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Committee Secretary  
Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Australia

Dear Committee Secretary

### **SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON GAMBLING REFORM**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

I am a transpersonal counsellor and hypnotherapist. I am an Australian citizen and I live in Melbourne. Since 1995 I have studied gambling and problem gambling. I was formerly the Commercial/Legal Officer with the Victorian Casino Control Authority. Between 1996 and 2010 I chaired a charitable/educational organization, Know The Odds Inc. that educated to prevent the harmful effects of problem gambling.

I would be happy to provide further materials upon request.

I request the opportunity to appear before the Committee.

#### **PURPOSE OF THIS SUBMISSION**

This submission examines pre-commitment in the context of the hypnotic trance known as “the zone” induced in problem gamblers by the machines which are hypnotic devices. The submission is designed to show:

- Why a full pre-commitment system is required;
- How the pre-commitment system will affect the behaviour of the entranced player.

Before getting into the detail of the submission there are just a few matters to mention.

- (a) In making this submission I remain adamant these machines, where they incorporate starved reels, are racketeer’s cheating devices. They are crooked games that have no place in Australia.
- (b) These machines are notorious as very dangerous devices and other harm minimization measures recommended by the Productivity Commission have not been carried out. Thus the full responsibility for limiting the harm caused by these machines falls on this one

measure. Accordingly, the most stringent scheme of player pre-commitment must be applied.

- (c) The pre-commitment arrangement as I envisage it would be as follows. A smart card similar to the new credit cards used by the banks would contain loss limiting parameters input by the player and fingerprint verification details. The machines would only work whilst the card is in them and the fingerprint checked. The machine would debit losses and credit wins to the card in real time and stop play if the player's losses exceeded the wins by the amount of permissible loss pre-selected under the card. As to loss limits and lead times for pre-committing, I would rely on the advice of the former problem gamblers. There would have to be a procedure for ensuring only one card was issued to each gambler but apart from that the fingerprint details and all the calculations could be limited to the card itself.

### **ABSTRACT OF SUBMISSION**

- 1) The machines are hypnotic devices which put the problem gambler (the "pokies zombie") into a trance (the "zone").
- 2) A person in a trance undergoes changes in their cognitive functions which render them vulnerable.
- 3) The machines use hypnotic conditioning in the form of suggestions on the hypnotized player – starved reel cheating, losses described as wins, video slot tactic and archetypal symbolism.
- 4) Gaming machine addiction can be explained in terms of Dennis Wier's trance theory which explains trances as cognitive loops and addictive trances as systems of interlocking cognitive loops.
- 5) The hypnotic conditioning maintains the trance during play (monkey loop) but also results in post-hypnotic conditioning outside periods of play (taboo and locking loops).
- 6) Pre-commitment can limit the monkey loop.
- 7) Limiting the monkey loop will not end the addictive trance but it should limit the financial and psychological damage.
- 8) Ideally, the pre-commitment act should be performed whilst the problem gambler is outside the gaming room and not in a trance state.
- 9) Former problem gamblers are best qualified to estimate how problem gamblers will use pre-commitment.

## 1. MACHINES AS HYPNOTIC DEVICES

### 1.1 Origin of Hypnosis by Fascination

The term “hypnotism” was first used in the English speaking world by the Scottish physician, James Braid in 1843. Braid’s method relied on “*telling subjects to ‘think only of sleep’ while having them stare at a ‘bright object’ (usually his lancet case) that would be put in a position to cause ‘the greatest possible strain upon the eyes’*”.<sup>1</sup>

Rosenfeld, author of “*A Critical History of Hypnotism*” writes of Braid, “*his tactic of ‘fixed gazing’ at bright objects had already been known in bygone times by the name ‘fascination’*”.<sup>2</sup> Rosenfeld quotes source indicating the art of “fascination” was practiced in ancient Egypt and was described by the Roman word “*fascinatio*”. Braid attributed the phenomenon to “over-excitation of the optic nerve”<sup>3</sup>

Weitzenhoffer, an author, quoted by Rosenfeld, considered both Braid’s “fixed gazing at bright objects” method and the “eye-stare” technique as forms of fascination. He described the reputation the technique had. “*As the notion of ‘fascination’ evolved, it ceased to be the sole property of the ‘fascinator’s’ eyes. It soon came to be identified with the action of any powerful attention compelling device ... It most commonly had the property of attracting or of immobilizing [the subject], of paralyzing his volition, and more generally of placing the will of the “fascinated” individual under the domination of the device or agent operating it.*”<sup>4</sup>

Engaging other senses such as auditory and tactile can serve to deepen the trance. The trance expert Dennis Wier writes: “*In NeuroLinguistic Programming or NLP, hypnotherapists speak of “different modalities”, that is, using words associated with different physical senses. They assert that it is the simultaneous use of different modalities which produces strong trance.*”<sup>5</sup>

Gaming machines use a mix of visual, auditory and tactile stimuli.

### 1.2 Sue Pinkerton

Sue Pinkerton, a problem gambling expert and former gaming machine problem gambler, was the first to correctly identify “the zone” as a hypnotic trance. It is difficult for any one who has not done trance work to understand. Sue made the point in an email to me dated 19 February 2007. It was not until I had commenced trance work in my studies at the Phoenix Institute of Victoria that I realized its significance. I quote from her email:<sup>6</sup>

*Only by knowing and accepting the reality of increased suggestibility that occurs during a hypnotic trance state (and continues for some time after coming out of the trance state) can we begin to understand why they become so depressed. After gambling in a hypnotic state, the subsequent loss of control and overspending is inevitably followed (during the post hypnotic*

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1 Saul Marc Rosenfeld “A critical History of Hypnotism – The Unauthorized Story” Xlibris Corporation 2008 at page 34

2 Rosenfeld at pages 33 and 34

3 Rosenfeld at page 33

4 Weitzenhoffer AM “General Techniques of Hypnotism” Grune and Stratton NY 1957 at page 118 – Rosenfeld at page 282

5 Dennis Wier “The Way of Trance” Trance Research Foundation Inc 2007 at page 89

6 Submission dated 21 July 2009 by Tim Falkiner to the Gambling Enquiry, Productivity Commission quoting correspondence from Sue Pinkerton in email dated 19 February 2007. [http://www.pc.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/90359/sub254.pdf](http://www.pc.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/90359/sub254.pdf)

*period when suggestibility is still high) by deep regret ....deep regret and shame evoke self blame and thoughts of self harm - a style of thinking about oneself that inevitably enters straight into the unconscious mind.*

### **1.3 Lynette Whale's description of "the zone"**

Set out below are phrases and sentences from one of the latest books on pokies gambling, it is written by the former New Zealand problem gambler Lynette Whale and titled, "*Pokies – Even when I win ... My journey through problem gambling*".<sup>7</sup> The notes in square italics are mine.

