

**Submission
No 31**

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF GAMBLING

Name: Mr Ashley Gordon

Date received: 12/03/2014

To the **Legislative Council Select Committee on the Impact of Gambling**

I am currently an Indigenous Gambling Researcher and Gambling Consultant with Southern Cross University at Lismore and previously a Manager and gambling counsellor with seven years experience at Life Activities Inc in Newcastle. Currently I manage the NSW Aboriginal Safe Gambling Services which has been operating for three years. I have extensive experience in community education and in program design, development and delivery for Indigenous peoples and communities. I am primary author of both international and national conference papers resulting in exposure and worldwide recognition of Life Activities Inc Gambling Counselling Services and the Centre for Gambling Education and Research at Southern Cross University. For example:

International

- International Gambling Conference, Auckland NZ, Keynote speaker 2012
- Australian Indigenous Committee Member and Speaker for the International Indigenous Conference and Think Tank Conference in Aotearoa 2010
- International Conference on Impact of Gambling (Las Vegas) and presenter 2001

National

- Ministerial Expert Advisory Committee on Gambling
- Expert Advisory Group for the Australian Gambling Research Centre (AGRC)
- Various National and State Conference presentations

Previous roles included Secretary of the NSW Council for Problem Gambling and Former President of the Hunter Council on Problem Gambling.

I have worked on three Indigenous gambling projects with the Centre for Gambling Education and Research, with the primary role of Indigenous community engagement, interviews and consultation. For one of these projects, Indigenous Gambling in a Aboriginal Community (funded by the QOGR), I successfully consulted with over 150 individuals and organisations in this community to enable the administration of a doorknock survey of a census of Indigenous people in that community. This effective consultation resulted in widespread community support for the survey (80% response rate = 1000 individuals) and endorsement of the project by the Local Shire Council, the Mayor and staff, the Local Health Managers Forum, associated health Services, Rehabilitation Centre, the Justice Group, schools, employment services, and others.

The second Indigenous gambling project I worked on was the Exploring Indigenous Gambling Project, funded by Gambling Research Australia. This two-year project commenced in May 2008. My role consisted of consultations and interviews with Indigenous organisations, relevant government, social, welfare, counselling, community, legal and financial organisations, gaming venue managers and Indigenous gamblers and non-gamblers in northern NSW.

The second Indigenous gambling project I worked on was an ARC Discovery Grant on Indigenous gambling problems, risks and consequences. My role was to manage community engagement,

survey administration (N = 1,250) and interviews (N = 75) with Indigenous peoples and community leaders in NSW and Queensland.

Another Indigenous gambling project was conducted by the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW funded by the Responsible Gambling Fund. I provided voluntary and consultancy services to facilitate gambling information sessions, as part of the AH&MRC's project on Responding to Gambling Issues and Problems for Aboriginal Communities in NSW. I was on the Advisory Committee providing services on various projects, such as the development of an Aboriginal Screening Tool, Aboriginal Accredited Counselling Courses, and Awareness Campaigns.

A previous project included working for the Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA) which focused on the delivery of services to Aboriginal people. This project highlighted the barriers and issues on why Aboriginal people do not or are hesitant in seeking help.

I have visited more than 150 Aboriginal communities and spoken to more than 2000 people as part of the gambling research with Southern Cross University. This published research has highlighted alarming problems, trends and statistics, yet there seems to be minimal discussions and forward planning in this country.

I am currently the Manager of the Waruwi Gambling Help Program in NSW which seeks to directly engage community members including Elders, local professionals and service providers to encourage them to talk openly about gambling and discuss the potential harm of problem gambling. As part of this program, I facilitate workshops and host community events, promoting specialist problem gambling services where those affected by gambling can seek help. At the "Let's Talk About Gambling Workshops" attendees discuss gambling and develop action plans which address problem gambling within their community. An Aboriginal Gambling Helpline - 1800 752 948 - has also been set up to provide support, education and information.

The Objectives are:

- To raise community awareness about gambling, related issues and local interventions for Aboriginal people
- To provide information on local gambling related issues and how they can be addressed
- To provide information on local gambling services and how they can be improved.
- To provide opportunities for Aboriginal Community members & service providers to talk about gambling issues and impacts on their families.

