambler end because of the adverse consequences they experience from their gambling, even though their motivations might be social. Figure 6.1 depicts the gambler continuum for north Queensland

**Figure 6.1: A continuum of gambler types in north Queensland**

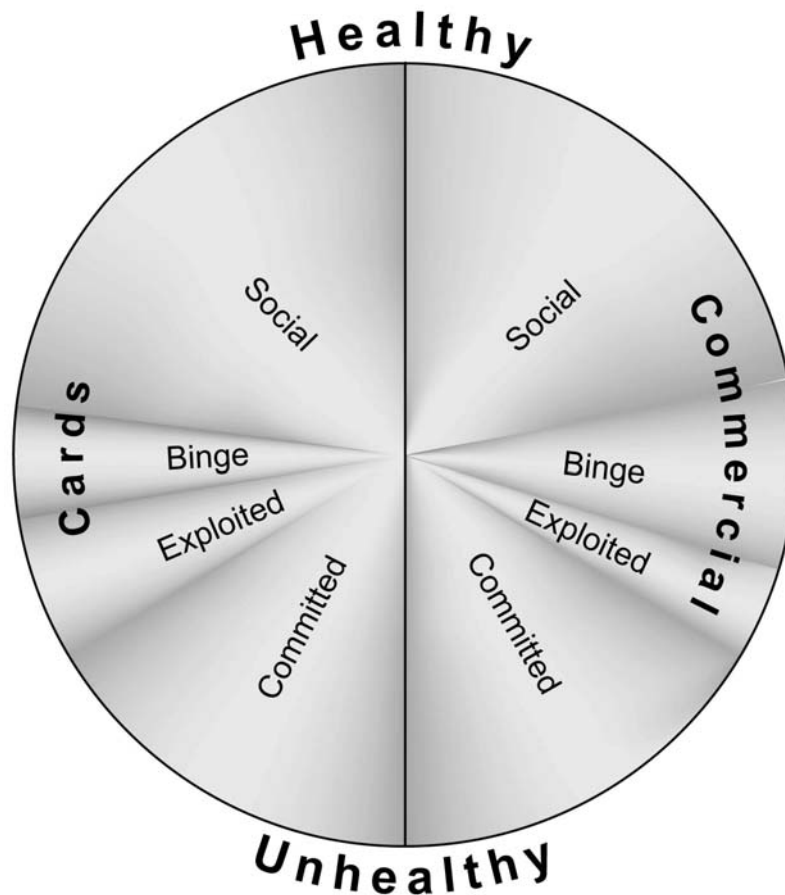


Source: Breen (2009).

## **6.6 A MODEL OF INDIGENOUS GAMBLER TYPES IN NORTH QUEENSLAND**

The preceding four card and four commercial gambling profiles were placed side by side by Breen (2009) to form a gambling model representing eight typical gambler profiles for north Queensland, as shown in Figure 6.2.

**Figure 6.2: A model of Indigenous gambler profiles in north Queensland**



Source: Breen (2009).

The central axis in Figure 6.2 represents a range of gambler behaviours, motivations and outcomes, moving from healthy or low risk gambling through increasing levels of gambling to unhealthy or high risk gambling (Korn & Shaffer 1999:330). Gambling outcomes change from positive at the healthy gambling end to adverse outcomes at the unhealthy end. This model, while a fixed representation of a dynamic phenomenon, presents a considered interpretation of a combination of different gambler behaviours and motivations which result in different outcomes. It assists in the description, interpretation and theoretical analysis of the data (Creswell 2007).

To explain this model of gambler typologies, both social card and social commercial gamblers have characteristics similar to Korn and Shaffer's (1999) concept of healthy gambling. Indigenous social gamblers in north Queensland enjoy gambling with low stakes and low risks. Social gambling outcomes help to sustain the gamblers' social wellbeing. Through self-regulating gambling norms, social gambling contributes to maintaining cultural and collective networks. Based on the Queensland research results, social gamblers sit at the healthy gambling end of the continuum in this model.

In contrast, both committed card and committed commercial gamblers appear to have similar characteristics to Korn and Shaffer's (1999) concept of unhealthy gambling. Indigenous committed gamblers in north Queensland gamble to win money, increase income and enhance their status as lucky individuals. They experience problems limiting their time and money while gambling. They compromise family, kin and community relationships and their

gambling often leads to adverse consequences (poverty, neglect, violence and some abuse of traditional reciprocity). Based on the Queensland research results, committed gamblers sit at the unhealthy gambling end of the continuum, opposite to social gambling in this model.

Another group who experience adverse outcomes of gambling are the exploited gamblers. Although their propensity to gamble is motivated by social reasons, exploited gamblers suffer from losing most of their income in a short time as a consequence of their gambling. They are more likely to sit towards the unhealthy end of the continuum because they experience negative consequences from gambling.

Occasional binge gamblers, being a combination of social and committed gamblers, logically sit somewhere in the middle of the gambling continuum. Binge gamblers hover somewhere between healthy and unhealthy gambling, lurching from one to the other depending on their motivations, access to gambling, available funds and their gambling consequences.

The construction of this model of eight gambler profiles of Indigenous Australians in north Queensland is based on the behaviour of gamblers, their propensity to gamble, their access to gambling products and services and their consequential outcomes. The separation into eight gambling typologies and the size of each group is not stationary but flexible and open to continuing cultural, social, political, economic and environmental influences. This model is useful because it illustrates the diversity of primary orientations intrinsic to gambling by Indigenous Australians in north Queensland. Many earlier research projects have not identified such detailed variations within Indigenous gambling activities, behaviours, motivations and consequences.

## **6.7 INDIGENOUS CARD GAMBLER PROFILES IN BUNDJALUNG COUNTRY**

Card gambling in Bundjalung Country was said to be a declining activity. It was evident in a few pockets of Ballina and Lismore Shires, publicly evident in one town in Richmond Valley Shire, perceived as an old people's game in Byron/Tweed Shire, banned by Elders in Kyogle Shire, and was found to have very little evidence in Clarence Valley Shire. From these research results two gambler types emerged and were labelled social card gambler and committed card gambler. The social card gambler profile had the majority of support from research respondents.

### **6.7.1 Social Card Gamblers In Bundjalung Country**

Social card gamblers were, in the main, women but when groups of visitors arrived, social card games were played by women and men. In one location, local youth (male) were public card gamblers. Social card gamblers usually played with people they knew well, family, extended family and friends. They generally gambled with low stakes, sometimes one or two dollars. Gambling motivations were underpinned by the desire to socialise but also to win. Social card gambling was carried on in short sessions, a few hours, often in the evening. Access to card gambling relied on the availability of card games and availability of groups of family and friends as players. Social gamblers gambled in each others' homes or in well-known places outside. Local games played included 'two-three' (somewhat similar to the north Queensland game of kabu) and 'tick around'. Pay week generally produced more gambling. Winners kept their winnings.

The consequences for social card gamblers included being socially connected to family and friends in undertaking an Indigenous-based activity. Social gamblers appeared to enjoy card gambling and maintain their control over it by having occasional games, by using low stakes



and playing in short sessions. It was a leisure activity that could be carried out in any meeting place by almost anyone. Stakes were set to suit the players' budget and sometimes no money was involved. Social card gambling appeared to be controlled by social norms of that group of players.

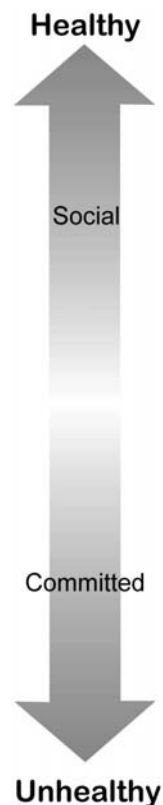
### 6.7.2 Committed Card Gambling In Bundjalung Country

There was some evidence to suggest the presence of committed card gambling in parts of Bundjalung Country. Some card gamblers, both men and women, were reported to spend large amounts of money on cards (over \$200), with some spending all their pay or their pension cheque. A few gamblers borrowed money to continue card gambling and others were said to use beer as alternative betting stakes. Committed card gamblers gambled in long sessions, all day or all night. Although winning was said to be the main motivation, committed card gamblers were also believed to be seeking an escape from their problems. The consequences of committed card gambling were seen to be a large win (\$700-\$800) or the loss of all funds. This was followed by borrowing from others until next pay day in a cycle of gambling and borrowing. Although committed card gambling was reported in pockets of Bundjalung Country by several respondents, it was not widespread and not obvious to the majority of respondents.

### 6.7.3 A Card Gambling Continuum For Bundjalung Country

These two card gambler profiles can be displayed on a continuum from healthy to unhealthy gambling, as per Korn and Shaffer (1999). Using the earlier gambler continuum developed by Breen (2009), the social card gambler is positioned at the healthy end of the continuum while the committed gambler is positioned at the opposite or unhealthy end. Figure 6.3 depicts the card gambler continuum in Bundjalung Country.

**Figure 6.3: A card gambler continuum in Bundjalung Country**



## **6.8 INDIGENOUS COMMERCIAL GAMBLER PROFILES IN BUNDJALUNG COUNTRY**

From the research into commercial gambling by Indigenous Australians in Bundjalung Country, three gambler types or profiles emerged and were labelled: social commercial gambler; committed commercial gambler; and occasional binge commercial gambler. Evidence supporting the social gambler and committed gambler profiles was supplied by the majority of respondents.

### **6.8.1 Social Commercial Gamblers In Bundjalung Country**

Most social commercial gamblers were men and women, older women and small social groups. They gambled in groups for short sessions (one to three hours) on poker machines but if the group was mixed, then TAB gambling and keno were included. In the main, bingo players were women.

Motivations for social commercial gambling included to win and to socialise. Social commercial gamblers usually met up with others in venues for recreation and time away from home. Gambling expenditure was typically in the lower range, about \$5. These gamblers used small bets which extended their gambling time in a venue. Some social gamblers pooled their money, played as a group and shared winnings. They appeared to have their budgeting and money management under their control.

Social commercial gamblers gambled on pay day, weekly or fortnightly. They visited gaming venues where they felt at ease, which were reasonably close or within walking distance to town, and provided affordable services in a cool, pleasant environment. Venue sports sponsorship was a feature making some gaming venues more likely to be visited than others.

The consequences of social commercial gambling were reported to include socialising, the occasional win, enjoyment and excitement, physical and social comfort and reduced alcohol consumption. These gamblers appeared to enjoy gambling as a recreation within their time and financial limits. Social commercial gambling was characterised by: lower gambling stakes; lower expenditure; social and winning motivations; and engagement with a social group who sometimes pooled stakes with shared winnings.

### **6.8.2 Committed Commercial Gamblers In Bundjalung Country**

Committed commercial gamblers were reported to comprise mainly older women in smaller villages (often single venue villages) and men in towns. They were mostly people in relationships but they gambled alone, even when appearing to be with a social group. Committed commercial gamblers preferred continuous gambling and played poker machines, although some gambled on the TAB as well. They gambled to win money, using higher stakes and higher expenditure (over \$300 for some) to win more money. Some committed commercial gamblers also gambled on cards.

Motivations for committed commercial gamblers were to win money, to hope for a big win with quick money, to zone out and escape from stress, grief and loss, and to reduce boredom. Committed gamblers gambled two or three times a week when they had funds. Length of gambling sessions could be all day or all night, depending on available resources. Committed gambling was most obvious on pay day and the shoulder period following pay day.

The influence of commercial gambling products and services on committed gambler behaviour was tied to gambling access and venue characteristics. Gambling duration often depended on venue opening hours. Committed gamblers preferred venues where they could

gamble alone and mainly out of sight. The opportunity for free spins and big prizes was appealing. Intermittent gambling rewards were reported to encourage committed gamblers to continue gambling. They were described as being intensively involved in commercial gambling.

The consequences of committed gambling included financial wins and losses. Wins were said to produce excitement and losses often brought financial hardship. Financial hardship, such as a lack of funds, debts and loans, sometimes led to demand sharing. Financial hardship for some meant family arguments about gambling loans, relationship problems over trust and the spread of negative ripple effects throughout the community. Committed commercial gambling was an individual activity, characterised by fast and continuous gambling, often motivated by the need for money to meet commitments and repay debts.

### **6.8.3 Occasional Binge Commercial Gamblers In Bundjalung Country**

As explained earlier, occasional binge gambling was a combination of social gambling and committed gambling. Occasional binge gamblers usually gambled as social gamblers but sometimes had a gambling binge when they gambled like committed gamblers.

In Bundjalung Country, there were a couple of reports of occasional binges on commercial gambling. These gamblers were said to be mostly men who usually gambled socially with family or social groups in a contained way with lower expenditure, but on occasions they gambled intensively in a continuous style spending large amounts of money. Most binge gamblers used poker machines, but some used TAB gambling. Binge gambling was motivated by seeking to escape from stress, for time out and time away from home and as a distraction from recurring problems. Triggers for binge gambling were reported as low self-esteem and family difficulties (often resulting from feeling under-valued, depression, mental health issues and unresolved childhood problems). Some binge gambling was said to be alcohol induced gambling. While binge gambling provided gamblers with temporary relief from their stressors, binge gambling in this committed mode produced more adverse consequences, especially financial losses, than gambling in a social mode. Binge gambling episodes ended when gamblers lost their money. Binge gambling consequences were likely to rise and fall with episodes of binge gambling. Although occasional binge gambling was reported by a few respondents, it did not appear widespread.

