Gambler self-help strategies: A comprehensive assessment of self-help strategies and actions

Commissioned by:

Gambling Research Australia

2013

Prepared by:

Professor Dan Lubman[1]

Dr Simone Rodda[1]

Professor Nerilee Hing[2]

Dr Ali Cheetham[1]

Mr Tomas Cartmill[1]

Dr Elaine Nuske[2]

Professor David Hodgins[3]

Professor John Cunningham[4]

Turning Point, Eastern Health and Monash University[1]

Centre for Gambling Education and Research, Southern Cross University[2]

Department of Psychology, University of Calgary[3]

National Institute of Mental Health Research, Australian National University[4]

Acknowledgements

ACRONYMS

TTM   Transtheoretical Model

EGM   Electronic Gaming Machine

Table of Contents

Tables

Tables in appendices

Figures

1. Executive Summary

1.1   Background and Study Rationale

Even though most people who develop gambling problems do not seek treatment, many recover through their own volition. Historically referred to as *natural recovery*, there is growing evidence that a gambling problem rarely spontaneously resolves itself, rather resources, strategies, and actions are employed. Self-help is the most widely used type of help amongst gamblers, and the first choice of gamblers if a problem has developed. Despite this, self-help has largely only been examined as a component of studies investigating help-seeking or recovery from problem gambling, rather than in its own right. As such, previous studies have typically investigated the uptake and effectiveness of a small set of self-help strategies, largely drawn from qualitative interviews with gamblers who are in recovery. These retrospective accounts are important but limited in that they represent a select and often small subsample of the gambling population. As such, there is a need to look beyond the literature to document what strategies and actions are promoted by industry and government, as well the strategies that are endorsed by gamblers themselves.

Building on the existing evidence, this multi-method project sought to develop a comprehensive list of self-help strategies and actions from a broad range of sources, as well as examine their uptake and helpfulness within an Australian context. Based on the previous literature, self-help was defined as the resources, strategies and actions people use to control or maintain change to their gambling that they do themselves, without necessarily interacting with other people. Compared to professional help, self-help strategies are characterised by being: (i) non-professionally administered; (ii) largely self-administered; and (iii) under personal control. Importantly, people can engage in self-help alone, as well as sequentially or concurrently with other forms of help, including from family and friends, peer support, mutual aid groups, and professional sources.

1.2   Phase 1: Identification of strategies and actions

Four concurrent studies were undertaken to provide a comprehensive list of self-help strategies and actions. This work utilised multiple data sources and encompassed a review of available literature as well as secondary analyses of existing data extracted from websites, forums and online counselling transcripts.

Study 1: Literature Review

A comprehensive literature review was undertaken that included published studies identified via a keyword search of electronic databases, as well as research reports and other 'grey' literature. Studies were considered eligible for inclusion in the review if they described at least one strategy that fit the definition of 'self help' outlined above. The review provided evidence for a wide range of cognitive-experiential, behavioural, financial, and social self-help strategies. In total, we identified seven strategies (*information seeking*; *self-assessment and monitoring*; *alternative activities*; *cash control and financial management*; *stimulus control*; *cognitive strategies*; and *social strategies*), with cash control and financial management the most frequently discussed

strategy. Fifty-one actions were also identified across these studies. While the literature highlighted that self-help strategies are frequently used by gamblers, there was limited information regarding the relative uptake and helpfulness of self-help strategies and actions across the continuum of change (i.e., as individuals identify they have a problem and work towards changing their gambling behaviour). In a similar vein, while a number of studies identified that some strategies and actions are more frequently used by those with gambling problems (compared to those without), there has been little work comprehensively exploring how the uptake and helpfulness of strategies and actions differs according to whether an individual has a current or past gambling problem, or has never experienced difficulties with their gambling.

Study 2: Audit of Self-Help Strategies Promoted by Gambling-Related Websites

Thirty-four websites providing self-help strategies, actions and tools to control or change gambling behaviours were selected. Criteria for inclusion in the audit were: (i) the website describes at least one self-help strategy; (ii) the website is provided by an Australian body and is accessible in Australia; (iii) the website is government funded or provided by an institution such as industry, service providers, funders or academic bodies; and (iv) the website contains predominantly provider-generated content (versus user-generated content). The audit entailed categorising the self-help materials located on the 34 websites into high order groupings. Nine overarching self-help 'strategies' were identified (becoming informed about gambling; self-assessment of own gambling; setting limits on gambling; managing finances and gambling spend; reducing opportunities and triggers; changing thoughts and beliefs; monitoring ongoing behaviour and change; utilising social support and resources; and taking up alternatives to gambling), which included 506 actions.

Overall, both the help service and government sites included a wide range of actions within each self-help strategy. Further, the government sites referred frequently to the help service sites; and the latter provided many links to the former. Thus the information available was substantial in breadth and depth. Some industry sites provided similar links, but the individual industry sites focused more closely on responsible gambling, including such actions as not chasing losses or gambling more than is affordable.

Collectively, the help service sites included actions to support all nine self-help strategies. However, not all individual help service sites included actions to support all nine strategies. Utilising social support and resources, managing finances and gambling spend, and becoming informed about gambling were the most common strategies across these sites. The government sites also included actions to support all nine self-help strategies, and each of these strategies tended to be included in a higher proportion of the government sites than was apparent across the help service sites. Actions to support the strategy of becoming informed about gambling were represented on all government websites audited, with the majority of the government sites also including actions to support the other eight self-help strategies. The industry sites included actions to support only seven of the nine self-help strategies. These sites focused most on setting limits on gambling behaviour, managing finances and gambling spend, and becoming informed about gambling, but the number of actions

associated within each of these strategies was significantly less than provided by the other types of sites.

Study 3: Analysis of Problem Gambling Online Discussion Forums

Data were obtained from an Australian website that operated for a period of four years between June 2009 and April 2013. Hosted by the Department of Justice (Office of Problem Gambling), www.problemgambling.vic.gov.au offered free and anonymous access to a forum for people impacted by problem gambling. Data were extracted from three categories related to self-help and stories of how people limited, managed or abstained from gambling - *stories of gambling* (307 posts), *success stories* (69 posts) and *stories of change* (229 posts). Six hundred and four posts containing 133,615 words of text, ranging in length between 4 and 1,319 words, were analysed using a descriptive content analysis.

These data provided an extremely rich, naturalistic account, of the types of strategies and actions gamblers attempt to limit, stop or manage their gambling problems, with a total of 14 different strategies (*source information about gambling; remove or limit access to money; set limits while gambling; manage finances; limit or remove access to gambling; change your thinking; identify and remove triggers; make a commitment to change; be vigilant; source alternative activities; source social support; and explore spirituality*) and 63 specific actions reported. The majority of forum posts were related to thinking differently about gambling (e.g., admitting that there is a problem, realising that you cannot win), managing finances (e.g., handing over control of finances or cards to another person), and social support (e.g., disclosing to others, asking for help). Fewer posts reported seeking information and, where it was present, the content related to reading information found in online blogs or forums. In addition, few posts related to faith, prayer or spirituality. It was common for gamblers to report multiple strategies in the same post. When multiple strategies were reported they were often a combination of cash control (either limiting access to money or managing finances differently), thinking differently about gambling and the chances of winning, substituting gambling with another activity or diversion, as well as seeking social support.

Study 4: Analysis of Problem Gambling Online Counselling Transcripts

Transcripts (n=85) were extracted from a dataset of clients (50.6% male, with equal representation of a range of age groups) who had participated in a web-based counselling session for problem gambling between November 2010 and February 2012 on the national Australian service (www.gamblinghelponline.org.au). Clients were more often involved in non-strategic gambling such as electronic gaming machines (72.9%) than strategic gambling (i.e., wagering or sports betting, 27.1%) and identified most often as Australian (71.8%) and new to counselling (62.4%).

Six broad strategy themes (*self-assessment and self-monitoring; cash control and financial management; stimulus control; changing thoughts and beliefs; alternative activities; and social support*) were identified, involving a total of 25 actions. The most common self-help strategies discussed by participants involved managing finances and gambling spend, which were mentioned by almost half of the sample. Participants who were considering using these strategies generally had positive expectations, however a

number of potential issues with implementation were identified, including feelings of shame and embarrassment, and the perception that some decisions could be overturned too easily. Strategies that involved taking up *alternative activities* were also frequently discussed. Although a number of participants reported that keeping physically fit and engaging in activities that promoted a sense of happiness or wellbeing were important, a lack of time and motivation could make committing to these strategies difficult. Changing thoughts and beliefs related to gambling involved thinking differently about the chance of winning and realising that over the longer term winning was not likely or a way of making money. Although cash control strategies were frequently discussed, their effectiveness seemed mixed. This strategy appeared to be more effective when friends and family were involved in minding or managing money. Sourcing social support from others was also discussed positively, as were planning and monitoring strategies. However, few participants appeared to have used these strategies, making it difficult to rate their actual effectiveness.

1.3   Phase 2: Uptake and Helpfulness of strategies

Self-help strategies identified across Phase 1 studies were collated and reviewed by the research team. Twelve distinct strategy themes were identified: (i) become informed about gambling; (ii) complete a self-assessment of your gambling (self-assessment); (iii) set limits on your gambling (setting limits); (iv) plan gambling session in advance (planning); (v) manage finances and gambling spend (managing finances); (vi) reduce gambling opportunities, triggers and urges (reducing opportunity); (vii) change thoughts and beliefs (changing thoughts); (viii) monitor ongoing behaviour and change (watching yourself); (ix) take up alternatives to gambling (*alternative activities*); (x) improve health and wellbeing (health and wellbeing); (xi) utilise social support and resources (social support); and (xii) engage in faith and prayer (faith and prayer). Action items identified across Phase 1 studies were categorised under these 12 strategy themes. There was significant repetition of suggested actions across Phase 1 studies, including multiple items with similar intent, and as such, actions were categorised under distinct action statements that captured their common purpose. Action statements were also written in an active and direct form to reflect clear actions gamblers could undertake. In total, 99 self-help actions were identified under the twelve self-help strategies identified across Phase 1 studies.

Building on this work, Phase 2 of the project involved determining the uptake and helpfulness of these self-help strategies and actions across a broad population of gamblers, including those with and without self-reported problems associated with their gambling. It is important to note that we chose to examine 'helpfulness' (i.e., the subjective perception that a strategy or action was beneficial, in relation to an individual's goals) as opposed to 'effectiveness' (e.g., an objective and quantifiable outcome such as reduction in time or money spent gambling) given the self-report nature of the data. This phase of the project involved two distinct studies, a large national online survey of current and past gamblers and a qualitative study exploring their experiences of using self-help strategies and actions.

Study 5: Survey of Self-help Strategies and Actions

a. The online survey

An online survey investigating the helpfulness of self-help strategies and actions amongst a large national sample of current and past gamblers (n=716) was conducted. The sample was recruited through heavy promotion on multiple websites (including government, industry, health, sport, support and operator sites); at venues and services; through paid advertising; social media; and targeted emails and newsletters to agencies, gamblers and support programs. Over 700 participants, aged between 19 and 88 (68% male), from across Australia completed the survey, including those who reported that they had never had a problem or concern about their gambling (n=227); those who had a problem with their gambling in the past (n=244); and those that had a current problem (n=245). Importantly, 62.6% of participants who had ever experienced a problem with their gambling (n=489) reported that they had never accessed face-to-face professional help, highlighting the importance of self-help approaches for many individuals who develop gambling problems.

For those participants with a current and past gambling problem, the three most helpful strategieswere 'changing thoughts'; 'self-assessment'; and 'watching yourself.' Similarly, the three most helpful actions for those with a current and past gambling problem (although the order differed) were 'accept that gambling needs to change (from the strategy 'self-assessment'); 'think about how your money could be better spent' (from the strategy 'changing thoughts'); and 'remind yourself of the negative consequences of gambling' (also from the strategy 'changing thoughts'). The least helpful strategies for participants with current problems were 'information'; 'setting limits'; and 'faith and prayer', compared to 'managing finances'; 'social support'; and 'faith and prayer' for those with past problems.

In contrast, participants who identified as never having a gambling problem reported that the most helpful self-help strategies were 'health and wellbeing'; 'planning'; and 'setting limits'; while the three least helpful were 'faith and prayer'; 'reducing opportunity'; and 'social support'. The three most helpful actions were different to those reported by participants who had experienced problems with their gambling. In this group, the most helpful action was 'eat a healthy balanced diet' (from the strategy 'health and wellbeing'); followed by 'set spending limit for each week or fortnight' (from the strategy 'planning'); and 'remind yourself sometimes people win at gambling but the system is designed for you to lose' (from the strategy 'changing thoughts').

There did not appear to be any differences in ratings of helpfulness between current problem and past problem groups for any strategy with the exception of 'setting limits', which was reported to be significantly more helpful by the past problem group, compared to the current and no problem groups. Females rated all strategies as significantly more helpful than males, with the exception of 'planning'. Younger participants (under 35 years of age) tended to rate all strategies as significantly more helpful than older participants (35 years and over) with the exception of 'faith and prayer' where there was no difference. There were no differences in the perceived helpfulness of strategies between groups of participants who had 'never sought professional help' and those who had 'sought professional help.' There were also few differences between those identified as non-strategic gamblers, compared to strategic gamblers, in mean helpfulness ratings.

b. Second (past 30 day) survey

Behaviour change models of addiction and gambling, such as the TransTheoretical Model (henceforth TTM), highlight that people intentionally change their behaviour through a number of distinct stages of change (i.e., pre-contemplation, contemplation, action and maintenance). A key question for the current project was to determine how the number and selection of self-help strategies and actions varied according to a person's current stage of change. Almost 60% (n=410) of the survey sample completed a second online assessment that explored the uptake of specific strategies and actions over a 30-day period. By categorising the sample by stage of change, the second survey was able to provide a unique insight into how the number and selection of self-help strategies and actions varied by each stage of behaviour change, including money and time spent gambling over the 30-day period.

Participants who completed the second survey identified a broad range of strategies and actions that they used during this period. Overall, the most frequently used strategy was 'changing thoughts', which was used by 77.9% of the sample. This was followed by 'health and wellbeing' (75.2%); 'self-assessment' (72.7%); and 'watching yourself' (72.7%). 'Remind yourself that you don't need to gamble'; and 'remind yourself of the negative consequences of gambling' were the second and third most frequently used actions amongst the overall sample (used by approximately 60%). Overall, the top 10 actions included six from the 'changing thoughts' strategy.

There were differences between stage of change groups in regard to the overall uptake and number of strategies used. The majority of strategies had the highest uptake amongst the action and contemplation groups, and the lowest amongst the precontemplation (or no problem) groups. Similarly, the average number of actions used per strategy were significantly higher amongst the action group, and significantly lower amongst the precontemplation and maintenance groups. When strategies were ranked by overall uptake, participants in the earlier stages of change were more likely to use 'planning' and 'setting limits' strategies, while participants in later stages were more likely to use 'changing thoughts', 'health and wellbeing', and 'self-assessment'.

There was a clear relationship between stage of change and time and money spent gambling over the past 30 days. While there was no change in gambling behaviour evident amongst participants in the no problem or precontemplation groups, participants in the contemplation stage reported a significant reduction in days gambled and money spent in the 30 days between completion of the first and second surveys. Similarly, participants in the action stage reported a significant reduction in money spent and a trend towards a reduction in days spent gambling, while participants in the maintenance stage demonstrated trends towards a reduction in days spent gambling and money spent.

Study 6: Interviews with Gamblers

The second study in Phase 2explored the experiences of self-help strategies and actions across a broad sample of gamblers (n=30), using a qualitative design. Participants were selected from the online survey, with a particular focus on self-reported problem gambling status (no problem, current problem or past problem) and

current stage of change. Participants were asked about the kinds of self-help strategies they used; how they found out about them; factors that helped or hindered them in sustaining their use; which were most effective; and how these strategies impacted upon lapse or relapse.

Triggers to using self-help strategies focused most often around financial concerns, from a sense that gambling was out of control, that bills were not being paid, and that savings were being depleted. Triggers also came from family and friends when problem gambling was discovered or from online information that provided a 'wake-up call'. At times, a change in life circumstances, such as retirement or buying a house, necessitated a review of finances that stimulated the need for behavioural change. Mental health issues also prompted use of self-help strategies for some participants.

The way the strategies and actions were sourced varied considerably amongst participants, with many explaining that they thought of the actions themselves and that they were 'just common sense' once they had decided their gambling needed to change. Other strategies had been suggested by family, friends or counsellors, or had been identified by the participant through using online problem gambling sites, surveys and the list of strategies provided to participants.

Many interviewees used a combination of strategies. The most widely used actions across all strategies were limiting the amount of money in their wallet, setting a gambling budget, not taking bank cards into gambling venues, and avoiding gambling venues. The most effective strategies amongst those interviewed were setting limits; managing finances and gambling spend; reducing triggers and opportunities; utilising social support and resources; taking up *alternative activities*; and a combination of these strategies. It should be noted that although utilising social support and resources was not specifically named as a 'strategy' by many, it was evident from the interviews that such support was integral to many of the actions and strategies undertaken.

Indeed, when considering what supported the effectiveness of using self-help strategies and actions, participants described the support of family and friends. Self-efficacy was a further motivating factor for the uptake of self-help strategies for many. Limiting access to funds encouraged use of money management strategies and for many, this meant renewed focus on saving or investing money. Increased and often renewed family activities also became a strong motivator to maintain change. Factors that hindered use of the various strategies included easy access to funds, proximity of gambling venues, loss of previous social activity at gambling venues, stress and mental health issues, alcohol use, the availability of internet gambling and lack of funds for other activities.

Individual strategies and actions used by participants did not occur in isolation. Many actions were dependent upon each other, and for many, their success relied on combining more than one action. It was clear that for those who were inspired or motivated to change by life events, re-establishing family contacts or engaging in diversionary activities, it was easier to pursue their chosen strategies and actions. In contrast, those who had limited social supports, or who had not previously developed

sufficient hobbies or interests, found it more challenging to implement or maintain the use of self-help strategies and actions.

1.4   Limitations

It is important to note there a number of limitations in this report when considering the overall findings. Firstly, none of the studies sought to recruit a representative sample of gamblers, and as such may have introduced a source of bias into the findings. The forum posts, although extensive, were selected from only a single website that did not permit peer-to-peer comments, which may have influenced those using the site, as well as the comments made. Similarly, online counselling transcripts were sourced from a single online counselling service (albeit one providing national coverage) and could only report on those individuals who contacted the service for help. While the online survey was widely promoted across multiple media and settings, participants were self-selected, and their responses may not reflect the broader population of gamblers in the Australian community. As participants of the qualitative interviews were identified through this sample, similar considerations apply. Finally, the websites audited were not necessarily representative, and in fact were purposively selected from Australian sites as they had comparatively comprehensive strategies.

A second limitation is that the data collected were predominantly based on self-reported responses, which may be influenced by factors such as recall bias and attribution. In addition, it is possible that social desirability bias impacted helpfulness ratings, as the qualitative findings indicated that many actions were used because they were considered 'common sense' (i.e., potentially reflecting perceived social norms). However, the use of multiple data sources throughout the project provides greater confidence in the overall findings, particularly when similar themes and responses were identified across studies. A third related limitation is the cross-sectional nature of the data, which is also a criticism of most of the previous literature in this area. Although associations between strategies, actions and outcomes were identified, causal relationships cannot be inferred.

A further limitation relates to the development of the online surveys. The number of self-help actions generated from Phase 1 data sources was extensive compared to that reported in the literature. While the research team were able to summarise this information into theme strategies and actions for the online survey, this task was challenging, and the final 99 strategies may not reflect all strategies and actions used by individuals to manage their gambling. Furthermore, while actions were categorised under specific strategy headings, several actions may have been used within multiple strategies, which may have affected the ratings of helpfulness and uptake of particular strategies in the online survey. Another limitation regarding the survey development was the use of a single 5-point likert scale to measure uptake and helpfulness of actions. Future studies may wish to include a more detailed examination of both measures.

In addition, there were limitations relating to the survey analysis. While we created subgroups of gamblers based on a range of relevant variables (problem gambling history, stage of change, gender, age, most problematic form of gambling, and help-seeking history), there are many other factors that are likely to contribute to variation

within the sample that were not considered. Given the length of the survey, collecting data to explore additional subgroups was beyond the scope of this project.

Finally, it is important to emphasise that given the multi-stage design of this project, the information provided by the studies in Phase 1 (specifically, the website audit, analysis of forum posts, and analysis of counselling transcripts) was current as of 2013. These chapters may not provide a complete picture as of 2015, and it will be necessary for future research to update these findings (along with those presented in Phase 2).

1.5   Conclusion

This two phase mixed method project (encompassing six distinct studies) is the largest and most ambitious research program specifically focussed on self-help undertaken in Australia. The findings provide a comprehensive description of self-help strategies and actions that are discussed and promoted for gambling within an Australian context. This research also offers a robust examination of the use and helpfulness of a broad array of self-help strategies and actions across differing gambling populations (i.e., problem gambling status and stage of change), together with a rich exploration of people's experiences in attempting to implement such strategies and actions. In addition, the research involved one of the largest samples of people with a current or past gambling problem. For these people, no strategy or action was identified that effectively dealt with an individual's gambling problem in isolation. Instead, participants described using a combination of strategies and actions that varied by their gambling situation (e.g., a combination of 'changing thoughts', 'health and wellbeing' and 'watching yourself' were most frequently used among participants in the action and maintenance groups, compared to 'limiting, 'planning' and 'managing finances' in the no problem group). Together, these studies deliver a unique insight into the importance and utility of self-help strategies within the Australian landscape, as well as providing a valuable contribution to the broader self-help literature internationally.

1.6   Implications

Building on the existing evidence on the use and effectiveness of self-help strategies for gambling, the findings from the studies conducted in this project raise a number of important implications for the field.

(i) Effectiveness of self-help and promotion of strategies

The project identified a broad range of strategies and actions utilised by individuals to limit or manage their gambling, including those who developed gambling problems. Numerous strategies and actions were found to be helpful, and these were commonly used in combination. However, as noted in the qualitative interviews, participants varied considerably in how they learnt about particular strategies and actions, with many explaining that they thought of the actions themselves and that they were 'just common sense', while for others strategies and actions had been suggested by family, friends or counsellors, or had been identified by participants through using online problem gambling sites or surveys. These findings suggest that despite a range of strategies and actions being included on multiple websites (albeit varying in their breadth and depth); there are opportunities to further promote these strategies and

their level of helpfulness more broadly. Consistent with this, current websites should be encouraged to promote the most helpful strategies and actions, including those that are most helpful for different groups (see below). Indeed, given the lack of current evidence-based material on industry websites, responsible gambling codes of practice could be revised to include provision to include this valuable information.

(ii) Better targeting of strategies to particular populations

While a range of self-help strategies and actions were identified across studies, their uptake and ratings of helpfulness varied according to both participants' problem gambling and current stage of change statuses. Promotion of a set of universal strategies that does not reflect where an individual may be in terms of their gambling may result in the adoption of strategies and actions that are ineffective and/or difficult to implement. For example, setting limits in a gambling setting (a commonly promoted strategy) was a frequently used strategy among individuals without gambling problems, however those with a current gambling problem rated this strategy as the second least helpful. Indeed, 'changing thoughts', 'self-assessment' and 'watching yourself' were the most helpful strategies for participants with a past and current gambling problem; whereas 'health and wellbeing', 'planning' and 'setting limits' were the most helpful for those who reported no problems. Similarly, the most frequently used strategies amongst those in the precontemplation group were 'limiting' and 'health and wellbeing', while the most frequently used strategy amongst the contemplation group was 'self-assessment'. In contrast, 'changing thoughts,' 'health and wellbeing' and 'watching yourself' were the most frequently used strategies amongst participants in both the action and maintenance groups. These findings speak to the importance of targeted information for particular stages and problem gambling states, as failure to implement promoted strategies may adversely affect self-efficacy and hinder recovery.

(iii) Addressing implementation challenges

Participants across studies identified numerous challenges in their attempts to successfully implement specific strategies and actions. Such information is critical to ensuring the effective use of particular strategies, and needs to be made more widely available. This should include specific information on implementation challenges and successes on available sources of self-help (such as websites and printed resources from industry and support services).

(iv) Increasing knowledge and skills of community members

The biggest barrier to seeking support for problem gambling is stigma, which is consistent with the low ratings of helpfulness for social support in the online survey. Indeed, some participants reported that they felt unable to tell friends for fear of criticism or, if they did disclose their gambling problem, felt humiliated. These findings support previous research in this area, and highlight the importance of stigma reduction programs for problem gambling in terms of promoting help-seeking.

Limited knowledge within the community on how to respond to problem gambling is also likely to be a factor in delaying a person seeking support. Issues of poor mental health literacy across the community are common, despite individuals identifying

friends and family as the main source of help and support. Health literacy programs, such as Mental Health First Aid, have been found to be effective in improving the ability and confidence of family members and peers to reach out and support people with a range of mental health issues and addictions to seek help, and a similar approach for problem gambling is likely to be beneficial in overcoming some of the barriers identified in the current report.

(v) Development of self-help resources and review of current programs

The low rate of professional help-seeking in the online sample, coupled with the high utilisation of self-help strategies across studies, highlights the importance of accessible and effective self-help resources and programs. While such resources are readily available for other conditions (e.g., smoking cessation and quit packs), and are often designed to reflect an individual's stage of change, there are limited self-help options currently available in Australia that have been evaluated. Our findings reinforce the need to develop and evaluate an accessible self-help gambling program or kit that is tailored to a person's stage of change or problem gambling status or severity.

Beyond self-help resources, the current research could also be used as a basis for review of the range of professional services offered to people attempting to limit or change their gambling. For example, it would be important to investigate the extent to which identified strategies (and their associated helpfulness) align with the current availability of professional services. For example, the strategy of 'challenging thoughts' may be considered analogous to a CBT-like strategy. Given the popularity of this strategy, there may be a need to increase access to gambling-specific CBT programs (e.g., by providing them across different delivery modes, such as face-to-faces, telephone or online). Similarly, the high uptake of financial planning might suggest the need for greater access to financial management/planning services or resources.

(vi) Future directions

While this project adds significantly to the available literature, there are a number of outstanding questions that require further research. Firstly, while some of the strategies tested have a good body of research behind them, at least in terms of their uptake (i.e., limit setting), others such as cognitive strategies have not been extensively researched as a self-help strategy or action (e.g., 'remind yourself sometimes people win at gambling but the system is designed for you to lose'). Further research is required to understand how individuals use these strategies in practice, as well as how they change during different stages of recovery.

A second question relates to the helpfulness of specific strategies and actions. While we identified that some strategies and actions were more helpful than others, helpfulness does not necessarily equate to effectiveness, and further longitudinal work is needed to examine whether actions designated as helpful are effective in changing gambling behaviour. In addition, many of the actions and strategies identified can be used for multiple purposes, and with different goals in mind. Future research could examine the different types of goals that gamblers tend to seek, and identify which strategies are most helpful in achieving these outcomes.

A third question relates to how strategies and actions are combined most effectively. For example, a strategy of changing cognitions may require the use of multiple cognitive actions (e.g., remind yourself you don't need to gamble, think about how money could be better spent) in order for it to be effective. Alternatively, it may be that a cognitive action is best accompanied by a behavioural strategy (such as limiting access to cash and/or engaging in alternative activities), as well as an action associated with social support. Future research should investigate the optimal number, and type of actions, required for a strategy to be effective, and which combinations are most effective for a person's particular stage of change.

A fourth question relates to the relevance of self-help strategies and actions for prevention. While this project provided a short-term look at what strategies are implemented across the continuum of change for gambling problems, further longitudinal research is needed to determine which strategies are most helpful as preventative actions, before a gambling problem develops.

A fifth question relates to the generalisability of findings to an international audience. Indeed, as the focus of the project was primarily on identifying the uptake and helpfulness of strategies and actions within an Australian context, further work is needed to determine their relevance to populations in different environments and cultures.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Even though most people who develop gambling problems do not seek treatment (Productivity Commission, 2010), many recover through their own volition. Historically referred to as *natural recovery*, there is growing evidence that a gambling problem does not spontaneously resolve itself, rather resources, strategies, and actions are employed. Self-help is the most widely used type of help amongst gamblers, and the first choice of gamblers if a problem has developed (Hing, Nuske, & Gainsbury, 2011). In Australia, almost one-quarter of people who access land based gambling settings report using self-help strategies, in addition to a further 15% of those who gamble online (Hing, Breen, Gordon, & Russell, 2014b). The stigma and shame associated with problem gambling also means that self-help will continue to be an important source of help for most people who develop problems with their gambling (Hing, Holdsworth, Tiyce, & Breen, 2014; Horch & Hodgins, 2008).

To date, there have been three studies investigating strategies or methods gamblers use to limit or restrict gambling. Hing et al. (2011) sought to determine the uptake and perceived helpfulness of nine strategies. These were: *used a checklist to self-assess a gambling problem*; *kept records of your gambling activities and expenditure*; *set a budget for gambling expenses*; *sourced information about how gambling works and the odds of winning*; *sourced information about why some people gamble excessively*; *avoided friends/family who gamble*; *avoided being near the venue where you primarily gambled*; *limited access to money for gambling (e.g., leaving debit and credit cards at home)*; and *took up other activities to take the place of gambling*. Participants were recruited from a variety of sources, including a national telephone survey (n=242), callers to Australian helplines (n=170) and an online survey of those who had accessed a specialist problem gambling counselling service (n=110).

Moore et al. (2012) tested the uptake of 20 self-help items among 303 gamblers (21% classified as problem gamblers) and then through factor analysis. The five factors identified were *cognitive approaches* (e.g., think about the negative consequences of gambling); *direct action* (e.g., seek professional help); *social experience* (e.g., go to venues that have other activities); *avoidance* (e.g., keep busy); and *limit setting* (e.g., setting a budget on time or money spent gambling).

Lastly, Abbott et al. (2014) tested six methods to limit time or money spent gambling. As part of a New Zealand national gambling prevalence study, Abbott, Bellringer, Garrett, and Mundy-McPherson (2014) surveyed over 4000 people who had gambled at least once over a 12-month period. Six strategies were tested, four related to cash control (i.e., set a dollar figure before leaving home, getting someone you trust to manage the money, separating money for betting from other money, and stopping when it is used up and leaving ATM and credit cards at home). The remaining two strategies were setting a time limit and avoiding places that have betting or gambling as an attraction.

The present study recognises these Australasian studies as well as the important qualitative work some 15 years earlier (Hodgins & El-Guebaly, 2000) that first identified that gamblers

use a range of self-help strategies to manage their gambling. Despite this work, research on self-help has largely been a component of studies investigating help-seeking or recovery from problem gambling, rather than self-help in its own right. As indicated above, previous studies have typically included a limited number of self-help strategies, due in most part to the limited gambling literature on this topic. In this regard, drawing from the literature on self-help for other addictive behaviours may assist in expanding the number and types of strategies that may also be relevant to gambling.

This first chapter is a literature review conducted for the purposes of identifying the range of self-help strategies reported in the gambling literature, as well as for other addictions. It aims to extend previous work by taking a closer look at how self-help is defined and described in the gambling and addiction literature. The review describes and reports on the available evidence for the uptake and effectiveness of a wide range of self-help strategies, and in doing so contributes towards the overall aim of Phase 1 in terms of the development of a comprehensive list of self-help strategies.

2.2   Definition of self-help strategies

Self-help strategies refer to those activities that: "people might use to better control their gambling, that they do themselves, without involving other people," (Hing et al., 2011). Thus, self-help refers to strategies and actions that are identified and implemented by the individual, and as such, do not include population-based approaches that seek to minimise harm from gambling (such as the relocation or removal of ATM machines or the installation of clocks or natural light that help people keep track of time).

Self-help strategies for problem gambling most frequently involve money and time management, and this most likely reflects a core component of the problem as a result of gambling more than intended in terms of both money and time. Problem gambling can also impair mental and physical health, relationships, employment and quality of life. This is reflected in self-help strategies, such as people purposefully developing new interests or hobbies, focusing on improving their health and wellbeing (such as commencing an exercise program) and repair old or develop new relationships.

Over recent years, there has been widespread and rapid dissemination of self-help strategies via gambling operator host responsibility programs as well as government and community based websites. Self-help strategies (such as limiting access to cash, developing alternate activities) are often key components of self-help programs, which have successfully been used to assist people to reduce their time and money spent gambling for more than a decade (Carlbring & Smit, 2008; Hodgins, Currie, Currie, & Fick, 2009; Hodgins, Currie, el-Guebaly, & Peden, 2004; Hodgins & El-Guebaly, 2000; Petry, Weinstock, Morasco, & Ledgerwood, 2009). However, while these programs have been found to be effective for many people impacted by problem gambling, there is limited knowledge of the helpfulness of individual self-help strategies, when they are used and by whom. In addition, we know little about which self-help strategies are used most frequently, and whether particular strategies are more helpful for certain gambling groups.

An important issue in this area of research is distinguishing the term strategy (an approach or method) from specific actions. In practice, the terms strategy and action are used interchangeably, and to some degree a strategy can on occasion be an action (e.g., limiting

access to money). However, in general, strategies are broad in nature and encompass a range of related actions (e.g., limiting access to money could include leaving cash or credit cards at home, cancelling credit cards, transferring money management to others, cutting up cards, avoid taking cards to venues). Although the way people implement strategies can vary and may be idiosyncratic, there appear to be consistent themes within the self-help literature in terms of the types of self-help strategies used (e.g., setting limits, engaging in alternative activities, managing finances etc.).

It is generally agreed that self-help strategies and actions are self-initiated and self-maintained and achieved without professional supervision or care (Neighbors, Hove, Nasrallah, & Jensen, 2011). Neighbors and colleagues describe professional supervision or care as that provided by practitioners, medical providers, treatment centres and mental health professionals. This means that while self-help is self-initiated and maintained, the selection, implementation or maintenance of the strategy may involve other people. Indeed, Neighbors and colleagues state that self-help strategies may be sourced from a whole host of people and places including professionally developed bibliotherapy and websites, telephone helplines and 12-step programs (e.g., Gamblers Anonymous). Self-help strategies can also be sourced from brochures, pamphlets, self-help books, diaries, journals, workbooks, checklists, audiotapes, and videotapes, many of which are now available online. Helplines are a good example of where self-help strategies may be suggested by a professional, but are not considered professional help unless the intervention involves multiple sessions of ongoing care and support (Neighbors et al., 2011). Other people such as family and friends may also be involved in the implementation and maintenance of self-help strategies. For example, family or friends can help limit access to money by minding debit or credit cards or act as a distraction from gambling (Moore et al., 2012). Indeed, the key to the definition of self-help is that the person is directing his or her own change (rather than being professionally directed) and this may involve a wide range of resources, strategies and actions.

While self-help strategies and actions are an important component of most behaviour change models, they are often described differentially across these theoretical models. A popular and widely applied model in understanding how people intentionally change addictive behaviours is the TransTheoretical Model (TTM). The TTM purports that people pass through a series of five stages as they intentionally change their behaviour, making use of ten processes that aid movement from one stage to the next (Table 1). The first stage in the model is labelled *pre-contemplation*, and refers to the stage in which the individual has not yet begun to contemplate changing their behaviour and do not intend to take action in the near future. While the outcome interval may vary, this is usually measured as the next six months. The second stage is *contemplation,* and sees the individual considering the costs and benefits of the problem behaviour with the intention of changing within the next six months. Following this, *preparation* involves both intention and the initiation of small behavioural changes, with the goal of taking action within the next 30 days. It is at this stage that decisions may be made about the type of help that will be best to make changes to behaviour (e.g., whether formal or self-help methods will be used). Following preparation is the *action* stage, in which the most overt behavioural changes are made. Individuals are classed as having progressed to the action stage if they have successfully altered their behaviour for a period of one day to six months; typically, this involves meeting a particular goal or criterion (such as abstinence). Finally, the fifth stage involves *maintenance* of the

behaviour change. This stage is thought to extend from six months to an indeterminate period past the initiation of action, and involves working to stabilise change and prevent relapse (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1982).

While these stages represent *when* people change, the processes of change describe *how* they change (Norcross, Krebs, & Prochaska, 2011). These can be divided into five experiential and five behavioural processes. Experiential processes include *consciousness raising,* which involves increasing awareness about self and problem, including the causes, consequences, and cures for a particular behaviour. This can occur through exposure to media or educational campaigns, bibliotherapy (e.g., reading self-help books or sourcing other materials on the problem behaviour), and confrontations with other people. *Dramatic relief* involves experiencing and expressing feelings about problems and solutions, and is thought to produce an increase in the intensity of emotional experience followed by reduced affect or relief if appropriate action is taken. This can include being upset or frightened when thinking about one's own experiences (a 'corrective emotional experience'), as well as after hearing about the negative consequences of the problem behaviour for others. *Self re-evaluation* encompasses cognitive and affective assessments of the self in relation to the unhealthy behaviour, and can involve feelings of guilt or disappointment that the problem behaviour is not being managed in line with the individual's values. Similarly, *environmental re-evaluation* encompasses cognitive and affective assessments of how the problem behaviour affects one's proximal social and/or physical environment. Initially, this process was conceptualised in relation to the general impact of the behaviour on the physical environment or society as a whole (Prochaska, Velicer, DiClemente, & Fava, 1988), but in later research has also encompassed perceived impacts on friends and family (Hodgins, Currie, & el-Guebaly, 2001). *Social liberation* includes awareness of others making changes and the realisation that social norms are changing in the direction of supporting healthy behaviour change.

Behavioural processes include *self-liberation,* which includes both the belief that change is possible, and the commitment to act on that belief. *Counterconditioning* involves substituting alternatives for the problem behaviour, which can be cognitive (e.g., thinking about something else or making positive self-statements) or behavioural (e.g., engaging in physical activity or practicing relaxation techniques). *Stimulus control* involves avoiding or countering stimuli that prompt problem behaviours, or replacing these stimuli with prompts for healthier alternatives. Although generally assessed in relation to the removal or replacement of triggering stimuli, strategies that involve limiting the problem behaviour may also fall under stimulus control processes (e.g., 'fading techniques;' Prochaska et al., 1982). *Reinforcement management* involves rewarding oneself or being rewarded by others for making positive changes. More broadly, this process can be defined as providing consequences for engaging in or avoiding a particular behaviour, and therefore includes negative as well as positive reinforcement (Prochaska et al., 1988). However, as self-changers have been found to rely more on rewards than punishments, reinforcement management has generally been examined in relation to self-management and social management of positive reinforcements. Finally, *helping relationships* involve seeking and using social support in order to achieve healthy behaviour change. This includes being open and trusting about problems with someone who cares, and receiving support and encouragement in return.

Table 1. Stages and Processes of Change (from Prochaska, Redding, & Evers, 2008)

Construct	Description
Stages of Change	
Precontemplation	No intention to take action within the next 6 months
Contemplation	Intends to take action within the next 6 months
Preparation	Intends to take action within the next 30 days and has taken some behavioural steps in this direction
Action	Changed overt behaviour for less than 6 months
Maintenance	Changed overt behaviour for more than 6 months
Processes of Change	
Consciousness raising	Finding and learning new facts, ideas, and tips that support the healthy behaviour change
Dramatic relief	Experiencing the negative emotions (fear, anxiety, worry) that go along with unhealthy behavioural risks
Self-reevaluation	Realizing that the behaviour change is an important part of one's identity as a person
Environmental reevaluation	Realizing the negative impact of the unhealthy behaviour or the positive impact of the healthy behaviour on one's proximal social and/or physical environment
Self-liberation	Making a firm commitment to change
Helping relationships	Seeking and using social support for the healthy behaviour change
Counterconditioning	Substitution of healthier alternative behaviours and cognitions for the unhealthy behaviour
Reinforcement management	Increasing the rewards for the positive behaviour change management and decreasing the rewards of the unhealthy behaviour
Stimulus control	Removing reminders or cues to engage in the unhealthy behaviour and adding cues or reminders to engage in the healthy behaviour
Social liberation	Realizing that the social norms are changing in the direction of supporting the healthy behaviour change

TTM processes were developed through observations of people who changed without the oversight or supervision or a professional (Prochaska, DiClemente, Velicer, Ginpil, & Norcross, 1985). Importantly, each of these processes is similar in nature to previously reported self-help strategies and actions. For example, one popular self-help strategy for problem gambling is *sourced alternative activities* and this is similar to the TTM item *counterconditioning.* This TTM model involves substituting alternatives for the problem behaviour, and can be cognitive (e.g., thinking about something else or making positive self-statements) or behavioural (e.g., engaging in physical activity or practicing relaxation techniques). Other gambling self-help strategies include avoidance or limiting access to venues or money, which are similar to the TTM item *stimulus control.* This TTM strategy involves avoiding or countering stimuli that prompt problem behaviours, or replacing these stimuli with prompts for healthier alternatives. Finally, the TTM also includes the item *helping relationships*, which has similarities with the self-help strategy social support, and involves seeking and using social support, being open and trusting about problems with someone who cares, and receiving support and encouragement in return.

Self-help strategies and actions are also described in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TBA) (Ajzen, 1985) which aims to predict an individual's intention to engage in a behaviour. The decision to limit or change gambling behaviour is impacted by motivation or intention to change as well as the perceived amount of control or ability to change. In terms of gambling, control or ability is influenced by: (i) attitudes towards the gambling behaviour (e.g., realising

that you cannot win); (ii) behavioural intentions (e.g., made a resolution to change your gambling); (iii) subjective norms (e.g., accept that gambling needs to change); (iv) social norms (e.g., complete a self-assessment); and (v) perceived power (e.g., remind yourself that you don't need to gamble). The processes of change described in the TTM and TPB are helpful in providing a more complete picture of how people change without professional support.

A final model that is also used to describe self-help strategies is self-regulation or self-monitoring. Self-regulation theory describes how people override innate or learned impulses with new or more helpful responses. It proposes that behaviour, emotions and impulses are monitored and compared against internal standards or goals (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007; Baumeister & Vonasch, 2014; Vohs & Baumeister, 2004). For example, for gambling this might be the actual amount spent gambling versus the desired amount spent gambling per week. Where there is discrepancy, successful self-regulation will see the individual implement a series of strategies (e.g., limiting access to cash, avoiding venues) and associated actions, such as not carrying cash or not driving near venues. This requires the individual to use self-discipline or willpower and also to be motivated to carry out the alternative thought, feeling or behaviour. When self-regulation fails it can be due to competing or unclear standards (e.g., setting limits on money spent gambling), abandonment of self-monitoring (e.g., loss of control in a venue) or loss of motivation. This model is important in understanding the range of self-help strategies in that it suggests items such as self-assessment, self-monitoring, planning and goal setting should be considered.

As well as developing a comprehensive list of self-help strategies and actions from multiple sources, research is required to determine the uptake and effectiveness of such strategies across gambling populations. Indeed, we know very little about the best strategy to apply that will have the most impact for people with gambling problems. Nevertheless, it is likely that a range of self-help strategies will be used at different times by those with distinct gambling patterns, including gamblers without any gambling problems, those struggling with problem gambling and those who previously have had problems with their gambling. The research currently available does suggest that self-help strategies have differing rates of uptake according to the severity of a person's gambling problem (Hing et al., 2011) and frequency of gambling (Abbott et al., 2014), although it is likely that the same strategy will be used variably at distinct times and for different reasons. A good example is limiting access to cash, which has been a reported as a self-help strategy used to prevent a problem from developing (Moore et al., 2012), but also as a first step when a problem has been identified (Hing et al., 2011).

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive review of the literature on the uptake and effectiveness of self-help strategies and actions to better control gambling behaviour. The methodology used to conduct the review is described in Chapter 3. The remainder of this chapter provides a description of self-help strategies and actions relevant to problem gambling and a brief rationale as to their inclusion. We then describe the evidence for each self-help strategy, including research on their uptake and effectiveness. A brief scan of the literature on self-help strategies suggests there is a paucity of research in the gambling field. As such, we will also draw upon literature examining the use of self-help strategies and actions applied to limiting or reducing alcohol, tobacco, and other drug problems.

2.3 Self Help Strategies and Action the Evidence

A working definition of self-help was developed to guide this review and subsequent studies. Based on the previous literature, self-help was defined as the resources, strategies and actions people use to control or maintain change to their gambling, that they do themselves, without necessarily interacting with other people. Compared to professional help, self-help strategies are characterised by being: (i) non-professionally administered; (ii) largely self-administered; and (iii) under personal control. Importantly, people can engage in self-help alone, as well as sequentially or concurrently with other forms of help, including from family and friends, peer support, mutual aid groups, and professional sources.

Based on this definition, seven broad strategies that were consistently discussed in the literature were identified (see

Table **2**). While differences exist in terms of the categorisation of actions, we have attempted to address this by grouping actions together based on their frequency of categorisation within the literature. This section provides a description of the identified strategies and related actions, as well as how they correspond with the definition of self-help strategy provided above. Evidence of their uptake and effectiveness is also provided wherever available.

Table 2. Summary of self-help strategies and actions described in this review

Strategy	Actions
Information seeking	Get the facts and figures (i.e., odds of winning)
	Seek information about how gambling works
	Learn about addiction and problem gambling
	Read self-help books, forums or message boards
Self-assessment & monitoring	Complete a self-assessment that may also include feedback
	Keep a record or diary of money spent on gambling
	Monitoring for signs that gambling is becoming a problem
	Track behaviours against goals
Alternative activities	Identify diversionary or distraction based activities such as keeping busy
	Substitute gambling with new activities such as exercise or relaxation or a new hobby
Cash control & financial management	Set a limit on gambling expenditure
	Set a limit on time spent gambling
	Set a budget for gambling expenses
	Leave credit cards/cash at home when gambling
	Cut up or cancel credit cards
	Use a venue smart card
	Avoid using ATM's to withdraw money
	Engage in other activities in gambling settings such as a meal
	Get a friend to support you in sticking to your limits
	Transfer financial responsibilities to others
	Pay bills before gambling

Strategy	Actions
Cash control & financial management continued	Plan gambling so that it does not interfere with other activities
	Make appointments to limit time gambling
	Avoid chasing losses
	Avoid gambling alone
Stimulus control	Avoid being near gambling settings
	Avoid certain places like casinos
	Avoid family/friends who gamble
	Avoid other triggers
	Adopt a 'gambling incompatible lifestyle'
	Self-exclude from gambling venues
	Avoid gambling when depressed, bored or drinking alcohol
Cognitive strategies	Think about the pros and cons of continued gambling
	Recall past gambling problems
	Think about how the future could be
	Use self-control or willpower
	Learn by observing how others change their gambling
	Consider values including the value of money
	Make a commitment to change
	Think about how money could be better spent
	Make positive self-statements and affirmations
	Engage in meditation or prayer
	Reflect on achievements
Social strategies	Seek support for changing gambling
	Seek general social support to maintain change
	Spend more time with others
	Talk to others about gambling activities
	Join a peer support or online forum
	Join a spiritual group or community
Other strategies	Increase exercise or physical activity
	Reduce alcohol or drug use

2.3.1   Information seeking

2.3.1.1 Description of self-help strategy and actions

Information seeking involves obtaining new information in order to better control or manage one's behaviour. According to the TTM, obtaining information is part of consciousness raising where the individual attempts to increase awareness about the causes, consequences and cure for their own problematic behaviour (DiClemente & Prochaska, 1982; Prochaska & DiClemente, 1982; Prochaska et al., 1988). This may involve obtaining facts and figures about gambling (e.g., odds of winning), information on the product (e.g., how gambling works), information on safe or 'responsible' gambling and also information about problem gambling (e.g., how it develops, what to do about it). An organised collection of readings is referred to as bibliotherapy, and may also be considered a form of self-help as

it is self-selected and self-maintained and does not involve professional oversight. According to DiClemente and Prochaska (1982), information can raise self-awareness without the person actually seeking it, from such sources as the media or educational campaigns, as well as via feedback or confrontation with other people. However, these examples do not fit with the definition of self-help as they are not self-initiated or self-maintained.

2.3.1.2 Research evidence on uptake

In the largest Australian study of help-seeking amongst gamblers conducted to date, Hing, et al., (2011) collected survey data from 730 gamblers, including those with and without problem gambling. They found almost one in three gamblers said that they had sourced 'information about how gambling works and the odds of winning' and just over 20% had sourced 'information about why some people gamble excessively'.

Estimates of the uptake of information-seeking strategies amongst gamblers have been provided by a small number of studies, with mixed findings reported. In a study of help-seeking amongst 82 Indigenous Australian gamblers who sought help for their gambling, a third of participants used 'written information on how to address a gambling problem' (Hing, Breen, et al., 2014b). Hodgins and El-Guebaly (2000) conducted open-ended interviews with recovered gamblers and reported that 9% of gamblers discussed 'insight into gambling' as an important factor in maintenance of change, but no participants mentioned this factor when discussing the initial actions taken to resolve a gambling problem. Evidence from the tobacco literature suggests that strategies used to gather information and increase awareness may be more frequently reported by individuals in the earlier stages of recovery, compared to those who have already quit (Etter, Bergman, Humair, & Perneger, 2000). This is consistent with the TTM in that information is used as a means of consciousness raising when a problem is first identified, but it might also be the only source of help that a person seeks.

Seeking information has also been examined in studies of substance abuse, although estimates of the uptake of this strategy have been mixed. In a sample of adolescents with alcohol use disorders, 'alcohol education' was the most frequently used self-help strategy, reported by 38% of participants (Caldeira et al., 2009). While there is limited research examining the use of commercial materials such as self-help books as sources of information about gambling, at least one study has reported the use of self-help books amongst individuals attempting to self-recover from gambling problems (Hodgins & Peden, 2005). While self-help books can play a role in the early stages of behaviour change in alcohol use disorders, without professional help (Klingemann, 2012), very few studies appear to have examined their effectiveness (Apodaca & Miller, 2003). More generally, forums and message boards (such as GAWeb) have been used to access information and materials, with as many as 20% of individuals in one study reporting that they relied on GAWeb exclusively to change their gambling (Cooper, 2004).

Seeking information also appears to play a role across the different stages of behaviour change. For example, a qualitative study examining the use of self-help strategies and actions by people recovering from cannabis misuse were asked what they would advise someone else to do if they had a problem with cannabis (Kwong, Howard, & Arcuri, 2010). Around one in 10 said that they should be 'encouraged to seek information', but very few stated that seeking information was a technique that they used to initiate change. However,

information during drug withdrawal was identified as potentially helpful and this was more frequently used than strategies such as seeking alternative activities or having a "quitting buddy".

2.3.1.3 Research evidence on effectiveness

In a study of 37 recovered gamblers (26 untreated, 11 treated), (Toneatto, Cunningham, & Hodgins, 2008) examined strategies that were used to maintain behaviour change in the first year post-recovery. While participants did not identify *information seeking* as an important recovery strategy, when asked what advice they would give to an active problem gambler to help them decide to change their gambling behaviour, approximately one third suggested raising awareness of the negative consequences of gambling, and a smaller proportion (15%) suggested highlighting the odds of winning. When asked what advice they would give to people with problem gambling who wanted to quit gambling altogether, 10% of gamblers recommended education about the odds of winning. In contrast, the only strategy recommended by gamblers who sought professional help was treatment (73% of the sample).

Little is known about the effectiveness of obtaining information as a self-help strategy. However, the results of studies that have provided self-help materials as part of an intervention suggest they could aid in recovery in a number of ways. For example, information designed to increase awareness of the problems of gambling, promote appraisal of its costs and benefits, and help individuals develop strategies for changing behaviour have been associated with significant reductions in gambling frequency and money lost by people with problem gambling (Hodgins et al., 2001; Hodgins et al., 2004). Similarly, the provision of information about relapse via mail has been associated with a reduction in gambling days and money lost (Hodgins, Currie, el-Guebaly, & Diskin, 2007).

As with the gambling research discussed above, information and bibliotherapy for alcohol problems have often been evaluated as part of more complex interventions or as a self-help program. For example, bibliotherapy for alcohol problems, reviewed in a meta-analysis by Apodaca & Miller (2003), identified that as well as providing information, materials often also included interactive workbooks or manuals. Other studies have recruited participants from treatment services, making it difficult to determine the effectiveness of self-help materials as a stand-alone treatment amongst individuals not concurrently seeking help from other sources.

2.3.2   Self-assessment and self-monitoring

2.3.2.1 Description of strategy

Self-assessment and self-monitoring involve evaluating, assessing, checking or monitoring gambling behaviour against personal standards or goals. The TTM and self-regulation theory both cite evaluation and monitoring as critical to the decision to change some aspect of behaviour. Specifically, the TTM describes a process of cognitive and affective appraisals of behaviour that can lead to self-re-evaluation and also cognitive and affective assessment of behaviour that can lead to consideration of how the behaviour impacts on others (i.e., environmental re-evaluation). Online self-assessments are now widely accessible and these can provide feedback to the individual about how their behaviour (e.g., time and money spent gambling) compares with others of a similar demographic; or even the population

more broadly. A key component of self-assessment is raising awareness, and indeed some research suggests that completing screening tools or questionnaires (even without feedback) can be sufficient in raising awareness and subsequent engagement in help-seeking (Parslow, Jorm, Christensen, & Rodgers, 2004). Self-assessment of the kind described above is normally not something that can be completed daily, with many of the screening tools (e.g., the PGSI) available focussed on behaviour over the previous 12 months.

In contrast, a more active and repeated form of self-assessment is self-monitoring. This involves keeping track of behaviours, cognitions, and emotions against a set of personal standards (i.e., acceptable amount of money spent per fortnight). The methods of self-monitoring can include diaries and journals or online applications, such as those that record time and money spent gambling, triggers, successes and progress against goals. These tools are used regularly to address a wide range of addictive behaviours, with online self-monitoring resources and applications reported in the alcohol literature (Savic, Best, Rodda, & Lubman, 2013; Sinadinovic, Berman, Wennberg, & Hasson, 2009).

For the purpose of this review, self-assessment and self-monitoring were considered self-help strategies as they can be self-initiated, and in the case of self-monitoring, maintained in the absence of professional supervision. However, it is important to note that feedback from self-assessments may also contain a motivational component or recommendations for further action.

2.3.2.2 Research evidence on uptake

Resources for self-assessment and self-monitoring are increasingly accessible online. A growing number of websites provide checklists and other tools that can be used to evaluate gambling behaviour, such as tailored normative feedback that provides information on the respondent's behaviour in relation to others (Gainsbury & Blaszczynski, 2011). In a pilot study examining use of an online personalised feedback screener for problem gambling (the *Check Your Gambling* screener), Cunningham, Hodgins, and Toneatto (2011) reported a total of 1321 downloads from two websites over a period of 15 months. Similarly, over the first two years of *Gambling Help Online*, self-assessment of problem gambling risk was accessed almost 16,000 times, while self-assessment of gambling expenditure was accessed more than 7000 times (Rodda & Lubman, 2014). Consistent with this, Hing et al. (2011) found self-assessment was used by one in five people with gambling problems, but only one in ten people without a problem.

In terms of self-monitoring, Hing et al. (2011) found this was a fairly frequent activity both for those with and without gambling problems, with one-quarter of gamblers reporting they kept a record of their gambling activities and expenditure. Similarly, Moore et al. (2012) found that over three-quarters of people with problem gambling had kept track of the money they spent gambling, and more than half of people without problems had also undertaken this action. However, McDonnell-Phillips (2006) found while almost all gamblers set time or monetary limits on gambling for a single session or week, only 8% set a monthly limit or monitored their gambling spend over a calendar month.

2.3.2.3 Research evidence on effectiveness

There is now a substantial body of evidence suggesting the effectiveness of internet-based self-assessments for alcohol use (Cunningham, Wild, Cordingley, Van Mierlo, & Humphreys, 2010; Kypri et al., 2009; Kypri et al., 2004) and other substances, such as cannabis (Tait, Spijkerman, & Riper, 2013); Wood and Williams (2009) reported that 34% of problem gamblers who completed an online survey and received feedback on their gambling behaviour and beliefs about gambling believed their behaviour would subsequently decrease. However, no data on actual outcomes were gathered.

While an early pilot study by Cunningham, Hodgins, Toneatto, Rai, and Cordingley (2009) investigating the effectiveness of self-assessment with feedback reported short-term reductions in money spent gambling, a subsequent study by the same team employing a more rigorous design (Cunningham, Hodgins, Toneatto, & Murphy, 2012) found screening with feedback did not have an impact on gambling behaviour. Similarly, when Hing et al. (2011) asked gamblers to retrospectively report on the helpfulness of self-assessment or self-monitoring, only 6% reported that this was an effective self-help strategy. Taken together, these findings suggest self-assessment may be an effective *short-term* self-help strategy in reducing alcohol or gambling consumption, but for longer term success it may need to be combined with other self-help strategies, such as self-monitoring.

2.3.3 Alternative activities

2.3.3.1 Description of strategy

Activities can be used as a diversion or distraction from unwanted thoughts about gambling. These may be specific in nature (e.g., completing odd jobs around the house) or more general (e.g., keeping busy). Diversionary or distraction based activities are commonly used to prevent or manage an urge to gamble. Use of activities to distract or avoid gambling is in part aligned with stimulus control in the TTM, where people avoid gambling-related stimuli. However, alternative activities fit more closely to the TTM process of *counterconditioning*, which involves the use of alternative behaviours as substitutions for the problematic behaviour (e.g., physical exercise or relaxation could be implemented after a long day at work instead of going to a gambling venue). Alternative activities can be defined as distraction or pleasant actions that can assist in changing the focus away from gambling, and may involve the uptake or re-engagement with hobbies or pastimes. While some alternative activities (e.g., taking a meal break) may be used to provide distraction, and therefore assist the person to stick to their limits in a gambling venue, in this review the strategy alternative activities relates specifically to activities that provide *counterconditioning* or a substitution for gambling.

2.3.3.2 Research evidence on uptake

Engaging in new or distracting activities are amongst the most common self-help strategies used by gamblers, although they tend to be used less than strategies involving cash control and avoidance of gambling triggers (Hing et al., 2011; Hodgins & El-Guebaly, 2000; McDonnell-Phillips, 2006). In terms of distracting activities, Hing and colleagues (2011) reported that 'taking up other activities to take the place of gambling' was the third most frequently reported self-help strategy (by 38% of the sample), after limiting access to money and budgeting for gambling expenses. In addition, gamblers in this study listed a range of

other actions that included: 'play lots of computer games'; 'go walking'; play lots of sport'; 'joining the gym'; 'working more'; 'meditation'; and 'playing games of chance without actually spending money'. Similarly, Moore et al. (2012) found nine out of 10 people with problem gambling reported that they had 'focused on other hobbies (e.g., sport, art, dancing, education, gardening, volunteering or playing computer games)', with over three quarters of gamblers reporting they had distracted themselves from gambling by keeping busy. This action was reported by just 30% of people without gambling problems.

The use of alternate activities also appears to vary according to problem gambling status, with Hing, et al. (2011) reporting that just under 50% of participants classified as problem or moderate risk gamblers had taken up other activities in place of gambling, compared to only 36% of low risk and 24% of non-problem gamblers.

In terms of alternative activities, Hodgins and el-Guebaly (2000) asked 43 gamblers "did you consciously do anything to help you achieve this goal?" Open-ended interviews found almost half had engaged in new activities that supported a change in gambling. These activities included a broad range of actions from reading to exercise and spending more time at work or with family. Participants were also asked to "describe what factors helped you to avoid a relapse to problem gambling after you resolved your problem". Almost half of participants reported engaging in new activities to maintain that change, and this was the most frequently cited factor (Hodgins & el-Guebaly 2000).

Similar strategies have also been frequently reported in the drug and alcohol literature, with similar rates of uptake. In two systematic reviews of recovery from drug and alcohol problems without professional guidance or support, between 20-30% of studies reported participants had developed non-substance-related interests as a means of maintaining recovery (Carballo et al., 2007; Sobell, Ellingstad, & Sobell, 2000). While descriptions of recovery and maintenance within this field have often lacked detail, a recent qualitative study identified three categories of new activities pursued by individuals who had recovered from alcohol dependence (both treated and non-treated): activities involving helping others, developing hobbies and trying new things (Klingemann, 2012). Similarly, in the smoking literature, keeping busy and doing other things (e.g., exercise) are strategies reported by current and former smokers as ways of managing the temptation to smoke (Dalum, Schaalma, Nielsen, & Kok, 2008; Etter et al., 2000).

2.3.3.3 Research evidence on effectiveness

Alternative activities are generally endorsed as helpful and described as effective in qualitative studies. In terms of using alternative activities for distraction from gambling, there is limited evidence of the effectiveness of this strategy in problem gambling. Moore and colleagues (2012) reported that 65% of gamblers without a problem focused on other hobbies as a means of avoiding gambling too much, and 90% of people with problem gambling reported this strategy. However, this study focused only on uptake and not effectiveness.

In terms of pleasant, positive or new activities, two retrospective studies reported this was important in maintaining change. Toneatto and colleagues (2008) investigated important techniques for recovery from problem gambling and found 60% of gamblers (treatment seekers and non-treatment seekers) adopted a lifestyle incompatible with gambling.

Similarly, Hodgins and el-Guebaly (2000) found evidence that new activities could help with maintaining changes in gambling behaviour. Using a checklist of maintenance strategies, they found that 58% of the sample had 'changed recreational/leisure activities' and 54% had 'changed in social life activities.'

A small number of studies have provided evidence that engaging in other activities can also be beneficial in reducing substance use. These have primarily investigated unassisted recovery from smoking, with reviews of the literature indicating that successful quitters are more likely to use alternative relaxation strategies (Carey, Snel, Carey, & Richards, 1989) and stress-management skills (Sussman, 2002) than those who relapse.

2.3.4   Cash control and financial management

2.3.4.1 Description of strategy

Cash control strategies are self-initiated attempts to limit access to cash, that can be applied in both a gambling setting as well as in everyday life. Although controlling cash is relevant to other addictive disorders, the related actions are relatively specific to gambling. Cash control also refers to self-initiated strategies that are longer term, with the aim of better controlling or improving one's financial situation. Cash control strategies can be used while gambling in a gambling venue or other gambling settings (e.g., online gambling), and include setting a spending limit (by using actions such as only taking the money you are prepared to lose, and sticking to the strategy by taking regular breaks from gambling (e.g., meals). Cash control strategies in everyday life are those that aim to limit the amount of cash available at any one time for gambling. This may involve actions such as leaving cards or cash at home (thereby reducing the chance of going to a venue), cancelling credit or debit cards or asking someone else to look after your cards or cash. Cash control strategies may also be used to improve one's financial position by reducing the impact of past or current gambling behaviour (e.g., budgeting, implementing a savings plan, consolidating debt). Cash control is in part a stimulus control process as described in the TTM, as the mere presence of money to gamble can act as a trigger.

2.3.4.2 Research evidence on use

Research has consistently shown that in a gambling setting almost all gamblers, whether they have a problem or not, set some kind of limit on gambling expenditure (Schottler Consulting, 2010). Options in gambling venues include the use of a venue provided smart card for setting cash limits (also referred to as pre-commitment) and avoiding using ATMs to withdraw money (McDonnell-Phillips, 2006). In terms of avoiding using ATMs, 35% of participants reported that over a 12-month period they often or always used this strategy as a means of sticking to their limits. Lalande and Ladouceur (2011) interviewed 43 people with problem gambling and 38 without problem gambling. They reported 12 actions that were often used during a gambling session. Four out of five gamblers reported setting a loss limit. However, loss limits were generally set on a session by session basis rather than over a period of time. While people with problem gambling did this more often than people without problems, they were more likely to go beyond their self-imposed limits.

In addition to actions related directly to cash control in gambling settings, other actions have been examined that assist the individual to retain control, so that expenditure limits will be adhered to. These include limiting or avoiding alcohol consumption, asking friends for

support and engaging in other activities while in a gambling setting such as other entertainment (e.g., music) or having a meal (McDonnell-Phillips 2006; Moore et al., 2012).

Lostutter, Lewis, Cronce, Neighbors, and Larimer (2012) recruited over 1900 students who had gambled at least once over a six month period and explored 16 actions. They identified two factors that were actions used to limit time or money spent gambling and avoidance of gambling stimuli. Actions used to limit time or money spent gambling were undertaken in the gambling venue (i.e., avoiding cash machines, keeping track of spending and time while gambling, setting a limit and sticking to it, controlling bet sizes and leave before running out of money) as well as outside gambling settings (i.e., avoiding chasing losses, avoiding borrowing money, planning a gambling session in advance so that it does not interfere with other activities, not taking cards to a gambling setting and using social support to stop gambling when time limits are reached). The actions with the highest frequency of use were not chasing and planning gambling so that it does not interfere with other activities.

Thus, some actions that are relevant to the gambling setting (e.g., setting a spending and time limit) are also important for planning and preparing for future gambling sessions. Actions that are discussed in the literature that can be pre-planned include only carrying the amount of money that will be spent, leaving other cash or cards at home, and making a plan for the amount of time spent gambling (such as making appointments or commitments to ensure time limits in the venue are adhered to) (Moore et al., 2012; Hing et al., 2011; McDonald-Phillips, 2005). Indeed, cash control in everyday life is a self-help strategy that is often promoted in self-help treatment programs (Dowling, Smith, & Thomas, 2006), and includes getting friends or family to mind or manage money (Moore et al., 2012) and also paying bills by direct debit (Dowling, et al., 2006).

In their population based prevalence study, Abbott et al. (2014) assessed the uptake and effectiveness of six self-help strategies or actions. Thirty per cent of the entire sample of people who had gambled at least once over in the last 12 months had attempted at least one of these actions to "stop themselves from spending too much money and/or time on gambling". This was highest for people with problem gambling, where almost 80% had attempted at least one action. In contrast, just over one-quarter of people without problems had used a strategy or action (27%). The most frequently used measure was "setting a monetary limit before leaving home/setting a limit" which was used by 69% of the entire sample, while separating gambling from other expenses was used by 15%, setting a time limit by 6% and leaving ATM cards at home by 5%. In terms of setting a monetary limit before leaving home, people with problem gambling did this less frequently (61%) than people without problems (70%), but this difference was not significant.

In terms of longer-term cash management, this most often includes budgeting and paying bills and other expenses before gambling. *The Australian National Survey of Gambler Pre-Commitment Behaviour* (McDonnell-Phillips, 2006) examined the budgeting practices of regular gamblers as a precursor to setting limits. When presented with the statement "I pay my bills and then calculate exactly what I can afford to gamble," 49% of regular gamblers responded 'always' while 14% responded 'often.' Hing et al. (2011) asked gamblers whether they had "set a budget for gambling for gambling expenses" and noted that around half of all gamblers surveyed had done this. In these examples, budgeting referred to a calculation of the most money that could be spent gambling. Consistent with these other studies, Moore et

al. (2011) reported two-thirds of people with problem gambling "set a target budget for my gambling, and stick to it" and just over half of people without problems had actioned this strategy at least once.

However, budgeting more broadly refers to calculating income and expenses so that plans and actions can be put in place where there is discrepancy (i.e., higher expenses than income). This strategy is frequently included in self-help or self-directed programs (Raylu, Oei, & Loo, 2008) but it appears to be infrequently used as a self-help strategy. For example, few gamblers reported that they had "kept records of your gambling activities and expenditure" (Hing et al., 2011) and infrequently calculated a budget for non-essential items and safety and security expenses (Schottler Consulting, 2010). Indeed, McDonald-Phillips (2006) found budgeting for gambling spend most frequently occurred on a session-by-session basis and less frequently on a weekly basis, with only one in five gamblers budgeting for their gambling on a fortnightly or monthly basis. Similarly, Lalande et al. (2011) found that a gambling budget was often not allocated amongst those with problem gambling, but reflected whatever money was left over after bills were paid. In contrast, gamblers without problems reported budgeting for entertainment that was inclusive of gambling.

2.3.4.3   Research evidence on effectiveness

Hing et al. (2011) assessed the self-rated helpfulness of "limited access to money for gambling e.g., leaving debit and credit cards at home" and found this was used by most gamblers. However, the perceived helpfulness of this action varied. For example, of the 32% of gamblers without problems who limited access to money for gambling, only 8% reported it was helpful, whereas 51% of helpline callers had used this action and 36% reported it helpful.

In regards to longer-term cash management, Hing and colleagues (2011) found that 'setting a budget for gambling expenditure' was reported as helpful by 40% of gamblers who had never sought non-professional or professional help, and by less than 5% of gamblers in treatment. Among gamblers in recovery (26 untreated, 11 treated), Toneatto and colleagues (2008) found that limiting access to money was the third most common strategy used (reported by 26% of the sample).

Abbott et al. (2014) reported that for the most part, all cash control actions that had been used were reported as effective. The most highly rated items were setting a monetary limit before leaving home (95% rated this as effective). However, only 50% of people with problem gambling rated this as effective and 37% explicitly rated this action as ineffective. Across every other action, non-problem and low risk gamblers consistently rated these cash control measures more effectively than people who were moderate risk or problem gamblers. Conversely, McDonnell-Phillips, (2006) reported that over a 12-month period, leaving ATM cards at home was rated as the most effective of all strategies. Compared with people without problems, people with problem gambling more often reported this strategy as effective.

<u>2.3.5   Stimulus control</u>

2.3.5.1 Description of strategy

Stimulus control involves limiting or avoiding contact with places, people, or situations in order to better control or manage one's behaviour. Stimulus control is a process described in the TTM, where the mere presence of gambling stimuli can trigger an urge to gamble. Gambling stimuli may involve gambling venues themselves (e.g.,., the ambience, noise, smell), gambling products such as machine design, imagery or sound, or gambling promotions, such as incentives or advertising (Battersby et al., 2010). Such stimuli have been identified as factors that can 'pull' a person back to gambling when they are attempting to limit or change their gambling behaviours. Stimulus control can involve actions that can be relatively simple, such as not driving past a gambling setting, avoiding certain venues like casinos, or not reading the racing form guide. However, included actions can also be more complex or challenging to initiate or implement, such as self-exclusion, developing new friends who are not involved in gambling or moving house to get away from a high-density gambling environment. This strategy is not just relevant to people who are attempting to avoid gambling altogether, but also those wanting to limit the frequency of gambling involvement.

2.3.5.2 Research evidence on uptake

Avoiding gambling settings includes everyday and longer-term actions. Everyday actions involve physically avoiding gambling settings, such as seeking entertainment or meals in places that do not provide gambling. Hing and colleagues (2011) found almost one-third of gamblers endorsed the action 'avoiding being near the venue where you primarily gambled'. People with problem gambling used this action more frequently (38%) than people who did not have a problem with gambling (16%). Similarly, Moore et al. (2012) reported that 65% of people with problem gambling had used the action 'avoid going to certain places like the Casino' (compared to 20% without problems), while 46% had used the strategy 'avoid walking or driving past certain locations' (compared to 10% without problems).

Longer term or more permanent actions refer to those that remove the chance of coming into contact with gambling stimuli. In a qualitative study involving 43 people that had previously reported a problem with gambling, stimulus control or avoidance was the most frequently stated action that occurred when people were actively making a change. This involved limiting access to gambling or staying away from gambling settings (Hodgins & El-Guebaly, 2000). When asked about the strategies that helped maintain change, stimulus control or avoidance was mentioned less frequently (16%). In this study, four out of five participants had quit gambling altogether and it appeared that as time passed stimulus control became less relevant. Similarly, Toneatto and colleagues (2008) reported on the results from interviews with 37 people with problem gambling. They found two out of three gamblers had applied a stimulus control strategy (e.g., avoidance of gambling venues). Qualitative work also suggests that people with gambling problems can implement more permanent actions related to stimulus control, such as moving house to avoid gambling opportunities (Boughton & Brewster, 2002). Finally, Moore et al. (2012) reported that 31% of people with problem gambling had attempted the strategy 'have myself voluntarily excluded from a gambling venue' which was significantly more frequently reported than people who did not have a gambling problem (10%). Consistent with this, between 10-20% of people with problem

gambling in Australia self-exclude themselves from venues where there has been a problem (Productivity Commission, 2010). Online moderate risk and problem gamblers have also reported using self-exclusion from gambling websites, blocking software to prevent access to gambling websites, and ad-blocking software, to reduce or better control gambling behaviours (Hing, Cherney, et al., 2014).

Stimulus control can also involve developing new social networks or friendship groups that are not focused on gambling activities. Indeed, Hing et al. (2011) reported that 'avoiding family and friends who gamble' was used by 24.0% of problem gamblers, 20.9% of moderate risk gamblers, 12.2% of low risk gamblers, and 15.8% of non-problem gamblers.

Similar stimulus control strategies are also reported in the alcohol and other drug literature. Adults recovering from substance use disorders report self-help strategies that involve avoiding triggers, including avoiding drug or alcohol using friends and changing city or country, job, work place, or school (e.g., (Caldeira et al., 2009; Granfield & Cloud, 1996; Klingemann, 2012; Westermeyer, Myott, Aarts, & Thuras, 2001). A range of stimulus control strategies are also reported by people who stop smoking by themselves, and include staying away from places where people smoke, avoiding tempting or triggering situations, and avoiding buying or carrying cigarettes (Etter et al., 2000; Prochaska et al., 1988).

2.3.5.3 Research evidence on effectiveness

Even though one in three gamblers surveyed by Hing et al. (2011) reported using the action 'avoiding being near the venue', only one in ten rated this action as helpful. Similarly, in the same study, avoiding family and friends who gambled was rated as helpful by fewer than 5% across the entire sample of gamblers (no problem through to problem gambling). However, while Abbott et al. (2014) reported only 8% of gamblers used the action 'avoid betting or gambling places', 89% of those using this action rated it as effective. This study also found this strategy was used more often by people with problem gambling (29%) or at moderate risk (16%), than people without problems (6%).

In terms of longer-term stimulus control strategies, the evidence is largely limited to avoiding access to venues by self-exclusion. Indeed, there is a great deal of research investigating the uptake and effectiveness of self-exclusion programs (Gainsbury, 2014). For example, Hing, Russell, Tolchard, and Nuske (2015) reported people who self-excluded had equivalent short-term outcomes to people who self-excluded and also sought counselling. However, there is limited knowledge of the effectiveness of self-exclusion used in combination with other self-help strategies.

2.3.6   Cognitive strategies

2.3.6.1 Description of strategy

Cognitive strategies refer to thinking differently about gambling, such that thoughts and beliefs can be used to control or maintain change to gambling behaviours. Cognitive strategies are most aligned with self-liberation in the TTM. Self-liberation refers to the individual's commitment to initiate change as well as commitment to maintaining change. The TTM proposes that when considering change people think about the pros and cons of their behaviour and this continues until the issue is resolved. Prochaska (2008) reported the pros of change (e.g., thinking about the negative consequences or harms of gambling) are

lowest in the pre-contemplation stage and gradually increase in number or strength across the continuum until the maintenance stage is reached. Conversely, the cons of change (e.g., missing out on the enjoyment of gambling) have been found to significantly outweigh the pros of change in the pre-contemplation stage and gradually decrease as people progress towards problem resolution.

Similarly, gambling self-efficacy (e.g., confidence to resist gambling across a range of settings) has been found to be higher among gamblers in the action stage than in contemplation (Dowling, Browne, & McDermott, 2007). Actions to increase self-efficacy may include thinking about past successes or learning from role models (i.e., other peoples' stories, peer support). Other cognitive strategies relevant to self-regulation include strength or will-power in order to initiate or maintain strategies and actions.

While cognitive approaches are common to treatment for gambling and other addictive disorders, the initiation and maintenance of this strategy does not require the oversight or supervision of a professional. As with other self-help strategies, people may learn this strategy from professionally developed materials found on websites or self-help books.

2.3.6.2 Research evidence on uptake

In a series of interviews with people with past problems, one-quarter stated that cognitive strategies had helped make change happen (Hodgins & El-Guebaly (2000). For those people who had not sought professional assistance, cognitive strategies involved remembering negative aspects of gambling and anticipating future negative consequences or benefits of quitting. This study also reported the use of specific cognitive techniques including thought stopping, decision making and self-talk as well as the use of will-power. These actions were also identified in interviews as important during the maintenance of change, as well as using cognitive strategies to manage urges and developing insight into gambling behaviours. Moreover, when maintenance of change actions were examined using a 20-item checklist (instead of an interview), the two most frequently endorsed items were 'recalling past gambling problems' (86%) and 'self-control or will-power' (79%). Also rated in the top five of 20 maintaining actions were 'gaining respect and goal commitment' and 'sense of accomplishment/pride'.

Moore et al. (2012) reported that 82% of people with problem gambling had attempted the action 'think about the negative consequences of excessive gambling that I have observed, heard about, or read'. This action was also used by almost 60% of people without a gambling problem. Hing et al. (2011) also asked gamblers to nominate strategies that were not listed in the study survey. Cognitive strategies identified included a commitment to stop (i.e., just stop, make the decision), consider the negative consequences (i.e., on other people), learning through observing impact on others, will power, affirmations, reconsideration of values (i.e., value of money, sense of purpose), meditation and prayer.

Abbott et al. (2014) did not include any cognitive strategies in the main survey, but seven cognitive strategies (out of 16 items) were reported as 'other' methods used to limit gambling. These included thinking about alignment with personal beliefs or standards (i.e., gambling wastes time or is against religious or other beliefs, gambling is a waste of money, buy to support a charity), thoughts about winning (i.e., chances of winning are low, only buy if prize is big), awareness of gambling problems and self-control. None of these items were

rated as helpful by more than 5% of the sample that were in most part people who had gambled over the previous 12 months but did not report gambling problems. It should be noted however, that these actions were not tested with the entire sample as they had emerged from the 'other' category.

Cognitive evaluations regarding the costs and benefits of substance use have also been reported as a common reason for self-change amongst those who have self-recovered from alcohol and drug abuse (Klingemann, 2012; Sobell et al., 2001), and have been frequently documented in studies of unassisted smoking cessation (e.g., (Dalum et al., 2008; Etter et al., 2000). *Self-re-evaluation* (i.e., positive thoughts about having stopped; being proud to have quit smoking, feeling accomplishment, feeling stronger than those who continue to smoke) has also been reported in former smokers who quit without assistance (Etter et al., 2000), while *becoming a new better person* (including *becoming stronger*; *gaining self-awareness;* and *regaining control*) has been reported in the alcohol literature (Klingemann, 2012). Prayer, mediation, and relaxation strategies have also been reported in the alcohol (Sobell et al., 2000) and smoking literature (Lichtenstein & Cohen, 1990).

2.3.6.3 Research evidence on effectiveness

Cognitive approaches are the most widely used and most effective type of treatment when delivered by a professional either as part of cognitive behaviour therapy or motivational interviewing (Cowlishaw et al., 2012). Cognitive therapy techniques are also effective at reducing time and money spent gambling as part of self-directed program (e.g., Carlbring & Smit 2008, 2011) or as delivered in a workbook with or without professional guidance (Hodgins, et al., 2001). However, the effectiveness of cognitive strategies as a self-help strategy or action has received less attention.

Previous research has identified that cognitive strategies are routinely used as part of the change process. Hodgins et al. (2007) conducted a content analysis of the reasons for quitting gambling, which included thinking about the past (e.g., how gambling had negatively affected family and friends), thinking about the future, (e.g., fear of what might happen if gambling continues in the same way), anticipating the future (i.e., desire for a better life), appraising gambling differently (e.g., pros and cons, waste of time, realising not a way to make money, understand it's not possible to win over the longer term) and making a conscious decision to change. A later review of 19 different studies by Suurvali, Hodgins, and Cunningham (2010) also found an evaluation of the pros and cons of gambling was a significant motivator for change (i.e., thinking about the consequences and making a conscious decision to change).

There has been considerable research into the role of cognitive factors in recovery from substance use disorders, most notably in relation to unassisted smoking cessation. An early review found that evaluating the pros and cons of quitting and also self-efficacy are important factors in determining success (Carey et al., 1989). In a review of self-initiated smoking cessation amongst adolescents (Sussman, 2002), cognitive factors were also found to predict quitting, including making a decision to change and thinking about the negative consequences. Similarly, amongst individuals attempting to stop smoking without formal treatment, self-efficacy has been found to predict quit attempts (Marlatt, Curry, & Gordon, 1988), is associated with successful quitting and lower rates of relapse (Garcia, Schmitz, &

Doerfler, 1990), and strongly contributes to the movement from contemplation to action and action to maintenance (Prochaska et al., 1985).

<u>2.3.7   Social strategies</u>

2.3.7.1 Description of strategy

Social strategies can include disclosing problems and/or seeking support from other people, as well as spending time with family, friends, and acquaintances. The TTM refers to helping relationships as those that are supportive of change and these are theorised to be particularly helpful in assisting the person to maintain change (i.e., during action and maintenance stages of change) and especially during times of stress (Prochaska, 2008). Supportive of change means that the person has someone to count on when they are having problems with gambling. This generally refers to quitting gambling, but as discussed under other strategies this may also involve limiting or controlling strategies (e.g., seeking support in a gambling setting, only gambling with friends rather than alone) as well as cash control or financial management (e.g., family or friend minding money).

2.3.7.2 Research evidence on uptake

Many individuals with gambling problems report seeking support from other people (Hodgins & El-Guebaly, 2000; Moore et al., 2012; Nuske & Hing, 2013). Hodgins and el-Guebaly (2000) found that 23% of gamblers interviewed mentioned 'social support' as an action taken when stopping gambling. In addition, 33% of people interviewed who no longer had a problem raised social support as important in maintaining change. The latter study administered a 20-item checklist of factors that maintained change from gambling, with close to half identifying support from family and friends and around a third reporting support from their spouse (37%). In addition, over half of participants who reported having gambling problems in the past reported they had changed their social life or social activities, while one third reported changing their friends.

Moore et al. (2012) tested two actions that involved support or involvement of family and friends. These were to 'talk to my friends and family about my gambling activities' (endorsed by 78% of people with problem gambling and 25% of those without a problem) and 'spend more time with family and friends' (endorsed by 85% of people with problems and 43% of those without problems). Hing et al. (2011) did not formally test social-support as a self-help strategy, but found that approximately one-third to one-fifth of gamblers sought help from their family, friends, or partner/spouse, with a smaller percentage seeking help from other gamblers, community or religious leaders, and workmates. Similarly, in another study by Hing, Breen, Gordon, and Russell (2014a) this time involving indigenous gamblers, 66% reported seeking help from family and friends, and 49% from a respected member of the community.

Social support is also frequently mentioned in the alcohol and other drug literature. For example, social support has been reported in 32.5% to 54.5% of studies examining natural recovery from alcohol problems (in some cases this may have also involved change in social group; (Carballo et al., 2007; Sobell et al., 2000), and may involve membership in spiritual communities (Klingemann, 2012). In the smoking literature, reviews of self-initiated quitting have consistently identified social factors as important, particularly amongst younger smokers (e.g., Cengelli, O'Loughlin, Lauzon, & Cornuz, 2011; Sussman, 2002). Finally,

Wagner et al. (2004) examined the importance of social support in changing smoking behaviour. They found social support predicted the number of processes of change undertaken, and that support specific to helping with smoking management as well as general support were equally important.

2.3.7.3 Research evidence on effectiveness

Consistent with the findings of Hodgins and el-Guebaly (2000) regarding the role of social support in maintaining changes in gambling behaviour, Toneatto and colleagues (2008) found that 23% of gamblers who had problems in the past had disclosed to another as a strategy for change. Social support is also frequently mentioned (and perceived as helpful) by smokers who are self-initiating quitting, and studies evaluating social factors indicate that they appear to play a significant role in success (i.e., maintaining abstinence; Carey et al., 1989; Helvig, Sobell, Sobell, & Simco, 2006). A review of self-initiated quitting amongst adolescent smokers found that living in a social milieu that is comprised of fewer smokers is a key predictor of self-initiated quitting (Sussman, 2002). This included fewer sibling and parent smokers, fewer numbers of offers to smoke, lower perceived prevalence of smoking, and lower approval of smoking by parents and friends. In a longitudinal review of studies examining self-initiated smoking cessation amongst adolescents and young adults (Cengelli et al., 2011), not having friends who smoke and resisting peer pressure predicted quitting.

Studies have also examined the role of peer support forums and message boards in self-recovery from substance abuse; however it may be difficult to measure the effectiveness of these independently of other variables. In a systematic review of the effects of online peer-to-peer interactions, Eysenbach, Powell, Englesakis, Rizo, and Stern (2004) identified six studies that had examined smoking cessation, but found that peer-to-peer interactions had been examined in conjunction with more complex interventions (i.e., the peer to peer community formed part of a broader intervention that included more structured programs and/or contact with a professional).

2.4   Summary

The aim of this chapter was to provide a comprehensive list and description of the self-help strategies and actions that have been described in the literature to control or maintain behaviour change related to gambling behaviour. The review also sought to describe the uptake and the effectiveness of these strategies and actions. Overall, the studies reviewed in this chapter provided evidence for a wide range of cognitive-experiential, behavioural, financial, and social strategies. In total, we identified seven strategies and 51 actions. Each type of strategy was found to involve a number of more specific actions, and these are summarised in Table 4.

In terms of broad uptake of self-help strategies and actions, cash control and financial management was the most frequently discussed strategy in the literature. It is important to note that the list of strategies and actions described in the current review represent those reported within the gambling literature and, to a lesser extent, in the other addictive behaviours literature. However, the gambling literature is to a large degree focused on directly limiting time and money spent gambling, meaning that self-help actions such as improving health and wellbeing, known to be helpful for other mental health disorders, have not typically been explored in terms of their helpfulness for gambling (e.g., Jorm, 2000). In

addition, much of the literature involves interviews with people who have recovered from problem gambling. These retrospective accounts of recovery are important but limited in that they represent a select and often small subsample of the population. There is a need to look beyond the literature to document strategies and actions offered to the community by government and industry through websites as well as listen to gamblers themselves discuss methods to manage gambling problems. The growth in online discussion boards, as well as online counselling services, provides a rich source of data that can exponentially increase our knowledge of the strategies and actions gamblers use to manage their gambling.