*The gaming machines began to hold a special magic to me, as I'm sure they do to countless others. The hypnotic lights and buzzers, rhythmic tunes, the counting up of credits and the amazing graphics are all there to seduce you.* [reference to hypnosis, rhythm, magic] {15}

*Bladder full, can't get up to go to the toilet, too engrossed ...* [loss/suppression of physical sensation] {15}

*... there was a sense of timelessness ...* [loss of track of time] {15}

*... it's as if part of your brain is lulled to sleep.* [dissociation, disabling of critical judgment] {15}

*You seem to exist in a "twilight zone".* [dissociation, the zone – another place where things are seen less clearly] {15}

*... enchanting songs.*<sup>8</sup> [enchantment – another word for entrancing, trance inducing] {15}

*That bliss of "time-out".* [high of trance, loss of passage of time] {15}

*The song "Comfortably Numb" from Pink Floyd's "The Wall" could have been written for the pokies gambler. "There is no pain, you are receding, a distant ship's smoke on the horizon. You are only coming through in waves. Your lips move but I can't hear what you're saying ... The child has grown, the dream has gone. And I have become comfortably numb."* [dissociation, loss of physical sensation] {16}

*It's numbing your reasoning mind ...* [splitting, dissociation, disabling of critical judgment] {16}

*You are simply there, in the moment.* [loss of passage of time, dissociation, literalism, short term memory loss] {16}

*... your mind is elsewhere and you can't wait to get back to your precious pokies.* [splitting, dissociation] {17}

*After this "gambling you" takes over the "reasoning you" comes back ...* [splitting, dissociation, losing and regaining of critical judgment] {17}

*You start to feel that you have split into two different personalities ...* [splitting, dissociation] {17}

*It is as if your sane, reasoning mind tries to outsmart your gambling mind.* [splitting, dissociation] {18}

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7 Lynette Whale "Pokies – Even when I win ..." Steele Roberts 2009 – numbers in paragraphs {} are page numbers

8 "Bewitch" and "enchant" both refer to a magical influence; the former in its literal sense suggesting witchcraft and the latter, sorcery. The Shorter OED includes in its definition of enchant: "to exert magical influence upon, to bewitch"; "influence as if by a charm; to hold spellbound". The connotation is an overriding of the will by occult means.

*It was as if I had become schizophrenic. [splitting] {19}*

*You feel betrayed, lied to by yourself. [splitting, delusions] {20}*

*It was as if I had been walking around in a daze, perhaps a little like an alcoholic on a bender. [dissociation, disabled critical judgment] {22}*

#### **1.4 Dr. Charles Livingstone**

In his Commodification of Interiority paper, Dr. Charles Livingstone interviewed a number of problem gamblers and wrote about their description of “the zone”. These are two excerpts from a number of similar descriptions in his paper.<sup>9</sup>

*“‘The zone’ is a particular space and time which is not consonant with the rest of life, according to those informants who reported experiencing it. The passage of time is observed, which may allow important commitments to be met, but, more commonly, the time marked for their observance passes by as the gambler notes, generally with detachment, that this has occurred. Time loses its usual importance in the regulation of human affairs. Similarly, problems associated with ‘normal’ life are not so much ignored as abandoned, or scrubbed of meaning. Playing the machine, an activity which, typically, can be repeated every 3 seconds or so, becomes the focus of all attention ...”<sup>10</sup>*

*“Mostly, those who spoke of ‘the zone’ described it as a place away from the world where nothing really mattered except the present, timeless moment. ...”<sup>11</sup>*

Once again, as in Lynette Whale’s description, we find the themes of dissociation, loss of the meaning of time, disabled critical judgment.

#### **1.5 Summary**

In short, what these authors are describing is a trance state. “The zone” is simply another phrase for a trance state.

The importance of the hypnotic trance in the addiction process cannot be underrated. The impact of all the tactics used by the machines must be assessed on the basis they are being used on a subject who is in a trance state and thus extremely vulnerable.

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<sup>9</sup> Dr Charles Livingstone, *Desire and the Consumption of Danger - Electronic Gaming Machines and the Commodification of Interiority* Addiction Research and Theory December, 2005, 13(6): 523–534

<sup>10</sup> Livingstone at page 528

<sup>11</sup> Livingstone at page 528

## **2. THE COGNITIVE FUNCTIONS DISABLED BY TRANCE**

### **2.1 List of Disabled Functions**

I am much indebted in my understanding of trance to Dennis Wier who is a retired computer systems engineer who has been studying meditation for forty years. Wier is the Executive Director and Founder of the Trance Research Foundation, Inc. and author of the book, *The Way of Trance*.<sup>12</sup>

Wier points out a person in a trance suffers from the disabling of a number of cognitive functions including:

- short-term memory failure;
- more general temporary memory loss;
- disabling of normal association structures;
- decrease in associative cohesiveness;
- increased literalism;
- increased suggestibility, credulousness
- disabling of critical judgment;
- enhanced inner involvement, including the production of so called delusions and/or visions of other realities.<sup>13</sup>

### **2.2 Short term memory failure/more general temporary memory loss**

I have had direct evidence of this in respect of gaming machines. One member of an audience I was lecturing to in Bendigo on 8 December 2010 advised me she would find herself playing a machine in a gaming venue without any memory as to how she got there. One moment she would be at home and the next she would be in front of the machine at a gaming venue, the intervening period being a blank. (In hypnotherapy a therapist can intentionally cause amnesia through suggestion, though it is generally reckoned undesirable.)

Andrew Austin, a British therapist, describes one early treatment.

*“I’m reminded of one of Bandler and Grinder’s clients in the early days who wanted to stop smoking. Since they were experimenting with hypnosis, they simply suggested that she forget that she had ever smoked in the first place. When she went home, her husband offered her a cigarette, and she said, “I don’t want one of those things.” He said, “Oh, you quit?” and she said, “I never smoked.” He would show her a photograph with a cigarette in her hand and she would negatively hallucinate the cigarette, “There’s no cigarette in my hand!” He would point to the nicotine stains on her fingers, and she would negatively hallucinate those as well. All this put quite a strain on their relationship. So they saw her again, restored her memory, and tried a more specific approach.”<sup>14</sup>*

### **2.3 Disabling of normal association structures/decrease in associative cohesiveness**

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12 Dennis Wier, “The Way of Trance” Trance Research Foundation Inc. 2007 – available from [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com)

13 Wier (Way of Trance) at page 39

14 Andrew T. Austin “The Rainbow Machine – Tales from a Neurolinguist’s Journal” Real People Press 2007 at page 157

One example of this is the wording of the songs by the Beatles in their hallucinogenic drug stage such as “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds” and “I am the Walrus”. Lines such as, “*Where rocking horse people eat marshmallow pies,*”, and “*Picture yourself on a train in a station, with plasticine porters with looking glass ties,*” and “*Semolina pilchard climbing up the Eifel Tower*”. The loss of normal association structures also occurs in dreams and schizophrenia.<sup>15</sup>

#### **2.4 Increased literalism**

I had an experience of this at the Phoenix Institute where, under trance, I was asked to place things on a large open plain but I was lying on my back and they would have fallen off. I started laughing and coming out of the trance.