### **6.8.4 A Commercial Gambling Continuum For Bundjalung Country**

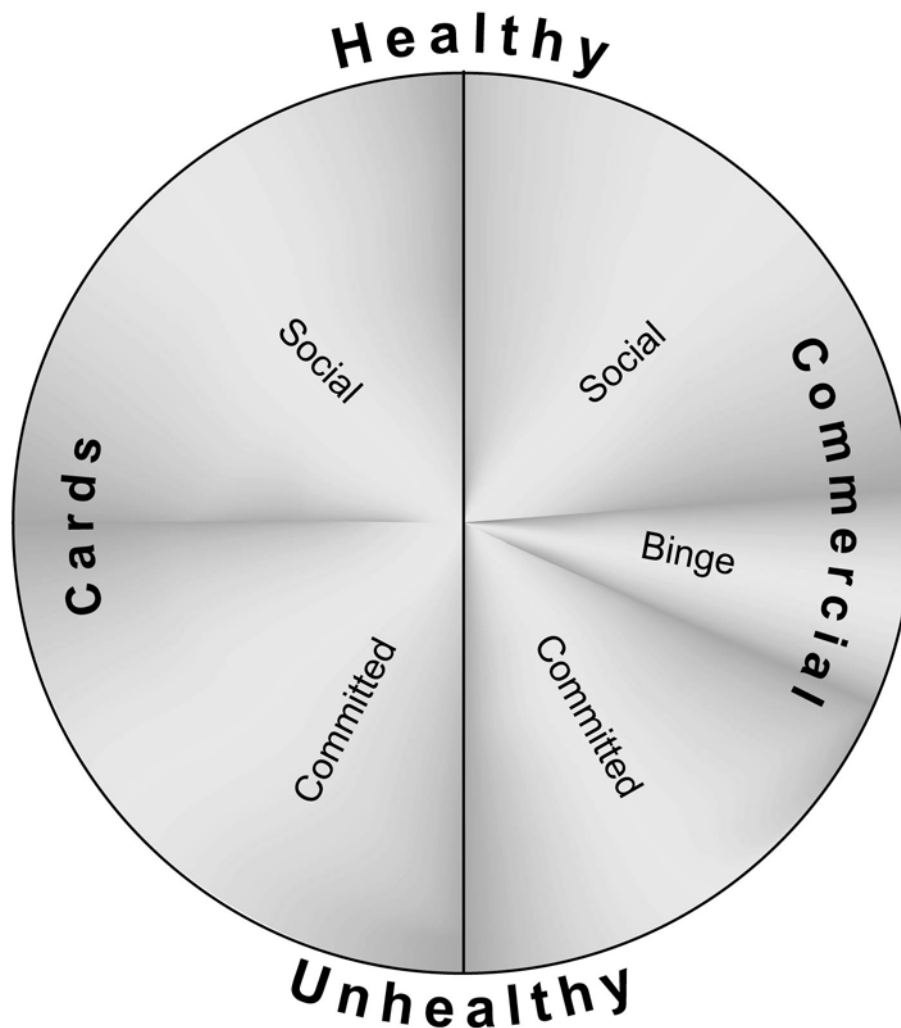
These three commercial gambler profiles can be displayed on a continuum from healthy to unhealthy gambling, as per Korn and Shaffer (1999). Using the gambler continuum developed by Breen (2009) for north Queensland, the social commercial gambler is positioned at the healthy end of the continuum while the committed commercial gambler is positioned at the opposite or unhealthy end. In the middle is the occasional binge commercial gambler. The binge commercial gambler shifts between social to committed gambling, depending on gambling motivations, opportunities and uptake. Figure 6.4 depicts the commercial gambling continuum in Bundjalung Country.

**Figure 6.4: A commercial gambling continuum in Bundjalung Country**

### **6.9 A MODEL OF INDIGENOUS GAMBLER TYPES IN BUNDJALUNG COUNTRY**

Based on the earlier model of Indigenous gambler profiles in north Queensland (Breen 2009), the preceding two card gambler and three commercial gambler profiles were placed side by side to depict a gambling model representing five typical gambler profiles in Bundjalung Country. The explanation of this model and its limitations are very similar to that for north Queensland (see Figure 6.2) except it has fewer gambler profiles. For Bundjalung Country, the exploited gambler profile is not shown and the binge card gambler is not shown. There was not sufficient evidence in the research results to support these profiles. The model of Indigenous gambler profiles in Bundjalung Country is shown in Figure 6.5.

Figure 6.5: A model of Indigenous gambler profiles in Bundjalung Country



## 6.10 A COMPARISON OF GAMBLER PROFILES

A comparison of card gambler profiles and then commercial gamblers profiles between Bundjalung Country and north Queensland follows.

### 6.10.1 Social Card Gambler Profiles

In comparing the social card gambler profile for Bundjalung Country with that for north Queensland, many similarities are apparent in these gamblers' socio-demographic characteristics, in gambling frequency (weekly) and expenditure (low), in choice of gambling sites, in motivations, some outcomes and the social norms that control gambling. The social card gambler type was supported by the majority of respondents in both locations. However, social card gamblers were in the majority in north Queensland and in the minority in Bundjalung Country.

Differences were seen in relation to gambling session duration, where many north Queensland social card gamblers played long leisurely card sessions for low stakes, with children playing around the card ring, where alcohol was not tolerated and some

redistribution of winnings was said to occur. In contrast in Bundjalung Country, social card gamblers played in short sessions, and while some children might be present, equally, they might not be present and gamblers kept their winnings. Differences were also seen in outcomes for social gamblers in north Queensland where card games had a wide variety of family and culturally cohesive outcomes, more than just the social outcomes reported in Bundjalung Country.

### **6.10.2 Committed Card Gambler Profiles**

Similarly, a comparison of the committed card gambler profile for Bundjalung Country with that for north Queensland showed many similarities in these gamblers' socio-demographic characteristics, in gambling frequency (several times a week) and expenditure (high), in choice of gambling sites, in some motivations and some outcomes. The committed card gambler type was supported by the majority of respondents in north Queensland but by only a minority in Bundjalung Country.

Differences were seen in gambling duration, where in north Queensland some card games could last for two or even three days, with people coming and going from the game. These games, often held over a weekend, were said to be continuous with no breaks in play. The longest duration in Bundjalung Country was all day or all night. Additional motivations (apart from winning) for committed card gamblers in north Queensland were to develop a reputation for being lucky and for the status connected to being skilled at card gambling. An additional motivation in Bundjalung Country was to escape from problems and pressure. Differences were also seen in the variety of negative outcomes for committed card gamblers in north Queensland (apart from losses and borrowing), which were reported as demand sharing, child neglect, domestic violence and exploitation of disadvantaged others.

### **6.10.3 Social Commercial Gambler Profiles**

Comparing the social commercial gambler profile in the two research locations shows many similar features. Socio-demographic characteristics, gambling preferences, frequency, duration, expenditure, some motivations and outcomes were almost the same. Differences were seen in Bundjalung Country where 18 year olds sometimes start gambling socially as a rite of passage into adulthood. As well, there was more variety in the gambling products available in Bundjalung Country, with social gamblers participating in poker tournaments and lottery products. In regards to the gambling environment, social gamblers gambled less in tourist precincts in north Queensland, but in Bundjalung Country less social gambling was engaged in where there were alcohol affected customers, a lot of humbugging occurring and little transport.

### **6.10.4 Committed Commercial Gambler Profiles**

Like the comparisons above, committed commercial gambler profiles in both research locations were very much alike. Some differences were seen in the socio-demographic characteristics of committed commercial gamblers in Bundjalung Country where they were more likely to be older women living in small villages or men living in towns. Further, committed commercial gamblers in Bundjalung Country were more likely to be in a relationship. In regards to gambling products and services, committed commercial gamblers in Bundjalung Country found poker machine gambling, their features and their promotions very appealing and sometimes rewarding. Poker machine gambling presented no literacy or

numeracy obstacles for them. In relation to the consequences of gambling, negative outcomes included mental health issues and crime in Bundjalung Country.

### **6.10.5 Occasional Binge Commercial Gambler Profiles**

Comparing occasional binge commercial gamblers, in Bundjalung Country these gamblers were mainly men, while in north Queensland they were mainly women. Although there were some similar motivations, contrasting motivations were low self-esteem and family difficulties reported in Bundjalung Country and feelings of not coping reported in north Queensland. Occasional binge commercial gamblers were similar in most other respects in the two research locations.

## **6.11 CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

This chapter has provided a conceptual model of a variety of different Indigenous gambler types, or profiles, in north Queensland analysed on a continuum from healthy to unhealthy gambling. From north Queensland, eight gambler profiles were explained and analysed from prior research (Breen 2009). These were presented as a continuum of gambler types, followed by a model of Indigenous gambler profiles for north Queensland. This process was continued for gamblers in Bundjalung Country. Gambler profiles were developed based on analysis of the research results and a cross-analysis across the respondent groups from the six different shires, counsellors and venue managers. A card gambling continuum was developed for card gamblers and a commercial gambling continuum was developed for commercial gamblers. Based on these continua, a model of Indigenous gambler profiles was created for Bundjalung Country. This was followed by a comparison of the gambler profiles, highlighting differences between the two research locations, north Queensland and Bundjalung Country. Card gambling appeared more popular and more available in north Queensland while commercial gambling appeared t more popular and more available in Bundjalung Country.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

# **CONSEQUENCES, RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS AND POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS FOR INDIGENOUS GAMBLER TYPES**

### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the results for Research Objective Four, which was to utilise the model of Indigenous gambler profiles (developed in Chapter Six) to analyse the consequences, risk and protective factors, and potential interventions for each type of Indigenous gambling in order to inform gambling policy development.

The chapter is arranged according to each main element in the analytical model used to underpin this research, as shown in Figure 3.5. Thus, it focuses first on the consequences of gambling in Bundjalung Country, followed by risk and protective factors relating to the propensity to gamble, to gambling products and services, and to the consequences of gambling. Potential interventions to address gambling issues are discussed, before a summary and conclusion at the end of the chapter. Throughout the chapter, the research findings are related to previous research on Indigenous gambling.

### **7.2 A CONTINUUM OF GAMBLING CONSEQUENCES, RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS AND INTERVENTIONS**

In relating gambling consequences, risk and protective factors and potential interventions to different types of gambling, it is critical to recognise that gambling behaviour occurs on a continuum. This was depicted in Chapter Six as ranging from healthy to unhealthy gambling. Similarly, the consequences of gambling also occur on a continuum, from positive to negative. Influential factors on gambling range from protective to risk-enhancing, while interventions range from the prevention of gambling problems, through harm minimisation to treatment. Thus, this chapter does not attempt to identify consequences, risk and protective factors and interventions that are distinctive only to social, committed and binge gamblers, but instead recognises there is a gradation of these along the gambling continuum. A series of diagrams in this chapter attempt to capture this.

### **7.3 CONSEQUENCES OF GAMBLING**

The positive and negative consequences of gambling are discussed below in relation to the literature, before a continuum of these consequences is presented.

#### **7.3.1 Positive Consequences of Gambling**

Common positive consequences of commercial gambling reported amongst the respondents in Bundjalung Country included socialising, excitement, enjoyment, social and physical comfort, an opportunity to win money and often reduced alcohol consumption. For card gambling, these were reported as social connectedness, social activity and an occasional win, although it is noted that little card gambling was reported overall.



The consequences of gambling identified in Bundjalung Country align with those found in prior research, where both card and commercial gambling have been reported to be enjoyable leisure and recreation activities for many Indigenous Australians (AHMRC 2007; McDonald & Wombo 2006; McMillen & Togni 2000). For example, McDonald and Wombo (2006) reported that card gambling provides social interaction, leisure opportunities and financial benefits for winners and that commercial gambling is mostly perceived as a social activity with positive outcomes. Recently, Fogarty (2009) asserted that card and commercial gambling are mostly social activities and only perceived as problematic when gambling becomes individuated, including gambling by oneself and gambling in a secluded place alone. Social gambling in venues, Foote (1996b) observed, encourages social interaction, particularly where stakes are pooled and gambling winnings are shared. McMillen and Togni (2000) reported that most Indigenous gamblers do not appear to experience problems with commercial gambling. In addition, Breen (2009) found in north Queensland that high alcohol consumption was frowned on by many social gamblers who were drawn together by the enjoyment they get from socialising and gambling together.

### 7.3.2 Negative Consequences of Gambling

Common negative consequences arising from committed gambling and to a lesser extent from some binge gambling reported amongst the respondents in Bundjalung Country included financial hardship, family difficulties, relationship problems, extended negative community impacts, exploitation of vulnerable others, mental health issues and crime.

Financial hardship from gambling losses is usually the first crisis most gamblers confront when they spent more time and money than they can afford at gambling (Thomas & Jackson 2004). Financial hardship, particularly chasing losses, accumulating debts and borrowing money, was recognised for Indigenous commercial gambling by AIGR/LIRU (1996), Dickerson *et al.* (1996a) and Young *et al.* (2007), and for Indigenous card gambling by Hunter (1993) and McKnight (2002). These characteristics were also displayed by the committed gamblers in the current study. The ripple effects of financial hardship were described by Phillips (2003) as affecting those closest to the gambler (their family) and then those around them (community members). The current study also found that financial hardship suffered by individual committed gamblers could also permeate their community.

Family and relationship problems arising from negative gambling consequences in Bundjalung Country included child neglect, domestic violence and abuse and relationship breakdowns. Ignoring children while gambling has been identified as a concern in previous Indigenous-focused research and may involve neglecting their physical, emotional and psychological welfare (Hunter 1993; McDonald & Wombo 2006; Wild & Anderson 2007). In New Zealand, Schulter *et al.* (2007) found that household food and shelter problems were related to gambling by Pacific Island mothers living in Auckland. In this research young mothers supporting children on their own were reported to gamble to increase their social security payments and fund everyday activities, while men were said to gamble to make their own money for marijuana and alcohol and to pay debts. Gambling losses led to some people being unable to provide the essential needs of children. Children suffered through poor nutrition and parental absence, with far-reaching consequences for their development.

Amongst committed gamblers in Bundjalung, women who lost all their funds at gambling were sometimes the victims of domestic violence by their husbands. This situation was also described by Phillips (2003:68) where ‘... men blame women’s gambling for their drinking, and women blame men’s drinking or marijuana use for their gambling’. Domestic violence

suffered as a gambling consequence was also found in north Queensland to show up as family dysfunction and some relationship breakdown (Breen 2009).

