

# CHAPTER 10

## QUALITATIVE STAFF PERSPECTIVES ON HOW WORKING IN A GAMING VENUE INFLUENCES ACCESS TO GAMBLING

### 10.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores 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. Thus, it fulfils Research Objective Six of the study. The methods used for this phase of the study have been explained in Chapter 3. This chapter now presents the results from the interviews with 40 staff from Victorian hotels and clubs, with pseudonyms used as noted in Chapter 3. The chapter commences by summarising the interviewees' responses in relation to their venues' policies on staff gambling in the workplace and their observations of staff gambling, both within and outside the workplace. The major themes discussed in the interviews are then analysed, before being summarised in relation to physical, social and cognitive access. It should be noted that additional qualitative comments to those gathered in the interviews are contained in Appendix D. These are those comments gathered from the quantitative survey.

### 10.2 VENUE POLICIES ON STAFF GAMBLING IN THE WORKPLACE

All respondents were asked about the rules or restrictions around staff being able to gamble in their venue. Eighteen of the 40 respondents indicated that they are permitted to gamble on site, although few venues allowed unrestricted access. Universally, gambling on the gaming machines during a work shift was not permitted, although a range of other rules applied including:

- No play in the 12 hours before or 12 hours after a shift (Ben);
- Not being able to play linked jackpot machines (Lara, Max);
- Having to wait 15 minutes after finishing a shift (Andrew);
- Must not wear their name tag (Rick);
- Can only gamble up to 45 minutes after the end of a shift (Lara);
- Uniform not to be visible (Lara, Max, Matilda, Andrew, Fanny, Duncan, Sally, Rick);
- No gambling during a shift (Raina, Lara, Fanny, Matilda, Sally);
- Must wait at least two hours after a shift (Rhonda);
- No restrictions on bistro staff (Duncan);
- Only for 30 minutes after the end of a shift (Rick);
- Must go home and change and then come back (Raina);
- No gambling on the poker machines, but can gamble on keno and the TAB (Maisie).

Of the 21 respondents who indicated that staff gambling was prohibited in their venue, most spoke of a total ban, and in one instance it was written into the contracts of the hotel staff. Will noted that, at his club, the policy was recently changed and, up until two months ago, staff were

permitted to gamble on their days off, while kitchen staff had been allowed to play at any time. The current policy is that staff are not allowed to socialise on site.

Laura explained how the ban on staff gambling came about at her venue:

‘I think early on we had an occasion where, and it was...a person was contracted for a day here, won quite a bit of money and was seen by patrons and they thought that it was, you know, it was organised. And from that day on I virtually said no matter who, no matter whether you’re working in this area or whether you’re working full stop in whatever area, it’s not acceptable.’

In Laura’s case, the staff gambling ban was motivated to protect the venue from customer complaints rather than to protect staff from the potentially harmful effects of gambling.

Although these staff indicated that there was a staff gambling ban in place in their workplace, several grey areas emerged. Practical considerations also limited the extent to which staff could gamble in their own venue. In the case of Kathy, who worked in a small club with only two current staff members and limited opening hours: ‘we can’t gamble here out of our working hours because ... when we’re not working we’re closed.’

A few respondents indicated that they were unclear on the policy, like Nigel, who thought there was one, even though ‘I’m not sure, but I haven’t really asked and I really...wouldn’t play anyway.’ Graham, a chef, was also unclear on the staff gambling policy: ‘I don’t think we’re allowed to. I’m the only (non bar and gaming staff member) and I’m not a gambler so I’ve never had the, had to worry about the boss coming up to me and saying you shouldn’t be doing that.’ One exception to the ban on gambling was noted, with staff at Miriam’s workplace wagering on a third party sportsbetting terminal on a weekly basis, although she was unsure as to whether this was sanctioned or just happened in contradiction of the ban.

Other inconsistencies in policies also emerged, with Mavis offering that staff at her venue had to go home and change but were not allowed to play on their work day, suggesting that these rules were either poorly articulated or irregularly applied. Mostly however, the restrictions in place tended to be applied across all forms of gambling to all staff, including kitchen staff, and at Rachel’s hotel, the ban is written into staff contracts. Several respondents had experience of both restricted and unrestricted staff gambling policies (Duncan), and the rules on drinking may have been different (e.g. Ben was allowed to go home, get changed and come back for a drink one hour after his shift).

One respondent, Rick, said there was no policy at his venue, but ‘there really isn’t any need for any because the staff don’t gamble there anyway.’ Only one of the 40 respondents commented on the perceived appropriateness of the policy in place in their workplace. Sally, a supervisor at a large club, indicated that no ban probably encouraged staff to gamble after work, some to excess, and that a ban would be preferable for those staff members.

### **10.3 STAFF GAMBLING BEHAVIOUR**

Staff gambling behaviour, as reported by the interviewees, is discussed in relation to gambling inside and outside the workplace and preferred types of gambling.

#### **10.3.1 Proportion of Staff Who Gamble in the Workplace**

Respondents who indicated that they were allowed to gamble at work were asked to estimate about how many, or what proportion, of staff would do this. A few, like Rachel, thought they were not in

a position to say, because ‘I don’t associate with anyone out of work’, while others would give vague indications of ‘not many’ or ‘very few’.

Duncan, like Rick, initially said he was not aware of any staff gambling at their clubs, but spoke of other venues, such as ‘the hotel I worked at with a TAB, nearly all the staff were gambling there’ and ‘a few of the girls I know like having a play on the machines when they’re not working.’

These low numbers were reflected in the responses of Will (5 per cent), Ben (‘less than 1 per cent’), Robyn (‘maybe 1 per cent’) and Matilda (‘maybe 1-2 per cent’). Higher estimates of staff gambling were given by Maisie (10 per cent), Raina (13 per cent), Lara (12 per cent), Sky (14 per cent) and Mavis (13 per cent). Mavis qualified this by noting that most of the staff gambled at the venue:

‘at some stage... If they’re at a function once a year, or twice a year...which is a normal thing to do when you’re with a group of friends. But, yeah, exactly. As a weekly or a monthly event, I don’t think too many do it.’

Frequency and duration of play were also highlighted as important elements to take into account when considering how many staff play at the venue, as Jake’s response illustrates: ‘a few might have a couple of games after work and that’s about it. I think most of the staff, if they want to go out and have a night, they’ll go somewhere else.’

Amy also responded with a similar example:

‘... if staff come in for dinner with their family or for a family birthday or something like that, they might play the pokies with their, you know, their parents or their boyfriends or husband or something like that. But as far as a regular basis goes no, not often at all really. Every now and then, like someone might put on a Keno bet or mystery bet, randomly, but not very often.’

Higher estimates of staff gambling were given by Patrick (20 per cent) and club employees Sally (30-40 per cent) and Fanny (33 per cent). Andrew, who worked at a small club with 10 machines, thought that 100 per cent of employees would gamble at the venue and that 25 per cent would also on occasion go home, get changed and go elsewhere to gamble. Max was more direct, and responded that ‘maybe one or two have problems as evidenced by chasing losses’.