Overall the literature reports that self-help strategies are frequently used. For example, Abbott et al. reported that 30% of people who had gambled at least once over a 12-month period had applied a method to limit or maintain control of their gambling. However, the literature is limited in a few key ways including the use of a consistent timeframe for the uptake of strategies. For example, Hing et al. (2011) asked about lifetime use of strategies, whereas Abbott et al. (2014) did not specify a period of time. Similarly, Moore et al. (2012) did not specify the time period, but asked participants to 'rate the extent you use any of the following strategies to limit your gambling' from 'never used' to 'done often'. According to the TTM, the timing of processes is important in that some, such as obtaining information, occur at the precontemplation stage, whereas others, such as helping relationships, are important during action and maintenance.

While identifying lifetime uptake of self-help strategies is important, more work is needed to identify the relative helpfulness of self-help strategies and actions across the stage of change continuum, as individuals identify they have a problem and work towards changing their gambling behaviour. In a similar vein, while a number of studies have identified that some strategies and actions are more frequently used by those with, compared to without, gambling problems (e.g., avoiding venues), there has been little work comprehensively exploring how the uptake and helpfulness of strategies and actions differs according to whether an individual has a current or past gambling problem, or has never experienced difficulties with their gambling.

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The research team designed the project to cluster around two broad aims that encapsulated the tender brief, specifically:

> (1) To develop a comprehensive list and descriptors of self-help strategies and actions

> (2) To examine the uptake and helpfulness of self-help strategies and actions within an Australian context.

To achieve these broad aims, the research team employed a mixed method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data, with multiple studies conducted over two distinct phases. Phase 1 involved four individual studies that used multiple data sources to provide a comprehensive list of self-help strategies and actions that were discussed by gamblers or described on gambling operator or support sites. The studies covered a review of existing literature as well as secondary analyses of existing data sources including websites, forums and online counselling transcripts. Building on this work, Phase 2 of the project involved determining the uptake and helpfulness of the strategies and actions identified in Phase 1 across a broad population of gamblers, including those with and without self-reported problems associated with their gambling. Finally, a subset of this sample was recruited into a qualitative study to provide a richer understanding of their experiences of using self-help for their gambling.

In total, six distinct studies were conducted across the two phases of the project, as outlined below:

Phase 1: Identification of strategies

Study 1: Literature Review

- A comprehensive review of Australian and international literature on self-help for gambling problems, with a focus on the types of strategies and actions available and utilised.

Study 2: Audit of Self-Help Strategies Promoted by Gambling-Related Websites

- A comparative review of the self-help strategies and actions promoted by Australian gambling-related websites (n=34), including recommended self-help strategies and descriptions of each.

Study 3: Analysis of Problem Gambling Online Discussion Forums

- An analysis of online forum posts (n=604) where gamblers discussed with each other strategies and actions for limiting or reducing gambling and related harms.

Study 4: Analysis of Problem Gambling Online Counselling Transcripts

- An analysis of self-help strategies and actions as discussed in online counselling sessions (n=85) within the national gambling help online service.

Phase 2: Uptake and Helpfulness of strategies

Study 5: Survey of Self-help Strategies and Actions

- An online survey investigating the perceived helpfulness of self-help strategies and actions amongst a large national sample of current and past gamblers (n=716), including those who reported that they had never had a problem or concern about their gambling, those who had a problem with their gambling in the past, and those that had a current problem. A subsequent online assessment was conducted 4 weeks later among consenting participants (n=410) to determine the uptake of strategies and actions over this time. The measures used in the two surveys are summarised in the Appendix.

Study 6: Interviews with Gamblers

- A qualitative study specifically targeting gamblers within the three groups described above to explore their experiences of using self-help strategies and actions (n=30).

Ethics approval for the study was gained from the Eastern Health Human Research Ethics Committee, study registration number LR22/1314.

A working definition of self-help was developed for the purposes of this project. This was derived from the *Gambling Research Australia* tender specifications as well as the study *Gamblers at risk and their help-seeking behaviour* (Hing, Nuske & Gainsbury, 2011). This latter report described self-help as "strategies or methods people might use to better control their gambling that they do themselves, without involving other people." The project team expanded this definition for the purposes of providing scope for the current project. The working definition that guided the methodology for this report was as follows:

Self-help comprises resources, strategies and actions people use to control or maintain change to their gambling that they do themselves, without necessarily interacting with other people. Compared to professional help, self-help strategies are characterised by being: (i) non-professionally administered; (ii) largely self-administered; and (iii) under personal control. People can engage in self-help alone, as well as sequentially or concurrently with other forms of help, including from family and friends, peer support, mutual aid groups, and professional sources.

3.1.1. Methodology for the literature review

We used a combination of search strategies to identify articles for the literature review. Published studies were identified via a keyword search of electronic databases (Psycinfo, Web of Science, ProQuest, and Google Scholar) using the terms 'gambling' and 'self-help,' 'self-regulation,' 'self-monitoring,' 'self-directed,' 'help-seeking,' 'natural recovery,' or 'unassisted recovery.' In order to identify research reports and other 'grey' literature we also reviewed the websites and publication lists of gambling research centres (e.g., Gambling Research Australia) and relevant government bodies (e.g., Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation). In addition, we examined the reference lists of selected articles in order to capture any papers that had not yet been identified.

An initial scan found the self-help literature for gambling problems to be somewhat limited, and as such, we used a similar search strategy to identify studies examining the use of self-help in recovery from substance use disorders. We did not attempt to conduct an exhaustive review of this literature; rather, relevant studies and reviews were included as a means of developing a comprehensive list of self-help strategies and actions that were relevant to problem gambling. Studies were identified through the databases noted above using the same keywords, with 'alcohol' or 'tobacco' or 'drug' replacing 'gambling' (in some searches, specific classes of drugs were specified, i.e., 'opiates', 'amphetamines' 'cocaine').

Studies were considered eligible for inclusion in the review if they described at least one strategy that fit the definition of 'self help' outlined above. As we were interested in the individual strategies and actions that people use to limit time or money spent gambling, we did not include studies that were referred to as a self-help program but where no evaluation or focus was placed on the individual strategies or actions. The initial literature search was conducted in December 2013, and was used to inform Phase 2 and the development of the survey instrument. Following the completion of the survey, an updated search of all literature published from December 2013 to April 2015 was included.

3.1.2   Methodology for the audit of self-help strategies promoted by gambling related websites

Thirty-four websites providing self-help strategies, actions and tools for problem gambling were selected for the audit. Criteria for inclusion in the audit were: (i) the website describes at least one self-help strategy; (ii) the website is provided by an Australian body and is accessible in Australia; (iii) the website is government funded or provided by an institution such as industry, service providers, funders or academic bodies; and (iv) the website contains predominantly provider-generated content (versus user-generated content).

Our sampling strategy was purposeful and aimed to:

- provide adequate representation by state/territory as well as by national bodies;

- provide adequate representation across different types of website operators, specifically governments, help services and gambling operators; and

- focus specifically on websites with a substantial array of self-help strategies and actions to ensure that the range of self-help strategies and actions commonly promoted were captured.

Thus, the sample of websites was not intended to be representative of all such websites. In total, 15 help service websites, eight government websites, nine gambling industry websites and two sites aimed at professionals dealing with problem gambling were audited between September and December 2013.

Two alternative approaches were considered to develop the audit tool. A draft audit tool was initially developed through a literature review that compiled a list of self-help resources (e.g., written information, workbook/manual, checklist), self-help strategies (i.e., high order categories, e.g., managing finances, limiting your gambling), along with specific actions to support each strategy (e.g., destroy credit cards, set a time limit per gambling session). This was subsequently pilot-tested across three websites. On piloting, however, the draft audit tool proved too cumbersome and did not easily match with what was contained on the selected websites to efficiently conduct the audit. Therefore, an alternative and inductive approach was used to develop the final audit tool. This approach involved documenting all self-help materials on three government websites with a comprehensive range of self-help materials (www.problemgambling.sa.gov.au; www.problemgambling.vic.gov.au; http://www.gambleaware.vic.gov.au/). This list was then supplemented with self-help materials found on an online wagering site (http://centrebet.com/#ResponsibleGambling) and a land-based casino site (www.crownmelbourne.com.au/responsible-gaming/1887/about-responsible-gaming). This initial list of self-help materials was then used deductively to audit the remaining websites, with additional materials from these remaining websites added as they were located. Thus, the list was expanded as the audit progressed until the audit of the 34 websites was complete.

Completing the audit entailed documenting the types of resources found on each website (e.g., written information, workbook/manual, checklist, calculator). The same inductive approach as described above was used to identify 22 types of self-help resources across the 34 websites.

The audit also entailed categorising the self-help materials located on the 34 websites into high order groupings. Nine overarching self-help 'strategies' were identified:

- Becoming informed about gambling
- Self-assessment of own gambling
- Setting limits on gambling
- Managing finances and gambling spend
- Reducing opportunities and triggers
- Changing thoughts and beliefs
- Monitoring ongoing behaviour and change

- Utilising social support and resources

- Taking up alternatives to gambling

Numerous self-help 'actions' were documented and assigned to each overarching 'strategy', and comprised more detailed advice, actions or tools to help implement each strategy. These 'actions' are contained in the tables in Chapter 4. Several members of the research team reviewed the categorisations of self-help strategies and actions, with appropriate refinements made. Also of note is that the 34 websites were audited only for website provider-generated content and not user-generated content (e.g., gamblers' stories) as the latter is the focus of Study Three.

3.1.3   Methodology for the identification of self-help strategies in an online forum for problem gambling

Data were obtained from an Australian website that operated for a period of four years between June 2009 and April 2013. Hosted by the Department of Justice (Office of Problem Gambling), www.problemgambling.vic.gov.au offered free and anonymous access to a forum for people impacted by problem gambling. The forum was pre-moderated by administrative staff (not clinicians or peers) only for compliance against site terms and conditions (e.g., not to post offensive materials). The site did not permit peer-to-peer comments. However, occasionally posters would make reference to other posters and the administrator would also post words of encouragement or referral.[1]

Problemgambling.vic.gov.au was organised by area of concern (e.g., personal stories, information). As we were interested in self-help and stories of how people limited, managed or abstained from gambling we specifically targeted three categories. These three categories were *stories of gambling* (307 posts), *success stories* (69 posts) and *stories of change* (229 posts). We extracted data from these three categories that were posted between June 2009 and April 2013. This resulted in 604 posts containing 133,615 words of text. Posts ranged in length between 4 and 1,319 words. The average number of words per post was 221 and the median number was 185.

In total, 319 gamblers posted under the user name 'anonymous' as well as variations of anonymous such as *anon3* or *anonymous11*. Gamblers also identified with user names that were positive words or phrases (e.g., *we can change, time to move on, my new year resolution*), self-deprecating (e.g., *stupid, very helpless, sorry, sad gambler*) or reflective of the current problem (e.g., *lost it all, I can't afford this addiction, fed up or dopeys story, pokies are the devil, out of control*). Furthermore, some gamblers

---

[1] In 2014 content from problemgambling.vic.gov.au was moved to the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation (VRGF) website www.responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/getting-help/real-stories/your-stories/gamblers-stories

identified with a username that was their first name and occasionally their full name. In these instances, we reported only the first name of the poster.

The selected posts were analysed using descriptive content analysis, as described by Newell and Burnard (2010). Forum posts contained a great deal of information related to the experience of gambling, but also information on how gambling behaviour was limited, reduced or managed. As we were interested in self-help, we extracted content that was related to resources, strategies and actions people used to better control their behaviour and that they did themselves, without necessarily interacting with other people. Four researchers (SR, DL, RI, AC) independently read transcripts, developed themes and created open coding headings from a review of the data.

To ensure categories were mutually exclusive, a number of categories (or codes) were combined (e.g., remove or limit access to money) and sub-categories developed. In addition, categories were collapsed into higher order codes (or categories) such as *limit or remove access to gambling,* which consisted of a range of themes related to the act of limiting or removing access (e.g., *stay away from venues, self-exclude)*.

We attempted to represent the main message of the poster. When more than one strategy or action appeared in the same post we separated the post into its component parts. This approach meant that many strategies and actions could be captured by the coding frame. For example, *limiting access to cash and close online accounts* was reported separately as *limiting access to cash* as well as *closing online accounts*. A Microsoft Excel database was then employed by three researchers to code the items into categories and higher order codes.

Quotes contained in this chapter are kept in their original form except for typographic corrections. Corrections included capitalisation and spelling and also translation of words from internet speak and text talk (i.e., abbreviations such as u for you or r for are). Some posts contained key words (e.g., limit); however there were occasions where the context or remainder of the post was not interpretable and these posts were therefore not included in the current analysis.

3.1.4   Methodology for the identification of self-help strategies in online counselling transcripts

The sample was extracted from a dataset of clients who had participated in a web-based counselling session for problem gambling between November 2010 and February 2012. Web-based counselling was provided free and immediately (no appointment) via a national Australian service (www.gamblinghelponline.org.au), which provides counselling, information and referral for anyone affected by problem gambling (Rodda & Lubman, 2012).

In total, 85 client transcripts were included in the analysis. The sample was selected to ensure equal representation of males (n=43; 50.6%) and females (n=42, 49.4%), and representation of a range of age groups: 25 participants were aged younger than 30 years of age (29.5%), 20 were aged 30-39 (23.5%), 18 were aged 40-49 (21.2%) and 22 were older than 50 years of age (25.9%). Clients were more often involved in non-strategic gambling such as electronic gaming machines (72.9%) than strategic

gambling (i.e., wagering or sports betting, 27.1%) and identifying as Australian (71.8%) and new to counselling (62.4%). Most clients contacted the service outside traditional business hours (i.e., evenings and weekends, 74.1%).

The transcripts were analysed by two researchers (SR and AC) using thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). The two researchers independently read and re-reread transcripts to understand how self-help strategies and actions were described in terms of depth (i.e., was the strategy just named or described in depth) and breadth of strategies and actions covered. Data were coded against self-help strategies and actions based on their latent content. We attempted to represent the main message of the gamblers accessing the online counselling service. When more than one strategy appeared in the same phrase we separated the phrase into its component parts. This approach meant that the coding frame could capture many strategies and actions. For example, limiting access to cash and close online accounts was reported separately as limiting access to cash as well as closing online accounts. Quotes contained in this chapter are kept in their original form except for typographic corrections. Corrections included capitalisation and spelling and also translation of words from internet speak and text talk (i.e., abbreviations such as u for you or r for are). Transcripts were extracted from a Microsoft Access database and imported into a qualitative analysis software package (NVivo Version 10.0).

3.1.5   Methodology for online self-help strategies survey

3.1.5.1 Self help strategies and actions

As outlined in Table 3, Phase 1 activities identified multiple self-help strategies and actions from the literature review, audit of gambling provider and support websites, online discussion forum, and counselling transcripts. Strategies and actions that were identified in the literature review, discussion forum and counselling transcripts were added to a database containing those identified through the website audit.

Table 3. Summary of research activity, data collection methods and number of strategies and actions identified across Phase 1 studies

	Research Activity	Data collection method	Number of strategies and actions identified
Study 1	Comprehensive literature review	Review of Australian and International literature	7 strategies 51 actions
Study 2	Analysis of self-help strategies promoted on gambling related websites in Australia	Audit of self-help strategies promoted by gambling related websites	9 strategies 506 actions
Study 3	Analysis of 604 forum posts extracted from an Australian online discussion forum for gambling	List of self-help strategies reported by gamblers in online discussion boards	12 Strategies 64 Actions
Study 4	Analysis of transcripts extracted from Gambling Help Online counselling sessions	List of self-help strategies used by gamblers contacting gambling support services	6 Strategies 25 Actions

Self-help strategies identified across Phase 1 studies were collated and reviewed by the research team. Twelve distinct strategy themes were identified based on these studies: (i) become informed about gambling; (ii) complete a self-assessment of your gambling; (iii) set limits on own gambling while in a landbased or online venue; (iv) plan gambling session in advance; (v) manage finances and gambling spend; (vi) reduce gambling opportunities, triggers and urges; (vii) change thoughts and beliefs; (viii) monitor ongoing behaviour and change; (ix) take up alternatives to gambling; (x) improve health and wellbeing; (xi) utilise social support and resources; and (xii) embrace faith and prayer (see Table 4).

Action items identified across Phase 1 studies were categorised under these 12 strategy themes. There was significant repetition of suggested actions across Phase 1 studies leading to a substantial reduction in total action items (n=318). Many of the remaining action items were similar in their intent, and as such, the remaining actions were categorised under distinct action statements that captured their common purpose (e.g., 'read information on how gambling works' was based on 6 actions identified across Phase 1 studies - know how pokies work or odds of winning; source information about how gambling works and the odds of winning; [know] odds of winning/losing; [know] how poker machines work; [understand] chance/skill and risk factors in poker machines; [know] how much you can lose on a poker machine; [understand] how other types of gambling work). Action statements were written in an active and direct form to reflect clear actions gamblers could undertake. The action statements were reviewed extensively and finalised based on consensus of the research team. In total, 99 self-help actions were identified under the twelve self-help strategies identified across Phase 1 studies (see Table 4).

Table 4. Full list of self-help actions, organised by strategy grouping

Strategy	Actions
Information	Read information on how gambling works
	Read gambling self-help books or materials
	Read first-hand accounts of other people's experiences
	Read information on signs or consequences of problem gambling
	Read information on responsible gambling
Self-assessment	Complete a questionnaire that gave me feedback on gambling problem
	Calculate money and time spent gambling
	Accept that gambling needs to change
Setting limits	Set limits on time/money spent gambling using smart card or automatic limit
	Avoid gambling alone
	Avoid gambling with heavy gamblers
	Avoid chasing losses
	Give winnings to a friend while gambling or put somewhere safe
	Don't drink alcohol or use drugs while gambling
	Take regular breaks while gambling
	Set up cues to keep track of time while gambling
	Stick with my strategy - don't increase or change bet

Planning	Set spending limit for each week or fortnight
	Only go to venues that offer other activities as well as gambling
	Plan ahead and leave credit cards and non-essential cash at home
	Plan ahead and limit amount of money you carry
Planning continued	Schedule other activities after gambling to limit session time
	Schedule gambling sessions so that they do not interfere with important activities
	Plan gamble free days each week
Managing finances	Consolidate debts and implement payment plan
	Keep money in joint account with partner or family member
	Lower daily ATM withdrawal limits
	Regularly contribute to a savings plan
	Give cards or cash to a family member or friend to limit access
	Cut up, destroy or cancel credit cards
	Pre-purchase goods or bills to reduce spare cash
	Only use credit cards that don't allow cash withdrawal
	Keep limited funds in online or loyalty gambling accounts
	Don't borrow money from friends or family, banks or loan sharks
	Keep track of money by setting up a budget and tracking spending
Reducing opportunity	Engage in behaviours that are incompatible with attending a venue
	Distract yourself or do something else until to gamble passes
	Postpone gambling until a later date
	Use alternate strategies to deal with gambling triggers
	Self-exclude or ban yourself from a land-based or online venue
	Keep busy to avoid thinking about or engaging in gambling
	Limit or restrict internet access
	Avoid discussions about gambling that might trigger own gambling
	Move house to get away from gambling venues
	Close online accounts related to gambling
	Avoid the first bet
	Avoid friends/family who gamble
	Avoid gambling when feeling down, depressed or otherwise vulnerable to gambling
	Avoid being near/passing gambling venues
Changing thoughts	Remind yourself that you don't need to gamble
	Re-establish trust and belief in yourself
	Compare costs and benefits of continuing to gamble
	Identify inaccurate thoughts about gambling or winning
	Remind yourself of negative consequences of gambling
	Remind yourself of positive consequences of not gambling
	Think about how your money could be better spent
	Make a daily affirmation such as staying positive or letting go
	Focus on not gambling each day at a time
	Make a resolution to change your gambling

Watching yourself	Remind yourself sometimes people win at gambling but system is designed for you to lose	
	Count days since you've made a change in your gambling	57
	Write about progress, thoughts, achievements or struggles related to gambling	
Watching yourself continued	Monitor for signs that gambling is becoming a problem	
	Monitor how your emotions relate to gambling	
	Concentrate on being strong or using will power	
	Make a list of strategies that worked for you in the past	
Alternative activities	Reward yourself for reducing your gambling	
	Create a physical reminder to limit your gambling	
	Complete daily activities around the house	
	Explore additional work or study-related activities	
	Engage in an activity that gives you a feeling of achievement	
	Engage in a new form of entertainment	
	Start a new hobby like arts, crafts or knitting	
	Practice relaxation strategies like yoga, meditation	
	Play free gambling games like fantasy league or Facebook slots	
	Take a long walk	
	Participate in regular structured groups or sports like football or tennis	
	Listen, play, sing or dance to music	
	Do something that is risky or causes you to feel a rush of adrenaline	
Health and wellbeing	Eat a healthy balanced diet	
	Have a sauna, salt bath or spa bath	
	Express anger or sadness without causing harm to self or others	
	Increase fluid intake	
	Take a multivitamin or herbal supplement	
	Try methods to improve your sleep	
	Ensure your physical health needs are met	
	Engage in regular exercise	
	Take it easy on yourself or take it slow	
	Talk to a health professional about your gambling	
	Focus on managing issues that contribute to your gambling	
Social support	Share or post comments about gambling or emotions in online forum	
	Volunteer your time or help someone in need	
	Disclose to someone else the extent of your gambling	
	Ask family or friends to help or support you	
	Spend less time alone	
	Be more open and honest with family and friends about gambling	
Faith and prayer	Attend church or spiritual meeting	
	Engage in prayer or meditation	
	Remain hopeful about your future	

Online survey

The online survey contained the 99 self-help actions as well as demographic questions and validated gambling measures. For each self-help action, participants were asked to respond on a 5-item scale that probed its uptake ('never used strategy') and helpfulness ('not at all helpful', 'a little helpful', 'moderately helpful' and 'very helpful').

Demographic questions

Demographic questions covered gender, age, marital status, education qualification, work status and spoken language. A question was asked - "Do you currently live in Australia?" – if this was answered in the negative, participants were thanked for their interest and the survey was terminated as the survey was targeted at Australian residents only.

Gambling type

Time spent gambling was assessed using a questionnaire that differentiated each type of gambling (numbers games, pokies or EGMs, informal private betting, table games, horse racing and sports). Participants were asked to indicate when the last time was that they had gambled on any of the aforementioned gambling types (options were today, yesterday, 2-7 days ago, 8-28 days ago, 1-12 months ago, more than 1 year ago or never gambled on this).

Gambling mode

Gambling type was assessed by asking participants to indicate the most typical method or location for engaging in the gambling activities probed above: (i) go to a hotel/club, casino centre or shop; (ii) internet via PC or laptop; (iii) use internet on phone or tablet; (iv) call a betting agency; (v) go to a betting shop or track; and (vi) go to a private residence). If participants had not gambled on a particular gambling type, they were able to respond 'never gambled on this'.

Time spent gambling and gambling spend

For each gambling type, questions were asked about the number of days spent gambling in the last 3 months and 30 days, as well as the amount of money spent in the last 3 months and 30 days. Participants were also asked to consider the largest amount they had spent on gambling in the past 3 months and nominate which type of gambling was involved.

Problem gambling

Past and current problem gambling was assessed using a self-report question. Participants were asked 'Have you ever had a problem or concern about your gambling?' and were provided with 3 possible responses 'no never had a problem', 'yes, in the past', and 'yes, currently.'

NODS-CliP. The NODS-CliP (Toce-Gerstein, Gerstein, & Volberg, 2009) is a diagnostic interview instrument for detecting adult problem gambling. The NODS-CliP consists of three items which screen for loss of control, lying and preoccupation. An example item is "Have you ever lied to family members, friends or others about how much you gamble or how much money you lost on gambling?" Answers are "yes" or "no." One answer in the affirmative identifies problem gambling. The NODS-CliP has a high level of sensitivity (99.3%).

Problem Gambling Severity Index. Gambling frequency and severity were measured using the Problem Gambling Severity Index (Ferris & Wynne, 2001). The PGSI is a 9-item scale with moderate internal consistency (α = .84), and acceptable test–retest reliability (α = .78) (Ferris and Wynne, 2001). Scores range from 0 to 27, with 0 indicating non problem gambler, 1–2 indicating low risk gambler, 3–7 indicating moderate risk gambler and 8+ indicating problem gambling.

Stages of Change

The Gambling Readiness to Change Questionnaire developed by (Neighbors, Lostutter, Larimer, & Takushi, 2002) was used to assess stages of change. The GRCQ is a 9 item questionnaire, using a 5 option Likert scale with options ranging from 'strongly disagree', and 'disagree' through 'neither agree nor disagree' to 'agree' and 'strongly agree'. Using the method described by Neighbors and colleagues (2002), separate scores were calculated for precontemplation, contemplation, and action by taking the average of items corresponding to each stage. Participants were categorised on the basis of their highest average score, with ties resolved by selecting the stage furthest along the continuum of change (e.g., if they scored 4 on both contemplation and action, they were categorised as being in the action stage; Heather, Smailes, & Cassidy, 2008).

At the conclusion of the baseline survey, participants were invited to download a copy of the 99 self-help actions in a pdf document. The document was printable and was designed to appeal to those considering making a change to their gambling. The document opened with the phrase "Gambling staying within your limits. Give our tips the thumbs up, which tips work for you?"

Survey recruitment

An advantage of delivering the survey online was that it provided an opportunity to administer the survey to a large, broad sample of gamblers across Australia, including those with and without identified gambling problems. A targeted promotion strategy was developed to ensure there was representation across multiple types of gambling activity (including numbers games, electronic gaming machines [EGMs], table games, racing, sports, and informal private betting), and demographics (including geographic location, age, and gender).

Recruitment occurred between May 2014 and June 2014 and involved free and paid advertising and promotion across a range of websites as well as direct contact with organisations providing gambling services (i.e., industry, treatment, government) and past gambling research participants. This included:

- **Advertising on gambling related websites** including government and industry bodies, gaming operators, national sporting clubs, community health and counselling services, financial and legal aid services, peer support organisations, self-exclusion programs, and councils that were identified as having a high gambling expenditure. In total, 11 website operators agreed to promote the survey online.

- **A newsletter** describing the study was sent to 3126 gamblers who had visited Gambling Help Online between the 11th of June 2012 and the 30th of June 2014 and had consented to be recontacted by the service.

- **Paid advertising** included Google Adwords which reached 5,200 people. Phrases included 'self-help', 'gambling help' and 'how to stop gambling addiction.' It also included advertisements on Facebook, Google, and Gumtree in June 2014.

- **Social media** was used to appeal to a younger demographic who may not seek support through 'normal' support pathways, and to recruit sports-focussed gamblers. Nathan Hindmarsh @nathanhiney, ex-Captain of the Parramatta Eels (National Rugby League), a sporting role model who has a well-documented past with problem gambling tweeted the study to 41,000 followers. Heath Shaw @heathshaw23, of the Greater Western Sydney Giants (Australian Rules) tweeted the study to 35,000 followers, Turning Point @TurningPointAU tweeted the study to 409 followers.

- **Targeted emails** to agencies and gamblers, including contact with peer support programs. Programs contacted included Northern Peer Support, Victoria; Chinese Gambling Hotline, Victoria; Consumer Voice Project, SA and the Gambling Impact Society NSW. We also alerted almost 2500 gamblers who had previously participated in gambling research with Southern Cross University Centre for Gambling Education and Research and were interested in other research opportunities.

- **Distribution of 2000 flyers**. In June 2014, approximately 8000 flyers were distributed to venues that contained EGMs in Victoria and NSW, and family and mental health centres in Melbourne (Turning Point) and Adelaide (Relationships Australia South Australia). Representatives from ClubsNSW 'ClubSAFE' program also delivered flyers across 2 days during venue visits. Approximately 50 posters were distributed in the Melbourne CBD, Brunswick, Fitzroy and St Kilda. Posters were prominently displayed within view of gaming venues (pubs).

As part of the promotion strategy, we developed a range of promotional materials including online banners, postcards and flyers, promotional text for distribution as well as text for email distribution. Promotional materials were all branded with logos from Turning Point, Eastern Health, Monash University, Southern Cross University, ANU and University of Calgary. Materials included variations of "tell us how you stay within your limits" and "give our tips the thumbs up, which tips work for you". Clicking on the

banner advertisement took people to this explanation of the study. Flyers contained information using versions of the following:

> *The purpose of the study is to find out the kinds of strategies people have developed and whether they work. By telling us about your successes you will help other people limit or reduce their gambling in Australia and around the world. We are interested in how people use strategies for a whole range of gambling activities. This could be buying a lottery ticket to sports betting or playing the pokies. Fill in our online survey and help gamblers learn from what has worked for you. The survey can be completed online, will take 40 minutes to complete and can be accessed at www.turningpoint.org.au. To thank you for your participation, you will receive a $30 shopping voucher and a free summary of the tips and strategies which you can download and keep.*

Participants were then presented with a more expansive explanation of the study, the participant information sheet as well as informed consent. This informed participants "that the study was an investigation into the types of strategies gamblers use in cutting down or quitting gambling. It seeks to determine what works best for who and when. We are interested in how strategies change over the course of gambling from thinking about change to having maintained change over a year or more". To be eligible to participate in the survey, respondents were required to be gamblers (either current or past), 18 years of age or over, and current Australian residents. The information statement also included information on the investigators, confidentiality, withdrawal and risks from participating. Importantly, participants were informed in advance what to expect from the survey.

> *This study involves completion of a web-based survey that can be accessed any time from any Internet enabled computer. The survey involves answering questions about what self-help strategies you have used and whether they are helpful in addition to questions on your current or past gambling, mental health, Internet use and a few demographics about you. The survey will be offered to you twice, once when you signup and again at 4-weeks. Everyone who completes the first survey will go into the draw to receive one of 5 Samsung Galaxy Tab4 Tablets (we will ask for your email address in order to enter you into the draw - please note that this will not be supplied to anyone else). If you agree to participate in the follow-up survey we will send a prompt via email for completion of the survey at four weeks. Once you complete the second survey we will have two store vouchers that you can choose from up to a value of $30. Please note that you will only receive the $30 voucher if you do the second survey in 4 weeks time.*

All participants who completed both surveys were reimbursed with a $30 shopping voucher (for Coles, Woolworths, or iTunes). In addition, participants who completed the baseline survey were entered into a draw to receive one of 5 Samsung Galaxy Tablets, valued at $239 (participants were able to opt out of the draw if they did not want to be included).

Participant characteristics

Recruitment commenced in May 2014. A total of 1002 respondents consented to participate in the baseline survey. Of these, 23 dropped out immediately (i.e., prior to responding to any questions following acknowledgement of consent), and a further 261 dropped out prior to completing the strategies section. As the aim of the survey was to evaluate the uptake and effectiveness of the identified strategies and actions, only participants who completed this section were included in the analyses. Two participants were removed as they stated they were completing the survey due to a family member having a gambling problem (i.e., they did not identify as a gambler themselves), leaving a total of 716 participants. The mean time to complete the baseline survey was 41 minutes.

Of the 716 participants included in the final analysis, 485 (68%) were male, and 228 (31.8%) were female. Three participants (0.4%) reported their gender as 'other.' Year of birth ranged from 1927 to 1996 (Table 5).

Table 5. Year of birth and estimated age range of participants

Age range	Year of birth	n	%
18-24	1990-1996	46	6.4%
25-34	1980-1989	167	23. 3%
35-44	1970-1979	145	20.3%
45-54	1960-1969	154	21.5%
55-64	1950-1959	134	18.7%
65-74	1940-1949	40	5.6%
75+	1939 or earlier	6	0.8%
Missing	Missing	24	3.4%
Total		**716**	**100.00%**

Two hundred and twenty-nine participants (32.0%) were single, 267 (37.3%) married, 114 (15.9%) in de facto relationships, 32 (4.5%) separated, 57 (8.0%) divorced, and 17 (2.4%) widowed. In regard to education, 188 participants (26.3%) reported their highest qualification as secondary school or less, 270 (37.7%) reported obtaining a certificate or diploma, and 258 (36.0%) had an undergraduate or postgraduate degree. A majority of participants (519; 72.5%) reported working, with 418 (58.4%) being in full-time work. The remaining 197 participants reported their occupation as home duties (11; 1.5%), student (32; 4.5%), self-funded retiree (35; 4.9%), pensioner (61; 8.5%), unemployed (32; 4.5%) or other (26; 3.6%).

Postcode data indicated that 223 participants (31.1%) were from Victoria, 190 (26.5%) were from New South Wales, 126 (17.6% were from Queensland), 96 (13.4%) were from Western Australia, 40 (5.6%) were from South Australia, 16 (2.2%) were from Tasmania, 11 (1.5%) were from the Australian Capital Territory, and 9 (1.3%) were from the Northern Territory. Five participants (0.7%) did not report a valid postcode.

The majority (676; 94.4%) spoke English at home, with the second most common language reported as Chinese (11; 1.5%). Other languages included Achenese, Arab, Burmese, Cypriot, Greek, Indian, Indonesian, Korean, Macedonian, Polish, Punjabi, Slovak, Spanish, and Vietnamese (all reported by less than 1% of participants).

Problem gambling group

Gamblers were categorised into three groups based on their self-reported experience of problem gambling. 227 participants (31.7%) responded 'no never had a problem', 244 participants (34.1%) responded 'yes, in the past', and 245 participants (34.2%) responded 'yes, currently.' As this was a single item question, we sought to confirm self-reported ratings using two validated screening tools: the PGSI and the NODS-CLiP.

Participants who completed the PGSI (n=704; 12 participants dropped out of the survey following completion of the strategies section) scored between 0 and 27 (M=9.40, SD=8.55), with 137 receiving a total score of 0 (non-problem gambler), 77 receiving a total score of 1-2 (low risk gambler)), 146 receiving a total score of 3-7 (moderate risk gambler) and 344 receiving a total score of 8+ (problem gambler). Scores on the NODS-CLiP ranged from 0-3 (M=2.00, SD=1.10).

There was a significant linear relationship between gambling group and scores on the PGSI and NODS-CLiP, with current problem gamblers reporting the highest scores on both measures and non-problem gamblers reporting the lowest scores (Table 6). When participants were categorised according to their PGSI scores (i.e., as problem gamblers, moderate-risk, low-risk, or non-problem gamblers), there was a significant association between PGSI categories and problem gambling status. Specifically, participants who reported having a current or past problem were more likely to be classified as moderate risk or problem gambler, and participants who reported never having a problem were more likely to be classified as non-problem gamblers or low risk (χ^2=456.63, p<0.001).

Table 6. Gambling group by problem gambling measure

Problem gambling measure	No problem	Past problem	Current problem	F	p
PGSI (M, SD)	1.80 (2.82)	8.39 (7.06)	17.37 (6.19)	438.04	<.001
NODS-CLiP (M, SD)	1.19 (1.26)	3.65 (1.25)	4.62 (0.78)	587.30	<.001

Participants who reported past or current problems were asked further questions about the duration and timeframe of these, as well as the type of gambling that had been the most problematic for them. For participants who reported a past problem, the average duration of the problem was 4.7 years (range 1 month-40 years), and had occurred on average 5.5 years ago (range 1 month-35 years). For participants who reported a current problem, the average duration of the problem was 10.9 years (range 3 months-55 years). The most commonly reported problematic form of gambling for those with a current gambling problem (116 participants; 47.4%) and past problem (78 participants; 32.0 %) was EGMs.

Gambling behaviour was also assessed across six different types: numbers games, EGMs, informal private betting, table games, racing, and sports. Participants were asked: (i) when they last gambled on each type (timeframes included today; yesterday; within the last 2-7 days; within the last 8-28 days; within the last 1-2 months; or over a year ago); and (ii) the typical method they used to gamble on each type (going to a hotel, club, casino, centre, or shop; via the internet on a PC or laptop; via the internet on a phone or tablet; calling a betting agency; going to a private residence; or going to a private betting show or track).

Table 7 reports the number of participants who reported gambling using each of the six types within the specified timeframes, as a percentage of those who had ever gambled on that type.

Table 8 reports the number of participants who reported using these methods, as a percentage of those that had ever gambled on that type. It is important to note that there were some discrepancies in the number of participants who reported never having gambled on a particular type across these two questions (see 'Ever' column in both tables).

Table 7. Time last gambled

	Today		Yesterday		2 - 7 days		8 - 28 days		1-12 months		Over a year ago		Ever	
Numbers games	2	0.5%	7	1.8%	16	4.1%	28	7.1%	86	21.9%	254	64.6%	393	54.9%
EGMs	25	3.9%	75	11.8%	132	20.8%	85	13.4%	158	24.8%	161	25.3%	636	88.8%
Informal private betting	6	1.2%	11	2.2%	25	5.1%	39	7.9%	142	28.9%	269	54.7%	492	68.7%
Table games	75	13.0%	58	10.0%	107	18.5%	66	11.4%	141	24.4%	131	22.7%	578	80.7%
Racing	57	13.1%	39	9.0%	126	29.0%	57	13.1%	86	19.8%	69	15.9%	434	60.6%
Sports	61	9.2%	65	9.8%	183	27.7%	96	14.5%	151	22.9%	104	15.8%	660	92.2%

Table 8. Typical method used to gamble

	Go to a hotel/club, casino, centre or shop		Internet on PC or laptop		Internet on phone or tablet		Call a betting agency		Go to a private residence		Go to a private betting shop or track		Ever	
Numbers games	17	5.0%	14	4.1%	3	0.9%	2	0.6%	307	89.5%	0	0.0%	343	47.9%
EGMs	579	94.3%	24	3.9%	6	1.0%	2	0.3%	2	0.3%	1	0.2%	614	85.8%
Informal private betting	424	88.5%	31	6.5%	12	2.5%	1	0.2%	2	0.4%	9	1.9%	479	66.9%
Table games	127	22.4%	204	36.0%	94	16.6%	23	4.1%	114	20.1%	4	0.7%	566	79.1%
Racing	56	13.3%	202	47.9%	111	26.3%	13	3.1%	34	8.1%	6	1.4%	422	58.9%
Sports	399	63.2%	120	19.0%	33	5.2%	14	2.2%	61	9.7%	4	0.6%	631	88.1%

Participants nominated the type of gambling they had spent the most money on in a single day: 117 participants nominated numbers games (most money spent $7,500); 271 nominated EGMs (most money spent $17,000); 11 nominated informal private betting (most money spent $7,500); 40 nominated table games (most money spent $7,500); 185 nominated racing (most money spent $100,000); and 104 nominated sports (most money spent $10,000).

Participants who reported ever experiencing a problem (n=489) were also asked whether they had sought help, either currently or in the past, from a range of professional and non-professional sources (see

Table 9 and Table 10 for full list; participants were asked to check all that applied). Of these, a total of 183 participants (37.4%) reported that they had accessed face-to-face professional help (i.e., gambling help face to face, a residential treatment program, or general help services such as a financial or relationship counsellor, or general practitioner), with 69 (14.1%) reporting they currently accessed these services and 114 (23.3%) having accessed them in the past. The number of participants who reported accessing help from each source, split according to whether they were currently experiencing a problem with gambling or had experienced a problem in the past, is reported in Table 9 (current help), and Table 10 (past help).

Table 9. Source of help (current)

Source of help	Past problem	Current problem	Total	%[c]
Gambling Help face to face[a]	18	34	52	10.6%
Gambling Helpline	15	34	49	10.0%
Gambling Help chat	11	21	32	6.5%
Gambling Help email	6	17	23	4.7%
Residential treatment program	3	2	5	1.0%
General help services a	19	40	59	12.1%
Online support group	8	22	30	6.1%
Face to face support group (e.g., GA)	6	17	23	4.7%
Exclusion [b]	21	41	62	12.7%
None of the above	195	142	337	68.9%
Partner	23	44	67	13.7%
Friend	18	40	58	11.9%
Family members	16	40	56	11.5%
Religious leader	3	2	5	1.0%
Work colleagues	5	6	11	2.2%
Community leaders or elders	0	2	2	0.4%
Someone else	4	7	11	2.2%
None of the above	198	155	353	72.2%

[a] Such as financial or relationship counselling, or a GP

[b] From a land-based or online venue

[c] Percentage of total that had ever experienced a problem with gambling (n=489)

Table 10. Source of help (past)

Source of help	Past problem	Current problem	Total	% [c]
Gambling Help face to face[a]	46	65	111	22.7%
Gambling Helpline	44	57	101	20.7%
Gambling Help chat	27	30	57	11.7%
Gambling Help email	16	13	29	5.9%
Residential treatment program	3	3	6	1.2%
General help services[a]	34	62	96	19.6%
Online support group	14	19	33	6.7%
Face to face support group (e.g., GA)	28	33	61	12.5%
Exclusion [b]	33	43	76	15.5%
None of the above	146	93	239	48.8%
Partner	45	54	99	20.2%
Friend	47	48	95	19.4%
Family members	36	54	90	18.4%
Religious leader	3	4	7	1.4%
Work colleagues	11	10	21	4.3%
Community leaders or elders	2	0	2	0.4%
Someone else	5	9	14	2.9%
None of the above	153	142	295	60.3%

[a] Such as financial or relationship counselling, or a GP

[b] From a land-based or online venue

[c] Percentage of total that had ever experienced a problem with gambling (n=489)

3.1.6   Methodology for online self-help strategies past 30 day survey

All participants who completed the survey at baseline were invited to participate in a second survey 30 days later. Gambling in the last 30 days was reassessed, with days spent gambling and amount of money spent in the previous 30 days recorded against the same 6 gambling types that had been used in the baseline survey. The second survey also assessed uptake of the same strategies and actions as the baseline survey over the past 30 days. The average survey completion time was 34 minutes.

3.2   Participant characteristics

Of the 716 participants who completed the baseline survey, 426 consented to participate in the second survey. Again, participants who dropped out of the survey prior to completing the strategies section were removed from analysis (n=15), leaving a total of 411 participants. Two hundred and seventy-nine participants were male (67.9%), 130 were female (31.6%), and two participants reported their gender as 'other' (0.5%). One hundred and twenty-one participants were under 35 (29.7%), while 278 were 35 or over (67.6%). In total, 163 participants (22.8%) were classified as being in the precontemplation stage, 320 (44.8%) were classified as being in the

contemplation stage, and 232 (32.4%) were classified as being in the action stage (one participant had missing data).

There were no significant differences between participants who completed the second survey and participants who did not in regard to gender (χ^2 = 0.12, p=0.94) or age group (χ^2 = 0.09, p=0.76). Similarly, there were no differences in regard to marital status (χ^2 =5.97, p=0.31), highest educational qualification (χ^2 = 8.82, p=0.32), employment status ($\chi^2 X^2$= 8.19, p=0.32), or location (χ^2 =8.91, p=0.26).

3.3 Problem gambling group

Based on their responses at baseline, the second survey included 134 participants (32.6%) who reported never having had a problem, 142 participants who reported a past problem, and 135 (43.5%) who reported a current problem (32.8%). The distribution of participants across these groups was not significantly different across time points (χ^2 = 0.839, p<0.657). Scores on the PGSI (measured at baseline) ranged between 0 and 27 (M=9.38, SD=8.49), with 79 receiving a score of 0, 49 receiving a score of 1-2, 80 receiving a score of 3-7, and 203 receiving a score of 8 or more. Scores on the NODS-CliP (also measured at baseline) ranged from 0-3 (M=7.20, SD=1.11).

3.4 Baseline survey data analysis

The aim of the baseline analysis was to determine which self-help actions and strategies were considered most helpful amongst gamblers, and to examine whether helpfulness ratings differed according to self-reported problem gambling status. An overall (mean) helpfulness score was therefore calculated for each of the 99 actions, which incorporated both the uptake of an action and its reported helpfulness. To avoid biasing helpfulness scores against actions that were used infrequently (but rated as helpful), the 'never used strategy' was recoded from 0 to 1, resulting in a 4-point scale ranging from 1 ('never used strategy'/'not at all helpful' to 4 'very helpful'). Helpfulness scores were also created for the 12 strategies, by calculating the mean helpfulness of actions within each group. Actions and strategies were ranked according to helpfulness, and the top 30 helpful actions were presented for the three problem gambling groups separately. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was then used to determine whether the helpfulness of actions and strategies differed by problem gambling status.

3.5 Past 30 day survey data analysis

The aim of the second survey was to examine uptake of self-help actions and change in gambling behaviour (money spent and days gambled) over the past 30 days, and to examine whether these outcomes differed according to stage of change grouping. It is important to note that this was not an intervention-based study: rather, the inclusion of two assessment points was to allow for a robust evaluation of the predictions of the TTM. Uptake was calculated for each action by taking the total number of participants who reported using that action over the past 30 days. Actions were ranked according to uptake. ANOVA was used to determine whether uptake of actions and change in gambling behaviour differed by stage of change grouping.

3.6   Methodology for in-depth qualitative interviews

The online survey asked respondents whether they would be willing to participate in further research exploring the use of self-help strategies and actions. The recruitment procedure targeted respondents who had completed the second survey by the end of August 2014. Participants were recruited from the follow-up survey, as the initial online survey could be completed anonymously and without any means of follow-up contact. The follow-up survey yielded 411 participants and 151 indicated an interest in a further interview. Participants were contacted on a rolling basis with the aim of conducting 30 interviews. Sixty-one participants were contacted in order to achieve 30 interviews.

In determining the respondents to contact for interview, we conducted a preliminary analysis of the follow-up survey data to gain a good representation of the uptake and helpfulness of self-help strategies and actions across two main areas. These were self-reported problem gambling status (no problem, current problem or past problem) and readiness to change. Problem gambling status was determined by a combination of self-report as well as the PGSI and NODS-CliP (see methodology for the survey for more information). We determined stage of change with the Gambling Readiness to Change Questionnaire as described above.

In selecting participants, we also attempted to sample across gender, age, gambling involvement and problem severity as measured by the PGSI. In terms of type of gambling and gambling problems, we also sought to include a range of problematic forms of gambling (i.e., strategic and non-strategic gambling). Most engaged in multiple gambling activities and considered that multiple types of gambling caused them problems. Table 11 and Table 12 summarise this information.

Table 11. Types of gambling that participants engaged in

Type of gambling	Number of participants (N = 30)
Electronic gaming machines	16
Lottery	5
Casino games other than EGMs	6
Horse race wagering	18
Dog race wagering	7
Sports betting online	6
Politics (betting on election results)	2
Keno	2
Bingo	2
Online gambling (unspecified)	9
Poker	2
Stock market	1

Table 12. Types of problematic gambling as self-reported by participants

Most problematic type of gambling	Number of participants (N = 30)
Electronic gaming machines	16
Lottery	1
Casino games other than EGMs	3
Horse race wagering	7
Dog race wagering	2
Sports betting online	3
Online gambling (unspecified)	6

Table 13 summarises the main characteristics of the participants. Of the 30 participants, 22 were male and eight were female. The average age of participants was 52 (SD=13.4; range 24-71). Ten were single, nine were married, three had a de facto relationship, seven were separated / divorced and one was widowed. Ten were working full-time, ten worked part-time, seven were pensioners and three were self-funded retirees. Most participants were from NSW (10), Queensland (8) and Victoria (7), with small numbers of participants from the other Australian jurisdictions, except the ACT and the Northern Territory.

Participants had been gambling for between one year and 60 years. All were currently gambling and all were using self-help strategies to limit, reduce or control their gambling activity. Overall, 16 participants identified as having a current gambling problem, 11 identified as having a past gambling problem, and three reported they had never had a gambling problem. However, as shown in Table 13, the self-reported problem gambling status of the participants did not always align with that suggested by their PGSI score.

Table 13. Characteristics of the participants

ID	Sex	Age	Marital status	Highest education	Work status	State	PGSI score	Self-reported problem gambling
1	M	25-34	Single	Undergraduate	Work part time	VIC	20	Current
2	F	45-54	Single	Certificate	Work part time	VIC	19	Current
3	M	65-74	Single	Secondary	Pensioner	QLD	8	Past
4	F	25-34	Married	Certificate	Work full time	NSW	16	Current
5	M	55-64	Divorced	Certificate	Self-funded retiree	QLD	10	Current
6	M	45-54	Married	Certificate	Work full time	QLD	2	Never
7	M	45-54	Separated	None	Pensioner	SA	8	Past
8	M	55-64	De facto	Secondary	Work part time	TAS	1	Never
9	M	45-54	Single	None	Work full time	QLD	25	Current
10	F	25-34	Married	Postgraduate	Work full time	NSW	19	Past
11	F	55-64	Married	Diploma	Self-funded retiree	NSW	17	Current
12	M	35-44	Single	Undergraduate	Work part time	NSW	4	Past
13	M	65-74	Single	Undergraduate	Self-funded retiree	WA	0	Past
14	M	55-64	Single	Secondary	Work part time	NSW	1	Past
15	M	25-34	Single	Secondary	Work full time	NSW	27	Current
16	F	45-54	Divorced	Postgraduate	Pensioner	VIC	12	Current

ID	Sex	Age	Marital status	Highest education	Work status	State	PGSI score	Self-reported problem gambling
17	M	55-64	Married	Secondary	Work full time	QLD	14	Current
18	M	55-64	Married	Diploma	Work part time	NSW	6	Past
19	F	18-24	Single	Diploma	Work part time	QLD	10	Current
20	M	55-64	De facto	Secondary	Pensioner	VIC	3	Past
21	M	55-64	Married	Undergraduate	Work part time	VIC	18	Current
22	M	55-64	Single	Certificate	Pensioner	NSW	21	Current
23	F	45-54	Widowed	Secondary	Work part time	VIC	11	Current
24	M	55-64	Separated	Secondary	Pensioner	QLD	14	Past
25	M	25-34	Married	Diploma	Work full time	VIC	11	Current
26	M	45-54	Separated	Certificate	Pensioner	WA	6	Current
27	M	25-34	De facto	Diploma	Work full time	NSW	7	Past
28	M	55-64	Divorced	Certificate	Work full time	WA	3	Never
29	F	55-64	Married	Certificate	Work part time	NSW	9	Current
30	M	55-64	Divorced	Diploma	Work full time	QLD	2	Past

Potential participants were emailed a link to a Qualtrics survey, which provided them with the participant information sheet and informed consent check boxes. If participants were interested in the study, they selected the three best times and days for contact and provided any special instructions, for example "when you call, don't mention the gambling study." Interviews were conducted by telephone between the 24th of September 2014 and the 2nd of December 2014 by two research assistants under supervision (AL and TC). Interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed verbatim. The average time for each interview was 55 minutes and participants were reimbursed with a $40 voucher for their time.

The interviews were semi-structured with an interview schedule containing five main sections. This included the kinds of self-help strategies used; how people found out about them; which were most effective; what factors helped or hindered in sustaining their use; and how these strategies impacted upon their gambling and on relapse and recovery from gambling problems.

Thematic analysis was used to develop themes from these data and is particularly appropriate for health related research as it attempts to report participants' lived experiences and understand the meaning of their responses (Smith, 1996). While it is acknowledged that this understanding occurs via a third party (i.e., the researcher), the aim is to portray the individual's perceptions within their social context (Smith & Osborn, 2003). In this way, thematic analysis can be particularly helpful when researching problem gambling, where a biopsychosocial approach is often adopted.

4.   Audit of Gambling-Related Websites

4.1   Introduction

This chapter presents results of Study Two and contributes to achieving the first broad aim of developing a comprehensive list and descriptors of self-help strategies and actions for gambling. More specifically, this chapter provides an analysis of self-help strategies and actions provided by gambling operator and support websites, with the aim of generating a list of common recommendations occurring across a range of Australian sites that provide advice on self-help strategies and actions for gambling. It is important to note that the purpose of the audit was not to compare the merits of individual websites or their respective types: rather, the aim was to identify the strategies and actions that a user would see when engaging with a broad range of gambling-related websites. This approach complimented other research studies in Phase 1 of the project, so as to provide a comprehensive list of self-help strategies and actions from multiple data sources. It is also important to acknowledge that the websites audited varied in terms of their specific purpose, and included those that provided key facts about gambling and related harms, with weblinks to other relevant sites, as well as those that offered the full range of self-help resources.

Overall, the methodology for Study 2 enabled the audit to capture the breadth (number of strategies) and depth (number of actions within each strategy) of self-help materials. The methodology also enabled an accurate tabulation of self-help strategies and actions included on each website, each type of website (government, help service, industry, professional), and in total across the 34 websites reviewed. Thus, the outcomes of Study 2 comprised:

- A comparative tabulation of self-help gambling strategies provided by Australian websites including relevant descriptions of suggested actions to implement each strategy (e.g., how websites suggest people limit access to funds);

- Determination of the range of self-help strategies offered (i.e., breadth and depth of strategies); and

- Analysis of which strategies are most commonly promoted and differences between different types of websites.

The chapter commences with results of the audit of the help service websites, followed by those for the government, industry and professional sites respectively. Later sections of the chapter compare results across website types.

4.2   Audit of help service websites

4.2.1   Help service sites audited

In total, 15 gambling help service websites were audited, as identified in Table 14, with broad representation across Australian jurisdictions and help service organisations, as well as inclusion of sites targeting Aboriginal and CALD populations. The 15 sites vary in terms of reach and service provision. Relationships Australia, Lifeline and Mission

Australia are national organisations that offer support, advice and services across the whole of Australia. Gamblers Help Southern is based in Melbourne but has a wide range of services available to professionals, community groups, gamblers and venues across Victoria. Some sites offer services to their local community. These include Amity community services (NT), Peninsular community services (NSW Central Coast), NRGS (NSW Northern Rivers) and Relationships Australia SA. One site specifically targets the Indigenous community (VASCAL) and one site is operated by the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health and offers extensive support to multicultural communities in the Melbourne area. Although there are some differences in terms of physical reach and service provision, all sites are accessible as online information services to those seeking assistance and help Australia wide.

Table 14. Help service websites audited

Operator	Date audited	Website
Gamblers Help Southern	18.09.13	http://gamblershelpsouthern.org.au
Gambling Help Online	18.09.13	www.gamblinghelponline.org.au
Mission Australia	19.09.13	http://www.magamblingcounsellingact.com.au/index.html
Amity Community Services	15.09.13	http://www.amity.org.au/gambling/self-help.shtml
Gamble Aware	27.09.13	http://www.gambleaware.com.au/
Relationships Australia SA (RASA)	19.09.13	http://www.gamblinghelpsa.org.au/
Gambling Impact Society	26.09.13	www.gisnsw.org.au
Lifeline	19.09.13	http://www.lifeline.org.au/Get-Help/Facts---Information/Problem-Gambling
Northern Rivers Gambling Service (NRGS)	21.09.13	www.nrgs.org.au
Peninsular Community Centre	19.09.13	http://www.problemgambling.net.au
Relationships Australia QLD (RAQ)	19.09.13	http://www.raq.org.au/resources/advice/problem-gambling
Relationships Australia	21.09.13	http://www.relationships.org.au/
Salvation Army	19.09.13	http://www.salvationarmy.org.au/en/find-help/Problem-Gambling/
Victoria Aboriginal Community Services Ltd (VASCAL)	26.09.13	http://www.vacsal.org.au/vagas.html
Centre for Culture Ethnicity & Health (CCEH)	19.09.13	http://www.ceh.org.au/our-programs/our_programs_mghp

4.2.2   Help service sites: Types of self-help resources

Table 15 shows the types of self-help resources for gambling provided on each help service website. All sites included some resources. One website included eight different types of resources (36% of all 22 resources listed in Table 15), representing the greatest range of resources provided. Across all help service sites, the most common resources were 'checklist' (included on 87% of the sites), followed by 'written information not included in types below' (80%) and 'workbook/manual to work through' (47%). Provision of 'assessment tool/calculator' (40%) and 'multicultural resources' (40%) was also reasonably common. Four of the 22 types of resources found across all types of websites were not included on any of the websites (video cartoon, media reports, and resources for the hard of hearing).

Table 15. Help service websites: Types of resources

	Gamblers Help Southern	Gambling Help Online	Mission Australia	Amity Community Services	Gamble Aware	RASA	Gambling Impact Society	Lifeline	NRGS	Peninsular Community Centre	RAQ	Relationships Australia	Salvation Army	VASCAL	CCEH	No. of sites containing resource	% of sites containing resource
Checklist		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	13	87
Written information not included in types below	√	√	√	√	√	√		√		√		√	√	√		11	73
Workbook/manual to work through	√	√		√					√	√		√	√			7	47
Assessment tool/calculator		√	√		√		√		√	√						6	40
Multicultural resources	√	√			√	√					√				√	6	40
Research and data		√		√											√	3	20
Gambling/recovery stories (provider-generated only)			√				√									2	13
Diagram/chart									√	√						2	13
Fact sheet								√		√						2	13
Indigenous resources			√											√		2	13
Newsletter	√		√													2	13
TV commercial				√												1	7
Videos															√	1	7
Leaning modules		√														1	7
100 day challenge		√														1	7
Poster				√												1	7
Other					√											1	7
Comics																0	0
Video cartoon																0	0
Brochure/pamphlet																0	0
Media reports																0	0
Resources for the hard of hearing																0	0
No. of resources per site	4	8	6	6	5	3	3	3	4	6	2	3	3	2	4	62	
% of resources per site	18	36	27	27	23	14	14	14	18	27	9	14	14	9	18		

4.2.3 Help service sites: Becoming informed about gambling

Table 16 summarises the actions contained on each help service website to support the self-help strategy of 'becoming informed about gambling'. The websites were audited for 26 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the help service websites:

- 22 of the 26 possible actions were suggested across the help service sites to help people become informed about gambling.

- 12 of the 15 sites contained at least some actions to help people become informed about gambling, while three sites contained none of these actions.
- The 15 websites contained a wide breadth of actions to help people become informed about gambling. The site with the most suggested actions contained 21 actions which represents 81% of all actions listed in Table 16. The remaining

14 sites contained between 0% and 46% of the actions associated with this strategy.

- The most frequently mentioned actions were 'what problem gambling is' and 'signs of problem gambling (suggested by 73% of the 15 sites), followed by 'impacts/effects of problem gambling' (60%) and 'different gambling behaviours/types of gambling', 'erroneous beliefs/myths', 'odds of winning and losing' and 'how poker machines work' (33% each).

  Thus, the major actions suggested by the help service sites to become informed about gambling focused on recognising problem gambling behaviours and impacts.

Table 16. Help service websites: Actions relating to becoming informed about gambling

	Gamblers Help Southern	Gambling Help Online	Mission Australia	Amity Community Services	Gamble Aware	RASA	Gambling Impact Society	Lifeline	NRGS	Peninsular Community Centre	RAQ	Relationships Australia	Salvation Army	VASCAL	CCEH	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
What problem gambling is	√	√	√	√			√	√	√	√	√	√	√			11	73
Signs of problem gambling	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√		√	√			11	73
Impacts/effects of problem gambling	√	√		√			√	√	√	√		√	√			9	60
Different gambling behaviours/types of gamblers	√	√		√						√			√			5	33
Erroneous beliefs/myths		√		√			√		√			√				5	33
Odds of winning/losing	√	√		√			√					√				5	33
How poker machines work	√	√		√			√					√				5	33
Effects on mental health	√	√		√			√									4	27
Chance/skill and risk factors in poker machines	√	√					√					√				4	27
Statistics on gambling populations		√					√			√	√					4	27
Be realistic and aware	√	√		√					√							4	27
Weigh up pros and cons of cutting back/giving up gambling	√	√		√					√							4	27
Effects on children of people who gamble		√					√		√							3	20
How much you can lose on a poker machine		√		√			√									3	20
Learn about your gambling activity	√	√										√				3	20
Links between gambling and OD use		√		√												2	13
Weigh up pros and cons of gambling									√			√				2	13
Write down reasons to not gamble									√			√				2	13
How do I know a gambling website is safe?		√														1	7
What responsible gambling/responsible gambler is		√														1	7

	Gamblers Help Southern	Gambling Help Online	Mission Australia	Amity Community Services	Gamble Aware	RASA	Gambling Impact Society	Lifeline	NRGS	Peninsular Community Centre	RAQ	Relationships Australia	Salvation Army	VASCAL	CCEH	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Calculate how many hours you have worked to earn the money you have gambled		√														1	7
Read and learn about problem gambling		√														1	7
Use player tracking devices on EGMs																0	0
Reasons why people gamble		√					√									2	0
How other types of gambling work																0	0
Information on gambling policies																0	0
No. of actions per site	11	21	2	12	0	1	12	3	9	5	2	10	4	0	0	92	
% of actions per site	42	81	8	46	0	4	46	12	35	19	7	37	15	0	0		

4.2.4   Help service sites: Self-assessment of own gambling

Table 17 summarises the actions contained on each help service website to support the strategy of 'self-assessment of own gambling'. The websites were audited for four possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the help service websites:

- All four possible actions were suggested across the help service websites to help people self-assess their own gambling.

- Seven of the 15 sites contained actions to help people self-assess their own gambling behaviour, while eight sites contained no actions for this strategy.

- One site contained all four actions, while the remaining 14 sites contained between 0% and 50% of the actions listed in Table 17.

- The most frequently mentioned actions were 'assess if you have a gambling problem' (suggested by 33% of the 15 sites), 'be truthful about why you gamble' (27%), followed by 'know what your gambling triggers are, e.g. stress, boredom' (13%).

- Thus, the major actions suggested by the help service sites to self-assess one's own gambling focused on providing tools to identify a gambling problem and to understand reasons and triggers for gambling.

Table 17. Help service websites: Actions relating to self-assessment of own gambling

	Gamblers Help Southern	Gambling Help Online	Mission Australia	Amity Community Services	Gamble Aware	RASA	Gambling Impact Society	Lifeline	NRGS	Peninsular Community Centre	RAQ	Relationships Australia	Salvation Army	VASCAL	CCEH	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Assess if you have a gambling problem	√	√		√			√		√							5	33
Be truthful about why you gamble	√	√							√			√				4	27
Know what your gambling triggers are, e.g. stress, boredom		√											√			2	13
Assess how much you spend on gambling		√														1	7
No. of actions per site	2	4	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	12	
% of actions per site	50	100	0	25	0	0	25	0	50	0	0	25	25	0	0		

4.2.5 Help service sites: Set limits on own gambling

Table 18 summarises the actions contained on each help service website to support the strategy of 'set limits on own gambling'. The websites were audited for 47 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the help service websites:

- 37 of the possible 47 actions were suggested across the help service websites to help people set limits on their own gambling.

- 13 of the 15 sites contained actions to help people set limits on their own gambling, while two sites contained no actions for this strategy.

The 15 websites varied greatly in the number of actions suggested. No sites contained all actions. The site with the most suggested actions contained 21 of the possible 47 actions which represents 45% of all actions in Table 18. The remaining 14 sites contained between 0% and 28% of the 47 possible actions.

- The most frequently mentioned actions were 'set a $ limit per gambling session' and 'set a time limit on gambling session/per day' (suggested by 67% of the 15 sites), followed by 'don't drink alcohol while gambling', 'think of gambling as entertainment, not a way to make money' and 'do a budget' (47% each).

- Thus, the major actions suggested by the help service sites to set limits on one's own gambling focused on setting money and time limits on gambling.

Table 18. Help service websites: Actions relating to set limits on own gambling

	Gamblers Help Southern	Gambling Help Online	Mission Australia	Amity Community Services	Gamble Aware	RASA	Gambling Impact Society	Lifeline	NRGS	Peninsular Community Centre	RAQ	Relationships Australia	Salvation Army	VASCAL	CCEH	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Set $ limit per gambling session	√	√	√	√	√		√		√	√				√	√	10	67
Set a time limit on gambling session/per day	√	√	√		√		√		√	√		√		√	√	10	67
Don't drink alcohol while gambling	√	√		√	√						√	√		√		7	47
Think of gambling as entertainment, not a way to make money	√	√		√	√		√		√	√						7	47
Do a budget	√	√					√	√	√			√		√		7	47
Don't gamble alone		√					√		√					√		4	27
Take a break every 15 minutes/regularly		√		√	√											3	20
Don't chase losses/walk away		√					√									2	13
Don't borrow money		√					√									2	13
Write out selection before going to TAB (punters)	√											√				2	13
Look for odds and payout information	√	√														2	13
If you want to bet on a game do so before not during	√	√														2	13
Don't use gambling to solve problems		√								√						2	13
Set $ limit per week											√					1	7
Give winnings to a friend while gambling		√														1	7
Don't gamble with heavy gamblers		√														1	7
Never gamble with expectation of winning		√														1	7
Put winnings in your pocket		√														1	7

	Gamblers Help Southern	Gambling Help Online	Mission Australia	Amity Community Services	Gamble Aware	RASA	Gambling Impact Society	Lifeline	NRGS	Peninsular Community Centre	RAQ	Relationships Australia	Salvation Army	VASCAL	CCEH	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Be wary of practice sites (online)		√														1	7
Don't take gambling too seriously		√														1	7
Go to venues only at scheduled times	√															1	7
When arrive at venue talk to someone for 3 mins	√															1	7
Do something else at times you know you normally gamble												√				1	7
Don't stay and watch all the races (punters)	√															1	7
Collect winnings and leave (punters)				√												1	7
Don't bet on every race (punters)	√															1	7
Don't change your bet at the last minute all the time (punters)												√				1	7
Set up cues to keep track of time		√														1	7
Take a break from gambling		√														1	7
Take it slowly, give yourself a month of not gambling for every year of gambling									√							1	7
Have access to clock or watch				√												1	7
To reduce the time you spend gambling, arrange other commitments ahead of time				√												1	7
Expect to lose				√												1	7
Keep a record of the money you spend				√												1	7
Keep track of odds and payments		√														1	7
It is always better to leave with some money than without														√		1	7
Buy small amounts of change	√															1	7
Set limit on winnings																0	0
Set limit on number of sessions per week																0	0
Remove betting apps from your phone (for online)																0	0
Use pre-commitment/ set loss limits/play safe limits																0	0
Don't let gambling interfere with your daily activities																0	0
Get free SMS message reminders																0	0
Don't increase your bet when you are losing																0	0

	Gamblers Help Southern	Gambling Help Online	Mission Australia	Amity Community Services	Gamble Aware	RASA	Gambling Impact Society	Lifeline	NRGS	Peninsular Community Centre	RAQ	Relationships Australia	Salvation Army	VASCAL	CCEH	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Write a card with 2-3 reasons why not to gamble and your limits – put in wallet and on fridge																0	0
If you must increase your bet only do so when you are winning																0	0
Socialise in places with no gambling activities																0	0
No. of actions per site	13	21	2	9	5	0	7	1	6	4	2	6	0	6	2	84	
% of actions per site	28	45	4	19	11	0	15	2	13	9	4	13	0	13	4		

4.2.6   Help service sites: Managing finances and gambling spend

Table 19 summarises the actions contained on each help service website to support the strategy of 'managing finances and gambling spend'. The websites were audited for 41 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the help service websites:

- 39 of the possible 41 actions were suggested across the help service sites to help people manage finances and gambling spend.

- 12 of the 15 sites contained actions to help people manage finances and gambling spend, while three sites contained no actions for this strategy.

- The 15 websites varied greatly in the number of actions suggested. No sites contained all actions. The site with the most suggested actions contained 32 actions which represents 78% of all actions in Table 19. The remaining 14 sites contained between 0% and 41% of the actions associated with this strategy.

- The most frequently mentioned actions were 'don't take bank cards with you when you go out' (suggested by 60% of the 15 sites), followed by 'only gamble what you can afford to lose' (53%), 'pay bills by direct debit or cheque' (47%) and 'carry a limited amount of money' (40%).

- Thus, the major actions suggested by the help service sites to manage finances and gambling spend were to reduce access to cash and to ensure bills were paid before any gambling.

Table 19. Help service websites: Actions relating to managing finances and gambling spend

	Gamblers Help Southern	Gambling Help Online	Mission Australia	Amity Community Services	Gamble Aware	RASA	Gambling Impact Society	Lifeline	NRGS	Peninsular Community Centre	RAQ	Relationships Australia	Salvation Army	VASCAL	CCEH	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Don't take bank cards with you when you go out	√	√		√	√		√			√	√			√	√	9	60
Only gamble what you can afford to lose		√		√	√		√		√		√	√		√		8	53
Pay bills by direct debit or cheque	√	√					√	√		√	√	√				7	47
Carry a limited amount of money	√	√		√					√	√		√				6	40
Don't chase losses/ don't add to gambling stakes		√		√	√		√									4	27
Don't borrow money to gamble	√	√					√					√				4	27
Tell others not to lend you money	√	√					√					√				4	27
Have 2 signatories on your accounts	√						√			√		√				4	27
Avoid jobs where you handle cash	√								√			√				3	20
Have someone else manage/help manage money		√					√		√							3	20
Have a support person collect wages	√	√							√							3	20
Cancel credit and ATM cards or give to trusted person		√							√			√				3	20
Lower daily ATM withdrawal limits	√	√					√									3	20
Avoid use of credit cards		√					√		√							3	20
Stick to your limits and walk away	√	√					√									3	20
Don't see gambling as an activity for family income		√		√					√							3	20
Have wages paid directly into a bank	√	√					√									3	20
Eliminate cash withdrawals on credit cards		√							√							2	13
Pay essential bills on payday	√	√														2	13
Avoid taking out loans to get cash to gamble		√					√									2	13
Prepare ahead for change in circumstances e.g., holiday	√	√														2	13
Avoid having pin number with EFTPOS card	√								√							2	13
Have limit attached to EFTPOS card	√	√														2	13
Keep track of your money transactions	√	√														2	13
Secure your assets		√										√				2	13
Get someone to hold your bank cards for you							√		√							2	13
Pay some bills in advance												√				1	7

	Gamblers Help Southern	Gambling Help Online	Mission Australia	Amity Community Services	Gamble Aware	RASA	Gambling Impact Society	Lifeline	NRGS	Peninsular Community Centre	RAQ	Relationships Australia	Salvation Army	VASCAL	CCEH	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Put money away for something you enjoy		√														1	7
Keep a separate bank account for gambling activity		√														1	7
Use debit cards not credit cards (online)		√														1	7
Keep a check on your player history and bank accounts to monitor your spending		√														1	7
Don't use money allocated for bills to gamble		√														1	7
Use a site that has limits on daily spend		√														1	7
Limit where you bet, don't have multiple accounts.		√														1	7
Don't lie about what you have spent															√	1	7
Be aware that the odds on 'practice' games are much better – so it is easier to win than on the paid games		√														1	7
Don't gamble when you have urgent debts		√														1	7
If have debts, include regular repayments		√														1	7
Avoid keeping large sums of money at home	√															1	7
Withdraw winnings, keep limited amounts in online accounts																0	0
Expect to lose																0	0
No. of actions per site	17	32	0	5	3	0	14	1	10	5	3	10	0	2	2	104	
% of actions per site	41	78	0	12	7	0	34	2	24	12	7	24	0	5	5		

4.2.7   Help service sites: Reduce gambling opportunities, triggers and urges

Table 20 summarises the actions contained on each help service website to support the strategy to 'reduce gambling opportunities, triggers and urges'. The websites were audited for 23 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the help service websites:

- 16 of the possible 23 actions were suggested across the help service websites to help people reduce gambling opportunities, triggers and urges.

- Seven of the 15 sites contained actions to help people reduce gambling opportunities, triggers and urges, while eight sites contained no actions for this strategy.

- The 15 websites varied greatly in the number of actions suggested. No sites contained all actions. The site with the most suggested actions contained eight actions to help reduce opportunities, triggers and urges which represents 35% of all actions in Table 20. The remaining 14 sites contained between 0% and 30% of the actions.

- The most frequently mentioned actions were 'avoid gambling as a reaction to emotions/stress (suggested by 27% of the 15 sites), followed by 'avoid being near/passing gambling venues' and 'remind yourself of reasons to not gamble/for change' (20% each).

- Overall, actions suggested to reduce opportunities, triggers and urges were not well represented by any help service website. Where suggested, actions focused most on avoiding gambling as a coping mechanism, avoiding being in close proximity to gambling venues and being mindful of reasons to not gamble.

Table 20. Help service websites: Actions relating to reduce gambling opportunities, triggers and urges

	Gamblers Help Southern	Gambling Help Online	Mission Australia	Amity Community Services	Gamble Aware	RASA	Gambling Impact Society	Lifeline	NRGS	Peninsular Community Centre	RAQ	Relationships Australia	Salvation Army	VASCAL	CCEH	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Avoid gambling as a reaction to emotions/stress		√		√					√	√						4	27
Avoid being near/passing gambling venues									√			√		√		3	20
Remind yourself of reasons to not gamble/ for change		√							√			√				3	20
Avoid gambling results, form guides, other collateral, etc.									√			√				2	13
Stop when gambling is no longer enjoyable	√	√														2	13
Change radio station									√			√				2	13
Socialise in non-gambling venues												√				1	7
Avoid advertising for gambling									√							1	7
Avoid talking about gambling with heavy gamblers									√							1	7
Postpone gambling for an hour or two		√														1	7

	Gamblers Help Southern	Gambling Help Online	Mission Australia	Amity Community Services	Gamble Aware	RASA	Gambling Impact Society	Lifeline	NRGS	Peninsular Community Centre	RAQ	Relationships Australia	Salvation Army	VASCAL	CCEH	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Read fine print on promotions material (online)		√														1	7
Wear wrist band to remind yourself not to gamble									√							1	7
If you gamble at lunch time go somewhere different	√															1	7
Turn car around whenever you approach a venue												√				1	7
Avoid people who you know gamble												√				1	7
Software to block access																0	0
Cancel gambling accounts																0	0
Exclude from online sites																0	0
Don't gamble if in recovery from dependency																0	0
Choose venues where you won't stay too long																0	0
Think of the people who need your support																0	0
Do other things at times you would normally gamble																0	0
Opt out of free offers and incentives (online)																0	0
No. of actions per site	2	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	8	1	0	7	0	1	0	25	
% of actions per site	9	22	0	4	0	0	0	0	35	4	0	30	0	4	0		

4.2.8   Help service sites: Changing thoughts and beliefs

Table 21 summarises the actions contained on each help service website to support the strategy of 'changing thoughts and beliefs'. The websites were audited for 22 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the help service websites:

- 21 of the possible 22 actions were suggested across the help service websites to help people change their thoughts and beliefs about gambling.

- Ten of the 15 sites contained actions to help people change their thoughts and beliefs about gambling, while five sites contained no actions for this strategy.

- The 15 websites varied greatly in the number of actions suggested. No sites contained all actions. The site with the most suggested actions contained 15

actions to help change thoughts and beliefs which represent 68% of all actions in Table 21. The remaining 14 sites contained between 0% and 45% of the actions.

- The most frequently mentioned actions were 'acknowledge you have a gambling problem' (suggested by 53% of the 15 sites), followed by 'decide whether you should cut back or give up gambling' and 'set a goal for changing your gambling' (33% each).

- Thus, the major actions suggested by the help service sites to change thoughts and beliefs about gambling focused on problem acknowledgement and setting goals for changing gambling behaviour.

Table 21. Help service websites: Actions relating to changing thoughts and beliefs

	Gamblers Help Southern	Gambling Help Online	Mission Australia	Amity Community Services	Gamble Aware	RASA	Gambling Impact Society	Lifeline	NRGS	Peninsular Community Centre	RAQ	Relationships Australia	Salvation Army	VASCAL	CCEH	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Acknowledge you have a gambling problem	√	√					√	√	√			√	√		√	8	53
Decide whether you should cut back or give up gambling	√	√		√					√			√				5	33
Set a goal for changing your gambling	√	√		√					√			√				5	33
Decide to change your gambling	√	√							√			√				4	27
Engage in positive thinking	√			√					√			√				4	27
Challenge irrational thoughts	√	√		√								√				4	27
Learn stress management techniques	√						√		√			√				4	27
Find new activities to change emotions	√	√										√				3	20
Be kind to yourself		√							√							2	13
Don't believe in feeling that you know when the machine will pay out	√	√														2	13
Beware of 'lucky thinking'		√		√												2	13
Specific issues for suicide thoughts							√			√						2	13
Accept you are not a bad person												√				1	7
Don't believe in a good thing	√															1	7
Don't overestimate your abilities		√														1	7
Keep cards with slogans on them to remind you not to gamble												√				1	7
Cash out credits over $	√															1	7
Set short and long term goals	√															1	7

	Gamblers Help Southern	Gambling Help Online	Mission Australia	Amity Community Services	Gamble Aware	RASA	Gambling Impact Society	Lifeline	NRGS	Peninsular Community Centre	RAQ	Relationships Australia	Salvation Army	VASCAL	CCEH	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Self care – vision, sound, smell, taste and touch	√															1	7
Remember, like any form of gambling, online poker, betting and sports wagering is not a good way to make money				√												1	7
Remember there is a way out	√															1	7
Improve problem solving skills/approach	√															1	7
Value that you are being loved and that the trust will return																0	0
No. of actions per site	15	10	0	6	0	0	3	1	7	1	0	10	1	0	1	55	
% of actions per site	68	45	0	27	0	0	14	5	32	5	0	45	5	0	5		

4.2.9   Help service sites: Monitoring ongoing behaviour and change

Table 22 summarises the actions contained on each help service website to support the strategy of 'monitoring ongoing behaviour and change'. The websites were audited for 20 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the help service websites:

- 14 of the possible 20 actions were suggested across the help service websites to help people monitor their ongoing behaviour and change in relation to gambling.

- Nine of the 15 sites contained actions to help people monitoring ongoing behaviour and change, while six sites contained no actions for this strategy.

The 15 websites varied greatly in the number of actions suggested. No sites contained all actions. The site with the most suggested actions contained eight actions to help monitor ongoing behaviour and change which represents 40% of all actions in Table 22. The remaining 14 sites contained between 0% and 30% of the actions.

- The most frequently mentioned action was 'record gambling wins and losses/keep a gambling diary' (suggested by 53% of the 15 sites), followed by 'eat properly' (27%).

- Thus, the major action suggested by the help service sites to monitor ongoing behaviour and change was to keep records of gambling activity.

Table 22. Help service websites: Actions relating to monitoring ongoing behaviour and change

	Gamblers Help Southern	Gambling Help Online	Mission Australia	Amity Community Services	Gamble Aware	RASA	Gambling Impact Society	Lifeline	NRGS	Peninsular Community Centre	RAQ	Relationships Australia	Salvation Army	VASCAL	CCEH	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Record gambling wins and losses/keep gambling diary		√	√	√			√		√		√	√		√		8	53
Eat properly							√		√		√	√				4	27
Record gambling urges, triggers and what you did to resist									√			√		√		3	20
Reward progress		√							√					√		3	20
Have a plan to deal with lapses				√					√			√				3	20
Review your diary – what is working?	√								√			√				3	20
Recognise gradual side towards a lapse				√												1	7
Know what activities reduce your gambling urges							v									1	7
Know high risk triggers for your gambling		√														1	7
Remember, like any form of gambling, online poker, betting and sports wagering is not a good way to make money		√														1	7
Be truthful about why you gamble		√														1	7
Be realistic and aware		√														1	7
Challenge irrational thoughts		√														1	7
Find new activities to change emotions		√														1	7
Prepare for relapses																0	0
Know what days and times increase your gambling urges																0	0
Know what moods increase your gambling urges																0	0
Face your feelings																0	0
Know what venues increase your gambling urges																0	0
Specific issues if you are suicidal																0	0
No. of actions per site	1	8	1	3	0	0	3	0	6	0	2	5	0	3	0	32	
% of actions per site	5	40	5	15	0	0	15	0	30	0	10	25	0	15	0		

4.2.10   Help service sites: Utilise social support and resources

Table 23 summarises the actions contained on each help service website to support the strategy to 'utilise social support and resources'. The websites were audited for 14 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the help service websites:

- All 14 possible actions were suggested across the help service websites to help people utilise social support and resources.

- 13 of the 15 sites contained actions to help people utilise social support and resources, while two sites contained no actions for this strategy.

The 15 websites covered the range of actions widely, although no site contained all actions. The site with the most suggested actions contained nine actions to help utilise social support and resources which represents 64% of all actions in Table 23. The remaining 14 sites contained between 0% and 43% of the actions.

- The most frequently mentioned action was 'be honest with friends and family'(suggested by 73% of the 15 sites), followed by 'ask for help' (47%), and 'involve others in solving your problem' and 'get help to deal with any stress/moods that contribute to your urges' (40% each).

- Thus, the major actions suggested by the help service sites to utilise social support and resources were to actively seek support from family and friends to help change gambling behaviour.

Table 23. Help service websites: Actions relating to utilise social support and resources

	Gamblers Help Southern	Gambling Help Online	Mission Australia	Amity Community Services	Gamble Aware	RASA	Gambling Impact Society	Lifeline	NRGS	Peninsular Community Centre	RAQ	Relationships Australia	Salvation Army	VASCAL	CCEH	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Be honest with friends and family	√	√	√	√			√	√	√	√	√	√			√	11	73
Ask for help	√	√		√					√	√		√			√	7	47
Involve others in solving your problem	√	√	√								√			√	√	6	40
Get help to deal with any stress/moods that contribute to your gambling	√	√		√					√			√	√			6	40
Go to friends who will look out for you			√					√	√	√	√					5	33

	Gamblers Help Southern	Gambling Help Online	Mission Australia	Amity Community Services	Gamble Aware	RASA	Gambling Impact Society	Lifeline	NRGS	Peninsular Community Centre	RAQ	Relationships Australia	Salvation Army	VASCAL	CCEH	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Repair relationships/ spend time with family and friends		√					√							√	√	4	27
Tell others about your decision not to gamble	√	√					√					√				4	27
Talk to someone who can help you deal with your urges		√					√			√	√					4	27
Share your successes and lapses												√		√		2	13
Read stories of recovery		√					√									2	13
Get a helper, check in with them once a week			√						√							2	13
Tell others about your lying	√															1	7
Listen to family and friends they may see something you don't		√														1	7
Go out with friends, not alone							√									1	7
No. of actions per site	6	9	4	3	0	0	6	2	5	4	4	5	1	3	4	56	
% of actions per site	43	64	29	21	0	0	43	14	36	29	29	36	7	21	29		

4.2.11 Help service sites: Take up alternatives to gambling

Table 24 summarises the actions contained on each help service website to support the strategy 'take up alternatives to gambling'. The websites were audited for 16 possible actions, as derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the help service websites:

- 15 of the 16 possible actions were suggested across the help service websites to help people take up alternatives to gambling.

- Ten of the 15 sites contained actions to help people take up alternatives to gambling, while five sites contained no actions for this strategy.

- There was good representation of a range of suggested actions, although no sites contained all actions. The two sites with most suggested actions contained 7 actions to help take up alternatives to gambling which represents 44% of all actions in Table 24. The remaining 13 sites contained between 0% and 38% of the actions associated with this strategy.

- The most frequently mentioned action was 'find activities to fill needs previously met by gambling (suggested by 47% of the 15 sites), followed by 'keep a diary' (40%), and 'exercise' and 'take up activities you did prior to gambling' (33% each).

- Thus, actions suggested by the help service sites to support this strategy focused on encouraging uptake of a range of diversionary activities.

Table 24. Help service websites: Actions relating to take up alternatives to gambling

	Gamblers Help Southern	Gambling Help Online	Mission Australia	Amity Community Services	Gamble Aware	RASA	Gambling Impact Society	Lifeline	NRGS	Peninsular Community Centre	RAQ	Relationships Australia	Salvation Army	VASCAL	CCEH	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Find activities to fill needs previously met by gambling	√	√		√					√			√		√	√	7	47
Keep a diary	√	√	√	√					√			√				6	40
Exercise	√			√			√		√			√				5	33
Take up activities you did prior to gambling	√	√	√	√					√							5	33
Treat yourself		√					√		√			√				4	27
Take up yoga/meditation	√						√		√			√				4	27
Find part time work	√								√						√	3	20
Get involved in local groups/activities							√								√	2	13
Make gambling one of your leisure activities not your only one		√			√											2	13
Distract yourself/keep busy		√										√				2	13
Make home and interesting place to be	√															1	7
If a lunch time gambler, go to different place for lunch with colleagues							√									1	7
Make a difference get involved															√	1	7
Discuss activities to do with family and friends														√		1	7
Take up education				√												1	7
Find new activities to change emotions																0	0
No. of actions per site	7	6	2	5	1	0	5	0	7	0	0	6	0	2	4	45	
% of actions per site	44	38	13	31	6	0	31	0	44	0	0	38	0	13	25		

4.2.12 Summary of help service website audit

Fifteen help service websites were audited for self-help resources, strategies and actions. Table 25 summarises the number of self-help actions contained within each self-help strategy.

All sites included some of the strategies. The most common self-help strategies with at least one action per site were 'set limits on own gambling' and 'utilise social support and resources', and both were included on 13 of the 15 sites. The next most common strategies were 'managing finances and spend' and 'becoming informed about gambling', both included on 12 of the 15 sites. Over half the help service websites included at least one action for the strategies of 'changing thoughts and beliefs' (10 sites), 'take up alternatives to gambling' (10 sites) and 'monitoring ongoing behaviour and change' (9 sites). The remaining strategies, 'reduce opportunities, triggers and urges' and 'self-assessment of own gambling' were mentioned only on seven sites.

The most commonly promoted self-help strategy as measured by the number of associated actions was 'managing finances and gambling spend', with 104 mentions of associated actions across 12 of the 15 websites. This was followed by the strategy of 'becoming informed about gambling' with 92 mentions of suggested actions across 12 of the 15 websites. 'Set limits on own gambling' was the next most supported strategy with 84 associated actions included on 13 of the 15 sites. 'Utilise social support and resources' was the next strategy with the most actions with 56 associated actions across 12 sites, followed by 'changing thoughts and beliefs' with 55 suggested actions across 11 sites. The least supported self-help strategy was 'self-assessment of own gambling' with only 12 associated actions across seven sites.

One site had extensive coverage in terms of both breadth of strategies (all nine strategies) and depth of associated actions (119 actions) within all nine strategies. In contrast, one site only included one action within one strategy ('become informed about gambling').

