Testing of the Self Administered Problem Gaming Scale
Prototype Screen – A Draft Report

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The prototype Self Administered Problem Gambling Screen (SAPGS) was tested with regular and irregular gamblers with very positive results. The SAPGS has tested well on the following criteria:

- Assisting gamblers to learn the extent to which their gambling behaviours and attitudes may be problematic;
- Identifying at risk and early stage problem gamblers;
- Comprising a high level of face validity;
- Identifying behaviours, attitudes and motives that the gambler exhibits or holds that they have not yet associated with problem gambling; and
- Being easy to understand and answer.

There were no major difficulties encountered by participants in the research, however some minor refinements are required to minimise the few difficulties exhibited for self completion administration. These were mainly formatting issues that can be easily addressed in the next phase of developing the SAPGS for distribution.

Whilst the prototype screen works well to identify at risk and early stage problem gamblers, some refinement may be required to specific sub-screens (eg. Believe and Why you play) as these were weakest in identification of at risk gamblers. Some of the specific statements may also be refined or deleted for similar reasons. However, it should be noted that participants were not concerned about the length of the screen.

In the next phase of development, the front page of the SAPGS will require some further thought. It is recommended that the front page should avoid the dour and judgemental headings and images that are portrayed on the current suite of self help materials. The concept of “taking a test” had very positive connotations and should be emphasised on the next version of the SAPGS.

Participants were keen to see the SAPGS brochure distributed across a wide range of locations. Whilst there was a focus on gaming venues, a wide range of alternative locations were recommended including doctor’s offices, ATMs/banks, supermarkets, newsagents, post offices, libraries, Local Council offices etc.

Along with testing the SAPGS, the research also gathered information relating to general gambling behaviours. This section of the research found that those who had been identified as “At Risk” were more likely to focus on gambling as the main activity when they are at a gaming venue, whilst those identified as “Not at Risk” were more likely to describe gambling as an adjunct to another activity (eg. dinner out with friends/family). “At Risk” participants also talked about the lure of winning and the ability to go to a venue to pass the time or fill a social void. Furthermore, the specific aspects of the EGMs that attract those identified as “At Risk” were described as being interactive (eg. free spins or other special features). Lower minimum bet machines were also a lure and provided a false sense of security (eg. money can stretch our for a longer time period). These issues are not new, but it is important to keep them in mind when refining the SAPGS to ensure that the attractions of the EGMs and the social reasons for visiting gaming venues are adequately addressed in the screen.

Stakeholders, whilst generally supportive of the prototype SAPGS, raised concerns especially regarding the validity of this self assessment tool. Communications with problem gambling professionals will be necessary if they are to provide unmitigated support for the screen.

It is recommended that a further research round be conducted when the prototype has been further refined and ready for implementation. This research would test the look and feel of the brochure to ensure that it portrays a positive image and message. The screen itself could also be re-tested if any major changes are made to the statements or sub-screens.
2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

In 2004, the Victorian government commissioned Dr Tony Schellink from Dalhousie University Canada to develop a self-administered problem gambling scale (SAPGS). This instrument (or set of instruments) should be capable of effectively assisting problem gamblers, or those who are at risk of significant harm due to gambling, to accurately assess their status. As well as being accurate, the SAPGS should be easy to administer by gamblers, themselves, or others knowledgeable about the gambler’s behaviours.

Dr Schellink observed that to date, a number of screens have been developed for administration by professionals, for example the South Oaks Gambling Screen and the DSM-IV. Given the debate surrounding the issue of pathological versus problematic gambling, as well as the utility of existing gambling screens for identifying problem gamblers in the general population, several new screens were developed that could be administered by trained telephone interviewers. These include Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI) and the Victorian Gambling Screen (VGS). None of these screens were designed to be self administered.

As well, Dr Schellink found that gamblers already have access to some information designed to help them recognise that they have a gambling problem and to motivate them to seek assistance. This includes the screens found on the Victoria Department of Human Services Public Gambling website and the lists of symptoms found on posters and in pamphlets provided by existing responsible gambling programs in many gambling venues.

In developing the scale, Dr Schellink proposed that the purpose of the SAPGS was to lead to accurate classification of the gambler into one of several possible categories, including at risk, exhibiting problem gambling behaviour leading to harm, or causing harm. The scale was designed primarily to target the population of gamblers who are at risk through the use of Electronic Gambling Machines (EGMs) so that the impact of problem gambling with EGMs can be prevented or minimised. It was felt that general scales are probably not specific enough to provide accuracy of responses. By focusing only on EGM behaviour the scales should be able to better identify problem gambling associated with this type of gambling given its prevalence amongst problem gamblers.

The SAPGS was developed to be self administered and be composed of easy to answer, non-threatening questions. It is envisaged that the use of the scale would be the first step to overcoming problem gambling; therefore, the scale needs to be credible with gamblers. In addition, if it illustrates errors in thinking (e.g., I can win.) or illustrates harmful impacts, the scale could also motivate problem gamblers to deal with the problem. Finally, the scale should be acceptable and credible with venue operators in order to elicit their support for its distribution on site.

Following on from the work by Dr Schellink in developing and refining the SAPGS prototype screen, Market Solutions was commissioned to conduct a test of the screen amongst Victorian EGM gamblers.
2.2 **Research Objectives**

The specific research objectives for this survey were to:

- Test the validity of the SAPGS.
- Compare the SAPGS results against those of the CPGI screen.
- Ascertain the views of gamblers in relation to the SAPGS including:
  - Determining gamblers attitudes to the possibility of a self-administered test;
  - Establishing the requirements of such a test in terms of format, wording, appearance and positioning; and
  - Verifying the perceived effectiveness of the screen.
- Study the aspects of the gaming experience that form part of the reasons for participants’ decision to play poker machines.
- Uncover gamblers’ attitudes and feelings with regards to their gaming practices.
3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in three stages:

- Initial contact
- Recruitment to specifications and administration of CPGI
- Depth interviewing

The various questionnaires used for recruitment and depth interviewing are provided as appendices.

3.1 Initial Contact

The research team met with representatives from the local licensed electronic gaming machine (EGM) operators (Tattersalls and TABcorp) along with a representative from the Australian Hotels Association to establish access to appropriate gaming venues. An agreement was reached whereby participants were approached at the following venues in the Melbourne metropolitan area:

- Bundoora Hotel (Bundoora)
- Croxton TAB (Preston)
- Cramer’s Hotel (Preston)
- Golden Nugget (Melbourne)
- Moreland Hotel (Brunswick)
- Players on Lygon (Carlton)
- Pokies Plus (Moonee Ponds)
- Westend Tatts Pokies (Albion)
- Zagames Hotel (Reservoir)

As per the requirements of the EGM operators, researchers only approached potential participants in the lobbies of the gaming venues. Due to the limited success of the intercept recruiting at the venues (75 contacts resulting in 43 successful bookings), referral recruitment was used, whereby participants were asked to refer friends and family who they thought would also be interested in participating in the research.

Participants in Ballarat and Bendigo were recruited through an advertisement in the local newspaper. This was a very successful approach to recruiting for this project.

Whilst categories were established to ensure that no group overwhelmed the participant sample, quotas were not imposed during the recruiting phase of the study.

3.2 Recruiting

Once contact and agreement to participate in the project was obtained, follow up telephone contact was conducted to administer the recruiting questions (see Appendix X). To validate the ability of the SAPGS to accurately identify those at risk of becoming a problem gambler, the CPGI was administered during the telephone recruitment stage to use as a control for benchmarking SAPGS results.

Demographic and gambling behavioural profiles were also obtained in the recruiting stage of the research.
3.3 Depth Interviewing

During recruitment, participants were scheduled for a depth interview which was conducted at Market Solutions (Moonee Ponds). The interview was conducted using a structured discussion guideline (see Appendix 1).

A total of 91 participants were interviewed between 22 May and 22 June 2006. To ensure that participants were adequately supported, Market Solutions had on hand a set of communication materials for any participants with this requirement.

To avoid ethical issues, Market Solutions provided each participant with a $50 shopping voucher (rather than a cash payment) as an incentive to participate in the research.