### **10.3.2 Proportion of staff who gamble outside the workplace**

Respondents who indicated that they had a workplace gambling ban were asked to discuss staff gambling outside of the workplace. A few said they did not know (Miriam, Paolo, Nigel), while Laura and Kathy said that it would be very rare or occasional. Kaitlyn, like Sabrina, knew that ‘some do’ but the difficulties in knowing what staff did outside the workplace in their own time were acknowledged by Sabrina, who doesn’t ‘know about all obviously, but I do know that some do because I know some of my staff a little bit better than others, yes.’

Duncan had ‘noticed a few staff at different venues, gambling’ and Mark also spoke from personal experience, stating that he’ll ‘leave work tonight as I say between 3 or 4 in the morning and I’ll be going to (another hotel) and I’ll stay there for a couple of beers and have a chat to people that I previously worked with.’

Both Brian and Graham acknowledged that a few staff from their venue ‘at the end of night shift, might go and play at one of the venues down the road’ but neither could estimate how many, while Betty and Kelly responded that any staff gambling outside the workplace would be socially motivated and occasional.

Unlike the estimates of staff participation rates from staff who are permitted to gamble in their workplace, estimates of numbers from staff who are not allowed to gamble in the venue were fairly consistent. Jacinta knew of 'one that plays the pokies and about four that gamble on the TAB' out of the 15 staff at her venue, giving a 33 per cent participation rate, consistent with that suggested by Dallas (33 per cent) and Nadine (30-40 per cent). Higher rates were given by Jill (50 per cent), Kaitlyn (50 per cent), Noel (60-70 per cent) and Gwyn (71 per cent), while Noel and Mark thought that 'everyone does', although, as Nigel described, this could even be from when 'they go on holiday or something'.

### **10.3.3 Preferred Form of Gambling for staff**

All respondents were asked what the most popular form of gambling was amongst staff. Staff who can gamble in their venues responded that most staff gamble on EGMs, and a smaller number on Club Keno or the TAB. Even at Sally's venue, a club at a racetrack, the main forms of staff gambling were EGMs and Club Keno.

Again, a few staff qualified their responses by discussing the size of the bets placed, such as Amy, who said that 'the only gambling I've ever seen staff do is for a very small amounts. Like I said, maybe a \$3.00 mystery bet, or \$20.00 in the poker machines or a \$5.00 Keno or something like that.'

The influence of the Spring Racing Carnival was acknowledged early on in most interviews, with the Melbourne Cup race in particular being a popular betting event. But, as Matilda said, 'that's it. No one here really bets much at all'. Jake concurred: 'the trend seems to be, yeah, when they knock off. They might have a drink and play, play or bet on a couple of horses and that's it, they're gone.'

Staff who gambled outside their venue as a consequence of the workplace ban were also most attracted to the gaming machines according to Jill, Sabrina, Mark, Brian, Graham and Dallas. Horse racing was also very popular according to Noel and Gwyn, while Kaitlyn and Laura nominated 'gambling across the board'. Jacinta and Paolo went further, thinking that, as Jacinta said, 'most of them here would probably rather go and bet on a horse than play the poker machines.' Graham thought Club Keno was popular, and Kaitlyn also spoke about some staff from her large club that might go to Crown to play roulette, because they're 'not pokies people'.

## **10.4 ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW THEMES**

This section analyses the interview data, and is loosely organised around the order in which each theme was raised in the interview schedule.

### **10.4.1 Convenient Access or Proximity to Gambling**

The majority of venue staff who could **gamble in their workplace (the workplace gambling group)** did not think that convenient access to gambling, in terms of its proximity in the workplace, influences staff to gamble at work, although they struggled to offer examples or explanations for their conviction, beyond the discouraging effects of, as Rhonda said, 'being with it all the time'. Amy also acknowledged the unattractiveness of her venue as a place to socialise: 'I don't gamble a great deal but if I was gonna go to somewhere for dinner I definitely wouldn't go to my work.' She did concede, however, that '...I still do it because I just could'. Jake also articulated the position of these majority respondents, thinking that 'if you're going to play, you'll play regardless. Not because it's convenient.'

Both the staff who supported convenience as a strong component of accessibility affecting staff gambling in the workplace and those who did not, acknowledged that distance from home is a confounding factor in where staff choose to gamble. For example, Raina thought that, given that the staff gambling policy at her workplace is that staff need to go home and get changed first, staff who live further away from work probably do not return, instead going to a venue close to their home.

The influence of the distance from work to home was also addressed by Will, one of the minority of staff in this group who thought that convenience, as expressed by proximity, was an influencing factor in staff gambling. Will offered this example:

‘Well at the end of the day, all slot machines are the same and everyone knows that. So it’s certainly convenient. Where they can just knock off, grab a, like is entitled to one knock off drink, there’d be a lot of soft drinks there, so they can just go and you know, sit at a machine and put 20 bucks through, whatever they want. A bit of un-winder, especially with the staff that live close by. You know they haven’t got that, you know, ten or fifteen minutes or half an hour to get home and unwind. So probably they only live around the corner, so they’ll have a beer and a punt. So yeah, probably, yeah, convenience I’d say more than anything.’

Rachel also strongly supported proximity as an influencing factor, but not of on-site staff gambling:

‘where I used to work there was actually another venue across the road and quite often I would notice certain staff members, you know, going to play, going to play the pokies and then coming to work after. So, and quite often, they would finish their shifts and go across the road to play. So yes.’

Sally and Andrew also agreed that convenience and proximity had strong effects on staff gambling, with Andrew volunteering it was because you ‘just can’t be stuffed going anywhere else basically...’. Sally was emphatic, giving evidence that:

‘a couple that work there and like they said, you know if they weren’t allowed to gamble there, that they reckon they wouldn’t gamble. But I still know they would and yeah, I think it’s convenience more than anything. They’re there and like they wouldn’t go anywhere else because it’s out of the way. Go somewhere else. This is on their way home otherwise they’d have to go into town, because we’re a little bit out of town but we’re not far out of town.’

The convenience effect was also strongly articulated when a few staff, such as Ben and Max, noted that workplace gambling often coincided to coming in on days off to check rosters or drop off keys. Max spoke to this theme, finding that ‘a lot of the staff that will play, will play because they’ve come in for something for work and the pokies are there, so yeah, convenience I suppose like you said.’ As Ben said, ‘it’s not a come out of their way situation that they’d come down here to bet.’

While some respondents, like Patrick, suggested that their venue is ‘the only one in town’, and that this had a proximity effect, it later emerged that this was the only club, and there were several hotels in town. So in small towns with limited alternative, equivalent venues, the behaviour-proximity relationship is further complicated by type of venue.

**Staff who were not allowed to gamble in their venue (the non-workplace gambling group)** were also asked about the effect of convenience on staff gambling behaviour, beginning with a question about whether there are gaming venues near to the workplace where staff could

conveniently go to gamble. Staff were unanimous that there were venues that were accessible as a consequence of their proximity to the workplace, although the perception of a convenient distance ranged from a 2 to 20 minute walk to 10 kilometres. Graham also figured proximity as the time taken to reach a gambling venue, noting that ‘they could walk down there on their break, spend 20 minutes down there and walk back again; you know half an hour break’, while Kaitlyn factored in the number of machines that each convenient venue had, and Banjo discussed whether they were a Tabcorp or Tattersall’s venue.

