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Understanding the Self-Exclusion Process in the ACT

February 2016

Summary of Findings

The ACT Gambling and Racing Commission contracted The Australian National University's Centre for Gambling Research to conduct this research. The study recruited people with varying degrees of experience with self-exclusion in the ACT, gambling counsellors and gambling venue staff, and involved interviews with participants and participatory research methods.

The study was initiated immediately prior to the ACT Online Gambling Exclusion Scheme being implemented. This scheme introduced significant changes to how self-exclusion from gambling operates in the ACT. The study provides a benchmark on which future evaluation of the new Online Exclusion Scheme can be measured and provides a foundation of knowledge that will inform ongoing improvements to self-exclusion in the ACT.

Key results

The key results of the study are:

- Self-exclusion from gambling is an important, positive and empowering process for people experiencing harm from gambling in the ACT. There is potential for greater utilisation of self-exclusion to provide additional assistance to people experiencing gambling harm.
- People surveyed that had self-excluded or were considering self-exclusion were in a vulnerable position, reporting severe negative impacts of gambling in their lives, including depression and anxiety over the consequences of their gambling.
- The people interviewed found venue staff to be supportive and professional when approached for assistance and venue staff consider the self-exclusion process straightforward and positive.
- Venue staff were not confident initiating contact with people who may be experiencing gambling harm and indicated that additional training, particularly for Gambling Contact Officers would be of assistance.

- In addition to gambling help services, self-help groups were a significant source of support to most participants interviewed, who had very few supportive friends or family members in their life.
- The ACT Gambling Counselling and Support Service (the AGCSS) is an important service that is known and accessed by people who have self-excluded or are considering self-exclusion. The report suggested that gambling help services in the ACT work to further complement each other to improve people's awareness of the range of services available to them in the ACT.
- Gamblers who self-excluded were highly likely to breach their self-exclusion and the study revealed low rates of detection in identifying these gamblers. The report suggested that improved communication between stakeholders in the exclusion scheme would minimise an individual's likelihood of breaching their self exclusion.
- The report also noted that improvements are needed in the information that is made available to the community about self-exclusion in the ACT. The lack of consultation with people who have self-excluded was a limitation of the previous self-exclusion process.

Support is available

Anyone experiencing, or knows someone who is experiencing harm from gambling is urged to seek assistance.

Immediate and free assistance is available anytime by phoning the ACT Gambling Counselling and Support Service on 1800 858 858 or through the national Gambling Help Online service at www.gamblinghelponline.org.au