3.4 Stakeholders

Additional research was conducted with stakeholders (eg. problem gambling and financial counsellors) to obtain their feedback regarding the SAPGS (see Appendix 2).
3.5 Sample Profile – Demographics

It is well documented that EGM gamblers who play regularly are likely to be at risk of becoming a problem gambler. Hence, in a study that focuses on problem gambling behaviour it is important for the sample to include a good representation of regular gamblers. Therefore, sample selection for this study aimed at acquiring an equal representation of regular and irregular gamblers with a focus on participants who had recently commenced gambling regularly. A significant representation of participants above and below the age of 40 was also sought to minimise age-bias of the sample.

Figure 1 provides a breakdown of the study sample by gender, age group, lifecycle and frequency of playing EGM’s and recency of commencing regular gambling. Participants in the study were more likely to be female (63%) and aged over 40 years (60%). The sample was more likely to represent singles (44%) than families (29%) or couples with no children (27%).

The recruiting achieved an even representation of regular gamblers (at least one a week) and irregular gamblers (once a fortnight of less often).

Figure 1: Sample Profile – Gender, Age group, Lifecycle and Frequency of Use
Figure 2 illustrates a profile of the study sample by occupation, income bracket and the highest level of education attained thus far. Just over half of those participating in the survey were found to be not in the workforce (55%). It is important to note that individuals who were classed as ‘not in the workforce’, for the purpose of this study, were those who were not currently employed in a paid job (eg. unemployed, home duties, students, retired).

In terms of income, whilst it is possible that participants used the “don’t know” response for refusing to divulge their income, it is also likely that the high proportion of participants who were not engaged in the workforce (55%) influenced the high proportion of participants who stated that they do not know the gross household income (46%).

It is also evident from Figure 2 that approximately one third (35%) of participants were early school leavers (Year 10 or below).

**Figure 2: Sample Profile – Occupation, Income and Education**
An overview of the regular (at least once a week) and irregular (less often than once a fortnight) gamblers in the sample, shown in Figure 3, illustrates that 72% of the irregular gamblers were female, as compared to 53% of regular gamblers. Regular gamblers participating in this study were more likely to be over 40 years of age compared with irregular gamblers.

Compared with irregular gamblers, slightly more of the regular gamblers were early school leavers (Year 10 or below).

There were no significant differences between regular and irregular gamblers in terms of occupation and income.

**Figure 3: Overview of Regular and Irregular Gamblers in the Sample**

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<td>Under 40 years of age</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 11 or 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Above Year 12</td>
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4.0 GENERAL GAMBLING BEHAVIOUR

4.1 Reasons for Playing Pokies

To begin the depth interview and to provide context, participants were asked what it is about EGM’s that entices them to keep coming back. The responses to this question can be arranged into four main categories:

- Entertainment – provided by the games and the social experience
- Convenience – both in terms of location and opening hours
- Lure of winning – including those who attempt to win back losses
- Pastime – as a habit, to escape from reality and just to ‘kill time’

4.1.1 Entertainment

Participants reported that various aspects of playing EGMs provided them with entertainment value. These included elements such sensory stimuli, the chance of winning, the experience of playing and the social experience. One participant stated:

“It can be a bit of fun sometimes. It is good entertainment because various games can come up. I might bring a few friends to form a syndicate and everyone can have a play together. I usually go there because there is also a bar where I can socialise” (At Risk by both screens).

It is interesting to note that whilst this participant identifies playing the EGMs in a positive way, they state that it ‘can be a bit of fun sometimes’, as opposed to being enjoyable all of the time. This participant was identified as being ‘At Risk’ by the SAPGS screen, CPGI At Risk measure and the CPGI Moderate measure.

A number of participants viewed playing EGMs as a social experience. One participant said:

“I just go with a few mates to the pokies to relax, have a few drinks and a little play. It is much better than going to the nightclubs” (At Risk by both screens)

These 'At Risk' participants view the playing of EGMs as a social event which may lend itself to fostering a situation where the player may not become aware of their transition from 'At Risk' to a problem gambler.

A number of participants cited the entertainment provided by the audio and visual stimuli of the venue as contributing to their recurring decision play EGMs. In some cases, the attraction was incomprehensible to the participant, but nonetheless there was some mention of this action.

“I don’t know why I keep going back. I am just pulled towards it. For some strange reason I think I can win when I know that I can’t. It’s something to do with the lighting and music drawing me in” (At Risk by both screens)

“I can’t answer why I go to the pokies instead of another place. The actual pokie machine has a bit of allure, I like looking at the pictures, they look relaxing.” (At Risk by both screens)
4.1.2 Convenience

The convenience of the location of the gaming venue was of some importance in the decision by some participants to keep coming back to play.

“It is just a social thing really. I always just end up at the pokies because it is near pubs and similar places… I always go back [there] with a group of my friends.” (Not At Risk by both screens)

“I don’t go out of my way to go to the pokies. I go to the location which is a pub, and the pokies are just there, so I have a quick game every so often.” (Not At Risk by both screens)

“They are there. I wouldn’t deliberately say ‘let’s go to the pokies tonight’. If I was having dinner with friends [at a venue with EGMs], after it we would have a little game because they are there” (Not At Risk by both screens)

Participants who were identified as Not At Risk referred to playing the EGMs as an adjunct to another activity, whereas the earlier mentioned ‘At Risk’ participants described it as the main activity in which they and their friends participate.
4.1.3 The Lure of Winning

In total, 35 participants stated that they go to EGM venues to win or to win back their losses. Of these, only two were identified as ‘Not At Risk’ by both the SAPGS and the CPGI screens.

Moreover, participants who stated that they play EGMs to win or win back their losses were likely to be classified as 'At Risk' by SAPGS Sub-screen 6 – *How playing pokies impacts your life*.

This suggests that these participants have found that their gambling has had a negative impact on their lives and at times has affected those around them. Very few of these participants openly admitted that they were addicted or that gaming was a habit. In contrast, many appeared to be untroubled by their gambling. Some of the comments made by participants were:

“[I go] as an enjoyment outlet, and to try and win a bit. I go to the pokies instead of another place of enjoyment because I have a chance to win money” (At Risk by CPGI)

“I’m sucked in by waiting for the big win. [It is] the chance of winning.” (At Risk by both screens)

“The thought of winning makes me go. It appears to be more private than other places. I can be by myself” (At Risk by both screens)

“Hoping that I will win. It became a bit of a social outing with my friends, bit of a tradition” (At Risk by both screens)

“[I go because of] the thrill of it. The fact that I can win money. The pokies are fun because they are little games” (At Risk by both screens)

Importantly, participants who stated that they go to the venues to win, often described it as an enjoyable event, whether due to its ability to provide an escape from reality or as a result of the social aspect. This is in spite of the previously mentioned negative impact that gambling has had on the lives of these individuals as revealed by responses to the SAPGS.

4.1.4 Just To Pass the Time

A number of participants stated that they go to EGM venues just to pass the time or because there is nothing else for them to do. Many of these were found to be ‘At Risk’ by at least one screen and overall it seemed that the EGM venue provided solace and escape.

“It’s not the fun aspect. It gives me something to do. It’s a getaway. With my lifestyle, the pokies are a chance to get away, be on my own, and I enjoy it” (At Risk by both screens)

“I go to the pokies just to pass the time. There is nothing else around my area to go to” (At Risk by SAPGS)

“It is somewhere to go. When you are as old as I am, you get lonely. The pokies is a place to go, and to talk to someone” (At Risk by CPGI)

“[I go because] it fills up time, for social interaction and to win. I could say that I am addicted” (At Risk by both screens)
4.2 Games Preferences – Likes

When participants were asked what types of games they like to play and why, the responses could be grouped into two main categories:

- Those with entertainment value
- Those with a particular minimum bet

4.2.1 Entertainment

Participants who stated that they choose games which entertain them cited that the appearance of the game was important to them and/or that the features of the game program were important.

Whilst references to particular characteristics of the gaming machine varied, the trend among participants was to state that they were attracted to those machines that attracted them visually and/or audibly stimulating. Participants who identified the audio and visual stimuli as a reason for choosing one machine over another often cited that they felt the stimuli contributed to enhancing the pleasure of the experience.

“I like the ones with animals, because it makes it more colourful, interesting and fun” (Not At Risk by both screens)

“The machines that have good, fun noises because they make me have more fun” (At Risk by both screens)

“The dolphin machine because I like dolphins and it makes it fun and interesting” (At Risk by both screens)

“I like the puppy dogs and the hearts. I like the music. I play the pokies for the music” (At Risk by SAPGS)

Participants who stated that the particular features of a game attracted them often stated that they were drawn to games with interactive features or those with higher numbers of ‘free spins’. These participants appeared oblivious to the fact that the so called ‘free spins’ are factored into the odds of the game and that they do not improve the odds of winning.