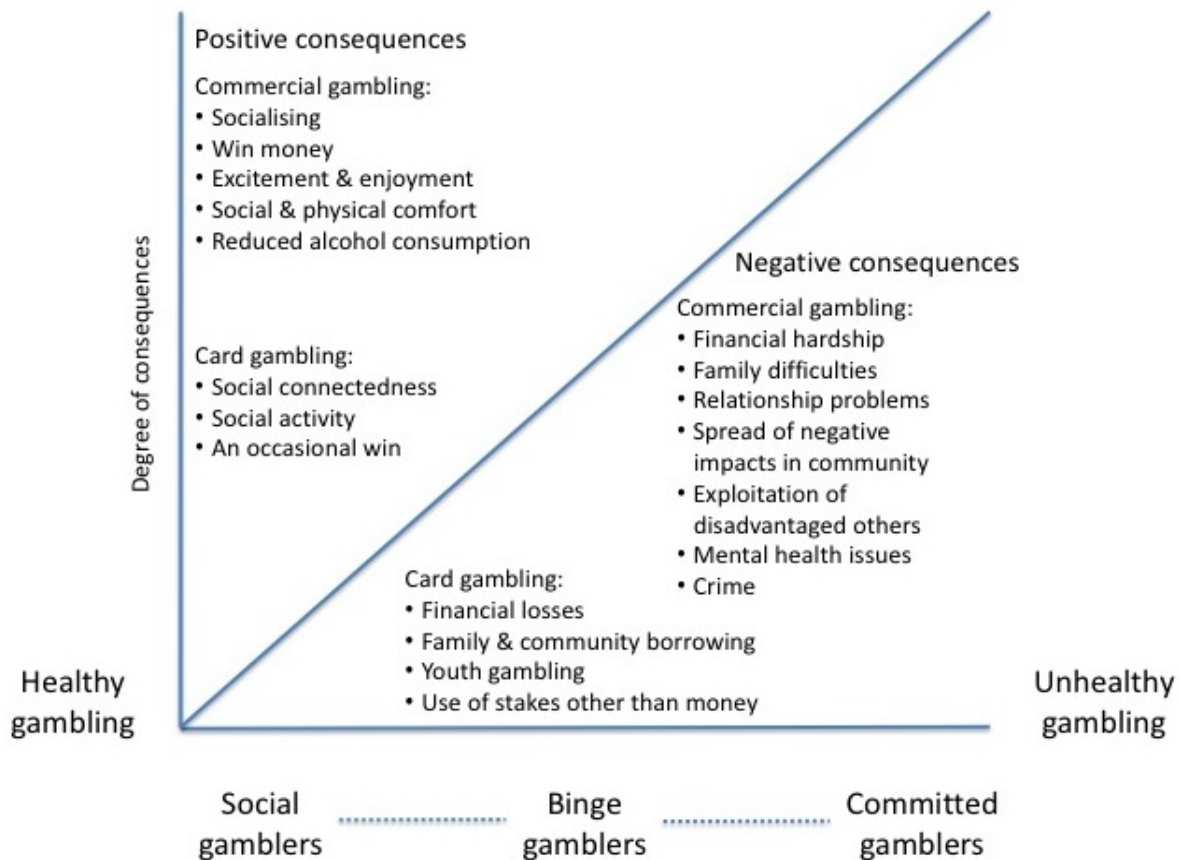
Demand sharing was said to sometimes be impossible to withstand from a cultural perspective. Demand sharing is 'relentless pressure' (Martin 1993:106) on people to provide money or resources, in this case to gamblers. In Bundjalung, this was experienced both by gamblers when they had a win and by others who were pressured to provide gambling funds. In fact, demand sharing was reported by Hunter (1993) as contributing to anxiety in male gamblers.

Exploitation of people and organisations by Indigenous gamblers was reported as a negative consequence of gambling by Breen (2009) in north Queensland. Exploitation of people was often an abuse of traditional reciprocity through pressure for assets or money while exploitation of organisations was more likely to be theft and fraud. In either case Indigenous people and their organisations suffered from these negative consequences of gambling. Also in north Queensland, Breen (2009) identified a group of gamblers whom she labelled 'exploited gamblers', to reflect the disadvantaged, disabled, less experienced or more naïve gamblers who were invited to join card games and/or were humbugged for their winnings by other gamblers. This was reported to also occur in Bundjalung, although to a lesser extent.

### **7.3.3 A Continuum of Gambling Consequences**

As detailed in Chapter Six, the Bundjalung analysis revealed two types of Indigenous card gamblers (social, committed) and three types of commercial gamblers (social, binge and committed). Figure 7.1 depicts the consequences of gambling found in Bundjalung Country on a continuum from healthy to unhealthy gambling and which shows the different types of gamblers. It depicts the degree of positive consequences of gambling as greater towards the healthy end of the gambling spectrum where social gamblers are placed, and the degree of negative consequences as greater towards the unhealthy end of the spectrum where committed gamblers are placed.

**Figure 7.1: A continuum of consequences of commercial gambling linked to types of Indigenous gambling**



## 7.4 RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR GAMBLING

Findings from this study point to numerous risk factors for gambling reported for Indigenous gamblers in Bundjalung Country. Risk factors associated with both card and commercial gamblers were, in the main, linked to the committed gambler profile. There were few risks identified with the card or commercial social gambler profile. The occasional binge gamblers appeared to face these risks when gambling in a committed mode. Risk factors are discussed in relation to the propensity to gamble, gambling products and services and the consequences of gambling.

### 7.4.1 Risk and Protective Factors Relating to the Propensity to Gamble

As discussed in Chapter Four and summarised in Chapter Six, risk and protective factors relating to the propensity to gamble were categorised as relating to personal, family, financial and historical/cultural risks.

#### Personal Risk and Protective Factors

Personal risk factors reported for committed gambler profiles centred on gambling to escape (from grief and loss, violence and abuse), gambling to alleviate disadvantaged structural conditions (unemployment and a lack of education) and gambling under the influence of alcohol or drugs (often due to peer pressure). The desire to escape from grief and loss, violence and abuse, was a risk factor that affected some gamblers more than others and

related to both card and commercial gambling. For some members of the Stolen Generation raised in orphanages or institutions, and for those living with violence and abuse, gambling appeared to provide an escape from their traumatic experiences and memories.

Atkinson (2002) agrees that growing up with long-lasting and traumatic effects of discrimination, marginalisation and disadvantage is reflected in illness, dysfunction and dependency for Indigenous Australians. Many feel the stress, anxiety, trauma, grief and feelings of not belonging (Phillips 2003). As a result, Atkinson (2002:91) noted, 'people begin to feel like losers'. Indigenous Australians who suffer from disproportionate burdens in many areas of life find gambling offers the hope of escaping disadvantage and achieving some equity (Nunkuwarrin Yunti 1998). The AHMRC (2007:12) also reported that 'grief and loss were often identified as contributing factors to gambling for Aboriginal people'. Gambling to relieve negative emotional states, loneliness, grief and loss experienced by Indigenous gamblers, particularly women, has been found to be associated with gambling problems (Hassim & Danckert 2008). Using gambling to escape appeared a risk associated with committed gambling by some gamblers in Bundjalung Country.

Gambling was also used by Indigenous Bundjalung residents to try to alleviate disadvantaged structural conditions such as a lack of education and employment, and by inference, living in poverty. Similarly, Dickerson *et al.* (1996a) found that being younger, single, having a low income, not having full-time work, and having fewer resources to fall back on were multiple risks linked to Indigenous gambling-related problems. Similarly, higher unemployment rates and lower incomes have been reported as highly likely to contribute to gambling-related financial problems for Indigenous gamblers (AIGR/LIRU 1996). Thus, a lack of education and subsequent unemployment, underemployment and time to gamble were recognised in the current study as risk factors which increased the propensity for committed gambling.

Previous research has noted that Indigenous gambling-related risks are heightened when alcohol is a significant problem (AHMRC 2007; Brady 2004; Hunter & Spargo 1988; McKnight 2002; Queensland Department of Corrective Services 2005; Stevens 2008). The link between alcohol and drug consumption, Indigenous gambling and negative life events was established by Young and Stevens (2009). A sense of loneliness and internalisation of shame and guilt can contribute to Indigenous people's use of alcohol, marijuana and gambling in order to 'medicate their pain' (Phillips 2003:99). To reduce feelings of guilt, some gamblers project their sense of shame onto family and community members by pressuring them into being involved in the same behaviour and then justifying their pressure as cultural (Phillips 2003). Such self-protective emotional mechanisms can be used by people vulnerable to risk, particularly marginalised people (Douglas & Wildavsky 1992). Thus, the co-morbidity between gambling, alcohol and drugs, along with the associated peer pressure, was not unique to this research for committed gamblers.

In contrast to the personal risk factors discussed above, personal protective factors appeared in the current study to be mainly experienced by social gamblers and centred on control, respect and religious beliefs. Similarly, self-control and informal group control protected Indigenous gamblers in north Queensland by reducing their propensity to gamble to excess (Breen 2009). This often included a general agreement on money stakes, on pooled stakes for group gambling, low denomination gambling and shared winnings. When a social group of gamblers decided to gamble in a venue, they usually knew each other well, chose a convenient venue, set time limits and limited alcohol consumption as general social norms. These gamblers respected the rights of others and regulated their gambling in a healthy, collective way. There was similar evidence of informal group control and self-management found in Bundjalung Country.

In both the Bundjalung and north Queensland research (Breen 2009), religious beliefs were found to help people make decisions to abstain from gambling or to gamble in a very controlled way. Non-gamblers were generally supported by their religious beliefs to reject the invitation to gamble. Others had experienced adverse consequences from earlier gambling and their religious faith helped them resist a repeat of those experiences. In this research, as in north Queensland (Breen 2009), religious beliefs appeared to provide non-gamblers and reformed gamblers with protection through religious values and involvement in church activities.

### **Family Risk and Protective Factors**

Family risk factors said to be associated with committed gambler profiles in Bundjalung Country focused on generational issues, normalisation of children's gambling and parental absence. Family and adult models for gambling have previously been linked to an increasing propensity to gamble for some Indigenous Australians (Hunter 1993; McDonald & Wombo 2006). Further, Martin (1993) revealed that a family history of gambling is important for linking social relationships with gambling, while in New Zealand, Maori mothers and grandmothers were also said to be role models for their children, socialising them into gambling (Morrison 1999). Indigenous youth discussed in the current study appeared to follow social norms for gambling in family circles.

Parental absence, reported as a risk factor for committed gambling in Bundjalung, was also tied to frequent gambling in north Queensland, with the result that some children were overlooked, tired, hungry and missed school (Breen 2009). In Western Australia, parents' absence, due partly to gambling, exposed Indigenous youth to profoundly serious behavioural outcomes (Zubrick *et al.* 2005). Thus, unhealthy gambling activity by committed adult gamblers both provides an example to others, especially youth, which reinforces this behaviour, and can also result in parental absence which further heightens risks for young people.

In contrast to the family risk factors identified above, family protective factors in the current study were identified as strong family values and positive relationships amongst the social gamblers. In north Queensland, Breen (2009) found role models to be parents, grandparents, extended family members and siblings. They assisted some gamblers to manage their gambling by advice and substitution of activities, such as fishing. Role models and strong family ties also helped shield some Indigenous people from pressure to gamble when they had money.

### **Financial Risk and Protective Factors**

Committed gamblers and occasional binge gamblers were found in this research to face financial risks and create a cycle of dependency in their efforts to increase income and alleviate poverty through gambling. Further, irregular windfall payments appeared to create a feast or famine environment for some committed gamblers. This was exacerbated by having few skills in budgeting and financial management.

Prior research has also found that Indigenous gamblers on low incomes are more likely to experience problems with their gambling because they can least afford to lose money (AHMRC 2007). Young and Stevens (2009) found that Indigenous gambling problems are linked to low individual and household income, housing tenure and cash flow problems. The need for money is heightened when other people exhausted scarce joint resources. For example, Phillips (2003) found that women gambled if they needed money to buy food when their husbands had spent a large proportion of their funds on alcohol and marijuana. Even

low levels of gambling expenditure may further decrease resources. Using gambling to try to increase resources is an unreliable and high risk strategy which may result in gambling with borrowed money. Gambling to make money was a risk associated with being a committed gambler and sometimes a binge gambler in Bundjalung Country.

In contrast, a financial protective factor used by social gamblers in the current study was limiting gambling activities to small stakes betting and having some understanding of the odds of winning. Such limits generally protect against problem gambling, that is, gambling characterised by difficulties in limiting money and/or time spent on gambling which leads to adverse consequences for the gambler, others and the community (Neal et. al. 2005:125). A further protective factor was identified as education and skills in financial management, with some social gamblers in Bundjalung discussing how they ensure they pay their bills first and only gamble with discretionary funds.

### **Historical and Cultural Risk and Protective Factors**

Historical and cultural risks for gamblers in Bundjalung were believed to be centred on the longevity of Indigenous activities (cultural acceptance) and a loss of traditional values and respect (abuse of the true meaning of reciprocity). Similar to Bundjalung, some gamblers in north Queensland also found it difficult or nearly impossible to avoid gambling activities by virtue of a history of gambling within their families and kin folk (Breen 2009). Ironically, people who try to decrease or give up gambling may be seen as 'boring', trying to 'be better than' and forgetting their Indigenous origins or losing their cultural identity (Phillips 2003:125).

Abuse of traditional reciprocity was reported for committed gamblers in the current study when a cycle of gambling losses resulted in debts and loans incurred by chasing losses. The ripple effect of gambling losses was felt by others as gamblers borrowed money, food and other essentials and sometimes exploited less able people. Humbugging, if successful, drains resources from other family members or the community (Hunter 1993; Hunter & Spargo 1988). Reciprocity traditionally supported others in times of genuine need, but was found to be a risk for committed gamblers when used to extend their gambling.

