

6 Club Patrons

This section presents findings from the telephone interviews with a sample of 45 patrons who gamble on EGMs in ACT clubs. The patrons were recruited on-site from a sample of eight ACT clubs as outlined previously in the Methodology (Section 4). Forty-five interviews were completed from a sample frame of 51 club patrons contacted; this represents a response rate of 88%. Interviews were conducted in June 2004.

The interviews explored the effects on patrons of the three harm minimisation measures that are the subject of this Policy Review (see Appendix G). The recruitment methodology did not differentiate between recreational and problem gamblers. Rather, during the interview club patrons were asked to self-identify if they had experienced a gambling problem.

Research examined the reported gambling behaviour of recreational gamblers interviewed; their perspectives on the effects of the 3-hour shutdown, the \$10 maximum bet and the cash payment restrictions; their responses to these measures; and finally their views on the efficacy of the three measures.

6.1 Problem gambling

All 45 club patrons interviewed were asked if their gambling has ever been a problem (QF1). This question was used to enable a comparison with the ACNielsen/ACGR study in NSW and to explore if the problem may have been impacted by introduction of the three harm minimisation measures.¹⁷² It should also be noted that a problem gambling prevalence screen was not utilised; hence the responses are not comparable with other Australian problem gambling surveys, including the 2001 ACT study.¹⁷³ Moreover, base sizes are too small to allow for any sub-group analysis.

- Over one quarter of patrons interviewed (27%) said that they have personally experienced a gambling problem at some time. This is broadly comparable to the findings of the similar ACNielsen/ACGR study which found 20% of NSW recreational gamblers have had a gambling problem.
- Several patrons indicated that the gambling problem was in their past whilst others considered they had a gambling problem at the time of interview.

Of course, certainly. But I've always had the bills paid.

Yes, I wasn't very happy with myself at one stage.

Absolutely. But I don't have a problem now.

Yes, occasionally.

Yes. When I get bored I take \$10 and go and relax; I have a rest and sit down and play.

Sometimes, yes. It's just a problem with spending money.

My fiancé has asked me where the money has gone and I told her. I have to stop as she is expecting a baby and I'm going to be a father. She's going to help me get past it. If I go with someone else I won't lose so much. I can go to the club with a mate and play pool and not even play them [EGMs].

¹⁷² ACNielsen and ACGR 2003, op cit.

¹⁷³ McMillen, J. et al., 2001a, op. cit.

The remaining 33 interviewees (73%) stated that gambling had never been a problem for them.¹⁷⁴

6.2 Patrons' EGM gambling patterns

As expected, given that recreational gamblers were recruited on-site at ACT clubs, playing EGMs was the form of gambling that they do most often. All club patrons interviewed were asked how often they gamble on poker machines (Table 16).

- 60% of the 45 interviewees (27 patrons) reported that they play EGMs at least weekly.
- 49% (22 patrons) reported they usually play 2-3 times a week, while five club patrons reported playing more frequently.
Daily. But I might also watch my boyfriend play.
- More than a third of patrons (36% - 16 patrons) play EGMs once or twice a month.
I play once or twice a month when my partner plays cards there. I might spend \$5 or \$10.
I might throw in \$5 once a month.
- Only two patrons said they gamble on EGMs less than monthly.

Table 16: Frequency of play of EGM players

Frequency	(n)	%
Daily	3	7
4-6 times a week	2	4
1-3 times a week	22	49
1-2 times a month	16	36
Every couple of months	1	2
Less often than every couple of months	1	2
Total	45	100

Source: Interviews with club patrons who gamble on EGMs (N=45).

QA1. How often would you usually play poker machines? See Appendix G.

Times of play

Club patrons were read a list of time periods and asked which times they now usually play poker machines (Appendix E – QA2). Multiple responses were possible.

- The most popular hours for gambling on EGMs were between 6pm and midnight. A large majority of the patrons interviewed report they usually gamble between 6pm and 9pm (55%) and between 9pm and midnight (22%).
- The morning was also popular, with twelve people (27%) nominating 8am to midday. This time was popular with patrons who also play bingo:
I go to bingo and if I win I might have a bit of a flutter on the pokies.
I go to bingo and housie and I might play them then.
- Hours either side of the 3-hour shutdown were the least popular. Only five of the 45 patrons reported they usually play EGMs in the hours leading up to the shutdown (e.g. midnight to 4am). Four patrons usually gamble between 8am and 10am, the hours following the shutdown period.

¹⁷⁴ It is not known if any of these patrons may have a gambling problem but did not self-identify.

- There is no significant difference between the hours for gambling reported by patrons who said they have had a gambling problem and other recreational gamblers interviewed.

6.3 Effects of the 3-hour shutdown: club patrons

The gambling practices of a small minority of recreational gamblers were affected by the 3-hour shutdown. The shutdown had prevented three of the 45 patrons interviewed for this study from gambling when they wanted to. One of these patrons now spends less time playing the poker machines since the shutdown was introduced, and one patron reported spending more time and money gambling on EGMs than before, mainly before the shutdown hours. One patron also reported spending a lot more money gambling since the shutdown.

To identify the sub-sample of recreational gamblers who used to gamble during the current shutdown hours all patrons were asked '*before the shutdown, did you ever play poker machines between the hours of 4am to 7am, or 5am to 8am?*'

- Of the 45 recreational gamblers interviewed nine (20%) had previously played EGMs during the current shutdown hours.
- Of that group, three patrons said they sometimes played during these hours and that the shutdown had prevented them from playing poker machines when they wanted to;
- Six of the nine patrons said they rarely played during these hours and that the shutdown had not prevented them from playing poker machines when they wanted to.
No, I only played them because they were there.
- No patrons said they often played poker machines during these hours.

Reason for playing during the shutdown hours

Those nine patrons were then asked why they had played EGMs during those hours, i.e. to identify the appeal of gambling during those hours.

- Five said they were shift workers, or finished work near those times.
- Four said they remained in the club at the end of a night out.
It was after a late session of bingo and I stayed longer than I meant to.
It was something to do when everyone else had gone home.
Only once, at the end of a night out when I was on a winning streak.

Changes in response to the shutdown

The nine patrons who had previously gambled during the shutdown hours were asked whether they had changed the time they play poker machines as a result of the shutdown (QB4).

- Seven of the nine patrons said they had not changed the time they usually gamble on poker machines since the shutdown.
No change. I still find a way to play them.
- Only two patrons said they had changed the time they usually spend gambling on EGMs. One now spends less time playing the poker machines and the other spends more time gambling than before, mainly before the shutdown hours.
- Five club patrons said that since the introduction of the shutdown measure they have been playing the poker machines just before shutdown time (QB7).

Four of these five patrons stated they went home when the club shut down, while one reported going on to another club that closed at a later time (QB8).

- These five club patrons were asked whether they now spend more money or less money on the machines than they did before the shutdown (QB9). Three of the five thought they hadn't changed the amount spent; one now spent a little less money; one reported spending a lot more.

No change. You still lose whether it's at 9pm or at 4am.

It depends. If I know the club is going to shut down I play higher and I may lose twice as much. It just speeds me up. When it [the club] closes it's a bad thing if you're down a bit and you want to chase the money and you get cranky and you want to chase a bit. But they might be doing you a favour if you're up. You just go back next day.

6.4 Effects of the maximum bet - club patrons

All 45 club patrons interviewed were asked a series of questions pertaining to the \$10 maximum bet (Section C, Appendix E). This measure has not affected any of the club patrons interviewed. Only five (11% of the sample) report they have ever bet up to \$10, and none said their gambling was affected by the maximum bet restriction.

Amount of usual bet

- Thirty eight (84.5%) of the 45 recreational gamblers interviewed usually bet \$1 or less at a time (i.e. on each play) (QC1). Of these 38 patrons, 31 (69%) bet 50c or less.

It depends. If I'm with someone else I bet 40c to \$1. If I'm by myself then \$2 to \$5.

Two hundred credits - \$2.

I bet the minimum – 25c. That's 1c for 25 lines.

40c to 50c depending on which machine I am playing. Occasionally \$1.

20c but now and again we punt up to \$1 if we look like getting there.

Between 20c and a dollar.

2 credits per line, 40c.

Between 2c and 40c. Usually 20c, the minimum. We have a set limit and we stick to it.

We limit our bets to 25c. We only bet small, just 25c a bet.

Usually 40c, but if I'm winning I might bet 60c. Rarely, say once a month, I bet \$1.

Between 25c and 50c.

- Seven patrons (15.5%) reported usually betting between \$1 and \$3. None said they usually bet more than \$3.

Usually \$1, sometimes \$2.

- Five (11%) of the 45 club patrons interviewed sometimes have bet the \$10 maximum.

Only one time when I had had too much to drink. But only once.

Sometimes. There is a machine at [name] club. There's a 2-center. I got to \$500 then lost \$300 in 10 minutes by betting \$10 a hit. But rarely would I do \$10 a hit, just sometimes \$5. I've seen other people playing \$10. There was a lady at [name] club who lost \$500 bucks in 45 minutes. When she

stopped I played her machine – but smaller credits. I got a couple of features and won a few hundred dollars.

Just a few times, but it just goes too quick.

Sometimes. It depends on how good it's doing. I prefer not to play them myself.

Depends. I'd bet \$10 if I won a few thousand dollars. When you only have a certain amount then you're more responsible. People don't realise that the 85% return is over a year, not in one sitting. I saw a lady at [name] club, she lost \$600 and she wanted her money back.

- The remaining 40 recreational gamblers never bet the \$10 maximum bet.
I haven't played one where it was \$10, but I have played the maximum on that machine of \$7.50 – I think it's 25 lines by 50c or 25c a line or something.
Never. But the machines here only go to \$5 anyway.
Never. \$10 is the maximum I spend all night.
- None of the 45 interviewed patrons had altered the amount of money or time they spent on poker machines as a result of the \$10 restriction (QC3, QC4).

6.5 Effects of cash payment restrictions – club patrons

All 45 club patrons were asked a series of questions regarding the cash payment restrictions, including whether they had won over \$1,000 on EGMs in the past 12-18 months and how they managed their winnings. The majority (82%, 37 patrons) reported they had not had a win that took their EGM credits over \$1,000 in the last 12-18 months. However, for those patrons who have had EGM wins over \$1,000, this measure appears to have had a greater affect on gambling behaviour than the other two measures under review.

- Eight (18%) of the 45 club patrons said they had had a win that took their credits over \$1,000 (QD2). Of these eight, five had won above \$1,000 more than once.
Yes, four times.
Yes, once. Mum and I won the linked trains, \$7,500.
- When asked what they usually did with credits above \$1,000, three of those eight patrons reported that they gambled the credits down below \$1,000 to avoid a cheque.
The first time I put \$2,000 by BSB into my account. I was offered a cheque or direct payment. The second time I won \$1,200 I gambled it down to \$900 and took it out. [Avoiding a cheque] wasn't the main reason, but one of the reasons.
I won \$1,080 one time and I got it down to \$950 and took it out. Another time I lost a heap trying to win more. You know how the cycle grabs you. Now I pull it out at about \$750.
Once I was up \$3,300 on a machine. The extra \$300 I gambled off and collected \$3,000. Other times I've ended up losing. I was in the club 14 hours once and lost \$1,400 of our own money. That's a disgusting amount of money. Now if I'm up \$1,100 I take it out and try another machine.
- Five (11%) of the 45 respondents interviewed said they had cashed out before \$1,000 to avoid having to get part of their winnings as a cheque (QD1).

