

## **3. YOUTH PERCEPTIONS**

### **3.1 DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS**

The following part of the report outlines demographic variables arising from the research with youth. Demographic differences within the findings are discussed as they relate to age, location, gender, non-English speaking background, household profile, and private or public school background. Where relevant, significant findings will also be illustrated by quantitative analysis of the questionnaire completed by all respondents. Differences among Internet Users and 'at risk' and unemployed youth, will also be discussed.

#### **AGE**

The key differences based on age were, as would be expected, differences between those respondents who were minors under 18 and those between 18-21 years old. The majority of the minors in the sample had not gambled on electronic gaming machines (EGMs) or participated in casino-based gaming, although a small number of Sydney-based respondents said they had visited a casino (in Sydney and Jupiters on the Gold Coast) with their family. These latter respondents were all between 16-18 and when 'dressed up' could have passed for 18. All were with their own, or friends' parents at the time and indicated they were not asked for ID at the door. There were however a small number of Dubbo-based respondents who said they

## YOUTH PERCEPTIONS

had played the poker machines in clubs in Dubbo. This will be discussed under locational differences.

Youth 18 and over in the sample had, with one exception only, all tried EGMs in clubs, and in some cases, the casino, at some time since becoming eligible. The one exception was a youth who said he had never gambled at all on any form of gambling because of religious beliefs that gambling was bad. The most popular form of EGM gambling for the over 18 group was clearly card machines in hotels, called 'the cardies' by youth. It was very apparent from this group that the 'cardies' are a current fashion amongst youth and when asked why that should be so, the response was that 'cardies' paid better than other forms of EGMs. This perception that card machines paid out more than other EGMs was consistent amongst all those over 18 in the sample.

Other outstanding differences based on age were those concerning knowledge and understanding of how the gambling industry worked, attitudes toward responsible gambling or drug, alcohol or safe sex education, and use of card-based financial transactions. In the case of the first issue, most older respondents from about 16 years onwards, were aware that the government took a percentage of gambling revenues and that gambling was profitable for other groups (ranging from clubs to charities) other than the gambling industry itself. Younger respondents were generally not aware that the government profited from gambling.

In the case of the second issue, older respondents, whether working or still at school, tended to be more negative, if not cynical, about school-based lifestyle/personal development educational experiences, seeing such programs as essentially ineffective, or a 'waste of time'. In general, the tendencies amongst older respondents were to be more influenced by peer group experiences with drugs, alcohol or safe sex behaviours and also by what they heard about through mass media, primarily television news. So, for example, the news coverage of the recent death of Anna Woods from taking ecstasy had a big impact on youth and was spontaneously mentioned in all focus groups with older respondents, as well as in some groups with younger respondents. This will be discussed further in Section 3.10.

The third issue relating to card based financial transactions showed some interesting findings, some of which would be expected due to differences between those working and those still at school, but others were unexpected findings. The unexpected findings concerned the very high proportion of youth in the sample — some as young as 13 years old — who already had their own 'keycards', or debit cards. This, and the surprising incidence of the number of youth who also had authorised access to their parent or parent's PIN for credit card usage, will be discussed further in Section 3.9.

The majority of older respondents in the sample — from about 16 years and upwards — had their own debit cards and regularly used EFTPOS and ATM transactions. This was the case for all those who were working plus the majority of those over 16 years who were still at school. The exceptions were all among the 'at risk' or

unemployed youth, although *some* of them also had 'keycards' and drew on unemployment benefits by that means.

A small number of working respondents in the 18-21 years age group had their own credit card already, but these youth were extremely circumspect about credit card usage and exhibited a strong sense of anxiety about getting 'out of control' with credit transactions. This latter finding is very consistent with research on card usage by consumers 25 years and under, recently published by AMR Quantum Harris and is indicative of caution about credit card spending and concern to control and manage money in a responsible way.

Finally, with regard to age differences, it is also important to stress here that overall, there were *no* significant differences based on age concerning one of the most outstanding findings of this study — that is, the high levels of awareness of the downsides of gambling and the potential for problem gambling to occur if/when gambling got out of control. This will be discussed in Section 3.4.

#### LOCATION

There were some quite obvious differences based on location, both differences between Sydney and Dubbo, and differences specific to the western suburbs of Sydney.

In the case of Sydney versus Dubbo differences, the most outstanding concerned youth access to age-restricted premises and the apparently more relaxed country attitude toward taking bets from minors. Among the Dubbo respondents, there were many examples of under age youth (mostly boys, but a few girls too) regularly placing bets on-course at local race meetings. In most cases, the bets were placed with on-course bookies and in some cases, there was a relationship between the youth and the bookies — for example, relative, family friends, or neighbours. There were also a few incidences of 14-16 year olds who *regularly* placed their own bets at the tote window on-course. They were never asked for ID and nobody bothered to police the situation.

This clearly reflects the more relaxed and informal attitude concerning the prevention of access to minors at country race meetings, where the culture of smaller town social connections prevails over any inclination on the part of authorities to enforce the law. Considering that Dubbo is in fact a comparatively large regional centre with a larger population than most NSW towns, this is a likely indication that ignoring betting by minors is common practice in the countryside. In contrast, none of the Sydney under-age respondents had placed their own bets on-course and most of those who gambled off-course had either a parent, other relative, or older friend, put the bet on and/or collect for them.

Similarly, as previously mentioned in discussing age differences, there were also several incidences of Dubbo youth who said they had either occasionally or regularly played poker machines in clubs in Dubbo. These were all boys, most of whom did

## YOUTH PERCEPTIONS

not look older than their 14-16 years, yet they were never asked for proof of identity to enter the club and were rarely caught — although one or two of them indicated they had been 'thrown out' when challenged. Again, this was not the case with Sydney-based minors who were not playing EGMs in clubs or pubs until they were legally eligible. As mentioned before, there were a few under-age Sydney-based respondents who said they visited the casinos in Sydney or the Gold Coast with their families, but they did not actually play EGMs at the time.

Other outstanding differences based on location concerned behaviours and access issues specific to the western and far western suburbs of Sydney. As will be shown in discussion of gender differences, the only type of gambling in which girls are more involved than boys is bingo, and this was true of all locations in the sample. But it was also very apparent that regular bingo meetings are a major feature of western suburbs community club, and church culture.

Very young children are being taken to bingo by their mothers, grandmothers, aunts and by the time they are 6 and 7 years of age, are given their own \$2 book to play with as part of this shared 'female culture' activity. Boys who are taken at very early ages tend to drop out of this activity by the time they reach 7-10 years because they perceived it as 'sissy' to be part of that culture. While some girls from other areas of Sydney had been exposed to bingo by similar means, it was clear that it was only occasional or one-off in most cases, as apposed to the on-going and well-established activities in the western suburbs.

Another finding relating to location concerned differences in interest in and access to horse racing gambling by youth located in the western suburbs, but particularly respondents of Indo-Chinese background living in the far western suburbs. There appeared to be generally stronger interest in gaming activities than racing-based gambling among the youth over 18 in the western suburbs. Major racecourses and racing events were seen to be 'too far away' to attend. If interest in racing did exist, it was pursued primarily in clubs where other gaming activities (keno and EGMs) were also available. In the case of youth of Indo-Chinese background, lessor interest in racing-based gambling was also a function of much stronger interest in, and cultural heritage with, gaming and card-based games. This will be discussed further under non-English speaking background differences.

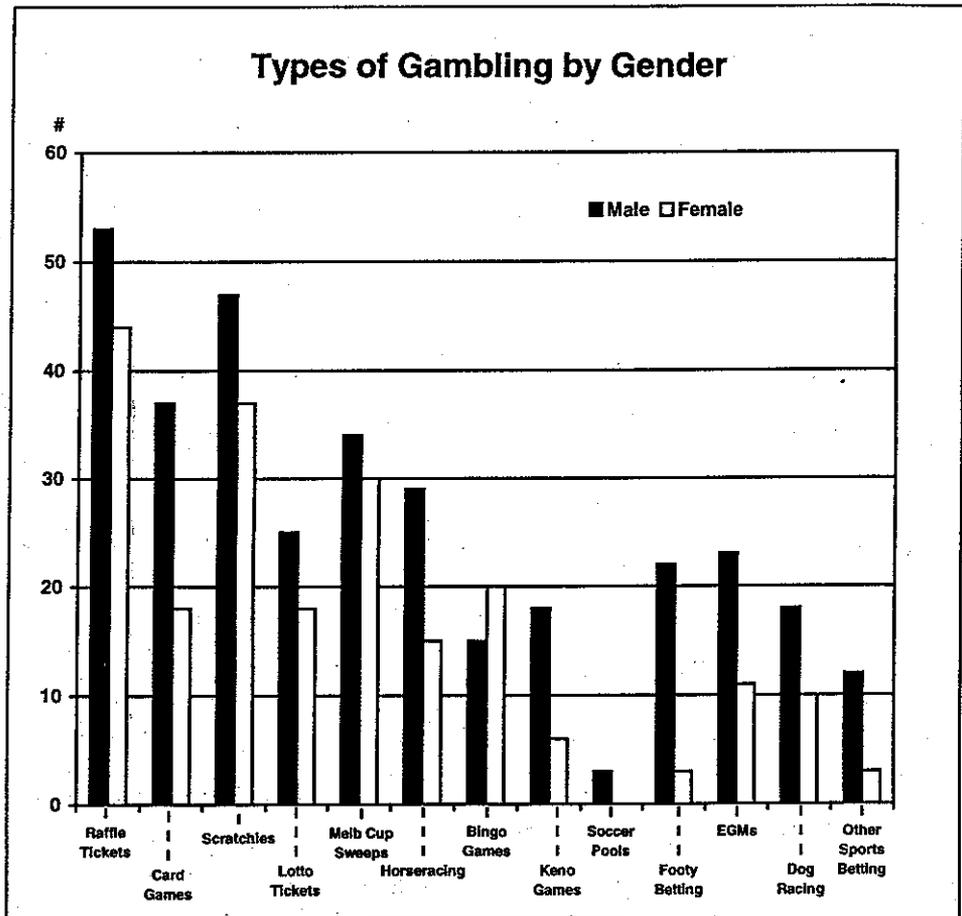
Finally, there was one other strong difference within the sample based on location — that was, youth in Dubbo had far less access to the Internet than the Sydney-based youth. This was the case for Internet usage either at school, at home or at friend's place and reflects access disadvantages for rural/country youth, already known about from other research in the telecommunications area. In Sydney, economically disadvantaged youth had Internet access through 'Internet Cafes' in the inner city. There were no Internet cafes in Dubbo.