Like respondents from the workplace gambling group, responses were more strongly against than for the notion that this convenient access had an effect on staff gambling behaviour, because, as Nigel pointed out, ‘it’s there in front of everybody wherever you go.’

In denying the effects of proximity, Kaitlyn, Betty, Noel, Brian, Gwyn, Miriam and Jill thought that staff would gamble closer to their homes, or at least further away from the workplace, although Noel acknowledged both effects when he said that ‘people will go to the closest place that they want to go to, or one that they’ve got to pass on the way home. That’s where they’ll drop off or they’ll go to, their local.’ Mark agreed, noting that:

‘there’s only about four or five of them anyway. The nearest one to us is the Stadium and I think it closes before we do and the next one would be, I don’t know, five or six city blocks away. So at three o’clock in the morning, no, I’m not going to walk down there and I’m certainly not, if I’m going to get in a cab - I’d be heading towards a suburban one.’

Of the three respondents in the non-workplace gambling group who agreed that proximity affected choice of gambling venue, Banjo and Nadine thought it was because a local (to work) venue was a good, central place to meet co-workers and staff from other venues whom they know. In her case, Banjo gambles at ‘the other hotel just a few metres up the road...(because) if you’ve had a stressful day, you can relay it on to someone who understands...’

#### **10.4.2 Familiarity with the Gaming Environment**

Most staff in the **workplace gambling group** thought that comfort, expressed as a dimension of familiarity with the gaming environment, influenced staff to gamble in their own workplace.

In particular, those in accord with this statement, like Sky and Rick, indicated that ‘...being around them all the time’ was a strong influence. Amy gave the example of how, ‘before I started working in venues I felt a bit more uncomfortable about going to them, but because I’m very aware of how they work and operate and stuff like that now, I’m more comfortable to go there.’ Matilda thought that, of the two venues in her town, ‘they choose this one probably just because they know it’.

Other non-gaming venue elements, like the staff-priced drinks at Patrick’s venue, and the social acceptance or non-judgmental attitude of others at Ben’s, were also seen as factors promoting staff comfort within their own venue. Lara, Max, Matilda and Amy saw evidence of the comforting effects of familiarity, with Amy commenting that ‘I think a lot of staff, once they work at a place, they like to sort of hang out there as well’.

Of those four respondents who disagreed that venue familiarity encouraged staff to gamble in the venue, Fanny elaborated, thinking that ‘if I’m going to gamble I’ll gamble anywhere.’ Jake thought that staff from his venue, who mostly gamble outside of work despite being permitted to gamble at work, do so because ‘they might feel comfortable out of their own venue’, the reason being that ‘some people just like to get away. Like having a drink. Some might have a quick drink

after work or whatever and others would prefer to go in a different environment so they feel they're actually away from work.'

Unlike the workplace gambling group, most respondents from the **non-workplace gambling group** did not think being familiar with the gaming environment influenced the gambling behaviour of venue staff. Reasons included that it is more of a deterrent than encouragement, or that other factors, like the characteristics of the individual or boredom, were more influential in inducing staff to gamble.

Those staff who did discern a positive relationship focused more on the association with winning and seeing patrons win than did the workplace gambling group, who talked of familiarity in terms of comfort. While the influence of seeing patrons win was probably stronger on newer staff, as identified by Betty, who was sufficiently concerned to raise the matter with the management team at her hotel group, others, like Noel, thought all staff 'fall for it'. However, Mark thought that the ones that do are 'rather naive and they're fairly fickle if they think like that.'

Several respondents highlighted the duality of this influence on their own gambling, like Miriam, who acknowledged that 'Yeah, well yeah, of course it does. I probably gamble less (since I started working here). Just because I'm sick of the place. Yeah, but I gamble higher as well. Like I take more risks. Because I've seen people win bigger and bigger bets...'

#### 10.4.3 Safety and Security

Those in the **workplace gambling group** were asked whether, from their experience, the safety and security of staying within your workplace, rather than going elsewhere, influenced staff to gamble there. Although many staff members were initially unsure about how to respond to this question, perhaps not recognising it as a dimension of accessibility, responses were eventually evenly divided on the subject.

Raina thought that safety and security related to what might happen if money started going missing at the club, and you were known to other staff as a gambler, while Sky spoke of safety and security as a sense of danger, relating the trauma associated with a recent robbery.

Others alluded to the relationship between safety and security and comfort and being protected by familiar others, such as Andrew, who said that:

'whether it's a security aspect or just knowing that you know most of the other people around, I'd say it's because, normally you'd know most of the people that are there anyway and it's just a comfort level that you do feel safe there.'

Lara gambled at her venue for this very reason, because '...having been there for ten years I know probably 80 per cent of the patrons in there, I know the staff, I know the security, I know that if anybody came at me for any reason that I would be protected there.'

Comfort was also alluded to in a few answers, including Jake's, who thought that staff felt safe at work because 'we're quite stringent on who's in the room and stuff like that...we keep the place nice and clean.'

Sally didn't think safety made any difference to staff gambling in the workplace, because 'the other venues are, you know, I mean I feel safe if I went to another venue.'

#### 10.4.4 Influence of Other Staff on Gambling Within the Venue

The social influences on staff gambling were explored from a number of perspectives with the workplace and non-workplace gambling participants, to assist in explaining the influence of social accessibility on their gambling behaviour. In the first instance, the **workplace gambling group** was asked to describe the influence that other staff from their venue may have on their gambling. Many respondents in this group believed that knowing other staff made them feel more comfortable in the venue while gambling, and Lara further thought that knowing the patrons she might be sitting next to, as discussed further below, contributed to this sense of security. Overall, the majority of respondents from this group thought that knowing other staff encouraged workplace gambling.

The general collegiality associated with working in a gaming venue was highlighted several times by respondents from both the workplace and non-workplace gambling groups. For example, in strongly agreeing with the statement that staff could influence the workplace gambling of each other, Amy noted that ‘(this town) is not a really big place so a lot of staff swap and change. So I’ve worked with quite a lot of people from around the area’ and, as a consequence, was likely to visit their venues. Patrick also acknowledged the stronger pull of a venue with staff you know, saying ‘you’re going to there for a drink, rather than going into a pub where you don’t know anyone.’

Shiftwork was also identified as a complicit, encouraging factor by two respondents, who noted their inclination to gamble with workmates who finished work at the same time, or for kitchen staff who shared breaks to do the same. Will’s response encapsulated both of these influences:

‘You know you might see two kitchen staff sort of having a gamble together, even three. Put \$10.00 or \$20.00 in each and pool it and sort of have a bit more fun that way...when they play the machine, they can sort of talk as well to the floor staff, you know...if they got a \$100 win or something like that, they like to sort of come up and share that sort of enjoyment with someone they know I suppose. Rather than, “oh yeah next please”, do you know what I mean?’

Maisie agreed, but thought that the social influence was more marked for men punting on the TAB, as did Duncan, also of the workplace gambling group, who talked about the encouraging influence of tip sharing amongst staff. As a counter to her discussion of TAB gambling, Maisie highlighted the invariably solo and private nature of machine gambling. She was supported in this notion by Sally, who used this argument to demonstrate her conviction that staff did not influence the gambling of others. Similarly, Raina thought that within-venue gambling was discouraged by knowing other staff, and did not ‘think they enjoy other staff hovering around them and looking at what they do, ‘cause they can see. If they like to gamble a lot, they wouldn’t want the staff to know. I think that’s why a lot of the staff don’t come here after work to socialise.’

