

Hi

I would like to make comment for the gambling reform and the advertising in media.

I am a compulsive gambler in recovery for 4 years and as should be known, you are never recovered, you are always in recovery and have to be careful not to let the wheels fall off.

Whilst my gambling of choice was the pokies, it still has an effect on me – as an avid sports fan, to have gambling thrown in my face constantly throughout a match and also in TV advertisements.

I would just like to put forward the views of a compulsive gambler and my story – as it may help and I am quite open about my experiences.

My gambling started getting worst about 7 years when I started experiencing depression and anxiety for personal reasons – this saw gambling escalate as it was an “escape” from reality. I would also at times bet on the footy and the horses but mainly the pokies.

My days were full of thoughts of finish time off work and getting to the machine. I am quite an intelligent person and can see when people have problems, but was not able to see it myself. I knew that I should not go and would tell myself that- but my body had its own idea's and it would just get changed and up to the club I go. The same would be with people that bet on the TAB etc.

Once I ran out of money and was in debt, realisation hit and I sought help at GA in my local area. This was the best thing – as it made me finally admit (I was in denial even walking in to the first meeting) I did have a problem and the people in the room were just like me – the area I live in includes the suburb of Wahroonga – so there would be some rather affluent people there.

I have seen people that have gone to jail for stealing to finance their gambling, lose their homes from gambling, lose their families, lose their business and on one occasion, nearly lose their life through an unsuccessful suicide attempt.

Gambling is a HUGE problem in Australia and it is not limited to just one part of the socio economics parts of the country – it is the rich, the middle class (me) and the poor. People are having their lives ruined – I am lucky – I had one go at giving up through GA and successful first go – most are not that lucky and have a few busts before they beat it.

There are restrictions on smoking advertising – that has been successful in reducing the number of smokers in the country – the same should be done for gambling. I am going to be on 3 months sick leave, sitting at home with a leg in plaster following foot surgery in May – and with a licensed club just around the corner and boredom being most likely high, the temptation will be there – it is just TOO easy! So I have to be very mindful – and being a footy nut – I will have gambling thrown at me many days of the week on the TV. Dangling something like Tom Waterhouse saying that if your team is favourite and behind at halftime we will refund your money – gives me a thought of well – that sounds like a win – and getting those thoughts in a gamblers mind, will start to get them thinking they can go gambling ..... its dangerous!

As I said – I am a intelligent, responsible “normal” person – I am in my late 40's, not married, have sustained ongoing employment with the commonwealth public service since 1980 (33 years) when I was 15 and continue to do so, I do not smoke or drink – yet – cannot gamble as I have no way of controlling it for some reason.

My father – is an alcoholic and has an addiction to prescription drugs and his life has been ruined from this – this, is my reminder to stay clean from gambling – as he has no contact with any family, suffers brain injury and has no hygiene skills. I went through (as did my family) a lot of trauma trying to get him to admit his addiction but he never was able to. Most people that go to the GA meetings – there is a trend of family members with different addictions. We were advised by my fathers medical staff that we are high risk of being alcoholics, so I made a choice to no longer drink – didn't see the gambling problem coming ..... so there is a fair bit to say it can be hereditary. My father too – was an intelligent person, went to a school for the gifted and worked a trade job during his working years and raised a family successfully until he had his problems when we were young adults.

I am very open with my story – the only thing private is my surname – so please feel free to pass this on to any appropriate person/s.

Thanks  
Jenny