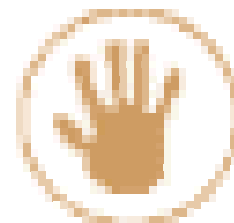
I have included information on Aboriginal Gambling and particular findings from our research for your reference. My published papers and reports I refer to in this submission are listed in Appendix A.

In addition I have developed some recommendations that I wish to discuss if possible in the future. Of particular interest is the Aboriginal Gambling Workshops that will be mentioned throughout this document, it is important to recognise that these have been trialled in various communities in Queensland and New South Wales. The Queensland and NSW Government had the Workshops reviewed by an Independent Consultant and it received excellent remarks and is still being implemented in communities throughout Australia. The issue of problem gambling in Aboriginal communities is very distressing and currently increasing significantly. I am very passionate about addressing problem gambling and its impact on Aboriginal people.

I hope that I can be of assistance and assist with any direction to address these important matters. I am looking forward to the opportunity to discuss my concerns, strategies and the future direction on Aboriginal Gambling. I can be contacted on _____ to discuss any questions or to arrange a meeting.

Regards

Ashley Gordon
Aboriginal Gambling Consultant and Researcher



Aboriginal Gambling

To begin addressing Indigenous Australians and gambling we must understand Aboriginal people, their culture and communities. The issues Aboriginal communities face are increasingly high; they often include grief and loss, unemployment, poor health, drug usage, high crime rates leading to high incarceration, poverty, alcoholism, poor concept of money, lack of social activities and a lack of opportunities. These issues that Aboriginal communities experience can contribute to the individual's need to gamble, identifying problem gambling and influencing the desire or ability to receive assistance. Unfortunately these issues are overshadowing the discussions and problems related to gambling. Gambling is a very sensitive topic and a concern many communities are either not willing to acknowledge or are unable to recognise how to begin addressing any of these problems. So many communities, services and government departments are focusing on existing issues that appear to be more important, i.e. alcohol, drug usage, mental health, poverty, homelessness etc. The failure to identify the seriousness of gambling in these communities is alarming, considering that gambling in Aboriginal communities can often be linked to most of them.

There are many reasons why people gamble and Aboriginal people gamble for the same reasons as the wider community. Some of the factors associated with a gambling dependency are boredom, the chase, loneliness, to socialise, excitement and low self esteem. According to our research with Southern Cross University the need to win money in hope to change their financial situation recorded the most responses. There is also a large tendency for Aboriginal people to use gambling as a form of escapism. There is evidence to suggest that many Aboriginal people can easily be enticed by marketing traps used by gambling venues, include limited education around gambling especially poker machines highlighting why most Aboriginal people have issues with this popular gaming form. A major concern is a large majority of younger people are learning the gambling behaviour from their family, elders and community.

Many Aboriginal people may find it difficult to identify or admit they have a gambling problem. If you have an Aboriginal person with a number of issues they find it difficult to isolate or understand what is a gambling problem or the magnitude of the problem/behaviour. Their perception of what is right and wrong is distorted as many people from their community are experiencing similar problems. An example of this is when gambling is played frequently and people accept it is a part of their daily routine and way of life. In most communities gambling is still not recognised as a problem and is therefore not discussed or addressed. Equally important is the lack of numeracy and literacy issues many Aboriginal people possess, this is closely linked to our management of money and budgets.

Aboriginal people find it difficult to locate a service that best supports their needs. They often avoid an organisation fearful that they will not be supported correctly. Feedback from many gambling counselling services, Indigenous organisations and community members suggest that there are extremely high numbers of people who have gambling problems and their needs are not being addressed. Indigenous people have difficulty seeking support from Indigenous services through fear of confidentiality in their community. Accessing services is often problematic because of transport and isolation difficulties, for both the service provider and the client. Isolated communities and problems with cultural awareness may provide further barriers when accessing these services. However the most popular reason why Aboriginal people do not access non-Indigenous services is a lack of confidence with the service to understand and recognise their cultural needs and sensitivities. The second most important reason is that Aboriginal feel shame regarding admitting they may have a

problem and seeking help, this is obviously closely related to poor self esteem and confidence. The gambling help industry in this country requires a total review as gambling counselling is promoted as the preferred therapy for Aboriginal people. There seem to be very limited alternatives other than foreign treatment models.