Table 25. Help service websites: Number of actions per self-help strategy

	Gamblers Help Southern	Gambling Help Online	Mission Australia	Amity Community Services	Gamble Aware	RASA	Gambling Impact Society	Lifeline	NRGS	Peninsular Community Centre	RAQ	Relationships Australia	Salvation Army	VASCAL	CCEH	No. of actions per strategy	No. of sites containing strategy	% of sites containing strategy
Managing finances & gambling spend	17	32	0	5	3	0	14	1	10	5	3	10	0	2	2	104	12	80
Become informed about gambling	11	21	2	12	0	1	12	3	9	5	2	10	4	0	0	92	12	80
Set limits on own gambling	13	21	2	9	5	0	7	1	6	4	2	6	0	6	2	84	13	87
Utilise social support and resources	6	9	4	3	0	0	6	2	5	4	4	5	1	3	4	56	13	87

	Gamblers Help Southern	Gambling Help Online	Mission Australia	Amity Community Services	Gamble Aware	RASA	Gambling Impact Society	Lifeline	NRGS	Peninsular Community Centre	RAQ	Relationships Australia	Salvation Army	VASCAL	CCEH	No. of actions per strategy	No. of sites containing strategy	% of sites containing strategy
Changing thoughts and beliefs	15	10	0	6	0	0	3	1	7	1	0	10	1	0	1	55	10	67
Take up alternatives to gambling	7	6	2	5	1	0	5	0	7	0	0	6	0	2	4	45	10	67
Monitoring ongoing behaviour and change	1	8	1	3	0	0	3	0	6	0	2	5	0	3	0	32	9	60
Reduce opportunities, triggers and urges	2	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	8	1	0	7	0	1	0	25	7	47
Self-assessment of own gambling	2	4	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	12	7	47
Total no. of actions	74	116	11	45	9	1	51	8	60	20	13	60	7	17	13	505		

4.3   Audit of government websites

4.3.1   Government sites audited

In total, eight government-operated websites were audited, as identified in Table 26, with broad representation across Australian jurisdictions, as well as major national sites. All states are represented in the audit of government websites. All contain extensive links to information found on help services sites. FaHSCIA is a site maintained by the National Australian Government. Three sites are encompassed within the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation site. These three sites (http://www.problemgambling.vic.gov.au/;   http://www.responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/; http://www.fightforyou.com.au/) all contain links that take viewers back and forth to the same links providing information, practical help and self-help strategies. This ensures viewers have multiple opportunities for accessing information. For this reason, these three sites were treated as one site for the purposes of this audit.

Table 26. Government websites audited

Operator	Date audited	Website
ACT Gaming & Racing Commission	19.09.13	www.problemgambling.act.gov.au/help_yourself.html
Tasmania DHHS	19.09.13	http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/gambling
WA Dept Racing Gaming & Liquor	27.09.13	http://www.rgl.wa.gov.au
NSW Trade & Investment	11.09.13	http://www.gamblinghelp.nsw.gov.au/
QLD Dept Justice & Attorney General	18.09.13	http://www.olgr.qld.gov.au/gaming/responsible/help/index.shtml
FaHSCIA	18.09.13	http://www.problemgambling.gov.au
SA Dept Communities & Social Inclusion	16.09.13	http://www.problemgambling.sa.gov.au/aspx/home.aspx
Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation	15.09.13	http://www.problemgambling.vic.gov.au/ http://www.responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/ http://www.fightforyou.com.au/

4.3.2   Government sites: Types of self-help resources

Table 27 shows the types of self-help resources for gambling on each government website. All of the eight Government websites included some of the 22 possible resources. Two websites included 11 different types of resources (50% of all resources listed in Table 27) which were the most resources provided amongst all government sites. The range of resources offered varied across the sites. The most dominant resources were 'written information not included in types below', 'brochure/pamphlet' and 'research and data', each included on six of the sites (which represents 75% of the government sites), followed by 'checklist' and 'assessment tool/calculator' (63% each). Two types of resources were not included on any website.

Table 27. Government websites: Types of resources

	ACT Gaming & Racing Commission	Tasmania Dept Health & Human Services	WA Dept Racing Gaming & Liquor	NSW Trade & Investment	QD Dept Justice & Attorney General	FaHSCIA	SA Dept Communities & Social Inclusion	VIC Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing resource	% of sites containing resource
Written information not including types below	√	√			√	√	√	√	6	75
Brochure/pamphlet			√	√	√	√	√	√	6	75
Research and data	√	√	√	√	√	√			6	75
Checklist	√			√	√		√	√	5	63
Assessment tool/calculator		√	√	√			√	√	5	63
Workbook/manual to work through			√	√	√		√		4	50
Gambling/recovery stories (provider generated only)			√			√	√		3	38
Fact sheet				√	√		√		3	38
Multicultural resource				√	√		√		3	38
Diagram/flowchart		√					√	√	3	38
Videos		√		√		√			3	38
Indigenous resource				√			√		2	25
Comics							√		1	13
Video cartoon								√	1	13
TV commercial								√	1	13
Media reports						√			1	13
Resource for the hard of hearing						√			1	13
100 day challenge								√	1	13
Poster				√					1	13
Newsletter									0	0
Learning modules									0	0
Other									0	0
No. of resources per site	3	5	5	10	7	7	11	8	56	
% of resources per site	14	23	23	45	32	32	50	36		

4.3.3   Government sites: Become informed about gambling

Table 28 summarises the actions contained on each government website to support the strategy of 'becoming informed about gambling'. The websites were audited for 26 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the help service websites:

- 25 of the 26 possible actions were suggested across the government sites to help people become informed about gambling.

- All eight sites contained at least some actions to help people become informed about gambling.

- The eight websites varied greatly in the number of actions suggested. The site with the most suggested actions contained 17 actions to help become informed about gambling which represents 65% of all actions in Table 28. The remaining 7 sites contained between 15% and 62% of the actions.

- The most frequently mentioned action was 'what problem gambling is' (suggested by 100% of the 8 sites), followed by 'impacts of problem gambling' (88%); 'signs of problem gambling', 'statistics on problem gambling', and 'how much you can lose on a poker machine' (75% each); 'erroneous beliefs and myths', 'chance/skills and risk factors in poker machines', and 'what responsible gambling/responsible gambler is' (63% each); and 'effects on mental health', 'how poker machines work' 'weigh up the pros and cons of cutting back/giving up gambling', and 'how other types of gambling work' (50% each). No site mentioned 'be realistic and aware'.

- Thus, actions suggested by the government websites to support the strategy of becoming informed about gambling focused mainly on tools to assist recognition of problem gambling and its impacts, to enhance understanding of how gambling works especially in relation to poker machines, and to explain responsible gambling.

Table 28. Government websites: Actions relating to becoming informed about gambling

	ACT Gaming & Racing Commission	Tasmania Dept Health & Human Services	WA Dept Racing Gaming & Liquor	NSW Trade & Investment	QD Dept Justice & Attorney General	FaHSCIA	SA Dept Communities & Social Inclusion	VIC Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
What problem gambling is	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	8	100
Impacts/effects of problem gambling	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	7	88
Signs of problem gambling	√		√	√	√		√	√	6	75
Odds of winning/losing		√	√	√	√		√	√	6	75
Statistics on gambling populations		√	√	√		√	√	√	6	75
How much you can lose on a poker machine		√	√	√	√		√	√	6	75
Erroneous beliefs/myths		√		√	√		√	√	5	63
Chance/skill and risk factors in poker machines		√	√	√			√	√	5	63
What responsible gambling/responsible gambler is	√		√		√		√	√	5	63

	ACT Gaming & Racing Commission	Tasmania Dept Health & Human Services	WA Dept Racing Gaming & Liquor	NSW Trade & Investment	QD Dept Justice & Attorney General	FaHSCIA	SA Dept Communities & Social Inclusion	VIC Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Effects on mental health	√			√	√		√		4	50
How poker machines work		√	√				√	√	4	50
Weigh up pros and cons of cutting back/giving up gambling				√	√		√	√	4	50
How other types of gambling work		√	√		√			√	4	50
Different gambling behaviours/types of gamblers		√	√				√		3	38
Effects on children of people who gamble						√		√	2	25
Use player tracking devices on EGMs								√	1	13
How do I know a gambling website is safe?								√	1	13
Links between gambling and OD use							√		1	13
Weigh up pros and cons of gambling								√	1	13
Write down reasons to not gamble							√		1	13
Learn about your gambling activity								√	1	13
Calculate how many hours you have worked to earn the money you have gambled							√		1	13
Reasons why people gamble				√					1	13
Read and learn about problem gambling	√								1	13
Information on gambling policies				√					1	13
Be realistic and aware									0	0
No. of actions per site	6	9	11	12	10	4	16	17	85	
% of actions per site	23	35	42	46	38	15	62	65		

4.3.4   Government sites: Self-assessment of own gambling

Table 29 summarises the actions contained on each government website to support the strategy of 'self-assessment of own gambling'. The websites were audited for four possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the government websites:

- All four possible actions were suggested across the government websites to help people self-assess their own gambling.

- Six of the eight sites contained actions to help people self-assess their own gambling behaviour, while two sites contained no actions for this strategy.

- Two of the eight websites covered this strategy quite comprehensively and five of the eight sites mentioned 50% or more of the actions.

- The most frequently mentioned action was 'assess if you have a gambling problem' (suggested by 75% of the eight sites), followed by 'assess how much you spend on gambling' (63%). The remaining two actions 'be truthful about why you gamble' and 'know what your gambling triggers are' were both mentioned by 13% of the sites.

- Thus, actions promoted by the government websites to support the strategy of self-assessing one's own gambling focused mainly on providing tools to assist problem recognition and calculate gambling expenditure.

Table 29. Government websites: Actions relating to self-assessment of own gambling

	ACT Gaming & Racing Commission	Tasmania Dept Health & Human Services	WA Dept Racing Gaming & Liquor	NSW Trade & Investment	QD Dept Justice & Attorney General	FaHSCIA	SA Dept Communities & Social Inclusion	VIC Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Assess if you have a gambling problem		√	√	√	√		√	√	6	75
Assess how much you spend on gambling		√	√	√			√	√	5	63
Be truthful about why you gamble								√	1	13
Know what your gambling triggers are, e.g. stress, boredom							√		1	13
No. of actions per site	0	2	2	2	1	0	3	3	13	
% of actions per site	0	50	50	50	25	0.	75	75		

4.3.5   Government sites: Set limits on own gambling

Table 30 summarises the actions contained on each government website supporting the strategy of 'set limits on own gambling'. The websites were audited for 47 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the government websites:

- 33 of the possible 47 actions were suggested across the government websites to help people set limits on their own gambling.

- Six of the eight sites contained actions to help people set limits on their own gambling, while two sites contained no actions for this strategy.

- The eight websites varied greatly in the number of actions suggested. No sites contained all actions. The site with the most suggested actions contained 18 actions to help setting limits on own gambling which represents 40% of all actions in Table 30. The remaining seven sites contained between 0% and 33% of the actions.

- The most frequently mentioned actions were 'set a time limit on gambling session/per day', 'take a break every 15 mins/regularly' and 'don't borrow money' (each suggested by 63% of the eight sites), followed by 'set $ limit per gambling session', 'don't drink while gambling', 'don't gamble alone', and 'do a budget' (50% each). Twelve of the actions were not mentioned at all by any of the websites.

- Thus, actions to promote the strategy of setting limits on one's gambling focused mainly on setting money and time limits, taking regular breaks from gambling, and avoiding gambling when alone or when drinking alcohol.

Table 30. Government websites: Actions relating to set limits on own gambling

	ACT Gaming & Racing Commission	Tasmania Dept Health & Human Services	WA Dept Racing Gaming & Liquor	NSW Trade & Investment	QD Dept Justice & Attorney General	FaHSCIA	SA Dept Communities & Social Inclusion	VIC Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Set a time limit on gambling session/per day	√			√	√		√	√	5	63
Take a break every 15 minutes/regularly	√			√	√		√	√	5	63
Don't borrow money	√			√	√		√	√	5	63
Set $ limit per gambling session	√			√			√	√	4	50
Don't drink alcohol while gambling				√	√		√	√	4	50
Don't gamble alone				√	√	√	√		4	50
Do a budget				√	√		√	√	4	50
Never gamble with expectation of winning	√			√			√		3	38
Don't take gambling too seriously	√			√	√				3	38
Set $ limit per week							√	√	2	25
Set limit on winnings				√	√				2	25
Put winnings in your pocket							√	√	2	25
Go to venues only at scheduled times				√	√				2	25
When arrive at venue talk to someone for 3 mins				√	√				2	25
Don't stay and watch all the races (punters)				√	√				2	25
Collect winnings and leave (punters)				√	√				2	25
Don't bet on every race (punters)				√	√				2	25
Write out selection before going to TAB (punters)				√	√				2	25
Don't change your bet at the last minute all the time (punters)				√	√				2	25
Think of gambling as entertainment, not a way to make money	√							√	2	25
Set limit on number of sessions per week							√		1	13
Give winnings to a friend while gambling							√		1	13
Don't gamble with heavy gamblers							√		1	13

	ACT Gaming & Racing Commission	Tasmania Dept Health & Human Services	WA Dept Racing Gaming & Liquor	NSW Trade & Investment	QD Dept Justice & Attorney General	FaHSCIA	SA Dept Communities & Social Inclusion	VIC Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Be wary of practice sites (online)								√	1	13
Remove betting apps from your phone (for online)								√	1	13
Don't let gambling interfere with your daily activities	√								1	13
Get free sms message reminders				√					1	13
Look for odds and payout information								√	1	13
Set up cues to keep track of time								√	1	13
If you want to bet on a game do so before not during								√	1	13
Take a break from gambling							√		1	13
Write a card with 2-3 reasons why not to gamble and your limits – put in wallet and on fridge							√		1	13
Socialise in places with no gambling activities	√								1	13
Use pre-commitment/ set loss limits/play safe limits									0	0
Don't increase your bet when you are losing									0	0
If you must increase your bet only do so when you are winning									0	0
Don't use gambling to solve problems									0	0
Take it slowly, give yourself a month of not gambling for every year of gambling									0	0
Have access to clock or watch									0	0
To reduce the time you spend gambling, arrange other commitments ahead of time									0	0
Expect to lose									0	0
Keep a record of the money you spend									0	0
Keep track of odds and payments									0	0
It is always better to leave with some money than without									0	0
Buy small amounts of change									0	0
No. of actions per site	9	0	0	18	15	1	15	14	72	
% of actions per site	20	0	0	40	33	2	33	31		

4.3.6   Government sites: Managing finances and gambling spend

Table 31 summarises the actions contained on each government website to support the strategy of 'managing finances and gambling spend'. The websites were audited for 41 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the government websites:

- 39 of the possible 41 actions were suggested across the government websites to help people manage finances and gambling spend.

- Six of the eight sites contained actions to help people manage finances and gambling spend, while two sites contained no actions for this strategy.

- -There was a wide spread of actions suggested across the eight websites. No sites contained all actions. The site with the most suggested actions contained 34 actions to help managing finances and gambling spend which represents 83% of all actions in Table 31. The remaining seven sites contained between 0% and 29% of the actions.

- The most frequently mentioned action was don't take bank cards with you when you go out' (suggested by 75% of the eight sites), followed by 'carry a limited amount of money', 'tell others not to lend you money', 'don't chase losses/don't add to gambling stakes' (63% each) and 'lower daily ATM withdrawal limits' (50%). Two of the actions, 'don't use money allocated for bills to gamble, and 'get someone to hold your bank cards for you were mentioned by none of the websites.

- Thus, the government websites tended to promote limiting access to cash and advising not to chase gambling losses to support the strategy of managing finances and gambling spend.

Table 31. Government websites: Actions relating to managing finances and gambling spend

	ACT Gaming & Racing Commission	Tasmania Dept Health & Human Services	WA Dept Racing Gaming & Liquor	NSW Trade & Investment	QD Dept Justice & Attorney General	FaHSCIA	SA Dept Communities & Social Inclusion	VIC Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Don't take bank cards with you when you go out	√			√	√	√	√	√	6	75
Carry a limited amount of money				√	√	√	√	√	5	63
Tell others not to lend you money	√			√	√		√	√	5	63
Don't chase losses/ don't add to gambling stakes	√			√	√		√	√	5	63
Lower daily ATM withdrawal limits				√	√		√	√	4	50
Have 2 signatories on your accounts				√	√			√	3	38
Avoid jobs where you handle cash				√	√			√	3	38
Pay some bills in advance				√	√			√	3	38
Have limit attached to EFTPOS card	√						√	√	3	38
Stick to your limits and walk away	√						√	√	3	38
Cancel credit and ATM cards or give to trusted person							√	√	2	25
Prepare ahead for change in circumstances e.g., holiday				√	√				2	25
Avoid having pin number with EFTPOS card							√	√	2	25
Don't borrow money to gamble							√	√	2	25
Only gamble what you can afford to lose				√				√	2	25
Have someone else manage/help manage money								√	1	13

	ACT Gaming & Racing Commission	Tasmania Dept Health & Human Services	WA Dept Racing Gaming & Liquor	NSW Trade & Investment	QD Dept Justice & Attorney General	FaHSCIA	SA Dept Communities & Social Inclusion	VIC Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Have a support person collect wages								√	1	13
Eliminate cash withdrawals on credit cards								√	1	13
Pay bills by direct debit or cheque								√	1	13
Avoid keeping large sums of money at home								√	1	13
Pay essential bills on payday								√	1	13
Put money away for something you enjoy								√	1	13
Avoid use of credit cards								√	1	13
Avoid taking out loans to get cash to gamble								√	1	13
Keep a separate bank account for gambling activity								√	1	13
Use debit cards not credit cards (online)								√	1	13
Keep a check on your player history and bank accounts to monitor your spending								√	1	13
Don't see gambling as an activity for family income								√	1	13
Keep track of your money transactions								√	1	13
Use a site that has limits on daily spend								√	1	13
Limit where you bet, don't have multiple accounts.								√	1	13
Don't lie about what you have spent					√				1	13
Withdraw winnings, keep limited amounts in online accounts								√	1	13
Be aware that the odds on 'practice' games are much better – so it is easier to win than on the paid games								√	1	13
Secure your assets								√	1	13
Have wages paid directly into your account					√				1	13
Expect to lose					√				1	13
Don't gamble when you have urgent debts							√		1	13
If have debts, include regular repayments								√	1	13
Don't use money allocated for bills to gamble									0	0
Get someone to hold your bank cards for you									0	0
No. of actions per site	5	0	0	10	12	2	11	34	74	
% of actions per site	12	0	0	24	29	5	27	83		

4.3.7 Government sites: Reduce opportunities, triggers and urges

Table 32 summarises the actions contained on each government website to support the strategy to 'reduce gambling opportunities, triggers and urges'. The websites were audited for 23 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the government websites:

- 14 of the possible 23 actions were suggested across the government websites to help people reduce gambling opportunities, triggers and urges.

- Six of the eight sites contained actions to help people reduce gambling opportunities, triggers and urges, while two sites contained no actions for this strategy.

- The eight websites varied greatly in the number of actions suggested. No sites contained all actions. This strategy was not covered widely or in much depth within any website. The site with the most suggested actions contained eight actions to help reduce opportunities, triggers and urges to gamble which represents 35% of all actions in Table 32. The remaining seven sites contained between 0% and 30% of the actions.

- The most frequently mentioned action was 'avoid gambling as a reaction to emotions/stress' (suggested by 50% of the eight sites), followed by 'software to block access', 'avoid talking about gambling with heavy gamblers', 'choose venues where you won't stay long', and 'do other things at times you would normally gamble' (25% each). Nine actions were not included in any of the websites.

- Thus, the main action suggested by the government websites to reduce gambling opportunities, triggers and urges was to avoid gambling as a coping mechanism when feeling emotional or stressed.

Table 32. Government websites: Actions relating to reduce gambling opportunities, triggers and urges

	ACT Gaming & Racing Commission	Tasmania Dept Health & Human Services	WA Dept Racing Gaming & Liquor	NSW Trade & Investment	QD Dept Justice & Attorney General	FaHSCIA	SA Dept Communities & Social Inclusion	VIC Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Avoid gambling as a reaction to emotions/stress				√	√		√	√	4	50
Software to block access				√				√	2	25
Avoid talking about gambling with heavy gamblers	√						√		2	25
Choose venues where you won't stay too long						√	√		2	25
Do other things at times you would normally gamble	√						√		2	25
Socialise in non-gambling venues								√	1	13

	ACT Gaming & Racing Commission	Tasmania Dept Health & Human Services	WA Dept Racing Gaming & Liquor	NSW Trade & Investment	QD Dept Justice & Attorney General	FaHSCIA	SA Dept Communities & Social Inclusion	VIC Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Avoid gambling results, form guides, other collateral, etc.							√		1	13
Avoid advertising for gambling							√		1	13
Remind yourself of reasons to not gamble/ for change							√		1	13
Postpone gambling for an hour or two							√		1	13
Exclude from online sites								√	1	13
Opt out of free offers and incentives (online)								√	1	13
Read fine print on promotions material (online)								√	1	13
Stop when gambling is no longer enjoyable								√	1	13
Cancel gambling accounts									0	0
Avoid being near/passing gambling venues									0	0
Don't gamble if in recovery from dependency									0	0
Think of the people who need your support									0	0
Wear wrist band to remind yourself not to gamble									0	0
Change radio station									0	0
If you gamble at lunch time go somewhere different									0	0
Turn car around whenever you approach a venue									0	0
Avoid people who you know gamble									0	0
No. of actions per site	2	0	0	2	1	1	8	7	21	
% of actions per site	9	0	0	9	4	4	35	30		

4.3.8   Government sites: Changing thoughts and beliefs

Table 33 summarises the actions contained on each government website to support the strategy of 'changing thoughts and beliefs'. The websites were audited for 23 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the government websites:

- 16 of the possible 23 actions were suggested across the government websites to help people change their thoughts and beliefs about gambling.

- Five of the eight sites contained actions to help people reduce gambling opportunities, triggers and urges, while three sites contained no actions for this strategy.

- None of the websites covered the actions comprehensively. No sites contained all actions. The three sites with the most suggested actions contained eight actions to help change thoughts and beliefs which represent 35% of all actions

in Table 33. The remaining five sites contained between 0% and 26% of the actions.

- The most frequently mentioned actions were 'learn stress management techniques' and 'improve problem solving skills/approach (both suggested by 50% of the eight sites), followed by 'acknowledge you have a gambling problem', 'decide whether you should cut back or give up gambling' and 'don't believe in feeling that you know when the machine will pay out' (38% each), then 'decide to change your gambling', 'set a goal for changing your gambling', 'engage in positive thinking', 'don't believe in a good thing' and 'challenge irrational thoughts' (25% each). Seven of the actions were not represented in any of the websites.

- Thus, actions to promote the strategy of changing thoughts and beliefs about gambling focused mainly on problem acknowledgement, setting goals to curtail gambling, and challenging erroneous beliefs and thoughts around gambling.

Table 33. Government websites: Actions relating to changing thoughts and beliefs

	ACT Gaming & Racing Commission	Tasmania Dept Health & Human Services	WA Dept Racing Gaming & Liquor	NSW Trade & Investment	QD Dept Justice & Attorney General	FaHSCIA	SA Dept Communities & Social Inclusion	VIC Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Learn stress management techniques				√	√		√	√	4	50
Improve problem solving skills/approach				√	√		√	√	4	50
Acknowledge you have a gambling problem				√			√	√	3	38
Decide whether you should cut back or give up gambling				√			√	√	3	38
Don't believe in feeling that you know when the machine will pay out				√	√			√	3	38
Decide to change your gambling				√			√		2	25
Set a goal for changing your gambling							√	√	2	25
Engage in positive thinking				√	√				2	25
Don't believe in a good thing				√	√				2	25
Challenge irrational thoughts					√		√		2	25
Be kind to yourself								√	1	13
Accept you are not a bad person						√			1	13
Value that you are being loved and that the trust will return						√			1	13
Don't overestimate your abilities							√		1	13

	ACT Gaming & Racing Commission	Tasmania Dept Health & Human Services	WA Dept Racing Gaming & Liquor	NSW Trade & Investment	QD Dept Justice & Attorney General	FaHSCIA	SA Dept Communities & Social Inclusion	VIC Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Remember, like any form of gambling, online poker, betting and sports wagering is not a good way to make money								√	1	13
Remember there is a way out						√			1	13
Find new activities to change emotions									0	0
Keep cards with slogans on them to remind you not to gamble									0	0
Cash out credits over $									0	0
Set short and long term goals									0	0
Self care – vision, sound, smell, taste and touch									0	0
Beware of 'lucky thinking'									0	0
Specific issues for suicide thoughts									0	0
No. of actions per site	0	0	0	8	6	3	8	8	33	
% of actions per site	0	0	0	35	26	13	35	35		

4.3.9   Government sites: Monitoring ongoing behaviour and change

Table 34 summarises the actions contained on each government website to support the strategy of 'monitoring ongoing behaviour and change'. The websites were audited for 20 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the government websites:

- 15 of the possible 20 actions were suggested across the government websites to help people monitor their ongoing behaviour and change in relation to gambling.

- Four of the eight sites contained actions to help people monitor their ongoing behaviour and change, while four sites contained no actions for this strategy.

- Overall the strategy of monitoring ongoing behaviour and change was not well represented on the government websites. The eight websites varied greatly in the number of actions suggested. No sites contained all actions. Two sites contained the most suggested actions to help monitor ongoing behaviour and change, and contained 45% of all actions in Table 34. The remaining seven sites contained between 0% and 40% of the actions.

- The most frequently mentioned actions were 'record gambling wins and losses/keep a gambling diary' and 'prepare for relapses' (both suggested by 50% of the eight sites), followed by 'record gambling urges, triggers and what you did to resist', 'have a plan to deal with lapses', 'know what moods increase

your gambling urges', 'face your feelings', and 'know high risk triggers for your gambling' (38% each). Five of the actions were not included in any of the websites.

- Thus, the most frequently promoted actions by the government websites to promote the strategy of monitoring ongoing behaviour and change focused on keeping records of gambling activity, being prepared for relapses and understanding triggers for gambling.

Table 34. Government websites: Actions relating to monitoring ongoing behaviour and change

	ACT Gaming & Racing Commission	Tasmania Dept Health & Human Services	WA Dept Racing Gaming & Liquor	NSW Trade & Investment	QD Dept Justice & Attorney General	FaHSCIA	SA Dept Communities & Social Inclusion	VIC Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Record gambling wins and losses/keep gambling diary				√	√		√	√	4	50
Prepare for relapses				√	√		√	√	4	50
Record gambling urges, triggers and what you did to resist				√	√			√	3	38
Have a plan to deal with lapses					√		√	√	3	38
Know what moods increase your gambling urges				√	√		√		3	38
Face your feelings				√	√			√	3	38
Know high risk triggers for your gambling				√	√		√		3	38
Reward progress							√	√	2	25
Review your diary – what is working?					√			√	2	25
Recognise gradual side towards a lapse					√				1	13
Eat properly								√	1	13
Know what days and times increase your gambling urges							√		1	13
Know what activities reduce your gambling urges							√		1	13
Know what venues increase your gambling urges							√		1	13
Specific issues if you are suicidal				√					1	13
Remember, like any form of gambling, online poker, betting and sports wagering is not a good way to make money									0	0
Be truthful about why you gamble									0	0
Be realistic and aware									0	0
Challenge irrational thoughts									0	0
Find new activities to change emotions									0	0
No. of actions per site	0	0	0	7	9	0	9	8	33	
% of actions per site	0	0	0	35	45	0	45	40		

4.3.10 Government sites: Utilise social support and resources

Table 35 summarises the actions contained on each government website to support the strategy to 'utilise social support and resources'. The websites were audited for 14 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the government websites:

- 12 of the 14 possible actions were suggested across the government websites to help people utilise social support and resources.

- Although these actions were well represented across five of the eight sites, three sites contained no actions to help people utilise social supports and resources.

- No sites contained all actions. The site with the most suggested actions contained nine actions which represents 64%% of all actions in Table 35. The remaining seven sites contained between 0% and 43% of the actions.

- The most frequently mentioned action was 'ask for help' (suggested by 50 % of the eight sites), followed by 'repair relationships/spend time with family and friends' and 'be honest with friends and family' (38%). Two actions were not represented on any of the websites.

- Thus, government suggested actions to support the strategy of utilising social support and resources focused mainly on actively seeking support from and building relationships with family and friends.

Table 35. Government websites: Actions relating to utilise social support and resources

	ACT Gaming & Racing Commission	Tasmania Dept Health & Human Services	WA Dept Racing Gaming & Liquor	NSW Trade & Investment	QD Dept Justice & Attorney General	FaHSCIA	SA Dept Communities & Social Inclusion	VIC Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Ask for help					√	√	√	√	4	50
Repair relationships/ spend time with family and friends					√		√	√	3	38
Be honest with friends and family					√	√		√	3	38
Tell others about your decision not to gamble					√			√	2	25
Get a helper, check in with them once a week				√				√	2	25
Tell others about your lying					√			√	2	25
Go out with friends, not alone						√		√	2	25
Involve them in solving your problem					√				1	13

	ACT Gaming & Racing Commission	Tasmania Dept Health & Human Services	WA Dept Racing Gaming & Liquor	NSW Trade & Investment	QD Dept Justice & Attorney General	FaHSCIA	SA Dept Communities & Social Inclusion	VIC Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Read stories of recovery								√	1	13
Go to friends who will look out for you								√	1	13
Talk to someone who can help you deal with your urges							√		1	13
Get help to deal with any stress/moods that contribute to your gambling							√		1	13
Share your successes and lapses									0	0
Listen to family and friends they may see something you don't									0	0
No. of actions per site	0	0	0	1	6	3	4	9	23	
% of actions per site	0	0	0	7	43	21	29	64		

4.3.11 Government sites: Take up alternatives to gambling

Table 36 summarises the actions contained on each government website to support the strategy to 'take up alternatives to gambling'. The websites were audited for 16 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the government websites:

- 13 of the 16 possible actions were suggested across the government websites to help people take up alternatives to gambling.

- Six of the eight sites contained actions to help people take up alternatives to gambling, while two sites contained no actions for this strategy.

- No sites contained all actions. Two websites suggested 10 actions to help take up alternatives to gambling which represents 63% of all actions in Table 36. The remaining six sites contained between 0% and 31% of the actions.

- The most frequently mentioned actions were 'keep a diary' and 'distract yourself, keep busy' (each suggested by 50% of the eight sites), followed by 'find activities to fill needs previously met by gambling' and 'take up activities you did prior to gambling' (38% each). Three actions were not represented on any government website.

- Thus, actions to support the strategy of taking up alternatives to gambling focused mainly on encouraging uptake of diversionary activities and diarising.

Table 36. Government websites: Actions relating to take up alternatives to gambling

	ACT Gaming & Racing Commission	Tasmania Dept Health & Human Services	WA Dept Racing Gaming & Liquor	NSW Trade & Investment	QD Dept Justice & Attorney General	FaHSCIA	SA Dept Communities & Social Inclusion	VIC Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Keep a diary				√	√		√	√	4	50
Distract yourself/keep busy				√	√		√	√	4	50
Find activities to fill needs previously met by gambling					√		√	√	3	38
Take up activities you did prior to gambling					√		√	√	3	38
Make gambling one of your leisure activities not your only one	√							√	2	25
Exercise					√			√	2	25
Take up yoga/meditation					√			√	2	25
Find part time work					√			√	2	25
Make home and interesting place to be					√			√	2	25
Treat yourself					√			√	2	25
Get involved in local groups/activities							√		1	13
If a lunch time gambler, go to different place for lunch with colleagues					√				1	13
Make a difference get involved						√			1	13
Find new activities to change emotions									0	0
Discuss activities to do with family and friends									0	0
Take up education									0	0
No. of actions per site	1	0	0	2	10	1	5	10	29	
% of actions per site	6	0	0	13	63	6	31	63		

4.3.12 Summary of government website audit

Eight government sites were audited for self-help resources, strategies and actions. Table 37 summarises the number of self-help actions contained within each self-help strategy.

All sites included some of the strategies. The most common self-help strategies with at least one action per site was 'become informed about gambling' included on all eight sites. The next most common were 'managing finances and spend', 'set limits on own gambling', 'take up alternatives to gambling', 'reduce opportunities, triggers and urges', and 'self-assessment of own gambling', which were all included on six of the eight sites. Five sites included at least one action associated with the remaining strategies of 'monitoring ongoing behaviour and change', 'changing thoughts and beliefs' and 'utilise social support and resources'.

Three of the strategies were most commonly supported by multiple actions: 'becoming informed about gambling' with 85 inclusions across all websites; 'managing finances and gambling spend' with 74 inclusions across six of the eight sites and 'set limits on gambling' with 72 inclusions across the same eight sites. The least mentioned category was 'self-assessment of own gambling' that was mentioned 13 times across six of the sites. All of the sites included some of the strategies, with four sites having 60 or more mentions across all strategies. Two of the sites only included mention of actions within two strategies, 'become informed about gambling' and 'self-assessment of gambling'. One site was notable for providing substantial information across all strategies which were each supported by multiple actions. Overall, provision of information, limit-setting and money management were the primary focus for the government websites.

Table 37. Government sites: Number of actions per self-help strategy

	ACT Gaming & Racing Commission	Tasmania Dept Health & Human Services	WA Dept Racing Gaming & Liquor	NSW Trade & Investment	QD Dept Justice & Attorney General	FaHSCIA	SA Dept Communities & Social Inclusion	VIC Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of actions per strategy	No. of sites containing strategy	% of sites containing strategy
Become informed about gambling	6	9	11	12	10	4	16	17	85	8	100
Managing finances & gambling spend	5	0	0	10	12	2	11	34	74	6	75
Set limits on own gambling	9	0	0	18	15	1	15	14	72	6	75
Monitoring ongoing behaviour and change	0	0	0	7	9	0	9	8	33	5	63
Changing thoughts and beliefs	0	0	0	8	6	3	8	8	33	5	63
Take up alternatives to gambling	1	0	0	2	10	1	5	10	29	6	75
Utilise social support and resources	0	0	0	1	6	3	4	9	23	5	63
Reduce opportunities, triggers and urges	2	0	0	2	1	1	8	7	21	6	75
Self-assessment of own gambling	0	2	2	2	1	0	3	3	13	6	75
Total no. of actions	23	11	13	62	70	15	79	110	383		

4.4   Audit of industry websites

4.4.1   Industry sites audited

In total, nine gambling industry-operated websites were audited for self-help materials for gambling, as identified in Table 38, with broad representation across Australian gambling sectors, including Internet gambling sites. Of the nine sites audited, five are casino sites: Crown (Melbourne), Crown (Perth), Wrest Point (Tasmania), Country Club (Tasmania) and Echo Entertainment (four casinos across Queensland and NSW). Three online betting sites were included in the audit: Tabcorp, Australia's largest wagering, racing media and keno operator; Betfair, one of the world's largest international online sports betting providers which operates a peer-to-peer betting exchange; and Centrebet the second largest private bookmaking company in Australia and one of the largest bookmakers in the world.

Table 38. Industry sites audited

Operator	Date audited	Website
Crown Casino	15.09.13	http://www.crownmelbourne.com.au/responsible-gaming/1887/about-responsible-gaming
Tabcorp holdings	14.09.13	http://www.tabcorp.com.au/responsible-gambling.aspx
Wrest Point Casino	21.09.13	www.wrestpoint.com.au/default.asp?pID=307
Crown Perth	27.09.13	http://www.crownperth.com.au/responsible-service-of-gambling/manage-your-gambling
Tatts Group	19.09.13	http://tatts.com/responsible-gambling
Betfair	21.09.13	http://responsiblegambling.betfair.com/
Centrebet	15.09.13	http://centrebet.com/#ResponsibleGambling
Country Club Tasmania	21.09.13	www.countryclubtasmania.com.au/default.asp?pID=307
Echo Entertainment	21.09.13	http://www.echoentertainment.com.au/OurCommunity/ResponsibleGambling/Pages/default.aspx

4.4.2   Industry sites: Types of self-help resources

Table 39 shows the types of self-help resources contained on each industry website. All nine industry websites included some resources with the range of resources offered varying across all sites. The most dominant resource was 'written information not included in types below' included by 100% of the industry sites, followed by 'checklist' and 'assessment tool/calculator (33%). The two sites with the most types of resources contained four resources which represents 18% of all resources listed in Table 39.

Table 39. Industry websites: Types of self-help resources

	Crown Casino	Tabcorp Holdings	Wrestpoint Casino	Crown Perth	Tatts Group	Betfair	Centrebet	Country Club Tasmania	Echo Entertainment	No. of sites containing resource	% of sites containing resource
Written information not included in types below	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	9	100
Assessment tool/calculator	√		√						√	3	33
Checklist					√	√	√			3	33
Workbook/manual to work through					√	√				2	22
Gambling/recovery stories (provider generator only)						√	√			2	22
Brochure/pamphlet/	√									1	11
Videos							√			1	11
Comics										0	0
Fact sheet										0	0
Indigenous resources										0	0

	Crown Casino	Tabcorp Holdings	Wrestpoint Casino	Crown Perth	Tatts Group	Betfair	Centrebet	Country Club Tasmania	Echo Entertainment	No. of sites containing resource	% of sites containing resource
Multicultural resources										0	0
Video cartoon										0	0
TV commercial										0	0
Diagram/chart										0	0
Research and data										0	0
Media reports										0	0
Resource for the hard of hearing										0	0
Leaning modules										0	0
100 day challenge										0	0
Newsletter										0	0
Poster										0	0
Other										0	0
No. of resources per site	3	1	2	1	3	4	4	1	2	21	
% of resources per site	14	5	9	5	14	18	18	5	9		

4.4.3   Industry sites: Becoming informed about gambling

Table 40 summarises actions contained on each industry website to support the strategy of 'becoming informed about gambling'. The websites were audited for 26 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the industry websites:

- 5 of the 26 possible actions were suggested across the industry sites to help people become informed about gambling.

- Seven of the nine sites contained at least some actions to help people become informed about gambling, while two sites contained none of these actions.

- None of the websites covered the actions comprehensively or in any depth with suggested actions. No sites contained all actions. The site with the most suggested actions contained four actions to help become informed about gambling which represents 15% of all actions in Table 40. The remaining eight sites contained between 0% and 4% of the actions.

- The most frequently mentioned action was 'what responsible gambling/responsible gambler is' (suggested by 66% of the 9 sites), followed by 'what problem gambling is' and 'odds of winning/losing' (22% each). Only two other actions were suggested: 'signs of problem gambling' and 'how other types of gambling work' (11% each).

- Thus, the major action suggested by the industry sites to become informed about gambling was to know what a responsible gambler/gambling is.

Table 40. Industry websites: Actions relating to becoming informed about gambling

	Crown Casino	Tabcorp Holdings	Wrestpoint Casino	Crown Perth	Tatts Group	Betfair	Centrebet	Country Club Tasmania	Echo Entertainment	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
What responsible gambling/responsible gambler is	√	√		√	√	√			√	6	66
What problem gambling is							√		√	2	22
Odds of winning/losing					√				√	2	22
Signs of problem gambling									√	1	11
How other types of gambling work					√					1	11
Impacts/effects of problem gambling										0	0
Different gambling behaviours/types of gamblers										0	0
Effects on mental health										0	0
Erroneous beliefs/myths										0	0
How poker machines work										0	0
Chance/skill and risk factors in poker machines										0	0
Use player tracking devices on EGMs										0	0
How do I know a gambling website is safe?										0	0
Statistics on gambling populations										0	0
Effects on children of people who gamble										0	0
Links between gambling and OD use										0	0
How much you can lose on a poker machine										0	0
Be realistic and aware										0	0
Weigh up pros and cons of cutting back/giving up gambling										0	0
Weigh up pros and cons of gambling										0	0
Write down reasons to not gamble										0	0
Learn about your gambling activity										0	0
Calculate how many hours you have worked to earn the money you have gambled										0	0
Reasons why people gamble										0	0
Read and learn about problem gambling										0	0
Information on gambling policies										0	0
No. of actions per site	1	1	0	1	3	1	1	0	4	12	
% of actions per site	4	4	0	4	12	4	4	0	15		

4.4.4 Industry sites: Self-assessment of own gambling

None of the industry sites contained any suggested actions for this strategy.

4.4.5 Industry sites: Set limits on own gambling

Table 41 summarises the actions contained on each industry website to support the strategy of 'set limits on own gambling'. The websites were audited for 47 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the industry websites:

- 15 of the possible 47 actions were suggested across the industry websites to help people set limits on their own gambling.

- 14 of the 15 sites contained actions to help people set limits on their own gambling, while one site contained no actions for this self-help strategy. The nine websites varied greatly in the number of actions suggested. No sites contained all actions. The site with the most suggested actions contained eight actions to help setting limits on own gambling, which represents 18% of all actions in Table 41. The remaining eight sites contained between 0% and 13% of the actions.

- The most frequently mentioned action was 'set $ limit on gambling session/per day' (suggested by 67% of the nine sites), followed by ''don't borrow money' (56%) and 'set a time limit on gambling session/per day', 'use pre-commitment/set loss limits/play safe limits' and 'think of gambling as entertainment not as a way to make money' (33% each). Most remaining actions received no mention on any of the websites.

- Thus, the industry sites focused mainly on promoting actions to set money and time limits for gambling.

Table 41. Industry websites: Actions relating to set limits on own gambling

	Crown Casino	Tabcorp Holdings	Wrestpoint Casino	Crown Perth	Tatts Group	Betfair	Centrebet	Country Club Tasmania	Echo Entertainment	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Set $ limit per gambling session	√	√	√	√	√		√			6	67
Don't borrow money		√	√	√	√			√		5	56
Set a time limit on gambling session/per day	√				√		√			3	33
Use pre-commitment/ set loss limits/play safe limits	√						√		√	3	33
Think of gambling as entertainment, not a way to make money		√		√			√			3	33

	Crown Casino	Tabcorp Holdings	Wrestpoint Casino	Crown Perth	Tatts Group	Betfair	Centrebet	Country Club Tasmania	Echo Entertainment	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Take a break every 15 minutes/regularly	√			√						2	22
Don't drink alcohol while gambling				√			√			2	22
Don't take gambling too seriously	√			√						2	22
Set limit on winnings			√							1	11
Don't let gambling interfere with your daily activities							√			1	11
Set up cues to keep track of time				√						1	11
If you want to bet on a game do so before not during				√						1	11
Do a budget								√		1	11
Don't increase your bet when you are losing								√		1	11
If you must increase your bet only do so when you are winning								√		1	11
Set $ limit per week										0	0
Set limit on number of sessions per week										0	0
Give winnings to a friend while gambling										0	0
Don't gamble with heavy gamblers										0	0
Don't gamble alone										0	0
Never gamble with expectation of winning										0	0
Put winnings in your pocket										0	0
Be wary of practice sites (online)										0	0
Remove betting apps from your phone (for online)										0	0
Get free SMS message reminders										0	0
Go to venues only at scheduled times										0	0
When arrive at venue talk to someone for 3 mins										0	0
Don't stay and watch all the races (punters)										0	0
Collect winnings and leave (punters)										0	0
Don't bet on every race (punters)										0	0
Write out selection before going to TAB (punters)										0	0
Don't change your bet at the last minute all the time (punters)										0	0
Look for odds and payout information										0	0
Take a break from gambling										0	0
Write a card with 2-3 reasons why not to gamble and your limits – put in wallet and on fridge										0	0
Socialise in places with no gambling activities										0	0
Don't use gambling to solve problems										0	0
Take it slowly, give yourself a month of not gambling for every year of gambling										0	0
Have access to clock or watch										0	0

	Crown Casino	Tabcorp Holdings	Wrestpoint Casino	Crown Perth	Tatts Group	Betfair	Centrebet	Country Club Tasmania	Echo Entertainment	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
To reduce the time you spend gambling, arrange other commitments ahead of time										0	0
Expect to lose										0	0
Keep a record of the money you spend										0	0
Keep track of odds and payments										0	0
It is always better to leave with some money than without										0	0
Buy small amounts of change										0	0
No. of actions per site	5	3	3	8	3	0	6	4	1	33	
% of actions per site	11	7	7	18	7	0	13	9	2		

4.4.6   Industry sites: Managing finances and gambling spend

Table 42 summarises the actions contained on each industry website supporting the strategy of 'managing finances and gambling spend'. The websites were audited for 41 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the industry websites:

- 10 of the possible 41 actions were suggested across the industry websites to help people manage finances and gambling spend.

- Seven of the 9 sites contained actions to help people manage finances and gambling spend, while two sites contained no actions for this strategy.

- None of the nine websites covered all possible actions for managing finances and gambling spend in great depth and they varied greatly in the number of actions suggested. No sites contained all actions. The site with the most suggested actions contained five actions which represents 12% of all actions in Table 42. The remaining eight sites contained between 0% and 10% of the actions.

- The most frequently mentioned action was 'don't chase losses/don't add to gambling stakes' (suggested by 78% of the nine sites), followed by 'only gamble what you can afford to lose' (44%) and 'stick to your limits and walk away' (33%).

- Thus, the focus for the industry sites in suggesting actions to help people manage their finances and gambling spend was on advice to not chase losses or increase gambling stakes, as well as to gamble only within affordable limits.

Table 42. Industry websites: Actions relating to managing finances and gambling spend

	Crown Casino	Tabcorp Holdings	Wrestpoint Casino	Crown Perth	Tatts Group	Betfair	Centrebet	Country Club Tasmania	Echo Entertainment	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Don't chase losses/ don't add to gambling stakes	√	√	√	√	√		√	√		7	78
Only gamble what you can afford to lose			√		√		√	√		4	44
Stick to your limits and walk away	√		√	√						3	33
Pay bills by direct debit or cheque				√						1	11
Keep a check on your player history and bank accounts to monitor your spending							√			1	11
Don't borrow money to gamble	√									1	11
Don't use money allocated for bills to gamble	√									1	11
Don't see gambling as an activity for family income							√			1	11
Keep track of your money transactions							√			1	11
Don't take bank cards with you when you go out				√						1	11
Have someone else manage/help manage money										0	0
Have a support person collect wages										0	0
Cancel credit and ATM cards or give to trusted person										0	0
Carry a limited amount of money										0	0
Lower daily ATM withdrawal limits										0	0
Tell others not to lend you money										0	0
Have 2 signatories on your accounts										0	0
Eliminate cash withdrawals on credit cards										0	0
Avoid jobs where you handle cash										0	0
Avoid keeping large sums of money at home										0	0
Pay essential bills on payday										0	0
Pay some bills in advance										0	0
Put money away for something you enjoy										0	0
Avoid use of credit cards										0	0
Avoid taking out loans to get cash to gamble										0	0
Keep a separate bank account for gambling activity										0	0
Prepare ahead for change in circumstances e.g. holiday										0	0
Avoid having pin number with EFTPOS card										0	0
Have limit attached to EFTPOS card										0	0
Use debit cards not credit cards (online)										0	0
Use a site that has limits on daily spend										0	0
Limit where you bet, don't have multiple accounts.										0	0
Don't lie about what you have spent										0	0

	Crown Casino	Tabcorp Holdings	Wrestpoint Casino	Crown Perth	Tatts Group	Betfair	Centrebet	Country Club Tasmania	Echo Entertainment	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Withdraw winnings, keep limited amounts in online accounts										0	0
Be aware that the odds on 'practice' games are much better – so it is easier to win than on the paid games										0	0
Secure your assets										0	0
Have wages paid directly into your account										0	0
Expect to lose										0	0
Don't gamble when you have urgent debts										0	0
If have debts, include regular repayments										0	0
Get someone to hold your bank cards for you										0	0
No. of actions per site	4	1	3	4	2	0	5	2	0	21	
% of actions per site	10	2	7	10	5	0	12	5	0		

4.4.7   Industry sites: Reduce opportunities, triggers and urges

Table 43 summarises the actions contained on each industry website in relation to the strategy to 'reduce gambling opportunities, triggers and urges'. The websites were audited for 23 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the industry websites:

- Three of the possible 23 actions were suggested across the industry websites to help people reduce gambling opportunities, triggers and urges.

- Three of the nine sites contained actions to help people reduce gambling opportunities, triggers and urges, while six sites contained no actions for this strategy.

- The nine industry websites did not include actions to help reduce opportunities, triggers or urges in any breadth or depth. No sites contained all actions. The three sites that did contain actions to support this strategy each contained one action which represents 4% of all actions in Table 43.

- Those actions mentioned were 'avoid gambling as a reaction to emotions/stress', 'don't gamble if in recovery from dependency' and 'think of the people who need your support' (each suggested by one of the nine sites).

- Thus, the industry websites had minimal self-help actions to reduce gambling opportunities, triggers and urges.

Table 43. Industry websites: Actions relating to reduce gambling opportunities, triggers and urges

	Crown Casino	Tabcorp Holdings	Wrestpoint Casino	Crown Perth	Tatts Group	Betfair	Centrebet	Country Club Tasmania	Echo Entertainment	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Don't gamble if in recovery from dependency							√			1	11
Think of the people who need your support		√								1	11
Avoid gambling as a reaction to emotions/stress				√						1	11
Software to block access										0	0
Cancel gambling accounts										0	0
Avoid being near/passing gambling venues										0	0
Socialise in non-gambling venues										0	0
Avoid gambling results, form guides, other collateral, etc										0	0
Avoid advertising for gambling										0	0
Avoid talking about gambling with heavy gamblers										0	0
Remind yourself of reasons to not gamble/ for change										0	0
Postpone gambling for an hour or two										0	0
Exclude from online sites										0	0
Opt out of free offers and incentives (online)										0	0
Read fine print on promotions material (online)										0	0
Choose venues where you won't stay too long										0	0
Stop when gambling is no longer enjoyable										0	0
Do other things at times you would normally gamble										0	0
Wear wrist band to remind yourself not to gamble										0	0
Change radio station										0	0
If you gamble at lunch time go somewhere different										0	0
Turn car around whenever you approach a venue										0	0
Avoid people who you know gamble										0	0
No. of actions per site	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	
% of actions per site	0	4	0	4	0	0	4	0	0		

4.4.8 Industry sites: Changing thoughts and beliefs

Table 44 summarises the actions contained on each industry website to support the strategy 'changing thoughts and beliefs'. The websites were audited for 23 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the industry websites:

- Only one of the possible 23 actions was suggested across the industry websites to help people change their thoughts and beliefs about gambling.

- Only one of the nine sites suggested this action.

- The action mentioned was 'set a goal for changing your behaviour' (suggested by one site (11% of the 9 sites).

- Thus, the industry websites had minimal self-help actions to assist people to change their thoughts and beliefs about gambling.

Table 44. Industry websites: Actions relating to changing thoughts and beliefs

	Crown Casino	Tabcorp Holdings	Wrestpoint Casino	Crown Perth	Tatts Group	Betfair	Centrebet	Country Club Tasmania	Echo Entertainment	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Set a goal for changing your gambling				√						1	11
Acknowledge you have a gambling problem										0	0
Decide to change your gambling										0	0
Decide whether you should cut back or give up gambling										0	0
Be kind to yourself										0	0
Accept you are not a bad person										0	0
Value that you are being loved and that the trust will return										0	0
Engage in positive thinking										0	0
Don't believe in a good thing										0	0
Don't believe in feeling that you know when the machine will pay out										0	0
Challenge irrational thoughts										0	0
Don't overestimate your abilities										0	0
Find new activities to change emotions										0	0
Keep cards with slogans on them to remind you not to gamble										0	0
Cash out credits over $100										0	0
Set short and long term goals										0	0
Self care – vision, sound, smell, taste and touch										0	0
Beware of 'lucky thinking'										0	0
Learn stress management techniques										0	0
Improve problem solving skills/approach										0	0
Remember, like any form of gambling, online poker, betting and sports wagering is not a good way to make money										0	0
Remember there is a way out										0	0
Specific issues for suicide thoughts										0	0
No. of actions per site	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	
% of actions per site	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0		

Table 45 summarises the actions contained on each industry website to support the strategy of 'monitoring ongoing behaviour and change'. The websites were audited for 20 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the industry websites:

- Only one of the possible 20 actions were suggested across the industry websites to help people monitor their ongoing behaviour and change in relation to gambling.

- Only one of the nine sites contained actions to help people monitor ongoing behaviour and change, while eight sites contained no actions for this strategy.

- The action mentioned was 'record gambling wins and losses/keep gambling diary' suggested by one (11%) of the nine sites.

- Thus, the industry websites had minimal self-help actions to assist people to monitor ongoing behaviour and change in relation to gambling.

Table 45. Industry websites: Actions relating to monitoring ongoing behaviour and change

	Crown Casino	Tabcorp Holdings	Wrestpoint Casino	Crown Perth	Tatts Group	Betfair	Centrebet	Country Club Tasmania	Echo Entertainment	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Record gambling wins and losses/keep gambling diary				√						1	11
Record gambling urges, triggers and what you did to resist										0	0
Reward progress										0	0
Have a plan to deal with lapses										0	0
Recognise gradual side towards a lapse										0	0
Eat properly										0	0
Prepare for relapses										0	0
Know what days and times increase your gambling urges										0	0
Know what moods increase your gambling urges										0	0
Know what activities reduce your gambling urges										0	0
Face your feelings										0	0
Know what venues increase your gambling urges										0	0
Know high risk triggers for your gambling										0	0
Specific issues if you are suicidal										0	0
Review your diary – what is working?										0	0

	Crown Casino	Tabcorp Holdings	Wrestpoint Casino	Crown Perth	Tatts Group	Betfair	Centrebet	Country Club Tasmania	Echo Entertainment	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Remember, like any form of gambling, online poker, betting and sports wagering is not a good way to make money										0	0
Be truthful about why you gamble										0	0
Be realistic and aware										0	0
Challenge irrational thoughts										0	0
Find new activities to change emotions										0	0
No. of actions per site	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	
% of actions per site	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0		

4.4.10 Industry sites: Utilise social support and resources

Table 46 summarises the actions contained on each industry website in relation to the strategy 'utilise social support and resources'. The websites were audited for 14 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the industry websites:

- Three of the 14 possible actions were suggested across the industry websites to help people utilise social support and resources.

- Three of the nine sites contained actions to help people utilise social support and resources, while six sites contained no actions for this strategy.

- These actions mentioned were 'involve them in solving your problem', 'ask for help' and 'listen to family and friends, they may see something you don't', each suggested by one (11%) of the nine sites.

- Thus, the industry websites had minimal self-help actions to assist people to utilise social support and resources.

Table 46. Industry websites: Actions relating to utilise social support and resources

	Crown Casino	Tabcorp Holdings	Wrestpoint Casino	Crown Perth	Tatts Group	Betfair	Centrebet	Country Club Tasmania	Echo Entertainment	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Involve them in solving your problem				√						1	11
Ask for help		√								1	11
Listen to family and friends, they may see something you don't			√							1	11
Repair relationships/ spend time with family and friends										0	0
Share your successes and lapses										0	0
Read stories of recovery										0	0
Go to friends who will look out for you										0	0
Tell others about your decision not to gamble										0	0
Get a helper, check in with them once a week										0	0
Talk to someone who can help you deal with your urges										0	0
Get help to deal with any stress/moods that contribute to your gambling										0	0
Tell others about your lying										0	0
Go out with friends, not alone										0	0
Be honest with friends and family										0	0
No. of actions per site	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	
% of actions per site	0	7	7	7	0	0	0	0	0		

4.4.11 Industry sites: Take up alternatives to gambling

None of the industry sites contained any suggested actions for this strategy.

4.4.12 Summary of industry website audit

Nine gambling industry sites were audited for self-help resources, strategies and actions. Table 47 summarises the number of self-help actions suggested by the industry sites within each self-help strategy.

All sites included some of the strategies. The most common self-help strategies with at least one action per site was 'set limits on own gambling' included on eight of the nine sites. Seven of the nine sites had at least one suggested action within the strategies of 'managing finances & gambling spend' and 'become informed about gambling'. Only a minority of the industry sites contained at least one action to support the self-help strategies to 'reduce opportunities, triggers and urges', 'utilise social support and resources', 'changing thoughts and beliefs' and 'monitoring ongoing behaviour and

change. None of the industry sites contained any actions to support the strategies of 'self-assessment of own gambling' and 'take up alternative to gambling'.

The sites varied in regard to the breadth of strategies. Three of the strategies dominated this element of the audit for the industry sites. 'Set limits on gambling' had 33 suggestions of actions across eight of the nine sites. 'Managing finances and gambling spend' had 21 inclusions across seven of the nine sites. 'Becoming informed about gambling had 12 inclusions of actions across seven sites. Two sites included actions relating to only two strategies and one site included only actions supporting one strategy.

The predominant focus of the self-help materials provided by the industry sites was on responsible gambling and what a responsible gambler is. There was considerable emphasis on not chasing losses and not gambling more than one could afford. There was very limited focus on assessment tools, identification of triggers and urges, monitoring behaviour, changing thoughts and beliefs, use of social supports or taking up alternative activities to gambling.

Table 47. Industry: websites: Number of actions per self-help strategy

	Crown Casino	Tabcorp Holdings	Wrestpoint Casino	Crown Perth	Tatts Group	Betfair	Centrebet	Country Club Tasmania	Echo Entertainment	No. of actions per strategy	No. of sites containing strategy	% of sites containing strategy
Set limits on own gambling	5	3	3	8	3	0	6	4	1	33	8	89
Managing finances & gambling spend	4	1	3	4	2	0	5	2	0	21	7	78
Become informed about gambling	1	1	0	1	3	1	1	0	4	12	7	78
Reduce opportunities, triggers and urges	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	3	44
Utilise social support and resources	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	33
Changing thoughts and beliefs	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	11
Monitoring ongoing behaviour and change	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	11
Self-assessment of own gambling	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Take up alternatives to gambling	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total no. of actions	10	7	7	17	8	1	13	6	5	74		

4.5   Audit of professional websites

4.5.1   Professional sites audited

Two gambling websites were audited that provided self-help materials for professionals dealing with problem gambling, as identified in Table 48. Both sites are components of

larger help sites included within the audit of government sites. Specific support offered to professionals working in problem gambling is detailed within these sites.

Table 48. Professional sites audited

Operator	Date audited	Website
NSW Trade and Investment	05.12.13	http://www.gamblinghelp.nsw.gov.au/help-for-health-welfare-professionals/
Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation	05.12.13	www.professionals.problemgambling.vic.gov.au/

4.5.2   Professional sites: Types of self-help resources

Table 49 shows the types of resources on each professional website, both of which included some resources. The resources included were very similar, and were provided primarily via brochures and fact sheets. The resources were aimed at professionals working with people with gambling problems but also provided material directed specifically to gamblers and their families.

Table 49. Professional websites: Types of self-help resources

	NSW Trade & Investment	Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing resources	% of sites containing resources
Written information not included in types below	√	√	2	100
Workbook/manual to work through	√	√	2	100
Checklist	√	√	2	100
Brochure/pamphlet/	√	√	2	100
Assessment tool/calculator	√	√	2	100
Gambling/recovery stories (provider generator only)	√	√	2	100
Fact sheet	√	√	2	100
Multicultural resources	√	√	2	100
Research and data	√	√	2	100
Indigenous resources	√		1	50
Videos	√		1	50
Comics			0	0
Video cartoon			0	0
TV commercial			0	0

	NSW Trade & Investment	Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing resources	% of sites containing resources
Diagram/chart			0	0
Media reports			0	0
Resource for the hard of hearing			0	0
Leaning modules			0	0
100 day challenge			0	0
Newsletter			0	0
Poster			0	0
Other			0	0
Total	11	9	20	

4.5.3   Professional sites: Become informed about gambling

Table 50 summarises the actions contained on each professional website to support the strategy of 'becoming informed about gambling'. The websites were audited for 26 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the professional websites:

- Both sites contained at least some actions to help people become informed about gambling.

- 22 of the 26 possible actions were suggested across the professional sites to help people become informed about gambling. There many similarities across both sites with only slight variations apparent in types of actions suggested.

- Both sites had a wide breadth of actions to support this strategy.

Table 50. Professional websites: Actions relating to becoming informed about gambling

	NSW Trade & Investment	Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
What problem gambling is	√	√	2	100
Signs of problem gambling	√	√	2	100
Impacts/effects of problem gambling	√	√	2	100
Different gambling behaviours/types of gamblers	√	√	2	100
Effects on mental health	√	√	2	100
Erroneous beliefs/myths	√	√	2	100
Odds of winning/losing	√	√	2	100
Chance/skill and risk factors in poker machines	√	√	2	100
Statistics on gambling populations	√	√	2	100
How much you can lose on a poker machine	√	√	2	100
What responsible gambling/responsible gambler is	√	√	2	100
Weigh up pros and cons of cutting back/giving up gambling	√	√	2	100
Weigh up pros and cons of gambling	√	√	2	100
Write down reasons to not gamble	√	√	2	100
Learn about your gambling activity	√	√	2	100
Reasons why people gamble	√	√	2	100
Use player tracking devices on EGMs		√	1	50
How poker machines work		√	1	50
Effects on children of people who gamble		√	1	50
Links between gambling and OD use		√	1	50
How other types of gambling work		√	1	50
Read and learn about problem gambling	√		1	50
How do I know a gambling website is safe?			0	0
Be realistic and aware			0	0
Calculate how many hours you have worked to earn the money you have gambled			0	0
Information on gambling policies			0	0
No. of actions per site	17	21	38	
% of actions per site	65	81		

4.5.4 Professional sites: Self-assessment of own gambling

Table 51 summarises the actions contained on each professional website to support the strategy of 'self-assessment of own gambling'. The websites were audited for four possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the professional websites:

- Both contained actions to help people self-assess their own gambling behaviour.

- Two of the four possible actions were suggested across the professional websites to help people self-assess their own gambling.

- Both professional sites included two assessment tools to assess if you have a gambling problem and to know what your gambling triggers are.

Table 51. Professional websites: Actions relating to self-assessment of own gambling

	NSW Trade & Investment	Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Assess if you have a gambling problem	√	√	2	100
Know what your gambling triggers are, e.g. stress, boredom	√	√	2	100
Assess how much you spend on gambling			0	0
Be truthful about why you gamble			0	0
No. of actions per site	2	2	4	
% of actions per site	50	50		

4.5.5   Professional sites: Set limits on own gambling

Table 52 summarises the actions contained on each professional website to support the strategy to 'set limits on own gambling'. The websites were audited for 47 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the professional websites:

- Both sites contained actions to help people set limits on their own gambling.

- 28 of the possible 47 actions were suggested across the professional websites to help people set limits on their own gambling.

- This strategy was well covered with extensive actions on both sites, with actions for punters also included.

Table 52. Professional websites: Actions relating to set limits on own gambling

	NSW Trade & Investment	Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Set $ limit per gambling session	√	√	2	100
Set a time limit on gambling session/per day	√	√	2	100
Don't drink alcohol while gambling	√	√	2	100
Don't gamble alone	√	√	2	100
Never gamble with expectation of winning	√	√	2	100
Don't chase losses/walk away	√	√	2	100
Don't borrow money	√	√	2	100
Don't stay and watch all the races (punters)	√	√	2	100
Collect winnings and leave (punters)	√	√	2	100
Don't bet on every race (punters)	√	√	2	100
Write out selection before going to TAB (punters)	√	√	2	100
Don't change your bet at the last minute all the time (punters)	√	√	2	100
Look for odds and payout information	√	√	2	100
If you want to bet on a game do so before not during	√	√	2	100
Do a budget	√	√	2	100
Expect to lose	√	√	2	100
Give winnings to a friend while gambling		√	1	50
Put winnings in your pocket		√	1	50
Don't take gambling too seriously		√	1	50
Use pre-commitment/ set loss limits/play safe limits		√	1	50
Go to venues only at scheduled times	√		1	50
When arrive at venue talk to someone for 3 mins	√		1	50
Do something else at times you know you normally gamble		√	1	50
Take a break from gambling		√	1	50
Don't use gambling to solve problems		√	1	50
Keep track of odds and payments		√	1	50
Buy small amounts of change		√	1	50
Think of gambling as entertainment, not a way to make money	√	√	2	50
Set $ limit per week			0	0
Set limit on winnings			0	0
Set limit on number of sessions per week			0	0
Take a break every 5 minutes/regularly			0	0
Don't gamble with heavy gamblers			0	0
Be wary of practice sites (online)			0	0
Remove betting apps from your phone (for online)			0	0

	NSW Trade & Investment	Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Don't let gambling interfere with your daily activities			0	0
Get free SMS message reminders			0	0
Set up cues to keep track of time			0	0
Don't increase your bet when you are losing			0	0
Write a card with 2-3 reasons why not to gamble and your limits – put in wallet and on fridge			0	0
If you must increase your bet only do so when you are winning			0	0
Socialise in places with no gambling activities			0	0
Take it slowly, give yourself a month of not gambling for every year of gambling			0	0
Have access to clock or watch			0	0
To reduce the time you spend gambling, arrange other commitments ahead of time			0	0
Keep a record of the money you spend			0	0
It is always better to leave with some money than without			0	0
No. of actions per site	19	26	45	
% of actions per site	40	55		

4.5.6   Professional sites: Managing finances and gambling spend

Table 53 summarises the actions contained on each professional website in relation to the strategy of 'managing finances and gambling spend'. The websites were audited for 41 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the professional websites:

- Both sites contained actions to help people manage finances and gambling spend.

- 26 of the possible 41 actions were suggested across the professional websites to help people manage finances and gambling spend.

- In general managing finances was covered in depth by a wide variety of actions on both sites

Table 53. Professional websites: Actions relating to managing finances and gambling spend

	NSW Trade & Investment	Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Carry a limited amount of money	√	√	2	100
Lower daily ATM withdrawal limits	√	√	2	100
Have 2 signatories on your accounts	√	√	2	100
Eliminate cash withdrawals on credit cards	√	√	2	100
Pay bills by direct debit or cheque	√	√	2	100
Avoid jobs where you handle cash	√	√	2	100
Pay some bills in advance	√	√	2	100
Avoid use of credit cards	√	√	2	100
Have limit attached to EFTPOS card	√	√	2	100
Don't borrow money to gamble	√	√	2	100
Don't use money allocated for bills to gamble	√	√	2	100
Stick to your limits and walk away	√	√	2	100
Don't chase losses/ don't add to gambling stakes	√	√	2	100
Only gamble what you can afford to lose	√	√	2	100
Don't take bank cards with you when you go out	√	√	2	100
Don't lie about what you have spent	√	√	2	100
Have wages paid directly into your account	√	√	2	100
Expect to lose	√	√	2	100
Get someone to hold your bank cards for you	√	√	2	100
Cancel credit and ATM cards or give to trusted person		√	1	50
Tell others not to lend you money		√	1	50
Avoid keeping large sums of money at home		√	1	50
Pay essential bills on payday		√	1	50
Put money away for something you enjoy	√		1	50
Avoid having pin number with EFTPOS card		√	1	50
Secure your assets		√	1	50
Have someone else manage/help manage money			0	0
Have a support person collect wages			0	0
Avoid taking out loans to get cash to gamble			0	0
Keep a separate bank account for gambling activity			0	0
Prepare ahead for change in circumstances e.g. holiday			0	0
Use debit cards not credit cards (online)			0	0
Keep a check on your player history and bank accounts to monitor your spending			0	0
Don't see gambling as an activity for family income			0	0
Keep track of your money transactions			0	0

	NSW Trade & Investment	Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Use a site that has limits on daily spend.			0	0
Limit where you bet, don't have multiple accounts.			0	0
Withdraw winnings, keep limited amounts in online accounts			0	0
Be aware that the odds on 'practice' games are much better – so it is easier to win than on the paid games			0	0
Don't gamble when you have urgent debts			0	0
If have debts, include regular repayments			0	0
No. of actions per site	20	25	45	
% of actions per site	47	58		

4.5.7 Professional sites: Reduce opportunities, triggers and urges

Table 54 summarises the actions contained on each professional website in relation to the strategy to 'reduce gambling opportunities, triggers and urges'. The websites were audited for 23 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the professional websites:

- Both sites contained actions to help people reduce gambling opportunities, triggers and urges.

- Six of the possible 23 actions were suggested across the professional websites to help people reduce gambling opportunities, triggers and urges.

- Both sites included similar actions, but this strategy was not covered in any depth by either site.

Table 54. Professional websites: Actions relating to reduce gambling opportunities, triggers, and urges

	NSW Trade & Investment	Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Remind yourself of reasons to not gamble/ for change	√	√	2	100
Stop when gambling is no longer enjoyable	√	√	2	100
Think of the people who need your support	√	√	2	100
Do other things at times you would normally gamble	√	√	2	100
Socialise in non-gambling venues	√		1	50
If you gamble at lunch time go somewhere different		√	1	50
Software to block access			0	0
Cancel gambling accounts			0	0
Avoid being near/passing gambling venues			0	0
Avoid gambling results, form guides, other collateral, etc.			0	0
Avoid advertising for gambling			0	0
Avoid talking about gambling with heavy gamblers			0	0
Postpone gambling for an hour or two			0	0
Avoid gambling as a reaction to emotions/stress			0	0
Exclude from online sites			0	0
Opt out of free offers and incentives (online)			0	0
Read fine print on promotions material (online)			0	0
Don't gamble if in recovery from dependency			0	0
Choose venues where you won't stay too long			0	0
Wear wrist band to remind yourself not to gamble			0	0
Change radio station			0	0
Turn car around whenever you approach a venue			0	0
Avoid people who you know gamble			0	0
No. of actions per site	5	5	10	
% of actions per site	22	22		

4.5.8   Professional sites: Changing thoughts and beliefs

Table 55 summarises the actions contained on each professional website to support the strategy of 'changing thoughts and beliefs'. The websites were audited for 23 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the professional websites:

- Both sites contained actions to help people changing thoughts and beliefs.

- 11 of the possible 23 actions were suggested across the help service websites to help people change their thoughts and beliefs about gambling.

- Inclusions on both sites were largely the same but this strategy was not covered extensively or in any depth.

Table 55. Professional websites: Actions relating to changing thoughts and beliefs

	NSW Trade & Investment	Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Acknowledge you have a gambling problem	√	√	2	100
Decide to change your gambling	√	√	2	100
Decide whether you should cut back or give up gambling	√	√	2	100
Set a goal for changing your gambling	√	√	2	100
Be kind to yourself	√	√	2	100
Don't believe in a good thing	√	√	2	100
Challenge irrational thoughts	√	√	2	100
Set short and long term goals	√	√	2	100
Learn stress management techniques	√	√	2	100
Improve problem solving skills/approach	√	√	2	100
Don't believe in feeling that you know when the machine will pay out		√	1	50
Accept you are not a bad person			0	0
Value that you are being loved and that the trust will return			0	0
Engage in positive thinking			0	0
Don't overestimate your abilities			0	0
Find new activities to change emotions			0	0
Keep cards with slogans on them to remind you not to gamble			0	0
Cash out credits over $100			0	0
Self care – vision, sound, smell, taste and touch			0	0
Beware of 'lucky thinking'			0	0
Remember, like any form of gambling, online poker, betting and sports wagering is not a good way to make money			0	0
Remember there is a way out			0	0
Specific issues for suicide thoughts			0	0
No. of actions per site	10	11	21	
% of actions per site	43	48		

4.5.9   Professional sites: Monitoring ongoing behaviour and change

Table 56 summarises the actions contained on each professional website to support the strategy of 'monitoring ongoing behaviour and change'. The websites were audited for 20 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the professional websites:

- Both sites contained actions to help people monitoring ongoing behaviour and change.

- 12 of the possible 20 actions were suggested across the professional websites to help people monitor their ongoing behaviour and change in relation to gambling.

- There was some variation across the two sites, but the majority of actions were shared across both sites.

Table 56. Professional websites: Actions relating to monitoring ongoing behaviour and change

	NSW Trade & Investment	Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Record gambling wins and losses/keep gambling diary	√	√	2	100
Reward progress	√	√	2	100
Have a plan to deal with lapses	√	√	2	100
Prepare for relapses	√	√	2	100
Know high risk triggers for your gambling	√	√	2	100
Record gambling urges, triggers and what you did to resist		√	1	50
Recognise gradual side towards a lapse		√	1	50
Eat properly	√		1	50
Know what days and times increase your gambling urges		√	1	50
Know what moods increase your gambling urges		√	1	50
Know what activities reduce your gambling urges		√	1	50
Review your diary – what is working?		√	1	50
Face your feelings			0	0
Know what venues increase your gambling urges			0	0
Specific issues if you are suicidal			0	0
Remember, like any form of gambling, online poker, betting and sports wagering is not a good way to make money			0	0

	NSW Trade & Investment	Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Be truthful about why you gamble			0	0
Be realistic and aware			0	0
Challenge irrational thoughts			0	0
Find new activities to change emotions			0	0
No. of actions per site	6	11	17	
% of actions per site	30	55		

4.5.10 Professional sites: Utilise social support and resources

Table 57 summarises the actions contained on each professional website the support the strategy to 'utilise social support and resources'. The websites were audited for 14 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the professional websites:

- Both sites contained actions to help people utilise social support and resources.

- Ten of the 14 possible actions were suggested across the professional websites to help people utilise social support and resources.

- This strategy was covered in depth by both web sites with coverage of similar actions.

Table 57. Professional websites: Actions relating to utilise social support and resources

	NSW Trade & Investment	Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Repair relationships/ spend time with family and friends	√	√	2	100
Involve them in solving your problem	√	√	2	100
Read stories of recovery	√	√	2	100
Be honest with friends and family	√	√	2	100

	NSW Trade & Investment	Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Ask for help	√	√	2	100
Get help to deal with any stress/moods that contribute to your gambling	√	√	2	100
Tell others about your lying	√	√	2	100
Go out with friends, not alone	√	√	2	100
Share your successes and lapses		√	1	50
Tell others about your decision not to gamble		√	1	50
Go to friends who will look out for you			0	0
Get a helper, check in with them once a week			0	0
Talk to someone who can help you deal with your urges			0	0
Listen to family and friends they may see something you don't			0	0
No. of actions per site	**8**	**10**	**18**	
% of actions per site	**57**	**71**		

4.5.11 Professional sites: Take up alternatives to gambling

Table 58 summarises the actions contained on each professional website in relation to the strategy 'take up alternatives to gambling'. The websites were audited for 16 possible actions, which were derived from all 34 websites included in the audit. In summary for the professional websites:

• Both sites contained actions to help people take up alternatives to gambling.

• 11 of the 16 possible actions were suggested across the professional websites to help people take up alternatives to gambling.

• This strategy was covered in depth by both web sites with similar coverage throughout.

Table 58. Professional websites: Actions relating to take up alternatives to gambling

	NSW Trade & Investment	Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of sites containing action	% of sites containing action
Find activities to fill needs previously met by gambling	√	√	2	100
Make gambling one of your leisure activities not your only one	√	√	2	100
Exercise	√	√	2	100
Take up yoga/meditation	√	√	2	100
Take up activities you did prior to gambling	√	√	2	100
Treat yourself	√	√	2	100
Find part time work		√	1	50
Distract yourself/keep busy		√	1	50
Keep a diary		√	1	50
If a lunch time gambler, go to different place for lunch with colleagues		√	1	50
Discuss activities to do with family and friends	√		1	50
Get involved in local groups/activities			0	0
Make home and interesting place to be			0	0
Find new activities to change emotions			0	0
Make a difference get involved			0	0
Take up education			0	0
No. of actions per site	7	10	17	
% of actions per site	44	63		

4.5.12 Summary of professional website audit

Two websites targeting professionals dealing with problem gambling were audited for self-help resources, strategies and actions. The strategies and associated actions were included within brochures and pamphlets to be downloaded by professional viewers of the site. Included were specific brochures for gamblers and their families that could be provided to clients by professionals.

The two sites largely included very similar material with a focus on actions that supports the strategies to 'set limits on own gambling', 'managing finances and gambling spend', and 'becoming informed about gambling'. There was also considerable focus on 'changing thoughts and beliefs', 'utilise social support and resources', 'monitoring ongoing behaviour and change' and 'take up alternatives to gambling'. One site had a slightly greater number of suggested actions, as shown in Table 59.

Table 59. Professional web sites: Number of actions suggested per strategy

	NSW Trade & Investment	Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation	No. of actions per strategy	No. of sites containing strategy	% of sites containing strategy
Set limits on own gambling	19	26	45	2	100
Managing finances & gambling spend	20	25	45	2	100
Become informed about gambling	17	21	38	2	100
Changing thoughts and beliefs	10	11	21	2	100
Utilise social support and resources	8	10	18	2	100
Monitoring ongoing behaviour and change	6	11	17	2	100
Take up alternatives to gambling	7	10	17	2	100
Reduce opportunities, triggers and urges	5	5	10	2	100
Self-assessment of own gambling	2	2	4	2	100
Total no. actions	**94**	**121**	**215**		

4.6 Comparison of resources, strategies and actions included across help service, government, and industry websites

This section compares the self-help resources, strategies and actions promoted by three types of websites: help service, government and industry websites. The professional websites are not included in this comparison as only two were audited to provide some indication of how professionals dealing with problem gambling are guided by professional sites and what kinds of resources are provided. They were considered too few in number to yield any useful comparative information.

4.6.1 Comparison of types of self-help resources across types of site

Table 60 shows the percentage of the websites within each type of website that included each type of self-help resource. The most common types of self-help resources on the help service sites were checklists and general written information. Government sites relied mostly on brochures/pamphlets, written information, research and data, and assessment tools/calculator. Industry sites predominantly provided written information on responsible gambling.

Table 60. Comparison of types of self-help resources across types of website (% of sites)

	Help service sites N = 15 %	Government sites N = 8 %	Industry sites N = 9 %
Written information not included in types below	80	75	100
Workbook/manual to work through	47	50	22
Checklist	87	63	33
Brochure/pamphlet	33	75	11
Assessment tool/calculator	40	63	33
Gambling/recovery stories (provider generator only)	13	38	22
Comics	0	13	0
Fact sheet	13	38	0
Indigenous resources	13	25	0
Multicultural resources	40	38	0
Video cartoon	0	13	0
TV commercial	7	13	0
Diagram/chart	13	13	0
Videos	7	38	11
Research and data	20	75	0
Media reports	0	13	0
Resource for the hard of hearing	0	13	0
Leaning modules	7	0	0
100 day challenge	7	13	0
Newsletter	13	0	0
Poster	7	13	0
Other	7	0	0

4.6.2 Comparison of actions across types of site for becoming informed about gambling

Table 61 shows the percentage of each type of site that included a specific action within the strategy of 'becoming informed about gambling'. The table highlights that government sites consistently covered actions relating to 'becoming informed about gambling' more extensively than the help service sites, with the industry sites having the least amount of actions to support this strategy. In summary:

- The main actions suggested by the help service sites to become informed about gambling focused on recognising problem gambling behaviours and impacts.

- Actions suggested by the government websites focused mainly on recognition of problem gambling and its impacts, enhancing understanding of how gambling works especially in relation to poker machines, and explaining responsible gambling.

- The industry sites provided information on only three actions, focusing predominantly on 'what responsible gambling/responsible gambler is', which featured more extensively than on the help service sites.

Table 61. Comparison of actions across types of website for becoming informed about gambling (% of sites)

	Help service sites N = 15 %	Government sites N = 8 %	Industry sites N = 9 %
What problem gambling is	73	100	22
Signs of problem gambling	73	75	11
Impacts/effects of problem gambling	60	88	0
Different gambling behaviours/types of gamblers	33	38	0
Effects on mental health	27	50	0
Erroneous beliefs/myths	33	63	0
Odds of winning/losing	33	75	22
How poker machines work	33	50	0
Chance/skill and risk factors in poker machines	27	63	0
Use player tracking devices on EGMs	0	13	0
How do I know a gambling website is safe?	7	13	0
Statistics on gambling populations	27	75	0
Effects on children of people who gamble	20	25	0
Links between gambling and OD use	13	13	0
How much you can lose on a poker machine	20	75	0
What responsible gambling/responsible gambler is	7	63	66
Be realistic and aware	27	0	0
Weigh up pros and cons of cutting back/giving up gambling	27	50	0
Weigh up pros and cons of gambling	13	13	0
Write down reasons to not gamble	13	13	0
Learn about your gambling activity	20	13	0
Calculate how many hours you have worked to earn the money you have gambled	7	13	0
Reasons why people gamble	0	13	0
How other types of gambling work	0	50	11
Read and learn about problem gambling	7	13	0
Information on gambling policies	0	13	0

4.6.3 Comparison of actions across types of site for self-assessment of own gambling

Table 62 shows the percentage of each type of site that included a specific action within the strategy of 'self-assessment of own gambling'. The table highlights that the government sites provided self-assessment tools most extensively, with help service sites including fewer actions to support this strategy. Industry sites did not include any self-assessment tools or suggested actions. In summary:

- The major actions suggested by the help service sites to self-assess one's own gambling focused on providing tools to identify a gambling problem and to understand reasons and triggers for gambling.

- Actions promoted by the government websites to support the strategy of self-assessing one's own gambling focused mainly on providing tools to assist problem recognition and to calculate gambling expenditure.

- The industry sites provided no actions to support this strategy.

Table 62. Comparison of actions across types of website for self-assessment of own gambling (% of sites)

	Help service sites N = 15 %	Government sites N = 8 %	Industry sites N = 9 %
Assess if you have a gambling problem	33	75	0
Assess how much you spend on gambling	7	63	0
Be truthful about why you gamble	27	13	0
Know what your gambling triggers are, e.g. stress, boredom	13	13	0

4.6.4   Comparison of actions across types of site for set limits on own gambling

Table 63 shows the percentage of each type of site that included a specific action within the strategy to 'set limits on own gambling'. The table highlights that:

- The help service sites had a focus on five actions to support this strategy; set $ limit per gambling session, set a time limit on gambling session/per day, think of gambling as entertainment not a way to make money, don't drink alcohol while gambling and do a budget. Thus, the major actions suggested by the help service sites to set limits on one's gambling focused on setting money and time limits on gambling.

- The government sites had a broader spread of actions with a concentration on setting money and time limits on gambling sessions/per day, taking a break every 15mins /regularly, putting winnings in your pocket, not drinking alcohol while gambling, not gambling alone and not increasing bets during play. Thus, actions to promote the strategy of setting limits on one's gambling focused mainly on setting money and time limits, taking regular breaks from gambling, and avoiding gambling when alone or when drinking alcohol.

- Industry sites predominantly focused on setting limits per gambling session and putting winnings in your pocket. Thus, the industry sites focused mainly on promoting actions to set money and time limits for gambling.

Table 63. Comparison of actions across types of website for set limits on own gambling (% of sites)

	Help service sites N = 15 %	Government sites N = 8 %	Industry sites N = 9 %
Set $ limit per gambling session	67	50	67
Set $ limit per week	7	25	0
Set limit on winnings	0	25	11
Set limit on number of sessions per week	0	13	0
Set a time limit on gambling session/per day	67	63	33
Take a break every 5 minutes/regularly	20	63	22
Give winnings to a friend while gambling	7	13	0
Don't gamble with heavy gamblers	7	13	0
Don't drink alcohol while gambling	47	50	22
Don't gamble alone	27	50	0
Never gamble with expectation of winning	7	38	0
Don't chase losses/walk away	13	25	0
Put winnings in your pocket	7	63	56
Don't borrow money	13	13	0
Be wary of practice sites (online)	7	13	0
Remove betting apps from your phone (for online)	0	38	22
Don't take gambling too seriously	7	0	33
Use pre-commitment/ set loss limits/play safe limits	0	13	11
Don't let gambling interfere with your daily activities	0	13	0
Get free SMS message reminders	0	25	0
Go to venues only at scheduled times	7	25	0
When arrive at venue talk to someone for 3 mins	7	25	0
Do something else at times you know you normally gamble	7	25	0
Don't stay and watch all the races (punters)	7	25	0
Collect winnings and leave (punters)	7	25	0
Don't bet on every race (punters)	7	25	0
Write out selection before going to TAB (punters)	13	25	33
Don't change your bet at the last minute all the time (punters)	7	13	0
Think of gambling as entertainment, not a way to make money	47	13	11
Look for odds and payout information	13	13	11
Set up cues to keep track of time	7	13	0
If you want to bet on a game do so before not during	13	50	11
Take a break from gambling	7	0	11
Do a budget	47	13	0
Don't increase your bet when you are losing	0	0	11
Write a card with 2-3 reasons why not to gamble and your limits – put in wallet and on fridge	0	13	0
If you must increase your bet only do so when you are winning	0	0	0
Socialise in places with no gambling activities	0	0	0

	Help service sites N = 15 %	Government sites N = 8 %	Industry sites N = 9 %
Don't use gambling to solve problems	13	0	0
Take it slowly, give yourself a month of not gambling for every year of gambling	7	0	0
Have access to clock or watch	7	0	0
To reduce the time you spend gambling, arrange other commitments ahead of time	7	0	0
Expect to lose	7	0	0
Keep a record of the money you spend	7	0	0
Keep track of odds and payments	7	0	0
It is always better to leave with some money than without	7	0	0
Buy small amounts of change	7	0	0

4.6.5 Comparison of actions across types of site to manage finances and gambling spend

Table 64 shows the percentage of each type of site that included a specific action within the strategy to 'manage finances and gambling spend'. The table highlights that:

- The major actions suggested by the help service sites to manage finances and gambling spend were to reduce access to cash and to ensure bills were paid before any gambling.

- The government websites tended to promote limiting access to cash and advising not to chase gambling losses to support the strategy of managing finances and gambling spend.