Precisely for that reason. I want the money in my pocket. I don't want to be waiting for seven days.

I think I've lost money because of the \$1,000 thing. I should have cashed out above \$1,000 and not gambled it down.

- One patron collected \$1,000 in cash and the rest as a cheque. Two patrons said they collected less than \$1,000 in cash and the rest as a cheque.

You still have \$1,000 bucks in your wallet and you blow that because you know you're getting a cheque the next day.

I've won three times. I collect a few hundred in cash and get the rest as a cheque. I pick the cheques up the next day or the day after. You have to go to the main club to get the cheque.

Changes in response to the cash payment restrictions

None of the 45 patrons interviewed had changed the place or places where they gambled because of the way the club deals with the payment of winnings. However, a small number of patrons (four) complained about the measure

They're all the same – it's just luck whether you win.

What I can't understand is you might win \$500 here and \$600 there. Why can't you get \$1,100 [in cash]?

I think consumers should have a choice. Clubs will either get it back that day or get it back anyway.

6.6 Club patrons' support for the three measures

All 45 club patrons interviewed were asked whether they support or oppose each of the three harm minimisation measures (Table 17). The level of patron support for all three measures was significantly higher than that indicated by ACT club managers.

- The measure with the highest level of support was the **\$10 maximum bet** with overall support from 87% of club patrons interviewed, with 40% expressing strong support.
- **Cash payment restrictions** also received support from a large majority of club patrons (85%); sixteen patrons (36%) said they 'strongly support' the measure and 22 (49%) stated they 'support' it.
- The **3-hour shutdown** had a slightly lower level of majority support from recreational gamblers (78%); 26 patrons (58%) said they 'strongly supported' it and nine (20%) said they 'supported' it.

Table 17. Patrons' level of support for all three measures.

Measure	Strongly support		Support		Neither/nor		Oppose		Strongly oppose		Don't know	
	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%
3-hour shutdown	26	58	9	20	5	11	1	2	4	9	0	0
\$10 maximum bet	18	40	21	47	2	4	2	4	2	4	0	0
Cash payment restrictions	16	36	22	49	1	2	3	7	3	7	0	0

Source: Interviews with club patrons who gamble on EGMs (N=45) See Appendix G.

QE1. Overall, do you support or oppose the [measure]. Is that strongly [] or just []?

Recreational gamblers interviewed were also invited to make additional comments on each of the three measures.

Club patrons' support for the 3-hour shutdown

While the concept of a shutdown of EGMs is perceived as a positive measure by the majority of patrons, many supporters suggested the shutdown should be for a longer period. A small number of patrons indicated they opposed the shutdown because the current hours were timed to occur when few people would be in the clubs and thus it was unlikely to be effective as a harm minimisation measure.

- There's no need for it to be open 24 hours. It makes people go home.*
- People shouldn't be allowed to gamble for 24 hours. They need a spell.*
- Any restriction on poker machines is a good one.*
- I support even more hours of shutdown. For some people they drink too much and they gamble too much.*
- It'd be good if clubs closed from 12am to 8am. It'd be easier for everyone.*
- People need to get out after a while. It's a good thing. They should close for longer.*
- For an idiot like me it should be longer. I'm serious when I say I wouldn't mind if they shut at midnight even though I'm there at 4am.*
- I oppose it because the time [of the shutdown] isn't effective. They should shut the machines from 12midnight to 3am when everyone is in their prime.*
- Strongly oppose. The bar should stay open and so should the machines.*

Club patrons' support for the \$10 maximum bet

The following comments by recreational gamblers reflect the strong majority support for the maximum bet. However a large number of patrons also suggest that the \$10 limit is too high. Both supporters and opponents of the measure expressed the view that the limit should be lower to have a positive effect on problem gambling. Many spontaneously suggested a different amount for betting limits.

- It can't harm and some people don't know how to control themselves.*
- Most definitely. But \$10 is ridiculously high. It should be a maximum of a couple of dollars.*
- Should be even less. It's meant to be for entertainment. \$10 is very big money.*
- Strongly support; it should be reduced. People can lose a hell of a lot in a little time.*
- I oppose it. It shouldn't be that high. It should be a lesser amount...\$2.*
- I'm opposed to it. \$10 is a bit ridiculous. \$5 is pretty bad; \$4 is more reasonable.*

Club patrons' support for the cash payment restrictions

The large majority of club patrons interviewed saw the cash payment restrictions as a positive initiative in preventing gamblers from spending their large winnings. A perceived positive benefit was that payment by cheque would encourage people to use the money for household needs. A small number argued that the amount paid in cash should be reduced.

If they get a big lump sum of cash it can just disappear whereas if they get a little time to think about it...

I strongly support it. People don't know when to stop. If they get a cheque they have to put it in the bank.

They get it too easy; they smoke and drink and then have to do without. They should be more responsible.

Strongly support. If you give them all that money they'll just put it all back in again... At least they might have a chance of going home with something.

I only got it once in my life. I didn't like it at the time but I can see now it's a good idea.

It should be stronger; it should be \$600 or \$700. I see a lot of gambling where I work. I've felt it and I know how it can get out of control. I did myself for a couple of weeks.

I support it for security reasons because you might get knocked on the head with that much cash. I've heard the club suggest you pick up the cash the next day for security.

It doesn't faze me but it should be less in cash.

I strongly support it ... but [the cash amount] should be reduced.

A minority view was that the measure would impact negatively on visitors to Canberra, while having little benefit for the community because people would find a way to bypass the restriction.

It depends on the situation. Tourists shouldn't have to wait. A bad gambler shouldn't mind. But if I haven't got enough money [to keep gambling] I just borrow it.

Neither support nor oppose. There are ways around it. Some clubs pay a win of \$3,000 in \$1,000 docketts, three of them.

Opponents of the measure were mainly of the view that a mandatory restriction interferes with people's rights. A small number complained about the delay and inconvenience of having to collect a cheque from the club.

I think you should be able to get your money back.

I oppose it. It's pointless if it's just \$50 or \$100 over. It should be left to the initiative of the person paying out to choose [whether to pay all out in cheque or not]. If it's \$1,700 then that's different.

It's a nonsense. It doesn't make any sense, the length of time it takes to get your money. You should be able to make an immediate claim. It's hard to get back to pick up a cheque during working hours. If it was a very big amount, say \$2,000 or \$3,000 then you should get a choice, for safety reasons you should be able to ask the club it hold it for you in cash. It shouldn't be a mandatory restriction on the amount.

6.7 Efficacy of the three measures – club patrons

Recreational gamblers interviewed for the study were asked to rate the efficacy of the three measures in reducing the harm caused by gaming machines for problem and 'at risk gamblers (QE2). In contrast to the club managers, a majority of patrons believe that all three measures were effective for reducing gambling-related harm (Table 18).

- The **restriction on cash payment of winnings** received the highest rating for efficacy (66% of recreational gamblers compared to 44% of ACT club managers). Ten patrons (22%) rated it as 'very effective' and 20 patrons (44%) rated it as 'quite effective'.
- The **\$10 maximum bet** was also rated as 'quite effective' by 20 patrons interviewed (44%) and 'very effective' by seven patrons (16%). In all, 60% of club patrons thought this was an effective harm minimisation measure compared to 38% of club managers.
- The **3-hour shutdown** was rated as effective by 40% of club patrons, with four patrons (9%) rating it as 'very effective' and 14 patrons (31%) rating it as 'quite effective'. A large proportion of patrons (33%) felt this measure was ineffective and 27% did not know. Even so, more patrons considered the shutdown to be an effective measure than did ACT club managers (12%).

Table 18. Club patrons' views on the efficacy of the three measures

Measure	Very effective		Quite effective		Neither/nor		Ineffective		Very ineffective		Don't know	
	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%
3-hour shutdown	4	9	14	31	0	0	9	20	6	13	12	27
\$10 maximum bet	7	16	20	44	0	0	4	9	4	9	10	22
Cash payment restrictions	10	22	20	44	1	2	7	16	1	2	6	13

Source: Interviews with club patrons who gamble on EGMs (N=45). See Appendix G.

QE2. Based on your experience, how effective or ineffective do you think the [measure] has been in reducing the harm caused by poker machines for problem and 'at risk' gamblers?

Efficacy of the 3-hour shutdown

A minority of recreational gamblers (40%) believe the shutdown is effective and identified some positive aspects of the policy.

I've seen a number of people I know from the bingo circuit sitting there until they are thrown out virtually. They'd sit there longer if they were not put out.

I haven't been privy to people playing at that time but it would have to be effective wouldn't it?

It's effective if people can't chase their money... It stops people from going and going and going.

They've got to have a break sometime, so I say 'effective'.

Quite effective, but it just makes people go harder before they go home.

The following comments by patrons expressed majority doubts that the 3-hour shutdown was effective overall. A common view was that the shutdown would not have a significant impact on problem gambling because the shutdown period does not target the hours when the clubs are busy, and few people are in the venue in the hours immediately before the shutdown. Several felt that the shutdown would only impact on shift workers and club staff. Others believe that gamblers affected by the shutdown will just go back into the club the next day.

I don't see what good it will be doing. They'll stop for three hours then go straight back down the next day.

Absolutely no effect. It's very ineffective because of the time of day.

It doesn't stop them from gambling because by that time they've spent all of their money.

It only affects shift workers. It's not going to apply to normal mums and dads with problems.

If they're trying to target big gamblers...by the time we've had dessert that's when they [poker machines] are busiest - between 9pm and 1am. Not at 4am. That only affects shift workers.

The shutdown should start earlier and end later. Who on earth would play at that time [e.g. 4-7am]?

Shut down the machines from 10 or 11pm through to 4 pm the next day.

Due to the closure of the poker machines my whole club closes down. The main effect has been on staff.

Efficacy of the \$10 maximum bet

The following comments from recreational gamblers indicate that support for the maximum bet is qualified by reservations about the \$10 limit. Many club patrons interviewed said that \$10 is too high, suggesting that a lower limit would be more effective.

It's a step in the right direction. I don't know anyone who bets that high but I suppose it stops people going overboard.

I've only ever seen a few people of ethnic persuasion betting that much.

Let's face it, it's not really effective. You can lose a vast amount of money at \$10.

It's much too high. They should bring the limit down.

I know a guy with a good job who plays \$5 a time. He has a major problem. He has a good job but he'll do all his dough and ask me for a loan so he has some money to take home to the Mrs. Bring the maximum bet back to no more than \$2. Even then people will have problems.

I'm not sure what good it would do. Even if it was less they would just gamble longer and at the end of the night they end up spending the same anyway.

Efficacy of cash payment restrictions

Comments by recreational gamblers indicate that many consider the cash payment restrictions could have a positive impact on reducing gambling related harm. However, several patrons had reservations about the \$1,000 limit which was seen to be too high; patrons of their own accord suggested a smaller cash payment would be more effective with problem gamblers.