Historical and cultural protective factors identified in the current study included cultural cohesion and respect. Engagement with collective culture and spirituality, Phillips (2003) argued, are the foundations of health and healing for those traumatised Indigenous Australians seeking escape through excessive gambling, alcohol and drug use. Indigenous role models, particularly the example of Elders in certain communities in Bundjalung Country, were equally protective by providing cultural leadership when acting in ways that were positive, balanced and respectful of Indigenous values.

### **A Continuum of Risk and Protective Factors for the Propensity to Gamble**

Protective factors relating to gambling propensity associated with both card and commercial gambler profiles were in the main linked to social card gamblers in this study and to some occasional binge gamblers when gambling in social mode. Conversely, risk factors appeared to be more extensive or accumulative for the committed gamblers. Figure 7.3 depicts these risk and protective factors on the continuum of health to unhealthy gambling and according to social, binge and committed gamblers.

**Figure 7.2: Risk and protective factors for the propensity to gambling on a continuum of Indigenous gambling**



### **7.4.2 Risk and Protective Factors Relating to Gambling Products and Services**

Risks associated with gambling products and services were reported by the Bundjalung respondents to include the physical and sensory experiences attached to gambling, emotional ties to certain 'lucky' poker machines, attractive venue marketing, and certain aspects of the gambling environment, as discussed below.

#### **Poker Machine Characteristics as Risk Factors**

Features built into poker machines to make them appealing include fast games, recognisable artwork and graphics, enjoyable sounds, pleasing music, free spins, intermittent payouts, cash prizes and jackpot prizes (Productivity Commission 2009). Respondents mentioned a variety of these features as being attractive as they reported that poker machine gambling was the most popular form of commercial gambling in Bundjalung Country. Poker machine gambling has been linked to a heightened risk of developing gambling problems generally (Productivity Commission 1999) and for Indigenous gamblers specifically (AHMRC 2007; Cultural Perspectives 2005). Some committed gamblers appeared to be captured by these conditioning features on poker machines and were reluctant to stop gambling at the point when social gamblers make a decision to do so.

Unreported in published literature on Indigenous Australian gambling are features of poker machines which were reported as risks by the current study's Indigenous respondents, many of whom were gamblers themselves. The most commonly mentioned were free features, as well as combinations of features (sound, light, icons, artwork, graphics, free spins and excitement). Next most commonly mentioned were the stimuli of the machines and the use of lucky machines combined with personal superstitions. The use of familiar sounds and music was the next most frequently identified, followed by the artwork/graphics, icons, jackpot prizes, favourite machines, technology, ease to play and novelty. Table 7.1 contains several quotes from the Indigenous respondent interviews identifying characteristics of poker machines they considered to be risk factors.



**Table 7.1: Examples of Indigenous Respondents' Quotes Identifying Risky Characteristics of Poker Machines**

- 'Aboriginal people like the features of the machines, such as free spins', and 'like the noise, lights, jackpots and features'.
- 'Get free spins, triples the prize, incentives to encourage more spins, not satisfied till you get those free spins to get bigger payout'.
- 'Machines, free games, lights and music, visual stimulation, mermaids blowing bubbles'.
- 'Combinations of features of the machines are attractive, adrenaline rush and emotional connection with machines, excitement'.
- 'Stimuli of machine is attractive' and 'look for favourite machines, one that goes off, it pays all the time'.
- 'Poker machines are very attractive for visual people; Indigenous Australians are very visual people'.
- 'Some people like particular machines, they're pretty and have extra features, sounds and they think the machine is lucky'.
- 'Like to go to the same machines for luck because they think they know what features are needed to win'.
- 'A belief that this day is their lucky day [and] the machine is their lucky machine'.
- 'People believe you win money on machines after a win, that is, have a win and believe it's easy to win so they keep playing'.
- 'What did you come and talk to me for? I was winning; now I have stopped winning because you started talking to me'.
- 'Many Aboriginal people like the machine and the noises it makes'.
- 'Like different games; fun, pretty noise, know the music'.
- 'Like to play their favourite machine'.
- 'Poker machines ... thrill of the win, thrill of the big jackpot, escape from problems, excitement (lights, noise)'.
- 'Features and technology of machines ... free spins' and 'easy to play and press'.
- 'Poker machines, set up so it's easy to draw people in like a magnet'.
- 'Poker machines hypnotise people, bells and lights'.
- 'A novelty for some new players'.

### Venue Marketing as a Risk Factor

In addition, a favourable view of gambling was found in the current study to be supported by marketing and venue appeal. In research in the Northern Territory, increased Indigenous participation in commercial gambling has been attributed to the socially inclusive nature of the gaming venues (McDonald & Wombo 2006). Similarly, the use of Maori cultural symbols and traditions for marketing gambling businesses, Dyall (2009) argued, encourages Maori gambling. In more generic literature, the Productivity Commission (1999) concluded that activities promoting gambling have the potential to undermine responsible gambling and informed decision-making by reinforcing inherently false beliefs, even if the marketing activities themselves are not deceptive. These marketing and promotional activities were also perceived as risk factors in the current study.

### **The Gambling Environment as a Risk Factor**

Risks were also identified in relation to the gambling environment. Easy physical and social access was seen to increase the appeal of gambling, especially if life at home was tense or over-crowded. Gaming venues with comfortable facilities made it easy to stay in a venue and gamble, a finding also noted by the AHMRC (2007). Prior research with Yolgnu gamblers in Darwin also found that venue features, such as air-conditioning and an exciting atmosphere, were particularly appealing (Christie *et al.* 2009). Similarly, in New Zealand, Morrison (2004) found that Maori women sought glamour and comfort in gaming venues, but also an escape from stress. In the broad non-Indigenous literature, it has been widely recognised that the gambling environment, including its mass appeal, ease of use of gambling, few entry conditions, minimal outlay and gambling-related stimuli may stimulate gambling behaviour (Productivity Commission 1999). Thus, the current study confirms these results for Indigenous gamblers in northern New South Wales.

### **Understanding Gambling Odds as a Protective Factor**

A protective factor in the current study which related to the gambling product was understanding gambling odds, that is, the odds of winning and losing. Understanding gambling costs affects the gambling behaviour of many people, except for some problem gamblers who may hold irrational beliefs about winning (Productivity Commission 2009). Consumer gambling decisions based on fact assist most gamblers to make logical choices about their expenditure and reduce potential harmful gambling consequences. Thus, many respondents in the current study also advocated greater consumer education for Indigenous people about how gambling works.

### **Responsible Gambling Practices as a Protective Factor**

Mandatory responsible gambling practices in New South Wales are expected to protect gamblers from gambling harm or at least minimise that harm. A few respondents in the current study felt that responsible gambling practices were protective in that they provided information such as signs and cards and kept underage gamblers out of venues.

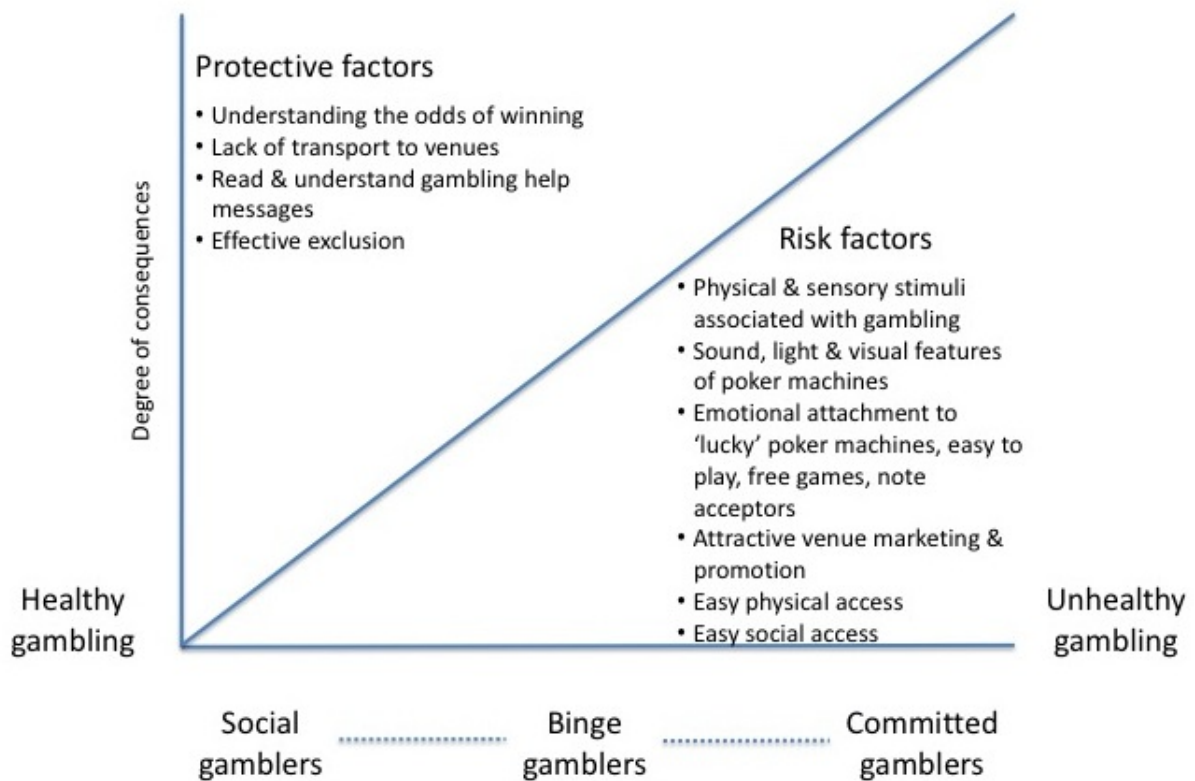
### **Lack of Transport as a Protective Factor**

Some respondents in the current study noted that lack of transport was a protective factor in that access to gaming venues was limited. Given that the Productivity Commission (1999) concluded there was ‘sufficient evidence from many different sources to suggest a significant connection between greater accessibility to gambling – particularly to gaming machines – and the greater prevalence of problem gambling’ (1999:8.31), it seems logical the opposite would hold for restricting access to gambling. However, some respondents noted that some TAB gamblers without transport still had ready access through telephone and internet betting, and watched the races on pay television.

### **A Continuum of Risk and Protective Factors for Gambling Products**

Figure 7.3 draws the above findings together and links them to the gambling continuum and the different gambler types found in this research.

**Figure 7.3: Risk and protective factors for gambling products on a continuum of Indigenous gambling**



### 7.4.3 Risk and Protective Factors Relating to the Consequences of Gambling

As noted in earlier chapters, risk factors relating to the consequences of gambling were mainly expressed in this study in terms of barriers to addressing a gambling problem, while protective factors related to facilitators.

#### Barriers to Addressing Gambling Issues

Barriers for gamblers in Bundjalung Country to addressing a gambling problem were analysed as intrinsic and extrinsic barriers. A most important intrinsic barrier centred on shame and stigma. Similarly, an important extrinsic barrier focused on a lack of culturally appropriate gambling help services.

Shame and stigma attached to having gambling-related problem were very painful, especially being seen as a loser and a target for gossip, both in Bundjalung Country and north Queensland (Breen 2009). Gambling-related problems have been reported as a source of shame and stigma for Indigenous gamblers in the past (AHMRC 2007; McDonald & Wombo 2006). In fact, Cultural Perspectives (2005) reported the main barriers for Indigenous people in help-seeking for gambling problems were gambler shame and some unwillingness to trust the confidentiality of counselling. In contrast, Dickerson *et al.* (1996a) reported that, in New South Wales, Indigenous gamblers with gambling-related problems sought help for their gambling at five times the rate of non-Indigenous gamblers with similar problems. However, the type of help sought was not identified. To reduce gambling risks and improve protection, the co-location of gambling help services within other Indigenous health services could assist gamblers to access help without feeling shamed (AHMRC 2007). Denial and concealment

were reported in the current study to deter Indigenous gamblers from seeking help and a lack of appropriate gambling help services exacerbated this risk.

### **Facilitators for Addressing Gambling Issues**

In contrast, facilitators suggested by the research respondents were personal recognition of a gambling-related problem. This of course depends on gamblers (and significant others) having sufficient understanding of gambling and related effects for them to recognise signs of a gambling problem. They also need to know where to seek help, yet poor literacy was reported as preventing some Indigenous gamblers from reading venue signage and information.

It also appears that support from others can be critical in taking action to address a gambling problem. Breen (2009) discussed how regaining respect allowed two gamblers in her research to feel comfortable in approaching close-knit others to talk about their gambling-related problems and to seek intervention. These problem gamblers (one recovered and one in treatment) were positive about the assistance received from others in improving their cultural connections, as well as in recapturing respect for their cultural values. Mainstream research has also shown that gamblers with family and social support have heightened capacity to address gambling-related problems (Thomas & Jackson 2004). For Indigenous gamblers, supportive attitudes and assurance of family help have been identified as important facilitators for help-seeking (Cultural Perspectives 2005).