- The focus for the industry sites in suggesting actions to help people manage their finances and gambling spend was on advice to not chase losses or increase gambling stakes, as well as to gamble only within affordable limits

Table 64. Comparison of actions across types of website for manage finances and gambling spend (% of sites)

	Help service sites N = 15 %	Government sites N = 8 %	Industry sites N = 9 %
Have someone else manage/help manage money	20	13	0
Have a support person collect wages	20	13	0
Cancel credit and ATM cards or give to trusted person	20	25	0
Carry a limited amount of money	40	63	0
Lower daily ATM withdrawal limits	20	50	0
Tell others not to lend you money	20	63	0
Have 2 signatories on your accounts	20	38	0

	Help service sites N = 15 %	Government sites N = 8 %	Industry sites N = 9 %
Eliminate cash withdrawals on credit cards	13	13	0
Pay bills by direct debit or cheque	47	13	11
Avoid jobs where you handle cash	27	38	0
Avoid keeping large sums of money at home	27	13	0
Pay essential bills on payday	13	13	0
Pay some bills in advance	7	38	0
Put money away for something you enjoy	7	13	0
Avoid use of credit cards	20	13	0
Avoid taking out loans to get cash to gamble	13	13	0
Keep a separate bank account for gambling activity	7	13	0
Prepare ahead for change in circumstances e.g. holiday	13	25	0
Avoid having pin number with EFTPOS card	13	25	0
Have limit attached to EFTPOS card	13	38	0
Use debit cards not credit cards (online)	7	13	0
Keep a check on your player history and bank accounts to monitor your spending	7	13	11
Don't borrow money to gamble	27	25	11
Don't use money allocated for bills to gamble	7	0	11
Stick to your limits and walk away	20	38	33
Don't see gambling as an activity for family income	20	13	11
Don't chase losses/ don't add to gambling stakes	27	63	78
Only gamble what you can afford to lose	53	25	44
Keep track of your money transactions	13	13	11
have a weekly budget	13	75	11
Don't take bank cards with you when you go out	60	13	0
Use a site that has limits on daily spend.	7	13	0
Limit where you bet, don't have multiple accounts.	7	13	0
Don't lie about what you have spent	7	13	0
Withdraw winnings, keep limited amounts in online accounts	0	13	0
Be aware that the odds on 'practice' games are much better – so it is easier to win than on the paid games	7	13	0
Secure your assets	13	13	0
Have wages paid directly into a bank	20	13	0
Have wages paid directly into your account	7	13	0
Expect to lose	0	13	0
Don't gamble when you have urgent debts	7	0	0
If have debts, include regular repayments	7	0	0
Get someone to hold your bank cards for you	13	0	0

4.6.6   Comparison of actions across types of site to reduce opportunities, triggers and urges

Table 65 shows the percentage of each type of site that included a specific action within the strategy to 'reduce opportunities, triggers and urges' for gambling. The table

144

highlights that this strategy was not covered extensively by any of the three types of websites. The most prevalent action within this strategy was to avoid gambling as a reaction to emotion/stress which was included widely in the government sites but not by help service or industry sites. In summary:

- Where suggested by help service websites, actions to support this strategy focused most on avoiding gambling as a coping mechanism, avoiding being in close proximity to gambling venues and being mindful of reasons to not gamble.

- The main action suggested by the government websites, where provided, was to avoid gambling as a coping mechanism when feeling emotional or stressed.

- The industry websites had minimal self-help actions to reduce gambling opportunities, triggers and urges.

Table 65. Comparison of actions across types of website to reduce opportunities, triggers and urges (% of sites)

	Help service sites N = 15 %	Government sites N = 8 %	Industry sites N = 9 %
Software to block access	0	25	0
Cancel gambling accounts	0	0	0
Avoid being near/passing gambling venues	20	0	0
Socialise in non-gambling venues	7	13	0
Avoid gambling results, form guides, other collateral, etc	13	13	0
Avoid advertising for gambling	7	13	0
Avoid talking about gambling with heavy gamblers	7	25	0
Remind yourself of reasons to not gamble/ for change	20	13	0
Postpone gambling for an hour or two	7	13	0
Avoid gambling as a reaction to emotions/stress	27	50	11
Exclude from online sites	0	13	0
Opt out of free offers and incentives (online)	0	13	0
Read fine print on promotions material (online)	7	13	0
Don't gamble if in recovery from dependency	0	0	11
Choose venues where you won't stay too long	0	25	0
Stop when gambling is no longer enjoyable	13	13	0
Think of the people who need your support	0	0	11
Do other things at times you would normally gamble	0	25	0
Wear wrist band to remind yourself not to gamble	7	0	0

	Help service sites N = 15 %	Government sites N = 8 %	Industry sites N = 9 %
Change radio station	13	0	0
If you gamble at lunch time go somewhere different	7	0	0
Turn car around whenever you approach a venue	7	0	0
Avoid people who you know gamble	7	0	0

4.6.7 Comparison of actions across types of site for changing thoughts and beliefs

Table 66 shows the percentage of each type of site that included a specific action within the strategy of 'changing thoughts and beliefs' about gambling. The table highlights that both help service and government sites included a range of actions to support this strategy. The most widely suggested action was acknowledging a gambling problem, which the help service sites included broadly. The industry sites only included setting a goal for gambling behaviour within this strategy. In summary:

- The major actions suggested by the help service sites to change thoughts and beliefs about gambling focused on problem acknowledgement and setting goals for changing gambling behaviour.

- On the government sites, actions to promote the strategy of changing thoughts and beliefs about gambling focused mainly on problem acknowledgement, setting goals to curtail gambling, and challenging erroneous beliefs and thoughts around gambling.

- The industry websites had minimal self-help actions to assist people to change their thoughts and beliefs about gambling.

Table 66. Comparison of actions across types of website for changing thoughts and beliefs (% of sites)

	Help service sites N = 15 %	Government sites N = 8 %	Industry sites N = 9 %
Acknowledge you have a gambling problem	53	38	0
Decide to change your gambling	27	25	0
Decide whether you should cut back or give up gambling	33	38	0
Set a goal for changing your gambling	33	25	11
Be kind to yourself	13	13	0
Accept you are not a bad person	7	13	0
Value that you are being loved and that the trust will return	0	13	0
Engage in positive thinking	27	25	0
Don't believe in a good thing	7	25	0

	Help service sites N = 15 %	Government sites N = 8 %	Industry sites N = 9 %
Don't believe in feeling that you know when the machine will pay out	13	38	0
Challenge irrational thoughts	27	25	0
Don't overestimate your abilities	7	13	0
Find new activities to change emotions	20	0	0
Keep cards with slogans on them to remind you not to gamble	7	0	0
Cash out credits over $	7	0	0
Set short and long term goals	7	0	0
Self care – vision, sound, smell, taste and touch	7	0	0
Beware of 'lucky thinking'	13	0	0
Remember, like any form of gambling, online poker, betting and sports wagering is not a good way to make money	7	13	0
Remember there is a way out	7	13	0
Learn stress management techniques	27	50	0
Improve problem solving skills/approach	7	50	0
Specific issues for suicide thoughts	13	0	0

4.6.8 Comparison of actions across types of site for monitoring ongoing behaviour and change

Table 67 shows the percentage of each type of site that included a specific action within the strategy of 'changing thoughts and beliefs' about gambling. The table highlights that the most widely used action to support this strategy was keeping a record of gambling wins and losses/keeping a gambling diary. All three types of sites included this action, with help service sites containing the most suggested actions to support this strategy. The remaining actions were represented across the help service and government sites, but not industry sites. In summary:

- The major action suggested by the help service sites to monitor ongoing behaviour and change was to keep records of gambling activity.

- The most frequently promoted actions by the government websites to promote the strategy of monitoring ongoing behaviour and change focused on keeping records of gambling activity, being prepared for relapses and understanding triggers for gambling.

- The industry websites had minimal self-help actions to assist people to monitor ongoing behaviour and change in relation to gambling.

Table 67. Comparison of actions across types of website for monitoring ongoing behaviour and change (% of sites)

	Help service sites N = 15 %	Government sites N = 8 %	Industry sites N = 9 %
Record gambling wins and losses/keep gambling diary	53	50	11
Record gambling urges, triggers and what you did to resist	20	38	0
Reward progress	20	25	0
Have a plan to deal with lapses	20	38	0
Recognise gradual side towards a lapse	7	13	0
Eat properly	27	13	0
Prepare for relapses	0	50	0
Know what days and times increase your gambling urges	0	13	0
Know what moods increase your gambling urges	0	38	0
Know what activities reduce your gambling urges	7	13	0
Face your feelings	0	38	0
Know what venues increase your gambling urges	0	13	0
Know high risk triggers for your gambling	7	38	0
Specific issues if you are suicidal	0	13	0
Review your diary – what is working?	20	25	0
Remember, like any form of gambling, online poker, betting and sports wagering is not a good way to make money	7	0	0
Be truthful about why you gamble	7	0	0
Be realistic and aware	7	0	0
Challenge irrational thoughts	7	0	0
Find new activities to change emotions	7	0	0

4.6.9 Comparison of actions across types of site for utilise social support and resources

Table 68 shows the percentage of each type of site that included a specific action within the strategy to 'utilise social support and resources'. The table highlights that this strategy was supported by a broad range of actions promoted by the help service and government sites, with industry including minimal actions within this strategy. Being honest with family and friends, and asking for help were the main actions promoted across the sites, with industry sites including these actions but to a lesser extent than the other types of sites. In summary:

- The major actions suggested by the help service sites to utilise social support and resources were to actively seek support from family and friends to help change gambling behaviour.

- Government suggested actions to support the strategy of utilising social support and resources focused mainly on actively seeking support from and building relationships with family and friends.

- The industry websites had minimal self-help actions to assist people to utilise social support and resources.

Table 68. Comparison of actions across types of website for utilise social support and resources (% of sites)

	Help service sites N = 15 %	Government sites N = 8 %	Industry sites N = 9 %
Repair relationships/ spend time with family and friends	27	38	0
Share your successes and lapses	13	0	0
Involve them in solving your problem	40	13	11
Read stories of recovery	13	13	0
Be honest with friends and family	73	38	v
Ask for help	47	50	11
Go to friends who will look out for you	33	13	0
Tell others about your decision not to gamble	27	25	0
Get a helper, check in with them once a week	13	25	0
Talk to someone who can help you deal with your urges	27	13	0
Get help to deal with any stress/moods that contribute to your gambling	40	13	0
Tell others about your lying	7	25	0
Listen to family and friends they may see something you don't	7	0	11
Go out with friends, not alone	7	25	0

4.6.10 Comparison of actions across types of site for take up alternatives to gambling

Table 69 shows the percentage of each type of site that included a specific action within the strategy to 'take up alternatives to gambling'. The table highlights that the government sties had the broadest coverage of actions to support this strategy, with help service sites also including actions but not as widely. In summary:

- Actions suggested by the help service sites to support this strategy of taking up alternatives to gambling focused on encouraging uptake of a range of diversionary activities and diarising.

- Actions promoted by government websites to support the strategy focused mainly on distracting oneself by keeping busy and diarising.

- None of the industry sites contained any suggested actions for this strategy.

Table 69. Comparison of actions across types of website for take up alternatives to gambling (% of sites)

	Help service sites N = 15 %	Government sites N = 8 %	Industry sites N = 9 %
Find activities to fill needs previously met by gambling	47	38	0
Get involved in local groups/activities	13	13	0
Make gambling one of your leisure activities not your only one	13	25	0
Exercise	33	25	0
Take up yoga/meditation	27	25	0
Find part time work	20	25	0
Take up activities you did prior to gambling	33	38	0
Make home and interesting place to be	7	25	0
Treat yourself	27	25	0
Distract yourself/keep busy	13	50	0
Find new activities to change emotions	0	0	0
Keep a diary	40	50	0
If a lunch time gambler, go to different place for lunch with colleagues	7	13	0
Make a difference get involved	7	13	0
Discuss activities to do with family and friends	7	0	0
Take up education	7	0	0

4.6.11 Summary of comparison of resources, strategies and actions across help service, government and industry sites

Table 70 compares the breadth of strategies and depth of associated actions included on the three types of websites. In summary:

- Overall, both the help service and government sites included a wide range of actions within each self-help strategy. Further, the government sites referred frequently to the help service sites and the latter provided many links to the former. Thus the information available had substantial breadth and depth. Some industry sites provided similar links but the individual industry sites focused more closely on responsible gambling, including such actions as not chasing losses or gambling more than is affordable.

- Collectively, the help service sites included actions to support all nine self-help strategies. However, not all individual help service sites included actions to support all nine strategies. Utilising social support and resources, managing finances and gambling spend, and becoming informed about gambling were the most common strategies across these sites.

- The government sites also included actions to support all nine self-help strategies, and each of these strategies tended to be included in a higher proportion of the government sites than was apparent across the help service

sites. Actions to support the strategy of becoming informed about gambling was represented on all government websites audited, with the majority of the government sites also including actions to support the other eight self-help strategies.

- The industry sites included actions to support only seven of the nine self-help strategies. These sites focused most on setting limits on gambling behaviour, managing finances and gambling spend, and becoming informed about gambling, but the number of actions associated within each of these strategies was significantly less than provided by the other types of sites.

Table 70. Comparison of each type of site for inclusion of actions to support each self-help strategy (% of sites)

	Help service sites N = 15		Government sites N = 8		Industry sites N = 9	
	% of sites with strategy	No. of actions per strategy	% of sites with strategy	No. of actions per strategy	% of sites with strategy	No. of actions per strategy
Become informed about gambling	80	92	100	85	78	12
Self-assessment of own gambling	47	12	75	13	0	0
Set limits on own gambling	87	84	75	72	89	33
Managing finances & gambling spend	80	104	75	74	78	21
Reduce opportunities, triggers and urges	47	25	75	21	44	3
Changing thoughts and beliefs	67	55	63	33	22	1
Monitoring ongoing behaviour and change	60	32	63	33	22	1
Utilise social support and resources	87	56	63	23	33	3
Take up alternatives to gambling	67	44	75	29	0	0
Total actions within each type of site		**506**		**381**		**74**

5. Online Gambling Forum

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of Study 3 and contributes to addressing the first broad aim of the research: to develop a comprehensive list and descriptors of self-help strategies and actions for gambling. More specifically, the chapter describes the self-help strategies and actions discussed by people in a major Australian gambling online forum who currently experience or have previously experienced problems with their gambling. A list of commonly discussed strategies has been generated in order to capture the range of actions used and to identify novel strategies and actions that people discuss and recommend to other people attempting to recover from problem gambling.

Posts generally contained one or more self-help strategy. Across the 604 posts, we found 12 broad strategies representing 64 different actions. Each of these strategies is described in the next section, including one or more representative quotes. Each quote also includes the name or pseudonym of the poster, the date of the post and the forum theme (i.e., *stories of gambling* (SG), *success stories* (SS) and *stories of change* (SC).

Table 71. Summary of self-help strategies and actions discussed in forums

Strategy	Action
Source information about gambling	Read information on how gambling works
	Read about the consequences of gambling
Remove or limit access to money	Sought inspiration from others stories
	Arrange for a card or account with no cash out
	Cut up, destroy or cancel cards
	Keep a record of gambling spend
	Leave cards and cash at home
	Leave cards and cash at home
Set limits while gambling	Set yourself a limit
	Plan gambling in advance
	Don't chase losses
	Don't borrow money for gambling
	Limit gambling to small bets
	Limit gambling to small bets
Manage finances	Make purchases and pay bills before gambling
	Give someone else control of finances
	Arrange for a joint account
	Set up a savings plan, account or financial goal
Limit or remove access to gambling	Stay away from gambling environments
	Move house or be in a place with no gambling
	Limit or restrict internet access to gambling
	Ban yourself from land-based casino or venue
Change your thinking	Weigh the pros and cons of continued gambling
	Think about how money could be better spent
	Recognise, admit or acknowledge the problem
	Realise that you cannot win
	Cut your losses
Identify and remove triggers	Identify triggers that might lead to gambling
	Become aware of urges and better manage them

Make a commitment to change	Be committed and willing to change
	Set a goal or make a plan
	Develop confidence through success
	Develop will-power, strength and determination
	Try to remain hopeful and never give up
Be vigilant	Watch out for problems developing or returning
	Take it a day at a time
	Record your progress
	Count days since attempting change
Source alternative activities	Do something physical
	Seek other entertainment
	Focus on work or study
Source social support	Share or post comments in an online forum
	Disclose the details of gambling to another person
	Get support to help manage change
Explore spirituality	Practice spirituality
	Engage in prayer

5.2   Self-help strategies and actions

5.2.1   Source Information about Gambling

Sourcing information about gambling included reading information on how gambling works, reading about the consequences of gambling, and reading stories in order to feel more inspired about limiting, reducing, or managing gambling.

5.2.2   Read information on how gambling works

Reading information on how gambling works included reading about the facts related to gambling, for example learning about how electronic gaming machines (EGMs) work and the odds of winning. For one poster reading information on how gambling works had led to thoughts about the financial and emotional costs of gambling.

- *I have been reading a lot of information and one thing comes to light... these machines are manipulative (Anon, 8/8/10, SG).*

- *Reading this article and the posts has made me realize that the odds really are against me. Financially and emotionally (Anon, 24/11/11, SC).*

5.2.3   Read about the consequences of gambling

Reading information about the consequences of gambling was frequently discussed in the context of the forum posts, which allowed posters to read about the experiences of others. Reading about other people's experiences with problem gambling (including the negative consequences they had experienced) was a means of finding new information as well as a reminder of the potential outcomes that could result from gambling.

- *I sat down today and read everyone's comment. I found some useful information from people's experience (Ken, 13/10/10, SC).*

- *When I got home, I did some searches on the internet and found this site. I sat here and read through all of the stories. It just makes me sad how horrible gambling is (Anon, 25/5/10, SC).*

For one poster, reading about other people's experiences of the problem provided a new perspective on life beyond gambling.

- *Reading peoples comments on this site has helped put things into perspective. There is much more to life than the feeling of despair and shame that the pokies bring (Jason, 2/12/10, SC).*

For some, reading about the consequences of problem gambling made them realise that they too could be heading towards a gambling problem.

- *Reading the stories above has really made me realise what could be if I keep going the way that I am going (Kristen, 28/7/09, SG).*

- *I hope after reading facts on this website I cannot gamble no longer (21 year old gambler, 4/8/09, SG).*

- *After reading all the comments I have come to the conclusion that I am in the beginning stages of pokies addiction (Anon, 18/8/10, SC).*

5.2.4   Sought inspiration from others stories

The dominant reason for reading about gambling was to feel inspired by the stories of others who had recovered from problem gambling. Reading about others' achievements via their forum posts was viewed positively even amongst those who were still struggling with their own gambling problems.

- *I have read about others that have suffered as I have with a gambling problem. I like the fact that many have been able to overcome the trap they find themselves in. At this time I don't know if I can be that lucky (Anon, 18/10/10, SG).*

- *So great to read stories from other people and see that it is OK I'm OK even though I have this addiction I will get through (problem gambling, 7/10/10, SG).*

Posters referred to feeling stronger after having read other people's stories, and reported feeling less alone in their struggles with problem gambling.

- *I have just read other people's comments and I must say I am already feeling a little stronger because of others honesty and stories (Anon, 5/4/10, SG).*

- *I'm sure reading these blogs is all I need to overcome these demons which have haunted me for so long. I hope others reading can relate realising they are not alone and this is a serious problem yet it can be beat (Anon, 23/7/11, SS).*

For one poster, reading stories from others who had been through similar experiences helped with preventing a relapse back to gambling.

- *Out of the blue I mean from nowhere I'm contemplating gambling again! I thank all of you for sharing your precious stories! It has been enough to WAKE ME UP AND SLAP MY SELF WITH A DOSE OF REALITY! (Anon, 1/6/11, SS).*

A common theme amongst posters who mentioned the benefits of reading other people's stories was a heightened sense of awareness that it was necessary to change their gambling behaviours. One poster mentioned feeling hope that reading and understanding other people's negative experiences would help them in this process.

- *I'm trying to hear other peoples stories of heart ache and I'm hoping that sinks in (Anon, 25/8/09, SG).*

For others, just reading stories was sufficient to change their thinking, and subsequently help them commit to changing their gambling behaviours. Posters expressed feeling stronger after reading about other people's stories, and expressed gratitude to them for sharing their experiences.

- *After reading to all those comments I have promise to myself that I will never go again and touch those machines (Moksh, 3/7/10, SC).*

- *I've read many of your notices and realised that it may be the start of a change so desperately needed in my life (Anon, 10/6/10, SC).*

- *I've decided to completely stop entering the Tab, thanks for sharing your stories, they have really given me the strength to realise I have a problem (Anon, 19/11/10, SC).*

- *I realise how young I am and it's not too late to stop this. Thank you all who are brave enough to share your stories (Anon, 25/5/10, SC).*

5.2.5   Remove or limit access to money

Removing or limiting access to money was discussed frequently in online forums. This included changing passwords to accounts to reduce access to cash, as well as cutting up, destroying, or cancelling credit cards

5.2.6   Arrange for a card or account with no cash out option

An important component of removing or limiting access to money was sourcing credit cards that do not permit cash withdrawals. Compared with high interest credit cards, these cards only permit credit transactions with available funds. As noted by the poster below, these cannot be used for cash withdrawals from gaming venues, and were therefore an effective means of limiting access to cash.

- *Withdraw all access to cash - CBA DO A CREDIT CARD WITH A CASH OUT OF ZERO - don't let them tell you any different - I have only a credit card with (can't be used at the pokies YAY they don't win - I DO!! - works well) online banking with an online saving account (Problem gambling, 7/10/10, SC).*

As noted by another poster, not only does this type of card prevent cash withdrawals at the venue, but the action of leaving the venue to get more cash helps to reduce the desire to continue gambling, making it easier to end the session.

- *I cut up my bank card and applied for a virgin credit card, you can only get cash out at a National ATM, they won't work in tavern ATM's or casino ATM's, usually by the time I get in my car to go get more cash, I snap out of the pokies zone and go home, definitely has cut down my losses (Anon, 11/7/11, SC).*

Although the above two posters note the potential benefits of obtaining a credit card without cash advance, others strongly recommend against the use of credit cards as a means of accessing money to gamble.

- *NEVER use a credit card to access funds for gambling (Anon, 16/8/09, SC).*

- *I have a 15K personal loan, which was pretty much ranked up from cash advances on credit cards. Please if you the slightest gambling inclination, never get a credit card (Steve, 18/11/09, SG).*

Similar to cash control with credit cards, others recommend sourcing credit or debit cards that do not have a pin number. This means that cards can be used for purchases but not as a means of accessing cash, although drawbacks to this action were also noted.

- *Having no pin number on an EFTPOS card might prevent you from taking money out at a gaming venue, however it will also make it impossible to use your card at a supermarket or ATM (Anon, 16/8/09, SC).*

- *Get a VISA card with no PIN access. Sign for all purchases. You can buy anything - but you can't get cash (Anon, 17/8/10, SC).*

Less frequently, posters recommended sourcing a traditional passbook account. They made the point that this type of account limits withdrawals to bank opening hours, meaning that cash cannot be accessed in the evenings. One poster also noted that not having immediate access to cash can create a space for the person to think through their actions (similar to having to leave the venue to access cash, as discussed above)

- *Find yourself a bank that still does passbook withdrawals, walking back to the bank waiting in line gives you time to reflect on the position you are in, no money after hours but you will have some in the morning (Kev, 4/10/11, SC).*

5.2.7   Cut up, destroy or cancel cards

Four posters had credit or cash cards that they viewed as a source of problems, in terms of providing them access to funds for gambling. These posters reported cutting up their credit cards or ATM cards in order to limit their access to funds, and as an interim measure while developing confidence through seeing their savings grow.

- *Tonight I chopped up my card. This means I have to go to the bank and get money out! which is a lot better. Means I can't go to the ATM if I run out of money!...I have a good job, good house, good husband and I really don't want to lose any of it to the pokies!! (Anon, 18/6/11, SG).*

- *NO ATM card (don't bother giving it to a friend or freezing it - as soon as you save you start trusting yourself with the ATM card - detach your account from your credit card and cut up any ATM cards - works beautifully for everyday use - well for me anyway:) (Problem gambling, 7/10/10, SC).*

Similar to cutting up cards, another reported that they had cancelled debit cards. This meant that they did not have access to cash outside of banking hours and therefore could not spend their money gambling.

- *I have also cancelled my debit cards it has worked so far and have not gambled anything as I don't have access to it anymore, the banks are closed on weekends so I simply can't spend my money (Anon, 26/4/11, SC).*

For some posters, including those quoted above who reported cutting up their cards, using a credit card was preferable to an ATM card. One poster recommended against having an ATM card to make small purchases during the week; while the reason for this was not explained further, it could be inferred that they believed keeping small amounts of money increased their risk of gambling.

- *Do NOT keep an ATM card for 'small amounts of cash during the week' (Anon, 17/8/10, SC).*

However, cutting up, destroying, or cancelling cards did not always work for all posters. One noted that even though they cut up their cards, as soon as they had money available they would spend everything they had despite the consequences.

- *I try to stop by cutting up cards but then as soon as I have money in my purse I drive straight to them and spend every cent even if it stops me from buying food or petrol (Anon, 19/3/10, SG).*

5.2.8   Keep a record of gambling spend

Keeping a record of gambling spend was described in two different ways. The first was in relation to keeping a record of bets made so that losses could be easily calculated.

- *Keep a diary - is good advice - in my case too many small bets to write them down and you lose track of your losses (Anon, 27/9/09, SC).*

- *In just 3 months I have lost $7564 I know this exact amount because I have been keeping track of all my losses (Anon, 30/5/11, SC).*

The second type of record keeping, which was mentioned less frequently, was in relation to keeping cash in the house rather than a financial institution. For this poster,

it helped to track their spending and made them realise how much they had spent on gambling.

- *My technique to spending minimum money was to withdraw all my money from my bank accounts and keep it in a safe at home. That way I always knew how much I was spending and could see it for real, because when you have a bank card it's so easy to spend money and you don't realise how much you're spending when it's all figures of money that don't actually exist (Dave, 28/3/10, SG).*

5.2.9   Leave cards and cash at home

Posters frequently reported leaving cash at home as a means of limiting the amount they could spend on gambling. This meant only carrying enough cash for the day (or not carrying cash at all), and finding alternative ways to pay for essentials such as bills.

- *Only carry enough cash for the day (scientist, 21/7/09, SC).*

- *Try not to carry cash (Mark, 4/7/10, SC).*

- *When I get paid, I pay my bills straight away using internet banking, and try not to carry around too much cash with me. I am starting to get my confidence back, and feel better about myself in general (Dan, 27/2/11, SS).*

Similarly, posters advised against carrying cash cards or credit cards with them when they left home or work. This meant either leaving the card out of their wallet, or leaving them someplace else like their place of employment.

- *Leave all my key-cards and credit cards at home (scientist, 21/7/09, SC).*

- *Leave any ATM or credit cards at home or work (Anon, 24/3/12, SS).*

- *I will take my ATM card out of my wallet (SouJou10, 29/7/10, SC).*

Some posters were more specific in terms of when they left their cards at home, recommending doing so when going to a gambling venue. This action was usually used in conjunction with only taking a predetermined amount of money (i.e., the amount they were prepared to spend, or prepared to lose).

- *The main suggestion has to be to only take as much money as you prepared to spend, and always, always leave other cards at home (Anon, 5/1/10, SS).*

- *I still go to the casino once a month but I leave home everything but my I.D. and what I want to spend (Chuck, 4/5/10, SS).*

- *Leave your card at home, and take only the amount of cash that you are prepared to lose (Anon, 16/8/09, SC).*

Leaving cards at home was sometimes a difficult action to commit to. For example, one poster said that they said they would leave their cards at home but then did not follow through with this decision.

- *Told myself I would leave my bankcard at home tomorrow so I would not be tempted. Of course I lied (Frank, 3/11/09, SG).*

5.2.10 Reduce daily bank withdrawal limits

Posters frequently reported that they had reduced their card withdrawal limits, which helped a great deal with restricting the amount of money that could be spent on gambling. Some had a daily limit and others a weekly limit.

- *I will reduce my card limits (again) to $100 a day max withdrawal (Tyler, 15/5/11, SC).*

- *I have tried a lot of things but none seem to work, currently I am reducing the amount of money I can get out of ATM's (Anon, 25/3/10, SC).*

- *Yet I still find time to gamble. I'm thankful for the $400 limit on the ATM's and my daily $800 limit, that has really saved me (Anon, 30/11/11, SG).*

Having a weekly limit also gave people a chance to reduce their thinking about gambling.
- *I have now made a real effort and put a limit on my cash flow by having a weekly limit so I can't just go to a ATM and get gambling money, It is working so far and I am trying to forget about gambling all together, I will keep on and hopefully be successful (David, 18/10/12, SC).*

Reducing daily limits was at times problematic. Posters reported having reduced their limit but finding ways to circumvent it, which sometimes appeared to increase the time they spent in the venue.

- *I have put withdrawal limits on my cards of $200 a day, but I keep finding ways to get more out (Anon, 24/10/09, SG).*

- *Daily ATM limits were not enough and I waited until midnight so I can pull more out. On one occasion I spent more than 8 hours in a tab on a Saturday and lost control (Anon, 8/3/10, SG).*

Removing or limiting access to cash could involve a single action or a combination of actions. The poster below described their overall cash control strategy in detail. They set up automatic payments for bills and had their salary transferred to an account without ATM access. They also combined this strategy with online purchasing and restricting the amount of cash they had to such an amount that was not sufficient to go gambling.

- *Firstly I have setup every direct debit possible for my bills. Secondly I have setup salary deductions from my pay (via my employer) to automatically place money into a savings account with no ATM access. Thirdly, I'm left with a very small amount left in my ATM account for cash expenses. It is so little that I don't see the point in gambling it. Fourth, if I want to buy something out-of-budget, I buy it online if*

possible. This system has really worked well for me so far. I have kept away from gambling for 17 weeks now & for the first time in my life, I've got savings to my name (Anon, 2/8/10, SS).

5.2.11 Set limits while gambling

Multiple strategies specific to attending gambling venues were suggested, including setting yourself a limit, planning gambling activities in advance, not chasing losses, not gambling alone, not borrowing money to gamble, limiting gambling to small bets, sticking to the gambling that causes less harm, and avoiding alcohol or drugs while gambling.

5.2.12 Set yourself a limit

Only taking the amount of money to a venue that you were prepared to spend or lose (in a session or in a day) was used to set limits on the amount of money spent.

- *The main suggestion has to be to only take as much money as you prepared to spend, (Anon, 5/1/10, SS).*

- *Only the amount of cash that you are prepared to lose (Anon, 16/8/09, SC).*

- *I will have to have a limit of spending per day. That was one of my very bad weak point (Anon, 2/6/10, SC).*

- *My wife knows I am working on the addiction, I have been back a lot since she found out, but have reduced the amount I allow myself to lose (Anon, 13/1/10, SC).*

- *Only take in a certain amount of monies to cover, meal, drinks and the magic flutter (Anon, 5/9/09, SG).*

For one poster, limiting the amount of money taken to a venue was accompanied by the thought that when the money was gone the gambling session was finished.

- *I know you can never get ahead but I enjoy it. I have now decided that I'm going to take small steps to stop gambling, have a limit and when the money has finished, its finished (Anon, 16/3/10, SC).*

Conversely, another two posters set themselves a limit on the amount of cash they would need to win in order to walk away; this included leaving after a win, as well as resisting the urge to chase losses.

- *Set yourself a goal and a limit and stick to it. When you achieve your goal, LEAVE (Anon, 16/8/09, SC).*

- *I felt I had to WIN! My money backs or just WIN. Even when I would think to myself I have to give the pokies up it was like they had WON! So what I did was changed my way and words I would think or say to myself, IF I WALK AWAY IM THE WINNER NOT THEM! I know it might sound funny but you have to do little things like that to stop the cycle (blow up the pokies, 29/12/09, SS).*

Setting limits in venues was not without problems. Five posters reported difficulties in attempting to set themselves limits while gambling, in that they would lose control, pass self-imposed limits, and gamble all of their available cash, even in cases where they were attempting to monitor their losses.

- *Whenever I get my pay I think like to play with limited money but I couldn't control and lose all (Anon, 5/1/10, SG).*

- *I've just been reading all your statements but like some of you that said to set yourself a limit there is no such thing because limits just go out the window yesterday I went out and spent the money that was supposed to be for my daughters day care (Petar, 25/1/10, SC).*

- *Whenever I get my pay I think I would like to play with limited money but I couldn't control it and lose it all (Chris, 20/2/10, SC).*

- *Forget trying to 'cut down', it won't work, you'll end up stuffing up again (Anon, 24/3/12, SS).*
- *I've tried to limit myself to a set amount of money each week but I always exceed that limit. I know that stopping is my only option now before I ruin my life (Cal, 21/10/13, SG).*

- *I tell myself to watch myself so far as amount I can lose. After a while that goes out the door at times anger can set in a situation arises whereby I CAN BEAT THIS MACHINE, wrong, wrong, wrong, then you walk out of the club no money to pay those certain bills, no money for food, rent, smokes, so you have to wait till next pay day, and, guess what, you start all over again (Anon, 5/9/09, SS).*

5.2.13 Plan gambling in advance

Planning gambling in advance involved scheduling time and money to be spent gambling.

- *Make yourself a schedule of what you will allow yourself to do and how much you are prepared to lose (Anon, 16/8/09, SC).*

For some, this involved setting a budget as well as restricting their gambling (e.g., to once a week, or on special occasions only), which helped them regain control and bring the gambling back to acceptable limits.

- *I now only go when going for dinner or on special occasions (Anon, 4/7/11, SC).*

- *I have found that setting a budget and gambling only once per week on a Saturday has helped me to regain control of my gambling so that it is within acceptable limits (Anon, 16/8/09, SC).*

5.2.14 Don't chase losses

Avoidance of chasing losses as a specific action was not directly discussed in detail in the forums except in terms of seeing gambling as entertainment (i.e., it was discussed in terms of limiting cash taken to venues and thinking that once it is gone its gone). In terms of gambling as entertainment, this poster described the importance of seeing gambling as a bit of fun and viewing it as paying for entertainment.

- *I think it's really important to see gambling as a bit of fun / entertainment and set an amount aside you want to spend. Then if you lose it just think you where paying for the entertainment and move on. Don't chase losses, don't think of it as loses if you lose just think you were paying for the entertainment (Dan, 23/1/10, SC).*

Where chasing losses was directly discussed, it was in terms of the difficulty experienced in not doing it. For example, the following poster talked about not chasing their losses within the context of being preoccupied by thinking about gambling day and night.

- *Despite advertising saying "Do not chase losses" then it goes to sports betting and the occasional horse betting then more losses -hard to stop because the losses are always in the back of your mind - it is the first thing you think of when you wake up - the final result is more tears (Anon, 27/9/09, SC).*

5.2.15 Don't gamble alone

Three posters raised issues about gambling alone. One of these posters said that they knew it was better not to gamble alone, while another stated that when she gambles, she now only does so in a social group.

- *I have stop gamble for more than a year, just last 2 month I start again, I know the tactic not to go alone, set budget, not go at all. (Sherry, 27/9/09, SG).*

- *Now if I do go, I don't go alone and I go in a group (Sin-Li, 28/5/12, SS).*

However, it was also important that friends who encourage gambling be avoided:

- *After work I am going home directly, take a shower relax and try to spend time with my family not with friends who encourage me to gamble (Anon, 23/8/11, SG).*

5.2.16 Don't borrow money for gambling

One poster said that it was important not to borrow money for gambling and stick to the cash that they were carrying.

- *The important thing is not to bet with what you don't have (someone else's money) and carry on with what you have (anon3, 9/12/09, SG).*

Avoiding borrowing money from others in a venue to gamble was not always simple. This poster talked about the difficulty of being in a venue with others who were happy to lend money.

- *I told friends, however when it comes to gambling they are all too happy to lend me money (Addicted, 20/10/11, SC).*

5.2.17 Limit gambling to small bets

For two posters it was important in a venue to limit gambling to small bets. This meant reducing their betting to a minimal outlay and for the most part only betting the minimum bet.

- *Reduce my betting to minimal outlay (Anon, 5/9/09, SG).*

- *Try placing small bets with the ambition of going up once you hit a predetermined target - for me it's 20 cents under $10 and then 40 cents over that. Sometimes I get flash and hit $1 bets over $30, but immediately drop back down if I go under... Try to make it a game not a mechanical process (Anon, 5/1/10, SS).*

For another poster, limiting gambling to small bets increased their gambling experience and meant that they did not have a desire to return.

- *The last bet I had before this time was on cup day and with a very small outlay enjoyed the experience and had no intention of going back (Anon, 2/1/10, SC).*

Similar to the action of setting a limit of the amount spent in a venue, this poster found it difficult to stick to the action of limiting gambling to small bets.

- *I tried to limit it, starting with 20 bucks and betting small just for entertainment. But we all know how quick these things munch even betting small, so then you slowly up your bet in an attempt to recover losses and sooner or later you are betting max bet and feeding in 50's and 100's (Anon, 30/4/10, SG).*

5.2.18 Don't drink alcohol or use drugs and gamble

When gambling, two posters said that they either avoided alcohol and drugs in order to stick to limits or gave up alcohol altogether. Not using alcohol or drugs when gambling helped to avoid impaired judgement or putting themselves in a position where the temptation to gambling would be too much.

- *Also if you drink or pop pills try avoid the gaming area and avoid putting yourself in that tempting position cause your judgment gets impaired at least for awhile (Ved, 16/11/10, SC)*

- *I don't drink alcohol anymore (Anon, 23/8/11, SG).*

5.3   Manage finances

Managing finances included four specific strategies: (i) make purchases and pay expenses before gambling (ii) give someone else control of finances; (iii) arrange for a joint account, and (iv) set up a savings plan, account, or financial goal.

5.3.1   Make purchases and pay bills before gambling

For two posters, harm was reduced by buying groceries and paying household bills in advance of a gambling session. This prevented harms by first ensuring that basic needs were being met but also reducing that amount of money left over for gambling.

- *Some things I do to prevent too much of a loss. I pay my household bills, and stock up the fridge (Janelle, 13/12/10, SS).*

- *Aside from not gambling at all, I think the best thing people can do is make sure you pay ALL your bills (this includes going grocery shopping) BEFORE you even THINK ABOUT having a bet. Once you've paid all your bills and have food in the cupboard, there's probably not that much left over to lose anyway (Anon, 16/1/10, SC).*

5.3.2   Give someone else control of finances

Handing over control of finances was highly discussed. This action was specifically in regards to giving over control of finances (rather than just cash or cards). Most often giving over control of all of finances or money was to a partner or parent.

- *I have given my wife total control of all my money (Paul, 6/4/10, SC).*

- *I have assigned all financial issues to my wife (Anon, 23/8/11, SG).*

- *I have handed my key card and my finances over to my mum and I am determined to kick this self destroying habit for good (at wits end, 28/2/13, SC).*

Often giving over control of finances was a way to minimise access to cash to minimise temptation and make it easier to stop.

- *Get someone to take control of your finances or find a way to minimise your access to cash. You will still feel the stress of trying to beat your addiction but if there is no money there is no temptation and it will be easier to stop (Anon, 4/12/09, SS).*

- *Tonight I'm going to start afresh. I'm giving control of my finances to my best friend. I'm just going to carry enough money to get me through the day (Anon, 27/5/10, SG).*

- *I've given my mother in law (as my husband is hospitalised now with a serious life-threatening condition) complete control of all our bank accounts now so am hopefully going to stop gambling as I've got no access to money anyhow (Anon, 17/11/09, SG).*

- *Try this it does help. Not saying that I'm cured, as I am a gambling addict that can't seem to stop, but giving someone control of money is the best way to go, if u don't u most likely will blow it all (Addicted, 20/10/11, SC).*

Giving over control of finances also meant concurrently closing accounts that had been used for gambling as well as having the family member change pin numbers for savings account so that the money could not be accessed. This poster noted the importance of not leaving open any means of accessing their finances.

- *At [my wife's] request, I shut down my credit cards (replaced with a debit card that she will top up weekly for me), gave her my savings card so that she could change the PIN, gave her my password to my online banking so that I can't access any money on-line and so that she can transfer all of my income direct to her account as soon as it hits my account...Do not leave any loopholes - your loved one must have control over every cent (Bozo, 23/2/13, SC).*

- *Be transparent and take steps to have you money channelled into an account you cannot easily draw upon and can be monitored by a trusted partner (Anon, 14/6/09, SG)*

Handing over control of finances meant that it was easier to stay away from gambling venues and also increase feeling good about themselves when money was saved rather than spent in a venue.

- *In the end I gave my key card and my money to my daughter and only carry what I need as I must go past at least 20 pokie venues on my way home from work I still struggle but I know it is worth it not to go in as I have money in the bank and it feels good instead of that feeling of how am I going to live this week with no money (Rosemary, 3/2/10, SC).*

This poster explained the longer-term benefits of not carrying cash. They suggested that having an extended break gave them enough space from gambling in order to quit.

- *After 6 months I was cured. Most addicted gamblers just need an extended break to quit. Most breathe a huge sigh of relief the day they start this system, because it becomes immediately apparent that it is impossible to play pokies with no cash - and it is impossible to get cash with a PIN-less VISA (Anon, 17/8/10, SC).*

Giving control of finances for some also meant setting up a fortnightly allowance.

- *My cash is controlled as I'm given a fortnightly allowance from my wife and have had no trouble living off this. I have access to our home loan via the internet and would not ever touch this, I have in the past transferred money from my credit card we are paying off and spent that on gambling (Anon, 2/1/10, SC).*

- *I have broke down to my mother and have given her total control of my bank cards and finances. It does solve a big problem in finances as I only get a daily allowance. Over the last 2 weeks I saved more thence I have over the last 5 years (Addicted, 20/10/11, SC).*

- *I have a new partner in my life who is so anti gambling, I cannot tell him... although today I told him I was giving all cards to him so I cant access any money and he can give me a weekly allowance and he is happy with that. I hate what I have*

become how I have financially ruined my life and lied to get money (Anon, 10/3/10, SG).

However, arranging for a fortnightly allowance did not always stem the flow of cash. This poster said that when they had arranged for the allowance they found other methods of obtaining cash.

- *I even recently gave all my ATM cards and ID (so I couldn't withdraw from bank branch) to a friend and he was giving me a weekly "allowance", but I have even managed to get around this and get my money from my account (Anon, 7/12/11, SG).*

Similarly, this poster agreed that while having an allowance was helpful to reduce access to cash it reduced their self-empowerment in terms of having to ask for money to pay for bills and made them feel less of a person and not trusted.

- *I agree that it may work for some of you to give family members exclusive access to your finances until you're through with this problem and having an allowance in the meantime. It is another way of removing an 'access' point. However, I tried this and it didn't work for me as I felt like I was missing a 'part' of me, having to explain to my parents why I needed a bigger allowance at times (e.g. to fill up petrol, etc.), in other words it made me lose some confidence in myself and feel like a kid again, needing to explain myself for everything and need to persuade my family members in to believing me before they agree to give me the pay rise. At times, my dad would also come with me to fill up petrol to make sure that the money went on petrol and nothing else. It made me feel like no one trusted me and I began to distance myself thereafter for a few weeks but once I reclaimed control of my finances, everything went back to the way it was (Latte, 4/2/12, SC).*

One poster mentioned the importance of developing a plan with the help of the partner. This meant that they could live with minimal access to cash and also asking them to pay bills and other expenses.

- *It is possible to live without cash with only minimal planning, especially with the help of a partner. Petrol, groceries, and a tab at the bar...I didn't once have a problem in 6 months of no cash (Anon, 17/8/10, SC).*

- *This is my day 7 without gambling. I decided to give all my cards to my mother and let her do whatever with my pay. She'll buy my lunch, smokes and keep my car filled every week. I don't even want to touch any money now even $10 because I know it will end up at the pokie machine (Anon, 11/10/10, SG).*

In terms of who to hand control of finances to, posters talked about choosing someone who was strong, a non-gambler, and someone they trusted or who was aware of the situation

- *Find someone reliable to take your money and pay things for you until a certain time frame, as this can't go on forever you must eventually take the control back.*

This person must be of a strong character, as you know, you as a gambler are the master of deceit and manipulation. Don't bother to do this if the person is a softy it won't work (Anon, 2/5/10, SG).

- *I even turned the finances over to my wife because she doesn't gamble (Chuck, 4/5/10, SS).*

- *Keep your finances with someone you trust for a while (Latte, 4/2/12, SC).*

- *Hand over complete control and passwords of my accounts to a close friend that is aware of my situation (Tyler, 15/5/11, SC).*

- *Hand all ATM/EFTPOS cards to someone you trust and tell them about your plan (Anon, 17/8/10, SC).*

One poster believed that longer-term, this action would place an unfair burden on their partner, and consequentially decided that other strategies would also be required.

- *I managed that by giving over my salary to my partner. I did not miss gambling that entire time. So I believe that limiting my access to money is the only practical solution that works. Since I feel it is unfair to expect my partner to take care of my finances, I decided to try limiting my access another way (Anon, 2/8/10, SS).*

Handing over to a person who could withstand demands for cash was important. This poster described a process of demanding access to finances to gamble with but also feeling better about not lying about gambling.

- *Lying at home with no money and living a boring Friday. The urge to gamble kicked in and I have to get my bankcard off my mother. I made it clear to her that I need to get $500 out of my account and gamble. I am not going to lie about it; I really need the money to have my last straw and either win or lose. I'm done with it. She believed me and gave me my bankcard. I took out $500 and went back to the Tabaret...After 30 mins I lost that $500 and went home. This time I don't feel as guilty because I was honest where I'll spend that money (Anon, 22/10/10, SC).*

A critical issue when handing over control of finances was knowing when to return financial control.

- *I've confessed to my mother I have a gambling addiction and gave her control of my bankcard, and wiped off the debt I had on it. Then I thought I would be ok to have it on me, which was a bad idea, the routine happened again (Anon, 13/2/10, SC).*

- *Can someone tell me honestly, when I get paid could or will my mind set change even after feeling so strongly about trying to stop? Should I leave my card with my family? Just until I am confident with myself to be able to hold my own money and not put it through them damn machines.... (Casey, 3/10/11, SC).*

- *I feel as though I am strong enough to be able to hold my card and not play but after reading your stories a relapse is not that uncommon and I am scared that I will fall into that cycle. From reading all your blogs it seems as though it takes at least a month to get rid of urges... (Casey, 3/10/11, SC).*

5.3.3. Arrange for a joint account

For two posters, creating a joint account was important so that they could not access cash or withdraw money without the co-signatory becoming aware.

- *My wages going into a joint account that I only have debit card access to (no pin) (Anon, 14/6/09, SG)*

- *I will speak to the bank about getting a co-signatory on my account for withdrawals of monies as I have a gambling problem (Tyler, 15/5/11, SC).*

There were problems with this approach and this poster said that a joint account meant that every time access to cash was required the other person had to attend the financial institution.

- *Requiring two signatures to withdraw money at the bank is also problematic, as someone else is required to come to the bank with you each and every time you want to access money (Anon, 16/8/09, SC)*

5.3.4. Set up a savings plan, account or financial goal

Three posters talked about setting up savings accounts and financial plans and goals. One poster talked about using creative skills to build up finances rather than spending money on gambling.

- *Use my creative skills, doing what I really enjoy doing to build up my finances. If I do this, I won't waste so much time thinking about the problem. And this will help greatly with time management and getting what I want to get done in life done, so that I can pave the way to true satisfaction (Anon, 6/5/11, SG).*

Similarly, making financial plans and goals took one poster's mind off gambling and helped them develop an eagerness to save money. It also helped another poster rethink the value of money and that money was worth more in a bank account rather than used to gamble.

- *Just recently I've started making financial plans and goals. Things like "markers" of how much I want to save up in x amount of time. It's only young days, but I hope that it helps me take my mind off the gambling, and move that eagerness to make money into a patient outlook to secure my money (Anon, 26/10/11, SG).*

- *Take control, beat the urge, live your life... money is worth more in your bank account (Anon, 9/1/10, SC).*

For others the financial goal was to repay money spent gambling and gradually reduce credit card debt.

- *My short term goals are to win my wife's trust back by paying the money back out of my wage each fortnight and not go to the tab, I have money in my wallet today and have no intention of gambling (Anon, 2/1/10, SC).*

- *And I'm gradually paying off my credit card debt of 6000. your life will be so much better if you don't play them (Anon, 16/9/11, SS).*

5.4   Limit or remove access to gambling

In contrast to limiting or removing access to cash or finances, posters also talked about limiting or removing access to gambling opportunities. This strategy including staying away from gambling environments, moving house, limiting or restricting internet access and self-excluding from land based and online venues.

5.4.1. Stay away from gambling environments

Staying away from gambling meant staying away from gaming venues, clubs and the casino.

- *I'm going to eliminate poker machines from my world vowing before you now never to touch a poker machine again (Anon, 27/5/10, SC).*

- *I must be crazy I sat in my car and cried last week I've never done that in all of those 16yrs of pokies it has made me realize what I have to do and that is keep away no one drags you in there (Anon, 17/1/10, SG).*

- *Its time to knuckle down, stay away from these venues and experience some of the more beautiful things life has to throw me (Jason, 2/12/10, SC).*

- *Distance yourself from betting shops, machines other gamblers (Mark, 4/7/10, SC).*

Two posters were specific about staying away from gaming machines. One of these posters talked about only going to venues that did not contain gambling stimuli.

- *Only go out for drinks where you cannot see or hear the machines (i.e. where there is a separate gaming room or no machines) (Anon, 24/3/12, SS).*

- *I steer clear of everything with a machine in it; it is so hard but worth it. I wouldn't say take them away because there are people out there who can set limits, I would only use suggestions like they do now other then that it's on the person to be responsible with their money unlike myself years ago (Geoff, 30/10/10, SS).*

Staying away also meant being vigilant at all times and when driving not looking at gambling venues.

- *Try your heart out to look the other way when your driving past the pokie sign (Adelaide, 19/12/09, SG).*

Similarly, for staying away from venues also involving cancelling club membership so that they were not tempted by venue rewards.

- *Any of you that have memberships of clubs is to get rid of it because that's the other thing they suck you in with reward points for playing you have to spend $1000 to get a free schooner. I'll be doing my best to stay away from the clubs (Petar, 25/1/10, SC).*

However, cancelling loyalty programs was not always a successful action and as described by this poster, cancelling loyalty programs just meant that they gambling as a guest rather than a member of the club.

- *I ripped up my membership card after a big loss from there recently but every time I get a decent amount of money I still go back there and sign a slip just to get in (27/4/10, SC).*

For one participant their method of staying away from gambling was to seek employment in a venue where they would not be permitted to gamble.

- *I even applied for a casino job so I can't gamble. If I get the job that would really help with my problem as it's against the law to gamble if you work there (Anon, 28/6/10, SC).*

Staying away from venues caused some problems in terms of boredom and implementation.

- *I feel the only solution is to not even go to the pub, but its pretty boring staying home alone all weekend so it's a bit of an oxy-moron (Problems, 20/6/10, SC).*

- *I make the pact every time I lose, that I will never step foot in a casino again. It goes fine until the next payday (Ryan, 3/5/10, SG).*

5.4.2. Move house or be in a place with no gambling

Posters talked about moving to a place without EGMs. Western Australia was considered a viable option because it was the only place that had EGMs in casinos but not in the community.

- *Maybe I should move somewhere where there are no pokies* (Anon, 25/3/10, SC).

- *WA has no POKIES!! Great holiday destination!! (Problemgambmling2, 14/10/10, SS).*

- *Move to WA. It's the only place in Australia without pokies. The casino has them, so go there and ban yourself for life. It's the only way you'll quit (Anon, 26/5/11, SC).*

Another poster talked about moving to an area that was away from the casino but then remarked that it probably would not help very much as there also seemed to be an increase in the density of venues beyond the casino.

- *If the economy wasn't so bad, I would try and sell my house and not live so close to these casinos, but they seem to be putting them up on every corner it seems (Feb Up, 27/4/11, SC).*

Two posters commented that it was a relief to be away from home and away from gambling venues. For one poster, this has prompted them to think about moving away permanently.

- *The only time I feel good is when I am far from the city where there is no pokies. I can live and think freely. I am living an unhealthy life (Anon, 31/7/09, SG).*

- *The only time I stop is when I'm out of town on business. But the moment I'm back home, I'm back at the casino. At some point, I may have to make that choice to move (Anon, 1/4/12, SG).*

Most often moving away was in an attempt to start anew. This meant leaving their employment and moving to a new city.

- *I have resigned from my job, which has disappointed my boss, to leave this city and state to start a new life of sorts next month. I am firmly committed that where ever I lob, I'll start from scratch gamble-free (rgm, 30/10/11, SC).*

- *I may have another chance at life again as I am moving away from this place very shortly. I had my chance to start here but it did not work out due to this addiction (Anon, 26/9/11, SC).*

For this poster moving away naturally created a break from gambling.

- *I stopped because of family intervention, but I was always very eager to be in the casino again when it is busiest. It never happened and we moved to another city (why did I do this, 10/11/11, SC).*

Moving away from gambling was not always successful. This poster stated that they had moved countries but this was difficult because they did not have money, employment, or anything else to do.

- *I now have stopped playing moved countries to get away from it all and am now dead broke no job and hanging for that feeling of playing big money cards again partly for the feeling partly because I love the game but it makes me so depressed as I sit here thinking what I have done hopefully I can find a job and slowly work on my problems and get back on my feet (Anon, 26/2/12, SG).*

5.4.3. Limit or restrict internet access to gambling

In terms of limiting or restricting access to venues, multiple posters referred to issues around online access and gambling. These two posters said that one action was to avoid online gambling altogether. The second poster had taken action to limit or restrict gambling in land-based venues but this limit did not apply online.

- *Do not use online gambling (I lost $80000 and had to remortgage) (Mark, 4/7/10, SC).*

- *The self-exclusion thing has been great, but then I discovered the online casinos. These are the most addictive places of all, you don't have to leave your home, or even go to an ATM. The sad part is there is no limit, they will let you keep depositing as much as you want from your credit card (Anon, 3/11/11, SC).*

As a means of reducing access to gambling online, another poster recommended selling their computer and using an ipad that limited their access to gambling sites.

- *I also sold my computer and have an ipad now because you can't gamble on an ipad it was the best thing any online gambler should do is to get rid of your computer then you can't possibly gamble online at all (Anon, 26/4/11, SC).*

In addition to avoiding online gambling, three posters had closed their online betting accounts. This included uninstalling software.

- *Closed down my TAB card. That's the things/steps that I/we can do (STOP, 25/6/11, SC).*

- *I've uninstalled and requested my account to be blocked along with my card so I cannot lose anymore (Anon, 26/10/11, SC).*

- *I closed my online betting accounts (Dan, 27/2/11, SS).*

In addition to removing software, two posters obtained software to block access to gambling sites.

- *If you have a pc install gamblock (fantastic thing about 80 dollars a year and cannot be removed unless you reboot, I did remove once only to lose more thousands and quickly reinstalled it (Mark, 4/7/10, SC).*

- *I have cancelled sky from Austar account and bar gambling sites on the home computer (Anon, 8/12/10, SC).*

Closing online accounts was not without its problems. This poster explained in detail issues that they experienced with closing a better account as well as shutting down the stream of credit into that account. Unfortunately, for this poster it meant that they continued to gamble and did so with money that was on credit.

- *After sitting back and assessing my situation, I took out a loan, paid off my credit card, reduced the limit to a very small one and closed my online account. HOWEVER... despite the friendly chap at the bank saying to me "yes, we'll take care of that for you, your limit has been reduced and you'll be able to see it when you next log on to netbank".... AND.... the betting agency replying to my email confirming that my account had been closed..... NEITHER of these was done. I soon realised that I could still access my betting account AND had quite a bit of credit to play with. Regrettably, I soon found myself back in the same situation -*

with the addition of the loan. I realise that this is my fault and I feel like an idiot for letting myself get in to that position again, but does anyone know if the bank or the betting agency have any sort of commitment to their customers to in fact carry out the requests? I can't help but feel that had my betting account been closed and my credit card limit been reduced, I would not be in this situation (Anon, 23/3/10, SG).

5.4.4. <u>Ban yourself from land-based casino or venue</u>

There was significant discussion related to being banned from land based casinos or gaming venues. This included self-imposed banning and assisted banning such as self-exclusion programs offered by gambling operators. The initial decision to exclude related to no longer trusting themselves to keep control, broken promises as well as making a fresh start.

- *Self-exclusion on Thursday no more excuses. I don't want to be trusted because I can't be trusted. I am out of control and I keep going I am going to destroy absolutely everything......(Anon, 20/4/11, SC).*

- *My attitude is today is a new day. Tomorrow I will ban myself from the local casino (Anon, 28/11/11, SC).*

- *Don't hide behind those promises, get a pen and paper and start excluding (Latte, 4/2/12, SC).*

For some exclusion was seen as necessary to successfully quit gambling.

- *If you really want to give up you must self exclude yourself from this venue before next pay day, fill out the form, attach a passport size photo and see the manager (Kev, 4/10/11, SC).*

- *I decided to exclude myself from venues that had been a problem for me in the past. For those who are reading this, I cannot emphasise how much this helped me and how supportive each venue was. As a pessimist, I assumed that I would be judged and 'humiliated against' in regards to the exclusion process, but it was the complete opposite. Yes I did feel humiliated but this was no wrong doing from the venue - This WAS MY FAULT, I put myself in this situation and I was the only person who could fix it. Self exclusion was the best option for me. Coming up to 6 months of no gambling, no lotto, no scratch its, no watching TV with gambling references - you name it....100% Gambling free (We can change, 20/3/13, SS).*

The penalties of breaching an exclusion order were also discussed as a significant deterrent from continued gambling.

- *I can be arrested if I would go back in to gamble, will not be paid if I would hit a big jackpot. Just the thought of being arrested and the scenario that would follow is enough to let me drive right by the casino without that uncontrollable urge to go gamble (Maggie, 1/2/11, SG).*

- *I've done self exclusion from venues where I got kicked out from after returning back which was great (Addicted, 20/10/11, SC).*

For one poster, self-exclusion was not a viable option because they were concerned about colleagues finding out that they had a gambling problem.

- *I would try to self-inclusion program but meet people with work at these venues for meetings/beers etc. I would hate to be told to leave as I have a gambling problem that no one from my work knows about (Anon, 13/1/10, SC)*

Although self-exclusion was discussed as an important action for limiting access to venues, there were multiple posters who stated that they continued to gamble at the same venue or casino without being detected.

- *While living in Sydney, my partner encouraged I self excluded myself from... the Casino which I did, but that didn't change anything - I kept going to the casino (Mike, 11/3/10, SG).*

- *I tried self exclusion for 3 years and true to a gambler mind set I managed to talk my way into these venues easily. I know it's not their fault and I should have stayed away but they make it hard when all you have to do is smile and say no I'm ok now I don't bet like I used too. I won't be long, its only $50 etc.. and they let me in! I spent nearly a quarter of my yearly wage while I was self excluded... (Anon, 8/10/11, SC).*

- *I have banned myself from every pub around me and further but to no avail, as I can still visit this one pub I am banned from just not full proof (Very helpless, 13/3/13, SC).*

One poster took action on the problem of breaches and contacted the casino to let them know that he had breached the order.

- *I go despite self exclusion, I rang the Casino today and told them I had been going and they are updating my info, and I hope security doesn't let me in next time (Petar, 26/1/10, SG).*

Although self-exclusion was reported has helpful, multiple posters reported finding ways around the exclusion by driving to venues that they had not included in the order.

- *I have self excluded myself from venues, but still drive outside the territory to find a pokie joint I can blow money in (John, 24/5/12, SS).*

- *I am on the exclusion program yet keep discovering new venues that get further and further away, yet I am willing to do the miles (Anon, 5/4/10, SG).*

- *I banned myself from a club I used to go to, I thought that would stop my gambling but I found another club... I'm going to try and quit gambling again maybe even ban myself from this club if I go again (Anon, 27/4/10, SC).*

Going to venues beyond those excluded was seen as an opportunity to progressively reduce access. For this poster they increased the number of venues when new venues were identified as a problem.

- *Upon acknowledging I had a problem, it became a habit for me to self-exclude every time I had a bad session at gambling. It may have seemed like I was running around in circles because I always found another venue with my machine in the next suburb but two years on, I can say that one of the main reasons why my first 2 weeks of cold turkey was so successful is because when the urge came along, I struggled to find an 'access' point - close to impossible now seeing I have self-excluded from a record number of venues (Latte, 4/2/12, SC).*

Similarly, others talked about the need to exclude from a range of gambling types as well as a general exclusion from every gambling venue in their jurisdiction.

- *The best thing I did was to exclude myself from everywhere that was tempting i.e. bookies, bingo, etc then there is nowhere to go (Lynn, 20/9/11, SS).*

- *I've even thought of threatening the staff at a local venue, just to get banned. I want to be banned from EVERY venue in the country but it would make a HUGE difference if I could get banned from my local venue in a small town, with no other venue within 60 or so kilometres (Anon, 30/7/10, SG).*

There were also discussions related to exclusions from online casinos and gambling venues.

- *I banned myself from these online casinos (Anon, 26/4/11, SC).*

- *Go onto all gambling sites and ban yourself for 5 years, (if you take a bad beat, this you will do easier). (Mark, 4/7/10, SC).*

- *I also opened online bingo accounts on then straight away excluded myself without making a deposit to them. You can exclude from anywhere where there is a gambling establishment and they have to cater your need to exclude by law (Lynn, 20/9/11, SS).*

Again, problems similar to land based exclusions arise and this poster talked about finding online bookmakers from which they had not excluded.

- *I have been trying to stop sports gambling for ages now. I have self-excluded from heaps of online bookmakers but I still manage to find others (Anon, 9/7/10, SC).*

Only one poster specifically discussed their concerns about the end of an exclusion order. Concerns were a mix of excitement that they could go back but also concern related to returning to that previous way of life.

- *In Canada you can request a ban from casinos and they take like 1000 pictures and if they catch you going into a casino they can arrest you! I signed up for 3*

years and it's almost up and I'm scared about and excited to be able to go back into the casinos. I hated that life and don't want it back (Anon, 28/8/10, SS).

5.5.   Change your thinking

A common self-help strategy for limiting, reducing or managing gambling was to challenge or change cognitions related to gambling. This included weighing the pros and cons of continuing to gambling, thinking about how money could be better spent, recognising, acknowledging and admitting there is a problem, realising that you can't win at gambling longer term and making a decision to cut your losses.

5.5.1.   Weigh the pros and cons of continued gambling

Considering the pros and cons of gambling involved thinking about the enjoyable aspects of gambling but also thinking about what it cost. This included enjoying the experience while also acknowledging being continually preoccupied with gambling.

- *I enjoy the Pokies although I know that I lose money there, I enjoy being there with a nice cup of coffee in front of a Machine. I wish I didn't because I am sick of thinking about them all day. I spend hours thinking about them. I have had enough (Kristen, 28/7/09, SG).*

One poster described the inner struggle associated with wanting to gamble but also a desire to be strong and determined not to gamble.

- *Must be a part of me that wants to gamble and a part that does not, however, I cannot seem to make the don't want part strong enough to beat the want to part. Last night spent $2000 and I am now really determined to stop; however I have been here before. I just hope that this time, I can make the don't want to gamble part take over (Anon, 25/3/10, SG).*

For others it was just thinking about the consequences of gambling and seeing how the negatives far outweighed the positives of gambling.

- *I advise anyone that has never gambled to never try or anyone currently gambling to think of the consequences (Anon, 29/9/09, SG).*

- *Remember the shit feeling afterward the dirty feeling of a loser cause really we all losers only idiots play the pokies. remember all those times you walked home or borrowed money cause you couldn't catch a train, taxi or pay your bills (Ved, 16/11/10, SC).*

- *When I hit rock bottom I wrote down a list of all the positives and negatives caused by gambling. I read that list over and over again and the list of negatives was so overwhelming that I felt compelled to stop and have hardly gambled since - that was 10 years ago. It just didn't make sense to me to continue gambling. When you consider how it impacts your life, you'll find reasons to stop (Anon, 27/4/10, SS).*

- *Always I mean always remember the negatives cause there nothing good about these things nothing!! (Ved, 16/11/10, SC).*

For another poster thinking about the consequences meant separating fact from fantasy.

- *It took me years to be honest and say I have a problem, then to say ok... the euphoria you feel when you win on the pokies, the thrill of the big win, it is no different to the euphoric feeling of being in a mindless state of bliss when intoxicated, but the comedown is always harder. THE END RESULT AND COMEDOWN WILL ALWAYS, ALWAYS BE HARDER. Separate the facts from the exciting fantasy (it is all up to you, 27/4/10, SS).*

5.5.2.   Think about how money could be better spent

There were multiple posts talking about how money could be better spent. This involved realising that if would be easier to save if they stopped spending money on gambling.

- *I have now realized it's up to me to stop all this nonsense, I could save up money much quicker than I could win it (Anon, 7/10/11, SC).*

- *I had enough (of gambling and) I told mum that if she didn't come with me now I was leaving. So we left, I felt so angry and going to the pokies was so not fun. So I decided I am no longer going to the pokies, I've got better things to do with my time and money then feeding it into a pokie machine (Anon, 21/7/10, SC).*

Others thought about the types of things that they could spend their money on. This included other entertainment and also paying outstanding debts and other expenses.

- *Ever been stuck home on a Saturday night while your mates are out having fun and meeting new people, think about what that money can bring to you. Having savings and not having to worry about the next day (Anon, 30/5/11, SC).*

- *I try to think about what other things I can spend the money on (Anon, 4/7/11, SC)*

- *I am already thinking about the other things I can do with the extra money and organising my debts and bills to be paid (Casey, 3/10/11, SC).*

5.5.3.   Recognise, admit or acknowledge the problem

Recognising or acknowledging that gambling had become a problem was a significant theme in the forum posts. Specifically posters wrote about the realisation that gambling might being a problem.

- *I now have come to the realization that I have a problem. It all started out as fun and games but now it is the most serious thing in my life (Anon, 1/2/12, SC).*

- *I haven't been going to the pokies for long, but just tonight I realised I might have a gambling problem. Tonight I lost $250+ the most I've ever lost (Anon, 21/7/10, SC).*

Others stated that they finally acknowledged that they had a problem. This was about being honest about problem which two posters stated was helpful and a significant step towards changing their gambling.

- *Acknowledging the problem helps more than you think: I first acknowledged I had a problem 2-3 months after I gambled my first dollar (Latte, 4/2/12, SC).*

- *51 years old and finally acknowledge I have a problem. If you can be honest with yourself and admit this, you are 3/4 way there in resolving your addiction to pokies (Anon, 10/10/10, SC).*

Recognising that there was a problem often led to the decision that gambling could not continue because of the negative consequences.

- *I lost thousands in a few visits... I've recognised that this is a problem for me and I am not going to gamble anymore. After my last visit I had a big argument with someone I love dearly, it brought out a horrible side of me I don't want (Anon, 9/1/10, SC).*

- *I realized that I had a problem when I spent my entire pay check of 800 and 900 dollars. Then I would walk out with knots in my stomach. I had not paid a bill or anything. I knew that it was time to stop. I still think about gambling but I know that is not what I need in my life. Because I will be trying to win back my money but instead I would lose money (Kesha, 14/12/12, SS).*

- *I have lost everything, friends, my girlfriend and now finally my family, I gamble excessively and after Saturday when I got paid went on a spree and lost my pay, I now have no money for food for 12 days, so finally admit that I have a problem, and need help (Anon, 17/8/09, SG).*

Posters also discussed the need for a willingness to admit that there is a problem and often to disclose this to another person.

- *I admitted to myself and another person that I need to quit as I have a problem (SouJou10, 29/7/10, SC).*

- *Today is the day I admitted, "I have a gambling problem". Let's hope tomorrow looks brighter (Anon. 4/7/11, SG).*

- *I'm finally going to admit I have a problem. I'm not letting this ruin my life (Anon, 9/8/11, SC).*

- *I am a Gambler, I have lost thousands, and now told my husband. I thought admitting my problem was going to make feel better, instead it's made me feel worse. I am nearly at the bankruptcy stage, but I now need to take action and get out of this situation (Nathalie, 19/9/11, SC).*

Admitting that there was a problem was not always easy. One poster stated that they were scared to admit there was a problem which was then preventing them from taking action.

- *I can't stop myself. I'm scared to admit the problem which is stoping me from solving it (Mitch, 28/10/09, SG).*

5.5.4.   Realise that you cannot win

There were multiple aspects of realising that you cannot win at gambling. The first was in accepting that you cannot gamble safely and that gambling for some could not be entertainment or a safe recreational activity.

- *I have stopped playing now for 2 years after a lot of counselling and now realise that gambling is never recreational (big time loser, 28/10/09, SS).*

For two posters, the realisation that you can't win was in relation to single episodes of gambling. This involved coming to terms with the difference between thinking that a win was coming and the reality of gambling as well as the reality that whatever money is taken into the venue will probably be lost.

- *Remember every time you thought it was going to pay out and it didn't and if it did give you feature paid nothing after you lost so much...remember how many times it was close but was never there (Ved, 16/11/10, SC).*

- *I know when I walk in now that I WILL lose $1000 and yet I still slip up now and then (Anon, 4/6/09, SG).*

Another poster had come to realise that they can't win and indeed that the more they played the more they lost.

- *My biggest revelation was finally coming to terms with the fact that you can't win. The more you play the more you lose (Mark, 12/11/12, SS).*

Two posters suggested that even if you win in the short term the money ends up back in the venue longer term.

- *Remember even if you win it goes back in anyway so a win is a loss no matter what if not that day its tomorrow (Ved, 16/11/10, SC).*

- *We don't realise -WE NEVER WIN!!! Those that think they win and walk away don't realise the next time you go back you may not win (Frank, 3/11/09, SG).*

For other realising that you can't win was in relation to the longer-term outlook. This involved recognising the loss of control and coming terms with the reality of gambling.

- *I started at 16 put my life savings 15gs in one day at the tab lucky for me the last horse I backed came in squared up...over the years I've lost over 2 million I'm 39*

now...all I can say is if you can't control yourself you'll lose guaranteed...(Oracle, 28/10/09, SG).

- *I have read most of the stories about other people and say well I know that I will win but the reality is that no I will not ever win (Steve, 19/11/09, SG).*

- *I've finally come to see that I will never ever win. I am an addict and always will be. I have to stay away from the pokies and if you're being honest...you know it's the only answer (Anon, 27/10/11, SG).*

For others coming to terms with the notion that you cannot win in the longer-term was in relation to the house being the only sure winner.

- *I've now realised that there is only ever one winner and that's the bookmaker. Time for change whilst that's still an option (Cal, 21/10/13, SG).*

5.5.5. Cut your losses

Related to recognizing that gambling is set up in favour of the house is the decision to let go of past losses in order to move forward beyond gambling problems.

- *Just cut your losses and move forward with determination in your heart to beat this social disease (Adelaide, 19/12/09, SG).*

- *If you can stop today forget the losses, then you will be better of for life (Mark, 4/7/10, SC),*

- *Forget, I mean forget, about how much you lost the only way you win is if you don't play and lose more (Ved, 16/11/10, SC).*

- *I don't even know how much I have lost, but I'd say it's just under $10,000. It's time to cut my losses (online poker player, 22/12/09, SC).*

Cutting your losses also involved people forgiving themselves for the losses and deciding to walk away.

- *In the end it comes down to forgiving yourself for your losses and walking away, because you won't ever win back all the money you lost and even if you do you end up spending it again. The loss number will always be higher tomorrow and the next day if you keep going.... So just cut your loss and walk away and stay away (Anon, 3/11/11, SS).*

- *There is only one solution for this from this moment of time just forget how much you have lost so far don't even get this in your mind that have lost so much money and I want that back (pokie master, 7/2/11, SC).*

This poster also compared thinking about losses due to gambling and losses due to a natural disaster, which helped put starting again into perspective.

- *just think something bad happened to you or you lost everything in floods or cyclone those money and now you have to start a new life again from day one start saving all your money pay back your bills slowly and start enjoying your life with your family (pokie master, 7/2/11, SC).*

Related to cutting your losses was accepting that the money was gone and that it was very unlikely to be recouped through further gambling.

- *I have to accept I will never get that money back. It has gone but more important I have to understand I have an addiction and I have to work at controlling it (Anon, 3/8/09, SS).*

- *One thing you need to constantly remind yourself is that once you have lost that money, YOU DON'T WIN IT BACK, so stop fooling yourself. Getting money is hard; you have to work for it. Cut your losses now and start living, you will be a lot happier. (It is all up to you, 27/4/10, SS).*

- *I'm going to now accept the fact all my moneys gone. What else can you do? The more we play we are absolutely guaranteed to lose. As hard as it is, as much as you've lost, accept the current situation, nothing will change the past, and move on living in the moment, gamble free (Anon, 7/8/10, SC).*

Lastly, posters also talked about letting go of past losses and looking at this as an expensive life experience and let go of the idea of recouping those losses.

- *I am making that decision today and have accepted I cannot change the past so no point in dwelling on it, just look at it as an expensive life learning experience (time to move on, 14/1/11, SC).*

- *There is only one solution for this from this moment of time just forget how much you have lost so far, don't every get this in your mind that have lost so much money and I want that back (pokie master, 7/2/11, SC).*

Related to letting go of the past, was acknowledging that it was only possible to change the future, not the past.

- *Whatever is gone is gone cannot bring it back but I can change the future, so don't need to cry over spilled milk (Chad, 10/4/12, SC).*

- *It is in the past, and the best thing for us to do is move forward, taking one day at a time. I won't lie, it's a tough addiction to quit, but days without gambling are much better than the gambling days (Anon, 17/12/11, SS).*

5.6.   Identify and remove triggers

Two themes emerged in relation to triggers of temptation. These were identifying triggers that might lead to gambling and becoming better at becoming aware of and managing urges.

5.6.1. Identify triggers that might lead to gambling

Posters talked about getting to know the triggers that led to their gambling. For one poster gambling on events that were not problematic triggered their gambling more generally.

- *My family love hearing about the wins/losses stories and enjoy sharing their stories. I will break the habit. I'm getting to know the triggers and I really want to change (Anon, 13/10/10, SC).*

- *I plan as of today to go cold turkey again and not gamble including internet betting, TAB, Lotto or even purchase a raffle ticket or enter a footy tipping comp. This may seem over kill but I know that being involved in something where I anticipate the result of an event that I have no direct influence over triggers something in my mind that I can't control (DWK, 23/5/10, SC).*

For another poster an action was to stop thinking of gambling as a means of escaping problems. For this poster, it was important to think about their reasons for gambling and why it was attractive.

- *Try with all your might to find out what you are trying to numb? What is that thing? What have you not identified? I believe it's the thing that's keeps us all gambling. I definitely was not born this way and as a child it wasn't there and in my teens there wasn't any desire like this, which means I can function without gambling. I will keep asking myself this question to find an answers (Anon, 2/5/10, SG).*

A trigger mentioned by four posters was thinking that gambling would be an easy way of getting money. For these posters it was about challenging the thought that there was easy money from gambling.

- *I know that money don't come easy. You have to work and earn it (TAB gambler, 13/7/09, SG).*

- *There's no such thing as easy money (Anon, 29/9/09, SG).*

- *My tip is that you will want to gamble to win money because you are greedy. If we can care less about money and greed, then there will be no need to gamble (Anon, 15/7/11, SG).*

- *Don't chase the easy money (Anon, 6/12/10, SC).*

5.6.2. Become aware of urges and better manage them

Becoming aware of urges and learning not to respond to them was an action used by one poster. This involved learning from past mistakes and being aware of triggers to gamble.

- *I have learned from my mistakes, and continue to take week by week. I believe that once you are a gambler, you will always be one. However, I now use this as a positive rather than a negative. It keeps me alert and aware of triggers that may*

contribute in relapse, it keeps me away from pathetic 'money wasting' activities but it keeps me close to my family, my work and a better life (We can change, 20/3/13, SS).

Posters talked about learning to manage urges. This involved understanding that lapses were common.

- *I believe I'm getting better but like most gamblers as mentioned you do have setbacks, and this was a big one which I hope I have learnt from (Anon, 2/1/10, SC).*

Two posters noted that they became aware that the urges were the greatest in the first few weeks of quitting and that the urge gradually lessened over time.

- *I have been clean since January 21st 2012, 2 weeks now (a record for me). It is a huge achievement because the urge is often the greatest within the first few weeks. Due to this, I feel more in control now and the urge has lessened (Latte, 4/2/12, SC).*

- *The urges to play were frequent and incredibly strong but the more I resisted them, the less frequent they became. By the end of the month the urges were nowhere near as strong either (Simon, 14/10/11, SC).*

Two posters also talked about the urge disappearing altogether and that they no longer act on temptation even though the desire might still be there.

- *Does this mean I am likely to gamble if I drove past a venue whilst travelling interstate in a few months from now? The answer is no. Reason for that is because the urge would be obsolete. Like I said, it is the hardest getting past the first few weeks, then with consistency, the rest will come (Latte, 4/2/12, SC).*

- *I'm still a problem gambler, but the difference is I don't act on temptation. I haven't played a poker machine in over ten years. The desire is still there, but I've learned to handle it (Cyenne, 28/5/10, SS).*

5.7. Make a commitment to change

Making a commitment to change involved being committed and willing to change, setting a goal or plan, developing confidence through success, developing will-power, strength, and determination, and also trying to remain hopeful while never giving up trying.

5.7.1. Be committed and willing to change

Posters expressed a desire, willingness and commitment towards change. This included statements related to determination to stop and a commitment, decision or promise to change.

- *I must stop, I must want to stop (Patricia, 26/1/10, SG).*

- *I am now set with the resolve to do what must be done to kick this habit, I WILL NOT let it control me and ruin my hopes and dreams for my future. I WILL NOT let it tear my family and friends apart (Crystal, 29/7/10, SC).*

- *Today I decided that enough is enough and that I have to do something to stop playing POKER MACHINES (Peter, 25/9/09, SC).*

- *The day I left my family I promised myself not lie and gamble again ever (Athyman, 18/2/12, SC).*

- *I have made a commitment to myself that it is a serious issue that I need to address and resolve (Anon, 16/3/10, SC).*

- *I promise myself today that I am never ever going to gamble on anything in life from now on (Anon, 17/6/11, SG)*

- *I have made a promise to myself I will never gamble again! (Anon, 9/8/11, SC).*

- *I was so depressed earlier tonight but as soon as I have decided to stop gambling I feel I have had a huge win which is much more genuine than any jackpot or multi bet and the feeling is not accompanied with any guilt (Anon, 9/8/11, SC).*

One poster said that they had tried everything to change their gambling but had become aware that strategies would only work following a decision to be willing to quit.

- *I've tried just about everything to quit (counselling, hypnotherapy etc) but none of it worked. I just put it down to those methods being absolute rubbish. However, when I was honest with myself I found that my attempts had failed because deep down I didn't want to quit playing the pokies (Simon, 14/10/11, SC).*

Similarly, this poster said that it takes more than a plan, that it also requires a willingness to change.

- *Unfortunately, if you really want to quit this social cancer (as I refer to it) then it takes more than a plan, you have to want to quit. I have been pokies free coming up 10 years now. Not one dollar have I invested in these machines, the result? Running my own business, 3/4 owning my first home, being happy in life, and a very different view about money and life in general...This can be achieved if you really WANT TO GIVE UP....(Steve, 3/5/10, SS).*

In addition to making a commitment, one poster stated that it was helpful to be clear on why you wanted to change.

- *At the end of the day we have to ask ourselves what our goals are, and make a list of twenty WHYS (as opposed to asking ourselves HOW). The HOW will come, if we follow our WHYS. Asking yourself how you are going to replace everything you*

have lost, is not as beneficial as writing down a solid goal, and listing 20 reasons WHY (Anon, 6/5/11, SG).

Another poster wrote about being committed to change on a daily basis. This involved reminding themselves that they were not going to gamble that day.

- *The best thing you can train your mind is when you get up in the morning first thing you say to your mind is I am not going to play pokies anymore feed that in your mind daily before you sleep and also when you get up (7/2/11, SC).*

5.7.2.   Set a goal or make a plan

A frequently mentioned goal was to take a break from gambling. This involved taking a break for a month, which allowed time to experience the positive impact of changing one's gambling behaviour.

- *Take a step back. If you have a job, take a break from gambling for a month, as hard as it is - see how you feel. You will be surprised just how quickly your state of mind changes. The depression of gambling cripples us. You got to hang on and get through and plan a break from it (Anon, 29/10/10, SS)*

- *One-Month Challenge. I'm hoping someone out there will read this post, then commit to taking one month off the pokies - then posting the results. You don't have to commit to quitting, just taking a month off then re-assess whether you want to let them back into your life at the end. I guarantee you will view your addiction in a completely different light if you can just make it through that month (Simon, 14/10/11, SC).*

Another poster suggested taking a 21 day break that would allow sufficient time to break the habit.

- *But there's hope. It takes 21 days to break a habit. Going cold turkey is the best solution (Anon, 30/5/11, SC)*

For another participant the plan was related to a further 50-day period of abstinence.

- *The dramatic improvements in all areas of my life over the month (and now 50 days) were not worth losing to go back to those wretched machines. For me it's on to the next 50 days pokie free (Simon, 14/10/11, SC).*

Three posters reported that it was important to make a plan now and avoid delaying change further.

- *Do it now, leaving it to tomorrow is already too late (Zen Master, 19/5/10, SG).*

- *Don't put off doing something about it because as I discovered waiting for that jackpot that will fix everything never comes and never will (Anon, 29/5/10, SS).*

- *If you're only starting to have problems...go get help now. And save yourself a lot of trouble as time goes by (mark, 4/7/10, SC)*

Beyond initial goals and plans, two participants stated that it was important that maintaining that plan was important.

- *All I need to do now is maintain my good progress and thrive through my bright future I have ahead (Anon, 4/7/11, SC).*

5.7.3   Develop confidence through success

Two posters talked about their belief and confidence that they could change.

- *I believe I have the courage and strength to get through this. No more lies, no more depression and loneliness, and especially, no more being broke, I'm getting my life back (Anon, 13/2/11, SC).*

- *I believe I can control this horrible habit, and I'm starting from now (Anon, 17/11/09, SC).*

For other posters, making a commitment to change was becoming easy as they started to experience some successes. With success came positive emotions associated with change.

- *I know I have only just started but I am feeling great now that I want to stop (Casey, 3/10/11, SC).*

- *For me it was all about being a winner. After talking to a minister, I learnt to savour small wins in life (Dave, 30/12/10, SS).*

- *I feel like a winner now...knowing that I'm not going to give them my money today and It's safe in my bank account (Anon, 16/9/11, SS).*

- *Achieving a goal daily feels great. After a year that will account for 365 feelings of greatness. Gambling will never deliver a great feeling every day of the year (Andrew, 2/9/11, SS).*

One poster specifically talked about lacking confidence to change. They described a situation where they tried hard to change, but that they kept returning to the old ways of thinking and behaving.

- *I will try my hardest but I'm not confident. It seems to get the better of me every time. I think. What's $20 here? Not going to do much to me bankroll or anything. That leads to $50 down then $100 down and before I know it. I'm broke again (Anon, 6/6/10, SC).*

5.7.4. Develop will-power, strength and determination

Associated with change was finding or developing the strength to see that gambling was creating problems. Strength was also associated with courage as well as determination.

- *I wish to encourage everyone who has a problem to come forward and find the strength in yourself to see that your addiction IS affecting your dreams and your future, and to be strong enough to change it (Chrystal, 20/7/10, SC).*

- *I hope I can be gambling free soon and I wish everyone here had the strength and courage to step up to this addiction.*

- *Bottom line is that I know what I have to do, and this time I really hope I can find the strength and get the support to finally kick this for good. (Tyler, 15/5/11, SC).*

- *Stay strong and you can all give this legalised robbery up! (Anon, 28/3/12, SC).*

- *Give me strength to negotiate this Melb Cup week without ending up in the gutter and stay on track for a fresh start and better, gamble-free life (rgm, 30/10/11, SC).*

For one poster, strength and courage were in relation to getting through the problem and stopping lying. They talked about having strength and courage to no longer being broke and getting their lives back.

- *I believe I have the courage and strength to get through this. No more lies, no more depression and loneliness, and especially, no more being broke, I'm getting my life back (Anon, 13/2/10, SC).*

Other posters referred to the use of will-power to change their gambling. This was in relation to having enough will-power and based on successes with other problems knowing that they had sufficient will-power to make change happen.

- *I am often a heavy drinker so this will make matters even harder, but I am very glad I have strong willpower (Anon, 9/8/11, SC).*

- *I am a recovering alcoholic who stopped drinking 17 years ago and also quit smoking cold turkey this past February so I know I possess the will power, I just need to do it 1 day at a time (SouJou10, 29/7/10, SC).*

In addition to will-power, one poster made the point that change is not about luck but practice, hard work and discipline.

- *I would say good luck to everyone. But having a good life doesn't involve luck. It involves hard work and discipline and that is what will make u a winner (Winslow, 16/5/11, SC).*

Another posted that it was important to develop determination to change gambling but also to keep stick to the plan.

- *We can quit this, be determined and make your self a promise (Anon, 30/5/11, SC). I feel powerful for my 5 free days away from them and I plan to stay away (Anon, 30/8/11, SS).*

Three posters explicitly stated that responsibility should be taken for change. This included taking responsibility for the past and future and also being accountable to other people.

- *At the end of the day we must realise it is our fault, no one else's. And we need to take control of our own actions and hold ourselves responsible (Anon, 26/10/11, SG).*

- *We can put it into remission if we try! We only have ourselves to blame for this and it is 100% up to us if we want to stop... no one can make us! (Tyler, 15/5/11, SC).*

- *You need to be accountable for how you spend your money (Anon, 12/6/09 SG).*

5.7.5. Try to remain hopeful and never give up

Remaining hopeful or positive towards change was in relation to hoping that thoughts about gambling would lessen, being hopeful about the future and remaining hopeful that change was possible no matter how problematic one's gambling had become.

- *It is going to be hard, but hopefully I will be able to stop thinking about it (Anon, 17/11/09, SG).*

- *I'm still not cured but I look forward to the future there still hope for me (Anon, 25/9/10, SG).*
- *One thing I do know now, from being 1 year free of everything is there is always a light at the end of the tunnel, no matter how far you dig yourself in (it is all up to you, 27/4/10, SS).*

Similarly, one poster reported that it was important to be kind to yourself and at the same time never give up trying to overcome the problem.

