

Host responsibility: From research to practice?

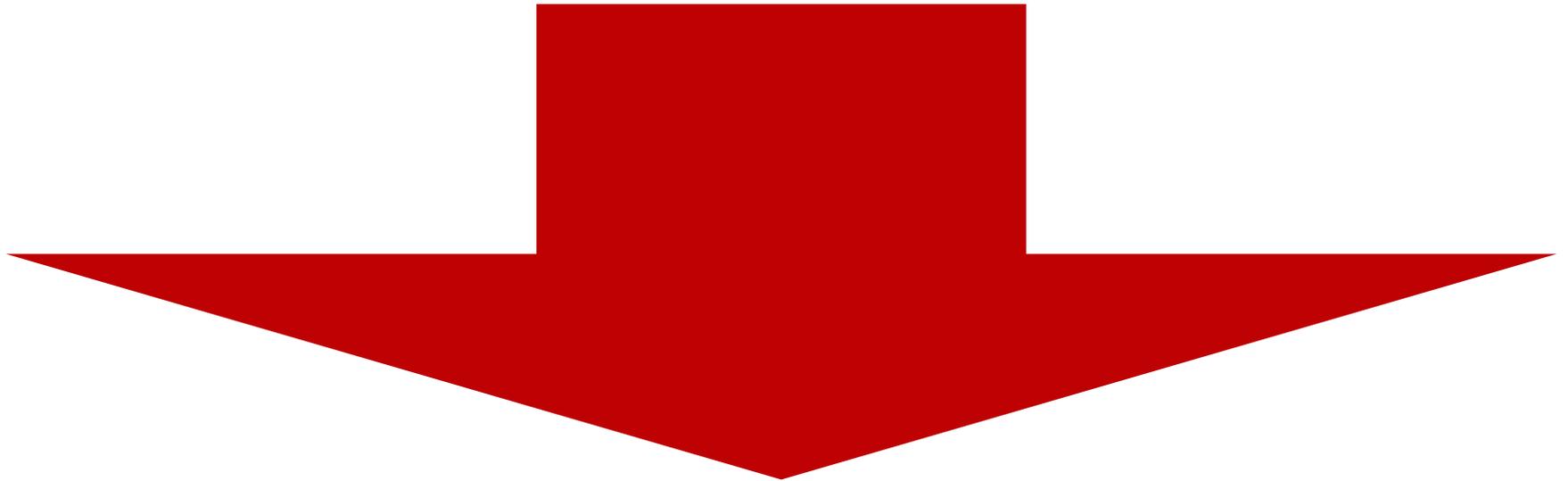
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The times they are a changing ...

**No responsible service of alcohol
No responsible provision of gambling**



**RG measures aimed at:
Preventing gambling problems
Minimising harm from gambling
Informing patrons about sources of gambling help**