I think the \$1,000 cut off is a good thing. I suppose it stops people from putting it all back through. At least they can't spend it all again.

I've known people who've got cheques, just regular Joes and they're quite happy. Usually they take it all in a cheque.

As long as they keep it [the cash payment restrictions] over \$1,000. I wouldn't want it lower than that.

It's quite effective, even if it was \$500 instead of \$1,000. If you win you wouldn't put it all back in but only put some back in. But it should be less in cash; they should make it \$500.

While club patrons perceived this to be the most effective of the three harm minimisation measures, a significant number felt that problem gamblers would find ways around the restriction.

I can't really find a reason why that one would be effective. I've seen people win and put it all back through again.

There's no law stopping you pulling out \$1,000 of each machine. They should limit it to \$1,000 per person or one big win a night.

The limit should be lower. And there's nothing to prevent people moving to the next machine.

6.7.1 Additional comments – club patrons

At the conclusion of the interviews club patrons were asked whether they had any further comments on the three harm minimisation measures under review; 28 of the 45 patrons recruited on-site (62%) provided additional comments. Comments which were specific to the three measures have been included above.

Almost without exception, other more general comments by recreational gamblers were critical of government policies and of gaming machines in clubs, including the following:

They're totally ludicrous restrictions. They're all token measures that don't do anything but waste government money pretending to do something and not doing anything at all.

I can't stress enough how hypocritical the government is being by introducing the measures. People that could be helped aren't affected. If they were really fair dinkum they should change the measures so it affects more people, not just people at the very end of the continuum.

I believe those money machines should be taken out of the clubs. I've seen too many people ringing up the bank waiting for their pension to go in so they can take it out and spend it at housie.

I think the clubs should be strongly audited on the percentage they pay out through pokies. I don't believe in the system they have. People should know how it works. It should be visible, so you know you're being treated fairly. You should see on a machine how much I've put in and how much the drop has been.

I don't believe in jackpots with one person winning everything and others getting nothing. It should be more even, the drops.

There should be more entertainment at clubs, more to do. [Name] club is too pokie-oriented; they don't give enough back to their members. They have a badge draw and it's across all their clubs and people wait around for three or four hours for it when they have kids they should be home feeding.

... I love the ad on TV at the moment by ClubCare. It tickles me pink, the ad – about how clubs are helping kids to play sport. If the kids' parents hadn't put all their money in the pokies they could afford to buy them football boots.

6.8 Effect of the measures on problem gambling

This section presents the results from interviews with the twelve club patrons recruited for this study who self-identified as having had a gambling problem, as well as information from interviews with sixteen people (problem gamblers and family members) recruited for another study, as described in the Methodology section of this report (Section 4).¹⁷⁵ That second group of participants included nine self-identified problem gamblers and seven family members close to someone with a gambling problem.

The participants in both studies were asked a series of questions as to whether each of the three measures had any impact on their gambling or, in the case of family members, gambling by their relative who had a gambling problem. Specifically, they were asked if gambling was more or less of a problem because of the measure.

The large majority of self-identified problem gamblers said that none of the three measures had impacted positively on their gambling problems. Gamblers recruited from ACT clubs specifically for this study said there had been little if any change in their gambling as a result of the measures (Table 19). Only the 3-hour shutdown was reported as having had a beneficial effect, with two gamblers saying that their gambling was less of a problem as a result of the measure.

I've gambled less. It's good in many ways as you're not out any later than 5am.

They should do some research and find out when the machines are most used. Then they might close the poker machines from 11 or 12 at night.

Table 19. Perceived effect of the measures on problem gambling, self-identified problem gamblers.

Impact	3-hour shutdown (n)	\$10 maximum bet (n)	Cash payment restrictions (n)
More of a problem	0	1	0
Less of a problem	2	0	0
No change	8	9	10
Don't know/can't say	0	0	0
Not applicable(a)	2	2	2
Total	12	12	12

(a) Problem ended prior to [measure].

Source: Interviews with club patrons who self-identify as having a gambling problem (n=12)

QF2. Has the [measure] had any impact on your gambling? Is it more or less of a problem for you because of the [measure]? See Appendix G.

¹⁷⁵ Those sixteen respondents were recruited as part of a related research project being conducted through the Centre for Gambling Research: J. McMillen *et al.* 2004. *Help-seeking by Problem Gamblers, Friends and Families: A Focus on Gender and Cultural Groups*. ANU Centre for Gambling Research, July 2004.

Interviews conducted with the group of problem gamblers and family members for the Centre's previous 'Help-seeking' study resulted in a slightly different finding:¹⁷⁶

- The restriction on the cash payment of winnings was reported by that group as the most effective of the three measures under review;
- However that group also reported that the 3-hour shutdown has had a positive affect for some problem gamblers, especially shift workers, by providing a break in play; and
- The \$10 maximum bet was not seen by the second group as an effective strategy to minimise harm from gambling as the limit was higher than most gamblers would bet. This finding also confirmed the views of club patrons recruited for this study.

6.8.1 Effects of the 3-hour shutdown on problem gambling

The 3-hour shutdown reportedly has had a positive effect on some shift workers with a gambling problem. It also has provided a beneficial 'break in play' for a small number of self-identified problem gamblers, but it was not seen as a complete solution by any problem gambler interviewed.

The 3-hour shutdown certainly had an effect on me. I was a shift worker and often gambled all night. I sat in front of the pokies until all my money was gone.

The 3-hour shutdown would have had an effect on him as he was a shift worker and often gambled all night. He gambled until all the money was gone.

I would have kept gambling all night right through until all my money was gone but I had to leave when the club shut at 4am or whenever.

The three hour shutdown does influence my gambling but only a bit. Sometimes I'd change my betting to take account of the impending closure.

6.8.2 Effect of the maximum bet on problem gambling

The \$10 maximum bet was perceived as an ineffective harm minimisation measure by all problem gamblers interviewed. They all said they rarely gambled \$10 per bet. Yet they also reported that the size of their bets tended to increase when they were on a 'winning streak' and when they were losing. Family members and friends of problem gamblers were more supportive of the \$10 maximum bet than gamblers.

The higher the loss during a session the higher the bet became. I was chasing the losses and lost everything.

There is no such thing like harm-minimisation with the bet limits as they are. If you're in it you're in it.

For me [a much lower maximum bet] would have been an inhibiting factor playing poker machines whenever I was gambling compulsively. However, this would be hard to argue for given the range of income groups who gamble safely in the ACT.

They should make it \$2 maximum bet. In all the years I've been playing poker machines I've never seen anyone playing \$10. Even \$2 can destroy people.

One dollar bets would slow him down but certainly wouldn't stop him.

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.*, pp.124-163.

One club patron who self-identified as having a current gambling problem said that the problem was worse as a result of the \$10 maximum bet.

\$10 is too high. When I'm winning I bet high. I don't mind betting \$2. Even a \$5 limit is enough; you can drop a lot at \$5 a hit.

6.8.3 Effect of cash payment restrictions on problem gambling

The majority of patrons in this study who had a gambling problem (72%) reported that the payment of large winnings by cheque placed an effective restraint on the amount of money they gambled. Others said the measure was not effective overall.

The cheque option saved me. It was the only thing that's worked in the last few months in helping me to control my gambling.

When he's won \$1,000 he takes his winning as a cheque. This cheque is then banked into a bank account – not put back into the pokies. This has been an effective method for him of keeping some control over his money.

Cheques as payout would have stopped me for the moment, but I would have gambled it away in the next session.

Although the option of a cheque was seen as an effective harm reduction barrier for some, others found ways to bypass it. Several problem gamblers reported they 'cash out' or 'gamble down' if they want to avoid cheques and retain immediate access to winnings in cash. One self-identified problem gambler objected to the measure and argued the limit should be higher.

I collected a cheque sometimes and didn't gamble it away again. But other times I'd deliberately stay under the \$1,000 limit and would lose everything. However, I still think it's a good measure.

It's OK to a certain extent. The poker machines are calling you when you have money, so you'll spend it that day or another day. But the consumer should have a choice. If it's \$5,000 - that's different; that should be a cheque.

6.9 Summary of interviews with gamblers

This section summarises the effects of the three measures on recreational gamblers and club patrons with a self-identified gambling problem.

The 45 patrons recruited on-site at ACT clubs were regular gamblers whose most frequent form of gambling was EGMs.

- The majority (60%) reported that they play EGMs at least weekly, with almost half of that group (49%) usually gambling 2-3 times a week. 60% of the recreational gamblers interviewed reported that they play EGMs at least weekly. Five club patrons reported playing more frequently at 4-7 times a week.
- The most popular hours for gambling on EGMs were between 6pm and midnight (77% of patrons interviewed). Hours either side of the 3-hour shutdown were the least popular. Only five of the 45 club patrons reported they usually play EGMs in the hours leading up to the shutdown (e.g. midnight to 4am). Four patrons usually gamble between 8am-10am, the hours following the shutdown period.
- Over one quarter of club patrons interviewed (27%) said that they have personally experienced a gambling problem at some time.

Effects of the three measures: recreational gamblers

- The **3-hour shutdown** has had little effect on recreational gamblers interviewed for this study. Only nine (20%) of the 45 patrons interviewed had previously played EGMs during the current shutdown hours. Five were shift workers or finished work near those times; four said they remained in the club at the end of a night out.
- Only two patrons said they had changed either the time or the amount spent gambling on EGMs as a result of the shutdown. One of those patrons now spends less time playing the poker machines since the shutdown was introduced, and one patron reported spending more time and money gambling than before, mainly before the shutdown hours.
- However, the shutdown has prevented three of the 45 club patrons from gambling when they wanted to.
- The **\$10 maximum bet** has not changed the gambling behaviour of the club patrons interviewed. The large majority of EGM gamblers interviewed (84.5%) usually bet \$1 or less at a time; 69% normally bet 50c or less. None said they usually bet more than \$3.
- Only five (11% of the sample) report they have ever bet up to \$10, and none had altered the amount of money or time they spent on poker machines as a result of the \$10 restriction.
- The \$10 maximum bet was perceived as an ineffective harm minimisation measure by all problem gamblers interviewed. Although they rarely gambled \$10 per bet, they also reported that the size of their bets tended to increase when they were on a 'winning streak' and when they were losing.
- For those recreational gamblers who have had EGM wins over \$1,000, the **restriction on cash payment of winnings** appears to have had a greater affect on gambling behaviour than the other two measures under review.
- The majority of recreational gamblers interviewed (82%) reported they had not had a win that took their EGM credits over \$1,000 in the last 12-18 months. Eight patrons (18%) said they had had a win that took their credits over \$1,000.
- Three of those eight patrons reported that they gambled the credits down below \$1,000 to avoid having to get part of their winnings as a cheque; and five (11%) had cashed out before \$1,000 to avoid a cheque.
- None of the gamblers interviewed had changed the place where they gambled because of the way the club deals with the payment of winnings.

Assessment of the three measures: recreational gamblers

The level of support by EGM regular gamblers for all three measures was significantly higher than that indicated by ACT club managers.