- *I sympathise with all problem gamblers' pain and loss, the only thing which has worked for me, is to not beat myself up and never give up on trying to beat the problem (Anon, 25/3/10, SC).*

Never giving up was a theme across four posts. These involved restating commitment at every lapse or challenge, keep making a genuine attempt to change and being persistent.

- *However hard this journey gets - every time I fall over even if it's just a bump I will once again declare not to lose any more (problemgambling2, 14/10/10, SS).*

- *Believe in yourself and never give up. You may have promised him or her that you'd stop and broken that promise once, twice, a hundred times or a thousand times. The important thing is you have genuinely attempted to stop gambling and you know that one way or another you will win (Latte, 4/2/12, SC).*
- *Eventually it'll work out, just be persistent (Latte, 4/2/12, SC).*

This poster reported the importance of not giving up hope that overcoming gambling will happen albeit progressively. They talked about looking back and having a sense of pride from change.

- *Be encouraged by the hope that progressively over time you can gradually get your life back on track. One day you will be able to look back and reflect upon how much you have learned. You will feel so proud of yourself to have come through! (Libby, 8/9/10, SS).*

While many posters talked about having commitment and persistence, one posted noticed that they gave up a little too easy but again made a commitment to try harder.

- *I will try harder this time as I 'really' want to get over this addiction, I just don't try hard enough it is easier not to (Anon, 14/6/11, SG).*

5.8   Be vigilant

The self-help strategy of being vigilant involved watching out for problems developing or returning, taking change a day at a time, recording progress, thoughts and achievements and counting the days since attempting change.

5.8.1.   Watch out for problems developing or returning

Two posters talked about being aware the problem could develop. For these posters, the action was to watch for problems developing initially and noticing if their gambling was changing.

- *I'm lucky insomuch that I've always managed to keep the real problem aspects at bay - but I know I'm at severe risk so I really limit how often I go to the club (Anon, 5/1/10, SS)*

- *I think I may be starting to get addicted to pokies. Up to a certain point, I had been lucky. I've only been gambling for about 12 months. I have won $1900 and $1600 and up to a "point" I had won about as much as I had lost. After that happened I made a promise to God that I would never again play pokies on my own (i.e. without mates etc.) (Dan, 16/4/10, SC).*

Similarly another poster reminded themselves of how easy it would be to forget the past and return to old habits.

- *Remember however long you quit, you can slip quickly forget the past and usually throw your money away half way through in disgust at returning to this horrible addiction... (Mark, 4/7/10, SC).*

One poster wrote about realising that vigilance was needed when managing a gambling problem. This involved not becoming complacent nor comfortable.

- *I realise that complacency does not sit well with gambling (Dan, 27/2/11, SS). You must be careful! All it takes is $1 (Andy, 11/11/10, SC).*

- *Don't get into any comfortable zone now that it's all ok. I have saved enough money to go back and play pokies...just never think about it... (pokie master, 7/2/11, SC).*

5.8.2. Take it a day at a time

Taking change a day at a time was an action in order to overcome gambling problems.

- *One day at time I can beat this (Dan, 27/2/11, SS).*

- *You are considered to be a winner if you can stop gambling one day at a time (Van The Man, 22/2/12, SC).*

For other posters, taking it a day at a time meant making a commitment to not gamble today.

- *Saying I will never gamble again is quite difficult. So set an easy one DON'T GAMBLE TODAY. How long has this worked for? I suppose this is a step program one day at a time. But just treat it today. Don't think about tomorrow just today. We cannot control yesterday or tomorrow but today is the day. Don't think of it I will stop gambling today, just I won't gamble today (Andrew, 2/9/11, SS).*

Taking a day at a time was also related to the time required to recover and also feel happy again.

- *What I would say is that you have to take time to heal (Anon, 16/2/10, SC).*

- *I will not gamble today. I repeat this a few times to myself and have messages on my mobile (Andrew, 2/9/11, SS).*

- *The good news is I will quit and day-by-day I will slowly build some pride back into myself. After a week I will start to feel happy again (Andy, 11/11/10, SC).*

5.8.3. Record your progress

Multiple forum users referred to recording their progress by keeping a diary or writing in an online forum (sharing with others was a by-product rather than a stated goal - see social support section for online sharing).

- *Create diary entries (Tyler, 15/5/11, SC).*

- *I have started to write down my diary entries (Anon, 4/7/11, SC).*

- *I will be writing my own diary and visiting the problem gambling website everyday to help me overcome this (Anon, 2/1/10, SC).*

Keeping a diary was the main method reported to monitor the ups and down of change.

- *I read about a diary which I have done now, its working. Will report in two weeks see how I go then. It's easier to remember your stuff ups if you write them down and remind yourself everyday (Anon, 9/7/10, SC).*

- *Keep a diary write things down how good you feel cause you didn't play 2 or 3 days or weeks doesn't matter, even if you **** up write it down how you feel. And start again. (Ved, 16/11/10, SC).*

- *Every fortnight I say never again - writing this down I hope will help (Anon, 27/4/10, SC)*

Keeping a diary was also a means of recording progress and an urge reduction action. This poster talked about writing in the forum when feeling like gambling.

- *Every time I think of going to the Pokies I am just going to write in this forum, it's like my diary and I will read the comments, it actually helps in some way to read these comments (Anon, 4/7/11, SC).*

Others used a diary or wrote in online forums to be more honest or open about their gambling to others as well as to themselves.

- *Using this site I am starting today the gambling diary… This has helped heaps just writing it.... (Anon, 13/1/10, SC).*

- *I will continue periodically to write to this forum as a form of honesty to myself (DWK, 23/5/10, SC).*

- *Write a note to yourself or to someone on the internet so that you can fully express and be aware of you problem (Anon, 1/2/12, SC).*

One poster talked about making a physical reminder not to gamble. This involved making a list of all the good and bad consequences from gambling and keeping it on a white board.

- *Make a list on a white board and place it in my room on the wall listing all the GOOD and all the BAD things that Gambling has brought me in the last 11 Years (Tyler, 15/5/11, SC).*

Another poster made a physical reminder not to gamble, but rather than write it down somewhere they created messages on their mobile phone.

- *I will not gamble today. I repeat this a few times to myself and have messages on my mobile (Andrew, 2/9/11, SS).*

5.8.3   Count days since attempting change

Counting the days since attempting change was a common occurrence in forums. In addition, counting the days was also accompanied by positive or negative expressions of emotion. These included feelings of achievement and pride or feeling better since making a change.

- *Today is the last day I gambled 23/05/12, I CAN STOP!! If it's going to be, it's up to ME! (John, 24/5/12, SS).*

- *I have to stop, I am too old for this, one day at a time, in fact today is day two, you have to find a positive (Kev, 26/10/10, SS).*

- *I have not played the machines for 4 days but that's because my bank account is empty and I have no money for them... I feel like I never want to play them again!!! (Casey, 3/10/11, SC).*

- *Now I do understand that its only been 10 days and I'm taking things 1 day at time but, I'm sure loving this life (Hagans, 14/3/13, SS).*

- *Today is my day five Pokie free day after a 10 year addiction. I know its only early days but I am already proud to say that (Anon, 30/8/11, SS).*

- *I can't say for sure I'll never play them again but that is my intention. It's only been a month but I've noticed the difference already (Mark, 12/11/12, SS).*

- *On the 11th I will have achieved 40 days gamble free, taking 1 day at a time I have achieved something I thought was not possible (Kev, 7/2/12, SC).*

- *It's been 48 days today since I haven't been to the pokies I don't really think about them as much as I used to (Laila, 29/10/10, SS).*

- *Today marks 50 days off the pokies for me which is an unbelievable achievement given my 20 year history (Simon, 14/10/11, SC).*
- *It's been 252 days and I haven't walked in to a gaming room since and I've been feeling a lot better with my life (Laila, 20/5/11, SS).*

Four posters who recorded the days since change were also experiencing negative emotions about the impact of their gambling and the challenges of change.

- *I am now three days into my plan and am already seeing benefits, I still feel like really horrible but feel that I will change as I stay to the plan (Crystal, 29/7/10, SC).*

- *I have been 3 days clean. I have no money in my bank account yet earn a good wage. But for the grace of god go I (sad gambler, 8/8/12, SC).*

- *It's been over 12 days and I haven't been to a pokie venue since. I do still think about them and it's so very hard (Anon, 21/9/10, SS).*

- *It has been about 5 months since my last bet. It does get easier, but I still get urges to gamble, especially when I am stressed or bored (Dan, 27/2/11, SS).*

5.9. Source alternative activities

Alternative activities to gambling included substitutions and distractions. These were doing something physical, seeking other entertainment or focusing on work or study.

5.9.1 Do something physical

Posters talked about doing something physical. Generally these were activities that could be done in a group or alone and included exercise, gym, walking, swimming, going to the beach and relaxing.

- *I have started walking and swimming more, I find these help me take my mind off gambling (Dan, 27/2/11, SS).*

- *I am trying to divert my attention more onto other things in life like physical activities and it is working (Anon, 17/6/11, SG).*

- *I went on a long jog to take my mind off it but still feel terrible (Anon, 4/2/10, SG).*

- *Go to the beach, sit down and relax (Zen master, 19/5/10, SC).*

- *I have a gym membership which I never use but this will change as I will have several more hours on my hands (Tyler, 15/5/11, SC).*

- *Play some sports or go to the gym instead (Winslow, 16/5/11, SC).*

- *I will go to gym everyday (not started yet) (Anon, 23/8/11, SG).*

- *I have now switched to exercising a lot and instead of spending the night gambling (Anon, 26/4/11, SC).*

- *There are so many great fun things to do, many free as in nature - walking, camping, picnics, fishing, studying the amazing natural world for the most exciting revelations and so on and so forth ad infinitum (Anon, 21/8/10, SC).*

These activities were used as a substitution for gambling and also helped distract or take the mind off gambling.

- *I will have to replace this with something positive such as exercising, I would love to do more with my husband but he doesn't really want to do anything (Anon, 5/1/12, SC).*

- *Use another activity (preferably not something else that is addictive or damaging) to distract yourself and channel your gambling impulse into doing something positive. E.g. When you get the impulse to hit the pokies, go to the gym instead (Anon, 16/8/09, SC)*

One poster also talked about getting better sleep as a response to having changed their gambling.

- *Luckily for me I'm going to take a punt on me going to sleep and waking up feeling better about myself tomorrow, but I only wish I had of done that for the last 3 years every night and I might be lying in a comfier bed or even my own apartment. Lets hope this is the first of many sleeps I have in this headspace (Anon, 11/1/10, SC)*

5.9.2.   Seek other entertainment

Seeking other entertainment was important for multiple reasons. The primary reason was to do something to relieve boredom or space left by gambling.

- *You have to find other interests or you'll gamble when you're bored. (Mark, 4/7/10, SC).*

- *From there I also realise I need to find another more productive outlet to filter my boredom into so as to then give them up completely (Anon, 16/3/10, SC).*

- *I'm trying to find another HABIT when the opportunity arises with me (Anon, 13/1/10, SC).*

- *It's a bitter pill to swallow but the worst is the time I wasted. So if you are still struggling with this DISEASE do anything to take or use your time (no spare time at all) (Jacobw, 28/4/10, SS).*

Posters also talked about keeping oneself or one's mind busy to fill the void left from gambling.

- *One day at a time try to keep myself busy not to think about gambling (Anon, 25/9/11, SC)*

- *Folks we need to find that something that is missing and refill our minds. Whether it be family, friends, faith or fun we need to find it. Once we do we will be closer (much closer) to defeating this demon (Fool, 2/12/11, SG).*

In addition, some posters talked about starting a new hobby to focus their attention on a more positive occupation.

- *If I focus my attention on a positive addiction I can be really successful. I can start a hobby or business and have the same rush as gambling but achieve a much more positive result (Vince, 8/4/12, SS).*

- *Replace your addiction with a hobby, or if you want to spend money, at least spend the money on yourself, not on the machines (Anon, 7/11/11, SS).*

- *I have gone back to hobbies that I once enjoyed as a teenager, relaxation techniques pets and technology etc also trying to get back into good job and lifestyle (Mick, 25/3/13, SG).*

- *Instead of spending the night gambling I go rent a bunch of movies instead (Anon, 26/4/11, SC).*

- *I did have my days that I wanted to go but I stopped myself and went to the movies or went out for a bit to eat or see a mate of mine or my boyfriend (Laila, 29/10/10, SS).*

For others it was important to treat themselves to something nice. This included shopping for clothes, dinner or holidays.

- *Yeah sure I might want to go to the point that I think of nothing else but there are other things that I want to do to, like go shopping for clothes, go out to dinner, go on a holiday. (Chrystal, 16/10/10, SC).*

- *I'm happier, I buy myself nice things instead of giving my money to the local pub or club (Anon, 16/9/11, SS).*

- *With extra money in my pocket I can now go out and buy things and also have left over money to spend on other stuff my boyfriend and I are more closer and so are my mates I'm always going out seeing my mates having a good time and not thinking about the pokies as much as I use to be before (Leila, 29/10/10, SS).*

- *I buy myself some nice things. I treat my good friend to a nice meal... then I visit the slots (Janelle, 13/12/10, SS).*

- *Keep money in your pocket. GO shopping for Christ sake!! (Anon, 1/2/12, SC).*

Playing an online computer game like scrabble or cards was a replacement for gambling activities in terms of recreation. One poster talked about other activities in hotels and playing trivia instead of gambling. Another talked about developing online computer games as a distraction.

- *Play a computer game or board game, you get the same thing, recreation (Anon, 29/3/10, SG)*

- *My solution to this is to play Barry trivia machines instead. That's not really about gambling and it actually takes some intelligence to play (i.e. not some mindless, hypnotic, soulless, button-pushing event) and you can get other pub goers involved - much more fun than pokies! (Dan, 16/4/10, SC)*

- *It also helps to find other interests to replace it. These days, I develop online computer games and I actually made a video poker game that can be a nice little distraction if you still have the urge to double up. It has a high score board and fierce competition all around the world, and best of all, doesn't cost a cent (Anon, 27/4/10, SS)*

5.9.3. Focus on work or study

There was a strong focus on work, study and further learning.

- *Go and socialise or learn a class. We can never learn enough (Winslow, 16/5/11, SC)*
- *Just be smart from today, study and work hard for future, remember we're still young (Anon, 16/8/09a, SG).*

Focusing on work or study was not always easy. This poster said that school was a distraction from gambling but recognised that they wanted to gamble because they felt socially isolated at school.

- *I told myself that school would distract me from my gambling but I go [gambling] to make myself feel better because I have very few people at school that I know (Abby, 17/9/11, SG).*

Two posters put their focus into work. One kept busy by going to school online and working two jobs. The other sought to work overtime to keep away from venues and address the boredom associated with stopping gambling.

- *I try to keep myself busy by going to school online and work two jobs. Now It has been a month that I stop gambling (Van the man, 22/2/12, SC).*

- *I try to stay back and work overtime as much as I can and keep myself away from boredom. When I get home from work, I would go to bed straight away and get ready for the next day (Anon, 11/10/10, SG).*

5.9.3   Source social support

Social support ranged from sharing or posting comments in online forums, disclosing the details of gambling to family or friends, getting support to help manage recovery, or asking family and friends to help create a diversion from gambling.

5.9.4   Share or post comments in an online forum

There were multiple comments on the benefits of sharing stories and talking to others online. This was helpful as a way of problem solving and talking to someone who can relate to what you are going through

- *It helps to talk and to read other's stories, I guess the truth is we are all looking outside ourselves for something that we think will solve our problems. (Anon, 17/11/09, SC)*

- *Always good to talk to someone who can relate to what you're going through (Paul, 20/3/10, SG).*

- *I am just writing this, as I need to vent so much of the guilt I'm carrying around so hopefully I can attack my problem with a clear head. Thanks for the stories as its*

helped me open up to myself and the people that mean the most to me about my GAMBLING PROBLEM...(Anon, 8/8/10, SG).

- *None of my friends have gambling problems and I've been hiding this for years from my friends and family, so reading real stories from real people who I can relate to and get advice from is so helpful (Anon, 24/11/11, SC).*

Talking to others online made one poster feel that their symptoms and experiences were normal when experiencing problem gambling.

- *Just finding out that you are not some shamefully irresponsible, mentally deficient, uncaring, unfeeling, selfish deviate with two heads (that right now you might feel) helps a lot at first especially! (Libby, 8/9/10, SS)*

Posters also said that talking online was a way of helping other people at the same time as helping themselves. It was an opportunity to give something back and to inspire someone else to believe that they too can change.

- *PLEASE CONSIDER MY STORY BEFORE GAMBLING AWAY YOUR LIVES. In return I will take on board those stories that have affected everyone else (JohnD, 2/6/10, SC).*

- *I am writing this not only because it is going to be my first step towards recovery, but also to reach out to those that share the same addiction (Anon, 1/2/12, SC).*

- *I would really like to stop going there and I'm lucky to find this site where I can write about it. This helps a lot of people around the world. If you are reading this, stop going because this is the right time to make good decisions in life (Anon, 24/3/10, SC).*

- *Now I want to give something back. I've started a blog, and I'm going to write about my experiences and what I've learned. Hopefully I can make a difference (Cyenne, 28/5/10, SS).*

- *I hope that if I can stop it can inspire someone else to do the same (SouJou10, 29/7/10, SC)*

For others sharing in forums was a way of talking aloud about their gambling, often for the first time.

- *Firstly let me say I think this forum is wonderful. I never knew it existed, I was looking to talk out loud about my addiction and here I am (Anon, 2/5/10, SG).*

- *This is the first time I have written and been open about my gambling problem. I will take this as the first step, to change my life, and hopefully we can all take each other's life experiences, and realise that we all have families. Its time to spend happy times with them, rather then cards and buttons (Anon, 1/12/10, SC)*

- *It really feels liberating to share this with you... I know it's anonymous, but this is the first time I have put the last 15 years into writing and I hope that it begins to help me in rationalizing life versus gambling (Justifiable consequences, 22/4/12, SC).*

Sharing in a forum also provided the opportunity to make a commitment to others. This involved making a commitment to change and posting in the forum instead of gambling,

- *I'm really thankful that I have the opportunity to read & share with everyone here, and I'm definitely going to VOW & this time not break it, for the sake of everyone including myself, to STOP GAMBLING (suffering, 16/6/10, SC).*

- *I am just writing this to get it out to the world, it might help me but I am going to change, even though I've said it often this is it (Anon, 15/10/10, SC).*

- *I will keep posting on here every night that I feel the urge to bet or how my day went. Wish me strength not luck (Anon, 6/6/10, SC).*

5.9.5   Disclose the details of gambling to another person

Posters talked about disclosure as a means of taking the first steps towards change or stopping the gambling becoming worse.

- *I have developed a gambling problem but have decided to change things as of tonight when I told my wife I am setting out to change and stop it (changing for the better, 12/10/12, SC).*

- *I have recently told my family about my problem which is the best thing to do as it gives you more power to quit (Anon, 26/4/11, SC).*

- *I am seriously going to try and stop playing them and my first step is to tell my family of my problem. They know I play the pokies but don't know how bad (Anon, 22/8/09, SG).*

- *I'm scared my gambling is going to ruin everything I have worked so hard for. I want to confess and admit I cannot control the urge to gamble (Pete, 24/5/10, SC).*

In preparing, to disclose to another person, posters talked about surviving the potential negative response.

- *Now I need to tell my husband that I am in debt again! I hope I will survive the look of hurt and disgust that I have caused him yet again (Dianne, 9/1/10, SG).*

- *You need to overcome the shame of admitting your problem to others, and you're well on the way to recovery (Anon, 14/6/09, SG)*

- *I feel ashamed and embarrassed and I'm not to sure how I am going to break this to my parents tomorrow, because I will see the disappointment on their faces. They*

never raised me like this. I'm lucky I am still young, and as of today I have had my last bet (Anon, 9/8/11, SC).

For others disclosure was around telling the whole truth and thinking about what they would want in response. For this poster, they expressed hope that the partner would help by being supportive rather than paying off debt.

- *How do I tell my partner that I blew a whole $1,200 over the weekend? Consequences- I will tell him the truth and hope that he will try to help me - not by paying for anything, but just telling me that it is possible for me to get through this issue. And that I am not alone. And that despite my stupid mistakes, he (hopefully) loves me (Anon, 8/8/10, SG).*

Others prepared for disclosure by considering whom they should tell. One poster decided to tell everyone they knew.

- *From today onwards I will control myself and make everyone know that I have a problem and am ashamed of it but better being ashamed now then later on when I've hit rock bottom & have nothing else to say for myself... (Time will come for you to break loose, 16/5/10, SC).*

After disclosing, posters often reported a positive response from family and friends. This included offers of support, and not feeling judged.

- *I told my 18y.o daughter that I was addicted and had a problem 6 months ago and she was wonderful and so supportive and got lots of information for me (Carol, 24/6/09, SG).*

- *If I do relapse I will not hesitate in telling my loved ones because they will never judge you and only want the best for you. I wished I learnt this lesson years ago. 2 weeks into my new life I am doing extremely well and haven't been tempted to gamble (Anon, 18/2/10, SC).*

- *My Husband is fantastic - he is very supportive and I can be honest with him about how I am feeling and when I want to go (Kristen, 28/7/09, SG).*

- *My advice is do what I did I came home last night and confessed to my partner and my brothers that I need help, They didn't judge me they just talked...(Anon, 17/11/09, SC).*

- *Again I was confronted with my actions, but this time I had the support and belief I needed... and I've never looked back (Cyenne, 27/5/10, SS).*

- *I am lucky, as I have just come out and told the family and they have been nothing short of wonderful in helping me get back on track one-step at a time. I recommend that no matter how much you are ashamed of what you had done and no matter how bleak it may look, talk to our family. Its like a band aid, it will hurt for a few minutes but the wound will heal a lot better. Family will understand more that you think and they will be the source of support, as they do love you no matter what. I*

thank god that they are there for me and I know your family will be there for you too (Anon, 29/5/10, SS).

- *I'm 26 and today have been the brightest day in a long time in my short life. I opened up about my gambling addiction completely to my family. They always wanted to help, but it was always up to me. I guess I'm just ready. It took me 8 years, yes its ages, but it could've been 20, maybe more, maybe never. I know now everything will fall into place. You just have to open up, it was so hard, but so worth it (Luke, 7/11/10, SC).*

Disclosing to others was a way of relieving family members from worry.

- *If you have a partner, you should tell them. They will actually be relieved and stop worrying about you spending all your cash on the affair they think you are having (Anon, 17/8/10, SC).*

Others stated that an important part of disclosure was telling the whole story truthfully. This included putting all of the facts forward including the types of gambling played as well as the financial situation. Both posters reported positive reactions from family members when this occurred.

- *Just told my partner about my gambling addiction. Spread the whole thing out on the table, no hidden surprises just the honest truth. Step number 1 towards a better life (Anon, 22/10/10, SC).*

- *It took a lot for me too come clean with my wife but I told her all about my sordid gambling. Addiction, Tab, pokies, casino, poker the works! For two weeks I have been clean and now when I tell them I love them I know I am not lying again! (Nick, 18/7/11, SC).*

5.9.6   Get support to help manage change

One poster talked about the importance of making a commitment to family or friends.

- *I just want to vouch for the above list of rules. I had a pretty severe gambling problem and it was starting to get in the way of my work, relationships, and my overall self-esteem. I took these rules (plus a few of my own) and promised my wife to stick by them. They have worked wonders. Gambling now is a fun outlet, rather than a dark burden I carry with me (Dave, 5/1/10, SS).*

For another, admitting the problem to others meant that they felt guilty for spending the family money on gambling.

- *I admitted to myself over a year ago I had a problem with gambling, I started to get help, told my family and friends. I knew it wasn't going to be easy, I knew every time I went out with friends that I would have trouble spending the money because I felt guilty for all the times I spent it on my habit that I didn't deserve it (Chrystal, 29/7/10, SC).*

For others disclosing to family and friends was a way of getting support and help in managing the change process.

- *At first [my partner] she was very angry, because I have promised to stop on several prior occasions. In desperation that our family was about to fall apart, she did some googling and read lots of research and discovered what I knew all along - that gambling addiction is an illness that is treatable. She finally understood that there was only one way to cure my illness, that is to take control over ALL of my finances (Bozo, 23/2/13, SC).*

One poster stated that change was a struggle but that support from family and friends would help them recover.

- *It is hard, every day is a struggle, but with the support of my good friends and family I will achieve my goal and be gamble free (Baby Steps, 16/1/10, SC)*

Family and friends were suggested as a good way of changing gambling, and also identified as support in a gambling venue.

- *If I do go in the future for other entertainment at the club I will ensure that my partner/friends know of the situation and ask them to help me stick to my resolve (Anon, 10/10/10, SC).*

One poster said that friends were helpful in talking through an urge to gamble.

- *I get urges but tell my friend and we talk about it and the urge is gone (gamble brain, 26/8/10, SS).*

5.9.10 Focus on spirituality

Focusing on spirituality included attending a church or spiritual gathering and/or engaging in prayer.

5.9.11 Practice spirituality

For two posters, attending a church was seen as an option for change.

- *I'm thinking of attending church and seeing what that may bring (Tyler, 15/5/11, SC)*

- *I like to go to the church again. That's the things/steps that I/we can do (STOP, 25/6/11, SC)*

Another poster talked about leading a more spiritual life as a way of recovering from gambling problems.

- *Time to realise it's not the brain that can solve my problem - I am far to smart and talk myself around anything. Its time to give myself to a more spiritual life, I am not religious but I do believe that there has to be something more, a strong spirit inside my, my soul that makes me the person I am and I need to get back to (Anon, 13/5/11, SG)*

5.9.12 Engage in prayer

There was substantial activity in terms of praying for help. This included help to be strong and stopping gambling, forgiving the harms and making amends.

- *Please god, help me to be strong and stop the madness (Anon, 4/1/10, SG).*

- *I will pray to my higher power daily and whenever needed to remove this defect from my life (SouJou10, 29/7/10, SC).*

- *Please pray for me so the Almighty God can help me overcome this terrible disease and horrible addiction (Anon, 21/8/10, SG)*

- *I'm a Christian so I'm praying to God that he will help me (Peter, 12/11/12, SG).*

- *If you believe in God, ask him to help you out. I believe in God and I know I will get out soon (Matty, 16/2/13, SC).*

- *I pray that I never gamble again, but the future is never promised to us (Anon, 28/11/11, SC).*

- *I pray for you and ask you pray for me as well because if I have learned one thing through the last 6 years with gambling. It can't be stopped by yourself. I am turning to God to help and ask you to help with your support as well (time to move on, 14/1/11, SC).*

- *I pray god to forgive me about the harms, and try to make restitutions (Anon, 23/8/11, SG).*

5.10 Chapter conclusions

This chapter sought to provide a comprehensive list of self-help strategies and actions sourced from the posts made in an Australian online forum by more than 600 gamblers. The chapter explored the content of these posts and reported a total of 14 different strategy themes and 63 specific actions. The data presented above provide an extremely rich, naturalistic account, of the types of strategies and actions gamblers attempt to limit, stop or manage their gambling problems.

The majority of forum posts were related to thinking differently about gambling (e.g., admitting that there is a problem, realising that you cannot win), managing finances (e.g., handing over control of finances or cards to another person), and social support (e.g., disclosing to others, asking for help). Fewer posts reported seeking information and, where it was present, the content related to reading information found in online blogs or forums. In addition, few posts related to faith, prayer or spirituality.

It was common for gamblers to report multiple strategies in the same post. When multiple strategies were reported they were often a combination of cash control (either limiting access to money or managing finances differently), thinking differently about gambling and the chances of winning, substituting gambling with another activity or diversion, as well as seeking social support.

Given the setting for this study, it is important to consider a number of potential limitations. Firstly, it is likely that the nature of the forums (i.e., an online text-based place to express thoughts and emotions) will have had some influence on the nature of the self-help strategies and actions reported, including the most commonly endorsed strategies. Secondly, the sample of gamblers who chose to post on the forum may not be representative of the broader population of gamblers with and without gambling problems. Thirdly, given the anonymity and limited data related to individual posts, it is not clear whether the suggested strategies and actions are universally helpful, or are restricted to particular sub-populations (e.g., depending on age, sex or type of gambling). Finally, the data were extracted between 2011 and 2013, meaning more recent gambling trends and behaviours and the impact of the internet on gambling and recovery may be underreported (i.e., closing online gambling accounts).

In summary, this chapter provides a rich source of information regarding gamblers' experiences of using a range of self-help strategies and actions within an online forum, deepening our understanding of how gamblers learn about and utilise self-help strategies, as well as the associated challenges and rewards. How universal these strategies and actions are and for whom they are successful remains to be determined. An important next step is to explore the uptake or helpfulness of the identified strategies and actions amongst a broader sample of gamblers (including, those with or without problems), as well as determining the helpfulness of such strategies and actions in particular subgroups.

6.   Analysis of Online Counselling Transcripts

6.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the results of Study 4 of this project, which contributes to the broad aim of developing a comprehensive list of self-help strategies and actions for gambling. More specifically, the aim of this study was to provide a more detailed description of actions used by people who had experienced problems with their gambling. Where applicable, factors relevant to the implementation and effectiveness of these strategies and actions are also discussed.

6.2   Main themes of counselling sessions

Almost two-thirds of transcripts contained a discussion involving self-help strategies (65%). Six broad themes were identified that involved a total of 25 actions. The most frequently discussed self-help strategy was *cash control and financial management* that was discussed in almost half of all transcripts. As might be expected when working with transcripts involving an interaction with a counsellor, there was also a great deal of discussion related to strategies that involve thinking differently and beliefs about winning and gambling. Other themes that arose included *self-assessment and self-monitoring, stimulus control, alternative activities* and *social support*.

6.3   Cash control and financial management

Cash control and financial management involved limiting gambling spend in a gambling setting as well as managing finances in everyday life. A number of participants discussed limiting access to cash by leaving their credit or EFTPOS cards at home when going to a gambling venue or only going to the venue with a set amount of cash.

- *When I go out I've been trying to leave my card at home and just take cash. That has helped. But when I do slip up I tend to have my card on me" (Male, 30-34).*

However, there were many implementation issues associated particularly with leaving cards at home. Some participants had left their cards at home but returned to get them, or despite having planned to leave cards at home, had not done so.

Leaving cards at home was used at the start of a gambling problem and also as the problem progressed. Using this strategy too early however, may be problematic especially when it limited or restricted other social activities that required money (such as buying friends drinks). The thought of not having access to money in order to gamble was also unpleasant and anxiety provoking. This concern included mention of feeling 'insecure' when at gambling venues without a card, and other negative emotional outcomes related to being prevented from gambling.

- *I can (limit access to cash) but will it stop the addiction? Because if I don't gamble I feel sick and cannot think about any other positive things" (Male, 35-39).*

Another participant used this strategy after others had failed and the harms from their gambling had increased. It did not appear to be an effective strategy after others had failed.

- *I stopped going to the casino but it didn't work, even tried to limit my daily cash limit but still no use, last thing I did I don't carry my credit card any more but I owe too much, it doesn't matter now" (Male, 30-34).*

Across the various cash limiting strategies that were mentioned, a general theme amongst participants was that these were self-enforcing and could be undone if and when the urge to gamble became stronger than the urge to change behaviour. For this participant, planning gambling episodes and also financial management took around two months to fully implement but it did not protect again contingencies such as winning money leading to a strong desire to continue.

- *I thought I had good strategies, they were limiting my money, transferring it to an account I didn't have access to unless I went to the bank, telling myself to walk away, they all worked it took about 2 and a half months to go from really bad to controllable. I used to go down with 40 dollars on pay day, and then I won big, now none of what I used to do works (Male, 20-24).*

In terms of managing gambling finances in everyday life, this was frequently discussed in terms of reducing ATM daily limits, keeping money in an account that doesn't have easy access and getting family members to take control of finances. There was considerable discussion around contacting the bank in order to set limits on cash withdrawals. This included setting daily withdrawal limits, moving money to accounts that did not allow withdrawals from ATMs, and changing to credit cards that do not allow cash advances. Most participants who mentioned these strategies were either planning to do them or had recently contacted their bank to request that they be done. For some, calling the bank was not an easy task because they felt shame despite the recognition that it would be a helpful step in managing finances.

- *I keep thinking I have to cancel my credit cards so I can't use them anymore and pay them off, as if you have no credit card you can't gamble on these sites, and as I don't work I would not be able to get another one. But I just can't seem to ring the bank to do it (Male, 30-35).*

There was also concern that in some cases, plans to reduce access could be undone easily. Internet banking was being used to move money between accounts in order to reduce access. But it also meant that access to funds could be easily obtained through smartphone or mobile devices and this meant that these restrictions could be lifted too easily

- *money can always be accessed with smartphones to transfer (Female, 35-39).*

While some discussed cancelling cards, there was also hesitation to cancel their cards as they were needed for financial reasons (such as paying bills). While others also noted barriers to implementing cash control strategies (e.g., inconvenience, added costs) they perceived the benefits of not gambling to be worth the effort. For example, moving money between a mortgage account and cash card was costly.

- *I could transfer just enough for what I need, it's just that the bank charges me $50 each time so I tend to get the maximum. But now that you mention it $50 will be a small price to pay if it saves me from having access to funds for gambling (Female, 45-49)*

For this same participant, moving money between a mortgage account and cash card was easy and also created new options for accessing funds to gamble.

- *I use the internet to transfer funds from my mortgage account, I need access to this account though as I need to transfer funds for my half of the mortgage and that's where it all goes wrong as I am using the money to gamble (Female, 55-59).*

Getting family members to take control of finances was a strategy that was frequently mentioned by participants. In most cases this involved handing over bank account details and cards to a partner or spouse so that they had complete control over finances, or transferring money into a joint account so that all transactions could be monitored. A smaller proportion of participants reported giving financial control to children or friends. A number of themes emerged in relation to these practices, including feelings of frustration and anger (along with other strong negative emotions), a perceived need to win back trust and independence, and feelings of guilt and shame in instances of deception.

Many participants who had relinquished control to a partner or spouse reported strong feelings of frustration and anger that 'it has come to this.' This was particularly prominent amongst those who implied that the decision to hand over control of finances was made by their partner rather than them, even if they acknowledged that such an approach might be necessary. Critical to this approach was the absence of another better option to manage finances in the family.

- *My wife took my visa away and now I have no access to money which makes me angry and upset that it has come to this...I am more angry with myself because I can't be trusted to carry it. My wife is only trying her best. But there must be a solution that can work or an option that can give me a different direction (Male, 40-49)*

A common theme was the perception that asking family and friends to help with managing finances was imposing an unnecessary burden. Indeed one participant reported that her husband had been unable or reluctant to help.

- *He could take control of the finances, I have asked him to do this before and he hasn't bothered, he says he has too much on his plate to deal with that as well (Female, 45-49)*

Concerns over winning back trust and independence were also prominent. Letting a significant other control finances was seen as an important step in repairing trust within the relationship, and in preparing for a life of being able to independently control finances. A number of participants expressed frustration and disappointment that they

"couldn't be trusted", while others recognised that winning back trust would be a lengthy and difficult process.

- *She gives me $50 a week and she saves the rest but I don't want that. I want to eventually be in charge of my own money and get my partner's trust back and confidence with me holding money. It will take time but I think I can do it (Male, 30-34)*

Themes of deception and guilt also emerged amongst those who had a history of requesting help from family members. This included making excuses for borrowing money (which was used for gambling), lying about money earned at work, and taking advantage of a partner's reluctance to control the finances.

- *But I get sneaky and only give my son half of what I earn. I have turned into this horrible horrible person who only thinks of herself (Female, 45-49).*

Getting a partner or significant other to take control of finances was generally perceived as an effective strategy amongst those that had implemented it. However, a small number of participants noted that it had not been successful for them in the long term, as once they had access to their money they returned to their old gambling habits. One participant had found the urge to start gambling too difficult to resist once funds were available again, despite the potential for causing problems in his relationship:

- *My girlfriend took my card off me for a while to help, but when I got it back I went straight to the pokies. Yesterday I owed my girlfriend money from something else and instead of going straight home to give it to her I went to the pokies and spent nearly all of my money there (Male, 20-24).*

Another found this strategy difficult to implement when gambling with friends, as it reduced the amount of money available for other social activities

- *I have given my cards to a friend and played with set amounts...but found I had no money to shout beers [due to] chasing losses (Male, 25-29).*

6.4   Self-assessment and self-monitoring

Transcripts contained many statements that indicated an evaluation, assessment or self-monitoring action had occurred. Evaluation or self-assessment was generally not formed from the results of a formal gambling screen but from reflecting on actions or feedback from everyday situations. For example, using high cost credit cards as a source of gambling money was associated with a realisation that gambling was becoming a problem "*I started using money on my credit card and realised that it was getting out of control*". While few transcripts contained specific actions taken in order to assess whether gambling behaviour was problematic, there were discussions related to information that provided unplanned feedback. For example, financial statements providing a summary of spending could lead to a raised awareness of the amount of money spent on gambling.

- *I got my statements out and checked through all the withdrawals of money taken out in my local pub. It worked out about $15,000 and I don't drink alcohol (Female, 45-49)*

For many, this increase in self-awareness led to the realisation that gambling had to change. This was reflected in letting go of the belief that gambling could continue in its current form "*I can't fool myself any more*". For others, coming to this understanding meant there was now a willingness to self-initiate change. "*I have finally given up saying I can handle this myself. I need support strategies*". Similarly, becoming aware of excuses or permission giving was important for change.

- *I'm excusing [my gambling]...that's probably the first time I've really looked at it objectively and said to myself "I'm excusing it. (Male, 25-29).*

Realising that there was a gambling problem did not immediately trigger the use of self-help strategies or actions for some clients. Instead, there was a focus on understanding why gambling had become so problematic, "*I don't know why I do it, that's the problem*". Similarly, for some who had experienced other addictive behaviours and saw their gambling as part of a more general tendency towards addictive behaviour, learning about risk factors was also important

- *Are there any traits that some people have that make them prone to this addiction? Maybe then I could work on that (Female, 45-49).*

For others, self-assessment meant identifying the motivations for gambling. Almost all transcripts contained a discussion on the specific motivations or triggers for gambling. These included escaping from problems and "*zoning out*", (reported by 18% of the sample), feeling excited by gambling and the potential to win big (13%), chasing losses or needing a "*quick fix*" financially (11%), feeling bored or lonely, (9%) and dealing with other negative emotions such as anger or anxiety (7%). Critically, identifying the motivation or triggers was an important part of being able to implement other self-help strategies such as avoiding venues.

- *I think my urges are very interesting as I say to myself no…don't go to the pub, but when I am in the vicinity it just takes over and before you know it I am in there pressing away my money (Male, 30-34)*

Sixteen participants (18.4%) mentioned strategies involving monitoring behaviour or change in gambling. These included practical actions taken to record gambling expenditure and goals, such as keeping a diary to track money spent, writing up a list of goals, putting up signs of things to accomplish or buy, and crossing off a calendar to mark gambling-free days.

New Year's resolutions were also employed to take a break from gambling and two participants reported lasting 2-3 months before beginning again. Although neither mentioned what their goal was at the time, one participant was attempting to quit gambling completely by using the same strategy a second time.

- *I stopped gambling 1st of Jan 2010 and lasted 2 months...I am trying to do it again this year and to finally stop all together (Female, 50-54)*

Most often these actions were taken in order to avoid denial, see the impact of their behaviour, provide motivation and inspiration, and take back control.

Most of the discussion involved planning to implement these strategies, but there was minimal discussion on how to do so effectively except when the action did not work. For example, two participants reported having attempted these strategies unsuccessfully in the past.

- *I tried putting up signs of things I need to accomplish or buy so I can see them, so that I can overcome the urge, but then I have trained myself not to look at it (Female, 45-49)*

Similarly, another developed a list of motivations and included a picture of a significant other.

- *I wrote out a list of dot points if you will of things to think about before I walk into the club and at the bottom I stuck a picture of my girlfriend to it just for that little bit of extra motivation not to walk in (Male, 20-24)*

The lack of contingency planning around implementation appeared a major barrier to the effectiveness of this strategy. For example, this participant attempted a whole range of strategies including setting monetary limits, writing down their experiences and progress as well as a schedule of activities. However, there did not appear to be a contingency plan for when these strategies and actions fail.

- *Believe me I make a plan every night about how I will stop – I try leaving my card at home, I write in a book about everything that is going on in my day and my plans for the day......but I always end up back there – sometimes I go four or five days without going, deliberately, and I feel so wonderful and in control but before I know it I am back there (Female, 55-59)*

6.5   Stimulus control

Stimulus control involved avoiding or removing access to physical venues and online gambling sites. Six participants (6.9%) discussed avoiding gambling venues (including pubs with pokies), while two participants (2.3%) discussed cancelling online accounts, uninstalling software, or disconnecting their internet connection altogether. Avoiding gambling venues was complicated by the fact that they often played a role in social activities.

- *I am thinking short term not going to pubs and clubs altogether, I just told my mate this but he didn't want to hear that (Male, 20-24)*

However, avoiding gambling venues was sometimes seen as a better option than self-exclusion, as it could allow the individual to still attend the venue with people who knew

about their gambling problems. Those who self-excluded experienced some social isolation

- *I guess I will have no choice but to go home when my friends want to gamble (Female, 35-40)*

In addition, being self-excluded when others could choose to gamble was perceived as difficult, particularly when the gambling venue was also the source of non-gambling social activities.

- *It does get a bit hard when my husband says he is going to the pokies" (Female, 45-49)*

Although there was limited discussion of exactly how participants planned to avoid gambling venues, two participants reported managing their urges to gamble by not leaving their houses at all. For example, one participant would engage in behaviours that were incompatible with attending a venue in order to ensure that she was effectively stuck at home.

- *I am most inclined to play when I am out by myself, when I come home from work I get changed into my pyjamas straight away so I don't go out again (Female, 40-44)*

Cancelling online accounts or limiting internet access were seen to provide a physical barrier that would require effort to breach.

- *I've started by cancelling my online accounts today. If I was to bet I would have to go into a TAB, I've less a chance of gambling there [compared to] gambling online (Male, 30-34)*

However, while having to leave the house to gamble (for example, by going to the TAB or to another house with internet access) was thought to reduce the likelihood of gambling, this was not always a successful strategy as there were ways around it.

- *I got the internet disconnected so I couldn't go on there, then I used to go round (to) my dad's and do it but I thought at least I had to leave the house.....I have a break from it I uninstall it from my computer then I reinstall it and it just goes on and on (Female, 45-49)*

A self-initiated action for avoiding venues was participating in a self-exclusion program. Eleven participants (12.6%) discussed self-excluding from land-based or online venues. Implementation issues involved problems associated with accessibility and the number of gambling venues near to the person,

- *There are just so many pubs etc. around…it just seems pointless (Male, 50-54)*

as well as access to other venues not listed in an exclusion order

- *I never went back there but now I gamble at my local pub which is just up the road (Female, 55-59)*

In terms of self-exclusion as a strategy for reducing gambling opportunities, the onus for implementing the strategy was often shifted towards the host or venue. There were a number of concerns about venue practices and policies relating to self-exclusion. One issue was that the venue may not actually prevent people who had requested to be self-excluded from entering.

- *The casino in Melbourne doesn't even really care if you self-exclude. I've been there many times since self-excluding and they have never said anything (Male, 30-34)*

Conversely, self-exclusion could be used as a strategy for reducing access to problematic venues. For example, self-exclusion may only be required for one venue or mode of gambling. Indeed this participant thought that it may block access completely which was a source of considerable anxiety.

- *It worries me not having the choice…it stresses me thinking I can't play at all (Female, 20-24).*

Although a number of participants reported having self-excluded in the past, others were unaware it was an option or were unclear of what it involved. Lack of knowledge was evident amongst online gamblers as well as those who attended land-based casinos. For others, issues related to the venue staff and feelings of embarrassment or shame that may result from having to request self-exclusion from them. This included a belief that staff may not always be mature or professional enough to respond to the request appropriately.

- *Do they put your mug shot up on the wall? Our pub staff are the biggest gossips…what if I hear they have told other patrons? (Female, 35-40).*

6.6   Change thoughts and beliefs

A common action was coming to terms with the fact that you are unlikely to win at gambling over the long term. This involved two main thoughts related to not winning at gambling. The first was that winning was possible, but in the long term unlikely because of an inability to stop when in front.

- *I know you can't really win that has been explained to me before. On a level I probably believe you can because I have won before-biggest win $10,000. But usually lose a lot! (Female, 45-49)*

Similarly, this person said that the reason they were unable to win was that they kept playing and also stated that they knew that it was unlikely that they would win at gambling.

- *I walk in optimistic that this time will be different ......I'm so stupid that even if I win I keep playing until it's all gone… I know it's a losing game but it doesn't make any difference" (Female, 55-59)*

Winning and losing were also described as part of a longer term cycle. For example, this person reported that while she sometimes won, she often returned the next day.

- *I start off putting in a bit to try and have some extra money for myself but I never win and if I do it's usually just my money back (Female, 35-39)*

In addition, some transcripts contained evidence of people thinking gambling was a way of making money. In this case, the person was attempting to pay back debts through gambling and lamented that they never won.

- *I need help with my gambling problem again, it went out of control starting this year, I have (been) lying and borrowing money from lots of people, I have been trying to pay it back by gambling more and I never win, I have been to jail twice because of this problem (Female, 35-39)*

Similarly, the hope that a big win would occur so that the problems would dissipate made some reluctant to believe that it was not possible to win.

- *A big win is a motivator. The chance to be able to win once more so I can walk out, deposit the money to assist with some of the debt I'm in (Male, 25-29)*

The attribution of winning to internal and controllable factors may undermine the effectiveness of this self-help strategy. Gamblers frequently acknowledge that once they started, it was difficult to stop a session of gambling. This person acknowledged this problem and then made a commitment to find another way of managing the urge to gamble.

- *I have said to myself every time OK I can solve this problem if I just stop, but somehow every time I find myself telling myself I will only spend a $100 dollars and it will be ok, I will be able to enjoy myself and walk away however I get into this horrible zone where I just can't stop. It's not that I don't win I often do but can't make myself hit collect and leave with my winnings. So I feel I know this about myself and will just have to find some way of resisting when I get the urge (Female, 55-59)*

This strategy may also be undermined by the experience of winning and this can undermine a whole range of other strategies. As indicated below, this person had initiated a detailed cash management plan that was dismantled by winning and the renewed belief that it was possible to win at gambling.

- *I thought I had good strategies they were limiting my money transferring it to an account I didn't have access to unless I went to the bank, telling myself to walk away, they all worked it took about 2 and a half months to go from really bad to controllable used to go down with 40 dollars on pay day, and then I won big, now none of what I used to do before work now, I have this stupid thought in the back of my head saying you can win big again, and sometimes I do win 200, 300 or 700 but I still walk out with nothing (Male, 20-24).*

Furthermore this person stated that the main reason that he gambles is because he thinks he can experience the same big win.

- *I want to get back to that stage where I can only go down and have a drink with friends and only put 20-40 in the pokies, and not have that urge to go down when I am bored, the main reason I gamble is because I think I can win again, I'm drunk, or I'm bored sometimes when I'm feeling upset or I "just don't care" I go down and I don't want to do that anymore (Male, 20-24)*

In contrast, others had come to a more realistic view of gambling that it was not possible to win over the longer term. In this example, the person discussed two further strategies - that they had disclosed their problem to another and were seeking help in managing their problem.

- *I am 54 and go to the pokies every day or when possible sometimes I win but most times I lose I have told my family yesterday and now I'm looking for help (Female, 50-54)*

Over three-quarters of transcripts contained a description of the negative impacts of gambling on the individual and other people. Negative impacts discussed included legal, work, health and a significant impact on basic needs. Multiple transcripts contained a description of surviving or subsisting in a basic way and not having enough to eat.

- *I ration my food and work out if I can afford bus fares and basics (Female, 50-54)*

Similarly, transcripts described the negative impact of gambling on general health including depression, anxiety, panic attacks, stress, high blood pressure, migraines and lack of sleep, as well as shame, guilt and a feeling of worthlessness.

- *The worst thing about the gambling besides losing and losing quality of life is the terrible lengths that I have gone to so that I can still be able to gamble... I also cannot deal with the emptiness after a gambling session any more (Male, 35-39)*

For some, thinking about the negative consequences of gambling was a first step in coming to terms with the gambling problem. This strategy was also associated with other self-help strategies. Most often this was seeking information about the types of help and strategies available to change or manage a gambling problem. For example, one person said

- *I get angry and say I'm not going to do it anymore but am up back there the next pay cheque (Male, 25-29)*

The impacts of the problem were identified and the person later in the session said that they would consider reading about any helpful strategies or actions.

Discussions also explored the negative impact of gambling on other people. One person recounted how gambling impacted on the basic needs of other people

- *I am scared most because I have children and they have gone hungry before because of my gambling (Female, 45-49)*

They later described the shame of doing this and made the statement *"I want to stop, but I can't see a way out of it".* For this person, thinking about the negative consequences and associated hopelessness was not necessarily associated with change. This was a similar experience of another person who had stolen money for gambling.

- *I get so depressed when I disappoint the most important people in my life, all I want to do is go to sleep and not wake up (Male, 25-29)*

For some, negative consequences was sometime associated with hopelessness such that the person was unable to generate their own strategies or actions. Others considered the positive consequences of change. These tended to be associated with reflecting on the success of other self-help strategies such as cash control such that the person now had savings, or success in developing a new social group or activity. For others, positive consequences were associated with a commitment to change.

- *Telling family and friends that I am on a mission. Taking a week at a time and feeling good about what I was doing (Male, 40-44)*

A final cognitive action was to think about how money could be better spent. This strategy was described in terms of what could have been (or what should have been) as well as how money could be better spent into the future. For some, thinking about how money could have been better spent was focused on thinking about what it should have been spent on. This often included groceries, bills, house or car repayments, children and other family commitments and also gambling related debt.

- *A couple of hundred bucks spent on horses would be better spent on groceries (Male, 30-34)*

For others this was about loss of opportunity or what the money could have bought. For example, one person said

- *I would have bought a decent car or put it towards a home loan or something decent (Female, 45-49)*

This strategy was also interpreted in terms of what money could buy in the future. Sometimes this was based on past successes or periods of abstinence. For example, *"It felt great I had money on me and was starting to save I paid off my holiday later this year"* (Male, 25-29). For others, thinking about how money could be better spent was related to doing ordinary things such as shopping or paying for dinner.

- *I do need to change my mind set I need to do something else other than gamble but I can't seem to do it I want to do it so much I want to have money to go shopping and take my girl out for dinner and buy new things I want all that, I want to be one of those people that can walk away (Male, 20-24)*

When thinking about how money could better spent aside from gambling, most often people talked about everyday activities. Others also thought about what they could do with money when it was derived from a gambling win. When this was discussed it involved paying off debt and bills and relieving financial pressure, but it also involved bigger dreams of new cars, holidays and houses.

- *It gets to the point where I have dreams about winning. And the whole day at work it's all I think about, and how I could win lots of money, and what I would do with it. I suppose I want a quick fix. A holiday a new car enough money to move out in to a house with my girlfriend (Male, 20-24)*

Indeed, thinking about how money won gambling could be spent further complicated the implementation of this strategy. For example, spending money on something other than gambling means that money has become available. This might be an unexpected amount of money or that saved from not gambling. Many transcripts contained evidence that cognitive strategies were accompanied by a cash control or financial management strategy, meaning that for most gamblers who had developed problems there was limited access to cash. As described below, deciding to spend money on something other than gambling means going out and shopping with accessible funds, which can also compromise the success of this strategy.

- *Yes, I tried putting up signs of things I need to accomplish or buy so I can see them, so that I can overcome the urge, but then I have trained myself not to look at it, I have tried thinking of substituting my urge by going out shopping but then I head straight to the club and use that as shopping (Male, 25-29)*

6.7 Alternative activities

Nineteen participants (21.8%) reported activities that could be used as a distraction or replacement for gambling. These included tasks or projects around the house (e.g., cleaning, cooking dinner, renovations, gardening), work or study-related activities (e.g., looking for work, keeping knowledge up to date), sports and exercise (e.g., playing golf, shooting, surfing, going to the gym, swimming, scuba diving) and other pleasurable activities (e.g., reading books, watching TV, playing online games).

The implementation of alternative activities tended to be accompanied by a judgement relating to how important or enjoyable they were. In this regard, participants varied in terms of how they viewed the range of activities that could take the place of gambling. Some were enthusiastic about the alternatives they identified as they were in line with their values or interests (*"I am doing what I enjoy"* [Female, 35-40]) while others viewed them as chores ("*they have to be done*" [Male, 60-64]). Other people were also frequently mentioned as a means of distraction, including friends, partners, children, and co-workers. These people were not necessarily providing support, but their presence enabled the individual to engage in alternative activities when they would otherwise have been gambling.

- *I force myself to hang out with other people...go out to lunch, have a drink, etc. That way, I spend an hour and maybe $50 max, have a good time and come back to*

work on time. I try and 'use' these friends (if you know what I mean) to distract myself (Female, 40-44).

More generally, there was recognition of the importance of keeping busy or occupied as a means of countering feelings of boredom – which for some participants would trigger gambling.

A misalignment between current skills, motivation or abilities and competing demands from others (e.g., children) impacted on the implementation of actions. Participants attempted to enlist strategies that they were not motivated to complete. For example, this participant said that they told themselves to do something else but did not actually implement the actions.

- *I tell myself not to go but am weak. Can't say I have tried very hard – keep telling myself to read a book, watch a movie, go to a movie, but the monster wants to play (Female, 40-44)*

In addition, some participants attempted to engage in strategies or actions that had worked in the past but failed because they were limited in their ability to implement them.

- *It's sort of hard at the moment because I just had surgery on my hand and have to rest it up and take it easy....I like to keep fit and healthy but I'm limited since I can't do any physical activities at the moment (Male, 35-39)*

Another key issue was transitioning in and out of alternative activities. Work and study were important for quality or life as well as distraction from gambling, but there was limited attention paid to the transition between work and gambling. For example, this participant talked about being busy and engaged at work but then towards the end of a work week would start thinking about gambling.

- *I don't think about it as I am busy at work and studying, and my work is really interesting….it's not until Thursday or Friday that I start to think about going to the RSL (Female, 50-54)*

- *Similarly, transitions can involve a change in location* where it is difficult to implement strategies in a new time or place

- *I find that when I am with friends it's a good distraction but we have moved and my friends are no longer close by (Female, 45-49)*

Alternative activities also involved actions to improve general mental and physical health. These included engaging in enjoyable activities to improve mood, as well as exercising to maintain physical fitness

- *I think of things that I could do that would make me feel good, I plan exercise sessions and how I am going to take care of my body (Female, 55-59)*

More broadly, 'care for myself' was mentioned by one older participant who was suffering health issues as well as recovering from problem gambling

- *I have a plan that includes a morning sleep which is about due now. This is my regular down time, it sparks me up (Male, 55-59)*

Issues affecting the implementation of these strategies included physical illness and injury, as well as a lack of time and motivation

- *I am a member of a gym but I start work at 6.30/7am and finish at 3.30pm. After work I just can't get motivated (Male, 50-54)*

It is also important to note that a number of participants reported experiencing comorbid mental health conditions such as depression or substance abuse, which could make implementing strategies to reduce gambling difficult.

- *I know I have to stop or severely reduce the gambling but it's the other issues [depression] that make it seem more difficult to do than in should be (Male, 55-59)*

Amongst those who had sought professional treatment, accessibility and cost could be barriers to improving general health.

- *I went to my GP and asked for his help – he referred me to a psychologist but I can't get in for a month and I just used up all my money (Female, 55-59)*

6.8   Source social support

Receiving support from other people was raised by 16 participants (18.4%) and was discussed primarily in relation to family and friends. Amongst those who had not told their family members, it was noted that revealing the full extent of the situation provoked feelings of fear that their partner would leave.

- *I am scared as hell of talking to my partner or family about this...I'm scared my partner will leave me...if I can get my partner to support me in this we will definitely be able to work through it together but I am so scared of how she will react when I tell her (Male, 25-29)*

A number of participants were intending to disclose their gambling problems to a friend or family member in the near future, and discussed the concerns they had regarding doing so. For this participant, there was a fear of being judged or being perceived differently as a result of disclosing that gambling problem.

- *I have a very dear friend. I have not told her about my problems and she has no idea. I will find it very hard to tell her in fear that it will change her perception of me. I think I know in my mind that she will be supportive but I am still afraid of being judged by another person (Female, 45-49)*

A number of participants discussed how support from family and friends had helped them to avoid gambling. For example, one participant had found that staying with a family member provided the space and support she needed to be able to stop

gambling. Space involved physical space from the home environment that had become associated with gambling as well as space from gambling due to limited funds. In addition, support provided a sense of safety and feeling cared for as well as social interaction that did not involve gambling.

- *I went and stayed with my sister for 5 weeks and I had no money. I did not miss gambling, I felt safe and cared for and I enjoyed the company. I felt hesitant to come home because I knew I would fall back into old habits (Female, 45-49)*

Although some participants reported relying on family and friends for support and enjoying the time they spent with them, a strong theme emerged regarding perceived lack of social support and connectedness amongst those who had not yet disclosed their problems to anyone. Some participants reported 'trying to keep up a facade' in that they would hide their problems in order for other people (including their families) to believe they were okay and not be burdened by the responsibility of knowing about their problems. Others mentioned fearing that their friends or families would be judgemental *("I feel very ashamed"* [Female, 60-64] or outright unhelpful *"they would stir me up and say we have heard this before"* [Male, 25-29]) if they mentioned a need to limit their gambling. One participant reported feeling isolated and depressed due to not having friends close enough to confide in.

- *I feel lonely...no girlfriend...I don't see friends because I never have money...during my days off I stay and home (and) watch TV...I do have a couple of friends, but not close enough (Male, 25-29)*

6.9   Chapter summary

This chapter aimed to provide a summary and description of the self-help strategies and actions used by gamblers who had contacted an online counselling service. Using data from 85 counselling transcripts, we identified six broad themes that categorised the strategies discussed: self-assessment and self-monitoring, cash control and financial management, stimulus control, changing thoughts and beliefs, alternative activities and social support. These strategies and their associated actions are presented in Table 72 at the conclusion of this chapter.

The most common self-help strategies discussed by participants involved managing finances and gambling spend, which were mentioned by almost half of the sample. A wide range of strategies was reported, including strategies that were undertaken alone (e.g., leaving cards at home; only taking a pre-determined amount of cash to a venue), as well as strategies that required assistance (e.g., contacting the bank to place limits on daily withdrawal limits; getting a partner or spouse to take control of the finances). As indicated in Table 72, most participants who discussed these strategies reported having used them in the past, or had plans to attempt them in the future. Participants who were considering using these strategies generally had positive expectations, however a number of potential issues with implementation were identified. These included feelings of shame and embarrassment associated with contacting financial institutions, and the perception that some decisions could be overturned too easily (e.g., online restrictions could be overridden to access funds). Shame could also act as

a barrier to the implementation of strategies that involved giving a partner or spouse control of finances.

Strategies that involved taking up alternative activities were also frequently discussed. A broad range of alternative activities were mentioned, ranging from activities that were seen as pleasurable (e.g., hobbies, sports) to obligations that were not necessarily enjoyable, but nonetheless served as a distraction (e.g., housework). Other people often facilitated these activities, or served as a distraction themselves, without necessarily needing to know about the gambling problem. However, a misalignment of skills, motivation, and competing demands could affect the implementation of these strategies, and failing to adequately negotiate the transition from one activity to another could provide an opening for gambling.

Similar implementation issues were identified when strategies designed to improve general mental and physical health were discussed. Although a number of participants reported that keeping physically fit and engaging in activities that gave them a sense of happiness or wellbeing were important, a lack of time and motivation could make committing to these strategies difficult. The presence of comorbid mental health conditions (most notably depression) and other addictive disorders were also identified by some participants as having a considerable impact on whether it was possible to undertake these strategies. Unfortunately, there was limited data discussing the inter-relationship between poor mental health and gambling issues, but given the data were taken from online counselling transcripts, where brief and time limited interventions typically focus on the presenting issue (i.e., the gambling) rather than exploring other issues, it is likely that the impact of comorbid mental health issues are not fully represented.

Changing thoughts and beliefs related to gambling involved thinking differently about the chance of winning and realising that winning was not likely or a way of making money. We identified that it was possible for people to interpret this action in two different ways: believing that winning wasn't possible over the longer term and believing that winning wasn't possible over the longer term *for them* because they failed to stop gambling after winning. It appears that this difference does not impact on the uptake of the action but it may mean that difficulties are encountered in maintaining the action. Indeed, when attempting to implement an action that involved thinking about how to better spend money instead of gambling, there were problems with implementation where people imagined how they could have more money by gambling. Nevertheless, thinking about future opportunities invoked hope and anticipation for a better future. However, thinking about the past and how money could or should have been spent was often associated with guilt, regret or remorse. Similarly, when considering the negative impacts of gambling, this was also associated with negative emotions.

Although cash control strategies were frequently discussed, their effectiveness seemed mixed. Those who had undertaken them alone often reported them to have been ineffective, as the urge to gamble could override the motivation to minimise spend. In contrast, when friends and family were involved in minding or managing money, this strategy appeared to be more effective. Sourcing social support from others was also

discussed positively, as were planning and monitoring strategies. However, few participants appeared to have used these strategies, making it difficult to rate their actual effectiveness. For example, only one in five transcripts contained any discussion related to disclosing or receiving support from family and friends, and when it was discussed this was in relation to issues associated with implementation, including a fear of being judged or embarrassed.

A consistent theme across the six strategies and 25 actions was a need to identify what works for who and when. Gamblers in this sample were all seeking information, support or a single session of counselling in order to develop a response to gambling problems. Transcripts represented gamblers who were at different stages of change in terms of their gambling behaviour, as well as their readiness to use self-help or other strategies. For example, some actions such as thinking about the consequences of gambling appeared to be used when contemplating change, consistent with the transtheoretical model. Finally, this chapter identified multiple issues associated with the interpretation and implementation of various strategies and actions. Further work is needed to explore how these factors impact on the uptake and perceived helpfulness of such strategies, as well as how gamblers manage to implement these strategies and actions successfully .

Table 72. Broad strategy themes and actions with associated implementation issues

Theme	Actions	Implementation issues
Self-assessment and self-monitoring	Calculate how much is spent on gambling from a range of sources including financial statements	Self-assessment does not need to be a planned process involving a standardised gambling screen but could involve everyday actions such as reading or reviewing bank statements
	Come to realise that gambling needs to change	Self-assessment may prompt the use of other self-help strategies or actions or it might prompt further thought related to how and why gambling became a problem
	Become aware or acknowledge the need to implement appropriate strategies or actions	Identifying motivation or triggers may be required in order to determine appropriate self-help strategies

Theme	Actions	Implementation issues
Self-assessment and self-monitoring continued	Track gambling spending	Self-monitoring strategies are routinely attempted but often reported as unsuccessful
	Write out goals and reminders not to gamble	There is limited attention paid to implementation issues including contingency planning
	Keep track of progress in a diary or calendar	
Cash control and financial management	Leave cards or cash at home	Cards can be left at home (when remembered) but can also be collected when needed for gambling
	Reduce ATM limits	The optimal time for restricting access to cash in the gambling cycle is unclear
	Use bank accounts or credit cards that do not permit easy access to cash	Reducing access to cash is easy to implement and may take around 2 months. But it is also easy to override
	Get family members to take control of finances	Financial institutions are involved in most decisions to better manage finances and reduce access to cash. But contact could elicit shame and embarrassment and in some cases this was a barrier
		Internet applications helped manage finances but could be costly and easy to override in order to access funds
		Giving a partner or spouse control of finances was helpful as a means of regaining control and repairing the relationship, but this also elicited feelings of frustration and anger and a fear that doing so would place an unfair burden on the other
		Handing over control of finances to a family member could elicit issues related to trust and independence, and feelings of guilt and shame
Stimulus control	Avoid gambling venues	Avoiding gambling venues was the most often used action and involved staying at home and avoiding gambling venues. Implementation was a problem when it also meant missing out on social activities
	Close online accounts	Internet gambling easy to avoid by closing accounts but this again could be circumvented by opening others or reinstalling programs
	Self-exclude from venues	Onus of self-exclusion from venues often shifted from the person to the venue and reasons around exclusion order sought

Theme	Actions	Implementation issues
Change thoughts and beliefs	Understand that in the long term one cannot win at gambling	It is possible to come to the realisation that it is not possible to win at gambling while at the same time believing that this is due to internal and controllable causes (e.g., not leaving at the right time).
	Realise that gambling is not a way of making money	Negative consequences are associated with the individual as well as others and include an impact on basic needs, health and well-being, finances and other people.
	Think about the negative impacts or consequences of gambling	Thinking about the negative consequences associated with gambling problems could lead to helplessness or initiation of other self-help strategies and actions
	Think about what money could have been spent on in the past	Thinking about money could involve past regret or future oriented hope or anticipation. There may be challenges with implementing this strategy if it means overriding a cash control strategy.
	Think about how money could be better spent in the future	
Take up alternative activities	Replace gambling for another activity	A range of activities are used including housework, gardening, work and study-related activities, playing sports, exercising, hobbies (e.g., reading books, watching TV)
	Distract yourself with other activity	People judge activities positively or negatively however there was no information on whether this impacts helpfulness
	Engage in exercise and physical activity	Other people can be a useful distraction but they don't necessarily need to know about the gambling problem
	Seek pleasant and enjoyable activities to improve mood	A misalignment of skills, motivation and competing demands can impact on implementation
	Practice self-care	A poor transition between alternative activities can provide an opening for gambling
		Many participants reported co-morbid mental health issues, particularly substance abuse and depression that may impact of the implementation or maintenance of self-help strategies and actions more broadly
Use social support	Disclose to someone else	Fear of judgement or embarrassment when disclosing to others
	Get support in managing the problem or avoiding gambling	When supports accepted, others are helpful in providing care and support and distraction from gambling
		A lack of support may be associated with isolation, loneliness or depression

7. Helpfulness of Self-Help Strategies and Actions Used by Gamblers

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of Study 5, which examined the perceived helpfulness of 99 self-help actions and 12 strategies amongst a large sample (n=716) of Australian gamblers. Section 7.2 reports mean helpfulness scores of strategies and specific actions in the overall sample, ranked from most helpful to least helpful. Section 7.3 reports the mean helpfulness scores of strategies and actions separately for each of the three problem gambling groups: participants who have a current gambling problem (n=245), participants who had a gambling problem in the past (n=244), and participants who have never had a gambling problem (n=227). Section 7.4 reports the results of analyses examining whether perceived helpfulness differed as a function of problem gambling status, age, gender, help-seeking history, and type of gambling.

7.2 Helpfulness: Overall sample

7.2.1 Self-help strategies ranked by helpfulness scores

Table 73 reports the overall mean helpfulness scores of the 12 self-help strategies, ranked from most helpful to least helpful. For each strategy, helpfulness scores were calculated by taking the mean scores of the actions it encompassed (ranging from 3 actions for *self-assessment* and *faith and prayer* to 14 actions for *reducing opportunity*). Participants rated each action on a 5-point scale (not at all helpful (1), a little helpful (2), moderately helpful (3), very helpful (4) or never used strategy (5), with the 'never used strategy' item recoded to a score of (1) prior to analysis to reflect the overall use and helpfulness of actions across the sample). The three strategies rated most helpful were: *changing thoughts*, *self-assessment*, and *watching yourself*, while the three strategies rated least helpful were: *reducing opportunity*, *social support*, and *faith and prayer*.

Table 73. Helpfulness of strategies (n=716)

Strategy	No. Actions	Mean	SD
Changing thoughts	10	2.39	0.99
Self-assessment	3	2.32	0.96
Watching yourself	7	2.12	0.92
Planning	7	2.10	0.89
Health and wellbeing	11	2.09	0.86
Information	5	2.01	0.88
Setting limits	9	1.97	0.81
Alternative activities	13	1.95	0.86
Managing finances	11	1.92	0.84
Reducing opportunity	14	1.89	0.82
Social support	6	1.84	0.86
Faith and prayer	3	1.84	0.86
Total	99		

7.2.2. Self-help actions ranked by helpfulness score

Table 74 reports mean ratings of helpfulness for all 99 self-help actions, ranked from most helpful to least helpful. The three actions rated most helpful were: *think about how your money could be better spent* (from the strategy *watching yourself*), *remind yourself sometimes people win at gambling but the system is designed for you to lose* (from the strategy *changing thoughts*), and *eat a healthy balanced diet* (from the strategy *health and wellbeing*). The three actions rated least helpful were: *engage in prayer or meditation*, *attend church or spiritual meeting* (both from the strategy *faith and prayer*), and *move house to get away from gambling venues* (from the *reducing opportunity strategy*).

Table 74. Helpfulness of actions (n=716)

Action	Mean	SD
Think about how your money could be better spent	2.73	1.25
Remind yourself that sometimes people win…but system is designed for you to lose	2.67	1.23
Eat a healthy balanced diet	2.63	1.24
Compare costs and benefits of continuing to gamble	2.61	1.22
Accept that gambling needs to change	2.56	1.28
Remind yourself of negative consequences of gambling	2.56	1.24
Remind yourself of positive consequences of not gambling	2.53	1.24
Plan ahead and limit amount of money you carry	2.50	1.27
Calculate money and time spent gambling	2.50	1.23
Engage in regular exercise	2.49	1.25
Avoid chasing losses	2.45	1.28
Engage in an activity that gives you a feeling of achievement	2.37	1.28
Plan ahead and leave credit cards and non-essential cash at home	2.36	1.28
Concentrate on being strong or using will power	2.34	1.25
Remind yourself that you don't need to gamble	2.33	1.19
Keep track of money by setting up a budget and tracking spending	2.33	1.31
Set spending limit for each week or fortnight	2.31	1.27
Ensure your physical health needs are met	2.31	1.25
Make a resolution to change your gambling	2.30	1.25
Identify inaccurate thoughts about gambling or winning	2.29	1.23
Engage in a new form of entertainment	2.29	1.26
Re-establish trust and belief in yourself	2.28	1.23
Keep busy to avoid thinking about or engaging in gambling	2.27	1.24
Take it easy on yourself or take it slow	2.27	1.22
Distract yourself or do something else until urge to gamble passes	2.25	1.22
Monitor how your emotions relate to gambling	2.25	1.24
Read information on how gambling works	2.20	1.18
Complete daily activities around the house	2.18	1.22
Remain hopeful about your future	2.18	1.26

Action	Mean	SD
Stick with my strategy - don't increase or change bet	2.16	1.26
Focus on not gambling each day at a time	2.16	1.27
Read first-hand accounts of other people's experiences	2.15	1.18
Increase fluid intake	2.15	1.23
Monitor for signs that gambling is becoming a problem	2.12	1.22
Don't borrow money from friends or family, banks or loan sharks	2.10	1.34
Use alternate strategies to deal with gambling triggers	2.10	1.20
Try methods to improve your sleep	2.08	1.22
Make a daily affirmation such as staying positive or letting go	2.07	1.23
Don't drink alcohol or use drugs while gambling	2.07	1.28
Read information on signs or consequences of problem gambling	2.07	1.14
Avoid gambling when feeling down, depressed or otherwise vulnerable to gambling	2.05	1.28
Regularly contribute to a savings plan	2.04	1.26
Be more open and honest with family and friends about gambling	2.04	1.24
Take a long walk	2.03	1.18
Explore additional work or study-related activities	2.03	1.21
Focus on managing issues that contribute to your gambling	2.01	1.22
Reward yourself for reducing your gambling	2.01	1.23
Engage in behaviours that are incompatible with attending a venue	2.00	1.23
Spend less time alone	1.99	1.18
Pre-purchase goods or bills to reduce spare cash	1.99	1.26
Participate in regular structured groups or sports like football or tennis	1.99	1.18
Count days since you've made a change in your gambling	1.98	1.21
Consolidate debts and implement payment plan	1.98	1.23
Schedule gambling sessions so that they do not interfere with important activities	1.96	1.21
Read information on responsible gambling	1.95	1.09
Disclose to someone else the extent of your gambling	1.94	1.17
Plan gamble free days each week	1.93	1.25
Postpone gambling until a later date	1.93	1.16
Schedule other activities after gambling to limit session time	1.93	1.21
Avoid gambling with heavy gamblers	1.91	1.24
Avoid gambling alone	1.91	1.24
Set limits on time/money spent gambling using smart card or automatic limit	1.91	1.22
Avoid the first bet	1.90	1.22
Complete a questionnaire that gave me feedback on gambling problem	1.89	1.08
Keep limited funds in online or loyalty gambling accounts	1.88	1.23
Self-exclude or ban yourself from a land-based or online venue	1.88	1.24
Take regular breaks while gambling	1.87	1.15
Cut up, destroy or cancel credit cards	1.87	1.24
Avoid being near/passing gambling venues	1.86	1.20
Make a list of strategies that worked for you in the past	1.86	1.19
Start a new hobby like arts, crafts or knitting	1.85	1.18
Take a multivitamin or herbal supplement	1.84	1.13

Action	Mean	SD
Listen, play, sing or dance to music	1.81	1.16
Ask family or friends to help or support you	1.81	1.15
Give winnings to a friend while gambling or put somewhere safe	1.80	1.17
Give cards or cash to a family member or friend to limit access	1.80	1.20
Keep money in joint account with partner or family member	1.78	1.18
Volunteer your time or help someone in need	1.78	1.15
Express anger or sadness without causing harm to self or others	1.78	1.10
Practice relaxation strategies like yoga, meditation	1.75	1.15
Have a sauna, salt bath or spa bath	1.75	1.09
Talk to a health professional about your gambling	1.75	1.15
Only go to venues that offer other activities as well as gambling	1.74	1.10
Lower daily ATM withdrawal limits	1.72	1.16
close online accounts related to gambling	1.72	1.17
Avoid discussions about gambling that might trigger own gambling	1.72	1.10
Play free gambling games like fantasy league or Facebook slots	1.72	1.12
Avoid friends/family who gamble	1.70	1.11
Read gambling self-help books or materials	1.70	1.04
Only use credit cards that don't allow cash withdrawal	1.65	1.15
Do something that is risky or causes you to feel a rush of adrenaline	1.63	1.04
Write about progress, thoughts, achievements or struggles related to gambling	1.61	1.04
Set up cues to keep track of time while gambling	1.61	1.04
Create a physical reminder to limit your gambling	1.59	1.04
Limit or restrict internet access	1.58	1.05
Share or post comments about gambling or emotions in online forum	1.51	0.96
Engage in prayer or meditation	1.48	0.96
Attend church or spiritual meeting	1.35	0.85
Move house to get away from gambling venues	1.28	0.76

7.3   Helpfulness: Problem gambling groups

The following section reports separate results for those participants who reported a current gambling problem (n=245), past gambling problem (n=244), and no gambling problem (n=227). For each gambling group, the mean helpfulness scores of the 12 self-help strategies and the top 30 most helpful actions are reported, ranked from most helpful to least helpful. Helpfulness ratings for the complete list of 99 actions for each gambling group are provided in the Appendix.

7.3.1   Current gambling problem

Self-help strategies ranked by helpfulness score

Table 75 reports the mean helpfulness score of the 12 self-help strategies for participants with a current gambling problem, ranked from most helpful to least helpful. The three strategies rated most helpful were: *changing thoughts*, *self-assessment*, and

watching yourself; while the three rated least helpful were: *information*, *setting limits*, and *faith and prayer*.

Table 75. Helpfulness of strategies: Current gambling problem (n=245)

Strategy	No. actions	Mean	SD
Changing thoughts	10	2.66	0.90
Self-assessment	3	2.63	0.96
Watching yourself	7	2.37	0.95
Planning	7	2.19	0.92
Alternative activities	13	2.19	0.83
Managing finances	11	2.17	0.89
Health and wellbeing	11	2.14	0.87
Reducing opportunity	14	2.14	0.76
Social support	6	2.12	0.86
Information	5	2.08	0.83
Setting limits	9	1.94	0.82
Faith and prayer	3	1.80	0.85
Total	**99**		

7.3.2 Top 30 helpful actions

Table 76 reports the top 30 self-help actions for participants who reported a current gambling problem, ranked from most helpful to least helpful. The three actions rated most helpful were: *accept that gambling needs to change* (from the strategy *self-assessment*), *think about how your money could be better spent* (from the strategy *changing thoughts*), and *remind yourself of the negative consequences of gambling* (also from the strategy *changing thoughts*). In total, 33.3% of the top 30 helpful actions for participants with a current gambling problem involved *changing thoughts*; 16.7% involved *watching yourself*, 13.3% *involved reducing opportunity*, 10% involved *alternative activities*, 6.7% involved *self-assessment*, *planning*, and *health and wellbeing*, and 3.3% involved *information* and *managing finances*.

Table 76. Top 30 helpful actions: Current gambling problem (n=245)

Action	Mean	SD
Accept that gambling needs to change	3.09	1.08
Think about how your money could be better spent	2.98	1.09
Remind yourself of negative consequences of gambling	2.82	1.12
Remind yourself of positive consequences of not gambling	2.82	1.09
Make a resolution to change your gambling	2.76	1.14
Distract yourself or do something else until urge to gamble passes	2.75	1.11

Action	Mean	SD
Compare costs and benefits of continuing to gamble	2.73	1.11
Remind yourself that sometimes people win…but system is designed for you to lose	2.68	1.21
Engage in an activity that gives you a feeling of achievement	2.67	1.22
Keep busy to avoid thinking about or engaging in gambling	2.63	1.16
Calculate money and time spent gambling	2.62	1.25
Plan ahead and leave credit cards and non-essential cash at home	2.62	1.22
Engage in a new form of entertainment	2.61	1.21
Plan ahead and limit amount of money you carry	2.60	1.23
Focus on not gambling each day at a time	2.60	1.23
Concentrate on being strong or using will power	2.60	1.20
Re-establish trust and belief in yourself	2.54	1.13
Complete daily activities around the house	2.50	1.18
Monitor how your emotions relate to gambling	2.49	1.21
Eat a healthy balanced diet	2.48	1.20
Make a daily affirmation such as staying positive or letting go	2.46	1.22
Count days since you've made a change in your gambling	2.45	1.20
Remind yourself that you don't need to gamble	2.44	1.12
Engage in behaviours that are incompatible with attending a venue	2.44	1.27
Identify inaccurate thoughts about gambling or winning	2.44	1.14
Monitor for signs that gambling is becoming a problem	2.44	1.19
Pre-purchase goods or bills to reduce spare cash	2.43	1.32
Engage in regular exercise	2.42	1.19
Read first-hand accounts of other people's experiences	2.40	1.14
Use alternate strategies to deal with gambling triggers	2.37	1.15

7.3.4   Past gambling problem

Self-help strategies ranked by helpfulness

Table 77 reports the mean helpfulness scores of the 12 self-help strategies for participants with a past gambling problem, ranked from most helpful to least helpful. The three strategies rated most helpful were: *changing thoughts*, *self-assessment*, and *watching yourself*; while the three rated least helpful were: *managing finances*, *social support*, and *faith and prayer*.

Table 77. Helpfulness of strategies: Past gambling problem (n=244)

Strategy	No. actions	Mean	SD
Changing thoughts	10	2.72	0.87
Self-assessment	3	2.58	0.84
Watching yourself	7	2.34	0.84
Planning	7	2.25	0.87
Health and wellbeing	11	2.23	0.87
Setting limits	9	2.16	0.83
Information	5	2.16	0.87
Alternative activities	13	2.13	0.82
Reducing opportunity	14	2.09	0.79
Managing finances	11	2.00	0.79
Social support	6	2.00	0.84
Faith and prayer	3	1.74	0.83
Total	99		

7.3.5   Top 30 helpful actions

Table 78 reports the top 30 self-help actions for participants who reported a past gambling problem, ranked from most helpful to least helpful. The three actions rated most helpful were the same as those reported by participants who had a current gambling problem, although the order was different. In this case, the action rated most helpful was: *think about how your money could be better spent*; followed by *accept that gambling needs to change*, and *remind yourself of the negative consequences of gambling*. In total, 26.7% of the top 30 helpful actions for participants who reported a past gambling problem involved *changing thoughts*; 13.3% involved *watching yourself* and *health and wellbeing*; 10% involved *reducing opportunity*; 6.7% involved *planning*; *self-assessment*; *setting limits*, and *alternative activities*; and 3.3% involved *information*; *managing finances*; and *faith and prayer*.

Table 78. Top 30 helpful actions: Past gambling problem (n=244)

Action	Mean	SD
Think about how your money could be better spent	3.08	1.13
Accept that gambling needs to change	3.00	1.15
Remind yourself of negative consequences of gambling	3.00	1.09
Compare costs and benefits of continuing to gamble	2.98	1.09
Remind yourself of positive consequences of not gambling	2.95	1.14
Remind yourself that sometimes people win…but system is designed for you to lose	2.95	1.13
Avoid chasing losses	2.77	1.25
Eat a healthy balanced diet	2.74	1.21
Engage in an activity that gives you a feeling of achievement	2.71	1.25
Calculate money and time spent gambling	2.71	1.17

Action	Mean	SD
Remind yourself that you don't need to gamble	2.70	1.15
Engage in regular exercise	2.69	1.24
Identify inaccurate thoughts about gambling or winning	2.67	1.22
Re-establish trust and belief in yourself	2.67	1.22
Plan ahead and limit amount of money you carry	2.65	1.24
Make a resolution to change your gambling	2.63	1.23
Monitor how your emotions relate to gambling	2.62	1.22
Engage in a new form of entertainment	2.61	1.21
Concentrate on being strong or using will power	2.61	1.22
Keep busy to avoid thinking about or engaging in gambling	2.56	1.25
Plan ahead and leave credit cards and non-essential cash at home	2.53	1.24
Keep track of money by setting up a budget and tracking spending	2.52	1.28
Distract yourself or do something else until urge to gamble passes	2.47	1.22
Monitor for signs that gambling is becoming a problem	2.45	1.24
Ensure your physical health needs are met	2.44	1.25
Stick with my strategy - don't increase or change bet	2.42	1.31
Remain hopeful about your future	2.42	1.29
Avoid gambling when feeling down, depressed or otherwise vulnerable to gambling	2.42	1.33
Take it easy on yourself or take it slow	2.41	1.23
Read information on how gambling works	2.41	1.19

7.3.6   Never had a gambling problem

7.3.6.1 Self-help strategies ranked by helpfulness

Table 79 reports the mean helpfulness scores of the 12 self-help strategies for participants who reported they had never had a gambling problem, ranked from most helpful to least helpful. The three most helpful strategies were: *health and wellbeing*; *planning*; and *setting limits*; while the three rated least helpful were: *faith and prayer*; *reducing opportunity*; and *social support*.

Table 79. Helpfulness of strategies: Never had a gambling problem (n=227

Strategy	No. actions	Mean	SD
Health and wellbeing	11	1.89	0.81
Planning	7	1.86	0.81
Setting limits	9	1.81	0.74
Information	5	1.78	0.89
Changing thoughts	10	1.73	0.87
Self-assessment	3	1.70	0.78
Watching yourself	7	1.61	0.74
Managing finances	11	1.56	0.70
Alternative activities	13	1.49	0.75
Faith and prayer	3	1.45	0.80
Reducing opportunity	14	1.40	0.68
Social support	6	1.38	0.68
Total	99		

7.3.7   Top 30 helpful actions

Table 80 reports the top 30 self-help actions for participants who reported never having had a problem with gambling, ranked from most helpful to least helpful. The three actions rated most helpful were different to those reported by participants who had experienced problems with their gambling. In this case the action rated most helpful was *eat a healthy balanced diet* (from the strategy *health and wellbeing*), followed by *set spending limit for each week or fortnight* (from the strategy *planning*) and *remind yourself sometimes people win at gambling but the system is designed for you to lose* (from the strategy *changing thoughts*). In total, 23.3% of the top 30 helpful actions for participants who reported never having had a problem with gambling involved *health and wellbeing*; 20.0% involved *changing thoughts*; 16.7% involved *setting limits*; 13.3% involved *information*; 6.7% involved *self-assessment*; and 3.3% involved *managing finances*; *watching yourself*; and *faith and prayer*, respectively.

Table 80. Top 30 helpful actions: Never had a gambling problem (n=227)

Action	Mean	SD
Eat a healthy balanced diet	2.66	1.31
Set spending limit for each week or fortnight	2.43	1.33
Remind yourself that sometimes people win…but system is designed for you to lose	2.37	1.28
Engage in regular exercise	2.34	1.31
Avoid chasing losses	2.32	1.31
Stick with my strategy - don't increase or change bet	2.32	1.33
Ensure your physical health needs are met	2.27	1.33

Action		Mean	SD
Plan ahead and limit amount of money you carry	2.22	1.31	
Calculate money and time spent gambling	2.15	1.21	
Keep track of money by setting up a budget and tracking spending	2.13	1.35	
Take it easy on yourself or take it slow		2.11	1.25
Read information on how gambling works		2.11	1.26
Think about how your money could be better spent		2.09	1.29
Compare costs and benefits of continuing to gamble		2.09	1.28
Increase fluid intake		2.03	1.22
Try methods to improve your sleep		1.93	1.23
Plan ahead and leave credit cards and non-essential cash at home		1.91	1.28
Regularly contribute to a savings plan		1.90	1.28
Read information on responsible gambling		1.83	1.14
Remind yourself that you don't need to gamble		1.81	1.14
Don't drink alcohol or use drugs while gambling		1.81	1.20
Set limits on time/money spent gambling using smart card or automatic limit		1.80	1.20
Remind yourself of negative consequences of gambling		1.80	1.18
Take a multivitamin or herbal supplement		1.77	1.14
Remind yourself of positive consequences of not gambling		1.77	1.15
Concentrate on being strong or using will power		1.76	1.16
Read information on signs or consequences of problem gambling		1.74	1.11
Read first-hand accounts of other people's experiences		1.74	1.09
Remain hopeful about your future		1.74	1.18
Take regular breaks while gambling		1.73	1.11

7.4 Baseline analysis of helpfulness by problem gambling status

Analyses were performed in order to examine whether the perceived helpfulness of self-help strategies and actions differed as a function of problem gambling status. Firstly, we examined the helpfulness of strategies by comparing: (i) mean helpfulness ratings for each strategy; and (ii) differences in the rank order of strategies across problem gambling groups (section 7.4.1). Secondly, we examined the helpfulness of actions by comparing mean helpfulness ratings across problem gambling groups (section 7.4.2).