Emergence of problem gambling as a public health issue

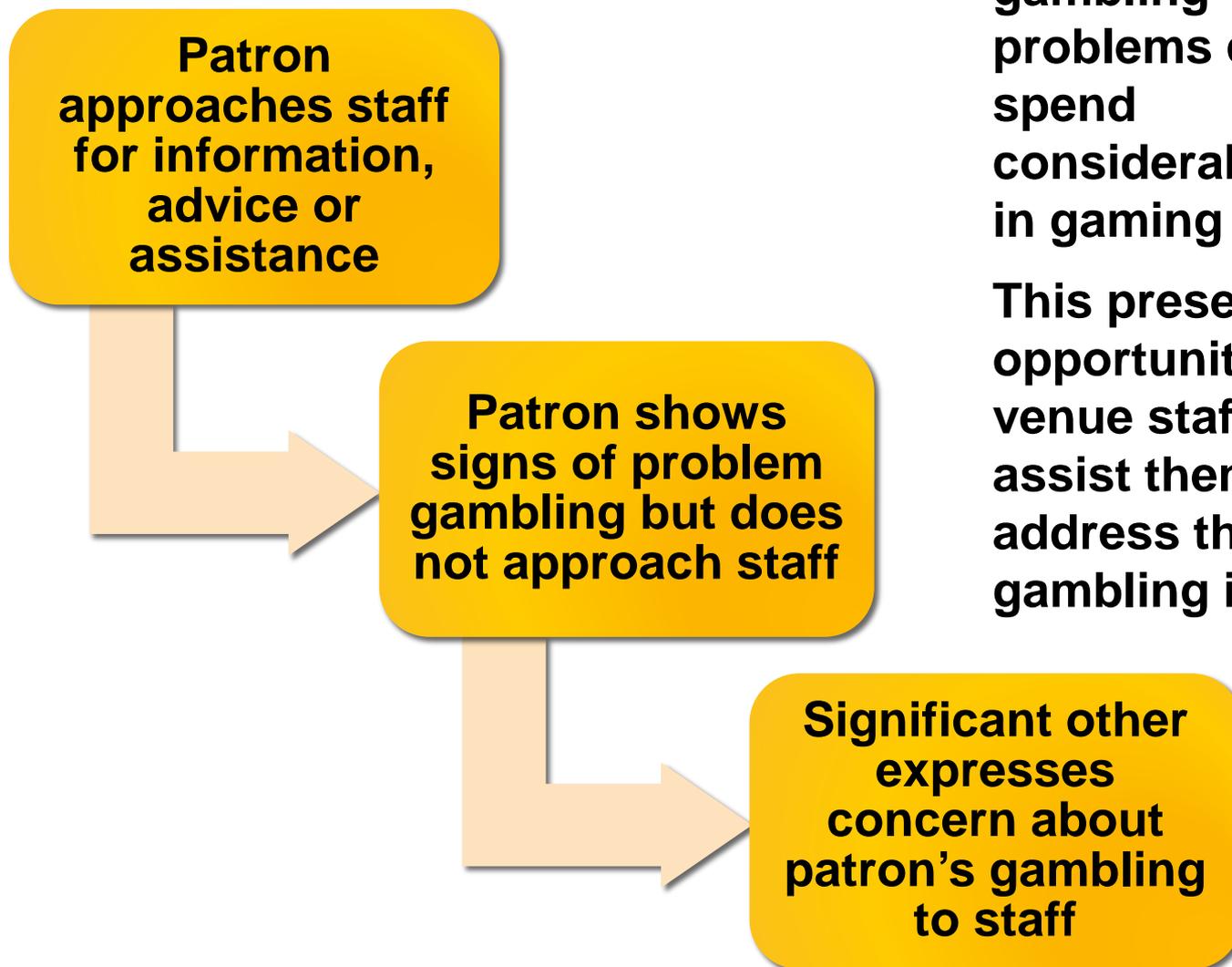


- Expansionary government gambling policies: prohibition → liberalisation → market stimulation, expansion, competition and privatisation.
- Expansionary industry practices: increasingly aggressive, commercial approach to gambling provision.
- Redefinition of arguments against gambling: moral & religious opposition → concern about crime → social impacts of PG → increased pressure groups.
- Redefinition of PG: medical/mental health disorder → public health issue.

Stages of Corporate Citizenship in RG

	Stage 1: Elementary	Stage 2: Engaged	Stage 3: Innovative	Stage 4: Integrated	Stage 5: Transforming
Strategic Intent	Legal compliance	Protect reputation	Licence to operate	Business case, harm minimisation	Harm prevention
Leadership	Uninterested or defensive	Resistance to change	Begrudging acceptance	Acceptance & stewardship	Visionary
Stakeholder Relationships	No or minimal engagement	Only as necessary	Increased interaction	Mutual influence	Multi-organisation alliances
Issues Management	Rejection or indifference	Reactive	Responsive, mainly policies	Responsive, mainly programs	Proactive
Structure	No specified responsible gambling functions	Some centralised interest, little diffusion through organisation	Functional ownership of responsible gambling	Dedicated depts & positions, cross-functional coordination	Mainstream, permeates organisation
Policy & Practice	Undeveloped	Minimal, passive, symbolic	New policies & practices	Expanded policies & practices	Effective policies & practices
Transparency & Accountability	Minimal	Public relations	Public reporting	Assurance	Full disclosure

Opportunities to assist patrons



People with gambling problems clearly spend considerable time in gaming venues.