- The **\$10 maximum bet** had the highest level of club patron support (87% of ACT recreational gamblers interviewed, with 40% expressing strong support).
- **Cash payment restrictions** also received support from a large majority of ACT club patrons (84%); sixteen patrons (36%) said they 'strongly support' the measure and 22 (49%) stated they 'support' it.
- The **3-hour shutdown** had a slightly lower level of majority support from club patrons (78%); eleven patrons (18%) said they 'strongly supported' it and eighteen (30%) said they 'supported' it.

In contrast to the negative view of most club managers, a majority of gamblers believe that all three measures were effective for reducing gambling-related harm.

- The **restriction on cash payment of winnings** received the highest rating for efficacy (66% of recreational gamblers compared to 44% of ACT club managers).
- The large majority of gamblers interviewed saw the cash payment restrictions as a positive initiative in preventing gamblers from spending their large winnings.
- However, a small number of patrons (four) commented that the amount paid in cash should be reduced.
- Critics of the measure complained about the delay and inconvenience of having to collect a cheque from the club. Others suggested it would impact negatively on visitors to Canberra and that a mandatory restriction interferes with people's rights.
- Recreational gamblers also expressed strong majority support for the **\$10 maximum bet**. The maximum bet was rated as an effective harm minimisation measure by 60% of recreational gamblers compared to 38% of club managers.
- However both supporters and opponents of the measure expressed the view that the \$10 limit is too high to have a positive effect on problem gambling.
- The **3-hour shutdown** was rated as effective by only a minority (40%) of recreational gamblers. A larger proportion of patrons (43%) felt this measure was ineffective; 27% did not know. Even so, more patrons considered the shutdown to be an effective measure than did ACT club managers (12%).
- Although the concept of a shutdown of EGMs is perceived as a positive measure by the majority of recreational gamblers interviewed, a large number were sceptical of the benefits of the measure because it is currently timed to occur when few people would be in the clubs and thus it is unlikely to be effective as a harm minimisation measure.
- Other more general comments by recreational gamblers were critical of government policies and of clubs' management of gaming machines.

Assessment of the three measures: problem gamblers and family members

The large majority of self-identified problem gamblers interviewed said that none of the three measures had impacted positively on their gambling problems. They reported there had been little if any beneficial change in their gambling as a result of the measures.

- Of the twelve self-identified problem gamblers recruited on-site, a majority (65%) said the shutdown had not affected their gambling; 75% said the maximum bet had not affected their gambling; and 83% said the restrictions on cash payment had not affected their gambling.
- Problem gamblers were less likely than recreational gamblers to perceive the maximum bet and the 3-hour shutdown as being effective.
- The **3-hour shutdown** was reported as having had a positive effect for a small number of gamblers who said their gambling was less of a problem as a result of the measure. By providing a break in play the 3-hour shutdown has been effective for those gamblers. However the hours of the shutdown mean that most problem gamblers are not affected.
- The **maximum bet** was not generally seen as an effective strategy to minimise harm from gambling as the \$10 limit was higher than most gamblers would bet. Problem gamblers reported the \$10 maximum bet allowed them to increase the

size of their bets when they were on a 'winning streak' and when they were losing. Family members and friends of problem gamblers were more supportive of the \$10 maximum bet than gamblers.

- The majority of problem gamblers (72%) reported that the **cash payment restrictions** placed an effective restraint on the amount of money they gambled. A large number, however, reported they frequently bypassed the restriction, e.g. by cashing out or gambling down below \$1,000 to avoid payment by cheque so they can continue gambling.
- Interviews with family members of problem gamblers also found that the **restriction on the cash payment of winnings** was seen by this group as the most effective of the three measures under review.

7 Impact on the ACT Community

This section of the report outlines findings relating to the impact of the three harm minimisation measures on the ACT community. It presents findings from consultation with ACT gambling and financial counsellors, the ACT Council of Social Services (ACTCOSS) and expert analysts regarding the three harm minimisation measures. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with a number of key organisations at their locations. Interviews with gambling counsellors and a representative of ACTCOSS also took place at Centre's ANU office and took approximately one hour. At least two members of the research team were present during those interviews.

Interviews were guided by semi-structured questions (Appendix H) that sought information and assessment of the affects of the measures on the clients of support agencies, as well as community impacts such as crime and street disturbances, employment and selected occupations that work shift work. During interviews all participants were invited to provide opinions and/or additional information in relation to the three harm minimisation measures. Interviewees were encouraged to discuss any issues they considered relevant to the research and were probed for their views of the efficacy of the three measures.

In addition a number of community organisations were contacted by letter, email and telephone to provide information on research questions identified during the literature review or the primary research. A thematic analysis of their qualitative responses are outlined below.

No community or counselling agency provided quantitative client data to assist the research.

7.1 Effect of the 3-hour shutdown

Community organisations and counsellors interviewed considered that the 3-hour shutdown was beneficial to a small number of problem and 'at risk' clients by forcing a 'break in play'. While they were unable to provide specific data, they believe this measure could have reduced the amount of gambling by those clients who might gamble at those hours.

Counsellors knew of women with child care responsibilities, shift workers and young males who used to gamble during the shutdown hours.

I had a young mother who'd get up in the night when her husband and baby were asleep and go to the club. She was dependent on her husband's income, not working. She gambled those hours as she had child care then.

Women will go [late at night] when they have child care, their partners are at home to mind children.

Shift workers and young males are more likely to gamble late into the morning. I've seen a couple of guys [gambling in the early morning]. Taxi drivers have to take a break and stand up for a while. They pop into the club for change. They're often parked there anyway.

Some clients have said they were embarrassed when they were made to go home [when the club closed].

We've had some clients [who have gambled through the night], not a whole lot. The occasional client.

If anyone is gambling at 4am then I'd say they have a problem. Some problem gamblers will virtually live at the club. So it's effective to that extent.

This is the only [measure] with any potential. The other two [maximum bet and restriction on cash payment of winning] tie a long distance last.

How effective is it? To a small number it's a big help.

- However few counsellors could recall any clients who had been affected by the shutdown.

I can't recall anyone who came [to counselling] because of shutdown. The vast majority of clients aren't gambling through to 4am or 5am.

No-one has mentioned they've gambled through the night. If they had a bit of a run at 10pm they might be there at 3am. I'm not a great fan of the shutdown, but now it's in I don't have a problem with it.

I haven't seen a lot of clients [who have been affected by the shutdown]. They tend to go out to the club for a while then go home.

- Counsellors reported instances where the 3-hour shutdown had helped club managers identify problem and 'at risk' gamblers who returned to the club when it reopened.

The start-up is a big help in terms of a venue identifying those people with problems.

There are some who are queuing to play when the gaming machines open.

One CEO asked to talk to those queuing – that's a sign of a problem.

People queuing at opening time are different to those who leave at 5am.

- However, all agencies interviewed were critical of the hours specified for the 3-hour shutdown, saying that the timing (e.g. 4am-7am) reduces its efficacy. Like many club patrons interviewed for this study, community agencies and counsellors generally felt the shutdown would be more effective if it was at more popular times for gambling. Others said most problem gamblers would have exhausted their cash by the time the shutdown commences.

The money's gone by 3am.

It doesn't impact hugely on most problem gamblers. Clients' gambling sessions usually last a few hours. They like to sit down, settle into it and enjoy it. They generally won't go to the club if they can't stay a while or only have \$20, although that's not true of everyone.

Gamblers play over a fortnight. Their access to cash includes Centrelink benefits, pay, savings and other sources. Some patrons access their account at midnight when the Centrelink benefit comes through and it's gone half an hour later. There's no point shutting the club at 4am for them.

- Expert analysts interviewed for the study also considered this measure to be poorly targeted, in that it would not impact on the majority of problem gamblers whilst impacting on recreational gamblers and non-gambling club patrons.

It doesn't stop the bulk of people with problems. It's an ill-targeted measure. And three hours is such a short period of time.

Problem gamblers are more likely to gamble between 11am-2pm (in their lunch hour or when the kids are at school) or between 11pm-2am when

everyone else has gone home. They're the ones who stay on to play for 'just a bit longer'.

- ACTCOSS saw greater potential for smart card technology to force a break in play rather than closing venues to do so. An expert analyst also suggested ways to improve and assess the efficacy of the measure.

If you had a smart card then the smart card could automatically shut the machine down. There could be a time limit on the playability of the card. If someone was playing the machine for a set period of time then the machine would automatically shut down.

Altering and extending the hours of the shutdown could be trialled in different communities – relying upon the community to know what's best for them. It's a community issue, after all.

7.2 Effect of the \$10 maximum bet

Gambling counsellors report that the maximum bet has some merit as a harm minimisation measure but not at the current level of \$10 which is too high to affect the vast majority of problem gamblers, allowing unacceptable rates of loss. The maximum bet limit had muted support mainly to reduce the 'rate of play'.

Is it [the maximum bet] a disincentive? I suspect not. Some people don't vary the amount they bet. For those that do, it's extremely helpful.

I haven't had anyone say 'I wish I could have bet more'. The main benefit? People believe in runs of luck. They adjust their play according to how they perceive the machine's about to pay out. They adjust their bets up or down on fallacious beliefs.

Problem gamblers will gamble higher, longer, become less inhibited over time.

It reduces losses without reducing the entertainment value much. Also people get used to things.

\$10 is a hell of a lot. In a standard machine accepting \$1 bets you can still lose about \$80 an hour.

- The key issue was whether \$10 is an appropriate ceiling. Counsellors said problem and 'at risk' gamblers do not automatically choose a \$9 maximum bet machine over a \$5 maximum bet machine. Other factors including machine features are more important in affecting gamblers' behaviour; gamblers tend to have their favourite machine, regardless of the bet size.

I think it's another furphy. Most of our clients are \$1 gamblers. I saw two clients yesterday – they bet 2c to \$1. Most of the ones we see bet around \$1. There are exceptions but most are around \$1.

Some gamblers have a 'time limit' as well as a 'spend limit' in their heads. They have an idea of how long \$50 should take to spend. On their unlucky days this \$50 might go much quicker before they have finished the first drink.

Some gamblers decide how many credits, how many lines based on how they think their machines are running. They decide whether it is worth it to bet that rate.

Some chase the features – they say that they want to see a particular feature happen.

Queen of the Nile is a favourite machine. Auditory cognition is important; they like pulsing volcanoes.

- Despite the muted support for the maximum bet as a harm reduction measure, community agencies suggested further policy improvements such as a reduction in the bet size. Expert analysts also suggested improvements to the measure.

I certainly wouldn't get rid of it [the maximum bet limit]. If the limit was reduced it might buy them time to get to me. If they had more time it might dilute it [their problem gambling]. The measure would just slow down problem gamblers.

Very few of the problem gamblers I see would be frustrated by a \$5 limit. Most regulations are in place to protect the very few... I just think the time will come where if you want to gamble you have to have a gambling card. It doesn't make sense imposing regulations. It's turned the industry against responsible gambling.

