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For online, phone and face to face gambling support

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Introduction

While Australians are often credited with liking a bet, the reality is most of us rarely gamble and those who do are more likely to buy a lottery ticket than blow the budget on the pokies.

Opportunities to gamble are however becoming more obvious in everyday life with new ways to gamble seemingly being invented every day.

Alongside older forms of gambling such as betting on horses or buying Tatts tickets, the expansion of online sports betting and a major increase in advertising has made gambling more visible than ever.

Today, you can bet anywhere, anytime, on just about anything.

And while many Victorians rarely gamble, for some people who gamble regularly, it can become a problem.

Around 30,000 Victorians have a problem with gambling with another 100,000 being at risk of developing a problem.

This is more than the capacity of the MCG, the number of people who pass through Flinders Street station every day or the number of people who attend the Melbourne Cup.

When you consider that each of these people have families, friends and co-workers, the potential impact of problem gambling on our community is considerable.

Research estimates that each person with gambling problems has five to 10 people in their lives who are affected by their gambling. This means up to a million Victorians are affected, directly or indirectly, by problem gambling.

MYTH

Aussies will bet on two flies crawling up a wall.
To make gambling safer in our state, we want to increase community awareness about both the risks of gambling and the help available to those with a gambling problem.

By increasing community awareness and understanding, we believe fewer people will get into trouble with gambling, and those who do will seek help earlier. This will reduce the harm from gambling for everyone.

Increasing community awareness about gambling is also important for younger generations.

In the past, gambling was largely confined to licensed premises – out of sight and largely not accessible for people under 18. Today, betting is available 24/7 from just about anywhere.

With access to gambling increasing and with more and more advertising, educating the community and especially the next generation about gambling is vital.

The Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation aims to create a better understanding of how gambling works and why some people develop problems with gambling.

The Foundation’s definition of responsible gambling comes in two parts. The first identifies the need for good decision making on the part of individuals, while the second promotes the concept of a shared community responsibility for creating safer gambling environments. The definition clearly acknowledges that all of us have a role to play in keeping people safe.

REALITY

Most Australians don’t gamble very much and when they do, they’re more likely to be buying a lottery ticket than playing the pokies.
The Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation

The Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation is an independent statutory authority set up to focus on the impacts of problem gambling and to foster responsible gambling.

We fund services for people affected by problem gambling, community education to foster responsible gambling and research to ensure our decisions are based on the best information available.

**OUR VISION**

*A Victoria free from gambling-related harm*

We work within a public health framework to provide access to services for people who are having problems with gambling and work to increase community awareness and resilience.

We work with key groups including health professionals like doctors and counsellors to ensure services are available to those who need them. We also work with the gambling industry to promote responsible gambling environments and increase awareness of the risks of gambling and solutions to minimising those risks.

**Services**

*Treatment services in relation to problem gambling*

**Community education**

*Education and information programs to promote responsible gambling, increase community awareness of the risks associated with gambling and encourage people to seek help in relation to problem gambling*

**Research**

*Undertake and commission research to ensure the Foundation’s activities are based on the best available evidence*

**GIRO**

*Provide information to facilitate community participation in the regulatory processes on gambling in Victoria*
‘Reducing the prevalence and severity of harm related to problem gambling’ is part of our job. To do this, we see a need to increase community understanding and empathy for those who develop gambling problems. We want people with gambling problems to feel supported in seeking help.

This guide provides information about the impact of gambling in our community with the aim of promoting discussion and greater understanding of the issues surrounding gambling.

Go to page 11 of the guide for information on the changing gambling environment and some of the main types of gambling associated with problem gambling.

In the centre of the guide is a pull out section on useful tips for gambling responsibly.

Information to help parents discuss gambling with their teenagers is included along with information about the impact of social media gambling apps.

The guide is based on some of the latest research into gambling and is intended as a community resource.

Less than 10 per cent of people with gambling problems seek professional help. Around a quarter say part of the reason they don’t look for help is because of the shame and embarrassment.

Any comments or suggestions for future editions of the guide should be sent to: communication@responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au

For more information on the Foundation go to responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au
Responsible gambling - a definition

Responsible gambling for individuals means:

- they may gamble for pleasure and entertainment but are aware of their likelihood of losing, and understand the associated risks
- they exercise control over their gambling activity
- responsible gambling occurs in balance with other activities in their lives and is not causing problems or harm for themselves or others

Responsible gambling for the broader community, including gambling providers, governments, and sporting associations, requires:

- shared responsibility for generating awareness of the risks associated with gambling
- creating and promoting environments that prevent or minimise problem gambling
- and being responsive to community concerns around gambling
Let’s Talk About...

What are the implications of the increasing availability of gambling?

Gambling is so in your face – it’s like having a casino in your pocket!

