

## Casino Table Games

### History of Casinos in Australia

The first legal casino was opened in Hobart in 1973. The 1980s and 1990s saw large scale liberalisation of casino industries across most states and territories and by 1986 there were 8 casinos opened across Australia. A further six casinos opened between 1992 and 1996 including the Star City Casino in Sydney. Currently there are 13 operating casinos in Australia, owned by six different corporations. Tabcorp Holdings Ltd operates the most number of casinos in Australia, including the Star City Casino and the Jupiters Casino in Townsville. The Australian casino industry operates within the private sector, with tight oversight by government regulatory authorities.

### What are casino table games?

Casino games are table games that involve laying bets on games such as baccarat, blackjack and roulette.

**Baccarat**<sup>1</sup> is usually played in a separate casino area and has three casino dealers and up to 12 or 14 players. The object is to bet on the winning hand. Two hands are dealt – one to the dealer and one to the player. Both hands are dealt face up next to each other by the dealer. In standard games between 6-8 standard decks are used to play. There are just two principal bets to make: bet on the player hand or the banker hand or less commonly on a tie. Whichever of the two hands comes closer to a total of nine (by adding up all the card values - e.g. aces =1, all tens and face cards =0). There is no strategy and the game requires no real skill, as you're just betting on what you think will be the winning hand.

**Blackjack**<sup>2</sup> is the most popular casino table game. The Blackjack table seats seven players on one side and the Dealer on the other. Blackjack is played with a standard 52 card deck. The number of decks can range up to eight and is determined by the casino. The aim of the game is to draw cards closer to 21 than those in the dealer's hand. Each card has a number value – an ace can count as 1 or 11, each picture card can count as a 10 and all number cards have their face value. Cards are dealt face up and the player may “stand” on the original 2 cards, “draw” additional cards or “bust” which

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<sup>1</sup> Mandos, G (1998). The Everything Casino Gambling Book. Holbrook: Adams Media Corporation

<sup>2</sup> As Above

means you lose when your cards value more than 21. If your hand comes closer to 21 than the dealer, you win and are paid even money.

**Roulette**<sup>3</sup> in Australia utilises a roulette wheel with the numbers one to thirty-six on it and a zero slot. The numbers are arranged around the roulette wheel in a way that high, low, odd and even numbers are distributed as mathematically balanced as possible. Numbers alternate between black and red with zero being green and all numbers have an equal chance of winning. The dealer spins the wheel and rolls a small ball in the opposite direction and when the ball stays in a certain slot, that number wins. There are a variety of bets players can make. For example, a “straight bet” is where you bet on one number being hit on the next spin, a “split bet” is where you bet on one or two numbers adjacent to a number will be hit on the next spin or you can bet on a black or green number being hit on the next spin. Due to the 0 on the roulette wheel, the casino always has a house advantage of 2.7%.

There are many different type of table games in Australian casinos, as shown in the following table.

**Table 1:** Casino Table Games in Australian Casinos.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aruze Blackjack</li> <li>• Four Card Poker</li> <li>• Baccarat (and Mini Baccarat)</li> <li>• Poker</li> <li>• Big Wheel</li> <li>• Pontoon</li> <li>• Blackjack</li> <li>• Roulette (and Rapid Roulette)</li> <li>• Three card poker</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Craps</li> <li>• Vegas Star Baccarat</li> <li>• Pai Gow</li> <li>• Vegas Star Blackjack</li> <li>• Matchmaker</li> <li>• Vegas Star Roulette</li> <li>• Caribbean Stud</li> <li>• Sic Bo (and Rapid Sic Bo)</li> <li>• Casino War</li> </ul>
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Source: The Allen Consulting Group (2009). Casinos and the Australian Economy: Report to the Australasian Casino Association.

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### Who plays casino table games?

The Productivity Commission (1999) report into gambling found that gamblers on

<sup>3</sup> Mandos, G (1998). The Everything Casino Gambling Book. Holbrook: Adams Media Corporation

casino table games in Australia had one of the most distinct profiles of all gambling forms – being male dominated, more likely to be single and aged between 18 and 24 years. There is a bias towards individuals from Asian communities. In the 2005 Tasmanian study into gambling found gamblers who played table games were more likely to be males within the 18-24 and 25-34 age demographic. This study also found a bias towards people in full-time employment or students and those with a higher than average annual income. A number of studies across Australia cited by Australian Gaming Council (2009/2010) report into gambling confirm this finding with people played casino table games were more likely to be male, be aged between 18 to 34 years, more likely to be engaged in full time employment or study and more likely to be earning a higher than average income. The vast majority of visits to Australian casinos are from Australian residents - around 5% of visits were from international tourists in 2007-08 (Allen Consulting Group, 2009).

### Expenditure in casinos on table games

Australian casinos obtained around \$3.46 billion in gaming revenue in 2008-09 and it is estimated that \$1.44 billion was earned from table games, which equates to more than \$900 000 from each gaming table. Casino expenditure has been relatively stable in Australia over the last decade. New casinos opened during the 1990s, which resulted in historically rapid growth, however, no new casinos have opened during the 2000s, which has led to stabilising casino expenditure. However, there has been a 39 per cent increase in the number of gaming tables in casinos from 1999 to 2009, with there being an estimated 1525 gaming tables in Australian casinos.

### Incidence of gambling on casino table games

The Tasmania Prevalence Study (2008) compared casino table games for the adult population in Tasmania in two previous studies from 2005 and 2007. They estimated that casino table games were played by approximately 5% of the adult population in 2005, and 7% of the population in 2007. Approximately 6.3% played casino table games less than once a month, 0.6% played 1-3 times a month and 0.1% played once per week or more. The 2007 Tasmanian prevalence study asked people about the source of their gambling problems. Approximately 11% nominated casino table games, with the majority nominating electronic gaming machines. Statistical analysis by the Productivity Commission (2010) suggested that the odds of having problems when people played gaming machines were significantly higher than racing or casino table games.

## Treatment

Treatments, which specifically target problem gambling on casino table games, have not been adequately researched by the gambling literature. As such, it is not possible to make a recommendation based on the treatment literature in relation to the most effective treatment for this population. This is echoed by the 2011 problem gambling treatment guidelines developed by Monash University, which concluded that the present treatment outcome literature is too limited to be able to make evidence based recommendations for treatments in relation to all the different types of problem gambling. Clearly further research in this area is required, in particular a randomized controlled trial examining the effectiveness of different treatment approaches to treating table games.

Here, at the Gambling Treatment Clinic, we utilise a cognitive therapy approach to treating problem gambling, related to casino table games.

## References

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