Milton Erickson, the famous American hypnotherapist, told of a hypnotized girl instructed to meet her therapist in the middle of nowhere. The girl opened her eyes in the trance state and said, earnestly, “*There is something awfully wrong!*” The therapist did not know what was wrong but the hypnotized girl did. There is no middle of nowhere, it is vacant space.<sup>16</sup>

#### **2.5 Increased suggestibility, credulousness**

The famous French hypnotherapist, Coue, wrote: “*We have first to explain the existence of our two selves, he explained, conscious and unconscious, and to understand that the unconscious, though full of potentially invaluable resources which the conscious self lacks or is unaware of, is remarkably credulous.*”<sup>17</sup> This is another aspect of literalism.

#### **2.6 Disabling of critical judgment**

Short term memory loss, disabling of normal association structures, increased literalism and credulousness all lead to the disabling of critical judgment.

#### **2.7 Enhanced inner involvement, including the production of so called delusions and/or visions of other realities**

In trance, clients often intuitively understand the meaning of dreams, symbols and other unconscious expressions. They are closer to what Milton Erickson called “*unconscious learnings*”.<sup>18</sup> At the Phoenix Institute of Victoria, we, as students, found dreamwork combined with trance a most effective therapeutic method.

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15 Carl Jung “On the Psychogenesis of Schizophrenia” [1939] Collected Works Vol 3 “*Bleuler [Jung studied under Bleuler] himself points out the remarkable similarity between schizophrenic associations and the association phenomena in dreams and half-waking states.( page 506 ) ... To say that insanity is a dream that has become real is no metaphor. The phenomenology of the dream and of schizophrenia are almost identical, with a certain difference, of course, for the one occurs under the condition of sleep while the other upsets the waking or conscious state.( page 522)*”

16 Sidney Rosen ed. “My Voice will go with you – the teaching tales of Milton H. Erickson” Norton 1982 at pages 75 and 76

17 Coue (circa 1892) cited in “Trance - A Natural History of Altered States of Mind” Brian Inglis Grafton Books 1989

18 Sidney Rosen ed. “My Voice will go with you – the teaching tales of Milton H. Erickson” Norton 1982 at page 27





### 3. THE MACHINES USE HYPNOTIC CONDITIONING IN THE FORM OF SUGGESTIONS ON THE HYPNOTIZED PLAYER

#### 3.1 Starved reels (near misses) cheating device

This is a cheating device like the crooked cat game or the crooked milk bottle game, games used by unscrupulous carnival stall operators.<sup>20</sup> The machines are designed to make getting a line of symbols look much easier than it really is. The players assume the reels are the same. But in fact each symbol, e.g. the Jack, is starved on one of the first three reels. In the reel table shown below, the Jack is starved on reel 2. On reel 2 there is only one Jack whilst there are six and five on the adjoining reels – and four on each of reels four and five. The player will keep getting Jacks on reels one and three but miss the middle reel as the Jack is only about one fifth as likely to come up on that reel.<sup>21</sup>

**Machine**

Symbol	Reel 1	Reel 2	Reel 3	Reel 4	Reel 5	Actual Combinations	Perceived Combin.	
Nine	1	4	7	1	4	40	604	
Ten	1	5	5	4	4	400	711	
Jack	6	1	5	4	4	20	480	1024
Queen	6	5	1	4	4	240	604	
King	6	1	2	3	4	180	454	
Bast	1	2	1	1	1	6	2.5	
Ten	1	1	1	1	5	1	1	
Scarab	1	2	1	1	1	5	5.4	
Pyramid	1	3	1	1	1	5	5.2	
Isis	1	1	1	1	1	5	1	1

Annotations from the image:

- Nine starved on reel 1
- Ten starved on reel 1
- 9, 10, J, Q and K are all starved on one of the first three reels
- Queen starved on reel 3
- Jack starved on reel 2
- King starved on reels 2 and 3

Comparing the actual and perceived combinations the Cat God machine would appear to a player who thought the reels were balanced as though it would pay out about \$200 for every \$100 put in.

#### 3.1.1 Making \$17 million per year from playing a machine

And this is why you would make around \$17,000,000 per year playing a gaming machine if they were on the level. If they were not, to use Marty and Burkhardt's phrase (post), "super-rigged". You can see from the perceived combinations that if the symbols were spread evenly across the reels the machine would pay out about double the money put in. Thus assuming the machine is paying out at 200%, you are limited to \$5 bets and the machine

<sup>20</sup> Concealed asymmetry is the feature of these cheating devices. In the crooked carnival cat game, you throw balls at four stuffed toy cats to knock them off a shelf. The cats look the same but two are weighted so the game looks easy but it is hard to knock all the cats off the shelf and get a prize. The crooked milk bottle game, with skittles shaped like milk bottles, works the same way with three light bottles and two heavy.

<sup>21</sup> See the "Unbalanced Reel Gaming Machines" paper written by Roger Horbay (President of Game Planit Interactive Corporation, Canadian electronic gaming machine expert and problem gambling specialist, trainer and researcher) and the author which was delivered at the IPIC Conference in Melbourne 2006. It is published in a number of places on the web including [http://www.casinofreepa.org/images/documents/falkinder\\_horbay\\_09\\_09\\_06.pdf](http://www.casinofreepa.org/images/documents/falkinder_horbay_09_09_06.pdf).

was playing every three seconds you would win \$5 every three seconds. That makes 20 spins a minute at \$5 = \$100 per minute or \$6,000 per hour. Playing 8 hours per day gives you \$48,000 per day. You have to take Good Friday and Anzac Day morning off but even so, that gives you 363.5 playing days per year. Playing 363.5 days at \$24,000 would give you approximately \$17,448,000 per year. If you were unlucky, you may only make \$16 million or so.

So when a problem gambler believes he or she can win on the machines, that belief is well-founded. Problem gamblers do not have faulty cognition; they are being cheated. The increased literalism (2.4 above), suggestibility (2.5 above) and increased primary process thinking (2.7 above) would make them more vulnerable to the starved reel near miss.