What impact is gambling advertising having on young people?

Is peer pressure about gambling increasing?

Is gambling advertising changing the way we enjoy sport?

Did you know Facebook now has gambling?

Shouldn’t they do something about gambling?

What’s the drama about live odds in sports coverage?

How many different ways to gamble are there?
The Gambling Regulation Act 2003 is the main piece of legislation governing gambling in Victoria.

It empowers the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation to set standards for venues and machines, to licence companies and venues to provide gambling and to lay down codes of conduct and self-exclusion tools.

Regulations have a role to play in minimising harm from gambling and promoting responsible gambling.

The Act specifies what sort of gambling can occur and under what conditions, including opening hours, acceptable advertising and how bookmaking is structured.

The Act also gives local councils and individuals the rights to get involved in determinations involving applications for new pokies. The Foundation’s Gambling Information Resource Office (GIRO) has been set up to help councils and individuals navigate these processes.

The Casino Control Act 1991, which regulates Crown Casino, is another important piece of state regulation.

The arrival of the internet means Victorians can now gamble with online sports betting agencies on horse racing, sporting and other events in a bookmaking format located in other states where Victorian law may not apply. However, federal law (Interactive Gambling Act 2001) currently prohibits Australian providers from offering online casino, card games or digital pokies over the internet.

There are three gambling authorities who work together to address various aspects of the Victorian gambling environment.

**Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation**
Statutory authority responsible for monitoring and regulating the gambling industry.
vcglr.vic.gov.au

**Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing (within Department of Justice)**
Provides strategic policy and regulatory advice and support to the Minister for Liquor and Gaming Regulation and the Minister for Racing.
justice.vic.gov.au

**Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation**
Independent statutory authority which aims to prevent and minimise the harms associated with gambling.
responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au
In recent years the gambling environment has changed significantly:

• The number of different types of gambling available has increased

• The amount of advertising for sports betting is increasing along with community awareness and concern that this is creating new groups of vulnerable gamblers

• The internet, smart phones, tablets and the apps that go with them have transformed the way we gamble

• Access to gambling has increased – it doesn’t matter where you are or what time it is, you can gamble

The pace and scale of all this change appears to be unprecedented and society may not be ready for this revolution in gambling. In particular, there are many who are concerned that the changes mean young people are being exposed to gambling earlier without necessarily understanding the risks.

Gambling used to involve making a series of choices:

1. You had to go to a gambling venue when it was open

2. You had to be 18

3. You had to choose to go to the gambling floor or the TAB or the races

4. To play the pokies, you needed to line up for change

5. To bet on the horses, you needed to line up, make your selections and place your bet

6. You had to have time to do all the above

Today, all you need is a smart phone, an online bank account and a minute or two to register with an online betting agency.

While keeping gambling in controlled environments won’t stop people from developing a gambling problem, making gambling mobile and more accessible means the temptation and the ability to gamble is with you 24/7 and so is the risk of gambling to excess.

“Alongside the diversification of gambling products (e.g. away from horse racing and pokies towards sports betting and online gambling), the way in which gambling (is) marketed and advertised (is) seen as the most significant change in gambling in the last five years.”

A/Prof Samantha Thomas 2011

It’s like carrying a poker machine in your pocket!
What can I do to promote responsible gambling in my family?

What do I say to my teenager about the increasing availability of gambling?

What can I do if my teenager’s friends are encouraging them to gamble?

What do you do if someone you know might be developing a gambling problem?

What can I do to promote responsible gambling in my family?

My teenager doesn’t listen to me about anything so why should they listen about problem gambling?
People gamble for many reasons. Some people gamble for excitement, the thrill of winning or to be social. From two-up on Anzac Day to an annual plunge on the Melbourne Cup, most people enjoy a flutter without losing control.

Responsible gambling is where you:

• are in control of how much time and money you are spending
• see gambling as a form of entertainment
• don’t bet more than you can afford to lose
• know and accept the odds
• keep sight of your chances of winning and losing

For some people however there are warning signs. Some people gamble to ‘zone out’ or escape from problems. For example, someone who is lonely and withdrawn might see gambling as a safe way to get out and be among people without having to talk to anyone.

People’s reasons for gambling can also change. Someone might gamble regularly at the TAB to win money but join the Melbourne Cup sweep to be sociable. They might usually play the pokies alone but share a machine when they go out with family and friends.

For some people, gambling can become a habit. The reasons they started have been forgotten and the habit just goes on. Betting because you need to win, or because you are sure you can win, could be warning signs. Ultimately, gambling odds are designed to work against you so if you gamble, you should be prepared to lose.

Gambling should be treated as an entertainment expense, just like going to a movie or out for dinner, and not considered a way to make money or solve deeper problems.