You could go to a two-regime standard in gaming machines: free bureaucratically unimpeded access to low maximum bet machines (akin to old NSW machines or WA video card machines) and smart card access to higher spend machines. This would allow tourists and visitors to have fun on the pokies, and those with serious intent to jump through a few hoops. Obviously a problem gambler who pre-committed to a constrained spend on the high bet machines would always be able to gamble on the low bet machines without constraint in this model, but they'd be there a long time to spend much money.

7.3 Effect of cash payment restrictions

Community agencies and counsellors support the cash payment restrictions as a harm minimisation measure, although they queried whether the current \$1,000 limit is appropriate.

- The rationale behind the restriction on the cash payment of winnings was well understood by counselling agencies, including 'chasing their losses' and forcing a 'cooling off period' to reduce excessive and impulsive gambling. Counsellors generally reported support for the restriction. One counsellor reported using control over winnings as a counselling technique.

Gamblers chase their losses – they'll gamble their winnings. The rationale of the measure is to force a break in play.

We're supportive of the measure. Our clients report playing off smaller winnings.

Anything we can put in front of them is worthwhile. But most of my clients haven't had big wins.

People move the goal posts and chase winnings as well as losses. The measure is very effective for clients on the day.

I encourage clients to take winnings out. Taking out winnings is a measure of control. One client reported winning \$700. They put something back but keep some of the winnings.

Cheques are an acceptable form of payment. There's a logic to it.

It gives them a pause – getting it sent home.

- Consistent with the reports by club managers and patrons interviewed for this study, the counselling agencies reported that many of their clients gamble down big winnings. This practice subverts the intention of the measure.

Clients keep playing off credits over \$1,000.

Nearly every single person we see would do that.

It works opposite to the way it was intended. If they win \$1,000 they can get \$200 cash and \$1,000 cheque. They think – 'I'll play it down to \$999'.

They get down to \$900 and think 'I'll just get it back to \$999'. They lose and think 'I'll just get it back to \$900'. Nearly every single person we see has said that.

- Counsellors also reported that problem and 'at risk' gamblers are willing to pay fees to cash cheques early to gain access to winnings so they can continue gambling.

Bear in mind they have \$1,000 cash and \$2,000 as a cheque. They lose the cash. Their minds work feverishly on how to get more cash. In [Canberra location] there are cheque cash businesses. Gamblers are so clever. They pay \$50 to their bank account...They phone it through and access it straight away.

- Club policies on the collection of winnings by cheque also were seen to impact negatively on problem gamblers. ACTCOSS and financial counsellors were particularly critical of club policies on payment of winnings.

Our clients report that clubs don't mail out cheques for winnings. They have to come back into the club to pick up the cheque. We're not keen on that; the temptation to stay and gamble is too strong.

Some clients don't like the cheque being mailed to their home address for privacy reasons.

It's unreasonable to expect people to go back to the club to collect a cheque. There's the risk of them gambling again.

You could require crossed cheques to be paid directly into the bank.

Electronic transfer would allow same day access. Cheques take three days between deposit and being cleared.

Electronic transfer of money within two days would be more acceptable.

This also allows a longer cooling off period.

Posting the cheque would be preferable. If they're scared that a family member would find it or if they lived in a shared house then there could be a second option of coming in to collect it. However, bank statements which are personal financial statements are sent to the person's house so I see no reason why the cheque shouldn't be posted.

- It was also suggested using recipients of cheques as a de facto measure for identifying problem gamblers.

Regular winners must be regular losers.

Groups in receipt of cheques are predominately problem gamblers. There is scope here for the venues to engage in problem gambling help strategies – getting to know who's winning and who's losing on a regular basis. This could be an avenue to get information about those winning and losing.

One approach would be to hand over a slip of paper with the cheque asking: 'Are you a problem gambler?'

- The large majority of community agencies considered the current \$1,000 limit should be reduced or maintained, but one counsellor suggested the limit should be increased. That counsellor argued that a higher limit would encourage gamblers to collect a cheque rather than gamble down their balance.

I think the \$1,000 restriction is adequate. Should it be raised? No – certainly not.

Clients consider a big win is \$300-400 and up. A \$500 limit would be good.

Payment by cheque is not a bad method for substantial amounts – amounts over \$250.

I don't know why, but my guess is a lot more people would be walking out with money [if the restriction was higher].

If it's raised to a level – say \$2,000 - a lot more would cash out. Maybe \$2,500.

- Two gambling counsellors agreed to rank each measure in terms of how effective it is as a harm minimisation measure. Both ranked the shutdown as least effective. However they differed in their ranking of the maximum bet and the cash payment restrictions.

I'd rank the shutdown at three. In terms of the number of people affected, I'd put the cash payment restrictions at two and the maximum bet at one.

Problem gamblers can get around the cash restrictions in a number of ways. I'd say the maximum bet is more effective, especially with gamblers who bet big when they're winning or losing.

7.4 Other community effects

Impact of the 3-hour shutdown on crime

We sought information from the Australian Federal Police (AFP) in relation to quantitative or qualitative evidence of changes to gambling-related incidents in the ACT community associated with the 3-hour shutdown and the other measures, e.g. if there has been any change in reported crime such as street violence, social disturbances or antisocial behaviour in the neighbourhood of licensed premises that could be attributable to the shutdown. Other relevant information would include whether there has been any change in police staffing requirements on early morning shifts associated with the shutdown of poker machines.

In reply, the AFP could provide only general information on the restriction of alcohol sales in the CBD, but no direct or indirect causal relationship could be attributed to the harm minimisation policies.

Effects of the shutdown on employment

We also sought information from the ACT branch of the Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers' Union (LHMWU) in relation to evidence of any changes to employment for their members working in clubs or other hospitality industries that could be attributed to the 3-hour shutdown or the other measures under review.

The LHMWU sought advice from union delegates in clubs and responded that apart from roster changes there had been no impact of the shutdown on 'permanents' or 'regular casuals' but that there may have been an impact on 'casual casuals'.¹⁷⁷

[There's been] no apparent job loss in the sense that the three or four hours of work have been rostered elsewhere... There may have been an

¹⁷⁷ According to the ACT Branch Secretary of the LHMWU there are three types of employment in the hospitality sector: permanent staff (a minority); regular casual staff (unique to the hospitality sector, with loadings, roster and no paid leave/sick leave but the expectation by employer that they will be available for work when rostered on); and 'casual casuals'.

impact on the third group [casual casuals] in the sense that some casuals might not have been put on that may have otherwise been put on, or if casuals left they may not have been replaced.

In the debate in the Legislative Assembly on the implementation of the 3-hour shutdown concern was expressed about the possible impact on recreational gamblers who are shift workers and hospitality workers.¹⁷⁸

In our interviews with club managers they also identified shift workers as the group of patrons most affected by the 3-hour shutdown. As outlined in Section 5 above, twelve of the thirteen shutdown club managers reported that the group most disadvantaged by the implementation of the shutdown were hospitality workers and shift workers. The employment categories they reported as shift workers included:

- hospitality workers
- taxi drivers
- Police
- hospital workers
- printers
- bakers
- sex industry workers.

Although we were unable to undertake a systematic study of impacts on those groups, we were not provided with evidence that any of the three harm minimisation has had a discernible effect on shift workers. Interviews with selected representatives suggest that there has been minimal impact and people have adapted to the current situation. For example, taxi drivers might go to a club before or after the 11pm shift change and they often have their night takings in cash. Taxi drivers who work the late shift (ie after 11pm) reported that the time that shift finishes has always depended on how much business is available. If it is quiet they may knock off earlier than 3am. Since the shutdown was introduced, drivers have moved to locations other than clubs while they wait for fares between 4am-7am.

Expert analysts had little sympathy for the argument that shift workers might be disadvantaged; and a representative of the Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers' Union (LHMWU), the union with coverage of the hospitality industry, reported that there has been negligible impact on the club labour force as a direct result of the 3-hour shutdown.

Shift workers would mainly include hospitality workers, and they don't need to gamble recreationally at those times.

Most community agencies considered that recreational gamblers who were shift workers or hospitality would not need access to clubs during the shutdown hours.

7.5 Summary – community effects

Community organisations and counsellors interviewed considered that the **3-hour shutdown** was beneficial to a small number of problem and 'at risk' clients by forcing a 'break in play'. While they were unable to provide specific client data, they believe

¹⁷⁸ Legislative Assembly, Hansard, 22 August 2001, pp.3174–3207.

this measure could have reduced the amount of gambling by those clients who might gamble at those hours, e.g. women with child care responsibilities, shift workers and young males.

- However few counsellors could recall any particular clients who had been affected by the shutdown.
- Counsellors reported instances where the 3-hour shutdown had helped club managers identify problem and 'at risk' gamblers who returned to the club when it reopened.
- All agencies and expert analysts interviewed were critical of the hours specified for the 3-hour shutdown, saying that the timing (e.g. 4am-7am) reduces its efficacy. Like many club patrons interviewed for this study, community agencies and counsellors generally felt the shutdown would be more effective if it was at more popular times for gambling. Others said most problem gamblers would have exhausted their cash by the time the shutdown commences.
- Counsellors ranked the shutdown as least effective of the three measures for harm minimisation.

Community agencies and counsellors gave muted support to the **maximum bet** as a harm minimisation measure, mainly to reduce the 'rate of play', but they considered the current ceiling of \$10 to be too high to affect the vast majority of problem gamblers.

- Community agencies and expert analysts suggested a reduction in the bet size.

Community agencies and counsellors also support the **cash payment restrictions** as a harm minimisation measure, although they queried whether the current \$1,000 limit is appropriate. The majority of community agencies considered the current \$1,000 limit should be reduced or maintained.

- Consistent with the reports by club managers and patrons interviewed for this study, the counselling agencies reported that many of their clients gamble down big winnings to avoid payment by cheque. This practice subverts the intention of the measure.
- Counsellors also reported that problem and 'at risk' gamblers are willing to pay fees to cash cheques early to gain access to winnings so they can continue gambling.
- ACTCOSS and financial counsellors were particularly critical of club policies that require patrons to return to the club to collect cheques for winnings.
- In terms of broader community effects, there has been minimal impact on employment or social disorder as a direct result of the 3-hour shutdown or the other measures under review.

8 Conclusions and future directions

This study has aimed to assess the effects of three harm minimisation measures - a mandatory 3-hour shutdown of EGMs, a \$10 maximum bet and restrictions on cash payment of winnings - on problem gambling, recreational gamblers and clubs in the ACT. As anticipated, gamblers and clubs have been most directly affected by the three measures under review.

Small clubs seem to have been affected more negatively than other groups of clubs, reporting revenue loss, administrative costs and inconvenience. However evidence available to the study suggests that most clubs have not been adversely impacted by the policies and have adjusted to the changes.

Recreational and problem gamblers expressed support for the three policies as harm minimisation measures, although there is little evidence that the measures have been effective in preventing problem gambling. The restrictions on cash payment of winnings has impacted on gambler behaviour more than the other two measures, but many gamblers appear to bypass the restriction to ensure they have cash to continue gambling.

We found little evidence that the effects of the three measures have extended to other community groups such as the families of heavy gamblers, or to counselling and other community support agencies, or to the community as a whole.