## GENDER

Without doubt, one of the most outstanding findings of this study has been the gender differences in relation to the amount of gambling taking place, types of gam-

bling undertaken, and interest in and attitudes toward gambling in general. With the exception of one form of gaming — that is bingo — boys are doing more gambling on a wider variety of types of gambling than girls, and overall, appear to be more attracted to and seduced by gambling than girls.

This is consistent with what is already known about gender differences in early gambling behaviours from American studies into problem gambling. However, it is extremely important for gaining insight into the genesis of gambling behaviours that these gender differences are understood and confirmed in the Australian environment. It does *not* mean that all boys are likely to become problem gamblers, nor does it mean that girls will not become problem gamblers — they can, and do. Rather, what these gender differences highlight, and provide some basis for explanation, is that of the minority of gamblers who become problem gamblers as adults, the typical case is most likely to be male.



## YOUTH PERCEPTIONS

The above diagram illustrates the differences in the amount of gambling taking place and the types of gambling undertaken by the youth in this research sample. Even taking into account the previously mentioned (see Section 1.3) sample bias toward boys, the gender differences are still apparent. Boys are doing more of everything except bingo, which they perceive to be 'sissy' as soon as they are old enough to apply such gender-based stereotyping. They are also clearly more attracted to sports-related gambling and skills-based wagering such as horseracing, yet they are also still doing more gaming (scratchies, lotto, EGMs) than girls.

*Note:* For the purpose of this study, it was not particularly important to distinguish the two codes of horseracing in the questionnaire and the category 'horseracing' includes both harness and galloping forms of racing.

Later on in this report, findings about overall sensible and balanced attitudes toward gambling for the majority of the sample will be discussed in greater detail. But within those overall findings, it was clear that there were differences in attitudes and behaviours between boys and girls, and the potential for future problems with gambling was more apparent for the boys, based on the following observations. Boys were:

- betting/gambling on more kinds of gambling;
- spending more, putting on larger bets;
- more convinced about the possibility of winning;
- bragging more about their gambling experiences;
- more confident that their skills could beat the odds;
- more likely to link gambling with alcohol consumption;
- more likely to link gambling with alcohol consumption;
- breaking the 'rules' more by placing, or attempting to place, their own bets when still minors;
- talking more about the allure and atmosphere of money at gambling venues such as the track or casino;
- and, more likely to indulge in, and associate gambling with, competitive behaviours amongst their male peers.

Of the incidences in this sample of minors violating access regulations (that is doing it themselves as opposed to having an adult do it for them), the majority were with boys. The most common form of such behaviour was buying scratchies from newsagencies — which many respondents (both girls and boys) were doing without difficulty, even in some cases, in their school uniforms.

But with the exception of a couple of cases in Dubbo with underage girls placing their own bets with bookies, all the other more 'risk-taking' behaviour associated with putting on their own bets was being done by boys in the sample. For example, boys sneaking into hotels or clubs to play gaming machines, or getting into busy queues to quickly put a ticket through at the TAB. In the case of some of the boys in

question, it was also clear that the risk-taking behaviour with actually placing the bet themselves, was part of the 'thrill' of the whole experience, particularly if they got away with it as they mostly did!

It is not within the scope of this report to speculate too deeply on implications of the psychological factors and gender differences discussed above. The purpose of this study is to report findings about youth gambling, which will then hopefully enrich and inform the data on which academic experts in problem gambling can build. But it is clear that there are complex psychological factors involved in gender differences associated with youth gambling and these may very well be keys to understanding the process which leads to the later development of problem gambling in some adults.

Further gender differences arising in the study will be discussed throughout the report as they relate to specific findings about attitudes, influences, early exposure and other matters.

### CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Of the sample based on 114 respondents, 24 youth indicated they spoke another language at home other than English. A manual record was kept by the consultants of cultural backgrounds represented in the sample and these were:

- Italian
- Greek
- Filipino
- Lebanese
- Indonesian
- Tongan
- Fijian
- Indian
- Vietnamese
- Cambodian
- Hong Kong Chinese
- Aboriginal

Not all the Aboriginal youth in this sample (6 total) spoke another language at home. Youth of Indo-Chinese cultural heritage (Vietnamese and Cambodian) were over represented in the sample because of purposeful recruitment of youth from this cultural background for in-depth interviews, in order to further explore different experiences with gambling among this group which became apparent early on in the study.

## YOUTH PERCEPTIONS

With the exception of youth of Indo-Chinese and Chinese background, it was very apparent that all other youth from non-English speaking backgrounds in this sample were gambling *less* than their 'mainstream' Australian counterparts. They were however, participating fully in mainstream Australian 'cultural events' such as Melbourne Cup betting, and were doing minor gaming activities at schools (raffles, some sports betting), and buying the occasional scratchies.

For the most part, the majority of non-English speaking background youth were simply not as interested in gambling as their Australian friends (who they called 'Skippies'), or the youth from Indo-Chinese backgrounds. This included the youth from Aboriginal background, four out of the six of whom were doing very little gambling. Two Aboriginal boys (one from Dubbo, one from Sydney) who were among the 'at risk'/unemployed youth groups, were gambling as heavily as their non-Aboriginal counterparts on dogs and horses.

On the whole, the majority of non-English speaking background youth took the attitude that occasional gambling could be 'fun', especially when it was in the context of special events like sports games or the Melbourne Cup but that for the most part it was 'a waste of time and money', better spent on other things. There were gender differences within the non-English speaking background respondents, with boys more likely to indulge in what they saw as the Australian pastime, and boys far more interested in sports betting on football and soccer games. None of the girls from non-English speaking backgrounds had been taken to the races with their parents or parent, or other relatives, as was the case with their Australian counterparts.

By contrast, all the youth from Indo-Chinese and Chinese backgrounds in the sample, were heavily exposed to gaming activities from very early ages. They learned card games and mahjong by being around and watching adults play for as long as they could remember. By 10 years of age, many of them were participating/playing with adults with money given to them by their relatives.

Also from as young as they could remember, respondents said they were given little New Year's 'good luck' gifts of money, and played special games with their relations. They were given money whether they won or lost. Since being in Australia all these respondents indicated they were regularly given scratchies as presents, and now got older kids to buy them regularly, using their own pocket money. The majority of these respondents also eagerly participated in 'Australian' gambling events such as Melbourne Cup sweeps organised at school by their Australian friends.

While it was clear that the youth of Indo-Chinese and Chinese background were more familiar and experienced with gaming activities, they were also much more interested in gambling in general. When asked to comment on why they thought gambling was enjoyed by, and so much a part of, their cultural heritage, most answered that they thought it was about 'belief in good luck', and that good luck brings money. Nevertheless, it was also clear that the majority of these youth were just as aware of the downside of gambling (that is, that you could also lose money)

and the potential for problem gambling to occur if this belief in luck got out of control, as the other youth in the sample, regardless of cultural background.

#### HOUSEHOLD PROFILE

As previously discussed, the only information on household profile gathered in this research was about the respondents' family or household living arrangements. There were no apparent differences between youth of single parent families and youth from two-parent families in relation to gambling behaviours, or pattern of exposure to gambling. It was however, apparent to the consultants that many of the respondents who were in the 'at risk'/unemployed groups were from single parent families, or were not living with their families at all, indicating possible breakdowns in family relationships. Because of the limited amount of data gathered on the demographic variable, it is not possible to speculate further on any correlation with gambling attitudes or behaviours.

#### PUBLIC VERSUS PRIVATE SCHOOL BACKGROUND

There was only one outstanding difference within the sample based on private versus public school educational background. That was, overall, youth from private schools were gambling less, and when gambling were spending less money on it, than the youth from public schools. This was particularly apparent with girls from the private schools in the sample who were doing the least gambling of any kind of all respondents, and what they were doing was mostly minor gaming (raffles and sweeps) and some personal betting where the 'stakes' were things like buying a hamburger if you lost.

No other significant differences were apparent from this research sample. Other critical issues — such as very early exposure to gambling and awareness of the downsides to gambling — were the same for both public and private school backgrounds. Youth from both kinds of background had the same sensible attitudes towards gambling overall. Respondents from both private and public schools talked about the negative side-effects of problem gambling and about knowledge of problem-gambling within their circle of contacts.