If this is not how you, a friend or family member gambles, you may need to talk about how to get back on track.

**Friends and family will often notice a problem before the person involved. Call Gambler’s Help on 1800 858 858 to talk about your plan to approach a family member or friend or visit gamblinghelponline.org.au**
Types of gambling

There are many ways to gamble and all involve various levels of chance with the odds of winning less than the likelihood of losing. Essentially however there are two types of gambling:

1. Games of pure chance where the odds cannot be affected by anything the player does or thinks they know. Includes pokies, various forms of lotto including Keno and casino games such as roulette.

2. Games of skill where some knowledge and judgement may increase your chances of guessing a winning outcome. Includes card games such as poker and blackjack and various types of betting offered by bookmakers, such as betting on horses, football teams or events. While skill is a component in these games, chance still plays a large role in determining the result and the odds are always in the operators’ favour.

Games of pure chance are mathematically constructed to make it inevitable that the operator will make more money than gamblers will win. You might be lucky at times, but over time continual gambling will result in net losses for the player.
How does problem gambling start?

- People often start playing for fun with friends and have some early wins. Some people keep playing in the hope they will repeat the win but can get caught up in ‘chasing their losses’. Without support or help, some people get stuck in this mindset for years.

- Studies have shown people who’ve had a major stressful change in their life such as an illness, divorce or children moving away from home can be more vulnerable to developing a problem with the pokies.

- Going to play the pokies or bet on the horses may be an escape from everyday worries such as stressful relationships or money troubles. Some people play so they can ‘zone out’.

- People who are socially isolated can also be more likely to develop problems with the pokies. They say it is somewhere they can go to get out of the house and be with people without having the stress of socialising.

Prevention and help – what we can all do

Friends and family are often the first to notice when someone is developing a gambling problem and can be a huge help for someone wanting to get back in control.

Being aware of how someone’s troubles might feed into a gambling problem means members of their community can also act to keep them safer.

If you are concerned about someone’s gambling – ask them about it. You cannot predict how they will react, but you can let them know you are asking because you care about them.

For tips on starting the conversation, or for free, confidential support 24/7 call Gambler’s Help on 1800 858 858 or go to gamblinghelponline.org.au

The house always wins!
The pokies

Pokies, poker machines or Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) were introduced in Victoria in 1992.

All poker machines in the state must meet specifications set by the state government and are regulated by the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation.

The number of machines in Victoria is limited to 30,000 with 2,500 of these located in Melbourne’s Crown Casino. The rest are equally divided between hotels and clubs.

Poker machines are computers that use randomised mathematical programming. This means the machine will pay out prizes at random intervals, keeping a percentage of the money put into them.

In Victoria, the law stipulates that poker machines must pay back 87 per cent of the money spent on it each year, after the deduction of any special jackpots. The rest goes to the pokie owners or in tax.

Any time you play, you are likely to lose more than the 13 per cent on average. The way the pokies are programmed means your losses could be two, four or even six times this amount.

Poker machines are designed to maximise the excitement factor to entice players to spend longer on the machine and make it possible to bet quickly.

In Victoria, the number of times a pokie can spin is set at 28 spins per minute. This limit is designed to slow down the play and theoretically, the losses.

A smarter bet

$1
Bet a dollar a spin and expect to lose an average of $3.60 minute or over $218 an hour

10c
If you bet 10c a spin, expect to lose an average of around $22 an hour

pokie facts

* At 30 June 2012 there were 19,376 EGMs in metropolitan Melbourne and 7,351 in country Victoria

* Clubs are allowed no more than 120 gaming machines while a single venue may have no more than 105 machines
With around 30,000 poker machines, Victoria has the third highest number in Australia behind NSW (100,000) and Queensland (47,000).

**Press the button to find out more**

Pokies in Victoria have an ‘i’ for information button which shows the odds of winning and the machine’s features. Some will also track your spending on the machine in a session.

**Play smart**

The pokies light and music show along with random prize delivery can make it hard to keep track of how much money you are spending.

Free spins, or even just the promise of a free spin, can be a powerful incentive to keep playing.

The Australian Productivity Commission found 80 per cent of people with severe gambling problems spent most of their money on poker machines (see figure below).

Setting limits on time and spending and taking regular breaks are good strategies to controlling gambling.

**Gambling machines are associated with greater problem gambling risks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>No risk</th>
<th>Low risk</th>
<th>Moderate risk</th>
<th>Problem gambler CPGI 3-7</th>
<th>Problem gambler CPGI 8-11</th>
<th>Problem gambler CPGI 12+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EGMs</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table games</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagering</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lotteries</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Victorian Gambling Study 2009
(CPGI, Canadian Problem Gambling Index)
8. Never chase your losses
If you lose your set money limit and then try to win some of it back before you leave, then you haven't really set a money limit. Chasing your losses will usually just lead to bigger and bigger losses.