Aboriginal people who do access a gambling counselling service, often leave this support before completing the program. This often occurs because the staff may not be trained or confident when communicating and supporting Aboriginal people's needs. There are many programs that services are implementing which are not suited to the needs of this culturally diverse group. The majority of services are unable to provide a flexible approach required for this client group (cultural appropriateness, session times, session length, session frequency, outreach support, presenting information in a format that is easily understood, adapting assessments, interventions/therapies to Aboriginal people). In the 2012/13 financial year, 223 clients (i.e. 5.8% of all clients across NSW) identified themselves as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander to Gambling Help Services. These clients had an average of four sessions each in 2012/13, and 42% of these Aboriginal clients attended only one session. As a comparison, clients across NSW had an average of 4.7 sessions each in 2012/13, and 32% of these clients attended only one session.

To encourage Aboriginal people to attend these services for gambling support, effective community consultation and engagement should occur. Service providers must build rapport and trust before any direct support can be implemented. Presently funding guidelines are preventing this important community and cultural process.

Current trends of Aboriginal gambling activities suggest that Aboriginal people spend significantly more money on cards games in remote communities and in large towns or cities it is gaming machines, more evident in Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia. Presumably this is influenced by the ease of access and the population of machines in the area. The issue of card playing in remote communities is significantly different and requires different and tailored programs for each community. Research will suggest that the problem gambling rates are approximately 30% in remote communities where card playing has no regulation.

Gambling has a significant effect on Aboriginal communities, given the higher rates of unemployment experienced by Aboriginal people and their lower levels of income. Research has shown that poor socio-economic communities gamble more than higher income communities; the majority of Aboriginal communities are poor socio-economically. It is a significant problem for Aboriginal men and directly affects their families, and their communities. The level of gambling by adults in many Aboriginal communities is also contributing to the increasing numbers of children gambling. This is a damaging societal trend that requires change before the gambling problem escalates to the level of damage felt by Aboriginal communities as a result of alcohol and substance abuse.

The Need to Address Aboriginal Gambling

- Where gambling problems are more prevalent in an Aboriginal community than amongst the general population, there is an obvious need to address gambling issues in that community. Higher rates of gambling problems are a common feature of Indigenous populations, both in Australia and elsewhere. Other prevalence studies involving Indigenous Australians have found higher than average rates of gambling problems (e.g. Dickerson et al., 1996; Productivity Commission, 1999; Hockings, Young, Falconer & O'Rourke, 2002; Queensland Department of Corrective Services, 2005; Queensland Government, 2005, 2008). Further, international epidemiological surveys have described 'alarmingly high' rates of problem gambling amongst First Nation populations in Canada, the United States and New Zealand (McGowan & Nixon, 2004:7). Thus, the prevalence results of our latest research largely align with previous research and also point to a more generalised need to address gambling issues amongst Indigenous populations. These prevalence rates (N = 1,259) were 23.4% were non-gamblers, 28.0% non-problem gamblers, 12.5% low risk gamblers, 16.6% moderate risk gamblers and 19.5% problem gamblers (Hing, Breen, Gordon & Russell, 2013)..
- A high proportion of gamblers who already have or are at risk of developing gambling problems reveals a different pattern of gambling problems to that of the non-Indigenous population. It has been observed in other studies of Indigenous populations (Bellringer et al., 2005) where the population contains proportionately large numbers of non-gamblers and proportionately large numbers of problem and at-risk gamblers. Thus, current state wide or state based primary, secondary and tertiary public health measures seem to be having little, if any, impact; other measures are required for this and similar communities to prevent gambling problems, minimise harm, lower risks and encourage either abstinence or responsible levels of gambling.
- While the types of impacts arising from gambling problems in Aboriginal communities appear similar to those in other populations, resource-sharing and expectations of reciprocity, large families and extended family networks mean the impacts of gambling problems disseminate throughout Indigenous communities more readily than in non-Indigenous communities. The number of people affected by each problem and at-risk gambler is therefore undoubtedly higher as well. For example, where families 'bail out' the gambler with assistance with paying bills, buying groceries and paying rent, the financial impacts of gambling are borne by non-gamblers as well; where gambling negatively impacts on children, larger families mean that more children are affected. Higher proportions of people affected by each gambler, coupled with higher proportions of people with gambling problems, means that the harmful consequences of gambling can permeate a community – the ripple effect is both wider and deeper.
- Latest research confirmed that, where people grow up in a household with adults who gamble, they are more likely to have gambling problems in later life. That is, gambling has intergenerational effects. Thus, a failure to address gambling problems amongst today's adults will lead to a continuance and escalation of gambling problems in future generations.
- Research also confirmed that easy access to gaming machines and card playing in particular encourage high rates of gambling participation, frequency, session duration and expenditure and are particularly associated with gambling problems. Where access to both these forms of gambling is easy and unlikely to diminish, at least in the short-medium term, measures to prevent and address gambling problems are needed in the community.
- There is a substantial level of concern amongst Aboriginal community members and health groups about gambling problems and their impacts in the community. On a positive note, this means that measures to address these issues should be well received in most Aboriginal communities.