The following are some comments on the starved reel device.

### **3.1.2 Devilish Cleverness – Professor Philip G. Fox**

Professor Philip G. Fox, a teacher of statistics at Wisconsin University. Fox (1959, p. 142)<sup>22</sup> wrote of the “devilish cleverness” of asymmetric reels,

*“I’m told the three dials clicking to a series of stops build up suspense far more effectively than the simultaneous halting of all dials. A glance at the arrangement of the symbols, given above, reveals the devilish cleverness of the setup. There are three bars on the second dial to raise hopes of a jack pot, but only one bar on the last dial. On the second dial there are no lemons which ruin a player; but four lemons on the third dial lower the boom on him.*

### **3.1.3 Seemingly Just Missing – Professor Jerome K. Skolnick**

Asymmetric reels, referred to as “differential placement of jackpot symbols” have misled generations of players with near misses according to Professor Jerome K. Skolnick (1978, p. 64):

*Generations of players have pulled slot machine handles and produced jackpot symbols on the first and second reels, seemingly just missing out on the jackpot. What happens is this: because of the differential placement of jackpot symbols players wrongly - though not necessarily consciously – believe that jackpot odds are something like 4 x 5 x 5 (100 out of 8000), while, in fact, the odds are 4 x 5 x 1 (20 out of 8000.) ...”*

### **3.1.4 A Cheating System - Australian Society of Magicians, Victorian Chapter**

The Australian Society of Magicians commented in their newsletter:

*... The most startling example was the fact that the symbols on the reels are not evenly distributed: six kings on reel 1, six kings on reel 3 but only two kings on reel 2. As only three symbols can be seen on each reel the unfortunate mug keeps believing he’s only missed a win by a couple of inches.*

*... You just cannot beat a cheating system folks.”<sup>23</sup>*

### **3.1.5 Incredibly Sneaky - Poker machines are super-rigged – Marty Ross and Burkard Polster, Melbourne mathematicians**

<sup>22</sup> Primer for Chumps by Professor Philip G. Fox – from Saturday Evening Post 21 November 1959

<sup>23</sup> Magic Makers Vol 57-04 page 9 – May 2007 newsletter of the Australian Society of Magicians

Two of Melbourne's leading mathematics educators regard the machines as "super-rigged":

*It is exactly this type of super-rigging that is programmed into the pokies. Think of the five poker machine wheels as 30-sided dice. Some wheels are starved of Jackpot symbols, which is then disguised by loading a few more Jackpot symbols on other reels. The consequence is that winning the Big Jackpot is much less likely than it appears. And, the chances of "just missing" - encouraging another go - is much more likely. ... The use of super-rigged poker machines is incredibly sneaky.<sup>24</sup>*

### **3.2 "Losses described as wins"- "winning" graphics/sounds on losing gross bets**

Associate Professor Kevin Harrigan from the University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada is responsible for raising this issue.<sup>25</sup>

Say the player bets 26 lines – say bet of \$5 total. The player will often win one line but usually less than \$5 - a net loss. However, the machine takes the winning line as a win and lights up and produces the winning sounds and graphics.

Harrigan measured the number of losses described as winnings at 180 per hour and considered this a huge reinforcement. According to Harrigan, the psychological testing and interviewing showed that LDWs resulted in the players perceiving they were winning most of the time. In effect the LDW design feature rewards the losing player by disguising losses as winnings.

When I first heard of this I did not consider it so bad. Not good, but just "aggressive advertizing". I gave evidence to this effect in answer to Senator Xenophon at an earlier Senate Committee hearing.

However, at the time I did not realize the enormous effect trance has on the suggestibility of the hypnotized player, the "zombie". Where the player is in a hypnotic trance this winning sounds and graphics would be accepted without question and would be very powerful hypnotic conditioning convincing the subconscious that the player was winning. I gave written evidence expressing my concern to the Productivity Commission in my submission letter dated 21 July 2009 which is posted on the Productivity Commission website.

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<sup>24</sup> 23 November 2009 "The Super-rigging of poker machines" – Education Age by Marty Ross and Burkard Polster

<sup>25</sup> 28 April 2010 "Why are Pokies So Addictive?" Notes from a lecture by Assoc Professor Kevin Harrigan, University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada on a visit to Melbourne (L.Beyer)

### **3.3 Video Slot Tactic**

#### **3.3.1 CBC News Camera Picks Up Images**

I had heard rumours of subliminal flashing on the video machines during the spin. In Ontario, Canada, February, 2007, a manufacturer was forced to withdraw gaming machines from the floor of the casino when a CBC film crew accidentally discovered that three brands of video slot machines flashed winning jackpot symbols for one-fifth of a second during every spin. The manufacturer's spokesperson told the CBC that the jackpot symbols were the result of a software glitch that the company would fix.<sup>26</sup>

#### **3.3.2 Technicians Chatting on Web**

In February 2010 I came across some chit-chat on the web between two gaming machine technicians who were discussing the "Unbalanced Reels Gaming Machines" paper written by Roger Horbay and me. After discussing the paper from an industry perspective one added the following.<sup>27</sup>

*"But regarding video machines, what they apparently don't know is that the strips you see rolling past during the game are not the same strips you see when the reels stop. There are "teaser" strips that show the punters lots of jackpot and high-pay symbols while the game runs, then as each reel stops, the machine cuts in the percentage strips for the last few steps. If they had known that, they surely would have made a huge fuss about it."*

And the other replied, "Good points. (psst -- I won't tell them about the video slot tactic if you don't." This was followed by three emoticons, one pulling faces and two rolling around laughing.

#### **3.3.3 Sue Pinkerton Photograph**

Recently I came across a photograph taken in Adelaide by Sue Pinkerton in 2005 of a machine screen which showed many images of the highest value jackpot symbol, a substitute symbol, on the last two reels which had not stopped spinning. It is clear that this machine is using the technique, the subject of the rumours.

I feel we must now assume that the video slot tactic is an industry standard and is being used in Australia. This is another subliminal suggestion to be added to the starved reel/near miss and winning statements on losing gross bets.

#### **3.3.4 Reputation of Subliminal Flashing**

I am not aware of any regulation against the video slot tactic. A quick check of the Australia New Zealand Gaming Machine National Standard Ver 10.1 date 5 February 2010 does not contain the words "tactic" or "subliminal" and a scan of the document does not disclose any prohibition against the video slot tactic.