7. Balance gambling with other activities
When gambling becomes your only form of entertainment, it's unlikely that you're still just gambling for the fun of it, and your gambling may even be a problem. Make sure gambling isn't your only pastime.

1. Think of gambling as entertainment, not a way to make money
The venue is using gambling to make money. It's not designed to work the other way around. Think of gambling as an entertainment expense – just like buying a movie ticket.

9. Don’t take your ATM card with you
This is a good way to safeguard your money limit and not let being ‘in the moment’ affect your judgment.
2. Only gamble with money you can afford to lose
Gamble within your weekly entertainment budget, not with your phone bill or rent money.

3. Set a spending limit in advance
Decide how much you can afford to lose before you go to play. When it’s gone – walk away.

4. Set a time limit in advance
It’s easy to lose track of time when you’re gambling. Set a time limit or alarm, and when time’s up – quit! Odds are that the more time you spend gambling, the more money you will lose.

5. Take a break
Gambling continuously can cause you to lose track of time and perspective. Step out for some air or a bite to eat at regular intervals.

6. Don’t gamble when you’re depressed or upset
Decision-making can be more difficult when you’re stressed or emotionally upset. Make sure you only gamble when you’re feeling happy and clear headed.

10. Don’t drink or use drugs when gambling
Drugs and alcohol can affect your judgment, your main line of defense against letting gambling get out of control.

Here are some extra precautions to think about to get you back in control.
Organised horse racing goes back to ancient times most notably with the Greek chariot races in the Hippodrome presenting a thrilling but dangerous spectacle around 780BC.

In Britain, betting on horse races goes back at least to the reign of Queen Anne (1702) while the first official horse race in Australia took place at Hyde Park in Sydney in October 1810.

The first official races in Victoria were held at Batman’s Hill in Melbourne in March 1838 while legal betting on horse racing started in 1882 with the licensing of the first bookmakers.

Today, thoroughbred horse racing is a major spectator sport in Australia with $14.3 billion spent in 2009-2010 with bookmakers and the TAB.

**The race that stops a nation**

The first Melbourne Cup was run on 7 November 1861 and was attended by a crowd of around 4000. It was won by Archer out of a field of 17 horses. They were racing for 170 pounds.

Compare this to 2012, where a crowd of over 100,000 and millions more on television watched Green Moon win a prize worth more than $6 million.

While the cup is a major racing event, most Australians won’t have a formal bet, preferring to join an informal sweep with workmates or friends.
Betting on the horses essentially happens in three ways:

• at the track with bookmakers who offer fixed-odds betting, the bookmaker pays out according to the odds on offer when you made the bet and retains what is left – this means, the bookie might lose on some races but makes up for it on others

• off-track with the TAB which offers pari-mutuel betting - that’s betting where the odds aren’t fixed, the house takes a cut and then distributes the remainder among people who make a winning bet.

• online person to person exchange betting, where members set their own prices and pay a percentage of their winnings in commission.

How do people develop problems with gambling on the horses?

For most people, attending the races is a social affair - an opportunity to catch up with friends, an excuse to dress up and have a flutter without any expectation of winning.

While gambling on horse racing is considered less risky than continuous forms of gambling like pokie machines, it accounts for the second highest source of problem gambling.

The rise of online betting however means the level of risk from betting on the horses has increased because now you can bet on multiple races, anywhere in the world, at any time of the day or night.

Regardless of the level of risk however, the principles of responsible gambling are the same whether it’s the pokies or the races:

• be prepared
• plan how much time and money you want to spend
• when it’s time, walk away.

If you or someone you know spends too much time and money at the track, consider redirecting that time into other social activities that don’t involve betting.

Go to thats melbourne.com.au to discover what’s on in Melbourne or go to visit victoria.com for ideas in regional Victoria.
While traditional betting at the race track has been around for hundreds of years, betting on other sports has only been legalised and regulated in Victoria since the 1990s.

The Victorian Commission for Liquor and Gambling Regulation approves events for sports betting in this state.

Sports betting can involve traditional sports such as football and cricket but can also cover less traditional contests like the outcome of elections or the results of reality TV shows.

As well as the end result of a game, bets can be placed on what happens within the game, like who will kick the first goal or score the first try or what will be the winning margin.

You can bet in person at a TAB, over the phone or online.

The rise of sports betting has led to increasing community concern about the possible impact on the enjoyment and integrity of the game. There is particular concern about the possible impact of sports betting advertising on children and how they regard sport.

While research on sports betting is comparatively new, it is evident that young men are the primary target of advertising. This group may also be more at risk than others to developing problems with gambling.

Despite the high profile due to heavy advertising, sports betting is only a small but rapidly growing part of total gambling activity in Australia.