Of those other respondents in the workplace gambling group who did not think staff influenced the gambling of others, Andrew was the only one to attempt to illustrate his answer, acknowledging nonetheless the benefits of staff-to-staff communication when gambling within your own venue:

‘No, I don’t think it has that much of an influence. It’s just one of those things that happens; if you can go in there and they’re working it just makes communication a lot easier. If something goes wrong with the machine you can tell them exactly what it is.’

Finally, while Matilda did not explicitly agree with the notion that staff influenced each other to gamble at work, she did acknowledge that ‘...sometimes, it’s a social thing to pop in and if they

want to have a play, they can have play. And they can also check their roster or talk to another staff member...’.

#### 10.4.5 Influence of Other Staff on Gambling at Other Venues

Overall, those in the **workplace gambling group** thought that, while staff talked a lot about gambling outings or sharing of TAB tips that might indicate a strong influence on staff gambling behaviour, there were several factors moderating the tendency for staff to gamble outside the workplace. Primarily, respondents made the distinction between gambling as a group – and the limited opportunities presented to do so – and gambling alone, arguing that being out together or finishing work shifts together was where a direct peer influence could be found. Thus, these respondents thought that the staff-to-staff influence was socially motivated, and less likely to carry over into solo TAB or machine gambling. In this case, Sally thought that staff were too familiar with the vagaries of gambling to take the tips provided by other staff members too seriously.

Although staff often discussed gambling as part of their shift handover, particularly the balance of jackpot machines and recent large wins, this could act as a moderating influence on the staff member who was just starting a shift, as identified by Andrew.

Another factor that could encourage staff to gamble socially with each other was the tendency for staff to view group drinking or gambling as part of the culture of working in a hospitality venue, as evidenced in several exchanges. For example, Will readily acknowledged ‘...a situation where you know, “do you want to go down the local and put 20 bucks in?” or “do you want to go for a drink?” or whatever’ was frequently heard, but he ‘never really sort of witnessed that as a real sort of an issue or a problem.’ However, Max, duty manager at a club, said that when he heard staff saying they ‘might put \$20.00 through’, he advises them to go home, encouraging these staff to ‘go and spend their money on other things rather than putting money into the pokies.’

Those in the **non-workplace gambling group** were similarly asked about the encouraging or discouraging influence of their peers on their gambling and, like the workplace gambling group, distinguished between the effects of being in a group – which was seen as more influential – and the influence on solo gambling, which was hardly perceived. Nonetheless, fewer respondents from this group than from the workplace gambling group thought that their peers influenced staff gambling outside the venue. Thus, there appears some anecdotal evidence that staff from venues with a permissive workplace gambling policy encourage staff to gamble outside their venue more than non-workplace gambling staff do. However, as with the workplace gambling group, several moderating factors were identified including the type of gambling (staff tips were perceived as influential in encouraging TAB gambling) and being in a venue with colleagues rather than alone.

Nonetheless, Noel, a manager with 25 years experience in the industry, could perceive effects on both sides:

‘It depends on how you read it. You might, you listen to a story when they’re talking between themselves saying “so and so won heaps last week” or “so and so lost heaps last week” and I think it will just depend on the story and then, the next time they’re out themselves socially, they’ll see a machine that they know that, you know, they’ve seen Joe Bloggs clean up on at your venue – “oh I might have a crack at that because so and so cleaned up on that the other week” or “the feature’s easy to get on that, you should have a go at that...I mean even between managers, we talk about stuff. I mean, we used to go out on a Friday night, a group of us when I was an Area Manager. Once every couple of months we’d say were going out to check all the other venues out. But we’re also all throwing in \$50.00 each and go and play the pokies at all these venues.’

While those respondents who acknowledged the influence of staff on staff gambling had a diversity of experience in the industry, most respondents from the group who said that staff did not influence each other in their outside gambling, had less than 18 months experience in the industry. Of the three managers with more than 11 years experience who thought there was no influence, few compelling reasons were offered, although Gwyn did acknowledge a lack of discussion about participation:

‘You don’t really talk about our own gambling very much. Like, we have one that goes to the casino. We just know he goes, it’s, you know. He talks about it quite openly and freely – it’s not a problem, he’s not trying to hide it or anything like that. And...we don’t judge him by that.’

#### 10.4.6 Knowing Other Patrons

Most of the **workplace gambling group** clearly indicated that knowing patrons discouraged them from gambling at work, although there were several exceptions, such as the few staff who either felt unqualified to comment or others who were able to argue both for and against this influence. The ways in which patrons could encourage staff to gamble included by giving tips for the TAB – particularly prominent in some venues where patrons involved in the racing industry gathered – and by facilitating a welcoming social atmosphere. Sky’s response illustrated the way in which patrons might encourage staff gambling, while acknowledging that the individual staff response determined the final outcome:

‘Well you could say yes and no. Sometimes they might come in and say “so and so’s got a ride today, it might do alright”. It’s just a figure of speech too. It’s just a friendly sort of gesture at times I guess. Or “I heard a tip”.’

Maisie, however, was alone in the workplace gambling group in thinking that the atmosphere of the TAB was less conducive to staff gambling than the gaming floor. As she noted, ‘customers walk up to a terminal, they chuck a ticket in, they get the money, they walk away.’

Of the majority responses that said patrons discouraged them from gambling at work, the most common reason was articulated by Jake, who thinks ‘people like to get away from where they’re working; they have a decent session for an hour or two hours or what have you’, mostly, it seems, because regular patrons can make staff feel uncomfortable in their approaches and make comments about any wins they may see staff have. This effect was not, however, consistently felt, and two staff acknowledged the attractiveness of gambling with patrons who might wish them well if they experienced a win. In small communities with limited gaming facilities, such as Matilda’s, knowing other patrons was an inevitable and welcome social aspect of working in a venue.

#### 10.4.7 Shiftwork

The most comments received from both groups related to the effects of shiftwork on staff gambling behaviour within and outside of the venue. In this latter instance, many staff felt qualified to comment on the basis of the number of staff from other venues whom they knew or had observed gambling in their own workplace.

The **workplace gambling group** was able to provide equal numbers of examples for and against shiftwork as an inducement to gamble at work, mostly frequently citing late night finishes and the need to wind down as strong influences on actual gambling behaviour.

Late finishing was regarded in many instances as a deterrent to gambling, because this limits staff gambling at work. Thus, day shift staff were the ones mostly perceived as engaging in after work on-site gambling. Sally, a night shift worker, said ‘when I used to do day shift, I used to stay, have

a drink and play... But now that I work nights, like I don't go in there to play. And when I knock off, the machines are closed...all the ones that do day shift, the majority of them will stay and play the pokies afterward'. In Andrew's case, he was pleased that he now did night shift, as it reduced the amount of time that he gambled.

This perception that workplace gambling is an option only available to day shift staff was widely represented. Those staff in the workplace gambling group who spoke about gambling after a late finish mostly discussed going to other venues, such as in this description by Max:

'Like I know sometimes we've finished work at say 12.30 here and you're a little bit, like you might have worked from 3 o'clock. You're a little bit, like awake and we tend to go to another venue for a drink because we know it's open. And then obviously, if they go for a drink and there's staff that do gamble here, well they tend to throw in 20 or 30 at another venue. And also, certainly if their partner's also asleep at that time of night, they're not likely to go home. So they're wanting to go somewhere else.'

