

**Assisting Problem Gamblers in the Gaming Venue: An
Assessment of Responses Provided by Frontline Staff,
Customer Liaison Officers and Gambling Support Services
to Problem Gamblers in the Venue**

By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
TABLE OF CONTENTS	ii
LIST OF TABLES	xii
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	xiii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	1
1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT	2
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	3
2.1 INTRODUCTION	3
2.2 RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING IN QUEENSLAND: A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY	3
2.3 RESPONSIBILITIES OF FRONTLINE STAFF, CLOS AND GAMBLING HELP SERVICES IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE.....	5
2.3.1 Responsibilities of Frontline Staff in Assisting Problem Gamblers in the Venue	5
2.3.2 Responsibilities of Customer Liaison Officers (CLOs) in Assisting Problem Gamblers in the Venue.....	6
2.3.3 Responsibilities of Gambling Help Agencies in Assisting Problem Gamblers in the Venue	7
2.4 INTERACTIONS AMONGST FRONTLINE STAFF, CLOS, GAMBLING HELP AGENCIES AND PROBLEM GAMBLERS	7
2.4.1 Interactions Between Staff and Problem Gamblers in the Venue.....	7
2.4.2 Interactions Between Venues and Gambling Help Agencies	16
2.4.3 Interactions Between Gambling Help Agencies and Problem Gamblers	17
2.5 CHAPTER CONCLUSION	19
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS	20
3.1 INTRODUCTION	20
3.2 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN.....	20
3.3 PRELIMINARY CONSULTATIONS	23

3.4	TARGET POPULATIONS AND SAMPLES.....	23
3.4.1	Customer Liaison Officers in Queensland Hotels and Clubs	23
3.4.2	Frontline Staff in Queensland Hotels and Clubs.....	24
3.4.3	Queensland Gambling Help Counsellors.....	25
3.4.4	Casino Interviews.....	25
3.4.5	Self-Excludes from the Three Tabcorp Casinos	25
3.4.6	Summary of Interview Participants	26
3.5	DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND INSTRUMENTATION	26
3.5.1	Customer Liaison Officers in Queensland Hotels and Clubs	27
3.5.2	Frontline Staff in Queensland Hotels and Clubs.....	27
3.5.3	Queensland Gambling Help Counsellors.....	28
3.5.4	Casino Interviews.....	28
3.5.5	Self-Excludes from the Three Tabcorp Casinos	29
3.6	DATA ANALYSIS.....	29
3.7	ETHICS APPROVAL	29
3.8	CHAPTER CONCLUSION	29

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS FROM THE HOTEL, CLUB AND CASINO CLO AND MANAGER INTERVIEWS.....30

4.1	INTRODUCTION	30
4.2	KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF HOTEL CLO INTERVIEWEES	30
4.3	HOTEL CLO RESPONSES TO PATRONS WHO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE	31
4.3.1	Frequency of Patrons Approaching Hotel CLOs	31
4.3.2	Procedures Used By Hotel CLOs	32
4.3.3	Hotel CLO Knowledge of Procedures	34
4.3.4	Challenges for Hotel CLOs in Responding to Patrons who Request Assistance.....	34
4.3.5	Perceived Helpfulness of Hotel Procedures.....	37
4.3.6	Hotel CLOs Suggestions for Improvements.....	37
4.4	HOTEL CLO APPROACHES TO PATRONS WHO SHOW SIGNS OF PROBLEM GAMBLING	38
4.4.1	Hotel CLO Identification of Signs of Possible Problem Gambling.....	38
4.4.2	Indicators that Would Prompt Hotel CLOs to Approach a Patron	41
4.4.3	Procedures Used by Hotel CLOs to Approach a Patron.....	42
4.4.4	Hotel CLO Knowledge of Procedures	45
4.4.5	Challenges for Hotel CLOs in Approaching Patrons About a Possible Gambling Problem.....	45

4.4.6	Hotel CLO Perceptions of the Helpfulness of Procedures.....	47
4.5	HOTEL CLO RESPONSES TO THIRD PARTY CONCERNS ABOUT PROBLEM GAMBLING.....	48
4.5.1	Frequency of a Third Party Approaching Hotel CLOs.....	48
4.5.2	Procedures Used by Hotel CLOs.....	48
4.5.3	Hotel CLO Knowledge of Procedures.....	50
4.5.4	Challenges for Hotel CLOs.....	50
4.5.5	Perceived Helpfulness of Procedures.....	51
4.6	HOTEL CLO SUPPORT FOR STAFF IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE.....	51
4.7	HOTEL CLO TRAINING IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE.....	52
4.7.1	Sources of Hotel CLO Training.....	52
4.7.2	Perceived Value of Training for Hotel CLOs.....	54
4.8	HOTEL CLO INTERACTION WITH GAMBLING HELP AGENCIES TO ASSIST PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE.....	56
4.8.1	Frequency of Hotel CLOs Interacting with Gambling Help Agencies.....	56
4.8.2	Types of Hotel CLO Interaction with Gambling Help Agencies.....	56
4.8.3	Perceived Value of Hotel CLO Interaction with Gambling Help Agencies.....	58
4.9	HOTEL CLOS' EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICES IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE.....	59
4.10	OTHER WAYS HOTELS CAN ASSIST PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE.....	60
4.11	HOTEL CLO CONCLUSION.....	62
4.12	KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF CLUB CLO INTERVIEWEES.....	62
4.13	CLUB CLO RESPONSES TO PATRONS WHO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE.....	63
4.13.1	Frequency of Patrons Approaching Club CLOs.....	63
4.13.2	Procedures Used By Club CLOs.....	63
4.13.3	Club CLO Knowledge of Procedures.....	66
4.13.4	Challenges for Club CLOs in Responding to Patrons who Request Assistance.....	66
4.13.5	Perceived Helpfulness of Club Procedures.....	68
4.13.6	Club CLOs Suggestions for Improvements.....	69
4.14	CLUB CLO APPROACHES TO PATRONS WHO SHOW SIGNS OF PROBLEM GAMBLING.....	71
4.14.1	Club CLO Identification of Signs of Possible Problem Gambling.....	71
4.14.2	Indicators that Would Prompt Club CLOs to Approach a Patron.....	73

4.14.3	Procedures Used by Club CLOs to Approach a Patron	75
4.14.4	Club CLO Knowledge of Procedures	76
4.14.5	Challenges for Club CLOs in Approaching Patrons About a Possible Gambling Problem	77
4.14.6	Club CLO Perceptions of the Helpfulness of Procedures.....	78
4.15	CLUB CLO RESPONSES TO THIRD PARTY CONCERNS ABOUT PROBLEM GAMBLING	79
4.15.1	Frequency of a Third Party Approaching Club CLOs	79
4.15.2	Procedures Used by Club CLOs	79
4.15.3	Club CLO Knowledge of Procedures	81
4.15.4	Challenges for Club CLOs.....	81
4.15.5	Perceived Helpfulness of Procedures.....	82
4.16	CLO SUPPORT FOR STAFF IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE	82
4.17	CLUB CLO TRAINING IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE.....	83
4.17.1	Sources of Club CLO Training.....	83
4.17.2	Perceived Value of Training for Club CLOs	84
4.18	CLUB CLO INTERACTION WITH GAMBLING HELP AGENCIES TO ASSIST PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE	86
4.18.1	Frequency of Club CLO Interacting with Gambling Help Agencies	86
4.18.2	Types of Club CLO Interaction with Gambling Help Agencies.....	86
4.18.3	Perceived Value of Club CLO Interaction with Gambling Help Agencies	87
4.19	CLUB CLOs' EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICES IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE	87
4.20	OTHER WAYS CLUBS CAN ASSIST PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE ..	88
4.21	CLUB CLO CONCLUSION	90
4.22	CASINO RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING MANAGER	90
4.22.1	Role of the Casinos in Assisting Patrons with Gambling Problems.....	90
4.22.2	Role of Staff and RGLOs in Assisting Patrons with Gambling Problems	92
4.22.3	Identifying Problem Gamblers.....	93
4.22.4	Exclusions	94
4.22.5	Interaction with Family Members.....	95
4.22.6	Gambling Help Agencies	96
4.22.7	RGLO Training.....	96
4.23	CASINO RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING LIAISON OFFICERS.....	96
4.24	KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CASINO RGLO INTERVIEWEES.....	97

4.25	CASINO RGLO RESPONSES TO PATRONS WHO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE	97
4.26	CASINO RGLO RESPONSES TO PATRONS WHO SHOW SIGNS OF PROBLEM GAMBLING	98
4.26.1	Casino RGLO Identification of Signs of Possible Problem Gambling.....	98
4.26.2	Indicators that Would Prompt Casino RGLOs to Approach a Patron	99
4.26.3	Procedures Used by Casino RGLOs to Approach Patrons	100
4.27	CASINO RGLO RESPONSES TO THIRD PARTY CONCERNS ABOUT PROBLEM GAMBLING	101
4.28	EXCLUSION PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES	101
4.29	SUPPORT FOR CASINO STAFF IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE	102
4.30	RGLO TRAINING IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE	103
4.31	CASINO RGLO INTERACTION WITH GAMBLING HELP AGENCIES TO ASSIST PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE.....	104
4.32	CASINO BEST PRACTICES IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE.....	104
4.33	OTHER WAYS CASINOS CAN ASSIST PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE.....	105
4.34	CASINO RGM AND RGLO CONCLUSION	105
4.35	CHAPTER CONCLUSION	105

CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS FROM THE HOTEL AND CLUB STAFF

	INTERVIEWS	106
5.1	INTRODUCTION	106
5.2	KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF HOTEL STAFF INTERVIEWEES	106
5.3	HOTEL STAFF RESPONSES TO PATRONS WHO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE	107
5.3.1	Frequency of Patrons Approaching Hotel Staff.....	107
5.3.2	Procedures Used By Hotel Staff.....	108
5.3.3	Hotel Staff Knowledge of Procedures	110
5.3.4	Challenges for Hotel Staff in Responding to Patrons who Request Assistance	110
5.3.5	Perceived Helpfulness of Hotel Procedures.....	111
5.3.6	Hotel Staff Suggestions for Improvements.....	112
5.4	HOTEL STAFF APPROACHES TO PATRONS WHO SHOW SIGNS OF PROBLEM GAMBLING	113
5.4.1	Hotel Staff Identification of Signs of Possible Problem Gambling.....	113
5.4.2	Indicators that Would Prompt Hotel Staff to Approach a Patron.....	116
5.4.3	Procedures Used by Hotel Staff to Approach a Patron.....	117

5.4.4	Hotel Staff Knowledge of Procedures	118
5.4.5	Challenges for Hotel Staff in Approaching Patrons About a Possible Gambling Problem.....	119
5.4.6	Hotel Staff Perceptions of the Helpfulness of Procedures.....	121
5.5	HOTEL STAFF RESPONSES TO THIRD PARTY CONCERNS ABOUT PROBLEM GAMBLING	121
5.5.1	Frequency of Third Parties Approaching Hotel Staff.....	121
5.5.2	Procedures Used by Hotel Staff.....	121
5.5.3	Hotel Staff Knowledge of Procedures	123
5.5.4	Challenges for Hotel Staff	124
5.5.5	Perceived Helpfulness of Procedures.....	125
5.6	CLO SUPPORT FOR HOTEL STAFF IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE.....	125
5.6.1	Types of Assistance Provided by Hotel CLOs	125
5.6.2	Perceived Adequacy of CLO Support to Hotel Staff.....	126
5.7	HOTEL STAFF TRAINING IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE.....	126
5.7.1	Sources of Hotel Staff Training	127
5.7.2	Perceived Value of Training for Hotel Staff.....	127
5.8	HOTEL STAFF INTERACTION WITH GAMBLING HELP AGENCIES TO ASSIST PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE.....	129
5.8.1	Frequency of Hotel Staff Interacting with Gambling Help Agencies.....	129
5.8.2	Types of Hotel Staff Interaction with Gambling Help Agencies.....	129
5.8.3	Perceived Value of Hotel Staff Interaction with Gambling Help Agencies	130
5.9	HOTEL STAFF EXAMPLES ON BEST PRACTICES IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE	131
5.10	OTHER WAYS HOTELS CAN ASSIST PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE.....	132
5.11	HOTEL STAFF CONCLUSION.....	134
5.12	KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF CLUB STAFF INTERVIEWEES.....	134
5.13	CLUB STAFF RESPONSES TO PATRONS WHO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE	135
5.13.1	Frequency of Patrons Approaching Club Staff.....	135
5.13.2	Procedures Used By Club Staff	136
5.13.3	Club Staff Knowledge of Procedures	139
5.13.4	Challenges for Club Staff in Responding to Patrons who Request Assistance	139
5.13.5	Perceived Helpfulness of Club Procedures.....	140

5.13.6	Club Staff Suggestions for Improvements	141
5.14	CLUB STAFF APPROACHES TO PATRONS WHO SHOW SIGNS OF PROBLEM GAMBLING	142
5.14.1	Club Staff Identification of Signs of Possible Problem Gambling	142
5.14.2	Indicators that Would Prompt Club Staff to Approach a Patron	144
5.14.3	Procedures Used by Club Staff to Approach a Patron	145
5.14.4	Club Staff Knowledge of Procedures	147
5.14.5	Challenges for Club Staff in Approaching Patrons About a Possible Gambling Problem	147
5.14.6	Club Staff Perceptions of the Helpfulness of Procedures	149
5.15	CLUB STAFF RESPONSES TO THIRD PARTY CONCERNS ABOUT PROBLEM GAMBLING	150
5.15.1	Frequency of Third Parties Approaching Club Staff	150
5.15.2	Procedures Used by Club Staff	150
5.15.3	Club Staff Knowledge of Procedures	152
5.15.4	Challenges for Club Staff	152
5.15.5	Perceived Helpfulness of Procedures	152
5.16	CLO SUPPORT FOR CLUB STAFF IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE	153
5.16.1	Types of Assistance Provided by Club CLOs	153
5.16.2	Perceived Adequacy of CLO Support to Club Staff	153
5.17	CLUB STAFF TRAINING IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE	154
5.17.1	Sources of Club Staff Training	154
5.17.2	Perceived Value of Training for Club Staff	154
5.18	CLUB STAFF INTERACTION WITH GAMBLING HELP AGENCIES TO ASSIST PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE	156
5.18.1	Frequency of Club Staff Interacting with Gambling Help Agencies	156
5.18.2	Types of Club Staff Interaction with Gambling Help Agencies	156
5.18.3	Perceived Value of Club Staff Interaction with Gambling Help Agencies	157
5.19	CLUB BEST PRACTICES IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE	158
5.20	OTHER WAYS CLUBS CAN ASSIST PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE	159
5.21	CLUB STAFF CONCLUSION	160
5.22	CHAPTER CONCLUSION	161

CHAPTER SIX: RESULTS FROM THE GAMBLING COUNSELLOR	
INTERVIEWS	162
6.1 INTRODUCTION	162
6.2 KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF COUNSELLOR INTERVIEWEES.....	162
6.3 COUNSELLOR RESPONSES ABOUT PATRONS WHO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE	162
6.3.1 Barriers for Patrons Approaching Staff	162
6.3.2 Facilitators for Patrons Approaching Staff	163
6.3.3 The Experience for Clients	163
6.3.4 What Staff Should Do if Approached by a Patron.....	164
6.4 COUNSELLOR RESPONSES ABOUT STAFF APPROACHING PATRONS TO OFFER ASSISTANCE	165
6.4.1 Venue Staff Identification of Signs of Possible Problem Gambling	165
6.4.2 Barriers for Staff Approaching Patrons	166
6.4.3 The Experience for Clients	168
6.4.4 What Staff Should do if Approaching a Patron	169
6.5 COUNSELLOR RESPONSES ABOUT THIRD PARTY CONCERNS ABOUT PROBLEM GAMBLING	170
6.5.1 The Experience for Clients	170
6.5.2 What Staff Should do if Approached by a Third Party.....	171
6.6 COUNSELLOR RESPONSES ABOUT THE SELF-EXCLUSION PROCESS.....	172
6.6.1 Frequency of Clients Self-Excluding.....	172
6.6.2 Barriers to Self-Exclusion.....	172
6.6.3 The Experience for Clients	174
6.6.4 Effectiveness of Exclusion.....	174
6.6.5 Improvements to Exclusion	175
6.7 INTERACTION BETWEEN COUNSELLING AGENCIES AND VENUES	176
6.7.1 Frequency of Counsellor Interaction with Gaming Venues	176
6.7.2 Positive and Negative Aspects of Counsellor Interaction with Gaming Venues.....	176
6.7.3 Types of Agency Interaction with Gaming Venues.....	177
6.7.4 Training Venue Staff.....	178
6.8 BEST PRACTICES IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE	180
6.9 OTHER WAYS VENUES CAN ASSIST PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE	182
6.10 CHAPTER CONCLUSION	185

CHAPTER SEVEN: RESULTS FOR EACH RESEARCH OBJECTIVE.....	186
7.1 INTRODUCTION	186
7.2 OBJECTIVES ONE AND TWO: CURRENT PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES IN HOTELS AND CLUBS	186
7.3 SCENARIO ONE: WHEN A PATRON DIRECTLY REQUESTS ASSISTANCE FOR A GAMBLING PROBLEM	187
7.3.1 Procedures Used by CLOs in Hotels and Clubs	187
7.3.2 Procedures Used by Staff in Hotels and Clubs	188
7.3.3 Strengths and Weaknesses Experienced by Hotel and Club CLOs	189
7.3.4 Strengths and Weaknesses Experienced by Hotel and Club Staff.....	190
7.3.5 Strengths and Weaknesses Compared to Casino Practices.....	192
7.3.6 Strengths and Weaknesses Compared to Practices Recommended in the Code	194
7.3.7 Strengths and Weaknesses Compared to Practices Recommended by Gambling Counsellors	196
7.3.8 Summary for Scenario One.....	198
7.4 SCENARIO TWO: WHEN A PATRON SHOWS SIGNS OF A GAMBLING PROBLEM BUT DOES NOT APPROACH FOR ASSISTANCE.....	199
7.4.1 Procedures Used by CLOs in Hotels and Clubs	199
7.4.2 Procedures Used by Staff in Hotels and Clubs	201
7.4.3 Strengths and Weaknesses Experienced by Hotel and Club CLOs	204
7.4.4 Strengths and Weaknesses Experienced by Hotel and Club Staff.....	205
7.4.5 Strengths and Weaknesses Compared to Casino Practices.....	205
7.4.6 Strengths and Weaknesses Compared to Practices Recommended in the Code	207
7.4.7 Strengths and Weaknesses Compared to Practices Recommended by Gambling Counsellors	210
7.4.8 Summary for Scenario Two	212
7.5 SCENARIO THREE: WHEN A THIRD PARTY INDICATES A PATRON HAS A GAMBLING PROBLEM	213
7.5.1 Procedures Used by CLOs in Hotels and Clubs	213
7.5.2 Procedures Used by Staff in Hotels and Clubs	214
7.5.3 Strengths and Weaknesses Experienced by Hotel and Club CLOs	215
7.5.4 Strengths and Weaknesses Experienced by Hotel and Club Staff.....	215
7.5.5 Strengths and Weaknesses Compared to Casino Practices.....	216
7.5.6 Strengths and Weaknesses Compared to Practices Recommended in the Code	216

7.5.7	Strengths and Weaknesses Compared to Practices Recommended by Gambling Counsellors	219
7.5.8	Summary for Scenario Three	219
7.6	OBJECTIVE THREE: ADEQUACY OF RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING TRAINING	220
7.6.1	Responsible Gambling Training Undertaken by Hotel and Club CLOs and Staff.....	220
7.6.2	Strengths and Weaknesses Experienced by Hotel and Club CLOs	221
7.6.3	Strengths and Weaknesses Experienced by Hotel and Club Staff.....	221
7.6.4	Strengths and Weaknesses Compared to Casino Practices.....	222
7.6.5	Strengths and Weaknesses as Perceived by Gambling Counsellors.....	223
7.6.6	Gaps in Training	224
7.7	OBJECTIVE FOUR: EFFECTIVE INTERACTION WITH LOCAL GAMBLING SUPPORT SERVICES	225
7.7.1	Strengths and Weaknesses Experienced by Hotel and Club CLOs	225
7.7.2	Strengths and Weaknesses Experienced by Hotel and Club Staff.....	226
7.7.3	Strengths and Weaknesses Compared to Casino Practices.....	227
7.7.4	Strengths and Weaknesses Experienced by Local Gambling Support Services	227
7.7.5	Suggested Improvements	228
7.8	OBJECTIVE FIVE: OTHER FACILITATORS, BARRIERS AND BEST PRACTICES	228
7.8.1	Other Facilitators	229
7.8.2	Other Barriers.....	230
7.8.3	Best Practice Examples.....	231
7.9	CONCLUDING COMMENTS	232
	REFERENCES.....	238
	APPENDICES.....	240
	APPENDIX A: LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM THE QHA	241
	APPENDIX B: LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM RA (QLD)	243
	APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR HOTEL AND CLUB CLOS	245
	APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR HOTEL AND CLUB STAFF.....	247
	APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR GAMBLING COUNSELLORS.....	249
	APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR CASINO RGM (QLD)	252
	APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR CASINO RGLOS.....	254
	APPENDIX H: SURVEY INSTRUMENT FOR CASINO SELF-EXCLUDEES	256

LIST OF TABLES

Table A:	Summary of Interview Participants	xiv
Table 3.1:	Summary of Interview Participants	26
Table 4.1:	Key Characteristics of Hotel CLO Respondents	31
Table 4.2:	Key Characteristics of Club CLO Respondents	63
Table 5.1:	Key Characteristics of Hotel Staff Respondents	107
Table 5.2:	Key Characteristics of Club Staff Respondents	135
Table 7.1:	Recognising Possible Signs of Problem Gambling	209
Table 7.2:	Excerpt from Section A of the Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice Resource Manual (2006)	218

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1:	Interactions to Assist Problem Gamblers in Gaming Venues	22
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Within the broader regulatory and industry framework, the interactions amongst four groups of people are critical in providing effective assistance to problem gamblers in the gaming venue – problem gamblers, frontline venue staff, customer liaison officers (CLOs) and gambling support services. The voluntary *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice* (Queensland Treasury, 2004:4) recognises the importance of effective interactions amongst these four parties principally through Practice Area 1 of the Code: Provision of Information, Practice Area 2: Interactions with Customers and Communities, and Practice Area 3: Exclusion Provisions.

The objectives of these Practice Areas and the guidelines for their implementation provided in the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice Industry Training Kit* (Queensland Government, 2005a) reflect the importance placed by the Code on shared responsibility and collective actions to achieve responsible gambling and to promote customer wellbeing and harm minimisation in gambling (Queensland Treasury, 2004:4). The Code and Industry Training Kit set out particular expectations for how these four parties should interact, yet little research has been conducted into the practices and procedures currently used, how appropriate they are, facilitators and barriers to their effective implementation, and what constitutes best practice.

RESEARCH AIMS

The aim of this project was to examine how, and how appropriately, frontline staff and customer liaison officers (CLOs) respond to and assist patrons with gambling problems in Queensland gaming venues, and how venues interact with local gambling help services to provide this assistance. It also identifies gaps in relevant staff skills, knowledge and responsible gambling training, other facilitators and barriers to providing appropriate assistance, and best practice examples. These aims were expressed as five research objectives which are presented below with the results pertaining to each.

METHODS

The study was originally designed to focus only on hotels and clubs in Queensland, as the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice: Report on the Implementation Review* (Queensland Government, 2004a) had identified opportunities for improvement in these sectors in numerous areas that affect the capacity of staff and CLOs to respond appropriately to problem gamblers in the venue. However, the Tabcorp owned casinos in Queensland offered to contribute to the project through interviews with their Responsible Gambling Manager (Queensland) and with some of the casinos' Responsible Gambling Liaison Officers (RGLOs). This allowed a comparison with the hotel and club sectors. The casinos also agreed to give a survey to patrons who self-excluded during part of the study period to elicit their opinions of beneficial practices and processes for staff and CLOs to use to assist problem gamblers in the venue.

Qualitative methods were deemed the most appropriate to address the study's aims and objectives as the study was exploratory and intended to uncover, rather than quantitatively measure, the issues investigated. More specifically, personal interviews were the main data

collection method, so as to yield rich in-depth data. Club and hotel staff and CLOs were sampled from Brisbane, Cairns, Mt Isa, Toowoomba and Dalby to give representation to metropolitan, regional and remote areas, and interviews conducted on-site in these venues. Gambling Help counsellors were recruited from across Queensland and were interviewed by telephone. Interviews were conducted on-site with the casinos' Responsible Gambling Manager and RGLOs. All interviews were digitally recorded, with the participants' permission, transcribed verbatim and then analysed using thematic analysis. Table A summarises the number of interviewees who participated in the study.

Table A: Summary of Interview Participants

	Hotel CLO	Hotel Staff	Club CLO	Club Staff	Casino RG Manager	Casino RGLOs	Gambling Help Couns- ellors	Total
Brisbane	6	6	10	6				28
Cairns	12	6	7	10				35
Mt Isa	2	2	3	3				10
Toowoomba/Dalby	9	11	6	4				30
Brisbane/Gold Coast					1	4		5
Statewide							23	24
Total	29	25	26	23	1	5	23	132

Unfortunately, the survey of casino self-excludees was unsuccessful. About two months after the surveys had been delivered to the casinos, only one completed survey had been received. Subsequent discussions with casino personnel revealed that very few surveys had been distributed as they were easily overlooked during the self-exclusion process which is complex, lengthy and often emotional. This was a very disappointing result and unfortunately largely outside the control of the researchers. Nevertheless, the counsellor interviews yielded extensive data on the experiences of problem gamblers in their interactions with venue staff, so their perspectives are still represented in this study.

SUMMARY RESULTS FOR OBJECTIVES ONE AND TWO

The first two research objectives were:

- to examine the current practices and procedures followed by Queensland hotel and club staff and CLOs for problem gamblers with different levels of disclosure - when a) a patron directly requests assistance for a gambling problem, b) a patron verbally hints at a gambling problem and/or shows observable signs of possible problem gambling but does not request assistance and c) a family member or close friend of a patron indicates that the patron has a gambling problem; and
- to identify strengths and weaknesses in these current practices and procedures a) as experienced by the venue staff themselves, b) as experienced by patrons who have excluded from a venue, c) by comparing them to those recommended in the Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice and associated training

materials, and d) by comparing them to those recommended by Queensland gambling counsellors.

Results for Scenario One: When A Patron Directly Requests Assistance for a Gambling Problem

This scenario focused on hotel and club procedures used to respond to a patron request for assistance with a gambling problem. The results indicate that responses by hotels and clubs to this situation are highly variable. Highly committed venues reportedly adhere to the relevant practices and procedures as articulated in the Code of Practice and in the associated Industry Training Kit, and to practices advocated by the gambling counsellors. These include responding immediately and with respect and discretion to a patron request for assistance, providing information about the role of the CLO, counselling agencies and self-exclusion, and then implementing a self-exclusion if the patron wished to do so. However, there are venues with apparently quite low commitment to these recommended practices. Most venues appear to fall between these two extremes.

From a management perspective, there are some barriers to ensuring hotel and club staff and CLOs always provide appropriate assistance to patrons who ask for help for a gambling problem. Lack of management commitment, scarce resources, high staff turnover, limited access to training, variable training and different levels of engagement with local counselling agencies are some of these. However, committed venues appear to have overcome these challenges. Management by example, a genuine interest in patron wellbeing, a commitment to having a duty of care, only hiring staff trained in responsible gambling, involvement in ongoing training activities, and fostering strong links with local Gambling Help services are some ways they have done this.

From a patron perspective, there are several barriers to their asking for assistance with a gambling problem. While the apparent shame and embarrassment involved in this situation is one barrier, others can be reduced through enhanced patron confidence that venue personnel will treat a request for help privately, discreetly, with genuine concern and with accurate and helpful information and actions. Consistently supportive responses by venues and communication that this will occur, are needed to encourage patrons to ask for assistance when needed. Given that requesting this assistance is a huge and often humbling step for patrons, receiving an appropriate venue response at this time is critical to them being able to take the necessary steps towards resolving their gambling problem.

Scenario Two: When a Patron Shows Signs of a Gambling Problem But Does Not Approach for Assistance

This scenario focused on hotel and club procedures used to deal with patrons who show signs of possible problem gambling but do not ask for assistance. The results reveal highly inconsistent perceptions amongst hotel and club CLOs and staff of signs that might indicate a gambling problem. Additionally, there is significant reluctance to make an uninvited approach to a patron of concern to offer assistance. This is unless the patron is being aggressive, is trying to borrow money or is extremely upset. Further, in the first two of these instances, the patron is most likely to be asked to leave the venue, with no discussion of a possible gambling problem or avenues for assistance.

However, there are some exceptions. A few venues reportedly adhere to the relevant practices and procedures as articulated in the Code of Practice and in the associated Industry Training Kit, and to practices advocated by gambling counsellors. The CLOs and staff at these venues

appear to have genuine concern for their patrons' wellbeing, can pick up on signs that a patron may be having difficulties with their gambling, are able to approach in a non-threatening and supportive way, and to provide information and assistance to the patron. These personnel appear to know their patrons well and to be willing to discuss and respond to their difficulties in ways that seem to best suit the patron and his or her circumstances. In some cases, this involves working with the patron to help them limit the time and money they spend on gambling, through monitoring, encouragement and support. Some even mind the wallets and pay-packets of some patrons or walk them to their car to limit the temptation for them to gamble or to gamble more. The interviewees reported some examples where approaching patrons has resulted in them self-excluding and/or seeking counselling.

However, most venues do not take a consistent approach to identifying possible signs of problem gambling amongst their patrons and to approaching them to offer assistance. Perceptions of signs of a possible gambling problem vary enormously between individual staff and CLOs, and show limited alignment with those outlined in the Industry Training Kit. Similarly, where approaches to patrons of concern are made, these are highly variable, often lack CLO involvement and are sometimes made by staff with limited training. Further, some venues and personnel will not approach a patron at all out of concern about their gambling.

From a management perspective, there are several barriers to ensuring hotel and club staff and CLOs can recognise possible signs of a gambling problem and provide appropriate assistance to the patron. Lack of management commitment, venue policies and industry training that discourage approaching patrons of concern, staff confusion over signs of a possible gambling problem, lack of direction over if and when to approach, apprehension about appropriate ways to do this, and lack of training in identifying and approaching are some of these. However, a few venues appear to have overcome these challenges, but these are very much in the minority. In essence, there is the opportunity for significant improvements in the way this scenario is handled across the hotel and club sectors. This would help problem gamblers in the venue by optimising the likelihood of them receiving appropriate advice and assistance, whilst helping to overcome the considerable confusion, apprehension and ethical dilemmas currently experienced by venue personnel when faced with this scenario.

Scenario Three: When a Third Party Indicates a Patron Has a Gambling Problem

This scenario focused on hotel and club procedures used when family or friends express concern to venue personnel that a patron has a gambling problem. It was difficult to gain a clear picture of how this scenario is usually dealt with because it appears to happen quite infrequently, according to both the hotel and club interviewees and the gambling counsellors. The procedures identified thus relate more to what the staff and CLOs reported they would do if faced with this situation.

The interviewees raised a number of challenges for venues in responding to third party concerns. The most frequently mentioned is establishing whether the third party concern is in fact genuine, and not an unrelated or vexatious complaint. CLOs and staff are also apprehensive about triggering family disputes and becoming involved in family issues, and feel limited in what they can do, given privacy restrictions, the difficulties of venue exclusions and the perceived futility of trying to help a patron who has not acknowledged a gambling problem.

The results show that the procedures used would be highly variable, not necessarily respect the patron's privacy or a third party's wish for confidentiality, and in some cases risk fuelling

a family dispute. There appeared very little knowledge of the procedures outlined in the Resource Manual that accompanies the Code of Practice or even awareness that these guidelines exist, although a few interviewees did report that they would seek advice before they acted. Nevertheless, the procedures that would reportedly be used by some CLOs and staff contain elements of what is outlined in the Resource Manual and advocated by the gambling counsellors. These include referring the matter to the CLO, informing the third party that the patron can self-exclude or that a venue exclusion may be possible, advising the third party that they might support the patron to self-exclude and/or seek counselling, and the CLO approaching the patron to discuss their gambling and identify self-exclusion as an option. If the patron refuses to self-exclude, the CLO might perform a risk evaluation on the patron to see if he or she qualifies for a venue exclusion or consider an active monitoring program for the patron. However, none of the interviewees reported that all these procedures would be followed and, in most cases, only one or two of these actions would be pursued by venue personnel. Clearly, there are substantial opportunities for improvement in how hotel and club personnel deal with third party concerns that would be beneficial for problem gamblers, their families, and venue staff and CLOs.

SUMMARY RESULTS FOR OBJECTIVE THREE: ADEQUACY OF RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING TRAINING

The third research objective was to assess the perceived adequacy of responsible gambling training in equipping staff and CLOs in Queensland hotels and clubs to interact appropriately with patrons with gambling problems and identify any gaps in relevant staff skills and knowledge.

The results indicate that, while knowledge and skills in relation to assisting patrons who approach to request help for a gambling problem are moderate on average, there are substantial variations between personnel who place a high priority on patron care and those who are less committed. To raise overall standards of patron care in this area appears to require a more concerted effort to have all staff trained in responsible gambling and to ensure they receive regular refresher courses in appropriate procedures. At a minimum, venue staff need to be well versed in sources of help for gambling problems, self-exclusion and how to provide a supportive response to patrons who ask for assistance.

Knowledge and skills in relation to assisting patrons who show signs of problem gambling but who do not ask for help are generally poor, at least amongst the hotel and club personnel interviewed. Again, there are substantial variations amongst the approaches used, ranging from doing nothing to proactive assistance. To achieve the level of patron support advocated by the Code of Practice and associated Industry Training Kit will require not only ensuring all staff are trained, but also integration or increased emphasis in that training on recognising signs of a possible gambling problem, systems to monitor and build a case history of patrons of concern, how and when to approach these patrons, what to say and how to assist. While this instruction needs to emphasise appropriate procedures, it also needs to develop the interpersonal communications skills of staff, both to enhance their confidence in approaching a patron and also to hopefully achieve better outcomes when they do. Further, some training programs reportedly advise staff and CLOs not to approach patrons of concern at all and so directly contradict the responses advocated by the Code of Practice.

Knowledge and skills in relation to responding to third party concerns about a patron are overall very poor. As noted earlier, the responses identified by many staff and CLOs risk breaching privacy legislation and fuelling family disputes. Knowledge of instructions contained in the Resource Manuals that accompany the Code of Practice is extremely low, as

is clarity around procedures, rights and responsibilities in relation to venue exclusions. Clearly, training of CLOs in appropriate procedures to use in this scenario is needed, as is instruction to venue staff to always refer a third party concern to the CLO.

Another gap is that not all training of hotel and club staff involves counsellor input. Yet, their input appears potentially very valuable in humanising problem gambling and conveying its serious impacts on the gambler, significant others and the community. Their input can also assist venue CLOs and staff to better understand the nature of addictions in general and problem gambling in particular. It can assist these personnel to develop skills in listening, communicating and responding appropriately to patrons with gambling-related issues and to approach patrons of concern in a non-confrontational and supportive way. It also appears that training is one way in which the links between venues and agencies are built and then maintained or strengthened over time. Having strong links with local counselling agencies appears critical in providing appropriate assistance to problem gamblers in the venue.

In terms of delivery, the training appears to benefit greatly from being conducted by trainers experienced in working in the industry so they can utilise real life examples and case studies. Role plays of challenging situations are particularly appreciated by the trainees. Training clearly needs to be more comprehensive and regular, and consideration should be given to including more rigorous mechanisms to ensure the trainee has gained the relevant knowledge and skills. The e-training system of responsible gambling may also benefit from greater promotion within the industry, particularly to venues in regional and remote locations where access to face-to-face training can be difficult.

SUMMARY RESULTS FOR OBJECTIVE FOUR: EFFECTIVE INTERACTION WITH LOCAL GAMBLING SUPPORT SERVICES

The fourth research objective was to assess how effectively Queensland hotels and clubs interact with local gambling support services to assist patrons with gambling problems and ways this interaction might be improved.

Where effective links exist, the interviewees identified several types of services provided by gambling support agencies to hotels and clubs. These include provision of printed materials about local services, being a contact for venues for advice and to refer patrons to, helping to organise patron self-exclusions, advice on specific situations, and provision of training sessions for staff. Several benefits of this interaction were articulated. This interaction provides professional back-up for venues, given that venue personnel are not trained counsellors. Agency staff can advise venue personnel on how to best deal with problem gamblers in the venue and how to improve venue practices. Once agency staff are known to venue personnel, the latter appear much more likely to and comfortable with referring patrons to the agency for counselling or getting agency staff involved in supporting patrons of concern to address their gambling problem. If this venue-agency interaction extends to having agency staff attend the venue to support the patron with advice and/or self-exclusion, this lowers the barriers to patrons attending counselling whilst also reassuring venue personnel that the patron can access professional help.

In venues where there are no or minimal links with counselling agencies, key barriers appear to be no contact initiated by the counselling agency, a misperception by venue personnel that agency staff are anti-gambling or a threat to the venue's operations and revenue, the busy schedules of both agency and venue personnel, limited resources of counselling agencies, no community educators in some agencies, and the tyranny of distance between the agency and venues in some locations.

Several of these barriers appear to reflect the stretched resources of Gambling Help agencies, where they just do not have the time and staff to maintain contact with all venues in their geographic area. In some regional and remote locations, the size of the geographic area covered by each agency is huge and can require extensive travel, sometimes in rough conditions. Thus, improving venue-agency links in such areas would seem to require additional resources for Gambling Help agencies.

The other type of barrier, resistance by venue personnel, might be overcome by better publicity of the benefits that a strong venue-agency relationship can have for the venues. Those personnel who reported a positive ongoing link with local Gambling Help agencies were unequivocal about the value of that link and how it makes it easier for them to assist patrons of concern in the venue. Mechanisms for them to advise other venues of this would assist greater forging of these links. Local responsible gambling networks are one appropriate forum, as are responsible gambling and CLO training sessions conducted by industry associations and other training providers.

SUMMARY RESULTS FOR OBJECTIVE FIVE: OTHER FACILITATORS, BARRIERS AND BEST PRACTICES

The fifth research objective was to identify any other facilitators, barriers and best practice examples for frontline staff and CLOs in Queensland hotels and clubs and for gambling support services in interacting appropriately with problem gamblers in the venue.

Other Facilitators

Several other facilitators for interacting appropriately with problem gamblers in the venue were identified by the hotel and clubs CLOs and staff and gambling counsellors.

- Good practice around assisting problem and at-risk gamblers in the venue appears strongly underpinned by management and CLO commitment to responsible gambling. This generally translates into clear procedures and policies, support for frontline staff, ready access to information and guidelines, and trained staff.
- An important facilitator is the support provided by CLOs to frontline staff, including being a referral, providing on-the-job training and instruction, ensuring responsible gambling materials are available, advice on specific patron incidents and updating staff on incidents, issues and self-exclusions.
- Assisting problem gamblers in the venue also seems greatly facilitated where the CLO and staff know the venue's regular gamblers well.
- A further facilitator is the materials provided by the OLGR that CLOs and staff can refer to as sources of information, forms, flow-charts, contacts and the like.
- Larger venues tend to have more prescribed policies and procedures and to have more CLOs (or equivalent) to support both patrons and frontline staff. Smaller venues seem better able to provide more personalised assistance to patrons of concern, such as individual monitoring of their gambling behaviour.
- Responsible gambling training is also a facilitator for venue personnel in responding appropriately to problem gamblers in the venue.
- Having a strong link with a local gambling counselling agency can greatly facilitate venues in their provision of assistance to problem gamblers.

Other Barriers

Several other barriers for interacting appropriately with problem gamblers in the venue were identified by the hotel and clubs CLOs and staff and gambling counsellors.

- Some CLOs are very unwilling to go beyond minimum requirements to assist problem gamblers in the venue, and will provide assistance only if approached by a patron who specifically asks for help.
- Some frontline staff work in venues where there is no CLO, where they have limited interaction with the CLO and/or where management does not seem to care much about responsible gambling.
- Some venues appear to discourage staff from interacting with patrons beyond what is required in performing their necessary duties and have instructed staff not to discuss a patron's gambling with them. Further, some staff have attended training advising them to never approach a patron about their gambling.
- Other barriers to a more proactive approach by both CLOs and frontline staff include competition amongst venues and a concern that other venues may not be as responsible; the perceived futility of approaching patrons who are not willing to acknowledge and act on a gambling problem; the difficulties of recognising whether a person has a gambling problem or not; concern about patron responses to a offer of assistance; and lack of training on recognising signs of problem gambling, and how best to approach, talk to and assist problem and at-risk gamblers.
- Staff and CLOs are understandably unsure of what happens to patrons who self-exclude and this can deter some from offering self-exclusion as an option to patrons.
- Approaching problem and at-risk gamblers to offer assistance is difficult and even more so for newer and younger staff who generally do not have the necessary experience, maturity and confidence.

Best Practice Examples

Several examples of what they considered to be best practice were identified by the hotel and club CLOs and staff and by the gambling counsellors.

- Not making it too easy for people to put winnings straight back into machines by asking patrons if they would prefer wins by cheque and by avoiding paying wins in notes of \$20 or lower.
- Being extremely strict about parents having to supervise their children if they bring them to the venue, so that the availability of children's play areas does not facilitate long or frequent gambling sessions by parents who neglect to supervise their children.
- Monitoring the expenditure, frequency or duration of patrons' gambling on request, to help them stay in control of their gambling.
- Having a system in place to enhance staff knowledge of self-excludees so they are more likely to pick up breaches.
- Assistance with self-exclusion from one or multiple venues by local counselling agencies.
- Machine systems set up to alert venue staff when a patron is playing a machine very regularly or for long periods.

- Only employing staff who have their RSG certificate.
- Encouraging breaks in play by not providing service in the gaming room for drinks, food, change or payouts.
- Not having gaming promotions to avoid providing unnecessary inducements to gamble.
- Facilitating active monitoring of patrons, for example, by keeping an incidents book at the change counter so that staff can immediately record any incidents or their observations.
- Restrictions on how long patrons can gamble for without being approached. In one venue, patrons are approached after four or five hours of continuous gambling. This helps ‘breaks the cycle’ and may provide the opportunity for staff to offer assistance if appropriate. The staff themselves also seem to welcome a more prescribed approach such as this.
- Responding to patrons who ask for help immediately and with genuine concern for their wellbeing, and acknowledging them for taking that step, rather than asking for the person to come back at another time, just proceeding with the paperwork for self-exclusion without much conversation and just treating the patron impersonally.
- Reducing embarrassment for problem gamblers wherever possible.
- Encouraging staff interaction with patrons which would appear to facilitate patron approaches to staff if they did want assistance, help staff recognise if a patron is having problems and perhaps provide a break in play for machine players.
- Providing different loyalty cards for patrons self-excluded only from gaming areas so that staff can unobtrusively recognise this.
- Monitoring patrons who have revoked their self-exclusion order in case their gambling becomes problematic again.
- Collaboration between venues to enable area self-exclusions, for example where several hotels are owned by the same company or where several clubs are affiliated.
- Initiatives to strengthen the links between venues and counselling agencies include local responsible gambling initiatives, such as Responsible Gambling Awareness Week activities and responsible gambling networks. These extend the profile of counselling agencies in the community and at venues and strengthen venue-agency relations. A strong and trusting relationship appears to underpin other best practice examples cited in relation to venue-agency links. These include venue staff knowing the counsellors so they know who to refer patrons to, inviting the agency to assess venue practices to identify areas for improvement, developing customised signage and cards, the provision of professional counselling at the venue, referrals to counselling to accompany self-exclusion, the invitation for venue staff to contact the counselling agency to assist with any problem gambling issues, and inviting agency staff to conduct critical incident debriefing for venue staff.

CONCLUSION

It is important to note the limitations of this study. As with most exploratory qualitative research, it was only possible to gather data from small, non-random samples which, in many cases, were self-selecting. Thus, it is not known whether the views and experiences expressed

by the research participants are representative of the broader study population, although the general convergence of the information gathered from the CLOs, staff and gambling counsellors provides reasonable confidence that the research results are valid and reliable. However, it is acknowledged that information from self-excludees would have helped to further triangulate the results, but unfortunately this was not forthcoming.

Nevertheless, the research has been able to provide in-depth data on the range of opportunities and challenges associated with assisting problem gamblers in gaming venues. As such, it is hoped that the insights provided by this study can inform improved practices and outcomes in responsible provision of gambling.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The *Queensland Responsible Gambling Strategy* (Queensland Treasury, 2002) was released in February 2002 and encompasses a range of initiatives for achieving its ‘overarching objective ... to minimise the harmful impacts of problem gambling’. Priority Action Area 1 of the strategy is to enhance responsible gambling policies and programs through research, so that responsible gambling decision-making can be informed by sound theory and empirical evidence. To enhance the quality and quantity of gambling-related research and contribute to the development of gambling policy in Queensland, the Queensland Office of Regulatory Policy administers the Responsible Gambling Grants Program on behalf of the Queensland Government. This study was funded by this program in its 2007-08 round of grants.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Providing appropriate assistance to problem gamblers in gaming venues requires effective interaction amongst four parties – problem gamblers, frontline staff, customer liaison officers (CLOs) and gambling support services. While the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice* (Queensland Treasury, 2004) and associated training materials prescribe procedures for when a problem gambler seeks help, staff and CLOs must use their best judgement when a patron merely hints at a problem, shows observable signs of problem gambling, or when family or friends express concern. Clearly, there is scope for much variation in how staff members respond to problem gamblers with different levels of disclosure. Yet, the appropriateness of these responses can mean the difference between a patron resolving their gambling problem or not.

This project therefore examines how, and how appropriately, frontline staff and CLOs respond to and assist patrons with gambling problems in Queensland gaming venues, and how venues interact with local gambling help services to provide this assistance. It also identifies gaps in relevant staff skills, knowledge and responsible gambling training, other facilitators and barriers to providing appropriate assistance, and best practice examples.

More specifically, the study addresses the following objectives:

1. To examine the current practices and procedures followed by Queensland hotel and club staff and CLOs for problem gamblers with different levels of disclosure - when a) a patron directly requests assistance for a gambling problem, b) a patron verbally hints at a gambling problem and/or shows observable signs of possible problem gambling but does not request assistance and c) a family member or close friend of a patron indicates that the patron has a gambling problem;
2. To identify strengths and weaknesses in these current practices and procedures a) as experienced by the venue staff themselves, b) as experienced by patrons who have excluded from a venue, c) by comparing them to those recommended in the Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice and associated training materials, and d) by comparing them to those recommended by Queensland gambling counsellors;

3. To assess the perceived adequacy of responsible gambling training in equipping staff and CLOs in Queensland hotels and clubs to interact appropriately with patrons with gambling problems and identify any gaps in relevant staff skills and knowledge;
4. To assess how effectively Queensland hotels and clubs interact with local gambling support services to assist patrons with gambling problems and ways this interaction might be improved;
5. To identify any other facilitators, barriers and best practice examples for frontline staff and CLOs in Queensland hotels and clubs and for gambling support services in interacting appropriately with problem gamblers in the venue.

1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This report documents the conduct and findings of this research project. Chapter Two reviews the relevant background literature and policy context, while Chapter Three explains the project methodology. Chapter Four is the first of several results chapters. It focuses on responses from the sample of hotel, club and casino CLOs and managers. Chapter Five presents results for the hotel and club staff interviewed, while Chapter Six presents results from interviews with gambling counsellors. Chapter Seven draws together the study's findings in relation to each of the five research objectives.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Within the broader regulatory and industry framework, the interactions amongst four groups of people are critical in providing effective assistance to problem gamblers in the gaming venue – problem gamblers, frontline venue staff, customer liaison officers (CLOs) and gambling support services. The *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice* (Queensland Treasury, 2004:4) recognises the importance of effective interactions amongst these four parties principally through Practice Area 1: Provision of Information, Practice Area 2: Interactions with Customers and Communities, and Practice Area 3: Exclusion Provisions.

The objectives of these Practice Areas and the guidelines for their implementation provided in the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice Industry Training Kit* (Queensland Government, 2005a) reflect the importance placed by the Code on shared responsibility and collective actions to achieve responsible gambling and to promote customer wellbeing and harm minimisation in gambling (Queensland Treasury, 2004:4). The Code and Industry Training Kit set out particular expectations for how these four parties should interact, yet little research has been conducted into the practices and procedures currently used, how appropriate they are, facilitators and barriers to their effective implementation, and what constitutes best practice.

Despite this paucity of research, this study is informed by the following literature review. It sets some context for the research by discussing the notion of shared responsibility in responsible gambling, then narrows the focus to literature pertinent to interactions amongst the four parties relevant to this study.

2.2 RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING IN QUEENSLAND: A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

The development from an older interpretation of problem gambling as an individual medical or psychological affliction, to its contemporary redefinition as a social and public health issue, has placed pressure on governments and gambling operators to reform gambling policy and venue practices to provide a more responsible gambling environment (Hing, 2000). Addressing problem gambling no longer involves just problem gamblers and gambling treatment providers, but is also considered the responsibility of governments, gambling providers and communities. As Blaszczynski, Ladouceur and Shaffer remark in introducing their framework for responsible gambling known as *The Reno Model* (2004:301), ‘as ... social observers increasingly identify gambling-related problems as a public health concern, a need has emerged for key stakeholders to join together to address the issue’. They advocated the establishment and implementation of a strategic framework ‘that will reduce or eliminate the potential harms that can be associated with gambling while simultaneously maximising the potential benefits of gambling’.

A collaborative strategic framework in responsible gambling has been established in Queensland, with input from community, industry and government through the Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee. The resulting *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of*

Practice (Queensland Treasury, 2004) is considered a shared commitment to best practice in responsible gambling, and achieving its stated outcomes requires ongoing roles for individuals, communities, the gambling industry and the Queensland Government. It outlines six Practice Areas for gambling providers, ‘with a particular focus on customer protection measures’ (Queensland Treasury, 2004:4). While these Practice Areas focus on the role of gambling providers in responsible gambling, their implementation requires input from other stakeholders. For example, links with gambling support services are advocated to provide timely and appropriate assistance for problem gamblers; signage has been developed by the Queensland Government for display in gambling venues; industry associations play a key role in providing responsible gambling training; and gamblers are assisted to make informed choices about their gambling through player information at the venue. Clearly, this approach to responsible gambling recognises the benefits of a collaborative approach. Indeed, its effectiveness depends on that collaboration.

Three Practice Areas of the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code Of Practice* (Queensland Treasury, 2004) are of particular interest in the proposed study, and are summarised below to emphasise that their effective implementation also requires appropriate input from a range of stakeholders.

Practice Area 1: Provision of Information

Practice Area 1 of the Code identifies four practices for gaming venues to implement to ensure that customers can make informed decisions about their gambling – displaying a responsible gambling mission statement; prominently displaying information about potential risks associated with gambling and where to get help for problem gambling; displaying information to alert customers that they can request and obtain information on the venue’s responsible gambling policy, the nature of games, game rules, odds or returns to players, exclusion provisions, gambling-related complaints resolution mechanisms, and key elements of the venue’s financial transactions policies; and prominently displaying meaningful information on the odds of winning major prizes (Queensland Treasury, 2004:7).

Practice Area 2: Interaction with Customers and Community

Practice Area 2 of the Code identifies four groups of practices for gaming venues to implement - to establish effective mechanisms to link with local gambling-related support services and relevant community networks; for a customer liaison officer (CLO) to provide appropriate information to assist customers with gambling-related problems, support staff in providing that assistance, and assist any staff with gambling problems; to establish and promote complaint handling procedures; and to ensure appropriate and ongoing responsible gambling training is provided to relevant staff and management (Queensland Treasury, 2004:8).

Practice Area 3: Exclusion Provisions

Practice Area 3 of the Code identifies four practices relating to exclusion for gaming venues to implement – to provide exclusion procedures and supporting documentation; to offer customers seeking exclusion contact information for gambling-related support services; to support excluding customers in seeking exclusions from other gambling providers (where practicable); and to refrain from sending correspondence or promotional material to customers who have excluded or have formally requested that this information not be sent (Queensland Treasury, 2004:9).

2.3 RESPONSIBILITIES OF FRONTLINE STAFF, CLOS AND GAMBLING HELP SERVICES IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

Implementing the provisions of Practice Areas 1-3 requires the input of, and effective interaction amongst, four parties – frontline staff, CLOs, gambling support services and problem gamblers. The responsibilities of the first three of these parties in implementing these Practice Areas are outlined in the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice Industry Training Kit* (Queensland Government, 2005a) and are summarised below.

2.3.1 Responsibilities of Frontline Staff in Assisting Problem Gamblers in the Venue

The *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice Industry Training Kit* (Queensland Government, 2005a) outlines that frontline venue staff are expected to:

- use appropriate ways to provide responsible gambling and problem gambling information to patrons, including clarifying precisely the information that is requested, responding with respect and referring to an appropriate person if necessary, providing information in a timely manner, and treating the request in a confidential way that respects the patron’s privacy;
- be aware of the responsible gambling information available in the workplace and familiar enough with each piece of information to quickly respond by directing patrons to it (or providing it) and describing what it contains or the processes it outlines;
- use their best judgement and sensitivity in deciding to refer a matter to a CLO or supervisor by explaining to the patron the reason for doing so and obtaining their consent;
- when patron consent for referral is not given, explain the role of the CLO and the advantages for the patron in approaching the CLO;
- decide if there are reasonable grounds for believing the patron’s wellbeing may be in imminent danger so that the matter should be referred to the CLO, even without the patron’s consent;
- understand the CLO’s role so they can judge when to refer a particular gambling-related matter to them;
- consult with the CLO about the venue’s responsible gambling materials, policies and practices;
- consult with the CLO where staff members are adversely affected by patrons’ gambling problems or are experiencing gambling-related problems themselves;
- be aware of and able to provide contact details of local Gambling Help services;
- provide the Life Line number to a patron displaying a serious and immediate life crisis, such as contemplating suicide;
- be familiar with the venue’s customer complaint resolution mechanism;
- undertake appropriate and ongoing responsible gambling training;
- understand how the venue’s exclusion process works so they can refer a situation to the CLO;

- respond immediately and in a positive and supportive way when a patron requests information on how to self-exclude;
- respond appropriately when a family member or close friend of a patron indicates that the patron has a problem with gambling;
- recognise the possible signs of problem gambling and respond appropriately by providing the patron with information about the CLO's role and about self-exclusion services, referring the patron to the CLO with the patron's agreement, advising the CLO of the patron's situation, and protecting the patron's rights to privacy; and
- refrain from projecting personal beliefs onto gamblers, prying into personal circumstances of gamblers, counselling the patron, persisting with information after it has been declined, and becoming involved in third party scenarios.

2.3.2 Responsibilities of Customer Liaison Officers (CLOs) in Assisting Problem Gamblers in the Venue

The *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice Industry Training Kit* (Queensland Government, 2005a) outlines that, in addition to fulfilling the relevant roles expected of frontline staff (as above), CLOs are expected to also:

- provide appropriate information to assist patrons with gambling-related problems;
- support staff in providing assistance to those patrons when staff feel unqualified to handle the situation or they need advice or guidance;
- handle sensitive problem gambling matters referred by staff;
- provide advice for staff on the venue's responsible gambling materials, policies and practices;
- provide assistance to staff with gambling-related problems, where they are adversely affected by patrons' gambling problems or are experiencing gambling-related problems themselves, ensuring they receive the professional support, assistance and intervention they require;
- advise staff and patrons of local Gambling Help service providers and their contact details;
- advise staff if a patron's situation represents a serious and immediate life crisis warranting referral to Life Line;
- establish effective links with local Gambling Help providers by telephoning them, providing them with the name and contact details for the venue, and organising a meeting to discuss services they can provide to the venue's patrons and staff;
- implement the venue's customer complaint resolution mechanism;
- coordinate and organise staff training in responsible gambling and invite the local Gambling Help service provider to be involved;
- handle exclusion processes at the venue by providing related advice and assistance to staff, ensuring the patron is fully advised on the exclusion details and process, issuing the patron with the relevant Exclusion Notice and Order or Direction, ensuring local Gambling Help service details are provided to the excluded patron, ensuring the assistance of the local Gambling Help service is sought, ensuring the patron is supported in seeking self-exclusion from other gambling providers (where

practicable), ensuring the exclusion is documented, maintaining a Register of Excluded Persons, ensuring promotional materials are not sent to an excluded patron, and ensuring all excluded patrons are treated with respect, dignity and privacy;

- respond appropriately when a family member or close friend of a patron indicates that the patron has a problem with gambling; and
- respond appropriately when a staff member reports possible signs of problem gambling on the part of a particular patron.

2.3.3 Responsibilities of Gambling Help Agencies in Assisting Problem Gamblers in the Venue

The *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice Industry Training Kit* (Queensland Government, 2005a) outlines that Gambling Help agencies are expected to assist a venue when:

- a patron brings a gambling problem to the attention of the venue;
- a patron's problem is affecting them and their family members;
- a patron wants to be excluded from the venue;
- a patron wants to be excluded from other venues;
- a staff member has a gambling problem;
- a staff member suffers as a result of working in a gambling venue;
- the venue trains its staff in responsible gambling;
- the venue needs to learn more about the services provided (e.g. counselling); and
- the venue organises venue or community activities to promote responsible gambling.

2.4 INTERACTIONS AMONGST FRONTLINE STAFF, CLOS, GAMBLING HELP AGENCIES AND PROBLEM GAMBLERS

The breadth and depth of the roles expected of frontline staff, CLOs and gambling support providers in assisting problem gamblers in the gaming venue appear to present particular challenges. While the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice: Report on Implementation Review* (Queensland Government, 2004a) identified some of these challenges at an industry and venue level, it did not detail challenges experienced within venues by staff and CLOs, in both their interactions with problem gamblers and with local gambling support providers. Some research literature relevant to the research objectives is now reviewed according to the key types of interactions these parties are involved with – staff interventions with problem gamblers in the venue, CLO exclusions of problem gamblers, responsible gambling training of staff, effective links between gambling providers and local support services, and the role of venues in the help-seeking behaviour of problem gamblers.

2.4.1 Interactions Between Staff and Problem Gamblers in the Venue

Gaming venue staff, whether frontline or CLOs, may be required to respond to and assist problem gamblers with differing levels of disclosure. As noted earlier, where a patron directly requests information and assistance, the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice* (Queensland Treasury, 2004) is explicit in the actions staff should take. However, far less direction is given where gamblers just hint at a problem, display some observable

signs of problem gambling, or where family or friends express concern about the patron's gambling. While staff are advised to 'respond with respect and refer' (Queensland Government, 2005a), considerable judgement is still required to know just how to 'respond' when direct help is not requested, what 'respect' for a gambler's preferred course of action actually constitutes when a person is clearly experiencing and causing harm as a result of their gambling, and specific situations when they should 'refer' the case up the chain of command.

Identifying problem gamblers in the venue

The ability of staff to use their best judgement in these circumstances is considerably clouded by the difficulties of using observable signs to identify problem gamblers. Indeed, the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice Industry Training Kit* (Queensland Government, 2005a:35-37) notes that 'indicators of possible gambling problems are not always obvious', but lists several 'possible signs of problem gambling' that 'may indicate that a person is at risk of problem gambling'. Staff are advised that 'displaying one risk indicator may not mean the person is a problem gambler', but 'a person displaying several risk indicators should alert you to a potential problem that you could refer to your CLO for advice and guidance'. Terms used, such as 'possible', 'may' and 'could', reflect the difficulties surrounding this issue, the tentative nature of the advice given, and the lack of clear direction for venue staff. This is not a criticism of this advice, but indicative of how little is known about observable signs of problem gambling and hence the difficulties of providing more prescriptive guidelines for venue staff. Only a few studies have focused on this issue, and these are now reviewed.

Identifying problem gamblers *in situ* at the gaming venue is one measure that has not been widely researched until recently, despite its potential as a harm minimisation tool. Internationally, little progress has also been made in this area. However, a study in Nova Scotia (Focal Research, 1998) identified several ways that problem video lottery players can be distinguished from regular players. These include playing for longer periods of time per week, engaging in longer playing sessions, betting at higher levels, continuing gambling until they run out of money, obtaining additional funds to play, exceeding their set budget, not quitting while ahead, distinct emotional, physiological and behavioural responses to machines, swearing, yelling or cursing while playing, losing track of time, and believing they are more skilled than regular gamblers. Nevertheless, it is unclear whether these results can be generalised to the Australian environment (Lesieur, 2002; Milton, 2002) and how accurately these behaviours can be observed by venue staff (Milton, 2002). While research is continuing in Nova Scotia to finetune these indicators of problem gambling, the emphasis is on the use of electronic player data to do so.

In Australia, the Productivity Commission (1999) was pessimistic about identifying problem gamblers in venues. It noted several barriers to this type of intervention – that it would be difficult to identify problem gamblers, that approaching patrons to offer them advice could cause great offence even if the person was a problem gambler, that it allowed for legal claims from patrons that the venue allowed them to gamble while knowing they had a gambling problem, and that staff interventions would not prevent a patron from gambling elsewhere. However, Delfabbro and Le Couteur (2006:129) point out that 'staff interventions do not have to be of the form that cause offence, require the termination of gambling, or the exclusion of gamblers', and provide several examples of interventions that do not single out particular patrons, yet still provide information to and offer to assist problem gamblers.

Nevertheless, even in the absence of reliable indicators, New Zealand has regulated to require all casino and gaming machine licence holders to develop a policy for identifying problem gamblers in the venue, whom they are then obligated to approach and offer information and advice about problem gambling (*Gambling Act 2004 NZ*). The regulations also require these venues to provide problem gambling awareness training for staff who supervise gambling, to enable them to: approach a player whom they believe to be experiencing gambling problems; provide information on the basic characteristics of problem gambling; advise the player of the potential risks and consequences of problem gambling; provide information on how to access problem gambling services; and remind the player of provisions for self and venue-initiated exclusion (*Gambling Act 2004 NZ*). However, no evaluation of the effectiveness of this training in equipping staff to accurately identify and appropriately approach problem gamblers in the venue has been conducted to date.

While some Australian responsible gambling codes of practice (e.g. Tabcorp Responsible Gambling Code; Australian Gaming Council Responsible Gaming Code) explicitly promote ‘staff training and awareness of observable behaviours which may be associated with problem gambling, and procedures to assist customers who display these behaviours’, they note that this goal needs to be underpinned by research into ‘reliable, observable behaviours associated with problem gambling’ (Australian Gaming Council, 2001:2).

To this end, the Australian Gaming Council sought opinions of prominent psychologists and practitioners in the field to obtain their professional views on problem gambling behaviours (Allcock et al., 2002). The resulting report concluded that, at that time ‘definitive behaviour that reflects harm caused most probably by gambling problems cannot be rigidly and reliably described’, although there is a range of behaviours that could ‘be used compassionately and sensibly to assist observers to be alert to potential problems, and be ready to assist’ (Allcock et al., 2002:4).

The ‘most obvious and urgent’ of these was identified as when customers disclose a gambling problem or request assistance, while other ‘most frequently suggested’ behaviours were repeated visits to ATMs, borrowing money on site and trying to cash cheques, disorderly behaviour, family enquiries and long sessions of play. Less frequent responses included frequent gambling sessions per week, alcohol intoxication and children left unattended. Those ‘mentioned in passing’ comprised the customer being the first in and last out of the venue, statements or comments about losing or family problems related to gambling, rushing when leaving a machine, staying after friends leave, playing two or more machines, and requests for credit.

Nevertheless, the overall conclusion of the Australian Gaming Council was that identifying problem gamblers in the venue was very difficult and should not be attempted. However, the report recommended research to empirically test the validity and reliability of these (and possibly other) behaviours commonly associated with gambling problems (Allcock et al., 2002). Gambling Research Australia then commissioned this research, representing the first Australian attempt to do so. The resulting study is now reviewed.

This report for Gambling Research Australia (Delfabbro, Osborn, Nevile, Skelt and McMillen, 2007) aimed to summarise and review existing published material relating to the identification of problem gamblers within venues, and to conduct empirical research into the nature of possible visible indicators of problem gambling within venues. Some key findings were that:

- 42.4 per cent of respondents in the Delfabbro et al. staff survey indicated that they see problem gamblers in the venue ‘almost all the time’, with an additional 37.6 per cent seeing problem gamblers on at least a weekly basis (2007:118).
- The Delfabbro et al. staff survey found that most staff felt confident they can identify problem gamblers *in situ*, with around one-third reporting it was ‘very easy to easy’, 25 per cent reporting the task was ‘moderate’, and only 14 per cent reporting it was ‘somewhat hard to extremely difficult’ (2007:116).
- Nevertheless, the Delfabbro et al. staff survey found that very few staff thought that approaching problem gamblers was easy, with most considering it ‘somewhat hard to extremely difficult’, with 71 per cent supporting further training in this area (2007:116-117).
- The study concluded that identification of problem gamblers within venues is certainly theoretically possible, and that a number of visible indicators can differentiate problem players *in situ* from others who gamble (2007:18). The study produced a final set of 52 indicators that could be usefully included in staff training, and advocated more extensive training into the nature of gambling and the range of visible behaviour that might be observed and specific training relating to interactions with staff, such as how to approach gamblers, anger management, conflict resolution and counselling (2007: 20).

These findings are a clear indicator that there are patrons in gaming venues who can benefit from staff and venue assistance with their gambling problems, and that staff have weekly, and sometimes daily, opportunities to do this. Thus, staff have the potential to intervene insofar as they are generally able to identify appropriate people for interventions, and adoption of Delfabbro et al.’s (2007) observable indicators of problem gambling may enhance this capacity in the future. Thus, with Delfabbro et al.’s (2007) study clarifying the capabilities of staff to identify problem gamblers, it is timely to examine ways staff can then approach and assist such patrons, once identified.

In summary, minimal research has been conducted into identifying problem gamblers in gaming venues, although the Delfabbro et al. study (2007) certainly represents the most rigorous empirical Australian research to date. Nevertheless, identifying problem gamblers in the venue is not an exact science, so that considerable difficulties must be encountered by staff and CLOs in observing and acting on patrons showing signs of problem gambling.

Approaching problem gamblers in the venue

Given the inherent difficulties of identifying problem gamblers in the venue and a lack of specific protocols for staff, staff may be unwilling to respond with information or refer the situation to a CLO or manager unless directly asked to do so by a patron, fearing the patron may become upset, angry or choose to gamble elsewhere. This was found by Hing (2007) in a case study of large club in New South Wales where she conducted 36 interviews to inform the development of an improved responsible gambling program at that club. The interviewees comprised five middle managers supervising the venue’s gaming functions, four duty managers, 12 gaming staff (employed as gaming and drink attendants, gaming supervisors, gaming section leaders, and cashier/cash desk staff), and 15 patrons. Amongst other questions, the staff and managers were given three scenarios about responding to potential problem gamblers in the venue and asked what they would do in each situation. Their responses are summarised below.

- The first scenario was if a patron approached staff for help about a gambling problem. All managers and staff interviewed were clear on what they would do, which was to refer the person to the duty manager. Some staff said they would give the patron a counselling brochure, inform them about self-exclusion and then walk the patron to the duty manager, while others would just advise the patron to see the duty manager. The duty managers were clear on following certain procedures – to provide the patron with information about counselling, explain how self-exclusion works, encourage the patron to take away the self-exclusion information to consider it, then come back to the club if they wanted to take up this option.
- The second scenario asked interviewees what they would do if a patron did not directly ask for help, but hinted that gambling was causing problems for them - perhaps by being upset, or by commenting to staff that they would not now be able to feed their children or pay the rent. From the diversity of answers, it was clear that staff had no clear direction on what to do. Some said, if they felt it was appropriate with that patron at that time, they would give the patron a counselling brochure or suggest they see the duty manager to discuss self-exclusion, another would ‘talk to them as a friend’, and another would ‘keep a file note about it’. Others said they would do nothing, mainly because they were not authorised or empowered to do so. There was a great deal of frustration amongst some staff and duty managers about their limited ability to intervene and the ethical dilemma this posed for them. Several interviewees wanted to be more proactive and advocated more guidance for staff, as it is ‘difficult to know what the best thing to do is’.
- The third scenario asked interviewees what they would do when they felt it was obvious that a patron had a gambling problem, but had not asked for help, was not visibly upset and had made no comments about their own gambling. While many staff and duty managers said they knew who the problem gamblers were amongst their patrons and many cited various observable indicators of problem gambling they had seen, most said they would do nothing in this scenario. However, one said he would point out the counselling brochures, another ‘would talk to them, find out if they had the means and ways to get help’, another would ‘ask how things are going, point out pamphlets, not be too direct’, and another would ‘try to converse, joke in light hearted way, not be judgemental’. Some noted they were unsure whether they had a legal right to do anything, others said they had been told by management to do nothing, while another noted staff had ‘not been given set rules about what to do’. Again, there was a great deal of frustration amongst some staff and duty managers about their limited ability to intervene and the passive role they played in assisting problem gamblers in their venue.

While the above results apply to only one club located in a jurisdiction with different legislation, they still illuminate the potential difficulties surrounding interventions in the venue, particularly uninvited ones, the related reluctance and frustrations of staff, supervisors and middle managers, and their perceived incapacity to respond effectively in varying situations. While this may be distinctive to the one club studied in New South Wales, the large number of clubs and hotels in Queensland and their varying levels of commitment to the Code of Practice (Queensland Government, 2004a, 2007) suggest there is potential for similar inconsistencies and staff uncertainty. As such, it is important to know how staff in these venues actually do respond to varying levels of patron disclosure of gambling problems and whether these responses align with those recommended in the Code, are perceived as appropriate by the staff and CLOs themselves, and align with those recommended by treatment professionals. This is a first step in assessing how the appropriateness and

consistency of these interactions between venue staff and problem gamblers might be enhanced.

Patron Exclusion

As well as responding to problem gamblers in the venue with information, venue staff might advise patrons about self-exclusion, or refer the patron to a CLO or manager for this. Yet, prior research indicates that self-exclusion has inherent challenges for staff in venues, as discussed below.

The case study of the New South Wales club referred to above (Hing, 2007) found potential for self-exclusion processes to be inconsistent and less than effective, even when prescribed in legislation. From the interviews with the club personnel, Hing (2007) found that, while self-exclusion was considered a good option, it received much criticism. Many interviewees were critical that staff did not have access to photos of self-excluded people, even though they were in the best position to recognise an excluded patron. It was also unclear whether duty managers were familiar with the photos and would be able to recognise a person, given the photos were kept in a folder in the security office. Further, the self-exclusion documentation stated the person would be excluded for a minimum of 12 months, yet most staff thought it was for two years, with one duty manager advising patrons the exclusion was for life. This manager said, once it was explained that it is a lifetime ban from all affiliated clubs and from all areas of these clubs, 70-80 per cent of patrons changed their minds. Additionally, the club signage on self-exclusion stated patrons can be excluded from nominated areas in the club, whereas the documentation stated the self-excluded patron cannot access any areas of the club, 'not even for dinner'. While a letter is sent to a nominated counselling service to advise them of the patron's self-exclusion, it appeared up to the patron to contact that service, although some duty managers noted they offer to do this. There appeared no follow-up by the club on the excluded person's progress in resolving their problem. There was also much scepticism about effective monitoring for breaches, given the number of self-exclusions (reportedly in the hundreds), the small passport-size photos requested, and their unavailability to floor staff. Many respondents also noted that a self-excluded patron could easily go to another gaming venue. This case example shows that, even when patrons do ask for assistance, there is potential for staff to convey inconsistent and incorrect advice. Further, the effectiveness of exclusions relies on the venue being willing and able to monitor patrons and enforce breaches.

These criticisms of the self-exclusion process at the one New South Wales club are generally consistent with the findings of the *Evaluation of Self-Exclusion Programs* (South Australian Centre for Economic Studies, 2003). In assessing the self-exclusion regime in Victoria and summarising their operation Australia-wide, that study documented several inherent weaknesses and a general failure of self-exclusion programs to be effective. For Victoria, they noted that 'the limited data available on self-exclusion is input not outcomes based' and so 'it is not possible to comment meaningfully on compliance by venues, rates of detection or notification rates and hence the effectiveness of exclusion as a protective measure' (South Australian Centre for Economic Studies, 2003:12). Further, the Victorian venues surveyed considered that the self-exclusion program had had little or no effect on problem gambling. Weaknesses included that photographs were an inadequate means by which to identify people, that this problem would compound as the number of exclusions increased, that there was a lack of training and support for venue staff in how to administer the program, identify problem gamblers, and report breaches, and that there is a 'conflict of interest where enforcing self-exclusion may impact directly on operator income' (South Australian Centre for Economic Studies, 2003:12).

In Queensland, the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice: Report on the Implementation Review* (Queensland Government, 2004a) found that 21 per cent of hotels and clubs in Queensland had not implemented exclusion procedures at all. Subsequently, the *Gambling Legislation Amendment Act 2005 QLD* was introduced for problem gambling related exclusions for the club, hotel and TAB sectors. This shift, from voluntary to legislated exclusion requirements for clubs and hotels, was supported by extensive training backed by peak bodies in the application of exclusion provisions (Queensland Government, 2007:48). The *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice: Report on the Cultural Shift Review* (Queensland Government, 2007) later found that this legislation resulted in a 16 per cent improvement in the commitment rate of clubs and hotels to providing exclusion provisions, to 95 per cent.

While implementation of exclusion provisions has improved, little is known about the consistency and appropriateness of associated procedures followed by staff and CLOs. However, the *Queensland Household Gambling Survey 2003-04* (Queensland Government, 2005c) found that 31 per cent of the problem gambler group had tried to be excluded from a gambling venue, a figure that had increased to 41 per cent by the time of the *Queensland Household Gambling Survey 2006-07* (Queensland Government, 2008). These figures indicate that many problem gamblers consider self-exclusion an important step towards resolving their gambling problems. It is therefore critical for staff and CLOs to respond appropriately to requests for exclusion. This is emphasised in the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice Industry Training Kit* which notes, 'when a patron approaches you and requests information on how to self-exclude, this represents an enormously important and courageous step on their part. ... You should bear this in mind and respond immediately in a positive and supportive way' (Queensland Government, 2005a:35). Clearly, self-exclusion is a critical intervention, with the Queensland Government recently moving to improve practices in this area through amended legislation and an extensive education and training process (Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation, 2006).

Despite its importance, self-exclusion is not something that happens frequently in Queensland hotels and clubs, and venue-initiated exclusion is even rarer. Only 28 per cent of the state's hotels and clubs reported at least one exclusion of either type during the 14 month period from May 2005 to June 2006 (Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation, 2006). Thus, exclusion is performed very infrequently, if at all, by most club and hotel venues, yet their staff and CLOs need to be aware of the venue's legal obligations, and be able to advise patrons accurately and enact exclusion processes in a timely, sensitive and appropriate fashion. Their knowledge, skills and capacity to do this appear to depend very much on appropriate training and having effective links with local gambling support services, as staff and CLOs are unlikely to otherwise gain experience through practice or familiarity. Thus, it is important to know how staff in these venues actually do advise, refer and implement exclusion in Queensland hotels and clubs. Again, this is a first step in assessing how the appropriateness and consistency of these interactions between venue staff and problem gamblers might be enhanced.

The Role of Customer Liaison Officers

A previous section has outlined the intended roles of CLOs as identified in the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice Industry Training Kit* (Queensland Government, 2005a). However, there has been little assessment of how effectively this role is being performed. The *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice: Report on the Cultural Shift* (Queensland Government, 2007) did report that a high proportion of clubs and hotels had nominated a CLO. Commitment to this practice had improved by 12 per cent to 94 per

cent over the two years since the Implementation Review, with this commitment highest in large venues. Of the 80 venues that did not have a CLO, 16 per cent were micro clubs and 24 per cent were small clubs. The Queensland Government (2007) also reported that best practice is the availability of a CLO at all times the venue is open, but recognised that this may be difficult in smaller venues due to staffing issues. Yet, availability of a CLO at all times is considered 'essential as this staff member provides on-the-spot assistance to customers experiencing difficulties associated with their gambling' (Queensland Government, 2007:44). Further, the Cultural Shift Review (Queensland Government, 2007) noted that the importance of this role is further highlighted by recent legislative requirements to ensure exclusions are appropriately and effectively conducted. Yet, it also noted that feedback from gambling-related support services indicated that patron and staff awareness of CLOs is low (Queensland Government, 2007:45).

Strategies to boost the availability of CLOs in venues have included documenting the role of the CLO in the exclusions regime in the *Gambling Legislation Amendment Act 2005 QLD*, publication and dissemination of the Industry Training Kit, and release of the brochure on *Gambling Exclusions: Is the Game Playing You?* (Queensland Government, 2007:45). Nevertheless, 13 per cent of clubs and hotels reported they 'never' have a staff person trained in responsible gambling to liaise with customers and staff on gambling issues, while a further 24 per cent of these venues do not always have a trained staff person available (Queensland Government, 2007:45). Thus, it is timely for this study to examine the practices and procedures used by CLOs to assist patrons with gambling problems, and how they interact with gamblers, staff and gambling-related support services in performing this role.

The Role of Responsible Gambling Training

Little research has been published on responsible gambling training, although it is known that some gambling providers have conducted in-house (and presumably confidential) evaluations of their training programs. Little is known about how well responsible gambling training equips venue staff and CLOs to respond to and assist problem gamblers in the venue, although there has been advocacy in some jurisdictions for staff to be better trained to recognise observable signs of problem gambling and how to respond (Australian Gaming Council, 2001:2) and for improvements in training around self-exclusion (South Australian Centre for Economic Studies, 2003:12). However, two studies (Hing and Breen, 2006; Hing, 2007) shed some light on some perceived deficiencies in the training that can impact on how staff interact with problem gamblers in the venue.

The case study of the New South Wales club referred to earlier (Hing, 2007) found that the interviewees strongly advocated refresher courses in responsible gambling to provide direction on what to do in the various situations they encounter with problem gamblers. Some had undertaken their training prior to entering the industry, and felt that further training was needed to help them address scenarios they had now experienced. The remainder of the staff had not been trained for over five years, and so had limited recall of what was covered. Many interviewees advocated involvement of counsellors and former problem gamblers in the training to 'humanise' the issue, and updates on latest thinking and practice around responsible gambling. Many felt this training should be delivered in small groups, so staff could share and seek solutions for the various situations they experience, such as responding to observed or reported signs of problem gambling, even if the patron had not directly asked for help. It appeared that industry experience had highlighted for these staff and managers the complex and diverse ways that gambling problems can manifest in a venue, and they sought more training around how to deal with these. In the absence of that training, responses from staff were inconsistent and, in some cases, inappropriate.

A study conducted by Hing and Breen (2006) also illuminates some issues around responsible gambling training, as found in their interviews with gaming venue staff in Queensland. While that project had a very different focus from the current project, discussions were held with staff about their training and whether it helped to protect them from developing gambling problems themselves. Several general criticisms of the training emerged from those interviews – that training is not readily available in all areas, it may not be done due to expense, it may not be conducted because it is voluntary, it was not engaging, did not involve all frontline staff, may not involve local counselling services, and was too short and infrequent. Not all the staff interviewed raised these issues and some reported very positively on their training. However, where these deficiencies do exist, they are likely to influence how appropriately staff and CLOs respond to and assist problem gamblers in their venues.

Some similar deficiencies in responsible gambling training for Queensland hotels and clubs were also identified in the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice: Report on the Implementation Review* (Queensland Government, 2004a). While the survey results for clubs and hotels indicated that 75 per cent of those venues had undertaken responsible gambling training, 67 per cent of these indicated this was provided in-house. This seems to have resulted in a ‘significant diversity in the quality and content of the training provided’, with that training including reading the Code and/or Resource Manual, discussions in staff meetings, information sessions, workshops provided by industry peak bodies, training which aligned with the relevant national competency standard, and training that did not align with this standard (Queensland Government, 2004a:24). Further, undertaking formal training courses can be impeded by problems of accessibility, particularly for smaller and more remote venues, inability to take time away from the business, lack of available staff to replace those attending training, costs involved in attending training, and perceived lack of relevance to the business (Queensland Government, 2004a:24).

Further, the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice: Report on the Cultural Shift Review* (Queensland Government, 2007) found that implementing practices associated with training still required improvement in the state’s hotels and clubs, given that responsible gambling training had been undertaken by only 63 per cent of club managers, 67 per cent of hotel managers, 50 per cent of club gaming staff and 55 per cent of hotel gaming employees. The major barriers to greater uptake were identified as ‘small size made it difficult to send staff to training’ (49 per cent), ‘already had sufficient training’ (37 per cent), ‘no training courses available’ (21 per cent), ‘costs of training were too great’ (18 per cent), ‘high staff turnover made it hard to maintain a trained workforce’ (16 per cent) and ‘did not have the available time’ (15 per cent) (Queensland Government, 2007:27).