While there is evidence that sports betting is attracting new people to be regular gamblers, research shows people with problems with sports betting often have problems with other forms of gambling.

**Chances of winning with sports betting**

A punter’s knowledge and skill of a sport might increase their chances of winning with some sports betting, however there is always a large degree of chance with any sporting contest.

Those rare individuals who have done well through sports betting do a large amount of research and are disciplined in the way they bet. They are also prepared to wait out long, unpredictable and stressful periods of losing.

The extension of bookmaking to sports and other events may mean more people, including people with less experience are gambling. This means that having greater community understanding of the principles of responsible gambling is even more important.

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**“Setting limits is one of the most commonly discussed methods of control. When it works, it’s very effective.”**

Dr Anna Thomas 2013
Bet during the game. Lose your shirt!

A significant proportion of sports betting is done online which may increase the risk.

The online bookmaker can track the way you gamble and use that information to tailor the offers to encourage you to bet more.

Offers to bet on unfamiliar competitions or in unfamiliar ways, or to place a number of bets very quickly while play is going on, will all undermine any advantage your knowledge of the sport may give you.

Efforts to take a responsible gambling approach by setting limits and considering the odds carefully can be taken over by a shot of adrenalin from the excitement of the game.

Responsible gambling tips for betting on sports

• Avoid having your wallet open in the heat of the moment!

• If you want to bet on a game, do it before, and not during. Betting during the event can affect your enjoyment of the game and leaves little time for good judgement.

• If things are going badly as the game unfolds there may be a strong temptation to chase your losses. Experienced punters say this usually leads to a big win for the bookie and sad reflections at the end of the day.

• Never bet more than you’re prepared to lose.
The invention of the internet also spawned the creation of a new way for people to gamble.

The massive increase in the number of people with smart phones and tablets means opportunities to gamble online have become even more widespread.

Australian gambling companies offer wagering and lotteries over the internet but are not permitted to offer ‘casino’ types of gambling like virtual poker or roulette.

Australians playing casino-type games over the internet should be aware they’re not protected by any specific Australian law. Australian consumer and other laws that seek to protect your rights or stipulate the fairness of the game are unlikely to be enforceable.

The risks of gambling online are similar to other types of gambling however research suggests online betting presents some new challenges.

**Accessibility** - Online gambling is more accessible than any other form of gambling. You can gamble 24/7 on a football match in Europe, play roulette with an online casino based in Macau or bet on a horse race in the United States at any time, day or night.

**Getting lost in the game** - Research suggests online gamblers are more at risk of ‘getting lost in the game’ - losing track of time and the outside world. Judgement and awareness of risk would be impaired under these circumstances.

**Hooked by false promises** - Many internet sites offer free games or lessons on how to play. These practice sessions often pay out more often than real games leading to mistaken beliefs about how often a player will win.

**Playing on your own** - It is easy to become isolated when gambling online. Gambling with others, as a shared social experience where people are watching out for one another can help moderate gambling behaviour. Playing alone means you have no such protection.

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"**Would you gamble on cards or dice in a back alley?** It is important to only play on gambling sites regulated in Australia. Be careful and protect yourself: withdraw your winnings and keep limited amounts in your account."

*Dr Sally Gainsbury 2013*
Almost half of Australia’s adult population now own a smartphone. Take-up soared by 104 per cent to 8.67 million units over the 12 months to May 2012.

Australian Communications and Media Authority, 1 February 2013

Targeted advertising - Online gambling companies can easily keep track of your betting habits which help them target specific advertising and offers to encourage you to gamble more.

High turnover - Online gambling allows fast turnover of bets where you can bet almost continuously and receive a constant stream of offers to bet, tempting you to bet even more. High frequency of betting has been identified as a risk factor for losing control over how much you are down.

Losing track of spending - Using a cash or credit card to gamble rather than handing over cash can make it harder to keep track of how much you’re betting. For people who control their gambling by only betting with cash, online gambling is a much bigger risk.

Tips for controlling online gambling

If you gamble online it is a good idea to:

• set limits for how much time and money you will spend

• set up cues to keep track of time, take breaks and limit total time spent gambling and obey them

• keep track of yourself, how much are you spending, are you betting on what you choose to, or are you just responding to offers and opportunities without much thought?

• talk to others about how you are going, let them give you reality checks
Top grossing free-to-play gambling apps in iTunes (April 2013):

1. Slotomania (3rd overall)
2. Slots Pharaoh’s Way (4th overall)
3. Poker by Zynga (7th overall)
4. Bingo (20th overall)
5. Big Fish Casino (24th overall)
6. Bingo Bash (30th overall)
7. Double Down Casino (39th overall)
8. Slots Journey (53rd overall)
9. Fresh Deck Poker (58th overall)

New research has found a massive expansion in social and online gambling games targeting youth as young as 12 are encouraging young people to become the next generation of gamblers and may be setting them up for problems with gambling.