So, what is the effect of subliminal flashing? In a 2007 dispute it was found that one Australian TV channel showed "very quick bursts of the sponsor's logo". I quote from the news article: 'Network Ten "Brainwashing" Viewers.'<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Ontario removes video slot machines flashing winning images  
<http://www.cbc.ca/consumer/story/2007/02/25/video-lottery.html#ixzz1C6WRBqIn>

<sup>27</sup> <http://newlifegames.net/nlg/index.php?topic=6532.0>

<sup>28</sup> 'Network Ten "Brainwashing" Viewers.' 7 November 2007 by Phil Han ninemsn

*“After a closer analysis of the telecast, it was revealed that the subliminal advertisements ranged anywhere from one frame per second, to four frames per second. That is .04 to .16 seconds, or considerably less time than the average eyeblink. Media experts say viewers cannot consciously take in a shot that short and that it must be regarded as subliminal advertising.*

*‘If we are being given little bursts of ads within our programs, it's an attempt to condition us outside our right to resist it,’ co-ordinator at UTS Insearch and media expert Dr Mike Minehan said. ‘It is far too rapid for us to be conscious of an image, and I would say that it's a deliberate attempt at subliminal advertising.’”*

### **3.4 Archetypal (Spiritual) Symbolism**

Another form of “suggestion” to which hypnotized problem gamblers are exposed is that of archetypal symbolism. As pointed out in 2.7 above, hypnosis sensitizes the hypnotized subject to motifs and symbolism for these are the language of the unconscious. These people are spiritually depleted. The New Age<sup>29</sup> religious themed machines have panels like church windows.

There is now clear evidence that escape gamblers have favourite machines based on hearts, dolphins, gods, goddesses, dragons and unicorns. There are four largely independent threads of evidence pointing to this: (1) observations of treatment providers, (2) Charles Livingstone’s “Commodification of Interiority” paper<sup>30</sup>, (3) my interpretation of the symbolism/symbolic syntax on machine panels<sup>31</sup> and (4) the “Loved Ones No. 3 table.”<sup>32</sup>

Symbolic analysis of the panels<sup>33</sup> discloses superb symbolic syntax<sup>34</sup>. Words which describe the traditional action machines are: solar, masculine, active, jocular, direct, competitive, logical and money – for escape machines: lunar, feminine, passive, reflective, subtle, nurturing, spiritual and love. Escape gamblers explain the money is important only insofar as it gives time on the machine and they value free spins highly.<sup>35</sup>

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29 *“New Age describes a broad movement in late twentieth century and contemporary Western culture characterized by an individual eclectic approach to spiritual exploration. ... ‘New Agers’ typically construct their own spiritual journey based on material taken as needed from the mystical traditions of all the world’s religious as well as shamanism, neopaganism and occultism.”* Source: Wikipedia.

30 Livingstone (supra) at page 527

31 C. G. Jung Society of Melbourne – “The Zone of the Pokies Addict” lecture 19 June 2009

32 December 2005 Victorian Dept of Justice study The Experiences of Problem Gamblers, Their Loved Ones and Service Providers - Round 3 – see Table 41 for list of preferred machines played by problem gamblers. (I had, independently, identified these machines using symbolic analysis coupled with anecdotal evidence from treatment providers and problem gamblers.)

33 *New Age religious gaming machines* – presentation to IPIC Conference Adelaide 2005 – Tim Falkiner

34 In examining the panels on machines it is not only important to look at the symbols and colours but also the symbolic syntax. It is equally important to identify the key symbols and study them as regards such matters as level, orientation and combination as well as colour. See Cirlot under entries: “pictorial image” and “graphics”. *“In short, there is nothing arbitrary about graphic symbolism: everything obeys a system which develops out of a single point and expands into more complex forms in which shape, rhythm, quantity, position, order and direction all help to explain and define the pattern.”* – Cirlot under entry “graphics”.

35 Livingstone (supra) at page 527

These machines pose a heightened risk to escape gamblers because they combine the uplifting transcendence of religion (archetypal symbols)<sup>36 37</sup> with the hypnotic trance induced by the machines and the two would have an interactive, cumulative effect. The issues the symbolism addresses include: fear of death, loss of a loved one, loneliness, need for ritual cleansing/baptism, childhood abuse (psychological, physical or sexual), transfer of eroticism into religious exultation (Miller fantasy)<sup>38</sup> and domestic violence.

For escape problem gamblers, gaming venues can be described as performing a mechanized, commercialized, religious role with the machines as altars. Losses would translate into sacrifice, further enhancing the spiritual transcendence.<sup>39</sup> (Sacrifice, central to all religions, involves a bargain where spiritual energy is acquired through suffering.)<sup>40</sup>

#### **4. THE STRUCTURE OF TRANCE AND ADDICTIVE TRANCE**

##### **4.1 Simple trance**

Wier explains trances as loops of cognitive objects.

“This looping, or circular flow of consciousness, is well-known as a mechanism for inducing trance. The repetition of mantras, the whirling of dervishes, the chanting and drumming of shamans, the repetition of TV commercials all induce different trances by limiting your attention and overloading your mind with repeated thoughts.”<sup>41</sup>

“I use the term cognitive object rather than thought because most people associate a thought with words; I specifically want to include feelings and noughtlike internal sensations. Subtle, vague feelings become more important than words for trance work, and many subtle feelings have no words, and often cannot be easily described.”<sup>42</sup>

Wier describes loops as follows: “... , loops have both a circular structure and finite contents. One way to represent or describe a loop is by naming its contents and thinking of the contents as a finite ordered list or a closed ordered set.”<sup>43</sup>

##### **4.2 Multiple and interlocking trance loops – addictive trances**

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36 “... the archetypes, when they appear have a distinctly numinous character which can only be described as ‘spiritual’ ... It mobilizes philosophical and religious convictions in the very people who deemed themselves miles above any such fits of weakness.” – C. G. Jung - De Laslo (ed) Basic Writings of CG Jung, Princeton University Press 1990 at pages 77 & 78

37 Most of the potent machines have a life/death/rebirth theme. Some people ask, “How can these mythological panels affect a person who does not know, for example, the association between dolphins and salvation or the Isis/Osiris/Horus mythology?” The answer is the themes are archetypal. That is, they fit with the inherited “riverbeds” or “fault lines” of the human mind. The human mind is automatically attracted to these symbols. This was explained by Jung in his volume, “Symbols of Transformation”, the book which caused his break from Freud. Every ancient civilization developed a life/death/rebirth mythology.