In recognition of these inconsistencies and difficulties, the Queensland Government has continued to facilitate and improve effective responsible gambling training in that state. To this end, it published the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Training Framework for Industry*, which establishes the criteria for the development and implementation of responsible gambling programs, specific learning outcomes to be demonstrated by employees, and benchmarks to indicate industry best practice (Queensland Treasury, 2003). The training framework is supported by the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice Industry Training Kit* (Queensland Government, 2005a), which was ‘designed to give you (managers and staff) the skills and knowledge required to provide responsible gambling service at your place of work’ (Queensland Government, 2005a:4). The provisions of the training kit relevant to this proposed project have been discussed earlier. While this kit is comprehensive and supported by the various Responsible Gambling Resource Manuals and the training programs operated by industry associations, registered training providers and

individual venues, no evaluation appears to have been conducted, particularly of the knowledge and skills acquired by staff and CLOs in relation to interacting with problem gamblers in venues.

In fact, some anecdotal evidence supports the need for further training to better equip venue staff in dealing with problem gamblers. The Responsible Gambling Manager of the three Tabcorp casinos in Queensland noted in mid-2007 that the casinos would be developing and implementing a training program specifically for their Responsible Gambling Liaison Officers (RGLOs), including 'some basic counselling skills, such as active listening'. These RGLOs were to be recruited from volunteers amongst existing staff, perhaps in recognition that a willingness to assist adds to the capacity of staff to provide that assistance (pers. comm., 08-06-07). This report later presents findings from interviews with some casino RGLOs to illuminate their roles and how training has equipped them for these.

Clearly, responsible gambling training in Queensland continues to be developed and improved. This current project will inform these developments by identifying whether the training adequately equips staff and CLOs in Queensland hotels and clubs to interact appropriately with patrons with gambling problems and by identifying any gaps in relevant staff skills and knowledge.

2.4.2 Interactions Between Venues and Gambling Help Agencies

As noted above, Practice Area 2 of the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice* (Queensland Treasury, 2004) requires gambling providers to establish effective mechanisms to link with local gambling support services. While little research has been conducted into the benefits of forging closer links, it is assumed this is desirable so that gambling support services can assist venues specifically when problem gambling issues arise and more generally in advancing and promoting responsible gambling in the venues and their local communities.

However, there are some inherent challenges surrounding this. The *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice: Report on the Implementation Review* (Queensland Government, 2004a) identified the following issues that have appeared to hinder effective interactions between venues and gambling service providers in Queensland:

- Gambling Help coordinators had received no formal training in the Code of Practice, yet this was considered desirable to train them how to approach venues and maximise the potential to work with industry to implement the Code (2004a:25);
- There is the need for a partnership approach to training with a focus on industry and local Gambling Help services working effectively at the local level (2004a:37);
- There was the suggestion that some gambling support services 'did not fully understand the persistence required to shift attitudes in gambling venues and outlets' (2004a:25);
- There is some disparity at the local level in understanding the role of Gambling Help service coordinators, with further clarification of the roles and outcomes of the Code required to facilitate effective partnerships between Gambling Help service coordinators and gambling providers (2004a:35);
- More specifically, Gambling Help coordinators held the view that the Code of Practice is intended to address problem gambling specifically, rather than minimise harm to individuals and the broader community. The view of the coordinators was not consistent with the Code and will need to be addressed to progress the implementation

of responsible gambling practices and establish effective relationships with gambling providers at a local level (2004a:38);

- Gambling Help coordinators reported a one-way communication process and were confronted with limited reciprocal activity when attempting to establish links with gambling providers, some of whom did not want any contact and saw Gambling Help services as a threat to their business (2004a:39);
- Less than half the clubs and hotels surveyed maintained links with gambling-related support services (2004a:47);
- Gambling Help providers reported that limited contact had been made by venues (2004a:58).

Several recommendations were made in that report to address these issues, including training in the Code for Gambling Help coordinators, development of closer links between Gambling Help services and gambling providers in training for venue staff, development of strategies to clarify the outcomes of the Code for Gambling Help service coordinators, and promotion of case studies of best practice partnerships between gambling providers and Gambling Help services to facilitate effective partnerships at the local level (Queensland Government, 2004a:6-8). The Government has also issued two specific publications to help establish such partnerships – *Gambling Providers Contact Guidelines for Creating Links with the Local Gambling Help Service* (Queensland Government, 2006b) and *Gambling Help: Contact Guidelines for Creating Links with Gambling Providers* (Queensland Government, 2004b).

By the time the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice: Report on the Cultural Shift Review* (Queensland Government, 2007) was published, the government had also conducted information sessions on the Code for Gambling Help services in the state and provided information on best practice, risk indicators, the provision of responsible gambling information to NESB patrons at the Queensland Hospitality Expo in 2004 and 2005, and the holding of Industry and Community Network Forums for all gambling providers in Queensland (Queensland Government, 2007:28). Nevertheless, the Cultural Shift Review found that only 55 per cent of clubs and hotels had an established link with local gambling-related support services, with particularly low commitment amongst micro and small clubs and small hotels (Queensland Government, 2007:46-47).

In summary, it can be assumed that close links between gambling providers and local gambling support services help to optimise responsible gambling efforts in venues and, more specific to this project, to ensure that problem gamblers in venues receive appropriate advice and assistance to help resolve their gambling problems. However, this is an area in which hotels and clubs in Queensland have not performed well, although the Queensland Government has recognised and made recommendations for improvement. The current project will help to inform these developments by assessing how effectively Queensland hotels and clubs interact with local gambling support services to assist patrons with gambling problems and ways this interaction might be improved.

2.4.3 Interactions Between Gambling Help Agencies and Problem Gamblers

Both the *Queensland Household Gambling Survey 2001* (Queensland Government, 2001) and *Queensland Household Gambling Survey 2003-04* (Queensland Government, 2005c) found that the majority of people identified as being in the problem gambling group, as measured on the Canadian Problem Gambling Index, recognised they had a problem but did not seek help. Of the problem gambler group in the 2003-04 survey, nearly 41 per cent wanted help for problems related to gambling, but only about 16 per cent had actually sought any form of

help. This help was most commonly sought from ‘spouse or partner’ and ‘family or friends’, rather than from formal services. Of the 84 per cent of the group who did not seek help, 40 per cent said they thought they could beat the problem on their own, while 36 per cent did not consider they had a problem. The most common triggers for seeking help were financial and/or relationship problems and feeling worried or depressed.

The *Queensland Household Gambling Survey 2006-07* (Queensland Government, 2008) found that both the proportion of problem gamblers wanting help for gambling-related problems (48 per cent) and trying to get any sort of help (28 per cent) had both increased since the previous survey. Common reasons given by the problem gambler group for needing to seek help were financial problems and feeling worried or depressed. Of the 72 per cent of the problem gambler group who did not seek help, 34 per cent said they thought they could beat the problem on their own, while 37 per cent did not consider they had a problem (Queensland Government, 2008:33).

It is difficult to specify exactly why there were such low levels of help-seeking behaviour amongst problem gamblers, as reported in these surveys, although the Queensland Government (2005c:31) engaged an independent consultant to review the Gambling Help services in the state to identify why this is the case and what can be done to encourage persons experiencing problems to seek assistance. Nevertheless, this low usage of formal help services amongst problem gamblers in Queensland is consistent with other studies. For example, the Productivity Commission (1999) found that only about 10 per cent of those who scored 5 or higher on the SOGS in their survey had obtained formal assistance from counselling services. In Victoria, the BreakEven network of agencies was estimated to have seen about 11 per cent of problem gamblers in the state (State Government of Victoria, 2002). In South Australia, a help-seeking rate of 8.9 per cent was found (Delfabbro and Le Couteur, 2006:132). In reviewing these rates, Delfabbro and Le Couteur (2006:133) concluded that ‘approximately 10 per cent of those identified as problem gamblers in a given 12-month period will seek formal assistance for their problems’. In reviewing research that has investigated reasons for this, they concluded that:

‘problem gamblers usually only seek formal assistance when there is no other choice. Psychological distress, financial and relationship breakdowns appear to be the primary motivating factors. The principal obstacles are reported to be shame and embarrassment, and a false hope in the ability to regain control, or win back losses.’

(Delfabbro and Le Couteur, 2006:135).

The Queensland survey results (Queensland Government, 2001; 2005c) appear generally consistent with this conclusion.

While the obstacles for help-seeking appear strongly related to the psychology of problem gamblers, the opportunity for gambling providers to raise awareness of and refer problematic patrons to formal help services is clearly there. Indeed, the Productivity Commission (1999) found that 16 per cent of the problem gambling clients had used information provided in brochures in gambling venues to contact help services. In Queensland, the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice: Report on the Implementation Review* (Queensland Government, 2004a:57) noted that responsible gambling signage in venues advertising the Gambling Helpline and other support service providers is resulting in people adversely affected by gambling accessing appropriate assistance. Of referrals to Gambling Help service providers, 35 per cent came from the Gambling Helpline and 19 per cent from a gaming venue. Nevertheless, the *Queensland Household Gambling Survey 2003-04* (Queensland Government, 2005c) found a low level of awareness within the broader community that gambling problems can be discussed with someone at a venue, indicating the need for CLOs

and their links with gambling support services to be more effectively promoted at the venue (Queensland Government, 2004a:57). Given that 71 per cent of people did not know they could discuss gambling problems with a staff member, it is likely that venue referrals of people to counselling coincided with their self-exclusion. Clearly, CLOs can facilitate formal help-seeking at that point, and it is now a requirement that venues offer contact details of counselling services to self-excluded patrons (Queensland Government, 2006a).

In summary, given the general reticence of problem gamblers to seek help and the low level of patron awareness of CLOs and their links with gambling help services, CLOs and frontline venue staff play a critical role in providing information about counselling, encouraging problem gamblers to undertake treatment, and facilitating a referral. This can make the difference between a problem gambler accessing a counselling service or not. The current research examines how staff and CLOs in venues actually do raise awareness of and refer problem patrons to formal help services, and how their links with gambling help providers facilitate or hinder this. Again, this is a step in assessing how effectively these staff facilitate the interactions between problem gamblers and counselling services, at least at the initial referral stage, and ways this might be improved.

2.5 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

The preceding review of the literature has emphasised the concept of shared responsibility that underpins a public health approach to addressing problem gambling, and the specific initiatives undertaken in Queensland to advance responsible gambling. The review has focused on key interactions amongst four parties – problem gamblers, frontline staff, CLOs and local gambling support providers – in responding to and assisting problem gamblers in the venue. The roles of these parties and their interactions demonstrate that all these ‘links in the chain’ need to be operating effectively if problem gamblers in venues are to receive appropriate advice, support, guidance and treatment. This current project examines how, and how appropriately, frontline staff and CLOs respond to and assist patrons with gambling problems in Queensland gaming venues, and how venues interact with local gambling help services to provide this assistance. It also identifies gaps in relevant staff skills, knowledge and training, other facilitators and barriers to providing appropriate assistance, and best practice examples where possible. By doing so, the project contributes to potential improvements in these interactions in venues and, more broadly to the advancement of the Queensland Government’s policy objectives in responsible gambling.

The next chapter, Chapter Three, explains the research methods used in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the methods used in this study, which was conducted over a 12 month time frame, from mid-July 2008 to mid-July 2009. It first provides a general overview of the research design, before describing preliminary consultations conducted for the study, its target populations and samples, data collection methods, instrumentation and data analysis techniques.

3.2 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

This study aimed to examine how, and how appropriately, frontline staff and CLOs respond to and assist patrons with gambling problems in Queensland gaming venues, and how venues interact with local gambling help services to provide this assistance. It also aimed to identify gaps in relevant staff skills, knowledge and responsible gambling training, any other facilitators and barriers to providing appropriate assistance, and best practice examples where possible.

As such, the focus of the research was largely on the interactions amongst four groups of people – problem gamblers, frontline venue staff, customer liaison officers (CLOs) and gambling support services. Figure 3.1 shows the interactions that would appear critical to providing appropriate assistance to problem gamblers in the venue.

The study was originally designed to focus mainly on hotels and clubs in Queensland, as the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice: Report on the Implementation Review* (Queensland Government, 2004a) had identified opportunities for improvement in these sectors in numerous areas that affect the capacity of staff and CLOs to respond appropriately to problem gamblers in the venue. Compared to the casino, lottery and totalisator betting sectors, the club and hotel sectors demonstrated lower commitment to implementing the Code of Practice, lower levels of implementing self-exclusion procedures, additional challenges with responsible gambling training, and fewer effective links with gambling support services. Thus, it was logical for this study to focus on those sectors with the greatest opportunities for improvement in their interaction at the venue level amongst problem gamblers, venue staff, CLOs and gambling support services.

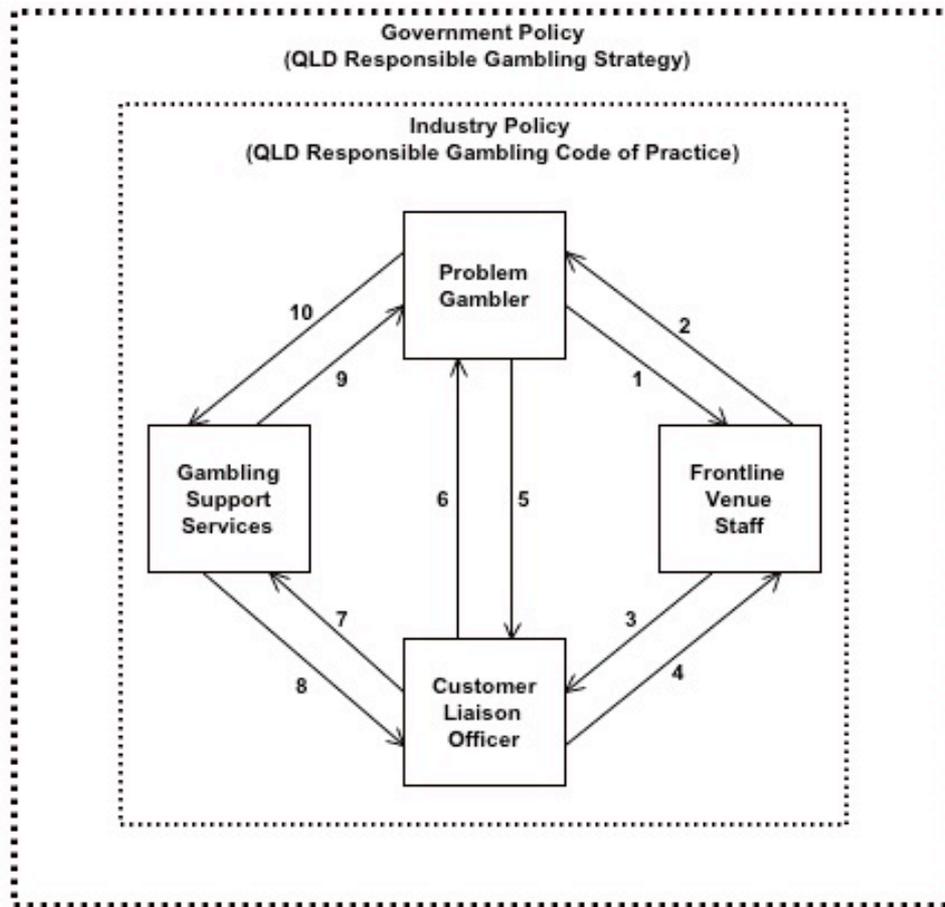
However, the Responsible Gambling Manager of the three Tabcorp casinos in Queensland offered for those casinos to contribute to the project in three ways. First, the manager agreed to be interviewed herself to provide a perspective on how these casinos assist problem gamblers in the venue. This allowed a comparison with the hotel and club sectors in that state. Second, the Tabcorp casinos agreed to allow a small number of their Responsible Gambling Liaison Officers (RGLOs) to be interviewed to provide insights into the practices and procedures they follow, the specialist skills and knowledge considered beneficial for that role, and the training program developed to equip them. Third, the casinos agreed to give any patrons who were self-excluding during part of the study period a survey to elicit their opinions of beneficial practices and processes for staff and CLOs to use to assist problem gamblers in the venue. These patrons were also invited for a telephone interview with the researcher, if they preferred.

Thus, the research plan involved collecting data from the following groups of people in Queensland:

- CLOs or their equivalents in clubs and hotels;
- Frontline staff in clubs and hotels;
- Gambling Help counsellors;
- Responsible Gambling Manager of the three Tabcorp casinos;
- Responsible Gambling Liaison Officers of two of the Tabcorp casinos;
- People who self-excluded from any of the three Tabcorp casinos during the study period.

Qualitative methods were determined as the most appropriate to address the study's aims and objectives and to capture data relating to the interaction of problem gamblers, frontline venue staff, venue liaison officers and gambling support services. This was because the study was exploratory and intended to uncover, rather than quantitatively measure, the issues investigated. More specifically, personal interviews were the main data collection method, so as to yield rich in-depth data that was then analysed using thematic analysis. A survey of self-excluded patrons was also used, but the emphasis in that survey was on gathering qualitative data based on the excludees' experiences and opinions. Again, this aligned with the exploratory nature of the study, but was also appropriate because the expected number of responses from excludees was likely to be too few to allow rigorous quantitative analysis.

Figure 3.1: Interactions to Assist Problem Gamblers in Gaming Venues



- Interaction 1: From problem gambler to frontline venue staff, e.g. directly ask for help, verbally hint at a problem, show signs of problem gambling, family/friends concerned.
- Interaction 2: From frontline venue staff to problem gambler, e.g. provide information, provide advice, refer to CLO, ignore.
- Interaction 3: From frontline venue staff to CLO, e.g. refer patrons, report incidents, seek information and advice.
- Interaction 4: From CLO to frontline venue staff, e.g. provide information and advice, coordinate training.
- Interaction 5: From problem gambler to CLO, e.g. request information and advice, request and participate in self-exclusion, be referred to counselling.
- Interaction 6: From CLO to problem gambler, e.g. provide information and advice, arrange exclusion, refer to counselling, deal with family/friends' concerns.
- Interaction 7: From CLO to gambling support services, e.g. establish effective links, invite to training, seek advice, refer patrons.
- Interaction 8: From gambling support services to CLO, e.g. establish effective links, participate in staff training, provide information and advice.
- Interaction 9: From gambling support services to problem gambler, e.g. provide advice, counselling, assist with self-exclusion from venues.
- Interaction 10: From problem gambler to gambling support service, e.g. seek advice, counselling and/or assistance with self-exclusion from venues.

3.3 PRELIMINARY CONSULTATIONS

In preparation for the project and to build support, the research team held face-to-face meetings with representatives from Clubs Queensland, the Queensland Hotels Association, the Tabcorp casinos in Queensland, the Gambling Help Network and Relationships Australia (Queensland) and had telephone discussions with representatives from the ALH and Coles groups of hotels. We also attended Responsible Gambling Awareness Week at the Treasury Casino in Brisbane and Conrad Jupiter's Casino on the Gold Coast where we met some of the casinos' RGLOs and were able to brief them on the project.

3.4 TARGET POPULATIONS AND SAMPLES

As noted earlier, data were collected from six different groups. This section explains the target populations and sampling for each.

3.4.1 Customer Liaison Officers in Queensland Hotels and Clubs

The target population of this group comprised Customer Liaison Officers (CLOs) or their equivalent in Queensland hotels and clubs that operate gaming machines. With 771 hotels and 581 clubs reportedly operating gaming machines in Queensland in 2006-07 (Australian Gaming Council, 2007), and assuming at least one CLO per venue and probably more in larger venues, the target population approximated at least 1,400 CLOs.

However, because this was exploratory qualitative research, only a limited sample of these CLOs were interviewed. The target was to interview CLOs from up to eight hotels and eight clubs from each of three geographic regions of Queensland, totalling up to 50 CLOs. The proposed geographic regions were Brisbane, Cairns and Mt Isa/Longreach, to give representation to metropolitan, regional and remote areas respectively. These regions were also selected because the research team had been successful in gaining interviews with managers and staff from venues in these regions in two previous projects. However, while our targets were met in Brisbane and Cairns, the smaller number of venues in Mt Isa and their low participation rates meant that our targets there were not achieved. Given that Longreach has only a few gaming venues, it was considered financially unviable to travel to there and to an additional region to make up this shortfall. Thus, the research team later substituted Toowoomba/Dalby for Longreach for the hotel and club data collection. This region was selected to boost the interviews conducted with non-metropolitan venues, because there were sufficient venues there from which to sample, and because it was cost effective for the researchers to travel there.

Based on a list of hotels provided by the Queensland Hotels Association, we sampled 38 hotels in Brisbane to approach to participate in the study. This selection was based on representation of large and small venues, independent and chain hotels, and venues in different socio-economic areas within Brisbane. These 38 hotels were telephoned to request an interview with the CLO and also a frontline staff member if possible. If the venue did not have a CLO, we asked to interview the staff person with most involvement in responsible gambling in the venue. If they agreed, we either emailed or faxed them a letter of support from the QHA (Appendix A) and a copy of the interview schedule. A follow up phone call was made to ensure these documents had been received, to answer any questions about these or the research in general, and to make a time for a site visit and the interview. In all, ten agreed to an interview, but four later declined on the day. The same process was followed in Cairns, where we approached 27 hotels and gained 12 CLO interviews; in Mt Isa/Cloncurry, where we approached 12 hotels and gained two CLO interviews; and in Toowoomba/Dalby

where we approached 15 hotels and gained nine CLO interviews. Thus, the total number of hotel CLO (or equivalent) interviews achieved was 29.

Based on a list of clubs provided by Clubs Queensland, we sampled 18 clubs in Brisbane to approach to participate in the study. This selection was based on representation of large and small venues, clubs of different types, and venues in different socio-economic areas within Brisbane. These 18 hotels were telephoned to request an interview with the CLO and also a frontline staff member if possible. If the venue did not have a CLO, we asked to interview the staff person with most involvement in responsible gambling in the venue. If they agreed, we either emailed or faxed them a copy of the interview schedule. A follow up phone call was made to ensure these documents had been received, to answer any questions and to make a time for a site visit and interview. In all, 10 agreed to an interview. The same process was followed in Cairns, where we approached 15 clubs and gained seven CLO interviews; in Mt Isa/Cloncurry, where we approached eight clubs and gained three CLO interviews; and in Toowoomba/Dalby where we approached ten clubs and gained six CLO interviews. Thus, the total number of club CLO (or equivalent) interviews achieved was 26. Combined, the hotel and club CLO interviews totalled 55, thus exceeding our target of 50.

Reasons for refusals included too busy, understaffed, the venue was being renovated, it had no gaming machines or the CLO was unavailable on any of the days the researchers would be in the area. No payment or inducement was provided to participating venues or their CLOs.

3.4.2 Frontline Staff in Queensland Hotels and Clubs

The target population of this group comprised all frontline staff in hotels and clubs in Queensland. At 30 June 2004, Queensland hotels with gaming machines employed 13,556 staff while clubs with gaming machines employed 14,803 staff (Queensland Government, 2005b), although the proportion of these who are frontline staff is not known. Again, because this was exploratory, qualitative research, only a limited sample of these frontline staff were interviewed. At least one frontline staff member from each venue where the CLO was interviewed was requested to participate in an interview, for a target of up to 50 frontline staff interviews.

Requests to interview a frontline staff person were made at the time of organising the CLO interviews and these requests were made only if the CLO had also agreed to an interview. Thus, the same venues were approached for a staff interview as for a CLO interview in the nominated geographic areas. The choice of which staff member in each venue to interview depended on the CLO or venue manager, and in reality it also depended on which staff were on duty at the time of the researchers' visit to the venue, and their ability to be released from duties for an interview.

However, not all venues were able to accommodate both a CLO and a staff interview. We gained frontline staff interview participants from six hotels in Brisbane, six hotels in Cairns, two hotels in Mt Isa/Cloncurry and 11 hotels in Toowoomba/Dalby, for a total of 25 hotel staff interviews. We gained frontline staff interview participants from six clubs in Brisbane, ten clubs in Cairns, three clubs in Mt Isa, and four clubs in Toowoomba/Dalby, for a total of 23 club staff interviews. Combined, the hotel and club frontline staff interviews totalled 48, close to the maximum target of 50. No payment or inducement was provided to participating venues or their frontline staff.

3.4.3 Queensland Gambling Help Counsellors

There were 14 Gambling Help agencies in Queensland at the time of the study, each with a varying number of gambling counsellors. Some agencies also have dedicated community educators. We gained support for the project from the Gambling Help Network, with the CEO of Relationships Australia Queensland then emailing a letter of support to those agencies (Appendix B). Our approach was to then telephone all 14 agencies to explain the project and ask for appropriate participants for a telephone interview. We then emailed or faxed to those who agreed to participate an informed consent form and the interview questions and organised a time to conduct the interview. In some cases, the community educators felt they could not usefully contribute to an interview. In total, we gained agreement to interview 25 counsellors, although one became unavailable before the interview could be conducted and one terminated the interview after its commencement, as that person was a community educator and did not feel they could answer most of the questions. Thus, 23 interviews were achieved. No payment or inducement was provided to participating agencies or counsellors.

3.4.4 Casino Interviews

As noted earlier, we conducted interviews with the Responsible Gambling Manager (Queensland) of the three Tabcorp casinos in Queensland and a small sample of their RGLOs. At the time of the interviews, the three Tabcorp casinos had trained 15 RGLOs at Conrad Jupiter's Casino, 12 RGLOs at Treasury Casino and ten RGLOs at the Townsville property. Four staff trained as RGLOs from the Brisbane and Gold Coast venues and the Responsible Gambling Manager (Queensland) were interviewed in person, with the latter selecting the RGLOs to be interviewed based on their availability during the times the research team could conduct these interviews. No payment or inducement was provided to casino interviewees.

3.4.5 Self-Excluees from the Three Tabcorp Casinos

The target population for this group was intended to be all persons who excluded from any of the three Tabcorp casinos in Queensland over a six month data collection period. However, the research team had underestimated the time needed to gain approval from the various management layers at Tabcorp, even though the Responsible Gambling Manager had given in-principle support for the project at the time of application for funding. Thus, the self-excluee surveys were not approved and delivered to the casinos until the start of March 2009, leaving only four and a half months for data collection. The casinos had agreed to give a survey to anyone who was self-excluding from any of the three properties during this time. In addition, and on advice from the casinos, the survey questionnaire was available in English, Vietnamese and Chinese, with a professional translation service used. The English version also invited the respondent to participate in a telephone interview if they wished. However, this option was not provided on the Vietnamese and Chinese versions, due to the logistical difficulties and expense of having interviewers available fluent in these languages.

The targeted number of surveys for distribution to these self-excluees was estimated from past self-exclusions data. Following the introduction of the new exclusions regime in May 2005, 277 individuals had excluded from the four Queensland casinos in the 14 months to June 2006, of which only one was a venue exclusion (Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation, 2006). Thus, it was expected that around 60-70 patrons would exclude from the three casinos during a four and a half month period. The Responsible Gambling Manager also

agreed to send the survey to any person who applied to revoke their self-exclusion order during this period.

However, by about two months after the surveys had been delivered to the casinos, only one completed survey had been received, with the respondent using the Vietnamese version. The researchers contacted the casino to check that surveys were being distributed and the Responsible Gambling Manager kindly sent an email to the relevant staff at the casinos to remind them to give the survey to people self-excluding. However, by the end of the project, no more surveys had been received.

A subsequent discussion with the Responsible Gambling Manager clarified the reasons for this. The manager explained that the self-exclusion process is complex, lengthy and often emotional for the patron; thus remembering to give the patron the survey was easily overlooked by the casino staff processing the self-exclusion. Additionally, the Responsible Gambling Manager does not process most self-exclusions so was unable to exercise any direct control over survey distribution. Further, the Responsible Gambling Manager is based at the Gold Coast property, whereas most self-exclusions occur at the Brisbane property. It is not known how many surveys were distributed, but it appears very few were. Thus, this was a very disappointing result and unfortunately largely outside the control of the researchers. Nevertheless, the counsellor interviews yielded extensive data on the experiences of problem gamblers in their interactions with venue staff, so their perspectives are still represented in this study.

3.4.6 Summary of Interview Participants

Table 3.1 shows the number of interviews conducted by sample and location.

Table 3.1: Summary of Interview Participants

	Hotel CLO	Hotel Staff	Club CLO	Club Staff	Casino RG Manager	Casino RGLOs	Gambling Help Couns- ellors	Total
Brisbane	6	6	10	6				28
Cairns	12	6	7	10				35
Mt Isa	2	2	3	3				10
Toowoomba/Dalby	9	11	6	4				30
Brisbane/Gold Coast					1	4		5
Statewide							23	24
Total	29	25	26	23	1	5	23	132

3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND INSTRUMENTATION

As noted earlier, this study was exploratory in nature and intended to uncover, rather than quantitatively measure, the issues investigated. Qualitative methods were therefore proposed as most appropriate to addressing the research objectives. The intention was to provide an evidence base for appropriate, and potentially improved, practices, procedures, training, and linkages with Gambling Help services, so that staff and CLOs can provide the best assistance possible to problem gamblers in their venues. To achieve this, it was necessary to gather rich,

in-depth data on current procedures and their strengths and weaknesses, to identify opportunities for improvement and ways to achieve this. For this reason, in-depth interviews were the main means of data collection. This process is now explained for each of the study samples.

3.5.1 Customer Liaison Officers in Queensland Hotels and Clubs

Section 3.4.1 explained the sampling for obtaining interviews with 56 CLOs (or equivalents) working in hotels and clubs in Queensland. The Brisbane interviews were conducted over three trips during July and August 2008. The Cairns interviews were conducted over a one week period in September 2008. The Mt Isa interviews were held over four days in September/October 2008, and the Toowoomba/Dalby interviews were completed over four days in November 2008.

These interviews were conducted in person and on-site in the CLOs' venues. They lasted 30-45 minutes and were all digitally recorded with the interviewees' permission. The interviews were semi-structured and focused on seven main areas:

- Background information on the employee and the venue.
- Practices and procedures and related challenges and areas for improvement in relation to three scenarios – 1) when a patron asks for assistance with a gambling problem, 2) when a patron shows observable signs of possible problem gambling but does not directly request assistance, and 3) when a family member or close friend of a patron indicates that the patron has a gambling problem.
- Support provided by the CLO for frontline staff in assisting problem gamblers in the venue.
- Training in assisting problem gamblers in the venue.
- Self-exclusion practices and procedures and related challenges and areas for improvement.
- Interaction with Gambling Help agencies.
- Any other challenges, best practice examples, other ways the venue might assist problem gamblers in the venue, and any other comments.

Please see Appendix C for the CLO interview schedule.

3.5.2 Frontline Staff in Queensland Hotels and Clubs

Section 3.4.2 explained the sampling for obtaining interviews with 48 frontline staff working in hotels and clubs in Queensland. These interviews were conducted during the same time periods as the CLO interviews were conducted.

These interviews were conducted in person and on-site in the employees' venues. They lasted 20-35 minutes and were all digitally recorded with the interviewees' permission. The interviews were semi-structured and focused on six main areas:

- Background information on the employee and the venue.
- Practices and procedures and related challenges and areas for improvement in relation to three scenarios – 1) when a patron asks for assistance with a gambling problem, 2) when a patron shows observable signs of possible problem gambling but does not

directly request assistance, and 3) when a family member or close friend of a patron indicates that the patron has a gambling problem.

- Support provided by the CLO for frontline staff in assisting problem gamblers in the venue.
- Training in assisting problem gamblers in the venue.
- Interaction with Gambling Help agencies.
- Any other challenges, best practice examples, other ways the venue might assist problem gamblers in the venue, and any other comments.

Please see Appendix D for the interview schedule used for the frontline staff.

3.5.3 Queensland Gambling Help Counsellors

Section 3.4.3 explained the sampling for obtaining interviews with 23 Gambling Help counsellors in Queensland. These interviews were conducted by telephone during December 2008 and typically lasted 30-50 minutes. They were all digitally recorded with the interviewees' permission, were semi-structured and focused on eight main areas:

- Background information on the counsellor.
- Client experiences in gaming venues in relation to three scenarios – 1) when a patron asks for assistance with a gambling problem, 2) when a patron shows observable signs of possible problem gambling but does not directly request assistance, and 3) when a family member or close friend of a patron indicates that the patron has a gambling problem.
- Counsellors' professional opinions on what venue staff should do in relation to these three scenarios and related challenges, opportunities for improvements and best practice examples.
- Client experiences with self-exclusion procedures in venues.
- Counsellors' professional opinions on what procedures venue staff should follow for self-exclusion and related challenges, opportunities for improvements and best practice examples.
- Types of interactions they have with gaming venues, related facilitators and barriers, opportunities for improvements and best practice examples.
- Their role in staff training, if any, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities for improvements and best practice examples.
- Any other ways that venues can assist problem gamblers in the venue and any other comments.

Please see Appendix E for the interview schedule used for the Gambling Help Counsellors.

3.5.4 Casino Interviews

Section 3.4.4 explained the procedure for obtaining interviews with the Responsible Gambling Manager (Queensland) and four RGLOs from the Tabcorp casinos. These interviews were conducted in person and on-site in the casinos during August 2008. The manager interview lasted for about 80 minutes, while the RGLO interviews lasted 45-60 minutes. They were all digitally recorded with the interviewees' permission and were semi-structured. The manager interview schedule is included as Appendix F and was very similar

to the interview schedule used for the hotel and club CLOs. The interview schedule for the RGLOs is included as Appendix G and was very similar to that used for the frontline staff in hotels and clubs.

3.5.5 Self-Excluees from the Three Tabcorp Casinos

Section 3.4.5 explained the procedure for distributing surveys to the self-excluees and noted that only one response was received. It was decided not to report on that one response as very clearly the response rate was inadequate to generate meaningful results. For completeness, Appendix H contains a copy of the survey instrument.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The digitally recorded interviews were transcribed by a professional transcription service and analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data, by organising and describing the data set in rich detail and by interpreting various aspects of the research topic (Braun and Clarke, 2006:79). It involves six identifiable stages – 1) familiarisation with the data by transcribing, then reading and re-reading, noting down initial ideas; 2) generating initial codes by coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set and then collating data relevant to each code; 3) searching for themes by collating codes into potential themes and gathering all data relevant to each potential theme; 4) reviewing the themes by checking to see if the themes work in relation to both the coded extracts and the entire data set, and then generating a thematic map of the analysis; 5) defining and naming themes via ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme; and 6) writing up the results by selecting vivid and compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back the analysis to the research objectives/questions and the literature, and producing a scholarly report of the analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006:87).

3.7 ETHICS APPROVAL

This research project was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at Southern Cross University in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans.

3.8 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter has explained the research methods used in this study. The next chapter is the first of four that presents and analyses the research results.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS FROM THE HOTEL, CLUB AND CASINO CLO AND MANAGER INTERVIEWS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results from interviews with the 29 hotel CLOs, followed by those from the 26 club CLOs, and those from the casinos' Responsible Gambling Manager and four casino Responsible Gambling Liaison Officers. Within each of these sets of results, key characteristics of respondents are first identified, before analysis of the interviewees' responses when patrons ask for assistance with a gambling problem, when patrons show signs of problem gambling but do not request assistance, and when family or friends approach them with concerns for a patron's gambling. The focus then turns to the support CLOs provide to venue staff in assisting problem gamblers in the venue, training the CLOs and staff have undertaken themselves, and their interaction with local gambling support agencies. Best practice examples in assisting problem gamblers in the venue, where given, are then presented.

4.2 KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF HOTEL CLO INTERVIEWEES

Twenty-nine hotel CLOs were interviewed for this study. Table 4.1 summarises their key characteristics and shows that the sample captured CLOs in a variety of locations and positions and in venues of varying sizes and types of gaming installations. It should be noted that interviewees were classified as CLOs if they were the nominated CLO, had completed CLO training, or were the person empowered to implement responsible gambling measures, such as self-exclusion.

Table 4.1: Key Characteristics of Hotel CLO Respondents

Location	Position	Length of service	Worked in other gaming venues?	No. of GMs	Other gambling facilities
Brisbane	Gaming Manager	7 mths	Yes	20	No
Brisbane	Hotel Manager	4 mths	Yes	40	Keno, TAB
Brisbane	Venue Manager	3 mths	Yes	15	No
Brisbane	Duty Manager	4 yrs	n/a	20	Keno, TAB
Brisbane	Gaming Manager	2 yrs	n/a	20	Keno, TAB
Brisbane	General Manager	1.5 yrs	n/a	20	No
Cairns	Assistant Manager	2 yrs	No	15	Keno
Cairns	Duty Manager	9 mths	Yes	26	Keno, TAB
Cairns	Hotel Manager	9 mths	Yes	40	Keno, TAB
Cairns	Manager	10 yrs	No	15	Keno
Cairns	Gaming Coordinator	1 yr	Yes	40	Keno, TAB
Cairns	Venue Manager	5 yrs	Yes	40	Keno, TAB
Cairns	Gaming Nominee	2.5 yrs	No	40	Keno, TAB
Cairns	Hotel Manager	8 mths	Yes	37	Keno, TAB
Cairns	Hotel Manager	1.5 yrs	Yes	35	Keno, TAB
Cairns	General Manager	4 yrs	No	20	Keno
Cairns	Gaming Attendant	n/a	Yes	30	Keno, TAB
Cairns	Hotel Manager	18 mths	Yes	14	Keno
Mt Isa	General Manager	6 mths	Yes	35	No
Mt Isa	Hotel Manager	3 mths	Yes	34	Keno, TAB
Dalby	Hotel Manager	3 mths	No	2	No
Dalby	Hotel Manager	2.5 yrs	Yes	14	Keno
Toowoomba	Assistant Manager	n/a	Yes	18	Keno
Toowoomba	Hotel Manager	5 yrs	Yes	40	Keno, TAB
Toowoomba	Gaming & Admin Manager	1 yr	No	35	Keno
Toowoomba	Gaming Manager	9 yrs	No	40	Keno
Toowoomba	Gaming Manager	9.5 yrs	Yes	40	Keno, TAB
Toowoomba	Venue Manager	2 mths	Yes	35	Keno
Toowoomba	Gaming Nominee	n/a	Yes	19	No

4.3 HOTEL CLO RESPONSES TO PATRONS WHO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE

The interviewees were asked about various aspects of responding to patrons in the venue who approach them to ask for assistance with a gambling problem. Their responses are summarised below in terms of how frequently they have experienced this, procedures they use, knowledge of procedures, related challenges, the perceived helpfulness of these procedures and suggestions for any improvements.

4.3.1 Frequency of Patrons Approaching Hotel CLOs

The experience of being approached by patrons for assistance with a gambling problem varied amongst the CLO respondents, but overall, this was not a frequent occurrence. Reported frequencies ranged from ‘never’ to ‘four years ago’, ‘one in the six months I’ve been here’ and four people in two and a half years. One CLO considered patron approaches are prompted by ‘some personal trauma or tragedy in their life, relationship problems or someone’s passed away and they come and it’s a relief gambling. They don’t have to think about their problems, just press the button and it costs them a fortune and they get to a stage

where they realise that obviously it doesn't solve their problems and that they do have a problem ... and want to do something about it'.

4.3.2 Procedures Used By Hotel CLOs

The hotel CLOs were asked 'What do you do if a patron asks for assistance with a gambling problem?' The procedures they use or would use included the following, although it must be noted that most CLOs would use a combination of these, generally beginning by having a conversation with the patron to find out more about the issue, then outlining options available, giving them counselling contacts and proceeding with self-exclusion if the patron wishes to do this.

- **Start by having a chat, offering advice and outlining options**

Several CLOs noted that their first response would be to 'ask them if they'd like someone to talk to', 'try and talk to them and make friends with them to start with' and 'have a chat to them'. In this initial conversation, some CLOs would first 'get them to explain what the problem is', 'try and make them feel comfortable talking to you about it' and 'congratulate them on taking that first step on admitting that there is a problem'. Most CLOs would then explain the range of options for the patron to 'find out the assistance they require' and 'go through what they would like to do'. These options include to 'give them a brochure to read', 'offer them assistance with the Gambling Helpline', 'recommend some Gambling Help services', 'let them know that you could get a self-exclusion', and in the case of two CLOs, 'offer a monitoring service'. However, a few CLOs would reportedly only provide counselling information or move straight to self-exclusion.

Two CLOs noted occasions when they had offered advice and options to patrons who had approached them, but the patrons had not wished to take any immediate action. One was when 'a casino worker (said) I should probably go to get some help. I said if you think you should, you probably should. ... I sort of told him, you know who you need to go to. You work in the industry, you know how it works'. The other was when 'nothing came out of it, I gave her information but she didn't self-exclude herself, but I sat down with her and gave the options'.

- **Provide counselling information**

Nearly all CLOs noted they would provide the patron with counselling information. They would 'put them onto Relationships Australia', 'give the number for one of the gambling helplines', 'offer them the brochures for gambling, the hotline, ring them up and make an appointment if they wanted to speak to a counsellor from here', 'refer them to (counsellor's name) from Lifeline', 'give them the cards with the phone numbers on them and advise them to give them a call', and 'say we can arrange counselling for him to talk to someone'.

One CLO also noted he would also explain to the patron that:

'... through our company website there's an email address for direct contact with (a high profile AFL player) who is our RSG ambassador. ... it's been well documented that he's had extensive gambling issues ... basically blew \$3m on the punt. I guess he's as much as he can be a reformed gambling addict at the moment. So he's behind the RSG campaign and there's direct access to him through our company website. ... He goes and does these talks at national conferences and puts a different perspective on the hotel managers regarding what it's like to be an addict.'

- **Individual case management**

Three hotel CLOs noted their venue offers to monitor a patron's gambling with their consent. One explained 'we've sort of got to counsel them, not that we're qualified, but just ask them if they're alright. We're sensitive about it, not like, you did all your money etc. Just if they're alright, if their family are okay, that they're not taking food off the table sort of thing'. Another gave a more detailed explanation:

... 'if they believe they don't have a serious problem but they want us to monitor it, we also offer that to them as well. Basically what we do is we set up a timeframe and a program, like an action plan. The action we take depends on what their behaviour is. If we find that their behaviour is that they're spending too much money, we ration out the money they're getting from us. But if they come in with \$100 in \$50 notes and we change it for them, we actually monitor that sort of thing and we believe that once they've reached a certain target we can say, you've reached your target now I think it's time to go. ... This is my way of saying there are options there besides excluding yourself from the hotel or from the actual gaming areas, there are other options we can do'

A third CLO, a hotel manager, took a more informal approach to monitoring patrons at risk and gave the following example of a patron contemplating self-exclusion:

'...he was off on sick pay, compensation, and he was getting bored with himself and apparently he had a bit of a spree uptown ... and I said do you want me to do this (self-exclusion) or I'm just going to kick your butt and tell you to go home and he respected me and he does. And now he walks in and he says ... I've only got \$20, and I said I'm watching you and if you're in there any longer I said I'll tell you.'

- **Suggest and implement self-exclusion**

All CLOs noted self-exclusion as an option they would identify for the patron. Some would just note this option first and then provide more details if the patron wanted to know. Others would explain the entire procedure so the patron could make a more informed decision, with one explaining they would:

'... grab a self-exclusion form, discuss that option with them and obviously discuss the ramifications if they were to break the exclusion. You need to be upfront with people about how serious an exclusion form is. ... And just discuss the options with them in the exclusion ... and the timeframe they have to cancel that.'

Some CLOs would 'ask them if they want to sit down and fill out the (self-exclusion) pack straight away', while others would ask 'if they would like to go through with it or if they would like to think about it or like some more information'. Of concern was the CLO who seemed to have misinterpreted the 24 hour cooling-off period, explaining that 'before I did the exclusion I'd ask them to think about it for 24 hours, come back then and do it because they're legal obligations. ... you must go home and spend 24 hours thinking about it then come back and if you still want to do it we'll do it'.

Several CLOs noted the importance of privacy and discretion, saying 'we usually take them somewhere private' or 'pull them aside' to an area where 'it's a bit more private and don't have any public involved'. Several CLOs also noted they would provide counselling information when a patron self-excluded.

In some cases, a patron approach entails a specific request for self-exclusion. An example of this and the CLO's response was when:

'She came up and said that she thought she had a problem. ... she was very edgy and upset. ... She was a regular. And she really didn't want to wait around. She wanted to get it over and

done with as quickly as possible. So I just went through the process with her and she'd actually been through the process once before at another venue ... and she said I know, I know, I just want to go, I want to get out of here. I went through it and she actually brought the photo back in the next day.'

Two CLOs noted instances of when the patron had been to counselling first and had apparently been advised to self-exclude and to bring photographs of themselves with them. One example was when:

'... she said that she wanted to exclude herself so we sat her down and did it all. We ... went on the internet and it actually had all the places where all the venues were that had gaming machines, so he (the manager) printed that out for her ... because she wasn't sure if she had them all or not. ... she was already seeking help because she'd been to a number of venues before she came here so she'd already been to counselling as well. ... she had a couple of photos. I think the Lifeline people had done that for her....'

Another CLO commented that:

'I'd say 99 per cent of the people who come in, have come in with Lifeline. ... (the counsellor) brings them around. ... Then we go through the paperwork with them and make sure they understand everything. If we can support them in any way, we've always made that known to them The big thing is to let them know and to congratulate them. We're very big on that. You've taken a wonderful step, that sort of thing. Support is big. Because it's so embarrassing for them.'

In contrast, one CLO's response was to first refer the patron to a counselling agency to implement self-exclusion, explaining that 'one lady came up to me with tears in her eyes and was almost crying and said she had to get a self-exclusion. ... She was asking how to go about it. I gave her the Lifeline number'.

4.3.3 Hotel CLO Knowledge of Procedures

Overall, the CLOs seemed confident they knew what procedures they would use when a patron approached them to ask for assistance with a gambling problem. For some CLOs, these procedures were prescribed by the hotel chain they worked for, where 'we're very much a procedures driven company'; for others, the procedure had 'just evolved on its own'. As noted earlier, one CLO mistakenly thought the patron had to wait 24 hours before self-exclusion, while another did not appear to act immediately on a request, but to refer the patron to a counselling agency first.

Several CLOs commented on the usefulness of the self-exclusion flow charts to guide them through the self-exclusion process. Some related comments were 'it's all got flow charts which are very easy to follow', 'there's a step by step guide there for the manager on duty to follow' and 'not having a flow chart or not having that assistance, it probably would be a bit of a challenge for me. That's why I never worry about it because I know I've always got that on hand'. For this reason, most CLOs felt that the self-exclusion process was appropriate, being 'fine', 'straight forward', 'very good' and 'quite simple'.

4.3.4 Challenges for Hotel CLOs in Responding to Patrons who Request Assistance

While most CLOs appeared comfortable responding to patrons who request assistance for a gambling problem, many noted particular challenges.

- **Comfort level of CLOs**

When the hotel CLOs were asked about how comfortable and equipped they felt in responding to patrons who requested assistance, responses varied. Most felt very comfortable, saying 'I don't think it would be a problem', 'I'm fine with doing it' and 'I have no problem at all'. This was because 'it's just helping somebody out really', it is 'just another job', 'we take the seriousness of gambling, very seriously', and 'if you don't do it, then I'm not exercising my duty of care. We have an obligation to protect our patrons without being assaulted by someone else or being damaged themselves'. One CLO also noted that 'for all the time you've worked in gaming that you can see it does do harm, it does make you feel good you can help someone get their life back on track a little bit'.

However, a few others noted that patron discomfort, particularly during a self-exclusion, can also affect the CLO processing the self-exclusion. One said 'I felt upset for her because of the position she was in'. Another noted that 'sometimes you feel a little bit uneasy as to what to say'.

Some CLOs noted the challenge of not being a trained counsellor where:

'... it's hard for us because we're not counsellors and we don't understand people's psyches and all that stuff; you sort of feel a bit overwhelmed with somebody's major emotional problems and mental problems and I just work here. You feel a bit overwhelmed yourself. ... It is challenging yes. Because you really do want to guide the person in the right direction ... so you want to do the best that you can. but you're still kind of unequipped.'

Similarly, another explained that:

'I'm almost acting as a counsellor ... It probably should be someone else's role. After all we've got enough responsibility. ... say you came into me today and want to discuss your gambling problem and what you can do about it. It's not really fair for me if I've been taking your money for the last three years and say sorry.'

Interestingly, some CLOs had experienced gambling problems within their own families and this seemed to have built compassion because 'I know the effect it can have' and 'I've seen how detrimental it can be to their personal life'.

- **Comfort level of patrons**

Another issue raised by the CLOs was the patron feeling embarrassed where 'I'd say all of them say how embarrassing it is to come in and do it'. Patrons can also be emotional, where 'I've sat out here for 2½ - 3 hours with a particular person who's self-excluded and they're emotional and in tears'. As another explained, 'obviously if someone is asking you for help then they may be in a pretty insecure emotional state so you need to tread carefully'. One commented 'I think it's an intimidating process but I don't think that's avoidable. Well, it takes a big swallow of pride to say I want to self-exclude'.

One CLO particularly mentioned the need for a photograph as a source of patron embarrassment. This CLO explained 'they sort of step back when you ask them to bring in a photo. ... that's a little bit confronting saying I want to take your photo'. However, another noted that 'Lifeline always has their photo done. They bring photos in. They have the forms done, we just go through it again with them. They've got a very good setup that way'.

A few CLOs noted they try to lessen the patron's embarrassment by:

'... thank(ing) them for coming forward because they're helping themselves and us at the same time. You have to make them feel really comfortable with the process so that when they

walk away they know they've done something good, rather than maybe feeling they've forced themselves or someone has forced them to do it.'

Similarly, another noted that 'the biggest thing is commend the person on what they've done and tell them it's been a very big step'.

Patrons' embarrassment can also be eased by being able to exclude from multiple venues at once. This was mentioned by one CLO who noted 'we've got four hotels, so if they want to sign up to all four, we can do it for them. ... It just makes it a little bit easier for them. ... They're relieved that don't have to go somewhere else and do it again'.

A few CLOs commented the situation was less awkward for both parties if they knew the patron well, whereas 'a complete stranger would probably be a little bit different'. One related how:

'I'd been at that hotel for just over ten years, knew her for the whole time so really for me ... I didn't feel pressured at all. ... just spoke to her like she was a friend. ... and I think because I'd been in her life for so long every day that she felt comfortable talking to me about it.'

The situation also appeared less awkward if a counsellor accompanied the patron or if the patron had self-excluded before. As one CLO explained:

'The counsellor brought them in as support and we sat down and filled out the form. It's a very big step for the person to take and they need as much support as they can get. ... The last guy I put through, he'd obviously been through a couple of counselling sessions and I don't think I was the only venue he was excluded from and I don't think I was the first venue, so he was pretty good with it.'

- **Monitoring breaches of self-exclusion**

The hotels appeared to have relatively few people self-excluded from their venues. This ranged from none to a maximum of a dozen. Some CLOs spoke of systems for helping staff to recognise self-excludees who might re-enter the venue. Some had 'the photos where the staff see it every day', while another 'encourages the staff to go through the photos every night if they have got time'. Another said he regularly asks staff to 'look and regularly sign off and they get up to date'.

Even so, monitoring for breaches can be 'quite a challenge'. As one commented, 'even here, unless you're looking at photos so regularly that it's imprinted in your head, people may come in and you just miss it'. Reasons given were that 'most of the people are excluding from a non-regular clientele base', 'one of them didn't want to produce a photo', one 'had a big long beard. (If) he shaved it off and had a haircut, you wouldn't recognise him', 'it would be hard in a bigger establishment', and because 'staff change pretty regularly'.

One CLO also commented on the logistical difficulties of monitoring patrons who exclude only from certain areas in the venue, explaining that:

'...basically we have our TAB on one side, our gaming room on the other side and in between you've got the TAB and Keno terminals ... if you had a stand alone gaming room in your hotel where you had to walk into another room ... that's a lot easier to monitor because it's one area and not separate areas. ... if that person comes back to the venue, we're having to have eyes in the back of our head and watch every single thing that they do. I've got enough to do.'

- **Deterrents to self-exclusion**

The CLOs raised some deterrent to self-exclusion. In the opinion of one CLO, a deterrent was the time period, where:

‘... it’s automatically five years and you can apply to have it revoked after one year. ... It could be fairly off-putting. And it’s a \$3,000 fine if they come in. I suppose it’s good. It stops them, discourages them from coming in, but maybe scares them off from self-excluding in the first place.’

Another deterrent was that ‘there are quite a few people who don’t actually know it exists’, with some CLOs advocating better publicity of self-exclusion and one commenting that ‘commercial advertising on TV definitely works’. A third deterrent was that ‘a lot of venues won’t exclude people; it’s revenue’.

4.3.5 Perceived Helpfulness of Hotel Procedures

All CLOs who commented on the helpfulness of current procedures felt self-exclusion was useful. While they could not comment on whether it assisted patrons to resolve their gambling problems, they did note the sense of relief it seemed to provide. One said ‘it seems to be a lot of relief you feel from people when they actually voice it and want to go through with a self-exclusion’ and another that ‘I see a lot of relief that they’ve made their decision, once all the paperwork’s done ... and you can see the weight off their shoulders’. Another noted that self-exclusion appears to be a step towards recovery, as ‘when they are coming forward, I think they are feeling good about doing something good for themselves and that it needs to happen and they’re on the road to making amends’.

Two CLOs commented on the financial benefits for patrons of self-excluding. One said ‘they profit financially from it. Hopefully it will help them overcome their financial problems’. Similarly, another explained:

‘Self-exclusion is a good process for sure. Especially in this particular environment, it’s a low socio economic area and there are a lot of battlers out there and it seems to be when times get harder, they gamble more to try and make that deficit up, which obviously is not right, but they’re in the position that they see that as an opportunity to make more money.’

4.3.6 Hotel CLOs Suggestions for Improvements

When asked about improvements to current practices and procedures for when patrons approach to seek assistance for a gambling problem, the interviewees all focused on self-exclusion. Most CLOs could not suggest any improvements to the self-exclusion system, saying ‘it’s quite simple’, ‘I’m happy with the process; it’s certainly very easy to go through with someone’ and ‘I don’t think it could be improved’. However, other CLOs identified some potential improvements.

- **Need for area wide exclusions**

Four CLOs raised the need for area wide exclusions. In some cases, this was out of concern for the patron, to save them the time and embarrassment of visiting multiple venues. As one explained:

‘... people find it too hard and too embarrassing to do it. ... If you could network all the pubs together it would be great ... so they didn’t have to go to every single venue. I’ve known for a fact that some people have stopped when they’ve done half the venues because it got too embarrassing and they know which ones they’re not signed off on and then they go to them.’

For others, area-wide exclusions would help to remove temptation for people excluded from only some venues, with one suggesting ‘a radius on it from your house to within 20 kilometres’. Another commented ‘if you’re excluded from one, you should be excluded from

all. Especially here because we've got so many hotels and so many gaming venues. If you're excluded here then you can walk 10 metres up the road and still play there'.

For others, area-wide exclusions would help keep a level playing field amongst venues in the area and raise confidence that self-exclusion would be effective. As one CLO said in relation to a patron who had self-excluded, 'I really don't know if there's a happy ending to all of that or not. They could just have gone to another hotel and kept playing'.

- **More publicity about self-exclusion**

As noted above, some CLOs felt self-exclusion could be publicised more as some people 'are unaware that the process is there. ... I'd have the self-exclusions brochures which I haven't even seen. I'd have them in the pokie room. I'd have them in the main bar area. I'd have them in the toilets'.

- **Requirement to attend counselling**

One CLO considered that counselling should be mandatory for people who self-exclude, commenting:

'... when people are asking to be self-excluded they're asking for help. If you're just writing a number and contact details for a Gambling Help service on that piece of paper to them, they're not getting the help that they need. It's up to them to contact them obviously, it's not a requirement that they contact them. I think that maybe it should be, or when someone comes in and self-excludes and the staff member calls the help service and gets them to come out and make a time, then go in so that you've made that first step for them.'

- **Photographs should be mandatory**

As one CLO commented, 'if they're going to go through the process of excluding themselves and making us help them, then ... it should be that they have to produce a photo'.

4.4 HOTEL CLO APPROACHES TO PATRONS WHO SHOW SIGNS OF PROBLEM GAMBLING

The CLO interviews asked about various aspects of approaching patrons in the venue who show signs of problem gambling. Their responses are summarised below in terms of what signs hotel CLOs thought might indicate a patron has a gambling problem, what signs would prompt them to approach a patron, procedures they would use, associated knowledge, challenges they face and perceived helpfulness of these procedures.

4.4.1 Hotel CLO Identification of Signs of Possible Problem Gambling

The CLOs were asked if they thought they could recognise if someone is a problem gambler or at risk, and if so, how. The vast majority agreed they could recognise signs of problem gambling and identified several potential indicators, although some tempered their comments by saying 'it is really a blurry line', 'it's a hard call', or similar. Interestingly, one CLO's response was that 'there're a lot of people who have problems with gambling' and another that 'I would say pretty much everyone who comes in here because they come in every day'. The identified indicators are listed below, but it must be noted that several hotel CLOs referred to combinations, rather than individual, signs.

- **Irritability and aggression**

The most commonly mentioned indicator, noted by the vast majority of CLOs, was irritability and aggression, particularly after losing. Some related comments included ‘if they start punching the machine or yelling at it or hitting the buttons really hard’; ‘when people are agitated because they’ve lost too much money’; ‘being aggressive after losing is the biggest thing ... cursing, swearing when they’re walking out the door’; ‘their sense of desperation, they’re getting frustrated or getting angry’; and ‘they’re blowing up, hitting the machines, growling that the payouts aren’t right’. Several CLOs recounted incidents when this had happened, including ‘a gentleman recently that poured water down five poker machines’ and ‘one gentleman spitting on the machines’.

- **Looking stressed or upset**

A few CLOs also noted a sign was looking upset or stressed even if the patron was not irritable or angry. One referred to this as ‘just being really hyper, emotional state like they’re really rushing backwards and forwards’ and another as ‘all upset or frustrated’. A third recounted ‘I had one customer talking to me pretty desperately about how much they’d lost ... They will be a bit more upset’.

- **Erroneous and irrational verbalisations**

Two CLOs noted talking to the machines and themselves as possible signs of problem gambling, where patrons are ‘just sort of talking to themselves and you can notice it’ or ‘patting the machine ... putting a real emphasis on it, like (saying) c’mon c’mon. You can tell that they’re betting money that they shouldn’t be betting’.

- **Marked change in behaviour**

Two interviewees discussed changes in patron behaviour, where ‘their personality would change and you would probably see that if they were a happy person, they would possibly be down and not as friendly or chatting to you’. The other recalled:

‘I’ve had customers who came here when we first opened, they were so friendly, they were so warm; you’d have a chat now to those same people, they focus on the machine and the machine alone. They count how many games they’ve had before they get free spins, how many games they get before it pays. They get very focused on a machine and they get to the stage where they don’t even speak to you.’

- **Increasing their gambling expenditure**

One CLO in a hotel with mainly regular patrons noted ‘you get to notice how much money they generally spend. And if I noticed that they were increasing their bets, or they were changing a lot more money than they usually would do, that would be an indication that they were starting to develop a problem’.

- **Gambling very regularly and/or for long periods**

Several CLOs identified gambling regularly and/or for lengthy periods as a sign of gambling problems, where the patron is ‘just constantly in there’, ‘putting all their money in every day’; ‘gambling for long sessions’ and ‘three to four hours for five days out of the week’.

- **Gambling for longer than intended/chasing losses**

One CLO specifically mentioned chasing behaviour, because ‘you can see that they’re chasing their losses. ... It’s no longer fun. ... They’re not reacting to the machine, they’re just

in there pushing the buttons’. Another noted an indicator was when a patron might ‘come up to you five times and say, this is the last one, don’t let me get more (change) and then still continue to come up’.

- **Trying to obtain extra money to gamble with**

Five CLOs noted trying to get extra gambling money as an indicator. This included trying to borrow money, that is, ‘people who ask others within the venue to loan them \$20 or whatever’. It also included ‘going to the car and raiding for change’ and those who ‘come with all their piggy bank and ask it to be changed into \$1 coins’.

- **Multiple ATM withdrawals**

Three CLOs felt strongly that multiple ATM withdrawals were a definite sign. Related comments were ‘if they’re returning to the ATM time after time and going straight back to the pokie room I would say yes, they have a problem’, ‘going back and forward to the ATM machines, that’s a dead giveaway’ and ‘just backwards and forwards to the ATM. That’s a huge one for me’.

- **Changing a lot of money or changing money often**

While several interviewees noted that gambling expenditure alone is not an indicator, one noted a sign is ‘putting lots and lots of money through and getting frustrated. They keep coming back and asking for money (to be changed)’.

- **Putting big wins back into a machine as soon as possible**

Three CLOs identified the following scenarios as indicators of a problem. The first was ‘if they win it on a Monday and then come back in Tuesday morning and cash the cheque back to us and blow it all, then I’d say there’s a bit of a problem there’. The second explained ‘normally anything over \$500 we’ll ask them do you want all that in cash or do you want me to write a cheque? ... Some of them say no, I want the whole lot and then they’ll just put it back through. Sometimes, very rarely but sometimes we’ll go up to a client in there and just say look, you’ve got to stop’. The third commented ‘you’ll see people who are winning and they’ll have \$800-\$900 on the machine and keep on playing. Next thing you look around and they’ve got nothing. To me that has to be an addiction’.

- **Putting lots of notes into a machine**

Two CLOs mentioned this, with one expressing it as ‘just loading note after note into the machine’ and the other as ‘just feeding the machine with \$5 bets all the time’.

- **Being overly attached to a particular machine**

One CLO felt patrons ‘stopping other people from using the machine that they feel might be going to pay them out’ is a sign of possible problem gambling. Similarly, another said ‘the only way we can see if someone does have a problem is when they get set on one machine and if anyone’s on that machine when they come here, they stand behind them and want their machine. ... They do try and intimidate other people getting off their machine’.

- **Saying they cannot afford it**

Three CLOs noted another indicator is patrons saying they cannot afford to be gambling, ‘saying things like, I can’t really afford this’, ‘people saying that they’re battling to make ends meet’ and ‘I shouldn’t be doing this, I’ve just blown my rent money and my electricity money which I’ve had people say quite a few times’.

- **Drinking heavily**

One CLO noted that ‘if they’re consuming a lot of alcohol’ this might be a sign of a gambling problem.

- **Neglecting children**

Another CLO mentioned ‘things like children hanging around or kids in cars’ as an indicator.

- **Trying to reserve a machine overnight**

One interviewee, who implied the following had occurred, noted a sign was ‘being the last to leave at night and leave the reserve sign on and hope that the reserve sign is on the next morning when they come back’.

- **Wanting to access the venue when it is closed**

Two CLOs recalled patrons who had knocked on the door when the venue was closed, wanting to come in to gamble. One said ‘the reason I say I identify him as a problem is maybe during the night-time when we’re closed he’ll be locked out and he’ll come and knock on the door and want to play the poker machines for half an hour while you’re doing your cleaning. That’s an urgent need to play’. The other told of ‘a lady ... who was knocking at the door at 10 to 10 every morning’.

4.4.2 Indicators that Would Prompt Hotel CLOs to Approach a Patron

The hotel CLOs were asked ‘Of the indicators you have identified, which would prompt you to approach a patron to assist them?’ About one-third of the CLOs indicated they would not approach a patron at all about their gambling, with one noting ‘no, I’m not doing that, no. Mate, you won’t find many people who would do it. ... Mate, if I was directed by my company or by the government that I must act on people’s behaviours and stuff in gaming rooms, I would leave the industry.’ The remaining CLOs nominated scenarios where they would approach a patron, but for many this was only if a patron became aggressive, when the CLO would intervene out of concern for security or disturbance to other patrons. In all, seven different scenarios were identified as prompting a response by at least one CLO interviewed.

- **Aggressive, abusive and violent behaviour**

As noted above, the most common scenario that would prompt a response, noted by about half of all CLOs, was if a patron was ‘getting angry at the machine, getting frustrated, talking to the machine, beating up the machine’, ‘aggressive behaviour, either verbally or physical to the machine or other patrons’, and ‘if they’re disturbing the entire room and everyone’s going, what’s going on over there?’.

- **Evidence of gambling impacting on the family**

One CLO noted that ‘the main one ... would be the children one. Poking their heads through the door, getting the attention of their parents’. In a similar vein, another said ‘I would need a family member to approach me about that, for me to feel totally comfortable with talking to that person about it’.

- **If a patron was crying and upset**

Two CLOs said they would approach a patron if they were ‘upset’, with one saying ‘I’d have to see them very distressed about the amount of money they’ve lost, getting agitated’.

- **Saying they cannot afford to gamble**

Two interviewees noted they would approach patrons who said they could not afford to gamble, ‘saying, this is my rent money’ or ‘I’m not having a very good day or this money was meant to pay the rent, or something like that’.

- **Trying to obtain extra money to gamble with**

A few CLOs noted they would approach patrons asking others for money, but this seemed more to protect other patrons from being badgered.

- **Putting big wins back into a machine as soon as possible**

One CLO had approached a patron about his gambling when this ‘person had a payout of \$1,000 and just put the whole lot back in’.

- **Always at the venue or long gambling sessions**

Five CLOs noted they would approach if ‘I noticed that someone was continually here’, ‘if someone was here and was still here after nine or eight hours’, ‘if they’re spending a lot of time on them and you know they must need the money’, and ‘if I really know that they don’t have the money to spend, they’re here every day spending all their money, they’re trying to get their money back in that sense, like playing all day’. Surprisingly, one CLO said they would approach a patron based on ‘the length of time they spend in the gaming area - in excess of two hours’.

4.4.3 Procedures Used by Hotel CLOs to Approach a Patron

Several CLOs gave examples of what they had actually done in this situation, while the remainder discussed what they would do.

Procedures CLOs have used

Fourteen CLOs gave examples of how they have approached patrons when they had concerns about their gambling. These instances are detailed in the quotes below, with the first three referring to approaches when patrons are aggressive:

‘Obviously if it’s a verbal or it becomes physically aggressive, quite often we ask them to leave the venue. ... you’re going have to leave tonight, you’re more than welcome to come back tomorrow and a few of them are willing to sit down and talk to us’.

‘Definitely if they were getting quite angry at the machine and quite noisy and basically disrupting my other patrons (and) my staff ... I would go over and try and calm them down and just get a feel of what they’re like. Obviously if they became very abrupt and rude and aggressive I would ask them to leave the venue. But if they were quite okay to talk to, I would give them a little card that we have which has all the information for gambling anonymous and gambling helplines and things, I would probably offer one of those to them and tell them to have a read through and let them know that I was here if they needed to talk about anything. I would approach it in a nice way, not go up and say, you’ve been too rowdy out you go.’

‘I usually try and get a bit friendly with them first and then I just sort of say, I have to ask, are you spending money you are happy to be spending, you’re comfortable spending this money? And they’ll just say yes or no and if they say no I’ll just say, I don’t really want you to continue to gamble today. I wouldn’t necessarily exclude them then but it gives them something to think about.’

Other CLOs described how they would have to know the patron reasonably well before they would approach them. Three examples of this are quoted below:

‘... a person had a payout of \$1,000 and just put the whole lot back in. ... He was a little bit embarrassed but he knew me quite well and took it in his stride and left. ... if I didn’t know them well I wouldn’t, but this guy is here nearly every day, we’ve gotten to know him.’

‘... she’s a local and everyone calls her mum. ... I have spoken to her and asked her does she feel she has a problem. She says no, she can afford it ... and she has exhibited some of those behaviours so that’s what prompted me to ask her in the first place. Most of my regulars, I’ll have a sit down and have a chat. ... we are like a family especially with our locals. We actually like to look after them.’

‘We have one lady we are keeping a close eye on and we limit her time in here. ... we get along; we’re pretty close with all of our customers who come in because we’re only a small hotel. And she has advised me that she has excluded herself from other hotels. I asked if she would like to exclude her from here. She said at the moment, I don’t see it being a problem. ... if she’s in there and not winning and we’re about to close, we’re closing now. ... She won’t come back for a week or so.’

A hotel manager who asks to mind the wallets or pay-packets of some regular patrons when they are gambling explained that:

‘... those people in particular are the ones now that have come to a relationship expecting that I will put something behind the bar for them. ... They’ll get it when they leave. ... Their pay-packet which has a lot of money in it and I’m pretty stern with that. I’ve made a lot of friends in the area because of this way, especially from the elderly, indigenous; they’ve got to have some fun too and as long as you control that then that’s, whatever I can do to help them, that’s fine. ... It’s not very difficult to figure out that something is going wrong especially when I see ... yellow envelopes and I know they’re pay checks, so I might ask are you sure you want to game today? Tell them to go home. Most of the times I get a very weird reaction to that, like people will say yeah, they know what I mean. ... And sometimes ... I get mind your own business, I get that a lot as well.’

This same hotel manager continued:

‘If I see a person that I know is on social security on a machine longer than two hours, I’ll ask them what they’re doing. Are you sure you know what you’re doing? And eventually they catch on and then there are people who don’t want any help and it doesn’t really matter what I say.’

Similarly, another CLO recalled:

‘...she’d been hit by a car and she got compensation. And she was blowing her money ... and all the others would hang around her and she would have to give them money ... and I would just tell (her) to go home, you’re not putting any more money in the machines, you’re going home. How much money have you got on you? Leave me your wallet here and I’ll often throw wallets in the safe. ... how much money have you got, sign for this, you’ve got \$200, I’m taking \$180, here’s \$20 for a cab home, come back tomorrow and get the rest.’

Another CLO described how an approach might differ between a gaming machine and TAB gambler:

‘... on gaming machines ... generally that person will be by themselves in that area. The TAB’s a little bit different. Generally people punt in groups. Certainly approaching a patron, you’re approaching two or three of his friends regarding it getting a bit out of hand and it can be intimidating, especially for female managers or female staff. So I would step beside that person on the way to the toilet or on the way to the bar and try and get them when they’re by themselves and address that issue with them at that point rather than in a group of five, six people.’

Five CLOs recounted instances where their approach had not made any difference or had resulted in the venue losing the person's patronage.

'I have gone to someone and asked if they needed help and they said no, they were fine. That was purely my own thoughts that they might and of course they never came back again. They just went to another venue.'

'... a lady in one venue that I was at who was knocking at the door at 10 to 10 every morning ... we pulled her aside one day, and I said do you really think you should be doing this on the poker machines every day? What about your family. And obviously it wasn't the right approach but she just said it's my f***ing money, I'll do what I like with it, and I never saw her again. That's a perfect example of how you can cost your own business a \$1,000 a week by trying to do the right thing.'

'We have a guy who comes here we believe has a minor problem. I don't mean he's got a full blown addiction, he has a minor problem and he said I can handle it, I can control it, I know what I'm doing. I can afford this.'

'Yeah, I speak with them from time to time. It's usually a negative response from those people. They believe they've got it under control.'

'... she exhibited all those behavioural traits ... she was coming in at lunchtime while she was at work and ... just unload a lot of money and just be real fidgety and stressed out. Initially I ... asked her if she could come and have a chat with me ... I just tried to put her at ease as much as I could and I just said, I've been noticing some of the gambling behaviour that you're displaying and it's a little bit worrying for me. Is there anything you'd like to talk about? Is there any sort of problems that you think you might have with gambling a little bit too much with the money that you have and she was just a flat out, no, no. For me that was my first time actually having a chat with someone on my own. I would say it was a failure. Definitely! I don't think until people recognise the problem, they aren't ready to talk about it ... she didn't really want to be there and have this conversation with me so she was trying to exit as quickly as possible and she basically shook her head and said everything's fine, and thank you for your enquiry and that sort of thing. She wasn't aggro but I think more she was more stunned that it was visible to an outside party. ... Never saw her again.'

Procedures CLOs would use

The remaining seven CLOs speculated on what they would do if they felt they needed to approach a patron about a gambling problem. Reasons for not having approached a patron before included 'I would just assume that I would get told to mind my own business' and 'I've never had the problem arise where I thought somebody was that bad'. Another explained 'I have spoken to people outside of work where I've given them a scenario like that. And people's responses to me have been, well of course I'd be angry with you. Now I'm not going to invoke a situation like that unless I am totally 110% sure of what that problem is'.

The approaches the CLOs would use included 'if they were at the bar looking distressed, yes I would give them a brochure and ask them if they'd like to have a talk about it' and asking 'is everything okay at home? I noticed you've been here spending a lot of time here'. The others described how they would approach in more detail:

'... pull them aside and be direct to them. ... Things like, we've been monitoring your behaviour the last week or so. Your demeanour changes when you're having a loss. We've overheard you say this, that or whatever. ... They've got a problem, is there anything we can do to help?'

'... ask the person if they would like to step aside for a tick, just somewhere quiet where I could chat to them I would ask them why they were acting in that manner. Whether

something has upset them or so on. Again, trying to sound the person out themselves to see what the problem is. You might have someone ... that has nothing to do with a gambling problem so you have to be very, very careful not to interfere where you shouldn't interfere. ... It would be something that I would monitor further and I think that you would be very, very silly to treat that any other way.'

'I would ask, do you think you have a bit of an issue here? And ... point out the areas on the wall that we've got all through the gaming room and outside if they wish. Offer our assistance to a degree too. If they need other information, we'd certainly try and help them with that.'

'Those little hints they drop. I would probably monitor them and if it was a constant thing like if they were as a recurring comment or if they were in there for hours on end or days on end showing signs of stress, I might suggest can we have a little chat. Is everything okay? I've noticed you been spending a lot of time here.'

4.4.4 Hotel CLO Knowledge of Procedures

While the CLOs were very aware of procedures to follow when a patron approached them to ask for assistance for a gambling problem, there were clearly less specific procedures around CLOs approaching patrons of concern. Responses varied by the CLO's preference, signs the patron was exhibiting, the CLO's knowledge of the patron, what they had been advised in their training, and previous experiences when they have approached a patron. It was not that CLOs did not know what to do in this situation; rather that there was a lack of identifiable procedures to follow.

4.4.5 Challenges for Hotel CLOs in Approaching Patrons About a Possible Gambling Problem

Several challenges were raised by the CLOs around approaching patrons in the venue.

- **Difficulties of recognising gambling problems amongst patrons**

About one-third of the CLOs noted the difficulties of knowing whether a patron had a gambling problem or not. For most, this was because they do not know a person's financial status. Related comments included 'you don't know how much they earn', 'I don't know that they don't have \$50m in the bank and are quite willing to put money after money in there', and 'what I might think is excessive might be someone's lunch money. ... Some of the labouring miners are on a \$120,000 a year'. For another CLO, the patron might have 'just had a bad day'.

Three CLOs were adamant they could not assume someone had a gambling problem unless the patron directly said so. One noted 'as they say in our RSG training, we can't assume that they do have a problem unless they mention it. And if we assume that they're in trouble, we can get ourselves in trouble'. The others said 'you can't assume unless they tell you' and 'unless they specifically tell you ... I've got a gambling problem, help me, there's not much you can do'.

- **Getting problem gamblers to acknowledge and act on the problem**

About one-quarter of the CLOs felt that approaching a patron was of little use if they were not willing to acknowledge and act on a gambling problem, as 'some people aren't that interested in speaking to you at all, nuh, I'm fine mate, no problems at all'. Other comments were that 'they sort of try and ignore you', 'very rarely will they admit it', 'they may not recognise it and may not want to deal with it', 'they believe they've got it under control', and 'there are people who don't want any help and it doesn't really matter what I say'. As another

commented, 'I can identify people, but you can't always identify whether they want help or not. They are two different things'.

- **Worried the patron might be angry, aggressive, insulted**

About one-quarter of the CLOs were deterred from approaching patrons because they felt it would cause an angry or negative response. Expected responses included 'you have no idea mate so piss off', 'fireworks', 'pretty cranky', 'it kind of makes it uglier, the situation', and 'it can sometimes make them a bit more aggressive and withdraw'. As one noted, 'it's never nice' and another that 'it is risky for the individual (staff) involved'.

- **Invasion of privacy**

About one-fifth of the CLOs were concerned that approaching a patron was an invasion of privacy that would cause offence, saying it is 'prying into people's lives', 'invading people's privacy' and 'none of our business'. Another noted 'some of them say, I've got a lot of money and this is how I choose to spend it. This is my entertainment'. Similarly, another did not want to be judgemental, saying 'maybe there's something you could be doing better with your money, but once again it's a hard call to make ... without taking a moral high ground. Who's to say what I do with my money is any better or more constructive?'.

- **Do not want to lose the patron's business**

About one-fifth of the CLOs were concerned an approach risked losing the patron's business. As one explained, 'you're either going to get into a situation where you're going to help somebody or you're going to move the problem somewhere else'. Another was very blunt, saying 'for that to occur you're losing revenue. Why cut your own throat?'. As noted in Section 4.4.3, others recounted instances where they had approached a patron and the patron had never returned. Another CLO was concerned that approaching patrons leads to a competitive disadvantage as 'you've got 70-80 per cent of people who are trying to be compliant and doing the utmost according to the law and you've got the other people who are always trying to sneak the extra dollar. It's pure greed'.

- **Requires staff confidence and experience**

Five CLOs commented that approaching a patron can be intimidating and required confidence and experience, as 'it really is confrontational going up to someone saying I think you've got a problem with gambling'. One explained 'it can be intimidating, especially for female managers or female staff. ... it just comes with experience and maturity just being able to deal with situations like that'. Another expanded on this point, explaining that:

'...they're half the age of these people, they're walking up to people like their parents and telling them they shouldn't be doing that. And you're not going to sit there and tell me while you're having a couple of vinos and a good time on the machine that you're not going to take exception to this young lass here telling me ...'

Several CLOs discussed how uncomfortable they would feel approaching patrons about a gambling problem, with one saying 'I'm not good at talking to people about it. ... I'd never approach them. That's just me'

- **Worried about legal ramifications**

Two interviewees were particularly concerned about legal ramifications. For one, trying to assist someone who had a problem but had not self-excluded was fraught, because:

‘Until you’ve gone through that self-exclusion process where you’ve got the actual stuff behind you, till you actually say to them, Freddy, you can’t be in here because you self-excluded yourself from the facility ... I think you’re sort of stretched a little bit. If they come in and say they’re struggling, then the next day you come in and say you told me you’re struggling, should you really be in here, do you want to leave, they can probably have you for discrimination.’

One interviewee noted ‘as they say in our RSG training, we can’t assume that they do have a problem unless they mention it. ... As they say in training, just say there was someone who did have a lot of money and you assumed that they didn’t, then they could have you for defamation’.

- **Difficulties of venue exclusions**

A few CLOs noted the only mechanism to involuntarily stop a person gambling was a venue exclusion and this posed a number of challenges. As one explained, ‘actually getting a venue based exclusion is an us and them sort of thing. ... A lot of venues are very reluctant to do it because it does alienate the customers. You say one bad thing about a hotel, 20 other people know about it.’

Others felt a venue exclusion would not be effective in curtailing a person’s gambling; they would just go to other venues. However, two situations where a venue exclusion had been or would be applied were identified. One noted ‘the biggest thing with the demographics here is children being left unattended outside. Their parents or guardians come here and gamble. And that’s one thing that we do take into account strongly if we were going to initiate an exclusion’. The other was when a patron continued to breach a self-exclusion, so the venue took out a venue exclusion.

A few CLOs had tried alternative approaches to a venue exclusion. One said ‘I think it’s a lot easier to just ban someone rather than have to try and get them to fill in the paperwork’. Another CLO who spoke at length about the voluntary monitoring system he had introduced felt it was important to be able to ‘offer alternatives to a venue based exclusion People that do have problem, being able to pull them aside. ... maybe we should monitor your behaviour, set the goals. Set levels. And then go from there to a venue based exclusion if need be’.

4.4.6 Hotel CLO Perceptions of the Helpfulness of Procedures

Not surprisingly, the hotel CLOs felt it difficult to comment on whether approaching patrons had assisted them to resolve a gambling problem. Section 4.4.3 relayed specific examples of when approaches to patrons had resulted in losing that patron’s business, with the CLO then not knowing whether the patron continued to gamble elsewhere. Other instances were related to when the approach had prompted no interest or action by the patron. However, there were times that approaching patrons appeared to help minimise harm. This occurred when two hotel managers minded the wallets or pay-packets of some at-risk patrons, when another CLO was able to convince a person to stop gambling for the day, and when another closes the gaming room early if the patron of concern is the only one there.

4.5 HOTEL CLO RESPONSES TO THIRD PARTY CONCERNS ABOUT PROBLEM GAMBLING

The hotel CLOs were asked about what they would do if a family member or close friend indicated that a patron has a gambling problem.

4.5.1 Frequency of A Third Party Approaching Hotel CLOs

The vast majority of the hotel CLOs had not personally experienced being approached by a third party. One noted that ‘you get it occasionally’, while the rest each recounted specific examples as discussed below.

4.5.2 Procedures Used by Hotel CLOs

Three CLOs gave examples of what they had actually done in this situation, while the remainder discussed what they would do.