This presents opportunities for venue staff to assist them to address their gambling issues.

Prior research on early detection

- Using actual player data:
 - Loyalty card data, e.g. iCare
 - Smart card technology, e.g. Playscan
 - Internet/phone account-based gambling
- Using observable indicators, e.g.
 - Schellinck & Schrans (2004) in Nova Scotia, Haefeli & Schneider (2006) in Switzerland, Delfabbro et al. (2007), Delfabbro, Borgas & King (2012) in Australia
- Identification of problem players is possible, but what to do then?



Aim of the CGER's 3 research studies

To examine:

- how frontline and senior staff respond to and assist patrons with gambling problems
- gaps in relevant staff skills, knowledge and responsible gambling training
- other facilitators and barriers to providing appropriate assistance.



Methods

- Mainly qualitative—rich in-depth data.
- On-site, personal interviews with venue staff in 1 large club in NSW as pilot, and in clubs, hotels & casinos in QLD and in South Australia.
- Representing about 100 venues.
- Interviews with recovered gamblers.
- Survey and interviews with self-excluders.
- Interviews with gambling counsellors.
- Interviewed industry associations.



Participants

	NSW	QLD	SA	TOTAL
Frontline staff clubs	12	23	11	46
Frontline staff hotels		25	32	57
Frontline staff casinos			10	10
Supervisory staff clubs	12	26	10	48
Supervisory staff hotels		29	38	67
Supervisory staff casinos		4	5	9
Gambling counsellors		23	28	51
Patrons regulars	12			12
Self-excluders			36	36
Recovered problem gamblers			10	10
TOTAL	36	130	180	346

Interview questions

- Practices, challenges & potential improvements related to 3 scenarios:
 1. patron asks for assistance
 2. patron shows observable signs but does not ask
 3. significant other indicates concern



Scenario 1: Patron asks for assistance

Highly variable responses



- Don't take seriously
 - Ridicule
 - No privacy/discretion
 - Come back later
 - No useful information
- Respond immediately
 - Treat with respect
 - Privacy/discretion
 - Make comfortable/calm
 - Information about gambling help
 - Information about SE
 - Refer to/get RG Officer
 - Record incident
 - Case management

Scenario 1: Patron asks for assistance

Challenges for staff appear to depend on:

Staff knowledge of procedures & materials: *I'm not really sure ... what would I do?; 'I grab our little folder ... this is how you approach it, this is what you need to get through, this is the form.*

Level of staff confidence: *I did feel ... out of my depth; It's not hard to help someone that wants help.*

Level of patron comfort/discomfort: *Upset, angry, defensive; In a hurry (and) desperate; Cool about it.*

Level of familiarity with patron: *If it was a really close friend...they would come up to me; It's a little bit easier to talk to someone you don't really know.'*

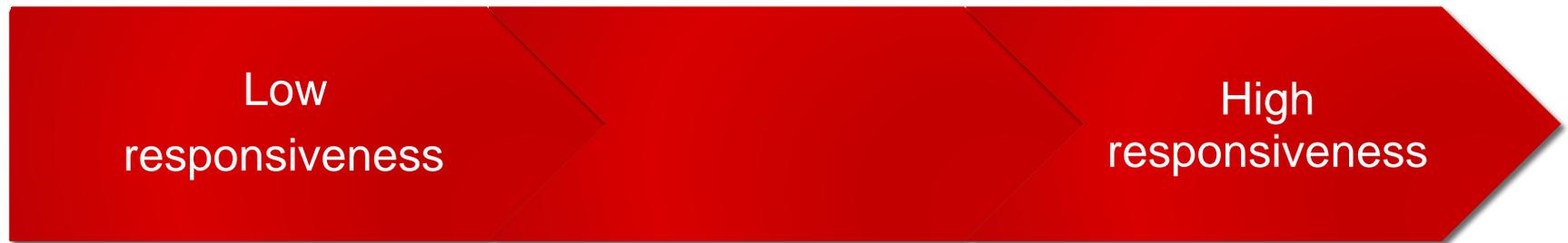
Emotional involvement/detachment: *It's very sad; Shocked as I didn't think that she had a real gambling problem; Just hand them the information and refer them on*