“Zorro, because of the features. They are entertaining and it makes my experience exciting. I also like Mr. Cashman because the feature is totally random and I don’t know when Cashman pops up.” (At Risk by both screens)

“The Elvis Presley machine because it gives me lots of free spins and I enjoy the music” (At Risk by SAPGS)

It is important to also note that many participants commented on what a particular machine ‘does for them’ likening their experiences to a relationship.

“[I like] ‘Where’s the Gold’ because it has more options, so it doesn’t get boring. ‘Cashman’ because I tend to win the most when I bet high on that machine” (At Risk by CPGI)
4.2.2 Minimum Bet

A number of participants stated that they chose particular gaming machines over others based on the minimum bet. Frequently the 1¢, 2¢ and 5¢ machines were identified by participants as the popular choice. These participants stated that they chose these machines as they extended the length of time for spending a set amount of money. In some cases, it appeared that the participant viewed these machines as ‘better value for money’ than the machines with a higher minimum bet.

Considering that there is the option to play multiple lines on the machines, playing on an EGM with a lower minimum bet does not necessarily equate to playing longer or spending less money.

“I think the 1 cent machines, because it’s a good way to pass the time without spending too much money and having fun in the process” (At Risk by SAPGS)

“1, 2 or 5 cent machines, because it is better value for my money. It lasts longer” (At Risk by both screens)

“I usually play the 1 cent machines, because I feel like I can play one credit and get longer games and more of a chance to win, even though it isn’t big money” (At Risk by both screens)

Participants who played the lower minimum bet machines in order to stretch their money over a longer period of time appeared to ignore the possibility that by spending more time at the gaming venue, they placed themselves at greater risk of developing a gambling problem. This is of particular concern with regards to those who have been identified as ‘At Risk’ by the SAPGS, but not by the CPGI.
4.3 Games Preferences – Dislikes

When asked about what types of games participants dislike, the responses were mostly inversions of those provided when participants were asked about which types of games they like. Therefore the two main response categories were the similar:

- Those with low entertainment value
- Those which compel the gamer to spend more money

4.3.1 Poor Entertainment Value

Generally, participants stated that they disliked complicated, boring games and those which lacked features such as free spins.

“The plain ones like the card machine, because they aren’t visually exciting and they bore me” (At Risk by both screens)

“I don’t go to the card game machines or the keno machine. They don’t attract me because they are dull and aren’t as interesting as the colourful, new machines” (At Risk by both screens)

“The Bingo machines and ones like that. They are boring and not good to look at or play.” (At Risk by CPGI)

“I don’t like… the machines with too many lines. I don’t understand how they work.” (At Risk by both screens)

These results highlight that whilst for some participants the main reason for playing may be to win money, participants still seek to be entertained whilst they play. This was highlighted earlier in 3.1.3 when participants commented on the lure of winning. Therefore, this demonstrates that the promise of entertainment at the time of playing is more significant to some gamblers than is the possibility of winning. Moreover, this begs the question: when do gamblers go to the pokies to be entertained and when do they go to win?
4.3.2 Machines That Require Larger Amounts of Money

The lack of knowledge held by some participants with regards to the odds of winning and the possibility of self-control was emphasised when participants stated that they disliked games that they felt ‘made them spend more’ or don’t give them ‘free spins’.

“The ones that don’t have the free spin features, it makes me bored because I want a bigger chance of winning” (At Risk by both screens)

“I never play the $1 machines because my money goes down too quickly” (At Risk by both screens)

“I don’t like the 30 liners and the 50 liners because I am forced to spend more money on those machines, and I don’t like getting forced” (At Risk by both screens)

Worthy of mentioning is that participants who were found to be ‘Not At Risk’ by both screens were also likely to cite that they do not like the EGMs which required larger minimum bets. Whilst the above mentioned misconceptions were still evident, the stated thought processes of these participants were somewhat different to those who were ‘At Risk’. The ‘Not At Risk’ participants demonstrated an assessment of affordability, rather than an assessment of ‘value for money’.

“I never play the $1 machines because I don’t have enough money to waste on them” (Not At Risk)

“The expensive ones, because they expect me to put a lot of money in” (Not At Risk)

“I don’t like games where you have to put in $20 before you get a feature. They’re too long and expensive” (Not At Risk)

“I wouldn’t go over 2 cents, because I wouldn’t want to waste my money” (Not At Risk)
4.4 Reactions to Wins

As expected, most participants stated that they would feel happy if they encountered a ‘big win’. The definition of a ‘big win’ varied between participants, ranging from amounts under $50 to over $1000. For a number of participants a ‘big win’ was not defined by the amount that they won, but by the return on the money that they gambled, or simply breaking even. For example, one participant states:

“Anything more than I have put in the machine, because I’m leaving the venue with a profit... I would feel excited, happy and relieved that I didn’t lose the money that I took” (At Risk by CPGI)

Participants who stated that they usually only play amounts of less than $50 at a time appeared to be more inclined to state that they would be happy if they won up to $100 and considered this a ‘big win’. Participants who considered amounts over $100 as a ‘big win’ also often related this amount to the amount which they usually gamble in any one sitting. One can therefore conclude that for most participants, the definition of a ‘big win’ is proportional to the amount that they believe that they gamble at any one time.

“$200, because I don’t bet too big. If my money is tripled I consider it a big win. It would feel pretty good and I would have a laugh.” (At Risk by both screens)

It was found that participants who stated that they consider amounts between $100 and $500 as a ‘big win’, unlike those who stated amounts of under $100, were more likely comment on them seeing this as a considerable amount of money, sometimes stating what they would do with the money.

“$300 to $400 because I hardly ever win that sort of money, so that is a substantial amount. It rarely happens, but I am pretty happy when it happens” (At Risk by both screens)

“Anything over $250 because I usually don’t put in more than $20, so this is a significant win. [I would feel] pretty good” (At Risk by both screens)

Participants who stated that they see a win of between $500 and $1000 as a ‘big win’ provided similar responses to those in the $100-$500 category, but were also likely to focus on how the money would affect their lives, and compare the amount to their usual income.

“$500 because it is a full weeks pay for me, and it gets me ahead. Obviously I would be excited.” (At Risk by both screens)

“Between $500 and $1000 because it is a substantial amount that I could buy something really good for myself with. I would feel really good and try to leave the venue immediately in case I lose it all or overstay.” (At Risk by both screens)
Only 10 participants stated that the amount which they would consider to be a ‘big win’ is greater than $1000. These participants said that they would feel happy after a big win and generally described how they would spend the money ‘well’.

There were a number of participants across the board who stated that they have or would expect to experience what can be termed as ‘restrained elation’ if they got a ‘big win’. It appears that for some this was due to the acceptance of the fact that they lose more than they win and for others it was the realisation that what they consider to be a ‘big win’ is not a life-changing amount of money.

“Well, if I play with $20 dollars and come out with $200 in my pocket it is a big win. I can do a lot with $200, such as shopping, rent, etc. I’ve gambled all my life so I don’t get too ecstatic. I’m used to having a good win every now and then. I still get happy, but not too excited.” (At Risk by both screens)

“$1000 is a big win. I feel a little happy. I don’t really feel much because it is just my money that I had lost previously” (At Risk by SAPGS)

4.5 Reactions to Losses

The majority of participants (69 participants) stated that they considered amounts of less than $100 to be a big loss. Most of these participants stated that when they suffer what they consider to be a ‘big loss’ they experience feelings of anger, guilt and sadness. Several participants also stated that they just accept the loss and move on in a rather emotionless way. Often, the amount defined as a ‘big loss’ by the participant was relative to what the participant stated that they intended to spend in one sitting. Several participants, particularly those who reported feelings of guilt, referred to better ways in which they could have spent the money that they lost.

“Anything over $60 [is a big loss] because I don’t have employment at the moment and it is hard enough to live. [After a big loss] I feel a little bit depressed, especially when I have spent money that could have been used on something like food” (At Risk by both screens)

“$50 to $100 [is a big loss] for the same reason [that it is a big win] because I don’t have much money to begin with. [After a big loss] I feel a bit bitter. If people are winning around me, I wonder ‘why me? All I ask for is $50 to $100’.” (At Risk by SAPGS).