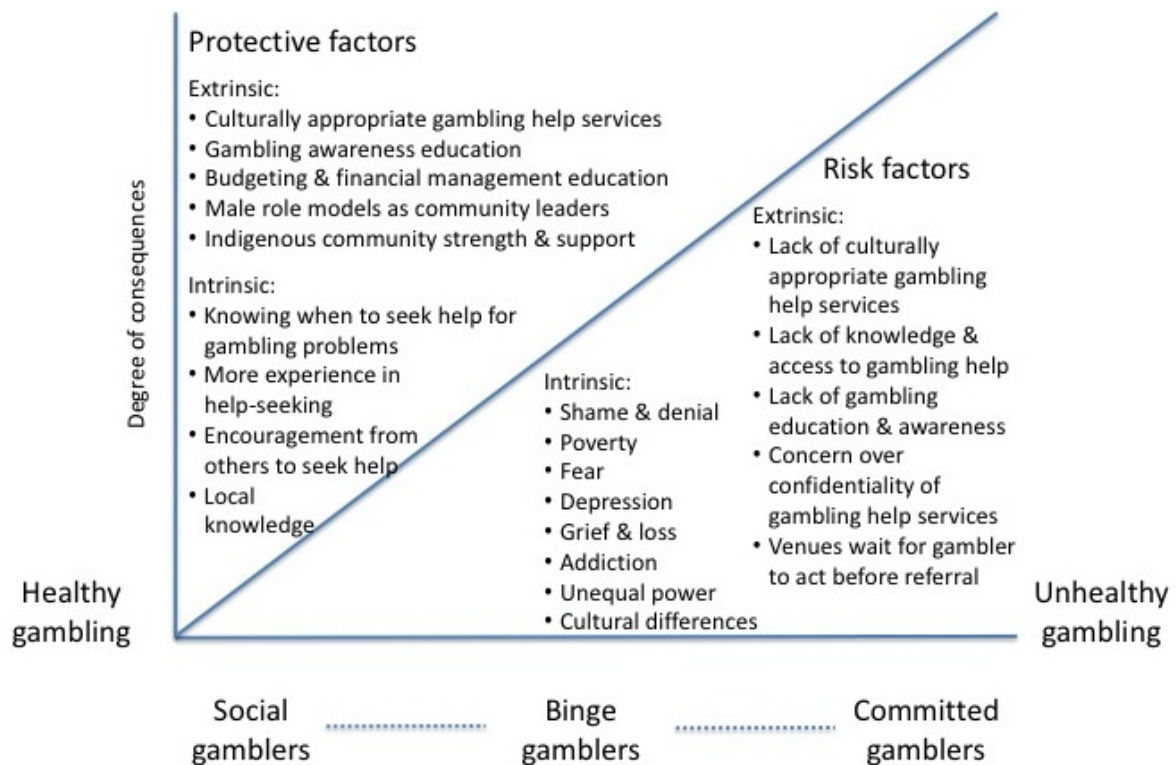
A lack of culturally appropriate gambling help services was an important extrinsic barrier to seeking help for a gambling problem in both Bundjalung Country and north Queensland (Breen 2009). Uncertainty was raised about culturally unfamiliar operational processes of the gambling help services, a variety of communication styles, unequal power relationships and the gender of the counsellors. These barriers to help-seeking have been raised previously (McMillen & Bellew 2001).

Facilitators suggested in the current study to reduce these barriers were the provision of a range of gambling help services, including culturally appropriate community education and awareness, gambling counselling, financial management education and for a few, rehabilitation. Similarly, the AHMRC (2009) reported that the development of culturally appropriate training and materials for use by gambling help services would assist Indigenous people with gambling-related problems. These potential facilitators are discussed later in relation to suggested interventions to address gambling issues in Bundjalung Country.

### **A Continuum of Risk and Protective Factors for the Consequences of Gambling**

Figure 7.4 summarises the risk and protective factors relating to the consequences of gambling and links them to the gambling continuum and the different types of gamblers, as found in the current study.

**Figure 7.4: Risk and protective factors for the consequences of gambling on a continuum of Indigenous gambling**



## 7.5 POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS TO ADDRESS GAMBLING ISSUES

Potential interventions were suggested by research respondents for Indigenous people and their communities, for community services, for the gambling industry and gaming venues and the government.

### 7.5.1 Potential Interventions by Indigenous People and Communities

For Indigenous people and their communities, the need for well-informed Indigenous role models was regarded as important in encouraging the replacement of committed gambling with social gambling. But for this to happen, community education and awareness about gambling and its effects were required first. For Indigenous communities to begin to discuss gambling openly and to heed the advice of role models or Elders about gambling, there was a need for balanced and culturally appropriate gambling information on which gamblers could make informed decisions. Local role models and Elders trained in gambling awareness and financial management could be encouraged to take an active role in leading community education and awareness campaigns to encourage discussion about gambling. They could act as a liaison person for gamblers and their families seeking help, and to assist people generally in managing their responsibilities and money in healthy ways.

### 7.5.2 Potential Interventions by Community Services

Community services were expected to be culturally aware and sensitive to Indigenous client needs, to provide appropriate holistic services and to cooperate with other services through

referrals and networking. Additionally, it was expected they would contribute to the creation of community education and awareness campaigns for Indigenous gamblers and the development of education and training courses for Indigenous gambling counsellors. This focus on Indigenous gambling was one that concerned many counsellors. They knew that it required considerable consultation with local Indigenous communities and they needed time and resources to develop suitable services, including outreach services and community education workshops. Counsellors were willing to take on these responsibilities and more. However, these extra roles and the provision of specific Indigenous gambling help services needed extra resources for this to occur.

### **7.5.3 Potential Interventions by the Gambling Industry and Gaming Venues**

It was felt that the gambling industry should act with responsibility in legally providing gambling services and cooperate with Indigenous people and others in developing responsible gambling policies and practices relevant to Indigenous people. This requires undertaking community consultation with Indigenous groups about providing support for gambling education and awareness and providing employment for Indigenous people in venues. Additionally, at a local gaming venue level, managers and staff would benefit from undertaking regular refresher courses in responsible gambling. Importantly, there was an emphasis on strengthening existing responsible gambling strategies by managers effectively communicating and explaining the availability of exclusion and the exclusion processes and by giving venue managers some leeway in introducing local but limited exclusions. Along with limited local exclusions, managers and staff needed to be alert to, and aware of, the activities of local Indigenous gamblers who they knew were committed gamblers. Some of these potential interventions need resources and others need vigilance, something already in place in some venues.

### **7.5.4 Potential Interventions by Governments**

Governments were seen to be the source of funding for many worthwhile and valuable potential interventions. Governments were expected to resource protection, prevention and promotion strategies and practices to specifically address the negative consequences of Indigenous gambling, especially by committed gamblers. With appropriate consultation, this could be addressed by commissioning community education and awareness campaigns for Indigenous gamblers, with some campaigns targeted at social gamblers and other campaigns at committed gamblers. Respondents considered that government funds should resource gambling help counsellors in providing extended services to Indigenous gamblers and communities, in funding and encouraging the education and training of Indigenous counsellors and in redressing the structural disadvantage in health, housing, education and employment that often act as catalysts for committed gambling.

Using the Thomas and Jackson (2004) Model of Influences on Gambling Behaviour and Outcomes, potential interventions (from Table 4.7) are grouped into those associated with the propensity to gamble, those associated with gambling products and services and those associated with gambling consequences (Thomas and Jackson 2004), as shown in Table 7.2

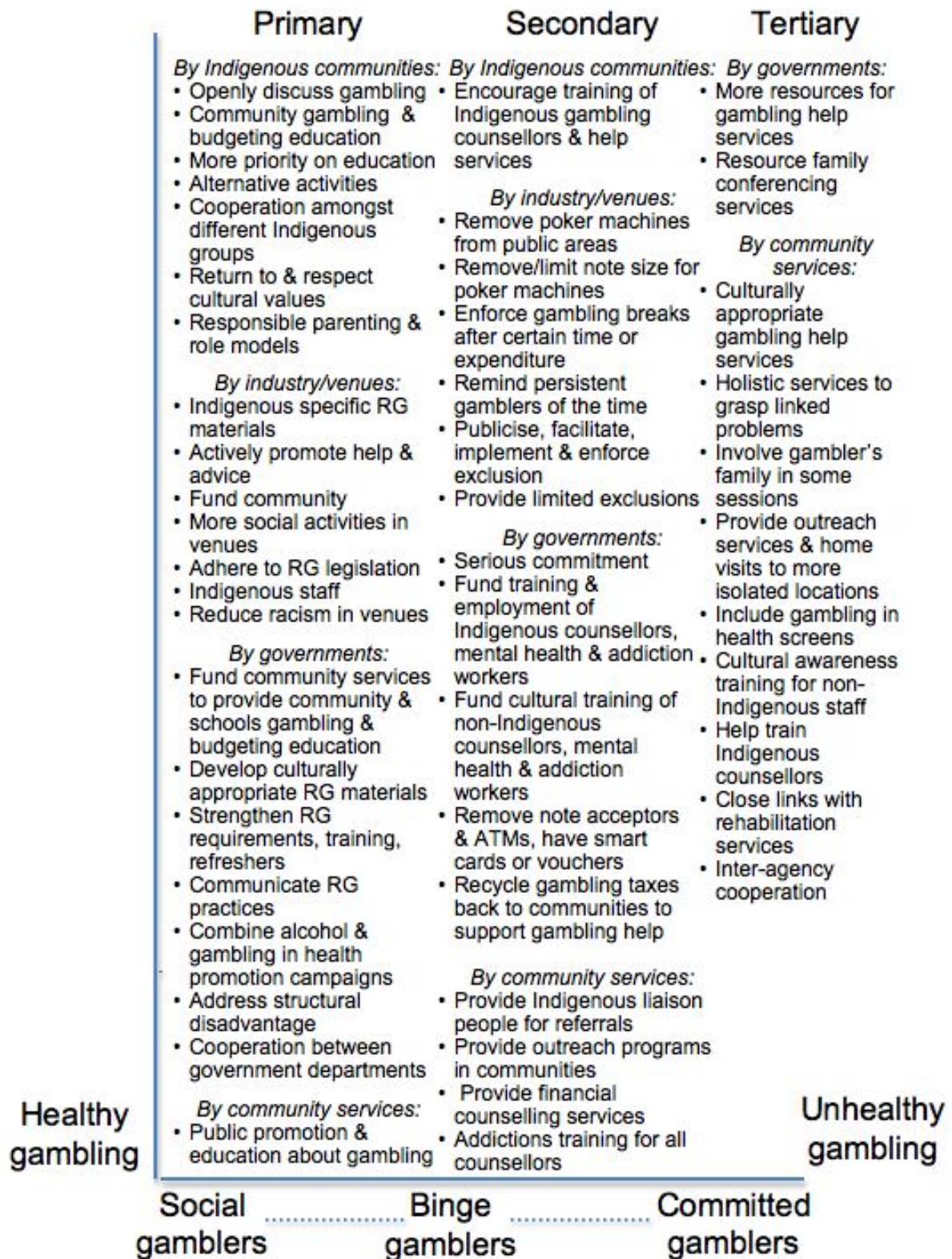
**Table 7.2: Potential interventions associated with the propensity to gamble, gambling products and services and the consequences of gambling**

Potential interventions associated with the propensity to gamble	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing gambling community education and awareness programs, targeting all ages &amp; all groups</li> <li>• Discussing gambling impacts &amp; its links with different groups</li> <li>• Providing financial management &amp; budgeting education workshops</li> <li>• Supporting indigenous education &amp; employment</li> <li>• Improving structural conditions for indigenous Australians</li> <li>• Encouraging indigenous leadership through assisting role models &amp; elders to be trained in gambling liaison &amp; help</li> <li>• Cooperation between different indigenous groups</li> <li>• Respecting indigenous values of caring &amp; sharing, parenting &amp; positive role models</li> </ul>
Potential interventions associated with gambling products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating and providing specific Indigenous responsible gambling messages &amp; signs</li> <li>• Placing gambling products &amp; services in appropriate &amp; responsible places</li> <li>• Strengthening and enforcing responsible gambling practices in venues</li> <li>• Introducing gambling expenditure limits</li> <li>• Effectively communicating exclusion processes &amp; limits</li> <li>• Providing local limited exclusions</li> <li>• Providing regular updates &amp; refresher courses in responsible gambling for managers &amp; staff</li> <li>• Combining responsible gambling &amp; responsible alcohol public promotion campaigns</li> </ul>
Potential interventions associated with the consequences of gambling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing culturally appropriate gambling help services</li> <li>• Conducting cultural awareness programs for non-indigenous counsellors</li> <li>• Encouraging education &amp; training of indigenous counsellors</li> <li>• Developing holistic services, referrals &amp; links to deal with problematic issues associated with gambling (family, health, mental health, education)</li> <li>• Encouraging indigenous role models</li> <li>• Training indigenous liaison people for home visits &amp; outreach programs</li> <li>• Providing resources for financial counselling &amp; health screening</li> <li>• Providing more addictions counsellors &amp; mental health workers</li> <li>• Cooperating with other community services &amp; agencies including rehabilitation services</li> <li>• Resourcing family conferencing services</li> <li>• Resourcing promotion and education programs explaining gambling impacts</li> </ul>

### 7.5.6 A Continuum of Interventions to Address Indigenous Gambling Issues

The preceding results are now synthesised in a continuum of interventions linked to each gambler profile identified in this research.

**Figure 7.5: Potential interventions to address gambling issues on a continuum of Indigenous gambling**





### 7.5.7 Some Implications for Responsible Gambling Policy

Suggestions to strengthen responsible gambling policies and practices indicate that more attention should be paid to their cultural relevance for Indigenous gamblers. The results from this investigation indicate that New South Wales responsible gambling policies, and the strategies and practices that flow from them, have limited relevance for some Indigenous gamblers facing risks with their gambling. For instance, a lack of consumer knowledge about the odds of winning is implicated in the risk of gambling to make money. In regard to aspects of community protection, responsible gambling signs and messages in gaming venues appear to have little relevance for some Indigenous gamblers, while the shame of admitting to a gambling problem is a risk for others. These research findings have clear implications for responsible gambling policy. Thoughtfulness and sensitivity to cultural nuances could improve the relevance of responsible gambling strategies and practices for Indigenous gamblers, particularly for committed gamblers.

Thus, in terms of harm protection, harm prevention and health promotion, current responsible gambling policy could be amended to be more inclusive of Indigenous Australians. Based on proven sustainable Indigenous social health programs (Clapham *et al.* 2007), considerable investment in consultation, planning and design of appropriate responsible gambling policy and strategies is required. This is best undertaken, according to Clapham *et al.* (2007), with policy makers in partnership with a range of Indigenous Australian people representing different communities and organisations. Collaboration is important in reducing exclusion and increasing participation.