Following this, we examined whether the perceived helpfulness of strategies differed as a function of demographics and other participant characteristics (section 7.4.3). Specifically, we examined whether the helpfulness of strategies differed between groups based on gender, age, help-seeking history, and type of gambling.

7.4.1 Strategies by problem gambling group

Differences in mean helpfulness ratings between gambling groups were examined using ANOVA with bonferroni corrected post-hoc tests (Table 81). There was a significant main effect of helpfulness for all 12 strategies, with all strategies except *limiting* rated as significantly less helpful by the no problem group, compared to the

current problem and past problem groups. No differences in helpfulness were observed between the current problem and past problem groups for any strategy, with the exception of *limiting*. This strategy was rated as significantly more effective by the past problem group, compared to the current and no problem groups.

Table 81. Helpfulness of strategies by problem gambling group

	Current (n=245)		Past (n=244)		No problem (n=227)		ANOVA			Total	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F	df	p	Mean	SD
Change your thinking	2.66[a]	0.90	2.72[a]	0.87	1.73[b]	0.87	93.61	(2. 713)	<.001	2.39	0.99
Self-assessment	2.63[a]	0.96	2.58[a]	0.84	1.70[b]	0.78	84.79	(2. 713)	<.001	2.32	0.96
Watching yourself	2.37[a]	0.95	2.34[a]	0.84	1.61[b]	0.74	59.34	(2. 713)	<.001	2.12	0.92
Planning	2.19[a]	0.92	2.25[a]	0.87	1.86[b]	0.81	13.61	(2. 713)	<.001	2.10	0.89
Health and wellbeing	2.14[a]	0.87	2.23[a]	0.87	1.89[b]	0.81	10.11	(2. 713)	<.001	2.09	0.86
Information	2.08[a]	0.83	2.16[a]	0.87	1.78[b]	0.89	12.52	(2. 713)	<.001	2.01	0.88
Limiting	1.94[a]	0.82	2.16[b]	0.83	1.81[a]	0.74	11.98	(2. 713)	<.001	1.97	0.81
Alternative activities	2.19[a]	0.83	2.13[a]	0.82	1.49[b]	0.75	52.76	(2. 713)	<.001	1.95	0.86
Managing finances	2.17[a]	0.89	2.00[a]	0.79	1.56[b]	0.70	36.08	(2. 713)	<.001	1.92	0.84
Reducing opportunity	2.14[a]	0.76	2.09[a]	0.79	1.40[b]	0.68	71.38	(2. 713)	<.001	1.89	0.82
Social support	2.12[a]	0.86	2.00[a]	0.84	1.38[b]	0.68	56.87	(2. 713)	<.001	1.84	0.86
Faith and prayer	2.12[a]	0.86	2.00[a]	0.84	1.38[b]	0.68	56.87	(2. 713)	<.001	1.84	0.86

[a] Means in a row with different subscripts are significantly different ($p<.05$)

A second set of analyses examined whether the rank order of strategies by helpfulness differed between problem gambling groups. A non-parametric Friedman test showed significant differences between the three groups ($\chi2(2) = 18.167$, $p<0.001$). Wilcoxon signed ranks tests with Bonferroni correction applied showed significant differences between the rank order of strategies in the current problem and no problem groups ($Z=-3.065$, $p=0.002$) and the past problem and no problem groups ($Z=-3.061$, $p=0.002$), but not between the current problem and past problem groups ($Z=-0.157$, $p=0.86$). Thus, helpfulness ratings of strategies for those with a current or past gambling problem were similar, but were significantly different to those who had never had a problem.

7.4.2   Actions by problem gambling status

Table 82 presents the number of actions that appeared in each top 30 list, classified according to the strategy they represent. Those with a current problem endorsed more actions related to *changing thoughts*, *reducing opportunity*, and *watching yourself*; and were less likely to endorse items related to *setting limits* and *health and wellbeing* compared to the no problem and past problem groups. The no problem group

endorsed more actions related to *information* compared to both the current problem and past problem groups.

Table 82. Number of actions endorsed in top 30 by gambling groups

	Current problem	Past problem	No problem
Information	1	1	4
Self-assessment	2	2	2
Setting limits	0	2	2
Planning	2	2	2
Managing finances	1	1	1
Reducing opportunity	4	3	3
Changing thoughts	10	8	8
Watching yourself	5	4	4
Alternative activities	3	2	2
Health and wellbeing	2	4	4
Social support	0	0	0
Faith and prayer	0	1	1
Total	**30**	**30**	**30**

In order to determine whether the perceived helpfulness of actions differed between problem gambling groups, helpfulness ratings of actions that appeared in the top 30 of any group were examined using ANOVA with bonferroni corrected post-hoc tests (Table 83). This table collates the strategies and actions discussed in the previous sections and supports the overall findings.

Table 83. Top 30 actions across all gambling groups

Action	Current		Past		None		ANOVA			Current	Past	None
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F	df	p	Top 30	Top 30	Top 30
Think about how your money could be better spent	2.98a	1.09	3.08a	1.13	2.09b	1.29	49.96	(2. 713)	.000	Y	Y	Y
Remind yourself…system is designed for you to lose	2.68a	1.21	2.95b	1.13	2.37c	1.28	13.22	(2. 713)	.000	Y	Y	Y
Eat a healthy balanced diet	2.48a	1.20	2.74a	1.21	2.66a	1.31	2.80	(2. 713)	.061	Y	Y	Y
Compare costs and benefits of continuing to gamble	2.73a	1.11	2.98a	1.09	2.09b	1.28	36.12	(2. 713)	.000	Y	Y	Y
Accept that gambling needs to change	3.09a	1.08	3.00a	1.16	0.06b	1.39	161.83	(2. 713)	.000	Y	Y	N
Remind yourself of negative consequences of gambling	2.82a	1.12	3.00a	1.09	1.80b	1.18	76.84	(2. 713)	.000	Y	Y	Y
Remind yourself of positive consequences of not gambling	2.82a	1.09	2.95a	1.15	1.77b	1.15	77.24	(2. 713)	.000	Y	Y	Y
Plan ahead and limit amount of money you carry	2.60a	1.23	2.65a	1.24	2.22b	1.31	8.03	(2. 713)	.000	Y	Y	Y
Calculate money and time spent gambling	2.62a	1.25	2.71a	1.17	2.15b	1.21	14.29	(2. 713)	.000	Y	Y	Y
Engage in regular exercise	2.42a	1.19	2.69b	1.24	2.34a	1.31	5.19	(2. 713)	.006	Y	Y	Y
Avoid chasing losses	2.26a	1.23	2.77b	1.25	2.32a	1.31	11.64	(2. 713)	.000	N	Y	Y
Engage in an activity that gives you a feeling of achievement	2.67a	1.22	2.71a	1.25	1.67b	1.12	55.92	(2. 713)	.000	Y	Y	N
Plan ahead and leave credit cards and non-essential cash at home	2.62a	1.23	2.53a	1.24	1.91b	1.28	22.21	(2. 713)	.000	Y	Y	Y
Concentrate on being strong or using will power	2.60a	1.20	2.61a	1.22	1.76b	1.16	38.29	(2. 713)	.000	Y	Y	Y
Remind yourself that you don't need to gamble	2.44a	1.12	2.70b	1.15	1.81c	1.14	37.66	(2. 713)	.000	Y	Y	Y
Keep track of money by setting up a budget and tracking spending	2.32a	1.29	2.52a	1.28	2.13a	1.35	5.33	(2. 713)	.005	N	Y	Y
Set spending limit for each week or fortnight	2.12a	1.20	2.39a	1.27	2.43b	1.33	4.34	(2. 713)	.013	N	N	Y
Ensure your physical health needs are met	2.21a	1.17	2.44a	1.25	2.27a	1.33	2.28	(2. 713)	.103	N	Y	Y
Make a resolution to change your gambling	2.76a	1.14	2.63a	1.23	1.45b	0.93	98.70	(2. 713)	.000	Y	Y	N
Identify inaccurate thoughts about gambling or winning	2.44a	1.14	2.67a	1.22	1.71b	1.13	42.52	(2. 713)	.000	Y	Y	N
Engage in a new form of entertainment	2.61a	1.21	2.61a	1.21	1.59b	1.06	58.59	(2. 713)	.000	Y	Y	N
Re-establish trust and belief in yourself	2.54a	1.13	2.67a	1.22	1.57b	1.05	64.56	(2. 713)	.000	Y	Y	N
Keep busy to avoid thinking about or engaging in gambling	2.63a	1.16	2.56a	1.25	1.56b	1.01	63.22	(2. 713)	.000	Y	Y	N
Take it easy on yourself or take it slow	2.26a	1.17	2.41a	1.23	2.11a	1.25	3.58	(2. 713)	.028	N	Y	Y
Distract yourself or do something else until urge to gamble passes	2.75a	1.11	2.47b	1.22	1.48c	0.94	86.53	(2. 713)	.000	Y	Y	N

Action	Current		Past		None		ANOVA			Current	Past	None
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F	df	p	Top 30	Top 30	Top 30
Monitor how your emotions relate to gambling	2.49[a]	1.21	2.62[a]	1.22	1.58[b]	1.01	56.23	(2. 713)	.000	Y	Y	N
Read information on how gambling works	2.07[a]	1.05	2.41[b]	1.20	2.11[a]	1.26	5.92	(2. 713)	.003	N	Y	Y
Complete daily activities around the house	2.50[a]	1.18	2.36[a]	1.22	1.65[b]	1.08	35.59	(2. 713)	.000	Y	N	N
Remain hopeful about your future	2.34[a]	1.19	2.42[a]	1.29	1.74[b]	1.18	21.56	(2. 713)	.000	N	Y	Y
Stick with my strategy - don't increase or change bet	1.78[a]	1.05	2.42[b]	1.31	2.32[c]	1.33	19.42	(2. 713)	.000	N	Y	Y
Focus on not gambling each day at a time	2.60[a]	1.23	2.30[b]	1.28	1.52[c]	1.05	51.09	(2. 713)	.000	Y	N	N
Read first-hand accounts of other people's experiences	2.40[a]	1.14	2.28[a]	1.20	1.74[b]	1.09	21.68	(2. 713)	.000	Y	N	Y
Increase fluid intake	2.12[a]	1.18	2.29[a]	1.27	2.03[a]	1.22	2.77	(2. 713)	.063	N	N	Y
Monitor for signs that gambling is becoming a problem	2.44[a]	1.19	2.45[a]	1.24	1.43[b]	0.93	62.31	(2. 713)	.000	Y	Y	N
Use alternate strategies to deal with gambling triggers	2.37[a]	1.15	2.32[a]	1.21	1.56[b]	1.04	37.65	(2. 713)	.000	Y	N	N
Try methods to improve your sleep	2.05[a]	1.17	2.24[a]	1.24	1.93[a]	1.23	3.86	(2. 713)	.022	N	N	Y
Make a daily affirmation such as staying positive or letting go	2.46[a]	1.22	2.27[a]	1.25	1.44[b]	0.94	51.30	(2. 713)	.000	Y	N	N
Don't drink alcohol or use drugs while gambling	2.09[a]	1.27	2.28[a]	1.32	1.81[b]	1.20	8.14	(2. 713)	.000	N	N	Y
Read information on signs or consequences of problem gambling	2.16[a]	1.11	2.27[a]	1.13	1.74[b]	1.11	14.47	(2. 713)	.000	N	N	Y
Avoid gambling when feeling...vulnerable to gambling	2.25[a]	1.33	2.42[a]	1.33	1.44[b]	0.93	42.80	(2. 713)	.000	N	Y	N
Regularly contribute to a savings plan	2.08[a]	1.24	2.14[a]	1.25	1.90[a]	1.28	2.36	(2. 713)	.095	N	N	Y
Engage in behaviours that are incompatible with attending a venue	2.44[a]	1.27	2.11[b]	1.21	1.41[c]	0.93	49.41	(2. 713)	.000	Y	N	N
Pre-purchase goods or bills to reduce spare cash	2.43[a]	1.32	2.07[b]	1.28	1.42[c]	0.93	42.62	(2. 713)	.000	Y	N	N
Count days since you've made a change in your gambling	2.45[a]	1.20	2.11[b]	1.26	1.33[c]	0.82	62.76	(2. 713)	.000	Y	N	N
Read information on responsible gambling	1.92[a]	1.07	2.08[a]	1.07	1.83[a]	1.14	3.29	(2. 713)	.038	N	N	Y
Set limits on time/money...using smart card or automatic limit	1.98[a]	1.22	1.94[a]	1.24	1.80[a]	1.20	1.34	(2. 713)	.263	N	N	Y
Take regular breaks while gambling	1.83[a]	1.10	2.04[a]	1.22	1.73[a]	1.11	4.39	(2. 713)	.013	N	N	Y
Take a multivitamin or herbal supplement	1.87[a]	1.10	1.87[a]	1.16	1.77[a]	1.14	0.61	(2. 713)	.544	N	N	Y

[a] Means in a row with different subscripts are significantly different ($p<.05$)

7.4.2   Strategies by gender

In order to determine whether there were gender differences in the pereceived helpfulness of different strategies, we compared the mean helpfulness ratings provided by males (n=485) and females (n=228) for each of the 12 strategy types. Three participants who reported their gender as 'other' were not included in the analyses.

The results indicated that females tended to rate strategies as more helpful, compared to males (Table 84). Strategies that were rated significantly more helpful by females included *change your thinking*; *self-assessment*; *self-monitoring*; *health and wellbeing*; *limiting*; *alternative activities*; *managing finances*; *reducing opportunity*; *social support*; and *faith and prayer*. There was a trend (*p*=0.07) for females to rate *information* as more helpful than males, although this did not reach significance. The only strategy that did not differ in perceived helpfulness between genders was *planning*.

Table 84. Helpfulness of strategies by gender

	Male (n=485)		Female (n=228)		ANOVA			Total (713)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F	df	*p*	Mean	SD
Change your thinking	2.32	0.98	2.52	0.98	6.44	(1. 711)	0.01	2.38	0.99
Self-assessment	2.26	0.93	2.45	1.01	6.13	(1. 711)	0.01	2.32	0.96
Self-monitoring	2.06	0.88	2.23	0.97	5.49	(1. 711)	0.02	2.12	0.91
Planning	2.08	0.88	2.15	0.90	1.00	(1. 711)	0.32	2.10	0.89
Health and wellbeing	2.02	0.82	2.24	0.93	10.38	(1. 711)	0.00	2.09	0.86
Information	1.97	0.87	2.10	0.89	3.22	(1. 711)	0.07	2.01	0.88
Limiting	2.02	0.79	1.87	0.84	5.21	(1. 711)	0.02	1.97	0.81
Alternative activities	1.87	0.85	2.11	0.86	12.23	(1. 711)	0.00	1.95	0.86
Managing finances	1.87	0.84	2.03	0.83	5.99	(1. 711)	0.01	1.92	0.84
Reducing opportunity	1.82	0.82	2.02	0.80	9.46	(1. 711)	0.00	1.89	0.82
Social support	1.76	0.83	2.01	0.90	12.65	(1. 711)	0.00	1.84	0.86
Faith and prayer	1.57	0.78	1.88	0.91	21.34	(1. 711)	0.00	1.67	0.84

7.4.3   Strategies by age

To examine whether the perceived helpfulness of strategies varied as a function of age, participants were split into two groups: under 35 years of age (n=213) and 35 years and over (n=479). Twenty-four participants (3.3%) did not provide a valid date of birth or age range, and were excluded from the analyses.

With the exception of *faith and prayer*, all strategies were rated as significantly more helpful by participants in the younger age group. The helpfulness rating of *faith and prayer* did not differ between younger and older participants (see Table 85).

Table 85. Helpfulness of strategies by age

Age group	Under 35 (n=213)		35 and over (n=479)		ANOVA			Total (692)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F	df	p	Mean	SD
Change your thinking	2.58	0.91	2.29	1.00	12.97	(1. 690)	0.00	2.38	0.99
Self-assessment	2.57	0.96	2.20	0.94	22.58	(1. 690)	0.00	2.32	0.96
Self-monitoring	2.29	0.93	2.04	0.90	11.87	(1. 690)	0.00	2.12	0.92
Planning	2.24	0.93	2.04	0.86	7.73	(1. 690)	0.01	2.11	0.89
Health and wellbeing	2.21	0.93	2.05	0.83	5.16	(1. 690)	0.02	2.10	0.86
Information	2.17	0.86	1.94	0.88	9.98	(1. 690)	0.00	2.01	0.88
Limiting	2.20	0.83	1.88	0.78	24.91	(1. 690)	0.00	1.98	0.81
Alternative activities	2.18	0.90	1.84	0.82	23.61	(1. 690)	0.00	1.94	0.86
Managing finances	2.07	0.91	1.86	0.80	9.76	(1. 690)	0.00	1.92	0.84
Reducing opportunity	2.09	0.84	1.79	0.78	20.91	(1. 690)	0.00	1.89	0.81
Social support	2.13	0.92	1.73	0.81	32.94	(1. 690)	0.00	1.85	0.87
Faith and prayer	1.74	0.89	1.64	0.81	1.89	(1. 690)	0.17	1.67	0.84

7.4.4   Strategies by professional help-seeking history

In order to examine whether mean helpfulness scores varied between gamblers with different histories of professional help-seeking, two groups were created: 'never sought professional help' and 'sought professional help'. Participants were categorised as having sought professional help if they had ever received help (either currently or in the past) from the following sources: face-to-face gambling help, gambling helplines, online gambling help (chat or email), face-to-face support groups, online support groups, other general help services, residential treatment programs, or self-exclusion programs. In total, 303 participants had never sought professional help, 183 participants were seeking professional help or had used it in the past, and 3 participants (0.6%) had missing data. There were no differences in the perceived helpfulness of strategies between these groups (Table 86).

Table 86. Helpfulness of strategies by professional help-seeking history [a]

Professional help-seeking history	Never sought help (n=303)		Sought help (n=183)		ANOVA			Total (n=486)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F	df	p	Mean	SD
Change your thinking	2.71	0.89	2.68	0.87	0.08	(1. 484)	0.78	2.70	0.88
Self-assessment	2.63	0.92	2.57	0.88	0.50	(1. 484)	0.48	2.61	0.90
Self-monitoring	2.34	0.90	2.38	0.89	0.24	(1. 484)	0.62	2.36	0.90
Planning	2.23	0.88	2.20	0.93	0.10	(1. 484)	0.76	2.22	0.90
Health and wellbeing	2.20	0.89	2.17	0.85	0.11	(1. 484)	0.74	2.19	0.87
Information	2.13	0.89	2.10	0.79	0.20	(1. 484)	0.65	2.12	0.85
Limiting	2.08	0.81	1.98	0.85	1.62	(1. 484)	0.20	2.04	0.82
Alternative activities	2.15	0.85	2.17	0.80	0.12	(1. 484)	0.73	2.16	0.83
Managing finances	2.11	0.86	2.05	0.82	0.48	(1. 484)	0.49	2.09	0.85

Professional help-seeking history	Never sought help (n=303)		Sought help (n=183)		ANOVA			Total (n=486)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F	df	p	Mean	SD
Reducing opportunity	2.12	0.80	2.11	0.75	0.00	(1. 484)	0.97	2.11	0.78
Social support	2.04	0.84	2.09	0.87	0.26	(1. 484)	0.61	2.06	0.85
Faith and prayer	1.76	0.80	1.80	0.90	0.34	(1. 484)	0.77	2.06	0.84

[a] Question asked to participants who reported current or past gambling problems only (n=489).

7.4.4   Strategies by most problematic type of gambling

To examine whether the perceived helpfulness of strategies differed according to the type of gambling that caused the most problems, participants were separated into two groups. 'Non-strategic gamblers' (n=236) included all participants who nominated numbers games or EGMs as their most problematic form of gambling, while 'strategic gamblers' (n=253) included all participants who nominated informal private betting, table games, racing, or sports as their most problematic form of gambling.

Two strategies were rated as significantly more helpful by non-strategic gamblers, compared to strategic gamblers: *health and wellbeing*, and *faith and prayer*. There were no other differences between groups in mean helpfulness ratings (see Table 87).

Table 87. Helpfulness of strategies by most problematic type of gambling [a]

Most problematic gambling type	Strategic (n=253)		Non-strategic (n=236)		ANOVA			Total (n=489)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F	df	p	Mean	SD
Change your thinking	2.68	0.86	2.70	0.90	0.10	(1. 487)	0.75	2.69	0.88
Self-assessment	2.62	0.86	2.58	0.93	0.24	(1. 487)	0.62	2.60	0.90
Self-monitoring	2.35	0.86	2.36	0.93	0.00	(1. 487)	0.99	2.35	0.89
Planning	2.26	0.89	2.17	0.90	1.23	(1. 487)	0.27	2.22	0.90
Health and wellbeing	2.12	0.84	2.26	0.90	3.21	(1. 487)	0.07	2.19	0.87
Information	2.09	0.83	2.16	0.88	0.80	(1. 487)	0.37	2.12	0.85
Limiting	2.08	0.81	2.02	0.85	0.65	(1. 487)	0.42	2.05	0.83
Alternative activities	2.14	0.81	2.17	0.85	0.16	(1. 487)	0.69	2.16	0.83
Managing finances	2.08	0.85	2.09	0.84	0.02	(1. 487)	0.90	2.09	0.84
Reducing opportunity	2.09	0.78	2.14	0.77	0.38	(1. 487)	0.54	2.11	0.78
Social support	2.04	0.84	2.08	0.87	0.25	(1. 487)	0.62	2.06	0.85
Faith and prayer	1.67	0.77	1.88	0.89	7.85	(1. 487)	0.01	1.77	0.84

[a] Question asked to participants who reported current or past gambling problems only (n=489).

7.5   Chapter summary

Participants at baseline identified a broad range of strategies and actions that they had used throughout their lives. Overall, the strategy rated as most helpful was

changing thoughts, with a mean helpfulness score of 2.39. This was followed by the strategies *self-assessment* (2.32) and *watching yourself* (2.12); while the strategies rated least helpful were *social support* (1.84) and *faith and prayer* (1.84).

The four actions rated most helpful were *think about how your money could be better spent* (from the strategy *watching yourself*), *remind yourself that sometimes people win… but the system is designed for you to lose* (from the strategy *changing thoughts*), *eat a healthy balanced diet* (from the strategy *health and wellbeing*) and *compare costs and benefits of continuing to gamble* (from the strategy *changing thoughts*). The three actions rated least helpful were *engage in prayer or meditation*, *attend church or spiritual meeting* (both from the strategy *faith and prayer*) and *move house to get away from gambling venues* (from the *reducing opportunity* strategy).

For those participants with a current gambling problem, the three strategies rated most helpful were: *changing thoughts*, *self-assessment*, and *watching yourself*; while the three least helpful were: *information*; *setting limits*; and *faith and prayer*. The three actions rated most helpful for those with a current gambling problem were: *accept that gambling needs to change* (from the strategy *self-assessment*), *think about how your money could be better spent* (from the strategy *changing thoughts*), and *remind yourself of the negative consequences of gambling* (also from the strategy *changing thoughts*).

For those with a past gambling problem, the three strategies rated most helpful were: *changing thoughts*; *self-assessment*; and *watching yourself*; while the three rated least helpful were: *managing finances*; *social support*; and *faith and prayer*. , The three actions rated most helpful were the same as those reported by participants who had a current gambling problem, although the order was different. In this case, the action rated most helpful was *think about how your money could be better spent*, followed by *accept that gambling needs to change*, and *remind yourself of the negative consequences of gambling*.

In contrast, participants who identified as never having a gambling problem reported that the most helpful self-help strategies were: *health and wellbeing*; *planning*; and *setting limits*; while the three rated least helpful were: *faith and prayer*; *reducing opportunity*; and *social support*. The three actions rated most helpful were different to those reported by participants who had experienced problems with their gambling. In this case the action rated most helpful was *eat a healthy balanced diet* (from the strategy *health and wellbeing*), followed by *set spending limit for each week or fortnight* (from the strategy *planning*) and *remind yourself sometimes people win at gambling but the system is designed for you to lose* (from the strategy *changing thoughts*).

There did not appear to be any differences in mean helpfulness ratings between current problem and past problem groups for any strategy with the exception of *limiting*, which was reported to be significantly more helpful by the past problem group, compared to the current and no problem groups. While females tended to rate strategies as more helpful (compared to males), there were no difference in mean helpfulness scores for the strategy *planning* between genders. Younger

participants (under 35 years of age) tended to rate all strategies as significantly more helpful than older participants (35 years and over) with the exception of *faith and prayer* where there was no difference. There were no differences in the perceived helpfulness of strategies between groups of participants who had 'never sought professional help' and those who had 'sought professional help.' Those who tended to prefer 'non-strategy' type gambling (e.g. EGMs), compared to strategic gamblers, reported strategies of *health and wellbeing*, and *faith and prayer* were be more helpful.

8. Uptake of Self-Help Strategies and Actions by Gamblers

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the second survey, which examined the uptake of self-help strategies and actions in the 30 days following completion of the baseline survey. The first two sections of this chapter identify the most frequently and least frequently used strategies (section 8.2) and actions (section 8.3) amongst the overall sample. These sections also include a comparison of helpfulness and uptake, in order to determine whether the strategies and actions that are perceived as most helpful are also the most frequently used. This is an important consideration given that some actions may be used frequently due to convenience or the presence of triggers (e.g., 'remind yourself of the negative consequences of gambling'), while others may be used less frequently for similar reasons. While understanding the relationship between helpfulness and uptake was not a key aim of this report, these comparisons nonetheless provide context for the interpretation of results throughout Chapter 8.

Following these initial analyses, participants were classified according to their baseline stage of change outlined by the Transtheoretical Model (TTM). As discussed in Chapter 1, the TTM is of relevance to understanding why people use self-help as it emphasises the internal processes that lead to behaviour change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983). However, while the model has been frequently applied in gambling research and treatment, no studies have examined how the stages and processes of change relate to the strategies and actions that gamblers use to regulate their behaviour. As such, the remainder of this chapter examines the use of self-help strategies and actions amongst participants who report concerns about their gambling, but are at different stages of change in terms of addressing their gambling. Specifically, section 8.4 describes the procedure used to estimate stage of change for the current sample, and identifies the most frequently used and least frequently used strategies amongst participants at different stages of change. Finally, section 8.5 reports the results of analyses comparing strategy uptake and gambling behaviour across groups.

8.2 Uptake of self-help strategies over a 30 day period

Table 88 reports the total number of participants who used each of the 12 self-help strategies over the past 30 days. Participants were considered to have 'used' a strategy if they reported using one or more of its corresponding actions over the past 30 days. Overall, the most frequently used strategies were *changing thoughts*, and *health and wellbeing*, (used by over 75% of the sample), followed by *self-assessment*, *limiting*, *planning*, *watching yourself*, *alternative activities*, *managing finances* (used by 70%-75% of the sample) and *reducing opportunity* (used by just under 70% of the sample). The least frequently used were *social support*, *information*, and *faith and prayer*, (used by between 51% and 57% of the sample).

Table 88. Uptake of strategies (whole sample: n=411)

Strategy (no. actions)	Used strategy	
	n	%ª
Changing thoughts (10)	320	77.9%
Health and wellbeing (11)	309	75.2%
Self-assessment (3)	299	72.7%
Watching yourself (6)	299	72.7%
Limiting (9)	298	72.5%
Planning (7)	296	72.0%
Alternative activities (13)	293	71.3%
Managing finances (11)	288	70.1%
Reducing opportunity (14)	287	69.8%
Social support (6)	234	56.9%
Information (5)	220	53.5%
Faith and prayer (3)	213	51.8%

ª Percentage of sample that used at least one action in each strategy group

In order to examine the relationship between uptake and perceived helpfulness, the uptake of each strategy over the 30-day measurement period was plotted alongside its mean baseline helpfulness rating (Figure 1; note that both the x-axis and y-axis have been truncated by an equal proportion [10%] to facilitate readability). Baseline helpfulness ratings were used as it was expected that these would influence subsequent use (i.e., having been presented with a list of actions and strategies, participants would be more likely to use the ones they considered helpful).

As illustrated by Figure 1, many strategies appeared to cluster together, with similar levels of uptake, and only slight differences in perceived helpfulness (e.g., setting limits, alternative activities, managing finances, and reducing opportunity; watching yourself and planning). However, there was a significant positive correlation between uptake and perceived helpfulness (r=0.62, p=0.03), indicating that the strategies that were used by a greater proportion of the sample over the past 30 days tended to be those that were considered most helpful at baseline, and vice versa. This was clearest in regard to *changing thoughts* (which demonstrated the greatest uptake, and highest helpfulness ratings); *social support,* and *faith and prayer* (which demonstrated notably lower rates of uptake than the other strategies, and the two lowest helpfulness ratings). The relatively low uptake of information is of interest, as this strategy was perceived as moderately helpful, yet used by a relatively small proportion of the sample.
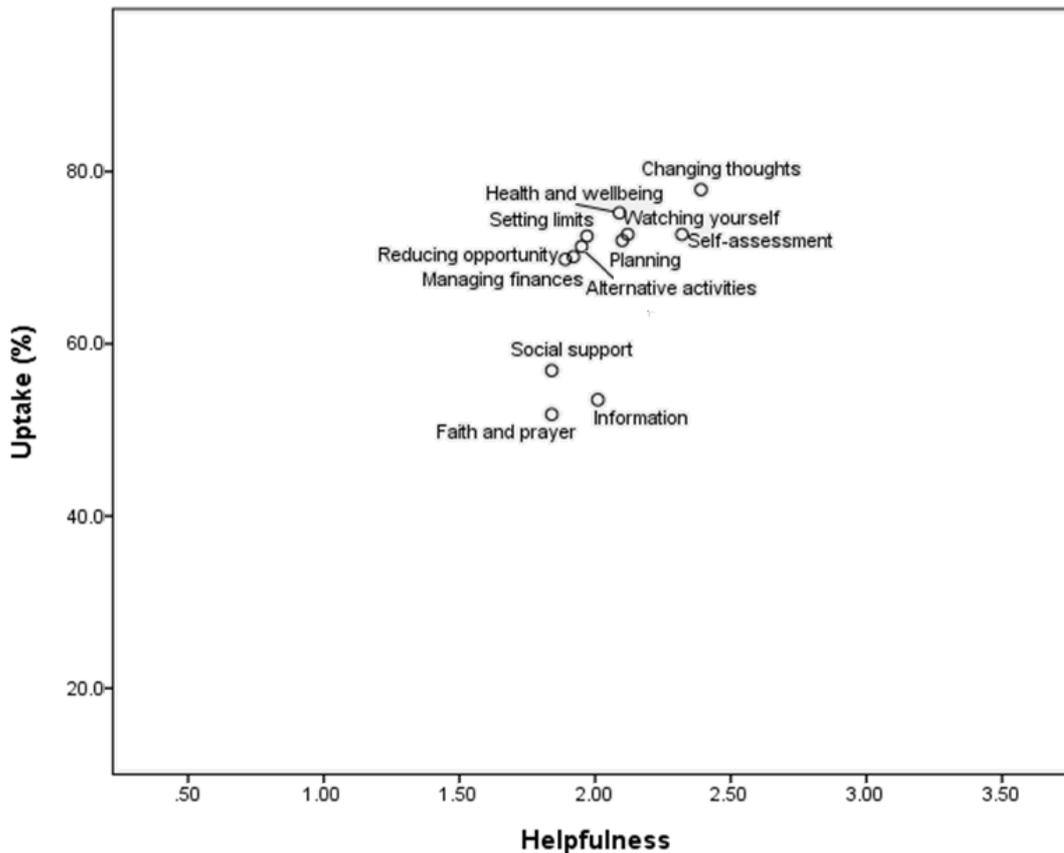
Figure 1. Relationship between strategy uptake and perceived helpfulness

8.3 Uptake of self-help actions over a 30 day period

Table 89 reports the total number of participants who used each action over the past 30 days, ranked from most frequently used to least frequently used. As a percentage of the overall sample, the number of participants who reported each action ranged from 13.1% to 65.0%, with the majority of actions (77; 77.2%) used by between 20% and 50% of participants.

The three actions with the highest uptake (used by over 60% of the sample) all involved *changing thoughts*, *including think about how your money could be better spent*, *remind yourself that you don't need to gamble*, and *remind yourself of the negative consequences of gambling*. The three actions with the lowest uptake (less than 18% of the sample) were only use credit cards that don't allow cash withdrawal, (from the strategy reducing opportunity), *attend church or spiritual meeting* (from the strategy *faith and prayer*) and *move house to get away from gambling activities* (from the strategy *reducing opportunity*).

Table 89. Uptake of actions (whole sample: n=411)

Action	Uptake	
	n	**%**
Think about how your money could be better spent	267	64.96%
Remind yourself that you don't need to gamble	259	63.02%
Remind yourself of negative consequences of gambling	252	61.31%
Remind yourself sometimes people win at gambling but system is designed for you to lose	249	60.58%
Calculate money and time spent gambling	248	60.34%
Remind yourself of positive consequences of not gambling	242	58.88%
Eat a healthy balanced diet	241	58.64%
Compare costs and benefits of continuing to gamble	240	58.39%
Accept that gambling needs to change	238	57.91%
Re-establish trust and belief in yourself	233	56.69%
Avoid chasing losses	216	52.55%
Complete daily activities around the house	216	52.55%
Set spending limit for each week or fortnight	215	52.31%
Distract yourself or do something else until urge to gamble passes	215	52.31%
Concentrate on being strong or using will power	214	52.07%
Keep busy to avoid thinking about or engaging in gambling	210	51.09%
Remain hopeful about your future	203	49.39%
Stick with my strategy - don't increase or change bet	201	48.91%
Plan ahead and limit amount of money you carry	197	47.93%
Engage in a new form of entertainment	196	47.69%
Engage in an activity that gives you a feeling of achievement	192	46.72%
Engage in regular exercise	191	46.47%
Make a resolution to change your gambling	190	46.23%
Keep track of money by setting up a budget and tracking spending	187	45.50%
Identify inaccurate thoughts about gambling or winning	185	45.01%
Take it easy on yourself or take it slow	185	45.01%
Use alternate strategies to deal with gambling triggers	177	43.07%
Take a long walk	174	42.34%
Monitor for signs that gambling is becoming a problem	173	42.09%
Focus on not gambling each day at a time	172	41.85%
Avoid gambling when feeling down, depressed or otherwise vulnerable to gambling	168	40.88%
Ensure your physical health needs are met	168	40.88%
Plan ahead and leave credit cards and non essential cash at home	167	40.63%
Regularly contribute to a savings plan	166	40.39%
Participate in regular structured groups or sports like football or tennis	166	40.39%
Increase fluid intake	166	40.39%
Explore additional work or study-related activities	165	40.15%
Read information on signs or consequences of problem gambling	164	39.90%
Postpone gambling until a later date	163	39.66%
Read information on responsible gambling	162	39.42%
Read information on how gambling works	160	38.93%

Action	Uptake	
	n	%
Complete a questionnaire that gave me feedback on gambling problem	160	38.93%
Play free gambling games like fantasy league or Facebook slots	159	38.69%
Make a daily affirmation such as staying positive or letting go	158	38.44%
Plan gamble free days each week	157	38.20%
Spend less time alone	156	37.96%
Set limits on time/money spent gambling using smart card or automatic limit	154	37.47%
Read first hand accounts of other people's experiences	153	37.23%
Avoid gambling alone	153	37.23%
Engage in behaviours that are incompatible with attending a venue	151	36.74%
Be more open and honest with family and friends about gambling	148	36.01%
Try methods to improve your sleep	147	35.77%
Reward yourself for reducing your gambling	146	35.52%
Count days since you've made a change in your gambling	146	35.52%
Schedule gambling sessions so that they do not interfere with important activities	144	35.04%
Avoid the first bet	144	35.04%
Avoid gambling with heavy gamblers	144	35.04%
Take regular breaks while gambling	139	33.82%
Don't drink alcohol or use drugs while gambling	138	33.58%
Focus on managing issues that contribute to your gambling	136	33.09%
Pre-purchase goods or bills to reduce spare cash	135	32.85%
Take a multivitamin or herbal supplement	133	32.36%
Schedule other activities after gambling to limit session time	132	32.12%
Don't borrow money from friends or family, banks or loan sharks	129	31.39%
Disclose to someone else the extent of your gambling	129	31.39%
Ask family or friends to help or support you	127	30.90%
Keep limited funds in online or loyalty gambling accounts	122	29.68%
Avoid being near/passing gambling venues	122	29.68%
Listen, play, sing or dance to music	121	29.44%
Avoid discussions about gambling that might trigger own gambling	121	29.44%
Make a list of strategies that worked for you in the past	120	29.20%
Only go to venues that offer other activities as well as gambling	119	28.95%
Start a new hobby like arts, crafts or knitting	116	28.22%
Consolidate debts and implement payment plan	115	27.98%
Express anger or sadness without causing harm to self or others	114	27.74%
Keep money in joint account with partner or family member	111	27.01%
Practice relaxation strategies like yoga, meditation	109	26.52%
Read gambling self-help books or materials	108	26.28%
Avoid friends/family who gamble	107	26.03%
Set up cues to keep track of time while gambling	107	26.03%
Self-exclude or ban yourself from a land-based or online venue	105	25.55%
Volunteer your time or help someone in need	105	25.55%
Give cards or cash to a family member or friend to limit access	102	24.82%
Have a sauna, salt bath or spa bath	101	24.57%

Action	Uptake	
	n	%
Give winnings to a friend while gambling or put somewhere safe	100	24.33%
Create a physical reminder to limit your gambling	96	23.36%
Cut up, destroy or cancel credit cards	94	22.87%
Write about progress, thoughts, achievements or struggles related to gambling	89	21.65%
Engage in prayer or meditation	89	21.65%
Close online accounts related to gambling	86	20.92%
Do something that is risky or causes you to feel a rush of adrenaline	86	20.92%
Talk to a health professional about your gambling	85	20.68%
Lower daily ATM withdrawal limits	83	20.19%
Limit or restrict internet access	82	19.95%
Share or post comments about gambling or emotions in online forum	72	17.52%
Only use credit cards that don't allow cash withdrawal	70	17.03%
Attend church or spiritual meeting	64	15.57%
Move house to get away from gambling venues	54	13.14%

The relationship between uptake and perceived helpfulness of actions was also examined. Again, the uptake of each action over the 30-day measurement period was plotted alongside its baseline helpfulness rating (Figure 1); again both axes have been truncated by 10% to facilitate readability). There was a strong positive correlation between perceived helpfulness and uptake of actions (r=0.93, *p*<0.001), with the action *think about how your money could be better spent* demonstrating the highest helpfulness rating and greatest uptake, and the action *move house to get away from gambling venues* demonstrating the lowest helpfulness rating and lowest uptake.

Examination of residuals highlighted two actions that demonstrated relatively high levels of uptake, given their helpfulness ratings (*remind yourself that you don't need to gamble* and *play free gambling games like fantasy league or Facebook slots*). Conversely, five actions demonstrated relatively low levels of uptake, given their helpfulness ratings (*plan ahead and limit the amount of money you carry*, *engage in regular exercise*, *ensure your physical health needs are met*, *plan ahead and leave credit cards and non-essential cash at home*, and *don't borrow money from friends or family, banks, or loan sharks*).
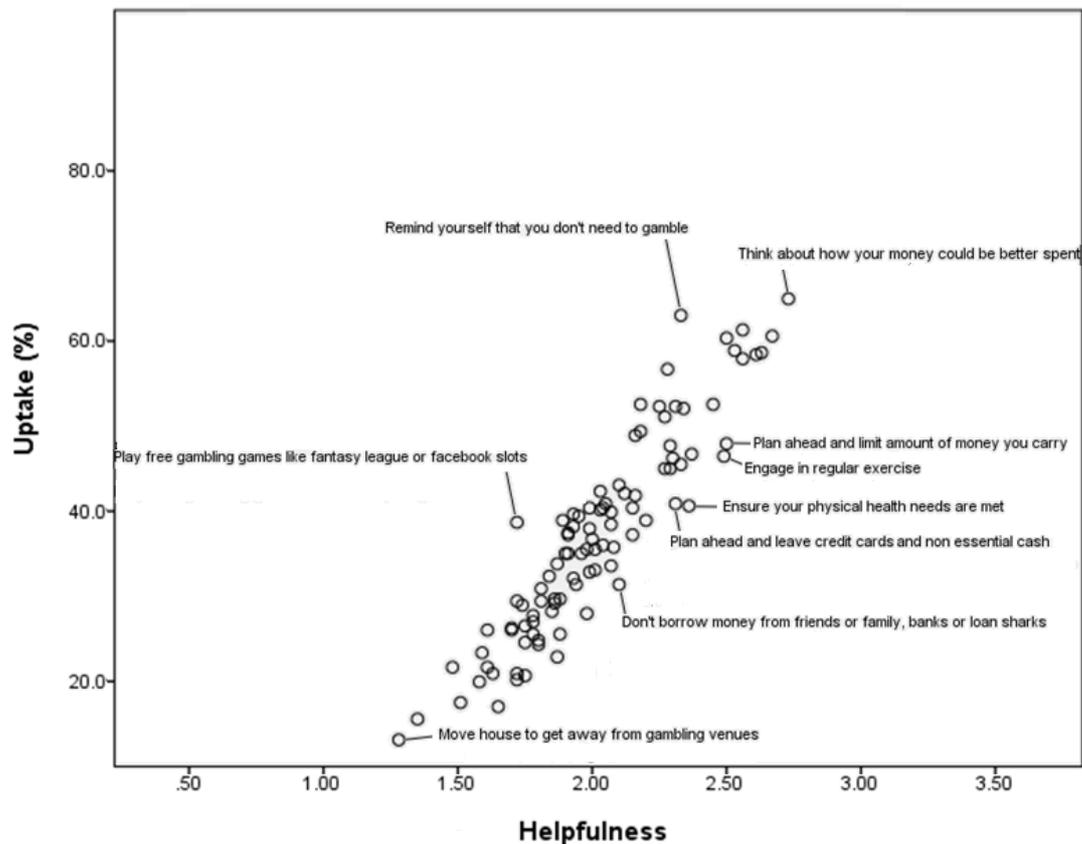
Figure 2. Relationship between action uptake and perceived helpfulness

8.4 Uptake by stage of change

A baseline score for participants' stage of change was calculated using the *Gambling Readiness to Change Questionnaire* (Neighbors et al., 2002). However, as the questionnaire only classifies participants as being in the precontemplation, contemplation, or action stages of change, additional information was used to identify participants who were likely to be in the maintenance stage. Specifically, participants were classified as being in the maintenance stage if they: (i) self-reported a past problem with gambling; and (ii) indicated that it had been resolved for 6 months or more (n=121). Participants who self-reported a past problem that had been resolved for less than 6 months were classified as being in the action stage, however one participant did not specify the length of time since they had been in recovery and was excluded from the analyses.

In addition, participants who showed no evidence of ever having had a problem with their gambling were identified and placed in a separate 'no problem' group. The reason for this was that the TTM is a model that explains processes involved in changing a *problematic* behaviour, and individuals who have never experienced gambling problems are therefore unlikely to be moving through the stages of stages of behaviour change that the TTM describes. Participants were included in the 'no problem' group if they (i) self-reported never having had a problem with gambling, and (ii) had a PGSI score of 0 (n=64). Results for the no-problem group are

248

presented for the purpose of comparison with the three stage of change ('problem') groups. The final group sizes were as follows: no problem (n=68), precontemplation (n=28), contemplation (n=120), action (n=77), maintenance (n=121).

8.4.1   Precontemplation

8.4.1.1 Uptake of strategies

The most frequently used strategies amongst the precontemplation group were *limiting*, and *health and wellbeing*, which were used by 82.1% and 75.0% of participants in this group, respectively (see Table 90). The strategies with the next highest uptake were *changing thoughts*, *planning*, *alternative activities*, *managing finances* (all used by 60.7% of the sample), and *self-assessment*, *watching yourself*, and *reducing opportunity*, (all used by 57.1% of the sample). The least frequently used strategies were *information*, *social support,* and *faith and prayer*, (used by between 35% and 47% of the sample).

Table 90. Uptake of strategies (precontemplation: n=28)

Strategy (no. actions)	Used strategy	
	n	*%*[a]
Limiting (9)	23	82.1%
Health and wellbeing (11)	21	75.0%
Changing thoughts (10)	17	60.7%
Planning (7)	17	60.7%
Alternative activities (13)	17	60.7%
Managing finances (11)	17	60.7%
Self-assessment (3)	16	57.1%
Watching yourself (6)	16	57.1%
Reducing opportunity (14)	16	57.1%
Information (5)	13	46.4%
Social support (6)	12	42.9%
Faith and prayer (3)	10	35.7%

[a] Percentage of sample that used at least one action in each strategy group

8.4.1.2 Uptake of actions

Table 91 reports the top 30 self-help actions for participants in the precontemplation stage, ranked from most frequently to least frequently used. The three most frequently used actions were *stick with my strategy – don't increase or change bet* (from the strategy *setting limits*), *calculate money and time spent gambling* (from *self-assessment*), and *eat a healthy balanced diet* (from *health and wellbeing*). The top 30 strategies were relatively evenly spread over strategy groups, with 16.7% involving *setting limits* and *changing thoughts*, 13.3% involving *alternative activities* and *health and wellbeing*, 10.0% involving *managing finances*, 6. 7% involved in *self-*

249

assessment, *reducing opportunity*, and *watching yourself*, and 3.33% *involved in information*, *planning*, and *faith and prayer*.

Table 91. Top 30 actions by uptake: Precontemplation (n=28)

Action	n	%
Stick with my strategy - don't increase or change bet	17	60.7%
Calculate money and time spent gambling	15	53.6%
Eat a healthy balanced diet	15	53.6%
Set spending limit for each week or fortnight	13	46.4%
Complete daily activities around the house	13	46.4%
Avoid chasing losses	12	42.9%
Remind yourself that you don't need to gamble	12	42.9%
Engage in regular exercise	12	42.9%
Keep track of money by setting up a budget and tracking spending	11	39.3%
Keep busy to avoid thinking about or engaging in gambling	11	39.3%
Compare costs and benefits of continuing to gamble	11	39.3%
Remind yourself sometimes people win at gambling but system is designed for you to lose	11	39.3%
Concentrate on being strong or using will power	11	39.3%
Increase fluid intake	11	39.3%
Re-establish trust and belief in yourself	10	35.7%
Engage in an activity that gives you a feeling of achievement	10	35.7%
Take it easy on yourself or take it slow	10	35.7%
Remain hopeful about your future	10	35.7%
Set limits on time/money spent gambling using smart card or automatic limit	9	32.1%
Don't drink alcohol or use drugs while gambling	9	32.1%
Take regular breaks while gambling	9	32.1%
Regularly contribute to a savings plan	9	32.1%
Keep limited funds in online or loyalty gambling accounts	9	32.1%
Postpone gambling until a later date	9	32.1%
Think about how your money could be better spent	9	32.1%
Explore additional work or study-related activities	9	32.1%
Read information on responsible gambling	8	28.6%
Accept that gambling needs to change	8	28.6%
Remind yourself of negative consequences of gambling	8	28.6%
Take a long walk	8	28.6%

8.4.2 Contemplation

8.4.2.1 Uptake of strategies

The most frequently used strategy amongst the contemplation group was *self-assessment* (used by 89.2% of the sample; see Table 92). However, the majority of other strategies were also used by a similarly high percentage of participants, with

changing thoughts, *planning*, *reducing opportunity*, *limiting, alternative activities, watching yourself* and *health and wellbeing* all used by over 80% of the group. managing finances was used slightly less (77.5%), while the least frequently used strategies were again *social support, information*, and *faith and prayer*, (used by between 56% and 69%).

Table 92. Uptake of strategies (contemplation: n=120)

Strategy (no. actions)	Used strategy	
	n	%ª
Self-assessment (3)	107	89.2%
Changing thoughts (10)	104	86.7%
Planning (7)	104	86.7%
Reducing opportunity (14)	104	86.7%
Limiting (9)	102	85.0%
Alternative activities (13)	101	84.2%
Watching yourself (6)	99	82.5%
Health and wellbeing (11)	98	81.7%
Managing finances (11)	93	77.5%
Social support (6)	82	68.3%
Information (5)	78	65.0%
Faith and prayer (3)	68	56.7%

ª Percentage of sample that used at least one action in each strategy group

8.4.2.2 Uptake of actions

Table 93 reports the top 30 self-help actions for participants in the contemplation stage, ranked from most frequently to least frequently used. The three most frequently used actions were *accept that gambling needs to change* (from the strategy *self-assessment*), *remind yourself of negative consequences of gambling*, and *think about how your money could be better spent*, (both from *changing thoughts*). Almost half (43.3%) of the top 30 strategies for the contemplation group involved reducing opportunity, with 13.3% involving *changing thoughts*, 10.0% involving *self-assessment, planning*, and *watching yourself*, 6.7% involving *alternative activities*, and 3.33% involving *setting limits* and *managing finances*.

Table 93. Top 30 actions by uptake: Contemplation (n=120)

Action	n	%
Accept that gambling needs to change	101	84.2%
Remind yourself of negative consequences of gambling	97	80.8%
Think about how your money could be better spent	96	80.0%
Remind yourself sometimes people win at gambling but system is designed for you to lose	90	75.0%
Remind yourself of positive consequences of not gambling	89	74.2%
Remind yourself that you don't need to gamble	87	72.5%
Distract yourself or do something else until urge to gamble passes	86	71.7%
Compare costs and benefits of continuing to gamble	85	70.8%
Make a resolution to change your gambling	85	70.8%
Re-establish trust and belief in yourself	82	68.3%
Calculate money and time spent gambling	81	67.5%
Engage in a new form of entertainment	81	67.5%
Plan ahead and limit amount of money you carry	80	66.7%
Keep busy to avoid thinking about or engaging in gambling	79	65.8%
Complete daily activities around the house	79	65.8%
Plan ahead and leave credit cards and non essential cash at home	75	62.5%
Concentrate on being strong or using will power	75	62.5%
Avoid chasing losses	74	61.7%
Eat a healthy balanced diet	73	60.8%
Set spending limit for each week or fortnight	72	60.0%
Focus on not gambling each day at a time	72	60.0%
Identify inaccurate thoughts about gambling or winning	70	58.3%
Use alternate strategies to deal with gambling triggers	69	57.5%
Engage in an activity that gives you a feeling of achievement	68	56.7%
Take it easy on yourself or take it slow	67	55.8%
Complete a questionnaire that gave me feedback on gambling problem	66	55.0%
Engage in behaviours that are incompatible with attending a venue	66	55.0%
Postpone gambling until a later date	65	54.2%
Monitor for signs that gambling is becoming a problem	65	54.2%
Keep track of money by setting up a budget and tracking spending	64	53.3%

8.4.3   Action

8.4.3.1 Uptake of strategies

Changing thoughts, health and wellbeing and *watching yourself* were the most frequently used strategies amongst the action group (used by over 90% of the sample; see Table 94). The majority of other strategies (including *alternative activities, self-assessment, reducing opportunities, social support*, and *managing finances*) were used by over 80% of the action group, while the strategies with the lowest uptake (*planning, faith and prayer*, *information*, and *limiting*) were used by over 70%.

Table 94. Uptake of strategies (action: n=77)

Strategy (no. actions)	Used strategy	
	n	*%*[a]
Changing thoughts (10)	73	94.8%
Health and wellbeing (11)	72	93.5%
Watching yourself (6)	70	90.9%
Alternative activities (13)	68	88.3%
Self-assessment (3)	67	87.0%
Reducing opportunity (14)	67	87.0%
Social support (6)	64	83.1%
Managing finances (11)	63	81.8%
Planning (7)	60	77.9%
Faith and prayer (3)	59	76.6%
Information (5)	57	74.00%
Limiting (9)	55	71.40%

[a] Percentage of sample that used at least one action in each strategy group

8.4.3.2 Uptake of actions

Table 95Table 95 reports the top 30 self-help actions for participants in the action stage, ranked from most frequently to least frequently used. The three most frequently used actions all involved the strategy *changing thoughts*, including *remind yourself that you don't need to gamble, remind yourself of positive consequences of not gambling*, and *re-establish trust and belief in yourself*. *Changing thoughts* accounted for almost a third (30.0%) of the top 30 strategies for this group, with the remainder involving *reducing opportunity* (16.7%), *alternative activities*, *health and wellbeing* (13.3%), *self-assessment*, *planning*, *watching yourself* (6.7%), *managing finances* and *faith and prayer* (3.3%).

Table 95. Top 30 actions by uptake: Action (n=77)

Action	n	%
Remind yourself that you don't need to gamble	67	87.0%
Remind yourself of positive consequences of not gambling	65	84.4%
Re-establish trust and belief in yourself	63	81.8%
Remind yourself of negative consequences of gambling	61	79.2%
Think about how your money could be better spent	61	79.2%
Accept that gambling needs to change	59	76.6%
Distract yourself or do something else until urge to gamble passes	59	76.6%
Compare costs and benefits of continuing to gamble	58	75.3%
Eat a healthy balanced diet	58	75.3%
Remain hopeful about your future	58	75.3%
Calculate money and time spent gambling	57	74.0%
Complete daily activities around the house	57	74.0%
Remind yourself sometimes people win at gambling but system is designed for you to lose	56	72.7%
Concentrate on being strong or using will power	56	72.7%
Keep busy to avoid thinking about or engaging in gambling	54	70.1%
Engage in a new form of entertainment	53	68.8%
Use alternate strategies to deal with gambling triggers	52	67.5%
Make a resolution to change your gambling	52	67.5%
Engage in an activity that gives you a feeling of achievement	52	67.5%
Take it easy on yourself or take it slow	52	67.5%
Participate in regular structured groups or sports like football or tennis	50	64.9%
Engage in regular exercise	50	64.9%
Plan ahead and limit amount of money you carry	48	62.3%
Avoid gambling when feeling down, depressed or otherwise vulnerable to gambling	48	62.3%
Focus on not gambling each day at a time	48	62.3%
Set spending limit for each week or fortnight	47	61.0%
Avoid the first bet	47	61.0%
Identify inaccurate thoughts about gambling or winning	47	61.0%
Regularly contribute to a savings plan	46	59.7%
Ensure your physical health needs are met	46	59.7%

8.4.4   Maintenance

8.4.4.1 Uptake of strategies

The most frequently used strategy amongst the maintenance group was *changing thoughts*, (used by 84.3% of the sample; see Table 96), followed by *health and wellbeing, watching yourself, managing finances, alternative activities, limiting, reducing opportunities*, and *self-assessment* (all used by over 70% of the sample). *Planning* was used slightly less (69.4%), while the least frequently used strategies were *faith and prayer, social support*, (both used by less than 60%) and *information* (46.3%).

Table 96. Uptake of strategies (maintenance: n=121)

Strategy (no. actions)	Used strategy	
	n	*%a*
Changing thoughts (10)	102	84.3%
Health and wellbeing (11)	95	78.5%
Watching yourself (6)	93	76.9%
Managing finances (11)	90	74.4%
Alternative activities (13)	89	73.6%
Limiting (9)	88	72.7%
Reducing opportunity (14)	87	71.9%
Self-assessment (3)	86	71.1%
Planning (7)	84	69.4%
Faith and prayer (3)	67	55.4%
Social support (6)	66	54.50%
Information (5)	56	46.30%

a Percentage of sample that used at least one action in each strategy group

8.4.4.2 Uptake of actions

Table 97 reports the top 30 self-help actions for participants in the maintenance stage, ranked from most frequently to least frequently used. Again, the three most frequently used actions all involved the strategy *changing thoughts*, including *think about how your money could be better spent, remind yourself that you don't need to gamble*, and *remind yourself of negative consequences of gambling*. *Health and wellbeing* and *changing thoughts* accounted for 26.67% and 23.3% of the top 30 strategies for this group, respectively, with the remainder involving *reducing opportunity* (10.0%), *self-assessment, setting limits, planning, managing finances, alternative activities* (6.7%), *watching yourself* and *faith and prayer* (3.3%).

Table 97. Top 30 actions by uptake: Maintenance (n=121)

Action	n	%
Think about how your money could be better spent	86	71.1%
Remind yourself that you don't need to gamble	80	66.1%
Remind yourself of negative consequences of gambling	78	64.5%
Calculate money and time spent gambling	76	62.8%
Compare costs and benefits of continuing to gamble	75	62.0%
Eat a healthy balanced diet	75	62.0%
Re-establish trust and belief in yourself	73	60.3%
Remind yourself of positive consequences of not gambling	73	60.3%
Remind yourself sometimes people win at gambling but system is designed for you to lose	72	59.5%
Avoid chasing losses	69	57.0%

Action	n	%
Remain hopeful about your future	65	53.7%
Accept that gambling needs to change	63	52.1%
Concentrate on being strong or using will power	63	52.1%
Keep busy to avoid thinking about or engaging in gambling	62	51.2%
Complete daily activities around the house	60	49.6%
Stick with my strategy - don't increase or change bet	59	48.8%
Plan ahead and limit amount of money you carry	59	48.8%
Keep track of money by setting up a budget and tracking spending	59	48.8%
Distract yourself or do something else until urge to gamble passes	59	48.8%
Engage in regular exercise	59	48.8%
Set spending limit for each week or fortnight	58	47.9%
Engage in an activity that gives you a feeling of achievement	58	47.9%
Identify inaccurate thoughts about gambling or winning	57	47.1%
Monitor for signs that gambling is becoming a problem	55	45.5%
Regularly contribute to a savings plan	54	44.6%
Play free gambling games like fantasy league or Facebook slots	54	44.6%
Increase fluid intake	54	44.6%
Avoid gambling when feeling down, depressed or otherwise vulnerable to gambling	53	43.8%
Take a long walk	51	42.1%
Ensure your physical health needs are met	51	42.1%

8.5.   No identified problem

8.5.1   Uptake of strategies

Rates of use amongst the 'no problem' group were lower than those for any stages of change group. The most frequently used strategies amongst the 'no problem' group were *limiting*, and *planning*, (used by between 40% and 50% of the sample; see Table 98), followed by *managing finances, changing thoughts, self-assessment, health and wellbeing,* and *watching yourself* (used by 30-40% of the sample), and *alternative activities* and *information* (used by between 20% and 30% of the sample). The least frequently used were *reducing opportunity, social support*, and *faith and prayer*, (used by between 10% and 20% of the sample). Unsurprisingly, the average number of actions used per strategy was also low, with the highest being an average of 1.42 (for 'health and wellbeing').

Table 98. Uptake of strategies (no problem: n=64)

Strategy	Used strategy	
	n	*%*[a]
Limiting (9)	30	46.90%
Planning (7)	30	46.90%
Managing finances (11)	24	37.50%
Changing thoughts (10)	23	35.90%
Self-assessment (3)	23	35.90%
Health and wellbeing (11)	22	34.40%
Watching yourself (6)	21	32.80%
Alternative activities (13)	17	26.60%
Information (5)	16	25.00%
Reducing opportunity (14)	12	18.80%
Social support (6)	9	14.10%
Faith and prayer (3)	8	12.50%

[a] Percentage of sample that used at least one action in each strategy group

8.5.2. Uptake of actions

Table 99 reports the top 30 self-help actions for participants in the 'no problem' stage, ranked from most frequently to least frequently used. The three most frequently used actions were set *spending limit for each week or fortnight* (from the strategy *planning*), *stick with my strategy – don't increase or change bet*, (from *setting limits*), and *remind yourself that sometimes people win at gambling but the system is designed for you to lose* (from *watching yourself*). The top 30 actions were relatively evenly spread over strategy groups, with 16.7% *involving health and wellbeing* and *changing thoughts*, 13.3% involving *information, self-assessment, planning*, and *managing finances*, 6.7%% involving *watching yourself*, and 3.33% involved in *self-assessment* and *alternative activities*.

Table 99. Top 30 actions by uptake: No problem (n=64)

Action	n	%
Set spending limit for each week or fortnight	25	39.1%
Stick with my strategy - don't increase or change bet	23	35.9%
Remind yourself sometimes people win at gambling but system is designed for you to lose	21	32.8%
Eat a healthy balanced diet	20	31.3%
Calculate money and time spent gambling	19	29.7%
Avoid chasing losses	17	26.6%
Think about how your money could be better spent	17	26.6%
Set limits on time/money spent gambling using smart card or automatic limit	14	21.9%
Remind yourself that you don't need to gamble	14	21.9%
Keep track of money by setting up a budget and tracking spending	13	20.3%

Action	n	%
Take a multivitamin or herbal supplement	13	20.3%
Engage in regular exercise	13	20.3%
Read information on responsible gambling	12	18.8%
Compare costs and benefits of continuing to gamble	12	18.8%
Read information on how gambling works	11	17.2%
Regularly contribute to a savings plan	11	17.2%
Keep limited funds in online or loyalty gambling accounts	11	17.2%
Take a long walk	11	17.2%
Ensure your physical health needs are met	11	17.2%
Plan gamble free days each week	10	15.6%
Read information on signs or consequences of problem gambling	9	14.1%
Take regular breaks while gambling	9	14.1%
Only go to venues that offer other activities as well as gambling	9	14.1%
Schedule gambling sessions so that they do not interfere with important activities	9	14.1%
Keep money in joint account with partner or family member	9	14.1%
Remind yourself of negative consequences of gambling	9	14.1%
Remind yourself of positive consequences of not gambling	9	14.1%
Concentrate on being strong or using will power	9	14.1%
Increase fluid intake	9	14.1%
Read first hand accounts of other people's experiences	8	12.5%

8.6   Analysis of uptake over the past 30 days

Four sets of analyses were performed in order to examine the relationship between stage of change group and the uptake of self-help strategies and actions. First, we examined whether stages of change groups varied in their uptake of the 12 self-help strategies (section 7.6.1). Second, we examined whether the rank order of strategies (by uptake) varied between groups (section 7.6.2). Third, we examined whether stages of change groups varied in the number of actions they used per strategy (section 7.6.3). Finally, we examined whether groups varied in the total number of actions used overall (7.6.4).

8.6.1   Uptake of strategies by stage of change group

Table 100 reports the number and percentage of participants in each of the stages of change groups who used the 12 strategies (as with the preceding sections, participants were considered to have 'used' a strategy if they reported using one or more of its corresponding actions during the past 30 days). For all strategies, there was a significant difference in uptake across groups.

Table 100. Uptake of strategies by stage of change

Total uptake	No problem (n=64)		Pre-contemplation (n=28)		Contemplation (n=120)		Action (n=77)		Maintenance (n=121)		X (4)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Change your thinking	23	35.9%	17	60.7%	104	86.7%	73	94.8%	102	84.3%	91.00	<.001
Health and wellbeing	22	34.4%	21	75.0%	98	81.7%	72	93.5%	95	78.5%	74.28	<.001
Self-assessment	23	35.9%	16	57.1%	107	89.2%	67	87.0%	86	71.1%	71.86	<.001
Watching yourself	21	32.8%	16	57.1%	99	82.5%	70	90.9%	93	76.9%	74.82	<.001
Limiting	30	46.9%	23	82.1%	102	85.0%	55	71.4%	88	72.7%	31.96	<.001
Planning	30	46.9%	17	60.7%	104	86.7%	60	77.9%	84	69.4%	36.31	<.001
Alternative activities	17	26.6%	17	60.7%	101	84.2%	68	88.3%	89	73.6%	84.89	<.001
Managing finances	24	37.5%	17	60.7%	93	77.5%	63	81.8%	90	74.4%	42.78	<.001
Reducing opportunity	12	18.8%	16	57.1%	104	86.7%	67	87.0%	87	71.9%	108.43	<.001
Social support	9	14.1%	12	42.9%	82	68.3%	64	83.1%	66	54.5%	78.36	<.001
Information	16	25.0%	13	46.4%	78	65.0%	57	74.0%	56	46.3%	43.23	<.001
Faith and prayer	8	12.5%	10	35.7%	68	56.7%	59	76.6%	67	55.4%	63.24	<.001

Overall, uptake tended to be highest in the action group, followed by contemplation, maintenance, and precontemplation (see Figure 3). Indeed, this pattern was present for 9 strategies, including *change your thinking, health and wellbeing, watching yourself, alternative activities, managing finances, social support, faith and prayer*, and *information*. Of the remaining strategies, two (*planning* and *self-assessment*) had the highest uptake in the contemplation group, followed by the action, maintenance, and precontemplation groups. The final strategy (*limiting*) had the highest uptake in the contemplation group, followed by pre-contemplation, maintenance, and action. The 'no problem' group reported the lowest uptake for all strategies.
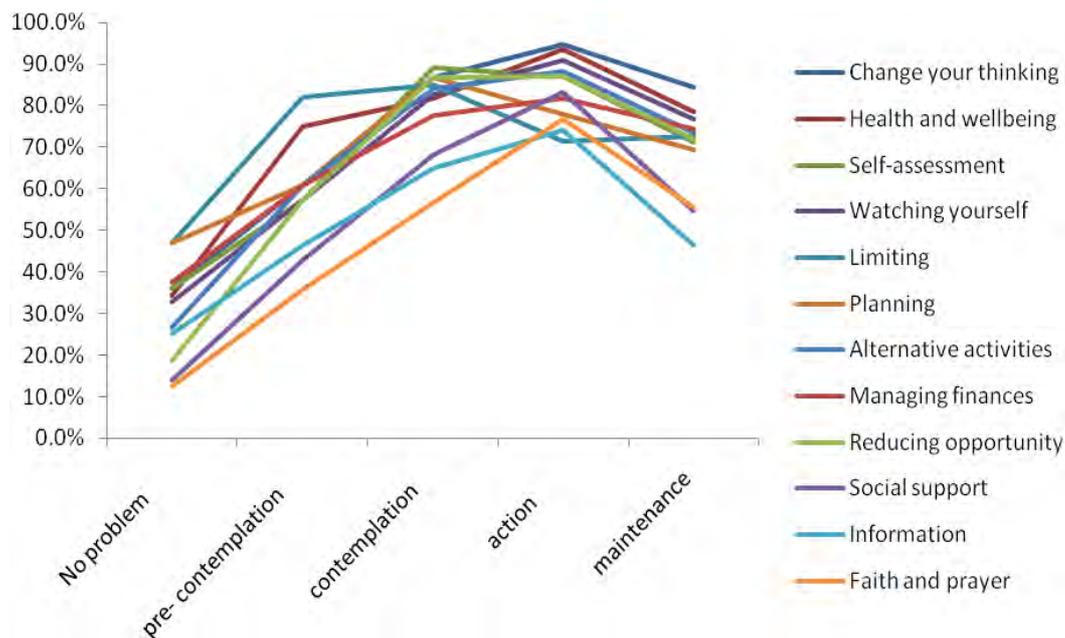
Figure 3. Uptake of strategies by stages of change

Multinomial logistic regression was used to explore interactions between uptake of strategies and stage of change. However, we were unable to include all strategies in the model simultaneously due to extremely high levels of multicollinearity (non-parametric correlations indicated that all strategies were positively correlated and significant at the $p<0.001$ level). Therefore, the rank order of strategies by change of change group was examined using non-parametric tests (below).

8.6.2   Rank order of strategies by stage of change group

Table 101 reports the rank order of self-help strategies for each stage of change group, ranked from most used to least used. For those who had no problem with gambling, the three most used strategies were; limiting, planning and managing finances with the least used strategy being faith and prayer. For those in the precontemplation group, the three most used strategies were: *limiting, health and wellbeing* and *changing thoughts*; with the least used strategy being *faith and prayer*. For those in the contemplation stage, *self-assessment, changing thoughts* and *planning* were the three most used strategies; with *faith and prayer* the least used. Strategies most used by those in the action group were: *changing thoughts, health and wellbeing* and *watching yourself* with the strategy of *limiting* being the least used. For the maintenance phase group, *changing thoughts, health and wellbeing* and *watching yourself* were the three most used strategies, with *seeking information* being the least used strategy. A non-parametric Friedman test demonstrated that the order of strategies was significantly different between stage of change groups ($\chi^2(4)$ = 41.67, $p<0.001$). Wilcoxon signed ranks tests with Bonferroni correction applied showed significant differences between the rank order of strategies of all groups

(p<0.05), with the exception of the contemplation and action groups (z=-0.79, p=0.43).

Table 101. Rank order of self-help strategies for each stage of change group

Group				
No problem	**Precontemplation**	**Contemplation**	**Action**	**Maintenance**
1. Limiting	1. Limiting	1. Self-assessment	1. Changing thoughts	1. Changing thoughts
2. Planning	2. Health and wellbeing	2. Changing thoughts	2. Health and wellbeing	2. Health and wellbeing
3. Managing finances	3. Changing thoughts	3. Planning	3. Watching yourself	3. Watching yourself
4. Change your thinking	4. Planning	4. Reducing opportunity	4. Alternative activities	4. Managing finances
5. Self-assessment	5. Alternative activities	5. Limiting	5. Self-assessment	5. Alternative activities
6. Health and wellbeing	6. Managing finances	6. Alternative activities	6. Reducing opportunity	6. Limiting
7. Watching yourself	7. Self-assessment	7. Watching yourself	7. Social support	7. Reducing opportunity
8. Alternative activities	8. Watching yourself	8. Health and wellbeing	8. Managing finances	8. Self-assessment
9. Information	9. Reducing opportunity	9. Managing finances	9. Planning	9. Planning
10. Reducing opportunity	10. Information	10. Social support	10. Faith and prayer	10. Faith and prayer
11. Social support	11. Social support	11. Information	11. Information	11. Social support
12. Faith and prayer	12. Faith and prayer	12. Faith and prayer	12. Limiting	12. Information

8.6.4 Uptake of actions by stage of change

There was a significant main effect of group in regard to the overall uptake of actions, with the greatest uptake reported by the action group and the lowest uptake reported by the no problem group (Table 102). Bonferroni-corrected post-hoc tests revealed that the action group used significantly more actions than the precontemplation, no problem, and maintenance groups (all p values <0.001). The difference in uptake between the action and contemplation groups was not significant (p=0.80). The contemplation group also used significantly more actions than the precontemplation (p<0.001), no problem (p<0.001), and maintenance groups (p=0.03), while the maintenance group used more actions than the no problem group (p<0.001), but not the precontemplation group (p=0.45). The no problem group used significantly fewer actions than all other groups (all p values <0.001).

Table 102. Overall uptake of actions by stage of change groups

	Group											
	No problem (n=64)		Pre-contemplation (n=28)		Contemplation (n=120)		Action (n=77)		Maintenance n=121		ANOVA	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F (4.405)	p
No. actions	10.61	18.97	22.36	24.41	45.22	26.12	51.83	27.92	35.24	27.47	28.492	<.001

8.6.5 Analysis of gambling behaviour by stage of change group

Participants in the contemplation stage reported a significant reduction in days gambled and money spent between the first and second surveys (measured over the past 30 days at both time points). Participants in the action stage reported a significant reduction in money spent, and a trend towards a reduction in days spent gambling. Participants in the maintenance stage demonstrated trends towards a reduction in days spent gambling and money spent. There was no change in gambling behaviour evident amongst participants in the no problem group, or participants in the precontemplation stage (Table 103).

Table 103. Change in gambling behaviour by stage of change group[a]

Baseline stage of change group		Baseline		Past 30 days				
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	df	p
No problem (n=64)	Days gambled	9.27	7.96	8.92	10.78	0.01	63.00	0.99
	Money spent	$273.56	$488.36	$426.48	$910.21	0.83	63.00	0.41
Precontemplation (n=28)	Days gambled	19.33	14.58	19.75	14.72	-0.53	27.00	0.60
	Money spent	$7,668.29	$20,543.28	$6,033.68	$14,103.89	0.67	26.00	0.51
Contemplation (n=120)	Days gambled	16.93	12.70	14.33	12.49	3.04	119.00	0.00
	Money spent	$2,242.90	$2,791.50	$1,851.60	$3,351.43	3.66	119.00	0.00
Action (n=77)	Days gambled	11.64	13.21	8.04	8.56	1.77	76.00	0.08
	Money spent	$2,237.27	$7,086.07	$909.35	$1,991.60	2.34	74.00	0.02
Maintenance (n=121)	Days gambled	15.49	21.31	12.62	15.72	1.90	120.00	0.06
	Money spent	$7,375.46	$63,633.61	$5,901.51	$54,507.95	1.97	117.00	0.05

[a]All variables were transformed (log transformation) prior to analysis

8.7 Chapter summary

Participants identified a broad range of strategies and actions that they used over the past 30 days. Overall, the most frequently used strategy was *changing thoughts*, which was used by 77.9% of the sample. This was followed by *health and wellbeing* (75.2%), 'self-assessment' (72.7%), and 'watching yourself' (72.7%). The three most

frequently used actions overall were all from the *changing thoughts* strategy, and included *think about how your money could be better spent*, *remind yourself that you don't need to gamble* and *remind yourself of the negative consequences of gambling* (used by approximately 60-65% of the sample). Overall, the top 10 actions included 6 from the *changing thoughts* strategy. Other frequently used actions *included remind yourself sometimes people win at gambling but the system is designed for you to lose* (from the *watching yourself strategy*, used by 60.6%), *calculate money and time spent gambling* (from the self-assessment strategy, used by 60.3%), *eat a healthy balanced diet* (from the *health and wellbeing* strategy, used by 58.6%), and *accept that gambling needs to change* (from the *self-assessment strategy*, used by 57.9%).

There were differences between change of stage groups in regard to the uptake of strategies and actions. For most strategies, uptake was highest amongst the action and contemplation groups, and the lowest amongst the precontemplation (or no problem) groups. Similarly, the total number of actions used was highest amongst the action and contemplation groups, followed by the maintenance, pre-contemplation, and no problem groups. However, when strategies were ranked by overall uptake, the earlier stages were more likely to use planning and limit strategies, while the later stages were more likely to use *changing thoughts*, *health and wellbeing*, and *self-assessment*.

There was a clear relationship between stage of change and time and money spent gambling over the past 30 days. While there was no change in gambling behaviour evident amongst participants in the no problem or precontemplation groups, participants in the contemplation stage reported a significant reduction in days gambled and money spent over the past 30 days. Similarly, participants in the action stage reported a significant reduction in money spent and a trend towards a reduction in days spent gambling, while participants in the maintenance stage demonstrated trends towards a reduction in days spent gambling and money spent.

9. In-depth Qualitative Interviews

9.1 Introduction

To obtain an in-depth understanding of people's experiences of using gambling self-help strategies and how this use may facilitate controlled gambling and recovery from gambling problems, this chapter analyses data from semi-structured interviews conducted with 30 participants.

This chapter describes and discusses the following themes that emerged from the analysis of participant interviews: triggers for beginning to use self-help strategies; how they found out about the strategies they used; which strategies and actions they employed and their experiences with using these; which were most effective for them; and how use of these strategies interacted with any experience of relapse. Participant quotes used to support the findings are coded with a participant number between 1 and 30, M for male or F for female, age bracket, and C for current problem gambler, P for past problem gambler, and N for never being a problem gambler. Thus, quotes from participant #1 in Table 13 are tagged (1,M, 25-34,C).

9.1.1 Triggers to using self-help strategies

Interviewees were asked the length of time between acknowledging they had a gambling problem and beginning to use self-help strategies. Findings are presented in Table 104. About one-quarter of interviewees reported that they had commenced using self-help strategies soon after recognising their gambling was a problem, about one-sixth waited for between 1-10 years, about one-quarter did not commence using strategies for at least a decade, one had always used the strategies, three reported they had never had a gambling problem (so they therefore could not report the length of time since acknowledging a gambling problem), and nearly one-third did not know or did not answer this question. Thus, problem recognition precipitated prompt uptake of self-help strategies for only a minority of participants.

Table 104. Period of time between acknowledging gambling had become a problem and beginning self-help strategies

Number of years	Number of participants (N = 30)
Less than a year	7
1-2 years	2
2-5 years	2
6-10 years	1
10+ years	6
Always used self-help strategies	1
Don't know/no response	8
Did not acknowledge a problem	3

Interviewees were asked "Why did you start using self-help strategies? What were the triggers for this?" The comments below indicate why participants began using self-help strategies initially, and do not necessarily reflect triggers for taking up additional individual self-help actions that they may have pursued later.

The most common overall trigger for take-up of self-help strategies was a financial incident or financial distress (10 participants). These included a big gambling loss, losses mounting, not being able to pay bills, needing to save for an event or trip, and getting into debt. Others (4) talked about how their life circumstances had changed, with marriage, marriage breakdown and retirement having highlighted the need for change. Some (4) felt the trigger was a response to family and friends, such as not wanting to upset family, partners finding out about their gambling, or feeling a need to choose between family and gambling. Two participants said that doing surveys, quizzes or reading lists of suggested strategies online had triggered thoughts about their level of gambling. They were not specific, however, about the nature of these online activities. Family or counsellors suggesting such strategies had been the trigger for two participants. One participant felt that he had had enough and was not coping and another thought he had to reassess his life after watching other gamblers at a venue. Another participant feared suicide and this triggered the need to find ways to stop gambling. Thus, the reasons for using self-help strategies most often appeared to be related to a deterioration of financial and other circumstances over time, and a gradual awareness that change in gambling behaviour was needed, rather than a specific event.

The following comments highlight issues such as financial stress, shame, depression, and witnessing others with gambling problems, and the resultant increase in self-awareness that prompted uptake of self-help strategies. While the first participant quote below suggests just one reason for taking up self-help strategies, the remainder emphasise that a combination of reasons was more common:

- *I was losing too much money. So again, I was betting money that I couldn't afford. (5,M,55-64,C).*

- *I could see it was getting to be a problem - it had become a problem, and I was trying to do something about it. But in terms of the money and the deception and so on that I was engaging in, once it became known of course the incentive to do something about it became much stronger because it meant - it was pretty much down to either continue on with the relationships with my wife and family or keep gambling. (21,M,55-64,C).*

- *I don't want to go to a counsellor or something, because I just felt so ashamed about it. So about what triggers it really is the last argument that [I had with my husband]. He gave me the ultimatum. So then it hits me that there is nobody else that could help me aside from myself. If I really want my marriage to work out, I should do something about it [for] myself first. That's what I did. I started doing it and just trying to do something. (4,F,25-34,C).*

- *I think you just get so far in debt and because of that you end up with such bad depression, and yeah, life's not worth living. You're living for your payday once a fortnight and then payday comes around and two hours later, after going out, you're home and you're completely broke for a fortnight. That's no way for anybody to live. (7,M,45-54,P).*

- *Did a survey about gambling habits … wake up call. I don't know whether it was you people or someone else. I had a survey about gambling and I filled it in and there were questions like how much do you spend and blah, blah, blah and it just blew me apart. I just couldn't believe that I was wasting as much as that. It was a wake-up call, this survey that I did and that's when I thought, well you'd better take a closer look at what you're [doing]. (11,F,55-64,C).*

- *I think just common sense, quite honestly. I'm not silly. I've never been a gambler in any other ways [other than in venues]. I have no interest in any other ways. I would never, for example, do online gambling or anything like that because I have an understanding of how quickly that can get out of control. So I really think just common sense and the fact that there's a lot of - where we live, it's an elderly community. There are a lot of very elderly ladies in there, pumping $50 notes in chasing a $50 jackpot. Just watching them and how distressed they can get. Also my work, I do talk to people who reach the point of suicide because of gambling. (29,F,55-64,C).*

9.1.2 How participants found out about the strategies they used

Participants were asked how they knew to use the self-help strategies that they had taken up, that is whether they had heard about it from someone or somewhere else, or whether they had just thought of it themselves. Ten participants described how they had thought of using the specific strategies themselves, with five of these saying it was just 'common sense' (once they had decided to better control their gambling). Thus, some of the strategies just made sense to gamblers, such as leaving bank cards at home or avoiding venues, as they would then not be able to gamble at all or gamble excessively. The strategies that appeared as 'common sense' were mainly associated with managing finances (5), reducing opportunities and triggers by avoiding venues, or setting limits such as having smaller bets.

Some strategies were suggested by family and friends, while knowledge of others had resulted from completing surveys that triggered ideas for strategies. Some participants had seen suggestions on gambling help websites, others had used similar strategies for other problems such as depression or alcohol use, and one interviewee had been seeing a counsellor who had suggested a particular strategy. There was no single or dominant source of learning about these strategies amongst those interviewed. The following quotes relate to specific strategies used by the participants and how they found out about them.

The following participant, with a current gambling problem, found that being provided with the list of self-help strategies after participating in the first online survey for this study had stimulated her to become interested in other activities. Being exposed to this list had raised her awareness that taking up other leisure pursuits could be a

self-help strategy to help her limit, reduce or control her gambling. She commented that:

- *I actually got it from the tips that you guys actually sent [after the first online survey for the current study]. Yeah. I reckon when I initially acknowledged it, because I guess I would have thought about it, but I'd never acknowledged it as a strategy – doing other things [instead of gambling]. (19,F,18-24,C).*

Similarly, another current problem gambler related how he had become more involved in family activities and that this was the result of completing the online surveys for the current study which contained questions on the use of 99 self-help gambling strategies. The self-help strategies included in these surveys also triggered further ideas of his own:

- *I've got a couple of your tests … ticking the boxes … you stop and think about, these are good ideas. What I'm doing here, they're all good ideas. Why can't I come up with my own ideas so to speak? (17,M,55-64,C).*

The same participant also described how he managed his finances by keeping a spreadsheet of gambling spend. Thus, having earlier completed online surveys about his gambling behaviour, he began to think about how he used a spreadsheet for his general family budget and how he could translate this experience to help him keep a record of his gambling expenses:

- *How did I know to do that? Well … I run my family budget off a spreadsheet, what I need to pay, what I need not to pay, how much have I got, … So I thought to myself, well, if I can do that [keep family budget] and have a record of it, I can do it this [keep record of gambling spend] and it's become very successful for me anyway. (17,M,55-64,C).*

The following extract shows how suggestions or information provided by other people can trigger a particular action. This participant, who experienced problem gambling in the past, had set limits to his gambling by having smaller bets:

- *I did talk to my mates sometimes about these things as well. One mate in particular I was chatting to about this and he actually sent me through a couple of articles. There was a magazine he actually gave me as well, just talking about different sorts of punting strategies and ways to keep yourself to a limit and that sort of thing. (27,M,25-34,P).*

The same participant then began to use strategies he had used to address previous problems he had encountered. One strategy involved changing his way of thinking to a more positive outlook, by thinking about his girlfriend and the impact of his gambling upon her:

- *Well, I have suffered from depression in the past so when I was, as I mentioned, at my lowest points, you just kind of have to look around and see what positives you have and the gambling was kind of pushing me back in that direction towards*

depression. So that was something that I learned from going through that, to use those strategies. (27,M,25-34,P).

It therefore seems that many strategies were developed from personal experiences, while others were triggered by online surveys and tips, information or suggestions from others.

9.1.3 Types of self-help strategies and associated actions used

Participants were asked: "What strategies have you tried to use to limit or reduce or control your own gambling through self-help strategies? Self-help strategies are those that people use to limit or control their gambling without necessarily involving other people."

Table 105 summarises the self-help strategies and associated actions reportedly used by participants. These are categorised using the format developed in the audit of websites in Study 2. Overall, 46 different actions were used relating to eight self-help strategies. It is important to note that most participants used a combination of strategies (therefore, the total 'number of participants using action' does not necessarily equal 'number of participants using strategy'). For clarity, the subsequent sections describe each strategy and the associated actions used individually, even though a combination of strategies was most commonly used by participants.

Table 105. Self-help strategies and actions used by participants

Type of strategy	Number of participants using strategy	Actions associated with each strategy	Number of participants using action
Managing finances and gambling spend	25	Limit amount of money in wallet	8
		Setting a gambling budget	8
		Not taking bank cards to gambling venues	7
		Paying bills first	4
		Not chasing losses	2
		Using a pre-paid debit card for gambling online	2
		Withdrawing all winnings from online gambling account	1
		Using cardless cash	1
		Going shopping with another person	1
			TOTAL 34
Taking up alternatives to gambling	12	Studying	1
		Music	1
		Physical activity/keeping healthy	2
		Gardening/housework	4
		Knitting	1
		Playing online social casino games	1
		Spending time with family	2
		Started own business	1

Type of strategy	Number of participants using strategy	Actions associated with each strategy	Number of participants using action
Taking up alternatives to gambling continued	12	Buying a poker machine for personal use at home	1
		Just keep busy	4
		TOTAL 18	
Setting limits on gambling	11	Making smaller bets	3
		Not gambling for a specific period of time	1
		Limiting duration of gambling sessions	1
		Limiting number of days each week to gamble	1
		Limit alcohol consumption while gambling	2
		Limiting amount of money spent each session	2
		Gambling within affordable limits	1
		Being selective about what to gamble on	1
		Having food breaks while gambling	1
		Planning gambling expenditure	1
		TOTAL 14	
Reducing opportunities and triggers	14	Avoiding venues	5
		Not socialising with gamblers	3
		Investing money elsewhere to limit gambling	2
		Not turning on the television	1
		Organising competing activities	1
		Asking friends not to have social events at gambling venues	1
		TOTAL 13	
Becoming informed about gambling	3	Reading gambling stories	3
		Researching gambling odds	2
		Exploring information online about gambling	2
		Self-assessment of own gambling	2
		TOTAL 9	
Changing thoughts and beliefs	3	Delaying the urge to gamble	1
		Focusing on goals and challenging their thinking about gambling	1
		Thinking about positive aspects of their lives	1
		TOTAL 3	
Monitoring ongoing behaviour and change	1	Setting goals	1
		Keeping a record of gambling and savings	1
		TOTAL 3	
Utilising social supports and resources	3	Disclosure of gambling problem to family and friends	2
		Seeking help from family and friends	1
		TOTAL 3	

By far the most widely used strategy was 'managing finances and gambling spend'. Use of 'taking up alternatives to gambling', 'setting limits on gambling' and 'reducing opportunities and triggers' were also commonly reported by participants. Many interviewees used a combination of strategies. The following analysis provides excerpts from the interviews to highlight the major actions used in relation to each of the major strategies.