Why is it important to address gambling issues in Aboriginal communities?

- Gambling problems are much more common in Aboriginal communities than what is currently recognised.
- Research suggests that most Aboriginal people who gamble are at risk of developing a gambling problem, or already have a severe gambling problem.
- Gambling problems have serious impacts on the gambler, children, other family members and the community.
- Gambling by adults influences gambling by children when they grow up around it - it has inter-generational effects.

Risk Factors

The pattern of recreational, low risk, moderate risk and problem gambling does NOT vary by: age, sex, marital status or sources of income.

Thus, any measures to reduce gambling problems in Aboriginal communities need to include all socio-demographic groups.

But, there are some other factors that distinguish Aboriginal people with gambling problems. These risk factors include.

- Gambling Behaviour
- Childhood Influences
- Wrong Beliefs About Gambling
- Alcohol & Other Drugs
- Reasons for Gambling
- Access - Gaming machines and card playing seem particularly associated with gambling problems in Aboriginal communities. Card playing in remote communities and poker machines where access to poker machines is readily available.
- Lack of leadership, especially from elders
- Unemployment

Gambling problems can be experienced by people of any age, gender or marital status.

Why is it important for an effective awareness campaign to be introduced about gambling in Aboriginal communities?

An emphasis should be placed on implementing a community awareness educational campaign on gambling to Aboriginal people. At this stage problem gambling is NOT acknowledged as a community issue and therefore an awareness campaign would assist in providing further education. It is important to recognise that Aboriginal communities require an issue such as gambling to be drawn to their attention, discussed and acknowledged before any measures are to be put into place.

- It helps local people, families, and health and welfare agencies to better understand the impacts of gambling in the community and to develop strategies to address gambling problems.
- The latest research into Gambling in Aboriginal communities can inform potential early intervention, prevention and treatment programs for people with gambling problems, those at risk of developing gambling problems and others affected by gambling.
- Advertising is often the most popular form of community awareness initiative used, but unfortunately it is not the most effective for communities who are not yet aware of any gambling problems they may be experiencing.

Education and Awareness Message

- Gambling eventually leads to financial losses, not gains, so people should only gamble what they can afford to lose. Gambling is not a wise strategy for financial gain.
- Dispel false beliefs around gambling and educate people how gambling works.
- Explanations of chance, randomness and the futility of chasing gambling losses would be useful.
- Discourage alcohol and drug use while gambling as these influences often lead to heavier gambling and gambling problems.
- Emphasise the harmful effects of gambling on the gambler, family members and the community. These include the financial impacts arising from gambling more money than is affordable and chasing losses, which can then lead to insufficient money for household essentials; emotional problems such as guilt and depression; relationship problems including household arguments, violence and losing contact with children; and community impacts where heavy gamblers become a drain on others.
- Emphasise the serious effects of gambling on children and discourage underage gambling and exposure of children to gambling.
- Emphasise that once a person becomes a gambler they are unlikely to avoid gambling problems, so it is best not to gamble at all.
- Provide indicators to help people recognise if they or someone close to them has a gambling problem.

- Most Aboriginal people would seek help for gambling issues from people close to them, so community awareness of gambling problems, what to do about them and how to advise or assist others needs to be raised.
- Encourage people to not give money to gamblers as this will drain family and community resources. Instead, encourage the gambler to address the underlying gambling problems.
- Provide clear pathways for people and their families to get help for gambling problems.
- Provide financial literacy education to build knowledge and skills in budgeting.