38 See C. G. Jung “Symbols of Transformation” Bollingen 1956

39 *New Age religious gaming machines* (supra)

40 “To sacrifice what is esteemed is to sacrifice oneself, and the spiritual energy thereby acquired is proportional to the importance of what is lost. All forms of suffering can be sacrificial if wholeheartedly sought and accepted.” – J. E. Cirlot “*A Dictionary of Symbols*” Routledge 1971

41 Dennis R. Wier “Trance from magic to technology” Trance Research Foundation 2009 at page 39

42 Wier (The Way of Trance) page 25

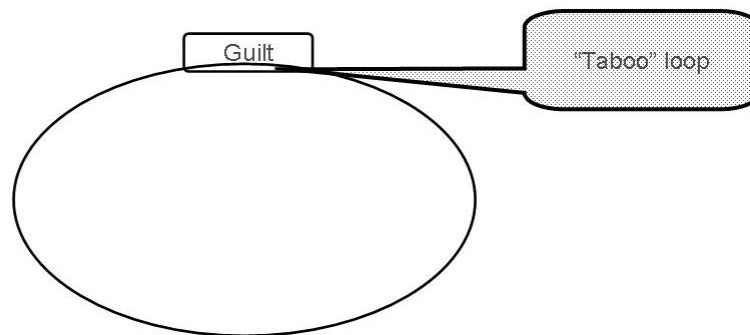
43 Wier (The Way of Trance) page 29

Wier points out that not only is a trance comprised of a loop, but multiple and interlocking trances can run at the same time.<sup>44 45</sup> Multiple trance loops create a strong trance. (As mentioned above, the simultaneous use of different modalities results in a strong trance and this is an application of multiple trance loops.) Wier maintains that an addictive trance is composed of at least three interlocking loops.<sup>46</sup> The following applies Wier's model to the addictive hypnotic trance generated by pokies.

#### 4.2.1 The first loop – the “taboo” loop

The first of the interlocking loops is the taboo loop.<sup>47</sup>

The following diagram shows the taboo loop in gaming machine problem gambling. It involves a recurring feeling of guilt. This loop is locked in by the delusional loop discussed below.



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44 Wier (The Way of Trance) at page 67

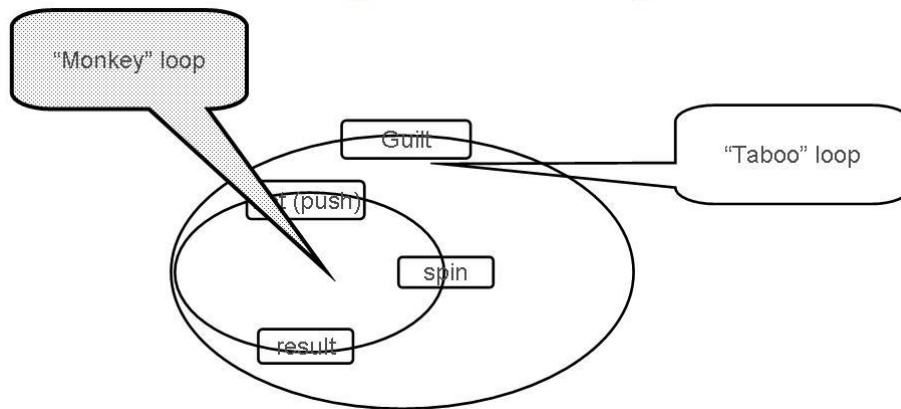
45 Wier (The Way of Trance) at page 89

46 Wier (The Way of Trance) at page 109

47 *Cigarette advertising sells the delusion of immortality in the face of high risk behavior or death. Hidden in the advertisement, of course, is the taboo of feeling powerless, impotence, self destruction or death. To fully understand how hypnosis works in these cases, it is very important to expose and consciously understand and express the taboo. Expressing the taboo can “defang” the hypnotic wyrd.* – Wier (The Way of Trance) at page 95

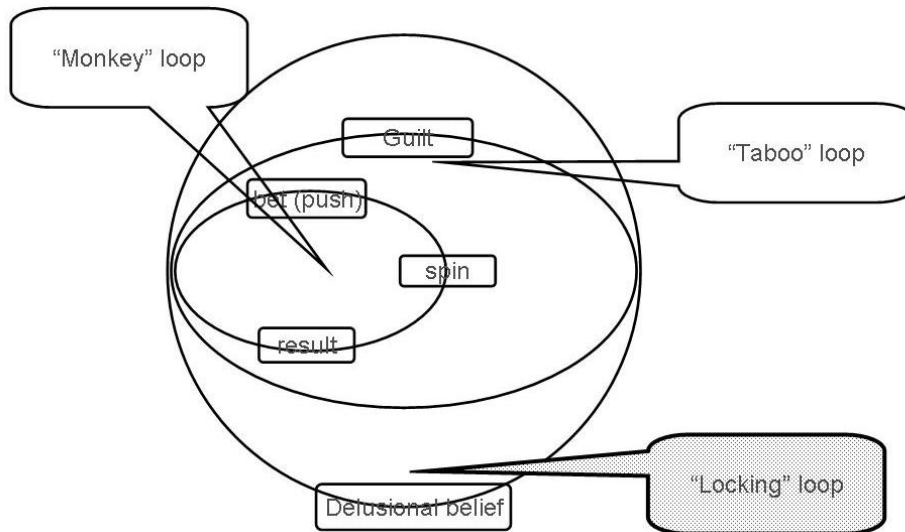
#### 4.2.2 The second loop – the “monkey” loop

The second loop is the “monkey” loop that involves the staking/spin/outcome loop.



#### 4.2.3 The third loop

The third, locking, loop involves the delusional “winner” belief implanted by the audio and visual suggestions which are accepted uncritically by the suggestible entranced player.



The audio and visual suggestions leading to the delusional “winner” belief are the starved reel/near miss cheating device, the losses disguised as wins and the video slot tactic.

#### 4.2.4 Fourth loop – spiritual trance

The fourth loop is the loop that, in the case of escape gamblers, raises the trance to a spiritual trance. The loop may not exist for action gamblers who can be locked in with the taboo, monkey and locking trances only.