Procedures CLOs have used

Three CLOs recounted specific examples of this scenario occurring. The first example was quite dramatic, but the CLO did not reveal much detail on how the situation was dealt with:

‘One big situation was a guy came in and had just had a kid with a lady ... and he’d been in the pokie room most of the day And then she obviously had come in with the kid and got up him for spending money they’d just received and then you think maybe it was the baby bonus ... She stormed through the pokie room, pulling his shirt and that, telling him to come on. ... And it was really hard with that situation. We talked to the girl and asked if she would like us to call someone.’

Another CLO recalled how she had been in trouble for giving out information about a patron to family or a friend, where ‘I’ve done that once and I got into massive trouble for that as well. Just giving their whereabouts, I said this guy’s in here. (I was asked) has he won anything? I said yes and that was it.’

A third recounted an incident that was a long time ago and in a different jurisdiction:

‘... someone came in and suggested I not allow their husband to play the poker machines. At that stage I didn’t think it was my responsibility and I said to her she should talk to her counsellor and get him to talk to the counsellor herself. If someone doesn’t think they have a problem then once again all they’re going to do is go to someone else’s venue.’

Procedures CLOs would use

The remainder of the CLOs commented on what they would do if this situation arose. In some cases, the CLO would use a combination of the procedures described below.

- **Ask to meet with the patron**

One CLO would ask to meet with the patron, saying ‘I would get some Gambling Help brochures together for the family or friend and say, perhaps you could take these home, express your concerns and if they could bring the patron in question in to have a chat’.

- **Monitor the patron**

Three CLOs would ‘monitor that person when they come in’, ‘maybe make the effort to go out a bit more and ask them how their day is, but really there’s not much I can do’. Of the

three, one said that, after monitoring, 'if I thought it was a major problem then I would go and approach him'.

- **Approach the patron**

Nearly one-third of the CLOs would approach the patron and 'have a chat', 'to let them know the family member had contacted me' and 'that his wife has rung up and is concerned about what he is about to do'. For four CLOs, whether they would approach the patron 'would depend on whether I knew the person or not'. Another said 'if I knew him I suppose. There's nothing I can really do.... I'd have a chat with him and say you should go and have a chat with your wife'. Another noted 'maybe if you know them, talk to them next time they would come in ... to see how everything was going'. Another was confident that 'if I did know them, I would certainly walk up to them and say your daughter just rang here and she had some big concerns that you were going spend your pension. Do you need some help?'. Another CLO would only approach the patron 'if it was an ongoing thing'.

Three CLOs commented that they felt limited in what they could do, with one saying 'I won't go out of my way to tell them they can't come here. I would mention to them that someone was concerned, a particular person has contacted me' and another that 'there isn't much you can do rather than offer your advice, offer your two cents worth and hope not to get it back in your face'.

The most detailed answer was given by the CLO who said:

'Obviously we would want to pull the patron aside and I would explain to the patron that as a staff of the hotel I'm under obligation and have a duty of care to sort the problem out and to look at self-exclusion. ... I would certainly play on the fact that their partner or a family member is here complaining about the harm that's been done to the family life or the family budget or whatever it may be, and hope that I can turn the person's will, get them a bit sympathetic to the situation they've created.'

- **Provide counselling information to the family**

Six CLOs reported they would provide counselling information to the family member, where 'you just give the family members the brochure', 'I would steer them to Gambling Help', and advise the person to 'take the information home and leave it lying around or give it to (the patron of concern)'. Three others commented that the situation required professional help, where 'I would probably give them one of our cards and advise them to ring Gambling Anonymous or Gambling Australia or one of those people and actually chat to a professional counsellor that could give them advice on what they should do'. Similarly, another said 'I'd send them to a professional. They're more equipped to deal with that sort of thing'.

- **Seek advice**

Two CLOs said they would seek further advice on what to do. One would seek advice from a counselling agency, saying 'I'd ... talk to one of the gambling hotlines and just get some information; the best way to deal with and how to go about talking to the family member or friend'. The other, a CLO in a chain hotel noted:

'... that's where the company is good too because we can always ring head office for support too and say, where do you feel we should go with this? We don't keep anything to ourselves, everything goes through a whole network where we have people who know more of it than us that would give us the information.'

- **Venue exclusion**

Four CLOs would consider moving to a venue exclusion, with another two just noting this was an option. One commented ‘that’s where a venue exclusion should be initiated with consultation with the client obviously. Getting the whole family in, getting counsellors involved, getting help’. Another explained:

‘Depending on how serious the situation was and whether the person became disgruntled or violent and made a scene or whatever, it would depend on the situation and where both parties were coming from and you would maybe have to make a serious judgement call on whether to let the person gamble in your venue.’

Another would:

‘... initiate a third party exclusion based on the information that the partner is giving. If that information was deemed to be correct. ... I would imagine there would be some procedure to verify the information and obviously you’d be trying to involve the agencies, Gambling Anonymous.’

The most detailed response was given by the CLO who said:

I’ll pull the (family member) aside and ask them how often the person thinks that that person is here. ... So I would be trying to suss out firstly whether the person is spending all of their time here. ... Now if it didn’t add up, this person may be travelling to several venues. What I would then say is, yes I can help you, I’m going to look at an exclusion order. However, I can only help you part of the way because this person may be using other venues. You’re trying to solve a problem not a venue and take it from there. ... (If the CLO could not convince patron to self-exclude) then I would have to say I’m going to exclude you from this venue, you’re no longer welcome here and I would like to suggest that you get further help with your gambling and I can suggest some people for you.’

There was clearly some confusion with the CLO who responded that a ‘spouse can come in and exclude you if she thinks you’re taking money off the table and things like that’.

4.5.3 Hotel CLO Knowledge of Procedures

The hotel CLOs clearly had limited experience of being approached by a third party. While most speculated on what they would do, as noted above, a few were unclear, saying ‘I honestly wouldn’t know what to do’ and ‘I don’t know’. Another would ‘refer back to my gaming manual because I can’t remember what the process is. Like a third party exclusion, but I’m not sure ... what sort of procedures we follow’. As noted above, there was some confusion evident around venue exclusions.

4.5.4 Challenges for Hotel CLOs

Several CLOs alluded to numerous difficulties in dealing with third party concerns.

- **Allegation may not be genuine**

The most commonly expressed challenge, by seven CLOs, was that the third party concern might not be about a gambling problem. For example, telling you that my mother’s spending too much money because she’s spending my inheritance and I don’t want her to do that’, ‘sometimes people use that as a tool to get back at someone’, ‘they could just be a partner that’s obviously not happy with them coming down for a drink’, ‘she might be the one with the problem and wanting to get more money’, and ‘you could have a disgruntled family member that might think they’ve got a bit of a problem but it might be their little social

outing'. Another noted 'we were told in our responsible service of gaming training that a lot of children bring their mother or father in as they're worried that their parents are spending the inheritance'. Another gave a more detailed answer, saying:

'I think you're touching on pretty scary ground for no reason at all and just taking someone's word for it. For all I know it could be anybody. You'd need some evidence of that. ... That's the hardest thing, how would you know? ... if she wasn't a carer, I don't see where we've got a leg to stand on.'

- **Concern for triggering friction**

One CLO noted 'you don't want to cause friction in the family either and say your wife's just been in here, get out, you can't spend your money, you're excluded'.

- **Not wanting to be involved in family issues**

Two CLOs cautioned against becoming involved in family issues, saying 'if it's a family member comes in, it's their duty to go and talk to their own family member. We're not going to invade their family situation' and 'you don't want to go getting involved in family disputes'.

- **Venue cannot force a patron to not gamble**

One CLO commented 'that would probably be one of the most difficult situations, because if a partner can't persuade the person to stop gambling then who am I to step in and try and stop the person from gambling?'.

4.5.5 Perceived Helpfulness of Procedures

Because very few CLOs had been involved in this scenario, they were also unsure of the likely helpfulness of the procedures they would use, but there was a sense that the patron would need to recognise they have a problem first for any action to be effective in resolving the gambling problem.

4.6 HOTEL CLO SUPPORT FOR STAFF IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

The hotel CLOs were asked about ways they support the venue's staff in assisting problem gamblers in the venue. They articulated several types of support they provide.

- **Be a referral for staff**

Several CLOs noted they are a referral for staff, saying 'if they get anyone enquiring about gambling problems or they want to self-exclude themselves or anything like that, it's just a straight, no worries I'll get our CLO or our general manager to come and have a chat to you'. Similarly, another explained 'if someone comes up to them and says I want to self-exclude myself, I've got a gambling problem ... to not panic and just go, I'll just go and get my manager or my CLO'. One explained this was highly appropriate, 'because my team members aren't trained in what training I've gone through, so they might not approach it in the correct way or do it in the right steps'.

- **On-the-job training**

Many CLOs spoke about on-the-job training and instruction they provide for staff, with one commenting 'with gaming it's all about training, it's making sure that your staff are trained'.

The CLOs identified numerous types of information they give to staff, including ‘all the laws’, ‘compliance’, ‘processes to go through if someone approached them with a gambling problem’, ‘the role of the CLO’, ‘new legislation’, ‘where different documents are’, ‘house policy’, ‘what to look for’, ‘to give support to those people if they see any signs’, ‘steps they have to follow’, ‘being confidential with what they get told’, ‘making sure that Joe Blow has a break so they’re not always putting in money into their machines’, ‘the helplines’, and ‘if they do see anybody who they think is a problem, they should note it in the incident book and be aware of it and pass it on’.

- **Advice on specific situations**

A few CLOs also mentioned they advise staff on specific incidents or ‘if there’s an issue’, where ‘if they think that a patron’s showing signs of perhaps an addiction, I’m always there for the staff to talk to’.

- **Updates on incidents or issues**

Four CLOs noted their role in updating staff, where ‘we fill each other in then’ and ‘I just keep them up to date I suppose with constant staff meetings and memos. Any information that I get, pass it down’. Another noted ‘every time I have a staff meeting, I go through self-exclusions if there have been any new ones and I say to them, is there anyone you’ve noticed that may have a problem?’.

- **Support for CLOs**

While the CLOs were not asked specifically about support they receive in their role, four mentioned this in passing. Two in the same chain of hotels referred to the company’s ‘gaming compliance officer in head office in Brisbane ... You can call her about anything to do with gaming and if she doesn’t know she’ll find out. She’s very knowledgeable. She’s been up here to the hotel once or twice since I’ve been here’. The other echoed this, saying the compliance officer provides ‘great support’. Another CLO noted the support from the local counselling agency, who ‘did a training session with staff a few months back in regards to self-exclusions which was good for them’.

4.7 HOTEL CLO TRAINING IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

The hotel CLOs were asked about training they had done to help them assist problem gamblers in the venue and its strengths and weaknesses.

4.7.1 Sources of Hotel CLO Training

When asked what types of training the CLOs had received in responsible gambling, eight sources were identified.

- **Responsible gambling courses**

Twenty-four of the 29 hotel CLOs had completed formal RSG training, completing this between one and three years ago. They had completed this through QHA providers, TAFE, other registered training organisations or through the company if working in a chain hotel.

- **CLO training**

Ten staff in the CLO role had completed the formal CLO training, with the four working for a chain hotel completing this through their company.

- **Gaming Nominee training**

Some CLOs also mentioned they had completed Gaming Nominee training, which according to one interviewee, is ‘where they identify problem gamblers and things like that They had video footage to show what to do and what not to do’.

- **On-the-job training and experience**

Five CLOs noted the role of on-the-job training and experience in helping them assist problem gamblers in the venue, with related comments including ‘I just got taught by the manager there and shown everything; just learned as we went along’, ‘a lot of it was trained by my venue manager ... when I was an assistant manager’ and ‘I started off in the gaming room being casual ... and they trained me up properly’. This hands-on experience was seen as supplementing formal training as ‘it’s an on-site situation that doesn’t happen in the classroom where they’ve got to pretend where everything works fine’ and ‘training can help to a certain extent but nothing beats life experience, especially in our particular industry where all you do is deal with people’.

- **Training by counsellors**

Three CLOs noted they had also learnt from their interactions with counselling agencies, whether this was through ‘meeting with the staff’ or more formal sessions where ‘I regularly get somebody in that just goes through exclusions and that sort of thing with my staff members’.

- **Company training**

Four CLOs worked in chain hotels and noted the company training, which included ‘gaming induction’, ‘gaming compliance and gaming variance analysis’, ‘conflict management courses’, ‘self-exclusions, CLO training, gaming nominee training’. One noted that ‘training is a big thing within the (company), it’s huge’. Another mentioned the ongoing support provided by the company’s gaming compliance manager who was available for advice. Another also noted learning from a guest speaker, where ‘yesterday we had our national gaming ambassador ... come and speak to all of Queensland managers at our annual conference just regarding RSG’.

- **Training CD/DVD**

Two CLOs noted they had watched a training CD/DVD, with one commenting ‘it was fairly good. It showed you how to approach somebody and how to sort it out... That CD was given to each staff member of each club and pub and go home and watch’.

- **Responsible gambling manuals**

One interviewee commented that ‘the government gives us the responsible gambling manual. It’s good training for new team members’.

4.7.2 Perceived Value of Training for Hotel CLOs

Various strengths and weaknesses were identified by the CLOs around their training.

- **Perceived strengths**

Most CLOs were positive about the training they had received, describing it as ‘good’, ‘very valuable’, ‘really relevant’ or ‘excellent’. Comments about the benefits of RSG and CLO training included ‘it does educate you on how to make the decisions better’, ‘I’m more confident’, ‘a good refresher ... there’s always something new that I always pick up on’ and ‘the brushing up, just the keeping in contact and keeping updated with the changes’. Content of the training mentioned included ‘how to self-exclude and the procedures’, ‘judging who to suggest regarding exclusion’, ‘rules and regulations’, ‘why they were putting these things into place’, ‘the human side of it and how to approach people and what to do if they approached you’, ‘tips and hints on things to say to people and just to be very gentle with people and giving them advice on counselling’, ‘how to talk to people’ and ‘when to approach them or when not to approach them and what to say and what not to say’. One commented ‘the CLO training ... was the first training that was done to do with self-exclusions that really made sense’.

Other positive aspects of RSG and CLO courses were noted. One praised the trainer thus:

‘...He’s also a guy who actually works at a hotel. ... The other ones were more just reading from the text, telling us what the law is, what you can and can’t do, when this guy comes out with so many good examples. So I think the trainer himself is probably the most important aspect of getting it across. He’s got the experience and he knows about it and he’s passionate about it.’

Another praised the availability of online training, saying ‘it’s handy to have. ... It’s excellent. ... they get a booklet to read and they give you a test. ...if you get a question wrong you get a chance to get the right answer. If you get it wrong twice, you’re locked out for 24 hours’.

For another CLO, the main value of the training was that it conveyed:

‘... it is serious and it’s important and it’s people’s lives that you’ve sort of got in your hands there for a small moment in time. I think the RSG really highlights those sorts of things. (Some might think) who cares, I don’t know that person, it’s just a gambling addict, another one, but it is serious and you’ve got to take it seriously and unless you do your RSG there’s no one telling you how important it is to get it right.’

A few other CLOs commented on how useful they found the scenarios and role plays presented during training.

Three CLOs commented on benefits of the training provided by the local Gambling Help service with one explaining:

‘I think we need to see what the other side is like, to know. We hear about it all the time that these people have lost all their money and their house. To know what actually happens after we pass them onto Lifeline. We never hear much. We’ve never had anyone return either after all these years, which is a good thing. But just to hear how the process happens. And it continues on, what happens if they do come back. How can we support them instead of just passing them off again to Lifeline.’

- **Perceived weaknesses**

Some hotel CLOs identified weaknesses in the training. Several agreed with the CLO who said ‘I don’t think it’s frequent enough’. One also noted ‘I didn’t really get a lot out of it. It was more to do with paperwork kind of things and not really how to deal with and identify’ and another that ‘the gaming room representative, I believe, needs much more training than an RSG. Psychological training and tell the staff it’s a little bit more difficult, depending on the age of the staff, that they’ll be able to identify problems’. One noted that ‘anybody over the age of 18 can get an RSG which means an 18 year old doesn’t necessarily have the skills, the speech, the approach tactics in order to speak to somebody a little bit older in a helpful way’. Another noted the difficulties of getting staff trained, as ‘with staff constraints, budget constraints, you just can’t have your staff off training every day’. One was critical that ‘it’s not a compulsory course’ and another raised the point that the training ‘was quite well done how they explained it, the procedures. But it’s just when you actually do it, you need a different way to handle things’. Finally, one criticised the online training, saying:

‘I don’t believe that online training is the right way to go. ... Yes, it has some benefits to complete the thing online, but I don’t believe you can do this sort of training whether it’s RSA or RCG without bringing in real life experiences and role playing. You can read a book and it means X. You might perform your roles. It gives you a totally different appreciation of the same point’.

- **Suggested improvements**

Several suggestions for improvements to the training were made. Five CLOs advocated more frequent training, that is, regular refresher courses, with comments such as ‘more training, better training of staff and refresher courses’, ‘updating, re-doing it, refreshing it would be good’, ‘they find it very daunting the first time, there’s a lot of information to take in so if they get updated all the time they find it a lot easier to remember’ and ‘I think it should be done yearly so you can refresh yourself’. One suggested to ‘just make it mandatory so you actually have to go back in and do your course’.

Four CLOs advocated more role plays, with one explaining ‘I remember doing my first exclusion. I was just as nervous as they were so I think role playing would be really helpful during an RSG’. Similarly, another suggested more focus on ‘face to face interaction and ways to approach somebody or if you receive a phone call what you should do and shouldn’t do’. The third noted:

‘... if you did like a scenario, if you had somebody sitting in there and a bit of practice saying, I think you might have a problem and then the person that’s acting as the gambler reacted in different ways. That could be helpful too because that’s up close and personal rather than just watching the video.’

Similarly, another said:

‘I use role-play in one of my training. It’s one of the most effective means of doing those things. You could do an RCG or and RSG course in a room like this for 20 people and role-plays very easily. And particularly if you’re doing it close to where the machines are. You’d be sitting out near the machine and noting the person approaching the machine. It becomes a real life experience then. More realism.’

Three CLOs suggested involving counsellors in the training ‘sharing their experiences’. One gave a more detailed response, saying:

‘For instance, (the local counsellor), he could probably run through 50 scenarios that have happened and they’re real life scenarios and they’re not paid actors saying lines. And really,

I'm sure he's probably made mistakes and he can actually inform us of where he went wrong and how he's decided to go in this direction now because it's achieving better results. And then us throwing different scenarios at him saying well this happened to us, what happens now. I think that would be really beneficial.'

Similarly, another suggested:

'...maybe contacting people from Relationships Australia and getting them to have chat with the staff would be a good idea. To humanise it. You can fill out all the forms you like but talking about it and just getting it out in the open and talking about how people feel about themselves when they're gambling and things like that and how to approach people, to talk to people about it. Better training. Give your staff more confidence to talk to people about gambling. Because you feel a bit scared and don't want to talk to people about their problems and you don't know what to say to them.'

One CLO thought 'like any other training, it could be shorter', while another advocated for the training to be 'broken up into smaller portions', because 'if you're talking about the same thing for a day, it just goes in one ear and out the other'.

When another was asked if the current training was sufficient, the reply was:

'No. Definitely not. ... I wouldn't think that the majority of the people would have the qualifications to handle a situation. It's touched on in the RSG training but there's no depth to provide the skills to do the job.... You'd make sure they understood the psychology of the game. It's the way people's minds work that's important. ... It's being able to ascertain when someone does have a problem and understanding why they have a problem.'

One CLO suggested that recovered problem gamblers should be involved in training sessions for 'anybody who works in gaming or has gaming machines and does payouts' where 'there's a speaker who has had gambling problems in the past that can come and speak to them and say look, this is what's happened to me. Like a motivational speaker, who makes them realise how bad it can get and maybe some slide shows or something that shows real life'.

4.8 HOTEL CLO INTERACTION WITH GAMBLING HELP AGENCIES TO ASSIST PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

The hotel CLOs were asked about their interaction with gambling support services to assist problem gamblers in the venue and whether they thought this was useful.

4.8.1 Frequency of Hotel CLOs Interacting with Gambling Help Agencies

Eight of the CLOs interviewed had had no contact with staff from a gambling support service, although agency staff may have visited the venue when the CLO was not present or made aware of them. Others were clearly confused, thinking Queensland Government staff who deliver new pamphlets and signs were from a counselling agency and/or that the local Gambling Help agency staff were from Gamblers' Anonymous. In contrast, there appeared particularly high awareness about local Gambling Help services in some regional areas.

4.8.2 Types of Hotel CLO Interaction with Gambling Help Agencies

The CLOs interviewees identified several types of services provided by gambling counselling agencies to their venue.

- **Provide printed materials about local services**

Most CLOs mentioned provision of printed materials about gambling support services, but as noted above, some clearly did not differentiate between materials on local services and those relating to the Gambling Helpline. For example, two seemed to be referring to the Queensland Government material when they said ‘I’m sure there’s a number you can ring. ... There’re cards, the Chilli Cards’ and ‘all we get is when they drop brochures and stuff and we put them out, but even then they come through couriers’. Others did distinguish local services from others, for example the one who responded ‘they’re ones we get from Queensland gaming, they send out some, and there was one from the other local touring the area where he actually brought in some flyers and dropped them off’.

- **Be a contact for venues for advice and assistance**

As well as printed materials, local agencies call into venues to let them know they can assist in numerous ways. For example, one CLO said ‘the guy that came in just introduced himself and said if we ever need to discuss anything with them to give them a call’ and another that ‘we usually get a call from them every six months saying, how’s it going, I’m here if you need me, if you want to pass anyone onto me or if you need some help, here’s some cards or if you have any questions’. Another noted ‘if we need to call them you just ring the number and there’s always someone there to help’.

- **Be a contact for venues to refer patrons to**

Some CLOs noted they refer problem gamblers to local gambling support services. As one explained, ‘until we suss out that someone’s a problem or they themselves thought they were a problem, well then you can’t do anything; and then once they come, we can contact Lifeline or the Gambling Helpline’. Another said ‘I know that they’re available; you ring and if you need to make an appointment for a problem gambler, there’s a counsellor there waiting to answer the phone. So to me that’s great support because you would never ring and not have anyone be able to help you out’.

- **Organise patron self-exclusions**

Several CLOs commented on the role that agencies sometimes play in helping patrons to self-exclude. Some related comments were ‘they’re always willing, if we refer somebody to them, to help them through the self-exclusion process’, ‘if I say I have a problem gambler here and he wants to be self-excluded, we’d like to talk to somebody, that information’s always followed on’, and ‘they would actually bring them down here, the counsellor and the patron, and we would go through the exclusion paperwork together’. One CLO praised the local Gambling Help agency thus:

‘I’ve got a good relationship with (the local counsellor) He’ll be here at the drop of a hat, he’s really good. I’ll say, (counsellor’s name) I’ve got someone here and he’ll say he’ll be there in 15 minutes. ... When I was newer to the process, I hadn’t done some exclusions myself and someone approached me in the gaming room and asked if I had a couple of minutes and I made a call to (counsellor’s name) and I said I’m new to this, would you mind assisting. He came down within 10 minutes and sat in the process and basically comforted the person, saying he made the right decision and that’s where I got ... the way that I go about it, from (counsellor’s name).’

- **Advise on specific situations**

As well as assisting with self-exclusions, some agencies also advise venues on specific issues or patrons. For example, one said:

‘We’ve had meetings with (the local counsellor) just to really chat about a few different issues I’ve had. Back then I think we were talking about that particular lady. Just advice from him as to how we can handle it or better handle it. He was just saying, it was one of those things. It can have a positive effect or can have no effect at all. But you’re making the decision to go in there and have a chat with them and explain these things with them, so hopefully that might move them onto the next stage of actually recognising they’ve got an issue. Just to have them there. That their advice is really good.’

- **Provide training sessions for staff**

Some CLOs also noted they had held or been to training sessions involving local counselling agencies where the counsellor ‘comes and does the training for our other duty managers, for the responsible service of gaming as well’ and ‘a course with gaming staff that may be caught up in problem gambling’. Two noted this training involves ‘the signs of a problem gambler’, as ‘what better person can tell my staff what to look out for?’.

4.8.3 Perceived Value of Hotel CLO Interaction with Gambling Help Agencies

As well as the more tangible services provided, as described above, the CLOs identified several benefits of interaction with Gambling Help agencies, based either on their experience or their expectations of how it might help.

- **Provides professional back-up for venues**

One recognised benefit was the professional backup that counsellors can provide, because ‘they’re trained counsellors ... whereas we’re not. We’re publicans. We’re here to serve beer’.

- **Help advise staff on how to deal with problem gamblers in the venue**

This benefit was articulated by several CLOs as a way of building staff skills and confidence, with one saying ‘some people I suppose can get pretty nervous doing that sort of thing and talking to customers about personal stuff. I think it would be good for those types to be able to get confident and tell them what they have to ask and how they can deal with it’.

Another was very enthusiastic to:

‘... have just one on one or a group sessions with them training saying, these are the issues that can come up with people with problems. These are signs to look out for when people have problems. I think especially staff who have just started in gaming. ... if you did do the training straight off, they’ve got more confidence and they’re more aware and they can keep an eye out for people with problems.’

- **Advise on how to improve venue practices**

Another benefit was that counselling agency staff can help venues to improve their practices. For example, one noted:

‘If there’s something we’re doing and we’re supposed to be doing it differently, I would sooner do it differently to make it beneficial for all of us. Not just for me and my chequebook, but for the staff. At the end of the day we’re all here to try and help people in one way or another and make people enjoy their time here and be safe.’

Another gave the example of a local counsellor:

‘He was only in here a month ago and he’s actually doing some work with liquor licensing now. ... so I assume he’ll be coming around to the venues and making suggestions. And I thought that was a fantastic idea because now you’ve got someone that is on the frontline.’

They are there with them trying to help them. That is one of the best initiatives that I've heard of.'

- **Makes staff more comfortable in suggesting counselling to patrons**

Another key benefit was that knowing agency staff allows venue staff to put a face to the name and thus builds their confidence in referring patrons to them, as they can say 'I've met this person and they're really nice'. As another said, 'at least you know that you can put a face to it. You're not passing someone off to somebody that you don't know and you don't feel comfortable with'. Another gave a more detailed response, commenting:

'Just so you could recommend somebody, like a particular name to go to, like this person's really good and he's helped people here in the past. I think they feel a bit more comfortable approaching a particular person instead of just calling a hotline. ... So it gives people a better opportunity to go and get some counselling if you sort of know people in the business.'

- **Benefits for patrons if the counsellor comes to the venue**

Three CLOs identified benefits for patrons of having counsellors involved in self-exclusion. One was 'they don't have to go into the (counselling) office or to be seen to be going in for help. He just comes in, sits down, has a cup of coffee'. Additionally, this allows the patron to 'make that first contact and that way if they want to make further contact or appointments, that ice is broken'. Accompanying self-excludees also means they 'don't feel uncomfortable talking to managers. They help them understand all the paperwork, what it means and what they can have'. Another CLO acknowledged this would also help with multiple exclusions, because 'not only did they bring them to our venue, they went around to all the other venues'.

- **Criticisms of gambling help agencies**

There were, however, three types of criticisms made in relation to venue interaction with counselling agencies. One was that the local counselling agency had not made contact, although some acknowledged that agencies 'don't have the resources I'd imagine'. Another related how:

'I rang the number which was the same number that was on the cards to get help. You couldn't get through to anyone. ... it diverted to three or four different phone numbers and you got to the end and it asked for you to leave a message. I thought, well that's useless if you're actually at the end of your tether, wanting to get help.'

One CLO based in a Brisbane hotel commented on the differences between metropolitan and regional support, saying 'we have a lot of regional hotels in remote areas, regional areas We get more contact from Gambling Help services in those areas, they're more proactive in the smaller towns, whereas in Brissie ... there are ... so many venues and so few counsellors'.

4.9 HOTEL CLOS' EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICES IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

The CLOs were asked whether they had examples of best practice in assisting problem gamblers in the venue. Only examples that went beyond normal procedures as encouraged by the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice* are included below.

- **Not making it too easy for people to put winnings straight back into machines**

Two examples were noted in relation to this. One was where a venue asks regular or heavy gamblers and patrons of concern if they would like their winnings in a cheque, even if this

amount is lower than that legally required to be paid by cheque. The other example was to avoid paying wins in \$20 notes or lower so the patron has to change the larger notes to put them back into the machine. As one CLO noted, this may help because ‘it’s that split second where the gamer stops and puts that money in his pocket It’s that split second that takes them away from the hypnotism to a little bit of reality, and that sometimes works’.

- **Being extremely strict about parents supervising their children in the venue**

One CLO was very critical of venues with children’s play areas or childcare facilities that facilitate parents’ gambling. This was described as ‘a cheap babysitting service’ that was ‘very tempting for people who are at home with the children whereas they like to gamble’. This CLO noted ‘a lot of places have playgrounds, but they have to be supervised by their parents and they’re right near the gaming rooms so they can do both’. In contrast, this CLO noted the venue was extremely strict about this, and that was ‘why over the years we’ve got the reputation that people just don’t even bother coming here; they know if they’ve got children, they’ve got to sit with them’. This CLO recalled how the venue had issued a venue exclusion to a lady who had left her children outside and how ‘we keep an eye out there because we have had people try and leave their children to sit outside there on the steps’.

- **Monitoring patrons**

A few venues assisted patrons to control their gambling by monitoring their gambling expenditure, frequency or duration if the patron so requested. Another also tried to look after the welfare of his patrons by offering to put their wallets or pay-packets in the hotel safe until they were ready to go home. These examples were discussed in Section 4.3.2.

- **Refreshing staff knowledge of self-excludees**

One CLO described the process of ‘getting staff to look and regularly sign off and they get up to date. (They are) not going to remember 12 months down the track who these people are. It’s a great idea that they have a look, familiarise themselves with the photo, know their names.’

- **Agency assistance with self-exclusion**

As noted earlier, some CLOs described how counselling agency staff assist patrons with self-exclusion from one or multiple venues. One gave this example:

‘He was a self-excludee and a Lifeline person came up to the venue with all the paperwork and pictures and that sort of stuff and read everything and they explained to them that the self-exclusion goes for so many years. They ask if that’s what they want, do you want to be self-excluded from any other hotels? They had a good talk about it and said yes, they wanted to be self-excluded from other hotels. Did they still want to come into the venue and have a good time at the venue without gambling? Everyone was happy with the result.’

4.10 OTHER WAYS HOTELS CAN ASSIST PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

The interviewees were asked if they thought there is anything else venues could do to assist problem gamblers in the venue. Some CLOs felt there were no additional ways that venues could assist problem gamblers. Others also had no suggestions, but were worried that gambling problems were still common, that ‘it’s self destructing. They lie to themselves, everyone lies to themselves in that (gaming) room’. As one said:

‘I know there’re a lot of people with problems that haven’t been identified and I don’t really know what the quick fix would be for that. ... there are so many people with gambling problems that don’t want to own up to it or don’t want to seek help. ... a lot of the low income earners and the people who are on Centrelink that are problem gamblers because they’re not earning enough money, not getting enough money and they’re trying to win more money and that’s obviously causing a problem which also draws on the other, Lifeline, then they don’t have food on the table and then they can’t pay their rent.’

Other CLOs made the following suggestions which have not been previously mentioned

- **Remove or restrict childcare facilities in gaming venues**

One interviewee felt that ‘childcare facilities in gambling areas are just a bad idea’. This person further explained ‘it’s great if you’re going there for dinner, but some people take them in first thing and take them out last thing at night. ... They have actual childcare rooms. And there’s no legality as to when the children have to leave the premises’.

- **Ensure cheques for winning are not cashed at the venue**

One respondent was critical that, when a winner is given ‘\$500 cash, the remainder has to be in cheque’ that ‘a lot of hotels allow you to come back the next day and cash the cheque there ... so you can get the money back and spend it in the venue. I just think that’s really irresponsible ... because it’s illegal to gamble on credit and that’s a form of credit’. Clearly, this respondent thought this practice should be curtailed.

- **Limit the availability of gaming machines**

One interviewee suggested concentrating gaming machines into fewer areas, explaining ‘if we minimise the availability of gaming machines, I believe that it will slowly fix a lot of the problems and then the problem gamblers will collect in singular places and they’ll be able to be dealt with without being spread all over Australia’. This person continued:

‘... there’s going to have to be a rescue package for the pubs. We want to fix it. It has to be a corporate decision, because they make \$1m a year; however the sort of effects that’s having on our community, there’s evidence, it’s like an experiment. It’s everywhere, people divorce, separate.’

Similarly, another CLO felt:

‘Morally I think poker machines should be banned. ... but I realise that you cannot sustain the business of a hotel or club without it. Because what’s happened is there’s been a trade off over the years where the beer prices probably should be \$4 and we’re still at \$2.70 or \$2.90 or \$3 or whatever it is and the only way we ... can afford to ... maintain our establishment (is) by absorbing the cost through our poker machines’.

- **Display the odds of winning on machine screens**

One CLO advocated to ‘put it on the screen and say you’ve got one in a million chances of winning a \$1 back and the pokies pay back 90 per cent of what they take in, so if you sat there for a lifetime, you’re never going to win.’

- **Display the time on gaming machines**

One CLO advocated ‘that the time is clearly displayed on gaming machines while people are playing them. ... These machines can do everything but wash the dishes for you. Why can’t they display the time? ... Just do it, don’t discuss it, just do it, for Gods sake!’.

- **Government advertising campaign**

One CLO was extremely passionate about the need for a government sponsored media campaign on responsible gambling, saying:

‘... we need to train the public. ... How many responsible service of gambling ads have you seen on the TV or in the paper? We don’t have anything. Very disappointed in the government’s hand in this because there is no public perception of responsible service of gaming, considering that it’s a massive community problem, I’m told, and the government obviously takes funds from gaming the same as we do as a private business. I would like to see a lot of that money go to advertising and just getting a bit more awareness out of the public. ... I do not accept the fact that we are the frontline and that’s the only thing that’s there to protect these people.’

This CLO continued;

‘I believe out of everything ... awareness in all sorts of campaigns; radio, print, TV and so on, that is going to be the biggest win you will ever have with community harm in gambling. That’s a no brainer. What do most people do at night? What do they do in the car? We’re missing something here. And it’s a lot of money. Well they can spend it on that. It’s a part I’m pretty passionate about. And don’t give me a microphone and a group of politicians in front of me. Look out!’

4.11 HOTEL CLO CONCLUSION

Sections 4.2 to 4.10 of this chapter have presented results relating to the 29 hotel CLOs who were interviewed for this study. After summarising the key characteristics of these interviewees and the venues where they worked, these sections summarised how the CLOs have or would respond to three different scenarios - when patrons ask for assistance with a gambling problem, when patrons show signs of problem gambling but do not request assistance, and when family or friends approach staff with concerns for a patron’s gambling. Ways in which the CLOs support other venue staff to assist problem gamblers in the venue were then described, as was the training they had undertaken and their interaction with local gambling support agencies. Best practice examples, where given, were then presented. The next sections focus on the results of interviews with 26 club CLOs.

4.12 KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF CLUB CLO INTERVIEWEES

Twenty-six club CLOs were interviewed for this study. Table 4.2 summarises their key characteristics and shows that the sample captured CLOs in a variety of locations and positions and in venues of varying sizes and types of gaming installations. It should be noted that interviewees were classified as CLOs if they were the nominated CLO, had completed CLO training, or were the person empowered to implement responsible gambling measures, such as self-exclusion.

Table 4.2: Key Characteristics of Club CLO Respondents

Location	Position	Length of service	Worked in other gaming venues?	No. of GMs	Other gambling facilities
Brisbane	Venue manager	5 mths	No	24	Keno
Brisbane	Secretary Manager	14 yrs	No	143	Keno, TAB
Brisbane	Duty Manager	2 yrs	No	143	Keno, TAB
Brisbane	Duty Manager	7 yrs	No	116	Keno, TAB
Brisbane	Duty Manager	5 mths	No	280	Keno, TAB
Brisbane	Assistant Manager	4.5 mths	Yes	172	Keno, TAB
Brisbane	Marketing Manager	3.5 yrs	Yes	100	Keno, TAB
Brisbane	Gaming Attendant	8 yrs	Yes	185	Keno
Brisbane	Operations Manager	11 yrs	Yes	185	Keno
Brisbane	Manager	5 yrs	Yes	106	Keno, TAB
Cairns	Assistant Manager	4 yrs	No	45	Keno
Cairns	Acting Manager	n/a	Yes	6	No
Cairns	Manager	4 mths	Yes	35	Keno, TAB
Cairns	Operations Manager	4.5 yrs	Yes	25	Keno
Cairns	Operations Manager	9 yrs	Yes	48	Keno, TAB
Cairns	Promotions & Events Manager	4 mths	No	158	Keno, TAB
Cairns	Promotions Assistant	3 yrs	No	158	Keno, TAB
Mt Isa	Manager	16 yrs	No	105	Keno, TAB
Mt Isa	Manager	6 mths	No	16	Keno
Mt Isa	Club Manager	6 weeks	Yes	54	Keno, TAB
Dalby	Gaming Nominee	15 yrs	No	8	No
Toowoomba	Assistant Manager	6 yrs	Yes	156	Keno
Toowoomba	Bar/Gaming Supervisor	5 mths	No	60	Keno
Toowoomba	Gaming Nominee	2 yrs	No	11	No
Toowoomba	Duty Manager	15 yrs	No	68	Keno, TAB
Toowoomba	General Manager	6 yrs	Yes	156	Keno, TAB

4.13 CLUB CLO RESPONSES TO PATRONS WHO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE

The club CLOs were asked about various aspects of responding to patrons in the venue who approach them to ask for assistance with a gambling problem. Their responses are summarised below in terms of how frequently they have experienced this, procedures they use, knowledge of procedures, related challenges, the perceived helpfulness of these procedures and suggestions for any improvements.

4.13.1 Frequency of Patrons Approaching Club CLOs

The experience of being approached by patrons for assistance with a gambling problem varied amongst the club CLO respondents, but overall, was not a frequent occurrence. Reported frequencies ranged from ‘never’ to ‘about one a month’, with most saying once, twice or not often.

4.13.2 Procedures Used By Club CLOs

The club CLOs were asked ‘What do you do if a patron asks for assistance with a gambling problem?’. The procedures they use or would use included the following, although it must be noted that most CLOs would use a combination of these, generally beginning by having a

conversation with the patron to find out more about the issue, then outlining options available, giving them counselling contacts and proceeding with self-exclusion if the patron wishes to do this.

- **Start by having a chat, offering advice and outlining options**

Seven club CLOs noted their first response would be to have a conversation with the patron to ‘flesh out the problems a little bit’, ‘get a bit of an idea where they’re coming from’, ‘listen to what they have to say’, find out ‘what their issues were’ and ‘what they wanted to do with it’, and have a ‘general relaxed conversation about what their problem is and how we can help them’. Five of these CLOs explicitly noted they would take the patron to a quiet, private area for this conversation.

The CLOs would then outline options available for the patron. As one noted, ‘you can’t give them the quick fix but you can give them some options’. One CLO explained these as ‘you can exclude yourself, you can restrict yourself, you can talk with your family’ and another as ‘counselling ... make sure we get some phone numbers for them to ring, people to contact and then talk to them about going down the path of excluding themselves’. Another CLO gave a more detailed answer, explaining:

‘Basically we have an information package here and if someone comes to us ... I have a legal obligation straight away to sit down and put it in writing; their expression of interest to be excluded or just an expression of concern. ... I go and grab our little folder and pull it all out and it pretty much runs through for Step 1, okay this is how you need to approach it, this is what you need to get through, this is the form they need to fill out to say that you’re even having this conversation. So we follow through what’s stipulated by Queensland Gaming.’

- **Provide counselling information**

The first response from ten club CLOs would be to provide the patron with counselling information. One noted ‘we’ve got some pamphlets there and brochures’, another that ‘we also always recommend to see an outside party’ and another that ‘we actually have a relationship with Relationships Australia and they’ve given us some business cards and people to contact, so we basically just refer them to them’.

Some CLOs would offer to contact the counselling agency on the patron’s behalf. As one explained:

‘... we would offer to contact them for them because I feel you can give them the information but they normally just take it and walk away down the road to the next club and they get some fresh air and calm down and start again. I told my staff that if they’re willing to, for us to ring the people and let them talk to them here at the club.’

For most CLOs, the provision of counselling information was a first step, with one noting ‘we refer them to the Gambling Helpline depending on what they’re wanting. They can go there for advice and if they come back later and say they want to be excluded then we ... go through it all’. Another CLO explained the process he uses:

‘I’d ask them whether they wanted to be able to manage it themselves, if they wanted to go and speak to Relationships Australia or speak to a helpline, Gamblers Anonymous or anything like that. Did they want to do that before they want to do anything a bit more drastic? I would explain to them that they can have self-exclusions done for them and that if they want to go down that road they can come back and see me.’

- **Individual case management**

Two club CLOs mentioned ways they can monitor people who consent. One explained that if a patron did not wish to self-exclude, the CLO advises the patron to:

‘... come back and say, can you please watch how I am going on the machines? You can place them on a 28 day watch and you have the staff monitoring them playing the poker machines. Then they sit down and say well, this is how we see it, how do you see it? And then we usually work something out. We may do another watch and say okay, maybe self-exclusion is best.’

The other CLO explained how the venue monitored a patron after she self-excluded only from the gaming machine area:

‘... we monitor her because all she did was exclude herself from gaming, but there’s also TAB and Keno so we kept it on there. We thought she was spending too much money on Keno and TAB which is another loophole. You do find that some then say, I’ll start playing Keno more.’

- **Suggest and implement self-exclusion**

All club CLOs noted they would offer self-exclusion as an option for a patron who approached them seeking assistance. Some CLOs would ‘encourage them to self-exclude’, while others would take a more neutral stance and just give them ‘the choice’ or ‘the opportunity’. As one noted, ‘that becomes their decision to self-exclude. I haven’t forced anyone to self-exclude’.

Some CLOs pointed out the options within self-exclusion they would discuss with the patron, including ‘if it’s just from the gaming area or from the TAB or Keno or the lot’, ‘whether they want one year or five years’ and in some cases ‘whether they want an area ban as well. ... that would be self-exclusion from all three of our clubs’.

Several CLOs noted the importance of privacy and discretion, to ‘take them to a quiet place away from the gambling area’ and to:

‘...make them feel, not secluded but just comfortable and take them away from the problem momentarily and talk to them in a nice conversing manner. You don’t want to be demeaning them. You don’t want to put them on a pedestal either. Not a friendship but don’t be too familiar as well. ... You need to keep distance’.

If the patron wishes to proceed with self-exclusion, some CLOs help the patron complete the paperwork ‘straight away on the spot’. One explained ‘we would take them to a quiet room and work our way through the relevant forms and give the referrals to help organisations. Take a copy of a photo of that person and just follow the whole exclusion process’. In contrast, other CLOs explain the self-exclusion process to the patron, then give them the paperwork and ask them to bring it back when completed. One noted ‘there’s 24 hours to fill out this form and bring it back to us’. Another explained this in more detail:

‘Generally you let them go away for 24 hours and think about it. Sometimes it can be a knee-jerk reaction because, obviously I’m not privy to their financial position. The 24 hour cooling off period, then sit down and talk to them properly, try and take out the emotion of it. ... then once they decide yes, that’s the path they want to take, then we’ll start the self-exclusion.’

Another would give the patron the self-exclusion paperwork and suggest ‘the best thing to do is to read this information. I can also give you (the local counsellor’s) name and he’s more than happy to run through what all this means; otherwise I can go through it with you now if you like’.

Some patrons approached with a specific request to self-exclude, with one CLO noting ‘they wanted it done right then and there, they’ve made a decision’ and another that ‘most people come to us after making up their mind. They’ve seen brochures about it.... We would just sit down and have a chat to them and make sure they know what’s involved and then we’ll get the paperwork and just talk it through with them’.

One other mentioned that some people who had self-excluded had not visited the venue to do this, but that ‘it was an agency who brought them around. ... Gambling Help came by with the signed documents and handed them to us and a photo’.

4.13.3 Club CLO Knowledge of Procedures

Overall, the club CLOs seemed confident they knew what procedures they would use when a patron approached them to ask for assistance with a gambling problem. Several commented on the usefulness of the self-exclusion flow charts to guide them through the process, with one saying ‘you’ve got the flow chart which takes you through, step by step what to do’ and another that ‘you just grab the whole pack and off you go’. However, there did appear to be some confusion over the 24 hour cooling-off period for self-exclusions, with two CLOs believing it meant the patron had 24 hours to decide whether to self-exclude or not, not 24 hours to change their mind after they had decided to self-exclude.

4.13.4 Challenges for Club CLOs in Responding to Patrons who Request Assistance

While most CLOs appeared comfortable about responding to patrons who request assistance for a gambling problem, many noted particular challenges.

- **Comfort level of CLOs**

The CLOs were asked about how comfortable and equipped they felt in responding to patrons who requested assistance with a gambling problem. The vast majority reportedly felt very comfortable, because ‘they’re very easy to talk to once they’ve communicated that they might have a problem; they’re probably reaching out for special help’, ‘once someone gives you an opening that’s your chance’, and ‘you can see that you’re doing them a favour, looking after their interests’. Another noted the difference that age and experience makes, saying:

‘Well at my age it doesn’t worry me at all. As a younger person, I really feel I may have felt a little bit strange about giving someone advice when you don’t have the life skills yourself A little bit older, people will talk to you about things that they wouldn’t like to talk to a younger person about. ... You have the confidence that people are confident to come to you with a problem ... and talk about things confidentially.’

A few CLOs noted the experience was not entirely comfortable as ‘you feel like you’re being very invasive’ and ‘it actually makes me a little bit nervous’. A few also noted some staff can be uncomfortable with patrons approaching them for help because ‘it just depends on who they are and how much experience they’ve had’ and ‘sometimes it’s a little bit harder on the staff when they hear, there goes my rent money and all that kind of stuff. That can be a little upsetting to them’.

One CLO who had not conducted a self-exclusion felt more confident because the local gambling counsellor offered support and had ‘said that if I really wanted to I could give him a ring and he’d come down. ... It would be nice to have somebody there to give you an idea of

what to say. If it does come about I think I will give (the local counsellor) a quick tingle to get down here’.

- **Comfort level of patrons**

Another issue raised by the CLOs was the patron feeling embarrassed, particularly when self-excluding, because ‘there’s a stigma attached to it’. As one explained:

‘They’re nervous. We try to calm them down and say, you’re doing the right thing. ... but you can’t be over supportive. You do encourage them to do it. You don’t want to make them feel uncomfortable in a way in that sort of sense. They know they’re getting all the information they need and all the encouragement they need.’

Similarly, another said ‘obviously this would be a big decision to make and they’re embarrassed to do it, but we try and make them not embarrassed at all. It’s just a normal thing to come and see us about’. In contrast, another said ‘by the time people are at the stage identifying that they need help, I think they are then comfortable. Everyone wants someone to guide them don’t they?’.

Another CLO seemed to feel that the patron does not usually take in all the information during self-exclusion, explaining:

‘I don’t know that people take a lot of notice about the forms and their content. ... I sit there and explain to them without reading from the form ... and most of them say yeah, I’ll sign. I get the impression that ... they just want to do it. ... I think they feel uncomfortable. I find that they want to rush it and just sign and be done with it and be out the door.’

- **Patrons who revoke their self-exclusion**

One CLO spoke of challenges to venues when patrons change their mind about self-excluding within the 24 hour cooling-off period, explaining:

‘(The other CLO) has tried to convince the people, it may be best to at least do the 12 months because you can (revoke) after 12 months but if you don’t after 12 months then it goes for five years. We have tried to convince people not to change their mind and explain to them as well we will be monitoring you and if we believe there is a problem then we will do a venue exclusion on you, which is not your choice but our choice.’

Another explained concerns after a patron revoked her self-exclusion after 12 months, saying:

‘We just had one lady ... who is a staff member who had asked for a self-exclusion and then she came and saw us after the 12 months and we did try to convince her that she seemed to be very happy. But she says she’s got her life together. She’s aware not to go over the top, but once again we did tell her that we’d monitor her and if there was a problem, it wouldn’t be her choice, it would become ours if we thought there was a problem.’

Similarly, another CLO commented that:

‘The only other thing where it may not help is where you can revoke the self-exclusion after one year and I’ve had two people to do that. And I guess it puts a bit of emphasis on me to make a judgement whether that person is over that problem and I’m probably not qualified to do that’.

- **Monitoring breaches of self-exclusion**

Some CLOs told of the challenges of monitoring for breaches of self-exclusion. One challenge was recognising people, where ‘hair colour change or hair style change, I mean growing a beard or getting rid of a beard makes it hard’. Another told of the following situation which required discretion, judgement and staff time:

‘... she was with her husband who was at the machine, but he didn’t know she was excluded so she went onto the floor with him and we had to quietly say to her ... just stay near the rail there and just wait for him but don’t go in there. ... so we just hovered around and made sure she didn’t play and we just watched her. It just becomes high maintenance to monitor. And you don’t want to upset the patrons.’

- **Monitoring patrons self-excluded only from the gambling areas**

Two CLOs explained the difficulties of this as follows:

‘We have a high turnover of staff on the front door, they don’t know what the person looks like and you have to keep refreshing their minds. They have to notify the duty manager as soon as an excludee walks in the front door so the staff can monitor and make sure he’s not in the gaming pool which can be very hard.’

‘... that particular person had just excluded themselves from the gaming room and they were still going to come in for lunch and things with family. ... it puts a bit more pressure on the staff and just to monitor them. We’re busy enough without having to chase people around the club. So I try and steer away from that. Some places might think, we can still get money out of them this way, but it’s not worth the hassle.’

- **Deterrents to self-exclusion**

Two main deterrents to self-exclusion were noted. One was patron embarrassment, as noted above, with one CLO saying ‘there’s a stigma attached to it and I think a lot of people don’t do it’. The other was the requirement for patrons to self-exclude from each individual venue. This was a concern noted by some club CLOs because there was no guarantee that self-excluding a patron would prevent them gambling elsewhere and this was considered ‘quite a loophole’ as ‘they could always be leaving the door open when they do exclude because there’re plenty of other venues in the town that they could go to’ and ‘if we exclude her that excludes her from gambling here; we can’t do anything about where she goes anywhere else’. Another explained:

‘... usually if they’re doing their money here and they go somewhere else and think, okay I’m doing a little bit better over here, they’ll stop themselves from coming here altogether and just go down the road. Which usually most of the time is what happens until they really, really hit rock bottom.’

4.13.5 Perceived Helpfulness of Club Procedures

All CLOs who commented on the helpfulness of current procedures felt that self-exclusion was useful, especially because it applied to people ‘willing to admit they have a problem’ and because ‘there’s so much help out there for them but they have to be willing to take the responsibility themselves’. Another commented ‘for the few that it helps, it’s certainly worthwhile’. One also noted ‘if they really don’t think they can do it, which a lot of them say ... the most solid thing you can do is a self-exclusion’. However, this CLO qualified this remark by saying ‘you need to have a look at other places around you and do them with a 5-10 kilometre radius of where you live’. Similarly, another noted:

‘... they do help at this venue, but I can’t guarantee once they leave how it helps after that. Maybe being self-excluded from the premises that they frequent, and people have known it may work, but to cure the problem I really don’t know how if they don’t do it at other venues and how realistic they are, if they’re fair dinkum about it when they leave these premises.’

One CLO summed this up by saying ‘you can again provide the information, but what happens after that really depends on the person’ and another that ‘how good it works, nobody knows. ... With the information given out and how we’ve got to locate it within each venue I

believe there is an assistance there, but at the end of the day it's up to the individual'. Another felt that 'it's (self-exclusion's) a start but I think a gambler's a gambler. I think if they can't bet on the pokies, they'll find something else. Well they can go to another venue, they can play Keno, they can get on the horses'.

However, one CLO did have a little more evidence that self-exclusion may have helped some patrons, saying 'some of the feedback I've got, they found Relationships Australia, they contacted them ...'.

One CLO was also critical of the signage, saying 'the signs they've created ... I don't think that people look at them and think, I can't afford to bet, I'd better go. They've already made their mind up before they get in there. They don't walk in the pokie room and look at a brochure and say, I shouldn't be here'.

4.13.6 Club CLOs Suggestions for Improvements

When asked about improvements to current practices and procedures for when patrons approach to seek assistance for a gambling problem, the interviewees all focused on self-exclusion. Many had no suggestions, saying 'I think it works well', 'it's a reasonable process' or similar. However, some potential improvements were identified, as discussed below.

- **Need for area wide exclusions**

Four club CLOs articulated a need for area-wide exclusions. In some cases, this was to remove temptation for people excluded from only some venues. As one said, 'you can't do a blanket, which is I guess one little flaw in the system. There's quite a loophole for them because they might only exclude here and then go down to the (X) Hotel'. Another gave a more detailed response, commenting:

'... it has to be improved in the way that they're self-excluding themselves from our club but there's nothing to say in a couple of days time, they get the urge, they're just going to go to one of the other clubs. I think there has to be a network or some sort of system in place where even just in the area, clubs and pubs have some sort of common knowledge of these people that are self-excluding. You usually find that people with a gambling problem, they will travel miles to do it.'

Other calls for area-wide exclusions appeared motivated out of concern for the patron, to save them the time and embarrassment of visiting multiple venues. As one CLO noted, 'the first one would be hard enough; to have to do it everywhere. Maybe a system where they do it once and then it's generated to everyone else'. Similarly, another commented:

'... if you have a gambling problem, it should probably be that you're banning yourself from all the venues in your area, not just one or two so I think it's a pretty arduous process for someone in (a regional centre) for example to make their way around to 34 venues and exclude themselves. I imagine it's very, very time consuming and by venue number 25 they're probably thinking, get me out of here, I'm just about sick of this. ... it is a barrier. ... One thing that I think could be implemented would be regional bans.'

- **Centralised self-exclusion facility**

Two CLOs suggested a centralised system of self-exclusion. One intimated this might lessen embarrassment and so lower barriers to self-exclusion, commenting 'they shouldn't have to come in here at all. Maybe there should be a regulatory body that they can go to away from the club itself. Somewhere that if they did go to didn't get a bad perception of them. Like a government department.'

The second CLO thought self-exclusion could be done through counselling agencies, so that:

‘... customers only need to go to Lifeline or wherever they’re going for their counselling help and have those agencies forward the exclusion onto you. ... every licensed venue that has gaming machines has to have an email address, an internet access, why is it not that we can’t have some sort of system that has a ban in place that can be done from a central location, such as Gambling Help, and they can then email every gambling venue in their area with a current photo, exclusion forms all submitted and then have each venue go okay, we accept it.’

- **More publicity about self-exclusion**

Two CLOs felt ‘there probably should be a bit more publicity’ about self-exclusion, that ‘I don’t think it’s particularly well advertised’.

- **Should not be able to revoke after 12 months**

One CLO thought people should not be able to revoke their self-exclusion after 12 months, saying ‘I don’t think one year’s long enough. It’s for five years but I can get out of it after one year. Why not make it five years and I can’t get out of it?’.

- **Shorter time period**

Two CLOs felt that the five year self-exclusion period deterred some patrons from self-excluding in the first place. As one explained:

‘...I know a lot of people get a bit concerned when you see them and they say right, they think it’s just for three months or six months, and when they realise how long the actual full term will go a few of them say, I’ll take it with me and come and see you and they never do. I think that five year term does scare a few people off.’

The second CLO, when asked if some people are actually deterred by the five year period replied ‘yes, and so’s 12 months really as well, especially if it’s a place where all their friends come and it’s embarrassing that they have this problem’. This same CLO appeared to want more flexibility in the time period for self-exclusion, saying:

‘... it’s a bit tough if somebody just wants to stay away for little while ... Or you can say, how about giving the place a wide berth for a month and then come back and see how you go? Just let them know they’ve got that time to try and get themselves sorted out and then come back.’

- **More frequent training**

One CLO felt more frequent training on self-exclusion was needed, because ‘they don’t offer them that often. Just because so many people already have that training, they try and fill up a class, so sometimes you may not be able to get into one for a month’.

- **Not all venues conduct self-exclusions well**

One CLO was concerned that not all venues conduct self-exclusions appropriately and wanted to see ‘all gambling venues in Queensland doing the same thing’. This CLO continued:

‘The number of times I’ve had a customer come to our venue, at the conclusion of the self-exclusion and has turned around and say, I wish everywhere was like this. It’s unbelievable. The number of problems they’ve had going to pubs, getting to the venue and having the staff say no-one can do an exclusion today or you’ll have to come back another day because the person who looks after that isn’t here or even just being told, oh I dunno, you’ll have to come back later when the boss is here.’

- **Remove partial bans**

Two CLOs expressed the difficulties of having patrons exclude from only the gambling areas, and advocated for exclusions to be from the whole venue. For one CLO, this was because ‘it becomes a constant battle. It just becomes difficult for us to police that’. The other felt a partial ban was not conducive to a person dealing with a gambling problem, noting:

‘I can’t see how it would be positive for a person with a problem gambling to be allowed to come into a venue ...where we’ve got 156 machines only 20 metres away from us and eat a meal and not be ... inclined to think wow, look at all that going on in there. The reality is there are thousands of places to eat in (a regional centre) and why you need to go to one that has gambling if you have a problem with gambling is beyond me.’

- **Simpler forms**

One CLO advocated simpler self-exclusion forms due to doubt that the person self-excluding would read and comprehend the information in its current form:

‘It’s this massive big form with all these paragraphs and so much writing and I don’t think a lot of people entirely understand what they’re entering into. They don’t read it. ... Even if you say to them, I’m just going to let you sit there and read that form for a few minutes and they’ll so, no, no, where do I sign? ... Maybe it should be in a visual form with bigger writing at the bottom of each page and a single form at the back.’

4.14 CLUB CLO APPROACHES TO PATRONS WHO SHOW SIGNS OF PROBLEM GAMBLING

The CLO interviews asked about various aspects of approaching patrons in the venue who show signs of problem gambling. Their responses are summarised below in terms of what signs might indicate a patron has a gambling problem, what signs would prompt them to approach a patron, procedures they would use, associated knowledge, challenges they face and perceived helpfulness of these procedures.

4.14.1 Club CLO Identification of Signs of Possible Problem Gambling

The CLOs were asked if they could recognise if someone is a problem gambler or at risk, and if so, how. The vast majority agreed they could recognise signs of problem gambling and identified several potential indicators, although some tempered their comments by saying it was inherently difficult. As one said, ‘they show the signs maybe, but at the end of the day it’s still very hard to tell if they have a problem gambling or not’. Other noted that combinations of signs over time are more telling than individual signs. For example, one noted that ‘it’s not something you can pick up in a day ... they’ve got to come back more than once for you to notice the trends in their behaviour’. Similarly, another said ‘you need to know the person pretty well prior to the problem to be able to determine whether gambling has made an impact on their behaviour’. The indicators mentioned by the CLOs are identified below.

- **Irritability and aggression**

The most frequently mentioned indicator, by 17 club CLOs, was irritability and aggression. Usually this aggression was directed towards gaming machines, such as when patrons are ‘punching or hitting the machine saying it’s robbed them’, ‘abusing the machines’, ‘swearing at the machines’ and ‘aggressive at the machines’. One recounted ‘we’ve had in the past year someone who put a fist through a toilet wall or they’ve damaged a poker machine’.

Sometimes this aggression is directed at staff, when patrons ‘think that we’re ... rigging the machines’. One CLO noted this irritability can translate into ‘rudeness They get rude to staff, rude to their friends and families especially if they’ve got a family member being around them. Anti-social behaviour’.

- **Looking stressed or upset**

Four club CLOs noted looking stressed or upset as an indicator. One explained ‘it’s a real stress and frustration thing. Just shaking and talking to the machine. It’s sort of like, you know an alcoholic when they come up to the bar because they’re shaking. It’s sort of like that behaviour’. Others mentioned ‘tears’, being ‘visibly upset’ and ‘crying in the corner’ as signs. Another noted that, in their opinion, problem gamblers are ‘hyped up, they’re tense, they sort of rush around a lot and you can just feel the stress and the worry’.

- **Erroneous and irrational verbalisations**

Three CLOs remarked on irrational behaviours or verbalisations, and gave the examples of ‘moving from machine to machine mumbling words’, ‘going turn that button on, it’s not paying out’ and ‘people talking about ways to rig the machines to make them win’.

- **Marked changes in behaviour**

Three club CLOs noted changes in attitudes, moods and behaviours as possible signs, such as ‘changes in behaviour ... after big wins or big losses’, ‘attitude changes ... they either get very withdrawn and won’t talk to you where they normally would or they become reasonably aggressive to the machines’, and ‘mood changes ... all of a sudden they change, they’ve lost money, then they’re trying to catch up and they’re getting frustrated’.

- **Gambling very regularly and/or for long periods**

Nine CLOs identified regular and long gambling sessions as indicators. This was expressed as ‘people who are ... waiting at the front door at 8.30 in the morning, half an hour before the club opens and they’re still here at 10-11 o’clock at night. They’ve been here all day and they’ll do it consistently’, ‘five days a week from 9 till 5’, and when ‘you may actually go into other pubs and see those people there and you say ... you don’t do this just here, you actually do this at other places as well’.

- **Gambling for longer than intended/chasing losses**

One CLO considered ‘chasing the next win’ as an indicator.

- **Trying to obtain extra money to gamble with**

Four interviewees mentioned trying to obtain extra money for gambling, such as ‘hitting people up for money just to gamble’ and ‘if they ask for a loan or try to get money out of a credit card’.

- **Multiple ATM withdrawals**

Three club CLOs considered multiple ATM withdrawals as an indicator, ‘when you have the same person going back to the ATM machine regularly’ and ‘someone who visits the ATM 15 times in a night’.

- **Changing a lot of money or changing money often**

One CLO noted a sign was when ‘they’ll come up and break their \$50’s to get change. You know you’ve broken \$200, \$400, \$600, you can see that trend happening’.

- **Putting big wins back into a machine as soon as possible**

Another CLO mentioned gambling away big wins as an indicator, such as ‘when the big member draw went, someone won \$5,000-\$6,000 and you just say oh that’s a win, we’ll have that back in the next month because the amount of time that they put in, they’re always chasing the next big win’.

- **Always betting the maximum amount**

One interviewee considered it a sign when a patron is ‘consistently playing maximum. They’re going to lose, they’ve got to lose, they’ve got a problem’. Similarly, another noted ‘the ones that play big I would say have a problem because I’d say that the hole that they’re digging, they’re digging at a rapid rate’.

- **Saying they cannot afford it**

Three CLOs referred to patrons saying that they cannot afford to be gambling, ‘comments like I won’t be able to buy the groceries for the week now’, saying ‘I better win now, I’ve got to pay the rent’ and ‘approaching staff and saying I have spent all the grocery money’.

- **Appearing to spend all their money**

One CLO considered another telling circumstance was when ‘they don’t seem to be affluent but still pumping, maybe they’re putting their pay through. People you see at the start of the week and you’re not seeing at the end of the week so they’re probably spending all their money at once’.

- **Family disputes**

One CLO mentioned family disputes, where ‘you can usually see them arguing with the family members ... or their wife will come and try and get them out and they don’t go’.

- **Do not want to be interrupted**

One CLO felt that people with gambling problems did not want their gambling interrupted and gave the following example:

‘I think poker machine players run to pattern. They think the machine’s going to do this, this, this, and this and it will pay them. They don’t like to break their pattern. Like some people get really cranky if you have to do a hopper fill in the middle of them playing. Because they play to a certain amount and then collect and play to a certain amount and then collect. If then you have to do a hopper fill, that’s interrupting the machine; they think once you open that machine, you’re upsetting the sequence.’

4.14.2 Indicators that Would Prompt Club CLOs to Approach a Patron

The club CLOs were asked ‘Of the indicators you have identified, which would prompt you to approach a patron to assist them?’ Nine of the 26 club CLOs indicated they would not approach a patron at all about their gambling, with reasons including ‘too difficult’, ‘I’m a bit young’, ‘I just don’t like to pry in other people’s business’, and ‘someone has to admit they have a problem before they can take your help seriously’. Another noted ‘we have a policy

that we don't approach anybody, we let them come to us', despite observing some patrons who 'I see (here) at 7.30 in the morning and I work sometimes here until 11-12 o'clock at night and those people can still be here and have been here all day. But very rarely do they ever stop for lunch sometimes. It's scary when you see it'.

The remaining CLOs nominated scenarios where they would approach a patron, but some were clear that one indicator alone would not prompt this, that 'it would probably need to be a combination'. A few others would note indicators in an incidents register and only approach if there was a pattern of behaviour. One noted:

'It would be a group of things. ... if they are being anti-social, if they are being rude or touching and hitting the machine and if they are making regular trips (to the ATM). I think three factors are usually enough to say, even just to have a chat with them and it usually brings it out from that'.

Some CLOs would only approach if a patron became aggressive, when they would intervene out of concern for security or disturbance to other patrons. In all, seven different scenarios were identified as prompting a response by at least one CLO interviewed.

- **Aggressive, abusive and violent behaviour**

Four club CLOs specifically noted they would approach a patron if they became aggressive or abusive, when 'for a start we stop them playing' or 'request that they not damage the machine'. Only one of these four mentioned they would broach the subject of a gambling problem, recalling that:

'... one of our managers did actually talk to a patron about their behaviour, he actually punched a machine. Displayed some aggression, some violence there and I did have a conversation with that patron about their behaviour and whether their gambling was causing an issue for them.'

- **Marked changes in behaviour**

Two CLOs noted they would approach a patron if their behaviour changed markedly where it was 'a lot more erratic than what it normally is' or if 'they are generally an easy going person and quietly spoken or outgoing, and all of a sudden they get a bit withdrawn and cranky and short and rude to the staff and after it starts getting gradually worse'.

- **Multiple ATM withdrawals**

One would approach a patron 'if someone is coming in regularly and constantly going to that ATM'.

- **If a patron was crying and upset**

Four club CLOs said they would approach a patron if they were 'sitting there crying at the machine' or 'in distress'.

- **Trying to obtain extra money to gamble with**

Three CLOs would approach a patron if they were trying to borrow money, although this was to prevent other patrons being badgered. One explained 'you have the real people that have a problem and come in and bet maximum credits to that and in 10 minutes come back and then they're asking people for money upstairs'. This CLO that 'it has become lately that some people will perform some type of service (prostitution) out in the car park to get money to come and gamble'.

- **Very high expenditure**

One CLO noted ‘I can actually generate reports to see how much someone has put through a machine during an hourly period or a day. So if someone’s put in \$1 million I will go up to them and say, how about you come back tomorrow?’.

- **If they say they have a problem**

One CLO reported ‘when they say, I think I’ve got a problem, bang, straight away get one of those things. That’s your opening, when they say they may have a problem?’.

4.14.3 Procedures Used by Club CLOs to Approach a Patron

Some club CLOs recalled procedures they had used in this scenario, while others speculated on what they would do.

Procedures CLOs have used

Twelve CLOs provided examples of when they had approached a patron out of concern for their gambling. One, if ‘you just overhear something’ would just ask ‘are you okay?’, while another said if patrons ‘get change and are a bit down in the dumps ... I do ask them if they’re alright’. Another said ‘I’ll pull up a chair and say would mind if I sit here and have a chat or try to remove them from the pokie room and have a chat quietly somewhere and try to find out what the problem is’. As noted earlier, another suggests ‘how about you come back tomorrow?’ to players who have spent large sums of money, with the reaction differing between ‘no, no I’m fine and some go yeah, I will’.

One CLO recounted the response when a patron asked to borrow money:

‘I said I’m sorry we don’t lend money for gambling. It’s against our policy. And I just talked to her then, you know you’re okay? She said oh yes, I’m fine, I just put too much money in, I just want to recoup a little bit more and I just need \$20 to try and recoup. And at that stage I just admit, because I was new at being a Duty Manager at that stage, I didn’t ask for self-exclusion. But ... it’s drummed into us now to take things further.’

Another CLO recalled an incident where the manager had called a counselling agency, saying there was ‘a young bloke come in actually in tears saying that he was wasting his wages and his family ... she actually rang one of the help people’.

Another gave the example of when venue staff had recorded ‘over three different instances where (a lady) spent too much money’:

‘... so that gives me the ability to then ring her and say, look you’ve spoken to (staff name) and (staff name) on such and such a day. Just letting you know we do have exclusion provisions, would you like to do that, would you like to come down and have a chat? ... she said no (manager’s name), I’m not going to come as often, there’s no problem, there’s no need for me to exclude myself, everything’s okay.’

One CLO recounted how he had helped a big spender to curtail their gambling by saying:

‘... seriously, you must have something better to do with your money than this, but (the patron replied) I just like the rush. ... he was actually one of the people that I was able to hand it back to, sit down and have a chat with, go through it all and ... the paperwork was just about done and he said, would you mind if I just hold this for another day? And I say, what for? Why would you, we’ve been through this, you’ve just made the decision within yourself that it would be good to say no. ... admittedly he never handed in his paperwork but he kept coming back down here and ... he’d say, nope, not going in there, I’ll leave \$50 on Keno tonight, that’s it. That place is terrible, it’s evil, I’m not going in there! More than anything I

believe I contributed to the fact of keeping him out there because I kept saying well why do you keep doing this?’

Another CLO commented on the approach he uses if people are cranky about losing, but also noted when he attempts to give them a counselling brochure ‘they normally tell you where to go because that’s not what they want to hear’:

‘... when you’re in the situation when someone is very cranky about the fact that they’re not winning, you can only suggest to them that it’s time they leave and that if you don’t want to lose you should really get up and go And they’ll just get cranky at me and leave ...’

One CLO took a more novel approach when a patron won but he knew they couldn’t afford to gamble much:

‘I’d instruct the staff not to give them \$20 notes. Give them \$50s so they wouldn’t put it back into the machine. ... I have pulled them aside ... and tell them they’re putting in a bit too much there. ... if you work in a venue long enough (you know) who can and who can’t afford it.’

However, this CLO reported this approach had not been effective for one patron who ‘was pumping in 5-6 grand a night’. This CLO explained that the patron ‘took it on board, agreed that he had a problem. I alerted the nominee that this guy had a problem, pulled a report on him, nothing was done and he lost the lot. ... the manager didn’t act. I still to this day hold him responsible’.

Procedures CLOs would use

The remainder of the CLOs who had not approached a patron but appeared willing to do so speculated on how they would do this. Many were quite vague, saying they would ‘have a general chat with them, see if you can find out why they are like that’, ‘it’s just a matter of talking to the person involved’, ‘if you see someone in distress, ask if they were okay, is there a problem, do they want to talk to anyone?’ and use ‘the softly softly approach’.

One CLO gave a more detailed answer, saying:

‘... take them aside, take them directly away from a pokie room in a quiet area in the club, listen to what they had to say, then the first thing I’d do would be to offer them self-exclusion. ... and then talk them through the procedure of how that works. If they’re not interested in that then just talk to them a bit more and offer them the reading material ... but at the end of the day, it’s their call’.

4.14.4 Club CLO Knowledge of Procedures

While the CLOs were very aware of procedures to follow when a patron approached them to ask for assistance for a gambling problem, there were clearly less specific procedures around CLOs approaching patrons of concern. Responses varied by the CLO’s preference, signs the patron was exhibiting, the CLO’s knowledge of the patron, and previous experiences when they have approached a patron. It was not that CLOs did not know what to do in this situation; rather that there was a lack of identifiable procedures to follow. As one noted, ‘I don’t know where you pull the line’. Another admitted being unsure, saying ‘there has to be clear guidelines about how we’re allowed to approach people. ... we’ve got no idea of how to approach people who we think have a gambling problem, what we’re allowed to say, what we’re not allowed to say and how far we can go with that person’.

4.14.5 Challenges for Club CLOs in Approaching Patrons About a Possible Gambling Problem

Several challenges were raised by the CLOs around approaching patrons in the venue.

- **Difficulties of recognising gambling problems amongst patrons**

The most commonly mentioned challenge, noted by nine club CLOs, was being able to tell if a patron has a gambling problem. This was mainly because they did not know people's financial circumstances, where 'I don't know how much money they have in their bank account', 'to look at, you wouldn't think they'd have 20c to rub together but they are very wealthy people', 'they could be a multimillionaire and quite happy to lose their money' and 'some people can afford it, some people can't afford it'. Another noted 'they may have just stubbed their toe so they're a little bit angry'.

- **Worried the patron might be angry, aggressive, insulted**

Five club CLOs specifically noted they would be wary approaching a patron out of fear they would insult them and prompt an aggressive response. One said 'I haven't actually done it before' specifically because a patron 'might take it the wrong way'. Similarly, another said 'you don't want to offend or upset the person either I guess, be a bit wary of possibly making an accusation which could be taken the wrong way'. Other CLOs were more certain they would get a negative reaction from the patron, with one noting 'they can get very aggro' and another that:

'... when some people that are problem gamblers, their situation is fuelled by alcohol as well which then can turn to violence so that's obviously another point where staff will back off because we don't come to work to get hit. ... in venues in Queensland, that may be a high risk factor'.

Interestingly, one commented that 'I've always found that a female approaching is lot better than a male approaching. We can diffuse a situation more so than a male because ... they tend to come across more aggressive'. Even so, some CLOs commented on how carefully they would approach the situation, 'that's why you don't come out directly and say have you got a problem? You've got to go fishing for that information but in a way that it's turned around'.

- **Invasion of privacy**

Two CLOs cautioned that patrons would consider an approach an invasion of privacy, because 'people keep their personal things personal'. However, another said 'they can tell me to mind my own business, but at least I've given them a card and told them where to go to get some sort of help'.

- **Do not want to lose the patron's business**

Three CLOs spoke of the potential for losing a patron's business if they approached them, where 'if someone's a good patron and then you upset them, then they're not going to be a good patron anymore'. Another commented that

'I would hate to go down and talk to one of our best gaming players and say hey, you're spending a lot of money and they just turn around and go, I'm offended, see you later. ... most sites would be the same. You'd probably get 80 per cent of your revenue from 20 per cent of your people. That 20 per cent is pretty important to most venues.'

The third CLO was concerned that if an approach were to ‘scare a customer off and they won’t come back here but they still have that problem. I would be concerned that we didn’t deal with that properly and then there wasn’t an opportunity to help them’.

- **Requires staff confidence and experience**

A few CLOs noted that approaching patrons required confidence, experience and diplomacy, where ‘some have the tact and the skill to do that and others don’t’. Another commented that ‘a lot of the staff are young, they could recognise certain things but not everyone has the same diplomacy or people skills. ... I had other staff attempt to fix situations like this where it only fuelled the fire and then I get called into a situation that’s a hell of a lot worse’.

- **Depends how well they know the patron**

Some comments were made about whether knowing patrons well made an approach easier or more difficult. One CLO was ‘not so comfortable to say that to people that I see once in a blue moon’. Conversely, two others felt knowing the patron made it ‘a difficult situation’ because ‘you know them and you know their family ... I’m also a friend out of hours and it’s the embarrassment level for them’.

- **Confusion over venue exclusions**

There was confusion amongst some CLOs about venue exclusion, with one noting ‘we can’t exclude them. They’ve got to self-exclude... no we can’t say you can’t play’. When the interviewer said ‘so there’s no process for venue exclusion for gambling?’, this CLO replied ‘not for gambling. I am quite sure that we cannot’. Another CLO expressed confusion as follows:

‘I’m still not overly sure and I’ve read different bits and pieces about venue exclusions from our side and I find that very confusing. Because you’re not really allowed to go up and start talking to these people. I can exclude somebody for physically damaging the machines, but if I think somebody’s got a gambling problem they might not want to come to me about and they’re not willing to do a self-exclusion, I don’t understand how I’m able to approach that person. ...It’s not clear. ... So our guidelines as far as what we’re allowed to do towards those people when we think that’s going to be the case is very blurred.’

4.14.6 Club CLO Perceptions of the Helpfulness of Procedures

Not surprisingly, the club CLOs felt it difficult to comment on whether approaching patrons had assisted them to resolve a gambling problem. Section 4.13.3 relayed specific examples of when approaches to patrons had resulted in losing that patron’s business, with the CLO then not knowing whether the patron continued to gamble elsewhere. Other instances were related to when the approach had prompted no interest or action by the patron. However, a few were noted that appeared to be effective in helping patrons to curtail their gambling.

4.15 CLUB CLO RESPONSES TO THIRD PARTY CONCERNS ABOUT PROBLEM GAMBLING

The club CLOs were asked about what they would do if a family member or close friend indicated that a patron has a gambling problem.

4.15.1 Frequency of a Third Party Approaching Club CLOs

While a few club CLOs recounted specific examples of being approached by a family member, the majority had not personally experienced this.

4.15.2 Procedures Used by Club CLOs

Six CLOs gave examples of what they had actually done in this situation, while the remainder discussed what they would do.

Procedures CLOs have used

Six CLOs recounted specific examples of this scenario occurring and described what they did. Two related examples where the complaint by the third party was not genuine, with one recounting 'there was a little bit of bitterness between the mother/daughter scenario and it's not really all the daughter told about the mother'. Another said 'it was an ex-boyfriend and they weren't involved with this person anymore and they hadn't been for some time and it was more of a malicious, try and get you barred from everywhere type thing'. Another CLO appeared to attempt to establish the legitimacy of the complaint by saying:

'... you come to me with this problem, I'll phone your partner or your family member and let them know that you've approached me with regard to spending too much money on the pokies and if there is a problem, go down the self-exclusion track, come in for a chat and we can self-exclude you. So you either get, there is a problem or bugger off, he's not a part of my life anymore. ... I've only had one of those and the guy went down the track of no, don't ring her.'

Another CLO noted this was a concern, saying:

'I guess the first thing is to establish this person has a genuine relationship with the person who they are alleging has a problem. First and foremost. Secondly, to talk to ... the patron involved and let them know, we have had an approach made by a concerned friend or relative and then just have a bit of a chat with them about issues they may or may not be having and suggest there are some options for them as far as counselling goes, if need be for the exclusion process. ... One instance, the person did have a gambling problem, once we had a discussion with the patron who the concern was about, they did exclude.'

A further two CLOs also spoke of effective outcomes after a third party approach. One involved a venue exclusion, where:

'... a husband did come to me and want his wife excluded. He came back to me with some information to prove there was an issue there with bank statements and phone bills and outstanding accounts and things like that. We then spoke to the wife. ... he was quite an aggressive type of guy. I didn't want to give him information about her gambling in case I was telling him more than he knew, so it was quite a touchy one actually. But he was happy in the end that we were able to venue exclude her and she was comfortable with that. ... It was a massive step, it was quite a scary one actually ... I was concerned about the home life as well.'

Another was able to advise the patron as follows:

‘...the next time the mother came in, I had a cup of coffee with her ... I said, your daughter’s come in to see me, she’s a bit worried about you spending so much time on the machines and she said, they’re right you know. I have been coming too much. But I love the place, I love coming in and having a coffee and I love meeting my friends here. I said that’s good. Just try and make it more of a social thing than sitting on the machines. Get some more friends to come.’

One CLO described the difficulties involved with the following occurrence:

‘I said, I think your husband’s waiting for you at the door. She’s like, one minute, one more minute. And he’s come into the room and just gone, we’re going. (I said) I really think you should press collect now, I’ll get that payout out to you straight away but you need to leave. ... I’ll just press collect for you okay?’

Procedures CLOs would use

The remainder of the CLOs commented on what they would do if this situation arose. In some cases, the CLO would use a combination of the procedures described below.

- **Monitor the patron**

Five CLOs noted they would monitor the patron following a third party complaint, with one explaining:

‘We’d then sort of try to discreetly monitor them ... the time they’ve been in there ... how much money they’ve spent ... how many times they’ve been up to break notes or if you see them go to the ATM ... we wouldn’t discuss gambling issues with a family member but if they came to us about it, we’d listen and observe’

Two would monitor and then approach the patron if warranted, with one saying ‘I’d track it, keep an eye on it. ... It’s our opinion if they overstep the mark. I wouldn’t hesitate going up and saying a few words’. The other commented ‘we’ll monitor that person ... over a period of time and then if they see that they are excessive or they’re getting frustrated; it all comes back into this sort of bit of behaviour pattern, we will approach’.

The fourth CLO would be more proactive in helping the family, noting:

‘We would monitor the husband. ... We take the person’s details that is bringing it to our attention and let them know we’re going to keep an eye on them ... we’ll give them a phone call once a week to see how things are going, if things are changing on the family front. If they’re behaviour here has changed at all. ... and say don’t be on their case about it, just try to be as understanding, caring and encouraging as you can be. ... otherwise they’ll just turn straight back out the door and start gambling again. You need to be more patient with them.’

- **Approach the patron**

Six CLOs would approach the patron of concern. One ‘wouldn’t say that a family member’s come up Probably go over there, have a chat with them, completely off that topic, keep their hand off the pokie button for a while I’d do it slyly’. A second noted ‘he should go home then. I’d probably have to suggest that he seek assistance from the Gambling Help people’.