“I think that] $100 is a big loss because it’s money that I could’ve spent on bills or on my daughter. [Afterwards] I feel a bit ticked off that I have wasted my money” (At Risk by SAPGS)
Participants who were found to be ‘Not At Risk’ by both screens were found to have a different attitude towards losing than did those who were found to be ‘At Risk’ by at least one of the two screens. Generally, those who were ‘Not At Risk’ stated that they were not worried or bothered by a loss, often citing that they only lose amounts which they have budgeted to lose or expected to lose. Certainly, nobody stated that they were happy to lose money, but participants who were found to be ‘Not At Risk’ by both screens stated that whilst at times they feel disappointed and that the gaming experience was a waste of time and money, they did not feel particularly negative about it.

“$50 is a big loss because I don’t play with much and this means that I would’ve spent too much. [When I lose this amount it] doesn’t really worry me because I don’t put a lot in. I go for the social aspect more than winning.” (Not At Risk)

“$30 is a big loss because it’s the most that I would spend. [after a loss like that I think] ‘Oh damn, there goes my money’. It feels like a waste” (Not At Risk)

“About $50 for me would be a big loss, because I only spend $20 to $30 and when I go over that amount I’m not happy. [When I lose] I don’t really feel anything because when I go and take $20 I expect to lose it. It is a night of entertainment for me.” (Not At Risk)

“$20 is a bad loss for me because I don’t put a lot in. I’m okay with it though, because I budget. I accept it because I don’t try to win back the money I lost.” (Not At Risk).
5.0 SELF HELP MATERIALS

5.1 Visibility of Existing Self-help Materials

Participants were asked whether they had seen existing self-help materials and if they had, they were asked where they have seen these materials. As indicated in Figure 4, an overwhelming majority (96%) of participants stated that they had seen the existing materials. Of these, 97% stated that they had seen these materials at gaming venues and 2% had seen them at a doctor’s surgery.

Figure 4: Visibility and Location of Existing Self-help Materials

![Bar chart showing visibility and location of existing self-help materials]

- **Yes**: 96% (97% at Gaming Venues, 2% at Doctor’s Surgery)
- **No**: 4%
- **locations of current materials**: Gaming Venues (97%), Doctors (2%), Support Groups (0%), Other (2%)

*Base: All respondents

^Base: All who see self-help materials
5.2 **Attitude towards Existing Self-help Materials**

Figure 5 shows that there are varying attitudes towards self-help materials depending on regularity of gambling. Compared with irregular gamblers, regular gamblers were less positive towards the existing array of self-help materials provided to assist those with gambling problems.

**Figure 5: Attitudes towards Existing Self-help Materials by Regularity of Gambling**

![Figure 5: Attitudes towards Existing Self-help Materials by Regularity of Gambling](image)

5.2.1 **Positive Attitudes towards Existing Self-help Materials**

Participants who had a positive attitude towards the existing materials were likely to perceive them as helpful in offering assistance, but generally acknowledged that it was up to the individual to pick up the materials and actually use them. Many described the materials as an avenue that everybody has the opportunity to turn to, but that the first step lies with the gambler.

- “*Because there are people who have big [gambling] problems, and they need to know who they can turn to when it gets tough.*” (Not At Risk)

- “*It’s good to know that there are places to go if I have a problem and need someone to talk to.*” (At Risk by both screens)

A number of participants also stated that they had a positive attitude towards these materials as they saw them as encouraging gamblers to re-evaluate their gambling behaviours.

- “*I look at them [the materials] and wonder if I have a problem… I wonder if the people playing around me have a problem*” (At Risk by both screens)

- “*Well if I was a really bad gambler and I admitted that to myself I would make sure that I got the help that is needed, so it is good*” (At Risk by both screens)

- “*They are there as a subtle reminder of the risks and problems with gambling. It is up to the individual to pick it up though.*” (At Risk by both screens)
There were also some participants who reported that the idea of self-help for gamblers was positive, but in their opinion, they were seen to be ineffective.

“I feel it is good that they are there to help, but I don’t believe that people who actually have problems would want to pick up a brochure because they are in denial and think that they are only in a temporary setback.” (At Risk by SAPGS)

5.2.2 Negative Attitudes towards Existing Self-help Materials

Those participants who had negative feelings about the existing self-help materials provided comments that fell into three distinct themes:

- The materials have a negative accusation
- They are not noticeable enough
- They are not helpful enough

Participants who stated that the current materials have a negative accusation emerging felt that the materials incite feelings of guilt and impose themselves on people who are not ready or willing to seek help with their gambling habits. A further implication of this impression of the materials is that gamblers are discouraged from using them.

“They don’t really influence me because I find them intimidating. It feels like they are pointing a finger at me. It seems like somebody is offering help when I am not ready to receive it. It is like an alcoholic.”(At Risk by both screens)

Those who stated that the current materials are not noticeable enough referred to the size, colour and placement of the materials.

“They are too small and in the toilets, so I don’t pay much attention to them. I feel that they should be bigger” (Not At Risk)

Perhaps the most concerning issue was raised by participants who had used the materials and/or information on them and found it unhelpful. Some participants stated that there was not enough information on the material and that the information that was on the material did not provide a solution to the problem.

“They’re useless. They don’t help because the number on the cards and posters are no help. They aren’t telling me something new. I already know I have a problem” (At Risk by both screens)

“Too little… they have very little cards that don’t have enough information” (At Risk by SAPGS)

The comments provided by participants about the existing material are important to take into consideration when new materials are developed. In general, characteristics that should be avoided include:

- Powerful but intimidating statements
- Poor placement and low visibility
- Lack of information and how to seek help or begin self-help
6.0 SELF ADMINISTERED PROBLEM GAMBLING SCALE

6.1 General Attitudes to Self Help Materials

Prior to showing the SAPGS brochure, respondents were asked how they felt about the idea of a self administered problem gambling screen. As shown in Figure 6, the majority of participants (91%) stated that they are generally supportive of a brochure that helps gamblers categorise their behaviour in terms of the possible risk of becoming a problem gambler. Regular and irregular gamblers alike were supportive of this style of brochure.

Figure 6: Attitude towards a Self-assessment brochure

![Bar chart showing attitude towards a Self-assessment brochure]

Participants who stated that they were supportive of such a brochure generally felt that it would be a helpful item for gamblers. Further, participants felt that for some gamblers this style of brochure may incite the ‘wake-up call’ that they need and for others it would reinforce the need for them to change their gambling patterns. Moreover, some participants commented on the benefit of a ‘quiz-type’ brochure that allows gamblers to determine their risk for themselves, rather than have someone tell them what their assessment is.

“It’s a good idea because gambling is a big problem, and anything to help anyone who has a problem is a very big step, and this way people won’t get too embarrassed. Some people don’t recognise that they have a problem” (At Risk by both screens)

“[I would be supportive] because I believe that something like this does not exist at the moment and it is needed for people with problems who wouldn’t like the idea of someone else to see if they have a problem. They would like to be in control. Also, I have seen that the majority of problem gamblers are females, and they usually like to complete little self tests about themselves” (At Risk by SAPGS)

“I think it is a fantastic idea. It should be handed out to people as they walk into the gaming venue” (Not At Risk)
“I know of a lot of people who have spent a lot of money on the pokies, and it can only be a good thing for them if they realised what they were actually doing. People want to help themselves and make the initial step without being told that they have a problem” (At Risk by CPGI)

Five of the seven participants who stated that they were unsupportive of a self-help brochure also stated that they had no specific feelings about self help materials or they generally felt negative towards the existing self-help materials. Their comments showed that the un-supportiveness was driven primarily by doubt about whether the brochure would be effective in helping gamblers control their behaviour.
Participants were shown the prototype SAPGS brochure (see Appendix 2) and asked to complete it. Participants were asked to provide answers honestly and were supported with assurances that their responses would remain totally anonymous. The researcher was present with the participant to assist with any queries. Upon completion of the SAPGS questions, the researcher instructed participants to use the instructions on the reverse to tally each SAPGS section. Once the responses for each section were tallied, the researcher discussed the SAPGS brochure with the participants, evaluating the various aspects of the screen.