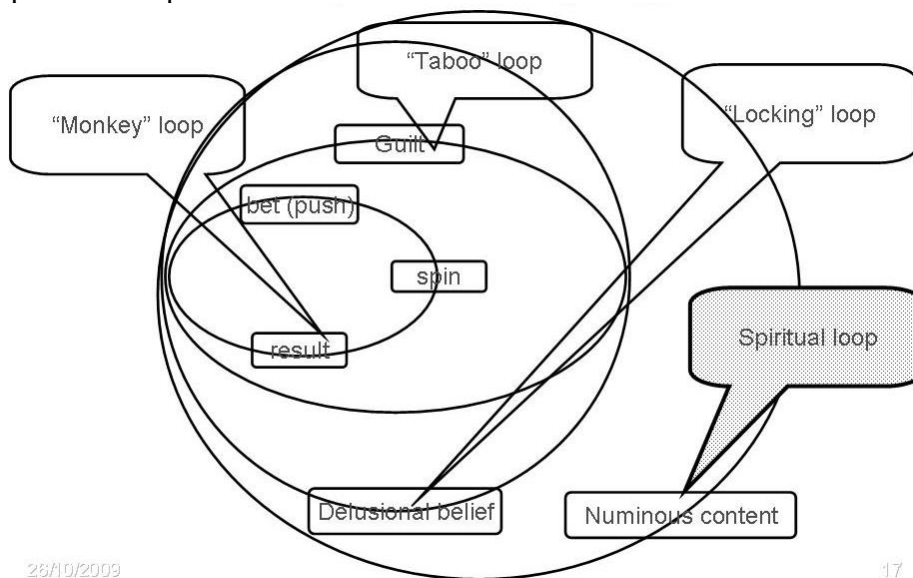
Gaming machine ritual compels introversion and the player’s “unconscious need” for spiritual support resonates with the powerful spiritual symbolism of the machines.

Wier<sup>48</sup> explains it as follows (though archetypal symbolism can trigger emotionally heavy memories or, more significantly, constellated archetypes):



*Words or triggers to emotionally heavy memories will tend to engage a person in internal mental thoughts, visions and memories. These types of word triggers [and I would add, symbols] make it relatively easy to establish trance in those persons who are easily drawn into such internal processes. When such triggers are chosen as mantras, it becomes especially easy to establish addictive trances. With a lot of repetition, isolated practice, devotion, and rituals or practices which anchor somatic secondary trance generating loops these religious addictive trances can become fixed, narrow and centric – where the most important thing in the world is the religion – with a rich range of compulsive and delusional ideas.*

This diagram shows the trance for the escape gambler which includes the “spiritual” loop.



## 5. HOW THE INTERLOCKING LOOPS MAINTAIN THE ADDICTIVE TRANCE

### 5.1 Taboo loop is “the real killer”

It is vital to understand the importance of the taboo loop and the locking loop. It is natural that most therapists’ attention is focussed on the monkey

loop which is the most visible. As important as the monkey loop is, the taboo and locking loops are the real problem, bringing the client back time and time again to the monkey loop. The advice in the footnote below, given by an older Gamblers Anonymous to a young member explains it clearly.<sup>49</sup> If it were simply a case of losing control in front of the machine, one could simply stay away. The real killer is the mental obsession like *“a phone that continued to ring in her head every waking moment. No matter how strong her will power eventually she would answer it just to stop the ringing. Knowing full well the outcome would be another guilt ridden, shameful trip to the casino.”* That is the effect of an unterminated addictive trance.

## 5.2 Locking loop – delusion, courage, determination and resolve

The locking loop also contains elements of courage, determination and resolve. Courage, determination and resolve can, by making a person more resilient to the pain of losing, actually predispose a person to become involved in problem gambling behaviour or make the person less inclined to pull out of such behaviour. Such qualities should provide a heightened protection against drug addiction or alcohol abuse. But with compulsive gambling, these qualities are as likely to draw the person into compulsive gambling as to afford protection. As Rev Gordon Moody, who helped set up GA in Britain, observed: *“... when I speak of ‘vulnerability’ I am not speaking of character weakness or flawed personality or anything of that kind.”*<sup>50</sup>

The action gambling addict believes, at least at the unconscious level, that in the long run he or she will win. And why not? I have never met a player who did not believe, consciously or unconsciously, each symbol has the same chance of coming up on each reel. And such a machine should be paying out around \$17 million a year (3.1.1 above)..

As Moody put it:

*“He is absolutely committed now. Like Macbeth he is in so far that to go back would be as far as to go right over - indeed further. To get right over he needs only that final debt-clearing, fortune-making win or succession of wins. To go back, he would have to settle all those debts one by one ... In any case there is his family. They despise him; some of them hate him. He must*

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<sup>49</sup> *“Lindy- What you describe makes perfect sense to me. You are dealing with powerlessness. The classic accepted view of that powerlessness is that it comes in 2 forms. One a physical allergy. When we gamble we react differently than other people. When we gamble we experience a craving for more despite often obvious consequences. Once we start we are no longer in control. If that was the only form of powerlessness then you could be told that fact, understand it, don’t gamble; thus never causing the allergic reaction and “presto-chango” you’re cured no need for all this 12 step stuff. The rub is there is another form of powerlessness, the real killer. That is a mental obsession with gambling. A mental obsession is a thought that overcomes all others to the contrary. It is that mental obsession that allows us to lie to ourselves time and time again. It is the mental obsession that causes countless relapses-“I’ve been so good I need a treat; I understand my gambling now; I can control it; Its been 5 yrs maybe I can gamble normally again etc... It is the mental obsession that occupies our minds even when not gambling. I was often present physically but mentally consumed with gambling- How to get \$ and time to go; keeping all the lies straight, Putting on the happy face when my insides were churning and on and on.... I’ve heard that mental obsession described by a fellow member as a phone that continued to ring in her head every waking moment. No matter how strong her will power eventually she would answer it just to stop the ringing. Knowing full well the outcome would be another guilt ridden, shameful trip to the casino. We obviously need to abstain from gambling to prevent the allergy from coming into play, but what deserves the full attention of the recovering compulsive gambler is the mental obsession. At any place in recovery!*

<sup>50</sup> Rev Gordon Moody “Quit Compulsive Gambling” Thorsons 1990 at page 32

convince them by that big win that he was right all the time."<sup>51</sup>

## 6. PRE-COMMITMENT – LIMITING THE MONKEY LOOP

The pre-commitment scheme is like a rosary or mala, a Buddhist or Hindu set of counting beads. With both the rosary and the mala, the beads are designed with a head bead so the person meditating with the device can concentrate on the mantra and know when the trance loop is to be terminated.<sup>52 53</sup> What a pre-commitment scheme will do is to place a limit on the monkey loop.