Four explicitly said they would tell the patron about the third party concern. One said ‘you can’t stop anybody using them, but you can pull grandad aside and say hey, your family is concerned about your problem’ and another that ‘if I knew her I would probably ask her to join me for a cup of tea and we’d have a chat about it. I would say family have concerns’. The third would ‘suggest that they talk to family. The big one is always to try and get them to go to the help people because they’re qualified to deal with them’. The fourth noted ‘I’d have

a word to him. Yes. I wouldn't say you can't play but I'd sit down and say listen, there're concerns here. (And if the patron visited again, say) before you go in there, remember we talked about something.'

- **Provide counselling information to the family**

Three club CLOs would provide counselling information to the third party, saying 'I would give him the relevant numbers of people to contact', and 'we would talk to the family members and give them options like helplines and Gambler's Anonymous ... where they can go do to get more information to try and convince the other person that they have a problem.'

- **Refer to the general manager**

Three club CLOs would refer the matter to the club's general manager because 'that goes out of the boundaries, because he's not the one self-excluding or with the gambling problem, he's complaining about somebody else, so it's a bit of a touchy one' and because 'we have duty of care to that family but we don't want to cause a scene either. We want to do it so it's handled professionally so I would go to the general manager'.

- **Ask to meet with the patron and the family**

Two CLOs would move towards meeting with the patron and family to try to resolve the problem. One said 'I'll have a word with him tonight but if you want to take it further, then the three of us should probably sit down', while the other noted:

'... if they are very worried about it, we can talk through the self-exclusion process with them. ... And if they think that's the way to go, it's possible to arrange a meeting with all of them there and just explain the process to the person. ... giving them basically the line for help they need.'

4.15.3 Club CLO Knowledge of Procedures

The club CLOs clearly had limited experience of being approached by a third party. While most speculated on what they would do, the variation in the procedures the CLOs have or would follow suggests an absence of explicit procedures across venues.

4.15.4 Challenges for Club CLOs

Several CLOs alluded to numerous difficulties in dealing with third party concerns.

- **Allegation may not be genuine**

As noted earlier, four CLOs who had experienced this situation spoke of ensuring the third party complaint was genuine. This was also raised by another two interviewees who had not been faced with this situation. One commented 'what I need to determine is there a problem or is more of a personal problem behind the scenes. Like the partners are fighting at the moment or they're going to break up at the moment. She's spending all my half of the house or something like that'. Similarly, the other noted:

'... you have to be careful there too when they come in and say that; maybe he's just come in and slipped \$20 in the poker machines and she's actually been out spending it all day on shoes! That's another way to look at it too, she's getting cranky with her husband that he's out doing something that she's been trying to cover up for quite some time.'

- **Concern for triggering friction**

As alluded to in some examples above where the CLOs had been approached by a third party, a few CLOs recognised a need to avoid causing more friction in the family.

- **Venue cannot force a patron to not gamble**

One CLO noted that ‘we can’t step in on their behalf. That person needs to be the person who excludes themselves’, suggesting the venue is limited in the actions they can take.

- **Privacy**

A few CLOs raised the issue of privacy, with one commenting they would not approach the patron ‘even if it’s family, it’s a privacy issue’ and another that ‘if a family member rang me and said, I don’t want them to know I rang, I would respect their privacy and try and deal with it in another way’.

4.15.5 Perceived Helpfulness of Procedures

Because very few CLOs had been involved in this scenario, they were also unsure of the likely helpfulness of the procedures they would use. However, some examples of a positive result were discussed earlier.

4.16 CLO SUPPORT FOR STAFF IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

CLOs were asked about the ways they support the venue’s staff in assisting problem gamblers in the venue. They articulated several types of support they provide.

- **Be a referral for staff**

Seven CLOs noted they support staff by being a referral. This was necessary because staff do not receive the same level of training as CLOs and ‘because they’re a transient staff’. One CLO noted the role of frontline staff was ‘to listen to the patron and then ask ... do you want to speak to the duty manager or if they don’t want to they must inform us of the problem’. Similarly, another said ‘our duty managers and myself always have an open door policy. If anything comes up that a frontline staff comes to see you about, then we can approach the person in question with information’

Three CLOs particularly noted that staff refer self-exclusions to them, where ‘I’m basically just the person they all point to so they don’t have to do the exclusions’. A second explained that ‘staff don’t ban people, exclude people on the pokies. Because they’re out on the floor, they can probably see some of the behaviour, they’ll come and tell us and then we’ll go and monitor it’.

- **On-the-job and other training**

Five club CLOs referred to in-house training they provide and organisation of external training for staff. Part of this was ensuring that staff had received RSG training, where ‘I ... make it a point now that if I take on any casual staff that they do at least have their own RSG’, and ‘we do ... make sure that their RSG certifications are current and up to date’. Another said ‘everybody here is RSG trained; we insist upon that so that’s just part of their employment here’.

Other CLOs referred to training provided by local Gambling Help agencies, where ‘if Gambling Help are advertising a course or if they’re offering to train staff, we let them do that’ and ‘we’ve also had in the past Lifeline ... run us through little courses and presentations about responsible gambling’.

Others referred to the in-house training they provide for staff. One explained ‘I have an operations manual that we give the new staff. ... they have to sign it to say that they’ve read it’ and another that ‘I suppose the RSG covers that sort of thing, but maybe just refreshing information, like constantly giving them a few more tools to work with. ... They don’t start in gaming if they’ve never done it before, we do give them the training first’.

One CLO referred to extra training for supervisors, where ‘the CLO course was one that was an option’ and another that ‘we also meet with other people in our industry regularly and talk about issues’.

- **Advice on specific situations**

One CLO spoke of giving advice to staff on specific situations, where ‘we’re always there to come and talk to if they feel someone in the club is getting aggressive or has a problem. ... But once again our hands are tied until someone’s ready to own up to having a gambling problem’.

- **Updates on incidents or issues**

A few CLOs told of regular staff meetings where ‘we just talk about any problems we’ve had throughout the month or exclusions or issues’.

4.17 CLUB CLO TRAINING IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

The club CLOs were asked about the training they had undertaken to help them assist problem gamblers in the venue and its strengths and weaknesses.

4.17.1 Sources of Club CLO Training

When asked what types of training the CLOs had received in responsible gambling, several sources were identified.

- **Responsible gambling courses**

Twenty-one of the CLOs had completed a formal responsible service of gambling course, some as recently as in the previous few months and others as long ago as seven years. CLOs who had not completed this training said they relied on ‘house policies’, being ‘streetwise’ and other short courses or seminars they had done.

- **CLO training**

Only five of the club CLOs specifically stated they had completed the CLO training, although a few others seemed confused as to whether some training they had undertaken had been the RSG or CLO training.

- **Gaming Nominee training**

Four CLOs particularly mentioned their gaming nominee course, which had covered some aspects of responsible gambling.

- **On-the-job training and experience**

Five CLOs commented on the value of industry experience, that ‘being in the industry for so long you tend to know how to handle it’. Even if they were positive about the value of formal training, ‘you can’t beat experience’. Another CLO was more circumspect about the value of training:

‘... the difficulty comes from the wide variation of different type of people that you can deal with. There’s no one training method that’s going to cover 60 year olds, 18 year olds, males, females. You don’t know what you’re walking into anytime you’re doing it, so I don’t care how much training you’ve done. Until you actually start to deal with a few, that’s when you start to understand it.’

The fifth CLO raised a different point, saying:

‘The training’s important, but it’s got a lot to do with the people you hire I can get a handful of people and put them through a training course, it’s not going to make them any better at dealing with the situation. ... That’s up to a manager and human resources departments to weed out the right sort of people for jobs.’

- **Training by counsellors**

Four CLOs noted the training sessions sometimes held by local counselling agencies. These were described as follows:

‘... Relationships Australia came down ... and spoke to all staff, told them about the services etc so all the staff were briefed on what they could do. And she gave them a bit of an outline as to what to watch for, how to approach people, how to deal with people and things like that’.

‘She spoke about ... recognising the signs of problem gambling and if the staff have got any issues. Just reinforce it and call Gambling Help for assistance and all the contact details. ... I don’t think it was anything they hadn’t heard before, but ... they were all happy to do it.’

- **Industry association seminars**

One CLO mentioned industry association seminars, where ‘when it first came out, this new legislation, Clubs Queensland had some seminars on responsible gaming which we attended.’

- **Local networks**

One CLO spoke of being involved in local networks as a learning experience, where ‘I’ve been tied up with committees on responsible service of gaming in Relationships Australia and a local network in previous areas’.

4.17.2 Perceived Value of Training for Club CLOs

Various strengths and weaknesses were identified by the staff around their training.

- **Perceived strengths**

Most CLOs were positive about the training they had received, describing it as ‘good’, ‘adequate’, ‘very thorough’, ‘fantastic’ and ‘fairly easy to understand’. Several areas of value were mentioned.

One was guidance on how to recognise problem gamblers, where ‘it tells you what to look for’ and ‘they give you tips on reactions and body language and things like that. It was a lot more thorough than just being able to look and feel and think on your own’. Similarly,

another commented ‘there’re are little snippets you pick out about how to handle things, mannerisms, the way you talk to people’.

Another was clarification of the role of venue personnel, to ‘understand how our role works’. Similarly another commented ‘I think the training we get now is sufficient because we’re not counsellors’ and another that ‘I think what’s on offer is adequate. ... we’re not counsellors, we’re here as a referral service. ... just make sure you give them the appropriate referrals and you get them to someone who is a professional’.

Two CLOs particularly noted the value of networking with people outside the venue during training because ‘you listen to some experiences that people have had, not necessarily at your venue, so I think it is valuable, very valuable’ and ‘there was a group discussion between a lot of the licensees in (a regional centre) and it was a very valuable part of the day’.

- **Perceived weaknesses**

Some club CLOs identified weaknesses in the training they had received or the training system itself. Two felt it could be more comprehensive in training people how to interact with problem gamblers, commenting that:

‘... some of the training companies out there are a little bit lax with that. ... I think the RSG is not really comprehensive enough. ... it didn’t go into the intricacies of how to identify people. ... I don’t think there’s enough in-depth in there for just normal bar staff. No. They gave us all the run down of what you’re allowed to do, what you’re not allowed to do as far as the machines and that are concerned, but ... the client approach and all that sort of stuff was not there.’

Similarly, another noted that ‘they train you how to fill out the paperwork, they don’t train you how to speak, to counsel someone through the process. ... there needs to be training on how to actually speak to the person’.

Another CLO wondered if staff retained what they learnt in the training, because ‘it’s so easy to get them I find. Are they taking it all on board? When they first come away from their RSG, they go gee I didn’t know about that. But are they going to keep that in practice if it doesn’t come up all the time? They’re going to forget it’.

This same CLO commented on resistance by staff to attend training during time off, saying ‘we pay for all the training but if it happens to fall on one of their days off, (they say) do I get paid for that? If I’m not getting paid, I’m not doing it’.

- **Suggested improvements**

Some suggestions for improvements to the training were made. These all focused on more training in how to approach and interact with patrons who may have a gambling problem. Three CLOs were in favour of being ‘a little bit more thorough in showing how to approach people. An example would be a good idea’ and ‘the training tells you all the basic things that you need to know, like how to recognise a problem to a certain extent or how to do the forms, but it doesn’t teach you how to really deal with those problems’. Similarly, a third advocated ‘a trainer who can give you real life experiences of how these things happen, how they pan out. Some be good, some be bad. It’s not a fairy story is it? Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn’t, but it’s being able to feel comfortable in giving people options’.

4.18 CLUB CLO INTERACTION WITH GAMBLING HELP AGENCIES TO ASSIST PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

The club CLOs were asked about their interaction with gambling support services to assist problem gamblers in the venue and whether they thought this was useful.

4.18.1 Frequency of Club CLO Interacting with Gambling Help Agencies

Eight club CLOs had experienced no contact with staff from a gambling support service, although agency staff may have visited the venue when the CLO was not present or not aware they were there. Others were clearly confused, thinking Queensland Government staff who deliver pamphlets and signs were from a counselling agency and/or that the local Gambling Help agency staff were from Gamblers' Anonymous. In contrast, there appeared particularly high awareness about the local counselling agencies in some regional centres.

4.18.2 Types of Club CLO Interaction with Gambling Help Agencies

The CLO interviewees identified several types of services provided by gambling counselling agencies to their venue.

- **Provide printed materials about local services**

Several CLOs mentioned the counselling cards and brochures delivered to venues, but some were clearly referring to those provided by the Queensland Government. However, six CLOs referred specifically to printed materials from local agencies.

- **Be a contact for venues for advice and assistance**

Four CLOs referred to local counselling agencies as a contact for advice, with some related comments being 'she was excellent, she'd come out and have a meeting, I phoned her about a number of issues, gave me some good advice', 'they're very pleasant, very approachable, I know that I can call them any time I need if I have a question or a query', and 'if we have any problems we can then liaise with them'.

- **Be a contact for venues to refer patrons to**

One CLO noted that if patrons asked them to, 'we might be able to set up a meeting for them (with a local counsellor)'.

- **Organise patron self-exclusions**

One CLO told of a previous local counsellor where 'people would come to him and he would walk them to every venue in (a regional centre) But now ... that's the problem, they exclude from here but then they might have a moment of weakness and go somewhere else.'

- **Advise on specific situations**

One CLO spoke of telephoning the local counselling agency to advise on specific situations, such as 'if that sister comes in and says, my sister is spending too much money, it's nice to get on the phone and ask, I am going to say this, does this sound alright, is it the right thing to say? And if not, what do I say in those circumstances?'.

- **Provide training sessions for staff**

Four CLOs noted the role some counselling agencies play in staff training. One said 'she phoned me last week which was amazing. Someone rings you! And said ... we spoke a couple

of weeks ago about some training for the gaming staff, it's coming up very shortly'. Another referred to 'a self-exclusion course, probably about 4-5 months ago, where the counsellor came and talked with us' and another to a 'responsible service of gambling forum they're doing here for awareness for the clubs'. Another explained that:

'... she was in here two weeks ago. ... the assistant manager was going to get them together and organise a bit of a training session in how to deal with people like that and just to give the staff some tools so they don't take things to heart like, you're working for this place and taking all my rent money etc. I can't afford to feed the kids this week. We need for the staff to not take that personally because it's not their fault'.

- **Provide in-house counselling**

One CLO recalled a previous initiative by a local counselling agency:

'... it was once a week ... and they had a table set up just near the gaming area where if anyone just wanted to come over and talk to them, not necessarily exclude but just sit down and have a talk. The trial finished. I don't know how successful it was. ... I just think it might have been too open for people who can be viewed, because a lot of the time they don't want people to know that they have a problem.'

4.18.3 Perceived Value of Club CLO Interaction with Gambling Help Agencies

As well as the more tangible services provided, as described above, the CLOs alluded to several benefits of venue and staff interaction with Gambling Help agencies. These included providing professional back-up for venues, advising staff on how to deal with problem gamblers in the venue, and advising on how to improve venue practices. However, these benefits were not identified as clearly as those by the hotel CLOs. Perhaps this reflects the larger staff numbers in the clubs where the responsible gambling functions are more dispersed and where it may be more difficult for agency staff to build and maintain a strong working relationship with individual CLOs.

4.19 CLUB CLOS' EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICES IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

The CLOs were asked whether they had examples of best practice in assisting problem gamblers in the venue. Only examples that went beyond normal procedures as encouraged by the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice* are included below.

- **Agency assistance with self-exclusion**

One CLO considered an example of best practice to be when counselling agency staff accompany people wanting to self-exclude. This CLO explained this was when:

'They'd come to him at Gambling Help and he said, listen we're going to walk around to every venue in (a regional centre) and have yourself-excluded. And he'd ring in advance and say, hey, we're going come down in ten minutes is that okay? And we'd make sure that we had a nice clear room for them to come into and they'd come in confidently because they had someone with them and they didn't have to worry about the black and white on the paper because that had been explained to them already. ... We'd reinforce that and sit down and do the process and say you know this? And they'd say, yes, (The counsellor has) told me. It made our job easier but it made them more relaxed as well. He would prompt any further questions, he would say now, at this venue do you want a full exclusion or a partial exclusion and there'd be conversation around the table. It was very relaxed and very open. But that worked a lot better than just you and the customer.'

- **Machine alerts for regular gamblers**

One CLO told of a system at the club where:

‘... our machines will actually ... show you if they think there’s a problem gambler; the actual colour of the square of the machine that’s being played will change colour. ... If they go through \$10 million, if it escalated, say, we always take a note of a machine’s colour, we see who’s playing on that machine and we might let it go for the next couple of times, if they were regulars when they come in; we see how things happen.’

- **Mandatory training**

A few club CLOs noted they would not employ staff who did not have their RSG certificate, even though this was not compulsory at that time. One noted ‘a lot of clubs have it as an in-house policy’.

4.20 OTHER WAYS CLUBS CAN ASSIST PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

The interviewees were asked if they thought there is anything else venues could do to assist problem gamblers in the venue. Some felt no improvements were needed. Others also had no suggestions, but were worried that gambling problems were still common, with one saying ‘there’re so many problem gamblers, they are everywhere’. Another commented that ‘there are a lot of people I just wish wouldn’t go in there (the gaming room). I know what they do for a living, I know what their income bases are, I know they have families and kids. How do you do it? How do you afford to do what you do?’. Some were clearly frustrated that problem gambling will persist, that ‘I don’t believe there will be a total cure of problem gambling’ and ‘I don’t think there’s any easy solution’. One was very pessimistic, saying:

‘I also feel in the end this sort of gambling has to come to an end, because I just wonder where people are going to keep getting their money from ... Because surely the money just can’t be there anymore and people are obviously going without something to be able to come and play the poker machines as often as they do.’

Some CLOs nominated other ways that venues could assist problem gamblers in the venue, as discussed below.

- **Multiple CLOs**

One CLO felt both venues and patrons would benefit from multiple CLOs in each establishment. This person explained:

‘...to have several people with that title so that not one person always has to deal with people with gambling problems all the time. Try and spread the load. ... And not only that, people have different personalities, they might not like the person they are talking to; maybe if you’ve got a few different people with different personalities doing a job, it can make it a lot easier for some people as well to relate to them and sit down and speak with them.’

- **A more proactive approach**

One CLO advocated a more proactive approach to preventing gambling problems and minimising harm, commenting ‘instead of turning a blind eye, maybe actually approaching people and saying do you think you’ve spent enough today or how about you have a break, I’ll give you a free coffee, so they go away from the machine and have time to think about it’.

- **Not to have gambling as the major focus of club revenue**

Two CLOs advocated for venues to have less focus on gambling, ‘to look at other avenues of gaining their income and revenue’ and because ‘clubs have become so reliant on the machines, bringing them in the income ... perhaps people just have got lazy. They know the statistics on pokies... they also know what it does bring in, so perhaps clubs need to find other ways to bring money in’.

- **Encourage more socialising in the venue**

One CLO felt that clubs could do more to ‘keep the community involved’. She explained:

‘You could almost have eight people walking around there fulltime just talking to them. And they’d love it. I find that a lot of them are really lonely and they just come here to socialise and have a drink and pop a few bob through the machine. Yeah. I suppose just on a social, ethical on my behalf, we need to find some other things to do.’

- **No gaming promotions and rewards**

One CLO was opposed to gaming promotions and rewards systems and thought they should not exist. This person explained:

‘I don’t believe in these – come and play the poker machines and we’ll give you a shopping voucher or \$20 worth of groceries That’s a promotional thing. ... I’m also doubtful about the bonus schemes they have when you put your card in and get your bonus point. It’s rewards they call it. It’s rewards for doing your arse.... let the pokie machines just sit there on its own ... without having to push, push, push.’

- **A common system for all venues**

One CLO felt there should be a common way to tackle gambling problems across all venues. Although not sure what this might be, this CLO explained this thus:

‘...if it could become acceptable in all venues. Say for instance after people have been playing the machines for a certain period of time, if you went around and put a card on every machine, a card that said, do you have a gambling problem? ... It would have to be a procedure in all places because otherwise they’d say, don’t go to (club name), they’re always telling you to don’t gamble. ... whether every half hour you have some certain thing that plays through your sound system that says, are you gambling the food money? ... there should be some way of trying to get the message across on a regular basis in all clubs. ... That there is help and you’re not alone.’

- **More hard hitting public education**

One CLO felt there should be a more hard hitting public education campaign on problem gambling, like ‘the ads on drink driving, when they were horrific, everyone remembers those don’t they? Children dead on the road. They really have an impact. Maybe it needs to be a bit more graphic. ... more hitting to home.’

- **Improved and extended counselling services**

Three types of improvements to the counselling system were suggested by three different CLOs. The first was to ensure counselling services are helpful. One CLO felt that ‘the Gambling Helpline could be improved When they ring up the counsellors, they don’t have the right sort of information’. Another CLO advocated the availability of immediate face-to-face counselling:

‘Because often talking on the phone is not good enough If someone came to me with this problem and ... I could say, I’ll ring up straight away and get you an appointment with a counsellor So then, before they had really time to think about it, they could go to that counsellor and get ... immediate help.’

Another CLO suggested making professional counselling regularly available in venues:

‘...if you had somebody here, a professional that knows how to deal with people better than what we do, who was at the venue once a month at a given time ... and that was well advertised, then they can go and talk to them privately or self-exclude there and then, that might be better than us trying to deal with it all over the shop.’

4.21 CLUB CLO CONCLUSION

Sections 4.12 to 4.20 of this chapter have presented results relating to the 26 club CLOs who were interviewed for this study. After summarising the key characteristics of these interviewees and the venues where they worked, these sections summarised how the CLOs have or would respond to three different scenarios - when patrons ask for assistance with a gambling problem, when patrons show signs of problem gambling but do not request assistance, and when family or friends approach staff with concerns for a patron’s gambling. Ways in which the CLOs support other venue staff to assist problem gamblers in the venue were then described, as was the training they had undertaken and their interaction with local gambling support agencies. Best practice examples, where given, were then presented. The next sections focus on the results on interviews with the Responsible Gambling Manager and four Responsible Gambling Liaison Officers of the three Tabcorp owned casinos in Queensland.

4.22 CASINO RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING MANAGER

The Responsible Gambling Manager (Queensland) for the Conrad Jupiter’s, Conrad Treasury and Jupiter’s Townsville Casinos was interviewed for this study. The interview was semi-structured to allow free expression of issues from a management perspective. Her interview is analysed into eight different themes: the role of the casinos in supporting patrons with gambling problems, the role of the casinos’ Responsible Gambling Liaison Officers (RGLOs), identification of problem gamblers, patron responsibilities, exclusions, interaction with family members, interaction with Gambling Help agencies, and staff training in responsible gambling. Each of these themes below is supported by the words of the Responsible Gambling Manager (RGM). It should also be noted that the RGM was a former addictions and financial counsellor with long experience in counselling people with gambling problems.

4.22.1 Role of the Casinos in Assisting Patrons with Gambling Problems

The RGM discussed the role of the three casinos in assisting patrons with gambling problems. This discussion is analysed according to five sub-themes: corporate social responsibility, community education, minimising harm, patron responsibility and not being a counselling service.

- **Corporate social responsibility**

The RGM indicated that the industry is seeing itself as having a significant social responsibility, where ‘there’s been a big shift in the last 10 years. The industry takes an active role in demonstrating they are a responsible operator. We advertise in ways that are true and

we don't use the same advertising campaigns that used to be used 15 years ago. People are fully aware of the chances of winning and they are more informed. I think when the industry has people like me working for them it is one of the ways we demonstrate our commitment to social responsibility'. She added that 'I know that we certainly take issues around problem gambling seriously. The casino does not want problem gamblers coming here. I think if you ask anybody who works here, they'll put their hand on their heart and say they wouldn't knowingly take money from problem gamblers. That's certainly not where we're coming from. And, people generally care about the people who come to our properties. We're in a service industry and we want to give our customers the best service we can'.

- **Community education**

An important role for the casinos is in supporting education about gambling problems. This was clarified and personal reflections were included by the RGM: 'In Queensland we have done the right thing in educating the community on issues around gambling, issues around problem gambling and the general public are adequately informed to be able to vote with their feet ... the Education Department has started in schools teaching children about probabilities and gambling, what your chances are of winning etc. The Queensland Government has started to do wide community awareness campaigns'.

- **Minimising harm**

Alongside the above issues, support for minimising harm was emphasised as an important role of the casino and implemented through the variety of practices and procedures discussed later in this section.

- **Patron responsibility**

The comment was also made that the patrons themselves need to take some responsibility for their own harm. Thus, the RGM noted that 'my biggest concern is that as a community and government, I think we're starting to look for ways of minimising harm that translate into creative ideas of stopping people from doing things that may cause them harm. The focus seems to be heading more and more this way and what happens from that, is you don't ever let the people face their own responsibilities. It's really frightening to see how far we're going with these ideas'. She added that 'we need to be very careful, as a government and community, that we don't become the next enabler of the problem gambler'. As a society, we don't want to take the industry away, we just want to fix up all the problem gamblers. We can't fix up all the problem gamblers. Guess what? They don't want to be fixed!'

- **Not being a counselling service**

There was some concern that it needs to be clear that the casinos do not provide a counselling function or service. The RGM explained that patrons with gambling problems 'should be going to counselling. They should be talking to a professional and looking for strategies to assist them, with their counsellor. The industry must not be blurring the boundaries and becoming part of the counselling service. We can't do that; it's a conflict of interest. ... we're a corporation, we're a shareholding company, we can't be part of the help seeking profession and we do our role in assistance and we refer on to counselling. We should never, ever, be the counsellor. I don't counsel anybody ... I use my counselling skills to influence and encourage people to do different things but I would never be their counsellor, so if they would tell me things, I would never work with them about those issues. I always say, those are the sort of things that I really think you should go and see a counsellor about'. In addition the subject of 'case management' was raised and the RGM commented 'that's really, really dangerous for

two reasons. I think, we're the gambling industry, we're not Gambling Help services. I did a lot of casework with problem gamblers when I was working as a counsellor and I've tried to work with people in limiting their gambling. If you've got a gambling problem, that generally never works and from a risk management perspective as the casino operator, it gets really dangerous because if you are case managing a person while they're gambling in your venue, I think this is a conflict of interest which could expose you to being liable and be sued. ... I disagree with implementing the active monitoring program that the pubs and clubs have got in their RG Resource Manual for Queensland, we did not adopt this model for the casino's manual ... because I just think you're setting yourself up to fail.'

4.22.2 Role of Staff and RGLOs in Assisting Patrons with Gambling Problems

Three sub-themes emerged in relation to the role of the staff in assisting patrons with gambling problems: referral, approaching patrons and reporting processes.

- **Referral**

When asked what staff are instructed to do if a patron asks them for assistance with a gambling problem, the RGM noted that staff are encouraged to refer to the RGM once they have assessed the situation. The RGM said 'we've got a motto, our motto, "Respond with Respect and Refer" and everybody who works here gets trained that they need to refer that to the supervisor or manager, and the supervisor or manager would then refer to either me or one of the RGLOs'. In turn, the RGLOs 'should be able to refer the person on for gambling counselling'.

- **Assisting patrons who approach staff**

If a patron is referred by staff to one of the RGLOs, the RGM was confident that the RGLOs 'have been given enough training now and enough skills that if they get faced with a situation on the gambling floor, they are able to talk to the person and they are able to show empathy'. She added 'they are also able to assist them for getting a self-exclusion'.

- **Reporting process**

There is a reporting process that staff adhere to. This was explained by the RGM thus: 'they are supposed to send me a report but sometimes they just catch me in the hallway and tell me a story. I remember recently whilst listening to one of the team and I'm saying to myself, I don't think I actually read anything about that anywhere'. The point is, I still got to hear the story informally. This is about building relationships with the Team. The formal reporting process is still in its early stages of developing, as was described by the RGM: 'there's an electronic incident register where our RGLOs can write and save a report and all the RGLOs can read these reports in order to provide a better response to those customers who may be demonstrating behaviours of concern'. There are still some issues with this for some of the Team and as 'it's a new program, we've only been running it for about six months some of them actually haven't been able to log into the system yet'.

Following a recorded report, the follow-up will vary depending on the situation. Thus 'there might be people who we've got more than one incident report for and so I would review all those incidents and then I attempt to talk to the customer. Sometimes that person has a host looking after them or our customer relations people may know them and so I would talk to the Team and check if they can assist with further knowledge of the person in question. We might think about some strategies to put in place so I can actually talk to these people or

perhaps take some steps to check with them that they're okay and I may talk to them and I may not. Each case is different.'

4.22.3 Identifying Problem Gamblers

There were two sub-themes identified in relation to identifying problem gamblers: signs of problem gambling and interventions.

- **Signs of problem gambling**

Even though the industry has acknowledged certain behaviours as possible indicators of problem gambling and includes 'high risk, low risk behaviours' in staff training, these are often problematic according to the RGM. Thus, when asked 'if you expect your staff to recognise if somebody has a gambling problem?' she said 'how are they going to do that? How are they going to recognise that someone's got a gambling problem? You can't smell dice on their breath or see card tracks up their arms for heaven's sake. Gambling is different from alcohol' and 'in the casino it would be very unlikely that anyone would know that someone has been multiple times to an ATM. Staff are working in the casino on the floor, they wouldn't see a customer leave the casino and go to the machine, they just wouldn't be aware. Perhaps a security guard may notice, however they move around the building on their shifts too'. The RGM did concur that 'the first observation might be where someone's noticed, that a customer has been here for a long period of time' or 'if somebody fainted on the floor. We have a customer care culture and if someone was sitting at the machine crying, no-one's going to walk past them and ignore them. They're going to say, what's the matter, are you okay?'

- **Interventions**

Some specific examples were provided to show how the casino intervenes when there is concern over a patron's level of gambling. The RGM described how 'when I present myself to a customer I present myself as a person who's concerned for their welfare, and not from the position of, I think you've got a gambling problem. I would certainly be talking to them about whatever incident had just occurred'. She gave another example of when she approached a lady at around three in the afternoon who the staff thought had been there all night: 'we approach her and I said to her, I'm the RGM and I would love to invite you for coffee and the customer replies, really! No-one's ever done that for me before and she took my arm and then she said, I have been a bit naughty, I've been here all night she was here on her own and she seemed very lonely the staff here are nice to people and it's a safe place for women in particular to come. Anyway, we had a long talk and she showed me photos of her family who lived overseas. I felt really sad for her because she seemed to be so alone. I thought to myself, time for her to go home. She said can I go back in and play? I still have more money and she opened her bag and showed me wads of \$100 bills she must have had a few thousand dollars in her bag. Straight away I said, you're not catching the bus today and you're going to be getting a taxi home. I went with her to cash out her chips and then helped her get a cab to go home. She said I'd never believe that the casino could be so nice to look after me and make sure I'm okay. I never knew the casino employed people like you, this is just really fantastic. The RGM then explained that there is flexibility in the way the casino approaches such situations; it depends upon each case individually.

4.22.4 Exclusions

Four sub-themes emerged in relation to exclusions: the number of exclusions, venue exclusions, revocations, and monitoring of those who are excluded. The RGM did not speak at length about the self-exclusion process as she had previously given the research team all documentation used in the process and this had also been detailed by the RGLOs.

- **Number of exclusions**

When asked about the number of exclusions from the casinos, the RGM explained ‘from the 1st May 2005 to 30th June 2008 ... we had somewhere around 1,500 exclusions and of that, around 660 were self-exclusions and there’s probably around 15 venue exclusions for problem gambling and the rest of them were venue exclusions for ... being naughty’. In total, ‘at the moment, the number of exclusions is about 4,400. That’s for the whole state, that’s for the three casinos’.

- **Venue exclusions**

The reasons that a patron could be excluded by the casino were explained: ‘they’re the Section 92’s. A Section 92 Exclusion is a venue exclusion, not to be confused with venue exclusions for problem gambling. Venue exclusions are for behavioural reasons or cheating, stealing, leaving children unattended etc and we exclude people for these reasons’. The decision to venue exclude for problem gambling is a difficult one as explained here: ‘We can’t make a judgment call, we need evidence in support of our position to be able to complete the Information Notice that legally we are required to provide to the person explaining the reason why they are being excluded. We can’t just make a judgement call and say I actually don’t think you should come back to the casino ... without evidence, how do we exclude for problem gambling ... even when the person has sent a letter saying I don’t have a gambling problem, where’s my evidence? Because when you issue a venue exclusion for problem gambling, they’ve got 28 days to appeal to the Magistrate’s Court saying that we did the wrong thing. You see, you have to be really, really sure of your grounds before you issue one of these. I prefer to encourage the person to initiate a self-exclusion themselves’.

- **Revoking the exclusion order**

A patron is able to apply for revocation of an exclusion order, either venue or self-imposed. An example was provided where ‘we reviewed a person yesterday and our Exclusions Committee decided that I’ve got to talk to them before we make our final decision. He’s written a really good letter saying, I’ve taken some steps, etc, he’s saying all the right things but his behaviour doesn’t really support that. So I’m not really sure whether this guy still has a problem or not ... perhaps someone else is a very good letter writer and wrote the letter for him and he signed it’. This example reflected a problem with the current self-exclusion system where ‘after 12 months people can apply for revocation, they send us the revocation notice form and their exclusion expires in 28 days. That’s it. We don’t have any right of refusal it’s just the person who is self-excluded withdrawing their permission for us to exclude them by serving us with the revocation notice. ... And this is a problem because all we can do is say, well we think this person’s got a gambling problem and we don’t want them coming back, so we’re going to issue an venue exclusion for problem gambling, which we have done’.

- **Monitoring of excludees**

The RGM explained the monitoring system for excluded patrons thus: ‘we have a state-wide register which is an electronic register with information about the person and a photo ... and

significant numbers of our Team have access to the register. I'm not sure if it's accessible in the pits but it's certainly accessible in the Casino Duty Manager's office. Certainly people at the cage have access to it. The Customer Service desk has access to it because they have to check when they're opening a new Loyalty Program account to ensure that the person is not excluded. All surveillance and security of course, have access to it. Then there'd be some other senior people who have access to it'. When asked about breaches of self-exclusion, the RGM noted 'we catch a lot of them. We probably catch someone nearly every day'.

The RGM explained what happens if a patron who has self-excluded is noticed inside the venue: 'If people self-exclude and they re-enter, the first time we actually give them a written warning and if we identified them but they've left the casino before we could approach them, they still get a written warning with a letter from me by mail that includes counselling information etc. If they get caught the second, third and subsequent times they are interviewed by the government on-site inspectors and the police and they will receive a PIN or Notice to Appear in Court. It's out of our hands'. However, the RGM advocated for the on-site police and on-site regulator to 'actually be helping some of these people get to counselling. On a couple of occasions they have actually called me up to go talk to someone who is a recidivist re-enterer because they thought it may assist the person to treatment. ... it is important to remember that these people are problem gamblers, they're not criminals and they're not the naughty people that we've excluded, they haven't really done anything illegal and we're trying to help them find a pathway to treatment, not a pathway to the courthouse. ... You have to remember that the inspectors are not problem gambling counsellors either and they are just doing their job. They're the regulator, so if someone's breached a law, it's about the consequences'.

4.22.5 Interaction with Family Members

The RGM explained the response when family members approach the casino: 'sometimes I get family members calling me and I might contact the gambling person and say look, your mother, father, wife, daughter, husband, has called me and said that they're concerned about your gambling etc if the family member has given me this permission. I always ask them for permission before I act. This opens the door to have a bit of a chat with them around what's going on'. However, she noted that 'you can't just assume when family members ring up that the information you are being given is right'. This was emphasised with the following example: 'You get all sorts of stories. It might just be about someone's perceived inheritance. There was one particularly sad case where a daughter kept ringing about her mother and when I finally spoke to her mother was told she had been looking after the daughter's child, her grandchild.... the daughter wanted to influence her mother to spend more time looking after the child so she was trying to stop her going out to the casino ... the mother told me her daughter had other problems.....drug problems and other issues she said her daughter had been violent towards her as well; it was a terribly sad case'. She gave another example where 'I had another guy ringing up and he told me he had just got married to this womanand he was he was really carrying on. I'm getting DV (domestic violence) vibes talking to this fellow. When I finally spoke with her and met her for coffee she told me that she had a domestic violence order out against him ... So you can't always rely on the facts that families tell you'. However, the RGM did note that 'other times they really want to do the right thing'. I worked a number of years with families of problem gamblers, it's hard for them to understand that often they're part of the problem. ... Most times they are doing something that is perpetuating the gambling. They take responsibility for the problem gambler and they don't allow them the respect and dignity to take responsibility themselves. They continuously fix everything, they always interfere in everything, they always want to know what's going

on and the other person just says to themselves I might as well just gamble, why not? It's a good chance to break out. And you think, poor thing'. The preceding examples clearly demonstrate the difficulties inherent in dealing with third party concerns about another person's gambling.

4.22.6 Gambling Help Agencies

The RGM appears to have a good working relationship with Gambling Help agency staff where 'they come to our Responsible Gambling Awareness Week activities. They come up and have coffee with me from time to time. ... If I'm working with someone with a gambling problem, I always say to them would you like to see a counsellor? ... and would you like to talk to a counsellor about that? ... its great, I can just call up their direct number and say can you find a spot for someone to see a counsellor this afternoon or tomorrow and the customer gets an appointment ... I just give my customer the phone and they make the appointment and find out where to go for counselling'. While acknowledging that there is no 24-hour gambling counselling service in close proximity, the RGM explained that at 'the Ministerial Council meeting, it was announced there was going to be a national counselling service, telephone helpline, email and on-line counselling'.

4.22.7 RGLO Training

Training has a high profile within the casino as exemplified by the following comments in relation to RGLO training: 'firstly they have a two day training course ... it was focused on problem gambling so we looked at issues associated with problem gambling. We did activities and role playing. ... for example, someone was pretending to be a gambling customer crying on a machine and someone else was doing the RGLO intervention ... someone else was pretending to gamble on tables and get upset to the point where someone would take them off the table, talk to them and call an RGLO. ... We went through some of the exclusion procedures. We also reviewed issues like domestic violence and dealing with mental health problems. Some basic counselling skills were also provided ... this wasn't about training them to be a counsellor but providing them with the skills to be able to talk to people and recognise some of the non-verbal signs associated with human interaction. She went on to describe how the course developed communication skills ... 'it's just those basic counselling and crisis intervention skills, how to respond if a person is suicidal etc. We covered listening skills and how to give appropriate feedback'. It was also noted that the RGLOs are experienced staff who had volunteered for the role, being 'senior people and they're staff who have already been doing these type of interventions before and really all we did was give them some more tools to add to the toolbox they already have'. At the time of the interview, the RGM was considering developing a refresher course for the RGLOs and training more RGLOs 'because we've already lost some who've left'.

Internally, the role of RGLOs seems to be valued and the number of people trained as RGLOs is likely to be extended, as 'the Security Team tell me that they'd like all their security seniors to be trained and all the seniors in gaming should be trained as well, so that would mean that every single person who is shift managing has had this training'.

4.23 CASINO RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING LIAISON OFFICERS

At the time of the interviews, the three Tabcorp casinos had trained 15 Responsible Gaming Liaison Officers (RGLOs) at Conrad Jupiter's Casino, 12 RGLOs at Treasury Casino and 10 RGLOs at the Townsville property. Four staff trained as RGLOs from two of the three

Queensland Tabcorp-owned casinos were interviewed to give context to the approach used by, and issues experienced within, the casino environment.

4.24 KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CASINO RGLO INTERVIEWEES

The RGLOs were initially asked about their position at the casino and why they had volunteered for the RGLO role. One person was employed as Responsible Gaming Coordinator, two were Acting Duty Managers and one was a Gaming Shift Manager. The Responsible Gaming Coordinator described her role as ‘a support; the RGM is obviously the main support but if the RGM is not about, they (casino staff) can call on me’. The role of a RGLO was described as involving ‘any concerns that a staff member has raised with me in regards to a patron that they feel may be at risk or may have issues’. As another explained, ‘I’m a contact point for ... staff members who may have some concerns even about other staff members or patrons. They can usually come to me and ask me for my advice, but usually I’m just here to observe patrons to see if they’re gambling responsibly. If I have some concerns about someone I would speak to them. I would have a bit of a chat with them and ask how they’re going. I suppose I’m a contact point but I also do a little bit of spruiking about what I do – Responsible Gaming Liaison Officer’.

In relation to reasons for taking on the role of a RGLO, one commented that ‘I just want a different perspective on problem gamblers, and I just thought it would be useful for what I do with self-exclusions’. Another said they ‘sort of get immune to it ... when doing the RGLO course, it sort of puts things back in perspective that we do have a responsibility to these people’. A similar comment was ‘I’ve worked here so long and have had blinkers on, you hear the comments so many times, and after listening to the RGM and the other trainer, it was really eye opening – these people are real human beings, they do have problems’.

4.25 CASINO RGLO RESPONSES TO PATRONS WHO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE

The RGLOs were asked what procedures would be followed if a patron approached them or the frontline staff for assistance with a gambling problem. Four related themes emerged.

- **Clear lines of responsibility and process**

All four RGLOs were clear in terms of lines of responsibility and the procedures that follow. In relation to responding to patrons who ask for assistance with a gambling problem, one RGLO clearly articulated the line of responsibility as ‘it kind of works like a chain of command here. It goes from Dealer to Floor Manager, to Pit Manager to ACDM (Acting Casino Duty Manager) to Casino Duty Manager’. One interviewee further explained that ‘if a patron asks for help, the frontline staff would notify their immediate supervisor’. However, one RGLO explained that if the approach was a simple request for information, cards or brochures, the frontline staff person would provide this. However, ‘if it’s more in-depth then it should go to an RGLO’. The RGLO would then ‘sit down and talk to the person and find out exactly what the problem was and if I feel out of my depth I would refer to the RGM’. Another echoed this, saying ‘I’d find out what type of assistance, whether they want to be excluded, first of all then I can help them with this process ... if it’s something more where they want to talk to somebody and want counselling, so obviously I’m not qualified for that so I’d refer them to the RGM’.

- **Levels of comfort.**

All four RGLOs felt comfortable in dealing with patron approaches for help with a gambling problem. As one explained, ‘personally I’m quite comfortable because I don’t judge people and if somebody is asking for help, I’m that kind of person. ... I do realise that some people have problems with gambling’. In regard to frontline staff, one interviewee commented that ‘if a person is not comfortable in approaching a patron, they know they don’t have to’. In relation to non-English speaking patrons, another said ‘I don’t find it challenging at all, the language barrier. I could always ask one of the dealers to come and be a translator or we can actually use a translator’.

- **Changes over the years**

One comment summarises the feelings of the four RGLOs well: ‘I look back to when we started years and years ago, where it was like, I’ve got a problem, and okay your luck will change. What we actually have now, there’s so much more awareness, there’s so many more things in place, there’s varied pieces of information that people can go to. And I think staff are quite aware of what indicators may be ... and report it to their supervisor’.

- **Challenges for RGLOs**

Lack of regular involvement with clients who identify themselves as having gambling problems was the only challenge identified in this situation amongst the RGLOs. According to one staff member, ‘that’s my biggest problem because I haven’t had that sort of constant experience of doing something. I don’t think there is any way you can practise it ... you might go with nothing for four months and then have three in one week’.

4.26 CASINO RGLO RESPONSES TO PATRONS WHO SHOW SIGNS OF PROBLEM GAMBLING

The RGLO interviews asked about various aspects of approaching patrons in the venue who show signs of problem gambling. The responses are summarised below in terms of what signs might indicate that a patron has a gambling problem, what signs would prompt them to approach a patron and procedures used.

4.26.1 Casino RGLO Identification of Signs of Possible Problem Gambling

The RGLOs were asked if they thought they could recognise if someone is a problem gambler or at-risk, and if so, how.

- **Long gambling sessions**

Some comments included ‘24 hours is definitely too long, but in between that 24 hours they may go and speak to the person’; ‘if anyone stayed for more than 24 hours we would ask them to go home’; ‘I’d say eight hours, you might look at somebody and then leave it a while longer and see how they go’; and ‘if I was working one day and I came in the next day and the patron is still playing’, this would be of concern.

- **Hitting a gaming machine**

One RGLO commented that ‘if someone is getting angry and hitting the machine, then it’s a time when they can damage the machine and they can be charged with an offence’.

- **Swearing at a gaming machine**

According to one RGLO, ‘obvious things like if they are sitting at the machine and they’re swearing at the machine’ are an indicator.

- **Making negative comments about a machine**

One RGLO added that a possible indicator of a gambling problem was when ‘some people complain that the machine isn’t working properly’.

- **Crying over a machine**

One RGLO commented that, if there was ‘someone crying at a gaming machine ... obviously a team member would go, yeah, somebody might need to speak to this person’.

- **Hinting at a problem**

One RGLO also noted another indicator as when ‘somebody makes a statement like, I’ve been here too long, I’ve spent all my money and that type of thing’.

4.26.2 Indicators that Would Prompt Casino RGLOs to Approach a Patron

The RGLOs were asked what would prompt them to approach a patron out of concern about their gambling.

- **Gambling for more than 24 hours**

One RGLO explained that ‘we took it upon ourselves about a year and a half ago, if we became aware that anyone had stayed for 24 hours, we would ask them to go home. ... and we just say to them, look we’ve got a duty of care, we’ve got to make sure that you’ve been home and had plenty of rest. You need to have a minimum eight hours rest. After we ask them to leave and if they come back within that time frame when they’re supposed to be away from the casino we do ask them to leave again’. We would be encouraging them to take a break long before this point though.

- **Repeated patterns of concerning behaviour**

This was articulated as ‘I’d intervene if the staff member raised concerns that this person has constantly displayed these; she’s said these things the last couple of days or so’.

- **Changes in observed behaviour**

According to one RGLO, ‘the first time we would take all the details and we’d observe it. If it starts getting beyond the norm, we would definitely take them for a coffee and have a bit of chat and say look, we just noticed, we’ve observed that your behaviour is changing when you’re playing blackjack, is there any reason for that? You just have a bit of a chat with them’.

- **Challenges for RGLOs**

The unpredictability of patron reactions to a staff approach was a challenge raised in relation to this scenario and expressed as ‘very, very tricky. And sometimes I can throw things in and work it but you can tell by their reaction if they are not willing to accept what you have to say, so you can only give them so much information before they say no I don’t want to talk to you anymore and they walk away’. Also ‘most of the time they are aware of it themselves ... there are other customers who say aww geez I’ve been sitting here for so long I just didn’t

realise. On the whole it is a positive thing and I suppose if you just show them that you care ...'. A second challenge raised was in relation to Asian gamblers, where one RGLO commented that 'when you were talking about how to catch those Asian problem gamblers, we have no counselling cards that are made up in their language. I think that could be a barrier sometimes as well'. Another RGLO commented that 'Asian patrons? I think it would be harder to pick because they don't tend to say anything ... they don't tend to let a lot of that out (anger)'.

4.26.3 Procedures Used by Casino RGLOs to Approach Patrons

The RGLOs were asked what they do when they approach a patron due to concern about their gambling.

- **Suggest the patron take a break**

One RGLO noted that if a patron had been gambling for a long time, they or a floor manager would usually approach the patron and 'just take them away from the table and just say, you've been playing for a very long time, I think it's probably best you go and have a break now, go and have something to eat, have a rest'.

- **Getting to know the patron**

At other times, the RGLOs would start with a general conversation with the patron of concern. A good example was given by one RGLO who recalled 'I have been approached by a floor manager of a lady who seemed disoriented. She'd been gambling for a long period. The RGM took her for breakfast. It was interesting because the lady lived on her own and she had just come in for company and it had actually got to the point where she actually wanted somebody to just say alright, stop now, you've done enough go and have a rest'. Similarly another RGLO said 'basically what happens is that I approach a person, introduce myself and just ask if they wouldn't mind having a quiet word with me'. Another RGLO pointed out that 'there would be developed relationships anyhow because they obviously would be a regular clientele ... quite often, the person's known to each other (the staff member and the patron)'.

- **Referral to counselling**

All RGLOs said they might refer the patron to a counselling service if the client indicated they wanted that. One RGLO said they would 'either give them cards, brochures or refer to Gambling Help or refer to the RGM'.

- **Challenges for RGLOs**

All four staff were comfortable with approaching patrons in this situation, but two expressed clearly that they did not always feel confident, as they were not trained counsellors. One confident staff member said 'most times it is fine. Basically it is about listening to the person initially to find out exactly what they are trying to say and then trying to get to the whole problem'. Alternatively, one staff member commented that 'sometimes it is quite hard because I am not a counsellor and sometimes I feel like you are when you go and speak to someone, so it can get a bit uncomfortable'. Another added 'I don't feel comfortable when they start bringing out a lot of the personal issues'.

4.27 CASINO RGLO RESPONSES TO THIRD PARTY CONCERNS ABOUT PROBLEM GAMBLING

The RGLOs were asked what they would do if a family member approached them with concerns about a patron's gambling. All indicated that they would refer this situation to the RGM. Due to issues of privacy, staff are not able to disclose any information about patrons. One RGLO's comments provide a clear representation of all four responses: 'not a difficult issue. I know what we can and can't tell them. It's difficult for them because we are limited in what we can give to them ... I can't tell them a person has played on such and such a day. I can't tell them that they're actually on the property. So it's difficult for them but not me because you know in all business you have to have some privacy ... if they really persist I refer them to the Privacy Officer'. Another RGLO also explained that they can assist the family member by 'refer(ring) them to Gambling Help or ask permission to speak to the person on their behalf, but if they don't give permission then you can't, so those sometimes can be quite difficult depending on what the person wants you to do'.

4.28 EXCLUSION PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

The RGLOs were asked about implementing self-exclusion in their venue, including processes, comfort levels for patrons and staff during the process, monitoring for breaches, perceived effectiveness and challenges for staff. The RGLOs reported that there are about 40 exclusions a month across the casinos.

- **The process**

As one RGLO related, 'RGLOs can assist the exclusion process ... the Casino Duty Manager would just do the actual notice'. The details of what occurs were clearly noted: 'the patron is explained the process, how long it will take, the need for a photo, and their rights for revocation. The patron has a 24-hour cooling off period during which time they can change their mind'. With regard to revocation processes it was explained by one RGLO that 'if a patron wants to revoke the exclusion, this has to go to the Responsible Gaming Committee'.

- **Comfort level of patrons**

The fast and discrete nature of the process was highlighted where 'I think it is as simple as it can be ... they have to go to security to have photos taken. They are escorted to the Casino Duty Manager's office where it's all done in a private office and then they have to be escorted off the property to make sure they don't actually cross the licensed gaming area. We do it as discreetly as we can'. Another commented that 'it's quite a smooth process and it takes 15-20 minutes to do'. This was echoed by patron responses as reported by one RGLO, who recalled 'I've had from them yay, I'm doing this, I'm happy about it too ... you've done the right thing, the person's a bit emotional about it. You talk to them about the difference it can make in their life and that sort of thing and just give them support'.

- **Comfort level of staff**

One RGLO commented that 'it is daunting at first, when being involved in the process for the first time, but that does get easier ... it is a challenge but worthwhile'.

- **Monitoring breaches of self-exclusion**

With the large number of people self-excluded, the RGLOs were asked about monitoring for breaches. One noted, 'I am amazed at how good they are (the surveillance staff) at identifying the people. Some of them go back to 1997 and surveillance will pick them up'. This echoed

the RGM's earlier comments about the effectiveness of monitoring. Another RGLO explained what occurred if a patron was caught breaching a self-exclusion order: 'once a patron is identified as entering the venue under exclusion, they're provided with a written warning, followed in subsequent times by heavy fines and eventually a court appearance'.

- **Perceived effectiveness of self-exclusion**

When asked if they thought that self-exclusion was effective for patrons with gambling problems, the following comment highlights the issues raised by the RGLOs: 'I think it is successful in that it stops people gambling for that period of time. Sometimes they can get their thoughts together. Maybe they've gone to some sort of gambling rehabilitation in that year. I'm not sure what those people do. But I think it's successful when you hear patrons telling other patrons that this is what we offer. So I think it is successful'. However, another RGLO felt that, to be more effective, self-exclusion 'should be for a longer time' where it cannot be revoked after only 12 months.

- **Challenges for RGLOs in self-exclusion**

The RGLOs noted a few challenges for them in relation to the self-exclusion procedures. One related to the infrequency that each RGLO might be involved in the process. One RGLO explained the difficulties this brings, as 'I might not do an exclusion for three or four months so sometimes in a way the process for this can be uncomfortable, because if you haven't done it for four months, there are all these forms you've got to fill out, but there's different forms for different exclusions. We have a chart which we follow but sometimes, you have to make sure the person's comfortable and you just try and do your job as best you can. I always think to myself just keep calm, don't panic because I don't want them to be thinking that I'm stressing because they're going to find it difficult'.

4.29 SUPPORT FOR CASINO STAFF IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

The RGLOS were asked about support provided to casino frontline staff to assist problem gamblers in the venue. Their responses are summarised in terms of regular training, general support, communications briefings and some difficulties for staff.

- **Regular training**

One RGLO commented that 'all staff are annually trained in responsible gambling', a comment previously confirmed by the RGM.

- **General support**

In relation to support for frontline staff, one RGLO commented that 'we give them all the information they need about what they need to look for and what they can look for when they are interacting with patrons'. A further comment was 'we teach them about confidentiality and coming and speaking to someone quietly about it' and 'if they have somebody who's showing signs that they need help then I can take them away, sit down with them and ask them a few questions'. As related by one RGLO, 'they've got the RGLOs for support and there's always the RGM and she is contactable 24 hours a day if there's a situation they really feel they need assistance with. So the support is there and the knowledge is there'.

- **Communication briefings**

One RGLO related that ‘we have a daily communication briefing that we do for all the staff, so every now and then we put something in there about responsible gambling ... just pop it into the briefing to give them a reminder’.

- **Staff who do not cope**

Despite the extensive support reportedly provided, some frontline staff do not cope very well. An example was provided where ‘there are a couple who have started and don’t like the idea that someone has come up to them and said, I’ve lost a lot of money tonight and that sort of thing so they’re really taking the human side of it and they don’t deal with that. We’ve lost a couple with that’.

4.30 RGLO TRAINING IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

The RGLOS were asked what training they had done to assist them in dealing with problem gamblers in the venue. The four staff interviewed had all been involved in RGLO training.

- **Perceived strengths**

The RGLOs articulated some definite strengths about the training they had received. All four found the use of scenarios and case study discussions and the training on self-exclusion processes useful. Three of the four RGLOs found the use of role plays and the information received from counsellors at their training useful.

One commented that ‘honestly, it was beyond my expectations’. In addition, ‘some of it reaffirms because you’ve worked in gaming for so long ... you learn about the way a person with addiction thinks and the cycles that they can go through’. Another commented that ‘I particularly liked the role plays. There were some scenarios that were very unexpected and just having the RGM there and having her experience ...’. Another commented that ‘the counsellor gave us good examples ... she helped’ and another that ‘it’s good to have human aspects of what can happen’ as relayed by the counsellors. Another recalled how the counsellor had given ‘case scenarios of people and what has happened and what they’ve lost and how the children are affected and how the brothers and sisters and mothers and aunties and that sort of thing are affected and that’s like, I get it now. It’s not just that one person, you’ve got to understand that there is a husband or there are children at home and things like that. That sort of got to me a bit’. A summary comment was ‘I thought it was really, really good. I really enjoyed it and I would recommend it to anybody else to do’.

- **Perceived weaknesses**

One staff reflected that ‘the two days were unnecessarily long ... a lot of it was sort of a little bit irrelevant because it went into a lot more of the counselling side which is something obviously I can’t do’. Another commented on the role plays specifically: ‘role playing doesn’t mean anything because you know what happens on the floor and doing the role play and the scenario of who you could stop, it’s going to depend on really what you know about that person and their history’.

- **Suggestions for improvement**

One mechanism for continued improvement was identified as getting the RGLOs together in between training, where ‘after a few months, get everyone together and see if they feel they need more information on a certain subject or they’d like to go into different things’. The

issue of separate training for different departments was raised by one RGLO as ‘what we do compared with different departments is different ... I think for gaming you need to more go through the process of what forms you do, where it goes to, what forms you give them’.

4.31 CASINO RGLO INTERACTION WITH GAMBLING HELP AGENCIES TO ASSIST PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

The RGLOs were asked about their interaction with gambling support services to assist problem gamblers in the venue and whether they thought this was useful. Only one RGLO mentioned training provided by such agencies, while two commented on the direct links between gambling support agencies and casino staff.

- **Training**

A single RGLO commented on the training provided by gambling support services, noting that ‘the message I got from it was that it’s all about working together like the industry, community, government type of things’.

- **A direct link to agency staff**

One RGLO commented that ‘I’d like to be able to ring the counselling agency while the patron was here and make an appointment’. On the other hand, a different RGLO disagreed, saying ‘I don’t think that would be right (making the appointment for the patron). I mean, a person has to make the decision that they want to do it to start with’. One other RGLO said ‘all I can do is give a pamphlet and a card with the gambling helplines on it’.

4.32 CASINO BEST PRACTICES IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

The RGLOs were asked to note any examples of good or best practice in the venue. Three areas were mentioned.

- **Always someone to call on**

Two of the interviewees said that the casinos had a good system of support for staff to call upon if they need assistance. This seemed an important issue for one RGLO who said ‘there’s always somebody to call on. It can keep going up the ladder ...’

- **Responsible gambling literature**

Two RGLOs also mentioned the amount of literature, brochures and cards around for patrons who need assistance as an example of good practice in the venue. As commented upon by one RGLO member, ‘we’ve got our brochures and our posters in discreet places, but they are there. There’s just so much information out there’.

- **Clocks**

One noted that having clocks in the casino was a good practice, allowing people to keep track of the time, saying ‘the fact that we have clocks in the casino whereas back then, that was taboo. You never wanted people to know the time’.

4.33 OTHER WAYS CASINOS CAN ASSIST PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

The RGLOs were asked if the venue could do anything extra to assist patrons with gambling problems. One RGLO mentioned the need for better notices providing information about exclusion, suggesting ‘with the re-entries, if we could put some signage up at the entrance of the casino telling people of the consequences if they do re-enter’.

However, all four RGLOs considered their venues were doing a good job in assisting problem gamblers, noting significant and important changes in the last 15 or so years. This was summed up well by one RGLO who said ‘well, there is one of the things that we emphasise is it’s not about fixing the problems of the world. It’s about identifying it and getting the person the help they need. You’re not a qualified counsellor so that’s not what it’s about, because some people do get scared that they have to go and fix things. So it’s about getting the person the right help and the right information’. As another explained, ‘at the end of the day it’s all about communicating what you know and what we can do for the customer’.

4.34 CASINO RGM AND RGLO CONCLUSION

Sections 4.222 to 4.33 of this chapter have presented results relating to the interviews with the Responsible Gambling Manager (RGM) and four Responsible Gambling Liaison Officers (RGLOs) of the three Tabcorp owned casinos in Queensland. The RGM’s interview was reported in terms of the role of the casinos in assisting patrons with gambling problems, the role of staff and RGLOs, identifying problem gamblers, exclusions, interactions with family members, interactions with gambling support services and RGLO training. In relation to the RGLOs, the interview findings were described in terms of how they have or would respond to the three different scenarios presented. Ways in which the CLOs support other venue staff to assist problem gamblers in the venue were then described, as was the training they had undertaken and their interaction with local gambling support agencies. Best practice examples, where given, were then presented.

4.35 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the results from interviews with hotel and club CLOs and with the Responsible Gambling Manager and four Responsible Gambling Liaison Officers of the three Tabcorp owned casinos in Queensland. The next chapter presents results from interviews with the hotel and club staff who participated in this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS FROM THE HOTEL AND CLUB STAFF INTERVIEWS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents results from interviews with the 25 hotel staff, followed by those from the 23 club staff. Within each of these sets of results, key characteristics of respondents are first identified, before analysis of staff responses when patrons ask for assistance with a gambling problem, when patrons show signs of problem gambling but do not request assistance, and when family or friends approach staff with concerns for a patron's gambling. The focus then turns to staff opinions of the support they receive to assist problem gamblers in the venue from their Customer Liaison Officer (CLO) or equivalent, from their training and from local gambling support agencies. Best practice examples, where given, are then presented.

5.2 KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF HOTEL STAFF INTERVIEWEES

Twenty-five hotel staff were interviewed for this study. Table 5.1 summarises their key characteristics and shows that the sample captured staff in a variety of locations and positions and in venues of varying sizes and types of gaming installations. It should be noted that interviewees were classified as staff if they were not an official CLO or had not completed CLO training, even though some of these people were in supervisory or management positions.

Table 5.1: Key Characteristics of Hotel Staff Respondents

Location	Position	Length of service	Worked in other gaming venues?	No. of GMs	Other gambling facilities
Brisbane	Gaming manager	7 mths	Yes	25	Keno
Brisbane	Gaming supervisor	5 mths	Yes	21	TAB
Brisbane	Gaming manager	8 yrs	Yes	40	Keno
Brisbane	Gaming & bar attendant	6 mths	No	16	no
Brisbane	Gaming manager	3 mths	Yes	25	Keno
Brisbane	Restaurant manager	n/a	n/a	15	no
Cairns	TAB manager	6.5 yrs	Yes	40	n/a
Cairns	Office administrator, gaming, bar attendant			12	TAB
Cairns	Office manager, gaming reconciliations	2 yrs	Yes	12	no
Cairns	Bar & gaming attendant	2 yrs	Yes	35	n/a
Cairns	Duty manager	2 yrs	Yes	20	Keno, TAB
Cairns	Bar supervisor	12 mths	Yes	40	Keno, TAB
Mt Isa	Junior manager	7 mths	Yes	35	no
Mt Isa	Assistant manager	1 year	Yes	40	Keno, TAB
Toowoomba	Gaming attendant	18 mths	No	40	Keno
Toowoomba	Administration gaming promotions	5 mths	Yes	40	TAB
Toowoomba	Bar & gaming attendant	2 yrs	No	40	Keno, TAB
Toowoomba	Cook, bar attendant	2.5 yrs	No	19	no
Toowoomba	Gaming & bar attendant	4 yrs	Yes	35	no
Toowoomba	Bar attendant	10 mths	No	19	no
Toowoomba	Bar manager	4 yrs	Yes	20	no
Toowoomba	Office & gaming	5 yrs	Yes	40	Keno, TAB
Toowoomba	Nominee	4 mths	Yes	30	Keno, TAB
Toowoomba	Duty manager	2.5 yrs	Yes	19	no
Toowoomba	Assistant manager	6 mths	No	20	no

5.3 HOTEL STAFF RESPONSES TO PATRONS WHO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE

The interviewees were asked about various aspects of responding to patrons in the venue who approach staff to ask for assistance with a gambling problem. Their responses are summarised below in terms of how frequently staff have experienced this, procedures the staff use, staff knowledge of procedures, related challenges, perceived helpfulness of these procedures and suggestions for any improvements.

5.3.1 Frequency of Patrons Approaching Hotel Staff

The experience of being approached by patrons for assistance with a gambling problem varied considerably amongst the staff respondents, but overall, was not a frequent occurrence. Some staff had never experienced this, with one noting ‘I’ve been doing this for 15 years and I’ve never, ever had anyone hint or even approach me’. The most frequent occurrence was for the staff member who noted ‘it’s happened to me four times in a couple of months’ and another who said they were approached by ‘two or three a month’ seeking self-exclusion. Another noted the irregularity, where ‘you can go for long periods of time where nobody does, then you might get a spate of three or four in a month’. Five staff said they had no

experience of being approached for self-exclusion, either because there had reportedly been none at their venue since they commenced working there or because they had not been personally involved in dealing with the patron.

5.3.2 Procedures Used By Hotel Staff

The hotel staff were asked ‘What do you do if a patron asks for assistance with a gambling problem?’. The procedures staff would use comprised the following.

- **Refer up the chain of command**

Five staff noted their first response would be to refer the issue up the chain of command. However, this procedure varied from advising patrons to organise to see the CLO themselves, fetching the CLO or manager to meet with the patron, or asking the person to fill in the self-exclusion forms while waiting for the manager or CLO. For example, one staff member explained ‘I generally refer them to our gambling liaison officers’, another that ‘I go and get the manager straight away’, and another that ‘we give them the form to fill out. Then I’d ring ... our CLO’. Three of these staff limited their involvement to this referral. A fourth would assist the patron while waiting for the CLO and ‘give them quite a bit of literature’. The fifth, if the CLO was not available, would ‘just go through all the options and see what they want to do. Give them the pamphlets and all the help numbers, self-exclusion options that can be done on the spot or they can come back and talk to counsellors’. Two of these five staff noted the importance of patron privacy, saying they would ‘take them to a quieter place’ while fetching the CLO and talk to them ‘personally rather than in public and in view so it makes them feel more comfortable’.

- **Start by having a chat, offering advice and outlining options**

Eight staff members noted their first response would be to ‘have a chat’ with the patron to find out ‘what’s happening’, to ‘see where they’re at’, to ‘ask why they are gambling so much’ and ‘find out the exact problem’. These staff would then go through various options to ‘see what they want to do’. The options included to ‘explain the whole exclusion process for them’, ‘give them a few numbers that they can call or the Gambling Hotline or Relationships Australia’, ‘give them the pamphlets’, ‘advise a counsellor to talk them through it’ and ‘tell (the patron) to exclude himself from this hotel and go to the other hotels or where he gambles and talk to them as well and make them aware’. Two of these staff explicitly noted they would find somewhere quiet in the venue to have this conversation.

- **Provide counselling information**

Nine staff prioritised providing counselling information to the patron as a first response, although this was sometimes accompanied with information about self-exclusion. For example, one staff member explained ‘I’d ... put them onto the Gambling Helpline, some support centres or if it was that bad, see if they wanted to self-exclude’. Similarly, another said ‘the only thing I really can do is get out the information and possibly before they get to the self-exclusion, maybe thinking of sending them to a helpline, give them someone to talk to first that actually can deal with it better than I could. ... But if ... they just want to self-exclude, we’d have to do it straight away’.

However, other staff responses were limited to provision of counselling information only. One explained ‘I’d just advise them we have a few leaflets and so forth around the place for them to have a read through and perhaps some contact numbers. I think it’s easier for a professional to deal with that side of things’. Another recounted his response as: ‘I gave him

a card which is from the Gambling Anonymous gent from Cairns. ... And whether he did (contact them) or not, I don't know'.

- **Individual case management**

Two staff suggested a more individually tailored approach to assisting a patron who had asked for help, with one saying 'I would do anything to help them ... if they want me stop them from changing over money or whatever, I would help them'. The other noted he advises people who have self-excluded that 'if you feel you need to have a bet, come and see me and I'll talk you out of it'.

- **Suggest and implement self-exclusion**

By far the most common response, articulated by 17 of the 25 staff, was to identify self-exclusion as an option. The predominance of the self-exclusion option was reflected in a comment from one respondent who said 'nine times out of ten you can help them with self-exclusions'.

Some staff were empowered to organise a self-exclusion themselves even though they were not the CLO and had not completed CLO training. One described the process as follows: 'I would normally get out the folder that has everything in there and explain it to them, get them to fill out the forms that we do have and maybe some identification and stuff like that'. Another described that 'we go through a series of paperwork and you fill that out and you get a photo so that anybody can identify you'. Another explained the process thus: 'they would fill out a form, we fill out a form. They have 24 hours, a grace period and after that we would file it and enter it onto a computer and make sure that we have a photo of them so we have some sort of ID. Follow the flow-chart'. These comments emphasise the apparent utility of the self-exclusion materials provided to venues to guide the self-exclusion process.

Other staff would call the CLO or manager to assist them. One recalled 'I've done one exclusion and I've got the manual and I've got the manager with me, because it was my first'. Another also wanted the support of someone more senior: 'I definitely would go a grab a manager or the nominee, because I wouldn't want to just do it by myself'.

Other staff referred the matter straight to the CLO or manager to deal with. For example, one said 'if someone wants to do it (self-exclude) then you have to advise the CLO. That person is then contacted and they'll have a chat'. Others might call a manager or the CLO to process the self-exclusion if they were too busy to do it themselves. Describing an instance where a patron 'specifically asked to be excluded straight away', the staff member said he 'went and got one of my other duty managers who've probably done them a bit more; it was busy so I hand-balled it'. On other occasions, patrons bring the completed paperwork to the venues themselves. One staff member noted 'I've had two actually come in and handed me paperwork'.

Another venue seemed to take a more impersonal approach. As the staff member explained:

'... we don't directly handle it, we put it onto the Gambling Helpline ... they take them through it and fill out all the paperwork rather than us doing all the paperwork. That doesn't bind us legally to do something like fill it out. ... We give them the forms ... they come back in to show who they are because we need a photo ID of them which we put in a file.'

Some staff were clearly considerate of how the patron might be feeling. One explained:

'... if somebody wants to be self-excluded, you take them to a spot which is secluded. You don't do it in front of their peers; you take them aside where it's private because it's a bit of a

stigma to them I suppose. They don't like to be singled out ... take them aside as discreetly as possible.'

Another noted that 'mine's more for TAB. I get them and they come up to me and explain to me that they've got the gambling problem and I'll sit with them for half an hour or whatever they need; I'll talk to my manager and ask him to give me time'. In contrast, one staff member seemed very averse to a discussion with the patron, explaining 'I'd say well give us your photo and I'll put it all in the book and do all our writing up. I'd say don't come back'. When asked if they would otherwise talk to the patron, this staff member replied 'no, I'm not a psychologist'.

5.3.3 Hotel Staff Knowledge of Procedures

In most cases, staff seemed confident that they knew what procedures they would use when a patron approached them to ask for assistance with a gambling problem, although their lack of experience with this situation led to many speculative responses. However, there were a few exceptions. For example, one responded 'I'm not really sure to be honest. I would have to probably get my little manual out and have a good read ... what would I do?'

A few others seemed to have had no or little instruction in procedures. One described how he had found out about procedures:

'When I first started here ... I came across a book and I just read the book. This had all the gaming stuff. ... I had found a whole heap of paperwork and it had forms in it for different things in the manual and once I'd read through everything and I worked out what was what, I created a folder of the self-exclusions so we had it all in one spot.'

A few seemed unclear about self-exclusion procedures. One noted 'we haven't really been taught about it'. Another said 'I think you have to apply for it, or the hotel has to apply for it. You have to send that to somewhere, I'm not too sure'. When asked if there were any other staff in the venue they could turn to for advice, that person replied 'not that I know of, no'. Another had inaccurate information about self-exclusions, thinking they could offer a 'regional exclusion (where) you actually tell some gaming authority and they fax an exclusion to every pub'. Another had no knowledge of counselling agencies they could advise patrons of, saying 'I'd have to look that up. I'm not too sure'.

5.3.4 Challenges for Hotel Staff in Responding to Patrons who Request Assistance

The staff were asked about how comfortable and equipped they felt in responding to patrons who requested assistance with a gambling problem. Responses varied substantially. Some felt very comfortable because 'I'm a people person', 'I could see that I was helping this person', 'it's not hard to help someone that wants help' and because some patrons 'seemed to know the process (of self-exclusion) and didn't really want to talk much'.

However, other staff clearly did not feel comfortable or confident. For example, one explained that 'I didn't know how many personal questions I should be asking them, like how far I'm meant to go. I did feel with (that patron) out of my depth'.

Another alluded to the emotional labour for staff, saying 'it is hard sometimes, I've got to admit. Because you just sort of think how much strain has it put on their life? It's very sad'. Similarly, another said 'I feel bad. I don't think I'd like to be in that situation of having nothing and putting your last \$10 in machines or the last \$10 on the horse'. Another noted they were:

‘... firstly a bit upset. I still feel that way because I know a lot of people ... who tend to prefer to spend their money on the pokies than they would on say, clothes or they’d rather skip a meal and put \$5 in the pokies than feed themselves. You see those sort of things and it’s a bit upsetting.’

Others were uncomfortable about dealing with what they saw as a very personal and private issue. For example, one said ‘that can be a little tricky especially, you have to be careful too, especially if they think you’re being overhead by somebody so you’ve got to be very careful’. Others were uneasy ‘just knowing someone’s personal business more than anything’. One commented that I don’t know if I’d take photos. I know you can take photos. But I think that’s a personal issue’.

Some staff suggested responding to patrons who ask for assistance with a gambling problem was easier for older workers, where ‘I’m older, I don’t find it as hard as the young ones do. I probably find it easier’. Others suggested how easy or difficult the task was depended on the patron, where ‘it kind of depends on what sort of relationship I have with the person already’.

Some suggested that responding to patrons became easier with experience and training. As one recounted:

‘The first time I ever was approached I was a bit uncomfortable because I didn’t know exactly how to go about it but a bit of training and self confidence in yourself, it’s acceptable to say, look it’s understandable people have problems. ... after seeing it happen for the first time you sort of open your eyes and realise how it affects people.’

Two staff members expressed concern about not knowing what happens to people who self-exclude. One commented ‘I always feel a bit rough about giving someone some numbers and self-excluding them and then not seeing them again. That line of contact has just been dropped’. The other noted ‘once you exclude someone you don’t know whether you’ve succeeded or not. ... It is a concern because if you exclude them out of your venue and they’re playing up the road ... you’ve done your bit, but the person up the road couldn’t care less and lets them play on’.

5.3.5 Perceived Helpfulness of Hotel Procedures

The staff were asked whether they thought the procedures used in their venue assisted patrons to deal with their gambling problem. Most thought they did, particularly self-exclusion. In the opinion of some staff, this was because ‘the person knows he’s got a problem’ and so ‘they’ve actually made a decision, a conscious decision themselves to exclude themselves’. As another expressed it, ‘if they’ve come to you, they’ve already decided’. One staff member provided an example of where self-exclusion was effective:

‘... a lady who came to us, she was one of our customers and she came and excluded herself from everywhere and I’ve seen her, she’s actually come to see me since and she’s turned her life around, had a family so it really makes you feel a bit better. Yes. She actually came upstairs here into the hotel and asked to see me and I came up. It’s really good. She came to tell me that she’d had a little girl and everything was great.’

Other staff stressed the importance of the patron being ‘really serious about it’ and of excluding themselves ‘from every venue and they do the rounds. ... once they’ve done that, they’re very determined’. Otherwise, if a patron is only ‘trying to exclude themselves from the closer ones (venues) to where they live, as soon as they get that urge they go into another one’.

Another emphasised the importance of support for the self-excludee:

‘It works if everybody works together - the self-excluded person, the staff, their family. And especially for that person who’s self-excluded, they want that support. ... I think that some kind of meeting, have everybody on the same page ... have everybody aware of who’s who, the family, the staff meet the family. I think everybody knowing everybody and understanding everybody is important.’

However, some other staff were more sceptical about the effectiveness of self-exclusion. One explained ‘it doesn’t suit everyone. ... It can be very embarrassing saying to someone, I think I have a problem, especially to someone you see on a regular basis’. This staff member then commented:

‘It’s a little bit easier to talk to someone you don’t really know. We get a lot of our self-exclusions through Lifeline. I believe that there’s a centre in (a regional town) that people can go and self-exclude themselves too and they provide all the hotels with the self-exclusion forms’.

This staff member clearly thought that this option to self-exclude through a third party was a good option.

Some staff were also a little sceptical about the effectiveness of self-exclusion as they had witnessed self-excludees trying to re-enter the venue, with one noting ‘a lot of them do try to sneak in.... I had a lot of self-excluded patrons changing their hair colour’. Another was unsure about the effectiveness of self-exclusion because ‘you don’t know if she went to the pub next door’.

There was also scepticism from some staff about the value of signage in assisting patrons. As one commented:

‘All the cards and hoo-ha is really a waste of time. ... it makes you feel good and fuzzy but really and truly, let’s be real, it doesn’t work. We’ve got all the stuff stuck up. I like the coasters because I need coasters! But the wallet stuff and all that, that stuff just sits there and no-one touches it and it collects dust and there’re boxes of stuff around.’

5.3.6 Hotel Staff Suggestions for Improvements

The staff interviewees were asked to suggest any improvements to current procedures used when a patron asks for assistance with a gambling problem. Opinions were divided. Some thought it was difficult to make any improvements as addressing a gambling problem first requires problem recognition by the patron as ‘you can’t do anything until the person admits they’ve got the problem’.

A few staff suggested improvements to the self-exclusion system. First, some felt ‘a bit more signage for self-exclusion, a bit more advertising on what there is’ was needed to ‘make them (patrons) more aware of self-exclusion’.

Others felt self-exclusion would be improved if it did not apply just to one venue. As one explained, ‘I think one of the problems with the system is ... if they ban themselves from here doesn’t mean they’re not sneaking off somewhere else’. Another thought that ‘if it’s put in place for one pub, it should be put in place for another’. However, this person acknowledged associated difficulties where ‘it would be hard to regulate who you know comes into your pub. Because if it was network-based you wouldn’t know who was in your pub and who wasn’t and who was self-excluded and who wasn’t’. Another suggested:

‘... a whole city ban ... get every pub working together because if you can’t play in one, you just go down the street and play in another pub. ... Maybe you should get all the pubs working together ... if you self-exclude from one pub, I reckon the other pubs would want you to come and play with them. It’s a tough one. But that’s probably the best way to do it.’

Another suggestion was ‘a process for people when they come into a pub that scan their ID and it has to be checked and if they’re on self-exclusion, that’s when it lights up’. While potentially effective, this person did note this system could be ‘quite expensive’.

One staff member was concerned that:

‘Once they’re self-excluded you don’t see them again. So you just lost that relationship. I think there could be a better support network. I feel that people self-exclude themselves and then they’re left on their own and not allowed to come into venues. I’m not aware of any follow up or encouragement from any organisation.’

A final issue relating to self-exclusion was staff knowledge of who is excluded. In relation to the folder of self-excludees kept in a venue, one staff noted ‘because ... we’ve got to have it hidden away ... the majority of the time you don’t even know who’s in it. So some of our other staff who can’t get into the office upstairs to see the photos don’t actually know that some of these people are excluded’.

While most suggestions for improvement related to self-exclusion, one staff member also spoke about other aspects of assisting people with gambling problems, commenting ‘I just don’t know that we have the right systems involved for people to actually get help. For someone to pick up a phone and ring the Gambling Helpline, I think it would be quite a big step’. This person also queried the adequacy of patron knowledge of the chances of winning on gaming machines, saying ‘I’m well aware of the odds and how much you can win or lose on them. A lot of people are not quite in the know about it, I think. I don’t know how they can make it easier’.

Another staff member, while not making specific suggestions for improvements, felt a good process for venues was:

‘... a consistent check to make sure you have the forms and the posters and things like that in an appropriate position. ... We use the gambling posters throughout the poker machine area, in between every pokie. Making sure that there’s a point made in that area as well as the ATM area as well, making sure that there’s something up there just to say when they go and get their money, the poster’s right in front of them, Don’t chase your losses or Do you think you have a problem? and making sure there’s a lot of information available to them’.

5.4 HOTEL STAFF APPROACHES TO PATRONS WHO SHOW SIGNS OF PROBLEM GAMBLING

The staff interviews asked about various aspects of approaching patrons in the venue who show signs of problem gambling. The responses are summarised below in terms of what signs hotel staff thought might indicate that a patron has a gambling problem, what signs would prompt them to approach a patron, procedures they would use, associated staff knowledge, challenges for staff and perceived helpfulness of these procedures.

5.4.1 Hotel Staff Identification of Signs of Possible Problem Gambling

The staff were asked if they thought they could recognise if someone is a problem gambler or at risk, and if so, how. The vast majority of staff agreed they could recognise signs of problem gambling and identified several potential indicators.

- **Irritability and aggression**

About one-half of the respondents identified irritability and aggression as an indicator. This manifested as ‘just becoming aggressive’, ‘abusing the machines’, ‘hitting the button and

getting a little agitated’, ‘swearing and hitting machines’ and ‘people who get a bit angry’. One interviewee described players who ‘hit them, kick them, punch them; and it’s not just a tap, it’s a full-on punch. They’ll go for the machine. It’s like they’re personalising the machine ... and they’re taking their aggression out’. It appears this is not restricted to gaming machine players. One staff member commented ‘in the TAB if they’re waiting for the last minute to get a bet on, and if they don’t get it on, you can tell the ones that get really, really annoyed at you. ... they start losing and you see them start throwing tickets’. Clearly, this aggression and frustration is sometimes directed at staff – ‘the world’s a really bad place at the moment and it’s your fault’.

- **Looking stressed**

Two staff felt that looking stressed while gambling was an indicator. One explained ‘we can usually tell when people feel stressed about what they’re spending or if they don’t want to be changing money’, and another that ‘they’ll sit at the bar by themselves really worried about something’.

- **Being anti-social**

Three staff thought anti-social behaviour could be an indicator, when gamblers ‘don’t want to talk to people’, ‘become insular’, ‘just focus on gambling’ and ‘don’t seem to have much personality’.

- **Erroneous and irrational verbalisations**

Three staff gave examples of this – one that ‘people will name the machine’, another that gamblers might say ‘I think I’m hitting the buttons wrong’ and a third about a patron who was ‘talking to the machines ... she said today why do people who play pokies talk to themselves? and she was saying it to herself while she was playing. And she called all of her machines her boyfriend’.