The implementation of the resulting strategies would need to be sufficiently broad to cover both card and commercial gambling and to allow for specific tailoring for different communities. Regular monitoring and evaluation processes would ensure the ongoing relevance and sustainability of such strategies over time. Revision of responsible gambling policy and its strategic implications could improve the protection and safety of Indigenous gamblers in Bundjalung Country. Achieving control over gambling is crucial for some Indigenous gamblers. These measures are essentially based on the principle of equity; that is, responsible gambling strategies and practices should be equally available to every gambler, regardless of cultural background.

## 7.6 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH

The main thrust of this research project has been to examine gambling behaviours, consequences, risk and protective factors, and potential interventions for Indigenous Australians in Bundjalung Country. Results are now summarised by the research objectives.

### 7.6.1 Summary of Results for Objective One

The research results indicate that card gambling in Bundjalung Country has declined in popularity, largely replaced by commercial gambling. Contrasts were obvious in different shires, with cards banned in one community and being openly played by youth in one town's main street. Occasional card gambling was seen as a social activity by the majority of respondents.

As commercial gambling had grown in popularity, it was taken up by men and women of all ages. The majority of Indigenous gamblers engaged in commercial gambling as a social activity, with people often gambling in family and social groups. Poker machine gambling was the preferred form of commercial gambling and pay day was a peak day for gambling.

Most Indigenous gamblers spent what they could afford with a minority spending all they had, even borrowings. The majority of people gambled to win, to socialise and to escape. They went to venues that were accessible and inclusive and those which had a range of gambling products and services at affordable prices. Socialising was perceived as being a positive consequence of gambling, while negative consequences revolved around financial losses, relationship and family problems, and a ripple of negative effects spread through families and communities.

Risk factors associated with the propensity to gamble included escape, peer pressure, alcohol and drug consumption, structural disadvantage, generational exposure to gambling influences, parental absence, normalisation of youth gambling, gambling to increase income and alleviate poverty, windfall payments, dependency, abuse of traditional reciprocity, and loss of Indigenous values and respect. In contrast, protective factors associated with the propensity to gamble centred on control, respect, high aspirations, religious beliefs, learning from the past, strong family influences, having outside interests, positive relationships, gambling within a budget, refusal to lend funds for gambling, Elders as role models and cultural cohesion.

Risk factors associated with gambling products and services revolved around the physical and sensory experience of gambling, sound, light, visual and free features of poker machines, emotional attachment to gambling, attractive marketing and promotion, and easy physical and social access. On the contrary, protective factors were characterised by understanding the odds of winning and gambling help messages and, on a practical level, by a lack of transport to commercial gambling venues.

Risk factors relating to gambling outcomes and consequences were reported as shame, denial, fear, grief and loss, depression, addiction, power relationships and cultural differences from non-Indigenous counsellors and venue managers. In contrast, protective factors were seen as the ability to recognise gambling-related problems, the support of significant others, Indigenous male role models, the provision of culturally appropriate gambling help services and exclusion.

Of the numerous suggestions for potential gambling interventions, the most important appeared the need for relevant and appropriate community education and awareness programs, culturally appropriate gambling help services, Indigenous specific responsible gambling resources, Indigenous trained counsellors and more flexible venue exclusion options. Indigenous role models could assist in these processes providing they were trained. Governments were expected to address these issues if they are serious about responsible gambling as a means of protecting Indigenous gamblers.

### **7.6.2 Summary of Results for Objective Two**

Comparisons of Indigenous gambling behaviour, risk factors, consequences and potential interventions in north Queensland revealed that, while card gambling was similar to that in Bundjalung Country, it was far more popular in north Queensland. However, youth card gambling was prominent in one town in Bundjalung Country.

Commercial gambling was more popular in Bundjalung Country than in north Queensland, but findings were similar in many respects. Some contrasts were found in socio-demographic characteristics where more males were more likely to gamble in towns and older females in smaller villages in Bundjalung Country. The ready availability of commercial gambling and the popularity of poker machine gambling were linked to the higher number of venues, their marketing activities and appealing venue facilities in Bundjalung Country. While there were

many risk and protective factors in common with north Queensland, particular gambling risks faced by Bundjalung gamblers were personal (peer pressure and to escape from pressure) and cultural (loss of cultural values, respect and discipline). Particular protective factors assisting Bundjalung gamblers were familial (support and being local), cultural (being strong and able to reject humbugging) and gambling awareness (understanding gambling and its operations, and knowing that some gambling leads to problems).

Apart from similarities with north Queensland, negative consequences of gambling included mental health issues and crime for Bundjalung gamblers. While positive consequences were very similar in both locations, there was an absence of collective cultural wellbeing evident in the positive consequences of gambling found in north Queensland.

In terms of barriers and facilitators for addressing problematic consequences of gambling, these were both more individually-based and personal for gamblers in Bundjalung Country than in north Queensland.

There were many similar suggestions in both research sites for potential interventions to assist gamblers. Differences were seen in Bundjalung Country where people wanted responsible gambling measures strengthened and made more culturally specific for Indigenous gamblers. However, at the same time, these measures need to have some flexibility to meet local population needs.

### **7.6.3 Summary of Results for Objective Three**

In refining a conceptual model of Indigenous gambler profiles, taking a public health approach, the concepts of healthy and unhealthy gambling (Korn & Shaffer 1999) were used on a gambling continuum. An analysis of research results in north Queensland using the continuum model of healthy/unhealthy gambling revealed eight gambler profiles (Breen 2009). In this New South Wales based research, a similar analysis revealed two card gambler profiles (social and committed gamblers) and three commercial gambler profiles (social, committed and the occasional binge gambler) as typical gambler profiles in Bundjalung Country. The committed gambler profile was characterised by fast games, high expenditure, continuous gambling, frequent gambling, long sessions, borrowing money and financial hardship accompanying gambling losses. The profile of the social gambler was characterised by slower gambling, low stakes, limited time allocation (a couple of hours), time for socialising, sometimes pooling funds and sharing winnings, and having a budget for gambling. The occasional binge gambler profile hovered between each end of the continuum, depending on their immediate circumstances and gambling uptake.

### **7.6.4 Summary of Results for Objective Four**

An analysis of the risk factors, consequences and potential interventions for gamblers in Bundjalung Country revealed that committed gamblers faced many risks, had limited protection and experienced many and severe negative consequences from their gambling. In contrast, social gamblers were largely protected from many gambling risks by limiting their gambling and understanding that gambling was just a leisure pursuit. The occasional binge gambler faced the risks, protective factors and consequences of whatever mode they were gambling in at the time, although some longer-term consequences of gambling binges were felt.

Suggested interventions highlighted the need for general gambling education and awareness designed to reach Indigenous Australians to open the topic for general discussion. This would be followed by education and training of Indigenous liaison workers and Elders as a source of

advice about gambling. Further, the supply of culturally appropriate information and materials should be provided to those seeking help.

Additional suggestions included the provision of culturally appropriate gambling help services and counselling, and the education and training of Indigenous counsellors. The provision of outreach programs and the linking of services including health, mental health, welfare, alcohol and drugs, and community education, with a range of other community services was recommended.

For the gambling industry and gaming venues, there was an expectation that gambling would be provided within the spirit as well as the letter of the law covering responsible gambling. Indigenous specific messages and information were seen as important to target Indigenous gamblers in venues. Effective communication regarding exclusion and some flexibility with exclusion practices were recommended. Refresher courses in responsible gambling for managers and staff would improve responsible gambling standards in some venues.

Responsibility for most of these potential interventions was seen to fall on the shoulders of government to fund these suggestions. However, from a macro perspective, the impact of structural disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians generally, and by Indigenous people in Bundjalung Country in particular, is very apparent for some gamblers in their propensity to gamble to increase income and alleviate poverty. A lack of education, few job opportunities, unemployment, underemployment and a lack of appropriate community services, including gambling help counselling, heighten the risks faced by committed Indigenous gamblers. Yet these can be improved by government actions, especially if governments work in cooperation with local Indigenous people.

## **7.7 CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

This chapter completes this research report. It analysed the consequences, risk and protective factors, and potential interventions for each type of Indigenous gambling found in Bundjalung Country in order to inform gambling policy development. Results were compared to prior research and synthesised through developing several continua which linked consequences, risk and protective factors and interventions with different Indigenous gambler profiles.

In conclusion, the application of a public health approach to investigate gambling in Bundjalung Country, as pursued in this research, has highlighted the complexities of Indigenous gambling behaviours, motivations, risks, protective mechanisms and consequences for both card and commercial gambling. Importantly, this research has pointed out the opportunity for potential interventions at the macro and local levels to develop inclusive gambling policies, strategies and practices suitable for Indigenous Australians. These policies, strategies and practices, developed in cooperation with Indigenous Australians, could filter down into regions and communities, heightening protection of Indigenous gamblers through the active participation of Indigenous collaborators and other interested people. It is hoped that this research has provided a useful platform from which such actions can proceed.

## **7.8 POSTSCRIPT**

Feedback sessions with the participating organisations and individuals in Bundjalung Country were held in May 2010. Presentations of the research findings were held in seven locations and all participants and interested others were invited to attend. Sixteen people attended these sessions. Some took notes to pass on the results to interested others. People who sent apologies usually requested that a copy of the results be sent to them. A couple of people commented on the difficulty of getting Indigenous people to workshops/presentations. Others suggested that gambling is still a sensitive issue, one that some Indigenous people do not want to talk about.

Communications to inform people that the presentations were being held included: emails sent out in each town and village through the local area health service, Aboriginal medical service, shire councils, employment networks, family and child support services, local social development councils and drug and alcohol centres. People were also contacted by flyers, telephone and text messages. The general public was notified of the presentations by a coloured advertisement in the public notices section of the Northern Star, the Tweed Daily News and the Grafton Examiner on Saturday May 1. Appendix H contains a copy of the advertisement, while Appendix I summarises the feedback gained.

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# APPENDICES

## **APPENDIX A: PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET**



## INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

### Exploring Indigenous Gambling

You are invited to participate in a study to explore issues surrounding Indigenous gambling and its impacts. This research project is funded by Gambling Research Australia. With your help we hope to gain an understanding of the characteristics of Indigenous Australian gambling in the Bundjalung area of NSW. In doing this we would like to identify distinctive social and demographic aspects of gambling and understand how gambling behaviour, gambling perceptions and attitudes impact on your community and on individuals in your community. In addition, we hope to identify help-seeking behaviour for people in your community, those seeking problem gambling counselling. Together we should be able to contribute to identifying potential strategies to best ameliorate any negative impacts of gambling on Indigenous communities.

If you agree to participate in this research, we invite you to participate in an interview. This will last about 30 minutes. The interview will be conducted by Ashley Gordon, Helen Breen or Nerilee Hing from Southern Cross University, Lismore. With your permission we will audio-tape or take notes during the meeting.

Only the researchers will handle the information collected from the interviews for analysis and report preparation. Your individual responses will remain anonymous and confidential. Your information will be integrated with other data and presented in themes. Please be assured that your name will not be recorded and no identifiers will be attached to your information.

The research findings will be discussed with a consultative committee to gather input and feedback. Any strategies that interviewees think would work to reduce the negative effects of gambling will be documented. The research results will then be written up as a research report for Gambling Research Australia. With their permission, the results may also be presented at conferences or via journal articles.

If you agree to participate in an interview, we ask that you be as honest as possible and be willing to discuss the impacts of gambling in your community. Please know that you are under no pressure to divulge any information you may feel uncomfortable with sharing. We recognise that gambling problems have been known to be linked to embarrassment and to some negative impacts. We will have a gambling counsellor (Ashley Gordon) with us during the meeting in case the need arises for someone to seek his advice and assistance. A list of other counsellors and helpful contacts is attached for your information.

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation at any time. However, we would appreciate you letting us know your decision. If you have any questions, we would like you to ask us. If you have additional questions at a later date please feel free to ask us at any time. Our contact details are:



Mr Ashley Gordon  
Indigenous Research Consultant  
Email: [agconsultant@optusnet.com.au](mailto:agconsultant@optusnet.com.au); ph: 0409 245 597

Dr. Nerilee Hing  
Professor and Head of the Centre for Gambling Education and Research  
School of Tourism and Hospitality Management  
Southern Cross University  
PO Box 157, Lismore, N.S.W. Australia  
Email: [nerilee.hing@scu.edu.au](mailto:nerilee.hing@scu.edu.au); ph 02 6620 3928; fax 02 6622 2208

Ms Helen Breen  
School of Tourism and Hospitality Management  
Southern Cross University  
PO Box 157, Lismore, N.S.W. Australia  
Email: [helen.breen@scu.edu.au](mailto:helen.breen@scu.edu.au); ph. 02 66 203152; fax. 02 66 222208

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Southern Cross University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The Approval Number is ECN-08-007.

If you have a complaint about the ethical conduct of this research study, you should contact the Ethics Complaints Officer. Complaints, in the first instance, should be addressed in writing to the following:

The Ethics Complaints Officer  
Graduate Research College  
Southern Cross University  
PO Box 157  
Lismore, NSW, 2480  
[sue.kelly@scu.edu.au](mailto:sue.kelly@scu.edu.au)

### **List of Counsellors and Helpful Contacts**

On-Site during the research:

Mr Ashley Gordon, a qualified gambling counsellor can be contacted on 0409 245 597 or by asking any of the research team.

Gambling Helpline:

Is gambling a problem for you? Call the Gambling Helpline. A confidential & free counselling service. Free Call 1800 633 635.