Staff age & experience: *I'm older, I don't find it as hard as the young ones*

Size of venue: *they need to refer that to the supervisor or manager, and the supervisor or manager would then refer to either me (RG Manager) or one of the RGLOs'.*

Scenario 2: Patron shows observable signs

Highly variable responses



- Ignore, do nothing

- Refer to senior staff
- Intervene to provide opening for chat, advice & assistance

But do staff recognise observable signs? Staff views on indicators of a gambling problem

- Irritability & aggression
- Upset or crying
- Looking stressed
- Being anti-social
- Erroneous and irrational verbalisations
- Being secretive or lying about their gambling
- Change in usual behaviour
- Gambling very regularly
- Gambling for long sessions
- Gambling for longer than intended/chasing losses
- Spending money put aside for something else
- Trying to obtain extra money to gamble with
- Multiple ATM withdrawals
- Changing a lot of money or changing money often
- Putting big wins straight back into machine
- Being overly attached to a particular machine
- Waiting for venue to open
- Complaining even when winning.



Scenario 2: What signs would prompt staff to intervene?



Ask patron
to leave

Do
something



Offer advice
& help

- *Aggressive, abusive, violent behaviour – ‘because then they’re becoming a danger to themselves and others’.*
- *Trying to borrow money - ‘if we catch you once more we will actually get you removed from the club’.*

Only if opening provided:

- *Here all day every day and I had family members ringing for them ... Then I would probably look into that situation*
- *I would probably do it if they brought it up somehow’.*
- *I wouldn’t approach unless ... they were actually pretty upset and daunted by what they had just done.’*

Scenario 2: Reasons for doing nothing

- *'You've been told you don't do that unless they approach you'.*
- *'Our bosses would not want us to'.*



Scenario 2: Deterrents for staff



- **Difficulty of being sure the patron has a gambling problem** – *‘we don’t know how much money they earn’.*
- **Getting gamblers to acknowledge the problem** - *‘you can’t make people do it. ... it’s their money and their life and their responsibility’.*
- **Invasion of privacy** - *‘what people do is really their own business’.*
- **Not a staff responsibility** – *‘the onus is put too much on the staff to look after people who should be looking after themselves’.*
- **Could lose the patron’s business** – *‘they’re only going to go to another hotel’; ‘I don’t interfere too much because it’s my job’; ‘we like the money in the till’.*
- **Conflicting interests** – *‘You can get into trouble with people themselves or with the establishment’.*

Scenario 2: Deterrents for staff

- **Unsure of staff boundaries** - *'we're not supposed to know they have a problem, we can't approach them, so how can we help them unless they ask us? Well we have to know what we are allowed to do and what we are not allowed to do'.*
- **Do not know how to approach a patron** - *'the approach isn't a problem if I knew how to word it properly and do it'.*
- **Worried about an angry reaction from the patron** - *"they're quite likely to turn around and smack me in the mouth Trying to keep the peace is the best thing"; 'you know if they're losing, don't go near them'.*
- **Requires staff confidence/experience** - *'Most of the people in this industry are under 20 ... they don't want to deal with all this pressure, trying to help people who genuinely need help'.*



Scenario 3: Significant other indicates concern

Highly variable responses



- Denial
- Advise it's up to the patron
- Do nothing

- Refer to senior staff
- Discuss options & provide counselling info to SO
- Monitor patron
- Meet with patron & SO
- Suggest counselling & SE
- Venue exclusion