- **Being secretive or lying about their gambling**

Four staff gave examples of this - ‘lying to other people about when she’s been here’, ‘being secretive about their spending; hiding it from people that they’re in with’, and ‘making comments that they having to go home before someone notices that they’re missing’. Another interviewee recounted ‘there’s one fellow who comes in all the time and puts a lot through and he’ll tell you all about when he wins but you never hear when he loses. He’ll sneak out the back’.

- **Change in usual behaviour**

Six staff noted changes in behaviour as an indicator of gambling problems. These included ‘if they start to get angry when they never get angry’, ‘if they’re going to the ATM more than usual’, ‘a change in the way that they react to people’, and ‘a really erratic change in behaviour’. Another noted ‘they shut themselves down a bit. You can’t talk to them. I go to say hello to some people and when they come up to the bar they’re all happy and then some days, no. You know they’ve had a punt’. Another change was when ‘they stop having drinks and just banish themselves to the pokie room and don’t move’. These changes might also include changes in their appearance, in that they ‘stop looking after themselves’.

- **Gambling very regularly**

Three staff made specific comments on the regularity of gambling being an indicator. Related signs were if ‘they are here on a daily basis’, ‘they were here all day every day’ and ‘people that come in regularly; how many times a week they come in’.

- **Gambling for long sessions**

Four staff identified session length as an indicator, if ‘they’re here for extended hours’ and those who ‘just sit in the pokie room for hours and hours and hours’.

- **Gambling for longer than intended/chasing losses**

Three interviewees connected gambling for longer than intended with gambling problems. They relayed examples of people ‘saying that they’ll go soon but putting another few hundred dollars through’, patrons saying ‘I’ve got to get more out (of the ATM), I’ve got to chase my losses’ and those ‘who don’t know when to stop, they just keep on going’. Another noted people playing until ‘they’ve lost all their money (then) they walk out’ as a sign of gambling problems’.

- **Spending money put aside for something else**

Two staff gave examples of patrons spending money they had allocated for something else and saw this as an indicator of a gambling problem. The first recalled:

‘I actually had an old lady take money out of a birthday card and I actually had to tell her I wasn’t going to let her gamble that money. So she said, I shouldn’t be doing this and I said I don’t think you should be either. And she goes, but I need the money. I asked what is that money for and she said her grandchild.’

The second recalled patron comments such as ‘the machine spent my bill money Got no shopping money left now because I’ve just put it all through the pokies, that sort of thing. That would be a bit worrying to me’.

- **Trying to obtain extra money to gamble with**

Four staff specifically mentioned trying to get extra money to gamble with as a sign of problem gambling. This could entail ‘people borrowing money’, ‘digging around for a \$1. Somebody that’s trying to find some loose coins, fidgeting, maybe approaching other people’, ‘scrounging through their pocket for change’ and those who ‘change notes and then be back in three seconds with a handful of five cent pieces you imagine ... they’ve just raided their car for’.

- **Multiple ATM withdrawals**

Three staff noted multiple ATM withdrawals as possible signs, for example, ‘when they keep going backwards and forwards from the ATM’, ‘when you see that person go to the poker machine and do those four or five trips to the ATM’ and ‘if they kept going to the ATM and feeding it through to make bets’.

- **Changing a lot of money or changing money often**

This was another indicator noted by three staff, in relation to ‘people who change money excessively’, are ‘always changing more money’ and ‘the amount of money that they change over would be a big thing’.

- **Putting big wins straight back into a machine**

Two interviewees considered players who put big wins straight back into a machine as potential problem gamblers, where ‘they might get \$400 but then, they don’t actually get the payout’. Another explained that ‘when we do payouts, you try, usually you give them enough 20’s to get them by, but if I’m doing a \$400 payout I’ll give them \$200 in 50’s if I’ve got them in the drawer and \$200 in 20’s and then they come back to do the 50’s’.

- **Being overly attached to a particular machine**

One staff member noted ‘people will sit down and watch one machine and wait till it comes free’ and this may be a sign of problem gambling.

5.4.2 Indicators that Would Prompt Hotel Staff to Approach a Patron

The staff were asked ‘Of the indicators you have identified, which would prompt you to approach a patron to assist them?’. Three hotel staff would not approach a patron at all about their gambling, noting ‘you can’t’ and ‘I’m not too positive if we’re allowed to go up and say anything’. Most others would only approach under extreme circumstances, for example where a patron was outwardly aggressive or very upset. The situations where staff reported they would approach are described below.

- **Aggressive, abusive and violent behaviour**

The most common scenario under which staff would approach a patron to try to assist them with a suspected gambling problem was if the patron was ‘aggressive and abusive’ and/or violent. As one staff member noted, ‘I think when they actually start getting physically violent and to me that’s a pretty major one, because then they’re becoming a danger to themselves and others’. One staff member gave an example of when he had approached a patron, as ‘the person seemed to be aggressive, talking to the machine ... punching the machine and spending all his money’.

- **Evidence of gambling impacting on family**

Another interviewee said an approach would be appropriate if a patron was ‘here all day every day and I had family members ringing for them and looking for them and I knew that they had children sitting somewhere hungry. Then I would probably look into that situation’.

- **If a patron hinted at a problem**

Another staff member said they would only approach if the patron gave them an opening – ‘I would probably do it if they brought it up somehow ... I mean if they brought up the subject I would possibly diplomatically ...’.

- **If a patron was crying and upset**

Two staff noted they would approach if the patron was crying and upset. As one explained, ‘I probably wouldn’t approach unless I saw that sort of scenario where they were actually pretty upset and daunted by what they had just done.’ Another noted ‘they get annoyed with the machines so unless I see a bit of disgust on their face or upset I would just leave them.’

- **Large sums of money being changed**

One staff member commented ‘the biggest thing that I would look at would be the money changeover and whether they were winning. If they had come in two or three times a week every week and given change over for \$2,000 each go, that would be big’.

- **Being secretive about gambling**

Another interviewee would be alerted by a patron being secretive, for example ‘saying something ... like, give me the money before she sees that I’ve won’.

5.4.3 Procedures Used by Hotel Staff to Approach a Patron

Five staff gave examples of what they had actually done in this situation, while the remainder discussed what they would do.

Procedures staff have used

Five staff gave examples of how they have approached patrons when they had concerns about their gambling.

One maintained ‘I always check with my regulars but they always say to me no I’m fine’. Another recalled how he said to a patron ‘leave the venue, think about it. That person’s come back once and said I don’t want to exclude myself and I’ve also been watching that person when they came back’. A third, on being concerned about a ‘young girl ... just gave her some money for food’.

Another, concerned that a patron was spending a lot of money, chasing losses and staying in the venue when her daughter was waiting to be picked up from school, recalled how she ‘tried to talk to her. I sort of said ... I don’t know how you can do this all the time because you always leave upset. She hasn’t been in as much’.

A fifth staff member recounted an episode where a lady had spent \$800 she had won the day before and then lost another \$200 ‘to see if (she) I could win some more’. When the staff member asked ‘don’t you think that shows a bit of a problem?’, the patron said ‘yes, it’s actually impacted on my savings and now my groceries for the week’. The staff member then suggested this showed:

‘... a serious problem and ... gave her, it’s like a little booklet, the gambling hotline, you can ring that and we can also exclude you from the venue and I talked over it the variations of the exclusion that she could come in and drink and have a meal from the restaurant but she wasn’t allowed to step foot in the gaming area. And she chose that option. I haven’t seen her back since.’

Procedures staff would use

The remaining staff speculated on what they would do if they felt they needed to approach a patron about a gambling problem. One would just have a conversation with the patron, explaining:

‘I’d probably go and enquire whether they’d like a cup of coffee. Are they having a good day? First you have to create a bit of a rapport before you can jump straight in and accuse somebody of excessive gambling. Maybe talk to them, take their mind off their gambling. If they are a problem gambler, they start to feel you did notice so sometimes that prompts them to get up and walk away anyway. So that’s enough.’

Another would simply ask the patron to leave, explaining that ‘the easiest way is, how about you just collect and make your way home and quit while you’re ahead?’.

Others were more vague on how they would approach, saying ‘I’d just talk to them about it’ and another that ‘it would have to be someone who’s been coming in a lot who I have met before and that way I’d feel very sure they do have gambling problems’. Another would ‘record their behaviour in my mind and then talk to other staff and if everyone has a similar opinion ... then I would approach’.

A few others would approach a patron for a conversation and identify venue options available to assist them, but only if they were very sure the patron had a gambling problem. One explained ‘if I felt that there was definitely a problem I would feel comfortable enough to go and have a yarn or pull them aside and ask them if they think there was a problem there or if they need help. Are they aware that there are avenues there?’ Similarly, another would say ‘look, I noticed last time you were here you might have, do you think you can use some of this information we have available and then if they say no, then there’s nothing else you can do’. Another explained:

‘Rather than saying I think (you have a problem), you put it back on them. Don’t you think you should make the choice, should you be playing those pokies, and asking them to make a decision for themselves rather than you trying to tell them the decision they should be making.’

Two others named specific circumstances when they would approach a patron and what they would do. One described that, if a patron was angry:

‘I would say, you have a problem. It is not my fault, it is not the staff’s fault. We are here to help you. And this is what we can do. I would advise that they could not bet. I would say, this is what we’ve got and offer them as in self-exclusion, as in Gamblers Anonymous and go from there. Pretty much depends I guess on the height of their aggression and so forth. I would say, you are not welcome back for a month. Cool them down.’

Another gave the example of patrons leaving children unattended while they gambled. This person noted ‘I won’t tolerate anyone that’s got kids sitting out the front. ... I would have no problem going in and approaching them and explaining to them that they have children sitting out the front that shouldn’t be there’.

5.4.4 Hotel Staff Knowledge of Procedures

While staff were generally aware of procedures to follow when a patron approached them to ask for assistance for a gambling problem, there were clearly less specific procedures around staff approaching patrons. This is evident from the variation in procedures discussed above, as well as some staff who were unsure of what to do. For example, one staff member was ‘not too positive if we’re allowed to go up and say anything’, while another noted ‘I don’t know where my limit is and what I should be saying’. Another said ‘I just wouldn’t know how far you could go and how far you could stick your nose into things to say to people, well I think you’ve had enough to gamble. Even more so how to approach the factor on doing the responsible gambling’. Other staff had clearly been instructed not to approach, where ‘personally you can’t go up and say, I think you’ve got a problem ... we can’t really approach them’.

5.4.5 Challenges for Hotel Staff in Approaching Patrons About a Possible Gambling Problem

Several challenges were raised by the staff around approaching patrons in the venue.

- **Difficulties of recognising gambling problems amongst patrons**

While most staff felt confident they could recognise if a patron had or was at risk of having a gambling problem, some circumstances could make this assessment difficult. One staff noted the size of the gaming room makes a difference, where ‘it would be hard in a bigger room. Here, I can see everything that goes on’. Another felt it depended how busy the venue was, saying ‘not at a busy time, but 70 per cent of the day you’d be able to tell pretty easily’.

Several others noted that not knowing how much a patron could afford to gamble also made this difficult, commenting ‘everyone has their own budget’ and ‘how do I determine who has money and who doesn’t?’. Another gave the example of a friend’s father who ‘wore stubbies all the time and thongs and went to the race track every day and he’s got singlets on and he’s a multi-millionaire. But you’d look at him and think, he’s got a problem, spending \$50,000 a week on gambling but he steps out in his Porsche’. Another commented ‘you may approach somebody and think they’re having a problem. It might be somebody who’s quite well off’ and another that ‘\$20 for one family might hurt that family, you never know ... but then \$2,000 might not hurt one family at all’.

- **Getting problem gamblers to acknowledge and act on the problem**

A few staff raised the difficulty of getting problem gamblers to acknowledge a gambling problem, as ‘it’s got to come from them first. That would be the hardest, getting them to realise they do have a problem’. Another felt ‘they should be aware of what their problems are. The onus is put too much on the staff to look after people who should be looking after themselves’. Another staff person felt it was particularly difficult to encourage patrons to act on a gambling problem because ‘you can’t make people do it. You can say stuff to them and try and help them but it’s their money and their life and their responsibility so you can’t force them not to do it really’.

- **Invasion of privacy**

Several staff felt to approach a patron would invade their privacy, where ‘people still deserve their privacy’. As one explained, ‘it’s not my position to pull someone up on that. ... If I had a problem gambling and someone came up to me about it I’d be upset about it’. Another explained ‘I find it a bit putting my nose where it’s not really wanted. Some people get offended if you go in and say I’ve seen you put a fair bit through.’

- **Frustrations of not being able to intervene**

Several staff expressed frustration at not being able to intervene when they thought the patron was being irresponsible. One gave the following example:

‘I was sitting in the gaming room talking to the gaming attendant and there was this wife and father, daughter ... They were putting money through the machine and one of them stopped and goes, sh** I hope Centrelink don’t find out about this. Like they’re putting this Centrelink money through this gaming machine. I just went, you’re kidding right? And I said to the gaming attendant, is that regular? She said yeah, a lot of people get their Centrelink cheques and go straight into the gaming room. I’ve heard other stories from other venues and just can’t believe it’.

Another related the story of ‘one lady, her child ... he could die, was in hospital all the time and she was there just spending her money. I knew her mother was at home looking after him ... and I was just like, that’s really bad’. A third told of ‘this man (who) used to leave his kids in this child’s room ... and he used to go and play the pokies until 10 o’clock at night and they were in there all day and not eaten and they (the staff) used to give them food and stuff’.

- **Do not want to lose the patron’s business**

A few others were concerned about losing the patron, where ‘you could drive the customer away’. Another agreed, saying ‘there’s nothing that you can personally do though. You can ask them to leave but they’re only going to go to another hotel’. Another bluntly stated that ‘business-wise it’s not good’ and another that ‘when it all boils down, we like the money in the till’.

- **Worried the patron might be angry or insulted**

Others would not approach a patron or be very careful because ‘they would become quite aggressive to you for actually trying to interfere in their lives’. This is ‘because you don’t know that person, you don’t know their mentality whether they’re aggressive, whether they’re not aggressive’ and ‘because you don’t want to have to go up to a person and they blow up in your face. You’re trying to help them but then they think that you’re just being rude or something’. Another staff member was concerned about not knowing how a patron would respond to an intervention, giving the following example:

‘This one lady ... she must live on the street ... she’s been coming down heaps the last couple of weeks and I don’t know, should I say something to her and have a chat to her, is she going to be insulted that I even you know ... I just don’t know what to do because I can tell she has no money and every time she’s here, she never walks away, she just spends it all.’

- **Requires staff confidence and experience**

One interviewee drew attention to different levels of staff confidence which would affect their likelihood of approaching patrons. He explained:

‘You have hospitality professionals and uni students ... they’re your two genre of workers ... those younger girl uni students probably wouldn’t have the confidence to approach someone ... you always find the blokes probably have got usually a more outgoing personality in hospitality’.

Some staff were also concerned that young staff do not have the experience required to deal with problem gamblers in the venue, with one saying ‘you can’t tell me that an 18 or 19 year old can spot a problem gambler ... They might know ... he’s playing the pokies too much. But they’re young, they don’t care. ... Anyone can pour a beer or work a till. But to deal with a customer, that’s the hardest part’. Another commented:

‘Most of the people in this industry are under 20 ... they’re not the most caring, brightest sparks in the world. ... they don’t want to deal with all this pressure, trying to help people who genuinely need help. ... there’s too much responsibility on the people behind the bar.... I don’t think we should have to go through all the rigmarole filling out paperwork to help someone who really should be seeing someone with a bit more experience or training to actually give them help.’

- **Difficulties if they see the patron elsewhere**

One person identified the difficulty of approaching a patron about a gambling problem and the seeing them elsewhere, saying ‘I might see them up at Woolworths tomorrow. Geez. Do I look or don’t I?’.

- **Difficulties of implementing a venue exclusion**

One staff member spoke of the challenges of implementing a venue exclusion if that was required to assist someone, explaining:

‘We’ve got to be very careful because when you do a venue exclusion you leave yourself up for legal action because the government even though they’re saying all this, they’re not backing it. So it means it’s up to us to put them out. That’s where it becomes a bit of a problem. A grey area, yes.’

5.4.6 Hotel Staff Perceptions of the Helpfulness of Procedures

The interviewees generally had limited experience in approaching patrons about a possible gambling problem and so had difficulty commenting on the helpfulness of doing so. However, some staff clearly felt it would not have any effect and so would not approach a patron. One noted ‘you can’t help those who won’t help themselves is my policy and a lot of these people don’t want to help themselves. ... if they’re not willing then it’s not even worth talking to them about it’. Similarly, another said that ‘by law we’re required to go and approach people but I don’t think it’s realistic to walk up to a patron in a hotel. I’d have no qualms in saying mate, you need to be out, you have a problem. But I can tell you nine out of ten times what their reaction would be’. Referring to a particular patron, another said ‘you can’t. He’d just grumble and keep on playing and walk away. It’s too hard that one’. Another felt ‘if you’ve got a problem you have to realise that you have a problem before anyone can help you. You can’t try and help somebody that doesn’t want to be helped’. Another felt that ‘a person that doesn’t like to be talked to and is probably a little bit aggressive even trying to have a casual conversation with them because you know they’ll just turn around and shut down and not talk to you’ and another that there is ‘not much you can say basically. Apart from bugger. I don’t know’.

5.5 HOTEL STAFF RESPONSES TO THIRD PARTY CONCERNS ABOUT PROBLEM GAMBLING

The staff were asked about what they would do if a family member or close friend expressed concern that a patron has a gambling problem.

5.5.1 Frequency of Third Parties Approaching Hotel Staff

Four staff had experienced being approached by a family member concerned about a patron’s gambling. One of these noted it was ‘years ago’, another said it was a ‘common occurrence’, while the other two simply acknowledged it had happened.

5.5.2 Procedures Used by Hotel Staff

Two staff gave examples of what they had actually done in this situation, while the remainder discussed what they would do.

Procedures staff have used

Two staff recounted specific examples of this scenario. The first explained:

‘The family had approached me; the mother and the brother ... thought there was as gambling problem there so I explained to them that really, we can approach her but the only way for her to deal with it was to self-exclude herself and then we can then say, no I’m sorry you can’t come into these premises. It was a hard situation because I actually knew them. But it was all

sorted. I think within the family they sorted it out amongst themselves and to be honest with you I probably haven't seen her in here playing the pokies in probably 12 months.'

The second recalled that:

'We had a wife come in and we could see clearly she was very upset. Her husband was there, he was a big punter and actually we told him to go. We said your wife wants you out of here, she's upset and we want you to go. We said be fair to your wife and your family. And he actually happily went. Yeah he came back. Not as regular as he was. She put the skids on him.'

Procedures staff would use

The remainder of the staff commented on what they would do if this situation arose.

- **Refer up the chain of command**

Four said they would refer the matter to someone more senior in the venue – the manager, duty manager, CLO or gaming manager. This might be 'so they can be monitored' or for the manager to decide 'if they want to take out an exclusion against that person'.

- **Ask to meet with the patron**

One staff member said he would ask to meet with the patron, explaining 'I would first tell the person to come down because I can't say by word of mouth, such and such said; that person would actually have to come down and be there'.

- **Discuss it with the patron and their family**

Two others said they would ask to meet with the patron, but in the company of the family member who raised the concern. One explained 'I've got to get that other person down here so we can both talk to this ... make her see her errors'. The other felt the best approach was 'getting some of their closest family members, a couple of their closest friends and surrounding family members and actually sitting down and having a chat to them... It's better if you have a few people there. Especially if there's a wife or a husband'.

- **Monitor the patron**

Three staff said they would start by monitoring the patron to see if the family member's concern was justified. As one explained, 'we can monitor ; if it does happen then we can give him the interview ... that would just give us enough backing I suppose'. Another would 'keep a bit of an eye on that person'. The third referred to:

'... active monitoring. They would monitor the patron to see if they were spending too much money and let them know that someone has come in and they're a bit concerned. ... we have to do it with consent of the patron and it's basically watching them to see how much they're spending, how often they're coming into the premises and after a certain period of time walk up to them and their friend who came in and sit them down together and see if they want to be self-excluded. Refer them to a support group, community help centre.'

- **Approach the patron**

Several staff would approach the patron of concern. Some were rather vague about how they would do this, saying 'yeah, I'd probably have a chat', 'I guess you could go about it advising that person that someone's come up about it and expressed concern' and 'I'd probably try and have a chat to them'.

Others would approach the patron to find out more information before making a judgement. As one explained, 'I would hope to maybe think or do something to talk to them anyway and find out. But you'd still have to make a judgement yourself'.

Two would be more direct, with one saying 'I would probably talk them through the options that are available and give them some numbers that they can call ... tell them about self-exclusion, encourage them to talk to their family members and to get their family member to talk to someone'. The other noted 'if I do feel it's a problem, I'd likely approach them and say, did you want to have a meeting with myself and the manager at the pub and we'll talk about what can be done, how you can be helped and all the relevant information provided?'.

Others would only approach the patron of concern under certain circumstances. One was 'if it was ... a regular person that came in here that I knew'. The other depended on 'if that family member's come to us in confidence or whether they have come to us because they've already spoken to them and then we can sometimes speak to the person'. Another spoke of having to 'pick the right time to approach them. You couldn't just walk up to someone and say, your sister said I've got to throw you out because you've got a problem'.

- **Talk to the family member(s) about options**

Several staff spoke of how they would discuss the issue with the third party who had raised concerns. For one staff member, this would be to find out more about the patron's gambling, asking 'how much do they play the pokies, do you think they should be playing them? Because they'll understand what their income's like, the type of money they have and so forth and be able to assess the situation a lot better than myself'. Another would discuss with the family member 'what they want me to do about it'.

Others would discuss options available. For example, one said 'I'd explain to them that there's a self-exclusion thing that they can do but they have to nominate themselves though. Or I'd tell them about certain counselling places they can go to, but apart from that, that's about the only thing I can do'. Similarly, another said:

'All you can do is give them the details and suggest they get the other person to come forward with having an issue. You can tell them about the helpline and things like that, but you can't impose anything on the other person. There could be malicious acts as well. Give them pamphlets and suggest that they talk to their friends.'

Another said 'I think that I can give them the information of helplines and if she chooses to hand it over to them ... I can't really do much' and another that he would 'pass them one of the leaflets saying look, how about if you get a conversation later tonight and just pass it onto him'.

These staff clearly felt they had limited power to force the patron to take action. For example, one explained that 'if someone came in and said, my hubby's down here playing the pokies 24 hours a day, I would say I can give you the number for help but I don't feel it's my job, even though it probably is my job to go and say look, you have a problem'. Similarly, another said 'that's when I'll probably just give them all the literature I've got, the gambling phone numbers and the gambling anonymous and all that. It's all I've got the power to do isn't it? I can't make anybody stop'. A third noted 'there's not a lot I can do unless (the patron) came up to me and said that she didn't want to gamble anymore and wanted to be excluded'.

5.5.3 Hotel Staff Knowledge of Procedures

The staff clearly had limited experience of being approached by a third party. While most speculated on what they would do, as noted above, several were unclear. For example, one

said ‘I’ve never thought about that’ and another ‘I haven’t had to deal with it yet. It’s pretty much unknown’. Another was unclear about any legal restrictions, saying ‘I think a lot of times people have family members who interfere so I don’t know. I honestly don’t know how you’d go legally with it either’. Another was not sure about third party exclusions, saying ‘if you can get the spouse to exclude (the patron); I don’t know if that’s possible’.

Some confusion was clearly evident for the staff member who said ‘it would be pretty hard because if you approached the other person then they’ll get in trouble, but if you approach themselves you’d probably get in trouble, but you get in trouble if he gets in trouble I suppose. I probably would have to say something about it. If it’s a family member, it’s a bit different’.

5.5.4 Challenges for Hotel Staff

Several staff alluded to numerous difficulties in dealing with third party concerns.

- **Protection of patron privacy**

One difficulty was due to the need for patron privacy, as ‘the privacy of the patron is most important. I wouldn’t be able to assist the family member. It would be up to the patron themselves to come up’. Another pointed out that:

‘I can’t even say that that person’s here. ... if someone rings up and says is so and so in the gaming room? You can’t actually say yes or no, you need to go and say to that person, so and so’s calling for you, do you want to take this call and then they say yes or no. Because if you say yes they are, and that person’s really like angry that they’re here and like stab them, then you can get in heaps of trouble with the law. ... So I can’t do anything about it.’

- **Concern for triggering aggression**

One staff member noted:

‘You can’t say your husband’s been in here and he’s threatened and he doesn’t want you to come in here. Then all of a sudden you’re becoming involved in a domestic ... a lot of times when you become involved with something like that and you’re the meat in the sandwich, you find that the couple, they’re lovey dovey and you’re the worst one in the world. It is a difficult situation’.

As well, this aggression might be directed at staff, where you might say ‘your family member has come in worried about you, but then there’s that chance of the aggression coming out’.

- **Concern for losing the patron to another venue**

As one staff member stated, ‘ironically if you stop them coming here, they go up the road to the bowls club or the golf club. There are lots of other venues’.

- **Staff cannot force a patron to not gamble**

One interviewee bluntly said ‘I can’t stop someone from playing. That’s what we’re here for, to provide a service ... I wouldn’t be in any position to tell them not to come in, not to play’.

- **If the family member wants confidentiality**

One staff person pointed out particular difficulties ‘if the family member said please don’t tell them that I’ve come to see you. I think that would be a little bit harder’.

5.5.5 Perceived Helpfulness of Procedures

Because very few staff had been involved in this scenario, they were also unsure of the likely helpfulness of these procedures. Some acknowledged that the patron would need to recognise they have a problem first, because ‘unless the person admits they’ve got a gambling problem you have a very difficult battle’. Another felt the venue could not help much, because if the family member ‘can’t approach the person, we may as well advise them to go to a counsellor, like these gambling helplines, and see if they can get through to them’.

5.6 CLO SUPPORT FOR HOTEL STAFF IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

The hotel staff were asked ‘In what ways does your CLO support you in assisting problem gamblers in the venue?’ and to comment on the adequacy of this support.

5.6.1 Types of Assistance Provided by Hotel CLOs

The hotel staff articulated several types of support provided by their CLO or manager.

- **Be a referral for staff**

Several staff valued being able to refer any patron issues to the CLO, where ‘you tell them if you think someone has an issue, then they do follow it up’. One staff member felt this was particularly useful because ‘they’ll take that step and make a person feel comfortable, whereas I haven’t been trained in that sort of area as much. So I might make that person feel uncomfortable to the point where they think it’s a bad idea and ... not go through with it (self-exclusion)’. Another staff person who was more confident dealing with patrons with gambling problems noted ‘it all depends who it is. ... If I thought they would benefit from talking to them (the CLO) as well or if they ask for more help I would definitely bring them in, but I would leave that up to the person who was wanting to be excluded’.

- **On-the-job training**

Some staff also noted they had received on-the-job training from the CLO. This included at induction where ‘there’s a section on the gaming part you have to sign off’, through staff meetings ‘to discuss updated training procedures and policies. We have a training manual which is updated regularly and it’s job specific’ and just informally through advice and by example. As one explained, ‘I’ve learnt the most from (the CLO) about it. Generally most of what I’ve learned in gaming was from (the CLO) and he always has little insights on everything’.

- **Advice on specific situations**

The staff also noted they could turn to the CLO for advice in particular situations. One recalled:

‘There’s this lady who comes in quite often and she always has \$2 coins and shrapnel whether it’s \$20 one round or \$40 one round ... It was always the same denomination at a time ... and she’s actually a bus driver. So I went to (the CLO) and said, don’t you think this is odd, maybe she’s ripping off the bus company? He goes well, you can’t really accuse anyone of anything. I don’t know if she has a problem, she doesn’t come in that often. So he actually is quite supporting and ... having someone like that is very helpful. ... So anytime we need backup or information (the CLO) knows a lot and he’s been doing this quite a lot longer than I have.’

Similarly, another described how she turns to her CLO for advice if needed because ‘he would have more know-how and be a bit more wise about the situation than I would because I haven’t had to deal with it yet’. Another noted the value of having ‘four or five CLOs trained. There would be one on 24 hours a day. There is never going to be an instance where there is not a CLO on. And what more support especially for the staff, if we’ve got one on all the time, we’ve got one to approach in event of a situation’.

- **Organise the responsible gambling materials**

A few staff also commented that the CLO had organised the responsible gambling material so it is easily accessible for staff. One described how ‘we have access to all the literature in the office if we thought that someone needed help. We have all the numbers to call in the folder ... it’s a step by step process to actually give out the help to someone’. Another described how ready access to this material had assisted her as the CLO had:

‘... set up our little exclusion kits and everything. So when that guy actually came to me ... the first thing I did was go straight to my little gaming book that (the CLO) set up, looked down my contents page, flipped to the right colour and there was my exclusion notices and there was also a pack in there with ... numbers to call, like (the local gambling counsellor’s) card is in there, little pamphlets telling how the procedure works.... So that was very helpful’.

- **Updates on self-excludees**

One interviewee noted that the CLO updates the staff on new self-excludees, so ‘if there’s a new exclusion, he goes through it all ... if they’re fully excluded or only gaming or the whole venue’.

5.6.2 Perceived Adequacy of CLO Support to Hotel Staff

Many staff were very positive about the support they receive from the CLO and/or hotel management. As one said, ‘they support us 100 per cent no matter what our issues or problems are, whether it be somebody from alcohol intoxication or a problem with gambling’. Another echoed this sentiment, saying ‘excellent, absolutely excellent. Any question on any sort of thing, they’re always there with an answer and always willing to help out’. Another commented ‘the lines of communication are always open’.

In contrast, some staff said either the venue did not have any CLOs or that management did not seem to care much about responsible gambling. For example, one said ‘I had to learn what I had to learn by myself because some of the people ... here just didn’t know and some of the managers here didn’t know. You get places where people just don’t care. It was a bit like that’. Similarly, another commented ‘we’ve had three different managers while I’ve been here and basically the only time anyone says anything to me about it (responsible gambling) is when the gambling people come in with new literature to put up around the place. The other management haven’t really said anything’.

5.7 HOTEL STAFF TRAINING IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

The staff were asked about the training they had done to help them assist problem gamblers in the venue and its strengths and weaknesses.

5.7.1 Sources of Hotel Staff Training

When asked what types of training staff had received in responsible gambling, three sources were identified.

- **Responsible gambling courses**

Twelve of the 25 staff had done some formal training in responsible gambling, although two of these in another jurisdiction. The length of time since their last training ranged from ‘eight months ago’ to ‘six, seven years ago’. While most staff who had not been trained were aware RSG was available, one interviewee commented ‘some of the staff say what’s the RSG? And I think geez, you don’t know? And obviously they don’t’.

Some staff who had not received formal training expressed a desire to do it. One explained this was because ‘I don’t really know the things I’m supposed to look out for with people and it would be nice to know how far your role can go, like what ... active steps, positive steps you should be taking just to ensure people are not gambling away all their money’. Similarly, another said ‘I’d like someone to give me an example of how they would approach someone. Like how they would word it without offending someone ... that way you won’t be so under pressure when you have to do it or you feel that you need to do it’ A third expressed a similar view, wanting training ‘on how to approach and what to say and what not to say’.

- **Responsible gambling manuals**

Some staff mentioned the responsible gambling manuals as sources of information. One explained:

‘we’ve got the QOGR folder with all of the avenues available to customers as well. That’s kept in the gaming room so if anybody is unsure of what to do, then there’s always that to fall back on. That’s available for anybody and everybody. It’s always kept ready. It’s very dog-eared actually. We’ve got a manual here that’s updated all the time’.

- **On-the-job training and experience**

Many staff also noted the on-the-job training and experience they had received, which involved ‘just basically learning from the people, your managers’, managers teaching staff ‘about the self-exclusion process and keeping an eye on people’, ‘training sessions here with the gaming manager’, ‘regular meetings with our gaming manager to go over any issues that may arise and certainly the RSG’, ‘just the experience doing it’ and ‘using a bit of nous and just watching what happens’.

However, some downsides of relying solely on on-the-job training were also expressed. One staff member commented that ‘we don’t know everything. We get these new managers and they’re that busy that they don’t have enough time to help you and teach you When we get our gaming license, we fill out a bit of paper and send it away and then you get one. You don’t get taught anything’. Another commented:

‘we had a gaming induction and that’s just going through the machines and saying what type of machines, where certain parts are, how to do hopper fills and stuff like that and then they show you where the stuff is that you show people if they want self-exclusion. They don’t really, not to my knowledge, tell you how to approach someone.’

5.7.2 Perceived Value of Training for Hotel Staff

Various strengths and weaknesses were identified by the staff around their training.

- **Perceived strengths**

Most staff who had received formal RSG training were reasonably positive about its value. Some comments were 'I think that they pretty much cover everything that you need to know', 'I wouldn't say it's excellent but it's good in the sense that they teach you everything that could possibly be done or to your ability', 'the training was very thorough for me', 'the training is adequate' and 'everything that has come up has been included (but) maybe not in detail'.

A few expanded on what they found particularly useful. One commented 'it sort of opened your eyes to a few things. ... I guess how to approach someone ... little signs you look for'. Another related that:

'It was through the QHA. Great material and I actually took a lot out of it ... there's a Gaming Code of Practice. I knew we had one displayed but certainly the steps of implementing it or best practice towards gaming and learning what was legislation and what was actually just best practice. ... The training material was up to date.'

A third said 'I like hearing all the figures. The figures makes you think, makes you want to know what's going on. ... I like the case studies. They're more useful I think'. Another appreciated the real examples given, saying 'the person who presented it was very good. He presented by examples and he'd go through real examples because they had worked in the industry'. Another valued the legal knowledge, 'especially after being here, what I can do to protect myself. I don't want it coming back on me saying well he's singled me out or he's bullying me'.

- **Perceived weaknesses**

Some staff were critical the training 'glosses over it a bit; I don't really remember a lot about it', 'it's a day course; you forget the whole thing by the next day', 'there's a lot of information to take in' and 'it was very rushed ... only like two, three hours'. One staff member expanded on this, saying it needed to be 'more thorough. I think it's a bit of joke of how easy it is to pass. It's not really a test, you go there for the day, they blab on about what it is and the next day if you've forgotten it'.

Another staff person felt the training was 'very vague in some places, like this is the law and then there was, this is frowned upon but it's not a law so you can still do it and I found it very confusing in some places. ... I've been told it's up to your discretion'.

Other staff were critical of the infrequency of their training. One, who had not been trained for 'six, seven years' wanted a refresher 'because things always change. There's different laws that come in and it's always good to stay on top of it'. Another noted 'because we have just one gaming area and don't have that much staff for the training, it fell through a couple of times'.

One person expressed the view that 'RSG should be compulsory, most definitely compulsory and a check should be done ... even if they're not directly involved in the running of the poker machines'.

- **Suggested improvements**

From the weaknesses identified above, some suggested improvements to training can be identified:

- Two staff felt the training should be more in-depth and thorough, with perhaps a test of knowledge required.

- One staff member felt the training should provide more prescriptive procedures and protocols where possible.
- Some staff wanted more frequent training and refreshers.
- One staff considered RSG training should be mandatory for all staff.
- Staff would benefit from more instruction on how to approach and interact with patrons of concern.

5.8 HOTEL STAFF INTERACTION WITH GAMBLING HELP AGENCIES TO ASSIST PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

The staff were asked about their interaction with gambling support services to assist problem gamblers in the venue and whether they thought this was useful.

5.8.1 Frequency of Hotel Staff Interacting with Gambling Help Agencies

Fourteen of the 25 staff had not had any interaction with a Gambling Help agency. In some cases, agency staff may have been to the venue, but not when the interviewees were on duty. Others were clearly confused, thinking Queensland Government staff who deliver new pamphlets and signs were from a counselling agency and/or that the local Gambling Help agency staff were from Gamblers' Anonymous. In contrast, there appeared particularly high awareness about local Gambling Help agencies and their staff in some regional centres.

5.8.2 Types of Hotel Staff Interaction with Gambling Help Agencies

The staff interviewees identified several types of services provided by gambling counselling agencies to their venue.

- **Provide printed materials about local services**

One was the provision of materials, such as pamphlets, cards and signage about local agencies, although the staff often seemed unclear on which agency was which. One suggested 'we get one of the guys from Gamblers' Anonymous comes and checks to make sure we've got enough sufficient cards, to see if our signage doesn't need upgrading'. Another noted 'they've got brochures too that can be left down here, rather than just the Gambling Helpline, and the little brochures that they bring out, even though there's a sign near the ATM. That is a Cairns number on it'. Referring to a local agency, another staff member said 'we've got the brochures on the counter and there're signs up in the toilets'.

- **Provide information about the service**

Agency staff also might call into venues just to introduce themselves and provide information about services they provide. One staff member recalled that 'we had a lady a few months ago coming in and she said this was her new area and she was from ... a new helpline, not the one we're advertising. She asked if we had any questions and handed out a few brochures'. Another noted 'we've representatives from the Gambling Helpline have come in and spoken with us so we're aware of the process. I've read their pamphlets and we've got them all around the place'.

- **Be a contact for venues for advice**

Agency staff also visit venues to offer availability for advice to management and staff. As one staff member commented, ‘he comes in and it’s good. And he said if ever we need him, ring’. Another recalled that ‘there’s (counsellor’s name) that we can call. I remember that’.

- **Be a contact for venues to refer patrons to**

Some staff also noted it was good to know counselling agency staff so they know who they can refer patrons to, ‘so we’re aware if we have an enquiry, we can direct them’. Another explained this was important because ‘in any given situation if you look at a problem gambler they would need assistance as soon as attention comes to the issue, not two, three days down the track, so in keeping in contact with the support services, we know who to call’.

- **Organise patron self-exclusions**

One staff member noted that a local counselling agency also assists patrons to self-exclude, saying they sometimes come to the venue with a patron wanting to self-exclude and ‘do all the paperwork and have all the photographs’.

- **Provide training sessions for staff**

One interviewee described how the venue had organised for a local agency:

‘... to come and sit down with as many of the staff I could get together and give us a 20 minute talk and just discuss what we can do and be a bit more aware. Make sure we know who the people are. They’re quite happy to do it, they come out for nothing and they bring us some posters and a bit of help,’

5.8.3 Perceived Value of Hotel Staff Interaction with Gambling Help Agencies

As well as the more tangible services provided described above, staff identified several benefits of venue and staff interaction with Gambling Help agencies, based either on their experience or their expectations of how it might help.

- **Provides insight into how agencies assist problem gamblers**

As one staff member described this, ‘it would probably be good because I have no idea what they offer and what they say to people’, while another noted it would ‘definitely help the new girls, newer to the industry’.

- **Provides professional back-up for venues**

One interviewee commented ‘I wouldn’t set myself up as a psychologist. If someone had a real problem with it, I would pass it on’.

- **Help advise staff on how to deal with problem gamblers in the venue**

Four staff considered Gambling Help agencies could greatly assist staff by advising them on dealing with problem gamblers in the venue. One explained: ‘I think it’s important to know every option that you have. What direction you take and how to help people and how to talk to people, about approaching people with that’. Another explained he would benefit from the opportunity to ‘just to go through the process with them. It’s always good to know. If someone came up to me I would have to wing it with them and see how we can help them’. Others thought the agencies could advise staff on ‘how to approach someone’ and ‘how to refer people to them’.

- **Advise on how to improve venue practices**

One interviewee considered agencies could help venues improve their responsible gambling practices – ‘they could even tell us what they need from us and vice versa. Not a bad idea actually. Come in and have a chat and get the dialogue happening and work out where we’re going wrong or where they’re going wrong’.

- **Builds staff understanding and empathy with problem gamblers**

Two other staff alluded to this interaction helping to build staff understanding and empathy ‘so we can see what’s on the other side’ and where ‘if people realise what an impact it does have on some families then they would maybe do a bit more about it. I think people might be a bit more empathetic’.

- **Makes staff more comfortable in suggesting counselling to patrons**

As one staff member explained, knowing the local counsellors would ‘be more comfortable for our regular patrons if we’re saying, such and such are lovely girls, why don’t you give them a call and have a bit of a chat to them?’

- **Perceived disadvantages of interaction with Gambling Help agencies**

Three staff were not in favour of Gambling Help agencies visiting venues, although two appeared to think agency staff walk through the gaming areas and approach patrons. One commented ‘they’re very private people the gamblers So having someone going through your gaming room, saying we can help and stuff ... they wouldn’t want someone like that because they feel embarrassed’. Another seemed to think similarly, saying ‘if someone came up here and said, excuse me sir, I feel you are a problem gambler, I’m such and such and that’s when they say, nick off, I don’t want to talk to you’. The third staff member felt agency staff would only reiterate what had already been covered in responsible gambling training, that ‘him coming out is only doubling up on the same information and the people are just going to l... go, we’ve already heard that’.

5.9 HOTEL STAFF EXAMPLES ON BEST PRACTICES IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

The staff were asked whether they had examples of best practice in assisting problem gamblers in the venue. Five examples were given that went beyond normal procedures as encouraged by the Code.

- **Payouts in large notes**

One staff member thought it good practice to give payouts in larger denomination notes, saying ‘if I give payouts of \$500 I might give them \$300 of large notes and \$200 of 20’s but I know some people who might give \$500 of 20’s’. This practice might deter someone from putting the winnings immediately back into a gaming machine, as \$20 is the largest denomination note a machine will accept in Queensland hotels and clubs.

- **Encourage breaks in play**

Two staff cited examples whereby they encourage patrons to take breaks in play. One explained ‘we don’t do tray service or anything so they have to leave. They have to walk to the bar. They have to walk to the bar to get the payout. We try to break it up so they don’t sit in there for hours’. Similarly, another said ‘we don’t provide a service to them in the pokie

area with free soft drinks or things like that ... that should help, that breaks them away from the machine’.

- **No gaming promotions**

One staff person noted the venue ‘doesn’t have any promotions; there’s nothing extra you can win by playing the pokies. We don’t give them an extra reason to keep gambling’.

- **Making it easier to actively monitor patrons**

One interviewee described a system which facilitated staff actively monitoring patrons:

‘The system implemented was ... just an incident diary ... that sat in plain view on the desk and at any time we could write a comment. The time she came in and the time that she left and certainly the amount of money we were changing over. The thing I liked about that was that it was there ... it was a better system to monitor than say, remembering going down an hour later and going, she was here, the book’s down at that entrance, let’s go write that up. ... (it) was accessible for every gaming attendant in the gaming room.’

- **Restrictions on how long patrons can gamble for without being approached**

One staff member explained ‘we have restrictions on how long they can be playing ... if there’s someone you see who’s been sitting there for four or five hours at a time, we usually have a chat to them and break up the cycle’.

5.10 OTHER WAYS HOTELS CAN ASSIST PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

The interviewees were asked if they thought there is anything else their venue could do to assist problem gamblers in the venue. Several suggestions were made.

- **More information about the odds of winning**

One interviewee advocated for venues were to provide more information about the odds of winning so ‘the message gets through ... they realise I’ve just chucked through \$80 to \$100. That money went to nothing really productive ... it just went straight into a machine which goes straight to the venue and the government. And so actually realising what the odds are’.

- **More standard protocols on dealing with different situations**

One staff person suggested ‘have a protocol for dealing with and serving customers. Like just signs to look out for. Just have the normal steps of what you should do in certain situations if people are displaying signs. Especially people who ... just start to work in there so they have an idea of what to look out for’.

- **More staff training on dealing with problem gamblers in an appropriate way**

Several staff suggested training on how to deal appropriately with problem gamblers, so they know ‘how to approach someone ... and tell them you’ve got a problem without offending them’. Another explained:

‘A lot of people can show sympathy but they can’t show empathy and a lot of people need to be trained ... to deal with the emotional side of it. ... seeing a really emotional person ... some of them may have difficulty doing that. They’d be more inclined to get emotional themselves. ... you have to be able to show compassion, it’s not easy for someone to do that ... just to make sure that staff are approachable.’

Another staff member felt this training was needed because ‘it’s quite possible that someone could go out to the bar and say to the bar staff, I have just spent so much money in there and the bar staff would have no idea what to say or how to respond ... (at the moment) they say, oh, that’s a shame. I hope you have a bit more luck’.

- **More regular training and refreshers**

One interviewee advocated more regular training and refresher courses in responsible gambling, because of ‘turnover with hospitality’ and for refreshers, ‘even if it’s the same training course that you do three times a year or with new staff and getting all those staff members together and just re-capping on things that have been brought up’.

- **More restrictions on gaming promotions**

One staff member was very critical of gaming promotions and gave the following example:

‘The hotel gets you to draw people in. ... the girls were on the microphone saying if you get this we’ll give you a bottle of wine, hit this jackpot, etc. and I don’t think the pubs should do that. ... Because they were all old and lonely They’d give the old girls a cup of tea and a chat and they’d give them scones and they just keep playing for hours.’

- **Provide clearer indicators of problem gambling**

One staff member was critical that:

‘The message comes across as ... you could be a problem gambler if you do this, but then again you couldn’t be, rather than say, you are a problem gambler if you do this. And then break it down into categories of how people act. Maybe even their spending habits. It’s too general on the basis of, are you chasing what you lost rather than saying, are you doing this because you’ve just lost that money? Or are you doing this because you can’t afford it anymore? Because people go well, I’m not chasing my losses, but then in the next breath they’re going without a meal. And they think it doesn’t apply to them because they’re seeing it as a totally different message.’

- **More limits on trading hours**

One staff member wanted tighter limits on venue trading hours, saying ‘who needs to be gambling at three o’clock in the morning? ... It’s just promoting people to come in after someone’s fallen asleep or sneak out and I’ll just go down for a quick play and they end of being there for three hours’.

- **Fewer gaming machines**

One staff member commented that ‘I just think the RSLs and clubs just have so many poker machines it’s ridiculous. You’ve got to think of where that money would be going in the community if it wasn’t going into a machine’.

- **Get rid of gaming machines**

Three interviewees suggested getting rid of gaming machines, saying ‘they should never have brought gaming machines into Queensland in the first place’, ‘close down gambling’, and ‘dynamite them!’.

5.11 HOTEL STAFF CONCLUSION

Sections 5.2 to 5.10 of this chapter have presented results relating to the 25 hotel staff who were interviewed for this study. After summarising the key characteristics of these interviewees and the venues where they worked, these sections summarised how the hotel staff have or would respond to three different scenarios - when patrons ask for assistance with a gambling problem, when patrons show signs of problem gambling but do not request assistance, and when family or friends approach staff with concerns for a patron's gambling. Support for staff to assist problem gamblers in the venue from their CLOs, from their training and from their interaction with local gambling support agencies were then described. Best practice examples, where given, were then presented. The next sections focus on the results of interviews with 23 club staff.

5.12 KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF CLUB STAFF INTERVIEWEES

Twenty-three club staff were interviewed for this study. Table 5.2 summarises their key characteristics and shows that the sample represents staff in a variety of locations and positions and in venues of varying sizes and types of gaming installations. The interviewees were classified as staff if they were not an official CLO or had not completed CLO training, even though some were in supervisory or management positions. It is notable that two of the staff had experienced gambling problems themselves, with one voluntarily relaying his experiences of self-exclusion and the other discussing her past and ongoing gambling problems with the interviewer.

Table 5.2: Key Characteristics of Club Staff Respondents

Location	Position	Length of service	Worked in other venues?	No. of GMs	Other gambling facilities
Brisbane	Cellarman, TAB & gaming attendant	4 yrs	Yes	120	Keno, TAB
Brisbane	Gaming & bar attendant, TAB, keno	3 years	Yes	100	Keno, TAB
Brisbane	Duty manager	4 mths	n/a	120	Keno, TAB
Brisbane	Gaming employee	9.5 yrs	n/a	172	Keno, TAB
Brisbane	Senior duty manager	9.5 years	Yes	106	Keno, TAB
Brisbane	Gaming attendant	3 yrs		280	Keno, TAB
Cairns	Bar attendant	2.5 yrs	Yes	10	No
Cairns	Gaming, keno & bar attendant	2 yrs	Yes	25	Keno
Cairns	Duty supervisor	1.5 yrs	Yes	48	Keno, TAB
Cairns	Gaming & administration	< 1 yr	Yes	280	Keno, TAB
Cairns	Office manager, previously bar & gaming supervisor	8 yrs	Yes	19	No
Cairns	Bar attendant	6 mths	No	28	Keno
Cairns	Bar attendant	8 yrs	No	10	None
Cairns	Promotions manager, bingo	21 yrs	n/a	280	Keno, TAB
Cairns	Bar attendant	5 yrs	Yes	28	Keno
Cairns	Gaming attendant	2 yrs	Yes	16	None
Mt Isa	Gaming attendant	5 yrs	Yes	105	Keno, TAB
Mt Isa	Duty manager	<1 yr	No	54	Keno, TAB
Mt Isa	Gaming manager	2 yrs	Yes	165	Keno, TAB
Toowoomba	Cashier, reception, bar attendant	4 yrs	Yes	68	Keno, TAB
Dalby	Gaming operator & bar attendant	16 yrs	Yes	60	Keno
Dalby	Assistant manager	20 yrs	No	30	Keno
Dalby	Duty manager	3.5 yrs	No	30	Keno, TAB

5.13 CLUB STAFF RESPONSES TO PATRONS WHO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE

The interviewees asked about various aspects of responding to patrons in the venue who approach staff to ask for assistance with a gambling problem. Their responses are summarised below in terms of how frequently staff have experienced this, procedures they use, staff knowledge of procedures, challenges of this role, the perceived helpfulness of these procedures and suggestions for improvements.

5.13.1 Frequency of Patrons Approaching Club Staff

The experience of being approached by patrons for assistance with a gambling problem varied amongst the staff respondents, but overall, was not frequent. In fact, eight staff reported never having been approached by a patron, and most had only ever had one or two. Probably the most frequent was for the staff person who said ‘in the last six months we probably have had two’.

5.13.2 Procedures Used By Club Staff

The club staff were asked ‘What do you do if a patron asks for assistance with a gambling problem?’. The procedures staff have or would use comprised the following.

- **Refer up the chain of command**

Nine staff reported they would refer the patron to a more senior person in the venue, either the CLO, duty manager or club manager. However, this procedure varied. One noted the patron would be given ‘some brochures on gambling problems and the Gambling Helpline to contact’ then be asked to ‘make an appointment or see a liaison officer here’. Others would call the CLO or manager to meet with the patron there and then. For example, one said ‘the first thing I always do is have a chat to them ... I usually try and take them somewhere where there’s just the two of us so I can talk to them. And then always straight away go to our liaison officer’.

In some cases, a CLO or manager may not be available, in which case the staff person might try to assist the patron. One explained how he had done this with ‘a gentleman probably about two weeks ago. ...we just had to give him all the information. He basically just came straight up and said I want to be self-excluded from the pokies. ... You can’t really say too much to them but just hand them the information and refer them on’. Another noted if the CLO was unavailable ‘I would do it because I have all the information inside’. Another explained that, if the manager was unavailable and:

‘... if I thought it was really desperate, I might even ring (the manager) and get her in. If it was someone I knew quite well and I thought they would come back, I would make a time for them to come back and speak to (the manager), but if anyone was distressed I wouldn’t send them away’.

Two staff noted they would do what the patron felt most comfortable with. One gave the following example:

‘... she felt comfortable talking to me and felt comfortable with me there and I just said would you like me to stay or would you prefer to just stay with (the CLO/manager) and she said no, I would like you to stay. I was there supporting her. ... I think she was a little bit embarrassed with the fact that she was talking to a man, intimidated her slightly so having me there helped her out.’

Another explained ‘if there’s a problem, a duty manager will be called. ... (but) some customers think, I don’t want to talk to them or they’re in trouble. ... It’s just about making them feel okay about it and that it’s not a problem and these are people who can help’.

- **Start by having a chat, offering advice and outlining options**

A few staff emphasised they would start by engaging the patron in a conversation, offer them advice and outline their options. One considered a preliminary chat was important to ‘see where they’re at because they may have other reasons for giving up. It’s not necessarily because they have a serious problem’. Staff would then offer advice or outline options, for example ‘I would ... go through the form and talk to them and I’ve got literature out there to do with problem gambling and what avenues they need to go down, who they have to contact, so I could certainly do all that sort of stuff’. Another explained:

‘If someone does approach, we actually take them aside to a quiet area, sit them down, have a talk about it, (then provide) kits from Lifeline so you’ve got all your brochures in there and (the counsellor’s) card. But also too, you’ve got your 3A 3B forms and a Privacy Statement, so even if they’re not sure if they want to give up or not totally, they can take this with them or they can have the option of sitting here and filling it out with me.’

Another explained:

‘I’d ask if she’d like to go somewhere and have a talk about it, somewhere quieter. I would probably talk to them myself first and then if I didn’t think I could handle it, which I have no experience in doing ... I would then just go and get someone who would be able to do it or help me do it for the first time.’

- **Provide counselling information**

Some staff appeared to prioritise providing counselling information to the patron as a first response, although this was typically followed up with information on self-exclusion or by calling the CLO or manager. One related ‘I would probably first of all give them a hotline brochure and ... (the local counsellor’s) business cards. ... I’d tell the duty manager probably and they’d have more experience with that sort of situation’. Another explained:

‘We’ve got a lot of posters up which have the cards on them for the Gambling Helpline so probably maybe point that out and ask them whether they’ve thought of talking to them. I know a little bit about self-exclusion so I’d maybe give them a look at the paperwork that goes with that and see whether they might be interested in doing that.’

Similarly, another said ‘normally we have a chat to them and give them all the pamphlets and everything and then ... talk them through the pamphlets and what they can do and I give them the numbers for the helplines and if they want to, we can exclude them as well’.

However, two staff would respond with counselling information only. One noted that ‘I could take them to a private office and give them the number and leave them to ring up the Gambler Anonymous Help or else I could give them the card and they can do that in their own time’. Another related a previous occurrence where he and the manager had offered to get the patron in touch with a local counselling agency.

- **Individual case management**

Three staff gave examples of active case management of patrons who had asked them for assistance with gambling issues. One was explained thus:

‘She plays bingo and she came up to me the day after ... and she said I put so much money through the poker machines; I can’t afford to do it ... but I love my bingo and I can’t walk past there. I said how about I walk out every Sunday; it’s the only day she came ... we’ll walk out to your car with you and she said, will you do that? And I said yes I will. ... We did it for three months. ... She stills comes in here today and she’s good, she’s fine. ... and I have done that for a couple of people.’

Another gave the following example:

‘A gentleman ... I know that he’s married and his wife’s gone through quite a lot. They’ve got two young children. ... He was coming quite regularly and I didn’t realise how bad the situation was until he actually broke down and told one of the duty managers and I actually went out to (the manager) and said I’m really worried about Joe Blow, he seems to be in here a lot lately and he doesn’t seem himself and when he’s at the machines he’s sort of fidgeting a bit and he doesn’t look like he’s here to have fun and enjoy himself and put a couple of dollars through the machine, he doesn’t look right or happy. And he said yeah, he’s got creditors on his back and told me the whole story. ... he’s had a couple of big payouts ... I’ve just said hey, would you like me to write the whole lot out as a cheque for you because that would be better and you can keep it and pop it into the bank instead of cashing it here and then losing it again. ... And he just said yeah, yeah okay then. And every time he comes in, if he does get a large payout, I’ll go out and say, righteo, what are we doing today? He says, okay, give it to me in a cheque. I say, good work mate. Pop it in your wallet and put it in the bank tomorrow.’

Another staff member reflected on what they would do, which was to say 'if you want me to help you ... to keep an eye on you when you come in, come and talk to me; if you want me to stop you, then I would. When they come in the next time I would say to them, look remember that talk we had last time you were here? I'm here for you'.

- **Suggest and implement self-exclusion**

By far the most common response, articulated by most staff, was to identify self-exclusion as an option for the patron.

Some staff were empowered to organise a self-exclusion themselves even though they were not the CLO and had not completed CLO training. One explained 'I would give them the self-exclusion kit and explain the procedure and phone number ... it has happened once to me'. Similarly, another said 'first thing we ever do is, once we've talked to them and everything, you know straight away they need it and they get a pack which has got all the information for them also. We've always taken a photo as well'. Another related that 'I've only had one client here approach me and that was actually over the telephone. She wanted to be barred from here so we just asked her to write a letter for self-exclusion and I gave her the contact numbers ... to contact the Gambling Helpline'. Another explained how they would do the self-exclusion themselves, noting 'we'd go into the office, totally private. I would sit down and ask him/her to tell me what was wrong with them. I think there are two exclusions. I'd ask them what exclusion they were after if it was only for gaming or if it was for the whole club? They can do either can't they?'

Other staff would direct a self-exclusion to the CLO or manager. One commented 'it's a very easy procedure. We'll ask them if they want to self-exclude themselves and we have a form to give to them or direct them to a CLO'. Similarly, another noted 'I'd give them the forms and explain the forms and everything and then also say, that's where (the CLO) comes in'. Another emphasised the staff person's role in making the patron comfortable while they waited for the CLO, saying:

'What I'd do is inform them that I'm not allowed to do a self-exclusion; however I can arrange for it to be done. I would offer them a seat and take them somewhere quiet and I'd get them a drink and then I'd go and inform someone who can - my boss or the manager. We've had to call her in twice for a weekend exclusion and she came straight away.'

Other patrons wanting to self-exclude had been accompanied by a counsellor 'so they don't have to do it by themselves'.

Some staff related how they helped patrons who had excluded only from the gaming areas of the club. One recalled how:

'We helped her with not being able to go in there and it was sometimes, I want to go in there and we were, well you know, you can't. ... You always felt bad when you came out and you'd spent more than you wanted to. She'd go okay and sometimes she'd get a little bit upset. But then she realised we were just helping you her out and she was most of the time really happy with it. ... we know the members and we can say sorry and have a bit of a laugh.'

Another recalled how she had offered informal encouragement to a patron:

'When I went bowling the other night, I actually saw another gentleman and I said, I haven't seen you in the club for ages and he goes yeah, those poker machines. I'm thinking about excluding myself. I said there's no shame in that. I said, it's very addictive and sometimes you just don't have the willpower to stop but if you can, good on you. And then he came out the week after and put on a couple of bets and he said, I haven't been out to the pokies and I said, high five for you!'

5.13.3 Club Staff Knowledge of Procedures

In most cases, staff seemed reasonably confident they knew what procedures they would use when a patron approached them to ask for assistance with a gambling problem, although their lack of experience with this situation led to many speculative responses. However, there were a few exceptions. For example, one staff member noted he has to ‘just deal with it as it comes to me ... although gaming administration is my title, because the general manager had left and other staff had left ... it’s really a lot of learning for me as I go and dealing with the situations as they arise and you can only do the best you can’.

5.13.4 Challenges for Club Staff in Responding to Patrons who Request Assistance

The club staff were asked how comfortable and equipped they felt in responding to patrons who requested assistance with a gambling problem. Responses varied substantially. A minority of staff felt very or ‘extremely’ comfortable because ‘I’m a people person’, ‘in a smaller club we know everyone here so it’s easier’, ‘we have that rapport here; basically we’re sort of friends in a sense and they know every now and then we have to pull them up’ and ‘you build a rapport with the patrons that come in and because they’re always here in the pokies ... because we’re such a friendly club, everyone knows everyone’. One staff member with a past gambling problem also noted ‘I self-excluded myself from places as well so I feel empathy for them. Sort of seen the way that different people dealt with me and what worked and what didn’t work; I sort of rely on that, fall back on that. Some places were better than others’.

However, other staff clearly did not feel comfortable or confident. Two staff related how they had felt ‘shocked’ because ‘I didn’t think that she had a real gambling problem’ and ‘just that they probably did have a problem ... that would be the hardest thing’.

Others implied they would feel uncomfortable because of the patron’s probable embarrassment or discomfort. One noted it is a ‘very touchy subject. You can’t really say too much to them but just hand them the information and refer them on’. Similarly, another said ‘it’s always going to be a hard situation whoever it is’. Another gave the example where ‘it was a little bit uncomfortable mainly because the lady ... was very uncomfortable and embarrassed’. Another noted ‘people are probably a bit ashamed to do it (approach a staff person) but there’s really no other way’.

Clearly, how at ease staff feel depends on the patron’s level of comfort in approaching staff for help. In turn, this appears to depend on how well the patron knows the staff person. As one explained:

‘If it was a really close friend, I don’t think it would matter. They would come up to me, but if it’s like someone that I do know that is popular around town, that there might be embarrassment because I know them. (They might wonder) are they going to talk about me behind my back?’

Conversely, one staff member in a smaller club commented ‘you build up a bit of a rapport with people don’t you? And that way if they are having a bit of a problem they can come to us and they know that it doesn’t get around. It stays in-house’. Others also suggested the process would be more difficult in larger venues. One explained ‘in a bigger club, or somewhere there were a lot more machines and people came just to play the machines, they may not know the staff as well as they do here. Then the customer may not feel comfortable approaching someone they hardly know and asking them for help’.

5.13.5 Perceived Helpfulness of Club Procedures

The staff were asked whether they thought the procedures used in their venue assisted patrons to deal with a gambling problem. Most thought they did, particularly self-exclusion.

In the opinion of one staff, this was because ‘once a person self-excludes themselves, you know that they’re serious about what they’re doing’. For other staff, the benefit of self-exclusion was its ability to reinforce people’s self-control by ‘watching their back for them’. As one explained, ‘if they just turn around and say I’m not going in there, they still have that oh, I’ll just go in for five minutes, but when they know that they can’t go in there and we won’t let them in there, it’s a big relief to them’. Others referred to gambling as ‘a habit or an addiction to some people’ where ‘they don’t really want to go in that (gambling) area, it’s just the addiction coming out’, so self-exclusion is ‘a bit of backup to know they can’t go in there’.

Another staff member considered self-exclusion good ‘protection for their earnings, the family’, while another commented favourably on the timeframe, where ‘after five years you’ve basically got gambling out of your system ... we’ve seen them after 12 months and they come back and start all over again’.

However, several staff pointed to the need for people to self-exclude from multiple venues to be effective. Indicative quotes include: ‘excluding themselves from one venue is not really going to help anybody’; ‘they can self-exclude themselves from this venue but nothing’s stopping them from going to 20 other venues’; and ‘just about every corner has a gaming establishment’. Some examples of this were given. One related how ‘a guy who has excluded himself from here and I have met him at (another venue) ... I said that I haven’t seen him for a while and he said, I excluded myself and he was there gambling there (at the other venue)’. Another recalled how one patron had ‘only barred from two places and then she found she was at the other place and just spending all her money there ... that’s when she realised she had to ban herself from all of them’. Another noted people likely to self-exclude ‘are not in one club. They’re usually at the casino, they’re usually at every other club and venue around’.

Some staff were sceptical about the effectiveness of self-exclusion because of the difficulties of monitoring, especially in ‘a bigger club (where) it may be a little bit harder to keep tabs on if they do come back in’. As another explained, when ‘so many people come through the door, it’s hard for them to be stopped. No-one’s going to know who they are’. Two commented on deficiencies in relying on photographs to identify self-excludees, where:

‘it’s going to be hard to look at that picture; hey, there’s that person’ and ‘it was a stupid photocopy that wasn’t even real clear and I thought well, I don’t know how I’m going to know it’s him anyway because if you’re busy behind the bar, someone could ... walk straight in there and you don’t even see them. I resented the fact that I could get in trouble by him playing in our venue.’

As noted earlier, some staff also commented that embarrassment may deter patrons from self-excluding, where ‘you need that paperwork and you need the photo of the person which I’m sure is very shameful for them’. Similarly, another said ‘some people might feel embarrassed coming up to us and saying they’ve got a problem. Most people don’t like admitting it especially to someone who’s not a doctor or a nurse or psychologist’.

Other staff did not know whether self-exclusion was effective or not, as they had ‘never seen anybody take it upon themselves to help themselves’ and had ‘never seen it happen before’.

Some staff commented on other practices used to assist patrons who ask for help, particularly signage where ‘we do have plenty of signage about the Gambling Helpline and that sort of

thing. There's help there; people know there's an option if they think they have a problem'. However, others were dubious about the usefulness of signage, with one staff who acknowledged having a gambling problem noting 'I really don't know if they (the signs) help all that much because from my point of view I read it and go, yeah right'.

Another staff member commented on the limitations of venue exclusions, explaining it thus:

'What happens is, if you can prove that they're putting a whole heap of money through, they're not paying their bills, they can't afford food, just putting their pension or whatever right through the machines and neglecting themselves and their family, you can actually apply for a venue exclusion. But it's very hard to do one.'

5.13.6 Club Staff Suggestions for Improvements

The staff made some suggestions for improvements. Some related to self-exclusion. One staff member, a former problem gambler, described the best self-exclusion system he had experienced:

'They were really helpful, they brought someone up straight away to talk to me, put me aside. Came straight away and saw me and explained all about the stuff I had to sign and what it meant by signing it. Offered me help with Gambling Helpline. And all the information. ... Going away to a quiet area ... Take me away from the situation. Just away from other people as well. It's pretty embarrassing having to go in. You don't want other people watching and listening to your conversation. It's a privacy thing'.

In contrast, this staff member pointed to particularly poor practice at a venue where the staff person he approached 'pretty much sat at the bar (and said) can't help you at the moment if you haven't got a photo'.

Other staff suggested area self-exclusions, where 'there could be a legal way ... to make sure that they stay away from all the venues ... maybe the venues have some sort of a setup where if a person excludes themselves it stands for all the venues in the area'. Another advocated a 'form or someone you can ring ... even with a counsellor that they can actually self-exclude everywhere, saving that person doing it. ... I think that's a real big necessity'.

Another suggested the following:

'One day a week we have someone in just to do venue exclusions. ... and just explain it's not as scary as they think. Not everyone knows about the venue exclusion. Because a lot of people think all the staff will see it. We say no, and it's confidential. If you get caught saying who's on those venue exclusions you can lose your job.'

Clearly this staff member was referring to self- not venue exclusion. Another agreed self-exclusion needs wider publicity, saying:

'I don't know whether the gamblers know about it. There are little brochures and things all around but people don't look at that. ... An ad on TV might reach the more general public, saying if you do have a problem there are ways, you can go and see about it. Make people more aware that help is easy to get.'

Another had suggestions around improving patron care: 'for just general staff in venues, they probably should get a little bit more involved in the responsibility of the customer ... and the advertising of Lifeline ... Making sure their staff are aware how it works even if they aren't a CLO'.

5.14 CLUB STAFF APPROACHES TO PATRONS WHO SHOW SIGNS OF PROBLEM GAMBLING

The club staff interviews asked about various aspects of approaching patrons in the venue who show signs of problem gambling. The responses are summarised below in terms of what signs the club staff thought might indicate that a patron has a gambling problem, what signs would prompt them to approach a patron, procedures they would use, associated staff knowledge, challenges for staff and perceived helpfulness of these procedures.

5.14.1 Club Staff Identification of Signs of Possible Problem Gambling

The staff were asked if they thought they could recognise if someone is a problem gambler or at risk, and if so, how. The vast majority agreed they could recognise signs of problem gambling and identified several potential indicators. Some mentioned just one possible indicator while others noted several.

- **Irritability and aggression**

About one-half of the staff identified irritability and aggression as a potential indicator. Related comments included: ‘they get really upset with the machines; they’re relying on having a win and that doesn’t happen ... they get cranky with us’; ‘getting agitated, swearing at the machines, hitting the machines if they’re not winning’; and ‘they bang it really hard and you have to go over and ask them politely for them to stop banging them. They do get wild with us sometimes’. Another noted ‘they get very grouchy if they lose, very snappy. They get impatient (if) you are not quick enough with their money. They’re just rude. Yes, and they say the machines are rigged ... so they don’t win. They just get really nasty. And that’s a common sign, it’s nastiness’.

Another recalled how:

‘A young fellow, he reckons that it didn’t pay him what it should have paid him. ... And he said that he’ll never play here again and he caused quite a kaffuffle over it all, but of course he’s back playing because he can’t help himself. ... he’s told me he doesn’t have a gambling problem and I’m thinking well the very fact that you’ve told me, it must be on your mind’.

- **Upset or crying**

A few staff identified ‘if someone was getting distressed over what they were doing’ as a possible sign of a gambling problem. One noted ‘I have heard stories of people leaving clubs and pubs in tears because they’ve lost money. I mean I’ve never come across that fortunately but signs like that...’.

- **Just not by being happy, being down.**

One staff member thought a sign was ‘not being happy when they come up to the bar.’

- **Being anti-social**

A few staff mentioned being anti-social, where ‘they are in a world of their own. They don’t like socialising, they are glued to their machine’ and ‘they won’t have a chat to the person next door, they’ll just zone into the machine’.

- **Talking to the machine**

One staff member considered a sign of a possible problem was ‘when they’re talking to it and carrying on and, oh! I only need this one more, and I would have got this, and they know exactly what it should be and shouldn’t be to get the win’.

- **Gambling very regularly**

About one-quarter of the staff noted very regular gambling as a possible sign, where the patron is ‘here everyday’ or ‘just about every day’, ‘every day, all day long’, ‘at the machine constantly’ and when ‘I’ve done an eight hour shift, night shifts even, and they’re there the next day ... and they’re there more than I am’.

- **Gambling for long sessions**

About one-quarter of the staff also noted long gambling sessions as an indicator, such as ‘spending all day here’, ‘from seven in the morning till we close’ and ‘spending a great deal of time’. One recalled how:

‘I did recognise one lady, she was pregnant and she kept on coming in with her husband and that’s all they did, just play the machines. ... And they have this hypnotised look that they have on their face. They call you over and say, can you go up to the bar and get me something to drink. We don’t do that.’

- **Gambling for longer than intended/chasing losses**

One interviewee described chasing behaviour as an indicator where ‘people that are really relying on winning, they get a bit desperate. ... if they’re not winning and they keep putting money in there, you can usually tell when they’re getting pretty desperate about not winning’.

- **Spending money put aside for something else**

One example of this was given, where ‘someone might have said something about I needed that money for a bill, or something like that’.

- **Trying to obtain extra money to gamble with**

Two examples of this were given: ‘they’re in here trying to borrow money, off staff, off other customers’ and ‘you see them bringing in their church change, 20 cent pieces and 5 cent pieces and we just say we can take so much but unfortunately we are not a bank’.

- **Multiple ATM withdrawals**

One respondent identified ‘someone going to the ATM constantly, every hour or every half hour and withdrawing money and then going back to the machine and coming back and getting more money out’ as a possible indicator.

- **Changing a lot of money or changing money often**

Two staff identified ‘coming up for regular change of money constantly’ and ‘anyone who’s constantly at the bar changing money’ as a possible sign.

- **Being overly attached to a particular machine**

One described how attachment to a particular machine is a possible indicator, where ‘they go to one machine ... and then if anyone’s on their machine, they get a little bit iffy’.

- **Waiting for the venue to open/gambling to be available**

Another described how being ‘here early in the morning, waiting for it (the gaming machines) to come on straight away’ indicated a gambling problem.

- **Family or friends comments**

Two staff noted they would consider a patron had a problem if ‘they’ve got friends telling them to get off the machines all the time’ and ‘if their family started coming in and were quite angry and irate’.

- **Complaining even when winning**

Another interviewee mentioned not being happy with wins as a possible indicator, for example ‘if you had someone that had had a few wins but was still saying that it hadn’t covered their losses’.

- **Large sums of money being gambled**

Two staff noted high expenditure on gaming machines as a possible sign, such as ‘people that are putting a great deal of money through the machines’.

5.14.2 Indicators that Would Prompt Club Staff to Approach a Patron

The staff were asked ‘Of the indicators you have identified, which would prompt you to approach a patron to assist them?’. Five staff said they definitely would not approach a patron under any circumstances, because ‘I’m not allowed to do that. ... there’s nothing you can do unless they approach you’, ‘I just don’t think it’s my business’, ‘you’ve been told you don’t really do that unless they approach you’, ‘I feel it’s not my place to say I think you’re spending too much money’ and ‘even though I may know, what right have I got to tell that person they’ve got that problem?’. Another ‘would stay clear of it; unless I had some sort of relationship with them’. Most others would only approach under extreme circumstances, for example where a patron was outwardly aggressive or very upset. Situations where staff reported they would approach are described below.

- **Aggressive, abusive and violent behaviour**

Two staff noted they would approach a patron if they were acting aggressively, such as ‘getting angry at the machines’ and ‘hitting the machines or swearing’.

- **Very regular gambling/long gambling sessions**

Two staff reported they would approach a patron if they were ‘here a lot’ or ‘here all day and especially not going home for lunch or anything, that would be a bit sign. Sitting there just playing the machines would be the biggest one’.

- **Evidence of gambling impacting on family**

One staff person recalled staff at the venue approached a patron after ‘a daughter of a mother came up with a photo of her mother and said, have you seen my mum? We pay our school fees, we need our books for school and that was quite an upsetting scenario’.

- **If a patron was crying and upset**

Another said they intervene ‘when I see someone that’s coming out of there, really upset a lot and starting to stress out a lot or going in there and you know that they can’t afford to be in

there. They're spending all their money and you know they're not having any money left over'.

- **Large sums of money being changed or gambled**

One person reported they would approach if a patron was 'spending big money'.

- **Continued complaints about not winning**

Another suggested 'if they kept badgering you about not winning' that would prompt an approach.

- **Decline in personal appearance**

One would be prompted to approach a patron 'if they started coming in and everything looks fine but all of a sudden they're starting to not bath, they're looking reckless, maybe there's too much drinking involved. ... if you can see the person deteriorating in front of you'.

5.14.3 Procedures Used by Club Staff to Approach a Patron

Several staff gave examples of what they had actually done if they thought a patron had a gambling problem, while the remainder discussed what they would do.

Procedures staff have used

Six staff related how they had dealt with patrons who became aggressive with the gaming machines. This typically involved trying to calm the person down, explaining there is nothing the staff can do to make the machines pay, and asking the person to leave if they were still aggressive. For example, one said 'I would just let them know that that sort of thing is beyond my control. I don't have any buttons that I can press. ... you've got to realise it's just chance'. Similarly, another recalled '(I) just try to calm them down a bit and say it's not our fault that the machines aren't paying. We don't regulate here what happens to the machines no matter how much money you put into it. It's only going to pay when it's ready, you've just got to be lucky that it's the right machine at the right time'. Another noted patrons who 'bang keys, and they hit the screen. Some have aggression problems. Yeah, they'd be thrown out for things like that. That's just being removed from the premises ... and referred to the board'. Notably, none of these staff would provide an opening to see if the person wanted help for a gambling problem.

One staff member related how the venue deals with patrons 'trying to borrow money, off staff, off other customers. We just tell them you're not allowed to do that and if we catch you once more we will actually get you removed from the club. It's illegal'. Again, no opening to discuss a gambling problem would be given.

Another staff member explained how she had dealt with a patron who had said:

'I've just put all my grocery money through the pokies ... and I don't know what I'm going to tell my partner. And I knew this girl very, very well. And I said, sweetheart, why would you do that? ... You've got to think of your three children. ... I said there are places you can go if you need help. Please don't ever do that again. ... it's quite a few years ago and ... now she doesn't go near the pokies.'

Other staff members related how they had also given patrons information on help services, such as when 'someone was saying that they've spent too much money and it's like, having a joke with them, oh there're some pamphlets there if you need a hand and just bring it in as a joke'. Another explained 'my closest friend, I've had her for 30 years and there's nothing I

can do. I have tried everything. I have rang Lifeline, I have rang every single place you can think of. It breaks my heart and there's not a thing I can do about it'. Another staff person, who had a gambling problem, related how she had tried to assist a friend who was a patron at her workplace by saying:

'You know you can't do that because it's not good for you. And he goes yeah, alright I know but ... and I go no buts Once everything's done, first of all bills and everything, then it's free money. ... he comes in and he does it all and you just sort of keep on reminding him and then he will go yeah you're right and he'll walk outside for a time and then he comes back in and might do a little bit. He has a problem and I said you should bar yourself But he wasn't keen on that. ... He really does have a problem. He's the worst one. There're a lot in here. ... I slipped him a little card. They're up on the toilet doors'.

A further staff member recalled how she had approached:

'One lady, she was pregnant and she kept on coming in with her husband and that's all they did, just play the machines. At the same time every morning and she would stay here all day, all night. Then she had her baby and I asked her one day ... how's baby? And she said, she's beautiful, she's growing up. And I said, how's husband, and she said yeah, he's alright. And I was just talking about baby more. I wasn't trying to say go home and be with your baby. ... She doesn't come in anymore.'

Another instance related by a staff member was 'when a couple of the girls approached me and says, she's (a patron) got a problem. And I said we know she has a problem and (the manager) actually asked us to please keep an eye on her ... and has threatened her with the venue exclusion'. Other staff also noted their venue might monitor patrons who display problem gambling behaviour. One noted 'we just keep an eye on them and say, hi how you going and have a bit of a chat and that way they know if they want to come and talk to us, they can'. Another commented 'we have security cameras and someone has to monitor them at all times. ... because that lady who got her exclusion removed and we said, we think you've got a problem, and she said, that's my business and we said that's fine. Two days later she excluded herself'.

Procedures staff would use

Amongst staff who had not approached patrons in the past, a few related what they would do if a patron was aggressive or abusive. One said he would 'start with: do you have a problem? Just say I've noticed they were thumping the machine and getting angry and ask if I could be of any help'. Another said they would 'ask them if there is a problem and why are they carrying on in that behaviour. If they said they've put a lot of money through and lost a lot of money, I don't know. As I said it's a fine line asking how to help'. Another noted 'if they kept badgering you about not winning I would certainly get some of the literature and just say to them do you think someone from here may be able to help you? Sell it as if it was not my decision'.

Other staff discussed what they would do if they thought a patron was showing other indicators of a gambling problem. Most would start with 'a chat about their situation', with some then offering assistance if they thought it appropriate. One explained 'I'd sit down and have a coffee with someone ... Are you okay? And then if I find out it's because of gambling then, no worries. There are steps that we take, are you happy to take them?'

Similarly, another said:

'You would probably want to ask them if you want to have a talk, are you okay? Is everything alright? Without mentioning the gambling side. ... See how they're going as a person, that would probably be the best approach. Then you could bring up the information, let them

know where they can go. Because I think too with (a local counsellor), if you asked him to, he'd probably come and sit with you and the person as well, if they didn't really want to go down there straight away... But you can't brush these people off because ... their emotions aren't balanced at the time so you really need to sit them down and talk to them.'

Others also showed this type of compassion, saying they would try to help by 'just being honest and polite and having that care' and by saying 'you know I'm always here for you if you need me, if you need someone to talk to about it'.

A few others noted they would try to get to know the patron better. One said they would 'leave a couple of the cards around the machines and maybe try and get to know them a little bit better so you know what kind of situation they're in'. Another, referring to a current patron of concern, said 'I would start off the conversation by asking her if she was a member and would she sign in And then I think I would just say to her, is there any particular reason why you come in so often and just sit at that one machine. ... See what her reaction is and how she talks'.

One staff member noted 'I would pass it onto the Customer Liaison Officer. I think it's hard in my position to tell, especially with my age and that I'm just a gaming attendant'.

5.14.4 Club Staff Knowledge of Procedures

While staff were generally aware of procedures to follow when a patron approached them to ask for assistance for a gambling problem, there were clearly less specific procedures around staff approaching patrons. This is evident from the variation in procedures discussed above, as well as the many staff who prefaced their answers that they would 'probably', 'maybe' and 'perhaps' take a particular action. These types of responses clearly reflect a lack of prescribed procedures and staff uncertainty around how to respond in different situations. One staff member directly noted 'I honestly couldn't say whether I would or not ... because I've never been put into a situation that I've had to do it'. Another said 'I don't know. I didn't really think any of this sort of stuff did happen to be honest. Especially to come up and say, I've got a gambling problem, can I sign a form? I didn't know people did that. It is something new that I'm learning that I didn't know about'.

5.14.5 Challenges for Club Staff in Approaching Patrons About a Possible Gambling Problem

Several challenges were raised by the staff around approaching patrons with possible gambling problems in the venue.

- **Difficulties of recognising gambling problems amongst patrons**

Even though most staff thought they could recognise indicators of a gambling problem, about one-half noted the difficulties of being sure enough to approach a patron. For many, this was because they did not know the financial circumstances of the patron, where 'they may look a little dishevelled and you might take them for a problem gambler but they could be a millionaire', 'unless we know them personally, we don't know how much money they earn', and 'we don't know how much money they earn or their partners earn or exactly where this money's coming from'.

For other staff, the difficulties of knowing if a patron has a gambling problem stemmed from not knowing more about the patron. For one, this was because 'we don't know what other venues they're going to and using their machines'. For another, this was because 'some people get aggressive but that's just a frustration thing; they'll hit the buttons hard. You can't

really tell if they're having problems unless they have said something to you'. Even when patrons are 'here all the time and you think, do they ever work? ... (they might be) night fill people who work late shifts (and) come in afterwards'. Others would need to know the patron 'personally or I've known them for over a long period of time and knew their mannerisms and knew exactly how they behaved' or have 'seen them elsewhere, you see the house/work side of them or if you see them with their children'.