9.1.4 Managing finances and gambling spend

By far the most popular strategy included many different actions associated with managing finances and gambling spend. The specific actions described were: limiting the amount of money in their wallet; setting a gambling budget; not taking bank cards to gambling venues; paying bills first; not chasing losses; using a debit card not credit card for online gambling; withdrawing all winnings from their online gambling account; using cardless cash and going shopping with another person to procure groceries.

9.1.4.1 Limiting amount money in wallet

A common sense action for the following participant with a current gambling problem was to limit the amount of money he carried in his wallet. This helped, until he came to borrow money from the bar or from his friends, thus limiting its effectiveness:

- *Common sense … Some days I'd do it, particularly if I knew I was going to be tight for money for whatever reason. Going forward like you've got bills to pay or whatever, I knew that I needed money for other things - that would be when I'm more likely to use that strategy … Hindered? I used to be able to borrow money from behind the bar, and gamble that, and obviously friends would lend me money if I wanted it as well, to put on the horses … Helped? Because once I've spent it, it's gone. (5,M,55-64,C).*

As other participants related, limiting the amount of money carried was effective, but one participant with a current gambling problem pointed out that it was also quite demeaning:

- *For that period of time when you don't have cash or card, it's an absolute prevent - you're prevented completely from being able to gamble … It was pretty difficult because I'd had the idea that I had to give up my access to much cash and cards was - for me, it was a pretty - I'm trying to think of the right word - demeaning I suppose maybe was the word. I felt goodness me, what have I come to that I can't be trusted to carry around cash. So it was a pretty difficult thing for me to cope with. (21,M,55-64,C).*

- *Well the bill paying started it and then it became have somebody take me shopping so I got the shopping, and hold my card. So I was very - probably that first year I was very restricted in the money I had. I think that first year I'd be walking around - I'd be lucky if I had $5 in my purse, basically because I didn't have. (7,M,45-54,P).*

For another participant with a current gambling problem, this self-help action manifested slightly differently. He kept a $100 bill in his wallet to remind him of the importance of having money available for other expenses. He explained:

- *I've had that $100 bill in there for two weeks now and I just keep saying to myself, you've got a $100 bill. You're not going to break it, you're not going to gamble it, you're just going to keep it in your wallet and every time you need to do things you'll look at that $100 bill and say okay, that's a reminder to me that the money is important to me. (17,M,55-64,C).*

9.1.4.2 Setting a gambling budget

Instead of just limiting money in their wallet, many participants set themselves a budget that limited how much they could spend on gambling. The following participant who was currently experiencing gambling problems, having set a budget for how much she could spend on gambling, only took a set amount with her when she visited a venue. She then found this frustrating but successful overall:

- *Sometimes I just get frustrated because you're losing at the pokies and you haven't got money with you and you want the money there, so it's probably - yeah, just sometimes you get a little bit frustrated. But like I say, once I walk out and I get home and I do something else and I calm down, yeah I'm okay again. (2,F,45-54,C).*

However, even after setting her budget, she found that easy access to the internet made it harder to remain within her budget as she knew when she was being paid and could check this at any time of the day or night. The temptation then was to leave home, visit a venue and exceed her budget:

- *[Access to] the internet [made it hard to stick to a budget]– I'd know around 1:30 in the morning I'd get paid and I'd look online to see if it was in there and if it was, that's when the trigger would be to go [to a venue]. That's been happening. That's been quite a problem for the last year now. (2,F,45-54,C).*

Setting a gambling budget was, in general, a useful strategy for her but an unintended consequence was that the budget could highlight how little money she had which could tempt her to gamble to try to win more:

- *Effective? Overall it helps me a bit. It does. Overall it's helped a lot, but just recently it hasn't at all. When I do write my budget, I realise how much debt I do have and I have very little money afterwards for everyday things. It prompts me to want to gamble even further to try and recoup losses. (2,F,45-54,C).*

The following participant, a past problem gambler, had seen the suggestion of setting a gambling budget on a gamblers' help website and he had modified the suggestion for his situation. It helped him consider how gambling was affecting his lifestyle. He commented:

- *Probably budgeting and making sure that the necessities come first and everything comes after … Necessity, didn't want to become homeless … I wouldn't say it's been … easy. Now I can sort of say it's easy, but it's easy because it has to be. You've got to sort of say, well what's more important? Gambling or having my life sort of set out so that I know I won't have this over my head, saying oh geez I haven't got any money for the next two weeks … I did read a little bit of stuff about, on that gamblers' help site or whatever they call it, and it sort of mentioned something like that. It wasn't entirely what I used, but it was similar to that … Yeah it helped me, because it made me realise if I start setting out my own budget and you've got to set your own budget to your own limit. Not everybody's identical. (24,M,55-64,P).*

9.1.4.3 Not taking bank cards to gambling venues

Without a debit card it was not possible to access more money than was taken into a gambling venue. However, while this strategy helps limit expenditure, it does not necessarily help to control the urge to gamble, as a participant currently experiencing gambling problems described:

- *If you don't have a card there, you've got no option to use it. It's a failsafe way to do it … my wife suggested it … Effective? It controls the effect of gambling, it doesn't control the urge at all. It does nothing at all to control the urge, but it's 100% effective in controlling the effect - the bad effect of gambling. (26,M,45-54,C).*

Embarrassment was the motivation for the following participant to use the strategy of not taking a bank card to gambling venues. She explained:

- *Just feeling embarrassed. I didn't want to feel embarrassed. I didn't want to be like those others that went to the ATM and come back with a wad of money and put it all in [an EGM]. (11,F,55-64,C).*

9.1.4.4 Paying bills first

Although some participants did not describe actually setting a gambling budget, they did comment that they began to realise the need to pay their household bills first before gambling, thus moderating their gambling spend. For the following person who had previously experienced problem gambling, the electricity company initiated this process and he continued the process with Centrelink. He said it was very effective:

- *It was only I rang up AGL … and said, look I've got to talk to somebody about my bill. They said to me, right we have a thing called - back then it was [Stay Connect] … it was brand new … The first six months it was terrible, because I was just paying bills and you didn't see any difference. It took - I think it took close to a year before I started showing that I was even not in the red. Very easy now … the people help you set it up, Centrelink help you set it up and there's no excuses for not paying it … 100% effective. (7,M,45-54,P).*

It was clear from another participant, a past problem gambler, that a quick and positive change had occurred from ensuring she paid her expenses and bills before gambling. She strongly emphasised that this was not a one-off strategy, but that it required consistency in better managing her money so that she bought necessities before engaging in any gambling:

- *If I get paid from work I go straight to the shopping centre and buy my needs for the house, that's it. If there's a little bit extra, I say okay, I'll play lotto, but if there's no extra it's okay if I don't play … For me I think it's easy. As long as you are very consistent and as long as you are really very serious to change and to manage your money, you can do it … Helped? I have money to spare. (10,F,25-34,P).*

For another participant, who had a current gambling problem, having the bills paid stopped his perceived need to gamble to win money to relieve financial pressure:

- *I thought, if there are no bills or nothing, I don't need to go to play the pokies to try to get money to pay them off if they've already been paid off. I thought, it's a smart thing to do. (15,M,25-34,C).*

However, for one interviewee with a current gambling problem, the urge to gamble was still strong and being paid was a great temptation, especially because there was a gambling venue in close proximity:

- *Having a venue close by, it was very accessible. I was waking up in the middle of the morning when I got paid and going straight to the venue. Yeah. It was the proximity of the venue itself. (2,F,45-54,C).*

9.1.4.5 Going shopping with another person to procure groceries

A related action within this set of strategies was going shopping with someone else. This controlled the following participant's spending, ensuring that money was spent first on food before gambling. He elicited the support of others to assist him, but the ultimate goal of this action was to reduce the amount of money he had left for gambling. He self-reported as being a past problem gambler:

- *On payday – Oh I think because - well for me it was tough because I was depending on other people and I think this is a problem a lot of gamblers have. We look - in the beginning when we first say, oh I need help I can't cope, I can't fix this myself, I need help. We're looking for somebody else to fix everything, and it doesn't work like that. People can advise us but we can only take on board what suits us as individuals and not every program works for every person. (7,M,45-54,P).*

9.1.4.6 Not chasing losses

A strategy often suggested on gambling help websites, not chasing losses, seemed to result in smaller amounts being spent. However, as one participant with current gambling problems explained, this strategy was difficult to adhere to when she lost her budgeted amount very quickly, raising the temptation to gamble more to try to gain a win:

- *Playing smaller amounts helped … but you can also lose it in 10 minutes and that's when I get frustrated, and then I'm tempted to put more in. If I've been into a club and I've had a really good win on a particular machine the time before, I'm tempted to think that I might have another really good win if only I played a little bit more money. As soon as I've done that a few times and I haven't won again, then that makes me realise. So it's a lesson hard-learnt, I think. (29,F,55-64,C).*

9.1.4.7 Using a pre-paid debit card for gambling online

Being able to limit the amount of accessible money when gambling online was of help to the following participant with current gambling problems. Using a pre-paid debit card seemed effective in reducing the amount she spent on internet gambling:

- *I was finding at the pokies I was losing too much and I didn't want to do that online … Then with the advent of internet banking and me being able to access the other account, I found I was doing it all online and the money didn't seem to last as long. I found I was putting in an extra $50 and I'd lose it all online. I didn't do that often. I've done it more often at a venue, rather than online, but there were a couple of times when I was caught out online. Then I discovered you could get prepaid Visa cards. So I'd go to a 7 Eleven and get a prepaid Visa card and play online with the prepaid Visa card. (2,F,45-54,C).*

9.1.4.8 Withdrawing all winnings from online gambling account

The same participant who used a pre-paid debit card for her online gambling explained how she usually withdraws all winnings so her online gambling account balance is zero. This then necessitates her having to physically go to the bank to deposit money with which to gamble:

- *Usually, what I'd do is, when I got paid [from the online gambling operator] I'd take out all my money and keep it with me, then if I wanted to gamble it would mean me having to go to the bank during business hours to put in the money. So I'd deposit $50 and then I'd go home, play that $50 which usually you get another $50 on top of that because they offer you bonuses online. So it might be a 100% bonus, or a 50% bonus. So I'd have $100 to play with and I found that really quite fulfilling. (2,F,45-54,C).*

9.1.4.9 Using cardless cash

Cardless cash enables withdrawals from ATMs without a cash card by using a smart phone application. The number of withdrawals per day and the withdrawal amount are limited by the bank. Cardless cash was only mentioned by one participant, who reported that it limited his access to funds:

- *I've still got my phone but it limits you to one ATM withdrawal a day. So say I play the pokies or anything, I can't chase my losses. So I go to the ATM - I don't have any money on me - I go to the ATM before I go there, say get out $80 and that's the maximum I can lose. That one seems to be working the most … very easy, very effective. (1,M, 25-34,C).*

9.1.5 Challenges and facilitators to implementation

There was a large diversity in the self-help actions that participants used to better manage their finances and gambling spend, when actions were taken up, and how long participants had used them. In general, motivation to use this strategy was mainly driven by the financial distress.

The main challenges were willingness for others to lend money, inconvenience of carrying limited cash and that this was demeaning, and the frustration of not having more cash available to gamble with. Participants found that while limiting the availability of cash was helpful, it did not stop gambling urges. Additional challenges noted were access to internet banking where participants could check account balances and when salary had been paid, difficulties of staying consistent in use of actions as one or a few slip-ups could be very costly, and the ease of accessing gambling.

The main facilitators appeared to be first and foremost commitment to change, and also having external controls on how much money was available. These external controls included friends and venues not lending money, using direct debit to pay bills, use of a pre-paid debit card, cardless cash, and someone to assist with shopping.

9.1.6 Taking up alternatives to gambling

Twelve participants found that taking up alternative diversionary activities helped significantly in managing, reducing or controlling their gambling. These activities included studying, music, physical activity and keeping healthy, gardening/housework, knitting, playing online social casino games, spending time with family, starting a business, buying a poker machine for personal use at home, and just generally keeping busy. Some examples are included below from the interviews.

9.1.6.1 Physical activity/keeping healthy

Remaining healthy and active seemed to be an important action that reduced the stress that might trigger gambling, as well as providing an alternative activity to gambling, as described clearly below:

- *I feel like when I'm stressed or when I'm not at my happiest that's probably when I gamble more. So I feel as if I always feel better when I go to the gym and just stick to the same routine. But when I get flat that's when the gambling is a possibility and that's when I chase. (1,M, 25-34,C).*

This was an old pattern for this participant, but even so he found it hard to maintain his commitment:

- *Not easy because I'm lazy and I can't be stuffed going to the gym. So it's hard - for some reason it's hard to keep a healthy lifestyle going … An old way to reduce stress … Not having enough money for gym membership … A little bit. A helper. Twenty per cent help. (1,M, 25-34,C).*

9.1.6.2 Playing music

A personal passion for playing music seemed to help the following participant who had previously had a gambling problem. This interest in playing music, coupled with a focus on changing priorities, created a possibility for change:

* *I've always loved music and I took up guitar 16 years ago, and it's just something that's a creative joy that I've decided to put more time into, instead of doing that [gambling]. (20,M,55-64,P).*

9.1.6.3 Buying a poker machine

One participant used the creative self-help strategy of actually purchasing a poker machine and playing it until he was sick of it. He explained that this was the most effective strategy he had used:

* *Well the most effective one that I did was actually buy my own pokie machine. Because I just played it to excess to try to break the addiction, so that it no longer had the lure. That was about a 12-month strategy to do that. (26,M,45-54,C).*

He explained the logic behind his thinking:

* *I knew that I always had a problem. Whenever I saw a pokie I'd want to play it, so I thought well the only way to break it - just using my own logic - was to put myself in front of it all the time. That's why I bought my own and when I finished work before I went down to the Mess for tea there was that hour, hour and a half, so I'd go have a shower and just make myself sit down and play it for that time. (26,M,45-54,C).*

However, this strategy seemed to have been only a short term solution because the experience of playing his own machine differed from that in a venue, and also because he eventually had to sell the machine. He reported that he currently had a gambling problem:

* *It still didn't totally cure me, because I was only playing for small coins that were my own. You'd walk into a club or something and there were machines there with a lot higher prizes available. But it slowed me down to a point where I could control it more … It was very effective at the time. But as time has progressed since having the machine, the lure is still there now, it's come back. So it wasn't a long term, effective measure. It would be if I still had the machine, but unfortunately I went bankrupt and had to sell off everything. I went bankrupt due to health reasons, not because of my gambling. (26,M,45-54,C).*

9.1.6.4 Playing online social casino games

The use of social casino games on the internet that did not require spending real money seemed to help one current problem gambler, by passing the time and reducing her boredom:

- *During the nights … they allow you free credits every four hours … so at 12 o'clock, when my next lot of credits are due or one o'clock, I wake up and I reload the extra free credits I get … it fills in the time. It fills in the boredom. It gets rid of boredom. (11,F,55-64,C).*

Another participant with a current problem explained that playing these games created some excitement if he won, did not cost any money if he lost, and provided a relaxing escape:

- *Well I thought if I can't go and spend real money, I can stay here and spend fake money and still get that sense of like if I win, I win and so I get a bit of the excitement. Not so much anymore, but a bit of the excitement and if I lose, oh well, there's always tomorrow, but it's not coming out of my pocket … Easy. Yeah, it's a relief, it's an escape, in some ways it helps release tension, not that I have a great deal of tension these days, but it does make me feel better. (17,M,55-64,C).*

It did take some control however to disregard incentives to spend real money on social casino games:

- *Yes there has been [some temptation to spend money] on occasion. They had a special going where you could get extra credit but you didn't have to pay for it, but you had to give them your credit card details. (17,M,55-64,C).*

9.1.7   Challenges and facilitators to implementation

There was a wide range of diversionary activities used by the participants, depending on their personal interests and previous activities and hobbies.

The main challenges were returning to gambling at times of stress or emotional upheaval, being tempted by online inducements to spend money (for those that used social casino games), and a sense that substituting other activities for gambling was only a short term answer as it was easy to return to old gambling habits because the new activities did not necessarily remove the urge to gamble.

9.1.8   Setting limits on gambling

Eleven participants reported using nine actions within the strategy of setting limits on gambling. Actions were diverse amongst these participants, with one action (making smaller bets) being used by three participants. The remaining actions were each used by only one or two participants. These were: limiting the amount of time spent on EGMs; limiting days each week on which to gamble; deciding not to gamble for a specific amount of time; limiting the amount of money spent each session; limiting the amount of money available on a visa debit card; gambling within affordable limits; being selective about what to gamble on; having food breaks while gambling; and planning gambling expenditure.

9.1.8.1 Making smaller bets

Two of the three participants who used this strategy found it very difficult to adhere to, but for somewhat different reasons. One participant currently experiencing problem gambling explained that it was difficult to maintain the self-discipline needed to keep the bets low:

- *I thought it might be helpful as a time-killer. It takes self-discipline. Sometimes I've started on that strategy and still ended up a train wreck by the end of the night. So it takes self-discipline to keep that bet down, and even at that low bet I'm still losing more than I want to … I have to increase my bets to try and win back what was already too much for me to lose … It's been to some degree helpful, because some nights I've gone in there and I've only lost $10 for the night, and I've played for two hours. I've been to the members' draws that I didn't win, and I've had a few nice coffees. I've enjoyed the atmosphere of a night out … I've actually enjoyed it. But the minute I get into a manic mode, losing money and self-harm, the pleasure is gone. (22,M,55-64,C).*

The second person who found making smaller bets a difficult action to maintain reported varying success. However, he considered the strategy was useful 'when it worked'. This participant explained that sharing the desire to limit the size of his bets with friends was needed for it to be successful:

- *I wouldn't say it's fairly easy at all … I find it a little bit tough at times. Some days are better than others or some weeks or even some months are better than others. But then you go through patches where it's not so great … Yeah, I mean I have mentioned it to my mates before I started. So a couple of times they will remind me of it, that sort of thing. (27,M,25-34,P).*

This same participant described that difficulties with adhering to this action were related to alcohol intake, the associated diminished control, and borrowing money from friends:

- *When I go out, I do have a beer so when you have a couple of schooners you don't really think too much about the consequences and make a few decisions that you do end up regretting later on … my mates will give me money if I ask for it. There's no real hesitation for them to say no. They're happy to lend me money if I ask for it. So I guess that's probably the biggest thing. I think it has helped quite a bit when it does work. In that way it has been a positive change. (27,M,25-34,P).*

A third person utilised this strategy effectively, and thought it was a 'common sense' action to limit harm from gambling by avoiding spending as much as other gamblers she saw in venues:

- *Because I don't deliberately go in there wanting to lose massive amounts, and I know that if you do bet big, then you certainly can lose massive amounts of money very, very quickly … Yeah, and even if you sit in there, I'm very much a people person and I talk to other people and I watch other people, and I've seen*

how much money some of those people put through those machines and how quickly. That scares me, and it's not really something I want to do … I think that is pretty effective, certainly in keeping the amounts lower. The minute you start betting high, then you're really in trouble, I think. (29,F,55-64,C).

9.1.8.2 Not gambling for a specific period of time

One participant with a current gambling problem had an unusual way of approaching the strategy of limiting time spent gambling on EGMs; he had a bet with a friend that he would not play EGMs for 12 months.

- *It was a bet. What we decided was that none of us would have a bet on a poker machine for that period of time, and it might have been six months or something that very first time Then, the next time I did it with a mate for $1000 bet that - again, knowing full well that the $1000 wasn't the issue, it was the fact that we could give up for 12 months, and we'd save a lot of money by not playing the poker machines over that 12 month period, but if either of us broke it then the other bloke had to pay $1000. Now, that's then - so that was where I got this idea that if there was a start and finish time, it worked for me. (5,M,55-64,C).*

This strategy worked because he felt he had a strong sense of personal control, especially when he had made a commitment to others:

- *Again, in my own mind, once I have a set timeline I know I can commit to it and I know that I can stick to it – made easier by doing it with others. (5,M,55-64,C).*

This participant did however, see that there were situations when he could be tempted to break this commitment, such as when he had consumed alcohol or was bored. These temptations seemed stronger early in the abstention period:

- *Early in the piece, when it might have been very quiet at the local pub or something like that, or I'm a bit bored with the company, I was tempted to think, oh yeah I should go and put something in the poker machine, particularly when I've had a few drinks or something, but I haven't, and I won't. I know I won't, because I'm just committed to it. (5,M,55-64,C).*

9.1.8.3 Limiting duration of gambling sessions

One participant who had previously had a gambling problem described how he had come to realise that setting a time limit on gambling would not affect his capacity to win. He explained:

- *That was in one of the books I read. It said simply don't worry whether you're winning or losing, you can always win or lose next time. But, have a set time and walk away … Hindered? When you're playing poker, you never take your winnings off the table … Effective? For me very good. I have no problems now walking away. (30,M,55-64,P).*

9.1.8.4 Limiting number of days each week to gamble

The same participant who had abstained from EGM gambling by betting with his friend about not playing was also quite successful in limiting the number of days each week that he gambled on horse races.

- *Horses - It just works, I know. Again, it's not something conscious. Well, it is conscious, for me because I don't want to drink on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday - I don't want to be in that environment up there on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday and it makes me enjoy my Friday, Saturday, Sundays more I suppose … People say that I am a routine type person, and it works for me, because I've got control … (5,M,55-64,C).*

9.1.8.5 Limit alcohol consumption while gambling

The same participant also described issues associated with alcohol and gambling. He commented that drinking alcohol made it difficult to stick to the limiting strategy.

- *Hindered? One of the things that I can find a little bit troubling is if I do have too much to drink that some of the plans that I have go out the door totally. (5,M,55-64,C).*

In a similar vein, another interviewee, with past gambling problems, related how he tried to limit his alcohol intake when gambling in order to better contain the number of bets he had. He found this strategy to be very difficult, but also very effective:

- *Very hard … You are not so courageous when not drinking … So the hardest part there is you probably increase the number of bets you have if you've been drinking, so to speak … Yes - effective. (18,M,55-64,P).*

9.1.8.6 Limit amount of money spent each session

One participant with prior gambling problems was creative when limiting his gambling expenditure. This strategy sourced from a book he had read involved physically allocating money for spending on gambling to a particular envelope, with other expenses sorted into other envelopes. He found he was saving money this way:

- *[I] set aside the amount I want to spend in an envelope. It just came to me. It's one of those things I thought well, you know, this is a sensible idea. One of the books I read was talking about envelopes and putting money in different envelopes for different things. I've stuck to that, I've never put any extra in and I've never taken any extra out. Sorry, I have actually taken money out of it because it's actually got more in it than I've been putting in. (30,M,55-64,P).*

Another participant felt a strong determination was required to make this self-help strategy work. In order to limit the amount spent at each session she left her wallet at home:

- *I force myself to do it. If I'm focused on something, if I'm determined, I'll do it. When I come home from the pokies and I see my wallet there and I look in it I think I've still got X amount of money there, I think that's good. But if I take my wallet with me and I come home and I look at it and it's empty I think you stupid idiot, what did you do that for? (23,F,45-54,C)*

9.1.8.7 Gambling within affordable limits

- *While some other actions that participants used helped them to gamble within their limits, one participant was more specific about this. She described how she was now retired and had limited money, which forced her to stay 'within her comfort zone'. (4,F,25-34,C).*

9.1.8.8 Other actions to set limits on gambling

One participant described that being selective about what to bet on had been successful. He commented that:

- *If you want to bet on everything, it's like betting on cockroach races … why bother doing that? I woke up to that real quick, that's just stupid. You're betting on things that you don't even understand. Not difficult and effective (24,M,55-64,P).*

Other actions within this strategy included giving money to family to look after so 'I would have to actually plan what I spent … Quite effective' (19,F,18-24,C); and having food breaks so that time spent gambling on EGMs would be more limited (22,M,55-64,C).

9.1.9   Challenges and facilitators to implementation

Limiting the amount of time and money spent on gambling seemed to be a useful strategy for many participants, but with definite challenges.

The main challenges mentioned were the use of alcohol which diminished control over gambling regardless of the cost, friends encouraging the participant to return to old habits, the need for participants to have strong self-discipline for this strategy to work, and triggers such as boredom that encouraged a return to gambling.

There were many factors that facilitated this strategy. Limiting alcohol use and having more money to spend seemed to allow participants to undertake other social activities within venues, while informing friends of new limits assisted some participants to remain in control. Watching others lose money seemed to motivate the use of this strategy, together with a strong sense of achievement when personal control was achieved.

9.1.10 Reducing opportunities and triggers

Fourteen participants used seven different actions within this strategy. The most popular action within this strategy was avoiding venues, followed by not socialising with gamblers; investing money elsewhere to limit gambling; not turning on the television to avoid gambling marketing; organising competing activities so the person

could not enter gambling venues; and asking friends not to have social events at gambling venues.

9.1.10.1 Avoiding venues

One participant who was currently experiencing gambling problems talked about how he had found himself in venues without consciously realising it; thus avoidance for him had to be a conscious and constant process:

- *I knew that because one of the things that I discovered or did was that I would literally be going somewhere and would find myself, almost without realising it, inside a venue. It almost became an automatic process. So this was about consciously considering where places were and, by consciously considering where they were and consciously avoiding them, made me think through that - trying to sort of short circuit that automatic process of just ending up inside somewhere. (21,M,55-64,C).*

This participant described the main difficulty of avoiding venues was related to ease of access and proximity of gambling venues. He talked of the constant struggle he experienced when he said:

- *Helped? Of the accounting for your time and the location, that worked together to help a bit … it's difficult, partly because when you're in a situation like I am - so addicted - it doesn't matter where a place is, you'll find it if you want to. But the other factor is that - to be honest, it's fairly difficult to walk down a lot of streets - even in my own suburb where I live, if I walk to the shops then there's a gambling venue in a hotel in the shops … Effective? In the last year or so it's been particularly - it's been an important part in the overall number of things that have helped me. So it's been an important part. I just have been able to avoid them by consciously being aware of it and not going down those streets sort of thing. (21,M,55-64,C).*

For the following participant (with a current gambling problem) who only gambled in land-based venues, venue avoidance was effective but was difficult to maintain, as she explained:

- *It's not easy … There's always the temptation. I have actually been in the club today and just had a cup of coffee and didn't play the machines, because yesterday, as I say, I put $60 in and I decided that was stupid. (29,F,55-64,C).*

She described the particular temptation she encountered when friends or her husband insisted she went with them to a venue because she was then exposed to the sights and sounds of gambling:

- *It's not super difficult [to avoid venues], unless we are actually going in to meet people or, as I say, last night, my husband wanted to go in because he wanted to go in for the members' draw. You sit in the clubs, you hear the bells and whistles and all the wonderful noises they make going off, and it attracts your attention and makes you very tempted to go on … It's up and down, to be quite honest.*

One week, I might be quite good, and another week, I'll be absolutely dreadful. (29,F,55-64,C).

9.1.10.2 Not socialising with gamblers/avoid friends who gamble

It was a major decision to change their friendship groups, but this seemed to be an important self-help gambling strategy for some participants. For some, there was sadness at not being able to continue with friends and this caused some challenges as indicated here:

* *Well, not really difficulties but I just missed them and difficulties from like gossip - they started to spread gossip about me because of why I don't want to be friends with them anymore. (10,F,25-34,P).*

One participant currently experiencing problem gambling said it became a total change in lifestyle for him:

* *I changed my friends. They don't know anything about the pokies either, my [new] mates. They don't know how they work or anything, which is good. I thought, why should I waste my time with people that are going to play the pokies and drink and all that when I can just go out with good boys that don't play the pokies, hardly drink, hardly go out? So I thought, no. I think it's a change of lifestyle. I think that's what happens in life where, if you change your lifestyle. (15,M,25-34,C).*

This participant also experienced painful rejection from his previous social group and this was hard for him:

* *Hindered? Yeah, just with old friends saying, what, you don't want to be mates with us and all the - no, I'm still mates, I just don't want to hang out with you, all that kind of stuff. My new mates hating my old mates for letting me play the pokies, all that kind of stuff. (15,M,25-34,C).*

9.1.10.3 Investing money elsewhere to limit gambling

Interestingly, for two participants who had previously had gambling problems, there was a decision to invest their money in property or other investments so they had limited funds. One participant talked about learning to invest through childhood games. He used financial software to help this process, which he deemed moderately helpful.

* *Property and other collectibles investments – used to play monopoly as a kid. When I was younger I got into buying a property so that I had to put my money somewhere else other than gambling … Very easy because most home loans are 25 to 30 years long. So unless you can pay off a home loan, then you've got to keep paying it … Helped? Managing money with Microsoft money program … Hindered? Sometimes I'd still gamble and blow money. I'd think that was a waste and now I've got to cover it. (14,M,55-64,P).*

Another participant described peace of mind through investment in property. He had thought of this strategy himself:

- *It's peace of mind, too - that you've actually put money away [in a property], and then you've actually done something about it and you can't get at that money. (18,M,55-64,P).*

9.1.10.4 Other actions to reduce opportunities and triggers

Other actions within this strategy included: not turning on the television to avoid gambling marketing; organising competing activities so the person could not enter gambling venues; and asking friends not to have social events at gambling venues.

9.1.11 Challenges and facilitators to implementation

Avoidance of venues appeared to be a difficult strategy for many. Exposure to gambling opportunities can be pervasive and many found it hard to reduce these external triggers to gamble.

The main challenge expressed was the need to be vigilant in consciously avoiding situations where gambling occurs or is advertised. Venues where gambling is a prime activity are also where social activity occurs; thus, in order to avoid gambling triggers, some participants found they needed to make new friends and avoid socialising with previous friends who gambled. The challenge was therefore related to a total lifestyle change for many. Some experienced rejection from old friends who did not understand and this experience was personally confronting.

However, new lifestyles and new friends also became facilitators in helping participants reduce, manage or control their gambling, creating new opportunities for change. In addition, the new availability of money led to a certain peace of mind and confidence amongst those interviewed. They felt successful and this facilitated the continued use of this strategy.

9.1.12 Becoming informed about gambling

Five participants reported using this strategy. Three had read stories from recovered/recovering gamblers, two had researched odds of winning, two had accessed a variety of online supports and resources, and two had self-assessed their own gambling behaviour.

9.1.12.1 Reading gambling stories

Amongst the three people who had read stories of gambling recovery, one described the impact in some detail:

- *There are situations that I could relate myself to … Helped? Easy to access online … Hindered? Well, it's just in your mind really. Sometimes trying to stop doing it. Yourself is your own enemy and stuff like that. Why bother, like that. I say in mind why bother reading it. It might not work. What do you get from it? Effective? Yes. (4,F,25-34,C).*

9.1.12.2 Researching gambling odds

Having easy internet access anywhere at any time helped the following participant (with a current gambling problem) to understand gambling odds and keep track of gambling. He explained how he could use his travel time to access the internet and thus work out how much he was losing. Following this, he was able to keep good records of his gambling, calculate his losses and, at the same time, address the boredom that he felt precipitated his gambling. In this sense, he used two strategies simultaneously, becoming informed about gambling and monitoring his behaviour and change:

- *I looked up the government website about how the pokies work and that, and they've given that percentage kind of thing where you hardly get - what is it, 87% or something from a dollar? … It was [successful], because I'm a shift worker on a train. I sit there on the train and I do absolutely nothing at all. So while I'm doing that, I get out my book and just jot it all down. It just kills the boredom. Actually, that was another reason I was playing pokies, was because I was bored … I can always refer back to it. It's always with me and I keep looking back at it. I think, I've saved this much a month, I've paid all my bills, I've got this left over. Yeah, I'm doing pretty well. (15,M,25-34,C).*

9.1.12.3 Exploring information online about gambling

One participant with a current gambling problem had accessed online support groups and read about signs of problem gambling which she had sourced from a gambling help website. Venue signage had prompted her to look at this website:

- *All the toilets and around every pokies area they have the signs about Gambling Help Online and that sort of thing. Had to look at that, so that's where I got the idea to have a look. (19,F,18-24,C).*

Another participant, with a past gambling problem, explained how online information helped him to develop his own set of self-help strategies:

- *I went to the Gambling Help Online on the computer. They had these different sites you can read, you know what I mean? I just looked at a few of them and I just thought oh well let's see what this is about and it had a few pointers on there. I'm not saying that they were all that I was going to relate to, but they sort of helped me formulate my way of budgeting my life, sort of thing. Putting it together, sort of putting what I was thinking together and mixing it up in a bowl and coming up with a cake basically. I've got no other way of explaining it. (24,M,55-64,P).*

9.1.12.4 Self-assessment of own gambling

Two participants had used this particular strategy and had found it useful, including the interviewee who had self-assessed his gambling behaviour during the two online surveys he had responded to for the current study. The other participant explained:

- *I weighed up how much I'd actually lost over the years and thought no, no … Effective? Yes. (30,M,55-64,P).*

9.1.13 Challenges and facilitators to implementation

Reading material online appeared to be a useful action. The only challenge noted was whether the information was correct or reliable, if it would really work and if it was worth reading about.

Facilitators included easy access to information online, information that was accessible in venues, and information that helped to identify new ways of dealing with gambling problems.

9.1.14 Changing thoughts and beliefs

Three participants described ways in which they consciously changed their thoughts and beliefs associated with gambling to delay their urge to gamble, to purposefully focus on their goals, challenge their thinking about gambling, and to think about positive aspects of their lives.

One person explained how psychotherapy had helped raise his self-awareness to enable him to resist the urge to gamble as a form of escape. Persistence appeared to make this process easier over time, as did gaining control over his alcohol consumption. He explained:

- *The whole self-awareness thing and checking in with myself is something that's come up through psychotherapy, it's come up through my counselling with Gambler's Help and more recently through the Catalyst program that I did for my drinking. … It wasn't easy and it's certainly not easy at times now, but I'm finding that it's becoming second nature at this point. I mean I don't gamble leisurely on a regular basis. Let's say that I gambled 10 times in the last three months. I could probably tell you that two out of those 10 times would be leisurely and the rest would be just a reaction to something. Does that make sense? Forget about the leisurely part, I'm using it as a form of escape. It got easier with time and I think it's got easier because I'm not feeding the gambling with the drinking. So, I'm a lot more clear in my head. (9,M,45-54,C).*

He felt the success of this strategy was very dependent upon his personal mindset at the time:

- *It just depends on my mindset. It just depends on where I'm at, how emotional I am about something or how upset I am about something. If I'm not able to check in with myself fairly enough, like I'm not able to manage the gambling, but I'm finding that I'm more capable of doing that and seeing that through the night than I was six months ago or a year ago. (9,M,45-54,C).*

9.1.14.1 Focusing on goals and challenging thoughts about gambling

One participant with a past gambling problem described focusing on goals and recognising that gambling was not a realistic way to make money:

- *No, just my - because my emotions were going down low and I was having a few problems in my relationship or whatever, so that was part of the motivation; I didn't want to keep complaining to my partner about losing money, and she wasn't happy about it … I was sick of, as I said, buying into a fantasy of the easy money dream, I suppose, which wasn't realistic. I felt like I was losing control. I wanted to be in control. … Well, it's like anything; it's like exercising or learning an instrument - takes a lot of personal discipline. You must apply it. You can easily just throw it all away. So it's focussing, engaging it and giving yourself some reward from doing it, like exercise or whatever it is, or playing an instrument - practising and then when you get the result you feel better. (20,M,55-64,P).*

He articulated the importance of combining actions when changing thoughts about gambling when he said:

- *Well, it's very effective. Yeah, a combination of discipline, reality checking, tapping into the fantasy of the win, and challenging those false ideas. (20,M,55-64,P).*

This same participant referred to challenging his thinking about gambling to help him resist urges to gamble:

- *Sometimes I could say there's always a little voice that could say, don't do that. It's always easier to go and sit on a stool and push buttons and try and win money, but I've just got to keep challenging that thinking. (20,M,55-64,P).*

9.1.14.2 Thinking about positive aspects in life

One participant (that had past problem gambling) recognised the positive things in his life including the importance of relationships with partner and child:

- *I guess when you get to some of the lower points you kind of take stock of what's the good stuff you have going in your life, sort of thing. Obviously my daughter and my girlfriend are two of the strongest points in my life. Well, I have suffered from depression in the past so when I was, as I mentioned, at my lowest points you just kind of have to look around and see what positives you have and the gambling was kind of pushing me back in that direction towards depression so that was something that - I learned from going through to use those strategies. Eventually it came to me, I guess, after one of my lowest points, it sort of just dawned on me that I do still have a lot of good stuff going on. (27,M,25-34,P).*

9.1.15 Challenges and facilitators to implementation

Compared with other strategies, changing thoughts and beliefs was less frequently identified. However, those who did use the strategy found it to be effective. The challenges, as with most strategies used, were emotional issues that surfaced at various times in the participants' lives, which made it difficult to adhere to this strategy.

Facilitators for using this strategy included engaging in therapy to raise personal awareness, being aware of the need to give oneself personal rewards with continued success, and focusing on the positive aspects of their life.

9.2   Monitoring ongoing behaviour and change

One participant purposefully monitored his own gambling behaviour and the consequent changes in his life. This involved setting goals and keeping records of gambling and savings.

This participant felt that setting goals and monitoring progress towards them was very useful. This participant was motivated to attain those goals to prove to others that he could reduce his poker machine gambling, save money and be reliable:

- *Save up – have goals. Because all that time they're like, oh you don't have money, you play the pokies, you're always playing pokies, blah, blah, blah. So I thought, I'll save up my money and show them that I can save, I can get money and I can stop playing the pokies. I proved them all wrong, then I said to them, we'll all go on holiday. Just so I can prove to everyone that I'm not an addict. I can change. I can save. I can be reliable for myself. (15,M,25-34,C).*

He kept a constant record of his gambling and savings:

- *Perfect, because I went and got myself a little notebook and I write down everything that I want to save for. Every time I get paid, I look at that book and I'll work out, oh beautiful, I can have this much money if I save. (15,M,25-34,C).*

9.2.1   Challenges and facilitators to implementation

Monitoring gambling activity allowed the participant who used this strategy to see changes as they emerged. This facilitated the continued use of this strategy. No associated challenges were noted.

9.3   Utilising social support and resources

Three participants specifically named support from family and friends as strategies they used to prompt them to limit their gambling. However, 10 participants commented on the support they had received from family and friends as being important to support many of the other strategies they used. Seven participants said that their partners were of particular support, either taking over bank cards and finances, helping with budgeting and suggesting some actions to take. However, one felt that her husband had been too controlling and was becoming annoying in his attempts to curb her gambling.

The following participant described how he felt obliged to stop gambling because of his wife's support and that this was a good motivator to address his current gambling problem:

- *My wife was willing to put in the time and effort to support me and find a way to continue the relationship. So it was about repaying that to her in some ways. (21,M,55-64,C).*

Another participant recalled that his partner had been a helpful sounding board when he had experienced gambling problems in the past:

- *Yeah, well my partner was helpful. I would talk to her about it, and told her, and she said, well it's just making you miserable and - the dream- it's a fantasy. So talking with her was good to help. I realise that. (20,M,55-64,P).*

Having his wife make suggestions about different holiday destinations was helpful for the following participant who said:

- *She knows that I like to gamble, so if we've gone away she'll suggest a holiday where there's no casino. We've done a few of those. She'll suggest something that doesn't involve spending any time in a city where the casino is. That doesn't worry me. (30,M,55-64,P).*

One participant with current gambling problems commented that managing finances placed a strain on her relationship. This included actions such as keeping a record of gambling spend that was deemed unhelpful by the participant:

- *He came down heavy – took my credit card away, my husband, when he knows I am depressed or fed up about anything, [he] will give in to me and give me some extra money and things, to a small amount of extra money, nothing too major. I don't know whether I'd call it helpful. It becomes a bit of a conflict between us, his constant criticism and the fact that he keeps the amounts on a spreadsheet of how much I've gambled and things like that. I always tell him that doesn't really help me. It just gets on my nerves. (29,F,55-64,C).*

Interestingly, the following participant recognised the importance of family support, but also acknowledged that this was not sufficient on its own. She explained:

- *My husband did support me a lot, because he's the main reason why I started it. He's been very supportive in every way. But again, it's the motivation, that's also a big factor because even if you get support from your relative or your family, but then you won't change yourself. (4,F,25-34,C).*

One participant accessed family support as a means of implementing self-help strategies and did so without disclosing the gambling problem. He reported that they were helpful 'decoys', visiting them to remove the possibility of gambling.

Only one participant recalled specific criticism from a current partner regarding her gambling; however, some had previous marriages that had ended but this was not explored in the interviews.

The reactions and support of friends were slightly more problematic, with some participants either feeling unable to tell friends for fear of criticism or, if they did disclose, they felt humiliated. However, some did receive support from other friends who continued to gamble. Some decided to change their friendship group to lower temptations and triggers to gamble. One participant joined a friend in a bet that they both would abstain from EGM gambling for 12 months, and this had been successful.

Another interviewee with a current gambling problem described how his friends were accepting of his choice to stop gambling. He said:

- *Well most of my friends accepted - because I was in that group and when I was at work they knew what I was doing so they - I was never outcast or anything like that. (26,M,45-54,C).*

Friends did support this participant, although they 'laughed' at his request:

- *I give cards to friends; they laugh but accept it. (26,M,45-54,C).*

The following comment shows how negative comments from family and friends made one participant determined to succeed in his desire to stop gambling:

- *My family and friends know I have a problem. They abuse me. They think I'm a loser. It helped initially to get that reaction. (5,M,55-64,C).*

For some, the realisation of the importance of family was significant in their determination to succeed with their self-help strategies. One interviewee decided that family responsibilities were more important than gambling, although this realisation proved to be a difficult exercise for him and appeared compounded by his depression:

- *It's been extremely difficult. What I've found out, I have fallen maybe off the wagon a couple of times because my parents have helped me out from time to time … Sometimes I think to myself, if I wasn't married, geez, I'd have a lot of money, but then, on the other hand, I probably wouldn't. I think my gambling would be a lot - it was a lot bigger before I got married, so I'm pretty sure that's probably what would happen. (18,M,55-64,P).*

He acknowledged that depression was a large influence on his gambling, but his family helped him to find a way to overcome this, to recognise the positive aspects of his life and to move forward.

A second participant decided that he needed to disclose his gambling to those around him and doing so proved to be a major catalyst for him to change his gambling behaviour:

- *It was about it coming out and becoming known. That was the catalyst, if you like, that caused the change. Mental strength … to achieve a positive outcome. That's what it boils down to I guess. Once it became known - it was a horrible shock at the time - but what kicked in then was this sort of mental - there's this thing that I said to myself I've got to - I've got to solve this because my whole world will change. (21,M,55-64,C).*

9.3.1   Challenges and facilitators to implementation

Many participants mentioned how their family and other supports helped them to continue with their self-help strategy(ies). A major challenge was the unknown reaction of significant others to a disclosure of problem gambling. Friends often did

not understand the reason for the participant changing behaviour patterns and were not always helpful in encouraging this change. Facilitating the use of social support was the generally positive response participants received following disclosure. This often led to a sense that they could not let their loved ones down and heightened their need to overcome their problems.

9.4 Most effective strategies

Participants were asked "Of the strategies that you have used, which has been the most effective? Why? Or has it been a combination of strategies? Please tell me more about this." Thirteen participants were able to identify specific strategies that they had found most effective in limiting their gambling. They named actions related to a combination of these strategies; managing finances and gambling spend; setting limits; taking up alternative activities; reducing triggers and opportunities; and utilising social support and resources. One participant nominated changing thoughts and beliefs, but no-one identified becoming informed about gambling, or monitoring ongoing behaviour and change, as the most effective change strategies.

9.4.1 Combination of strategies

As noted earlier, most participants used a combination of self-help strategies and actions. A number of participants specifically noted that it was a combination of strategies that helped most. It was hard for these participants to claim one particular strategy as most important; thus they explained how strategies worked together:

- *The only thing that I can see is all those strategies combined have been helpful at differing times. (22,M,55-64,C).*

- *Combination, including improving my mental health. (21,M,55-64,C).*

- *Yeah, well my health and my financial wellbeing. I went from being single to having a partner with four children and … financially that strapped me, so I didn't have the money available to start with. (26,M,45-54,C).*

While participants viewed the following strategies as most effective for them, it is clear that many of the strategies rely on combinations with other strategies to create successful behaviour change.

9.4.2 Managing finances and gambling spend

Seven participants identified better money management as their most effective self-help strategy, including specific actions including limiting access to money; keeping records of gambling spend; using cardless cash; paying bills first; money management in general; and setting a gambling budget.

It was clear that this strategy was highly effective for many of those interviewed. The motivating force to begin self-help strategies was often financial stress, making the actions within this strategy greatly significant. Often it was the input and support of family and friends that enabled the success of this strategy, together with the

improvement in availability of money resulting from managing their finances. Record keeping and budgeting, alongside other actions, amplified effectiveness.

9.4.3   Setting limits

Four participants identified setting limits as the most effective self-help strategy for them. This strategy included actions such as limiting time in gambling venues; limiting the amount available on a debit card; deciding not to gamble for a specific amount of time; and gambling within affordable limits.

9.4.4   Taking up alternatives to gambling

Four participants considered that focusing on diversionary activities was effective in substantially reducing their gambling activity. Keeping busy was important in providing a distraction from thinking about gambling, but developing a sense of achievement related to non-gambling activities was also rewarding.

Many participants expressed pleasure as they discovered old or new activities. For this strategy to be successful, participants needed to either have previous hobbies or passions, or be able to consider new activities either alone or with family and friends. For many, there appeared to be no good alternative to gambling as this had become so much a part of their lives. The challenge was for them to discover new avenues to spend time on. For people who were isolated or who have spent many years with gambling as their main recreational activity, this strategy appeared very difficult to use.

9.4.5   Reducing triggers and opportunities

Three participants identified recognition of their gambling triggers and opportunities as their most effective self-help strategy. Two participants identified the actions of investing money elsewhere to limit funds available for gambling and one participant avoided venues specifically to reduce triggers and opportunities to gamble.

As with setting limits, this strategy was only successful for those who were able to maintain strong personal control over their actions. Being exposed to gambling in so many avenues of life made it very hard to reduce triggers and opportunities to gamble. If combined with diversionary activities, this could be very effective, but on its own it appeared difficult to maintain.

9.4.6   Utilising social support and resources

Two participants nominated prioritising family as the most significant self-help measures for them. Although this strategy did not rank highly as the most effective strategy for participants, throughout the interviews social support was described by many as a strong determinant of the effectiveness of using self-help strategies and actions.

9.4.7   Changing thoughts and beliefs

One participant explicitly nominated changing thoughts and beliefs as the most significant self-help strategy for him. The actions specified within this strategy were

not widely identified by those interviewed. However, it was clear from the interviews that most participants engaged in changing thoughts and beliefs about themselves, their gambling, their circumstances and consequent behaviours as they took up and continued to use various self-help strategies. Participants who articulated this as a strategy they had used had generally been receiving professional support. Professional therapy prompted their self-evaluation, enabling them to become aware of their needs and how to change their behaviour accordingly.

9.5   Lapse or relapse and its relationship to self-help strategies used

The interviewees were asked "Since you began to use self-help strategies to limit or control your gambling, have you ever experienced going back to your old ways where your gambling may have been less controlled?" . Those who had were then asked: "How did this relate to your use of self-help strategies? Did you stop using them or did they stop working for you? Of the 30 people interviewed, 17 had lapsed or relapsed at least once after using self-help strategies.

The reasons provided for lapse or relapse varied from renewed stress factors in their lives at home and work and feeling upset or angry, the use of alcohol, having a small win prompting renewed gambling activity, having a big win, going through a losing period, being away from home, having too much money in their wallet, having access to extra funds, or just not being bothered anymore.

Experiencing a lapse or relapse seemed to renew energy to overcome gambling problems, with all of those who had lapsed or relapsed saying that they returned to the same or other strategies with vigour. Some participants kept records of their lapse or relapse, thus having a constant reminder of their vulnerability to returning to gambling. Some re-evaluated their use of the strategies with one participant saying:

- *...that obviously didn't work, it was too easy, I've got to make it harder and that's what I did, made it harder (25,M,25-34,C).*

Those who did not relapse recounted the importance of their self-help strategies in this process. For example, one participant said:

- *Oh as far as I'm concerned there's no problem now, now that I've done - now that I keep a record. I will continue forever keeping a record and that's it. There's no way that I would ever spend more than I intend. (13,M,65-74,P).*

Others who had not relapsed acknowledged the combination of support from family and friends, alongside the self-help strategies they used, as helping to prevent a lapse or relapse.

9.6   Chapter summary

This chapter has analysed the results from semi-structured telephone interviews with 30 participants, recruited from the self-help strategies online survey. Sixteen participants identified as having a current gambling problem, 11 identified as having a past gambling problem, and three reported they had never had a gambling problem. Participants were asked about the kinds of self-help strategies they used;

how they found out about them; factors that helped or hindered them in sustaining their use; which were most effective; and how these strategies impacted upon lapse or relapse.

Triggers to using self-help strategies focused most often around financial concerns, from a sense that gambling was out of control, that bills were not being paid, and that savings were being depleted. Triggers also came from family and friends when problem gambling was discovered or from online information that provided a 'wake-up call'. At times, a change in life circumstances, such as retirement or buying a house, necessitated a review of finances that stimulated the need for behavioural change. Mental health issues also prompted use of self-help strategies for some.

The way the strategies and actions were discovered varied considerably amongst participants, with many explaining that they thought of the actions themselves and that they were 'just common sense' once they had decided their gambling needed to change. Other strategies had been suggested by family, friends or counsellors, or had been identified by the participant through using online problem gambling sites, surveys and the list of strategies provided to participants.

The strategies and associated actions were identified and grouped according to the classifications used in the audit of websites (Study 2). By far the most widely used strategy was *managing finances and gambling spend*. Use of *taking up alternatives to gambling*, *reducing opportunities and triggers* and *setting limits on gambling* were also commonly reported by participants. Many interviewees used a combination of strategies. The most widely used actions across all strategies were limiting the amount of money in their wallet, setting a gambling budget, not taking bank cards into gambling venues, and avoiding gambling venues.

The most effective strategies amongst those interviewed were *setting limits*; *managing finances and gambling spend; reducing triggers and opportunities; utilising social support and resources; taking up alternative activities*; and a combination of these strategies. It should be noted that, although *utilising social support and resources* was not specifically named as a 'strategy' by many, it was evident from the interviews that such support was integral to many of the actions and strategies undertaken.

Of the thirty interviewees, seventeen had lapsed or relapsed at least once since they started to use self-help strategies. Lapse or relapse was viewed by participants as an opportunity to learn about their gambling and the use of self-help strategies, as they had temporarily abandoned the self-help strategies they had been using. However, they all reported that they were subsequently reinvigorated in their use of self-help strategies, and their lapse or relapse did not seem to undermine their overall determination to remain in control of their gambling.

In considering what supported the effectiveness of using self-help strategies and actions, participants described the support of family and friends. Their increased self-efficacy was a further motivating factor for many. Limiting access to funds encouraged use of money management strategies and for many this meant renewed focus on saving or investing money. Increased and often renewed family activities

also became a strong motivator to maintain change. Factors that hindered use of the various strategies included easy access to funds, proximity of gambling venues, loss of previous social activity at gambling venues, stress and mental health issues, alcohol use, the availability the internet gambling and lack of funds for other activities.

Individual strategies and actions used by participants did not occur in isolation. Many actions were dependent upon each other, and for many, their success relied on combining more than one action. For example, in keeping a gambling budget, participants also did not take bank cards to venues, thus increasing the chances of sticking to their budget. For many participants this was often combined with family or friends taking over cash flow and holding their bank cards. By engaging in alternate activities, participants limited the amount of time spent in venues and promoted social connection with those not involved in gambling. It was clear that, for those who were inspired or motivated to change by either life events, re-establishing family contacts or engaging in diversionary activities, it was easier to pursue their chosen strategies and actions. In contrast, those who had few social supports, or who had not previously developed hobbies or interests, found it more challenging to implement or maintain the use of self-help strategies and actions.

10. General Discussion and Implications

This multi-method project incorporated two major phases of work, incorporating six distinct studies with the aim of (a) developing a comprehensive list and descriptors of self-help strategies and actions, and (b) examining the uptake and helpfulness of self-help strategies and actions within an Australian context. Based on the previous literature, self-help was defined as the resources, strategies and actions people use to control or maintain change to their gambling, that they do themselves, without necessarily interacting with other people. Compared to professional help, self-help strategies are characterised by being (1) non-professionally administered, (2) largely self-administered, and (3) under personal control. Importantly, people can engage in self-help alone, as well as sequentially or concurrently with other forms of help, including from family and friends, peer support, mutual aid groups, and professional sources.

Four individual studies were undertaken in Phase 1 to address the first aim of the project. These studies utilised multiple data sources to provide a comprehensive list of self-help strategies and actions that were discussed by gamblers or described on gambling operator or support sites. Indeed, a particular strength of the project was to source self-help strategies and actions from a range of settings, including (i) existing Australian and international literature on self-help, gambling and other addictions, (ii) promoted strategies and actions on Australian industry, government and help service websites (n=34), (iii) posts (n=604) on an Australian online discussion forum where gamblers discussed with each other strategies and actions for limiting or reducing gambling and related harms, and (iv) self-help strategies and actions discussed by gamblers (n=85) during an online counselling session on the 24/7 free, national online counselling service Gambling Help Online.

Together, these studies provide rich, naturalistic descriptions of the types of strategies and actions gamblers use to limit, stop or manage their gambling problems, as well as a comprehensive and detailed examination, in terms of breath (number of strategies) and depth (number of actions within each strategy), of self-help strategies and actions promoted and discussed in multiple settings. This multifaceted approach identified 34 self-help strategies encompassing over 646 actions undertaken by gamblers, which were subsequently categorised for testing by the research team into 12 distinct self-help strategies and 99 actions.

To address the second aim of the project, examining the uptake and helpfulness of strategies and actions, two distinct studies were undertaken, comprising Phase 2. The first was a detailed online survey investigating the helpfulness of the identified self-help strategies and actions amongst a large national sample of current and past gamblers (n=716). The sample was recruited through heavy promotion on multiple websites (including government, industry, health, sport, support and operator sites), at venues and services, through paid advertising, social media and targeted emails and newsletters to agencies, gamblers and support programs. Over 700 participants, aged between 19 and 88 (68% male), from across Australia completed the survey, including those who reported that they had never had a problem or concern about

their gambling (n=227), those who had a problem with their gambling in the past (n=244), and those that had a current problem (n=245). Importantly, 62.6% of participants who had ever experiencing a problem with their gambling (n=489) reported that they had never accessed face-to-face professional help, highlighting the importance of self-help approaches for many individuals who develop gambling problems.

Behaviour change models of addiction and gambling, such as the TransTheoretical Model (TTM), highlight that people intentionally change their behaviour through a number of distinct stages of change (i.e., pre-contemplation, contemplation, action and maintenance) (Prochaska et al., 1988). A key question for the current project was to determine how the number and selection of self-help strategies and actions varied according to a person's stage of change. Almost 60% (n=410) of the survey sample completed a second online assessment that explored the uptake of specific strategies and actions over the following 4 weeks. By dividing the sample by their stage of change, the second survey was able to provide a unique insight into how the number and selection of self-help strategies and actions varied by particular stages of behaviour change, including money and time spent gambling over the past 30 days.

The final study in Phase 2, using a qualitative design, explored the experiences of using self-help strategies and actions across a broad sample of gamblers (n=30) selected from the online survey, with a particular focus on self-reported problem gambling status (no problem, current problem or past problem) and stage of change. Participants were asked about the kinds of self-help strategies they used; how they found out about them; factors that helped or hindered them in sustaining their use; which were most effective; and how these strategies impacted upon lapse or relapse.

In the following section, we discuss findings from the Phase 2 online survey and qualitative interviews with gamblers, in terms of their uptake, perceived helpfulness and experiences of implementing the 12 self-help strategies and associated actions identified in Phase 1 of the project. Findings from Phase 1 activities (i.e., the literature review, website audit, forum posts and counselling transcripts) are also discussed under each strategy where relevant.

10.1 Self help strategies and actions

(i) become informed about gambling

The baseline survey found that *information seeking* was the 6th (out of 12) most helpful strategy for all participants. The highest ranked actions were: *read information on how gambling works*, *read first hand accounts of other people's experiences*, and *read information on signs or consequences of problem gambling*, which all had a weighted average (accounting for non-use) of over 2 (i.e., between a little bit helpful and moderately helpful). The other items (read information on *responsible gambling* and *read self-help books*) were rated as between 1-2 (i.e., between not very helpful and a little bit helpful). The helpfulness of *information seeking* varied considerably according to self-reported problem gambling status. This strategy was the 3rd most

helpful for gamblers who had never had a problem with gambling, the 7th most helpful for gamblers with a past problem, and the 10th most helpful for gamblers with a current problem. However, across all groups, the average helpfulness score remained low, with the highest rating amongst past gamblers (2.16) still only just above 'a little bit helpful.' These findings are particularly interesting given that informed choice is the major strategy promoted (by many, but not all) as underpinning responsible gambling (both provision and consumption). However, information that is provided typically relates to understanding how gambling works or recognising a problem, with limited information offered in terms of how to change behaviour or indeed how behaviour change is best supported.

The follow-up survey found that *information-seeking* was one of the least frequently used strategies amongst gamblers, although there was some evidence to suggest that use may be slightly higher at earlier stages of change, as is suggested by the TTM (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1992). In the overall sample, just over 50% of gamblers reported using one or more *information-seeking* strategies over the past 30 days, with only *faith and prayer* having a lower rate of uptake. The uptake of this strategy was slightly higher, relative to other strategies, amongst participants in the precontemplation stage (3rd least used strategy) compared to participants in the contemplation and action stages (2nd least used strategy) and maintenance stage (least used strategy). Overall, the use of *information-seeking* strategies was highest amongst non-problem gamblers. Indeed, four of the five *information-seeking* actions (with the exception of *read self-help books*) appeared in the top 30 used actions amongst this group, whereas none of these actions appeared in the top 30 actions for participants in the contemplation, action, or maintenance stages. Consistent with this finding, few participants reported using this strategy in the qualitative interviews, with concerns raised about whether the information was correct or reliable and if it was effective.

Consistent with the survey findings, *information seeking* was infrequently discussed in counselling transcripts, and few of the forum posts reported seeking information as a strategy. Similarly, while a number of clients responded positively to information that was provided by the counsellor, there was limited mention of this as a self-help strategy, or as something that had been initiated without prompting. However, reading information about the consequences of gambling was frequently discussed in the context of the forum posts, where reading about other people's experiences with problem gambling (including the negative consequences they had experienced) was a means of finding new information as well as a reminder of the potential outcomes that could result from gambling. The dominant reason for reading about gambling was to feel inspired by the stories of others who had recovered from problem gambling, even amongst those who were still struggling with their own gambling problems. The value of hearing about the adverse aspects of gambling has been previously identified by Toneatto and colleagues (2008), who found that around a third of gamblers in recovery suggested raising awareness of the negative consequences of gambling would be advice they would give to someone else with a current gambling problem to help them decide whether to change their behaviour. Aligned with this notion, a common theme amongst forum posters who mentioned the benefits of reading other people's stories was a heightened sense of awareness

that it was necessary to change their gambling behaviours. For others, just reading stories was sufficient to change their thinking, and subsequently help them commit to changing their gambling behaviours.

Consistent with the notion of *information seeking* as an important strategy for those with no problems or gamblers who are precontemplative, the website audit highlighted that government sites consistently covered actions relating to 'becoming informed about gambling' more extensively than the help service sites, with the industry sites providing the least amount of recommended actions to support this strategy. Actions suggested by the government websites focused mainly on recognition of problem gambling and its impacts, enhancing understanding of how gambling works especially in relation to poker machines, and explaining responsible gambling. While the online survey suggests that such information is perceived as most helpful by those without a gambling problem, the qualitative interviews identified that easy access to information online, information that was accessible in venues, and information that helped to identify new ways of dealing with gambling problems were important facilitators for using this strategy.

(ii)   Self-assessment

The online survey found that completing a self-assessment was one of the highest rated strategies in terms of helpfulness. Across the entire sample, *self-assessment* was the second most helpful strategy (after *changing thoughts*), rising to the most helpful strategy amongst participants who had a past gambling problem. In particular, *accept that gambling needs to change* was the most helpful action for participants with a current problem, and the second most helpful action amongst participants with a past problem. The average helpfulness rating of this action for both groups was 3 (i.e., 'moderately helpful'), which after weighting to account for non-use was the highest helpfulness rating given for any action (worth noting that prior to weighting, the highest rating was approximately 3.5). Unsurprisingly, participants who had never experienced a problem with gambling rated self-assessment as less helpful compared to planning, limiting, and general *health and wellbeing* strategies.

The follow-up survey found that uptake of *self-assessment* strategies was mixed. Overall, self-assessment was the third most used strategy (by over 70% of the sample), but varied considerably according to the stage of change. Arguably, the findings regarding self-assessment provide some of the strongest evidence in support of the TTM, as this strategy rose from the 7th most used strategy amongst individuals in precontemplation, to the most used strategy amongst individuals in contemplation. Prochaska and DiClemente (1992) note that during the contemplation stage, participants are most open to consciousness-raising for the purpose of self-re-evaluation, but that this process becomes less important as they move into the action stage (and, presumably, behavioural processes take precedence). Consistent with this, the follow-up survey found that uptake of *self-assessment* strategies was reduced amongst participants in action (to the 5th most used strategy), and further declined amongst participants in maintenance (to 7th).

In counselling sessions, participants rarely used terms such as *self-assessment*, but a considerable proportion (close to one-quarter of the sample) discussed processes involved in the assessment of their own gambling behaviour, such as realising that gambling was causing a problem. Similarly, while *self-assessment* was only mentioned by a few participants in the qualitative survey, and was not discussed explicitly at all in forum posts, it was evident across these studies that many participants were using this strategy. In some cases, self-assessment was discussed in general terms without reference to how or why clients had chosen to re-evaluate their behaviour (e.g., 'I realised I couldn't do this on my own'), however recognition of financial loss was a common theme, and a number of clients reported that calculating their gambling expenditure was what made them recognise they needed to change. Although implementation was not discussed explicitly, it was apparent that some clients felt they had been unwilling to accept the reality of their situation earlier.

Given the helpfulness of this strategy, particularly for those in the earlier stages of changing their behaviour, it is not surprising that resources for *self-assessment* are increasingly accessible online, and are frequently downloaded (Cunningham, Hodgins, and Toneatto, 2011). While there is some evidence that self-assessment with feedback alone can lead to short-term reductions in money spent gambling (Cunningham, Hodgins, Toneatto, Rai, and Cordingley, 2009), our findings suggest that self-assessment is an important first step, with a range of additional self-help strategies and actions utilised by those who are making active attempts to reduce their gambling. While the website audit highlighted that government sites provided the most extensive coverage of self-assessment tools (focusing mainly on assisting problem recognition and calculating gambling expenditure), it was interesting to note that at the time Australian industry sites were reviewed, they did not include any self-assessment tools or suggested actions.

(iii)   Setting limits

In the baseline survey, *setting limits* was ranked 7th in terms of helpfulness. The most helpful individual actions were *avoid chasing losses*, followed by *stick with my strategy – don't increase or change bet,* which on average were considered between 'a little bit helpful' and 'moderately helpful.' However, most limiting actions were rated lower, with the majority of participants either not using them or finding them 'not very' helpful. The helpfulness of this strategy relative to other strategies varied across groups, being ranked 2nd least helpful by gamblers with a current problem, and the 3rd most helpful by non-problem gamblers. Gamblers with a past problem provided the highest helpfulness ratings of the three groups; while this was the case for most strategies, it is worth noting that setting limits was the only strategy that significantly differentiated the current and past problem groups.

In the follow-up survey, limiting was used by just over 70% of participants (the 5th most used strategy overall), which is consistent with Abbott et al. (2014), who found setting a gambling limit was used by 69% of people who had applied a method to limit the amount they spent gambling. This strategy was ranked slightly below self-assessment and self-monitoring in terms of uptake, and involved a higher average number of actions (3.29), however with the exception of *stick with my strategy* (used

by approximately 50% of the sample), most of these were used relatively infrequently (by between 25-35%). However, limiting appeared to be used more frequently (relative to other strategies) by participants at earlier stages of change. Indeed, this was the most frequently used strategy amongst individuals in precontemplation and the no problem group, while it was the least used strategy amongst individuals in the action group. Moreover, it was the only strategy where uptake was not markedly lower in the maintenance group, relative to the action group. These findings appear to mirror those regarding helpfulness, and suggest that gamblers actively struggling with change do not perceive efforts to limit their gambling as effective.

Actions related to this strategy were the highest for gambling industry websites, although government websites offered the broadest spread of actions. Limiting was also a commonly reported strategy in both the qualitative interviews and online forum posts, and is consistent with previous research showing almost all gamblers, whether with a problem or not, set some kind of limit on gambling expenditure within a gambling setting (Schottler Consulting, 2010).

While *setting limits* were frequently discussed during online counselling sessions, these generally involved limiting access to money by either leaving cards and cash at home, or limiting the amount that could be accessed online or using ATMs. These strategies are discussed in more detail in the sections on planning, managing finances, and reducing opportunity. Other limiting strategies, such as taking regular breaks, or not drinking alcohol while gambling, were not discussed in detail during online counselling sessions.

Across studies, challenges to implementation were consistently identified. Challenges to implementation highlighted in the qualitative interviews included drinking alcohol, which diminished control over gambling, friends encouraging the participant to return to old habits, the need for participants to have strong self-discipline for this strategy to work, and triggers such as boredom that encouraged a return to gambling. There were many factors that facilitated this strategy. Limiting alcohol use and having more money to spend allowed participants to undertake other social activities within venues, while informing friends of new limits assisted some participants to remain in control. Watching others lose money seemed to motivate the use of this strategy, together with a strong sense of achievement when personal control was achieved.

Taken together, these findings suggest that while this strategy is commonly attempted, it may not be that useful because people find it so hard to adhere to their limits. Nevertheless, where they do manage to stick to their limits, the strategy may in fact be extremely helpful (as exemplified by participants with no problems as well as those in maintenance).

(iv)   Planning

In the baseline survey, *planning* was the fourth most helpful strategy overall. It was ranked higher in helpfulness by non-problem gamblers (2nd most helpful strategy) than those with current or past problems (4th most helpful strategy), which is

unsurprising as being able to successfully plan gambling sessions in advance would be likely to protect against the development of problems. In this regard, it is worth noting that the most helpful planning action for non-problem gamblers was *set spending limit for next week or fortnight*, which was the second most helpful action overall and was midway between 'a little bit helpful' and 'moderately helpful.' In contrast, the most helpful planning actions for current and past problem gamblers involved more specific money-limiting strategies (i.e., planning ahead and leaving cards or cash at home). This is consistent with Abbott et al. (2014), who found 69% of people who had gambled at least once over a 12-month period had set a "monetary limit before leaving home" and of these people, 95% reported that this was effective.

The follow-up survey showed that *planning* was the 6th most frequently used strategy overall. However, while planning was more frequently used by gamblers in the contemplation and precontemplation stages, it was used less often amongst those in the action stage, presumably because they were already implementing changes and had made a commitment to reduce or cease their gambling. While planning was not identified in the qualitative interviews or website audit, there were significant overlap in action items that were included under the strategy 'managing finance and gambling spend'. In contrast, planning a gambling session in advance was a strategy that was frequently discussed by clients accessing online counselling. In particular, this tended to involve limiting their access to money by leaving credit or EFTPOS cards at home and only going to the venue with as much money as they were willing to lose. This strategy was also discussed in several forum posts, and typically involved scheduling time and money to be spent gambling. For some, this involved setting a budget as well as restricting their gambling (e.g., to once a week, or on special occasions only), which helped them regain control and bring the gambling back to acceptable limits.

Many implementation issues were identified in the counselling transcripts, most notably that planning was self-enforced and could therefore be undone if the urge to gamble was stronger than the urge to change behaviour. Planning did not necessarily protect against the consequences of 'winning big,' as this could increase motivation to continue gambling. In addition, having limited money while in the venue was viewed as unpleasant and anxiety-provoking by some clients, and could have negative impacts on other social activities that took place in gambling venues (e.g., having a drink with friends).

(v)   Managing finances

While this was the most popular strategy reported by gamblers in the qualitative interviews, as well as the strategy with the most action items on help service websites, the baseline survey revealed that *managing finances* was not considered particularly helpful. In the overall sample, its average helpfulness was below 'a little helpful' and was only slightly above social and faith-based strategies (which were consistently the least helpful of all the strategies examined). *Keeping track of money by setting up a budget/tracking spending* was the most helpful action from this strategy (scoring between 'a little helpful' and 'moderately helpful'). However, most

other financial management actions (including *lowering daily limits and only using credit cards that don't allow cash withdrawal*) were rated between 'not very helpful' and 'a little helpful.' As with the majority of strategies, *managing finances* was significantly less helpful amongst non-problem gamblers than gamblers who reported a current or past problem. While it was rated as similarly helpful amongst current and past gamblers, it was ranked lower in helpfulness amongst those with a past problem (10th) than those with a current problem (6th).

*Managing finance*s was used by 70% of participants in the follow-up survey (ranking 8th in terms of uptake), however no individual action was used by more than 45% of the sample. Setting daily withdrawal/cash withdrawal limits were amongst the least used actions, reported by 20% and 17% of participants, respectively. Although participants in the action group reported the highest uptake of this strategy, there were no significant differences in the number of strategies used between the precontemplation, contemplation, and maintenance groups. Overall, managing finances was ranked highest in regard to uptake amongst the no problem and maintenance groups, and lowest amongst contemplation.

Removing or limiting access to money was discussed frequently in the online forums. This included changing passwords to accounts to reduce access to cash, cutting up, destroying, or cancelling credit cards, making purchases and paying expenses before gambling, giving someone else control of the finances, arranging a joint account, and setting up a savings plan, account, or financial goal. This was consistent with actions suggested on help service sites, which included *reducing access to cash* and *ensuring bills were paid before any gambling*, while government and industry websites also advised people not to chase gambling losses.

Managing finances was also the most common strategy discussed during online counselling sessions, and included setting daily withdrawal limits and switching to credit cards that did not allow cash withdrawal. Similar to online posts, for those accessing online counselling, this strategy frequently involved getting friends or family members to take control of finances. This could be partial (e.g., having a joint account where expenditure could be monitored), or full (where access was taken away entirely and an allowance provided). While in many cases this was an effective strategy for reducing gambling expenditure, it frequently caused distress amongst those who felt they could not be trusted or were unfairly burdening their partners. Additional implementation issues included the other person being unwilling to take on responsibility, or failing to realise/take action when they were being taken advantage of (e.g. when they were owed money). More broadly, any financial management strategy that involved discussing gambling problems with other people (including bank employees) could cause feelings of shame and embarrassment.

Challenges identified in the qualitative interviews included the inconvenience of carrying limited cash and that this was demeaning, and the frustration of not having more cash available to gamble with. Additional challenges noted were access to internet banking where participants could check account balances and when salary had been paid, difficulties of staying consistent in use of actions as one or a few slip-ups could be very costly, and the ease of accessing gambling. The main facilitators

appeared to be first and foremost commitment to change, and also having external controls on how much money was available. These external controls included friends and venues not lending money, using direct debit to pay bills, use of a pre-paid debit card, cardless cash, and someone to assist with shopping.

These findings are largely consistent with the existing literature. While managing finances and gambling spend are frequently included in self-help or self-directed programs (e.g., Raylu et al., 2008), they appear to be infrequently used as a self-help strategy. Indeed, McDonnell-Phillips (2006) found budgeting for gambling spend most frequently occurred on a session-by-session basis and less frequently on a weekly basis, with only one in five gamblers budgeting for their gambling on a fortnightly or monthly basis. Similarly, Hing et al. (2011) found few gamblers reported that they had 'kept records of your gambling activities and expenditure', while 'setting a budget for gambling expenditure' was reported as helpful by only 40% of gamblers who had never sought help, but by less than 5% of gamblers in treatment.

(vi)   *Reducing opportunity*

In the baseline survey, *reducing opportunity* was the third least helpful strategy overall. Although significantly more helpful amongst current and past gamblers, it remained one of the least helpful strategies overall for both groups. Similarly, reducing opportunity had relatively low uptake in the follow-up survey (68%), though rates were higher in the action and maintenance groups.

Consistent with these findings, while the strategy was commonly reported by gamblers in the qualitative interview, avoidance of venues appeared to be a difficult strategy for many. Indeed, while avoiding venues is a commonly reported strategy in previous research (Hodgins & El-Guebaly, 2000, Toneatto et al., 2008), few gamblers rate this action has helpful (Hing et al., 2011). Exposure to gambling opportunities were noted to be pervasive and many found it hard to limit these external triggers to gamble. As a result, participants identified that they needed to be vigilant in consciously avoiding situations where gambling occurs or is advertised. Venues where gambling is a prime activity are also where social activity occurs; thus, in order to avoid gambling triggers, some participants found they needed to make new friends and avoid socialising with previous friends who gambled. For many, this involved a total lifestyle change, which was highly challenging. Some experienced rejection from old friends who did not understand and this experience was personally confronting. Such findings are consistent with previous research, where avoiding family and friends who gambled was rated as helpful by fewer than 5% of gamblers, including those with and without problem gambling (Hing et al., 2011).

Posters on the online forum also talked about limiting or removing access to gambling opportunities. This strategy including staying away from gambling environments, moving house, limiting or restricting internet access and self-excluding from land based and online venues. Two themes emerged in relation to triggers or temptation. These were identifying triggers that might lead to gambling, and becoming better at becoming aware of and managing urges. Similarly, reducing opportunities was discussed in the counselling transcripts in regard to avoidance of

venues, self-exclusion, and cancelling online accounts. Issues with implementation included the perception that these actions could be easily overturned (or in the case of self-exclusion, not implemented correctly by the venue), as well as the impact that not being able to gamble had on social activities. In contrast to the other studies, the audit highlighted that this strategy was not covered extensively by any of the websites. The most prevalent action within this strategy was to avoid gambling as a reaction to emotion/stress which was included widely on government websites but not by help service or industry sites. Importantly, the industry websites had minimal self-help actions to reduce gambling opportunities, triggers and urges.

(vii)   Changing thoughts

The baseline survey found that *changing thoughts* was the most helpful strategy overall, and the most helpful strategy for both people with current and past problems. However, this strategy was significantly less helpful for non-problem gamblers, who ranked it as the 5th most helpful strategy overall. For current and past problem gamblers, cognitive actions comprised 4 of the top 10 helpful actions, including *think about how your money could be better spent* (the most helpful action overall amongst past gamblers and the second most helpful action overall amongst current gamblers), as well as *think about the negative consequences of gambling, think about the positive consequences of not gambling*, and *compare costs and benefits of gambling.*

Changing thoughts was also the most commonly used strategy in the follow-up survey, and was the strategy that involved the greatest number of individual actions (an average of 5.3). *Remind yourself that you don't need to gamble* and *remind yourself of the negative consequences of gambling* were the second and third most frequently used amongst the overall sample (used by approximately 60%), and other changing thoughts actions were also used frequently: overall, the top 10 actions included 6 changing thoughts strategies.

While the TTM suggests that cognitive strategies are more likely to be used in the earlier stages of change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1992), the follow-up survey found evidence that use of cognitive strategies increases as gamblers move from precontemplation to action. Changing thoughts was the 4th most used strategy for the no problem group, the 3rd for the precontemplation group, the 2nd for the contemplation group, and the number one strategy for action and maintenance. This is consistent with previous research, where one-quarter of gamblers who reported previous problems identified that cognitive strategies had helped make change happen (Hodgins and El-Guebaly, 2000).

Overall, uptake was highest in the contemplation and action stages, suggesting that cognitive strategies remain frequently used by gamblers who are actively addressing their problems, as well as those who are still in the process of deciding to change their behaviour. Indeed, 94.8% of participants in the action stage reported using one or more changing thoughts actions over the past 30 days. The actions used across the different stages could vary however; for example, participants in the action stage were more likely to remind themselves of the positive consequences of not gambling,

while participants in the maintenance stage (who were, on average, 5+ years post-recovery) were more likely to remind themselves of the negative consequences of gambling. Participants in the maintenance stage may also need to use fewer of these actions over time, with participants in the contemplation and action group using significantly more changing thoughts actions (an average of 6.8 and 7.3, respectively) than all other groups.

Compared with other strategies, *changing thoughts and beliefs* was less frequently identified in the qualitative interviews, however consistent with the online survey, those who did use the strategy found it to be effective. The challenges, as with most strategies used, were emotional issues that surfaced at various times in the participants' lives, which made it difficult to adhere to this strategy. The website audit highlighted that both help service and government sites included a range of actions to support this strategy, whereas industry websites had very few. While the majority of forum posts were related to thinking differently about gambling (e.g., admitting that there is a problem, realising that you cannot win), changing thoughts was discussed relatively infrequently in the online counselling transcripts compared to planning and money management strategies. Specific strategies that were mentioned by clients included reminding themselves of the negative consequences of gambling, thinking about how money could be better spent, feeling good about positive changes made, and changing the way they thought about their gambling.

(viii)   Watching yourself

In the baseline survey*, watching yourself* was the third most helpful strategy overall, and the third most helpful strategy amongst gamblers with a current or past problem. In contrast, watching yourself was the 7th most helpful strategy amongst non-problem gamblers, with this group also rating it as significantly less helpful than the other groups. However, when individual actions were examined separately, *remind yourself that the system is designed for you to lose* was the third most helpful overall, and appeared in the top 10 most helpful actions for all three groups. This is consistent with Hodgins et al. (2007) who found that appraising gambling differently (i.e., realising not a way to make money, understand it's not possible to win over the longer term) was an important reason for quitting gambling. *Concentrating on being strong or using willpower* was also ranked similarly across groups, while more specific self-monitoring actions (e.g., monitoring for signs of problem gambling) were generally less highly ranked by non-problem gamblers. These findings suggest that separating general from specific self-monitoring actions may be required to properly understand the helpfulness of this strategy for different groups of gamblers.

Watching yourself was the fourth most frequently used strategy in the follow-up survey. While used less often than other strategies by participants in the precontemplation and contemplation groups (ranked 8th and 7th in terms of use, respectively), relative uptake of this strategy increased markedly amongst the action group, and it was the third most frequently used strategy amongst the action and maintenance groups. Participants in the contemplation and action groups both used a significantly greater number of *watching yourself* actions than the precontemplation or maintenance groups, while the specific action 'remind yourself the system is

designed for you to lose' again appeared to be a relatively popular strategy across multiple groups.

Monitoring behaviour or change in gambling was often discussed during online counselling, and encompassed a wide range of actions such as keeping a diary, writing up a list of goals, putting up signs of things to accomplish, and keeping a calendar to mark gambling-free days. This was consistent with the website audit, which highlighted that the most widely used action to support this strategy was keeping a record of gambling wins and losses or keeping a gambling diary. All three types of sites included this action, with help service sites containing the most suggested actions to support this strategy. In the online forum, posts related to this strategy involved watching out for problems developing or returning, recording progress, thoughts and achievements and counting the days since attempting change.

Despite being frequently discussed by counselling clients, it is important to note that the majority had not yet used them, and amongst those who had, there was a lack of contingency planning around what to do when these strategies failed. As a result, there was limited consideration of how to implement different self-monitoring strategies effectively. In contrast, the qualitative interviews identified that monitoring gambling activity allowed the participant who used this strategy to see changes as they emerged, which facilitated the continued use of this strategy, and no associated challenges were identified.

(ix)   Alternative activities

Previous research has identified that engaging in new or distracting activities is amongst the most common self-help strategies used by gamblers (Hodgins & El-Guebaly 2000, Moore et al., 2012, Hing et al. 2011). Consistent with this, *engaging in alternate activities* was a commonly reported strategy by gamblers in the qualitative interview, with actions chosen related to their personal interests and previous activities and hobbies. Approximately one-fifth of clients discussed a wide range of alternative activities during online counselling sessions, including doing the housekeeping, gardening, or other chores around the home, engaging in work or study obligations, exercising, playing sports and other hobbies, and reading/watching TV. While there was general recognition that 'keeping busy' was the primary goal of this strategy, implementation appeared to be affected by value judgements regarding how pleasurable or necessary the specific activities were, and their utility as a distraction from gambling. The main challenges identified in the qualitative interviews were returning to gambling at times of stress or emotional upheaval, being tempted by online inducements to spend money (for those that used social casino games), and a sense that substituting other activities for gambling was only a short term answer as it was easy to return to old gambling habits because the new activities did not necessarily remove the urge to gamble.

Online forum posts discussed alternative activities to gambling as substitutions and distractions, and also identified physical activity, seeking other entertainment or focusing on work or study. Actions suggested by the help service sites to support this

strategy focused on encouraging uptake of a range of diversionary activities and diarising, while government websites focused mainly on distracting oneself by keeping busy and diarising. Interestingly, none of the industry sites contained any suggested actions for this strategy.

Overall, the results of the baseline survey indicated that taking up alternative activities was not regarded as a particularly helpful strategy, ranked as the 9th most helpful, with the average helpfulness rating just below 'a little helpful.' This strategy was significantly more helpful amongst gamblers with current or past problems, and was the 5th most helpful strategy amongst current problem gamblers. However, it should also be noted that given the breadth of this strategy, examining overall helpfulness is unlikely to give an accurate estimate of the helpfulness of specific actions. Indeed, alternative activities appeared in both the top 10 and bottom 20 most helpful strategies overall, with the highest rated (engage in an activity that gives you a sense of achievement) receiving a rating of 2.4 (between 'a little helpful' and 'moderately helpful'), and the lowest rated (play free gambling games like fantasy league and Facebook slots) receiving a rating of 1.7 (between 'not helpful' and 'moderately helpful'). Amongst participants with a current or past problem, *engage in an activity that gives you a feeling of achievement* was the most helpful individual action, followed by 'engage in a new form of entertainment.' Of note, the use of alternate activities has previously been found to vary according to problem gambling status, with Moore et al. (2012) reporting that nine out of 10 gamblers had used this strategy to avoid gambling too much. Similarly, Hing et al. (2011) found that just under 50% of participants classified as problem or moderate risk gamblers had taken up other activities in place of gambling, compared to only 36% of low risk and 24% of non-problem gamblers.

Alternative activities were used by just over 70% of the sample overall, and was the 7th most popular strategy in regard to uptake. The uptake of individual actions varied considerably, from approximately 50% of the sample for more popular actions (complete daily activities around the house; engage in a new form of entertainment; engage in an activity that gives you a sense of achievement) to less than 25% of the sample for the least popular actions (creating a physical reminder; doing something to feel a rush of adrenaline). Consistent with the predictions of the TTM, the uptake of alternative activities was highest in the action stage (88.3%), where this was the 4th most frequently used strategy. Participants in the action stage also reported using a greater number of actions (an average of 7) compared to the other stages. Overall, the uptake of alternative activities was lower in the maintenance group than the contemplation group.

(x)   Improve health and wellbeing

The baseline survey found that improving *health and wellbeing* was the fourth most helpful strategy across the whole sample. *Eating a healthy balanced diet* was the *third most helpful action overall, while engaging in regular exercise and* taking it easy were also amongst the top 30 most helpful strategies. However, this ranking appeared to be primarily driven by participants who had never had a problem with gambling, as this group rated *health and wellbeing* as the most helpful strategy

overall, and considered a healthy diet and regular exercise to be the most helpful and 5th most helpful actions, respectively. Such findings are consistent with a recent study by Morgan et al. (2012), who found that similar self-help actions received high helpfulness ratings in adults with subthreshold depression.

For participants with current or past problems, the *health and wellbeing* strategy was ranked as less helpful than *changing thoughts, self-assessment, watching yourself*, and *planning strategies*. In addition, while both diet and exercise were amongst the top 10 most helpful actions for gamblers with a past problem, they were less helpful for those with a current problem.

Uptake of the *health and wellbeing* strategy in the follow-up survey was high (75%), with only changing thoughts being used by a greater proportion of the sample. An average of 4 *health and wellbeing* actions were used over the past 30 days, with this again being highest amongst the action and contemplation groups. However, these groups differed markedly in the relative uptake of this strategy. *Health and wellbeing* was the 2nd most frequently used strategy in the action group, behind changing thoughts, but was only the 8th most frequently used strategy amongst the contemplation group, behind a range of somewhat more targeted cognitive and behavioural strategies (e.g., changing thoughts, planning, limiting, etc.).

While improving *health and wellbeing* was primarily discussed in the counselling transcripts in relation to physical fitness, a small number of clients discussed 'self-care' actions designed to increase happiness and mental wellbeing. However, overall the discussion of these strategies focussed more on barriers to implementation, most notably comorbid mental health conditions (e.g., depression) and substance abuse. This strategy was infrequently reported by gamblers in qualitative interviews, and were mainly discussed in the context of physical activity and keeping healthy. Similarly, while the strategy was not explicitly identified in the website audit and forum posts, actions related to exercise were discussed as alternate activities to gambling. These findings are consistent with the existing gambling literature, which has typically included physical activity and other actions related to wellbeing under the strategy alternative activities (Hing et al., 2011; Hodgins and el-Guebaly, 2000).