This finding that youth from private schools were gambling less than their public school counterparts, suggests that youth from economically better-off family backgrounds are less enticed by the desire to win money than the youth from middle-to-lower socio-economic groups. No doubt there is *some* validity to that speculation, but the consultants believe it would be incorrect to take that conclusion too far, for the following reasons.

Firstly, private school background was only 24% of the sample base and there was a slight sample bias toward lower socio-economic groups by virtue of the targeted recruiting of 'at risk'/unemployed youth. Secondly, among the 24% of private

## YOUTH PERCEPTIONS

school youth, there were *some* who were heavily into horse-racing wagering, including one very young girl and one boy who had been running his own 'book' — that is, being the bookie for his friends — for years. They were a minority within the subsample, but they were there. Thirdly, it is clear from looking at the overall culture of gambling in Australia, that wealthier groups, or the 'upper' class, find gambling just as appealing a form of entertainment and leisure activity as does the middle, or working class, although there may be differences in which types of gambling are more appealing and/or socially acceptable.

Given these considerations, it may be that differences in school background are relatively insignificant as it applies to youth exposure and youth perceptions. It may be safer to conclude that the primary difference was about the appeal of different forms of gambling, that is horseracing wagering being more popular among youth of private school background, and a wider variety of gambling, particularly gaming type activities, being more a part of middle to working class culture and the activities of youth from public school backgrounds.

If this is the case there are implications that youth from public school backgrounds and lower socio-economic groups could be more vulnerable to the later development of problem gambling by virtue of wider exposure to a wider variety of gambling options. Only long-term (longitudinal) cases studies into problem gambling would be able to establish if that were true or not.

## INTERNET USERS

The most important finding from the research regarding the possible impact of on-line gambling services on youth, is that there was no correlation between Internet usage and attraction to gambling within the sample. The youth who were most heavily into gambling were not 'Netheads' and the youth who were 'Netheads' were not very interested in traditional forms of gambling. But they were doing one form of gambling which was unique to heavy Internet users.

This new form of gambling was an unexpected finding of the research. That is, the heavy Internet users had created their own form of gambling for what they valued the most, which was access time on the Net. They called it 'time-gambling' and it involved playing video type games, or other kinds of knowledge-based games on-line, against 'sys-ops' (systems operators) who then provided blocks of free access time if the player won the game. All the boys who were heavy Internet users in the sample were doing 'time-gambling'. Only one of the girls had tried it but was not doing it regularly.

These youth saw any other form of gambling as essentially a waste of time and money which could be better spent using the Internet, and specifically indulging in the favourite Net pastime which was the Internet Relay Chats (IRCs) activity. When asked to discuss their IRC activity, the majority of these youth spontaneously acknowledged that they were 'addicted', that the only thing which kept them from spending more time on IRCs was the cost of access time. IRCs activity took up a

large proportion of their leisure time, sometimes at sittings of 5, 10, or more hours at a time on the weekends.

What these heavy Internet users amongst the sample were doing on the IRCs is extremely consistent with other research (see Appendix) into heavy Internet usage amongst youth. They are participating in 'cybersex' discussions, gossip about technical aspects of the Net, gossip about where to find 'forbidden' information on the Net such as pornography, how to make bombs, or ecstasy or other drugs, and what was new and topical on the Net in general. The few girls in the sample who were heavy Net users were also participating in the gossip and cybersex activities but not to the same extent as the boys. They described the attraction to Internet pornography as 'boy's stuff' which did not interest them.

Only one of the boys among the group had gone into a virtual casino site, 'just out of curiosity'. He found it boring and indicated he would never have given out a credit or debit card number on-line in order to participate in it, since he (like all the other 'Netheads'), was very aware of the security risks of doing so. None of the other boys in the group had even bothered to check out existing gambling sites on-line, although most knew they were there. Gambling information had little interest for them compared to what they were already doing on-line.

All of the youth who were heavy Net users had had the same level of exposure to gambling as young children, as their non-Nethead counterparts. They were also doing periodic minor gambling activities such as buying scratchies, participating in raffles and sweeps, and the occasional betting on sports, including Footytab and Soccer pools. But these activities were seen as 'just ordinary fun stuff' as one boy put it, and clearly paled in comparison to the higher levels of fun and games available on the Net — from their point of view.

It is also important to point out that along with these findings about the heavy Internet users, other factors were strongly apparent for this group. Firstly, they were extremely well-informed about most topics and very articulate when talking about all matters discussed in the focus groups, ranging from attitudes toward gambling in general, to youth education, all forms of current and future technologies, and smart cards in particular.

Secondly, they all knew something about smart cards and on-line financial transactions (from their discussions on the Net) and had a good understanding of matters such as encryption technology and privacy issues arising from smart cards. Some even knew about how information on smart cards could be manipulated by putting them in microwave ovens — which is correct! Without doubt they were bright and intelligent, and teachers confirmed with the consultants later they were all serious and good students, at the top of their classes.

The implications of these findings for the likely impact of on-line gambling services on youth, are that there is a *large* gap between youth who find the Internet highly appealing and youth who find gambling activities appealing, and that each group is

## YOUTH PERCEPTIONS

attracted to a very different kind of social interaction for their entertainment and leisure activities. This will be discussed further in Section 4.1 of the report.

### THE 'AT RISK' AND/OR UNEMPLOYED YOUTH

Of the youth who were recruited on the basis of being unemployed, or otherwise 'at risk' or both, some were school drop-outs at ages as young as 13-14, some had been in trouble with the police (mostly for drunk and disorderly behaviour or stealing), some had recently left school and were in youth training programs, and some were long-term unemployed such as those 19, 20, 21 years who had not had jobs since leaving school at 15 or 16 years. The focus groups and in-depth interviews conducted with these youths were a stark contrast to the research with the rest of the sample.

While there were a few relatively bright personalities among these youth, for the most part, these respondents were characterised by low self-esteem and poor communications skills. They were difficult groups and/or interviews to conduct because the majority of the respondents showed little enthusiasm for the experience, although most were quite involved in gambling in one form or another and some were gambling quite heavily on horses, or EGMs if they were old enough. Boys and young adult males represented about two-thirds of the sub-sample of 22 youth. As with the rest of the sample, the girls were doing some forms of gambling but nowhere near as much, or spending as much, as the boys.

While the respondents in this category did talk about the downside of gambling — the recognition that you could lose what money you had and might become addicted if you did it too much — it was clear that their awareness of these matters was not as convincing as with other youth in the sample. Discussion of the downsides to gambling was almost always expressed in the context of somebody else's problem, whereas with youth who were not 'at risk', there was the recognition and acceptance that it could happen to me too. As well, attraction to the atmosphere of money at gambling venues (racetrack, casino and clubs) was very pronounced among these youth. Gambling was seen as a quick and easy way to get 'quick and easy money' as one youth put it, and the lure of that was strong, even with the recognition that you could also lose.

The other pronounced difference within this group was that there were more boys in the 'at risk' category who consistently broke the rules by gambling as minors in clubs (Dubbo only) or attempting to put on their own bets on-course or at the TAB. The thrill of breaking the rules added to the experience and although a few of them said they had been thrown out of clubs, most of them had done it more than once and got away with it. Several of the boys said they believed the gambling age should be lower and this was a contrast to other boys in the sample who did not feel that way, even if they were gambling.

There were also pronounced differences regarding the unemployed/'at risk' respondents' usage of the Internet or video games. The majority of these youth were regu-

larly playing video games, mostly in arcades but sometimes at friend's places. Very few of them had ever used the Internet, although public schools which they had attended in both Sydney and Dubbo did have Internet access. Of the Dubbo group there were no Internet users, but of the nine Sydney-based respondents, four used the Internet on a fairly regular basis at one of the Internet Cafes in the inner city. Again, the attraction was primarily to join in the Internet Relay Chat sessions. But unlike the heavy Internet users, these respondents never accessed the Net for other educational or informational purposes. Teenage chatting and cybersex sites were the principal attractions.

It is difficult to draw too many definitive conclusions about the 'at risk' group's potential vulnerabilities to on-line gambling. Clearly, they *were* vulnerable to gambling in general as a perceived source of quick money. But their overall lack of access to the Internet, and the limited interests of those few who did gain access through the public venue cafes, would suggest that future on-line gambling services would not be the route to those vulnerabilities, whereas traditional gambling venues such as clubs, track, casino, would be. In that sense, they were clearly vulnerable to the potential for problem gambling, but not specifically from future on-line services.

### 3.2 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The questionnaire completed by the respondents was designed to capture data on three critical issues. One, to establish what kinds of gambling and gaming youth had done/were doing; two, to find out how old they were when these gambling activities began; and three, to get a picture of the usage pattern for the Internet and video games.

Cross-tabulations against basic demographics were also analysed to see if there were any significant differences arising. Some of these have already been discussed — such as gender and non-English speaking background and will not be repeated here. If other cross-tabulations did show any significant differences, this will be noted.

