

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 BACKGROUND

This research project was funded through the Victorian Government's Submission Based Research Grants System for Gambling Research, established in 2006 to 'encourage research that is academically rigorous, able to provide a solid evidence-base for the development of future Victorian Government gambling policy, and innovative in its approach' (Department of Justice, 2006:2). By calling for submissions, the grants system aims 'to re-invigorate gambling research by encouraging participation and input from a variety of disciplines to undertake applied gambling research' (Department of Justice, 2006:2).

In the 2006 pilot round of this grants system, the area of interest and focus was the theme of accessibility to gambling products, with accessibility recognised as 'a broad topic that encompasses several elements, such as the kind of access people have to gambling products and venues and how this impacts on the behaviour of both gamblers and problem gamblers' (Department of Justice, 2006:4). This project aligns with this theme by focusing on the gambling behaviour of a group of people who have heightened access to gambling products – staff who work in gaming venues.

This introductory chapter explains the aims and objectives of the research, its scope and the structure of the research report.

1.2 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This research project aimed to test the link between accessibility to gambling and the prevalence of problem gambling by:

- comparing the gambling behaviour and prevalence of problem gambling amongst a population with very high accessibility to gambling (staff who work in gaming venues who are allowed to gamble in their workplace) to the gambling behaviour and prevalence of problem gambling amongst a comparable population with less accessibility to gambling (staff who work in gaming venues who are not allowed to gamble in their workplace);
- comparing the gambling behaviour and prevalence of problem gambling amongst gaming venue staff, a population with relatively high accessibility to gambling, to the gambling behaviour and prevalence of problem gambling amongst the general population of Victoria as measured by prior research;
- exploring the perceived influence that heightened access to gambling, along multiple dimensions, has on the gambling behaviour and development of gambling problems for gaming venue staff.

The following specific research objectives were developed to achieve the project aim:

1. To examine how legislative requirements, codes of conduct, and venue policies and practices may or may not restrict the kind of access that gaming venue staff have to gambling products within their workplace;

2. To measure the gambling behaviour of gaming venue staff, both within and outside their workplace, including gambling type, frequency, duration and expenditure;
3. To measure the prevalence of non-gambling, no-risk, low-risk, moderate-risk and problem gambling amongst gaming venue staff;
4. To compare the gambling behaviour and prevalence of non-gambling, no-risk, low-risk, moderate-risk and problem gambling between gaming venue staff who have access to gambling products within their workplace and those who do not;
5. To compare the gambling behaviour and prevalence of non-gambling, no-risk, low-risk, moderate-risk and problem gambling between gaming venue staff and the general population of Victoria (as identified by prior research);
6. To explore staff perspectives on how working in a gaming venue influences the access of gaming venue staff to gambling products and venues, both within and outside their workplace and along multiple dimensions of access (including opportunities to gamble both within and outside their workplace, access to other venues when open, conditions of entry to venues, perceived ease of use of gambling products, financial accessibility to gambling, and social accessibility to gambling).

1.3 PROJECT SCOPE

The scope of the study is further delineated by the following explanation of key terms:

- Gambling behaviour includes the many aspects of a person's gambling, including type, frequency, duration and expenditure, and no-risk, low-risk, moderate-risk and problem gambling (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, 2001).
- Problem gambling is gambling behaviour that creates negative consequences for the gambler, others in his or her social network, or for the community. This definition of problem gambling was developed for the *Canadian Problem Gambling Index* (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, 2001), which was the instrument used to measure problem gambling in this study.
- Gaming venues for this project refer specifically to Victorian clubs, hotels and the Crown Casino and the project aimed to include employees from each of these three venue types. However, Crown Casino declined to allow their staff to participate in the study, so the study is based only on hotel and club employees.
- Gaming venue staff for this project refer to all types of staff in the participating hotels and clubs, including front-of-house and back-of-house staff, and operational, supervisory and management staff.
- Accessibility to gambling has been recognised as having multiple dimensions, with the Productivity Commission (1999) identifying these as the number and distribution of gambling opportunities, the number of opportunities to gamble in any given venue, venue opening hours, conditions of entry to gaming venues, ease of use of gambling products, financial accessibility to gambling including initial outlay, and social accessibility to gambling. This study recognises the multi-dimensional nature of accessibility to gambling and considers accessibility in its broadest sense.

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This research report has eleven chapters. Chapter 1 has introduced the study by providing some background, and by detailing the aims, objectives and scope of the study. Chapter 2 reviews the international and Australian literature on accessibility to gambling, as well as previous research into gambling by gaming venue staff. The research methods for both the quantitative and qualitative phases are described in Chapter 3, where key characteristics of the survey respondents and interview participants are provided. Chapter 4 addresses the first research objective, by focusing on restrictions on gambling by staff in their workplaces. The second research objective is addressed in Chapter 5, where the gambling behaviour of the survey respondents is detailed. Chapter 6 examines problem gambling amongst the survey respondents, thus addressing the third objective. Chapter 7 focuses on the fourth research objective by comparing gambling behaviour and problem gambling between staff who can gamble in their workplace and those who cannot. Chapter 8 also provides comparisons, this time between the gambling behaviour and problem gambling amongst the respondents to the staff survey and those of the Victorian population, thus addressing the fifth research objective. Chapter 9 examines links between accessibility and gambling behaviour, including problem gambling. The qualitative findings are presented in Chapter 10 so as to address the sixth objective of the study. Finally, Chapter 11 discusses the study's findings and concludes the report.