The Australian-first research says early exposure to gambling is a risk factor for developing problems with gambling.

Canadian-based research by Dr Jeffrey Derevensky supports this revealing that young people who play these social media gambling games are also prone to gambling problems.

A University of Adelaide study by Dr Daniel King has found a significant proportion of young people aged 12-17 are playing simulated gambling games via internet gambling sites, social media, smartphone apps and video games.

Dr King surveyed 1200 Australian teenagers finding 40 per cent who played gambling games reported a ‘preoccupation with gambling’ or an intention to gamble in the future.

According to the research, gaming apps are:

- making gambling more accessible and attractive to young people
- promoting false information about gambling – in particular they ‘pay out’ at a faster rate
- making gambling more prolific and socially acceptable

There are unique risks of digital gambling that can make young people particularly vulnerable. This includes greater accessibility and convenience allowing gambling anywhere at any time, faster losses than traditional gambling, inadequate age checks and credit card checks.
Quick facts:

1. The average Australian teenager spends more than five hours a day engaged in digital media activities (Australian Communications and Media Authority).

2. Australians are spending more on online gambling than ever before. Gambling Data (UK) estimates Australians spent more than $60 million last year on social casino games, simulated gambling games that are often free initially but later cost money to play.

3. Simulated gambling games are free-to-play using virtual credits, and include hybrid video games with monetised features such as Runescape.

4. According to a Bloomberg Business report, digital gaming companies are making billions of dollars and focusing on developing new games which are not regulated like traditional gambling.

5. The global online gambling market is poised to hit $US30 billion this year according to US researcher H2 Gambling Capital.

International gambling experts say parents and teachers need to be more vigilant in protecting young people against the boom in free-to-play gambling apps and games on social media.

Recent research has shown parents and teachers are mostly unaware of the danger free gambling apps pose to young people.

Young people are among the highest risk group experiencing gambling related problems, with up to 85 per cent of adolescents gambling in some form during the past year, according to the research (ACER, 2011).

The 2012 Canadian research found teachers and parents view gambling as less serious than drug use and school violence despite a high rate of gambling among young people.

The study found almost half of teachers surveyed saw gambling as a good learning activity rather than a risk.

Meanwhile, the majority of parents reported having gambled at least once with their child in the past year, without discussing the need to be cautious about gambling.

Worth $60 million in Australia last year, free-to-play gambling games mean children can practice gambling but the industry is not regulated because winnings can’t be collected as cash.

Three free-to-play gambling apps, Slotomania, Slots Pharaohs Way and Poker by Zynga, are ranked in the top ten highest grossing apps sold on iTunes.

Tips for parents and teachers:

- Watch out for ads that click through to gambling apps from the other apps your children are using
- Turn off the App Store to limit apps accessed by choice or accident
- Turn off in-app purchases option so your child can’t access more credits, progress to a new level or access new game characters or traits in a gambling game
- Show interest in the child’s use of apps and play together

Gambling and Young People in Australia, Australian Centre for Educational Research 2011.
Casino games

Casino games, also called table games, can be played in a casino, other live venues or online. Casinos offer a number of gambling activities including card, dice and random number games played on a table and managed by a representative of the casino known as the dealer or croupier. Well known casino games include black jack, poker and roulette.

Casino games work by allowing customers to purchase chips and to bet these on the outcomes of a game (such as a round of poker) or an event (such as spinning a roulette wheel). While many of these games involve an element of skill, winning and losing is still largely determined by chance.

Many casinos offer a number of services and entertainment in addition to gambling. These include accommodation, bars and restaurants, function facilities, day spas, shows, shopping and sporting activities.

Some popular casino games are also played formally and informally outside of casinos. Examples include poker games played among friends or poker tournaments played in pubs and clubs.

In addition to venue-based casino games, gamblers can now participate in a rapidly growing online casino gaming industry. This unregulated industry offers players the opportunity to play online versions of common casino games against other online players.

What are the risks of casino games?

Casino games can be fun if you gamble responsibly. Some players however can lose large amounts of money very quickly by choosing tables with stakes higher than you can afford, by playing very quickly even on lower stakes games or playing too often or for too long.

Playing with friends can offer a level of protection if you are watching out for one another however being part of a group can also make people feel pressured to spend more money and play longer.

The glamorous surroundings are part of the appeal of casinos which can also entice you into spending more than you can afford to ‘live up’ to the occasion.

It can help to remember that the environment can be enjoyed no matter how much, or little, time and money you spend.

The house edge: why casinos win even when they lose

Almost every casino game has a built in profit for the house - this is the house edge or casino advantage. The house edge is legal, it is in essence a fee charged by the casino for providing the facilities.