The study found overwhelming support for the three measures among recreational gamblers and representatives of community agencies, while club managers were more critical of effects of the policies. Community representatives and many gamblers expressed the view that all three measures should be amended to improve their effectiveness. However, no group was able to provide objective evidence to support their opinions.

Overall, there is insufficient evidence or consensus between the various groups and individuals interviewed for this study to sufficiently understand the effectiveness of the measures in minimising the potential harm from gambling. Further, while the study has provided indicative findings on each of the three measures, we do not consider that the evidence provides a sufficient basis on which to make firm recommendations for improvements.

Despite disagreement between different groups about the value and effectiveness of the three measures, and criticisms by clubs about their costs and inconvenience, they do appear to have been accepted (albeit reluctantly) by gamblers and clubs, both of which have adjusted to the current restrictions. Given this, we consider that the policies should be monitored and a further review undertaken when more reliable information of the effects is available.

8.1 The 3-hour shutdown

Based on evidence from this study and the IPART review in NSW, there appears to be evidence that the 3-hour shutdown may have had positive effects in protecting a

small number of gamblers. Most recreational gamblers interviewed were unaffected by the shutdown, but a small number of self-identified problem gamblers had benefited from the policy.

While a large majority of gamblers and representatives of community agencies support the shutdown as an important 'circuit breaker' for problem and 'at risk' gamblers, it is viewed as relatively ineffective because of the hours of its application. Prior to the shutdown, very few gamblers had ever played gaming machines during those hours. The most popular times for gambling on EGMs are between 6pm and midnight.

Club managers had a contrary view, arguing that the shutdown impacted mainly on recreational gamblers. Only 12% of club managers consider the shutdown is effective in protecting problem gamblers. In terms of reported revenue loss, nine of the thirteen shutdown club managers said that the shutdown had a negative effect on their business (3-10%). On the other hand, they reported positive impacts in terms of staff rosters, cleaning and security.

Overall, the existing shutdown requirements for a three-hour period appear to have been accepted by participants in this study, although its impacts on clubs and recreational gamblers, and its effectiveness as a harm minimisation measure are strongly disputed.

Recommendation

The existing three-hour shutdown should be subject to ongoing evaluation to examine the effects of extending the shutdown period to five hours, as proposed. Consideration should also be given to obtaining data to identify the hours when problem gamblers are more likely to gamble (e.g. from counselling client data and research) to inform a review and possible variation of the shutdown hours.

8.2 The maximum bet

This study has found that very few gamblers in ACT clubs ever bet the maximum \$10 allowed on gaming machines. Rather, the most common bets range from 25 cents to \$1, although problem gamblers indicated that the possibility of betting \$10 could encourage them to increase the size of their bets when they were on a 'winning streak' or losing.

This policy receives stronger support from clubs than either of the other measures as it has had little impact on revenue or the number of patrons. However, the majority view by all groups interviewed is that the \$10 maximum bet is not an effective harm minimisation strategy. Gamblers and representatives of community agencies strongly recommended a reduction in the bet size.

An argument has been made in various inquiries (eg the Productivity Commission, IPART, LAB proposals in NSW) that reducing the maximum bet from the current standard \$10 would encourage responsible gambling and reduce harm from problem gambling. The evidence from this study and from a large experimental study in

NSW¹⁷⁹ suggests that such an amendment would have a positive effect for 'at risk' gamblers who tend to chase losses or increase the size of their bets when winning.

However, the gaming industry has strongly challenged this notion, arguing that a reduction in the size of maximum bets would be unlikely to reduce problem gambling. Researchers and the club industry also disagree about the predicted impacts of a reduction on industry earnings and on government revenue.

IPART's review of this debate noted that a reduction could also have 'potentially unintended consequences such as prolonging gambling sessions...[and] that the optimal level for the maximum bet is unclear'.¹⁸⁰ IPART recommended that no reduction should be undertaken without modelling the effects of a range of potential bet levels on recreational gamblers and the gaming industry to provide sufficient evidence of the optimal bet level. IPART recommended that research into a range of levels 'at and below the existing \$10 limit' should be conducted at a national level. Policy change could then be coordinated with jurisdictions who subscribe to the National Technical Standards for gaming machines.

Recommendation

While evidence supports a reduction in the size of the maximum bet, further information about the betting patterns of problem gamblers (e.g. from counselling client data, surveys, venue data) and the circumstances in which gamblers risk high bets is required to determine the optimal bet size and its effects.

8.3 Restrictions on cash payment of winnings

Evidence from this study confirms many of the Commission's findings in its review of the *Gambling and Racing (Code of Practice) Regulations* and the cash payment of winnings.

The research has found that most clubs, especially small clubs, believe they have been significantly impacted by the cash payment restrictions. The restrictions have impacted negatively on revenue and created management problems and difficulties explaining the requirements to patrons. They reported that some large gamblers who preferred cash payment had stopped visiting their club. While many clubs had established new procedures to manage the cheques, several reported practical difficulties with implementation of the measure and complaints by gamblers who wanted to receive their winnings immediately in cash and by interstate visitors.

Payment of large prizes by cheque has not inconvenienced most gamblers, since most recreational gamblers report they do not win amounts over \$1,000 on a frequent basis. In the main, club patrons appear to have adjusted to the restriction. The major effect seems to have been that many gamblers now gamble down their winnings below the \$1,000 limit to avoid payment by cheque.

In terms of broader community impacts, no-one interviewed for this study raised the issue of money laundering, which was suggested when the Commission conducted its own review of this measure.

¹⁷⁹ Blaszczyński, A. *et al.* 2002, op. cit.

¹⁸⁰ IPART 2004, op. cit., p.92.

As the Commission found in its review of the *Code of Practice*, opinions were divided on whether the restrictions on cash payout of winnings is an effective harm minimisation measure. All counsellors and the majority of gamblers expressed support for the measure, although the majority consensus was that the \$1,000 threshold was too high and should be lowered. The majority of club managers presented a contrary view, arguing that gamblers are inconvenienced and circumvent the policy intention by gambling down amounts over \$1,000. A number of problem gamblers confirmed that this was their common practice to ensure they retained cash for continued gambling. Even so, club managers (44%) saw the cash payment restrictions as the most effective of the three measures.

Given the conflicting reports by different groups and the lack of tangible evidence, this study found no convincing reason to amend the existing \$1,000 threshold either to improve its objective of minimising gambling-related harm or to improve the practical operation of the measure.

While the measure may benefit some problem gamblers, it appears that the aims of the policy - to promote a 'break in play' and to discourage gamblers from continuing to gamble with their large winnings - are not being achieved. Reports that many gamblers are gambling down below \$1,000 to avoid a cheque suggests that the measure could have unintended negative consequences for some gamblers. This issue warrants further investigation.

Recommendation

The existing restrictions on cash payment of winnings should continue to operate without amendment but should be monitored to obtain more reliable objective information of its effects on small clubs and problem gamblers.

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Appendix A: Community Advisory Group

A Community Advisory Group (CAG) was established to advise the research team in designing and conducting the research. The first meeting of the CAG was held on 18 December 2003. Invitations to participate in the CAG were extended to representatives from the following organisations:

- ACT Gambling and Racing Commission
- ACT Women's Consultative Council
- ACT Multicultural Consultative Council
- ACT Council of Social Services
- ACT Churches' Council
- ACT Community Care
- ACT-TAB
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultative Council
- Australian Hotels Association, ACT
- Canberra Casino
- CARE Financial Counselling and Legal Services
- Clubs ACT
- Council on the Ageing
- Gambling Care - Lifeline
- Migrant Resource Centre

Appendix B: Letters and Consent Forms

Invitation/Information Sheet for Support Agencies, Community Representatives

Can you assist with research?

Review of the ACT Government's Harm Minimisation Measures

[Date]

I am writing to request your participation in a research project that is currently being conducted by the Centre for Gambling Research (Australian National University). This research is funded by the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission.

We are conducting interviews on the ACT Government's measures to address the harm that might be associated with gambling. We are interested to hear about your experiences as service providers as well as the experiences of gamblers themselves, and their friends and family members. The findings of this research will inform recommendations for policy improvements to address any problems identified. We anticipate that the discussion will take approximately 30 – 45 minutes of your time.

We would like to hear your views on the issue of harm minimisation for gambling in the ACT. Specifically, we are interested to hear your views on:

- Restrictions on total stake amount (currently \$10);
- The three-hour shutdown per 24 hours; and
- Maximum payout on stand-alone machines and progressive jackpots.

Participation in this research is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. To assure that privacy and confidentiality are met as far as possible we will remove any identifying details from our files. We do not name participants in any document we publish.

Please contact us if you would like to participate in an interview or if you have any questions about the interviews or the project itself.

Centre for Gambling Research, RegNet,
Research School of Social Sciences,
Australian National University, ACT 0200.
Phone: 02 6125 4665, 02 6125 8443
Fax: 02 6125 4993
Email: jan.mcmillen@anu.edu.au, susan.pitt@anu.edu.au

Thank you for your assistance

Professor Jan McMillen
Director, Centre for Gambling Research

The Australian National University's Human Research Ethics Committee has approved this study. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact Sylvia Deutsch, Human Ethics Officer, Research Services Office, Australian National University ACT 0200, or phone Sylvia on 02 6125 2900, fax 02 6125 1507, or email Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au.

Appendix D: Letter of Introduction/Information for Club Patrons

Can you assist us with research?

Review of the ACT Government's Harm Minimisation Measures

Dear Club Patron

We invite your participation in a research project that is currently being conducted by the Centre for Gambling Research (Australian National University). This research is funded by the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission.

The findings of this research will inform recommendations for policy improvements to address any problems identified. We would like to hear your views on the issue of harm minimisation for gambling in the ACT. Specifically, we are interested to hear your views on:

The three-hour shutdown of clubs per 24 hours;
Restrictions on total stake amount (currently \$10); and
Maximum cash payout on stand-alone machines and progressive jackpots.

All we require today is your first name and a telephone number and we will call you in a few days time to arrange a telephone interview at a time to suit you. We anticipate that the discussion will take approximately 10 - 15 minutes of your time.

Participation in this research is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. To assure that privacy and confidentiality are met as far as possible we will remove any identifying details from our files. We do not name participants in any document we publish.

Please contact us if you have any questions about the interviews or the project itself. Thank you for your assistance.

Professor Jan McMillen, Director
Susan Pitt, Project Manager
Centre for Gambling Research
RegNet, Australian National University
Ph: 6125 4665
Fax: 6125 1507
Email: jan.mcmillen@anu.edu.au
susan.pitt@anu.edu.au

<http://gambling.edu.au/>

The Australian National University's Human Research Ethics Committee has approved this study. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact Sylvia Deutsch, Human Ethics Officer, Research Services Office, Australian National University ACT 0200, or phone Sylvia on 02 6125 2900, fax 02 6125 1507, or email Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au.

We are interested in your experience of the regulation which restricts the maximum bet on poker machines to \$10 as a harm minimisation measure. It was introduced in 1993. I'd like your views on this policy.

E1. Firstly, what proportion/% of your patrons currently bet up to the maximum stake? An estimate is OK.