- **Getting problem gamblers to acknowledge the problem**

One staff member thought a key challenge was getting problem gamblers to acknowledge a problem, where 'a lot of people are not very comfortable discussing their problem or admitting they're having a problem'.

- **Invasion of privacy**

Some staff felt approaching a patron would invade their privacy as 'they might have other issues', 'I just don't think it's my business', because you don't want to judge and you don't want to go to the wrong person' and because 'what people do is really their own business'.

- **Do not want to lose the patron's business**

Two staff were concerned that approaching patron might drive them away, so 'I don't interfere too much because it's my job. ... They could say, how dare she, I'll just go down the road'. Similarly, another said 'you certainly don't want to scare them away from the club altogether. You want them to be able to come and have a drink with their mates'.

- **Conflicting interests**

A few staff intimated that they felt faced with:

'... a Catch 22; if the establishment wants them here to spend their money, we can't go and tell them they have a problem, get out of here, you're wasting your money. You can get into trouble with people themselves or with the establishment. Because you don't know how they're going to react. No-one wants to hear they have a problem and tell them what to do. That's the last thing you can do.'

Similarly, another said 'you don't want to stop people from gambling altogether because that's our main source of income but again, you don't want to wreck people's lives'.

- **Do not know how to approach a patron**

A few staff felt approaching patrons was a challenge specifically because they would not know what to say. One explained 'the approach isn't a problem if I knew how to word it properly and do it'. Similarly, another noted 'I would but ... it's the wording. You can't just go up and say, nah, stop putting that much money through, it's a waste of money'. Another staff member wanted 'more information as to what I could say to them'. Another emphasised this challenge, agreeing it is 'not a simple job. ... A lot of it's how you relate to people and how you get along with them; don't try and offend them, don't accuse them of things or anything'. Another felt that 'it just puts your staff at risk because you don't know how some people are going to react sometimes to certain things'. One simply commented that 'the experience just hasn't been there in dealing with problem gamblers'. Another felt that the infrequency of having to deal with problem gamblers added to the challenge, because 'it's not something you get very often but you need to act on them'.

- **Unsure of staff boundaries**

Two staff clearly felt unclear about the limits on what they could do to assist problem gamblers in the venue. One explained ‘we’re not supposed to know they have a problem, we can’t approach them, so how can we help them unless they ask us? Well we have to know what we are allowed to do and what we are not allowed to do’. Another also felt unsure of these boundaries, saying ‘if it’s really a problem you could say, Fred seems to be here a lot, what can we do, or can we do anything about it, what’re our rights?’.

- **Worried about an angry reaction from the patron**

Some staff were deterred from approaching a patron because they feared an angry reaction. As one noted, ‘if they’re cranky they’re quite likely to turn around and smack me in the mouth if I say something they don’t like. Trying to keep the peace is the best thing’. Similarly, others noted ‘they could be violent’, ‘people that do have a problem are generally defensive about it’ and ‘you know if they’re losing, don’t go near them’.

- **Dealing with abusive customers.**

Staff may be deterred from approaching a patron about a possible gambling problem, given that some customers are abusive anyway. Three staff felt that abusive customers were a major challenge. One described this as ‘being abused on a constant basis. We get called names. Occasionally they’ll throw money at us. ... So we cop a fair bit’. Another related how ‘it’s mainly the new workers when they come in, they get scared and ... they come up and say, a patron has just abused us, I’m a bit scared and don’t know what to do’.

- **Requires staff confidence/experience**

The hesitancy of many staff around approaching patrons seemed also due to lack of experience. As one staff person explained, ‘I think some of the younger ones would be a little bit wary of approaching someone over it. I think it might come with experience’.

- **Difficult in bigger venues**

A few staff noted particular challenges of identifying problem gamblers in larger venues, where ‘I’m sure you’d probably notice if someone was in there from open till close every day but it may not be if you’ve got 200 machines you have to look after’ and because ‘it would be a lot harder because ... you haven’t got that personal contact with that person’.

- **Change machines mean staff do not know how much money patrons are changing**

One staff member noted increased difficulties of identifying problem gamblers because of change machines, explaining ‘we’re not sure anymore because they put it in the note machine now’.

5.14.6 Club Staff Perceptions of the Helpfulness of Procedures

Most interviewees generally had limited experience in approaching patrons about a possible gambling problem and so had difficulty commenting on the helpfulness of doing so, although a minority of staff related incidences where their approach had been followed by less patronage or gambling by the patron, as described above. However, some staff clearly felt it would not have any effect and so would not approach a patron. As one explained, ‘unless they admit their problem, how can the people help? And a lot of people don’t like to admit that’.

5.15 CLUB STAFF RESPONSES TO THIRD PARTY CONCERNS ABOUT PROBLEM GAMBLING

The club staff were asked about what they would do if a family member or close friend indicated that a patron has a gambling problem.

5.15.1 Frequency of Third Parties Approaching Club Staff

About half the club staff indicated they had never experienced being approached by a family member about concern over a patron's gambling nor had heard of it happening in their workplace, saying 'I've never come across that', 'I haven't had the experience' and 'we really don't have that sort of thing happening here'.

5.15.2 Procedures Used by Club Staff

Three staff gave examples of what they had actually done in this situation, while the remainder discussed what they would do if the situation arose.

Procedures staff have used

The first related how:

'A father-in-law (approached) about his son-in-law ... I knew the son was very bad ... They were losing their house. ... straight away he (the manager) called the gentleman (patron) in and sat down and had a really good talk. He didn't want to do it in front of the father-in-law ... he wanted to talk to him on his own and told him what was going on. He said if he wanted the family to come in that he would do that, but he wanted to bring a counsellor in as well. He felt that it should be here ... I don't want you to go retaliating against them, they're worried and that this person was a good person. They (the patron) said no, it had to happen. (The manager) did say, well I won't be letting you back into the club, you are not allowed back here.'

The second told how:

'He was in here all the time ... from the time we open to the time we close. When you finish here, you tell people stories about how you go to the next club. ... His wife's always ringing up and asking is such and such there? Yes he is. Go and tell him your wife's on the phone; she wants to know if you can please go home. She's waiting for you, she's worried, dinner's on the table, etc. He says, yeah, yeah, I'll get there, I'll give her a call. ... then we actually had his wife and his daughter and his granddaughter here. The wife was in tears. He spent their whole life savings, taken out two personal loans and blown all of them and she said she wanted him excluded. He will never admit it himself. ... I was emotional because I could see this poor old woman who's like 85-90 really upset and absolutely drained and I thought well, he's got family who care about him. I got (the manager) ... and we did a venue exclusion (The man) actually rang up and apologised and said he didn't realise he had a problem as bad as he did. And thank you for being there and supporting him.'

The third story was related thus:

'I had this young lad, he started coming in because I know his dad pretty well and he said I'd like you to tell (my son) he's not allowed to play in here anymore because he keeps coming in and spending his money. He did seem that he was having a bit of a problem, but he was ... a little bit backward and his dad just wanted me to give him a bit of a fright. He told him that if he kept coming in then I would report him and have his picture posted everywhere so the staff know not to serve him anymore. So next time he came in I just said to him, I'm concerned about it and if he kept coming in, that's what I would have to do. He stayed away for quite a while. He pops in now every now and again.'

A fourth story was in relation to a third party complaint, although the staff interviewee had played a minor role. This occurred when:

‘a daughter of a mother came up with a photo of her mother and said, have you seen my mum? We can’t buy our school fees, we need our books for school and that was quite an upsetting scenario. We took her name and details and said, if we do see your mum we’ll have a chat to her ... and I think she was approached’.

Procedures staff would use

The remainder of the staff commented on what they would do if this situation arose.

- **Refer up the chain of command**

Four staff noted they would refer the issue to a more senior staff person. One explained ‘that’s the role, we have to pass on in the chain of command and ... I’d make a report for the CEO and then it would be left to his discretion if they wanted to contact the customer and offer them the contact to Gambling Helpline’. Another would ‘organise a time for them to actually come down and sit down one on one with (the manager)’. A third would ‘listen to what they say then I’d probably go to (the manager) and talk to him about it and then just leave it to him’. The fourth explained:

‘If it was during the day, I would bring them back to see (the manager) ... but if it was at night, again I would try and get them to come back at a different time to talk to (the manager). If that wasn’t possible then I’d certainly take all the information I could ... and refer it on. I don’t think I would try and deal with it right then and there especially if they were a bit worked up. I’d try and get them to calm down. I’d write a report. It also depends if they’ve come with photographs of the person.’

- **Monitor the patron**

One staff member reported they would ‘talk to the family or friend and find a bit more background information on where their concerns are coming from, and just observe the person’.

- **Approach the patron**

Four staff would approach the patron of concern. One would ‘have a meeting with the person ... and tell them your concerns about them gambling here all the time. ... I’d have the general manager or somebody who’s a mediator, but just maybe hand them a card or places that they could call’.

Others would approach the patron, with one saying ‘I’d go up to them and probably mention that their wife is concerned for them, for their situation and see if they’d like help, if they need any help. I think the only way to go is being honest and truthful’. Another would ‘speak to him (the patron) but I would say the (family member) is concerned about you’. Another explained:

‘You would have to let (the patron) know that the person’s (family member’s) there. ... It just depends ... because if the person (family member) comes in aggravated and you end up having a manager talking to them at reception and they’re carrying on, you really don’t want to let them into the club to upset everyone else. So generally, while the manager’s talking to them ... one of the other staff may approach the person playing the pokies and just let them know the situation. But then it’s their choice if they want to go out or not. Because we have people ring up asking for people in the gaming area all the time. ... a lot of people don’t even want people to know that they’re here.’

- **Talk to the family member(s) about options**

Four staff said they would talk to the family member about options. However, the advice they would give varied. One would suggest the family member ‘watch them themselves, take them to dinner over in the bistro which is in the other corner of the club. Let them know about entertainment to keep them busy’. Three others would offer counselling information to the family, either ‘the package for Lifeline with all the information, to at least take it home’, ‘the details for a counsellor’ or ‘refer them to the helpline’.

- **Consider venue exclusion**

Two staff mentioned venue exclusion, although one said ‘I don’t know if it would be the right thing for me personally to exclude someone in their absence. I think that’s something I’d need to find more about’. The other was more informed, noting ‘I’d just say unfortunately we can’t stop her putting whatever she would like through; however if you could prove that she is doing all her pension and not paying her bills, keeping up with her daily stuff, we can ... try and get a venue exclusion’.

5.15.3 Club Staff Knowledge of Procedures

The staff clearly had limited experience of being approached by a third party. While most ruminated on what they would do, their responses were highly variable and speculative, suggesting a lack of prescribed procedures to follow. Other staff were unclear on what they would do. For example, one said ‘I don’t know what I’d do. I wouldn’t have a clue about that one’.

5.15.4 Challenges for Club Staff

Several staff alluded to three main difficulties in dealing with third party concerns.

- **Concern for triggering aggression**

Two expressed concern for how a patron would respond if approached about a third party concern, where ‘it might make them realise or it might make them turn the other way and be grumpy and nasty’ and ‘it can be not beneficial to the staff person. You may cop some abuse, it’s really not worth that risk’.

- **Family members can be emotional and blame staff**

Another noted the third party might be ‘aggravated and telling us to do something about it and they’re blaming us, but there’s really not a lot you can do except provide them with the information and just being polite, keep calm and hopefully that calms them down’.

- **Staff cannot force a patron to not gamble**

Another staff member noted the potential futility of approaching a patron about a third party concern, because while ‘they may have a bit of a problem ... it’s just like they’re making that choice. We’ve got all these pamphlets at the change counter. ... what more can you do unless they ask for help? ... Because you can’t help anyone if they don’t want help’.

5.15.5 Perceived Helpfulness of Procedures

Because very few staff had been involved in this scenario, they were also unsure of the likely helpfulness of these procedures. However, in three cases described above, staff acting on

family concerns appeared to have resulted in the patron curtailing their gambling, at least in the interviewees' workplace.

5.16 CLO SUPPORT FOR CLUB STAFF IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

Staff were asked 'In what ways does your CLO support you in assisting problem gamblers in the venue?' and to comment on the adequacy of this support.

5.16.1 Types of Assistance Provided by Club CLOs

The staff articulated several types of support provided by their CLO or manager.

- **Be a referral for staff**

One role was as a referral for staff, where 'we just go and tell them and let them know and they'll handle it' and 'if someone approaches me I direct him to the CLO, then they'll take action'.

- **On-the-job training**

A second role was on-the-job training for staff where the CLO or manager 'gives me advice on everything - on gambling, what to do, what not to do' and has 'given me information that I need, because I haven't been in the industry for very long'. Another said 'I don't fully understand it that much but if I ever have any questions I can always talk to (the manager), he's happy to explain it to me. And when we get a self-exclusion together, he went through the steps with me'.

- **Advice on specific situations**

A third role was to advise staff on handling specific situations. Related staff comments included: 'I've got no problems talking to them if I've got any concerns with customers', 'we know there's an open door' and 'we can call (the manager) because he only lives about five minutes away and he can get here. Any problem at all, we know we can give him a call'.

- **Updates on self-excludees**

One staff member also noted the CLO has 'the memo that they put on the noticeboard and say that if such a person with his picture who has self-excluded himself ... and everybody who wants to read that, knows what has happened'.

5.16.2 Perceived Adequacy of CLO Support to Club Staff

Many staff were very positive about the support they receive from the CLO and/or club management, describing it as 'very supportive', 'an abundance of support' and 'I find him very good. He's done a lot of courses himself so he's right on the ball'.

In contrast, some staff said either the venue did not have any CLOs or there was little interaction between the staff and the CLO. For example, one said 'we don't have any real communication with the CLOs. But I mean if someone approaches me and I direct him to the CLO, then they'll take action, but we don't have any more discussions'. Another, when asked what sort of support the CLO or management offer them in dealing with problem gamblers, replied 'nothing, because nothing's really been brought up about it'. Another wanted more interaction where 'when the person comes in to be excluded that maybe whoever has done it

so many times took one of the staff ... and showed them how to do it ... how to approach it without making the customer or yourself feel embarrassed ... to make sure that I was confident about doing it myself’.

5.17 CLUB STAFF TRAINING IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

The staff were asked about the training they had done to help them assist problem gamblers in the venue and its strengths and weaknesses.

5.17.1 Sources of Club Staff Training

When asked what types of training staff had received in responsible gambling, three sources were identified.

- **Responsible gambling courses**

The vast majority of the club staff interviewees (17) had done a responsible service of gaming course. The recency of this ranged from six months to four years ago at the time of the interview. Of those who had not completed a course, one was scheduled to do so in the next few months. In contrast, one staff member who had been working at the venue for four years had not completed a course, yet wanted to do so ‘for my own peace of mind’. A minority had also completed other RSG-related training, with a few having completed refreshers and one having also completed ‘a couple of courses’ through a local Gambling Help agency.

- **Responsible gambling manuals and materials**

Only two staff mentioned the responsible gambling manuals and materials as a source of training, with one noting the formal course was supplemented with ‘meetings, booklets, notes, stuff like that’ and the other that ‘any documentation or any material in regards to gaming goes into the gaming room and all the attendants have to ... sign it to say you’ve read it’.

- **On-the-job training and experience**

One staff member who had not completed RSG training noted he had gained ‘hands-on experience ... talking to people that have had more training like my bosses, how they would deal with it’. A few others noted their on-the-job training, saying ‘I’ve learned things as I go. As I need to know things, people teach me’, and ‘the lady I took over from ... I did a lot of training from her. It was more just hands on training’. Another discussed the ‘buddy’ system of training in their workplace that worked in tandem with the e-training RSG course, explaining:

‘When they did their RSG course they actually had to go around and we had to show them the self-exclusion folder and what it was about because that was the practical part of their course. They had to do an assessment here through their work so they do all the theory and there were task questions ... any of the managers could just do it with them’.

5.17.2 Perceived Value of Training for Club Staff

Various strengths and weaknesses were identified by the staff around their training.

- **Perceived strengths**

Most staff who had received formal RSG training were reasonably positive about its value. For some, this value lay in building ‘more confidence’ in that ‘it’s validating what you think is the right thing to do. It makes you feel better about what you’ve been doing’. This value also stemmed from the provision of guidelines for staff ‘because not everybody thinks logically, so if they’ve got definite guidelines set out for them about how they must behave, then it’s a good thing’. Some staff appreciated being able to learn about experiences from staff at other venues. As one staff member from a club with only ten gaming machines explained, ‘I don’t go into the other venues that often and we just sat around and different people were ... giving a story and it’s an eye opener ... you can always learn from somebody else’s life experiences’.

Staff also valued clarification of issues provided by the training, where ‘if you needed to know some legal thing that you could ask and... get a proper answer, the right answer’. Similarly, another said ‘at least you know where you stand with what the law is and how to apply it’.

Other staff found the training particularly good ‘when I was new to the industry’, while another noted ‘the younger ones sometimes aren’t as advanced as the older ones so it’s good to pair them up together when your staff are training ... so they can learn off them as well’.

Others valued the updates and reminders provided by refreshers ‘to make sure you’re keeping up with it and you know what’s going on. ... because you’re not doing this all the time, it’s so easy to forget what you learnt in the past’.

One staff member commented on the valuable training he had done with a local Gambling Help agency and commented ‘I did a half day course with them just to help us understand a little more into the problems and how to see it. ... I believe that it’s something that’s a real necessity’.

A few commented on the strengths of the e-training system of delivery for responsible gambling training. One strength was its accessibility, as ‘it’s online so they can do it at home in their own time’, ‘at the e-training office in town’ or ‘if it’s a quiet night, they can just go in the office and do some work there’. This online access helped overcome previous difficulties, where ‘beforehand it was a bit of a hassle trying to organise to get someone to come up or organise the training down in Cairns’. This accessibility appeared to help venues keep staff trained despite staff turnover, ‘because you’ve got a rollover of staff coming and going so if they come along and it needs renewing, we can just issue that course’. Another strength of the e-training course was its rigour, with one interviewee commenting ‘it was a lot harder than when they come up and do the courses. ... but it was really difficult because also if you get a certain amount of questions wrong in each chapter it freezes you out for 48 hours so you have to go and study it again’. A further strength was identified as the practical requirements of the course. One staff member related how ‘at the end of it ... she had to do an actual practical test with (the manager) there to watch her ... and they had to fill out the forms to say yes, she’s completed all those areas. ... It is more in-depth and I think they learn a lot more out of it doing it that way’. This was contrasted to face-to-face delivery where ‘when you’re in the courses you sort of sit back and just listen but you don’t take it in’.

- **Perceived weaknesses**

No staff directly criticised the training they had received, although about half had suggestions for improvements to the courses they had done, as discussed below.

- **Suggested improvements**

The main suggestion was more emphasis on ‘dealing with problem gamblers’, ‘what signs to look for’, ‘identifying a problem gambler’, ‘how to cope with someone who’s a problem gambler’, ‘the best thing to say’ and ‘what to say appropriately ... because you have different people with different scenarios’.

One staff person saw the need for ‘more access to training ... through Clubs Queensland’, and a few others for refresher courses because ‘it’s been almost two years since I’ve done my responsible gambling service course ... if someone was to approach me today, I don’t know whether I could give them all the information correctly’. These refreshers could be ‘every 12 months’ or ‘every 18 months ... because there are new things coming in all the time and it’s hard to keep up with everything. The boss has got the handle on all the new things coming in but not all the staff get to know about it’. Another staff person simply advocated ‘more training for everyone’.

Another staff person commented ‘I’d like to learn how to do self-exclusions because if no-one else is around, I’m not going to tell someone sorry, my boss is away and (the CLO) is on holidays; I’m not going to say you can’t do it because no-one’s around’.

5.18 CLUB STAFF INTERACTION WITH GAMBLING HELP AGENCIES TO ASSIST PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

The staff were asked about their interaction with gambling support services to assist problem gamblers in the venue and whether they thought this was useful.

5.18.1 Frequency of Club Staff Interacting with Gambling Help Agencies

Over half of the 23 staff had not had any interaction with a Gambling Help agency. In some cases, agency staff may have been to the venue, but not when the interviewees were on duty. Others were clearly confused, thinking Queensland Government staff who deliver new pamphlets and signs were from a local counselling agency and/or that the local Gambling Help agency staff were from the Gambling Helpline. Many staff seemed to think the Gambling Helpline was a local counselling agency. In contrast, there appeared particularly high awareness about some local Gambling Help agencies in some regional centres.

5.18.2 Types of Club Staff Interaction with Gambling Help Agencies

The staff interviewees identified several types of services provided by gambling counselling agencies to their venue.

- **Provide printed materials about local services**

One of these services was the provision of printed materials, although the staff often seemed unclear on which agency was which, as noted above. Local agencies mentioned by staff included Relationships Australia, Gamblers Anonymous, Lifeline and Centacare. Several interviewees noted ‘all the brochures’, ‘pamphlets’, ‘leaflets and the little cards’ and ‘posters’ provided by the agencies.

- **Be a contact for venues for advice**

Agency staff also visit venues to offer availability for advice to management and staff. As one staff member commented, ‘(the counsellor) certainly made us feel that any of us could

ring him at any time with a problem. ... He indicated that it doesn't have to be a person with a problem who can ring him. We can ring him'.

- **Be a contact for venues to refer patrons to**

Agencies also visit venues so staff and management know who they can refer patrons to, where 'you can ring them and they usually recommend places for you to go and see. There is the neighbourhood centre up the road there and I'm pretty sure they do counselling as well'.

- **Provide back-up when dealing with problem gamblers in the venue**

The staff also indicated some agencies provide back-up when dealing with problem gamblers in the venue. One staff person explained this thus 'he (the counsellor) is available to come here if we need him to talk to somebody, if we don't think that somebody is actually going to follow-up for themselves. ... Obviously he takes what he does very seriously because he's prepared to help people'. Similarly, another said the patron, CLO and counsellor 'can have a three-way conversation', where the patron and CLO 'go into the office, sit down, we ring him'.

- **Organise patron self-exclusions**

Two staff recalled how agency staff had assisted venue patrons with self-exclusion. In one instance, 'we had the lady come in to apply for self-exclusion with this counsellor person'. The other recalled how 'once every fortnight or once every month she (a local counsellor) would come in and we'd set up a table down the back of the gaming room and if you had a problem she would sit there and have a talk to you and get a self-exclusion'.

- **Provide training sessions for staff**

Another role of local agencies can be to provide training sessions for venue staff. One staff member described this involvement thus: 'the guy from the local Lifeline, he came in and spoke to us when we did our RSG, handed out flyers and just explained the information that was on the flyers and told us where they should be in the venues and things like that'. Similarly, another said 'that's who did our RSG last time. We can ring them and he will come out ... and he did the CLO training that (another staff member) did'.

5.18.3 Perceived Value of Club Staff Interaction with Gambling Help Agencies

As well as the more tangible services provided, as described above, staff identified several benefits of venue and staff interaction with Gambling Help agencies, based either on their experience or their expectations of how it might help.

- **Provides insight into how agencies assist problem gamblers**

One interviewee felt that interacting with Gambling Help agencies would give venue staff 'more knowledge about the (agency) staff, about what they do and how they help'.

- **Provides professional support for venues**

A few staff articulated the reassurance gained from having professional back-up 'because you're not on your own ... it's nice to know that there's that person that you can ring and you know him and talk to him. Well now that I've met (the local counsellor), I wouldn't hesitate in using him as a backup if I did have to approach someone'. This can also reassure patrons. Referring to the three-way conversations that can be arranged through some local agencies,

one interviewee also noted if the patron has ‘someone else sit in with them they probably don’t feel as intimidated’.

- **Help advise staff on how to deal with problem gamblers in the venue**

For one staff member, this was very important ‘because the experience just in dealing with problem gamblers just isn’t there’. Another said ‘I might even ring up one of the helplines myself and say I’ve got a patron here who I feel is in trouble. What can you suggest to help me approach them?’.

- **Puts a face to the service**

Other staff articulated the benefits of knowing who agency staff are, being able to ‘put a face to the brochures that we’ve got sitting around. ... If he comes to all the RSG courses and puts his face out there then that’s a good thing’.

- **Demonstrates to staff the venue’s commitment to responsible gambling**

One interviewee noted that having agency staff involved in staff training ‘shows that the club’s actually participating in the responsible service of gaming for their patrons. You’re liaising with them, you’re looking after your patrons. Can only benefit it by doing it’.

5.19 CLUB BEST PRACTICES IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

The staff were asked whether they had examples of best practice in assisting problem gamblers in the venue. Five were given that went beyond normal procedures as encouraged by the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice*.

- **Responding to patrons who ask for help immediately and with understanding**

One staff member who had previously had a gambling problem and had completed the self-exclusion processes at several venues shared his experience of the best he had encountered:

‘Dealing with the customers straight away I know from my own experience there was a time I did feel helpless and someone said, I’ll deal with you in a second and I thought what’s the point? I’ll go off somewhere else and start gambling more. First, it was the not ... acknowledging that I needed help ... Making them feel good ... that you’ve done something good. Actually sitting down in the situation with the person straight away instead of getting the paper out straight away, but listen to what they’re saying. This guy that I had at a venue probably sat there for about ten minutes just having a chat with me. Then he went through the policies after that. I thought that was a good approach. Yeah. But also found out the problem that I was having and how I was feeling about my chances to dig my way out of it. Made it more personal, not just another number.’

- **Reducing embarrassment for problem gamblers**

One staff person related how she had helped reduce embarrassment for a patron wanting to self-exclude ‘a friend of mine said to me I would like to exclude ... but she said I don’t want to go into your boss’s office. I said ... we can organise for her to take you for a coffee ... and it looks like a job interview And she says really? ... And we arranged a time for her to do it’.

- **Encouraging staff interaction with patrons**

Two interviewees noted the importance of staff interacting with patrons – to facilitate patron approaches to staff if they do want assistance, to help staff recognise if a patron is having problems and perhaps to provide a break in play for machine players. One noted ‘we encourage our staff to go around and talk to people while they’re on the machines ... to know their clients’. Another noted a key challenge is ‘dealing with the different types of people that you get into any club. It’s probably a little bit easier if you yourself get to know people ... I believe that you have a little bit more interaction with people out there rather than just going down and doing payouts’.

- **Encourage breaks in play**

One staff member raised the issue of encouraging breaks in play where ‘we used to give drink service and change service at the machines which we no longer do and when people ask for drink service, I just explain to them that it’s in their best interest to take a break, get up and have a walk around’.

- **Different loyalty cards for patrons self-excluded from gaming areas**

One staff interviewee explained a novel system to assist in monitoring people who are self-excluded only from the gaming areas of the club. She explained:

‘What we’ve started is a special (member’s) card for people who choose to do that ... so all the staff are aware, so they don’t have to approach that customer and make a point out of things. They just know when they use their card, okay that person has exempted themselves from the gaming areas. ... but her card will not work in the machines. ... She still gets her discounts on her meals and on her drinks and if there’s any functions on ... it’s just no Keno, no TAB, no gambling and what I’ve put on the card to specify that is Bar/Bistro functions only ... I just jumped in there and changed it so that category is on our system now. So if anyone else does that, we can just click on Bar/Bistro functions only instead of Social Member. And then ... all staff will know that person’s not allowed to play gaming.’

5.20 OTHER WAYS CLUBS CAN ASSIST PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

Staff were asked if there were any other ways clubs can assist problem gamblers in the venue. Several suggestions were made.

- **Ensuring a CLO or equivalent is always available for patrons**

One staff member thought it very important to ‘just have someone there that can deal with it straight away. Ongoing support I suppose from the person who is customer liaison, just how to deal with customers if he is off doing something else at the time. Like offering coffee. Just making that person feel important’.

- **Fewer gaming machines**

I don’t like this idea of certain venues having over 200 machines. I think that’s ridiculous personally. Even if you do get a lot of clients through your door, that’s ridiculous.

- **Compulsory counselling for self-excludees**

One staff member suggested ‘counselling should be offered. There should be a free government sort of thing if you’re self-excluded. I think maybe we should have to go to a compulsory (system)’.

- **Monitoring patrons who have revoked their self-exclusion order**

One interviewee explained how the venue was monitoring ‘one of our regulars, she was self-excluded for a year We now, us as duty managers, keep an eye on her. Any time she spends a lot of time down here we write it down. Anytime she’s spending a lot of money we write it down. If we find it excessive we’ll write it down’.

- **Get rid of gambling**

For one interviewee, the best way to assist problem gamblers was to:

‘Go to the main source and close the gambling establishments. ... If you stop every form of gambling they’re not going to gamble. Not as much as they do here. You can tell the difference between when Queensland got their license for poker machines ... before that people used to go once a month over the border. ... for a good day Now, since they’ve been here, you consider the difference between all the clubs and hotels. They’ve become luxurious, they’ve become big, it’s all because of the problem gamblers. They pour money into that and everybody makes money and I get a job. The government doesn’t want to kill the golden goose. They’re making so much money out of gambling. ... they really know that they’re not really doing any favours to gambling people. ... our hands are tied, we can’t do much and we’re not supposed to really do much.’

- **Offer diversionary activities**

One staff member who had an ongoing gambling problem felt:

‘Obviously people need to have other stuff for them to do and I think that’s the only thing that’s going to substitute ... have a movie time. ... Let’s play cards. ... Why not set up a constant card table? ... why don’t we have Bingo? You can spend \$30 or \$40 on your Bingo but it takes you three hours. You can put \$30 in there (a gaming machine) in two seconds. ... Just something else for them to do I think. It is a boredom thing.’

- **More responsible gambling information**

One staff member advocated ‘bigger posters or more posters or brochures. Either like before they walk in so they actually do see them. Maybe even stickers on the machines’, while another suggested ‘they don’t really read the signs. ... But they need it in front of their face on TV or a big page ad in the paper’.

5.21 CLUB STAFF CONCLUSION

Sections 5.12 to 5.20 of this chapter have presented results relating to the 23 club staff who were interviewed for this study. After summarising the key characteristics of these interviewees and the venues where they worked, these sections summarised how the club staff have or would respond to three different scenarios - when patrons ask for assistance with a gambling problem, when patrons show signs of problem gambling but do not request assistance, and when family or friends approach staff with concerns for a patron’s gambling. Support for staff to assist problem gamblers in the venue from their CLOs, from their training and from their interaction with local gambling support agencies were then described. Best practice examples, where given, were then presented.

5.22 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented results from interviews with 25 hotel staff and 23 club staff. The next chapter presents results from interviews with Gambling Help counsellors throughout Queensland.

CHAPTER SIX

RESULTS FROM THE GAMBLING COUNSELLOR INTERVIEWS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents results from interviews with 23 Gambling Help counsellors in Queensland. The key characteristics of these interviewees are first identified, before analysis of their responses relating to when patrons ask for assistance with a gambling problem, when patrons show signs of problem gambling but do not request assistance, and when family or friends approach staff with concerns for a patron's gambling. The focus then turns to self-exclusion, interaction between the counselling agencies and gaming venues, and best practice examples where given.

6.2 KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF COUNSELLOR INTERVIEWEES

Twenty-three counsellors working in Queensland Gambling Help agencies were interviewed for this study to provide comments based on their own and their clients' experiences of the processes and practices involved in assisting problem gamblers in gaming venues in that state. Sixteen of these counsellors were from Relationships Australia, two were from Lifeline, four were from Centacare and one was from Interlock. Experience in the role ranged from 'a couple of months' to 11 years. Six interviewees also had a community education role, one was a financial counsellor and four had coordination or program leadership roles.

6.3 COUNSELLOR RESPONSES ABOUT PATRONS WHO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE

The counsellors were asked if any of their clients had talked to them about approaching staff in venues for assistance with a gambling problem. Nine of the 23 counsellors recalled clients who had approached staff in venues, although some noted it was 'very few' and 'it's really quite unusual'. The responses of the counsellors are organised into three themes: what prevents patrons from approaching staff, the experience for patrons, and what counsellors consider staff should do in this situation.

6.3.1 Barriers for Patrons Approaching Staff

Four barriers to patrons approaching venue staff were articulated by the counsellors.

- **Feeling shame**

This was clearly expressed by one counsellor as 'it's around the shame and the unwillingness to admit they have a problem'. Similarly, another said 'I think the whole issue of denial is one that people carry around with them and a sense of embarrassment of actually coming out and admitting you're not coping'. A third answered 'shame - they perceive asking for help as a sign of weakness'.

- **Issues of confidentiality and privacy**

For patrons who live and gamble in small communities, ‘they probably see it that the community will find out’ and ‘the most accurate answer I can give to that is that because we live in a small community’. Conversely, another counsellor thought the ‘small town mentality’ where ‘the whole town very much relies on personal relationships to function’ means patrons were more likely to approach staff. This depends on ‘the amount of time they’ve been attending that venue and how well they feel they know the staff, the ability to feel comfortable, to trust that they’ll get a hearing from the staff’. Another raised the issue that ‘their friends might be at the venue with them and they don’t want their friends to know’.

- **Not aware the venue could help**

As one counsellor commented, ‘not trusting what the response is going to be, not knowing what the venue staff could possibly do, possibly having no idea that the venue staff can do anything to help them’ deters patrons from approaching staff for assistance. She continued ‘it’s a process that’s unknown to them, they’re not sure whether they’re going to be told, it’s not my problem, get over it. They have no idea about that’.

- **Unsympathetic venues**

One counsellor considered a barrier to be ‘a policy thing that you (staff) don’t involve yourself in personal matters’ and ‘I think it takes a huge amount of courage to admit that you have a problem and I don’t think that’s the atmosphere in which people would necessarily find sympathetic to that confession’. When asked which types of venues tend to have an unsympathetic attitude, the counsellor noted these were the chain hotels and ‘some of the smaller venues (which) have a fairly casual attitude. They believe that they know their patrons and are really quite convinced that problem gambling isn’t an issue in their venue’.

6.3.2 Facilitators for Patrons Approaching Staff

One facilitator for patrons approaching staff was identified.

- **Existing relationship with a staff member**

One interviewee noted that ‘really building up a relationship, particularly with a particular member of staff, I think in the occasions when it has happened’ has been a facilitator. This was echoed by another, who commented ‘you need to have a pretty good relationship with the staff member I think over time’.

6.3.3 The Experience for Clients

The counsellors were asked about their clients’ experiences when they had approached venue staff for assistance with a gambling problem and to describe any particularly positive and negative experiences. The counsellors clearly considered the staff response to be critically important in this situation, especially because ‘for some of our more chronic gamblers, some of the staff in the venues are quite significant people in their lives’.

- **Positive responses**

There were some very positive comments related by counsellors. Some examples include ‘for the most part, they’ve reported to me that they’ve been fairly well received’, ‘it’s been very positive’ and ‘they’ve actually been treated well by venue staff, that they were encouraged to visit the Gambling Help service and they’ve talked about it fairly positively’. One recalled

‘two occasions when a venue has actually phoned me and said, I’ve got John Smith here and I’m suggesting he makes an appointment with you. Would you like to speak to him now? Which I think is outstanding when that happens’. Another commented ‘it’s really only one venue (in the area) that has a really, really good attitude to it and it’s been extremely helpful and supportive of people, taking care to take them into a private place, very flexible with working around their needs’.

- **Negative or unhelpful responses**

Several counsellors noted that clients had reported a negative or unhelpful experience. According to one counsellor, a client recalled ‘I tried to get help from such and such a venue but they just ignored me; I found I was very embarrassed’. Similarly another counsellor said ‘they’re pretty well made to feel that the venue’s not interested in that, that they’re being stupid for being a problem gambler and how stupid they might be that they might find themselves in that situation’. Some responses of staff seem to discourage clients as recalled here: ‘sometimes they get some issues incorrect, for instance, cooling off periods or whatever. I’ve heard of people actually being encouraged to come back next week and we’ll discuss it’. Another counsellor described a client who ‘was let down because he feels he didn’t have the exclusion process explained to him correctly, that he wasn’t given the option of excluding from just the gambling area or from the whole venue. He didn’t understand. And the form was not filled out correctly. He’s not very literate’. This person was also critical that ‘often they’re not given the Gambling Help service contact stuff which I would consider bad, of course’. One other counsellor also commented that ‘on hearsay, I’ve heard of a patron in tears confessing that she’s rather distressed about how much she’s lost and being told never mind dear, try the next machine’. Similarly, another interviewee noted ‘I have had instances where clients have told me that they’ve been deflected rather than helped. ... Being advised to have a cup of coffee’.

6.3.4 What Staff Should Do if Approached by a Patron

Counsellors were asked what they consider to be good practice when patrons approach venue staff for assistance with a gambling problem.

- **Respond immediately**

One counsellor noted the importance of an immediate response from the staff member, as ‘if the client is approaching them and they want some help, they’re wanting to tell their story to someone there and then’.

- **Provide information and or referral**

Fifteen of the counsellors emphasised the importance of frontline staff either referring a patron to their CLO because ‘they have the better training and as far as I know the general staff don’t have much training at all’ or to a gambling support service. One counsellor stated that staff in venues should ‘refer people to the Gambling Helpline as well so they can get some professional help’. Another indicated he/she is available for consultation anytime and:

‘The staff also know that they can call me on my office line at any time and ... should they have someone who’s wanting to exclude or wanting some assistance or information they can call me or I can make myself available over the phone or, time permitting, I can actually go to the venue’.

Similarly, another interviewee advocated ‘ringing the Gambling Help service people on the spot there for them’.

- **Provide information on self-exclusion**

As noted by one counsellor, this information ‘it’s out there in the self-exclusion procedures they’re supposed to follow, offering the various forms of the possibility of self-exclusion’.

- **Listen and stay calm**

The importance of allowing the patron to ‘tell their story’ in a calm, unhurried way was emphasised in this comment: ‘if the staff member is calm, the client is going to pick up on that and that’s going to help calm them down’. Understanding the depth of the patron’s emotions was also emphasised by another counsellor who said ‘I think one thing they need to do is to understand how difficult that is, and whilst they decide at one point in time, they may have a stressful day tomorrow and still be driven to go back and gamble, whilst they have a set of mechanisms to change in place’. The power of the ‘moment’ was emphasised by one comment:

‘We find when a client comes in here and articulates that they have a gambling problem, it’s a very powerful moment for them and usually very emotional and I would imagine that it’s a similar sort of experience when they first admit it to a venue staff member too. So having a venue staff member a little bit trained to appreciate the enormity of the moment for the person, they’re not to rush over it.’

- **Treat the client with respect**

This was an issue raised by ten of the counsellors, for example ‘they need to be respectful, discreet, and they need to not to pry too much’. A respectful space to conduct the interview was mentioned by ten of the counsellors, as shown in this comment: ‘having that private space where they can certainly be aside, just them and the manager going through, would be advantageous’. Similarly, another said ‘just taking them away somewhere private and having a real good talk to them’ was very important.

6.4 COUNSELLOR RESPONSES ABOUT STAFF APPROACHING PATRONS TO OFFER ASSISTANCE

The counsellors were asked if they could recall any clients saying that venue staff had approached them out of concern for a gambling problem. The vast majority (17 of the 23) said that they did not recall this happening and identified several barriers. No facilitators were identified. However, 19 of the counsellors thought staff should be approaching patrons if they were exhibiting signs of distress with their gambling.

6.4.1 Venue Staff Identification of Signs of Possible Problem Gambling

The counsellors were asked if they thought staff were able to accurately identify indicators of problem gambling amongst venue patrons and if so, what those indicators might be. Fourteen of the counsellors considered that staff would be able to notice indicators of problem gambling, eight considered this was problematic and one was non-committal.

- **Staff ability to identify problem gambling behaviour**

The following comments reflect the majority view of the counsellors that staff can generally recognise signs of problem gambling amongst their patrons: ‘I think venue staff are aware when there are problem gamblers, certainly in the bigger venues. You have your regulars, your little old ladies who are there nine o’clock in the morning. I think they see them’; ‘absolutely. They absolutely can recognise them’; and ‘I think that the majority of staff who

work in venues, in my experience are pretty savvy'. A comment relayed by one counsellor says this clearly: 'staff are telling me continually we know when people are in trouble'. A counsellor who had previously worked in a gaming venue verified this, saying 'even myself when I first came into the gaming room with very little experience, and even then over the couple of years I was there, you realise that someone was developing a problem'.

However, other comments showed some doubt. For example one counsellor said staff do 'not necessarily' recognise problem gambling behaviours. Another recalled how a staff member had said to them that 'you can't do it, you can't tell'. Another noted further difficulties, querying:

'... whether people are watchful enough to notice how often someone goes back to the ATM or to actually pick up the fact that somebody has reserved the machine and they've gone home for more money. That sort of thing. It's pretty hard to keep an eye on 70 or 150 machines while those sort of things might be happening.'

- **Signs of possible problem gambling**

There were many indicators noted by the counsellors that they felt staff should be looking out for and the following is a representation of their comments: 'coming back to get more money, going to the ATM more than once', 'playing more than one machine at once', and 'multiple playing, increased agitation, frustration, maybe drinking heavily as well, missing for hours, playing several games at once or several machines at once, no money, repeated trips to the ATM'. Another counsellor who had worked in a venue emphasised the number of different signs that staff 'do notice':

'... time spent there, if they're waiting at 10 o'clock to go in there, if they have that frantic feel to them with their gambling, if they're not sitting there and enjoying themselves, they're punching buttons, hunting money. You can tell. They stroke the machines, they've got to have their machine, they get very upset if they don't have their particular machine, they do the sticking of cards in things, they stroke the machine or talk to them or sing to them, they put their glasses a certain way. All those little superstitions.'

Some responses indicated it is a combination of behaviours that is significant, for example, 'looking at the totality of the situation; if a number of indicators are present then yes it probably is time to start looking at that particular patron and seeing whether they can assist them or not' and 'we really look at all of the signs'.

6.4.2 Barriers for Staff Approaching Patrons

When the counsellors were asked why they thought it was so infrequent for venue staff to approach patrons of concern, the responses were very strong.

- **Venue discouragement**

Several interviewees were adamant that venues discourage approaching patrons of concern. For example, one counsellor simply said that 'staff in Queensland are told they can't do it'. Another was of the view that 'it's coming from their boss, but also from higher up from their boss, it's coming from an organisational level down'. Similarly, another counsellor commented that 'it seems to be generally across the board, it seems that Clubs Queensland and the QHA say that you shouldn't approach people because it's an invasion of privacy and you don't know, and they might be an eccentric millionaire'. One counsellor's comment strongly represents this view: 'I think venue staff are often compromised, possibly by venue management's desire to generate revenue, and so the actual frontline workers are very

compromised in that they're not really encouraged to support problem gamblers'. Another counsellor, who worked in a venue 'a couple of years ago' verified this, explaining:

'I worked in the gaming room as a staff member and from my personal experience on that side of it, it's frightfully daunting for a start but also we were told not to. ... We were told under no circumstances to do that. And that was in our training, that was in our RSG. We were told it's not fair to judge a person about their gambling. You might think they're putting through \$100s of dollars but that might well be in their budget, so we were told not to.'

- **The training discourages this**

The preceding point noted that one view was that Clubs Queensland and the QHA advise staff not to approach patrons of concern. Presumably, this advice, if given, occurs during staff training. However, one counsellor also actively discouraged staff to approach clients, within the training the agency offers. The following comment reflects this clearly: 'in our training and in talking to people, we don't encourage them to do that because sometimes that elicits violence or violent behaviour. Someone can take exception to people sticking their bit in'.

- **Conflict of interest**

A major issue seems to be the conflict of interest where the venue is aiming to generate revenue, which is counter to discouraging patrons from gambling. The following comments represent relevant responses from the counsellors interviewed: 'staff are often management and they want the people there to make the money rather than know that they're supposed to be there to give assistance if it's needed. They look at it being more a business proposition rather than somebody having a gambling problem' and 'I earn money at the club or the pub and here I've got somebody who wants to tell me they don't want to spend money at the pub. So it's an ethical dilemma'. Another comment here sums up the issue: 'they're scared that even if they do approach a patron that that patron probably won't come back, they'll just go to another venue'. The counsellor who had worked in a venue a few years earlier also noted that 'we were told, I don't care if the bar is unattended but the gaming room has to be attended and you have to look after the clients above all else because that's where our money is'.

- **Patron not venue responsibility**

In addition, the counsellors felt that staff struggle with whether the responsibility lies with the venue or the individual patron. Thus, one counsellor said 'some of the staff feel that it's just not their role to analyse whether people are actually having a problem or need help, that it's more for the patron to make the first move'. At times this has resulted in the staff to seeking counselling. Thus, 'they (venue management) are essentially saying you can't make those decisions for them, that you're invading their privacy if you're going to approach them and talk to them about this. I've had a number of staff members who have been coming to counselling'. One counsellor put the responsibility for this dilemma firmly back in the hands of the venue, saying 'some staff are resistant not only to approaching clients, but even to the notion that they should, and those people tend to be resistant to training as well. But I think it is part of the responsibility of the gaming industry, the people working in it, to bite that particular bullet'.

- **Staff are unsure or just don't care**

One counsellor raised the issue of conflicting advice given to venue staff in relation to approaching patrons of concern, where 'in their training they're told not to and we're telling that they should'. Another commented that 'a lot of them ... just don't care. A lot of them

might have an idea, but they're young and they don't care. They don't recognise the impact that it has on people's lives'.

- **Staff are apprehensive or afraid**

One counsellor who had previously worked in a gaming venue commented that 'it's a very difficult thing to do if someone's really quite distressed. They (staff) may even be frightened'. Additionally, many staff feel ill equipped to deal with patron reactions. Thus, it was recalled that 'it's fear a lot of the time on the part of venue staff like, if I approach him or her, how would I be seen by the patron and/or the venue staff, how would I be seen by those around me and am I really doing the right thing, am I saying the right thing?' Another comment also showed concern for venue staff, where 'I think we put a responsibility that's beyond them, on the average venue staff member, to have them going up and approaching problem gamblers. I don't think that's a reasonable, a fair ask of somebody that you're employing'.

6.4.3 The Experience for Clients

The counsellors had limited comments on their clients' experiences of being approached by venue staff, presumably because it appears to happen so rarely amongst this group of people. However, there were still some positive and negative experiences they were able to share.

- **Positive responses**

One counsellor had some examples of positive responses and outcomes in relation to staff approaching patrons of concern, saying:

'There are some staff who do keep quite a friendly eye on their patrons and who might say, come on Gladys, it's time you went home and got the tea and, don't you think you've had enough for one day? That sort of thing and do it in a very friendly and informal way within the context of a relationship that's been built up, and that's very well accepted I think.'

This counsellor also recalled 'there are some instances where there has been an act of intervention and referral as a result of a discussion that follows'. The example was given where:

'We had a case where a patron was .. becoming quite obstreperous ... they took him into an office and chatted with them for quite some time and suggest that he make contact with the Gambling Help service. He phoned me the next day and said we've referred so and so to you and we've even suggested that you might ring him and set up an appointment, which I did. So again that was I think a very responsible way of managing that client.'

- **Negative or unhelpful responses**

Many counsellors' comments gave the sense that a patron was approached only when the situation was desperate. For example, one counsellor recalled how a client had relayed how it occurred only when he had no money left. Thus, 'X had been there a long time, like hours, and spent a lot of money and not won anything and the staff members were actually giving them free drinks of alcohol'. Similarly, another commented 'they send them when they've spent all of their money. One woman in particular spent her whole unit there. She sold her unit, spent all her money and when she was in trouble, they send her here'.

6.4.4 What Staff Should do if Approaching a Patron

When asked what staff should do when approaching a patron, the counsellors had some clear and useful comments. These focused on being sensitive, building a relationship with the patron, referring the matter to senior staff, choosing the right time to approach, and building up a case.

- **Be sensitive and non-confrontational**

Counsellors' typical comments included: 'first of all they have to be discreet, sensitive, remain approachable, keep their voice low, all those inter-personal techniques that are subtle and helpful' and 'just approaching them and saying, can I help you at all, come and have a chat, would you like a cuppa, come and have a cuppa with me'. As another explained, 'from a client's welfare point of view, sitting and having a cup of coffee, getting away from the machine for 15 minutes or 30 minutes can be enough time to help a client move out of the moment and start thinking of the outcomes of their behaviour'. Another interviewee noted that:

'I don't think you can go there (talk about their gambling) straight up. I've been to Gamblers' Anonymous ... and they've all said if someone had tried to approach me before I was ready to recognise that I had a problem I would have told them to get lost in no uncertain terms and be very angry.'

One counsellor expressed the importance of sensitivity thus: 'people who may well and truly be in the depths of a gambling problem may not seek help, so having someone approach them in a sensitive and gentle way could be one of the triggers that opens up some awareness on the client's part'.

- **Build a relationship with patron**

Further advice from the counsellors was that 'staff should be able to build up a relationship with their patrons in such a way that they actually feel comfortable to be able to talk to them'. Another counsellor expanded on this by saying:

'Very much it would depend on the relationship. ... you've got a patron who's come in regularly and you've gotten to know them and it's part of your duty as staff person that you are told to bring them cups of tea. ... You build up quite a relationship. That's part of your job. It's to make small talk with them, to know about their families, to ask what's going on etc. and so if you had developed a good relationship with someone over a period of time, you'd feel a lot more comfortable to approach them and ask what's wrong. But if it's someone you don't know that well... it's very, very daunting. ... So just trying to pull out some of that; it's the relationship with the person, taking it gently.'

- **Referring to senior staff**

Several counsellors reflected that frontline staff should refer to senior staff or to the counselling agency. For example 'I think they should refer really, I don't think that it is the place of venue staff to go into it heavily with them. I think they should either discuss the option for self-exclusion and/or also ... refer them to us'

One interviewee suggested that the CLO should be informed, but that the frontline staff member is still in a good position to directly approach the patron, saying:

'First of all I think the general staff should actually approach their manager, who I think is much better off in approaching the person themselves, but then approaching them and saying, I've noticed that you've been playing for quite a while and it seems like you're a bit annoyed

at the machine or whatever else and maybe then saying why don't we go and have a coffee or something and have a chat about how it's going?'

- **Pick the 'best' time to approach**

One counsellor indicated a real concern for the safety of the staff person if they approach a patron, and actively discouraged it whilst the patron was still at the machine, but encouraged contact after this initial phase. This counsellor said:

'I'll always say to staff, don't approach the person who's feeling angry at the machine. You might get a punch in the nose. Wait for the time when you're actually seeing them slump down in the chair afterwards and feeling quite miserable afterwards because they've done all their cash and they've lost some of that aggression and they're actually in the kind of regret phase.'

- **Build up a case**

A useful suggestion was made about trying to gain the whole picture. Thus, a comment was made that:

'What we suggest they do is build up a case and have a look at the indicators put out by the OLGR and if you notice something in there, then you would approach the person and say, Bill, my staff are a bit worried about you, I'd like to have a chat to you. We've noticed this, this and this about you.'

6.5 COUNSELLOR RESPONSES ABOUT THIRD PARTY CONCERNS ABOUT PROBLEM GAMBLING

The counsellors were asked if they were aware of situations where family or friends of patrons had contacted venues about their problem gambling. All agreed this did occur, but not frequently.

6.5.1 The Experience for Clients

One counsellor was able to relay an example of both good and poor practice in dealing with this issue:

'A family member was concerned about another family member who was leaving her children either at the door of the venue or in the car outside the venue while she gambled. She was doing it at one of the local clubs and one of the local hotels. I encouraged the family member to approach both venues, which she was fairly shy about, but we decided that in fact I would approach them and she would follow it up.

The club was exemplary in their response. They said yes, we've noticed this person, we have seen the kids at the door from time to time, it's not a good look for us, we'll speak to her next time she comes in and give her a very clear warning that if this happens again we will take steps to bar her. They spoke to her, she got the message very quickly and it didn't happen again.

At the hotel, we went through the same process. The hotel's attitude was just diametrically opposite. They tried to deny that she was a regular customer, they denied that they'd ever seen the children in the vicinity. They denied that they had any duty of care. We went through the papers about third party exclusions and so on. I pointed out that in fact they did have a duty of care; we got into quite a hefty debate about this. I went to the Hotels Association, debated the matter with them. I got very little response, very little satisfactory response and took it to the Office of Gaming Regulation where it was still found that there was very little

that we could do to persuade the venue. So those are such dramatically different responses to the same set of circumstances’.

Other counsellors also provided anecdotes that emphasised the inherent difficulties of dealing with this situation. One told of a client’s partner who ‘had gone to the pub and spoken to them about it. ... They kind of told her there wasn’t too much they could do unless he came in and self-excluded. ... I think she thought she could get more assistance’. Another noted:

‘There has been very little that was offered as assistance, where they’ve said look, you really want to be excluding this person etc. They (the venue) regard it as an invasion of privacy etc and wouldn’t act on it. ... But that’s something the venue was not keen to take on board at all. They were told that’s not our thing and secondly it’s an issue of privacy.’

6.5.2 What Staff Should do if Approached by a Third Party

The counsellors were asked their professional opinions on what venue staff should do if approached by a third party concerned about a patron’s gambling. Their responses are summarised below according to numerous themes.

- **Treat with respect, provide information and refer**

All interviewees agreed the best course of action was to treat family members with respect, provide them with appropriate information and refer them to a counselling agency. This was clearly expressed in the following comment: ‘they should be supportive, they should give them the referrals, the information, the same sort of thing that they do for the patron; be sensitive, be aware, refer to us, give information, provide information about self-exclusions’. Another counsellor emphasised the potential benefits of the family attending counselling, as:

‘I think they need real understanding of what problem gambling is and what the limits of their responsibility are and what the venue can do or not do. I think roughly half/half of my clients, half are gamblers, half are family of gamblers and I think it can be very helpful to the family to gain some understanding.’

Similarly, another commented:

‘It is tough in terms of family members. In terms of privacy as well, I guess I would suggest that staff give the referrals to the Gambling Helpline and to us to discuss, to come in and talk about how they’re dealing with the gambling problem themselves, how it’s affecting them and what they could do to perhaps encourage their family member or loved one to come in and discuss it further and how they can perhaps cope with the stress as well.’

- **Monitor and apply a venue exclusion if needed**

There were some comments about monitoring the behaviour of the patron once this has occurred. Thus, ‘I think ... all they can do is add it to their log book as one more factor in deciding what they’re going to do about it. In conjunction with other evidence, I guess they do have to look at doing a venue exclusion to protect themselves’. Similarly, another commented ‘I think they should listen hard, respond sympathetically, offer to do some active monitoring, certainly offer to speak with the patron, keep their option of initiating a venue-based exclusion and see it through in terms of achieving a shift in that patron’s behaviour’. Another counsellor recalled a situation ‘over a three month period where the family member called a number of times and discussed their concerns around his mum. And what the venue did was they recorded all of the conversations that they’d had with him. They came in to see me. That’s good’.

- **Try to obtain the family member's permission to tell the patron**

The following comment indicates the need for sensitive consultation. Thus, one piece of advice was to:

‘... negotiate with a family member and say listen, next time they come in, is it alright for me to say that you've been in here talking to me? So get the family member's permission to say that the family member came in and have a chat with the person saying you've been spending a lot of money, is there an issue here? And give them the resources and say, if you need to talk to somebody, here's the Gambling Helpline.’

- **Privacy issues**

The issue of privacy for the patron is paramount in this situation and something venue staff need to be aware of. As noted earlier, privacy obligations make acting on a third party concern difficult for venues. As one counsellor noted:

‘I can understand the resistance up to a point because of people's fear of the privacy laws and so on, but I personally think that venues could undertake then to keep a bit of an eye on that person, not use that as grounds for a venue generated exclusion in itself. I do think clubs have a responsibility.’

Another counsellor noted that, even though family members might have a legitimate concern, ‘it's the person with the gambling problem who has to make the self-exclusion or the venue has to decide to exclude’.

6.6 COUNSELLOR RESPONSES ABOUT THE SELF-EXCLUSION PROCESS

The counsellors were asked about the self-exclusion process. Their comments are organised into several themes below.

6.6.1 Frequency of Clients Self-Excluding

Twelve of the counsellors said they had not had any clients who had self-excluded. Three had clients who had self-excluded prior to coming for counselling and four had clients who self-excluded following counselling, while the remainder had a mixture of these. The following comments support this: ‘most of them don't self-exclude’ and ‘it's rare. If I looked at all of my clients from the last few years and numerous, numerous clients, I would say 2-3 per cent have self-excluded. It really is in the minority’.

6.6.2 Barriers to Self-Exclusion

The counsellors identified several barriers to self-exclusion that help explain its low uptake amongst their clients.

- **Having to self-exclude from multiple venues on an individual basis**

Having to self-exclude from multiple venues on an individual basis is a big issue for many clients as shown by the following comments from counsellors. First, ‘it's too hard. They say, if I go to one then I have to go to three. It's at least doable where I am. It's a small town but there're still about 13 venues that you'd have to exclude from’. This clearly deters some clients, where ‘most of my clients don't want to do it because they just know they'll go somewhere else. I've had one who did self-exclude from every venue in Ipswich’, and ‘they have to do a whole big trek around different venues’. Knowing they can go to other venues leads patrons to doubt whether it is worthwhile, as ‘the clients fully realise even without

thinking about it, what the hell's the point? I will go straight down the road to the next nearest venue. And venues know this too'.

- **Shame and embarrassment**

Shame and embarrassment also deter clients from self-excluding. As one counsellor explained, 'it is daunting ... the shame factor for gambling is so much worse than alcohol or smoking ... the fact that you are so out of control that you're about to lose your house is so huge. Particularly with different cultures too. Some cultures are worse than others'. This counsellor continued with the following anecdote:

'I had a long term problem gambler on the phone the other day ... and he was saying he's full of shame now because he's excluded from a venue and now what the hell is he going to tell anyone when they say, let' go down for a drink or a meal or something, how's he going to survive that?'

- **Being known in the community**

The issue of embarrassment, especially in small towns, discourages clients from self-excluding. Thus, 'it's because it's embarrassing, because they happen to know the staff' and 'it's the small town thing – everyone knows you'.

- **Limited effectiveness of self-exclusion**

One counsellor's comments suggest that some clients are deterred from self-exclusion because they recognise its limits as an effective mechanism to stop them gambling, as 'most of them know it's not going to solve the problem but it's just going to put a few barriers up to help them in the process of getting over their gambling addiction'.

- **Self-exclusion seen as a sign of weakness**

According to a few counsellors, clients may also not choose self-exclusion because it is seen as a sign of weakness, where 'a lot of them tell me that they feel like it's weak to do it ... to self-exclude, that they should be able to control it themselves'. Another explained:

'When I raise it with clients, the usual response is, no I don't want to do that, I'd prefer to manage this myself, I'd be too embarrassed. So I try to make a contract with my client that if all else fails we will re-visit the self-exclusion issue. So we try and keep it on the table that's something that hasn't been ruled out, but I have to acknowledge their reticence in the first instance.'

- **Staff being unclear about the self-exclusion process**

Three counsellors commented they thought the patron was discouraged when staff were not clear about processes to follow in implementing self-exclusion. Thus, 'sometimes staff don't know what to do. They don't know where to find the forms, they don't know how to fill them out' and 'people do their RSG training and because exclusions are rare events, they're not called on to do them often and they lose that, they've got a vague idea on how to do it, but they lose the detail'.

- **Having to exclude themselves from all parts of the venue.**

Mentioned by seven counsellors, some clients feel they do not want to be excluded from the whole venue, especially in small towns, yet some venues reportedly discourage exclusion from only one area of the venue. As one counsellor noted, 'if you go out for dinner you're going out to a hotel. Pub meals are what we get here. There's the misconception too that they can't go there and drink, they can't go there and eat, they can't go to that pub if they do self-

exclude'. Another confirmed this by saying 'they get concerned about excluding from the whole venue. They say, where are we going to go when we go out to tea because there aren't venues without pokies or without gambling?'

6.6.3 The Experience for Clients

The counsellors were asked about the client's experiences of the self-exclusion process. Nine counsellors made positive comments, such as 'they come back and say that the venues were really quite nice with them, they handled it well' and 'the staff said things like well done, congratulations'. Similarly, another said:

'Some of them reported it has been handled with a great amount of sensitivity, having approached the venue feeling quite awkward and embarrassed. (They) have been met with genuine sympathy and concern, have been treated with dignity, have been encouraged to follow it through, have been quite actively told that I admire you for the steps that you've taken, I think it's a great thing you're doing, so there have been some clients who have been quite surprised by how well they've been responded to.'

However, some clients had clearly encountered negative experiences with the process. For example, one counsellor recalled:

'I had one client recently who was quite angry because she excluded from a number of venues and it took a lot of effort and she was really pleased with herself, and she only excluded from the gaming room at a large venue nearby because she used to go there with girlfriends for lunch and the venue turned around and said no, you're excluded from the whole venue. She hadn't told her friends she has a problem and now she's in this really difficult situation where she can't walk into the venue.'

Another counsellor recalled that 'one client said to me one of the worst parts of trying to give up gambling was the phone calls, because the casino kept on ringing them to try and entice them to come back in. And then they get things in the post and stuff like that as well'.

One interviewee noted that some clients 'have reported that the venue didn't have the paperwork, didn't understand what the procedure was meant to be, said come back tomorrow and even then didn't seem to have sorted themselves out and had made it quite awkward for the patron'. One counsellor described how they have assisted the process: 'we've actually developed a checklist for them that they can sit beside the flow chart and sit there and tick off what they've got to tell them and what they've got to do'.

One vivid experience was recounted, where:

'I've had a case where the person had come in after having previously made an appointment with the gaming manager,. They were greeted by, I think it was probably the bar manager, who said in full voice and full hearing of all the crowd in the bar, oh you're that loser who wants to quit gambling are you?'

Similarly, another counsellor recalled 'one case where the person went to the venue. The manager of the venue stood in front of him with the completed self-exclusions form that the patron had handed in. He tore it up and threw it and said, we don't do those here. Go away. That's probably one of the worst'.

6.6.4 Effectiveness of Exclusion

The overwhelming majority of the counsellors considered self-exclusion to be helpful for clients, one was unsure and one thought it was not helpful at all.

Of those counsellors who considered self-exclusion useful, some indicative comments were as follows: ‘most of them are dancing on air when they come out. They feel that it’s a really positive step. Most of them say they feel a lot lighter, they’re very happy about it’; ‘that was the day she turned the corner. That’s when she was really taking it seriously and working to stop gambling; and ‘I think self-exclusion is a massive tool for people, I really do. I do think that’s a make or break thing if they’re prepared to do that. It can really, really be a deciding factor’. Even if self-exclusion may not always prevent clients from accessing gambling, it was still considered valuable as ‘it would provide a psychological safety net around them I think. That they would think okay, I’m excluded now, I can’t go into those places and maybe that would be a real psychological boost in them’.

However one counsellor did not believe it helped clients and said:

‘I personally think that if you need to self-exclude it’s a bit of a cop out. I think it’s great for people who seriously have an illness and really can’t stop gambling, but I think to truly stamp out that addiction you need to do that on your own without excluding yourself from venues. I think you’re better off in the long run. I think you’ve got less chance of having a relapse if you don’t self-exclude and you overcome it yourself.’

Another issue raised was the effectiveness of monitoring for breaches of self-exclusion. Clearly, the process is not foolproof. One counsellor recalled clients who had self-excluded but managed to return and gamble in the venue unnoticed: ‘I’ve had three clients here that have self-excluded from venues in the area and they’ve gone back into the venues that they’ve self-excluded from and continued to gamble’. Similarly, another counsellor recalled ‘they’ve even identified that the staff member who did the self-exclusion with them has seen them in there and not approached them’.

Venue exclusions were not greatly commented upon by the counsellors, but one did say that:

‘Venue exclusions are probably largely a waste of time. I think first of all the person can of course go to the appeals process and that could involve the venue in a court battle or whatever. Even if they are successful, the venues know full-well the first thing a person will do is go down the road, they’ll bad-mouth the venue and they’ll go and gamble in another 140-something venues on the Gold Coast.’

6.6.5 Improvements to Exclusion

Counsellors had some clear ideas about how the process could be improved. One area was being able to self-exclude without going to the venue or remote exclusion, whereby ‘you can just self-exclude, people can download it on the computer’. Another explained this more fully, saying:

‘If it was something for example where you download it, a form off the internet, posted it to a venue so you didn’t have to go there. They sign it and send it back or you sign it, I don’t know. ... Making it more anonymous so you don’t actually have to go in there. That seems to be the barrier, the shame factor, the shyness, the personality, whatever it is, they just will not go in there and do that.’

An alternative is to be able to organise self-exclusion through a counsellor where ‘they should be able to do it through places like a Gambling Help service, where we act as an agent to do it and people come here, we explain it and then go give the paperwork to the venue so clients don’t actually have to go to the venue’. Another counsellor explained this would also facilitate excluding from multiple venues, saying ‘to me it would seem I’m the ideal facilitator to co-ordinate that. To come in here for counselling, bring your self-exclusion stuff and I get that out to all the venues. ... that would be perfect. They wouldn’t have to front up 13 times to 13 people’.

While one suggestion was to organise self-exclusion through a counsellor, as described above, another was for counsellors to be involved in self-exclusion at the venue. One interviewee who had been involved in this way noted ‘I really like the idea of this one CLO who did invite us along’.

Another area for improvement raised was in the training of staff in the self-exclusion process. As one counsellor explained:

‘... just the training of the staff. So that they know immediately and know to take someone away if they are approached ... where do we go with this person now to get private if I’m not the CLO, is the CLO around? In reality to know that if the CLO is not around, they should deal with it on the spot because people have screwed up their courage so much to get there and if they’re told to come back in two hours, you won’t see them again. And just making sure that they know the process well. Because something comes like that so rarely and out of the blue. If you haven’t got used it, with any skill, they’ll think, oh. What to do? And forget one stamp and forget to send them to me.’

Finally, there was a suggestion for improving monitoring for breaches of self-exclusion where ‘every venue should have a camera’.

6.7 INTERACTION BETWEEN COUNSELLING AGENCIES AND VENUES

The counsellors were asked about the quality and frequency of their interaction with gaming venues.

6.7.1 Frequency of Counsellor Interaction with Gaming Venues

Eleven of the counsellors had some contact with venues either in relation to training or liaison, while the remainder had no contact. This latter group had dedicated community education officers within their agency who took on this role. Frequency of contact with venues varied, as indicated by the following comments: ‘I don’t think they really want to see us every five seconds. We try and make sure we see them, the bigger ones ... at least every six months and the smaller ones we only see every year’; ‘we keep in touch with them like two to three times a year with personal visits’; ‘I do roughly 30 every six months’; ‘we have a goal of reaching every venue or visiting every venue twice a year’; and ‘I try and make contact at least twice a year with each venue in this region’.

6.7.2 Positive and Negative Aspects of Counsellor Interaction with Gaming Venues

• Positive aspects

The majority of comments reflected good relationships and interactions. Thus, one counsellor said that the relationship was ‘quite good actually’ and in relation to clubs ‘I would tend to say the clubs are more welcoming. And I guess that is also (because) they’re not run for individual profit whereas hotels of course are’.

One counsellor commented on the purpose for building the relationship in saying ‘it’s really just up to us. And we sometimes do a venue survey and ask them how they like to be approached whether they want to approach us or we approach them. Usually they’re happy for either. We just go and we say look, we’re here to support you’. Another expressed a similar sentiment, noting ‘we’re not the gambling police, we’re here to help them in any way we can and they normally respond very well’. Another said ‘we see each other as partners in assisting people who have got problems rather than as in opposition’.

- **Negative aspects**

There were some rather strong comments made about the difficulties of maintaining good relationships with venues. Some venues seem just not interested in maintaining contact with gambling support agencies. As one interviewee expressed it, ‘some venues are not really interested in talking to us at all and they say it’s a voluntary code, and we don’t have to follow it’ and from another counsellor ‘a lot of them ... they just don’t care. A lot of them might have an idea, but they’re young and they don’t care. They don’t recognise the impact that it has on people’s lives’.

The quality and extent of agency-venue interaction appears to ‘depend on the manager’. One counsellor expanded on this, saying ‘you get certain individual staff members who are very caring and very motivated and understanding and you get others that are not and don’t care or on the contrary see our role perhaps as trying to take the bread out of their mouth’. Another noted the effort made to ‘try and build up the personal relationship with the staff, although in some cases that’s a different person every six months which is a bit frustrating, you’ve got to start from scratch all over again’.

The issue of ‘gambling police’ was raised by two counsellors, one of whom said ‘I get a sense that they see us as maybe checking up on them’. This was reiterated by another who noted ‘some venues are really lukewarm about our trying to have a relationship with them because they view us as the gambling police or that we’re trying to minimise their revenue’. One counsellor felt quite strongly about the resistance encountered in one regional area and commented that:

‘Staff in (a large regional town) are very resistant to the Gambling Help service from my experience so far. ... a lot of the smaller pubs for example, because they make their money from these machines and from the gaming industry; the bigger venues are a little bit more helpful and they’ll be more sort of inclined to have us go and meet their staff. A lot of these smaller pubs, this is where they know the people and that’s another reason why they don’t want to do it because they don’t want to upset their clients. Because all the business is the client and if he gets suspended and doesn’t come back to their venue’

Finally, one other counsellor did say, somewhat cynically, that ‘I don’t think they particularly care. They put on the whole, oh yes we’re really concerned about our patrons and it’s great that you’re there and we’d love to see you do a presentation. I think it’s all just for show’.

6.7.3 Types of Agency Interaction with Gaming Venues

The counsellor interviewees identified several types of services provided by their agencies to gaming venues.

- **Provide printed materials about local services**

As one interviewee explained, ‘I try and make sure that they have a good supply of brochures and cards and encourage them to make these available’.

- **Be a contact for venues for advice**

One counsellor, who obviously has a very good relationship with some venues, provided two examples of providing advice. First, he noted he ‘often gets people who ring me saying we’re doing an exclusion now, I just want to check and make sure we’re going through it alright’. Second, he recalled when ‘this guy was going playing the pokies and the partner turned up and said could they please ban him because it wasn’t good for the family. So the venue rang

me up and said could I come down to have a conference with her and so act as a mediator. I went down (there)’.

- **Be a contact for venues to refer patrons to**

Within this role, one counsellor stressed the importance of building a relationship with venue staff as:

‘I don’t think there’s anything that takes the place of that personal contact over time and the building up of confidence, because I genuinely believe that the referrals happen on a person to person basis rather than an organisation to organisation basis. A venue manager or CLO is much more likely to refer somebody that they’ve met and have a relationship with. So that relationship building is the cornerstone I think.’

- **Organise patron self-exclusions**

As one counsellor noted, ‘most of the people who we help are excluded or we facilitate an exclusion for them’ and ‘we’ve actually developed a checklist for them (venues) that they can sit beside the flow chart and sit there and tick off what they’ve got to tell them and what they’ve got to do’.

- **Responsible gambling networks**

One counsellor explained that:

‘What we’re trying to do here ... is to set up a local gambling network and get the CLOs together a couple of times a year for a meeting where they can kind of encourage each other on issues of best practice and I believe that’s been going quite well on the Gold Coast and in Brisbane. So certainly we’d like to see that sort of thing happening so again, we can push along that culture shift so that it becomes a much more general thing to be responsive to problem gamblers.’

- **Provide training sessions for staff**

This is discussed in the next section.

6.7.4 Training Venue Staff

The counsellors were asked about their involvement with training staff in venues. Their responses are organised below to reflect the content of the training they have conducted and suggestions for improvement. Ten of the counsellors were directly involved in training of staff in venues.

Training content

This was provided by the counsellors in five main areas.

- **Communication skills**

According to all counsellors involved with training, one of the main elements is communication skills training. As one explained, ‘we’ll be training them in communication and active listening skills, but we’ll be also dealing with some of the ethical dilemmas that have come up with even problem gamblers who are staff members’. Another noted the training covers how to:

‘... be discreet, be aware and talk to the patron, address the behaviour displayed, don’t diagnose, if in doubt get your CLO or manager, important to stay calm, let them tell you

what's happening then you can suggest help, speak in a soothing low voice and always keep yourself safe.'

- **How to approach and work with vulnerable patrons**

Background information on problems experienced by vulnerable patrons was seen as an important element of training. According to one counsellor:

'I really like to bring a bit of stuff about how people get involved with gambling problems, what happens to them. I think it's really good to refresh their memory so they actually start looking ... instead of blindly going about their job. But I also think the newer staff need to be taught a bit of this stuff and I think the other staff need to be refreshed a bit.'

- **Provision of agency information**

The importance of providing clear information regarding counselling was emphasised: 'we all talk about the different help services that are available so it's not just us. There's a 24-hour line, the other services we offer'.

- **Exclusion training**

One counsellor noted 'I offer exclusions training; some people take it up. I just go there, spend a little bit less than an hour, get as many staff as we can, run through the checklist and the flowchart and don't go into the detail about it, but this is what you say, this is what you do and this is how you go about it, and tell your boss'. The need for this is emphasised by the following example, where:

'Recently we had a venue where a woman turned up and I got a phone call from her and she was saying to me: look, they're telling me here I've got to come and see you before I can exclude. I said where are you? And she said I'm down at such and such a venue. I said do you mind if I come down? And she said, no. So I came down, went and grabbed the manager who has a good relationship with us and I told him and he said, who did that? And we pointed to the guy and he said, oh my God, look we're having a staff meeting next Monday, can you come and run across the exclusions. I went and did that with all the staff.'

- **Signs of problem gambling**

It seems fairly common to also address indicators of problem gambling. Referring to this, one counsellor noted 'when we have the opportunity to contribute we spend quite a lot of time around those issues'.

Improvements in training

When asked about areas that could be improved in the training of venue staff, there were several useful suggestions provided.

- **Approaching clients**

One counsellor noted that one improvement needed was 'a little bit more about their manner, how to approach with that sensitivity, that confidentiality, that respect for the person regardless'.

- **Frequency of training**

The following comments indicate a need for more frequent training:

'I guess the number one is the regularity of training and the availability I suppose, because we provide free training and our training is designed to complement what goes on in CLO

training and RSG and Gaming Nominee training. So I guess increasing the frequency and availability of training might be one way.'

There was also a suggestion that refresher training was important where 'they could train their staff, have refreshers every six months' and 'it could be skills tested, like maybe after three months they go through a review process where they are actually questioned about their knowledge on, for example, self-exclusion and the practice standards for gambling'.

- **Extending training to more staff**

A few counsellors raised the need for training to be extended to more staff. One provided the following anecdote to illustrate this need:

'We had a couple of staff members from here go down and do their CLO training recently and they had no idea that I existed and I suppose that's why I've restarted going around to the venues again saying, look I've spoken to your manager, I've spoken to your CLOs, but your staff on the ground don't know that I exist so you're not telling them. Can I come to a staff meeting and meet everybody and talk to them about what I do? Even though you may have been in touch with the manager or the CLO or the head CLO if there're a number of them, it's not being passed down and the ordinary staff don't get trained properly as far as I know.'

According to another counsellor, this is compounded by 'the simple fact of regular staff turnover, so ... you've got new people coming onto the floor fairly regularly'.

- **Dealing with effects on themselves**

One counsellor thought that venue staff need assistance in being aware of how to deal with their own issues. As one explained, 'there isn't really anything that's designed to assist them from a personal point of view into how they deal with the effects of working in a venue where they may see the effects of problem gambling on their patrons'.

- **Providing information on mental illness**

One counsellors advocated for the training to include:

'... some information about mental illness and how to perhaps recognise somebody who might not be operating in the full cognitive way. The might pick up on some of the symptoms of depression and all that sort of stuff and then maybe question and bring a little bit of that into play, whether finding out whether they're on medication and whether they are receiving assistance and all that sort of stuff. Because I've had people who are severely depressed and under medication, schizophrenics who are under psychiatric care and they're just taken by the machines.'

- **Using DVDs in training**

One of the counsellors is making a DVD to use in training, explaining that:

'We're in the process of getting a DVD together and working with Channel 7. They're doing the interviews for us of problem gamblers and others in the field and we've got a woman who's a former casino employee in NZ who left the industry because of the dilemma she faced of the problem gamblers.'

6.8 BEST PRACTICES IN ASSISTING PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

The counsellors were very vocal in highlighting either instances of good practice within venues or suggesting ways that practices could be improved. Their responses are organised into several themes.

- **Regional Responsible Gambling Networks**

Local or regional responsible gambling networks had already been established in Brisbane and the Gold Coast at the time of the interviews, and were in the process of being established on the Sunshine Coast. As noted earlier, one counsellor articulated the benefits of this and how it can encourage best practice. As well as CLOs, venue managers, gambling counsellors, government representatives and other stakeholders are involved in the existing networks.

- **Responsible Gambling Awareness Week activities**

One counsellor commented on the agency's community education processes, saying:

‘We have a barefoot bowls day during the Responsible Gambling Awareness Week and we invite people from the venues to come and so we mix a bit of social activity with serious business and we have a bowls day which is basically the help service and we also invite the QOGR representatives and invite local venues from clubs, pubs, casino, UniTab.’

- **Ensuring venue staff know the counsellors**

One interviewee commented:

‘I think it's great when the managers want us to come and actually get to know their staff so they know who to refer people to. I think that's really important. There's nothing better than knowing the person you're going to refer somebody to. As well as some good feedback we had last time, we're so thrilled that they all feel really confident referring people to you.’

- **Agency assessment of venue practices**

One interviewee provided the following ‘example of best practice ... where they invited us, the Gambling Help service, to come in and to work through their procedures with them and with us looking at them from the point of view of what effect that would be having on someone who may have a gambling problem’.

- **Assistance to self-exclude from other venues**

There was one instance of best practice commented upon in relation to this issue, where:

‘There was one little town ... who actually, on the exclusion forms, got them to tick a box (in response to) would you like us to help you contact and make an appointment for you at the other venues in town? and about four of the venues got together so one client had excluded and they'd pick up the phone and say look, I've got such and such here, if they gave permission, can we make an appointment for them to come in and see you? They agreed to do that. That was a great process, I really liked that.’

- **Problem gambling literature available in the toilets**

Another area that was commented on by many counsellors was the availability and placing of pamphlets and forms within the venue. One noted ‘I've had venues where they've put some of their brochures in the toilets and they said they're always re-stocking those and the ones that are out near the cashier, they'll just sit there forever. People take them when nobody's watching them’. Another concurred, saying ‘sometimes they may not pick that brochure up in public view, but they might quietly pick it up if it's not conspicuous what they're doing’.

- **Customised signage and cards**

Some examples of good practice were noted in this area. One was reported as where ‘they've taken the initiative to print on the back of the club card the Gambling Helpline number. That's an example of best practice’. The second related to:

‘One large club here on the coast who actually, we collaborated with them, to design special help service cards that go on each machine and they’ve actually agreed to put those cards on all the poker machines in the venue, so that is going well and truly above and beyond the requirements of the Code.’

- **Counselling at the venue**

Two counsellors suggested counselling should be available at the venue and noted a specific project that had been successful in initiating this, where:

‘One of the rural clubs in our zone here in central Queensland, actually worked with our worker in Gladstone to negotiate for her to be available in the venue once a month for counselling and for venue staff referral and for assessments in responsible gambling matters, and that was a co-operative that worked very, very well.’

The second counsellor reported ‘I think it was Lifeline that has Gambling Help in (a regional centre) and there was an article in the paper that they’ve got an in-house gambling counsellor who is there (in a venue) certain times of the week’. A third interviewee told of a venue which:

‘... initiated discussions with us about the possibility of locating a counsellor on their premises because they’d heard that was happening in another region and they suggested that we both might follow up on this and see if that was a possibility at their venue. So there’s a good example of the venue being pro-active.’

- **Refer to counselling before exclusion**

One instance of good practice related to patrons being referred to counselling prior to initiating a formal self-exclusion, where there is ‘a process in place where they are directed to go to counselling before they suspend them. Let’s say suspend them for three weeks until they go to counselling and work through this’.

- **Provide debriefing for venue staff**

One counsellor considered another example of best practice to be at:

‘...one venue ... because we’ve got a good relationship with them, they had a series of issues with staff where there was quite a lot of personal trauma in the lives of staff members that had walked into the organisation. They invited our relationship counsellor ... to conduct a critical incident de-briefing and that was on the basis of the relationship that we’d built up over time. And I think it was that kind of relationship, these sort of things are going to happen more frequently.’

6.9 OTHER WAYS VENUES CAN ASSIST PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN THE VENUE

The counsellors had numerous suggestions for additional ways, not already discussed, that venues can assist problem gamblers.

- **Build patron histories**

One interviewee advocated for venues:

‘... to build a history. It’s a bit like what child safety do ... I suggested venues should be doing that, staff should be encouraged to write incident reports which is part of the procedures for the Code of Practice and whatever worries them, whatever gives them an

internal emotional tug and the CLO should look at that and the management should act on it if they think it's appropriate.'