Of the staff who thought shiftwork was not an influence on staff gambling, only Maisie offered a reason for her answer, noting that hospitality staff are habituated to the demands of shiftwork.

When the same **workplace gambling group** was asked to discuss the influence of shiftwork on **gambling outside the workplace**, the typical, initial reaction was that they would not know what their colleagues did, but they did frequently observe and interact with staff from other venues who came to gamble at their own venue. Noel, for example, drew on his previous experience in hotels, stating that 'you used to be able to recognise the staff from other hotels...they weren't in for a social drink. They were just more in to play pokies.' Duncan has also seen many employees of other venues play before their shifts at his venue. They 'come in their uniforms, you know with a jacket on and that, and (are) playing the machines and then going to work...obviously I don't know whether any of ours did it, but none...that I know of anyway'. Despite these uncertainties, almost all respondents thought shiftwork influenced staff to gamble at other venues, regardless of the in-house workplace gambling policy.

Several factors identified by this workplace gambling group complicit in staff gambling at other venues included the policy of their workplace, the opening hours of other venues relative to their own, the opportunity to meet with other hospitality workers, a desire to observe the gaming practices and offerings of other venues, and a desire for privacy from patrons of their own venue.

Andrew thought about one-quarter of staff at his venue would go out to other venues, to do 'competition checks. See what sort of operations the other venues are running. The likelihood of playing a machine that isn't in the venue'. His response concurred with many others in both the workplace gambling and non-workplace gambling groups, who often indicated that staff may have difficulty switching off from work, even when out for reasons of leisure, or that maybe they require the 'excuse' to gamble rather than just wanting to participate. This could be part of the 'culture' of the workplace and of being a hospitality employee.

Sally, a supervisor with 10.5 years industry experience, was one of the few in the workplace gambling group who:

'doesn't know any of them that do knock off work and go to another venue to play. I sort of haven't come across any of them that do that. They'll sit there and play. Have a drink, have a play and then go home.'

She similarly described her own behaviour: ‘when I knock off work I like to go home. If I wanted to have a play and have a drink, I would stay where I was. Once I’m in the car I just want to go and get home.’

With very few exceptions, those in the **non-workplace gambling group** also credited the notion that shiftwork is an encouragement to gamble at other venues. Unlike the previous respondents, none of this group spoke of not wanting to gamble after a late shift, nor identified the need to check out the offerings of other venues. Rather, they concurred with the non-workplace gambling group that the primary influence on after work gambling was the desire to wind down or relax, accompanied by a lack of alternative leisure opportunities or inability to interact with family and friends. Dallas highlighted this social inequity well, describing how ‘only last week, well our venue’s probably open the latest, but I’m not allowed to gamble, so I drove for half an hour to another venue that was open to the same time as us just to play for a couple of hours...I’d been home and I was bored so I thought I’d go to this venue.’

In her strong affirmation of the link between shiftwork and staff gambling, Jacinta talked about the groups of staff from other venues that used to frequent her previous workplace ‘when 24 hours was in...because it was something they could do. It was like, you know, six o’clock in the morning. They finally had somewhere to go. It’s their night time I suppose. Where it’s our day time. They’d come in and have a beer and not, you know, heavily gamble, but we used to get a hell of a lot of them where I last worked. But obviously here, being the shorter hours, we don’t so much.’

None of the other 21 respondents in this group spoke of being unable to access a gambling venue as a result of the shutdown, and Brian offered evidence that it was of little consequence when it came to choosing a place to go after work, as even:

‘if you’re working at a place that’s open its full 20 hours and you finish at 4 o’clock in the morning and there are other places around that are still open and there’s not too much else to do...a lot of people would be influenced to go and have a drink and a gamble.’

Noel also underscored the ease and convenience of gambling after a 1am finish, often going ‘somewhere to have a beer, or meet my son or something and go and put 20 bucks in a poker machine. That’s only because I can and it was that time of the night, that time of morning.’

Of the few non-workplace gambling staff who disagreed that shiftwork influenced staff gambling, or argued for other, stronger influences, the most common reason was that it is individual characteristics. For example Gwyn thought ‘that if you’re going to gamble you’re going to gamble whether you’re doing shiftwork or not’. Nigel emphasised the geographic availability of gaming, where ‘it is accessible to everybody - that does not exclude gaming staff members.’

Finally, both groups spoke of the influence of split shifts, a common feature of kitchen staffing, on the gambling behaviour of those employees. Overall, several respondents acknowledged having seen kitchen staff gamble between shifts, although a few staff said that kitchen staff tended to go home rather than stay at the venue.

#### **10.4.8 Knowledge and Familiarity with Gambling**

Both the workplace gambling and non-workplace gambling groups were asked if they thought the increased knowledge and familiarity with gambling that staff generally have influences their own gambling behaviour.

Those in the **workplace gambling group** were divided in their responses, although common to all was the assertion that gaming venue staff should have a greater knowledge of the odds of winning and should recognise the low likelihood of such. Matilda was assured in her response that, 'because they're with them everyday and they're explaining to people how they work...we know the rules'.

Several respondents, such as Maisie, thought that this higher level of knowledge and familiarity was discouraging, and made them 'inclined not to play', although Maisie thought that staff with access to 'the money side of it and the revenue' were more empowered in this regard.

Amy acknowledged the double edge of familiarity with gaming:

'it doesn't influence me because I know what the odds are and stuff like that. But because I do know a little bit more about it, it does sort of entice me... So it sort of works in both ways, yeah, because I know the odds, I don't gamble very often but because I do have a bit of knowledge on gaming, I do like to gamble every now and then.'

While Andrew also thought that staff knowledge and familiarity influenced their gambling behaviour, he also demonstrated the contradictions in this perceived certainty. For example, while staff '...basically know how machines operate, how they can actually increase their chance of winning on a linked jackpot system', he didn't think this familiarity extended to the perceived ability to influence the outcome of the machines, acknowledging that 'it's purely just chance and coincidence and basically good luck'.

It is also probable that gaming staff come to know the machines in their venue quite well, as a consequence of serving the patrons who use them. Some staff from the **workplace gambling group** were asked whether this might affect the decision to gamble at their own venue. Will, Sky and Andrew thought so, with Will likening it to:

'...going to a shopping centre or a supermarket, where you know where things are I guess.' You're like "I, yeah, I need, I know where my machine is" or I'll walk past it at the start of work and yeah it hasn't been a deployment or anything. Or, you know, like other venues you don't know how, they're swapping machines around and stuff.'

Sky referenced the TAB, and the special knowledge required there, when she said that 'they feel comfortable coming in, they know how the system works... They know what time a certain race is on I suppose and yeah, I mean, they can look up the board odds and everything.'

Patrick, Ben and Matilda disagreed, either because 'it's not like you can just get the figures and say which one's going to pay, because it doesn't work like that' (Patrick), or because 'they jump on any one there' (Ben).