#### TYPES OF GAMBLING TAKING PLACE

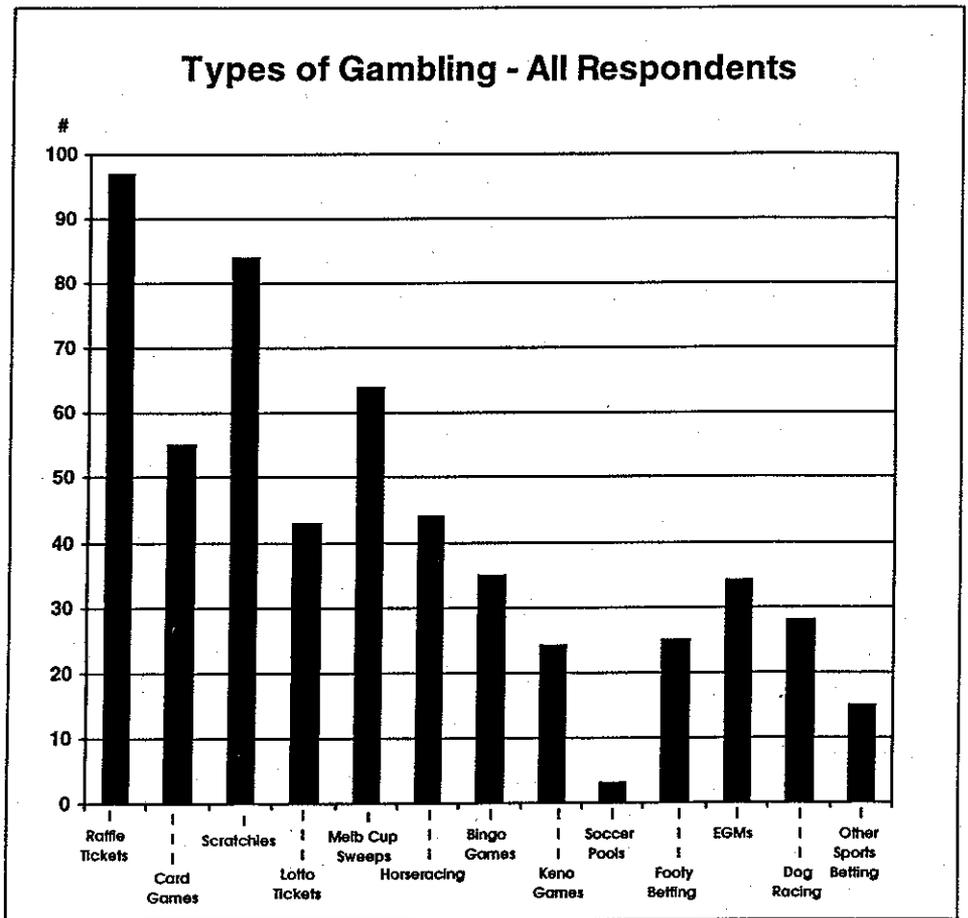
The following diagram illustrates what kind of gambling respondents had done, or were doing. They were asked to tick the appropriate box for whatever kinds of gambling they had participated in, whether they had been given the bet or ticket by somebody else, or placed the bet or purchased the ticket for themselves.

What is interesting about the findings is that although minor gaming on raffles tops the list of gambling activities — as would be expected — other gaming activities such as scratchies, card games, lotto tickets, bingo and keno, feature fairly significantly, particularly scratchies. How and why this should be so, will be discussed in

## YOUTH PERCEPTIONS

detail in Section 3.6 of the report based on qualitative findings from focus groups discussions with the respondents.

Melbourne Cup sweeps are clearly very popular with youth but at 56% were lower than might be expected, considering that the Melbourne Cup is such a focal point of Australian gambling culture. Other non-Melbourne Cup horseracing at 38% indicates a fairly substantial interest in either galloping or harness racing events considering that by far the majority of the sample were minors and presumably, most of them were not putting on their own bets. For the purpose of this study, horseracing was treated as one category as breaking down the two codes of horseracing was not particularly important for our research objectives.



Other features of the findings worth noting are that use of EGMs by 30% of the sample, indicates that almost all youth in the sample were gambling on EGMs as soon as they were eligible to do so, since that is approximately the same proportion who were nearly 18 or over. Apart from key gender differences, with boys doing more and more types of gambling than girls, but girls doing more bingo than boys, the only other significant cross-tabulation finding concerned soccer pools. Only boys from non-English speaking backgrounds were gambling on soccer pools.

**AGE OF EXPOSURE TO GAMBLING ACTIVITY**

Without doubt, the most outstanding finding from the quantitative analysis of this research, was the very early age at which youth in New South Wales are exposed to gambling or gaming activities. Early exposure by itself does not necessarily lead to problem gambling in later life, but there is evidence from other research that it is a factor, along with other psychological and attitudinal profiles, which leads to potential problem gambling in later life.

Youth in New South Wales are being exposed to gambling at very early ages — under ten years of age for the majority of the sample, and under thirteen years for more than 82% of the sample. Only four respondents out of the sample of 114 indicated they had never undertaken any form of gambling. The profile of age of first gambling activity is as follows:

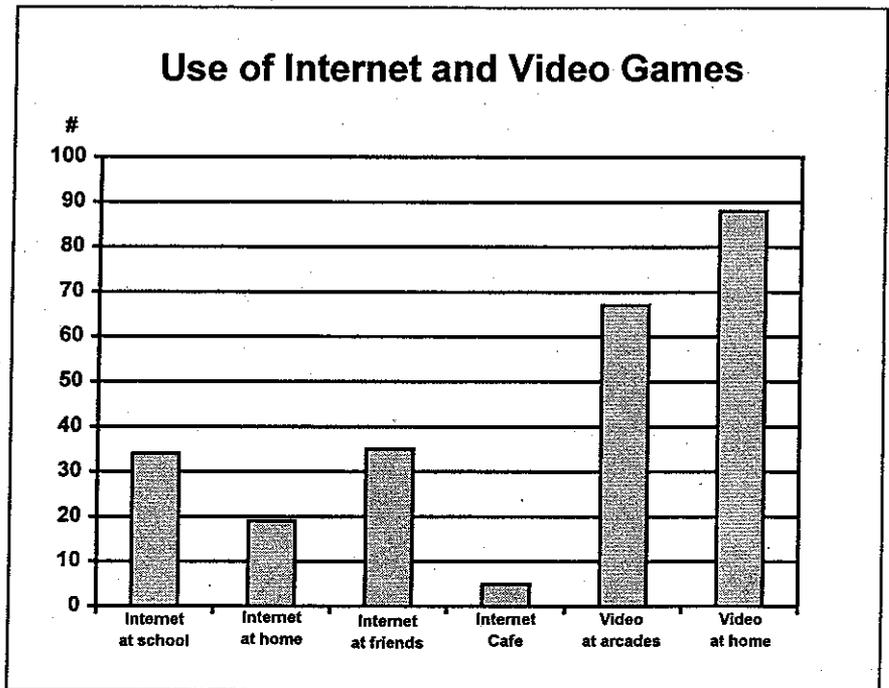


## YOUTH PERCEPTIONS

The key influences on youth exposure and the ways by which youth exposure to gambling occurs, will be discussed in further detail in Section 3.5 of the report, based on qualitative findings from focus group discussions with the respondents.

## INTERNET AND VIDEO GAME USAGE

The breakdown of exposure to the Internet and video games activities within the sample is as follows:



The high proportion of those playing video games in video arcades and/or at home is significant, but within that, cross-tabulations against both gender and schooling showed some interesting differences. Girls were using the Internet and playing video games significantly less than boys, whether it be at school, at home, at friend's places, or in video arcades. Only approximately half of the respondents from private schools had played video games in video arcades in contrast to the majority of youth from public schools.

Playing video games at home was extremely popular with boys from both private and public schools. There was a slightly higher proportion of these in private schools who had Internet access at home, and only one respondent from Dubbo had access at home. Access to the Internet at school appeared to be relatively evenly spread for both public and private schools, but clearly girls at both public and pri-

vate schools were not using it as much as boys, even though it was available to them.

The implication from these usage figures most relevant to this study concerns the obviously popularity of video games with youth, and boys in particular. The findings imply that future interactive video-based services are likely to be extremely appealing to youth, since there is such a strong existing usage base with video interactivity, particularly where it involves competitive game-playing among boys.

This may well mean that boys will be very attracted to interactive gaming activities delivered through on-line broadcasting services, but significantly less attracted to gaming or other gambling activities if there is no, or little, video component. It would be extremely interesting to do a longitudinal study on minors heavily involved in video games now and follow their gambling behaviours in later life. Without such a study, the above suggestions remain mostly speculative.

### 3.3 AWARENESS OF GAMBLING

Respondents were asked to talk spontaneously (with very little prompting) about gambling in order to understand their awareness of different forms of gambling and gaming, and the sources of and influences of this awareness.

#### UNDERSTANDING OF DIFFERENT FORMS OF GAMING AND WAGERING

Most youth in the sample had a good understanding of the differences between gaming and wagering-type gambling, including the younger (10-13 years) respondents. The only exceptions were those who did not gamble at all, or had very little experience with gambling other than from raffles or sweeps. The majority saw the main differences to be related to whether the gambling activity involved skills on the part of the player or not, and about the odds involved in winning and losing.

Games like scratchies, lotto, keno, bingo and EGMs, were seen to offer little chance of winning, requiring no skills on the part of the player. Such games were seen to be just about 'good luck'. Youth who regularly played the 'cardies' in hotels were convinced that card machines offered better odds than other forms of EGMs. Youth who played card games, particularly those of Indo-Chinese cultural background, believed there was a lot of skill involved in playing the games although the player was still subject to 'the luck of the draw'.

