

## Gambling

Gambling is any activity where money – or anything else of value – is put at risk on an event of uncertain outcome that relies, in part or entirely, on chance. Just over 77 per cent of the Victorian adult population gamble every week, mostly for fun and entertainment. The most popular form of gambling is lottery games.

### Different types of gambling

Different types of gambling include:

- **Gaming** – where the outcome is decided largely by chance. Examples include lotteries, pokies, bingo, scratchies, casino and card games.
- **Betting or wagering** – on the outcome of a future event. Examples include horse racing, sports betting, Internet betting and TAB betting.
- **Speculation** – such as gambling on the stock market.

### The odds of winning on the pokies are low

Most people gamble because they think they will win money but the odds of winning are low. For example, electronic gaming machines ('pokies') are randomly programmed so it may take hundreds of thousands of individual games before the machine pays out.

According to some research, to have a 50 per cent chance of winning on some gaming machines, a person would have to press the button 6.7 million times, which would take close to 400 days of around-the-clock continuous play. In ordinary playing time, this equals around 190 years.

For a \$2,000 prize, a person would have to feed around \$330,000 into the machine.

### Other forms of gambling also have low odds

According to a national inquiry into gaming, the odds of winning at other popular forms of gambling are equally low. Examples of some of the odds include:

- **Saturday Tattslotto major prize** – approximately one in 2 million
- **Powerball** – approximately one in 27 million
- **The Pools** – approximately one in 1.4 million
- **Tatts Keno** – approximately one in 9 million.

### Gambling in Victoria

Victoria's adult population is spending more on gambling. This has been the trend since the 1990s when gaming machines were introduced. Each adult is losing (on average) \$1,134 per year compared to \$590 in 1993–4. This is the third highest expenditure of all Australian states and territories.

Just over half of this spending is on gaming machines. The proportion of Victoria's total takings from gambling can be broken down approximately as follows:

- **Gaming machines** – 54 per cent
- **Casino** – 23 per cent
- **Racing** – 13 per cent
- **Lottery products** – 9 per cent
- **Sports betting** – 0.9 per cent
- **Other** (including Keno, interactive and minor gaming) – 0.2 per cent.

### Problem gambling in Victoria

'Problem gambling' is when gambling causes harm to the individual player or their family. This harm may also extend into the community. It is estimated that Victorians account for one-third of Australia's problem gamblers – approximately 1.12 per cent of the Victorian adult population has serious problems with their gambling.

When gambling is out of control, a person who is experiencing difficulties may feel compelled to gamble, even when it causes them distress. The impact of gambling can have a significant effect on a problem gambler's life. These effects include:

- Spending little time with family and friends
- Difficulties at work
- Relationship breakdowns (both marital and personal)
- Turning to crime to support gambling habits
- Major financial difficulties (including bankruptcy)
- Significant mental health problems (over 50 per cent of problem gamblers suffer from depression)
- Suicidal tendencies
- High alcohol and drug consumption.

### **Services available**

There are various organisations that can offer support, assistance and counselling for people who have problems with gambling. Depending on the service, the aim is either to control the gambling or abstain altogether. Some organisations also offer support to affected family and friends.

### **Where to get help**

- Gambler's Help Tel. 1800 858 858, TTY 1800 777 706 – 24-hour telephone counselling service
- Gambling Help Online - for problem gambling counselling and support (Australia-wide), 24 hours, seven days
- Gamblers Anonymous Tel. (03) 9696 6108
- Gam-Anon Tel. (03) 9898 7526 (volunteers only)
- Crown Responsible Gaming Support Centre Tel. 1800 801 098
- Australian Hotels Association – (AHA) Self Exclusion Program Tel. (03) 9654 7100 Mon to Fri (business hours)
- Lifeline Tel. 131 114
- Suicide Helpline Victoria Tel. 1300 651 251
- Financial and Consumer Rights Council Tel. 1800 134 139 or Tel. (03) 9663 2000
- Kids Help Line Tel. 1800 551 800
- Your doctor or other health professionals

### **Things to remember**

- Gambling is any activity where money (or anything of value) is put at risk on an event of uncertain outcome that relies, in part or entirely, on chance.
- Approximately 1.12 per cent of the Victorian adult population has serious problems with their gambling.
- There are various organisations that can offer support, assistance and counselling for people who have problems with gambling.

**This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:**

Department of Justice - Problem Gambling Strategy

**Copyright** © 1999/2009 State of Victoria. Reproduced from the Better Health Channel ([www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)) at no cost with permission of the Victorian Minister for Health. Unauthorised reproduction and other uses comprised in the copyright are prohibited without permission.

- This Better Health Channel fact sheet has passed through a rigorous approval process. For the latest updates and more information visit [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au).