The **non-workplace gambling group** perceived a stronger influence, overall, of gambling knowledge and familiarity on staff gambling behaviour, although several of these respondents supposed this influence to be discouraging. This discouragement came about from seeing how much patrons lose, thus 'taking a bit of the fantasy out of it' (Kaitlyn), or knowing and practically observing the odds of a win. Betty acknowledged this as 'a shift in thinking since they've starting putting the stats in the machine. So you can actually dial the machine and say what's the chance of getting five Kings or whatever it is and some staff actually read that stuff...when they've got spare time'.

This knowledge does not always translate into caution on the part of the staff member, however. Noel, a manager with a long history of working in gaming, including in other states, thought that these odds empower staff to think they have inside knowledge of gaming machines:

'I'd like to think we've got inside knowledge. Look I can tell you, tell you now, when I do the morning shifts and I count the cash every morning for four or five days, on about day three or four I think, "gee we're due for a couple of payouts." And all of a sudden the machines will start paying out'.

Betty spoke of how gaming floor staff have time to observe patrons in play, develop a rapport, and 'hang around with them while they're on the machine.' This can translate to gambling outside of work, as described by Banjo, who 'used to go just up the road because there was a particular game I liked to play...and if I enjoy playing the game I enjoy watching (customers play) it too.'

While Dallas thinks staff from this group might 'see the machines at our venue might be paying out, so they go to the other venues and try those machines - see if they can win a crust', Brian estimates that for 'an overall proportion the only advantage the staff would have when they go and play at other venues (is that) they already understand what they need to get on the machines to win or what, what's the jackpot and how they work.'

#### **10.4.9 Effect of Jackpots**

The effect of jackpot machines, and linked jackpots in particular, on staff gambling behaviour emerged during discussion with some respondents, and was deemed sufficiently influential to be incorporated in the questions for subsequent interviewees. Two broad themes relating to jackpot machines emerged. The first was that many staff indicated that they could 'tell' when a jackpot was close to being won, as a consequence of knowing the jackpot limit and judging this against the current balance. The second theme was that this could induce chasing behaviour in that group of employees who did gamble. While this is not knowledge or behaviour exclusive to staff, they do have higher access to jackpot machines and greater knowledge about jackpot levels.

In the **workplace gambling group**, a few respondents indicated that their only restriction was on playing the jackpot machines, or on playing the jackpot machines when they reach a certain level, which Sally:

'totally agree[s] with because, like, if we knock off work, we go out there and like, you know we don't know which machine it's going to go off on because it's linked to Melbourne. But if we win it and they say "oh yeah, you know which machine to play don't ya'!" I don't think it looks really good but the boss said we're not allowed to play while its 4½ to 5.'

While some staff in this group would watch the balance of the jackpot machines closely, and then play the machines off duty, others like Amy perceived this knowledge component as a consequence of the job, because 'when you're at work all day you keep an eye on those things'.

Max's 'first memory of staff gambling' relates to a staff jackpot win: '...we used to go around and say "no get on the Wild Cash machines, it's about to go off". One of our staff had finished his shift, got on, won it.' The staff gambling policy at that Max's workplace was changed as a consequence of this incident.

The **non-workplace gambling group** also acknowledged their constant awareness of the balance of jackpot machines, and several respondents said this was an inducement to some staff to seek out those machines elsewhere, particularly where the jackpot machines are linked across venues.

#### 10.4.10 Normalisation of Gambling

Responses to enquiries around the normalising effect on gambling of working in a gaming venue, more than any other, highlighted the complicity of other dimensions of accessibility, such as safety, social approval and familiarity, on staff gambling behaviour.

All respondents in the **workplace gambling group** thought that gambling becomes normalised for staff (i.e. they are more likely to see gambling as a good or acceptable pastime), although many thought that this was not enough to induce staff to gamble. Other factors identified as influential in this normalisation for this group included the attractiveness of the gambling environment, which was generally perceived as clean and safe, the social pressures to participate, and the length of time working in the industry. A few respondents also thought, like Raina, that because they ‘...see it every day’, this makes them averse to spending time in the venue because ‘you don’t want to sort of come back into that environment again.’

Ben, Max, and Jake, in acknowledging the normalising effect - ‘I think they feel it’s more acceptable’- also lent toward the general feeling expressed by many respondents at different times during the interviews that gambling participation is determined by individual factors. For example, Jake, in response to the enquiry as to the normalising effect of working in the industry, said ‘I think if someone likes to have a bit of a punt they will do so regardless.’ He elaborated on this point by noting that:

‘it makes them more aware...I think it gives them a better understanding of what’s involved in the gaming side. I, in my experience, I haven’t found anyone really that’s never played before and then they started working and that’s had an influence on them to play, so yeah.’

The **non-workplace gambling group** also mostly supported the notion of a normalising effect of workplace participation, like Kaitlyn, who:

‘doesn’t know about influencing their own gambling behaviour but I think it certainly puts a normal spin to people who do gamble...once they actually work in a venue like this they realise that not all gamblers are bad, so I think it sort of eases a bit on the perception that gambling is bad...’.

Caveats were also issued by several other respondents, who either didn’t perceive an influence on staff gambling behaviour, or were unsure about the effects of this ‘desensitisation’. Some, like Laura, thought that seeing losses had a strong deterrent effect, while Rachel, like Kaitlyn above, spoke about the normalising effects of gambling that come from seeing the positive effects, for example how it relieves the loneliness and boredom of older patrons.

Of those respondents strongly supporting the idea that through normalisation of gambling staff were compelled to gamble themselves, a few thought it influenced their own gambling although, in their responses other related factors were identified, such as the social accessibility of gambling. For example, Jill spoke of how ‘whenever we go out as a group...we either meet in the pokies or meet in the bistro and end up in the pokies’.

#### 10.4.11 Financial Circumstances

Whether the typically low wages of front line hospitality staff (relative to other industries) had an effect on the gambling behaviour of these staff, or, conversely, whether salaried managers with potentially more disposable income were affected by their financial circumstances were explored with both groups of staff.

Almost all respondents in the **workplace gambling group** thought that the financial circumstances of staff limited their gambling behaviour. That is, those on low incomes were not able to gamble and those with disposable incomes – on higher wages – could afford to gamble a little. Matilda, for example, was typical in acknowledging her tight finances and said this limited her gambling expenditure to \$2.00-\$3.00 at most.

A few respondents in this group who were undecided agreed with the prompted suggestion of the interviewer that some employees could see gambling as a way to supplement a low income, particularly where the number of shifts was low. Max had first-hand experience of this, noting that new employees, in particular, who might only get two or three shifts ‘...can think ,wow, that’s so easy to do. So when money is low, maybe they do tend to look at pokies as an option of winning.’

Respondents in the **non-workplace gambling group** were divided as to whether they perceived an influence of income on staff gambling behaviour. Those who thought that financial circumstances had no effect either thought that staff in need of extra money would try to pick up extra shifts to supplement their income, or were sensible enough not to look at gambling as a money-making exercise. Others, like Kathy, thought that income was the limiting, rather than motivating, factor: ‘I suppose if you really can’t afford it, well then I guess you can’t do it.’

Those respondents who agreed that a limited income was an encouragement to gamble, like Dallas, thought that ‘if you’re after a bit of extra money, a win of a couple of hundred dollars at the pokies is pretty good...’. Laura also thought that staff, like members of the public, who ‘aren’t rewarded or (are) finding life difficult where money is concerned...’ would be influenced to gamble.