1. less than 10%
2. 10-20%
3. 21-30%
4. 31-40%
5. 41-50%
6. Other, SPECIFY _____
7. Don't know/can't say (DO NOT READ)

E2. Has the average bet increased over time? PROBE

1. Yes, SPECIFY _____
2. No change
3. Other, SPECIFY _____
4. Don't know/can't say (DO NOT READ)

E3. What impact has the maximum bet had on your club? Has there been an increase or decrease in revenue? Any change in...READ a. then b. then c.

IF CHANGE – How big has this change been, in %? An estimate is fine.

	<i>Don't know/can't say</i>	<i>No change</i>	<i>Decrease/Loss</i>	<i>Increase</i>	<i>% change</i>
a. Gaming revenue	1	2	3	4	
b. Non-gaming revenue	1	2	3	4	
c. Total revenue	1	2	3	4	

E4. Has your club experienced an increase or decrease in costs associated with the maximum bet? Any change in.... READ a. then b. then c.

IF CHANGE – How big has this change been, in %?

	<i>Don't know/can't say</i>	<i>No change</i>	<i>Decrease/Loss</i>	<i>Increase</i>	<i>% change</i>
a. Staffing costs	1	2	3	4	

b. Other costs	1	2	3	4	
c. Total costs	1	2	3	4	

E5. Has your club experienced an increase or decrease in the number of club patrons associated with the maximum bet? Any change in... READ a. then b. then c.

IF CHANGE – How big has this change been, in %? An estimate is OK.

	<i>Don't know/can't say</i>	<i>No change</i>	<i>Decrease/Loss</i>	<i>Increase</i>	<i>% change</i>
d. Gaming patrons	1	2	3	4	
e. Non-gaming patrons	1	2	3	4	
f. Total patrons	1	2	3	4	

E6. Have you done anything to respond to the restriction on the maximum bet? PROBE: What have you changed in the way you run your business? MULTIPLE RESPONSE

DON'T READ

1. more advertising/promotions
2. changed the type of gaming machines installed PROBE
3. other SPECIFY _____
4. nothing GO TO E8.
5. don't know/can't say GO TO E8.

E7. Has it been enough to counteract the affect of the maximum bet? READ

1. fully
2. partially
3. or not at all?
4. don't know/can't say (DON'T READ)
5. not applicable

E8. Have there been any impacts on your patrons associated with the maximum bet? DON'T READ

1. spent more time playing the pokies
2. spent the same time playing the pokies
3. spent less time playing the pokies
4. spend more time/money on other activities at the club
5. approved of the policy
6. complained about the inconvenience
7. other SPECIFY _____

8. no impact GO TO Section F
9. don't know/can't say GO TO Section F

PROBE: Anything else?

E9. Are your patrons who are affected by the maximum bet more likely to be recreational gamblers or problem gamblers?

1. more likely to be recreational gamblers
2. more likely to be problem gamblers
3. both equally
4. don't know/can't say

Section F: Payment of Winnings

The next questions relate to the payment of winnings. Under the current Code of Practice implemented in December 2002 a gaming machine licensee cannot pay out any more than \$1,000 in cash winnings for any one payout or event.

F1. How does your club pay out gambling winnings (or credits) of \$1,000 or more? Is it by cheque or by other means?

1. Cheque
2. Electronic
3. Both
4. Other, SPECIFY _____

F2. What impact has the restriction on winnings had on your club? Has there been an increase or decrease in revenue? Any change in ...READ a. then b. then c.

IF CHANGE – How big has this change been, in %?

	<i>Don't know/can't say</i>	<i>No change</i>	<i>Decrease/Loss</i>	<i>Increase</i>	<i>% change</i>
a. Gaming revenue	1	2	3	4	
b. Non-gaming revenue	1	2	3	4	
c. Total revenue	1	2	3	4	

F3. Has there been an increase or decrease in costs associated with the restriction on winnings? Any change in ...READ a. then b. then c.
IF CHANGE – How big has this change been, in %?

	<i>Don't know/can't say</i>	<i>No change</i>	<i>Decrease/Loss</i>	<i>Increase</i>	<i>% change</i>
a. Staffing costs	1	2	3	4	
b. Other costs	1	2	3	4	
c. Total costs	1	2	3	4	

F4. Has there been an increase or decrease in the numbers of club patrons related to the restriction on winnings? Any change in ... READ a. then b. then c.
IF CHANGE – How big has this change been, in %?

	<i>Don't know/can't say</i>	<i>No change</i>	<i>Decrease/Loss</i>	<i>Increase</i>	<i>% change</i>
a. Gaming patrons	1	2	3	4	
b. Non-gaming patrons	1	2	3	4	
c. Total patrons	1	2	3	4	
d.					

F5. Have you done anything to respond to the restriction on the payment of winnings?
PROBE: What have you changed in the way you run your business? MULTIPLE RESPONSE
DON'T READ

1. Set up processes to make out cheques
2. Set up processes for electronic transfer
3. more advertising/promotions
4. other SPECIFY _____
5. nothing GO TO F7.
6. don't know/can't say GO TO F7.

F6. Has it been enough to counteract the affect of the restriction on winnings?
READ

1. fully
2. partially
3. or not at all?

4. don't know/can't say (DON'T READ)
5. not applicable

F7. Have there been any impacts on your patrons associated with the restriction on winnings?

DON'T READ. PROBE: Anything else?

1. some gamble off their winnings over \$1,000
2. spent more time playing the pokies
3. spent the same time playing the pokies
4. spent less time playing the pokies
5. spend more time/money on other activities at the club
6. approved of the policy
7. complained about the inconvenience
8. other SPECIFY _____
9. no impact GO TO F9.
10. don't know/can't say GO TO F9.

F8. And what impact has the restriction on payment of winnings had on your patrons? **Has it... READ, ALLOW MULTIPLE RESPONSES**

1. Had no impact overall
2. Been accepted by your patrons
3. Provided a cooling off period for problem gamblers
4. Provoked complaints about the inconvenience
5. Other, SPECIFY _____
6. Don't know/can't say (DO NOT READ)

PROBE:

F9. Are the patrons who are affected by the restriction on payment of winnings more likely to be recreational gamblers or problem gamblers?

1. more likely to be recreational gamblers
 2. more likely to be problem gamblers
 3. both equally
 4. no impact on either
 5. don't know/can't say
-
-

F10. Would you say overall your patrons have adjusted now to the restriction on the payment of winnings?

1. yes
2. no GO TO SECTION G
3. don't know/can't say GO TO SECTION G

F11. How long do you think it took them to adjust? DON'T READ

1. less than 1 month
2. 1 - 3 months

3. 3 - 6 months
4. 6 – 12 months
5. more than 1 year
6. don't know/can't say

Section G: Ratings of the three measures

G1. Finally, I am going to ask you to rate each of the three measures. Overall, do you support or oppose the 3-hour shutdown? (Is that strongly support/oppose or just support/oppose the shutdown?) READ a. then b. then c.

	<i>Strongly support</i>	<i>Support</i>	<i>Neither/nor</i>	<i>Oppose</i>	<i>Strongly oppose</i>	<i>Don't know DON'T READ</i>
a. 3-hour shutdown	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Restriction of maximum bet \$10	1	2	3	4	5	6
c. Restriction on payment of winnings in cash	1	2	3	4	5	6

Comments

G2. I am going to ask you to rate each of the three measures based on your experience. How effective or ineffective do you think each one has been in reducing the harm caused by poker machines for problem and 'at risk' gamblers. (Is that Very effective/Ineffective or just effective/ineffective?) READ a. then b. then c.

	<i>Very effective</i>	<i>Quite effective</i>	<i>Neither/nor</i>	<i>Ineffective</i>	<i>Very ineffective</i>	<i>Don't know DON'T READ</i>
a. 3-hour shutdown	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Restriction of maximum bet \$10	1	2	3	4	5	6
c. Restriction on payment of winnings in cash	1	2	3	4	5	6

Comments

G3. That's all the questions I have. Would you like to make any other comments?

THANK AND CLOSE: On behalf of ANU thank you for your time today. We really appreciate you taking the time to provide this feedback.

Start _____ Finish _____ Total Minutes _____

Interviewer: I declare that the information obtained is true and correct and I have obeyed the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee code of ethics.

INTERVIEWER: _____

Appendix G: Interview Schedule - Club Patrons

Review of the ACT Government's Harm Minimisation Measures Interviews with Club Patrons

		Call 1	Call 2	Call 3	Call 4
	Time				
	Date				
	Result				

Record No.----- Best time to call: -----

Record start time: -----

Venue Patron Category (circle) 3-40 EGMs 41-100 EGMs 101-155 EGMs >155 EGMs

Introduction: Good morning/afternoon/evening. Can I speak to [name].

IF YOU ARE ASKED BY A PERSON OTHER THAN RESPONDENT WHAT IT IS ABOUT OR WHERE WE GOT THEIR NUMBER:

We are calling from the Australian National University and [name] gave me this number and said we could call him/her. DO NOT DISCLOSE ANY FURTHER INFORMATION!!

IF UNAVAILABLE ASK FOR BEST TIME TO CALL.

IF AVAILABLE GREET AND REMIND THEM OF THEIR AGREEMENT TO BE SURVEYED.

TO RESPONDENT:

Hello, it is Susan Pitt from the ANU. I am calling about the research you agreed to help us with for the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission. REMIND IF NECESSARY. We would like your opinion on some of the government policies for poker machine gambling. As we told you earlier it should take only 10-15 minutes. Is now a convenient time or would you like me to call you back? IF NOW SAY:

IF RESPONDENT IS RELUCTANT TO PARTICIPATE, SAY: I know this intrudes on your time, but this is an important issue and the Australian National University wants to understand the community's views. Your participation means the results will be more accurate. Can you spare a couple of minutes to participate in the initial part?

IS THE RESPONDENT WILLING TO CONTINUE?

1. Willing to continue – collect first name and home phone number.
2. Still refuses - THANK & CLOSE

Section A: Gambling Behaviour of EGM Users

A1. How often would you usually play poker machines? Would it be READ OUT.

1. Daily
2. Four to six times a week
3. Two to three times a week
4. Once or twice a week
5. Once or twice a fortnight
6. Once or twice a month
7. Every couple of months
8. Less often than every couple of months

9. Don't know/can't say

Record comments (Don't probe)

- A2. Thinking now about the times of the day you usually play poker machines. What time of day do you usually play? Prompt - mornings, afternoons, evenings?

MULTIPLE RESPONSE

1. 6pm to 9pm
2. 9pm to midnight²
3. After midnight to 4am
4. 4am to 8am (shutdown)
5. 8am to 10am
6. 10 am to midday
7. midday to 3pm
8. 3pm to 6pm
9. Don't know/can't say (DO NOT READ)

Record comments (Don't probe)

Section B: Impact of the Shutdown on EGM Users

The next questions are about the 3-hour shutdown. In September 2001 the ACT Government introduced legislation requiring clubs to shutdown poker machines for three hours, i.e. poker machines must be closed when the bar is closed - usually between 4am or 5am – for 3 hours. I'd now like to ask you about how the shutdown has affected you.

- B1. Before the shutdown, did you ever play poker machines during these hours.