Target Groups

There need to be messages that target different socio-demographic groups in Aboriginal communities, such as younger and older people, men and women, and singles and those with dependants.

There is also the opportunity to deliver community education and awareness sessions to existing groups that already meet regularly, such as the Aboriginal men's and women's health groups, cultural groups, justice groups, local football teams, arts and crafts groups, etc, and at venues where people already congregate, such as the Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout Carnival, PCYC, Councils, sport and recreation centres, child care centres, aged persons' hostels and rehabilitation centres, to name just some possibilities.

There is a priority need for schools based gambling education and awareness measures to decrease the risks of today's young people and children developing gambling problems in later life.

Suggested Community Early Intervention Training

- Ideally there should be local community staff/Officers to be appointed and trained to be a first contact for people wishing to discuss and address gambling-related issues.
- Existing health workers working in physical, mental, social and emotional wellbeing would benefit from early intervention training around gambling, as would Indigenous health services in and around the community. Elders, church leaders and other respected members of the community whom local people are likely to turn to for assistance should be trained in providing appropriate advice, guidance and pathways to help for gambling problems.
- Educators and school counsellors who may be involved in schools-based education and awareness measures. The above mentioned target groups should attend the two day workshop at their community.
- Most communities will support having one or more Community Liaison Officers or local staff/Officers to assist people to seek help for any gambling issues. These liaison officers/staff would be a first contact for people with or affected by gambling problems, be able to advise on help-seeking options available and put the affected person in touch with

relevant services. Thus, there is the opportunity to train numerous local people in this role throughout each state.

- Nevertheless, most people would prefer to access a help service in their local community. In the future consideration should be given to establishing a dedicated gambling help service, staffed by Indigenous counsellors and community educators particularly in large towns or cities.
- However, an alternative is to train some staff in the existing health services in problem gambling help and treatment. In NSW there are several health organisations which appear to be widely known and reasonably well utilised by local people. There is the opportunity to harness the local confidence in these services to provide gambling help within the community.

Because of the holistic view of health and wellbeing, there is a need to integrate awareness of gambling issues across the range of health and wellbeing programs already operating in Aboriginal communities. Gambling may be just one of a number of problems people face. Thus, all existing services and programs can help to address gambling problems in the community by being able to offer clear pathways to help for those affected by gambling problems and to address other issues contributing to and resulting from gambling problems.

- There is also the opportunity to build closer links with Gambling Help Services funded by the state governments and for local services to be proactive in offering assistance to community members affected by gambling problems.
- However, it is clear that most Aboriginal people who require assistance are unlikely to utilise the services provided by a Gambling Help Service until the service has an Indigenous counsellor or they have established a positive rapport with that community. For a Gambling Help Service to offer appropriate services to those most in need, the appointment of or community contact in the area is essential. The long term objective is to have an Indigenous gambling counsellor, or Financial Counsellor or community Educator/Liaison Officer based at various locations. Given that there are currently very few Indigenous gambling counsellors working around Australia, strategies to train and recruit Indigenous people into these roles is a priority.
- Non-Indigenous gambling counsellors would benefit from training in cultural awareness and sensitivity. They need to be able to recognise the interaction of structural, health and social barriers to the wellbeing of Indigenous people and communities and be able to refer people to appropriate related services. This cultural awareness training should be specific to Aboriginal people and communities affected by gambling.
- A culturally appropriate gambling screen to assess the presence and severity of a gambling problem amongst Indigenous clients is also necessary as current screening tools have not been validated for Indigenous Australians. This screening tool is close to being finalised and should be a part of the training for Aboriginal people, relevant organisations and Gambling Counselling services.