#### 10.4.12 Other Themes Raised

Toward the end of each interview, respondents were asked whether there were any other aspects of working in a gaming venue that they thought either encouraged or discouraged staff from gambling, and whether there were any other comments they wished to make.

Overwhelmingly, the **workplace gambling group** cited seeing player losses as the factor most likely to discourage staff gambling, although other factors cited once included the staff policy and not wanting to socialise with people you actually work with. Sky thought that the occasional presence of ‘an up to date lady that comes around all the time and she gives us pamphlets and I know personally all the staff do read them’ also helped discourage staff gambling, presumably through informing staff about the low odds of winning.

The few encouraging factors cited by respondents that they felt had not already been discussed included Mavis’s view that ‘people that are in the industry that think it’s a good industry, might support each other’s industries’. Seeing the wins was also thought to have an effect, as was the encouragement of staff and patrons in the case of TAB gambling. It was thought, too, that younger staff, or those with less experience in the industry, were particularly vulnerable.

The **non-workplace gambling group** was similarly discouraged by seeing patrons lose money, and were struck by the negative consequences that ensue. Some staff, again those new to the industry, were also perceived as being at-risk of seeing gambling as a way to win money, as a result of seeing players win large amounts. Max thought that training – or a lack of it – was complicit in the gambling habits of new staff.

Jacinta, like Graham, thought that the desire to be out of the work environment - ‘you look at them, all day, so you don’t really want to go out and play them’ - limited staff gambling. Conversely, Kaitlyn thought the emphasis placed on making the ‘workplace fun and try(ing) to

make it fun for our customers' could lead to staff seeking 'the same thing if they every went to a gaming venue'.

While almost all staff acknowledged that employment in the industry was stressful, mostly through witnessing the losses of patrons, some, like Noel and Banjo, were able to link that to staff gambling: 'Well the stress in general encourages some people to gamble. So if you're under stress at work through either negativity of gambling or whatever, your boss is giving you a hard time or you're struggling with your workload, you'll wander off to your little club in the corner, or your pub in the corner, and off you'll go and start playing pokies. I suppose it's human nature unfortunately.'

Alcohol was also an influential factor in staff socialising and thus, indirectly, in staff gambling. Sometimes, it is the need to 'wind down', as discussed earlier. More commonly, as Mark described it, most players know the system whereby machine players are 'rewarded' with drinks, in an effort to keep the turnover on machines up. This could be encouraging, in the sense that, if you were going to drink anyway, playing the machines might not cost much. The system works thus:

'As I walk in the door of the hotel, the guy that would be the night shift supervisor or manager that night, will see me coming and whoever's with me, and he'll have a drink on the bar for us by the time we get to the bar. And there will be no charge...because he knows that we're probably going to put \$20.00, \$30.00, or \$50.00 in the machine between us.'

The workplace culture, that encourages staff to understand their product, and to know what promotions and machines the competition offered, was also influential in encouraging staff to gamble at other venues or, where allowed, at their own. Nigel discussed how, while he was once a non-gambler, he now gambles 'to learn the machines. To see what people feel.' Laura similarly discussed how this culture pervades staff social occasions:

'where somebody might say "will we put \$5 in" and that's as far as it's gone. And they've come back and comment on "there wasn't many people there", or "there was loads of people there" and looking at the environment more than anything else, more than their interest in the actual gambling.'

Max also identified gambling in the workplace as some staff's way of 'supporting the club.'

Management can also have a role in encouraging or discouraging staff gambling. In Sally's case, she had approached her manager, seeking a ban on staff gambling, and his response was that 'our turnover would drop. I would sooner the staff play here, than go elsewhere and play'. This illustrates the strong leadership and mentoring role that managers can take, and the potentially strong message that a permissive staff gambling policy could send. Another respondent spoke of the liberating effect that having the hotel owner/manager not present at the venue had, noting that staff were readily able to gamble at work late at night in his absence.

Pubs and the TAB were also perceived as places where staff gambling was more likely to occur, in perhaps excessive levels, as a result of the unique social environment of both. Duncan thought:

'the pub scene - it's just sort of more undisciplined and there wasn't sort of, yeah, yeah, like anyone sort of looking over. So staff just seemed to do what they liked. It was one of the reasons I left... I was balancing the TAB and that, and having discrepancies and that, and in the end I had enough. Because I knew what was happening but it didn't, it just seemed to fall on deaf ears.'

Although the subject of staff gambling problems was not raised with respondents, several were compelled to discuss their perceptions of problem gambling prevalence within the industry, like Matilda, who thought that ‘in the eleven years I’ve been here no one’s ever had a problem, no one gambled too much, no one’s ever been spoken to.’ On the other hand, Sally, who worked in a large venue with a permissive gambling policy that bordered on encouraging, thought ‘there’s a couple there that have definitely got gambling problems, yeah, and they know they have. If they didn’t work in the venue I don’t think they would have.’ She also felt constrained by not being able to talk to staff or patrons about perceived gambling problems, although acknowledged the challenges associated with doing that.

Overall there was a sense amongst many respondents that there are gamblers and non-gamblers, and the influence of the workplace is either neutralising or discouraging. However, several respondents also acknowledged opposite effects, particularly around the culture of the workplace, which drew employees to gambling venues at knock-off time, and valued product knowledge, frequently obtained off the job, quite highly.

## **10.5 SUMMARY OF THEMES IN RELATION TO ACCESS**

This section draws together the interview findings under the three themes of physical access, social access and cognitive access to gambling, as perceived by the interviewees.

### **10.5.1 Physical access**

Physical access to gambling by staff was discussed by the interviewees mainly in terms of convenience, proximity to work and to home, and the influence of shiftwork and split shifts on the times that staff are likely to access gambling facilities.

Most respondents did not think convenient access to gambling, in terms of its proximity in the workplace, influences staff to gamble at work. This may be because of the unattractiveness of the venue to the staff member and/or because they have already spent a good deal of time around gambling and that venue while at work. However, it was readily acknowledged that staff, like the general public, have convenient access to venues in general.

If staff need to change out of their uniform to gamble at the workplace, those who live some distance away are more likely to gamble at a venue closer to home. However, if no other similar venue operates in the town, then staff may be more likely to gamble in their workplace. Even for staff not allowed to gamble in their workplace, other venues are often in close proximity to their workplace, allowing convenient gambling before or after work. These nearby venues were also considered good places to meet up with co-workers and staff from other venues whom they know. For others, it may be more convenient to gamble closer to home, either on their way home from work or during time off, than to go to a venue near the workplace.

A minority thought that the proximity of gambling facilities was an influencing factor on staff gambling in the workplace, especially as it is such a convenient way to relax after work. Some also gamble in the workplace when they come in to check rosters or return keys in their time off.

Shiftwork was another aspect of staff worklife that appeared to affect physical access to gambling. Late night finishes meant some staff did not have the opportunity to gamble after work, so staff gambling in the workplace was seen as confined to those working day shifts. However, staff who finished late did sometimes go to other venues after work and many had observed staff from other venues coming to the respondent’s workplace before or after shifts to gamble. Essentially, shiftwork was seen as encouraging staff to gamble at other venues, rather than in their workplace.