Youth interested in, or doing, racing-based gambling (horse or greyhounds) believed the odds were better and that there were considerable skills involved. These skills were associated with studying the form, knowing about track conditions, jockeys or drivers, past performances, and other factors, including knowing how to bet wisely based on the kind of bets placed, or the likely dividends returned.

## YOUTH PERCEPTIONS

On the whole, boys in the sample were far more interested in and aware of the skills-based factors involved in wagering than girls, and several girls indicated they just made selection based on names or colours or someone else's recommendation. There were a few exceptions to that among girls who families were directly or indirectly involved with horses (particularly girls in Dubbo) and who studied the form like the boys.

On the matter of understanding the odds in any particular game or gambling activity, older respondents of both gender were more conscious of the odds of winning or losing, based on their study of probability theory in math classes at school. Many older respondents mentioned that their teachers had used gambling to illustrate probability theory in math classes, and this had helped them to have an understanding of the chances of winning or losing at various kinds of gambling activity.

This latter finding about the understanding of different kinds of odds associated with different kinds of gambling activities through the study of mathematics probability theory, is particularly important for the purposes of this research. The debate about responsible gambling education for youth has mostly focused on the pros and cons of creating special educational programs or packages about gambling. Yet this finding clearly shows that tangential education about gambling in the context of studying maths, had a big impact on the youth who had been exposed to it. This will be discussed further in Section 3.10 of the report.

## AWARENESS — SOURCES AND INFLUENCES

Without doubt the primary source of awareness of gambling came from within the family environment and related to early exposure to various kinds of gambling activities by parents, grandparents, other relatives and family friends and neighbours. Exposure to gambling at early ages within the family will be discussed in greater detail in Section 3.5, but it is clear that the main source of influences about gambling is also within the family, seeing what other family members do, and being around when they do it. This is also confirmed by the finding that of the four respondents in the sample who were not doing any kind of gambling, all four indicated that there was no gambling in their family and their families believed it 'was wrong' or 'bad'.

However, external influences are also strong, but they occur later, *after* children have already been exposed at very early ages. Almost all respondents mentioned in one way or another that 'gambling is all around you', that you can hardly go anywhere without seeing something to do with gambling. These influences on awareness mentioned by respondents were:

- posters and banners outside, and on counters inside, every newsagency and some convenience stores;
- TAB agencies all around you;
- gambling activities in clubs where you went for dinner with your parents;

- scratchies and other games in newspapers and at petrol stations;
- and, particularly, advertising on television.

In the case of the latter, the current NSW TAB ad for 'the adrenalin bet' was mentioned by respondents in every focus group and the majority of the in-depth interviews during this research. Also mentioned were the ads for NSW Lotteries' lotto and powerball games, and ads for the Sydney Casino.

The 'adrenalin bet' ad seemed particularly appealing to boys in the sample and some even discussed how they liked its 'crazy pace' as one boy put it. (The ad is particularly fast, using multi-and split frames and is highly visual, with no voice content but a lot of background sounds — not unlike many video games which attract boys). Whether it was intended or not, the ad is clearly having an impact on the very group of young people who are gambling the most, and most enticed by the 'thrill' or adrenalin rush of gambling — that is, boys and young adult males!

### 3.4 ATTITUDES TOWARD GAMBLING

Respondents were asked to discuss what they thought about gambling in general, what was good or bad about it, why they thought people did it, and why they do it. With the exception of the two focus groups with 'at risk' youth who had lower confidence levels and poor communication skills, no consultant prompting was required to stimulate any discussion of the negative aspects of gambling, and it arose spontaneously with all other youth.

#### THE PROS AND CONS OF GAMBLING

The findings about youth attitudes were consistent across all groups, all demographic variables. Even the younger respondents in the sample were very aware of the downsides to gambling and exhibited the same balanced and sensible attitudes as the older ones, although older respondents were on the whole, more articulate and less shy about saying what they thought.

It is worth noting that there was one incidence among the in-depth personal interviews for this research where the young female respondent (about 16 years old) became very upset at the point in the interview when she started talking about the negative consequences of gambling. It quickly became apparent that she was a victim of her father's problem gambling and the immediate family had experienced a lot of emotional trauma because of it. The consultants felt that there were also a few other cases within the focus group research where gambling was a particularly sensitive issue at home, but these respondents were not pressed to speak about it in front of their peers in a group setting. These respondents tended to take the attitude that gambling was 'for idiots' and 'causes trouble' and didn't want to talk about it anymore. Such comments were accompanied by very closed body language in

## YOUTH PERCEPTIONS

strong contrast to the rest of the group. This was particularly the case for some 'at risk' respondents in Sydney, who later acknowledged they were gambling themselves. The consultants suspected there was a history of problem gambling in the family, but were not in a position to pursue it in that kind of research setting.

All other respondents were enthusiastic about discussing the pros and cons of gambling in very open and quite considered ways. Overall, they displayed very sensible and balanced attitudes toward gambling. In the course of group discussions, most respondents indicated they knew about, had heard about from other friends, or had some direct experience with problem gambling and its consequences. Direct experience sometimes involved relatives or family friends, or neighbours, or relatives of personal friends. Respondents also made it clear that they knew family or friends who gambled in 'sensible' ways where there were no negative consequences.

The positive aspects of gambling were:

- gambling is fun/enjoyable and you share the fun with friends
- you can win money
- social outing with family or friends
- entertainment — doing something with friends different from the routine
- it can be exciting — atmosphere of excitement and glamour
- can be a hobby and interest, something to follow regularly
- belief in good luck — have a go because you might be lucky.

The negative aspects of gambling were:

(examples given in brackets below are using respondent's words)

- losing in general
- losing more than you can afford in particular
- can become addictive (depends on person's self-control)
- can be damaging to other people/family (ie leave kids in car, spend grocery money, don't spend enough time with family)
- can cause marriage and family break-ups (fights, spend mortgage money)
- can cause social problems (people stealing to gamble or pay gambling debts)
- can cause violence (dads might beat up kids when they lose)
- can cause people to become boring and stupid (all they do is gamble)
- can cause dependency (family breaks up and mum and kids live on welfare).

What was interesting about these findings other than the overall balanced and sensible attitudes, was that none of the youth in the sample talked about unrealistic expectations of dreaming of a big win which would mean they didn't have to work, or they would become millionaires. In fact, several respondents actually scoffed at such fantasies on their parents' part, with some saying things like 'Mum buys lotto

tickets because she thinks she could quit work'. Only respondents in the 'at risk' group thought gambling was a source of 'quick and easy' money. Nobody else believed that.

### MOTIVATIONS FOR GAMBLING

Perhaps one of the most important findings of this study is how strongly youth related gambling and gambling behaviours to its social context. As illustrated by the above attitudes about the positive aspects of gambling, the social context of gambling is seen as a critical part of the whole experience, that is, sharing it with family and friends. When asked why did they think people in general gamble, the majority of respondents offered the same explanations as for what they believed was positive about gambling — that is, fun, social interaction, hobbies, and relief from everyday routine.

The implications for this from the point of view of the likely impact of on-line gambling on youth are quite strong. If the social context of gambling is so important to youth, and, as we have seen from other findings youth who are heavily interested in the Internet are not very interested in gambling, then it is unlikely that individual/isolated gambling activity in front of a computer screen is going to be very appealing to most young people. This will be discussed further in Section 4.1.

### INFLUENCES ON ATTITUDES

As mentioned above, family influences were paramount when it came to general awareness of gambling and gaming behaviours and exposure to various forms of gambling. But the research findings did indicate that other influences affected attitudes as children got older, and more exposed to, or experienced with, gambling behaviours. Foremost of these was *personal* experience — that is, hearing about addiction or problem gambling among family, friends, neighbours. The next most powerful influence appeared to be an understanding of the odds of winning or losing, and this was particularly evident amongst older youth exposed to probability theory in maths classes.

Younger children (11-13 years) also appeared to be very influenced by what they saw on television which involved gambling problems. For example, many younger respondents mentioned episodes in soap operas, or American 'sit-com' programs where characters had got into trouble over gambling, or gambling had caused problems within the family. It was clear from this research that what was seen on these programs did leave strong impressions on younger children.

### 3.5 EXPOSURE TO GAMBLING — GENERAL

The purpose of this part of the research was to try to establish what were the main sources of exposure to gambling for youth, how such exposure occurred and what environments (home, school, community, or other) were involved.

The findings were consistent among all youth in the sample, although obviously there were variations concerning the amount of exposure and the particular people influencing each respondent. But in general, the patterns of exposure were the same throughout the sample and the critical finding was that gambling begins within the family. The seeds for interest in gambling are planted at very early ages from within the family environment. External influences and the availability of gambling are important, but those influences occur at much later stages after initial interest has already been created.

The best way to illustrate how this exposure occurs is to take a few case study examples from the individual interviews conducted during the research where there was the opportunity to explore exposure in greater depth. One from Dubbo and two from Sydney will be used to illustrate these patterns of exposure. The names have been changed to protect their identity, but other than that, the 'stories' are as the respondents described to the consultants, using their terminology.