### 7.1 SAPGS Scoring

The results from the SAPGS were scored using the following:

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<tr>
<th>Sub Screen Section</th>
<th>Number of “Yes” Responses To Fail Sub Screen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What you believe to be true when you gamble</td>
<td>3 or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How you play</td>
<td>4 or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Why you play</td>
<td>3 or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What you frequently experience when playing</td>
<td>2 or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How playing makes you feel</td>
<td>2 or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How playing pokies impacts your life</td>
<td>2 or more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were then categorised as either at risk or not at risk as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categorisation</th>
<th>No. Subscreens Failed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SAPGS: Not at risk</td>
<td>0 or 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAPGS: At risk</td>
<td>2 or more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using this scoring system (noted as SAPGS Moderate Risk), at total of 57 participants were identified in the At Risk category (63%) and the remaining 34 participants were identified as Not at Risk (37%) as shown Figure 7 below.

**Figure 7: SAPGS Moderate Risk Categorisation**
7.2 **Comparison of the SAPGS against CPGI**

The reliability of the SAPGS screen to accurately identify those at risk of becoming a problem gambler can be validated in several ways. The research was designed to allow for a comparison of the SAPGS results against the CPGI results (obtained during recruitment). The CPGI questions are shown in the recruitment questionnaire (see Appendix 3).

A total of 9 questions were asked and the results from the CPGI were scored using the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categorisation</th>
<th>No. Questions Failed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at risk</td>
<td>0 or 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At risk</td>
<td>2 or more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using this scoring system (noted as CPGI Moderate Risk score), at total of 48 participants were identified in the At Risk category (47%) and the remaining 48 participants were identified as Not at Risk (53%) as shown Figure 8 below.

**Figure 8: CPGI Moderate Risk Categorisation**

The results of the SAPGS were cross-tabulated with the results of the CPGI moderate risk measure (obtained during recruitment). It is important to highlight that the SAPGS and CPGI are not designed to measure the same phenomenon. The SAPGS is aimed at identifying potential problem gamblers, whereas the CPGI is aimed at identifying those who are already problem gamblers. This said, a moderate to high similarity between both screens highlights the effectiveness of the Self-administered screen.

Results from the two screens have been compared as shown in Figure 9 below. Results show that there is a strong relationship between the two screens. A high proportion (70%) of participants were categorised by both screens as either ‘At Risk’ (25) and ‘Not At Risk’ (39).
A total of 18 participants were identified as ‘Not At Risk’ by the CPGI but were ‘At Risk’ according to the SPAGS. This does not appear to be a major issue, as the SAPGS aims to identify possible problem gamblers before their behaviours become established. However, nine participants who were categorised to be 'At Risk' by the CPGI were found to be 'Not At Risk' by the SAPGS. This is slightly more problematic although the overall proportion of all participants falling into this category was quite low (10%).

**Figure 9: SAPGS by CPGI (Moderate Measures)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAPGS Classification</th>
<th>Not At Risk</th>
<th>At Risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not At Risk</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At Risk</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An analysis of the SAPGS sub-sections is provided against the CPGI measure in Figure 10. Overall, 68% of participants who were identified by the self-administered screen as being ‘At Risk’ were also identified as ‘At Risk’ by the CPGI Moderate Risk Measure.

**Figure 10: SAPGS Determined ‘At Risk’ against CPGI Moderate Risk Measure**

Examination of the individual SAPGS sub-screens has revealed that a majority of those identified in the sub-screen as being ‘At Risk’ were also identified as being ‘At Risk’ by the CPGI.

However, some sub-screens were more strongly aligned with the CPGI as follows:

- Sections 5 (How Playing Makes You Feel)
- Section 2 (How You Play)

Sub-screens with weaker alignment with the CPGI were:

- Sections 1 (Believe)
- Section 3 (Why You Play)
7.3 Frequency of gambling by SAPGS score

Whilst frequency of gambling is not a direct indicator of a problematic gambling behaviour, the CPGI can be used to assess whether regular gamblers are more likely to be problem gamblers than those who gamble irregularly. Figure 11 shows the relationship between gambling frequency and the proportion of participants being classified as ‘At Risk’ or ‘Not At Risk’ by the CPGI.

The majority (71%) of regular gamblers were categorised as ‘At Risk’ by the CPGI and the majority (65%) of irregular gamblers were categorised as ‘Not at Risk’ buy the CPGI.

Figure 11: Frequency of Gambling by CPGI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAPGS Classification</th>
<th>Regular</th>
<th>Irregular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not At Risk</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Risk</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When one looks at those who were classified as 'At Risk' by the SAPGS in terms of the gambling frequency of participants, it is evident that those who gamble at least once a week were most likely (60%) to be classified as 'At Risk' by all screens.

Figure 12: Frequency of Gambling by SAPGS

Section 5 (How Playing Makes You Feel) and Section 2 (How You Play) were the most likely to identify as 'At Risk' regular gamblers (highest potential to develop problematic gambling behaviours). Sections 1 (Believe) and 3 (Why You Play) show the lowest likelihood of identifying regular as being 'At Risk'. These results are consistent with those obtained when the SAPGS was compared against the CPGI Moderate Risk Measure, thereby further validating the effectiveness of the SAPGS in identifying those who are likely to develop problematic gambling behaviours.
7.4 SAPGS Sub-screen Questions

Taking the CPGI moderate measure as the established benchmark in assessment of problem gambling, an analysis has been completed to identify the ability for specific sub-screen questions to differentiate between those identified to be at risk and those identified as not at risk. This assists in identifying the sub-screen questions that are more successful and hence should be retained in further refinements of the SAPGS.

7.4.1 SAPGS Believe Sub-screen

Section 1 of the SAPGS included the following questions:

- Q.1 Some gamblers are lucky enough to win at the pokies over the long run
- Q.2 After a string of losses I sometimes believe that my chances of beating the pokies over the next while will improve
- Q.3 More skilled pokie players win more often
- Q.4 A near miss means the machine may pay out big soon.
- Q.5 In the long run some people can win at pokie play

Figure 13 shows that none of the five questions in the Believe sub-screen were able to clearly differentiate between those identified as being ‘At Risk’ and the.

Figure 13: % ‘YES’ Response to SAPGS Believe Section by CPGI
7.4.2 SAPGS How You Play Sub-screen

Section 2 of the SAPGS included the following questions:

- Q.1 I sometimes spend more time playing the pokies than I intend to
- Q.2 After losing money playing the pokies, I go back later that day or on another day in order to win my money back
- Q.3 The largest amount I have ever lost at one time playing the pokies keeps getting larger
- Q.4 I have more trouble quitting when I am ahead than I used to
- Q.5 I have started to use my bank or cash (EFTPOS) card to get more money to continue playing the same day
- Q.6 I now spend most of the time while at the location playing pokies
- Q.7 I increasingly spend more than intended

As shown in Figure 14, the individual sub-screen questions in Section 2 were observed to clearly differentiate between ‘At Risk’ participants and ‘Not at Risk’ participants.

Figure 14: % ‘YES’ Response to SAPGS How You Play Section by CPGI
7.4.3 SAPGS Why You Play Section

Section 3 of the SAPGS included the following questions:

- Q.1 It is worth a try to win at pokies if I need more cash
- Q.2 Even if I don’t have a lot of money to spend I might as well play the pokies to get big wins.
- Q.3 I sometimes play pokies with the hope of paying off my debts/bills
- Q.4 I play pokies to forget my troubles or worries
- Q.5 I play pokies just to pass time
- Q.6 Playing the pokies is a good way to escape
- Q.7 I usually feel I’m going to win when I start playing pokies
- Q.8 I play pokies because I know how to win
- Q.9 The only fun part of playing pokies is winning
- Q.10 I am a serious pokie gambler
- Q.11 Time speeds by when I gamble on pokies
- Q.12 I lose myself in the pokie games
- Q.13 Most times I am in a place that has pokies I want to play them
- Q.14 I would like to play pokies almost everyday

As shown in Figure 15 (over page) the individual sub-screen questions in Section 3 varied considerably in their ability to differentiate between ‘At Risk’ participants and ‘Not at Risk’ participants.