The difference between the true odds (or the mathematical odds) and what a casino pays varies across games and is usually expressed as a percentage. The higher the percentage, the more the casino is keeping.

Remember the little ball has no memory and can’t remember where it last landed.
Responsible gambling strategies at the casino:

- Set a limit and don’t let peer pressure undermine it.
- Look for the odds and payouts on games you are playing so you are fully informed.
- Don’t chase losses, you can’t turn your luck around – the odds stay the same no matter how many times you play.
- Remember you are the novice - so don’t overestimate your abilities.

- Set the pace – take control of how quickly you play and don’t let yourself fall into patterns of betting quickly or losing track of your bets.
- Take breaks to clear your head before deciding whether to continue.
- When you take a break, leave the gambling area rather than just the immediate game so you can truly break free of the environment.

The house edge at Crown Casino – example roulette

1. The low bet tables have 38 numbers on a wheel – 00, 0 and 1 to 36.

2. Your chances of winning on any one number are 1 in 38.

3. If the payout was based purely on mathematical probability and you won, the return on a $1 bet would be $38 ($37 win and return $1 stake).

4. The casino however will take its house edge. For example, with the odds set at 1 in 36 a $1 bet wins $36. ($35 win and return $1 stake)

Crown Casino, Victoria’s only casino, has an exclusive license to operate until at least 2032.

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A teenager experimenting with gambling, like they do with other grown up and risky pursuits, is not unexpected.

Some will do it playing cards with friends or try to buy lotto tickets. Some might try to get around the legal barriers to try sports betting or betting on machines at venues.

Parents’ concerns might be about gambling becoming a problem for their children while they are underage or about how gambling now might affect their future.

With smart phones and the internet making it easier to gamble, new types of gambling like micro-betting becoming common and the explosion of betting advertising, the world of gambling is changing rapidly.

Keeping up with all this is a major challenge but this guide is here to help.

**Young people and risk**

Experts say parents are right to be concerned when children gamble. Not because it means they will develop major problems but because children are more vulnerable.

Children have less impulse control or capacity to understand the risks. They are more prone to be overly optimistic about their chances of winning and often believe they can predict winners in football or racing, or even the pokies, when they cannot.

Young people have less capacity to judge and resist advertising. Today’s teenagers have grown up with gambling being marketed as entertainment with very little attention given to informing them about the risks or providing responsible gambling messages.

Some experts believe teenagers are four times more likely to have a problem with gambling than adults. Conservatively that means 3-4 per cent of all teenagers have problems with gambling or one in every high school class of 25 students.

While most children won’t have access to enough money to cause serious financial hardship, bad habits developed as teenagers can spill over into young adult life. With gambling this can have serious consequences on tertiary study, developing careers, relationships and even mental health.

**Facts about young people and gambling**

- One in five adults with gambling problems started before they were 18
- Boys are more likely to gamble, place bigger bets and develop problems than girls
- Parents’ behaviour and values do affect how children feel about gambling but family structure and income do not

**Why do young people gamble?**

Young people gamble for the same reason they try other risky things like using drugs and alcohol. They think it’s fun, exciting and ‘the thing to do with your mates’. They may also wrongly believe it’s an easy way to make money.

Like with drugs and alcohol, some young people use gambling as a way to escape the pressure of studying or just coping with life. Some young people simply don’t know how to cope with problems in their lives so they turn to gambling as an escape.
How young people learn about gambling

Parents
what they say and do

School
what you hear from others

Peer pressure

Media
advertising and portrayal of the 'cool' world of gambling

Culture
Melbourne Cup and sports tied up with gambling

What young people think about gambling

Recent research shows teenagers have their own take on gambling.

- Many teenagers don’t think about gambling. If they do, they might not know what gambling is or understand it can be a problem. Teenagers in general don’t tend to understand the risks or what they can lose.

- Teenagers are more likely to think about gambling as sports betting and major event gambling (like the Melbourne Cup) than traditional gambling products like pokies and lotteries.

- Teenagers talk about gambling as a way to win money while most adults see it as a social activity.

- Teenagers tend to be black and white in their thinking. Gambling is either cool or a complete waste of money, dangerous and for losers. Helping teenagers to take a moderate view or accept a responsible gambling message is difficult.

“Detecting emerging problems associated with gambling can be difficult. Unlike alcohol and drugs, there are usually few physical symptoms to indicate that the person might not be engaging in the behaviour in a responsible way.” A/Prof Paul Delfabbro 2013
Young people and new forms of gambling

The internet has changed our world in so many ways including how we gamble and particularly for teenagers, how they learn about gambling.

Today, you can 'virtually' gamble online or gamble for real at a ‘virtual’ casino on the other side of the world.

