THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Gambling Treatment Clinic
School of Psychology

GAMBLING FACTS & FIGURES IN AUSTRALIA

Gambling in Australia

- Australians spend over $18 billion per annum on all forms of gambling or $1500 per capita. This amount is considerably higher compared to other countries such as New Zealand ($495 per capita), Canada ($393 per capita) and U.S.A ($325 per capita) (Delfabbro, 2010).
- There are between 80 000 and 160 000 Australian adults suffering significant problems from their gambling (0.5 to 1.0 per cent of adults), with a further 230 000 to 350 000 experiencing moderate risks that may make them vulnerable to problem gambling (1.4 to 2.1 per cent of adults).
- State tax revenue from gambling was $5 billion in 2008-09 (or 10 per cent of all state tax revenue).

Electronic gaming machines (EGMs)

- The most significant gambling development in Australia was the introduction of EGMs in 1956 in NSW.
- EGMs account for the biggest single slice of overall gambling expenditure in Australia — 62 per cent of the total, compared with 15 per cent for wagering and 7 per cent for table games. The risks associated with playing EGMs are higher than other gambling forms.
- There were 198 300 EGMs in Australia in 2009, with 97 065 machines in N.S.W alone. The annual revenue per EGM was around $59 700 in 2008-09 with average revenue per venue around $2.1 million.
- Australians spent around $10.5 billion on EGMs in clubs and hotels and around $1.4 billion on EGMs in casinos in 2008-09. Problem gamblers account for 40% of spending on poker machines in Australia. The annual gaming machine losses per EGM player averaged around $3700 in NSW.

The social cost of problem gambling

- The social cost of problem gambling is around $4.7 billion a year. The social costs of problem gambling are serious and include suicide, depression, relationship breakdown, lower work productivity, job losses, bankruptcy and crime.
- For every problem gambler up to 10 more people suffer. Most commonly affected are the family, children, friends and colleagues of the problem gambler.
- Only a small percentage of problem gamblers seek formal help from counselling and treatment services. Many people seeking help for gambling problems also have co-existing mental health problems. For example, in N.S.W., of those clients presenting for counselling, 43% reported having at some stage been diagnosed with anxiety, 55% with depression, 29% with alcohol problems and 19% reported problems with other drugs.

All data from:
Productivity Commission (2010). *Gambling. Productivity Commission Inquiry Report. Volume 1*. Report no. 50 Canberra: Productivity Commission. Available online - www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/gambling-2009/report
Productivity Commission (1999). *Australia's gambling industries*. Canberra: Productivity Commission
Delfabbro, P.H. (2010). *Exploring the myths around gambling*. Paper presented at Gambling Awareness Week, Melbourne Town Hall, Melbourne.