1) *Craig — male, 16 years old, Dubbo*

Craig was taken to the trots from about 4 years of age onwards, along with a little friend the same age. His friend's parents were horse owners and the families were friends and regularly went together. The kids enjoyed it and it was fun being with the families and doing something different. His Nan took him to bingo with her from about 6 years of age. He stopped doing that around 10 because it was too 'sissy'. His Nan bought him scratchies as presents from about 6 years old onwards. His primary school organised football betting for fundraising and that was a regular occurrence between about 8-11 years old. There were also raffles and Melbourne Cup sweeps organised by the school/teachers. By about 12-13 years of age, he would go to the local club after Saturday hockey practice with the adults where he would join them in playing the pokies — nobody even questioned it. By the time he was in high school, he was going to the dog races in Dubbo almost every weekend placing his own bets (average \$2) with the local bookies. Now at 16, he bets regularly on both horses and dogs. His Nan now buys him lotto tickets using her player registration card.

2) *Alison — female, 18 years old, Sydney*

Alison's earliest memories (about 5 years old) of gambling are going to the dog races at Wentworth Park with her grandparents. She loved being with them and they were 'special' outings so her parents could have the 'night-off'. Her grandparents would give her tickets to hold and if the bet won, she would get pocket money. She also used to go to bingo at the local community centre with her mother and aunts.

from about 5 years of age onwards. As soon as she was old enough to know what to do (7-8 years) she was given her own \$2 book to fill out. She got bored with that about 11 years old and preferred to play with her friends. She later met a friend whose father took both of them to the races occasionally on Saturdays. They loved it and thought it was very exciting to see the horses and all the people and festivities.

Her mother regularly bought lotto tickets using the family birthday numbers and all the family would watch the lotto draw on television together to see if they had won anything. She always bought raffle tickets and went into Melbourne Cup sweeps at high school and won a few prizes at raffles. By the time she was 15, she and her girlfriends were buying their own scratchies on their way home from school — still in their school uniform, nobody ever questioned them. Now at 18, she thinks lotto and scratchies are a waste of money but still likes going to the races with friends and does it about every couple of months. She plays cardies at the hotel where her and her boyfriend and friends go to eat regularly, about once a week. They also sometimes play keno games, but prefer the card machines.

3) *Peter — male, 19 years old, Sydney*

Peter's earliest memories from about 4 years of age, are of going to the trots at Harold Park with his father. His father worked hard and he doesn't remember seeing much of him at home so, going out with him on Friday nights when Peter was allowed to stay up late was something special — 'it was just him and me'. His father would take him into the ring and he thought the atmosphere was exciting. This became a regular practise for years and only stopped when Peter became a teenager of about 14 years and chose to do things with his friends instead. But he maintained an interest in the horses, would discuss the form with his father and his father would put the bets on for him. He also played football at school and regularly participated in football betting, both that organised by the school, and personal bets for money with his mates. He also regularly bought scratchies with his friends from about the age of 8 years old onwards from the store near the caravan park where his family used to go twice a year for vacations. The store owner used to tell them if they won anything, they would have to bring their parents to collect it. He also played keno with his parents buying the tickets when they all went to the local club for family outings at the club restaurant. By the time he got a part-time job at 16 and had his own money to spend, he was following the form for the races and sometimes going to the Saturday races with mates from work or school (the older mates would put on the bets). Now, at 19, he described himself as 'a regular punter' but is no longer interested in scratchies, keno or football betting. He spends a lot of time on the form and has had some good wins, but carefully keeps his 'punting money' separate from living monies. He had been to the casino in Sydney once but wasn't very impressed, said he only went because friends wanted to go, particularly the girls who thought it was glamorous. He prefers racing now and considers himself a skilled gambler.

These case studies illustrate what was very apparent from all youth in the sample who were gambling. That is, gambling begins with exposure to people within the family environment who introduce the 'fun' of gambling for entertainment, leisure

## YOUTH PERCEPTIONS

and social purposes. The most common initial exposure begins in the context of doing something special with parents, a parent, or other family members. The excitement and energy of gambling venues, particularly the racetrack, leaves a lasting impression on small children, especially if they are experiencing it within the context of shared 'fun' with close relations.

The social context of gambling is of critical importance to this study since one of the main research outputs concerns whether or not future on-line services will be appealing to youth, or whether new forms of delivery of gambling services will increase the vulnerability of youth. We have seen from the above findings that exposure occurs at very early ages within the context of family relationships and shared leisure activities. Section 4.1 of the report will discuss the likely implications of these findings from the point of view of likely take-up of future on-line services.

### 3.6 EXPOSURE TO GAMBLING — BY TYPE

The purpose of this part of the research was to examine youth attitudes to, and experiences with, different forms of gambling activities. Section 3.2 of the report has already discussed the findings concerning youth involvement in each type of gambling. This section will look at each kind of activity, and a few other forms of gambling which were not included in the questionnaire.

#### RAFFLES

Raffles were considered to be an integral part of school and community social life. In some cases, respondents' early exposure to raffles was through church fund-raising activities and church or school fetes. All youth in the sample considered them to be minor gambling. Some did not think they were gambling at all when participating in raffles. Most lost interest in raffles by the time they were teenagers.

#### BINGO

As previously discussed, bingo was very popular with girls and considered to be 'sissy' by boys. Most exposure to bingo took place in the context of female family social activity at clubs, community centres or church activities. Boys lost interest in it as soon as they were old enough to apply such gender stereotyping, and most girls lost interest in it by the time they were teenagers.

## KENO

It was a surprising finding of the research that 21% of the sample said they had participated in keno games at clubs. Further probing uncovered that this was occurring almost always in the context of going to club restaurants (where minors are allowed — although they were not allowed in the rest of the club) with parents and/or friend's parents. The group would all throw in a few dollars each and the adults would buy the keno tickets, with any prizes shared by the group. On the whole, keno was not popular with youth in this sample and most lost interest in it once these family group activities ceased as they got older.

## SCRATCHIES

Without doubt, scratchies were the most popular form of gambling for minors within the sample, and remained popular with the majority of youth even after they reached 18 years. Interest in scratchies was generated at very early ages with parents, grandparents and sometimes other relatives buying them as gifts for the kids, which the children would scratch and the adults collect for them if there was a win. Many youth in the sample indicated they were regularly buying their own scratchies by the time they were teenagers, using their own pocket money. Purchases were made by either older friends, other family members, and in many cases, the minors themselves with little difficulty. If they were questioned, many youth in the sample indicated they simply told the counter staff they were buying them for their mum. They mostly got away with it.

## CARD GAMES

Card games were not very popular with most youth in this sample except for those from Indo-Chinese and Chinese cultural background. These youth were exposed to card games at very early ages, learning how to play by watching at young ages and then being taught by adults as soon as they were old enough, in some cases as early as 7-8 years. Most of the Indo-Chinese and Chinese youth in the sample indicated they were looking forward to being able to play card games and other kind of table games at the casino when they were legally allowed.

## LOTTO AND LOTTO-TYPE GAMES

Lotto and the Powerball game offered by NSW Lotteries were both popular with youth, primarily as a group activity shared within the family. Parents and/or other relatives would purchase the tickets with their player registrations but the children would pick some numbers and share in the game's winnings if any. In some cases minors would put up their pocket money for their own ticket purchased by older siblings or their mother. Interest in Lotto appeared to drop off as the youth got

## YOUTH PERCEPTIONS

older, with many indicating they thought the odds were so limited that it was not worth the expenditure involved.

## MELBOURNE CUP SWEEPS

These were popular with most youth and seen to be part of the shared social experience of the Melbourne Cup carnival. Most youth were introduced to Melbourne Cup Sweeps in primary school, in some cases, sweeps being organised by the school, or teachers, in other cases, organised by older kids within the school. Other forms of participation were youth being put into sweeps organised at their parents' work. Parents, grandparents and other relatives also put on bets at the TAB for the kids and would give them the money if there was a dividend. Youth of non-English speaking background who were not otherwise interested in horseracing, eagerly participated in Melbourne Cup.

## HORSERACING OTHER THAN THE MELBOURNE CUP

This was a very popular form of gambling with many youth in the sample, most particularly boys and older teenagers. Introduction to racing usually occurred at very young ages when parents, or a parent, took their children to the track, or in some cases, to the TAB to watch races and put on bets. The most common form of introduction to the races was in the relationship between father and son, with fathers teaching their sons about racing, how to bet, and how to study the form. Both forms of horseracing — galloping and harness racing — were popular, but it was noticeable among the respondents in this sample that interest in harness racing appeared to wane, while interest in galloping appeared to increase with age. While the majority of girls were not as interested in racing as boys, this was not the case for girls in Dubbo where horseracing was more strongly a part of country social activity.

## GREYHOUND RACING

There was not a lot of interest in greyhound racing among the sample, with the exception of youth in Dubbo, many of whom regularly attended local dog racing meetings. Introduction occurs in the same way as for the races, with a parent (usually the father), or parents taking the children to the track at very early ages.

## SOCCER POOLS

Only the boys of non-English speaking background in this sample were betting on soccer pools. Introduction to the sport occurs at home and was very much a part of shared social activity with male family members.

### FOOTBALL BETTING

Betting on football matches either through TAB 'Footytab' or by means of school or sports-club organised football betting pools, was very popular with boys in this sample. If Footytab bets were placed on major NSW matches, fathers, older brothers, or older friends put on the bets for minors. In the case of school matches, or minor league sports events, minors placed their own bets using their own pocket money with the adults or friends organising the gambling, and nobody ever questioned the activity.