- **Individual case management**

Some interviewees were firmly in favour of individual case management after patrons return from self-exclusion. One counsellor explained this might involve:

'... a consent to monitor, so if a client comes back and says, look I want to come back in. And you say that last year you told me that you had a problem, what's happening this year, are you seeing a counselling service, whatever? We'll let you back on the understanding that you don't cause yourself or anybody else or the community trouble and we want to monitor you. We want you to sign a Consent to Monitor form which is an OLGR form and you can put conditions of re-entry on them, which is another form, which might be that you're only allowed to play poker machines with your loyalty card in.'

- **Encourage or enforce breaks in play**

One counsellor suggested they ought to have a 'smoko break for the poker machines every couple of hours. They should turn them off for about 10 minutes and people simply to get a bit of breath of fresh air before they start hitting the buttons again. Getting a little bit of clarity'.

- **Excluding from multiple venues**

The issue of patrons needing to self-exclude from multiple venues was high on the agenda with 17 of the counsellors commenting on the need for this to be changed. The following comments represent these views: 'I would like to see the provisions for territorial or blanket exclusions in Queensland' and 'a more regionally-based exclusion system so that a person can exclude from the nearest three or four postcodes would be one solution'. One counsellor suggested a central place for all exclusions to occur, saying 'it would be wonderful if we could be on a terminal in a neutral place like at the RA (Relationships Australia) offices and just enter in a form on the computer that electronically gets sent out to all the venues'.

- **Separating gaming areas**

Two counsellors suggested a formal partitioning of gaming areas, where 'all gaming rooms should be walled off. They shouldn't allow any of these open plan, gaming rooms should be screened from the rest of the venue, they should put a big wall up around the lot of them rather than have them so they funnel people through'. Another said:

'I think the pokie rooms in venues shouldn't be the first thing that you see when you come in the door but on the other hand it's possibly not a good thing to have them hidden away too much either. I'm not sure what the best answer to that one is. Maybe it's better if they're fully open to the street so people's neighbours can see them.'

- **Amount of signage needs to be proportional to the number of machines**

The number of signs was questioned by one counsellor who said 'if I've got 280 poker machines in a venue, I only have to have the exact same amount of signage, responsible gambling signage, as a venue that has eight machines'. Clearly, this interviewee felt larger venues needed more signage.

- **More information on self-exclusion**

The issue of being able to access self-exclusion information readily was commented upon, with one interviewee noting that ‘exclusion brochures ... if they were there more readily available that would be a good idea as well’.

- **Mandatory not voluntary code of practice**

There were strong feelings about the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice* being mandatory. This was mentioned by 15 of the counsellors. One said ‘that’s something that I feel quite strongly about. If the Code of Practice was made mandatory, I think that there would be a fair deal more collaboration’. It was felt that consequences needed to be in place for breaching the Code, hence the need for a mandatory code. As one counsellor said, ‘at the moment, if they breach their responsibilities, that’s an ambiguous, ill-defined notion with no real consequences for the venue licensee’. Similarly, another commented:

‘It probably comes back to a code of conduct that actually has some consequences attached for complying with the mandatory or the voluntary code of conduct, so that venue managers can trust that other venue managers are going to be doing the same stuff, so that they’re not going to be unequally disadvantaged around their responsible service provision.’

Yet another said ‘the only way that people like that will ever learn a lesson is to be hit with a substantial fine, which of course not always possible when you have a voluntary code’.

- **Patrons taking control of self-exclusion process**

Due to issues of embarrassment and fears of breaches of confidentiality, most counsellors suggested that patrons should be able to access self-exclusion documents away from the venue. There was one instance of this occurring which was commented upon as an example of best practice where:

‘With some pretty basic technology, they had the letters to the clubs on a template form on their computers in the office, they had a camera, they could take the photo, print it out on the letter, print the letter out with all the details that are needed in the office while the client was open to the idea and it could actually send it to the venue so that the person didn’t actually have to front up at all and obviously that letter could be sent to multiple numbers of venues as well.’

- **Removal of cooling off period**

Two counsellors suggested the cooling off period for self-exclusion should be reviewed and possibly removed. Thus, ‘I think once a person reaches a point of deciding they want to self-exclude, why are we giving them 24 hours to change their mind?’.

- **Conduct surveys in venues**

It was suggested that counselling agencies could ‘go into the venue and conduct a survey in the venue of the patrons, in terms of their gambling habits and make venues and their patrons available for surveys because we would then pick up what is really happening with people who are gambling’.

- **To have an ID card**

The subject of an ID card was raised, with one interviewee advocating that ‘people, before they go into the gaming room, everybody has an ID’. Presumably, this would assist in monitoring for breaches of self-exclusion.

- **Limiting number of machines**

One counsellor commented on the number of gaming machines, saying ‘I can see that the Queensland Government has put a cap on the number of poker machines, but my concern is there are still way too many. Let’s talk about cutting back’.

6.10 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the results of the interviews with the 23 Gambling Help counsellors from across Queensland. The next chapter summarises and analyses the results of the study according to each of the five research objectives.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RESULTS FOR EACH RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research project was to examine how, and how appropriately, frontline staff and CLOs respond to and assist patrons with gambling problems in Queensland hotels and clubs, and how venues interact with local gambling support services to provide this assistance. It also aimed to identify gaps in relevant staff skills, knowledge and responsible gambling training, any other facilitators and barriers to providing appropriate assistance, and best practice examples where possible. These aims were expressed as five research objectives. The data are now analysed in this chapter in relation to each of these objectives.

Of note is that this chapter combines the results for the hotel and club personnel. This is due to extensive similarities in the findings from the interviews with 29 hotel and 26 club CLOS, and with 25 hotel and 23 club staff. Also of note is that this chapter is informed by the practices and procedures used in the three Queensland casinos involved in this study. As explained in Chapter Three, the original intention was not to include the casinos, as previous reviews of the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice* had identified any deficiencies as occurring more in the hotel and club sectors. However, the research team considered it valuable to take the opportunity, when offered, to interview the Responsible Gambling Manager and four Responsible Gambling Liaison Officers from the Tabcorp casinos in Queensland. Thus, this chapter considers the results from the casino interviews, but mainly in comparison to the results for the hotels and clubs.

7.2 OBJECTIVES ONE AND TWO: CURRENT PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES IN HOTELS AND CLUBS

Sections 7.3 to 7.5 summarise and analyse the research results for the first two research objectives. These were:

- to examine the current practices and procedures followed by Queensland hotel and club staff and CLOs for problem gamblers with different levels of disclosure - when a) a patron directly requests assistance for a gambling problem, b) a patron verbally hints at a gambling problem and/or shows observable signs of possible problem gambling but does not request assistance and c) a family member or close friend of a patron indicates that the patron has a gambling problem.
- to identify strengths and weaknesses in these current practices and procedures a) as experienced by the venue staff themselves, b) as experienced by patrons who have excluded from a venue, c) by comparing them to those recommended in the Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice and associated training materials, and d) by comparing them to those recommended by Queensland gambling counsellors.

Results pertaining to these two research objectives are now discussed in relation to each scenario associated with the three levels of disclosure. However, of note is that it was not possible to identify strengths and weaknesses as experienced by patrons who have excluded from a venue due to a lack of responses from this cohort. However, some experiences of problem gamblers were conveyed *via* the interviews with gambling counsellors.

7.3 SCENARIO ONE: WHEN A PATRON DIRECTLY REQUESTS ASSISTANCE FOR A GAMBLING PROBLEM

This section summarises and discusses the research results in relation to scenario one, which is when a patron directly requests assistance with a gambling problem from venue CLOs or staff.

7.3.1 Procedures Used by CLOs in Hotels and Clubs

The CLOs reported that the frequency of being approached by a patron for assistance with a gambling problem varies, but overall it is infrequent and unpredictable with no discernable pattern of occurrence. Both hotel and club CLOs identified four types of responses they use.

- The most common response, followed by all hotel and club CLOs, is to identify self-exclusion as an option for the patron. Some just note this as an option first and then provide more details if the patron wants to know. Others explain the entire procedure so the patron can make a more informed decision. Several CLOs noted the importance of privacy and discretion for the patron. In some cases, a patron approach entails a specific request for self-exclusion and in others, patrons have been to counselling first and advised to self-exclude and to bring photographs with them. In other cases, counsellors accompany the patron to the venue to self-exclude. More rarely, gambling support agencies bring the documentation to the venue without the patron attending. In most cases, it appears that venue personnel help the person complete the self-exclusion paperwork on the spot, but in others the patron is given the paperwork and asked to complete it and bring it back to the venue. A few CLOs appeared to think that the 24-hour cooling-off period means that patrons have to wait 24 hours before they can complete and lodge the self-exclusion documentation with the venue.
- The next most common response by both hotel and club CLOs is to provide the patron with counselling information, such as brochures, wallet cards and the like. Agencies mentioned included the Gambling Helpline, Gamblers Anonymous and various local agencies. A few CLOs offer to organise an appointment with the agency for the patron.
- It is common for both hotel and club CLOs to first have a general conversation with the patron to build rapport, find out the nature of the problem, offer advice and outline options available. These include counselling options, the helpline, self-exclusion and individual monitoring. Some make a point of congratulating the patron on taking this first step of acknowledging a problem and asking for assistance.
- Three hotel CLOs and two club CLOs offer to monitor the patron with their consent. One hotel CLO has developed a system for this, where patrons can set time and expenditure limits on their gambling, which the venue then reminds them of if they exceed these. The others do not seem to have such a structured system in place but just keep a watch on the person's gambling and perhaps suggest self-exclusion if the person's gambling remains problematic.

In practice, most CLOs use a combination of the above approaches, generally beginning by having a conversation with the patron to find out more about the issue, then outlining options available, giving them counselling contacts and proceeding with self-exclusion if the patron wishes to do this. A small minority of CLOs also offer to monitor the patron with their consent.

7.3.2 Procedures Used by Staff in Hotels and Clubs

The experience of being approached by patrons for assistance with a gambling problem varies considerably amongst the hotel and club staff, but overall, this is not a frequent occurrence for them. Some staff have never experienced this, while others noted the irregularity of this occurring. Both hotel and club staff identified five types of responses to patrons who approach them to ask for assistance with a gambling problem.

- The most common response is to identify self-exclusion as an option for the patron. Some staff are empowered to organise a self-exclusion themselves even though they are not the CLO and have not completed CLO training. They appear to be very much guided by the self-exclusion materials and flow-charts provided to venues. Other staff are assisted by a CLO or manager when they conduct a self-exclusion. Others refer a self-exclusion directly to a CLO or manager. In other cases, patrons arrive at the venue with the completed paperwork and photographs in hand. One hotel takes an alternative approach by contacting a counselling agency who then organises the self-exclusion paperwork, with the patron then bringing this back to the venue with a photograph. Some staff also related how they help to encourage patrons who have self-excluded only from the gambling areas to stay out of these areas.
- The second most common response for club staff and the fourth most common for hotel staff is to refer the patron to a more senior person in the venue, either the CLO, duty manager or general manager. However, this procedure varies from providing counselling information and asking the patron to make an appointment to see the senior person, to calling the CLO or manager to meet with the patron there and then. If the senior person is not available, the staff might call the manager to come in or try to assist the patron themselves. Some staff ask the person to fill in the self-exclusion forms while waiting for the manager or CLO.
- The third most common response for club staff and the second most common for hotel staff is to first provide counselling information to the patron, before providing information about self-exclusion if that is considered necessary or requested by the patron, or before calling the CLO or manager. However, other staff limit their response to providing counselling information only, by giving the patron a brochure, card and/or other printed material.
- The third most common response amongst the hotel staff and a practice followed by only a few club staff is to start by engaging the patron in a conversation to find out more about the issue, then to offer them advice and explain their options of self-exclusion, calling the Gambling Helpline and/or contacting a local counselling agency. Some are then empowered to proceed with self-exclusion if that is requested by the patron, while others call a more senior person to do this.
- A small minority of hotel and club staff gave examples of active case management of individual patrons who have asked them for assistance with gambling issues. Amongst club staff, this included walking a patron to her car every Sunday after bingo so she is not tempted to play the poker machines; encouraging an at-risk patron to take all their winnings by cheque; and offering to stop the person from gambling when they come to the club if requested by that person. Amongst the hotel staff, two examples of this individualised approach were given, namely to stop patrons changing money to gamble with or by otherwise deterring them from gambling when they visit the venue, if so requested by those patrons.

From the results above, it is apparent that four types of responses by the staff are the same as for the CLOs – self-exclusion, providing counselling information, a general conversation with the patron, and monitoring – but the staff also reported the option of referring the matter to the CLO or more senior person. However, it was surprising that only about one-fifth of the hotel staff and two-fifths of the club staff noted their first response would be to do this. This may partially reflect that eight of the 25 hotel staff and seven of the 23 club staff interviewed were in supervisory positions and so felt more empowered to decide what response was appropriate for the patron. This appeared to be more common amongst the hotel respondents. It may be that the smaller staff numbers typically found in hotels means there is less division of duties, more empowerment of individual staff, fewer senior people or CLOs and times when there may be no senior person on site.

There certainly appeared more variation amongst the staff responses to a patron approaching them for assistance than amongst their CLOs. While all CLOs identified self-exclusion as an option for a patron who requested assistance, it is concerning that some frontline staff who do not refer the patron to a more senior person appear to neglect to tell such patrons about this option.

7.3.3 Strengths and Weaknesses Experienced by Hotel and Club CLOs

This section summarises strengths and weaknesses of the practices and procedures reportedly used by the CLOs to assist patrons who directly ask for assistance with a gambling problem.

Strengths

Overall, both the hotel and club CLOs were confident they know what procedures they will follow when a patron approaches them to ask for assistance with a gambling problem. The vast majority are able to identify a range of options for the patron, including self-exclusion and information about a variety of counselling agencies. The majority of hotel and club CLOs noted they respect the patron's privacy by dealing with the issue discreetly and in a secluded area away from the gaming floor. Further, the vast majority also feel comfortable and confident dealing with patron requests for assistance with a gambling problem. This is particularly so when the CLO knows the patron well, which tends to be the case in the smaller venues.

Several strengths were also identified specifically around the self-exclusion process. Most hotel and club CLOs consider that self-exclusion assists patrons to deal with their gambling problem, particularly because it is a step towards recovery, seems to provide a great sense of relief for the patron and it helps to protect the patron's finances.

Some CLOs noted ways they try to lessen patron discomfort when seeking assistance or a self-exclusion. These include commending the patron on taking that step and offering to arrange self-exclusion from other hotels in the chain or from other clubs they are affiliated with. Patron discomfort is also reportedly lessened if a counsellor attends during self-exclusion, which is sometimes the case, particularly it seems in some non-metropolitan areas.

Some CLOs also described specific systems they have in place for helping staff to recognise self-excludees who might re-enter the venue. These mainly involve regular updates of self-excludees and mechanisms for staff to view the photos regularly.

Weaknesses

Some hotel and club CLOs feel some discomfort dealing with patrons who request assistance for a gambling problem because they can find it upsetting, because of the awkwardness of

discussing such a personal and private issue, because of the patron's probable discomfort or embarrassment, and because the CLOs are not trained counsellors. Most hotel and club CLOs also noted the embarrassment involved for patrons asking for assistance and implementing self-exclusion. The need for a photograph is felt to be particularly confronting for the patron.

Monitoring for breaches of self-exclusion is reportedly challenging because it is hard to remember faces from small photographs, people who are not regular patrons sometimes self-exclude, people can easily change their appearance, some people refuse to provide a photo, staff turnover is often high, people might not be noticed in a large, busy venue, and because of the logistical difficulties of monitoring patrons who exclude only from certain areas in the venue.

A few CLOs noted challenges around people who want to revoke their self-exclusion after 12 months in that the CLOs feel unqualified to judge whether the patron has resolved their gambling problem or not.

Several deterrents to self-exclusion were raised. These included that the five year timeframe and \$3,000 fine for breaches might put some patrons off self-excluding in the first place, self-exclusion is not well publicised, patrons need to self-exclude from venues individually, there is considerable stigma attached to problem gambling and self-exclusion, and because of the reported reticence of some other venues to implement self-exclusion, thus gaining them a competitive advantage.

Several suggestions were made to improve the self-exclusion system. Some hotel and club CLOs advocated area-wide self-exclusions to save the patron time and embarrassment, to remove temptation for people excluded from only some venues, and to help keep a level playing field amongst venues in the area and raise confidence that self-exclusion would be effective. Two club CLOs also advocated a centralised self-exclusion facility, such as a government agency or the counselling agencies. Two club CLOs also advocated removing partial bans, first because it is difficult to monitor, and second because of concern the patron will be tempted to gamble again when they patronise other areas of the venue. Some hotel and club CLOs also felt that self-exclusion could be publicised more to raise patron and family awareness of its availability.

Other suggestions made only by one CLO each were that: counselling should be mandatory for people who self-exclude; provision of a photograph should be mandatory; people should not be able to revoke their self-exclusion after 12 months; simpler self-exclusion forms are needed as it is doubtful whether people read and comprehend the information in its current form; and a consistent approach to self-exclusion is needed across all venues, as some venues reportedly refuse to implement a self-exclusion immediately or in an appropriate way.

7.3.4 Strengths and Weaknesses Experienced by Hotel and Club Staff

This section summarises strengths and weaknesses of the practices and procedures reportedly used by the hotel and club staff when a patron requests assistance for a gambling problem.

Strengths

In most cases, staff were confident they know what procedures they will use if a patron approaches them to ask for assistance with a gambling problem. Many were able to identify a range of options for the patron, including self-exclusion and information about a variety of counselling agencies, or they would refer the patron to the CLO or venue manager. Many staff also noted they would respect the patron's privacy by dealing with the issue discreetly and in a secluded area away from the gaming floor.

However, only a minority of staff from both the hotels and clubs are reportedly very comfortable dealing with patrons who requested assistance. Generally, these are the older more experienced staff, those who already have a good relationship with the patron, those who have been trained in these procedures and staff who have previously dealt with this type of request. Some club staff in particular seem to know their venue's regular patrons quite well and to take a personal interest in their welfare. This appears conducive to patrons approaching staff for assistance and for staff to respond in the best individual interests of the patron.

Most staff considered that self-exclusion assists patrons to deal with their gambling problem, particularly because it signals that the patron has recognised a problem and wants to act on it, because it is a back-up for the patron's self-control, and because it helps to protect the patron's finances and family.

Weaknesses

It is surprising that only about one-fifth of the hotel staff and two-fifths of the club staff referred or would refer a request for assistance to their CLO or manager, although a few interviewees were already in senior positions. Not referring patrons to a CLO or manager is not necessarily a weakness if staff are adequately equipped to respond. It does, however, enhance the likelihood of highly variable and sometimes inappropriate responses to such patrons. Indeed, some inadequacies in staff responses are apparent. A small minority have little or no knowledge of what to do if a patron approaches them to ask for assistance with a gambling problem and have clearly received minimal instruction on this. Further, self-exclusion is, it appeared, the first or only option offered to patrons by some staff. Yet, it would also seem beneficial to inform the patron of other avenues available in case they do not want to self-exclude or prefer alternative types of assistance. Even when the patron wants to self-exclude, a minority of staff do not seem willing or able to engage with the patron to offer other options or counselling information beyond asking for the completed self-exclusion paperwork and the person's photograph to be given to the venue for processing. Conversely, a small minority of staff appear to offer the patron counselling information only, simply by handing them some printed materials, without inviting the patron to discuss the issue or alternative options available.

Many staff would be uncomfortable dealing with patrons who request assistance for a gambling problem because they are unclear on how to respond and where the boundaries are, because they find it upsetting, because of the awkwardness of discussing such a personal and private issue and because of the patron's probable discomfort or embarrassment. This might also be heightened in small towns where patrons are concerned about other people finding out. However, staff appear to feel more comfortable dealing with patrons they know.

In relation to self-exclusion, some staff considered that the current process deters some patrons because it is very embarrassing to admit the problem and have a photograph taken. Some thought it would be particularly difficult when the patron needs to talk to venue staff whom they see regularly. A suggestion was for patrons to be able to exclude through a counsellor instead or for counsellors to come to venues on designated days to provide information about and implement self-exclusions. Some staff also considered that self-exclusion is only effective if the patron also self-excludes from other venues they might be tempted to visit. Otherwise, the problem may just be shifted elsewhere. Some advocated regional exclusions or a collaborative system amongst venues to overcome this problem. Some staff also considered that self-exclusion is not advertised sufficiently and there is an opportunity to raise patron awareness of it, perhaps through mainstream media.

The difficulties of monitoring self-excluded people was also raised by staff, particularly in larger venues and because of the small and sometimes photocopied photographs used. One hotel staff person suggested a card-based system of patron identification to monitor for self-excludees. Some staff were critical that they do not know who is self-excluded from their venue and that the photos should be more accessible to staff. Concern was also expressed that staff do not know what happens to patrons after they self-exclude and that there needs to be a good support network for them.

Some weaknesses were identified in relation to other avenues of assistance for patrons with gambling issues. Some staff were sceptical about the value of responsible gambling signage as they are dubious whether patrons read it, while a few hotel staff reported little uptake by patrons of the brochures and cards. Some also questioned whether some problem gamblers would feel comfortable ringing the Gambling Helpline, and suggestions were made to improve how the odds of winning and losing are communicated to patrons.

7.3.5 Strengths and Weaknesses Compared to Casino Practices

This section considers the hotel and club procedures when a patron approaches with a gambling problem in comparison to those adopted in the three Tabcorp casinos in Queensland, as identified through the interviews conducted with the casinos' Responsible Gambling Manager (RGM) and four Responsible Gambling Liaison Officers (RGLOs). The casinos' procedures, and the strengths and weaknesses of these are summarised first, before some comparisons are made with the hotel and club results.

Casino procedures, strengths and weaknesses

If a patron requests assistance, the RGM noted that staff should firstly make the patron feel comfortable and valued, then refer them to senior staff or an RGLO if they wish to self-exclude. They can also provide the patron with counselling brochures. The staff are generally encouraged to respond with respect and refer. All four RGLOs were clear in terms of lines of responsibility in assisting patrons who approach staff for help and in the procedures they follow. All felt comfortable in dealing with this situation, while two said they considered this was a personal issue and that some frontline staff would not feel so comfortable. All four emphasised the importance of making the client feel comfortable and not judged. If the client decides not to pursue self-exclusion, two of the RGLOs said they would provide cards for counselling services, one said they would just 'keep an eye on the patron' and two said that they would refer the patron to the RGM. The frequency of patrons asking for assistance varied, and this caused some concern in terms of perceived expertise. All four RGLOs noted that the practices in supporting patrons who identified themselves as having gambling problems had improved significantly over the years.

Exclusion from the casinos is not uncommon, with about 40 per month across the casinos in Queensland, according to the RGM and RGLOs. About 45 per cent of these are self-exclusions and the related procedures were reported as being as streamlined as possible. The RGLOs can assist the self-exclusion process by explaining to the patron the process involved, how long it will take, the need for a photo, their rights for revocation and the 24-hour cooling off period, with the Casino Duty Manager or other authorised person then serving the actual notice. Venue exclusions for problem gambling are not nearly as numerous, with about one every few months on average across the casinos.

The following key strengths of current procedures were identified from the RGM and RGLO interviews. The RGM emphasised the referral mechanisms for staff in assisting problem gamblers in the venue. This was echoed by the RGLOs, who felt there is ample support for

staff in this situation and that there are clear lines of responsibility and process. The RGM also noted that the RGLOs have received dedicated training for their roles in the practices and procedures to follow in this scenario, and the RGLOs appeared to feel that their training has equipped them well in this regard. The RGLOs generally felt very comfortable and confident in dealing with patron approaches for help with a gambling problem and appeared to treat patrons in this situation with sensitivity and discretion. Further, the casinos' practices in assisting patrons who ask for help with a gambling problem have clearly become much more comprehensive over the years.

In relation to self-exclusion, the RGLOs appeared to be very clear about the procedures and levels of authority within the self-exclusion process in the casinos and reported being comfortable with their roles in this process. The RGLOs were very cognisant of the need for sensitivity, discretion, privacy and support for patrons. Monitoring of excluded people was reported as very good, especially considering the number of people excluded (about 4,400 across the three casinos), the volume of patronage and the multi-cultural mix of casino patrons. The RGM also noted that the recent anti-money laundering legislation has meant the casinos have started catching a lot of excluded people, as there is a requirement for patrons to produce personal identification if they cash in or out at a certain level. The RGLOs generally felt that self-exclusion is a worthwhile option to provide but were understandably unsure of how effective it is for the gambler.

The following weaknesses were identified from the RGM and RGLO interviews. Lack of regular involvement with clients who identify themselves as having gambling problems was the only challenge identified in this situation amongst the RGLOs as this means it is difficult for them to hone their skills in their RGLO role. While not a specific weakness of casino practices, the RGM noted that casino personnel need to be careful not to act as counsellors or to case manage patrons, nor to be perceived as responsible for these roles.

In relation to exclusions, venue exclusions for problem gambling are considered difficult by the RGM as the RGM cannot just make a judgement call about the person's gambling, there needs to be sufficient evidence to withstand a patron appeal in court. Revocations of self-exclusion orders can also be difficult, according to the RGM, because the casino does not have any mechanism apart from a venue exclusion to refuse the revocation. One RGLO felt that, to be more effective, self-exclusion should not be able to be revoked after just 12 months. The RGM noted a missed opportunity for patrons who are caught breaching their exclusion order to be directed to gambling counselling by the on-site police and on-site regulator. The infrequency that each RGLO might be involved in self-exclusion also presents some difficulties. One is retaining their familiarity with the process and forms.

Comparison with hotels and clubs

Compared to the casino sector, it is clear that the hotel and club sectors have a far less consistent approach to assisting patrons who ask for help with a gambling problem. Several reasons can be suggested for this.

Unlike the casinos, there is no central management of the hotel and club sectors so consistency in how provisions of the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice* (Queensland Treasury, 2004) are implemented is difficult to achieve. How hotel and club CLOs and frontline staff respond to patrons asking for assistance may depend on the policies of individual venues, management commitment to responsible gambling, staff preferences, their previous experience of dealing with the situation, the training they have received, how well they know the patron asking for help and who is on duty at the time of a patron's request.

Further, individual hotels and clubs have fewer staff resources and are not typically able to have dedicated staff positions in responsible gambling. Additionally, high staff turnover is an issue for many hotels and clubs, particularly in some regional areas. For example, the mining boom occurring at the time of the interviews meant that many staff in Mt Isa took hospitality jobs only until a better paying job in the mines became available. In Cairns, the seasonal nature of the tourist trade means that venues often have large numbers of short-term casual and transient employees working only in the peak season. These situations deter venue management from having all staff trained in RSG and lead to some venue staff having minimal knowledge of appropriate responses to a patron enquiry for help for a gambling problem.

It is also generally not feasible for hotels and clubs to conduct their own in-house RSG training, CLO training and refresher courses as is done at the casinos. Thus, hotel and club staff are trained by a variety of providers, sometimes even within the one venue, and this can lead to variable advice and instruction on how to deal with a patron request for assistance. In some cases, hotel and club staff have no training at all in RSG, although some venues where interviews were conducted were moving towards policies of only employing staff who had been trained in RSG.

However, there are some potential advantages for hotels and clubs in delivering assistance to patrons who ask for help with a gambling problem. Staff and managers are more likely to know the venue's patrons and some interviewees suggested this makes it easier for patrons to approach for help and for venue personnel to feel comfortable in providing that help. Additionally, some CLOs seemed to consider their patrons as family and to take a genuine interest in their personal welfare. It is also easier for hotels and clubs to monitor the gambling of individual patrons if they so request and to assist them in ways that might best suit their personal circumstances.

7.3.6 Strengths and Weaknesses Compared to Practices Recommended in the Code

As discussed in Chapter Two, the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice* (Queensland Treasury, 2004) sets out various Practice Areas in responsible gambling for gambling providers. The *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice Industry Training Kit* (Queensland Government, 2005a) then articulates the responsibilities of CLOs and venue staff in implementing these Practice Areas. This section now compares the procedures used in hotels and clubs, as evident from the interviews, with these responsibilities.

Section 2.3 of this report identified the responsibilities of frontline staff and CLOs in relation to assisting problem gamblers in the venue. In relation to patrons who ask for assistance with a gambling problem, the relevant responsibilities of frontline staff can be summarised as follows (Queensland Government, 2005a):

- provide and describe responsible gambling and problem gambling information to patrons in an accurate and timely manner, including contact details of local Gambling Help services;
- explain the role of the CLO, how they can assist the patron, and refer the patron to the CLO (or equivalent) if appropriate;
- respond immediately when a patron requests information on how to self-exclude, understand the venue's exclusion process and refer these requests to the CLO;

- treat the patron and the issue with respect, support, confidentiality and privacy; and
- undertake appropriate and ongoing responsible gambling training.

Additional to these responsibilities, the following are also expected of CLOs in this situation (Queensland Government, 2005a):

- assist patrons with gambling-related problems by providing appropriate information, providing contact details of local Gambling Help agencies, and by handling exclusion processes;
- support staff in assisting patrons with gambling-related problems by providing advice, assistance or referral to the CLO, advising on the venue's responsible gambling materials, policies and practices, and advising of local Gambling Help services;
- coordinate and organise staff training in responsible gambling; and
- establish effective links with local Gambling Help providers and involve them in staff training.

Comparative strengths of hotel and club procedures

When the procedures used by CLOs and frontline staff in hotels and clubs are compared to those outlined in the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice Industry Training Kit* (Queensland Government, 2005a), it is apparent that venues which are highly committed to responsible gambling largely adhere to these responsibilities. Several frontline staff in the hotels and clubs related how they respond to a patron request for assistance with a gambling issue by providing counselling information, identifying self-exclusion as an option and referring the patron to the CLO or equivalent. Several CLOs related how they ensure they handle the self-exclusion process appropriately with the patron and link them with gambling support services, either by providing their contact details, telephoning the agency on the spot to arrange an appointment, asking the counsellor to immediately talk to the patron on the telephone, or inviting the counsellor to the venue to provide support to the patron. In these highly committed venues, the staff and CLOs noted they respond immediately to a patron request for help, are supportive, respectful and acknowledge that the patron is taking an important but difficult step, and deal with the issue in a discreet, confidential and private manner. Highly committed CLOs also provide extensive support for frontline staff, ensure all staff are trained in responsible gambling and have an effective ongoing relationship with local gambling support services.

Comparative weaknesses of hotel and club procedures

The interviews revealed that not all hotel and club personnel are committed to meeting the responsibilities of their roles as articulated in the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice Industry Training Kit* (Queensland Government, 2005a) in relation to assisting patrons who request help for a gambling-related problem. Examples were provided where it was clear that some staff and CLOs are not particularly knowledgeable about local Gambling Help services, with some confusing these with the Gambling Helpline, Gamblers' Anonymous and the Queensland Government personnel who renew and check venue responsible gambling signage. Thus, it is likely they are not providing accurate information to patrons about these. In many cases, the CLOs have not established any link with local agencies so there is no agency support for either the venue personnel or its patrons in assisting them when they request help. Examples were also given where inquiries about self-exclusion are not addressed in a timely manner, where patrons are asked to come back later, to take the paperwork home for 24 hours before returning to the venue if they still want to

self-exclude, or to go to a counselling agency to organise the self-exclusion documents. It is surprising how many frontline staff amongst the interviewees do not refer matters to the venue's CLO or equivalent, but instead handle the situation themselves. Even though some of these staff were in senior or supervisory positions, given that not all staff are trained in RSG and that these frontline staff have not undertaken CLO training, there is a risk that patrons seeking assistance are not treated in an appropriate manner and/or are not given appropriate information. For example, some interviewees reportedly neglect to identify self-exclusion as an option for the patron and/or to provide them with counselling information. Commitment to training in responsible gambling is also patchy, and in some cases, even the CLOs have not undertaken RSG training.

7.3.7 Strengths and Weaknesses Compared to Practices Recommended by Gambling Counsellors

This section summarises results from the interviews with 23 Queensland gambling counsellors in relation to their clients' experiences of approaching venue staff for assistance with a gambling problem. It then compares the hotel and club procedures used in this scenario to those recommended by the counsellors.

Venue procedures experienced by clients

Nine of the 23 counsellors recalled clients who have approached staff in venues to request assistance with a gambling problem. This was recognised as difficult for patrons to do, with the counsellors' comments grouped into four types of barriers – 1) feeling shame about a gambling problem, 2) concerns that their approach to staff may not be kept confidential and private, particularly in small communities and in venues where patrons are well known, 3) not being aware if and how staff at the venue could help, and 4) a perception that venues will be unsympathetic and/or consider it not their problem. One facilitator to patrons approaching for help, an existing relationship with a staff member, was identified.

Many of the clients who have approached venue staff reported to counsellors that they were treated well and that, in some instances, they were encouraged to contact the local Gambling Help service. On occasions, venues have rung the local Gambling Help service to connect the client with the service. However, one counsellor reported that there is only one venue in the agency's local area which is genuinely helpful and supportive.

However, there were several instances reported by clients where venue staff either did not know appropriate procedures, ignored or belittled the patron, or deflected them by asking them to come back later or to have a coffee instead. Information on counselling services was not always given.

The counsellors clearly considered staff responses to a patron request for assistance to be critically important in this situation and recommended the following key inclusions:

- respond immediately to the patron's request;
- provide clear and accurate information on counselling and referral to the CLO in the first instance and then to the Gambling Helpline or a local counselling agency;
- provide information on self-exclusion;
- listen well and stay calm, in recognition of the 'enormity of the moment' for the patron; and
- treat the patron with respect and discretion.

About half the counsellors have treated clients who had self-excluded, some before they commenced counselling and some afterwards. However, there was reasonable consensus that only a small minority of clients self-exclude. In contrast, the overwhelming majority of the counsellors consider self-exclusion to be helpful for clients and reported that it is often a relief for clients and a critical turning point in their recovery process. Some positive experiences were reported, where the process was handled competently and sensitively by the venue, with the staff involved showing genuine concern, sympathy and support.

However, several barriers for clients to self-exclude were identified by the counsellors. These comprised having to self-exclude from multiple venues on an individual basis, shame and embarrassment, being known in the community, limited effectiveness of self-exclusion, self-exclusion being seen as a sign of weakness, staff being unclear about the self-exclusion process, and patrons having to exclude themselves from all parts of the venue. Some counsellors also noted the questionable effectiveness of monitoring for breaches of self-exclusion, which then undermines it as a deterrent to problem gamblers.

Additionally, counsellors reported that some of their clients have clearly had negative experiences with the self-exclusion process. Procedural weaknesses comprised staff not knowing how to implement the process and not having the required paperwork, asking the person to come back at another time, not keeping it confidential, refusing to do it, and treating the person with contempt.

The counsellors had some clear ideas about how the process could be improved. These comprised being able to self-exclude without going to the venue, perhaps online or via a counsellor, being able to exclude from multiple venues at once, for counsellors to be involved with exclusions at the venue, better staff training in the self-exclusion process and better monitoring systems for breaches.

Comparative strengths of hotel and club procedures

When the procedures used in hotels and clubs are compared to those recommended by the gambling counsellors, it is apparent that venues which are highly committed to responsible gambling largely adhere to the counsellors' recommendations. Several hotel and club CLOs and staff spoke of providing an immediate response to the patron, and of providing them with counselling information and referrals to a CLO or senior staff person, then to the Gambling Helpline and/or a local counselling agency. In a small minority of cases, venues directly connect the patron to a local counsellor, either by organising on the spot for the patron to make an appointment with the agency, telephoning the agency so the patron can speak to a counsellor immediately, or inviting the counsellor to come to the venue to support the patron. These committed venues also place high importance on respect and privacy for the patron by taking them to a private area for a conversation about the problem and what the patron would like to do about it. All venues reported that they provide self-exclusion information to the patron in this situation.

Comparative weaknesses of hotel and club procedures

From the interviews with hotel and club CLOs and frontline staff, it is apparent that not all venues are highly committed to providing appropriate assistance to patrons who request help for a gambling problem. Examples were provided of delayed responses to a request for assistance, for instance when the patron is asked to make an appointment to see the CLO or senior person, is given the self-exclusion paperwork to take away and consider for at least 24 hours, or is directed to a counselling agency to help with the self-exclusion paperwork. In some cases, staff do not provide the patron with information on self-exclusion at all, and in

others, no counselling information is provided. Given the apparent confusion amongst many CLOs and staff about the different services provided by the Gambling Helpline, Gamblers Anonymous, Queensland Government staff who check on signage and local counselling agencies, it is very likely that patrons also do not receive accurate information about accessing counselling services. Additionally, venue staff do not always refer the issue to the CLO or manager, but sometimes deal with it themselves, despite not being trained at CLO level. Further, only a minority of CLOs (or equivalents) had undertaken CLO training at the time of the interviews. Thus, these staff may not be well equipped to provide adequate and accurate information or to treat the patron in a supportive, respectful and discreet way. Clearly, the practices followed in these less committed venues do not align with those advocated by the gambling counsellors.

7.3.8 Summary for Scenario One

The preceding summary and analysis have focused on hotel and club procedures when a patron directly requests assistance for a gambling problem. There is close alignment of how these procedures were described by the hotel and club CLOs and staff and by the gambling counsellors when relating their clients' experiences. The picture that emerges is one of high variability amongst venues. Highly committed venues reportedly adhere to the relevant practices and procedures as articulated in the Code of Practice and in the associated Industry Training Kit, and to practices advocated by the gambling counsellors. These include responding immediately and with respect and discretion to a patron request for assistance, providing information about the role of the CLO, counselling agencies and self-exclusion, and handling self-exclusion processes. However, there are venues with apparently quite low commitment to these recommended practices. Most venues appear to fall between these two extremes.

From a management perspective, there are some barriers to ensuring hotel and club staff and CLOs always provide appropriate assistance to patrons who ask for help for a gambling problem. Lack of management commitment, scarce resources, high staff turnover, limited access to training, variable training and different levels of engagement with local counselling agencies are some of these. However, committed venues appear to have overcome these challenges. Management by example, a genuine interest in patron wellbeing, a commitment to having a duty of care, only hiring staff trained in RSG, involvement in ongoing training activities, and fostering strong links with local Gambling Help services are some ways in which they have done this.

From a patron perspective, there are several barriers to their asking for assistance with a gambling problem. While the apparent shame and embarrassment involved in this situation is one barrier, others can be reduced through enhanced patron confidence that venue personnel will treat a request for help privately, discreetly, with genuine concern and with accurate and helpful information and actions. Consistently supportive responses by venues and communication that this will occur, are needed to encourage patrons to ask for assistance when needed. Given that requesting this assistance is a huge and often humbling step for patrons, receiving an appropriate venue response at this time is critical to them being able to take the necessary steps towards resolving their gambling problem.

7.4 SCENARIO TWO: WHEN A PATRON SHOWS SIGNS OF A GAMBLING PROBLEM BUT DOES NOT APPROACH FOR ASSISTANCE

This section summarises and discusses the research results in relation to scenario two, which is when a patron shows signs of a possible gambling problem but does not directly request assistance from venue personnel.

7.4.1 Procedures Used by CLOs in Hotels and Clubs

This section first summarises indicators of a possible gambling problem, as perceived by the hotel and club CLOs, what signs would prompt them to approach a patron about their gambling, and then procedures they have used or would use when doing so.

Indicators of a possible gambling problem

The vast majority of CLOs considered they can recognise signs of problem gambling in a patron and identified several potential indicators. However, some noted that indicators are not always reliable and some look for combinations of indicators. The indicators identified, set out below, did not differ markedly between hotel and club CLOs:

- Irritability and aggression
- Looking stressed or upset
- Erroneous and irrational verbalisations
- Marked changes in behaviour
- Increasing their gambling expenditure
- Gambling very regularly and/or for long periods
- Gambling for longer than intended/chasing losses
- Trying to obtain extra money to gamble with
- Multiple ATM withdrawals
- Changing a lot of money or changing money often
- Putting big wins back into a machine as soon as possible
- Always betting the maximum amount
- Putting lots of notes into a machine
- Being overly attached to a particular machine
- Saying they cannot afford it
- Appearing to spend all their money
- Drinking heavily
- Neglecting children/family disputes
- Trying to reserve a machine overnight
- Wanting to access the venue when it is closed
- Do not want to be interrupted while gambling

Indicators that would prompt an approach

About one-third of both the hotel and club CLOs indicated they will not approach a patron at all out of concern about their gambling. Reasons for this included it is against venue policy, it has been advised against in RSG training, it is an invasion of privacy, they are afraid of upsetting, insulting or prompting an aggressive response from the patron, and they are worried about losing the patron's business.

The remaining CLOs nominated scenarios where they will approach a patron, but for most this is only if a patron is aggressive, when the CLO or another staff member will intervene out of concern for security or disturbance to other patrons. Some will intervene if a patron is trying to borrow money from other patrons, but this is to protect other patrons from being badgered. Apart from these, the indicators identified as prompting a response by at least one CLO interviewed are as follows:

- Five hotel CLOs noted they will approach if a patron is always at the venue or gambles for long periods of time.
- Two hotel CLOs and four club CLOs will approach if a patron is crying and upset.
- Two hotel CLOs will approach if a patron has said they cannot afford to gamble or something similar.
- Two club CLOs will approach if a patron shows marked changes in behaviour.
- The following indicators were identified as prompting a response by only one interviewee each: putting a large win straight back into a machine; constant withdrawals from the ATM; very high expenditure on gambling; and evidence of gambling impacting on the family, such as children waiting outside.

Procedures CLOs have used in approaching patrons

Fourteen of the 29 hotel and 12 of the 26 club CLOs reported having approached a patron out of concern about a possible gambling problem. The hotel CLOs reported that three of these were for aggressive or abusive behaviour, one for putting big wins straight back into a machine, two for spending beyond their means and the rest for other behaviours which had led the CLO to believe the person may have a gambling problem. The club CLOs reported that their approaches had been prompted by overhearing patron concerns, mood changes, high gambling expenditure, trying to borrow money, being in tears and being cranky about losing. Their reported responses to these situations are as follows:

- Hotel and club CLO responses to aggressive or abusive behaviour included trying to calm the patron down and/or asking the patron to leave the venue for the day. Only one reported they would give the patron some counselling information and offer assistance for a gambling issue.
- Three hotel CLOs noted they will only approach a patron if they know them well, while some club CLOs also felt that not knowing the patron makes it more difficult to approach them. Responses from hotel CLOs included talking to them, inviting them for a coffee and a chat away from the gaming room, asking the patron if they want to self-exclude, and closing the gaming room early if that patron is the only one there. Responses from the club CLOs included inquiring if the patron is alright, inviting them for a coffee and a chat away from the gaming room, calling a counselling agency for the patron, suggesting self-exclusion, and instructing staff not to pay wins to these patrons in \$20 notes.

- Two hotel CLOs offer to mind the wallets and/or pay-packets of some patrons of concern. Both these hotels are in low-socio-economic areas and the CLOs see their actions as trying to remove the temptation for these patrons to gamble more than they can afford. At one of these hotels, the CLO (also the hotel manager) reported that he approaches patrons whom he knows are on welfare after they have been gambling for more than two hours.
- Five hotel CLOs recounted instances where their approach has not made any difference or resulted in the venue losing the person's patronage. It was less clear whether the club CLO approaches have resulted in loss of patronage.

Procedures CLOs would use in approaching patrons

As noted above, about one-third of the hotel CLOs indicated they will not approach a patron at all about their gambling. Seven who have never approached but seemed willing to do so speculated on what they would do, with several noting they would need to be very sure the patron had a gambling problem before making that approach. Their proposed responses were to:

- give them a counselling brochure and ask them if they would like to have a chat;
- pull them aside and ask if they have a gambling problem and, if so, offer to help; and
- ask them to a quiet area and find out more about why they were behaving the way they were and if they have any problems.

Also noted above was that about one-third of club CLOs reported they will not approach a patron at all. Five who have never approached but seemed willing to do so speculated on what they would do. This was to:

- have a general chat with the patron to open up communication;
- ask the person if they are alright;
- ask if they would like to sit down and have a talk; and
- take them away from the gaming areas, listen to them, offer them self-exclusion and counselling information.

7.4.2 Procedures Used by Staff in Hotels and Clubs

This section first summarises indicators of a possible gambling problem, as perceived by the hotel and club staff, what signs would prompt them to approach a patron about their gambling, and then procedures they have or would use when doing so.

Indicators of a possible gambling problem

The vast majority of hotel and clubs staff considered they can recognise signs of problem gambling in a patron and identified several potential indicators. These did not differ markedly between hotel and club staff.

- Irritability and aggression
- Looking stressed
- Being anti-social
- Being overly attached to a particular machine
- Being secretive or lying about their gambling

- Change in usual behaviour
- Changing a lot of money or changing money often
- Complaining even when winning
- Erroneous and irrational verbalisations
- Comments by family or friends
- Gambling for long sessions
- Gambling for longer than intended/chasing losses
- Gambling very regularly
- Just not by being happy, being down
- Large sums of money being gambled
- Multiple ATM withdrawals
- Putting big wins straight back into a machine
- Spending money put aside for something else
- Talking to the machine
- Trying to obtain extra money to gamble with
- Upset or crying
- Waiting for venue to open/gambling to be available

Indicators that would prompt staff to approach

Three hotel staff and five club staff reported they will not approach a patron at all out of concern about their gambling. Of those who would approach, the vast majority will only do so under extreme circumstances, where the patron is aggressive or very upset. If a patron displays aggressive, abusive or violent behaviour, six staff would respond, but only to ensure the physical safety and security of other patrons, staff and the venue.

Many staff felt very strongly about not approaching patrons of concern, either because they have been directed not to approach by venue management or in their training, or because they feel it is not their place to do so, it is beyond their responsibilities and job role, they are not trained in this, do not have counselling skills, or truly consider it is none of their business. Indeed, there is great reticence to take on this task. However, a few said they would approach a patron about their gambling in the following situations:

- Two club staff will approach if the patron is engaging in long and regular gambling sessions.
- Two hotel and one club staff will approach if a patron is crying and upset.
- One hotel and one club staff will approach if there is evidence of gambling impacting negatively on a patron's family, such as children waiting for the gambler outside the venue.
- One club and one hotel staff will approach if the patron is gambling or changing large sums of money.
- The following indicators were identified as prompting a response by only one interviewee each: continual complaints about not winning; decline in personal

appearance over time; being very secretive about their gambling; and if a patron hints at a problem.

Procedures staff have used in approaching patrons

Only five hotel staff reported ever having approached a patron out of concern about a possible gambling problem. Their approaches entailed the following:

- One reported he ‘always checks with my regulars’.
- One asked the patron to leave the venue and think about self-exclusion. After the patron came back and did not want to self-exclude, the staff member reported he continued to monitor the patron.
- One staff member’s response was to give the patron some money for food.
- One staff member queried a patron about how she could gamble so often, particularly when the patron always left the venue upset. The patron reportedly did not visit the venue as often after that conversation.
- One staff member conversed with the patron and explained available options. The patron chose to self-exclude from the gaming area and had not been back to the venue since.

Twelve club staff reported having approached a patron who showed signs of a possible gambling problem. Six of these were for aggressive or abusive behaviour, one for regular, long gambling sessions and a few for a combination of signs. Their approaches entailed the following:

- Staff responses to aggressive or abusive behaviour towards the gaming machines were typically to try to calm the patron down and explain to them that wins depend on chance, staff have no control over outcomes, and it is not the staff’s fault. If the patron does not calm down, they are usually asked to leave and might be referred to the club board for misbehaviour. None of the staff mentioned that the venue would attempt to find out if the patron has a gambling problem and then try to assist them.
- The response to patrons trying to borrow money was again to ask the patron to leave the premises, as reported by one staff member. Again, no concern for a possible gambling problem was raised.
- Staff responses to patrons who said they had spent too much money or spent money allocated to something else were to talk to the patron, encourage them to think about their family and perhaps give them some counselling information, as reported by five staff.

Procedures staff would use in approaching patrons

Staff who had never approached a patron about their gambling speculated on what they would do, with several noting they would need to be very sure the patron had a gambling problem before making that approach. Their proposed responses were:

- Ask the patron aside for a chat, ask them if they think their gambling is problematic, then outline the options available to assist them.
- Ask the patron aside for a coffee and a chat about their gambling. The staff member considered this would be enough for a problem gambler to realise their gambling behaviour has attracted attention and that the patron would then walk away.

- Ask the patron if they have a problem.
- Ask the patron to leave, suggesting they quit while ahead.
- Discuss the patron with other staff, and if they agree the patron has a gambling problem, then approach them.
- Give them some counselling literature.
- If a patron is angry, talk to the patron, advise them of how the venue can help, and bar them for a month.
- Offer for the local counsellor to come to the venue to talk to the patron.
- Offer for the patron to talk to them anytime they needed to.
- Pass it onto the CLO.
- Try to get to know the patron better to open up communication.
- Do nothing because they are not allowed to approach a patron or because they would not know what to say.

7.4.3 Strengths and Weaknesses Experienced by Hotel and Club CLOs

This section summarises strengths and weaknesses reported by the hotel and club CLOs in relation to procedures used to assist patrons who show signs of having a gambling problem.

Strengths

Apart from the few instances where approaching a patron resulted in them curtailing or stopping their visits to the venue or limiting their expenditure, as described earlier, the CLOs did not identify any other strengths of current procedures around approaching patrons of concern to offer assistance.

Weaknesses

The CLOs identified several challenges that deter them from approaching patrons to offer assistance for a possible gambling problem. The most frequently mentioned deterrent was the difficulty of knowing whether a patron has a gambling problem or not, because CLOs do not know the person's financial situation, background or any other issues the patron might be facing.

Several CLOs are deterred from approaching patrons because they feel it will cause an angry or negative response. Concerns were also raised that approaching a patron is an invasion of privacy that will cause offence, while some CLOs fear losing the patron's business by offending them, such that the patron will just go to another venue.

Some CLOs commented that approaching a patron can be intimidating and requires confidence and experience. A few were particularly concerned about the legal ramifications of approaching a patron, fearing they can be charged with discrimination or defamation.

Some CLOs also noted that approaching a patron is of little use if they are not willing to acknowledge and act on a gambling problem. Some CLOs also noted that the only mechanism they have to involuntarily stop a person gambling is a venue exclusion and that this poses a number of challenges. These include alienation of patrons, damage to the venue's reputation, the patron will just gamble elsewhere, and the considerable time, effort and paperwork involved. A considerable amount of confusion about the requirements and processes for venue exclusion was also apparent.

7.4.4 Strengths and Weaknesses Experienced by Hotel and Club Staff

This section summarises strengths and weaknesses reported by the hotel and club staff in relation to procedures used to assist patrons who show signs of having a gambling problem.

Strengths

Apart from the few instances where approaching a patron resulted in them curtailing or stopping their visits to the venue, as described earlier, the staff did not identify any other strengths of current procedures around approaching patrons to offer assistance.

Weaknesses

The staff identified several challenges that deter them from approaching patrons to offer assistance for a possible gambling problem. The most frequently mentioned was that staff find it difficult to recognise gambling problems amongst patrons, especially where the gaming room is large, when the venue is busy and because they do not know the financial circumstances of the patron and/or they do not know them well enough to notice a change in their behaviour. Further, identifying signs of problem gambling is considered more difficult in larger venues and where patrons use change machines.

Many staff are worried about an angry reaction from a patron if they are to approach them and are also concerned that an approach might be seen as an invasion of privacy because what patrons do is their own business. Some also reported that they do not want to lose the patron's business by approaching them, particularly if the patron just goes to another venue.

Staff acknowledged that approaching a patron to offer assistance requires a level of confidence and experience that all staff are unlikely to have. Further, some staff reported they will not approach a patron because they do not know what to say or how to approach appropriately. Nevertheless, others were clearly frustrated at not being able to intervene when they consider a patron's gambling to be irresponsible. This is particularly the case when staff know that children are being adversely affected and where the patron is spending welfare money on gambling.

Staff sometimes feel that approaching a patron will have no effect, as people need to recognise a problem before others can help them. The only other avenue is a venue exclusion, yet some staff raised concerns over the difficulties of implementing this.

7.4.5 Strengths and Weaknesses Compared to Casino Practices

The casinos' procedures in approaching patrons who show signs of a possible gambling problem, and their strengths and weaknesses, are included here as a basis for comparison with the hotel and club procedures. Information on the casinos is drawn from the interviews with the RGM and RGLOs, as explained earlier.

Indicators of a possible gambling problem

While the casino RGM was highly dubious about the reliability of observable signs of problem gambling, all four RGLOs agreed they could recognise signs of problem gambling and one also noted that 'our staff are absolutely fantastic in identifying people that are possible problem gamblers, they're very good'. The RGLOs identified several possible indicators. Two noted gambling for extended periods of time as an indicator. Other indicators, identified by one RGLO each, were hitting a gaming machine, swearing at a machine, and making negative comments about a machine.

Indicators that would prompt staff to approach

Instances that may prompt an approach to a casino patron by the RGLOs or RGM included repeated patterns of behaviours of concern, marked changes in the patron's usual behaviour and gambling for extended periods of time. One mechanism for the venue to keep track of patron behaviours was through an incidents register. This is an electronic system where RGLOs and others can report patron incidents that, over time, may indicate a gambling problem. The staff also have regular briefings where any patrons of concern can be identified and monitored.

Procedures, strengths and weaknesses

How casino patrons of concern are approached depends on the situation. Where there had been multiple incidents recorded which, in combination, suggested the patron may have a gambling problem, the RGM may approach the patron for a talk. The RGM also reported a patron would be approached if they had fainted or were crying over a machine. One RGLO also noted that if a patron had been gambling for a long time, they or a floor manager would usually approach the patron and suggest they take a break.

If a patron shows signs of a gambling problem, the RGM noted that staff should firstly assess the situation, identifying possible behavioural indicators of problem gambling. They then contact a senior staff person who may speak directly with the patron. This process involves a non-judgmental general discussion with the provision of clear information to the patron as to their options.

All four RGLOs said they would begin with some general conversation, asking the patron how they were doing and then indicate that they had noticed some behaviour they found concerning. All said they might refer the patron to a counselling service if the client indicated they wanted that. All four RGLOs were comfortable with approaching patrons in this situation, but two expressed that they did not always feel confident as they were not trained counsellors.

The following key strengths were identified from the RGM and RGLO interviews. The use of an electronic incidents register which RGLOs and others can use to record incidents facilitates the tracking of patron incidents over time and recognition of concerning patterns of behaviour. Once a patron comes to the attention of the RGM or RGLOs and a decision is made to approach them, this seems to be done in a sensitive manner by the RGM and RGLOs. The venue exclusion legislation was seen as a strength by the RGM in that she can use it to help convince patrons of concern that it is in their best interests to have a talk with her. There is flexibility in the way the RGM and RGLO can approach these situations, and several examples were given of individualised approaches that were thought to best suit the situation and the patron.

The following key weaknesses were identified from the RGM and RGLO interviews. As noted earlier, the unreliability of observable signs of problem gambling was seen as limiting the ability of staff to recognise if a patron has a gambling problem. This is made even more difficult because of the sheer volume of patrons, 24 hour trading and the size of the venue. The electronic incidents register was not always used by staff as it was a relatively new system. The unpredictability of patron reactions to a staff approach was a challenge raised by the RGLOs in relation to this scenario. A patron may become angry and may resent the venue's intervention or they may simply refuse to talk to the staff person. Some RGLOs felt a little uncomfortable in some of these situations because they were not trained counsellors.

Comparison with hotels and clubs

Compared to the casinos, there are some different features of hotels and clubs that might affect the ability of their CLOs and staff to recognise possible signs of problem gambling amongst their patrons. One of these is the overall lower level of responsible gambling and liaison officer training found in the hotel and club sectors, where proportionately fewer staff are trained in RSG and fewer liaison officers have undertaken CLO training. Training sessions for hotel and club staff are also generally shorter and refreshers less frequent than at the casinos, and are consequently likely to be less comprehensive. In fact, a gap in the hotel and club training identified by many CLOs and staff was instruction on how to approach patrons of concern, what to say and do, and how to deal with likely patron responses. That the casino RGLOs all felt comfortable approaching patrons of concern is a likely reflection of the more comprehensive training they receive compared to the hotel and club CLOs. Further, the casino RGLOs were all experienced staff who had volunteered for the role and who presumably had the necessary maturity, confidence, experience and diplomacy to approach patrons about their gambling. This may not always be the case in hotels and clubs, where the CLO role may be just a compulsory addition to existing supervisory duties.

However, the smaller size and more regular patronage typically found in hotels and clubs when compared to the casinos should facilitate the recognition of signs of possible gambling problems amongst patrons. Hotel and club personnel should therefore be more likely to notice changes in a patron's personal and gambling behaviour over time, and be more cognisant of the personal circumstances of regular customers. While the electronic incidents register at the casinos may help to track behavioural changes and gambling incidents over time, several hotels and clubs also noted they keep manual incidents registers which should serve the same purpose. Overall, however, deciding to approach a patron about a possible gambling problem is a judgement call and far from an exact science, despite what type of venue the patron is gambling in.

In terms of responding to a patron who displays signs of a possible gambling problem, some different conditions amongst the venue types would also likely have an influence. Perhaps a key difference is that the casino RGLOs are specifically empowered to approach patrons of concern, where this was highly variable amongst the hotel and club CLOs and even more so amongst the staff. Further, the casino RGLOs were able to refer issues up the chain of command to an RGM who is highly experienced in dealing with problem gambling, whereas this was not generally possible for the hotel and club CLOs.

7.4.6 Strengths and Weaknesses Compared to Practices Recommended in the Code

Section 2.3 of this report identified the responsibilities of frontline staff and CLOs in relation to assisting problem gamblers in the venue. In relation to patrons who show signs of a possible gambling problem, the relevant responsibilities of frontline staff and CLOs are expressed as follows in the Industry Training Kit (Queensland Government, 2005a):

Frontline staff have a responsibility to:

- recognise the possible signs of problem gambling and respond appropriately by providing the patron with information about the CLO's role and about self-exclusion services, referring the patron to the CLO with the patron's agreement, advising the CLO of the patron's situation, and protecting the patron's rights to privacy.

CLOs have a responsibility to:

- provide appropriate information to assist patrons with gambling-related problems;
- support staff in providing assistance to those patrons when staff feel unqualified to handle the situation or they need advice or guidance;
- handle sensitive problem gambling matters referred by staff; and
- respond appropriately when a staff member reports possible signs of problem gambling on the part of a particular patron.

Comparative strengths of hotel and club procedures

It is apparent that some CLOs and staff who were interviewed largely adhere to their responsibilities to recognise possible signs of a gambling problem and approach patrons of concern, as outlined in the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice Industry Training Kit* (Queensland Government, 2005a). Some CLOs, but fewer frontline staff, related how they had picked up on indicators of problem gambling, felt comfortable approaching patrons, and had consequently been able to assist that patron through providing appropriate information and support. However, these instances were relatively rare.

Comparative weaknesses of hotel and club procedures

As noted above, the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice Industry Training Kit* (Queensland Government, 2005a) is specific that frontline staff have a responsibility to recognise the possible signs of problem gambling and respond appropriately. While most hotel and club personnel who were interviewed were confident they are able to identify indicators of a possible gambling problem, there is enormous variation amongst the indicators that each interviewee identified. In total, the hotel and club staff identified 22 different indicators, while the CLOs identified 21. Further, not all indicators identified by the staff and CLOs are the same. Some staff and CLOs noted they look for clusters of indicators, while others nominated single indicators. Some look for changes in patron behaviour over time, while others look for one-off signs. Further, there are far fewer indicators that the hotel and club personnel reported would prompt them to approach a patron out of concern for a possible gambling problem. Again, these varied substantially between the interviewees. In essence, relying on current staff and CLO perceptions of signs of a possible gambling problem results in very inconsistent assessments.

Additionally, there are significant variations in the possible signs of problem gambling identified by the staff and CLOs and those outlined in the Industry Training Kit, and reproduced in Table 7.1. Of note is that most signs identified in Table 7.1 rely on patrons reporting certain difficulties associated with their gambling. The exceptions are when patrons are observed being threatening, harmful or aggressive to others and to venue property, selling valuables in order to gamble, being unduly intoxicated or drugged, and engaging in three or more gambling activities simultaneously. However, most staff and CLOs reported that their response to aggressive behaviour, trying to get extra money to gamble with and intoxication would not involve offering an opportunity to discuss or provide help for a gambling problem, but to just ask the person to leave the venue. Further, very few staff and CLOs noted they will approach a patron if that patron reports or hints at difficulties associated with their gambling. What is more likely to prompt a staff or CLO approach, although still only by a minority of staff and CLOs, is high gambling expenditure, regular gambling sessions, marked changes in behaviour and if a patron is upset or crying.

Table 7.1: Recognising Possible Signs of Problem Gambling

Possible problem gambling risk indicators for use by gambling venue staff	
Risk Factors	Examples of Risk Factors
Faulty cognition	Player reports having a perception of chances of winning which is apparently unrealistic.
Loss of control	Player reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having a problem with gambling; • having tried unsuccessfully to stop gambling; or • spending too much time gambling. Player is observed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • threatening or causing physical harm to others or self; • selling valuables to gamble; or • behaving in an aggressive manner towards property.
Negative impacts of gambling	Player reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having lost a significant relationship due to gambling; • having lied to others to hide their gambling; or • having lost a job due to gambling. Third party (e.g., a family member or another patron) reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the patron is gambling instead of fulfilling family responsibilities (e.g., picking children up after school); or • trying to borrow or “scam” money for gambling from others (e.g., other patrons).
Use of alcohol or drugs while gambling	Player is observed as being unduly intoxicated or under the influence of drugs while gambling.
Depression or thoughts of suicide	Player reports they are suffering from depression and/or have thoughts of suicide due to gambling.
Involvement in multiple simultaneous gambling activities	Player is observed to be participating in three or more gambling activities simultaneously (e.g., playing three or more gaming machines at a time).
Personal remorse	Player reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • losing household money on gambling (e.g., money that was to be used to buy groceries, pay the rent, or pay rates or electricity bill); • selling valuables to gamble; • borrowing money to live due to gambling; • being unable to meet loan repayments due to gambling; • depending on others to repay their gambling debts; or • having committed illegal acts due to gambling (e.g., stealing or fraud or domestic violence).

Source: *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice Industry Training Kit*, (Queensland Government, 2005a:36).

Clearly, there is a significant mismatch between what hotel and club personnel perceive to be valid indicators of a possible gambling problem and those outlined in the Industry Training Kit. Further, there is also a significant mismatch between the indicators that would prompt hotel and club personnel to approach a patron out of concern about their gambling and the indicators as advised in the Industry Training Kit. While it is acknowledged that recognising signs of problem gambling is far from an exact science, it seems that CLOs and staff would benefit from some clearer direction and boundaries around when they should approach a patron. The most obvious mechanism for this to be conveyed is through their training. Additionally, there has been further research on observable signs of problem gambling since the Industry Training Kit was developed, notably the study by Delfabbro et al. (2007), which could inform staff and CLO training in this area.

Once signs of a possible gambling problem are recognised, the next step in assisting the patron is to approach them (Queensland Government, 2005a). However, it is clear from the hotel and club staff interviews that this does not occur at all in some venues and is handled very inconsistently in others. About one-third of the hotel and club CLOs and about one-sixth of the staff interviewed indicated they will not approach a patron at all due to concern about their gambling. Amongst the others, whether they will approach a patron or not can depend on a variety of factors, including venue policy or culture, instructions received during training, the staff person's personal preferences, their confidence and maturity, their relationship with the patron and previous experience in handling this situation. Several barriers to venue personnel approaching patrons were identified. The major one, difficulty of knowing whether a patron has a gambling problem or not, could be addressed through staff training involving clearer guidelines and boundaries around indicators that should prompt a response. Some other barriers could also be addressed through staff training in communication skills and how to respond to different scenarios to build staff confidence and lower concerns about a negative response from the patron. A consistent approach across all venues would also be desirable to lower the competitive barriers to approaching patrons due to fear of losing the patron's business to another venue. Further instruction around venue exclusion is also needed to remove confusion about the requirements and processes involved.

Once a staff member approaches a patron of concern, the Industry Training Kit notes that they should then advise that patron of the CLO's role and refer them to the CLO if they so wish. Again, actual practice as reported by the hotel and club staff appears to be quite different. Only a minority of staff noted they advise or refer the patron to the CLO. Instead, their responses include having a chat with the patron, asking them if they have a gambling problem, giving them counselling literature, suggesting self-exclusion, monitoring the patron's gambling and asking them to leave the venue.

Where the patron is referred to the CLO or where the CLO has approached the patron in the first instance, it does appear that the CLOs typically provide the patron with appropriate information to assist them, when that patron is receptive to this. As such, these CLOs generally appear to adhere to their responsibilities in this situation, as outlined in the Industry Training Kit. However, not all CLOs are willing to approach a patron in the first place. Thus, CLO responses to a patron showing possible signs of a gambling problem are highly variable across venues, both in terms of whether they will or will not approach a patron at all and the indicators that would prompt an approach.

7.4.7 Strengths and Weaknesses Compared to Practices Recommended by Gambling Counsellors

This section summarises results from the interviews with 23 Queensland Gambling Help counsellors in relation to their clients' experiences of being approached by venue staff or CLOs out of concern for their gambling. It then compares the hotel and club procedures used in this scenario to those recommended by the counsellors.

Venue procedures experienced by clients

The vast majority of the counsellors reported that they did not recall any clients saying that venue staff had approached them out of concern for a gambling problem. This is despite the fact that most considered that venue staff are able to accurately identify indicators of problem gambling amongst venue patrons. Indicators the counsellors consider could be noticed by staff include multiple trips to the ATM, playing multiple machines at once, increased

agitation frustration and aggression, no money left, time spent gambling, waiting for the venue to open, attachment to a particular machine and superstitious behaviours.

Of the clients who had been approached by venue staff, as recalled by their counsellors, some reported a positive experience where staff used an informal and friendly approach to advise patrons they might want to stop or have a break, while a few examples were given where venue interventions have led to the patron seeking help. However, many counsellors suggested that a patron is approached only when the situation is desperate.

The counsellors felt strongly that frontline staff should be referring any concerns they have regarding individual patrons to senior staff. When dealing with the patron, these staff need to be sensitive and non-confrontational, pick an appropriate time to approach, build up a relationship with the patron and also build up a case history of their gambling.

The counsellors also noted that staff express a lack of training and general deficiency of knowledge about how to approach patrons they are concerned about. Senior staff seem, according to the counsellors, more adequately equipped, but the counsellors commented that the frontline staff are significant people to patrons and need to be able to communicate effectively and knowledgeably about the self-exclusion process and other avenues of assistance. Many staff have expressed to counsellors that they are afraid of patrons becoming angry or aggressive, or not returning to the venue. Other barriers for staff approaching patrons, which the counsellors had identified during training sessions with staff, include discouragement by venue management, discouragement by the industry association training, conflict of interest between venue revenue and patron care, an attitude that it is a patron not venue responsibility, staff being unsure of what they should do or not caring, and staff being apprehensive or afraid. Staff were faced with ethical dilemmas regarding whether they should be approaching patrons, and felt inadequately briefed about their role in this situation.

Comparative strengths of hotel and club procedures

When the procedures used in hotels and clubs are compared to those recommended by the gambling counsellors, it is apparent that some staff and CLOs largely adhere to the counsellors' recommendations. Some interviewees spoke of being able to identify the types of indicators noted by the counsellors and then approach and talk to patrons of concern, especially those they know, in a friendly, caring and non-confrontational manner. Some examples were given where this approach has resulted in the patron taking some action to better control their gambling.

Comparative weaknesses of hotel and club procedures

It is apparent that current approaches used in this scenario by most hotel and club staff and CLOs who were interviewed do not align with the approaches advocated by the gambling counsellors. As noted earlier, a significant minority of personnel will not approach a patron at all about their gambling, and amongst those who will, many often deal with the situation themselves without referring it to the CLO. Yet, in alignment with the perceptions of the counsellors, staff often feel ill-equipped and lack sufficient knowledge to deal with an approach to a patron of concern. Many are unclear about whether and when they should approach a patron of concern, seem to lack direction on this either from their training or from venue management, and lack the skills, experience, confidence and knowledge to feel comfortable doing this.

7.4.8 Summary for Scenario Two

The preceding summary and analysis have focused on hotel and club procedures when a patron shows possible signs of a gambling problem. There is close alignment of how these procedures were described by the hotel and club CLOs and staff and by the gambling counsellors when relating their clients' experiences. The picture that emerges is one of highly inconsistent perceptions of signs that might indicate a gambling problem and significant reluctance to make an uninvited approach to a patron of concern in order to offer assistance. This is unless the patron is being aggressive, is trying to borrow money or is extremely upset. In the first two of these instances, the patron is most likely to be asked to leave the venue, with no discussion of a possible gambling problem or avenues for assistance.

However, there are some exceptions. A few venues reportedly adhere to the relevant practices and procedures as articulated in the Code of Practice and in the associated Industry Training Kit, and to practices advocated by gambling counsellors. The CLOs and staff at these venues appear to have genuine concern for their patrons' wellbeing, can pick up on signs that a patron may be having difficulties with their gambling, are able to approach in a non-threatening and supportive way, and to provide information and assistance to the patron. These personnel appear to know their patrons well and to be willing to discuss and respond to their difficulties in ways that seem to best suit the patron and his or her circumstances. In some cases, this involves working with the patron to help them limit the time and money they spend on gambling, through monitoring, encouragement and support. Some even mind the wallets and pay-packets of some patrons or walk them to their car to limit the temptation for them to gamble or to gamble more. The interviewees reported some examples where approaching patrons has resulted in them self-excluding and/or seeking counselling.

However, most venues do not take a consistent approach to identifying possible signs of problem gambling amongst their patrons and to approaching them to offer assistance. Perceptions of signs of a possible gambling problem vary enormously between individual staff and CLOs, and show limited alignment with those outlined in the Industry Training Kit. Similarly, where approaches to patrons of concern are made, these are highly variable, often lack CLO involvement and are sometimes made by staff with limited training. Further, some venues and personnel will not approach a patron at all out of concern about their gambling.

From a management perspective, there are several barriers to ensuring hotel and club staff and CLOs can recognise possible signs of a gambling problem and provide appropriate assistance to the patron. Lack of management commitment, venue policies and industry training that discourage approaching patrons of concern, staff confusion over signs of a possible gambling problem, lack of direction over if and when to approach, apprehension about appropriate ways to do this, and lack of training in identifying and approaching are some of these. However, a few venues appear to have overcome these challenges, but these are very much in the minority. In essence, there is the opportunity for significant improvements in the way this scenario is handled across the hotel and club sectors. This would help problem gamblers in the venue by optimising the likelihood of them receiving appropriate advice and assistance, whilst helping to overcome the considerable confusion, apprehension and ethical dilemmas currently experienced by venue personnel when faced with this scenario.

7.5 SCENARIO THREE: WHEN A THIRD PARTY INDICATES A PATRON HAS A GAMBLING PROBLEM

This section summarises and discusses the research results in relation to scenario three, which is when family or friends express concern to venue personnel that a patron has a gambling problem.

7.5.1 Procedures Used by CLOs in Hotels and Clubs

The vast majority of hotel and club CLOs who were interviewed have not experienced being approached by a family member concerned about a patron's gambling and this appears to happen very infrequently.

Procedures CLOs have used in dealing with third party concerns

Three hotel CLOs recounted specific examples of this scenario occurring, although two of these had occurred in previous workplaces. Responses included asking the family member if there was someone the venue could call for her and advising the family member to seek counselling advice. The third recounted how she had got into trouble for telling a family member that the patron was in the venue and had had a gambling win.

Six club CLOs recounted examples of this situation. Three related examples where further inquiries revealed that the complaint by the third party was not or did not appear to be genuine. In one other instance, the patron admitted they had been gambling too much, another resulted in a venue exclusion, and in the third instance the CLO was able to convince the patron to leave when her husband came to collect her.

Procedures CLOs would use in dealing with third party concerns

The remainder of the CLOs commented on what they would do if this situation arose, with some noting they would use a combination of the procedures below:

- One hotel CLO would ask to meet with the patron and advise the third party to take some counselling brochures home to them.
- Three hotel and five club CLOs would monitor the patron and perhaps approach them to see how they are.
- Nearly one-third of the hotel CLOs and six club CLOs would approach the patron and have a chat, advise them of the third party concern, and perhaps encourage them to self-exclude. However, most CLOs would only approach a patron they know well.
- Six hotel and three club CLOs would provide counselling information to the family member.
- Two hotel and three club CLOs would seek further advice on what to do, either from a counselling agency, head office when the hotel was part of a chain, or the club general manager.
- Four hotel CLOs would consider moving towards a venue exclusion, with another two just noting this as an option.
- Two club CLOs would ask to meet with the patron and the family.

7.5.2 Procedures Used by Staff in Hotels and Clubs

Only four club and four hotel staff have experienced being approached by a family member concerned about a patron's gambling. For some, this was 'years ago', while one said it was a 'common occurrence'. The others simply acknowledged it has happened.

Procedures staff have used in dealing with third party concerns

Different responses to this situation were recalled by the staff:

- Three club staff referred the matter to the manager. The first offered to bring in a counsellor to talk to the patron and the family, and then barred the patron from the club. The second manager organised a venue exclusion for the patron. The staff member was not sure what the third manager did.
- One club staff told the patron if he kept gambling in the venue they would 'have his picture posted everywhere so the staff know not to serve him anymore' to give him 'a bit of a fright'. This staff member was following a request from the patron's father to take these actions and reported that this patron appeared to have some intellectual difficulties.
- One hotel staff advised the family that the only way the venue could stop the patron gambling was for the patron to take out a self-exclusion order. This did not occur but the patron reportedly stopped gambling at the venue.
- One hotel staff told the patron to go as his wife was clearly upset. The patron left and did not gamble as regularly at the venue after that.

Procedures staff would use in dealing with third party concerns

The remainder of the staff commented on what they would do if this situation arose.

- Four hotel and four club staff said they would refer the matter to someone more senior in the venue.
- Two hotel staff said they would ask to meet with the patron, but in the company of the family member who raised the concern.
- Three hotel and one club staff said they would start by monitoring the patron to see if the family member's concern was justified.
- Several hotel and four club staff would approach the patron of concern and have a chat, find out more from the patron about their gambling, or tell them the options to get help. In some cases, they would advise the patron that a third party had expressed concern about their gambling.
- Several hotel and four club staff would discuss the issue with the third party who had raised concerns to try to check the veracity of the concern or complaint, how gambling is impacting on the family's situation, options available for help and what the family would like to do.
- Two club staff said they might consider implementing a venue exclusion if there is evidence that the concerns are justified.

7.5.3 Strengths and Weaknesses Experienced by Hotel and Club CLOs

This section summarises strengths and weaknesses of the practices and procedures reportedly used by the CLOs when a third party approaches them out of concern for a patron's gambling.

Strengths

There were very few instances where acting on a third party's concern resulted in a patron curtailing or stopping their visits to the venue, as described earlier, and the hotel and club CLOs did not identify any other strengths of current procedures used to deal with these types of concerns.

Weaknesses

The CLOs identified several difficulties in dealing with this situation. The most commonly expressed challenge, by seven hotel and four club CLOs, is that the third party concern might not be about a gambling problem, but can instead be a selfish or vexatious complaint. One hotel and a few club CLOs were concerned that taking action on a third party concern might trigger friction in the family concerned. Two hotel CLOs cautioned against becoming involved in family issues. One hotel CLO felt that, if the family cannot stop the patron gambling, then there is little the venue could do. One club CLO also noted there is nothing the venue can do to stop the patron gambling. A few club CLOs raised challenges around respecting the privacy of both the patron and the third party.

7.5.4 Strengths and Weaknesses Experienced by Hotel and Club Staff

Strengths and weaknesses of the practices and procedures reportedly used by the staff when a third party concern is expressed are summarised below.

Strengths

Apart from the few instances where acting on a third party's concern resulted in a patron curtailing or stopping their visits to the venue, as described earlier, the hotel and club staff did not identify any other strengths of current procedures used to deal with these types of concerns.

Weaknesses

The staff identified several difficulties in dealing with this situation. Some staff have little or no knowledge of what to do if approached by a family member or friend concerned about a patron's gambling. This uncertainty relates to procedures to use, legal obligations and venue exclusions. It is surprising that only a minority of staff said they would refer the matter to the CLO or manager, yet the staff who reported they would deal with the situation themselves would take highly variable approaches. Protection of patron privacy means that staff should not approach a patron to say that family or friends have expressed concerns about their gambling, unless the third party has given permission for this. However, some staff would approach the patron to let them know about the third party approach, with little apparent concern for potential family ramifications of this. However, other staff were worried that if they approach a patron based on a third party's concern that this might trigger aggression, either between the patron and the third party or from the patron towards staff. Some staff also felt they have no means whereby they can force a patron to stop gambling or to curtail their gambling. Finally, dealing with the situation is seen as even more difficult if the third party wants their approach to the venue to be kept confidential.

7.5.5 Strengths and Weaknesses Compared to Casino Practices

The casinos' procedures in dealing with a third party concern, and their strengths and weaknesses, are included here as a basis for comparison with the hotel and club procedures.

Casino procedures, strengths and weaknesses

This issue is a difficult one as the venue is restricted by privacy laws and staff are not able to disclose any information about patrons to a third party. Thus, all four RGLOs indicated that they would refer this situation to the RGM and/or to the Privacy Officer if necessary. The RGM indicated that, if she had permission from the family member, she might contact the patron to 'have a bit of a chat with them around what's going on'. But, she stressed that family complaints are not always genuine concerns about a patron having a gambling problem and that family members often contribute to the person's gambling problem themselves.

In terms of strengths, the RGLOs were clear and consistent about referring this situation to the RGM and about the limits of their possible actions due to privacy legislation relevant to this situation. The RGM was experienced in dealing with families of problem gamblers from her former counselling position and was careful to establish the circumstances around the third party approach to the venue.

In terms of weaknesses, it can be difficult to assist family members concerned about a patron's gambling because of the limits on what the RGLOs and RGM can tell them about the patron's gambling. Further, third party concerns can be raised for issues unrelated to problem gambling by the patron.

Comparison with hotels and clubs

Compared to the casino sector, it is clear that the hotel and club sectors have a far less consistent approach when dealing with third party concerns about a patron's gambling. In the hotels and clubs, the matter is not always referred to a CLO or more senior person, staff are not always well versed in privacy legislation, and some of their approaches, while well meaning, risk fuelling family disputes. Similarly variable responses appear to be provided by the hotel and club CLOs who were interviewed. Overall, the variation and deficiencies in the procedures used by hotel and club CLOs and staff in this scenario seem to reflect lack of direction on how to respond to this situation and lack of knowledge about privacy restrictions. However, in contrast to the casinos, hotel and club personnel are more likely to have closer relationships with their patrons and possibly also some family members, due to the more regular patronage, fewer patrons and smaller venue size. These closer relationships may facilitate both a third party approach to venue personnel and a response from them that best suits the patron's individual and family circumstances. However current practices in relation to this scenario are highly variable and, in some cases, inappropriate.

7.5.6 Strengths and Weaknesses Compared to Practices Recommended in the Code

The *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice Industry Training Kit* (Queensland Government, 2005a) identifies that CLO and staff responsibilities in relation to this scenario are to respond appropriately when a family member or close friend of a patron indicates that the patron has a problem with gambling. Further directions on how to respond appropriately in this situation are contained within the hotel and club resource manuals that accompany the Code. Table 7.2 contains the relevant excerpt from the hotels section (Section A) of the

Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice Resource Manual (2006), with an identical section contained in the clubs section (Section B).

Clearly, current procedures used by the hotel and club CLOs and staff who were interviewed vary substantially from those outlined in the Resource Manual. Not all staff refer the matter to the venue's CLO, and the CLOs interviewed did not appear to be knowledgeable about or to apply the procedures outlined in the Resource Manual. A few CLOs appear to cover the key requirements contained in Table 7.2, albeit in a less formal way, but the vast majority of interviews inspired little confidence that CLOs are typically informed about and consistently follow these procedures.