Gambling Help Counsellors in the Northern Rivers:

Northern Rivers Gambling Service  
PO Box 42 Bangalow 2480 NSW Australia  
Ph: 02 6687 2520; Email: [info@nrgs.org.au](mailto:info@nrgs.org.au)

Lifeline – North Coast (NSW)  
Coffs Harbour  
Ph: 02 6651 4093

## **APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM**



**INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT  
EXPLORING INDIGENOUS GAMBLING**

Enquiries to:

Mr Ashley Gordon

Indigenous Research Consultant

Email: [agconsultant@optusnet.com.au](mailto:agconsultant@optusnet.com.au); ph: 0409 245 597

- I agree to participate in the above research project. I have read and understand the details contained in the Information Sheet. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study and I am satisfied with the answers received.
- I agree with the researcher taking hand written notes or audio-taping.
- I understand that I am free to discontinue participation at any time and I have been informed that prior to data analysis, any data that has been gathered before withdrawal of this consent will be destroyed.
- I understand that my name and any identifying information will not be disclosed or published, except with my permission.
- I understand that the Southern Cross University's Ethics Committee has approved this project.
- I am aware that I can contact the researcher at any time after the interview. If I have any further questions about this study I am free to contact Mr Ashley Gordon on 0429 245 597.
- I understand that I will be given a copy of this form to keep.

If you have a complaint about the ethical conduct of this research study, you should contact the Ethics Complaints Officer. Complaints, in the first instance, should be addressed in writing to the following:

The Ethics Complaints Officer  
Graduate Research College  
Southern Cross University  
PO Box 157  
Lismore, NSW, 2480  
[sue.kelly@scu.edu.au](mailto:sue.kelly@scu.edu.au)

All complaints are investigated fully and according to due process under the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and this University. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and you will be informed of the outcome.

*I have read the information above and agree to participate in this study. I am over the age of 18 years.*

Name of Participant: .....

Signature of Participant: .....

Date: .....

I certify that the terms of the Consent Form have been verbally explained to the participant and that the participant appears to understand the terms prior to signing the form. Proper arrangements have been made for an interpreter where English is not the participant's first language.

Signature of Witness (independent of the research, where possible):

.....

Date: .....

### **List of Counsellors and Helpful Contacts**

On-Site during the research:

Mr Ashley Gordon, a qualified gambling counsellor can be contacted on 0409 245 597 or by asking any of the research team.

Gambling Helpline:

Is gambling a problem for you? Call the Gambling Helpline. A confidential & free counselling service. Free Call 1800 633 635.

Gambling Help Counsellors in the Northern Rivers:

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Coffs Harbour  
Ph: 02 6651 4093

## **APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR INDIGENOUS RESPONDENTS**

## **EXPLORING INDIGENOUS GAMBLING: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR INDIGENOUS RESPONDENTS**

### **YOUR ORGANISATION (if applicable)**

- 1. Can you please briefly tell us about what your organisation does?**
- 2. What involvement does your organisation have with Indigenous people who gamble and perhaps gamble heavily or have gambling problems?**
- 3. Is heavy or uncontrolled gambling common amongst your clients?**

### **YOUR LOCAL AREA**

- 4. Would you feel more comfortable talking about gambling in relation to the clients you see in your organisation or amongst Indigenous people in your local area? Which do you feel you know more about?**
- 5. If your local area, which is it?**

### **WE'D NOW LIKE TO ASK ABOUT CARD (AND DICE) PLAYING**

- 6. Thinking about any card/dice playing amongst the Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients, can you please tell us about:**

WHAT card/dice games these people play?

WHO gambles on cards/dice games?

WHERE they play card/dice games?

HOW OFTEN they play card/dice games?

HOW LONG they play card/dice games for?

HOW MUCH THEY SPEND on card/dice playing?

WHY they gamble on cards/dice (motivations)?

### **WE'D NOW LIKE TO ASK ABOUT COMMERCIAL GAMBLING (E.G. POKER MACHINES, KENO, BETTING AT THE TAB)**

- 7. Thinking about commercial gambling amongst the Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients, can you please tell us about:**

WHAT types of gambling these people gamble on?

WHO gambles on these types of gambling?

WHERE they gamble?

HOW OFTEN they gamble?

HOW LONG they gamble for?

HOW MUCH THEY SPEND on gambling?

WHY they gamble on these types of gambling?

### **WE'D NOW LIKE TO ASK ABOUT ANY RISK FACTORS FOR PEOPLE IN THEIR GAMBLING**

- 8. Thinking about gambling amongst the Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients, what are the things that might influence some to gamble heavily or out of control?**

Personal (e.g. boredom, stress, health)

Family (e.g. childhood influences, family gambles)

Friends (e.g. peer pressure, social activities)

Financial (e.g. need money, attitudes to money)

Historical (e.g. trauma, stolen generation)

Cultural (e.g. kinship influences, reciprocity, generational issue)

The gambling products themselves (e.g. accessibility, how they are promoted, the games themselves)

**WE'D NOW LIKE TO ASK ABOUT ANY PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR PEOPLE IN THEIR GAMBLING**

**9. Thinking about gambling amongst the Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients, what are the things that might influence them to not gamble or to gamble responsibly?**

Personal (e.g. too busy, religious faith, be a role model)

Family (e.g. upbringing, family doesn't gamble, pressure to not gamble)

Friends (e.g. peer pressure to not gamble, social activities)

Financial (e.g. can't afford it, don't want to waste money, household budgeting skills)

Cultural (e.g. traditional responsibility to protect community, strong family networks, generational resilience built over time)

The gambling products themselves (e.g. no accessibility, don't like the games)

**WE'D NOW LIKE TO ASK ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF GAMBLING**

**10. Thinking about gambling amongst the Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients, can you describe any positive outcomes of gambling for:**

INDIVIDUALS? FAMILIES? COMMUNITIES?

**11. Thinking about gambling amongst the Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients, can you describe any negative outcomes of gambling for:**

INDIVIDUALS? FAMILIES? COMMUNITIES?

**12. What are the things that might make it particularly difficult for some Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients to deal with or resolve a gambling problem?**

Personal (e.g. don't think they have a gambling problem)

Family (e.g. no support, family bails them out so they continue gambling)

Friends (e.g. peer pressure to keep gambling)

Financial (e.g. can't sustain losses)

Cultural (e.g. wouldn't go to counselling or seek help)

The gambling products themselves (e.g. addictive games, inducements to keep gambling)

**13. What are the things that might make it easier for some Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients to deal with or resolve a gambling problem?**

Personal (e.g. willing to admit a gambling problem)

Family (e.g. support from family)

Friends (e.g. peer pressure to control gambling)

Financial (e.g. have enough money to limit negative impacts)

Cultural (e.g. develop a deep understanding of traditional culture and beliefs, respect for family)

**WE'D NOW LIKE TO ASK ABOUT HELP-SEEKING FOR GAMBLING PROBLEMS**

**14. Would Indigenous people in your local area/amongst your clients who have a gambling problem seek help? If yes, who would they go to for help?**

**15. What are the barriers for them from seeking help? What discourages them?**

Personal (e.g. shame, embarrassment)

Help services themselves (e.g. don't know about them, not accessible, not culturally appropriate)

**16. What are the facilitators for them for seeking help? What encourages them?**

**WE'D NOW LIKE TO ASK ABOUT WHAT CAN BE DONE TO REDUCE THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS AND ENCOURAGE RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING AMONGST INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN YOUR LOCAL AREA/AMONGST YOUR CLIENTS?**

**17. What can Indigenous communities do?**

**18. What can community services, health and welfare agencies do?**

**19. What can the gambling industry do?**

**20. What can the government do?**

## **APPENDIX D: NSW GAMBLING COUNSELLORS' FORUM WORKSHOP SLIDES**



## Exploring Indigenous Gambling: Understanding Indigenous Gambling Behaviour, Risk Factors, Consequences and Potential Interventions




Centre for Gambling  
Education &  
Research  
Southern Cross  
University Australia

## Project Team

- A/Prof. Nerilee Hing
- Ashley Gordon
- Helen Breen
- Prof. Judy Atkinson

## Project Overview

- Funded by Gambling Research Australia.
- Aim is to examine Indigenous gambling behaviour, risk factors, community consequences and potential interventions in northern NSW.
- Qualitative methods - workshops, interviews, meetings with local Indigenous organisations, relevant government, social, welfare, counselling, community, legal and financial organisations, gamblers, problem gamblers and gaming venue managers.
- Guided by model of gambling developed from prior research.

## Workshop Format

- Collating of 'homework'
- Model of Indigenous gambling
- Workshop discussion points
- Interactive please!
- Taping and note taking
- Informed consent

## Collating of 'Homework'

- How many ATSI clients?
- What are their socio-demographic characteristics?
- Nature of their commercial gambling activities?
- Nature of their non-commercial/ community gambling activities?



### Propensity to Gamble

- What factors seem to influence the propensity of your ATSI clients to gamble?
- E.g. personal, contextual, historical and cultural factors?
- Examples from your work?
- Our experiences.

### Gambling Products

- What features of gambling products seem to encourage your ATSI clients to gamble?
- E.g. access, game design, marketing, the gambling environment, consumer appeal?
- Examples from your work?
- Our experiences.

### Consequences of Gambling

- What have been the consequences of gambling amongst your ATSI clients?
- E.g. individual, family, and community?
- Examples from your work?
- Our experiences.

### Consequences of Gambling

- What exacerbates negative consequences?
- E.g. personal, financial, family circumstances?
- Examples from your work?
- Our experiences.
- Are there positive consequences?

### Interventions

- What interventions do you think would work best for ATSI people?
- Are there interventions relating to propensity to gamble, gambling products and consequences?
- Examples from your work?
- Our experiences.

### Help Seeking

- What are the barriers to ATSI people accessing counselling services?
- What are the facilitators for ATSI people accessing counselling services?
- What else can community, health and welfare agencies do to assist ATSI people with gambling problems?

### Questions?

- How can we access Indigenous problem gamblers?
- Who else should we talk to?
- Other questions?

## **APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR GAMBLING COUNSELLORS**

## **EXPLORING INDIGENOUS GAMBLING: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR GAMBLING COUNSELLORS**

### **1. Overview of your agency**

How long has your service been operating?

About how many non-Indigenous clients would your service assist annually?

About how many Indigenous clients would your service assist annually?

### **2. Your experience**

How long have you been working as a gambling counsellor?

How long with this particular service?

### **3. Indigenous clients and their gambling**

About how many Indigenous clients have you seen in the past 3 years?

Can you please tell us about their socio-demographic characteristics, e.g. male/female, married/single, age, employed/unemployed?

Can you please tell us about the gambling behaviour of these clients, e.g. gambling preferences, frequency, duration, expenditure?

Can you please tell us why these clients gambled and gambled heavily, i.e. their motivations for gambling?

### **4. Risk factors**

What factors seemed to influence the propensity of your Indigenous clients to gamble, e.g. personal, contextual, historical and cultural factors?

What features of gambling products seemed to encourage your Indigenous clients to gamble, e.g. access, game design, marketing, the gambling environment, consumer appeal?

### **5. Consequences of gambling**

What were the consequences of gambling amongst your Indigenous clients for a) themselves, b) their family and c) their community?

Did any factors exacerbate the negative consequences of their gambling, e.g. personal, financial, family circumstances?

### **6. Interventions**

What interventions do you think would work best for Indigenous problem gamblers?

What are the barriers to Indigenous people accessing counselling services?

What are the facilitators for Indigenous people accessing counselling services?

What else can community, health and welfare agencies do to assist Indigenous people with gambling problems?

Any other suggestions to assist Indigenous people with gambling problems?

## **APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR GAMING VENUE MANAGERS**

## **EXPLORING INDIGENOUS GAMBLING: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR GAMING VENUE MANAGERS**

### **(a) Introduction**

What is your position?

How long have you been working in this venue? In other venues in the same area?

Do you have any knowledge of, or links with local Indigenous people and communities?  
(please explain)

### **(b) Indigenous gamblers in your venue**

What proportion of your gambling customers would be Indigenous Australians?

In relation to these Indigenous patrons who gamble in your venue:

1. Who gambles (socio-demographic profiles e.g. age, gender, married/single, employed/unemployed, etc)
2. What types of gambling do these customers gamble most on?
3. How often do they gamble on these types of gambling?
4. When do they gamble? On particular days/nights of the week?
5. How long do they gamble for each time (average session length)?
6. How much do they spend each time?
7. Do they usually gamble alone or in groups?
8. Why do you think they gamble (motivations)? Why do you think this?
9. Do Indigenous customers play card games in your venue? Could you please describe what you have seen in relation to this?
10. Is this the most popular venue in town/your area for Indigenous gamblers? If no, what other venues are most popular?

### **(c) Risk factors**

In your experience with Indigenous Australian gamblers, does alcohol play a role in their gambling? Is there a typical pattern of behaviour? Is alcohol a risk factor for initiating gambling or for continuing gambling?

Are there other risk factors for Indigenous gamblers in limiting the harmful consequences of gambling? (e.g. socio-economic circumstances, time available, peer pressure to gamble, etc). Can you give us any examples of these?

### **(d) Assisting Indigenous gamblers to gamble responsibly**

In your experience do the responsible gambling strategies in place in venues assist Indigenous gamblers to gamble responsibly, to control or abstain from gambling? Which strategies work best (e.g. signage, self-exclusion, etc)? Why? Can you give us some examples?

Have any Indigenous gamblers or family members approached you worried about their gambling? In general terms, what problems were they facing?

If yes, what approach did you take when these people sought assistance for their gambling problems? Do you know if this was successful/helped them?

Are there any cultural or other barriers to responsible provision of gambling to Indigenous gamblers?

Would cultural awareness training situated within the RSA and RCG courses help managers and staff deal more effectively with Indigenous gamblers seeking help for their gambling problems? What other suggestions could you make?

**(d) Future Strategies**

In your opinion, what more could the gambling industry (including venues) do to reduce negative impacts and encourage responsible gambling for Indigenous gamblers?

In your opinion, what more could the State Government do to reduce negative impacts and encourage responsible gambling for Indigenous gamblers?