Recommendations

I recommend to the Select Committee on the Impact of Gambling ten strategies be considered to address the growing concerns of Aboriginal gambling. Please note that some of these suggestions are already being implemented. They are:

1. Indigenous Community Engagement and Consultation

Indigenous Australian communities have different relationships to those that exist within non-Indigenous Australian society. That is, a whole of community approach is taken toward the resolution of many issues and as such, Indigenous communities deal with problems that are individualised internally before they are recognised as a 'crisis'. This means that the approach to community consultation, engagement and capacity building is necessarily different to that for non-Indigenous Australians, and is dictated primarily by "cultural considerations". The community engagement and consultation process will be conducted with key organisations and agencies, as well as interested community members. This will be achieved by visiting each of these communities and holding numerous meetings with various people. All relevant community members will be invited to attend a workshop if the needs arises (using the general media such as posters, local newspapers, newsletters and/or radio). Additionally, specific community agencies and organisations will be targeted and invited personally by telephone, email or letter. These include Traditional Owners, the local Aboriginal Lands Council, Elders, the local Men's' and Women Group Coordinators, Justice Group Coordinators, local Indigenous organisations, relevant regional government departments, police, leadership organisations, and others as identified through a snowball sampling approach. Advice from these contacts will also be sought to ensure the appropriate approach for the project is undertaken. Each of these communities will be visited regularly to ensure effective community consultations, to build meaningful relationships and for a more in-depth examination of any best practice services and/or follow-up meetings with relevant people and organisations which may need to take place.

2. A Community Awareness Campaign

An emphasis should be placed on implementing a community awareness educational campaign on gambling to Aboriginal people. However at this stage problem gambling is NOT acknowledged as a community issue and therefore an awareness campaign should follow the community engagement and possibly a Gambling Workshop. These campaigns would be implemented to assist provide further education and awareness but ideally it has more impact when the community is involved and active in the process. The most effective community awareness campaigns implemented in Aboriginal communities are often organised and facilitated by local people. It is vitally important to ensure Indigenous and Non-Indigenous services are ready and capable after the campaign so that Aboriginal people's needs are dealt with immediately if they require gambling help.

3. Indigenous Community Gambling Education and Support Workshops

An important strategy recommended for Aboriginal communities is Indigenous Gambling Education and Support Workshops. Firstly this would provide gambling education and awareness to various Aboriginal people in communities. It would equip local people and agencies such as Aboriginal Medical Centre staff, Men and Women Group's, Mental Health Workers etc to provide support, education and improve pathways to gambling counselling services. Ongoing support, mentoring and education would be necessary to maintain consistency, confidence and genuine outcomes. It is important to understand that the issue of problem gambling should be discussed and highlighted within an Aboriginal community as early as possible. Once a community recognises gambling and its impacts only then will Aboriginal people begin to tackle the issue. The workshop is providing local people with skills and knowledge to assist others who may have gambling problems, particularly helping others how to recognise the signs. Research suggests that gambling is linked to other issues currently being focused on in Aboriginal communities, so the content and skills gained will help people see the connection. Furthermore the community can discuss and develop a Community Action Plan to deal with gambling problems at a local level. The workshop concentrates on providing community awareness which leads to community ownership, an effective and proven strategy that will lead to addressing the issue.

4. An Indigenous Gambling Screening Tool.

The development of an Indigenous screening tool should be developed to assist community workers to more easily identify and address problem gambling issues in their communities. The resource can be given to a person who maybe experiencing gambling issues by an Aboriginal person in their community, not necessarily by a Gambling Counselling Service. This resource would assist Aboriginal people recognise whether they have a problem and it would provide further support and encouragement to each individual. This process would improve a current significant barrier of Aboriginal people accessing Non-Indigenous Gambling Counselling Services. This Indigenous Screening Tool which is close to being complete would be a component of the Indigenous Community Gambling Education and Support Workshops.

5. Cultural Awareness Training and Support to Gambling Counselling Services

Research indicates that Aboriginal people do not seek help and support from Non-Indigenous Gambling Counselling Services. There is also sufficient evidence to highlight that these services struggle to effectively access Aboriginal people and implement culturally appropriate services. Further cultural awareness training is required to achieve

- Education, understanding and skills to Gambling counselling services.
- Culturally specific interventions for Aboriginal communities, at risk gamblers and problem gamblers.
- Provide strategies to non-Indigenous services that would assist relationship, rapport and trust within Aboriginal communities.