Questions most successful in identifying participants ‘At Risk’ were:

- Q.11 Time speeds by when I gamble on pokies
- Q.13 Most times I am in a place that has pokies I want to play them

Questions most successful in differentiating between ‘At Risk’ and ‘Not at Risk’ participants were:

- Q.1 It is worth a try to win at pokies if I need more cash
- Q.2 Even if I don’t have a lot of money to spend I might as well play the pokies to get big wins.
- Q.3 I sometimes play pokies with the hope of paying off my debts/bills
- Q.4 I play pokies to forget my troubles or worries
- Q.11 Time speeds by when I gamble on pokies
- Q.12 I lose myself in the pokie games
- Q.13 Most times I am in a place that has pokies I want to play them
- Q.14 I would like to play pokies almost everyday

Questions least successful in differentiating between ‘At Risk’ and ‘Not at Risk’ participants were:

- Q.5 I play pokies just to pass time
- Q.7 I usually feel I’m going to win when I start playing pokies
- Q.8 I play pokies because I know how to win
- Q.9 The only fun part of playing pokies is winning
Figure 15: % ‘YES’ Response to SAPGS Why You Play Section by CPGI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>NOT AT RISK</th>
<th>AT RISK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All respondents
7.4.4 SAPGS What You Experience Sub-screen

Section 4 of the SAPGS included the following questions:

- Q.1 Butterflies in your stomach
- Q.2 Heart racing/pounding
- Q.3 Nausea/feeling sick to your stomach
- Q.4 Headaches
- Q.5 Angry/frustrated
- Q.6 Sad/depressed

As shown in Figure 16, the individual sub-screen questions in Section 4 varied in their ability to differentiate between ‘At Risk’ participants and ‘Not at Risk’ participants.

Questions most successful in **identifying** participants ‘At Risk’ were:

- Q.5 Angry/frustrated
- Q.6 Sad/depressed

Questions most successful in **differentiating** between ‘At Risk’ and ‘Not at Risk’ participants were:

- Q.4 Headaches
- Q.5 Angry/frustrated
- Q.6 Sad/depressed

Questions least successful in **differentiating** between ‘At Risk’ and ‘Not at Risk’ participants were:

- Q.2 Heart racing/pounding

**Figure 16:** % ‘YES’ Response to SAPGS What You Experience Section by CPGI
7.4.5 SAPGS How Playing Makes You Feel Sub-screen

Section 5 of the SAPGS included the following questions:

- Q.1 I spend time thinking about the pokies when I’m not playing
- Q.2 I sometimes feel anxious, restless or irritable because I can’t play the pokies when I want to
- Q.3 I sometimes have trouble sleeping thinking about playing the pokies
- Q.4 Sometimes I am depressed that I play the pokies
- Q.5 I sometimes feel guilty about the amount of money I spend on the pokies

As shown in Figure 17, the individual sub-screen questions in Section 5 varied in their ability to differentiate between ‘At Risk’ participants and ‘Not at Risk’ participants.

Questions most successful in identifying participants ‘At Risk’ were:

- Q.4 Sometimes I am depressed that I play the pokies
- Q.5 I sometimes feel guilty about the amount of money I spend on the pokies

Questions most successful in differentiating between ‘At Risk’ and ‘Not at Risk’ participants were:

- Q.2 I sometimes feel anxious, restless or irritable because I can’t play the pokies when I want to
- Q.4 Sometimes I am depressed that I play the pokies
- Q.5 I sometimes feel guilty about the amount of money I spend on the pokies

Questions least successful in differentiating between ‘At Risk’ and ‘Not at Risk’ participants were:

- Q.1 I spend time thinking about the pokies when I’m not playing
- Q.3 I sometimes have trouble sleeping thinking about playing the pokies

Figure 17: % ‘YES’ Response to SAPGS How Playing Makes You Feel Section by CPGI
### 7.4.6 SAPGS How Playing Impacts Your Life Sub-screen

Section 5 of the SAPGS included the following questions:

- Q.1 I sometimes borrow money in order to continue gambling
- Q.2 I continue to gamble despite the negative consequences
- Q.3 I have neglected family, friends or work in order to gamble
- Q.4 I juggle funds to pay debts due to gambling
- Q.5 I have friends or family who worry or complain about me playing the pokies

As shown in Figure 18, the individual sub-screen questions in Section 6 were observed to clearly differentiate between ‘At Risk’ participants and ‘Not at Risk’ participants.

Questions most successful in identifying participants ‘At Risk’ were:

- Q.2 I continue to gamble despite the negative consequences
- Q.5 I have friends or family who worry or complain about me playing the pokies

**Figure 18: % ‘YES’ Response to SAPGS How Playing Impacts Your Life Section by CPGI**
8.0 RESPONSE TO THE SAPGS AND BROCHURE OVERALL

8.1 Rating of the SAPGS

Upon completion of the SAPGS, participants were asked to give an overall rating. An overwhelming majority rated the brochure as at least ‘good’ (See Figure 19). Regular and irregular gamblers provided similar ratings of the brochure.

Figure 19: Overall Rating of SAPGS Brochure

![Figure showing overall rating of SAPGS brochure with categories: Excellent (13), Very Good (47), Good (33), Fair (4), Irregular Gamblers: Excellent (18), Very Good (52)]

8.2 Ratings of the SAPGS Brochure

Participants were asked to rate the prototype SAPGS brochure on four aspects:

- Amount of text used in the brochure
- Clarity of the instructions
- Language easy to understand
- Layout of the brochure.

Figure 20 shows that in the current format, the brochure rated very well on each of the aspects measured.

Figure 20: Overall Rating of SAPGS Brochure

![Figure showing ratings of SAPGS brochure with categories: Amount of text used (86%), Clarity of the instructions (93%), Language easy to understand (90%), Layout of the brochure (83%), All respondents]
8.3 Positive comments about the SAPGS Brochure

After giving the SAPGS brochure an overall rating, participants were asked to comment on what they liked about the brochure. Essentially, three common themes arose throughout the responses:

- Appropriateness and connection with gamblers
- Truth revealing
- Succinctness and clarity

8.3.1 Appropriateness and connection with gamblers

A number of participants commented that the wording of the questions related to gamblers very well and in some cases they were seen to be thought provoking. Specifically, this related to the depth of the questions and the accuracy of the suggested possible beliefs, behaviours and experiences.

“I think it really hits the nail on the head to any problem gambler or even someone who isn’t a problem gambler. By completing this brochure I can see what the behaviours of a problem gambler are. It is very thorough in the statements and I don’t think that they have left anything out. I think the brochure has really keyed into people’s emotions” (At Risk by both screens)

“It has got all of the questions that gamblers should ask themselves. It makes me stop and think about what I am doing. It is very true in it’s statements.” (At Risk by both screens)

A stated connection with gamblers was not only achieved by ‘asking the right questions’, but the accuracy with which the SAPGS seemingly encompassed all the various thoughts, feelings and situations that gamblers can relate to and experience. Moreover, participants stated that by doing so, the SAPGS demonstrated a real understanding of a gambler’s situation.

“It covers a lot because it really brings out a feeling and understanding of how I feel when I gamble” (At Risk by SAPGS)

“It pretty much covers all aspects. It singles out every potential aspect and problem that could arise from gambling for the wrong reasons. It was very easy to understand” (At Risk by SAPGS)

8.3.2 Truth Revealing

More than half of the participants (49 in total) commented on how ‘truth revealing’ the screen was. This was both in terms of the truths that were brought through in the question wording as well as the accuracy (or presumption there of) of the result.

“It was very true what the brochure says in the way it shows my behaviour” (At Risk by both screens)

“It is a direct through the interpretations of behaviours. Everything on it is valid and true.” (At Risk by both screens)

“It covered a broad range of areas relating to why people gamble. It is truthful and easy to read and understand.” (Not At Risk by both screens)
8.3.3 Succinctness and Clarity

The succinctness and directness of the SAPGS was observed by a number of the participants. The ‘to the point’ wording of the questions, the ease of understanding the wording and the scoring was seen as very beneficial and overall helpful.

“I like the information on the back because I am able to relate the information given about my behaviour to what I ticked earlier in the brochure. It is very clear and easy to understand” (At Risk by both screens)

“I liked the fact that it was straight to the point. The questions were very relative to me. I liked the way it was set out. It made me want to complete all of the questions. It kept me interested.” (At Risk by both screens)

“It is easy to understand. If people pick it up, they can see for themselves that they have a gambling problem” (Not At Risk by both screens)

8.4 Negative comments about the SAPGS Brochure

When participants were asked what they disliked about the SAPGS brochure, there were very few responses.