### ELECTRONIC GAMING MACHINES

EGMs were very popular forms of gambling with most of those over 18 in the sample, both boys and girls. The current 'fashion' is for the card machines, know as 'cardies' by youth, and both genders played them regularly whenever they were at hotels, usually on the weekends. In the cases where there was early introduction to poker machines as minors, all were among Dubbo-based respondents who were taken to clubs with their parents, or sometimes other relatives. As previously mentioned there were a few incidences of minor boys sneaking into clubs in Dubbo to play poker machines and mostly, they got away with it.

### THE CASINO

Very few of the youth in the sample had been to a casino. Of those who had, these visits were one-off special occasions with friends and sometimes family, to 'see what it was like'. The majority did not find the casino very appealing. No-one in this sample had gone back a second time. Only youth of Indo-Chinese or Chinese cultural background in the sample indicated they were looking forward to going to the casino when they were old enough. A few respondents indicated they found the casino environment very attractive because of the glamour and the atmosphere of lots of money.

### OTHER SPORTS BETTING

Many of the youth in the sample indicated they occasionally placed personal bets with friends on a range of other sports events — from baseball matches to swimming carnivals. Mostly these bets were small — in the order of \$2 to \$5 — and mostly they were taking place amongst boys.

## YOUTH PERCEPTIONS

### PERSONAL BETTING

Quite a large number of girls in the sample indicated they regularly placed personal bets with their girlfriends, on events ranging from how they did in exams to the outcomes of video games. Boys also took personal bets amongst themselves on video games played at home. In some cases, real money was put up, but more commonly, the loser had to buy the winner something, like a hamburger or pay for a movie. This personal betting activity was taking place mostly among younger respondents in the 11-14 years age group.

### TIME-GAMBLING ON THE INTERNET

As previously discussed, those who were heavily into the Internet, were playing games against the operators of Bulletin Boards for which the stakes were free access time. No other youth in the sample had even heard of time-gambling. Introduction to this form of gambling occurred through contact with other 'Netheads' and the teenage chatting which was going on through the Internet Relay Chats.

## 3.7 AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF NEW DELIVERY MECHANISMS

The purpose of this part of the research was to test the respondents' awareness and understanding of the possibilities for gambling services delivered through either cable television or the Internet, and to examine attitudes toward these or other future services which will be provided by these means. It was not expected that youth would have much knowledge of electronic commerce possibilities. Therefore the approach to this part of the research was to ask for general responses to the idea of future cable and computer-based services, then prompt for reaction to gambling services in particular.

### CABLE TV AND FUTURE INTERACTIVE BROADCASTING SERVICES

The most common response to the question 'what comes to mind when you think about cable TV', was that it is going to cost money and will provide more channels/more choice of programs. The majority of youth in the sample were not terribly interested by what they had heard about cable TV, with the exception of a few boys who mentioned increased coverage of major sporting events. There were a few Sydney-based respondents in the sample who already had Pay TV at home and their response was 'it costs money but isn't really worth it'.

There was little understanding of the distinction between existing Pay TV services and future interactive services delivered by cable, except among the heavy Internet users group who had a good understanding of the technical differences. The

Internet users were the only group who had a clear understanding of the notion of interactivity, and this included the few girls within the group.

They were also the only group within the sample who spontaneously talked about interactive home shopping and home banking services. The majority of other respondents did mention home shopping services when prompted to think about future possibilities, but all saw that as being limited to credit card transactions (where you called up to order and gave your credit card number over the phone) undertaken by existing means. No respondents were interested in the notion of home shopping, but some thought it might be useful for 'old people' who couldn't get out.

#### THE INTERNET AND FUTURE ON-LINE SERVICES

There was a very pronounced difference regarding awareness and understanding of future on-line services between the heavy Internet users, or self-proclaimed 'Netheads' group, and the rest of the sample. Even though approximately 75% of the sample had used the Internet either at home, at school, or at friend's places, only the ten respondents from the group specifically recruited on the basis of being 'Netheads' were aware of the possibilities for future on-line services.

These youth had a very good understanding of how electronic commerce would take place. The differences in knowledge and understanding were so pronounced, it was like the youth in the sample were living in two different worlds, with the majority rooted in the world of current experience and the Netheads rooted in cyberspace consciousness!

Every respondent in the 'Nethead' group, including the girls, was aware of electronic money, smart cards (both disposable and reloadable), the possibilities for direct on-line credit and debit transactions, and the security and privacy issues associated with such on-line services. With regard to the latter, they were aware of the issues associated with leaving electronic trails, they were aware of encryption technologies and their general attitude to security matters was that 'if it is electronic, it can be hacked'.

Everything to do with hacking, and hackers, was of great interest to these youth, and one of the most popular topics for discussion amongst youth in cyberspace. Stories about hacking, and the escapades of infamous hackers from around the world, were widely discussed in both the IRC sessions and various world wide web sites. These youth knew that smart cards could be manipulated if you put them in microwave ovens because they had read about it in cyberspace when that research was first announced in the United States.

Overall, the youth in the group took a cautious approach to electronic commerce, because of their awareness of, and concerns about, security issues. They all believed that electronic commerce and on-line services of all kinds would be 'the way of the future', but most indicated they would be hesitant to use them because of current

## YOUTH PERCEPTIONS

and future security risks involved. As well, there was spontaneous awareness within this group that electronic cash could be 'a dangerous temptation', that is, that it would be easier to spend because of the perception that 'it is not real'.

## FUTURE ON-LINE GAMBLING SERVICES

The youth who were 'Netheads' were aware that all kinds of future services would be offered on-line, including gambling services, since, as one youth put it, 'there is so much money to be made out of gambling'. None of these youth found the idea of gambling on-line appealing to them, not only because there were not very interested in gambling, but because of the perceived security and privacy risks involved. As one respondent put it 'we wouldn't trust it (on-line gambling)!'.

In contrast, none of the other respondents in the sample had any awareness or understanding of future on-line gambling services. When prompted for their response on the matter the majority thought it would be 'boring' to gamble on-line because there would be no social interaction involved, and no atmosphere to experience. When asked if they thought gambling through interactive television services would be different, or better, many respondents thought this would be more appealing if you could also watch the races and other sports live on TV.

Thus, the video component for some gambling services did add appeal for them. But most still associated gambling activities with its broader social context whether it be the context of gambling venues such as clubs, track, or casino, or simply the sharing of gambling 'fun' in the company of family and friends at any location. As well, those youth who were doing racing forms of gambling and also understood that access time to the Internet costs money, spontaneously raised the point that placing bets via an Internet would cost more than using the TAB. This was an important finding from the point of view of the likely impact of future gambling services on youth and will be discussed further in Section 4.1.

Finally, there was one other point made by 'Netheads' about the Internet and the future of the Internet. As one young man (16 years) described it, 'there are two sides to the Net — the light and the dark side... right now we see the light side dominating... but we worry about the dark side dominating the future'. Their definition of the light side was that the Net is 'a fantastic source of mostly free communications and information', it is 'free from government regulations and still mostly free from commercial interference'.

The dark side was seen to be about hackers 'trying to destroy things' and government control and commercial exploitation 'trying to turn it into something else'. Commercial services such as gambling or other forms of electronic commerce were seen to be *almost sacrilegious to their view of the Internet*, and to represent the potential triumph of the dark side in the not too distant future. This was a critical finding about the attitudes of serious Internet users toward the future of electronic commerce and one which is simply not understood by suppliers driving future applica-

tions, whether they be gambling services or others. This will also be discussed further in Section 4.1.

### 3.8 ATTITUDES TOWARD THE PREVENTION OF ACCESS TO MINORS

The purpose of this part of the research was to examine what young people themselves thought about age restrictions as they applied to gambling and gaming services.

Overall, there were very few differences in the findings across the sample base. The vast majority of youth in the sample thought minors should be prevented from having access to gambling and gaming services on the grounds that there would always be some 'idiot' as they put it, who would get into trouble if they had easy access. Still, many older respondents commented that although they thought access restrictions should apply to those under 18, many forms of gambling, such as scratchies and lotto-type products would always involve kids because they were usually shared within the family, so many people gave them as gifts, and in the case of scratchies, they were so easy to buy as minors.

The only youth within the sample who thought that the gambling age should be lowered, were from the 'at risk' category and some Indo-Chinese respondents who felt that they should be able to bet at the racetrack or go into clubs at sixteen years of age. These were a very small minority of the sample and were mostly boys who were already regularly into gambling of one form or another.

In contrast to the above, there was also a minority of 18-21 year olds in the sample, who actually spontaneously suggested that the gambling age should be *raised* to 21 years. They believed this on the grounds that when you first leave school and start to work, you are not experienced in how to manage your money. They thought this is a crucial time when many young people get into trouble with overspending or foolish behaviour with new freedoms to do with drinking, gambling and going out in general.

Several respondents suggested that it takes a while — a couple of years — to 'get your act together', and that if gambling was not allowed during that time, it would be harder for youth to get in trouble. During group discussions of these matters, other older respondents commented that although they agreed with the point being made, they thought it was unrealistic to expect the gambling age would be raised, since the government would miss out on the extra revenue generated by those between 18 and 21 years being able to gamble legally.

### 3.9 UNDERSTANDING AND USAGE OF PAYMENT AND CONTROL MECHANISMS

The purpose of this part of the research was to examine the current usage of and attitudes toward credit and debit transactions, to test for knowledge and awareness of existing or future security and control mechanisms, and to establish what youth thought about various kinds of mechanisms to control access to existing on-line or broadcasting services seen to be inappropriate for minors.