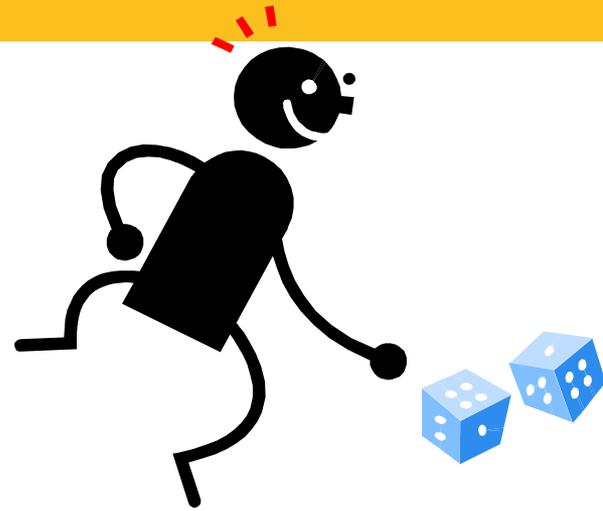
Scenario 3: Challenges for staff

- **Patron privacy** - *'the privacy of the patron is most important. I wouldn't be able to assist the family member'*.
- **Trigger family arguments** – *'all of a sudden you're becoming involved in a domestic'*.
- **Aggression** - *the third party might be '... aggravated ... blaming us, but there's really not a lot you can do except provide them with the information and just being polite, keep calm and hopefully that calms them down'*.
- **Patron in denial** – *'if a partner can't persuade the person to stop gambling then who am I to step in and try and stop them?'*
- **Allegation may not be genuine** - *'sometimes people use that as a tool to get back at someone', 'telling you that my mother's... spending my inheritance and I don't want her to do that'*.



Ways forward: for venues

- Staff training
 - recognising indicators of problem gambling
 - clearer direction and boundaries
 - system of red flags and required responses
 - systems to monitor and build a case history of patrons of concern
 - how and when to approach
 - what to say and how to assist
 - interpersonal communications skills
- Build staff-patron interaction & rapport
- Feedback for venue staff
- Address gambling problems amongst venue staff



Gambling problems amongst venue staff

- In Victoria, our survey of 533 hotel & club employees found:
 - 13.7% moderate risk gamblers (15 times higher than Vic population)
 - 5.6% problem gamblers (6 times higher than Vic population)
- In Queensland, our survey of 511 casino, hotel & club employees found:
 - 11.5% moderate risk gamblers (5.8 times higher than Qld population)
 - 4.5% problem gamblers (7.5 times higher than Qld population)
- Raises queries:
 - over capacity of venue staff to detect and intervene effectively with problem gamblers.
 - over venue RG practices if the biggest problem is with the very people who provide host responsibility and promote responsible gambling to gamblers.



Ways forward: closer links with gambling help agencies

- To raise awareness of gambling help services.
- To enable staff to put a face to a counsellor's name, so they can give patrons a more personal recommendation.
- To train staff in active listening, providing appropriate responses to patrons, and how to intervene in a discreet, sensitive and non-confrontational way.
- Staff can seek ongoing advice from counsellors on how to intervene or to make referrals for patrons.
- Counsellors & recovered gamblers can help humanise and increase staff understanding of PG



Ways forward: for patrons

- Patron education:
 - That they can ask venues for help
 - That SE is available (e.g. SA & current Qld studies)
 - That help services are available (e.g. GRA help-seeking study)
- Change patron expectations:
 - Currently, gamblers expect to be left alone to gamble, no questions asked.
 - But RSA experience shows this expectation can be changed.
 - Educate that overt problem gambling behaviour will prompt a venue intervention.
 - Educate that venue staff are acting within their rights and responsibilities when they approach a patron about their gambling.
 - Educate that staff are motivated to do so by concern for welfare.
 - Acceptance of interventions more likely if based on objective measure of PG behaviour through player tracking.



Conclusion

- At present, staff responses to people with gambling problems in the venue are focused most on *guiding* patrons who ask towards help for their gambling problems.
- But interventions need to be much more proactive to *prevent* gambling problems.
- And to *minimise* the harm from gambling.
- We continue to lack an effective response to people showing PG behaviours within the gaming venue.



Questions??



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