Social media like Facebook and Twitter are bringing virtual as well as real gambling, and advertising about gambling, to teenagers in their daily newsfeed.

**What parents need to know about the internet and gambling:**

- When your teenager’s friend posts a message about a footy game on Facebook, the attached link might take them to a gambling site
- Online games sometimes contain elements involving gambling. Pretend gambling apps deliver pretend prizes but sometimes at a higher rate than a real gambling game. This may condition the young mind to think gambling returns are higher than they really are
- There have been media reports where very young children (five or six years old) have downloaded games on mum’s iPhone or iPad and spent thousands on ‘virtual’ game tokens
- If any of your child’s Facebook friends ‘likes’ a gaming site because they’re being offered a chance to win a prize, a link to that site and that game ends up on your teenager’s newsfeed. This is where gambling advertisers are using the old fashioned concept of word-of-mouth marketing on the new social media platform

**Gambling advertising and teenagers**

While legal Australian gambling providers have procedures to stop under 18s accessing their products, this doesn’t mean young people won’t try to gamble online.

One contributing factor may be gambling advertising which clearly targets young men in their early to mid 20s.

Many of the channels used to target this group also appeal to underage youth who look to the older group for cues on how to be ‘grown up’.

One of the messages they’re getting is that growing up involves gambling. Some researchers are concerned this is normalising gambling and may be, in essence, grooming young people to develop gambling problems in the future.

**Tackling potential problems with teenagers and gambling**

Spotting a problem with gambling early before it becomes a major issue can be important to full recovery but as always, good communication is the key. Here are some useful tips for parents to have a conversation with their teenager about gambling.

Be honest about the chances of winning – Help teenagers understand the risks of gambling and the high probability they will lose.

Follow the money trail – Make them aware that the gambling industry exists to make a profit, the odds are always in the house’s favour and the house wins – even when it loses.
Don’t wait for lady luck – Whether it’s the pokies, table games or lotteries, when it comes to games of pure chance, the odds are mathematically certain that the house will win. No matter how long you play, the odds aren’t getting any better and chasing losses is a trap that will make you poorer quickly.

Studying the form guide is not a guarantee of success – You could use the example of an Olympic athlete to highlight this point, e.g. while Olympic athletes all train hard, only a few win a gold medal. Chance is always a factor in any sporting contest.

Looking after your mates – Being a teenager sometimes means you’re closer to your mates than your parents. This puts your teenager in a position to be a positive influence and important safety net within their group. Encourage your teenager to use their knowledge of the risks of gambling to watch out for their mates.

Set rules and expectations – Pushing the boundaries is part of being a teenager but there can be serious consequences when it comes to underage gambling. Establish rules and expectations by discussing the facts about gambling with your teenager.

Talk about the tricks of internet gambling – Privacy is important to teenagers but can be dangerous when it comes to internet gambling. Talk about what they would do if a link to a gambling site pops up on their Facebook feed.

Set an example – Teenagers are very alert to the example they see from parents and other adults in their lives.

If you are worried about your child and gambling there is help available. For free, confidential and professional advice and support, call Gambler’s Help on 1800 858 858 or go online to gamblinghelponline.org.au

Despite their seemingly relentless pursuit for independence, they will pay close attention to how adults behave and will be critical if your actions and words don’t match.

If you are concerned about whether your teenager or a mate might be in over their head, some of the symptoms to look out for include:

1. lying or being secretive about gambling activities
2. placing larger or more frequent bets
3. spending lots of time talking or thinking about gambling
4. missing school or grades falling due to time being spent gambling
5. borrowing or taking money from family and friends
6. missing personal belongings and can’t cover their usual expenses
7. experiencing mood swings, feeling stressed when not gambling
8. continuing to gamble to win back money they have lost
9. showing signs of depression including isolation from peers
For more information

Gambling Information Resource Office
The Gambling Information Resource Office (GIRO) within the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation provides information to the public about responsible gambling and its regulation in Victoria. To subscribe for GIRO updates call 1300 260 019 or go to responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/giro

Key resources

Problem gambling from a public health perspective: A study of gambling in Victoria, September 2009
Productivity Commission Inquiry Report: Gambling, February 2010
Gambling and Young People in Australia, Australian Centre for Educational Research 2011

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For copies of this publication or to provide feedback, please email: communication@responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au
Information and assistance

If you or someone you care about has an issue with gambling, have a question or are looking for further information, there is confidential, professional, free advice and support available at:

* Gambler’s Help 1800 858 858 or
* Gambler’s Help Youthline 1800 262 376 or
* gamblinghelponline.org.au

The Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation is an independent statutory authority set up to help people who are affected by problem gambling and to foster responsible gambling. To find out more go to www.responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au or email contact@responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au
Don’t leave home without it.