(xi)   Social support

Along with faith and prayer, *social support* was the least helpful strategy in the baseline survey overall. However, it was ranked higher amongst those with a current gambling problem (9th), and was rated as significantly more helpful amongst current problem gamblers than non-problem gamblers (though there was no difference in ratings between the current and past problem groups). Consistent with this finding, Moore et al. (2012) found that talking to family and friends about their gambling activities and spending more time with family and friends were endorsed highly by people with problem gambling (78% and 85% respectively), but less frequently by those without a problem (25% and 43% respectively).

Social support was also used relatively infrequently by participants in the follow-up survey. Overall, just under 60% of the sample reported using this strategy, and it was

ranked 10th out of the 12 strategies in regard to uptake. Social support was ranked highest amongst participants in the action group (7th), with this group using significantly more social support actions over the past 30 days (an average of 2.8) than the precontemplation (0.93) and maintenance groups (1.65). The contemplation group used a similar number of social support actions to the action group, but overall ranked this strategy lower (10th). While Hodgins and el-Guebaly (2000) found that less than a quarter of gamblers interviewed mentioned 'social support' as an action taken when stopping gambling, around a third of those interviewed who no longer had a gambling problem did raise social support as important in maintaining change.

Many forum posts discussed social support, which ranged from sharing or posting comments in online forums, disclosing the details of gambling to family or friends, getting support to help manage recovery, or asking family and friends to help create a diversion from gambling. This strategy was also supported by a broad range of actions on the help service and government websites, with *being honest with family and friends* and *asking for help the main actions promoted*. Many participants in the qualitative interview mentioned how their family and other supports helped them maintain other self-help strategies.

Social support strategies were mentioned in just under 20% of online counselling transcripts. Primarily this involved seeking support from family and friends. However, significant barriers to implementation were also discussed, most notably negative emotions (e.g., fear that a partner would leave when they were told the full extent of the problem), and feelings of isolation. Similar concerns were raised in the qualitative interviews. Clients who had not sought support from family and friends reported a lack of social support and connectedness, either due to the feeling that they had no friends they could be completely honest with, or limited social contact with others altogether. Importantly, facilitating the use of social support was the generally positive response participants received following disclosure. This often led to a sense that they could not let their loved ones down and heightened their need to overcome their problems.

(xii)   Faith and prayer

While spirituality, prayer and meditation have previously been reported as reasons for change (Hodgins et al., 2002) as well as specific self-help strategies (Hing et al., 2011), faith and prayer was the least helpful strategy in the baseline survey, along with social support. While ranked slightly higher amongst non-problem gamblers (10th), it remained the least helpful strategy (12th) amongst gamblers with a current or past problem, and did not receive a rating above 1.8 (between 'not very helpful' and 'a little helpful' amongst any group). Faith and prayer was rated as significantly more helpful amongst non-strategic gamblers than strategic gamblers (although overall helpfulness remained low).

This strategy had the lowest uptake of all strategies in the follow-up survey: just over 50% of the overall sample reported using faith and prayer. In addition, it had the lowest number of actions used of any strategy (an average of 0.81), and only the action 'remain hopeful about your future' was used by more than 15-20% of

participants. Indeed, while this strategy was used by 76% of participants in the action stage, 75% of these reported using the action 'remain hopeful,' and no group reported other actions in their top 30 most used.

Consistent with these findings, few forum posts were related to faith, prayer and spirituality. The strategy was not discussed in counselling sessions, nor reported by gamblers in the qualitative interview, and was not identified in the website audit.

10.2 Combining Strategies and Actions

No strategy or action was identified that singly effectively dealt with an individual's gambling problem. Instead, participants described using a variety of strategies and actions that were each a little or moderately effective in addressing their gambling struggles. Indeed, data from the online survey found that participants reported multiple self-help strategies to be helpful, with *changing thoughts, self-assessment* and *watching yourself* identified as the three most helpful strategies across the entire sample. The top 10 most helpful actions identified at baseline also highlighted that participants were likely to combine strategies they found helpful (think about how your money could be better spent; remind yourself that sometimes people win…but system is designed for you to lose; eat a healthy balanced diet; compare costs and benefits of continuing to gamble; accept that gambling needs to change; remind yourself of negative consequences of gambling; remind yourself of positive consequences of not gambling; plan ahead and limit amount of money you carry; calculate money and time spent gambling; engage in regular exercise) included items from 4 different strategies. Similarly, over the past 30 days, multiple strategies and actions were utilised by participants, with the most frequently used strategies being 'changing thoughts', and 'health and wellbeing,' (used by over 70% of the sample), followed by 'self-assessment,' 'limiting,' 'planning,' watching yourself,' and 'alternative activities' (used by 70%-75% of the sample) and 'reducing opportunity' (used by just under 70% of the sample). While these data highlight participants utilised a range of strategies to manage their gambling, identifying the most effective combination of strategies for different groups is an important area for future research.

In the online discussion forum, it was also common for gamblers to report multiple strategies in the same post. When multiple strategies were reported they were often a combination of cash control (either limiting access to money or managing finances differently), thinking differently about gambling and the chances of winning, substituting gambling with another activity or diversion, as well as seeking social support. Consistent with these findings, Hodgins and El-Guebaly (2000) identified that gamblers in recovery reported they used an average of 8 actions used during maintenance, while Moore et al. (2012) reported the average number of strategies used was 7 (out of a possible 20).

Participants in the qualitative study also identified that individual strategies and actions did not occur in isolation. Many actions were dependent upon each other, and for many, their success relied on combining more than one action. For example, participants found that while limiting the availability of cash was helpful, it did not stop gambling urges, therefore requiring a set of additional strategies. Similarly, when trying to keep to a gambling budget, participants also chose not to take their bank

312

cards to venues, thus increasing the chances of sticking to their budget. For many participants this was often combined with family or friends taking over cash flow and holding their bank cards. By engaging in alternate activities, participants limited the amount of time spent in venues and promoted social connection with those not involved in gambling.

10.3 Limitations

It is important to note a number of limitations in this report when considering the overall findings. Firstly, none of the studies sought to recruit a representative sample of gamblers, and as such may have introduced a source of bias into the findings. The forum posts, although extensive, were selected from only a single website that did not permit peer-to-peer comments, which may have influenced those using the site, as well as the comments made. Similarly, online counselling transcripts were sourced from a single online counselling service, albeit providing national coverage, and could only report on those individuals who contacted the service for help. While the online survey was widely promoted across multiple media and settings, participants were self-selected, and their responses may not reflect the broader population of gamblers in the Australian community. As participants of the qualitative interviews were identified through this sample, similar considerations apply. Finally, the websites audited were also not necessarily representative, and in fact were purposively selected from Australian sites as they had comparatively comprehensive strategies. A focus on recruitment in Australia may have led to the strategy 'faith and prayer' rating poorly across studies, even though this strategy is more commonly discussed in other countries, such as the US. Nevertheless, a particular strength of the current project was that it collated responses from multiple data sources, allowing the research team to identify the consistency of responses across the varied settings where samples were selected.

A second limitation is that the data collected were predominantly based on self-reported responses, which may be influenced by factors such as recall bias and attribution. Indeed, strategies and actions may have had a greater or lesser impact on behaviour than perceived by participants. In addition, it is possible that social desirability bias impacted helpfulness ratings, as the qualitative findings indicated that many actions were used because they were considered 'common sense' (i.e., potentially reflecting perceived social norms). However, the use of multiple data sources throughout the project provides greater confidence in the overall findings, particularly when similar themes and responses were identified across studies. A third related limitation is the cross-sectional nature of these data, which is also a criticism of most of the previous literature in this area. Although associations between strategies, actions and outcomes were identified, causal relationships cannot be inferred. Nevertheless, a strength of the current project was the administration of a second online survey, which provided an opportunity to examine the utilisation of specific strategies and actions over a 4 week window. While differences between stage of change groups were identified, further longitudinal work is needed to examine how use of these strategies changes over time and whether their implementation effectively reduces gambling-related harms.

To expedite the collation of self-help strategies and actions in Phase 1, studies 1 to 4 were conducted concurrently. As each of the Phase 1 studies was conducted at the same time, strategies and actions that emerged in one study did not necessarily appear elsewhere. While this led to some discrepancy in reported strategies and actions across Phase 1 studies, this multi-method approach facilitated the generation of an exhaustive list of actions from multiple sources. This approach also led us to reconsider what may be considered a self-help strategy based on what gamblers reported in their discussions with others. For example, self-exclusion was initially considered out of scope because it was a program that was professionally administered. However, as our definition of self-help became more refined it became apparent that self-exclusion could fit the definition of self-help in that it was self-initiated and self-maintained and did not involve oversight or supervision from a health professional. This was further supported in the online counselling transcripts where self-exclusion was discussed at the same time as other self-help strategies. As such, self-exclusion was included in the final list of strategies and tested for its uptake and helpfulness in Phase 2. Similarly, we did not consider will-power to fit the definition of a self-help strategy or action. However, the online forum posts found gamblers often discussed the uptake and helpfulness of will-power and as such this item was also included in the survey.

It should be noted that the collection of data for Phase 1 occurred primarily in 2013 (approximately 18 months prior to the publication of this report). With the exception of the literature review (which was updated in April 2015), it is important to acknowledge that the data collected in Phase 1 was accurate as of 2013, but may not provide a complete picture of what is available to gamblers today. For example, some of the websites evaluated in Chapter 4 have since been modified and have added additional content. Nevertheless, a particular strength of Phase 1 was that it collated responses from multiple data sources so as to identify a broad range of strategies and actions relevant to Phase 2 work, and it is highly unlikely that a new effective self-help strategy would have emerged since this phase of data collection.

A further limitation relates to the development of the online surveys. The number of self-help actions generated from Phase 1 data sources was extensive compared to that reported in the literature. While the research team were able to summarise this information into theme strategies and actions for the online survey, this task was challenging, and the final 99 strategies may not reflect all strategies and actions used by individuals to manage their gambling. Furthermore, while actions were categorised under specific strategy headings, several actions may have been used within multiple strategy groups, which may have affected the ratings of helpfulness and uptake of particular strategies in the online survey. Indeed, the terminology used to describe and categorise strategies and actions in the existing literature was rarely consistent and often ambiguous (e.g., actions such as 'keep track of the money I spend on gambling' (Moore et al., 2012) and 'kept records of your gambling activities and expenditure' (Hing et al., 2011) could be discussed as a means of cash control in a venue, self-monitoring or self-assessment to increase awareness of gambling or as a longer term budgetary strategy). Nevertheless, our methodical approach attempted to address this deficit by using data from multiple sources, including conversations in naturalistic settings.

Another limitation regarding the survey development was the use of a single 5-point likert scale to measure uptake and helpfulness of actions. In order to avoid biasing helpfulness scores against actions that were used infrequently (but rated as helpful), we recoded the 'never used strategy' from 0 to 1, resulting in a 4-point scale ranging from 1 ('never used strategy'/'not at all helpful' to 4 'very helpful'). In addition, evaluating uptake using a binary response (used/never used) precluded an examination of the *frequency* with which actions were used. Future studies may wish to include a more detailed examination of both measures.

Finally, there were limitations relating to the survey analysis. For example, while we created subgroups of gamblers based on a range of relevant variables (problem gambling history, stage of change, gender, age, most problematic form of gambling, and help-seeking history), there are many other factors that are likely to contribute to variation within the sample that were not considered. For example, faith and prayer may be used more frequently and viewed as more helpful amongst gamblers who are religious or spiritual, and the analyses may be biased by including those with and without similar levels of faith together. However, given the length of the survey, collecting data to explore additional subgroups (including those based on religion or spirituality) was beyond the scope of this project. Nevertheless, the information provided within this report provides a foundation for future research examining how uptake and helpfulness of strategies vary within particular subgroups.

Despite these limitations, this two phase, mixed method project, encompassing six distinct studies, provides a comprehensive description of self-help strategies and actions that are discussed and promoted for gambling within an Australian context. It also offers a robust examination of the use and helpfulness of a broad array of self-help strategies and actions across differing gambling populations, as well as a rich exploration of people's experiences in attempting to implement such strategies and actions at various stages of their gambling career. Together, these studies deliver a unique insight into the importance and utility of self-help strategies within the Australian landscape, as well as providing a valuable contribution to the broader self-help literature internationally.

10.4 Implications

Building on the existing evidence on the use and effectiveness of self-help strategies for gambling, the findings from the studies conducted in this project raise a number of important implications for the field.

(i) Effectiveness of self-help and promotion of strategies

The project identified a broad range of strategies and actions utilised by individuals to manage their gambling, including those who developed gambling problems. Numerous strategies and actions were found to be helpful, and these were commonly used in combination. However, as noted in the qualitative interviews, participants varied considerably in how they learnt about particular strategies and actions, with many explaining that they thought of the actions themselves and that they were 'just common sense', while for others strategies and actions had been suggested by family, friends or counsellors, or had been identified by participants

through using online problem gambling sites or surveys. These findings suggest that despite a range of strategies and actions being included on multiple websites (albeit varying in their breadth and depth), there are opportunities to further promote these strategies and their level of helpfulness more broadly. Consistent with this, current websites should be encouraged to promote the most helpful strategies and actions, including those that are most helpful for different groups (see below). Indeed, given the lack of current evidence-based material on industry websites, responsible gambling codes of practice could be revised to include provision to include this valuable information.

(ii) Better targeting of strategies to particular populations

While a range of self-help strategies and actions were identified across studies, their uptake and helpfulness varied according to problem gambling status as well as stage of change. Promotion of a set of universal strategies that does not reflect where an individual may be in in terms of their gambling, may result in the adoption of strategies and actions that are ineffective and/or difficult to implement. For example, setting limits in a gambling setting (a commonly promoted strategy) was a frequently used strategy among individuals without gambling problems, however those with a current gambling problem rated this strategy as the 2nd least helpful. Indeed, 'changing thoughts', 'self-assessment' and 'watching yourself' were the most helpful strategies for participants with a past and current gambling problem, whereas 'health and wellbeing', 'planning' and 'setting limits' were the most helpful for those who reported no problems. Similarly, the most frequently used strategies amongst the precontemplation group were 'limiting' and 'health and wellbeing', while the most frequently used strategy amongst the contemplation group was 'self-assessment'. In contrast, 'changing thoughts,' 'health and wellbeing' and 'watching yourself' were the most frequently used strategies amongst both the action and maintenance groups. These findings speak to the importance of targeted information for particular stages and problem gambling states, as failure to implement promoted strategies may adversely affect self-efficacy and hinder recovery.

(iii) Addressing implementation challenges

Participants across studies identified numerous challenges in their attempts to successfully implement specific strategies and actions. Such information is critical to ensuring the effective use of particular strategies, and needs to be made more widely available. This should include specific information on implementation challenges and successes on available sources of self-help (such as websites and printed resources from industry and support services).

(iv) Increasing knowledge and skills of community members

The biggest barrier to seeking support for problem gambling is stigma, which is consistent with the low ratings of helpfulness for social support in the online survey. Indeed, some participants reported that they felt unable to tell friends for fear of criticism or, if they did disclose their gambling problem, felt humiliated. These findings support previous research in this area, and highlight the importance of stigma reduction programs for problem gambling in terms of promoting help-seeking.

Limited knowledge within the community on how to respond to problem gambling is also likely to be a factor in delaying a person seeking support. Issues of poor mental health literacy across the community are common, despite individuals identifying friends and family as the main source of help and support. Health literacy programs, such as Mental Health First Aid, have been found to be effective in improving the ability and confidence of family members and peers to reach out and support people with a range of mental health issues and addictions to seek help, and a similar approach for problem gambling is likely to be beneficial in overcoming some of the barriers identified in the current report.

(v) Development of self-help resources and review of current programs

The low rate of professional help-seeking in the online sample, coupled with the high utilisation of self-help strategies across studies, highlights the importance of accessible and effective self-help resources and programs. While such resources are readily available for other conditions (e.g., smoking and quit packs), and are often designed to reflect an individual's stage of change, there are limited self-help options currently available in Australia that have been evaluated. Our findings reinforce the need to develop and evaluate an accessible self-help gambling program or kit that is tailored to a person's stage of change or problem gambling status or severity.

Beyond self-help resources, the current research could also be used as a basis for review of the range of professional services offered to people attempting to limit or change their gambling. For example, it would be important to investigate the extent to which identified strategies (and their associated helpfulness) align with the current availability of professional services. For example, the strategy of 'challenging thoughts' may be considered analogous to a CBT-like strategy. Given the popularity of this strategy, there may be a need to increase access to gambling-specific CBT programs (e.g., by providing them across different delivery modes, such as face-to-faces, telephone or online). Similarly, the high uptake of financial planning might suggest the need for greater access to financial management/planning services or resources.

 (vi) Future directions

While this project adds significantly to the available literature, there are a number of outstanding questions that require further research. Firstly, while some of the strategies tested have a good body of research behind them, at least in terms of their uptake (i.e., limit setting), others such as cognitive strategies have not been extensively researched as a self-help strategy or action (e.g., 'remind yourself sometimes people win at gambling but the system is designed for you to lose'). However, it is important to note that many of the strategies frequently utilised by the sample are commonly promoted within existing evidence-based interventions for problem gambling. For example, the survey identified that six out of the 10 most frequently used actions involved changing thoughts, which is a central tenet of cognitive behavioural therapy, as is monitoring gambling behaviour (e.g., 'calculate time and money spent gambling'), which was also frequently endorsed in the sample. Similarly, counting the days since attempting change was commonly reported in the

online forums, and is a core strategy for 12-step recovery groups. Such findings suggest there is a natural synergy between particular self-help strategies and what has been found to be effective in treatment studies. Further research is required to understand how individuals learn to use these strategies in practice, as well as their relative effectiveness at different stages of their gambling career.

A second question relates to how gamblers determine the helpfulness of specific strategies and actions. Many of the actions and strategies identified can be used for multiple purposes, and with different goals in mind. For instance, information-gathering from a pamphlet could be considered a helpful strategy if the individual was able to retain that information. In this instance, retaining information is the primary outcome or goal, with reducing problematic gambling behaviour a more distal secondary outcome. As such, it is possible that some strategies that were considered helpful in addressing a person's primary goal at a particular stage may not be successful in addressing their broader gambling concerns. Future research could examine the different types of goals that gamblers tend to seek, and identify which strategies are most helpful in achieving these outcomes. An important related issue is that the helpfulness of particular strategies identified in this project do not necessarily equate to effectiveness, and further longitudinal work is needed to examine whether actions designated as helpful are actually effective in changing gambling behaviour at particular stages of change.

A third question relates to how strategies and actions are combined most effectively. For example, a strategy of changing cognitions may require the use of multiple cognitive actions (e.g., remind yourself you don't need to gamble, think about how money could be better spent) in order for it to be effective. Alternatively, it may be that a cognitive action is best accompanied by a behavioural strategy (such as limiting access to cash and/or engaging in alternative activities), as well as an action associated with social support. Future research should investigate the optimal number, and type of actions, required for a strategy to be effective, and which combinations are most effective for a person's particular stage of change.

A fourth question relates to the delineation of groups based on the TTM categories. The TTM purports that by passing through a series of five stages, behaviour change can occur. For example, the first stage in the model is labelled pre-contemplation, and refers to the stage in which the individual has not yet begun to contemplate changing their behaviour and do not intend to take action in the near future. The stages also include ten processes that aid movement from one stage to the next. However, we found that gamblers reported using a number of strategies across multiple stages of change, some of which do not fully align with the original model. For example, in the current study, some gamblers assessed as being in the pre-contemplation stage reported using the action 'accept that gambling needs to change'. According to the model, use of this action suggests that these people have some insight or motivation to change. However, this could reflect differences in how individuals perceive their gambling, such as concerns about loss of money on several occasions, rather than recognising they have a more severe gambling problem. Alternatively, it could mean that coming to understand or accept that there is a problem that needs changing could be a core part of the process of change.

Indeed, the fact that we found that all gamblers surveyed used at least one strategy to limit or control their gambling suggests that many strategies and actions are used regardless of whether there is an identified gambling problem. Given the TTM was developed through observations of smokers and then later people attempting to reduce alcohol use, it is important that future work determines how the processes outlined in the TTM are aligned with the self-help strategies and action reported by gamblers.

A fifth question relates to the relevance of self-help strategies and actions for prevention. While this project provided a short-term look at what strategies are implemented across the continuum of change for gambling problems, further longitudinal research is needed to determine which strategies are most helpful as preventative actions, before a gambling problem develops.

A final question relates to the generalisability of findings to an international audience. Indeed, as the focus of the project was primarily on identifying the uptake and helpfulness of strategies and actions within an Australian context, further work is needed to determine their relevance to populations in different environments and cultures.

11. References

Abbott, M., Bellringer, M., Garrett, N., & Mundy-McPherson, S. (2014). New Zealand 2012 National gambling study: Overview and gambling participation. Report number 1. *Auckland: AUT*.

Ajzen, I. (1985). *From intentions to actions: A theory of planned behavior*: Springer.

Apodaca, T. R., & Miller, W. R. (2003). A meta-analysis of the effectiveness of bibliotherapy for alcohol problems. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 59*(3), 289-304. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/jclp.10130

Battersby, M., Pols, R., Oakes, J., Smith, D., McLaughlin, K., & Baigent, M. (2010). The definition and predictors of relapse in problem gambling. Adelaide: Flinders Human Behaviour & Health Research Unit: Gambling Research Australia.

Baumeister, R. F., & Vohs, K. D. (2007). Self-regulation, ego depletion, and motivation. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 1*(1), 115-128.

Baumeister, R. F., & Vonasch, A. J. (2014). Uses of self-regulation to facilitate and restrain addictive behavior. *Addictive Behaviors, 44*, 3-8.

Boughton, R., & Brewster, J. (2002). Voices of women who gamble in Ontario: A survey of women's gambling, barriers to treatment and treatment service needs. Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101. doi: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Caldeira, K. M., Kasperski, S. J., Sharma, E., Vincent, K. B., O'Grady, K. E., Wish, E. D., & Arria, A. M. (2009). College students rarely seek help despite serious substance use problems. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment, 37*(4), 368-378.

Carballo, J. L., Fernández-Hermida, J. R., Secades-Villa, R., Sobell, L. C., Dum, M., & García-Rodríguez, O. (2007). Natural recovery from alcohol and drug problems: a methodological review of the literature from 1999 through 2005 *Promoting self-change from addictive behaviors* (pp. 87-101): Springer.

Carey, M. P., Snel, D. L., Carey, K. B., & Richards, C. S. (1989). Self-initiated smoking cessation: A review of the empirical literature from a stress and coping perspective. *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 13*(4), 323-341.

Carlbring, P., & Smit, F. (2008). Randomized trial of internet-delivered self-help with telephone support for pathological gamblers. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 76*(6), 1090-1094.

Cengelli, S., O'Loughlin, J., Lauzon, B., & Cornuz, J. (2011). P2-40 Predictors of smoking cessation in adolescent smokers: a systematic review of longitudinal

studies. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, 65*(Suppl 1), A230-A230.

Cooper, G. (2004). Exploring and understanding online assistance for problem gamblers: The pathways disclosure model. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction, 1*(2), 32-38.

Cowlishaw, S., Merkouris, S., Dowling, N., Anderson, C., Jackson, A., & Thomas, S. (2012). Psychological therapies for pathological and problem gambling. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, 11*.

Cunningham, J. A., Hodgins, D. C., & Toneatto, T. (2011). Pilot study of an Internet-based personalized feedback intervention for problem gamblers. *Journal of Gambling Issues*, 3-10. doi: 10.4309/jgi.2011.26.2

Cunningham, J. A., Hodgins, D. C., Toneatto, T., & Murphy, M. (2012). A randomized controlled trial of a personalized feedback intervention for problem gamblers. *PLoS One, 7*(2), e31586.

Cunningham, J. A., Hodgins, D. C., Toneatto, T., Rai, A., & Cordingley, J. (2009). Pilot study of a personalized feedback intervention for problem gamblers. *Behavior therapy, 40*(3), 219-224.

Cunningham, J. A., Wild, T. C., Cordingley, J., Van Mierlo, T., & Humphreys, K. (2010). Twelve-month follow-up results from a randomized controlled trial of a brief personalized feedback intervention for problem drinkers. *Alcohol and Alcoholism, 45*(3), 258-262. doi: 10.1093/alcalc/agq009

Dalum, P., Schaalma, H., Nielsen, G. A., & Kok, G. (2008). "I did it my way"—An explorative study of the smoking cessation process among Danish youth. *Patient Education and Counseling, 73*(2), 318-324.

DiClemente, C. C., & Prochaska, J. O. (1982). Self-change and therapy change of smoking behavior: A comparison of processes of change in cessation and maintenance. *Addictive Behaviors, 7*(2), 133-142.

Dowling, N., Smith, D., & Thomas, T. (2006). Treatment of female pathological gambling: the efficacy of a cognitive-behavioural approach. *Journal of Gambling Studies, 22*(4), 355-372.

Dowling, N. A., Browne, E., & McDermott, A. (2007). *The application of the transtheoretical model to problem gambling*. Paper presented at the 42nd Annual Conference of the Australian Psychological Society.

Etter, J. F., Bergman, M. M., Humair, J. P., & Perneger, T. V. (2000). Development and validation of a scale measuring self-efficacy of current and former smokers. *Addiction, 95*(6), 901-913.

Eysenbach, G., Powell, J., Englesakis, M., Rizo, C., & Stern, A. (2004). Health related virtual communities and electronic support groups: systematic review of the effects of online peer to peer interactions. *Bmj, 328*(7449), 1166.

Ferris, J., & Wynne, H. (2001). The Canadian problem gambling index. Ottawa: Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse.

Gainsbury, S., & Blaszczynski, A. (2011). Online self-guided interventions for the treatment of problem gambling. *International Gambling Studies, 11*(3), 289-308. doi: 10.1080/14459795.2011.617764

Gainsbury, S. M. (2014). Review of self-exclusion from gambling venues as an intervention for problem gambling. *Journal of Gambling Studies, 30*(2), 229-251.

Garcia, M. E., Schmitz, J. M., & Doerfler, L. A. (1990). A fine-grained analysis of the role of self-efficacy in self-initiated attempts to quit smoking. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 58*(3), 317.

Granfield, R., & Cloud, W. (1996). The elephant that no one sees: Natural recovery among middle-class addicts. *Journal of Drug Issues*.

Heather, N., Smailes, D., & Cassidy, P. (2008). Development of a Readiness Ruler for use with alcohol brief interventions. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence, 98*(3), 235-240. doi: 10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2008.06.005

Helvig, T. M., Sobell, L. C., Sobell, M. B., & Simco, E. R. (2006). Smokers' narrative accounts of quit attempts: Aids and impediments to success. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors, 20*(2), 219.

Hing, N., Breen, H., Gordon, A., & Russell, A. (2014a). The gambling behavior of Indigenous Australians. *Journal of Gambling Studies, 30*(2), 369-386.

Hing, N., Breen, H., Gordon, A., & Russell, A. (2014b). Gambling harms and gambling help-seeking amongst Indigenous Australians. *Journal of Gambling Studies, 30*(3), 737-755.

Hing, N., Cherney, L., Gainsbury, S., Lubman, D., Wood, R., & Blaszczynski, A. (2014). Maintaining and losing control during internet gambling: A qualitative study of gamblers' experiences. *New Media and Society*, online. doi: 10.1177/1461444814521140

Hing, N., Holdsworth, L., Tiyce, M., & Breen, H. (2014). Stigma and problem gambling: Current knowledge and future research directions. *International Gambling Studies, 14*(1), 64-81. doi: DOI:10.1080/14459795.2013.841722

Hing, N., Nuske, E., & Gainsbury, S. (2011). Gamblers at-risk and their help-seeking behaviour. Lismore, Australia: Gambling Research Australia.

Hing, N., Russell, A., Tolchard, B., & Nuske, E. (2015). Are there distinctive outcomes from self-exclusion? An exploratory study comparing gamblers who

have self-excluded, received counselling, or both. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 1-16.

Hodgins, D. C., Currie, S. R., Currie, G., & Fick, G. H. (2009). Randomized trial of brief motivational treatments for pathological gamblers: More is not necessarily better. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 77*(5), 950-960. doi: 10.1037/a0016318

Hodgins, D. C., Currie, S. R., & el-Guebaly, N. (2001). Motivational enhancement and self-help treatments for problem gambling. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 69*(1), 50-57. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.69.1.50

Hodgins, D. C., Currie, S. R., el-Guebaly, N., & Diskin, K. M. (2007). Does providing extended relapse prevention bibliotherapy to problem gamblers improve outcome? *Journal of gambling studies, co-sponsored by the National Council on Problem Gambling and Institute for the Study of Gambling and Commercial Gaming, 23*(1), 41-54. doi: 10.1007/s10899-006-9045-1

Hodgins, D. C., Currie, S. R., el-Guebaly, N., & Peden, N. (2004). Brief motivational treatment for problem gambling: A 24-month follow-up. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors, 18*(3), 293-296. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0893-164X.18.3.293

Hodgins, D. C., & El-Guebaly, N. (2000). Natural and treatment-assisted recovery from gambling problems: A comparison of resolved and active gamblers. *Addiction, 95*(5), 777-789. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1046/j.1360-0443.2000.95577713.x

Hodgins, D. C., & Peden, N. (2005). Natural course of gambling disorders: Forty-month follow-up. *Journal of Gambling Issues, 14*, online.

Horch, J., & Hodgins, D. (2008). Public stigma of disordered gambling: Social distance, dangerousness, and familiarity. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 27*(5), 505-528. .

Jorm, A. F. (2000). Mental health literacy. Public knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders. *British Journal of Psychiatry, 177*, 396-401.

Klingemann, J. I. (2012). Mapping the maintenance stage of recovery: A qualitative study among treated and non-treated former alcohol dependents in poland. *Alcohol and Alcoholism, 47*(3), 296-303.

Kwong, A., Howard, J., & Arcuri, A. (2010). Bulletin 12: Self-managed change from problematic cannabis use.

Kypri, K., Hallett, J., Howat, P., McManus, A., Maycock, B., Bowe, S., & Horton, N. J. (2009). Randomized controlled trial of proactive web-based alcohol screening and brief intervention for university students. *Archives of internal medicine, 169*(16), 1508-1514.

Kypri, K., Suanders, J. B., Williams, S. M., Mc Gee, R. O., Langley, J. D., Cashell-Smith, M. L., & Gallagher, S. J. (2004). Web-based screening and brief intervention for hazardous drinking: a double-blind randomized controlled trial. *Society for the Study of Addiction, 99*, 1410-1417.

Lalande, D. R., & Ladouceur, R. (2011). Can cybernetics inspire gambling research? A limit-based conceptualization of self-control. *International Gambling Studies, 11*(2), 237-252.

Lichtenstein, E., & Cohen, S. (1990). Prospective analysis of two modes of unaided smoking cessation.

Lostutter, T. W., Lewis, M. A., Cronce, J. M., Neighbors, C., & Larimer, M. E. (2012). The use of protective behaviors in relation to gambling among college students. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 1-20.

Marlatt, G. A., Curry, S., & Gordon, J. (1988). A longitudinal analysis of unaided smoking cessation. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 56*(5), 715.

McDonnell-Phillips. (2006). Analysis of gambler pre-commitment behaviour. Melbourne: Commisioned by Gambling Research Australia.

Moore, S. M., Thomas, A. C., Kyrios, M., & Bates, G. (2012). The self-regulation of gambling. *Journal of Gambling Studies, 28*(3), 405-420. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10899-011-9265-x

Neighbors, C., Hove, M. C., Nasrallah, N. A., & Jensen, M. M. (2011). Self-help approaches for addiction. In B. A. Johnson (Ed.), *Addiction Medicine: Science and Practice* (Vol. 1): Springer.

Neighbors, C., Lostutter, T. W., Larimer, M. E., & Takushi, R. Y. (2002). Measuring gambling outcomes among college students. *Journal of Gambling Studies, 18*(4), 339-360.

Newell, R., & Burnard, P. (2010). *Research for evidence-based practice in healthcare* (2nd ed.). Chichester, West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons.

Norcross, J. C., Krebs, P. M., & Prochaska, J. O. (2011). Stages of change. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 67*(2), 143-154.

Nuske, E., & Hing, N. (2013). A narrative analysis of help-seeking behaviour and critical change points for recovering problem gamblers: the power of storytelling. *Australian Social Work, 66*(1), 39-55.

Parslow, R. A., Jorm, A. F., Christensen, H., & Rodgers, B. (2004). Use of medical services after participation in a community-based epidemiological health survey. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, 39*(4), 311-317.

Petry, N. M., Weinstock, J., Morasco, B. J., & Ledgerwood, D. M. (2009). Brief motivational interventions for college student problem gamblers. *Addiction, 104*(9), 1569-1578. doi: 10.1111/j.1360-0443.2009.02652.x

Prochaska, J., & DiClemente, C. (1983). Stages and processes of self-change of smoking: Toward an integrative model of change. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 51*(3), 390-395. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.51.3.390

Prochaska, J. O. (2008). Decision making in the transtheoretical model of behavior change. *Medical Decision Making, 28*(6), 845-849.

Prochaska, J. O., & DiClemente, C. C. (1982). Transtheoretical therapy: Toward a more integrative model of change. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice, 19*(3), 276.

Prochaska, J. O., DiClemente, C. C., Velicer, W. F., Ginpil, S., & Norcross, J. C. (1985). Predicting change in smoking status for self-changers. *Addictive Behaviors, 10*(4), 395-406.

Prochaska, J. O., Velicer, W. F., DiClemente, C. C., & Fava, J. (1988). Measuring processes of change: applications to the cessation of smoking. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 56*(4), 520.

Productivity Commission. (2010). Gambling Inquiry Report. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

Raylu, N., Oei, T. P. S., & Loo, J. (2008). The current status and future direction of self-help treatments for problem gamblers. *Clinical Psychology Review, 28*(8), 1372-1385.

Rodda, S. N., & Lubman, D. I. (2012). Characteristics of gamblers using a national online counselling service for problem gambling. *Journal of Gambling Studies, 30*(2), 277-289. doi: DOI 10.1007/s10899-012-9352-7

Rodda, S. N., & Lubman, D. I. (2014). Characteristics of gamblers using a national online counselling service for problem gambling. *Journal of Gambling Studies, 30*(2), 277-289.

Savic, M., Best, D., Rodda, S. N., & Lubman, D. I. (2013). Exploring the focus and experiences of Smartphone applications for addiction recovery. *Journal of Addictive Diseases, 32*(3), 310-319.

Schottler Consulting. (2010). Factors that influence gambler pre-commitment decisions. Melbourne: Commissioned by Gambling Research Australia.

Sinadinovic, K., Berman, A. H., Wennberg, P., & Hasson, D. (2009). Internet-based screening and intervention for alcohol- and drug-related problems. *European Psychiatry, 24*(S457).

Sobell, L. C., Ellingstad, T. P., & Sobell, M. B. (2000). Natural recovery from alcohol and drug problems: Methodological review of the research with suggestions for future directions. *Addiction, 95*(5), 749-764.

Sobell, L. C., Klingemann, H. K. H., Toneatto, T., Sobell, M. B., Agrawal, S., & Leo, G. I. (2001). Alcohol and drug abusers' perceived reasons for self-change in Canada and Switzerland: Computer-assisted content analysis. *Substance Use & Misuse, 36*(11), 1467-1500. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1081/JA-100106960

Sussman, S. (2002). Effects of sixty six adolescent tobacco use cessation trials and seventeen prospective studies of self-initiated quitting. *Tobacco induced diseases, 1*(1), 35-81.

Suurvali, H., Hodgins, D. C., & Cunningham, J. A. (2010). Motivators for resolving or seeking help for gambling problems: A review of the empirical literature. *Journal of Gambling Studies, 26*(1), 1-33.

Tait, R. J., Spijkerman, R., & Riper, H. (2013). Internet and computer based interventions for cannabis use: A meta-analysis. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence, 133*(2), 295-304. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2013.05.012

Toce-Gerstein, M., Gerstein, D. R., & Volberg, R. A. (2009). The NODS-CLiP: A rapid screen for adult pathological and problem gambling. *Journal of Gambling Studies, 25*(4), 541-555. doi: 10.1007/s10899-009-9135-y

Toneatto, T., Cunningham, J. A., & Hodgins, D. C. (2008). Recovery from problem gambling without formal treatment. *Addiction Research & Theory, 16*(2), 111-120.

Vohs, K., & Baumeister, R. F. (2004). Understanding self-regulation: An introduction *Handbook of Self-Regulation: Research, Theory, and Applications* (Vol. 1-9).

Wagner, J., Burg, M., & Sirois, B. (2004). Social support and the transtheoretical model: Relationship of social support to smoking cessation stage, decisional balance, process use, and temptation. *Addictive Behaviors, 29*(5), 1039-1043. doi: 10.1016/j.addbeh.2004.02.058

Westermeyer, J., Myott, S., Aarts, R., & Thuras, P. (2001). Self-help strategies among patients with substance use disorders. *The American Journal on Addictions, 10*(3), 249-257.

Wood, R. T., & Williams, R. J. (2009). Internet Gambling: Prevalence, Patterns, Problems, and Policy Options.

12. Appendix

Summary of survey items and measures used

All items with the exception of participant demographics and self-reported problem gambling status were readministered at 30 days.

Participant demographics
- Gender
- Year of birth
- Marital status
- Highest educational qualification obtained
- Current work status
- Postcode
- Language spoken at home

Gambling involvement
- Time last gambled
- Typical method of gambling (e.g., online, betting shop, casino)
- Days gambled - past 30 days
- Money spent on gambling - past 30 days
- Money spent on gambling - past 3 months
- Largest amount spent - past 3 months
- Self-reported problem gambling status (never, past problem, current problem)
- Duration of problem (past and current problem gamblers only)
- Duration of recovery (past problem gamblers only)
- Most problematic form of gambling (past and current problem gamblers only)
- Help-seeking history (professional and non-professional sources)

Measures
- Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI: Ferris & Wynne, 2001). The PGSI is a well-validated and and reliable measure of problem gambling that includes 9 items measured on a 4-point scale (ranging from 'never' = 0, to 'almost always' = 4). Total PGSI score can be used to classify participants as non-problem gamblers (a score of 0), low level problem gamblers (i.e., few or no identified negative consequences; a score of 1-2), moderate problem gamblers (i.e., some negative consequences; a score of 3-7), or problem gamblers (negative consequences and loss of control; a score of 8 or more).

- Gambling Readiness to Change Questionnaire (GRTC; Neighbors, Lostutter, Larimer, & Takushi, 2002). The GRTC includes 9 items measured on a 5-point likert scale (ranging from 1 = 'strongly disagree' to 5 'strongly agree') and can be used to classify participants into the precontemplation, contemplation, or action stages of change. The GRTC has been shown to have good reliability and convergent validity (Neighbors et al., 2002).

- The NODS-CliP is a brief (3-item) screen that measures lifetime prevalence of pathological gambling (Toce-Gerstein et al., 2009).

Table A1. Uptake and helpfulness of all actions at baseline (full sample)

Strategies	Uptake				Helpfulness					
	Used strategy (% of total)		Not very helpful		A little helpful		Moderately helpful		Very helpful	
Remind yourself sometimes people win at gambling but system is designed for you to lose	596	83.2%	77	12.9%	103	17.3%	153	25.7%	263	44.1%
Think about how your money could be better spent	568	79.3%	48	8.5%	90	15.8%	141	24.8%	289	50.9%
Eat a healthy balanced diet	567	79.2%	65	11.5%	93	16.4%	156	27.5%	253	44.6%
Compare costs and benefits of continuing to gamble	559	78.1%	48	8.6%	111	19.9%	159	28.4%	241	43.1%
Calculate money and time spent gambling	550	76.8%	67	12.2%	112	20.4%	151	27.5%	220	40.0%
Remind yourself of negative consequences of gambling	546	76.3%	53	9.7%	111	20.3%	142	26.0%	240	44.0%
Avoid chasing losses	538	75.1%	87	16.2%	99	18.4%	116	21.6%	236	43.9%
Plan ahead and limit amount of money you carry	537	75.0%	72	13.4%	94	17.5%	133	24.8%	238	44.3%
Remind yourself of positive consequences of not gambling	533	74.4%	48	9.0%	104	19.5%	151	28.3%	230	43.2%
Accept that gambling needs to change	531	74.2%	53	10.0%	96	18.1%	124	23.4%	258	48.6%
Remind yourself that you don't need to gamble	530	74.0%	69	13.0%	145	27.4%	141	26.6%	175	33.0%
Set spending limit for each week or fortnight	520	72.6%	104	20.0%	95	18.3%	120	23.1%	201	38.7%
Read information on how gambling works	518	72.3%	95	18.3%	133	25.7%	145	28.0%	145	28.0%
Engage in regular exercise	514	71.8%	49	9.5%	84	16.3%	161	31.3%	220	42.8%
Identify inaccurate thoughts about gambling or winning	502	70.1%	76	15.1%	110	21.9%	137	27.3%	179	35.7%
Take it easy on yourself or take it slow	495	69.1%	73	14.7%	106	21.4%	148	29.9%	168	33.9%
Read information on responsible gambling	493	68.9%	129	26.2%	145	29.4%	124	25.2%	95	19.3%
Read information on signs or consequences of problem gambling	489	68.3%	97	19.8%	137	28.0%	139	28.4%	116	23.7%
Concentrate on being strong or using will power	489	68.3%	59	12.1%	101	20.7%	132	27.0%	197	40.3%
Plan ahead and leave credit cards and non essential cash at home	487	68.0%	63	12.9%	84	17.2%	127	26.1%	213	43.7%
Ensure your physical health needs are met	485	67.7%	68	14.0%	83	17.1%	148	30.5%	186	38.4%
Make a resolution to change your gambling	475	66.3%	53	11.2%	104	21.9%	127	26.7%	191	40.2%

Strategies	Uptake				Helpfulness							
	Used strategy (% of total)		Not very helpful		A little helpful		Moderately helpful		Very helpful			
Re-establish trust and belief in yourself	474	66.2%	50	10.5%	114	24.1%	130	27.4%	180	38.0%		
Keep busy to avoid thinking about or engaging in gambling	471	65.8%	56	11.9%	101	21.4%	134	28.5%	180	38.2%		
Engage in a new form of entertainment	464	64.8%	52	11.2%	89	19.2%	137	29.5%	186	40.1%		
Distract yourself or do something else until urge to gamble passes	462	64.5%	48	10.4%	99	21.4%	148	32.0%	167	36.1%		
Engage in an activity that gives you a feeling of achievement	462	64.5%	40	8.7%	78	16.9%	131	28.4%	213	46.1%		
Stick with my strategy - don't increase or change bet	461	64.4%	91	19.7%	80	17.4%	116	25.2%	174	37.7%		
Read first hand accounts of other people's experiences	458	64.0%	58	12.7%	114	24.9%	150	32.8%	136	29.7%		
Monitor how your emotions relate to gambling	458	64.0%	47	10.3%	105	22.9%	130	28.4%	176	38.4%		
Keep track of money by setting up a budget and tracking spending	456	63.7%	56	12.3%	72	15.8%	106	23.2%	222	48.7%		
Increase fluid intake	455	63.5%	74	16.3%	98	21.5%	126	27.7%	157	34.5%		
Complete daily activities around the house	452	63.1%	55	12.2%	104	23.0%	135	29.9%	158	35.0%		
Remain hopeful about your future	438	61.2%	59	13.5%	89	20.3%	116	26.5%	174	39.7%		
Complete a questionnaire that gave me feedback on gambling problem	437	61.0%	101	23.1%	116	26.5%	137	31.4%	83	19.0%		
Use alternate strategies to deal with gambling triggers	432	60.3%	62	14.4%	89	20.6%	147	34.0%	134	31.0%		
Try methods to improve your sleep	430	60.1%	75	17.4%	83	19.3%	126	29.3%	146	34.0%		
Take a long walk	427	59.6%	68	15.9%	108	25.3%	120	28.1%	131	30.7%		
Monitor for signs that gambling is becoming a problem	422	58.9%	46	10.9%	104	24.6%	115	27.3%	157	37.2%		
Focus on not gambling each day at a time	421	58.8%	58	13.8%	74	17.6%	112	26.6%	177	42.0%		
Postpone gambling until a later date	413	57.7%	86	20.8%	106	25.7%	103	24.9%	118	28.6%		
Make a daily affirmation such as staying positive or letting go	408	57.0%	57	14.0%	84	20.6%	116	28.4%	151	37.0%		
Spend less time alone	408	57.0%	68	16.7%	95	23.3%	120	29.4%	125	30.6%		
Explore additional work or study-related activities	404	56.4%	61	15.1%	91	22.5%	110	27.2%	142	35.1%		

Strategies	Uptake		Helpfulness							
	Used strategy (% of total)		Not very helpful		A little helpful		Moderately helpful		Very helpful	
Participate in regular structured groups or sports like football or tennis	404	56.4%	67	16.6%	96	23.8%	113	28.0%	128	31.7%
Avoid gambling when feeling down, depressed or otherwise vulnerable to gambling	394	55.0%	72	18.3%	67	17.0%	78	19.8%	177	44.9%
Be more open and honest with family and friends about gambling	392	54.7%	55	14.0%	85	21.7%	96	24.5%	156	39.8%
Schedule gambling sessions so that they do not interfere with important activities	391	54.6%	80	20.5%	72	18.4%	105	26.9%	134	34.3%
Regularly contribute to a savings plan	391	54.6%	64	16.4%	71	18.2%	92	23.5%	164	41.9%
Don't drink alcohol or use drugs while gambling	390	54.5%	60	15.4%	71	18.2%	84	21.5%	175	44.9%
Disclose to someone else the extent of your gambling	390	54.5%	69	17.7%	92	23.6%	108	27.7%	121	31.0%
Take a multivitamin or herbal supplement	389	54.3%	97	24.9%	90	23.1%	98	25.2%	104	26.7%
Count days since you've made a change in your gambling	388	54.2%	66	17.0%	78	20.1%	109	28.1%	135	34.8%
Play free gambling games like fantasy league or Facebook slots	388	54.2%	144	37.1%	77	19.8%	63	16.2%	104	26.8%
Avoid gambling alone	384	53.6%	104	27.1%	59	15.4%	70	18.2%	151	39.3%
Reward yourself for reducing your gambling	384	53.6%	54	14.1%	87	22.7%	95	24.7%	148	38.5%
Focus on managing issues that contribute to your gambling	384	53.6%	52	13.5%	86	22.4%	103	26.8%	143	37.2%
Express anger or sadness without causing harm to self or others	376	52.5%	98	26.1%	93	24.7%	92	24.5%	93	24.7%
Take regular breaks while gambling	373	52.1%	71	19.0%	92	24.7%	99	26.5%	111	29.8%
Engage in behaviours that are incompatible with attending a venue	373	52.1%	50	13.4%	74	19.8%	104	27.9%	145	38.9%
Don't borrow money from friends or family, banks or loan sharks	371	51.8%	59	15.9%	42	11.3%	62	16.7%	208	56.1%
Set limits on time/money spent gambling using smart card or automatic limit	370	51.7%	79	21.4%	73	19.7%	76	20.5%	142	38.4%
Schedule other activities after gambling to limit session time	363	50.7%	65	17.9%	68	18.7%	95	26.2%	135	37.2%
Plan gamble free days each week	357	49.9%	71	19.9%	57	16.0%	77	21.6%	152	42.6%
Only go to venues that offer other activities as well as gambling	356	49.7%	103	28.9%	67	18.8%	96	27.0%	90	25.3%
Avoid being near/passing gambling venues	356	49.7%	82	23.0%	61	17.1%	82	23.0%	131	36.8%

Strategies	Uptake				Helpfulness							
	Used strategy (% of total)		Not very helpful		A little helpful		Moderately helpful		Very helpful	
Avoid gambling with heavy gamblers	355	49.6%	73	20.6%	58	16.3%	75	21.1%	149	42.0%
Read gambling self-help books or materials	352	49.2%	89	25.3%	91	25.9%	103	29.3%	69	19.6%
Consolidate debts and implement payment plan	351	49.0%	40	11.4%	68	19.4%	98	27.9%	145	41.3%
Give winnings to a friend while gambling or put somewhere safe	347	48.5%	86	24.8%	63	18.2%	82	23.6%	116	33.4%
Avoid the first bet	344	48.0%	56	16.3%	73	21.2%	73	21.2%	142	41.3%
Have a sauna, salt bath or spa bath	341	47.6%	76	22.3%	84	24.6%	93	27.3%	88	25.8%
Pre-purchase goods or bills to reduce spare cash	339	47.3%	38	11.2%	55	16.2%	87	25.7%	159	46.9%
Start a new hobby like arts, crafts or knitting	339	47.3%	63	18.6%	60	17.7%	97	28.6%	119	35.1%
Listen, play, sing or dance to music	336	46.9%	64	19.0%	74	22.0%	85	25.3%	113	33.6%
Ask family or friends to help or support you	333	46.5%	59	17.7%	83	24.9%	77	23.1%	114	34.2%
Avoid discussions about gambling that might trigger own gambling	328	45.8%	74	22.6%	88	26.8%	70	21.3%	96	29.3%
Cut up, destroy or cancel credit cards	324	45.3%	63	19.4%	44	13.6%	73	22.5%	144	44.4%
Keep limited funds in online or loyalty gambling accounts	323	45.1%	54	16.7%	51	15.8%	78	24.1%	140	43.3%
Make a list of strategies that worked for you in the past	322	45.0%	46	14.3%	59	18.3%	92	28.6%	125	38.8%
Self-exclude or ban yourself from a land-based or online venue	316	44.1%	53	16.8%	48	15.2%	66	20.9%	149	47.2%
Avoid friends/family who gamble	314	43.9%	81	25.8%	57	18.2%	81	25.8%	95	30.3%
Practice relaxation strategies like yoga, meditation	312	43.6%	68	21.8%	65	20.8%	67	21.5%	112	35.9%
Keep money in joint account with partner or family member	309	43.2%	67	21.7%	50	16.2%	68	22.0%	124	40.1%
Volunteer your time or help someone in need	307	42.9%	49	16.0%	70	22.8%	77	25.1%	111	36.2%
Give cards or cash to a family member or friend to limit access	301	42.0%	54	17.9%	54	17.9%	63	20.9%	130	43.2%
Talk to a health professional about your gambling	300	41.9%	59	19.7%	56	18.7%	77	25.7%	108	36.0%
Lower daily ATM withdrawal limits	292	40.8%	65	22.3%	51	17.5%	61	20.9%	115	39.4%

Strategies	Uptake			Helpfulness							
	Used strategy (% of total)		Not very helpful		A little helpful		Moderately helpful		Very helpful		
Do something that is risky or causes you to feel a rush of adrenaline	286	39.9%	66	23.1%	64	22.4%	82	28.7%	74	25.9%	
Set up cues to keep track of time while gambling	283	39.5%	69	24.4%	72	25.4%	63	22.3%	79	27.9%	
Create a physical reminder to limit your gambling	273	38.1%	70	25.6%	63	23.1%	60	22.0%	80	29.3%	
Close online accounts related to gambling	267	37.3%	51	19.1%	37	13.9%	58	21.7%	121	45.3%	
Write about progress, thoughts, achievements or struggles related to gambling	266	37.2%	52	19.5%	67	25.2%	70	26.3%	77	28.9%	
Limit or restrict internet access	265	37.0%	70	26.4%	60	22.6%	49	18.5%	86	32.5%	
Engage in prayer or meditation	256	35.8%	90	35.2%	57	22.3%	42	16.4%	67	26.2%	
Share or post comments about gambling or emotions in online forum	255	35.6%	73	28.6%	64	25.1%	56	22.0%	62	24.3%	
Only use credit cards that don't allow cash withdrawal	245	34.2%	54	22.0%	29	11.8%	49	20.0%	113	46.1%	
Attend church or spiritual meeting	232	32.4%	107	46.1%	42	18.1%	37	15.9%	46	19.8%	
Move house to get away from gambling venues	196	27.4%	94	48.0%	38	19.4%	30	15.3%	34	17.3%	

Table A2. Helpfulness of all actions at baseline (current problem group)

Action	Mean	SD
Accept that gambling needs to change	3.09	1.08
Think about how your money could be better spent	2.98	1.09
Remind yourself of negative consequences of gambling	2.82	1.12
Remind yourself of positive consequences of not gambling	2.82	1.09
Make a resolution to change your gambling	2.76	1.14
Distract yourself or do something else until urge to gamble passes	2.75	1.11
Compare costs and benefits of continuing to gamble	2.73	1.11
Remind yourself sometimes people win at gambling but system is designed for you to lose	2.68	1.21
Engage in an activity that gives you a feeling of achievement	2.67	1.22
Keep busy to avoid thinking about or engaging in gambling	2.63	1.16
Calculate money and time spent gambling	2.62	1.25
Plan ahead and leave credit cards and non essential cash at home	2.62	1.22
Engage in a new form of entertainment	2.61	1.21
Plan ahead and limit amount of money you carry	2.60	1.23
Focus on not gambling each day at a time	2.60	1.23
Concentrate on being strong or using will power	2.60	1.20
Re-establish trust and belief in yourself	2.54	1.13
Complete daily activities around the house	2.50	1.18
Monitor how your emotions relate to gambling	2.49	1.21
Eat a healthy balanced diet	2.48	1.20
Make a daily affirmation such as staying positive or letting go	2.46	1.22
Count days since you've made a change in your gambling	2.45	1.20
Remind yourself that you don't need to gamble	2.44	1.12
Engage in behaviours that are incompatible with attending a venue	2.44	1.27
Identify inaccurate thoughts about gambling or winning	2.44	1.14
Monitor for signs that gambling is becoming a problem	2.44	1.19
Pre-purchase goods or bills to reduce spare cash	2.43	1.32
Engage in regular exercise	2.42	1.19
Read first hand accounts of other people's experiences	2.40	1.14
Use alternate strategies to deal with gambling triggers	2.37	1.15
Remain hopeful about your future	2.34	1.19
Don't borrow money from friends or family, banks or loan sharks	2.34	1.36
Reward yourself for reducing your gambling	2.33	1.24
Spend less time alone	2.32	1.18
Keep track of money by setting up a budget and tracking spending	2.32	1.29

Action	Mean	SD
Disclose to someone else the extent of your gambling	2.31	1.24
Be more open and honest with family and friends about gambling	2.31	1.26
Give cards or cash to a family member or friend to limit access	2.31	1.33
Explore additional work or study-related activities	2.29	1.21
Take a long walk	2.28	1.18
Consolidate debts and implement payment plan	2.27	1.27
Focus on managing issues that contribute to your gambling	2.27	1.26
Take it easy on yourself or take it slow	2.26	1.17
Avoid chasing losses	2.26	1.23
Avoid gambling when feeling down, depressed or otherwise vulnerable to gambling	2.25	1.33
Cut up, destroy or cancel credit cards	2.23	1.32
Ensure your physical health needs are met	2.21	1.17
Ask family or friends to help or support you	2.19	1.20
Complete a questionnaire that gave me feedback on gambling problem	2.19	1.14
Participate in regular structured groups or sports like football or tennis	2.17	1.17
Avoid being near/passing gambling venues	2.17	1.30
Read information on signs or consequences of problem gambling	2.16	1.11
Postpone gambling until a later date	2.15	1.17
Talk to a health professional about your gambling	2.13	1.27
Schedule other activities after gambling to limit session time	2.13	1.26
Set spending limit for each week or fortnight	2.12	1.20
Increase fluid intake	2.12	1.18
Self-exclude or ban yourself from a land-based or online venue	2.11	1.33
Plan gamble free days each week	2.11	1.30
Don't drink alcohol or use drugs while gambling	2.09	1.27
Avoid the first bet	2.09	1.28
Start a new hobby like arts, crafts or knitting	2.08	1.24
Regularly contribute to a savings plan	2.08	1.24
Lower daily ATM withdrawal limits	2.07	1.30
Read information on how gambling works	2.07	1.05
Give winnings to a friend while gambling or put somewhere safe	2.07	1.26
Avoid discussions about gambling that might trigger own gambling	2.06	1.20
Try methods to improve your sleep	2.05	1.17
Make a list of strategies that worked for you in the past	2.05	1.24
Schedule gambling sessions so that they do not interfere with important activities	2.03	1.22

Action	Mean	SD
Avoid gambling alone	2.03	1.25
Set limits on time/money spent gambling using smart card or automatic limit	1.98	1.22
Keep money in joint account with partner or family member	1.97	1.27
Express anger or sadness without causing harm to self or others	1.96	1.14
Keep limited funds in online or loyalty gambling accounts	1.96	1.26
Avoid gambling with heavy gamblers	1.94	1.25
Read information on responsible gambling	1.92	1.07
Only use credit cards that don't allow cash withdrawal	1.91	1.28
Avoid friends/family who gamble	1.90	1.20
Close online accounts related to gambling	1.90	1.28
Volunteer your time or help someone in need	1.89	1.19
Practice relaxation strategies like yoga, meditation	1.88	1.16
Create a physical reminder to limit your gambling	1.87	1.20
Listen, play, sing or dance to music	1.87	1.15
Take a multivitamin or herbal supplement	1.87	1.10
Read gambling self-help books or materials	1.86	1.04
Write about progress, thoughts, achievements or struggles related to gambling	1.85	1.17
Take regular breaks while gambling	1.83	1.10
Do something that is risky or causes you to feel a rush of adrenaline	1.82	1.12
Play free gambling games like fantasy league or Facebook slots	1.82	1.14
Have a sauna, salt bath or spa bath	1.80	1.11
Stick with my strategy - don't increase or change bet	1.77	1.05
Only go to venues that offer other activities as well as gambling	1.71	1.10
Limit or restrict internet access	1.71	1.14
Share or post comments about gambling or emotions in online forum	1.69	1.10
Engage in prayer or meditation	1.60	1.04
Set up cues to keep track of time while gambling	1.58	1.00
Attend church or spiritual meeting	1.46	0.91
Move house to get away from gambling venues	1.31	0.78

Table A3. Helpfulness of all actions at baseline (past problem group)

Action	Mean	SD
Think about how your money could be better spent	3.08	1.13
Accept that gambling needs to change	3.00	1.15
Remind yourself of negative consequences of gambling	3.00	1.09
Compare costs and benefits of continuing to gamble	2.98	1.09
Remind yourself of positive consequences of not gambling	2.95	1.14
Remind yourself sometimes people win at gambling but system is designed for you to lose	2.95	1.13
Avoid chasing losses	2.77	1.25
Eat a healthy balanced diet	2.74	1.21
Engage in an activity that gives you a feeling of achievement	2.71	1.25
Calculate money and time spent gambling	2.71	1.17
Remind yourself that you don't need to gamble	2.70	1.15
Engage in regular exercise	2.69	1.24
Identify inaccurate thoughts about gambling or winning	2.67	1.22
Re-establish trust and belief in yourself	2.67	1.22
Plan ahead and limit amount of money you carry	2.65	1.24
Make a resolution to change your gambling	2.63	1.23
Monitor how your emotions relate to gambling	2.62	1.22
Engage in a new form of entertainment	2.61	1.21
Concentrate on being strong or using will power	2.61	1.22
Keep busy to avoid thinking about or engaging in gambling	2.56	1.25
Plan ahead and leave credit cards and non essential cash at home	2.53	1.24
Keep track of money by setting up a budget and tracking spending	2.52	1.28
Distract yourself or do something else until urge to gamble passes	2.47	1.22
Monitor for signs that gambling is becoming a problem	2.45	1.24
Ensure your physical health needs are met	2.44	1.25
Stick with my strategy - don't increase or change bet	2.42	1.31
Remain hopeful about your future	2.42	1.29
Avoid gambling when feeling down, depressed or otherwise vulnerable to gambling	2.42	1.33
Take it easy on yourself or take it slow	2.41	1.23
Read information on how gambling works	2.41	1.19
Set spending limit for each week or fortnight	2.39	1.27
Complete daily activities around the house	2.36	1.21
Be more open and honest with family and friends about gambling	2.32	1.28
Use alternate strategies to deal with gambling triggers	2.32	1.21
Focus on managing issues that contribute to your gambling	2.31	1.24

Action	Mean	SD
Focus on not gambling each day at a time	2.30	1.28
Increase fluid intake	2.29	1.27
Read first hand accounts of other people's experiences	2.28	1.20
Don't drink alcohol or use drugs while gambling	2.28	1.32
Read information on signs or consequences of problem gambling	2.27	1.13
Make a daily affirmation such as staying positive or letting go	2.27	1.25
Explore additional work or study-related activities	2.26	1.26
Try methods to improve your sleep	2.24	1.24
Avoid the first bet	2.23	1.29
Don't borrow money from friends or family, banks or loan sharks	2.22	1.35
Avoid gambling with heavy gamblers	2.21	1.34
Avoid gambling alone	2.19	1.31
Self-exclude or ban yourself from a land-based or online venue	2.17	1.33
Reward yourself for reducing your gambling	2.16	1.24
Take a long walk	2.16	1.19
Disclose to someone else the extent of your gambling	2.14	1.19
Regularly contribute to a savings plan	2.14	1.25
Participate in regular structured groups or sports like football or tennis	2.14	1.21
Spend less time alone	2.13	1.20
Engage in behaviours that are incompatible with attending a venue	2.11	1.21
Count days since you've made a change in your gambling	2.11	1.26
Schedule gambling sessions so that they do not interfere with important activities	2.10	1.25
Plan gamble free days each week	2.10	1.28
Schedule other activities after gambling to limit session time	2.09	1.24
Read information on responsible gambling	2.08	1.07
Consolidate debts and implement payment plan	2.08	1.24
Postpone gambling until a later date	2.07	1.19
Pre-purchase goods or bills to reduce spare cash	2.07	1.27
Avoid being near/passing gambling venues	2.05	1.24
Start a new hobby like arts, crafts or knitting	2.05	1.21
Take regular breaks while gambling	2.04	1.22
Listen, play, sing or dance to music	2.03	1.24
Complete a questionnaire that gave me feedback on gambling problem	2.02	1.10
Make a list of strategies that worked for you in the past	2.01	1.24
Cut up, destroy or cancel credit cards	1.98	1.26

Action	Mean	SD
Practice relaxation strategies like yoga, meditation	1.96	1.26
Ask family or friends to help or support you	1.95	1.22
Set limits on time/money spent gambling using smart card or automatic limit	1.94	1.24
Keep limited funds in online or loyalty gambling accounts	1.93	1.22
Express anger or sadness without causing harm to self or others	1.91	1.16
Close online accounts related to gambling	1.91	1.24
Play free gambling games like fantasy league or Facebook slots	1.91	1.22
Volunteer your time or help someone in need	1.90	1.18
Keep money in joint account with partner or family member	1.89	1.22
Only go to venues that offer other activities as well as gambling	1.88	1.13
Take a multivitamin or herbal supplement	1.87	1.16
Avoid friends/family who gamble	1.84	1.16
Talk to a health professional about your gambling	1.83	1.18
Give winnings to a friend while gambling or put somewhere safe	1.82	1.16
Set up cues to keep track of time while gambling	1.82	1.14
Have a sauna, salt bath or spa bath	1.81	1.11
Give cards or cash to a family member or friend to limit access	1.78	1.16
Read gambling self-help books or materials	1.76	1.05
Lower daily ATM withdrawal limits	1.76	1.15
Avoid discussions about gambling that might trigger own gambling	1.75	1.09
Do something that is risky or causes you to feel a rush of adrenaline	1.71	1.08
Write about progress, thoughts, achievements or struggles related to gambling	1.66	1.06
Only use credit cards that don't allow cash withdrawal	1.66	1.15
Limit or restrict internet access	1.65	1.07
Create a physical reminder to limit your gambling	1.60	1.02
Share or post comments about gambling or emotions in online forum	1.53	0.95
Engage in prayer or meditation	1.50	0.98
Move house to get away from gambling venues	1.36	0.83
Attend church or spiritual meeting	1.30	0.78

Table A 4. Helpfulness of all actions at baseline: No problem group

Action	Mean	SD
Eat a healthy balanced diet	2.66	1.31
Set spending limit for each week or fortnight	2.43	1.33
Remind yourself sometimes people win at gambling but system is designed for you to lose	2.37	1.28
Engage in regular exercise	2.34	1.31
Avoid chasing losses	2.32	1.31
Stick with my strategy - don't increase or change bet	2.32	1.33
Ensure your physical health needs are met	2.27	1.33
Plan ahead and limit amount of money you carry	2.22	1.31
Calculate money and time spent gambling	2.15	1.21
Keep track of money by setting up a budget and tracking spending	2.13	1.35
Take it easy on yourself or take it slow	2.11	1.25
Read information on how gambling works	2.11	1.26
Think about how your money could be better spent	2.09	1.29
Compare costs and benefits of continuing to gamble	2.09	1.28
Increase fluid intake	2.03	1.22
Try methods to improve your sleep	1.93	1.23
Plan ahead and leave credit cards and non essential cash at home	1.91	1.28
Regularly contribute to a savings plan	1.90	1.28
Read information on responsible gambling	1.83	1.14
Remind yourself that you don't need to gamble	1.81	1.14
Don't drink alcohol or use drugs while gambling	1.81	1.20
Set limits on time/money spent gambling using smart card or automatic limit	1.80	1.20
Remind yourself of negative consequences of gambling	1.80	1.18
Take a multivitamin or herbal supplement	1.77	1.14
Remind yourself of positive consequences of not gambling	1.77	1.15
Concentrate on being strong or using will power	1.76	1.16
Read information on signs or consequences of problem gambling	1.74	1.11
Read first hand accounts of other people's experiences	1.74	1.09
Remain hopeful about your future	1.74	1.18
Take regular breaks while gambling	1.73	1.11
Keep limited funds in online or loyalty gambling accounts	1.73	1.19
Don't borrow money from friends or family, banks or loan sharks	1.73	1.24
Schedule gambling sessions so that they do not interfere with important activities	1.72	1.12

Action	Mean	SD
Identify inaccurate thoughts about gambling or winning	1.71	1.13
Engage in an activity that gives you a feeling of achievement	1.67	1.12
Complete daily activities around the house	1.65	1.08
Take a long walk	1.63	1.08
Have a sauna, salt bath or spa bath	1.62	1.04
Only go to venues that offer other activities as well as gambling	1.62	1.06
Participate in regular structured groups or sports like football or tennis	1.62	1.09
Engage in a new form of entertainment	1.59	1.06
Monitor how your emotions relate to gambling	1.58	1.01
Re-establish trust and belief in yourself	1.57	1.05
Keep busy to avoid thinking about or engaging in gambling	1.56	1.01
Avoid gambling with heavy gamblers	1.56	1.02
Plan gamble free days each week	1.56	1.06
Use alternate strategies to deal with gambling triggers	1.56	1.03
Consolidate debts and implement payment plan	1.55	1.05
Postpone gambling until a later date	1.55	1.01
Schedule other activities after gambling to limit session time	1.53	1.02
Volunteer your time or help someone in need	1.53	1.04
Listen, play, sing or dance to music	1.52	1.00
Focus on not gambling each day at a time	1.52	1.04
Accept that gambling needs to change	1.52	0.92
Make a list of strategies that worked for you in the past	1.51	1.01
Give winnings to a friend while gambling or put somewhere safe	1.50	0.98
Explore additional work or study-related activities	1.50	0.97
Reward yourself for reducing your gambling	1.49	1.02
Spend less time alone	1.48	0.97
Avoid gambling alone	1.48	1.02
Distract yourself or do something else until urge to gamble passes	1.48	0.94
Read gambling self-help books or materials	1.48	0.98
Keep money in joint account with partner or family member	1.46	0.98
Make a resolution to change your gambling	1.45	0.93
Avoid gambling when feeling down, depressed or otherwise vulnerable to gambling	1.44	0.93
Make a daily affirmation such as staying positive or letting go	1.44	0.94
Complete a questionnaire that gave me feedback on gambling problem	1.44	0.83
Be more open and honest with family and friends about gambling	1.44	0.93

Action	Mean	SD
Express anger or sadness without causing harm to self or others	1.43	0.90
Monitor for signs that gambling is becoming a problem	1.43	0.93
Pre-purchase goods or bills to reduce spare cash	1.42	0.93
Set up cues to keep track of time while gambling	1.42	0.92
Engage in behaviours that are incompatible with attending a venue	1.41	0.93
Play free gambling games like fantasy league or Facebook slots	1.40	0.89
Start a new hobby like arts, crafts or knitting	1.40	0.93
Focus on managing issues that contribute to your gambling	1.39	0.87
Practice relaxation strategies like yoga, meditation	1.37	0.88
Limit or restrict internet access	1.37	0.88
Cut up, destroy or cancel credit cards	1.36	0.90
Only use credit cards that don't allow cash withdrawal	1.36	0.89
Avoid the first bet	1.35	0.82
Avoid friends/family who gamble	1.35	0.83
Do something that is risky or causes you to feel a rush of adrenaline	1.33	0.83
Count days since you've made a change in your gambling	1.33	0.82
Avoid being near/passing gambling venues	1.33	0.83
Avoid discussions about gambling that might trigger own gambling	1.32	0.82
Close online accounts related to gambling	1.32	0.84
Engage in prayer or meditation	1.32	0.83
Disclose to someone else the extent of your gambling	1.31	0.76
Lower daily ATM withdrawal limits	1.31	0.81
Self-exclude or ban yourself from a land-based or online venue	1.30	0.78
Write about progress, thoughts, achievements or struggles related to gambling	1.30	0.76
Attend church or spiritual meeting	1.30	0.84
Share or post comments about gambling or emotions in online forum	1.28	0.76
Create a physical reminder to limit your gambling	1.28	0.75
Give cards or cash to a family member or friend to limit access	1.26	0.77
Ask family or friends to help or support you	1.24	0.72
Talk to a health professional about your gambling	1.24	0.68
Move house to get away from gambling venues	1.16	0.61

Table A 5. Full list of self-help actions identified, by stage of project

Literature Review
Get the facts and figures (i.e., odds of winning)
Seek information about how gambling works
Learn about addiction and problem gambling
Read self-help books, forums or message boards
Complete a self-assessment that may also include feedback
Keep a record or diary of money spent on gambling
Monitoring for signs that gambling is becoming a problem
Track behaviours against goals
Identify diversionary or distraction based activities such as keeping busy
Substitute gambling with new activities such as exercise or relaxation or a new hobby
Set a limit on gambling expenditure
Set a limit on time spent gambling
Set a budget for gambling expenses
Leave credit cards/cash at home when gambling
Cut up or cancel credit cards
Use a venue smart card
Avoid using ATM's to withdraw money
Engage in other activities in gambling settings such as a meal
Get a friend to support you in sticking to your limits
Transfer financial responsibilities to others
Pay bills before gambling
Plan gambling so that it does not interfere with other activities
Make appointments to limit time gambling
Avoid chasing losses
Avoid gambling alone
Avoid being near gambling settings
Avoid certain places like casinos
Avoid family/friends who gamble
Avoid other triggers
Adopt a 'gambling incompatible lifestyle'
Self-exclude from gambling venues

Gambling-Related Websites
Set $ limit per gambling session
Set a time limit on gambling session/per day
Don't drink alcohol while gambling
Think of gambling as entertainment, not a way to make money
Do a budget
Don't gamble alone
Take a break every 15 minutes/regularly
Don't chase losses/walk away
Don't borrow money

Gambling-Related Websites continued

Write out selection before going to TAB (punters)

Look for odds and payout information

If you want to bet on a game do so before not during

Don't use gambling to solve problems

Set $ limit per week

Give winnings to a friend while gambling

Don't gamble with heavy gamblers

Never gamble with expectation of winning

Put winnings in your pocket

Be wary of practice sites (online)

Don't take gambling too seriously

Go to venues only at scheduled times

When arrive at venue talk to someone for 3 mins

Do something else at times you know you normally gamble

Don't stay and watch all the races (punters)

Collect winnings and leave (punters)

Don't bet on every race (punters)

Don't change your bet at the last minute all the time (punters)

Set up cues to keep track of time

Take a break from gambling

Take it slowly, give yourself a month of not gambling for every year of gambling

Have access to clock or watch

To reduce the time you spend gambling, arrange other commitments ahead of time

Expect to lose

Keep a record of the money you spend

Keep track of odds and payments

It is always better to leave with some money than without

Buy small amounts of change

Set limit on winnings

Set limit on number of sessions per week

Remove betting apps from your phone (for online)

Use pre-commitment/ set loss limits/play safe limits

Don't let gambling interfere with your daily activities

Get free SMS message reminders

Don't increase your bet when you are losing

Write a card with 2-3 reasons why not to gamble and your limits – put in wallet and on fridge

If you must increase your bet only do so when you are winning

Socialise in places with no gambling activities

Don't take bank cards with you when you go out

Only gamble what you can afford to lose

Pay bills by direct debit or cheque

Carry a limited amount of money

Don't chase losses/ don't add to gambling stakes

Gambling-Related Websites

Don't borrow money to gamble

Tell others not to lend you money

Have 2 signatories on your accounts

Avoid jobs where you handle cash

Have someone else manage/help manage money

Have a support person collect wages

Cancel credit and ATM cards or give to trusted person

Lower daily ATM withdrawal limits

Avoid use of credit cards

Stick to your limits and walk away

Don't see gambling as an activity for family income

Have wages paid directly into a bank

Eliminate cash withdrawals on credit cards

Pay essential bills on payday

Avoid taking out loans to get cash to gamble

Prepare ahead for change in circumstances e.g., holiday

Avoid having pin number with EFTPOS card

Have limit attached to EFTPOS card

Keep track of your money transactions

Secure your assets

Get someone to hold your bank cards for you

Pay some bills in advance

Put money away for something you enjoy

Keep a separate bank account for gambling activity

Use debit cards not credit cards (online)

Keep a check on your player history and bank accounts to monitor your spending

Don't use money allocated for bills to gamble

Use a site that has limits on daily spend.

Limit where you bet, don't have multiple accounts.

Don't lie about what you have spent

Be aware that the odds on 'practice' games are much better – so it is easier to win than on the paid games

Don't gamble when you have urgent debts

If have debts, include regular repayments

Avoid keeping large sums of money at home

Withdraw winnings, keep limited amounts in online accounts

Expect to lose

Avoid gambling as a reaction to emotions/stress

Avoid being near/passing gambling venues

Remind yourself of reasons to not gamble/ for change

Avoid gambling results, form guides, other collateral, etc.

Stop when gambling is no longer enjoyable

Change radio station

Socialise in non-gambling venues

Gambling-Related Websites continued

Avoid advertising for gambling
Avoid talking about gambling with heavy gamblers
Postpone gambling for an hour or two
Read fine print on promotions material (online)
Wear wrist band to remind yourself not to gamble
If you gamble at lunch time go somewhere different
Turn car around whenever you approach a venue
Avoid people who you know gamble
Software to block access
Cancel gambling accounts
Exclude from online sites
Don't gamble if in recovery from dependency
Choose venues where you won't stay too long
Think of the people who need your support
Do other things at times you would normally gamble
Opt out of free offers and incentives (online)
Acknowledge you have a gambling problem
Decide whether you should cut back or give up gambling
Set a goal for changing your gambling
Decide to change your gambling
Engage in positive thinking
Challenge irrational thoughts
Learn stress management techniques
Find new activities to change emotions
Be kind to yourself
Don't believe in feeling that you know when the machine will pay out
Beware of 'lucky thinking'
Specific issues for suicide thoughts
Accept you are not a bad person
Don't believe in a good thing
Don't overestimate your abilities
Keep cards with slogans on them to remind you not to gamble
Cash out credits over $
Set short and long term goals
Self care – vision, sound, smell, taste and touch
Remember, like any form of gambling, online poker, betting and sports wagering is not a good way to make money.
Remember there is a way out
Improve problem solving skills/approach
Value that you are being loved and that the trust will return
Record gambling wins and losses/keep gambling diary
Eat properly
Record gambling urges, triggers and what you did to resist
Reward progress

Gambling-Related Websites
Have a plan to deal with lapses
Review your diary – what is working?
Recognise gradual side towards a lapse
Know what activities reduce your gambling urges
Know high risk triggers for your gambling
Remember, like any form of gambling, online poker, betting and sports wagering is not a good way to make money.
Be truthful about why you gamble
Be realistic and aware
Challenge irrational thoughts
Find new activities to change emotions
Prepare for relapses
Know what days and times increase your gambling urges
Know what moods increase your gambling urges
Face your feelings
Know what venues increase your gambling urges
Specific issues if you are suicidal
Be honest with friends and family
Ask for help
Involve others in solving your problem
Get help to deal with any stress/moods that contribute to your gambling
Go to friends who will look out for you
Repair relationships/ spend time with family and friends
Tell others about your decision not to gamble
Talk to someone who can help you deal with your urges
Share your successes and lapses
Read stories of recovery
Get a helper, check in with them once a week
Tell others about your lying
Listen to family and friends they may see something you don't
Go out with friends, not alone
Find activities to fill needs previously met by gambling
Keep a diary
Exercise
Take up activities you did prior to gambling
Treat yourself
Take up yoga/meditation
Find part time work
Get involved in local groups/activities
Make gambling one of your leisure activities not your only one
Distract yourself/keep busy
Make home and interesting place to be
If a lunch time gambler, go to different place for lunch with colleagues
Make a difference get involved

Gambling-Related Websites continued

Discuss activities to do with family and friends

Take up education

Find new activities to change emotions

Managing finances & gambling spend

Become informed about gambling

Set limits on own gambling

Utilise social support and resources

Changing thoughts and beliefs

Take up alternatives to gambling

Monitoring ongoing behaviour and change

Reduce opportunities, triggers and urges

Self-assessment of own gambling

What problem gambling is

Impacts/effects of problem gambling

Signs of problem gambling

Odds of winning/losing

Statistics on gambling populations

How much you can lose on a poker machine

Erroneous beliefs/myths

Chance/skill and risk factors in poker machines

What responsible gambling/responsible gambler is

Effects on mental health

How poker machines work

Weigh up pros and cons of cutting back/giving up gambling

How other types of gambling work

Different gambling behaviours/types of gamblers

Effects on children of people who gamble

Use player tracking devices on EGMs

How do I know a gambling website is safe?

Links between gambling and OD use

Weigh up pros and cons of gambling

Write down reasons to not gamble

Learn about your gambling activity

Calculate how many hours you have worked to earn the money you have gambled

Reasons why people gamble

Read and learn about problem gambling

Information on gambling policies

Be realistic and aware

Assess if you have a gambling problem

Assess how much you spend on gambling

Be truthful about why you gamble

Know what your gambling triggers are, e.g. stress, boredom

Set a time limit on gambling session/per day

Gambling-Related Websites continued

Take a break every 15 minutes/regularly

Don't borrow money

Problem Gambling Discussion Forums

Read information on how gambling works

Read about the consequences of gambling

Sought inspiration from others stories

Arrange for a card or account with no cash out

Cut up, destroy or cancel cards

Keep a record of gambling spend

Leave cards and cash at home

Leave cards and cash at home

Set yourself a limit

Plan gambling in advance

Don't chase losses

Don't borrow money for gambling

Limit gambling to small bets

Limit gambling to small bets

Make purchases and pay bills before gambling

Give someone else control of finances

Arrange for a joint account

Set up a savings plan, account or financial goal

Stay away from gambling environments

Move house or be in a place with no gambling

Limit or restrict internet access to gambling

Ban yourself from land-based casino or venue

Weigh the pros and cons of continued gambling

Think about how money could be better spent

Recognise, admit or acknowledge the problem

Realise that you cannot win

Cut your losses

Identify triggers that might lead to gambling

Become aware of urges and better manage them

Be committed and willing to change

Set a goal or make a plan

Develop confidence through success

Develop will-power, strength and determination

Try to remain hopeful and never give up

Watch out for problems developing or returning

Take it a day at a time

Record your progress

Problem Gambling Discussion Forums continued

Count days since attempting change

Do something physical

Seek other entertainment

Focus on work or study

Share or post comments in an online forum

Disclose the details of gambling to another person

Get support to help manage change

Practice spirituality

Engage in prayer

Gambling Counselling Transcripts

Calculate how much is spent on gambling from a range of sources including financial statements

Come to realise that gambling needs to change

Become aware or acknowledge the need to implement appropriate strategies or actions

Track gambling spending

Write out goals and reminders not to gamble

Keep track of progress in a diary or calendar

Leave cards or cash at home

Reduce ATM limits

Use bank accounts or credit cards that do not permit easy access to cash

Get family members to take control of finances

Avoid gambling venues

Close online accounts

Self-exclude from venues

Understand that in the long term one cannot win at gambling

Realise that gambling is not a way of making money

Think about the negative impacts or consequences of gambling

Think about what money could have been spent on in the past

Think about how money could be better spent in the future

Replace gambling for another activity

Distract yourself with other activity

Engage in exercise and physical activity

Seek pleasant and enjoyable activities to improve mood

Practice self-care

Disclose to someone else

Get support in managing the problem or avoiding gambling

Survey
Think about how your money could be better spent
Remind yourself that sometimes people win…but system is designed for you to lose
Eat a healthy balanced diet
Compare costs and benefits of continuing to gamble
Accept that gambling needs to change
Remind yourself of negative consequences of gambling
Remind yourself of positive consequences of not gambling
Plan ahead and limit amount of money you carry
Calculate money and time spent gambling
Engage in regular exercise
Avoid chasing losses
Engage in an activity that gives you a feeling of achievement
Plan ahead and leave credit cards and non-essential cash at home
Concentrate on being strong or using will power
Remind yourself that you don't need to gamble
Keep track of money by setting up a budget and tracking spending
Set spending limit for each week or fortnight
Ensure your physical health needs are met
Make a resolution to change your gambling
Identify inaccurate thoughts about gambling or winning
Engage in a new form of entertainment
Re-establish trust and belief in yourself
Keep busy to avoid thinking about or engaging in gambling
Take it easy on yourself or take it slow
Distract yourself or do something else until urge to gamble passes
Monitor how your emotions relate to gambling
Read information on how gambling works
Complete daily activities around the house
Remain hopeful about your future
Stick with my strategy - don't increase or change bet
Focus on not gambling each day at a time
Read first-hand accounts of other people's experiences
Increase fluid intake
Monitor for signs that gambling is becoming a problem
Don't borrow money from friends or family, banks or loan sharks
Use alternate strategies to deal with gambling triggers
Try methods to improve your sleep
Make a daily affirmation such as staying positive or letting go
Don't drink alcohol or use drugs while gambling
Read information on signs or consequences of problem gambling

Survey continued

Avoid gambling when feeling down, depressed or otherwise vulnerable to gambling

Regularly contribute to a savings plan

Be more open and honest with family and friends about gambling

Take a long walk

Explore additional work or study-related activities

Focus on managing issues that contribute to your gambling

Reward yourself for reducing your gambling

Engage in behaviours that are incompatible with attending a venue

Spend less time alone

Pre-purchase goods or bills to reduce spare cash

Participate in regular structured groups or sports like football or tennis

Count days since you've made a change in your gambling

Consolidate debts and implement payment plan

Schedule gambling sessions so that they do not interfere with important activities

Read information on responsible gambling

Disclose to someone else the extent of your gambling

Plan gamble free days each week

Postpone gambling until a later date

Schedule other activities after gambling to limit session time

Avoid gambling with heavy gamblers

Avoid gambling alone

Set limits on time/money spent gambling using smart card or automatic limit

Avoid the first bet

Complete a questionnaire that gave me feedback on gambling problem

Keep limited funds in online or loyalty gambling accounts

Self-exclude or ban yourself from a land-based or online venue

Take regular breaks while gambling

Cut up, destroy or cancel credit cards

Avoid being near/passing gambling venues

Make a list of strategies that worked for you in the past

Start a new hobby like arts, crafts or knitting

Take a multivitamin or herbal supplement

Listen, play, sing or dance to music

Ask family or friends to help or support you

Give winnings to a friend while gambling or put somewhere safe

Give cards or cash to a family member or friend to limit access

Keep money in joint account with partner or family member

Volunteer your time or help someone in need

Express anger or sadness without causing harm to self or others

Practice relaxation strategies like yoga, meditation

Have a sauna, salt bath or spa bath

Talk to a health professional about your gambling

Only go to venues that offer other activities as well as gambling

Survey continued

Lower daily ATM withdrawal limits

close online accounts related to gambling

Avoid discussions about gambling that might trigger own gambling

Play free gambling games like fantasy league or Facebook slots

Avoid friends/family who gamble

Read gambling self-help books or materials

Only use credit cards that don't allow cash withdrawal

Do something that is risky or causes you to feel a rush of adrenaline

Write about progress, thoughts, achievements or struggles related to gambling

Set up cues to keep track of time while gambling

Create a physical reminder to limit your gambling

Limit or restrict internet access

Share or post comments about gambling or emotions in online forum

Engage in prayer or meditation

Attend church or spiritual meeting

Move house to get away from gambling venues

Interviews with gamblers

Limit amount of money in wallet

Setting a gambling budget

Not taking bank cards to gambling venues

Paying bills first

Not chasing losses

Using a pre-paid debit card for gambling online

Withdrawing all winnings from online gambling account

Using cardless cash

Going shopping with another person

Studying

Music

Physical activity/keeping healthy

Gardening/housework

Knitting

Playing online social casino games

Spending time with family

Started own business

Buying a poker machine for personal use at home

Just keep busy

Making smaller bets

Not gambling for a specific period of time

Limiting duration of gambling sessions

Limiting number of days each week to gamble

Limit alcohol consumption while gambling

Interviews with gamblers continued

Limiting amount of money spent each session

Gambling within affordable limits

Being selective about what to gamble on

Having food breaks while gambling

Planning gambling expenditure

Avoiding venues

Not socialising with gamblers

Investing money elsewhere to limit gambling

Not turning on the television

Organising competing activities

Asking friends not to have social events at gambling venues

Reading gambling stories

Researching gambling odds

Exploring information online about gambling

Self-assessment of own gambling

Delaying the urge to gamble

Focusing on goals and challenging their thinking about gambling

Thinking about positive aspects of their lives

Setting goals

Keeping a record of gambling and savings

Disclosure of gambling problem to family and friends

Seeking help from family and friends