## 7. LIMITING THE MONKEY LOOP WILL NOT END THE ADDICTIVE TRANCE BUT IT SHOULD LIMIT THE FINANCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DAMAGE

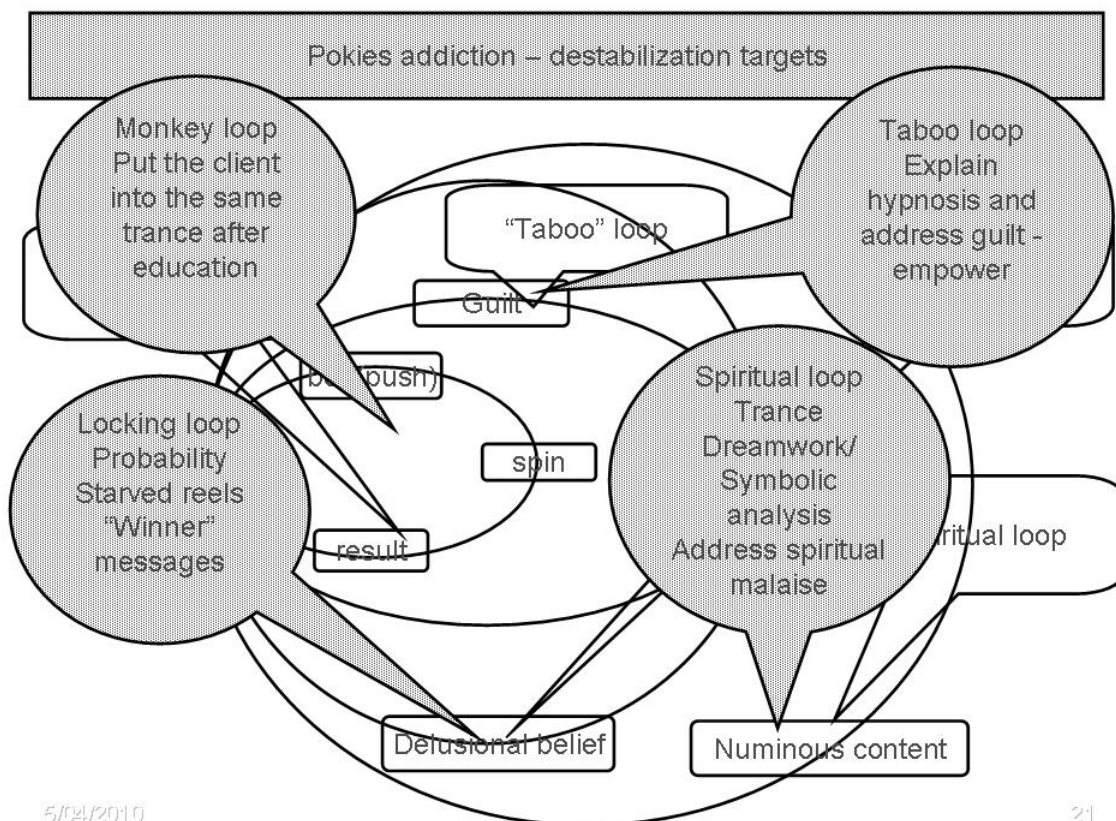
### 7.1 Limiting monkey loop will not end trance

A pre-commitment scheme cannot be expected to break the trance. This is because the other loops will still be running and will bring the problem gambler back to the monkey loop.

It is the multiple, interlocking loops which make the addictive trance so hard to break. If you just break one loop, the other loops will re-establish it.

A comprehensive treatment paradigm would attempt to destabilize all of the loops so that even if it was not successful in destabilizing one or perhaps two loops, at least enough loops would be destabilized to bring the system down.

The shaded balloons on the following diagram show where the destabilization points are and how each could be destabilized. There are four destabilization points, one for each loop.



5/04/2010

21

<sup>52</sup> The rosary or mala would also deepen the trance by mixing the auditory mantra with the physical act of turning each bead – a multi-modal trance in NLP language. Rather like pressing the button on a gaming machine as well as watching the reels spin and listening to the music and sounds.

## **7.2 Limitation of financial and psychological damage**

If the pre-commitment scheme works to limit the monkey loop then it is reasonable to expect a reduction in the financial and psychological damage caused by the addictive trance. Along with the reduction in the amount of money lost and the shame associated with that there would be a feeling of empowerment and control. This feeling of control would be invaluable to the problem gambler.

## **8. PRE-COMMITMENT DECISION SHOULD BE MADE IN THE ORDINARY WAKING STATE**

### **8.1 Gambler alternates between ordinary waking state and monkey loop trance**

Pre-commitment decisions should be made when the problem gambler is in the ordinary waking state. In that situation one could be hopeful the decision would be a prudent one.

I think here we must appreciate that, with pokies addiction, the imposition of the hypnotic trance splits the psyche of the problem gambler. To go back to Lynette Whale's description "*After this 'gambling you' takes over the 'reasoning you' comes back ...*", "*You start to feel that you have split into two different personalities ...*", "*It is as if your sane, reasoning mind tries to outsmart your gambling mind.*", "*It was as if I had become schizophrenic.*"

In other words the problem gambler alternates between ordinary waking state outside the gaming room and monkey loop trance inside the gaming room. (Admittedly it is more complicated as the taboo and locking trance loops are still running in the background of the problem gambler's mind at all times and keep building up pressure until the problem gambler returns to the monkey loop activity. But certainly the problem gambler has a better chance of exercising critical judgment outside the venue.)

### **8.2 Problem gambler likely to be in monkey trance in venue**

I assume for practical purposes the decisions over the setting of limits will be made in the venue at a card reading/writing terminal. This is not as satisfactory as having off-venue terminals as once in the venue it is likely the monkey loop trance will be starting and the use of critical judgment by the problem gambler will be impaired. If the pre-commitment terminal is to be located at the venue then it should be located as far away from the gaming room as possible to try and avoid the problem gambler from making pre-commitment decisions when in the monkey loop trance. (This is the same argument as requiring ATMs to be located away from the gaming rooms to give the players a chance to "get out of the zone", come out of the monkey loop trance, before making a decision whether to draw out more money or keep playing.)

## **9. ASK FORMER PROBLEM GAMBLERS**

It is difficult to judge just how problem gamblers will use the system wisely. The Productivity Commission noted:

*"Of problem gamblers receiving counselling, around 63 per cent said that, when they had a problem with their gambling, they often or nearly always wanted to control their gambling. Only 11 per cent rarely or never wanted to*

*control their behaviour.*”<sup>54</sup>

However, it is also acknowledged by the Commission that only between 8% and 17% seek help from counselling organizations and whether the remaining 83% of problem gamblers feel the same way is conjectural.

As to the likelihood of the system working for the benefit of problem gamblers, the best people to ask are the former problem gamblers such as Sue Pinkerton, Gabi Byrne and Libby Mitchell. Their advice should also be sought on:

- What loss limits should be fixed; and
- How long they should be locked in.

The only other point I should make is that loss limits should be fixed having regard to the typical disposable income for entertainment purposes available to the low-socio economic interest groups who are the most severely affected by gaming machine problem gambling.

Yours faithfully

Tim Falkiner  
Look Away to Life  
Melbourne