Table 7.2: Excerpt from Section A of the Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice Resource Manual (2006)

3.1.3 Approach by a Third Party

If a staff member is approached by a third party (e.g. husband, wife, partner, or someone with a significant relationship with the patron) requesting exclusion for another person, the staff member will:

- a. Refer the third party to the staff member performing the role of Customer Liaison Officer.
- b. The Customer Liaison Officer to explain to the third party the following:
 - An exclusion may only be put in place either by the individual concerned (self-exclusion) or initiated by the hotel (exclusion direction).
 - The third party cannot sign, or enter into, an exclusion on another person's behalf.
 - The third party may provide support to the patron by either suggesting self-exclusion or encouraging them to see a Gambling Help service.
 - The third party may assist the hotel by alerting the Customer Liaison Officer to a patron who may be at risk of problem gambling. It is then up to the hotel to initiate an **Exclusion Direction [Form 3D]** or, with the patron's consent, place the patron on an **Active Monitoring Program** if there are reasonable grounds to do so.
- c. The third party may wish to discuss the self-exclusion option with the patron believed to have a problem with gambling and/or encourage them to make contact with a counselling service or the hotel's Customer Liaison Officer directly.
- d. Customer Liaison Officer to reinforce to the third party, the preference for the patron to approach the Customer Liaison Officer directly for a self-exclusion (refer 3.1.1).
- e. Customer Liaison Officer to check with the third party if they wish to be identified to the patron in any discussions with the Customer Liaison Officer.
- f. The patron may:
 - Approach the Customer Liaison Officer directly, seeking self-exclusion. Implement the self-exclusion process (refer 3.1.1).
 - Be approached by the Customer Liaison Officer discreetly, requesting an opportunity to have a chat/coffee with the patron. (Once relationship established, discuss their gambling behaviour/habits and introduce idea of self-exclusion).
- g. If the patron refuses to pursue self-exclusion, the hotel should carry out a risk evaluation (refer Form 3(n), "Risk Indicators for Use by Gambling Industry") to determine patron's eligibility for an exclusion initiated by the hotel (**Exclusion Direction** - refer 3.1.2).
- h. Customer Liaison Officer to record the patron's refusal in **Register of Gambling-related Complaints/Issues [form 2(c)]**.
- i. Hotel may wish to consider implementing an **Active Monitoring Program** (refer 3.1.6) if the patron refuses self-exclusion but valid grounds exist for the hotel to monitor their gambling behaviour. Active Monitoring will require the patron's consent

Source: *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice Resource Manual: Section A*, (Queensland Hotels Association, 2006:12-14)

7.5.7 Strengths and Weaknesses Compared to Practices Recommended by Gambling Counsellors

Interviews with 23 Queensland Gambling Help counsellors in relation to this scenario revealed that some of the counsellors were aware of this scenario occurring, but it appears quite infrequent. The issue of privacy is paramount here. However, the counsellors considered it important that staff treat the family with respect, provide them with information, and refer them to a counselling agency. Additionally, venues can monitor the patron's gambling and build a picture of overall behaviours, then apply a venue exclusion if needed, although the latter seems a difficult process and not used much at all by gaming venues. If the family gives permission, the venue can approach the patron, relay the concerns of the family, and give the patron contact details for help.

It was difficult for the counsellors to have informed views on this scenario, given the infrequency of its occurrence. Both some positive and negative experiences were relayed. Positive experiences of the counsellors and their clients involved referring the family to the counselling agency and monitoring the patron to assess the situation. Negative experiences of the counsellors and their clients generally involved the venue denying it had any duty of care and refusing to do anything.

Comparative strengths of hotel and club procedures

While the club and hotel interviewees have very little experience in dealing with this scenario, the actions they have taken in the past and ones they reported they would use in the future were highly variable, as noted earlier. However, a small minority of interviewees would reportedly follow procedures that would largely meet those advocated by the gambling counsellors.

Comparative weaknesses of hotel and club procedures

The vast majority of hotel and club staff who were interviewed relayed very little knowledge of appropriate procedures to follow in this scenario. Individual elements of the counsellors' advice to treat the family with respect, provide them with information, refer them to a counselling agency and respect the patron's privacy would be followed by some staff and CLOs, but certainly not all. All elements of the counsellors' advice would be followed by very few. Of concern was also the apparent lack of knowledge around a patron's and third party's right to privacy.

7.5.8 Summary for Scenario Three

The preceding summary and analysis have focused on hotel and club procedures when staff and CLOs are approached by a third party concerned about a patron's gambling. It is difficult to gain a clear picture of how this scenario is usually dealt with because it appears to happen quite infrequently, according to both the hotel and club interviewees and the gambling counsellors. The procedures identified thus related more to what the staff and CLOs reported they would do if faced with this situation.

The interviewees raised a number of challenges for venues in responding to third party concerns. The most frequently mentioned is establishing whether the third party concern is in fact genuine, and not an unrelated or vexatious complaint. CLOs and staff are also apprehensive about triggering family disputes and becoming involved in family issues, and feel limited in what they can do given privacy restrictions, the difficulties of venue exclusions

and the perceived futility of trying to help a patron who has not acknowledged a gambling problem.

The results show that the procedures used would be highly variable, not necessarily respect the patron's privacy or a third party's wish for confidentiality, and in some cases risk fuelling a family dispute. There appeared very little knowledge of the procedures outlined in the Resource Manual or even awareness that these guidelines exist, although a few interviewees did report that they would seek advice before they acted. Nevertheless, the procedures that would reportedly be used by some CLOs and staff contain elements of what is outlined in the Resource Manual and advocated by the gambling counsellors. These include referring the matter to the CLO, informing the third party that the patron can self-exclude or that a venue exclusion may be possible, advising the third party that they might support the patron to self-exclude and/or seek counselling, and the CLO approaching the patron to discuss their gambling and identify self-exclusion as an option. If the patron refuses to self-exclude, the CLO might perform a risk evaluation on the patron to see if he or she qualifies for a venue exclusion or consider an active monitoring program for the patron. However, none of the interviewees reported that all these procedures would be followed and, in most cases, only one or two of these actions would be pursued by venue personnel. Clearly, there are substantial opportunities for improvement in how hotel and club personnel deal with third party concerns that would be beneficial for problem gamblers, their families, and venue staff and CLOs.

7.6 OBJECTIVE THREE: ADEQUACY OF RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING TRAINING

The third research objective was to assess the perceived adequacy of responsible gambling training in equipping staff and CLOs in Queensland hotels and clubs to interact appropriately with patrons with gambling problems and identify any gaps in relevant staff skills and knowledge. This section draws together the relevant research findings to address this objective.

7.6.1 Responsible Gambling Training Undertaken by Hotel and Club CLOs and Staff

The interviews with the hotel and club CLOs revealed that 24 of the 29 hotel CLOs have completed formal RSG training, ten have completed CLO training and some noted the Gaming Nominee training they have completed covered some aspects of responsible gambling. Others spoke of the value of their on-the-job training and experience, training sessions provided by counsellors, and company training and support if working for a hotel chain. A few others mentioned training DVDs and responsible gambling manuals as sources of information.

Of the 26 club CLOs, 21 have completed formal responsible gambling training, five have completed CLO training, and some made mention of their Gaming Nominee training. Others noted the value of their on-the-job training and experience, training sessions provided by counsellors, industry association seminars and local gambling networks.

About one-half of the 25 hotel staff and 17 of the 23 club staff have undergone formal responsible gambling training.

7.6.2 Strengths and Weaknesses Experienced by Hotel and Club CLOs

The positive and negative aspects of the training, as perceived by the CLOs, are summarised below.

Strengths

Most hotel and club CLOs were positive about the training they have received. The benefits noted by the hotel CLOs included capacity for better decision-making, enhanced confidence, updated and refreshed knowledge and direction on rules and regulations, self-exclusion procedures, when and how to approach patrons of concern, what to do if approached by a patron, and available counselling services. The benefits of training noted by the club CLOs included guidance on how to recognise problem gamblers, how to talk to people, clarification of the role of venue personnel in assisting problem gamblers, and the value of networking with people outside the venue during training. The training was also appreciated by some because it conveyed that gambling problems are serious issues that need to be taken seriously by venue staff.

The training is generally considered superior if delivered by a person with industry experience and familiarity who can provide real life examples, rather than an approach that focuses only on rules, regulations and forms to fill in. Scenarios and role playing during training are considered particularly beneficial. Involvement of counselling agencies in training is also considered very useful to raise awareness of the impacts of gambling problems on people and families, what counselling agencies do for clients, and the process patrons go through after self-excluding. The online availability of training was also praised, particularly by personnel in non-metropolitan areas where access to face-to-face training is more difficult.

Weaknesses

One weakness associated with the training is that not all CLOs are trained. Five hotel and five club CLOs have not completed any formal responsible gambling training, while a large majority of hotel and club CLOs have not completed any formal CLO training.

Suggested improvements to training delivery are for training and refreshers to be more frequent, role plays to be utilised more, counselling agencies to be more involved in delivering the training and for responsible gambling training to be mandatory. A few hotel and club CLOs noted the logistical difficulties of getting all staff trained, especially for venues with transient and small numbers of staff.

In terms of content, some hotel and club CLOs considered that the training is not comprehensive enough, particularly in relation to understanding problem gambling, problem gamblers, how to recognise signs of a gambling problem, and how to approach and talk to problem gamblers about their gambling. A suggestion by one hotel CLO to enhance this understanding is to involve recovered problem gamblers in the delivery of training sessions.

7.6.3 Strengths and Weaknesses Experienced by Hotel and Club Staff

The positive and negative aspects of the training, as perceived by the staff, are summarised below.

Strengths

Overall, the hotel and club staff were reasonably positive about the value of their training. Positive aspects identified by club staff are enhanced staff confidence, provision of

guidelines, reinforcement of existing knowledge, learning from the experiences of other staff and venues, clarification of rights, responsibilities, procedures and boundaries, and updates on legislative changes. Positive aspects identified by hotel staff are training in procedures, how to approach patrons, signs of possible gambling problems, relevant legislation and best practices.

Some club staff particularly praised the e-training delivery system for responsible service of gambling for its accessibility, rigour, practical elements and depth. This system was not mentioned by any hotel staff. Some hotel staff particularly praised the trainers for their delivery style, the case studies used and the real examples given based on industry experience.

Weaknesses

One weakness associated with the training is that not all staff are trained. About one-quarter of the club staff and one-half of the hotel staff have not received any formal training in responsible gambling. A few staff who have received formal training had done so several years previously and were critical that they have received no update or refresher, despite legislative and other changes. Some hotel staff reportedly are unaware that responsible gambling training even exists. Suggestions were made for the RSG training to be mandatory for all staff, and some staff wanted more frequent training and refresher courses.

Many staff wanted more training on identifying problem gamblers, how to approach a patron, and what they are able and not able to do to assist patrons. Some also criticised the training for being vague in some areas, particularly where the choice of whether to implement certain practices is left to the discretion of the venue or staff member. They felt the training should provide more prescriptive procedures and protocols where possible. Another suggestion was for more frontline staff to be trained in self-exclusion procedures to cover for when the manager and CLO are away.

Some staff considered the face-to-face training to be inferior to the e-training course. Further, others considered the face-to-face training to be somewhat superficial and rushed, and that passing the associated test was too easy and not a true test of knowledge. They advocated more in-depth and thorough training, with a test of the knowledge gained.

While on-the-job training generally assisted staff, sole reliance on it seems to sometimes result in lack of knowledge of practices and procedures, especially if managers are too busy to provide adequate instruction or not committed to responsible gambling.

7.6.4 Strengths and Weaknesses Compared to Casino Practices

This section draws on the interviews with the casino RGM and RGLOs to summarise strengths and weaknesses relating to responsible gambling training in the casinos.

In terms of strengths, responsible gambling training has a high profile within the casino and is conducted for all staff, with annual refreshers. Dedicated and comprehensive two-day training is also provided for the RGLOs. A refresher course for RGLOs and training additional RGLOs were also being considered at the time of the interviews. Most RGLOs found all elements of the training useful, including the scenarios, case study discussion, training in self-exclusion procedures, role plays and counsellor input. There were many different activities and exercises included in the training to meet a variety of staff needs. Other elements included in the training that would seem to enhance the effective performance of the RGLO role include listening and communication skills, understanding addictions, addictive behaviours, problem gambling, problem gamblers and co-morbidities, and crisis

intervention. The training appeared to reaffirm practices that have become automatic over a long period of time.

A few weaknesses or gaps were noted in relation to the casinos' responsible gambling and RGLO training. One RGLO felt the training was too long. Other RGLOs would like more regular training sessions or at least some way of those attending to get together in between training sessions to share thoughts and experiences. The question of different training for different departments within the venue was raised as a possible suggestion for improvement, as different practices are required by different departments in the casinos.

Comparative strengths and weaknesses of the hotel and club training

In contrast to the casinos, responsible gambling training in the hotel and club sectors has not been completed by all staff and refreshers are not undertaken as regularly, if at all, by many. Further, the CLO training does not appear to have been undertaken by most employees performing that role in the hotel and club sectors, whereas the casinos provide their RGLO training before employees move into this role. Additionally, some training deficiencies perceived by the hotel and club personnel might be addressed with further training and awareness in those areas that seemed to have equipped the casino RGLOs well, such as in listening and communication skills, and understanding addictions, addictive behaviours, problem gambling, problem gamblers and co-morbidities, as noted above. It would appear even more important for hotel and club personnel to be comprehensively trained in procedures to assist problem gamblers in the venue, along with regular refreshers, given that these personnel are faced with these situations less frequently than the casino staff and so have little opportunity to develop this knowledge and skills through on-the-job experience.

7.6.5 Strengths and Weaknesses as Perceived by Gambling Counsellors

This section draws on the interviews with the counsellors to summarise their views on the strengths and weaknesses relating to responsible gambling training of venue staff.

Strengths

Of the counsellors who were involved in training, they generally perceived that one of the most important and effective elements is training staff in general communication and active listening skills so they can interact appropriately when approached by patrons or when they approach patrons themselves. Counsellor training can also address how to approach and work with vulnerable people, signs of problem gambling, information about the gambling support agency, how they can assist the venue and patrons of concern, and ways that counsellors can assist with self-exclusion.

Weaknesses

The counsellors mentioned the need to increase the frequency of the training and refresher courses, to extend the training to more staff, and to include an element about 'learning about yourself' and 'dealing with your own issues'. The area of mental health is also considered important and not well covered in current training. The suggestion was made that DVDs of staff approaching patrons could be useful, as this is an issue that constantly needs reinforcing in training.

7.6.6 Gaps in Training

The preceding analysis of the responses of hotel and club personnel to three scenarios involved in assisting problem gamblers in the venue reveals substantial gaps in knowledge and perceived skills to deal with these various situations.

While knowledge and skills in relation to assisting patrons who approach to request help for a gambling problem are moderate on average, there are substantial variations between personnel who place a high priority on patron care and those who are less committed. To raise overall standards of patron care in this area appears to require a more concerted effort to have all staff trained in responsible gambling and to ensure they receive regular refresher courses in appropriate procedures. At a minimum, venue staff need to be well versed in sources of help for gambling problems, self-exclusion and how to provide a supportive response to patrons who ask for assistance.

Knowledge and skills in relation to assisting patrons who show signs of problem gambling but who do not ask for help are generally poor on average, at least amongst the hotel and club CLOs and staff interviewed for this study. Again, there are substantial variations amongst the approaches used, ranging from doing nothing to proactive assistance. To achieve the level of patron support advocated by the Code of Practice and associated Industry Training Kit will require not only ensuring all staff are trained, but also integration or increased emphasis of additional instruction into that training on recognising signs of a possible gambling problem, systems to monitor and build a case history of patrons of concern, how and when to approach these patrons, what to say and how to assist. While this instruction needs to emphasise appropriate procedures, it also needs to develop the interpersonal communications skills of staff, both to enhance their confidence in approaching a patron and also to hopefully achieve better outcomes when they do. Further, some training programs reportedly advise staff and CLOs not to approach patrons of concern at all and so directly contradict the responses advocated by the Code of Practice.

Knowledge and skills in relation to responding to third party concerns about a patron are overall very poor. As noted earlier, the responses identified by many staff and CLOs risk breaching privacy legislation and fuelling family disputes. Knowledge of instructions contained in the Resource Manuals that accompany the Code of Practice is extremely low, as is clarity around procedures, rights and responsibilities in relation to venue exclusions. Clearly, training of CLOs in appropriate procedures to use in this scenario is needed, as is instruction to venue staff to always refer a third party concern to the CLO.

Another gap is that not all training of hotel and club staff involves counsellor input. Yet, their input appears potentially very valuable in humanising problem gambling and conveying its serious impacts on the gambler, significant others and the community. Their input can also assist venue CLOs and staff to better understand the nature of addictions in general and problem gambling in particular. It can assist these personnel to develop skills in listening, communicating and responding appropriately to patrons with gambling-related issues and to approach patrons of concern in a non-confrontational and supportive way. It also appears that training is one way in which the links between venues and agencies are built and then maintained or strengthened over time. As discussed more in the next section, having strong links with local counselling agencies appears critical in providing appropriate assistance to problem gamblers in the venue. Regular involvement of counsellors in staff training is one way in which these links can be effectively maintained.

In terms of delivery, the training appears to benefit greatly from being conducted by trainers experienced in working in the industry so they can utilise real life examples and case studies

and so the training can encompass the many challenges experienced by venue staff and CLOs in responding to problem gamblers in the venue. Role plays of these challenging situations are a training tool that appear to be particularly appreciated by the trainees. Training clearly needs to be more comprehensive and regular, as noted above, and consideration should be given to including more rigorous mechanisms to ensure the trainee has gained the relevant knowledge and skills. Finally, the e-training system of responsible gambling may benefit from greater promotion within the industry, particularly to venues in regional and remote locations where access to face-to-face training can be difficult.

7.7 OBJECTIVE FOUR: EFFECTIVE INTERACTION WITH LOCAL GAMBLING SUPPORT SERVICES

This section summarises and analyses the research results pertaining to the fourth research objective, which was to assess how effectively Queensland hotels and clubs interact with local gambling support services to assist patrons with gambling problems and ways this interaction might be improved.

7.7.1 Strengths and Weaknesses Experienced by Hotel and Club CLOs

This section summarises strengths and weaknesses associated with CLO interaction with local gambling support services. Eight of the hotel and eight of the club CLOs reported they have not had any interaction with a Gambling Help agency, although agency staff may have visited the venue without the knowledge of these CLOs.

Strengths

The CLO interviewees appeared to value several types of services provided by gambling support agencies to their venue, including provision of printed materials about local services for display in the venue, being a contact for venues for advice and to refer patrons to, helping to organise patron self-exclusions, advice on specific situations, and provision of training sessions for staff. One club CLO also noted that a local gambling counselling agency had previously provided regular counselling sessions at the venue.

The CLOs also identified several benefits of this interaction with Gambling Help agencies. This interaction provides professional back-up for venues, given that the CLOs are not trained counsellors themselves. The agency staff can help to advise venue personnel on how to best deal with problem gamblers in the venue and how to improve venue practices. Of particular note is that, once agency staff are known to venue personnel, the latter appear much more likely to and comfortable with referring patrons to the agency for counselling or getting the agency staff involved in supporting patrons of concern to address their gambling problem. If this venue-agency interaction extends to having agency staff attend the venue to support the patron with advice and/or self-exclusion, this lowers the barriers to patrons attending counselling whilst also reassuring venue personnel that the patron can access professional help.

Weaknesses

There were, however, some criticisms made in relation to venue interaction with counselling agencies. First, some CLOs were critical that the local counselling agency has not made contact with them. However, these CLOs have clearly not initiated this contact themselves and so are not adhering to Practice 2.1 of the Code of Practice that requires gambling providers to establish effective mechanisms to link with local gambling support services. It

also appears that local gambling support agencies are less likely to make contact with venues in metropolitan compared to regional areas, perhaps reflecting the greater number of venues in metropolitan areas. Further, the strength of relationships between agencies and club CLOs seemed less than with the hotel CLOs. This may reflect the larger staff numbers in the clubs where the responsible gambling functions are more dispersed and where it may be more difficult for agency staff to build and maintain a good working relationship with CLOs. Overall, there was considerable confusion about the different types of gambling support services that CLOs could refer patrons to, with some not distinguishing accurately between local support services, the Gambling Helpline, Gamblers' Anonymous and Queensland Government staff who check on and supply responsible gambling signage to venues. Finally, one CLO reported that a counselling agency was uncontactable when the CLO tried and that the call was redirected several times and finally to an answering machine. It is not known what time of day this attempt was made, but a gap in current arrangements is the lack of an after hours gambling service across Queensland, except for the 24 hour Gambling Helpline. Thus, the business hours of agencies do not generally align with the busiest times of gambling venues.¹

7.7.2 Strengths and Weaknesses Experienced by Hotel and Club Staff

This section summarises strengths and weaknesses associated with staff interaction with local gambling support services. More than half the hotel and club staff have not had any interaction with a Gambling Help agency, although agency staff may have visited the venue without the knowledge of these staff.

Strengths

The interviewees appeared to value several types of services provided by gambling support agencies to their venue, including provision of printed materials about local services, provision of information about the service, being a contact for venues for advice and to refer patrons to, provision of back-up when dealing with problem gamblers in the venue, helping to organise patron self-exclusions and delivery of training sessions for staff.

Staff also identified several actual and potential benefits of venue and staff interaction with Gambling Help agencies. These were reported as providing insight into how agencies assist problem gamblers, providing professional back-up for venues in dealing with problem gamblers, helping to advise staff on how to deal with problem gamblers in the venue, and advising on how to improve venue practices. Venue-agency interaction also builds staff understanding and empathy with problem gamblers, makes staff more comfortable in suggesting counselling to patrons by putting a face to the help service, and demonstrates to staff the venue's commitment to responsible gambling.

Weaknesses

As noted above, most staff have not had any interaction with local gambling support services. Yet, the staff were able to identify several potential benefits of this interaction, as described above. Thus, extending this interaction to involve all staff would help to extend these benefits. In particular, staff felt that gambling support agencies can assist by advising or training them on how to interact with problem and at-risk patrons – how to approach them,

¹ Please note, that the national online Gambling Help website went live on 31 August 2009 at www.gamblinghelponline.org.au.

what to say, what to ask the patron and how to best help them. Greater interaction with agencies would also help enhance staff understanding of problem gambling and build empathy, which may then further encourage staff commitment to patron care. Enhanced interaction would also likely increase referrals to counselling agencies as staff would have better knowledge of local services and be able to 'put a face' to these agencies.

Overall, staff knowledge of agencies was poor, with many clearly confused between the different roles of the Gambling Helpline, Gamblers' Anonymous, the (then) QOGR and local agencies such as Lifeline and Relationships Australia. They are therefore likely to give incorrect or misleading information to a patron about where they can seek help. Greater interaction with local agencies would help to dispel this confusion. Further interaction with local gambling support agencies would also help to dispel the belief of some staff that the role of agency staff is to walk through venues and approach patrons about their gambling.

7.7.3 Strengths and Weaknesses Compared to Casino Practices

This section summarises strengths and weaknesses associated with interaction with local gambling support services by the casinos. The RGLOs appeared to have had little direct interaction with counsellors, except through their training and perhaps meeting them at Responsible Gambling Awareness Week at the casinos. In fact, the RGM had earlier clarified that a key difference between the role of a casino RGLO and a hotel or club CLO is that the RGLOs are not expected to liaise with Gambling Help agencies.

In terms of strengths, the RGM appears to have a good working relationship with Gambling Help agency staff and has a direct line to the local Gambling Help agency and can therefore assist patrons to arrange an appointment if they wish. Local Gambling Help agency staff have been involved in the casinos' training and Responsible Gambling Awareness Week. This interaction between the casinos and gambling support services appears to reinforce the message of shared responsibility for responsible gambling.

In terms of weaknesses, some of the RGLOs would like to be able to ring a counselling agency on the spot if they had a distressed patron, and did not currently feel they could do that. Lack of a 24 hour counselling service (apart from the telephone hotline) limits access to support that the casinos can immediately refer patrons to if needed.

Comparative strengths and weaknesses of hotel and club practices

Similar to the casinos, some hotel and club personnel appeared to have excellent links with their local gambling support service and to engage in some community networks where gambling-related issues can be raised. Also like the casinos, they sometimes utilise this link to arrange appointments for patrons with counsellors if appropriate. However, less committed venues and personnel had no links at all with local Gambling Help services.

7.7.4 Strengths and Weaknesses Experienced by Local Gambling Support Services

About one-half of the counsellors have a role in liaising with venues, while the remainder have dedicated community educators at their agency instead. Frequency of interaction with each venue, where this occurs, is generally a few times a year. Agencies provide information for display in venues, are a contact for venue advice and referrals, help to organise self-exclusions and may be involved in local responsible gambling networks. They are also involved in training, as previously discussed

Strengths

Some of the counselling agencies have designated staff who liaise directly with venues, thus some of the counsellors have no knowledge of the interaction processes. However, for those who do, it appears that they have developed a strong partnership with some venues, with staff feeling comfortable about referring patrons. Counsellors being involved in staff training is seen by all the counsellors as positive.

Weaknesses

Where there is little contact, or if a venue resists contact from counselling agencies, then the counsellors felt that venue staff are unlikely to refer patrons to counsellors. Difficulties with time were identified by some counsellors as a factor inhibiting the amount of contact they can have with venues. It was mentioned that having designated community educators may be problematic, as they tend not to be counsellor trained and thus, even though they can develop good links, they cannot provide information about the counselling processes to staff in venues. Staff turnover is also a challenge to relationship building, as are the attitudes of some managers who do not seem to care about gambling problems amongst patrons, who feel that gambling problems do not occur in small venues, who think the counsellors are there to check up on them, or who feel that the interaction might threaten their revenue. Small venues, particularly hotels, were identified by some counsellors as typically more reticent to embrace this interaction.

7.7.5 Suggested Improvements

In venues where there are no or minimal links with counselling agencies, key barriers appear to be no contact initiated by the counselling agency, a misperception by venue personnel that agency staff are anti-gambling or a threat to the venue's operations and revenue, the busy schedules of both agency and venue personnel, limited resources of counselling agencies, no community educators in some agencies, and the tyranny of distance between the agency and venues in some locations.

Several of these barriers appear to reflect the stretched resources of Gambling Help agencies, where they just do not have the time and staff to maintain contact with all venues in their geographic area. In some regional and remote locations, the size of the geographic area covered by each agency is huge and can require extensive travel, sometimes in rough conditions. Thus, improving venue-agency links in such areas would seem to require additional resources for Gambling Help agencies.

The other type of barrier, resistance by venue personnel, might be overcome by better publicity of the benefits that a strong venue-agency relationship can have for the venues. Those personnel who reported a positive ongoing link with local Gambling Help agencies were unequivocal about the value of that link and how it makes it easier for them to assist patrons of concern in the venue. Mechanisms for them to advise other venues of this would assist greater forging of these links. Local responsible gambling networks are one appropriate forum, as are responsible gambling and CLO training sessions conducted by industry associations and other training providers.

7.8 OBJECTIVE FIVE: OTHER FACILITATORS, BARRIERS AND BEST PRACTICES

The following discussion summarises the results pertaining to the fifth research objective, which was to identify any other facilitators, barriers and best practice examples for frontline

staff and CLOs in Queensland hotels and clubs and for gambling support services in interacting appropriately with problem gamblers in the venue.

7.8.1 Other Facilitators

Several other facilitators for interacting appropriately with problem gamblers in the venue were identified by the hotel and clubs CLOs and staff and gambling counsellors interviewed for this study. These are summarised below.

- Good practice around assisting problem and at-risk gamblers in the venue appears strongly underpinned by management and CLO commitment to responsible gambling. This generally translates into clear procedures and policies, support for frontline staff, ready access to information and guidelines, and trained staff.
- An important facilitator is the support provided by CLOs to frontline staff in the hotels and clubs. The CLOs interviewed articulated numerous types of support they provide. Several noted they are a referral for staff. This allays concerns that staff often have about having to deal with a gambling issue themselves as they know they can refer it to the CLO. This is important, given that many staff are young, transient and may not have received much or any training in responsible gambling. Many hotel and club CLOs also noted they provide on-the-job training and instruction for venue staff in dealing with responsible gambling issues and ensure responsible gambling materials, such as flow charts and other information, are available for staff. A few hotel and club CLOs reported they advise staff on specific patron incidents or issues and a few noted their role in updating staff on incidents, issues and self-exclusions. The value of the support role of CLOs was confirmed by the hotel and club staff interviews.
- Assisting problem gamblers in the venue also seems greatly facilitated where the CLO and staff know the venue's regular gamblers well. Not only does this appear to facilitate a CLO or staff approach to a patron of concern, it also means the patron is typically more comfortable approaching venue personnel or listening to their advice and offer of assistance. Thus, this familiarity with regular patrons helps to enhance a genuine interest by CLOs and staff in patron welfare.
- A further facilitator is the materials provided by the OLGR that CLOs and staff can refer to as sources of information, forms, flow-charts, contacts and the like. It appears that CLOs and staff rely heavily on these materials because dealing with patron approaches for assistance with a gambling problem, approaching patrons who show signs of gambling problems and dealing with third party concerns about a patron's gambling are generally infrequent occurrences. Thus, it is difficult for these venue personnel to hone their related knowledge and skills through on-the-job experience.
- Venue size appears to have a varying influence on the capacity of their personnel to respond to problem gamblers in the venue. Larger venues tend to have more prescribed policies and procedures and to have more CLOs (or equivalent) to support both patrons and frontline staff. In contrast, smaller venues seem better able to provide more personalised assistance to patrons of concern, such as individual monitoring of their gambling behaviour.
- As noted earlier, responsible gambling training is also a facilitator for venue personnel in responding appropriately to problem gamblers in the venue. However, not all staff are trained in RSG and not all CLOs have undertaken the specialist CLO training. Access to training appears to be facilitated by management commitment to

responsible gambling and by utilising the e-training system. CLOs within a hotel chain also seem to benefit from an extra layer of training, support and advice provided by head office.

- Having a strong link with a local gambling counselling agency can greatly facilitate venues in their provision of assistance to problem gamblers in the venue in ways described earlier and also help to build understanding and compassion for problem gamblers and their families. It also appears that links between agencies and venues are stronger in some non-metropolitan areas, although the strength of this link largely depends on the dedication of the agency staff involved and their willingness to visit venues regularly and be available for advice and support to both venues and patrons.

7.8.2 Other Barriers

Several other barriers for interacting appropriately with problem gamblers in the venue were identified by the hotel and clubs CLOs and staff and gambling counsellors interviewed for this study. These are summarised below.

- Some CLOs are very unwilling to go beyond minimum requirements to assist problem gamblers in the venue, and will provide assistance only if approached by a patron who specifically asks for help with a gambling problem. Some pursue a policy of never approaching a patron about their gambling, and some have attended training advising them not to approach. It appears to be the attitudes and personal preferences of these CLOs and their managers and the organisational culture, rather than other barriers, that most hinder more proactive responsible gambling efforts in these venues.
- Some frontline staff work in venues where there is no CLO, where they have limited interaction with the CLO and/or where management does not seem to care much about responsible gambling. Thus, these staff have limited opportunities for responsible gambling training and little knowledge of practices and procedures to assist patrons with gambling problems.
- Some venues appear to discourage staff from interacting with patrons beyond what is required in performing their necessary duties and have instructed staff not to discuss a patron's gambling with them. Further, some staff have attended training advising them to never approach a patron about their gambling. Thus, these staff are rather cynical that venues seem to emphasise profits over patron care and face ethical dilemmas when gambling is clearly having adverse consequences for the gambler and others.
- Other barriers to a more proactive approach by both CLOs and frontline staff include competition amongst venues and a concern that other venues may not be as responsible; the perceived futility of approaching patrons who are not willing to acknowledge and act on a gambling problem; the difficulties of recognising whether a person has a gambling problem or not; concern about patron responses to a offer of assistance; and lack of training on recognising signs of problem gambling, and how best to approach, talk to and assist problem and at-risk gamblers.
- Staff and CLOs are understandably unsure of what happens to patrons who self-exclude. They generally do not know whether the self-exclusion has helped the patron to resolve their gambling problems, or whether the patron has kept gambling at other venues instead. This lack of knowledge can deter some staff from offering self-exclusion as an option to patrons. It can also lead them to think that self-exclusion is

an instant cure for a person's gambling problems, whereas self-exclusion is usually a first step in a long road to recovery. A better understanding of how gambling problems impact on people's lives and the difficulties faced by most problem gamblers in addressing the problem would build empathy and encourage more proactive assistance to appropriate patrons.

- Approaching problem and at-risk gamblers to offer assistance is difficult and even more so for newer and younger staff who generally do not have the necessary experience, maturity and confidence. Thus, there needs to be experienced staff in venues to take on this role instead. Some staff intimated that, if the CLO or manager is unavailable, no one else in the venue is able to do a self-exclusion.

7.8.3 Best Practice Examples

Several examples of what they considered to be best practice were identified by the hotel and club CLOs and staff and by the gambling counsellors. These are listed below.

- Not making it too easy for people to put winnings straight back into machines by asking patrons if they would prefer wins by cheque and by avoiding paying wins in notes of \$20 or lower.
- Being extremely strict about parents having to supervise their children if they bring them to the venue, so that the availability of children's play areas does not facilitate long or frequent gambling sessions by parents who neglect to supervise their children.
- Monitoring the expenditure, frequency or duration of patrons' gambling on request, to help them stay in control of their gambling.
- Having a system in place to enhance staff knowledge of self-excludees so they are more likely to pick up breaches.
- Assistance with self-exclusion from one or multiple venues by local counselling agencies.
- Machine systems set up to alert venue staff when a patron is playing a machine very regularly or for long periods.
- Only employing staff who have their RSG certificate.
- Encouraging breaks in play by not providing service in the gaming room for drinks, food, change or payouts.
- Not having gaming promotions to avoid providing unnecessary inducements to gamble.
- Facilitating active monitoring of patrons, for example, by keeping an incidents book at the change counter so that staff can immediately record any incidents or their observations.
- Restrictions on how long patrons can gamble for without being approached. In one venue, patrons are approached after four or five hours of continuous gambling. This helps 'breaks the cycle' and may provide the opportunity for staff to offer assistance if appropriate. The staff themselves also seem to welcome a more prescribed approach such as this.
- Responding to patrons who ask for help immediately and with genuine concern for their wellbeing, and acknowledging them for taking that step, rather than asking for

the person to come back at another time, just proceeding with the paperwork for self-exclusion without much conversation and just treating the patron impersonally.

- Reducing embarrassment for problem gamblers wherever possible.
- Encouraging staff interaction with patrons which would appear to facilitate patron approaches to staff if they did want assistance, help staff recognise if a patron is having problems and perhaps provide a break in play for machine players.
- Providing different loyalty cards for patrons self-excluded only from gaming areas so that staff can unobtrusively recognise this.
- Monitoring patrons who have revoked their self-exclusion order in case their gambling becomes problematic again.
- Collaboration between venues to enable area self-exclusions, for example where several hotels are owned by the same company or where several clubs are affiliated.
- Initiatives to strengthen the links between venues and counselling agencies. These include local responsible gambling initiatives, such as Responsible Gambling Awareness Week activities and responsible gambling networks. These extend the profile of counselling agencies in the community and at venues and strengthen venue-agency relations. A strong and trusting relationship appears to underpin other best practice examples cited in relation to venue-agency links. These include venue staff knowing the counsellors so they know who to refer patrons to, inviting the agency to assess venue practices to identify areas for improvement, developing customised signage and cards, the provision of professional counselling at the venue, referrals to counselling to accompany self-exclusion, the invitation for venue staff to contact the counselling agency to assist with any problem gambling issues, and inviting agency staff to conduct critical incident debriefing for venue staff.

7.9 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Some concluding comments are now made in relation to the interactions amongst the four groups of people identified in Chapter Two and Figure 3.1 as critical to providing effective assistance to problem gamblers in the venue – frontline staff, CLOs, gambling support services and problem gamblers. These comments are largely directed at measures that might enhance these interactions and ultimately lead to improved assistance for problem gamblers in the venue.

Interaction 1: From problem gambler to frontline venue staff

As examined in this study, problem gamblers may interact with frontline venue staff to directly ask for assistance for a gambling problem. However, this appears to happen infrequently, despite good evidence from the research that substantial numbers of patrons in venues display possible signs of problem gambling. Key barriers to problem gamblers approaching staff for help with a gambling problem were identified as lack of recognition and acknowledgement of a gambling problem, shame and embarrassment about the problem, concerns over whether a request for help would be kept confidential, uncertainty over whether venue staff could provide any assistance, and concern that venues would be unsympathetic to a request for assistance.

Several measures may help to lower these barriers. Community education could help to enhance problem recognition, lower the stigma around problem gambling, build a greater sense of responsibility by gamblers themselves and publicise avenues for assistance, both by

venues and external agencies. Similarly, venues themselves could better publicise that they are willing and able to assist problem gamblers discreetly and privately through referrals to counselling, monitoring and self-exclusion. Venue management could also encourage higher levels of staff-patron interaction in general to build stronger relationships, which in turn would be likely to enhance the comfort level of patrons approaching staff about a problem and their receptivity to staff advice or assistance.

Interaction 2: From frontline venue staff to problem gambler

As noted earlier, responses from frontline staff to patrons who ask for help are highly variable, ranging from caring, discreet, confidential, immediate and informative assistance to much lower levels of patron care, confusion about support services for problem gamblers and lack of due practice around self-exclusion. Key barriers to frontline staff providing higher standards of patron care were identified as lack of management commitment, scarce resources, high staff turnover, limited training, variable training and lack of effective engagement with local counselling agencies. Further, frontline staff responses to patrons who display signs of a possible gambling problem are typically minimal with considerable staff reluctance to approach and assist a patron out of concern for their gambling behaviour. Key barriers to frontline staff in making an uninvited approach to a patron of concern were identified as lack of management commitment, venue policies and industry training that discourage approaching patrons of concern, staff confusion over signs of a possible gambling problem, lack of direction over if and when to approach, apprehension about appropriate ways to do this, and lack of training in identifying and approaching.

Several measures may help to lower these barriers. Improved training, including having all frontline staff trained, more comprehensive training and frequent refresher courses, would help to encourage a stronger commitment to responsible gambling, educate staff in appropriate procedures and build staff confidence, understanding and empathy when assisting problem gamblers in the venue. In particular, training to enhance staff knowledge of problem gambling and its impacts, the nature of addictions, identifying and approaching problem gamblers and effective interpersonal communication skills, would appear potentially beneficial. There is also the opportunity for more prescribed policies for staff in this situation, either through venue policies or the Code of Practice, to reduce the considerable confusion around staff roles and responsibilities. Currently, many staff do not feel empowered to approach patrons and are poorly versed in appropriate ways to do this.

Interaction 3: From frontline venue staff to CLOs

Frontline venue staff can interact with their venue's CLO or equivalent in various ways, including referring patrons to the CLO, reporting gambling-related incidents, seeking information and advice and other interactions as outlined in the Industry Training Kit. However, a surprisingly large number of frontline staff currently do not refer gambling-related issues to the CLO, but instead try to deal with them themselves, often in highly variable and sometimes inappropriate ways. This may reflect lack of awareness by staff that they can or should refer certain gambling-related issues to the CLO, lack of awareness of how the CLO can support staff in these situations and perhaps lack of availability of the CLO when such issues arise.

Again, staff training can help to clarify the roles of frontline staff and CLOs in assisting problem gamblers in the venue. Additionally, CLO training can emphasise the different types of support they can provide to staff. However, there is the need to substantially increase the proportions of frontline staff trained in RSG and of CLOs undertaking the dedicated CLO training if their respective roles are to be clear and performed in alignment with the Code of

Practice and associated Industry Training Kit. Venue policies could also be developed to advise staff of specific situations which they must refer to the CLO, for example when a third party expresses concern about a patron's gambling and when a patron wants to self-exclude. A further measure would be to ensure a CLO is on duty during all the venue's trading hours. This is likely to require more than one CLO in each venue. Better clarity of the roles of frontline staff in assisting problem gamblers in the venue and when to refer to the CLO would help reduce the variable and inappropriate responses sometimes provided by staff and reduce their resistance and apprehension around assisting patrons with gambling-related issues.

Interaction 4: From CLO to frontline staff

The role of the CLO in supporting frontline staff to deal with responsible gambling issues in the venue can involve providing information and advice to staff, being a referral for staff for gambling-related issues, organising staff training in responsible gambling and other interactions as outlined in the Industry Training Kit. Some CLOs clearly fulfil their responsibilities in this role and staff in those venues appear to value this support highly. However, some CLOs are clearly not as diligent and supportive for staff. Most have not been trained in their role and some have not even undertaken basic RSG training. This may lead to lack of clear procedures and information for staff, variable and sometimes inappropriate assistance for patrons with gambling-related problems and a failure of frontline staff to receive RSG training themselves.

A key measure to improve these outcomes is to encourage more personnel in the CLO role to undertake the dedicated CLO training, along with regular refresher courses. This may help to emphasise the importance of the CLO role in supporting both patrons and staff, the need to support frontline staff in assisting problem gamblers in the venue, to ensure frontline staff are RSG trained and informed of responsible gambling issues, and to clarify the expectations for staff in terms of when to deal with a gambling-related issue themselves and when to refer it to the CLO. Clear venue policies around this would also assist. CLOs can also provide good role models for staff, lead by example and help to nurture a stronger culture of responsible gambling and patron care so that patrons with gambling problems can receive appropriate assistance from venues.

Interaction 5: From problem gambler to CLO

Problem gamblers may interact with CLOs when they request information and advice, self-exclusion, a referral to counselling or other type of assistance for a gambling problem. Barriers to problem gamblers approaching venue staff to directly request assistance for a gambling problem have been outlined earlier and these also apply to patrons approaching CLOs. In some cases, patrons may be even more reticent to approach the CLO about a gambling problem if they have had little interaction with the CLO previously. This is more likely to be the case in larger venues with only one or a few CLOs who are clearly unable to build personal relationships with all patrons. Thus, having more CLOs in larger venues to allow them to interact with patrons more generally may help lower barriers to patrons approaching them for help. Further publicity about the role of the CLO to patrons might also assist. Additionally, other measures to lower barriers to patrons approaching venue staff, such as community education and better venue publicity of ways they can assist problem gamblers, have been discussed above.

Interaction 6: From CLO to problem gambler

CLOs may interact with problem gamblers when the latter directly ask for assistance for a gambling problem or are referred to the CLO by frontline staff to implement self-exclusion, be referred to counselling or enter into a monitoring program. Overall, the CLOs' responses to when patrons directly request help for a gambling problem appear reasonably supportive and appropriate, although there is considerable variation amongst highly committed CLOs and those who adhere only to minimum requirements. Further training and sharing of best practice interactions may help to reduce this variation.

Of greater concern however is the generally poor level of CLO response to patrons who show signs of gambling problems. Associated barriers were identified as lack of management commitment, venue policies and industry training that discourage approaching patrons of concern, confusion over signs of a possible gambling problem, lack of policy and direction over if and when to approach, apprehension about appropriate ways to do this, and lack of training in identifying and approaching patrons of concern. Some CLOs will not approach these patrons at all, and of those who do, it appears this typically only occurs when the patron's situation is desperate or their behaviour quite extreme. Responses to third party concerns are also highly variable and sometimes breach privacy legislation and risk fuelling family disputes. Barriers to acting appropriately on a third party concern appear to arise more from an absence of knowledge amongst many CLOs of their roles, responsibilities and obligations in this situation.

Several measures may help CLOs provide improved responses to problem gamblers in the venue. Ensuring all CLOs undertake the dedicated training is one such measure, but it is also worth considering whether that training adequately equips CLOs to deal with these situations. While it is important for CLOs to be well versed in appropriate procedures, sources of help and other mechanisms to help the patron, they may also benefit from greater understanding of problem gambling, problem gamblers and the nature of addiction, as well as training in effective interpersonal communication, active listening, negotiation and conflict resolution. It would certainly appear that CLO training would benefit from greater involvement of gambling support agencies who can share their wisdom and experience on these issues. These agencies can also provide extensive support for CLOs when interacting with problem gamblers in their venue and are a resource that appears very much under-utilised at present. As discussed below, building stronger links between venues and agencies appears critical to providing appropriate assistance to problem gamblers and their families in the gaming venue.

Interaction 7: From CLO to gambling support services

CLOs can interact with gambling support agencies by establishing links with them, inviting them to staff training sessions, contacting them for advice and referrals, asking them to support a patron self-excluding or otherwise seeking help, and at local community forums. Typically however, the initial link between a venue and gambling support agency is initiated by the agency rather than by the CLO or other venue personnel. Where agencies do not initiate this link, venues seem very reticent to do this themselves. Barriers to CLOs initiating links with counselling agencies include lack of commitment to responsible gambling, a belief that gambling problems do not occur in small venues, and a perception that agencies are there to check up on venues or might threaten their revenue. Yet, where effective links have been established, CLOs are unequivocal about the value of interacting with the agency and the professional backup they provide in dealing with the challenges of assisting problem gamblers in the venue.

Thus, encouraging all venues to establish and maintain effective links with a local gambling support service is a worthwhile aim. Possible measures to achieve this include emphasising the benefits of this interaction in CLO training, industry forums and local community forums, such as responsible gambling networks and Responsible Gambling Awareness Week activities.

Interaction 8: From gambling support services to CLOs

As noted above, gambling support services can interact with CLOs and other venue staff by providing information for display in venues, being a contact for venue advice and referrals, helping to organise self-exclusions, and via local responsible gambling networks and activities. They can also contribute to training of CLOs and staff. Typically, it is the agency which initiates links with the venue, rather than vice versa. However, agencies are constrained by limited time and personnel to visit venues and find that high staff turnover in venues is a challenge to maintaining these links. The counsellors reported that they tend to visit each venue only a few times a year at most. Yet, maintaining strong links appears to help direct problem gamblers in venues and their families to counselling and to encourage self-excludees to access help services. Their involvement in training also appears to build staff understanding of and empathy for problem gamblers and how to identify, approach and assist them. Thus, enabling these agencies to initiate and maintain regular contact with all venues in their geographic area is a worthwhile endeavour. However, this would appear to require additional resource allocations to these agencies.

Interaction 9: From gambling support service to problem gambler

In relation to assisting problem gamblers in the venue, gambling support services can help patrons to self-exclude from venues by advising them on the process, by accompanying them to venues or by visiting venues on the client's behalf to implement a self-exclusion. They can also assist problem gamblers surmount the challenges of self-excluding from multiple venues. Additionally, agency staff can be available to provide telephone or on-site counselling in venues to patrons or their families who need support. Where agency staff are called into venues to assist with advice, counselling or self-exclusion for a patron, this appears to substantially lower the barriers for the patron to then access counselling to address the gambling problem. This involvement also helps to ensure that venues follow due process in implementing a self-exclusion and provide other types of assistance to the problem gambler in an appropriate and supportive way. In essence, the assistance venues provide to problem gamblers is generally very much enhanced with input from agency staff.

Interaction 10: From problem gambler to gambling support service

Problem gamblers can interact with gambling support services to seek advice, counselling and assistance with self-exclusion. However, the proportion of problem gamblers who seek this type of support is small, with barriers to help-seeking including lack of problem recognition and acknowledgement, shame, embarrassment and a belief that they can resolve the gambling problem on their own. However, venues can play a vital role in linking problem gamblers with gambling support services. This can occur through venue signage, advice and referrals, and through inviting agency staff to the venue to support patrons who are self-excluding or otherwise seeking assistance. To maximise this linking of problem gamblers in the venue to counselling agencies, measures to encourage strong agency-venue links, as discussed above, are vital.

Conclusion

This chapter concludes this research report. It has summarised and analysed the key research findings to address the five research objectives. As such, it has also addressed the overall aim of the study which was to examine how, and how appropriately, frontline staff and CLOs respond to and assist patrons with gambling problems in Queensland gaming venues, and how venues interact with local gambling help services to provide this assistance. The chapter also identified gaps in relevant staff skills, knowledge and responsible gambling training, other facilitators and barriers to providing appropriate assistance, and best practice examples where possible. It then outlined various measures that might enhance the interactions amongst four parties critical to providing effective assistance to problem gamblers in the venue – frontline staff, CLOs, gambling support services and problem gamblers.

In conclusion, it is important to note the limitations of this study. As with most exploratory qualitative research, it was only possible to gather data from small, non-random samples which, in many cases, were self-selecting. Thus, it is not known whether the views and experiences expressed by the research participants are representative of the broader study population, although the general convergence of the information gathered from the CLOs, staff and gambling counsellors provides reasonable confidence that the research results are valid and reliable. However, it is acknowledged that information from self-excludees would have helped to further triangulate the results, but unfortunately this was not forthcoming.

Nevertheless, the research has been able to provide in-depth data on the range of opportunities and challenges associated with assisting problem gamblers in gaming venues. As such, it is hoped that the insights provided by this study can inform improved practices and outcomes in responsible provision of gambling.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM THE QHA



August 2008

Re: Gambling Research Project by Southern Cross University

Dear Hotel Manager

I am writing to make you aware of a research project that Southern Cross University's Centre for Gambling Education & Research is conducting in Queensland gaming venues, titled *Assisting Problem Gamblers in the Gaming Venue: How Frontline Staff, Customer Liaison Officers and Gambling Support Services Respond to Problem Gamblers in the Venue*.

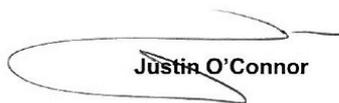
The Queensland Hotels Association has a continuing interest in ensuring that the industry's response to problem gamblers within venues is supportive and appropriate. The possibility of furthering our understanding of how this response can be improved through sharing our understanding of the interactions between venue staff, counselling agencies and gamblers is important, and will be useful for the QHA, our members, and the communities in which we operate.

Over the next couple of months, a research team from Southern Cross University, headed by A/Professor Nerilee Hing, will be approaching some hotels to participate in an interview. The QHA would appreciate your involvement in this process.

We would encourage you to co-operate with the researchers on this interesting and important project by allowing two key gaming personnel – one customer liaison officer and one frontline gaming staff member - to each participate in a ½ hour interview. Your hotel and the contribution of your staff will be anonymously reported.

The prospect of using the fundamental understanding that this research will develop in our responsible gambling efforts represents an important step forward in the difficult business of responding collaboratively to problem gamblers within venues.

Yours Sincerely,


Justin O'Connor
Chief Executive

FRECALL 1800 177 594 <small>ARN 51 678 166 261</small>	Address Level 3, 160 Edward St Brisbane Qld 4000 Postal GPO Box 343 Brisbane Qld 4001	Phone 07 3221 6999 Facsimile 07 3221 6649	Email info@qha.org.au Web www.qha.org.au
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APPENDIX B
LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM RELATIONSHIPS
AUSTRALIA (QLD)

Date: Wed, 19 Nov 2008 08:53:44 +1000
From: Andrew Davis <acdavis@relateqld.com.au> Subject: GH
Research
To: Gambling Help Service <GHS@relateqld.asn.au> Cc: Nerilee
Hing <nerilee.hing@scu.edu.au> ,

Dear Gambling Help Counsellors

I write to encourage you to participate in a study titled 'Assisting Problem Gamblers in the Gaming Venue'. It is funded by the Queensland Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing (OLGR) through its Responsible Gambling Research Grants Scheme, and is being conducted by the Centre for Gambling Education and Research (CGER) at Southern Cross University.

The study examines how, and how appropriately, frontline staff and customer liaison officers respond to and assist patrons with gambling problems in Queensland gaming venues, and how venues interact with local gambling help services to provide this assistance. It will also identify gaps in relevant staff skills, knowledge and responsible gambling training, any other facilitators and barriers to providing appropriate assistance, and best practice examples, where possible. As a gambling help counsellor, I would greatly appreciate your participation. If you agree to participate, Christine Hahn from the Centre for Gambling Education and Research will phone you in the next week to schedule a time for a telephone interview and to arrange to send you an informed consent form and the interview questions. The interviews are being conducted by Nerilee Hing, Lewis Bizo and Elaine Nuske from the Centre for Gambling Education and Research . With your permission they will audio-tape or take notes during the interview. It should last about 30-45 minutes.

While your participation in an interview is voluntary, I encourage you to support this research and its potential to help improve venue practices around problem gamblers.

Andrew Davis
Chief Executive Officer
Relationships Australia Queensland
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"Building better relationships for 60 years"

APPENDIX C

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR HOTEL AND CLUB
CUSTOMER LIAISON OFFICERS**

We have been funded by the QLD Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing to conduct a research project on how gaming venues in QLD respond to and assist patrons in the venue with gambling problems. We hope to gain an understanding of how problem gamblers, frontline staff, customer liaison officers and gambling help services interact to help people address their gambling problems. The purpose of this interview is to gather your experiences and opinions about the practices and procedures used in your venue to respond to problem gamblers, the opportunities and challenges these might present to you in your job, and any thoughts on how they might be improved to help CLOs and frontline staff in their jobs and to help patrons to address their gambling problems. Assure of anonymity, confidentiality. Ask permission to record interview.

- 1. Our first few questions are about you to provide some context. Can you please tell me:**
 - Your position
 - How long you have worked here
 - Whether you have worked in other gaming venues
 - No. of gaming machines in the venue and any other gambling facilities (TAB? keno?)
- 2. What do you do if a patron asks for assistance with a gambling problem?**
 - Does this happen often?
 - How do you know to follow this procedure?
 - How comfortable do you feel doing this? Any challenges
 - How well do you think these practices and procedures assist these patrons?
 - Do you think this approach could be improved? How? Why?
- 3. Do you think you can recognise if someone is a problem gambler or at risk? How?**
- 4. Of the indicators you've identified, which would prompt you to approach a patron to assist them?**
- 5. How would you approach them? What would you do?**
 - Does this happen often?
 - How do you know to follow this procedure?
 - How comfortable do you feel doing this? Any challenges?
 - How well do you think these practices and procedures assist these patrons?
 - Do you think this approach could be improved? How? Why?
- 6. What do you do if a family member or close friend indicates a patron has a gambling problem?**
- 7. In what ways do you support your frontline staff in assisting problem gamblers in the venue?**
 - Do you think this support could be improved? How? Why?
- 8. What training have you done to help you assist problem gamblers in the venue?**
 - How could the training be improved?
- 9. Please describe the self-exclusion procedures used in your venue.**
 - Do you think this approach could be improved? How? Why?
- 10. How do gambling help agencies help you assist problem gamblers in the venue?**
 - Do you think this support could be improved? How? Why?
- 11. Are there any other challenges for you or frontline staff in assisting problem gamblers in the venue?**
- 12. Do you have examples of good/best practice in assisting problem gamblers in the venue?**
- 13. Is there anything else your venue could do to assist problem gamblers in the venue?**
- 14. Any other comments?**

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR HOTEL AND CLUB
FRONTLINE STAFF

We have been funded by the QLD Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing to conduct a research project on how gaming venues in QLD respond to and assist patrons in the venue with gambling problems. We hope to gain an understanding of how problem gamblers, frontline staff, customer liaison officers and gambling help services interact to help people address their gambling problems. The purpose of this interview is to gather your experiences and opinions about the practices and procedures used in your venue to respond to problem gamblers, the opportunities and challenges these might present to you in your job, and any thoughts on how they might be improved to help CLOs and frontline staff in their jobs and to help patrons to address their gambling problems. Assure of anonymity, confidentiality. Ask permission to record interview.

- 1. Our first few questions are about you to provide some context. Can you please tell me:**
 - Your position
 - How long you have worked here
 - Whether you have worked in other gaming venues
 - No. of gaming machines in the venue and any other gambling facilities (TAB? keno?)
- 2. What do you do if a patron asks for assistance with a gambling problem?**
 - Does this happen often?
 - How do you know to follow this procedure?
 - How comfortable do you feel doing this? Any challenges
 - How well do you think these practices and procedures assist these patrons?
 - Do you think this approach could be improved? How? Why?
- 3. Do you think you can recognise if someone is a problem gambler or at risk? How?**
- 4. Of the indicators you've identified, which would prompt you to approach a patron to assist them?**
- 5. How would you approach them? What would you do?**
 - Does this happen often?
 - How do you know to follow this procedure?
 - How comfortable do you feel doing this? Any challenges?
 - How well do you think these practices and procedures assist these patrons?
 - Do you think this approach could be improved? How? Why?
- 6. What do you do if a family member or close friend indicates that a patron has a gambling problem?**
- 7. In what ways does your CLO support you in assisting problem gamblers in the venue?**
 - Do you think this support could be improved? How? Why?
- 8. What training have you done to help you assist problem gamblers in the venue?**
 - How could the training be improved?
- 9. How do gambling help agencies help you assist problem gamblers in the venue?**
 - Do you think this support could be improved? How? Why?
- 10. Are there any other challenges for frontline staff in assisting problem gamblers in the venue?**
- 11. Do you have examples of good/best practice in assisting problem gamblers in the venue?**
- 12. Is there anything else your venue could do to assist problem gamblers in the venue?**
- 13. Any other comments?**

APPENDIX E
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR GAMBLING HELP
COUNSELLORS

We have been funded by the QLD Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing to conduct a research project on how gaming venues in QLD respond to and assist patrons in the venue with gambling problems. We hope to gain an understanding of how problem gamblers, frontline staff, customer liaison officers and gambling help services interact to help people address their gambling problems. The purpose of this interview is to gather your client experiences and professional opinions about the practices and procedures used in venues to respond to problem gamblers, the opportunities and challenges these might present, and any thoughts on how they might be improved. Assure of anonymity, confidentiality. Ask permission to record interview.

1. Our first questions are to provide some context. Can you please tell me:

- Your position and role? How long you have worked there?

Our next few questions are around what venue management and staff do and should do in various scenarios they may experience in interacting with gamblers in the venue.

2. The first scenario is when a patron approaches a staff member to ask for help with a gambling problem.

2a. Thinking about your clients' experiences:

- Is this common amongst your clients – that they approached a venue staff person for assistance or advice on a gambling problem? Why or why not?
- What have been your clients' experiences when they have approached staff for help? What did staff do?
- How well do you think this approach has assisted these clients? How? Why?
- Can you give examples of good and bad practice your clients have experienced under this scenario? Why do you consider these 'good' and 'bad'?

2b. In your professional opinion as a gambling counsellor:

- What *should* staff do when a patron approaches them to ask for assistance with a gambling problem?
- What prevents or hinders staff from taking this approach now?
- Do you think venue staff are currently equipped to follow your recommended approach? What additional skills, training, resources, etc might they need?

3. A second scenario is when a staff member might approach a patron to offer assistance for a gambling problem.

3a. Thinking about your clients' experiences:

- Is this common amongst your clients – that venue staff approached them to offer assistance or advice on a gambling problem? Under what circumstances has this happened?
- What have been your clients' experiences when staff approached them to offer help? What did staff do?
- How well do you think this approach has assisted these clients? How? Why?
- Can you give examples of good and bad practice your clients have experienced under this scenario? Why do you consider these 'good' and 'bad'?

3b. In your professional opinion as a gambling counsellor:

- Do you think venue staff can recognise if a patron is a problem gambler or at risk? What indicators should they notice, if any?
- Which indicators should prompt staff to approach a patron to offer advice or assistance?
- What *should* staff do when they approach a patron to offer advice or assistance?
- What prevents or hinders staff from taking this approach now?
- Do you think venue staff are currently equipped to follow your recommended approach? What additional skills, training, resources, etc might they need?

4. A third scenario is if a family member or close friend indicates to venue staff or management that a patron has a gambling problem.

4a. Thinking about your clients' experiences:

- Is this common amongst your clients – that a family member or close friend of theirs approached a venue with these concerns? Under what circumstances has this happened?
- What have been your clients' experiences when a family member or close friend approached venue staff or management? What did management or staff do?
- How well do you think this approach has assisted these clients? How? Why?
- Can you give examples of good and bad practice your clients have experienced under this scenario? Why do you consider these 'good' and 'bad'?

4b. In your professional opinion as a gambling counsellor:

- What *should* staff do when a family member or close friend approaches them to ask for assistance with a gambling problem?
- What prevents or hinders staff from taking this approach now?
- Do you think venue staff are currently equipped to follow your recommended approach? What additional skills, training, resources, etc might they need?

5. A fourth scenario is if a patron decides to self-exclude.

5a. Thinking about your clients' experiences:

- Is this common amongst your clients – that they have self-excluded? Why or why not? (barriers and facilitators?)
- What have been your clients' experiences when they have asked to be self-excluded? What did venue management or staff do?
- How well do you think this has assisted these clients? How? Why?
- Can you give examples of good and bad practice your clients have experienced in relation to self-exclusion? Why do you consider these 'good' and 'bad'?

5b. In your professional opinion as a gambling counsellor:

- What *should* staff do when a patron asks to be self-excluded?
- What prevents or hinders staff from taking this approach now?
- Do you think venue staff are currently equipped to follow your recommended approach? What additional skills, training, resources, etc might they need?
- How might self-exclusion be improved? (e.g. process, time, geographic coverage)

6. In what ways do you interact with local gaming venues to assist problem gamblers in the venue?

- What are the facilitators and barriers to this?
- How well does this interaction help venue staff to assist patrons with gambling problems? (strengths, weaknesses, examples)
- Do you think this interaction could be improved? How? Why?
- Do you have any examples of best practice in this area?

7. Do you have a role in staff training in venues? If so, please describe the training.

- How well does this training equip venue staff to assist patrons with gambling problems? (strengths, weaknesses, examples)
- How could the training be improved?
- Do you have any examples of best practice in staff training?

8. Is anything else gaming venues can do to assist problem gamblers in the venue that we haven't talked about? Any other comments?

APPENDIX F
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR CASINO RESPONSIBLE
GAMBLING MANAGER (QLD)

We have been funded by the QLD Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing to conduct a research project on how gaming venues in QLD respond to and assist patrons in the venue with gambling problems. We hope to gain an understanding of how problem gamblers, frontline staff, responsible gambling liaison officers and gambling help services interact to help people address their gambling problems. The purpose of this interview is to gather your experiences and opinions about the practices and procedures used in your venue to respond to problem gamblers, the opportunities and challenges these might present to you in your job, and any thoughts on how they might be improved to help RGLOs and frontline staff in their jobs and to help patrons to address their gambling problems. Assure of anonymity, confidentiality. Ask permission to record interview.

- 1. What should casino staff do if a patron asks for assistance with a gambling problem?**
 - Does this happen often?
 - How do they know to follow this procedure?
 - How comfortable do you think they feel doing this? Any challenges
 - How well do you think these practices and procedures assist these patrons?
 - Do you think this approach could be improved? How? Why?
- 2. Do you think casino staff should be able to recognise if someone is a problem gambler or at risk? How?**
- 3. What indicators might prompt casino staff to approach a patron to assist them? That is, under what circumstances would you want them to do this?**
- 4. How should staff approach them? What would you want them to do?**
 - Does this happen often?
 - How do they know to follow this procedure?
 - How comfortable do you think they feel doing this? Any challenges?
 - How well do you think these practices and procedures assist these patrons?
 - Do you think this approach could be improved? How? Why?
- 5. What should casino staff do if a family member or close friend indicates a patron has a gambling problem?**
- 6. In what ways do you support casino staff in assisting problem gamblers in the venue?**
 - Do you think this support could be improved? How? Why?
- 7. What training have you provided to help staff assist problem gamblers in the venue?**
 - How could the training be improved?
- 8. Your venue has provided us with information about its self-exclusion procedures.**
 - What challenges does SE pose for you and other staff who do SEs?
 - Do you think the SE approach could be improved? How? Why?
- 9. How do gambling help agencies help you assist problem gamblers in the venue?**
 - Do you think this support could be improved? How? Why?
- 10. Are there any other challenges for you, the RGLOs or frontline staff in assisting problem gamblers in the venue?**
- 11. Do you have examples of good/best practice in assisting problem gamblers in the venue?**
- 12. Is there anything else your venue could do to assist problem gamblers in the venue?**
- 13. Any other comments?**

APPENDIX G

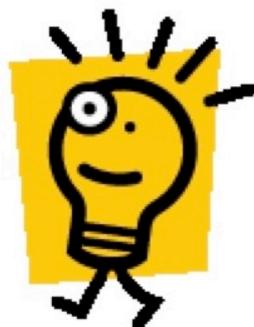
**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR CASINO RESPONSIBLE
GAMBLING LIAISON OFFICERS**

We have been funded by the QLD Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing to conduct a research project on how gaming venues in QLD respond to and assist patrons in the venue with gambling problems. We hope to gain an understanding of how problem gamblers, frontline staff, responsible gambling liaison officers and gambling help services interact to help people address their gambling problems. The purpose of this interview is to gather your experiences and opinions about the practices and procedures used in your venue to respond to problem gamblers, the opportunities and challenges these might present to you in your job, and any thoughts on how they might be improved to help RGLOs and frontline staff in their jobs and to help patrons to address their gambling problems. Assure of anonymity, confidentiality. Ask permission to record interview.

- 1. Our first few questions are about you to provide some context. Can you please tell me:**
 - Your position
 - How long you have worked here
 - Whether you have worked in other gaming venues
- 2. What do you do if a patron asks for assistance with a gambling problem?**
 - Does this happen often?
 - How do you know to follow this procedure?
 - How comfortable do you feel doing this? Any challenges
 - How well do you think these practices and procedures assist these patrons?
 - Do you think this approach could be improved? How? Why?
- 3. Do you think you can recognise if someone is a problem gambler or at risk? How?**
- 4. Of the indicators you've identified, which would prompt you to approach a patron to assist them?**
- 5. How would you approach them? What would you do?**
 - Does this happen often?
 - How do you know to follow this procedure?
 - How comfortable do you feel doing this? Any challenges?
 - How well do you think these practices and procedures assist these patrons?
 - Do you think this approach could be improved? How? Why?
- 6. What do you do if a family member or close friend indicates a patron has a gambling problem?**
- 7. In what ways do you support frontline staff in assisting problem gamblers in the venue?**
 - Do you think this support could be improved? How? Why?
- 8. What training have you done to help you assist problem gamblers in the venue?**
 - How could the training be improved?
- 9. Your venue has provided us with information about its self-exclusion procedures.**
 - What challenges does SE pose for you in your role?
 - Do you think the SE approach could be improved? How? Why?
- 10. How do gambling help agencies help you assist problem gamblers in the venue?**
 - Do you think this support could be improved? How? Why?
- 11. Are there any other challenges for you or frontline staff in assisting problem gamblers in the venue?**
- 12. Do you have examples of good/best practice in assisting problem gamblers in the venue?**
- 13. Is there anything else your venue could do to assist problem gamblers in the venue?**
- 14. Any other comments?**

APPENDIX H
SURVEY INSTRUMENT FOR CASINO SELF-EXCLUDEES

• A Study of Gaming Venue Practices and Self Exclusion in Queensland •



The Centre for Gambling Education and Research at Southern Cross University invites you to participate in this survey. It has been commissioned by the Queensland Office of Liquor, Gaming & Racing. We hope to find out how Queensland gaming venues assist patrons with problems associated with their gambling behaviour and provide appropriate self-exclusion services. Your answers will help to improve these venue practices. It will be most helpful for the results if everyone who receives this survey completes it. It should take you about 20 minutes.

You are, however, under no obligation to complete the survey. If you decide to participate, you can decline to answer any of the questions, you can change your mind about participating, or you can contact me with any questions. If you do participate, please answer the questions as honestly as possible. Your answers are completely confidential and anonymous. Please do not put your name on the questionnaire. The information you provide will be handled only by Southern Cross University and will not be accessible by any gaming venues, any venues you have excluded from, or the Queensland Government.

Please return your completed questionnaire in the reply-paid envelope to:
Professor Nerilee Hing, Head, Centre for Gambling Education and Research, Southern Cross University, PO Box 157, Lismore NSW 2480.

If you have any questions, please contact Nerilee by ph: 02 66203928, mob: 0428 115 291 or email: nerilee.hing@scu.edu.au

Or, if you have any problems associated with this project, please contact: Ms Sue Kelly, Ethics Complaints Officer, Southern Cross University, ph: 02 66269139 or email: sue.kelly@scu.edu.au

Thank you! Your contribution to this study is greatly appreciated.

Southern Cross University Ethics Approval Number: ECN-08-021

SECTION 1: YOUR SELF-EXCLUSION ORDERS

1. How did you first learn about self-exclusion? (please tick as many boxes as apply)

- From written information at a gaming venue (e.g. signs, brochures)
- From talking to managers or staff at a gaming venue
- From other patrons at a gaming venue
- From a counsellor
- From the telephone Gambling Helpline
- From your family
- From your friends
- From the general media (e.g. TV, billboards, etc)
- Other (please specify) _____

2. How many of the following types of venues are you currently self-excluded from?
(please write the number next to each venue type)

____ Hotels ____ Clubs ____ Casinos ____ Stand-alone TAB outlets

3. For your current self-exclusions, which areas of the venue did you self-exclude from? (please tick as many boxes as apply)

- The whole venue Just the gaming areas Other (please specify) _____

4. How many Self-Exclusion Orders have you previously had (not including current ones)?

Please write here: _____

SECTION 2: YOUR GAMBLING BEFORE YOU SELF-EXCLUDED THIS TIME

5. Which activities did you gamble on most frequently before you self-excluded this time? (please write below)

Your most frequent gambling activity _____

Your 2nd most frequent gambling activity _____

Your 3rd most frequent gambling activity _____

6. Which types of venues (e.g. hotel, club, casino, TAB) did you gamble at the most often before you self-excluded this time? (please write below)

Type of venue you gambled at the most often _____

Type of venue you gambled at the 2nd most often _____

Type of venue you gambled at the 3rd most often _____

7. Thinking back to before you self-excluded **this time**, how often did you display the following behaviours associated with your gambling? (please tick **one** box on each line)

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
	0% of times you gambled	Less than 25% of times you gambled	25% to 50% of times you gambled	More than 50% of times you gambled	100% of times you gambled
Gambled very intensively (e.g. gambled very frequently, for long sessions, without breaks in play, with large amounts of money)? <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Displayed difficulties stopping a gambling session (e.g. stopped only when the venue was closing, gambled through lunch & dinner times, tried obsessively to win on a particular machine)? <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Displayed unsociable behaviour due to your gambling (e.g. was rude to venue staff, avoided contact with anyone else in the venue, became angry if a patron took your favourite machine)? <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Tried to raise additional funds while gambling (e.g. made multiple ATM withdrawals, tried to borrow money from other patrons at the venue, left the venue to find more money to gamble, gambled all winnings)? <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Showed you were upset while gambling (e.g. crying, hitting the machine, sitting with your head in your hands after losing)? <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Blamed others after losing (e.g. blaming the venue or machine for losing, complaining to staff about losing, swearing at staff or the machine after losing)? <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Hinted to venue staff that you were having problems with gambling (e.g. saying you had lost the rent, mortgage or grocery money)?.....	... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Have a family member or close friend inform the venue(s) you had a gambling problem?.....	... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION 3: IF VENUE STAFF APPROACHED YOU TO DISCUSS YOUR GAMBLING

8. Before you self-excluded **this time in Queensland**, did any venue staff ever **approach you** (without you asking them) to discuss your gambling or gambling problem? (please tick **only one** box)

- Yes, at all the Queensland venues I gambled at
- Yes, at some of the Queensland venues I gambled at
- No, at none of the Queensland venues I gambled at (**if you answered no, go to Q. 12**)

9. How did you feel about venue staff approaching you (without you asking them) to discuss your gambling or gambling problem? (please tick only one box)

- Very pleased Somewhat pleased Neither pleased or displeased Somewhat displeased Very displeased

Please explain why you felt pleased or displeased that staff had approached you.

10. How helpful was this staff approach for you in addressing your gambling problems? (please tick only one box)

- Very helpful Somewhat helpful Neither helpful or unhelpful Unhelpful Very unhelpful

What were the most helpful things that staff did when they approached you?

What were the least helpful things that staff did when they approached you?

What could staff have done differently (if anything) to better help you?

11. When the venue staff approached you, did they provide you with the following? (please tick as many boxes as apply)

- Information about how to gamble responsibly
 Information about the telephone Gambling Helpline
 Information about gambling counselling services
 Information about self-exclusion
 An offer to provide individual assistance
 Other (please specify) _____

SECTION 4: IF YOU APPROACHED VENUE STAFF FOR ASSISTANCE

12. Before you self-excluded this time in Queensland, did you ever approach venue staff to discuss your gambling or gambling problem? (please tick only one box)

- Yes, at all the Queensland venues I gambled at
 Yes, at some of the Queensland venues I gambled at
 No, at none of the Queensland venues I gambled at (if you answered no, go to Q. 15)

13. When you approached venue staff, how helpful were they in assisting you to address your gambling problems? (please tick only one box)

- Very helpful
 Somewhat helpful
 Neither helpful or unhelpful
 Unhelpful
 Very unhelpful

What were the most helpful things that staff did when you approached them?

What were the least helpful things that staff did when you approached them?

What could staff have done differently (if anything) to better help you?

14. When you approached the venue staff, did they provide you with the following? (please tick as many boxes as apply)

- Information about how to gamble responsibly
 Information about the telephone Gambling Helpline
 Information about gambling counselling services
 Information about self-exclusion
 An offer to provide individual assistance
 Other (please specify) _____

SECTION 5: MOTIVATIONS FOR YOUR MOST RECENT SELF-EXCLUSION

15. How important were the following influences on your decision to self-exclude this time? (please tick only one box on each line)

	Extremely important	Important	Unimportant	Not at all important
Yourself <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Venue management or staff..... <input type="checkbox"/>			
Your spouse or partner <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Other family members <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Friends <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Work colleagues <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
A court order <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
A counsellor <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
A debt collector <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Other (specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/>			

16. How important were the following reasons in your decision to self-exclude this time? (please tick \checkmark **only one box on each line)**

	Extremely important	Important	Unimportant	Not at all important
Emotional problems (e.g. feeling depressed, guilty, etc) <input type="checkbox"/> ...			
Financial problems (e.g. spending too much, unpaid debts, etc) <input type="checkbox"/> ...			
Relationship problems (e.g. arguments, separation, etc) <input type="checkbox"/> ...			
Legal problems related to your gambling (e.g. criminal charges, court order, etc) <input type="checkbox"/> ...			
Work problems (e.g. job loss, absenteeism, etc) <input type="checkbox"/> ...			
Other (specify) _____	... <input type="checkbox"/> ...			

17. Was your decision to self-exclude this time triggered by a specific event? (please tick \checkmark **only one box)**

Yes No

If yes, please explain what this trigger was.

18. Why have you self-excluded this time? (please tick \checkmark **only one box)**

- To stop gambling altogether
 To reduce or control your gambling, but not stop altogether
 To have a break from gambling for a while
 Other (please specify) _____

SECTION 6: VENUE PROCEDURES DURING YOUR MOST RECENT SELF-EXCLUSION

19. What type of venue did you most recently self-exclude from in Queensland? (please tick \checkmark **only one box)**

Hotel Club Casino TAB Other (please specify) _____

20. Thinking about your most recent self-exclusion, how would you rate the response from the first staff member you spoke to about self-excluding from this venue? (please tick \checkmark **only one box on each line)**

The first staff member I spoke to:	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
responded immediately to my request.....	... <input type="checkbox"/> ...			
took my request seriously.....	... <input type="checkbox"/> ...			
treated me with respect.....	... <input type="checkbox"/> ...			
was informed and professional.....	... <input type="checkbox"/> ...			
encouraged me to go through with self-exclusion	... <input type="checkbox"/> ...			

21. Overall, were you satisfied with the response from that first staff member?

(please tick ✓ **only one** box)

Yes No

What were the most helpful aspects of their response to you?

What were the least helpful aspects of their response to you?

What could the staff have done differently (if anything) to help you at this time?

22. Please think about the staff member who actually conducted your most recent self-exclusion for you. Was this a different staff member from the one you first spoke to in that venue?

Yes No

23. How would you rate the response from the staff member who actually conducted your most recent self-exclusion for you? (please tick ✓ **only one box on each line)**

The staff member doing the self-exclusion:	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
took me to a private area away from others <input type="checkbox"/> ...			
responded immediately to my request <input type="checkbox"/> ...			
took my request seriously <input type="checkbox"/> ...			
treated me with respect <input type="checkbox"/> ...			
was well informed about the self-exclusion procedure <input type="checkbox"/> ...			
encouraged me to go through with self-exclusion	... <input type="checkbox"/> ...			

24. Overall, were you satisfied with the way that staff person treated you during the self-exclusion process? (please tick ✓ **only one box)**

Yes No

What were the most helpful aspects of the way that staff person treated you?

What were the **least helpful** aspects of the way the staff person treated you?

What could that staff person have done **differently** (if anything) to help you?

25. Did the staff person **clearly explain** to you the following **information** about self-exclusion? (please tick **only one** box on each line)

The staff person who conducted the self-exclusion clearly explained:

	Yes	No	Don't know
the self-exclusion procedure to me.....	... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> ...
what areas of the venue I would not be allowed to enter.....	... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> ...
the length of the self-exclusion period.....	... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> ...
that a photograph of me would be taken.....	... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> ...
information about the Self-Exclusion Notice.....	... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> ...
information about the Self-Exclusion Order.....	... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> ...
information about the Conditions of Re-entry.....	... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> ...
information about how to revoke my Self-Exclusion Order.....	... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> ...
the consequences if I breach my Self-Exclusion Order.....	... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> ...
how to contact the venue's responsible gambling manager....	... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> ...
that any existing loyalty points would expire.....	... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> ...
that my name would be removed from venue loyalty mailing lists	... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> ...
confidentiality and privacy arrangements for my self-exclusion	... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> ...
how I could contact a counselling service for problem gamblers..	... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> ...
that they could contact a counselling service to make an immediate appointment for me.....	... <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> ...

26. Overall, were you satisfied with **the information** given to you during the self-exclusion process? (please tick **only one** box)

Yes No

What was **most helpful** about this information?

What was **least helpful** about this information?

What other information (if any) could have been provided to help you?

27. Were you satisfied with the following conditions of your most recent self-exclusion?

The time period for your Self-Exclusion Order? Yes No
Please explain why you were satisfied or dissatisfied with this.

The penalties for breaching your Self-Exclusion Order? Yes No
Please explain why you were satisfied or dissatisfied with this.

How to revoke (lift) your Self-Exclusion Order? Yes No
Please explain why you were satisfied or dissatisfied with this.

That your Self-Exclusion Order applies to only one or a few venues? Yes No
Please explain why you were satisfied or dissatisfied with this.

SECTION 7: OUTCOMES OF SELF-EXCLUSION

28. What have been the main benefits to you of self-excluding? (please list here)

29. What have been the main difficulties for you of self-excluding? (please list here)

30. Which support, if any, have you used during your most recent self-exclusion period to help you stop or control your gambling? (please tick ✓ as many boxes as apply)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> My family | <input type="checkbox"/> A psychologist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My friends | <input type="checkbox"/> Gambling Helpline |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My employer | <input type="checkbox"/> Gamblers' Anonymous |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Venue staff | <input type="checkbox"/> Online self-help groups |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Face-to-face gambling counselling | <input type="checkbox"/> Printed self-help resources (e.g. booklets, guides) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial counselling | <input type="checkbox"/> Online self-help resources (e.g. websites) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relationship counselling | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ |

31. Which best describes your gambling during your most recent self-exclusion period? (please tick ✓ **only one** box)

- I have not gambled at all (**please go to Q. 35**)
- I now gamble less than before I self-excluded
- I now gamble about the same as before I self-excluded
- I now gamble more than before I self-excluded

32. What have you gambled on during your most recent self-exclusion period? (please tick ✓ **only one** box)

- The same types of gambling that caused me problems before I self-excluded
- Different types of gambling than those that caused me problems before I self-excluded
- Both of the above

33. Which best describes where you have gambled during your most recent self-exclusion period? (please tick ✓ **only one** box)

- I have gambled in venues I am self-excluded from
- I have gambled in venues I am not self-excluded from
- Both of the above

34. How many times have you gambled in a venue you are self-excluded from during your most recent self-exclusion period? (please tick ✓ **only one** box)

- 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 or more

35. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about self-exclusion? (please tick ✓ **only one** box on each line)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
It is up to the venue(s) to make me stop gambling by keeping me out <input type="checkbox"/> ...			
It is up to me to stop gambling by staying away from the venue(s) <input type="checkbox"/> ...			
I am confident self-exclusion is a good way to help myself <input type="checkbox"/> ...			
I am confident if I try to enter a gaming area I am self-excluded from, the venue staff will intervene <input type="checkbox"/> ...			
I am confident my self-exclusion will be kept confidential by venue staff <input type="checkbox"/> ...			

36. Do you intend, or have you already applied, to have your current Self-Exclusion Order(s) revoked (lifted)? (please tick **only one** box)

- Yes, at all venues I am self-excluded from Yes, but only at some venues I am self-excluded from No, at no venues I am self-excluded from

If yes, how long after your current Self-Exclusion Order(s) was first put in place will you or did you apply to have it revoked?

Please write here: ____ years ____ months OR Within 24 hours....

SECTION 8: ABOUT YOU

37. How old are you? (please write here) _____ years

38. Are you male or female? (please tick **only one** box)

- Male Female

39. What is your marital status? (please tick **only one** box)

- Married Separated / divorced Never married
 Living with your partner / de facto Widowed

40. What cultural or ethnic group do you most identify with?

Please write here: _____

41. How did you receive this survey questionnaire? (please tick **only one** box)

- It was given to me when I self-excluded at a venue
 It was sent to me when I applied to a venue to revoke my self-exclusion order
 Other (please specify) _____

COMMENTS

42. Do you have any other comments you would like to make about how gaming venues assist patrons with gambling problems and/or self-exclusion? If so, please write them here or attach another page. They will be read and taken into account.

Thank you!

**Please return your completed questionnaire in the reply paid envelope provided to:
Dr Nerilee Hing – Centre for Gambling Education & Research – Southern Cross
University – P.O. Box 157 Lismore NSW 2480**