

VISION

Set your course

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**CENTRAL COAST PROBLEM GAMBLING SERVICE:
Who We Are – What we do**

In this regular feature clients highlight their own experiences

Who's doing what to ensure a responsible gambling environment

Helpful strategies to keep you on track

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Hope you enjoy it! 1-4

Central Coast Problem Gambling Service has been in operation since 1998, providing assistance to approximately 1600 people in this time. Offering free confidential counselling and education, the service is funded by the New South Wales government through the Responsible Gambling Fund. Central Coast Problem Gambling Service is a division of the Peninsula Community Centre, Woy Woy with other offices at Gosford and Berkley Vale.

Counselling and support is provided for people with a gambling problem, their partners, family members, or others affected by the gambling. Public awareness and education is carried out through forums, presentations, advertising in local media as well as on our informative website: www.problemgambling.net.au University qualified staff use a variety of clinical models to facilitate positive outcomes in

individuals, families and groups. Currently the service operates from 9.00am to 5.00pm on weekdays. For further information or for an appointment call 4344 7992 or 4344 7993.

See page 4 for Gambling Check Up invitation

THE PROS AND CONS OF GAMBLING IN OUR COMMUNITY: A call for a balanced view

While the state government provides the Central Coast with over \$300,000 a year to fund help for problem gambling, clubs argue that the new poker machine tax undermines funds normally used to support local community organisations.

In 2004 Clubs NSW provided \$51 million in funding to local organisations around the state. However in 1999 the Productivity Commission estimated that clubs and pubs make around \$3.5 billion from gaming a year. \$1.8 billion of this is made from those with an addiction. Which means that only a fraction of what is made out of the suffering of problem gamblers and

their families is put back into the community.

This may seem scandalous but we have not considered any of the social gains that venues offer the community. For the majority of Australians (about 97%), gambling is nothing more than a pleasurable pastime, and the facilities that the venues provide offer great social benefits.

Several clubs on the coast have been pro-active in responsible gambling practices in addition to their usual community support projects, while others seem reluctant to consider problem gambling as an issue.

So how do we weigh-up the benefits and the costs of gambling to the Central Coast community? The intention behind this news letter is to share facts from both sides of the equation and break down bias of opinion. We intent to print credible stories from the gaming industry, problem gambling services, community and government organisations as well as problem gamblers themselves.

In the interest of a balanced view we appeal to organisations and individuals to contribute information related to gambling that they feel to be valuable. Let us know by email at ccpgs@bigpond.com.

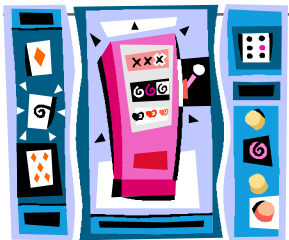


An anonymous insider kept the evening moving with challenges and true statements about the gaming industry. It was a great evening, wish you had been there.

Ettalong Beach
War Memorial Club Ltd
51-52 The Esplanade
Ettalong Beach NSW
Telephone (02) 4343 0111

Many Thanks to the Ettalong Beach Memorial Club for the donation of the delicious supper which was enjoyed by all.

“Roger made it clear that poker machines can intentionally or unintentionally give players misleading information. This generally related to how machines are working and the possibility of winning the next reel.”



Not being able to see the next reel is disempowering to players wanting to make an informed choice!

Problem Gambling, Who's Responsible?

The Central Coast Responsible Gambling Steering Committee, comprised of the Central Coast Problem Gambling Service, Wesley Mission and Unifam held a successful hypothetical evening at the Peninsula Theatre Woy Woy on the 10 of May. Many thanks go out to Scott Levi of Central Coast ABC radio who hosted the evening and all our panelists whose participation

resulted in a well rounded look at the gambling scene from the perspectives of the clubs, hotels, government, counselling services, hospitality, a problem gambler and her spouse. The evening was a success and was broadcast the following day on ABC radio to an audience of approximately 37,000 people on Scott's radio show. The overall message of the night

was that responsibility for problem gambling lay at the feet of all concerned, from clubs to constituents. The evening concluded with a takeaway hypothetical. A class action suite has been filed against the gaming industry and the state government by problem gamblers who have lost heaps. How do you think the case will proceed?

Canadian Expert on Informed Choice and Poker

Toward the end of last year Canadian problem gambling expert Roger Horbay, a former founder and past President of the Canadian Problem Gambling Certification Board, visited Australia to speak at a number of forums including the National Association for Gambling Studies annual conference. Roger also was interviewed on ABC radio by Terry Lane. We have adapted this article from the transcript of that interview.

Roger made it clear that poker machines can intentionally or unintentionally give players misleading information. This generally related to how machines are working and the possibility of winning the next reel.

The key problem is the way use “virtual” or video reels means players cannot get an accurate sense of each virtual reel strip. He continued ...so they don't know "...that say reel 1 has four Kings on it, but reel 5 has only one King on it,

they would get the impression they're all spinning equally, they all look like they are spinning the same. They all have the same odds of winning...when they don't.” A player may be getting a couple of reels with Kings (which are the reels that have more Kings on them) and this may be coming up easily. They will be waiting for the fifth reel and in fact it is very rare that it ever will but the nature of the video game virtual reel is they may be under the impression that all reels are equal when they are not and it will be extremely rare for the fifth reel to display a King.