Of those who responded, the main theme related to formatting issues related to the presentation of the brochure which participants felt could be presented in colour with photo images to attract attention.

Additional formatting issues related to the need for more instructions regarding how to score the responses. Also some participants felt that there were forced into a ‘yes’ response when they felt a ‘sometimes’ response would have been more appropriate.

8.5 Confusions or Difficulties Encountered When Completing the SAPGS

Around 8% of participants felt that there were parts of the SAPGS brochure that were difficult to understand, however there were no specific questions or wording issues that could be clearly identified as problematic. General reading difficulty amongst these participants and the feeling that a “yes” was at times forced were the sources of main difficulties.

Around 18% of participants felt that there were parts of the SAPGS brochure that were confusing. These mostly concerned formatting issues relating to the completion of the form, especially the scoring section. For example the notation “No.” was not understood by all.

In addition, the inability to provide a “sometimes” answer was raised as a confusion by a few participants.

In the “Overall, how did you score?” section there was confusion over the term “if you tested positive on three or more of these tests” caused some confusion and should be reworded.

Apart from these few comments, the participants had little difficulty completing and scoring the test.
8.6 Perceived Accuracy of the SAPGS Brochure

Participants were asked to provide their own rating of how accurate the SAPGS was in correctly categorising their behaviour. The following charts show participants generally felt that the SAPGS accurately categorised their gambling behaviour. This was equally evident for regular and irregular gamblers and those identified by the SAPGS as at risk or not at risk.

Figure 21: Perceived Accuracy of the SAPGS by Regularity of Gambling

Figure 22: Perceived Accuracy of the SAPGS by SAPGS Category
8.7 Accessing the SAPGS Brochure

Participants were asked whether or not they would pick up the SAPGS brochure if they saw it. Figure 23 shows that whilst irregular gamblers may or may not be enticed to pick up the brochure, the majority of regular gamblers felt that they would pick up the brochure if they saw it. Given that regular gamblers are the primary target, this is an excellent result.

Figure 23: Likelihood of Picking up the Brochure

![Figure 23: Likelihood of Picking up the Brochure](image)

Whilst almost all participants expected to find the brochure at gaming venues, there was also some expectation that they could access the brochure at a doctor’s office (26%) or at a support group (19%). Other suggestions included:

- Next to the cashier at the gaming venue
- Next to the ATM at the gaming venue to other ATMs in general
- Next to the machines
- Toilets at gaming venues (for privacy)
- TABs and pubs (at the bar)
- Bistro/restaurant of the gaming venue
- Supermarkets
- Newsagents and post offices
- Libraries
- Local Council offices
- Community houses
- Bottle shops
- Anywhere cigarettes are sold
- Tourist information centres
- Seniors clubs
- Sports clubs
- Churches
- Centrelink

Participants offered the following comments relating to why they felt they would be attracted to picking up the brochure:

- Attraction to completing “quizzes” or “tests” and scoring into categories
- Small size is discrete
- To discourage gambling and to access help
- To uncover the truth about gambling behaviours that can cause harm
- To give to a friend or family member who hasn’t admitted they have a problem
9.0  FINAL COMMENTS BY PARTICIPANTS

Participants were provided with the opportunity to have a final comment about the brochure. The main theme to emerge related to the ability of the SAPGS to bring realisation to gamblers who may be headed toward a gambling problem. Some comments relating to this theme are provided below:

“I think it’s a good thing to let people fill this out themselves and to actually realise they have a problem, instead of little cards that just have a number to call.“

“The overall summary box at the back of the brochure was very truthful of my situation and it brought out things I wouldn't have thought I did until now.“

“Maybe the brochure should be a bit shorter for more of an impact and to the point to grab somebody’s attention. It wasn't really accurate for Section 1, but other than that it did expose a few things I didn’t previously know about myself.“

“The analysis on the back of the brochure was pretty accurate with my behaviours. I was a little surprised with the outcome that says I might be leading to a problem.“

Some participants initially denied the accuracy of the SAPGS, but were tempted to go away and think about their behaviour in any case:

“I think the information was a bit over-dramatized with what it implied about my behaviours, but maybe I just hadn't realised that I might be leading to problem“

“I feel the explanations were nearly accurate for my answer. It said that I might have a problem but I don't think that is correct at all. Not yet“

“With the info on the back, it says I have a problem don't really agree with it. I might have to look at how I am gambling and maybe change it“

There were some who welcomed the ability to conduct a self administered test:

“I think people would like the chance of self assessing their own behaviour, instead of having someone tell them why they play. They have control. “

Some were focused on ensuring the brochure attracted attention:

“I hope that the brochure becomes colourful because as it is it seems dull and boring“

“Responsible gambling” title is wrong. It is about my gambling behaviours ..maybe “nobody likes to judge, so judge for yourself” .. Make it as fun as possible.”

A typical comment from one participant highlights the power of the test to be thought provoking:

“I was not surprised with my answers and the explanation, they were correct that I might be leading to a problem. It is good wording that I will remember and think about. It was straight to the point. I couldn't avoid the truth.”
10.0 STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

A series of 10 depth interviews was conducted with stakeholders including:

- 7 Problem Gambling Counsellors
- 2 Financial Counsellor
- 1 Educational institution researcher

The depth interviews were conducted using a discussions guidelines (see Appendix 1).

10.1 Reactions to Current Self Help Materials

Generally, stakeholders feel that the self help materials currently available to gamblers provide assistance for gamblers who have already identified that they have a problem:

“The biggest issue is that people, one, need to identify themselves if they have an issue in relation to problematic gaming, and if they don’t identify that then how does the information get to them? With a lot of other harm related strategies, if we look at drink driving, for example, through booze buses and something that can be proactive, it really requires the motivated person to identify something that can be proactive, it really requires a motivated person to identify that perhaps my gaming practices have become problematic so therefore I’m now reaching out to somebody. I guess the trouble is how do you identify your target group, that are those that are most at risk, before they get into such a significant position that it’s too late for any intervention?”

“They’ve got some useful information in them in terms of ideas but they are mainly focused on giving people phone numbers to call”

It was also reported that clients rarely reported that they were prompted to seek help as a result of accessing current self help materials:

“Rarely do you get a client saying it was a brochure in a venue that prompted this [action to seek help].”

“Gamblers will also say that they saw a brochure and pocketed it – but do not use it until some years later, so obviously they are reaching their targets but I think there needs to be more specific ones that motivate more immediate identification of problematic behaviours and result in quicker action”

Current materials were seen as useful and helpful to counsellors, but of limited use to clients:

“I know there are a number of brochures out there, and they are quite good but I’m not sure how people who gamble identify with them. They’re quite good for people like me who want information but I’m not sure how people who actually gamble would view them”
10.2 Reactions to Concept of Self Assessment Test

Stakeholders were asked to provide reactions to the concept of a self help brochure that helps gamblers to categorise their own gambling behaviours in terms of the possible risk of becoming a problem gambler. Generally there were positive reactions to this concept:

“People might choose to take [the test] and the key messages that can come through a test might just register some alarm bells that they may never have thought about”

“I think people would be interested, a lot of people do that questioning, and one of the very common questions that we get when people come in is: I want to know if I am a problem gambler. Well a lot of them already know they are, but anything that can help them along the process would be useful”

“Sounds like an excellent idea. People find it hard to self identify, it’s like everything... so I think that if I’m doing these behaviours them I’m at risk and I think that can only be a good thing”

“I think it is very good because it is a big problem because sometimes people they o through denial stage and they think – do I have a gambling problem? No I don’t, it’s okay, it’s manageable. This might help people to get through that denial stage quicker”

Reservations relating to the concept of the self assessment tool related to ensuring that the tool does not categorically place people into a problem gambling segment:

“I think I would be a bit wary about it because people could maybe just miss some of their behaviour – you know it’s not that straightforward that you can necessarily ask a series of simple questions and know for sure. It would have to be carefully worded”

Furthermore, there is some concern that those at risk may not access the brochure:

“I they are recreational gamblers they won’t think it is necessary and if they are very close to the risk of developing problem gambling, or have already done so, then the likelihood that they will be denying it and again may be unlikely to access the tool. Having said that, it’s inexpensive and even if it’s got a marginal effect then it’s probably worth doing”
10.3 Positive Reactions to SAPGS

Stakeholders were provided with a copy of the prototype and asked for their reactions. In general the feedback from stakeholders varied. Whilst the concept of the self assessment test was received very positively, reactions to the actual SAPGS questions and scoring sections met with some negativity.