This was due to workplace policies on staff gambling, relative opening hours, opportunities to meet other hospitality workers, wanting to observe the gambling facilities at other venues and wanting privacy in their own gambling.

Several respondents also commented on seeing kitchen staff gambling between shifts. In terms of physical access, these staff often find it easier to stay close to their workplace in between split shifts. Gambling then becomes a way to pass that time.

### **10.5.2 Social Access**

Social access to gambling was discussed by the interviewees mainly in relation to the potential familiarity and comfort of gambling in their workplace, safety and security, encouragement from other staff to gamble, the influence of patrons, the normalisation of gambling, limits on other social activities, and management and workplace culture.

Most staff who could gamble in their workplace thought familiarity with their venue's gaming environment made it a comfortable and sometimes inviting place to gamble. Cheaper drinks for staff (where provided) and the non-judgemental attitude of others added to this comfort level. However, other staff who could gamble in their workplace felt that staff preferred to gamble elsewhere, so they felt they were away from work. In contrast, staff who could not gamble in their workplace tended to disagree that familiarity with gaming environments encouraged staff to gamble. Some reasons were that this familiarity turned staff off gambling and they get sick of the environment. Others felt that individual factors such as boredom were more influential than social factors.

Respondents were fairly evenly divided on whether the added safety and security of gambling in your own venue, rather than going to another, encouraged staff to gamble in their workplace. Some commented that knowing other people in the workplace added to the level of comfort and others that security is enhanced because they know so many staff and patrons and because their venue has a strict security system. However, others noted that alternative venues were just as safe.

The potential influence of other staff on social accessibility to gambling was the topic of much discussion. Most staff who could gamble in their workplace thought that knowing other staff encouraged workplace gambling. As well as adding to comfort and security levels when gambling in the workplace, the general collegiality was attractive, although this also applied for staff who gambled at other venues where they knew employees. Finishing a shift at the same time as other staff, the sociability of the TAB for men, a drinking and gambling culture, and sharing of 'hot tips' amongst staff were other encouraging factors noted. However, others felt that social factors had no influence on machine gambling, as it is such an individual and private activity, while heavier gamblers might prefer to gamble elsewhere to retain their privacy around this. It seemed that staff working in a venue where workplace gambling was allowed were more likely to encourage other staff to gamble with them, even outside the workplace. Some staff, however, did not want to socialise with the people they worked with.

Knowing other patrons seemed to discourage staff from gambling in their workplace (where allowed), as staff liked some respite from their patrons and sometimes felt uncomfortable if patrons commented on their gambling or any wins. For some, however, knowing the patrons added to the social enjoyment.

The vast majority of interviewees recognised that gambling becomes very normalised for staff. Whether this translates into heightened gambling activity, however, depends on several other factors, such as the attractiveness of the gambling environment in the workplace, social pressures to participate, length of time working in the industry, and individual propensity to gamble. This

normalisation, however, can reduce any stigma around gambling, and draw attention to its social benefits of relieving loneliness and boredom.

Also related to social access, is the limit on other social opportunities, family time and options for relaxing after work for venue staff, particularly those doing late shifts. As well as gambling in the workplace, some staff were attracted to other venues after work to socialise with other hospitality workers.

The financial circumstances of staff were also acknowledged as influencing the affordability of gambling for staff and thus the comfort level of spending limited disposable income on gambling. Most interviewees felt that staff would not consider gambling as a way to supplement their income, although some younger or newer staff members may be more naïve in this regard.

Social access to gambling in the workplace was also seen as dependent on management attitudes to staff gambling. Where a permissive policy applied, management can be seen as endorsing staff gambling. Similarly, when management is often absent, staff can feel more comfortable gambling in their venue.

Finally, hotels and TABs were perceived as places where staff gambling was more likely to occur, at sometimes excessive levels, given the more relaxed social environment of both.

### **10.5.3 Cognitive access**

Several themes relating to cognitive access to gambling were raised by the interviewees. These were enhanced knowledge of the odds of gambling, greater product knowledge, attraction to individual machines, heightened access to and greater knowledge of jackpot levels, a desire to know what competitive venues are offering, and cognitive distortions of some staff.

It was widely acknowledged that staff should have a better knowledge than the general public of the odds of winning and losing at gambling and the extent of patrons' losses, so this should discourage them from gambling. However, whether this was the case depended on the financial means of the worker, whether this knowledge of the odds was stronger than the person's interest in gambling, and whether the worker perceived they had inside knowledge that would help them win. Knowing the machines in the workplace could attract staff to gamble on them, but more due to familiarity with individual machines rather than thinking that this familiarity would increase their chances of winning. However, the special knowledge required of staff working at a TAB also adds to their familiarity, comfort and knowledge of how to gamble on TAB activities. Others were genuinely interested in certain games (on machines) and, after watching patrons play them, wanted to try them themselves at their or another venue. Others observed patrons winning on particular machines and were enticed to play them to see if they could also win.

Staff were reported as having greater access to jackpot machines and greater knowledge about jackpot levels than did the general public. This led some staff to believe they know when jackpots are about to be won and others to then chase these jackpots. Staff can closely watch jackpot levels in their workplace, and then play these machines when off-duty or seek out a linked machine at another venue.

Staff gambling was also encouraged by a desire to see what competitive venues are offering, to try different machines to those in their venues and to know about alternative promotions and competitions. Some felt they gambled to enhance their product knowledge and work performance and to gain a better understanding of the patron experience.

In general, younger or newer staff were considered more vulnerable to cognitive distortions around gambling, to see gambling as ‘easy money’ after seeing patrons win. However, the majority thought that staff were more influenced by player losses which, in turn, deterred them from gambling themselves. Responsible gambling awareness was also cited as a discouraging influence for some staff, but the limited training of newer or younger staff added to their vulnerability in gambling.

## **10.6 CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

This chapter has presented and analysed the results of 40 interviews conducted with staff of hotels and clubs in Victoria. After summarising their responses in relation to venue policies on staff gambling in the workplace and their observations of staff gambling behaviour, numerous factors that the interviewees considered can influence access to gambling were analysed and then drawn together in relation to physical, social and cognitive access to gambling. In terms of physical access to gambling, most staff felt that the proximity of workplace gambling facilities does not unduly affect staff gambling in their venue as there are many alternative venues close to work and home where staff can gamble if they wish. However, shiftwork and split shifts were seen as important influencers on the times that staff are likely to access gambling facilities. Some aspects of social access to gambling were considered as mainly encouraging influences for staff in their own gambling. These included the familiarity and comfort of gambling in the workplace, encouragement to gamble both within and outside the workplace by other staff, limits on other social activities, and a management and workplace culture that does not deter staff gambling. Other aspects of social access raised were the safety and security of gambling in the workplace and the normalisation of gambling, but responses were mixed on their influence on staff gambling. Cognitive access to gambling was perceived as heightened by a better knowledge of the odds of gambling, greater product knowledge, attraction to individual machines, heightened access to and greater knowledge of jackpot levels, a desire to know what competitive venues are offering, and cognitive distortions by some younger, newer staff.

Having analysed and presented the qualitative findings for this study, the next chapter discusses the overall results of the study and concludes the report.