“They can't see the entire reel strip...[so]... they cannot make an informed choice around the next purchase or the next play option.”

Roger made it clear that the longer a player plays the more likely they are to have a practical percentage that "...will be very low or zero.” He said that you may be winning back

90% at a time, but you are paying it back slowly all the time "... until you end up with nothing”

Roger has the view that machines are a dangerous and addictive product similar to alcohol and tobacco. He sees the difference between these products is that we know what the harmful substances are in alcohol and tobacco , but with poker machines “ we're just in our infancy of exploring what are the toxic elements in these machines.”

He indicated that his concern is that people are robbed of their ability to make a rational and informed choice while they are playing because of the nature of the product. He feels this factor of lack of informed choice will be factored into future litigation.

Adapted from an interview conducted by Terry Lane Radio *National Canadian Pokies Lessons* "The National Interest" 20/11/2005

STRATEGIC TIPS BEFORE WITHDRAWING MONEY



“In gaming the many must lose in order that the few may win” George

Central Coast Problem Gambling Service Gets “New Shoes”

The first issue of the CCPGS newsletter comes to you with a major change to our service. Our popular and knowledgeable Co-ordinator, Chris Davidson has sadly left to embrace a new career opportunity. CCPGS, the Peninsula Community Centre, his many clients and colleagues will miss Chris and his many contributions to both individuals and the community!

All the best Chris!

Have you ever found it difficult to fill the shoes of the person before you in a new situation? Maybe it's in a new job, as a step parent, or with a new partner, or even with a new friend? About 20 years ago in my first “real” job, I worked hard at duplicating everything the last person did. I made the same number of calls, saw the same number of people, and made sure the statistical outcomes didn't change. I was pretty confident I would get

a good first evaluation. It was quite a shock to be told otherwise! While I had done well in the areas I had set for my self, my supervisor did not feel I had imparted my own unique skills into the job. Even my office hadn't changed that much! I had not been hired to mimic the last guy, no matter how well respected and good he had been. In order to change my performance we set goals unique to my capabilities. Once this had been done, the pressure was off and I started to love the job. Chris left here in his broken in comfortable shoes. I come to you in new trainers. My background has given me the ability to walk, even run, but I need to break in my own shoes! How are your shoes fitting? Are they yours or someone else's? Are they comfortable and familiar,

or are they tight and constricting, stuck on you, maybe in need of an upgrade? If you are reading this newsletter maybe you are experiencing some problems with gambling, yours, or someone close to you. We at CCPGS invite you to call and arrange an appointment for a unique opportunity to participate in a Gambling Check Up. You will be supported as you explore, if how, and possibly when you would like to upgrade your “shoes”. If you come to counselling your experience will be unique, maybe a bit similar to a friends, maybe you will even have the same counsellor, but it will always be personal to your circumstances. Counselling is you time, its confidential, can be a couple of sessions or longer, its up to you. You are welcome to call. Come in for a free personal refit! I know my “refit” will be a good experience. Margie



PSSST

Did you know the safest way to double your money is to fold it over once and put it in your pocket... Ken Hubbard



“The best throw of a dice is to throw them away.” Anon

VISION



Central Coast Problem Gambling Service

Funded by NSW government
from the
Responsible Gambling Fund

PLAY IT SAFE

BOOK YOUR

FREE



GAMBLING CHECK UP NOW

4344 7992

www.problemgambling.net.au

A Journey of Strength, Compassion and Forgiveness

I first found out my partner was a problem gambler two years ago. Utter disbelief was my first re-action, closely followed by 'how could I not know'. I had suspected a problem, I knew he was spending a lot of time at clubs and hotels but I thought he had a drinking problem. I look back now and realise how naïve and trusting I was. I never checked our accounts, I believed everything my partner told me regarding his salary, I took it for granted he was telling me the truth.

As soon as the problem was recognised we started going to counselling. At the beginning I went to support my partner, it never entered my head that at times I would need counselling as much, if not more, than he did.

I felt totally and completely helpless, there was nothing I could do to change anything other than the obvious, like making appointments to see the bank to sort out the financial dilemma we were facing. Once that was sorted out, which was major in itself as it was a huge amount of money, I was left to deal with the emotional side.

The highs were very high and the lows were very low. It shattered my belief in my marriage. I felt we had lost so much. You take so much for granted, trust, truth, honesty, sharing, you don't realise how important they are until you lose them. I felt betrayed. It was such a secret, there was no-one in the family I could turn to. A couple of our friends did find out, this was a huge help to me, I didn't feel so alone. It is important to talk to people who are not judgemental.

Our three children now know and have been incredibly supportive to both of us. I am in control of the finances, at times I find it a real chore. I truly mourn the loss of trust in my marriage, but there have been some positives.

I am much stronger, more compassionate and much more forgiving. I have made a career change, something I would never have done, and I love it. I have also learned that it's ok to ask for help, and that has been a huge step forward for me. I look forward to regaining some trust in our marriage, but know that this is only going to happen with a lot of hard work from both of us. It won't happen if only one of us is committed.

Partner of a Problem Gambler.