The following were felt to be positive aspects of the SAPGS:

- Popular magazine survey style format
- Preserves privacy
- Relevant questions
- Clear scoring explanations

10.3.1 Popular magazine survey style format

The format of the SAPGS was felt to resemble a popular magazine survey style format that was felt would generate interest.

“The fact of going through and scoring yourself at the end, people are probably a bit more motivated to see what their end score is and complete the test, and then refer to where they fit in on the back and be able to measure it against some other parameter so I thin the concept is good”

“I think that as long as it is easy for the client to quickly add up their answers and find their score – that’s very important. But I think the format and content and style is very good”

10.3.2 Preserves privacy

Stakeholders felt that the format of the brochure allowed for the gambler to complete the survey in private and allow them the opportunity to identify problematic behaviour in the hope that it may assist them to make corrective changes without having to access formal support services:

“It still has the opportunity to get that intervention and be still private for them, the opportunity to then try and do some self help and change your own behaviours rather than reach out to someone if there is embarrassment around that”

10.3.3 Relevant questions

The SAPGS questions were believed to be relevant to the gambler:

“They’re not too challenging, they’re not judgemental, which is important. They’re the sorts of things that I would think people who are spending too much time or money are already thinking to themselves”

10.3.4 Clear explanations

The SAPGS was felt to provide clear explanations that help participants to conduct a reality check:

“I thought the explanations are reasonably clear, they’re not too in your face. What we’re saying is that you should be starting to do a bit of a reality check and I think it’s better not to be too doom and gloom because people go – oh that’s not me, because I’m doing fine, and this is aimed at people who are perhaps in that earlier stage”
10.4 Negative Reactions to SAPGS

Each stakeholder had some reservations about the SAPGS. The following were felt to be negative aspects of the SAPGS:

- Lacks validity
- All questions appear in the negative
- Too long

10.4.1 Lacks validity

Stakeholders were concerned about how the SAPGS had been developed and was worried about the validity of the screen. Communications with professionals within the industry will be important to ensure the acceptance of the screen:

“This comes across as a diagnostic tool which is meant to be researched statistically with a control group – I’d like to know where they’ve plucked these numbers from because that’s misleading to sort of say three or more of these indicates you might have a problem – I really object to this idea of someone trying to diagnose themselves with a questionnaire that someone seems to have made up”

“I guess the other thing I don’t agree with is that if you agree with three or more then you may hold beliefs that could lead to problem gambling. I disagree because you could have one or two of those and that can lead to a problem with gambling. I just would like to know how they came to these conclusions.”

“I don’t like Section 4...because you can feel butterflies in your stomach in any number of situations...heart racing and pounding is a sign of joy as well as fear...they’re not signs of problem gambling.”

10.4.2 All questions appear in the negative

One stakeholder was concerned that every question appeared to be an indicator of problem gambling and couched in negative terms:

“All the questions are about problem gambling, you know what I mean? Usually you have a quiz where it will throw in a couple that are positive rather than negative whereas these are all particularly negative statements. I just wonder how people feel about answering questionnaire about all negative statements.”

10.4.3 Too long

One stakeholder was concerned about the length of the screen:

“The amount of questions that people are asked to respond to is quite significant and although it will give probably a reasonable number of dimensions of problematic aspects, I think the likelihood of marginal problem gamblers actually doing it is very low – especially since these people are in denial.”
10.5 Overall Stakeholder position

Although there were reservations about the SAPGS amongst stakeholders, the overall feeling was positive. Stakeholders will need to be convinced of the validity of the screen to ensure that they support its implementation.

The following comment was typical of the stakeholder overall feelings:

“If it makes someone a bit more aware when they do this like “Gee I hadn’t realised I have so many of these factors that might mean that I’ve got a problem with gambling” – if it serves to do that then it would be a useful tool I believe”
11.0 CONCLUSIONS

This study sought to test the SAPGS prototype brochure against a range of measures. During the first phase of the development of the SAPGS for testing, Dr Tony Schellink identified several criteria against which a self administered problem gambling screen should be evaluated. The results form the testing phase are now provided against each evaluation criteria.

11.1 Diagnostic

Do gamblers learn the extent to which their gambling behaviours and attitudes may be problematic?

Regular gamblers were somewhat critical of the current suite of self help materials available. Whilst the current materials provide regular gamblers with access to relevant support services, these materials rely on the gambler to have identified that they have a problem with their gambling behaviours. In addition, some research participants had used the current material which they found to be insufficient in providing new information to assist them.

The current suite of materials was also criticised for the judgemental and intimidating approach which incite feelings of guilt which creates a barrier to usage. A further criticism was made about their inability to catch the attention of gamblers due to their size, colour and low visibility.

Research participants were very supportive of the SAPGS prototype brochure. The questions and response scoring explanations were found to be “truth revealing” and “thought provoking” to the majority of regular gamblers participating in the research. It was clearly evident that the SAPGS prototype was successful in assisting gamblers to learn the extent to which their gambling behaviours and attitudes may be problematic.

11.2 Early Identification

Does the screen identify at risk and early stage problem gamblers?

Participants were asked to complete the SAPGS prototype and the results of this were compared against the CPGI screen (completed over the phone at the time of recruitment). The majority of participants had commenced gambling within the last 2 years and hence were in the target group for early detection.

Upon comparison of the results, it was found that there was a strong correlation between the CPGI and the SAPGS screens. A majority of participants were correctly identified by the SAPGS and a small proportion (10%) of all participants were incorrectly categorised as being “At Risk” by the CPGI but “Not at Risk” by the SAPGS. Overall, the SAPGS was successful in identifying at risk and early stage problem gamblers.

Having said this, two sub screens in particular (Believe and Why You Play) and various specific questions were observed to be less able to identify at risk and early stage problem gamblers. These sub screens and specific questions may need refinement to minimise false positives or deletion to reduce the size of the screen. However, it should be noted that participants did not feel that the screen was excessively long.
11.3 Face Validity

Does the screen have face validity?

The SAPGS achieved a high level of face validity amongst the research participants. The purpose of the questions and the screen in general were very well understood by participants. The questions were seen to be relevant and clearly articulated. It was obvious that ticking “yes” to the questions revealed problematic behaviours. However, this face validity did not appear to have an influence on the way in which the participants responded to the questions. This may have been influenced by the fact that they were participants in research and were overtly asked to ensure that they provided open and honest responses. Nonetheless, the researchers believe that given the format of the SAPGS as a “quiz style” screen, the participant appears to feel almost obligated to provide honest responses so that they can obtain an “accurate” score for categorisation.

11.4 Convincing

Does the screen identify behaviours, attitudes and motives that the gambler exhibits or hold that they have not yet associated with problem gambling?

There were many participants who reported that the SAPGS told them what they already know about problem gambling. These participants were regular gamblers who were identified as “At Risk” by the CPGI and hence may have already been investigating problem gambling. However, there were several participants who observed that the questions on the screen had brought to light some behaviours and attitudes that they had not associated with problem gambling.

It was observed by participants that the SAPGS questions are relevant to regular gamblers but less relevant to irregular gamblers. Hence, the target group was the most likely to find the screen convincing.

11.5 Easily Administered

Are the statements and screens not confronting or embarrassing to answer with friends nearby? Are they easy to understand and answer, and do they have a common scale?

In its current format, the SAPGS brochure was very well receive din terms of the amount of text, clarity of the instructions, easy to understand language and clear layout. However, there are some small refinements that would enhance the effectiveness of self administration. These are minor formatting issues that can be easily corrected in further development stages.

The statements and screens were not overly confronting, although they were described as “thought provoking”. The researchers believe that privacy is still a major issue and it is unlikely that a regular gambling who has already self identified would complete the screen with friends nearby. However, gamblers who have not self identified are unlikely to find the completion of the screen embarrassing if completed amongst friends or family as they are not yet in the denial stage.
Appendix 1

Discussion Guidelines: Gamblers & Stakeholders
Appendix 2

Self Administered Problem Gambling Screen (Prototype)
Appendix 3

Recruitment Questionnaire
## Appendix 4

Detailed Tables