In your opinion, what more could community services & welfare agencies do to reduce negative impacts and encourage responsible gambling for Indigenous gamblers?

In your opinion, what could Indigenous communities do to reduce negative impacts and encourage responsible gambling?



**APPENDIX G: BREEN'S (2009) INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR NORTH QUEENSLAND RESPONDENTS**

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR NORTH QUEENSLAND RESPONDENTS

### **Indigenous community (card-games) gambling behaviour:**

Who gambles (socio-demographic profiles)?

What games do people play?

Where do they play?

How often do they play?

How long do they play each time?

How much do they spend each time?

Why do they gamble/motivations?

### **Indigenous commercial gambling behaviour:**

Who gambles (socio-demographic profiles)?

What games do people play?

Where do they play?

How often do they play?

How long do they play each time?

How much do they spend each time?

Why do they gamble/motivations?

### **Risk factors:**

What do you see as risk factors that might increase the propensity of Indigenous people to gamble, and to gamble out of control?

What do you see as risk factors associated with the gambling products and services themselves that might encourage Indigenous people to gamble, and to gamble out of control?

Do these vary for the different types of community and commercial gambling?

### **Protective factors:**

What do you see as protective factors that might assist Indigenous people to gamble responsibly, to control or abstain from gambling?

Do these vary for the different types of community and commercial gambling?

### **Positive consequences of gambling:**

Could you describe some of the positive social effects of gambling on individuals and families in the Indigenous community here?

Could you describe some of the positive economic/financial effects of gambling on individuals and families in the Indigenous community here?

Could you describe some of the positive effects of gambling on the recreation and leisure activities of individuals and families in the Indigenous community here?

Could you describe some of the positive effects of gambling on Indigenous culture of the community here?

Could you describe some of the positive effects of gambling on Indigenous health of the community here?

**Negative consequences of gambling:**

Could you describe some of the negative social effects of gambling on individuals and families in the Indigenous community here?

Could you describe some of the negative economic effects of gambling on individuals and families in the Indigenous community here?

Could you describe some of the negative employment effects of gambling on individuals and families in the Indigenous community here?

Could you describe some of the negative effects of gambling on the recreation and leisure activities of individuals and families in the Indigenous community here?

Could you describe some of the negative effects of gambling on Indigenous culture of the community here?

Could you describe some of the negative effects of gambling on Indigenous health of the community here?

Could you describe some of the negative effects of problem gambling in the community here?

**Potential Interventions:**

Could you identify any barriers working against Indigenous people seeking help or counselling for gambling problems?

Could you identify any facilitators assisting Indigenous people seeking help or counselling for gambling problems?

In your opinion, what could Indigenous communities do to reduce negative impacts and encourage responsible gambling in Indigenous communities?

In your opinion, what could the gambling industry do to reduce negative impacts and encourage responsible gambling in Indigenous communities?

In your opinion, what could the State Government do to reduce negative impacts and encourage responsible gambling in Indigenous communities?

In your opinion, what could community services, welfare & health agencies do to reduce negative impacts and encourage responsible gambling in Indigenous communities?

## APPENDIX H: ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE PRESENTATIONS OF RESULTS



## Exploring Gambling in Bundjalung Country

**To local Aboriginal people, organisations & interested others**

With the assistance of local Aboriginal people and organisations, the Centre for Gambling Education & Research at Southern Cross University recently completed a research project into Indigenous gambling in 6 shires in Bundjalung Country. You are now invited to a forum to hear the results of this research.

Location	Date	Time	Venue
Tweed Heads	Monday May 3 <sup>rd</sup>	2.00pm	Tweed Heads Aboriginal Co-op
Casino	Tuesday May 4 <sup>th</sup>	10.00am	The Oak Centre
Lismore	Tuesday May 4 <sup>th</sup>	2.00pm	Lismore Workers Club
Ballina	Wednesday May 5 <sup>th</sup>	10.00am	Ballina Aboriginal Lands Council
Grafton	Thursday May 6 <sup>th</sup>	11.30am	Grafton Community Centre
Maclean	Thursday May 6 <sup>th</sup>	2.30pm	Hillcrest Nungera Community Hall
Byron Bay	Friday May 7 <sup>th</sup>	9.30am	Byron Bay Community Centre



Southern Cross  
**UNIVERSITY**  
*A new way to think*

**Presenter:  
Ashley Gordon**

A study funded by Gambling Research Australia  
For more info please call 0409 245 597



CGER  
Centre for  
GAMBLING EDUCATION & RESEARCH

**APPENDIX I: SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK GAINED FROM PRESENTATIONS OF RESULTS IN SIX SHIRES IN BUNDJALUNG COUNTRY**

## Introduction

Seven feedback sessions with Indigenous people from Bundjalung Country were held where research results were presented to verify the accuracy of the findings. These were conducted from 3-7 May 2010. Sixteen people attended these sessions. Some who attended took notes to pass on the results to interested others. People who sent apologies usually requested that a copy of the results be sent to them. A couple of people commented on the difficulty of getting Aboriginal people to workshops/presentations. Others suggested that gambling is still a sensitive issue, one that some Indigenous people do not want to talk about.

Communications to inform people that the presentations were to be held included: emails sent out in each town and village through the local area health service, Aboriginal medical service, shire councils, employment networks, family and child support services, local social development councils and drug and alcohol centres. People were also contacted by flyers, telephone and text messages. The general public were notified of the presentation by a coloured advertisement in the public notices section of the Northern Star, the Tweed Daily News and the Grafton Examiner on Saturday May 1.

We asked the question: Do these findings make sense to you, are they real for people in your area? Below is a summary of the comments made at the feedback sessions.

## Comments on card gambling

Card gambling: There was general agreement with the results about card gambling.

Socialising: People play cards in their community. If it is played amongst families and cousins then the money can stay within the family. Card gambling was seen as a social activity.

Large households: Many Indigenous families are big and in some circumstances more than one family lives together in the same household. Thus, there are often many people at home together and a lot of children to look after. People may play cards as recreation because it is something to do. In some households there is always a game of cards being played. Card games and dice can be used to teach young children how to add up and to subtract. There is some educational value in card playing.

In the past: Popular older card gambling games were said to be Koonkan and Cut'em. There were big games in the old days. Previously card gambling was popular at football matches where there might be \$3000 in the pot (back in the 1980s). One person recalled: 'As kids we were flogged for touching cards – but as adults grandparents taught kids to play cards'. As a child, people always knew if their parents won at cards because there was a small amount (20 cents) for the kids to spend, to go and get an ice cream.

Currently: Gambling is becoming a rite of passage at 18 years. This could be because everyone talks about wins at card gambling. Kids hear the talk and get excited about it all. This may transfer into commercial gambling for some.

## Comments on commercial gambling

Commercial gambling: The majority of people agreed that the results were accurate, especially those relating to poker machine gambling. Commercial gambling was said to be mostly poker machines, although some people followed the big bingo jackpots (\$2000), with a few even going to Brisbane for this.

**Poker machines:** Poker machine gambling is a solitary activity. It can be an addiction for some gamblers. Poker machine gamblers like to concentrate on ‘their’ machine. They don’t like others to know whether they are winning or losing as they can be a target for a loan.

**Bingo and horse racing:** Both were reported to be social activities.

**TAB gambling:** People said that many local stand-alone TABS have been closed. Men generally visit pubs and clubs to gamble on the TAB while women were more likely to use a TAB phone account. Some people sit all afternoon in one of the few stand-alone TABs left in the region.

**Younger people:** Many younger Indigenous people like to gamble on commercial gambling. Some young couples see their money as individual income and may spend it on their own needs. It is not always pooled with their partner, so partners might not even know about the other’s gambling.

**Older people:** older people don’t want to sit in a venue for hours.

### **Comments on motivations**

**Gambling to win and then to socialise:** Firstly, some Indigenous people gamble once they are paid to see if they can get more money. Secondly, they gamble to socialise.

**Gambling to make money:** Some people, if they only have a small amount of money, say \$20, and they cannot pay their electricity bill, might gamble to build up enough funds to pay that bill.

**Parents’ example:** Some Indigenous people choose to drink and gamble or not to drink and gamble, usually based on the example their parents provided.

**Peer pressure:** Some people find it hard to say ‘no’ to others; some find it easy to not gamble.

**Time to gamble:** There are numerous Indigenous people unemployed in this community which means they have more time to gamble, but many employed people gamble too.

**Escape:** Many young people in their 20s still live at home. Mum needs to ‘escape’ the home environment sometimes and go gambling.

### **Comments on risk factors**

**Cycle of borrowing:** Everyone knows what day is pay day for different people. Some borrow from others based on this knowledge. They get into a cycle of borrowing.

**Expenditure per session:** The problem is not how often Indigenous people gamble. It is how much they spend in one sitting.

**Poverty:** It can be a feast or famine when people get used to a cycle of poverty.

**Venue access:** There are smoke free areas outside venues which have gambling available. This makes it easy to gamble as ‘many of our mob smoke’.

**Risky behaviour:** Some of the local high school kids are gambling with their lives. Their risk-taking behaviour is high. They walk out on the road, ‘play chicken’ with the traffic, take risks with alcohol, sex, drugs and other activities.

**Rite of passage:** Gambling is likened to a rite of passage. It is similar to going up a grade in football, being ‘upgraded’ to go to pubs and clubs when turning 18 years.

Younger people: They tend not to put their money aside for food before spending on other activities, such as gambling, whereas older people do.

Younger people exposed to gambling wins: It is obvious when someone has won at gambling, as they come home with two cartons of beer and food. Therefore, children and others see the benefits of gambling, that the winner is very popular and they want to be like that.

Parents' example: Some parents use their children to gain more money by giving them money to gamble with.

Binge gambling: Many people are binge gamblers and Indigenous people have more triggers or reasons to prompt a binge.

Shame and stigma: Gambling is a huge problem in our community, what is worse is no one talks about it.

Influence of other problems mixed in with gambling: When there are problems amongst families in a community, then obviously it is going to make things hard for Indigenous people to acknowledge there is a problem and even harder to plan for these issues to be addressed.

Mental health issues: People with mental health problems are now starting to gamble and it can cause more problems. The implication was that they are more easily addicted.

### **Comments on protective factors**

Religious beliefs: Religion gives some people support. It helps them to uphold and to continue their non-gambling or non-drinking behaviours. In one place, the Indigenous community is supported by a large annual gathering where people travel from several states to celebrate their religion together – sometimes up to 300 people congregate for 'gospel sessions' in this community.

Leadership: This is another protective factor that works.

Strong family values: Strong family values are the best protective factor because Indigenous people are linked to other family through these ties.

Exclusion: This works but some people do not exclude themselves from every venue in town. They might miss out on one venue and then exclusion does not work for them.

CentrePay: This is a system where CentreLink pays bills as pre-payments (electricity, phone and rent) from government payments.

Protective factors: There was general agreement that the research findings were real.

### **Comments on interventions**

Interventions: There was general agreement with the suggested interventions.

Indigenous solutions: If there is a problem in a community, then people themselves need to get together to talk about it and try to fix it. There is no need to wait for funding (it may not come).

Counselling services: There was definitely a need for one-to-one services provided by counsellors.



Integrating counselling services: Only this week, one of the Aboriginal health and medical agencies in Lismore has been approached by the local gambling help service to move gambling counselling services for Aboriginal gamblers into their agency. The gambling help service said that their previous location was not culturally appropriate for Aboriginal gamblers who were seeking their assistance.

Gambling education and awareness: 'We need more awareness about gambling and where we can go to get help'. 'Gambling is still not talked about. No one has even come to our community to talk about it. We have to raise awareness!'

### **Comments on consequences of gambling**

Confidentiality: This was important for all concerned. For example one person attending the sessions had been trained as a mediation counsellor (for justice). When all the trained Indigenous mediators went home to work, there was little to do. They had to be transferred to areas where they were unknown as there was a fear about breach of confidentiality in their own home area.

Cultural consequences: 'When you're black, you stay back'. This saying was said to represent a way of standing back, looking and watching to see what happens when something new is introduced. It was seen as a legacy of discrimination felt by Indigenous Australians.

Statewide consequences: Aboriginal people will have the same problems when it comes to gambling no matter where you go in NSW.

Alcohol use: Some people know if they win at gambling then they can drink more alcohol.

### **Comments on counsellor findings**

Older men in counselling: There was discussion about why there were more older men in counselling. The suggestion was that maybe women did not think they had a problem with their gambling.

### **Comments on other issues**

Employment: There was not enough employment for young Indigenous people in the Lismore area. They are mostly employed in government jobs. Very few other organisations employ Indigenous people. In one suburb, Coles depend almost entirely on spending by local Indigenous residents nearby. Yet Coles and the other big stores such as Kmart and Woolworths hardly employ any Indigenous people in Lismore. So, where do some young people get their money? Some gamble to get extra money. Similarly, there are no opportunities in Grafton, particularly for Indigenous employment. Gambling is related to employment and pursuing a job. Also, many non-Indigenous people stereotype Indigenous people when it comes to employment, that is, not believing Indigenous people will go to work.

Financial pressure: new technology (i.e. mobile phones, GE Finance) is putting even more financial pressure on young people.

Indigenous Elders: The generation gap is different now where there is less respect for older people. However older people and Elders need to also better communicate their seniority and demand or encourage respect. Further, older people need to earn respect through good role modelling and behaviour.

### **Comments on prior AH&MRC seminars**

Two people from the Drug and Alcohol Centre had attended the AH&MRC seminar on gambling held late in 2009. They found it very informative and eye-opening from a health professional's view. They also found our presentations equally as informative because we had talked to local people in the Bundjalung area and captured their views in our results. Our grass-roots findings resonated with them as they are doing similar research into tobacco use by Aboriginal people. They saw links between gambling, tobacco use, drug and alcohol consumption. They want to keep in touch with us. There was no awareness of the AH&MRC seminars in Tweed Heads.