#### USAGE OF, AND ATTITUDES TOWARD CARD-BASED TRANSACTIONS AND SECURITY MECHANISMS

There were several unexpected findings from this part of the research. It was to be expected that youth would be comfortable with ATM and EFTPOS transactions. What was not expected was the very high proportion of the sample who already had their own debit cards, and had them from very young ages such as 12-13 years old. As previously mentioned in the Glossary to this report, banks will issue key-cards to minors between 12-16 years with parental authorisation, and to minors over 16 without parental authorisation.

The questionnaire was not designed to capture this information, so the consultants can only estimate the proportion based on notes taken with each group or interview. It was estimated that approximately three-quarters of the sample had, and were regularly using, their own debit cards.

Another surprising finding was the number of youth in the sample who indicated they had access to their parent, or parents', PIN for either or both credit or debit card transactions. In some cases, knowledge of parent's PINs was unauthorised and had occurred because of years of being around and observing parents undertaking ATM or EFTPOS transactions. But mostly, the knowledge was authorised by parents who trusted their children to use the cards on their behalf, either for withdrawing money from ATMs or for household shopping needs.

Attitudes towards card-based financial transactions and PINs in particular showed another unanticipated finding. While some respondents — the minority — thought PINs were a secure mechanism for control over credit or debit card usage, the majority did not believe that based on the perception that 'lots of kids know other people's PINs' as one respondent put it. As well as parental PINs, youth in the sample indicated it was not uncommon to know the PINs of close friends and older siblings, frequently because 'they share it with us so they won't forget'.

Overall, attitudes toward personal identification numbers as an effective security mechanism for financial transactions, were negative. Rather, the majority of youth in the sample, even some younger ones with little or no understanding of smart card technologies, had futuristic images of how card-based transactions would operate with better security in the future. They mentioned fingerprint scans and retina scans

although for the most part, they had little understanding of how such mechanisms would work.

Only the youth in the heavy Internet users group understood the direct connection between these security mechanisms and smart card technology applications, and only those respondents had heard of the use of digital signatures as a security device. The 'Netheads' had heard about all these issues through the Internet. Most of the other youth in the sample had heard about such security mechanisms by watching science programs on television, particularly programs such as Beyond 2000.

#### ATTITUDES TOWARD CONTROL MECHANISMS FOR ACCESS TO EXISTING OR FUTURE ON-LINE SERVICES

Most of more 'innocent' and younger respondents in the sample had no knowledge or understanding of other control mechanisms which are currently being discussed in debates concerning the prevention of access to minors to violence on television, or pornography or other information inappropriate to minors, on the Internet. But the heavy Internet users, and some of the older youth in the sample, had all heard of the V-chip. Many of those using the Internet at school knew that parents or teachers could install 'Net Nanny' disks into computers.

Only the 'Netheads' understood how devices such as 'Net Nanny' were installed and all were strongly *against* the idea of web browsers being policed in that way. In general, the attitude of the majority of youth in the sample was that while schools might police access to inappropriate information for minors, the average parent not only couldn't afford the expense involved, but wouldn't have any idea how to go about doing it. The point was made that most parents still do not know how to program the VCR, and that kids in general know more about computers than anyone else in their households. Thus, the use of such devices to control access to services such as gambling, or access to pornography or violence on computers or television, was scoffed at as ineffectual by these regular Internet users.

It was clear that overall, the majority of youth in the sample thought that any control mechanisms which relies on a PIN to manage access, would not be effective for the average teenager, on the grounds that the average teenager would be able to find a way around it. There was also an attitude that such devices, by virtue of actually providing a challenge to kids, would made the 'forbidden' subject matter (whatever it was), more attractive to kids.

In illustration of some of these issues and attitudes, one 16 year old respondent, whose family had Pay TV, told how his parents had asked him to program a security device to prevent access for the younger siblings in the family to adult movies, because the parents were not able to do it themselves. He did it for them but has 'no interest' in accessing the adult movies himself. But he said he is constantly pestered by his little brothers and sisters to tell them the PIN because it is 'forbidden' to them.

## YOUTH PERCEPTIONS

Other comments made by the 'Netheads' within the sample, were they thought it was 'stupid' to have control devices on violence or pornography on TV, since what was available to kids on the Internet was 'much hotter' than that, and parents and teachers would 'not have a clue' how to find it, or control kid's access to it. They thought control devices such as filtering software installed through web browsers, also would not work on the grounds that there would still always be 'Netheads' who would 'put the word out about how to delete them' through IRCs or other means.

Examples given were information about how to make ecstasy or LSD, how to make bombs, where to find international pornography sites, and where to find information about how to hack into control devices and get around them. The general attitude of these heavy Internet users was that while the challenge to get into such sites, or access such information on the Net, was appealing to kids, the actual content itself, often held limited appeal. Most kids were sensible enough not to use it, or pursue it any further once they had 'checked it out'.

Thus, they believed that control devices of any kind were *more likely* to add appeal to any subject matter, than if the kids were just 'allowed to be teenagers', exploring what was new and 'forbidden' in the way that teenagers do. The boy who recently checked out one of the virtual casino sites added to that by saying he had just wanted to see what it was like, was not terribly interested in the content, and had never gone back into it again.

### 3.10 ATTITUDES TOWARD EFFECTIVE YOUTH EDUCATION

The purpose of this part of the research was to explore youth attitudes and experiences with various forms of special education as it relates to encouraging responsible behaviours amongst youth, for matters such as alcohol, drugs, safe sex, and others. The intention is to draw conclusions from these and other findings about what might constitute effective responsible gambling education for youth.

#### SCHOOLS-BASED INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Among youth in the sample, most had experienced some form of schools-based special education. The most common form of those in public schools was what they experienced in 'personal development' classes, and the most common form of that was teachers just talking about and/or leading class discussions on drugs, alcohol or safe sex education. Some respondents had experienced special 'personal development'. There were a few incidences where guest speakers had been invited to talk at those camps.

Guest speakers acting as 'role models' for students were also fairly common experiences for the youth from private schools in the sample. Frequently these speakers were just local authority figures (such as a member of the police force) or local per-

sonalities (such as a football player or other sports person). There were a few respondents in the sample who said they had experienced more 'famous' visiting speakers such as well-known music industry personalities or Olympic medallists.

It was clear that speakers with either peer-group fame, or figures well-known from the media, created a far bigger impression on the students than did authority figures of any kind, no matter how good they may have been at speaking about whatever subject was involved. Those youth who had heard speakers close to their own age group who talked about the subject matter (usually drugs or alcohol) from their own experience with it, said the speakers left a powerful impression on them. Examples given were young (20-25 years) people from the music industry who talked about their previous problems with drugs or alcohol, and young sports stars who talked about the dangers of drugs and alcohol to the body.

But, for the most part, the majority of youth in the sample were not overly impressed with these schools-based special education programs. Many described them as 'teachers or boring speakers droning on endlessly about things we already know about'. Some respondents felt that written information in the form of special kits given out by schools, were better because they could take them home and read them in the privacy of their own rooms. This particularly applied to information concerning AIDS and safe sex practices. This was seen as something kids wanted to learn about, but not necessarily discuss in public/in front of their peers.

#### PUBLIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS

Two different kinds of public information had an impact on youth in this sample. The first was that resulting from formal public education campaigns — such as television ads for AIDS awareness, or RTA road safety campaigns, or drink-driving posters along roadways. The second, and by far the most influential, form of information which got the attention of kids, was what they saw on television news and current affairs programs about other kids getting into trouble.

Examples of the latter were news coverage of teenagers killed in car accidents for speeding and/or drink driving, and the death of Anna Woods from taking ecstasy at a rave party. The case of Anna Woods was mentioned spontaneously in the majority of focus groups undertaken for this research and appeared to have had a particularly strong impact on older youth (from about 15 years onward) in the sample. All those who talked about it saw the case as very close to home from a psychological point of view and as such, they took it very seriously indeed.

Younger respondents in the sample, had strong impressions of ads such as the 'grim-reaper' AIDS campaign from a few years ago. It was not clear to the consultants whether the content of the ad actually had as much impact as the visual means and images used to get the message across. It is worth noting that of all the youth in the sample, the ones most likely to be vulnerable to problem gambling — the 'at risk' youth and possibly a few from Indo-Chinese background — were also the only youth in the sample who did not appear to be much influenced by any form of

## YOUTH PERCEPTIONS

school or public education campaigns. Their general attitude was none of these things had much relevance to them and everybody's problems were basically their own. There was a sense of separation from the rest of the community in that regard.

## EFFECTIVE RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING EDUCATION

The above findings do not provide much encouragement for the effectiveness of formal responsible gambling education campaigns or programs directed at young people. The only conclusion which could be drawn from these findings is that widespread media coverage of cases where young people have got into trouble through gambling, would be the most likely kind of 'informal' education to have an impact on youth.

There was another strong finding of the research however, which gives more hope for the creation of effective gambling education directed at youth. That was the finding concerning the tangential learning about, understanding of, the odds associated with gambling, in math classes at school. While the objective may have been to teach about probability theory, the outcome was that youth also learned about sensible and responsible approaches to gambling.

The implications of this for responsible gambling education will be discussed further in Section 4.3 of the report.

---