No/Never GO TO Maximum Bet

IF YES, ask: Was that...

1. Often
2. Sometimes
3. Rarely
4. Don't know/can't say DO NOT READ

- B2. Why did you play during those hours? What was the appeal of playing during those hours? PROBE: Any other reasons?

DO NOT READ. MULTIPLE RESPONSE

1. Shift worker/finished work during/near those hours
2. Fitted it in before work
3. Was at the end of a night out
4. Usually started earlier and was still going
5. More private/less likely to be seen
6. Fitted it in around family commitments (e.g. when the family were asleep, etc)
7. family were asleep, etc)
8. Other SPECIFY _____
9. Don't know/can't say

- B3. Has the shutdown prevented you from playing poker machines when you wanted to?

1. Yes
2. No

3. Don't know/can't say
- B4. Have you changed the times you play poker machines as a result of the shutdown?
1. Yes
 2. No GO TO B 7
 3. Don't know/can't say GO TO B 7
- B5. As a result of the shutdown, do you now tend to spend more time or less time playing poker machines?
1. More time
 2. Less time GO TO B 7
 3. No change GO TO B 7
 4. Don't know/can't say GO TO B 7
- B6. Do you now tend to spend more time playing poker machines in the hours before the shutdown or after the shutdown?
1. Hours before the shutdown
 2. Hours after the shutdown
 3. Don't know/can't say
- B7. Have you ever been playing poker machines just before the venue shuts down the operation of its poker machines?
1. Yes
 2. No GO TO Maximum Bet
 3. Don't know/can't say GO TO Maximum Bet
- B8. And where did you go when the club shut down, did you go...READ OUT
1. To another club
 2. Home
 3. To work
 4. Or somewhere else SPECIFY _____
 5. Don't know/can't say GO TO Maximum Bet
- B9. Would you say you have spent more or less money on poker machines as a result of the shutdown, or has there been no change? IF MORE/LESS: Is that a little more/less or a lot more/less?
1. Spent a lot more
 2. Spent a little more
 3. No change/stayed the same
 4. Spent a little less
 5. Spent a lot less
 6. Don't know/can't say

Section C: The Impact of Maximum Bet on EGM Users

The next questions are about the maximum bet. In 1993 the ACT Government set a limit on the maximum you can bet on a poker machine - \$10 each bet.

C1. How much do you usually bet at a time/on each play when playing poker machines/on each play on average?

1. Less than 10c
2. 10c – 20c
3. 21c – 30c
4. 31c – 40c
5. 41c – 50 c
6. 51c - \$1
7. Other – specify _____
8. Don't know/can't say

Record comments (don't probe)

C2. Do you ever bet \$10 at a time/on each play?

1. Sometimes
2. Always.
3. Never
4. Don't know/can't say

Record comments (don't probe)

C3. Would you say you have spent more or less money on poker machines as a result of the \$10 restriction on the maximum bet, or has there been no change? IF MORE/LESS: Is that a little more/less or a lot more/less?

1. No change/stayed the same
2. Spent a lot more money
3. Spent a little more money
4. Spent a little less money
5. Spent a lot less money
6. Don't know/can't say

C4. Would you say you have spent more or less time on poker machines as a result of the \$10 restriction on the maximum bet, or has there been no change? IF MORE/LESS: Is that a little more/less or a lot more/less?

1. No change/stayed the same
2. Spent a lot more time
3. Spent a little more time
4. Spent a little less time
5. Spent a lot less time
6. Don't know/can't say

Section D: The Impact of the Limit on Payment of Winnings on EGM Users

In December 2002 the ACT Government introduced a policy that payment of all poker machine winnings over \$1,000 are to be made by cheque or other non-cash means.

D1. In the last 12 – 18 months have you ever cashed out before your credits built up to more than \$1,000 to avoid having to get part of your winnings as a cheque?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know/can't say

Record comments (don't probe)

D2. In the last 12 – 18 months have you ever had a win that took credits on your poker machine over \$1,000 ? If YES, How often?

1. Yes – once
2. Yes – more than once
3. No GO TO D 7.
4. Don't know/can't say GO TO D 7.

Record comments (don't probe)

D3. What did you usually do with the credits (of \$1,000 or more)? Did you collect it, or keep playing? What did you do?

ALLOW MULTIPLE RESPONSES

1. Collect \$1,000 in cash and the rest as a cheque
2. Collected less than \$1,000 in cash and the rest as a cheque
3. Collect all as a cheque immediately
4. Continue to gamble and build up the credits
5. Gamble the credits down below \$1,000 and collected it in cash to avoid a cheque GO TO D 7
6. Gamble all of it GO TO D 7
7. Don't know/can't say GO TO D 7
8. Other, incl. electronic transfer SPECIFY _____

Record comments (don't probe)

D4. How did you collect the cheque/s? Was it

READ OUT - ALLOW MULTIPLE RESPONSES

1. Paid on the spot
2. Collected from the club
3. Mailed out
4. Other SPECIFY _____
5. Don't know/can't say

D5. What did you do with the cheque/S? DO NOT READ

1. Banked it
2. Cashed it at the club
3. Cashed it and spent it
4. Other SPECIFY _____

5. Don't know/can't say

Record comments (don't probe)

D6. Can you remember what you spent it on? ALLOW MULTIPLE RESPONSES (Prompt)

1. Paid bills
2. Household or personal goods
3. Gambled it
4. Other entertainment,
5. Other, SPECIFY _____
6. Don't know/can't say

Record comments (don't probe)

D7. Have you changed the place or places where you gamble at all because of the way the club deals with the payment of winnings? IF YES: Have you switched venues all together, or just gone to other venues as well as your usual one/s, as a result of the payment by cheque policy?

1. No change
2. Yes, have switched venues altogether because of the club's policy
3. Yes, gone to go to other venues as well as usual one/s because of the club's policy
4. Don't know/can't say

Record comments (don't probe)

D8. Would you say you have spent more or less money on poker machines as a result of the restriction on the cash payment of winnings, or has there been no change? IF MORE/LESS: Is that a little more/less or a lot more/less?

1. No change/stayed the same
2. Spent a lot more
3. Spent a little more
4. Spent a little less
5. Spent a lot less
6. Don't know/can't say

D9. Would you say you have spent more or less time on poker machines as a result of the restriction on the cash payment of winnings, or has there been no change? IF MORE/LESS: Is that a little more/less or a lot more/less?

1. No change/stayed the same
2. Spent a lot more time
3. Spent a little more time
4. Spent a little less time
5. Spent a lot less time

Don't know/can't say

Section E: Ratings of the three measures by EGM Users

E1. Finally, I am going to ask you to rate each of the three measures. Overall, do you support or oppose the 3-hour shutdown? (Is that strongly support/oppose or just support/oppose the shutdown?) READ a. then b. then c.

	<i>Strongly support</i>	<i>Support</i>	<i>Neither/nor</i>	<i>Oppose</i>	<i>Strongly oppose</i>	<i>Don't know DON'T READ</i>
a. 3-hour shutdown	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. restriction of maximum bet \$10	1	2	3	4	5	6
c. restriction on cash payment restrictions	1	2	3	4	5	6

Comments (use a., b. and c. to identify measure)

E2. Now, based on your experience how effective or ineffective do you think the 3-hour shutdown has been in reducing the harm caused by poker machines for problem and 'at risk' gamblers. (Is that Very effective/Ineffective or just effective/ineffective?) READ a. then b. then c.

	<i>Very effective</i>	<i>Quite effective</i>	<i>Neither/nor</i>	<i>Ineffective</i>	<i>Very ineffective</i>	<i>Don't know DON'T READ</i>
a. 3-hour shutdown	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. restriction of maximum bet \$10	1	2	3	4	5	6
c. restriction on cash payment restrictions	1	2	3	4	5	6

Comments (Use a.b. and c. to identify measure)

Section F: Gambling Problem – EGM Users

F1. Has your gambling ever been a problem for you? Prompt - personally?

1. Yes
2. No GO TO Conclusion
3. Don't know/can't say GO TO Conclusion

Record comments (don't probe)

F2. Has the 3-hour shutdown had any impact on your gambling? It is more or less of a problem for you because of the shutdown?

1. More
2. Less
3. No change
4. Don't know/can't say
5. Not applicable (check sequencing, check data for next step)

Record comments (don't probe)

F3. Has the maximum bet had any impact on your gambling? It is more or less of a problem for you because of the restriction on the maximum bet?

1. More
2. Less
3. No change
4. Don't know/can't say
5. Not applicable

Record comments (don't probe)

F4. Has the restriction on the payment of winnings in cash had any impact on your gambling? Is it more or less of a problem for you because of the restriction on the cash payment of winnings, or the same?

1. More
2. Less
3. No change
4. Don't know/can't say
5. Not applicable

Record comments (don't probe)

Record comments (don't probe)

Section G: Conclusion

G1. That's all the questions I have. Do you have any further comments on any of the three measures?

Record comments (don't probe)

G2. Record gender (Don't ask; note from recruitment records)

1. Male
2. Female
3. Don't know

CLOSE: On behalf of the ANU, thank you for your time today. We greatly appreciate you taking the time out of your day to provide this feedback.

THANK AND CLOSE.

Interviewer to complete:

I declare that the information obtained is true and correct and I have complied with the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee code of ethics.

INTERVIEWER SIGNATURE: _____

Start _____ Finish _____

Total Minutes _____

Appendix H Interview Guide – Community Support Agencies

Maximum Bet

- Have any of your problem gambling clients ever mentioned the \$10 maximum bet limit?
- Has the maximum bet affected your clients' behaviour?
- Has the maximum bet limit had any (other) impacts?
- In your view how effective is the maximum bet limit as a harm minimisation measure?
- Overall do you support or oppose the \$10 maximum bet limit as a harm minimisation measure?
- Would any policy change improve this measure?

Restriction on cash payment of winnings

- Have any of your problem gambling clients ever mentioned the restriction on payment of winnings above \$1,000 in cash?
- Has this limit affected your clients' behaviour?
- Has the limit had any (other) impacts?
- In your view how effective is the restriction on cash payment of winnings as a harm minimisation measure?
- Overall do you support or oppose this restriction as a harm minimisation measure?
- Would any policy change improve this measure?

3-hour Shutdown

- Have any of your problem gambling clients ever mentioned the 3-hour shutdown?
- Has the 3-hour shutdown affected your clients' behaviour?
- Has the 3-hour shutdown had any (other) impacts?
- Did any of your problem gambling clients used to play poker machines during the early morning hours, e.g. 4am and 8am? *If yes, probe for social characteristics (sex, age, employment status, etc).*
- Why did they play during those hours?
- As a result of the shutdown, do they now tend to spend more time or less time playing poker machines?
- Has the shutdown affected your clients family/friends??
- Has your agency had any new clients as a direct result of the shutdown?
- In your view how effective is the 3-hour shutdown as a harm minimisation measure?
- Overall do you support or oppose the shutdown as a harm minimisation measure?
- Would any policy change improve this measure?

Comparison of the measures

- How would you rank the three measures in terms of their potential to minimise the harm associated with problem gambling?