- Education on effective marketing, assessments, and interventions for Aboriginal people.
- Strategies to improve relationships and utilisation of Aboriginal services

Non-Indigenous Counselling Services are invited to attend the second day of an Indigenous Community Gambling Education and Support Workshop. This would assist the service to better understand Aboriginal people and their communities. Furthermore it demonstrates the service is enthusiastic, authentic and cares for Aboriginal people as it brings the parties together to discuss and plan the ways forward to address gambling problems. Furthermore these Non-Indigenous Gambling Counselling Services are visible and begin to improve their rapport and relationship with Aboriginal people. I believe it is vital for these service providers to learn cultural awareness training specific to the issue of gambling, both for the individual and community. This strategy will also link local Aboriginal people to Non-Indigenous Gambling Services so then improve the referral pathways for Aboriginal people.

6. Accredited Gambling Counselling Courses or Financial Counselling for Aboriginal people

The delivery of Gambling or Financial Counselling by an agency that is within the communities and already providing diverse counselling is suited to address Aboriginal gambling. This approach would also alleviate the issues such as privacy and confidentiality in the communities. That is, people can access gambling counselling without being readily identified with gambling issues as the agencies deals with other wellbeing issues in the communities. This approach applies more to country and rural areas addressing the issue of remoteness and having Gambling Counselling services travelling considerable distances.

If this cannot be achieved then we should aim to have Trained Aboriginal Gambling or Financial Counselling Counsellors employed by Gambling Counselling services. This would be a long term plan as it is not the answer to begin tackling problem gambling in Aboriginal communities until other strategies have been implemented. Currently there are approximately six Indigenous people working in the Gambling Help Industry in Australia, this statistic is alarming when you consider the size of the industry but also the prevalence rates of Aboriginal problem gamblers.

7. Indigenous Gambling Resources (educational and promotional materials)

Community awareness and education programs should be developed within the specific communities using local people to develop posters, pamphlets, CD's/videos, plays and culturally appropriate resource materials. This awareness building should ideally be put in place utilising the local Aboriginal Services i.e., Medical Centres. Ideally this approach would operate more effectively if it was a part of their funded service delivery. This community capacity building approach utilises existing services and people who already have a rapport with the community and understand their local community dynamics. This approach should create better access, more community ownership and a clear referral path for people wanting gambling counselling services in their community.

8. Aboriginal Gambling Help Service

The role is to provide information and mentoring which would ensure confidence, consistency, authenticity and a professional approach after any Cultural Training undertaken. The Aboriginal Gambling Help Service can provide further direction, guidance and support to the following target groups. It is also a strategy to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of Gambling Counselling Organisations service delivery. The Help Service would be for the following target groups

- The Aboriginal people who have completed the Two Day Course
- Gambling Counselling Services Staff
- Aboriginal people who have completed the Accredited Gambling or Financial Counselling Courses
- Researchers who are targeting Gambling in Aboriginal communities
- Current and new Indigenous staff employed in the Gambling Help Industry

9. Aboriginal Gambling Helpline

A telephone Helpline would provide support, guidance and short term counselling for Aboriginal people who are interested to learn more about gambling or have identified has having gambling problems. The service would also assist the client understand the referral process and support them to ensure they are comfortable and relaxed.

10. Community Diversionary or Healing Program

During the Gambling Workshop the participants discuss gambling related strategies that could benefit their community. The intention is to allow the community to provide input and develop strategies at a local level, particularly useful in remote communities. The benefit of this program is it focuses on offering the community ownership and accountability, vital characteristics often lacking when trying to address community issues. The Aboriginal Healing programs can be tailored to suit Aboriginal people with a particular focus on dealing with relevant cultural issues. Research suggests that Aboriginal people are reluctant to seek professional support from Gambling Counselling Services; therefore it would be beneficial to include credible Cultural Healing Programs to assist people to confront various problems especially gambling related issues.

Examples of a Diversionary and Cultural Healing Programs include

- Cultural Activities (basket weaving, making artefacts, Aboriginal dance, cultural camps, fishing etc)
- Aboriginal Men and Women's Group – designed to provide support, counselling and guidance for Aboriginal people in a group setting
- Exercise or Sports Activities (touch football competitions, netball competitions, walking groups etc)
- Red Dust Healing, Black on Track and Rekindling the Spirit Programs

Appendix A: Ashley's Gordon's publications referred to in this submission

- Hing, N., Breen H., & Gordon, A. (in press). Consequences of commercial gambling for Indigenous communities in New South Wales, Australia. In *Gambling: Cultural Attitudes, Motivations and Impact on Quality of Life*. Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science Publishers.
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