

## **International Think Tank on Presenting Gambling Populations and First Contact Services**

### *Newsletter Number 1: August 2004*

Welcome to the first follow up newsletter from the Think Tank held in Auckland in May this year. Please accept our apologies for the delay in sending out this update. In this newsletter, we provide a reminder of what we set out to do and a summary of progress to date. We are also seeking input to the development of the concept before we reconvene next year.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Think Tank was to provide a forum to address globally significant issues and developments in problem gambling policy, services and research in relation to presenting gambling populations and first contact services. Its ultimate aim is to contribute to the development of an international public health agenda on gambling.

The goal of the Think Tank was to bring together leading authorities and major stakeholders to consider information on presenting gambling populations and how best to assist them. It aimed to foster cooperation between researchers, policy-makers and service providers and focus on the development of evidentially led policies and services to meet the needs of presenting and at-risk populations.

#### **Participants**

Participation in the Think Tank was by invitation only and was intended to be limited to a maximum of 40 persons. However, a number of conference delegates heard about the Think Tank and asked if they could join. In the event, 65 people participated and represented Australia, Canada, Fiji, Hong Kong, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. One third of the participants were from countries other than New Zealand. Participants included international leaders in the field and locals deemed well positioned to make a useful contribution. There was a mix of service providers, researchers/academics, policy makers, regulators, officials and industry executives. There was a range of nationalities and ethnicities, including indigenous and migrant participants.

The group as a whole agreed on the following:

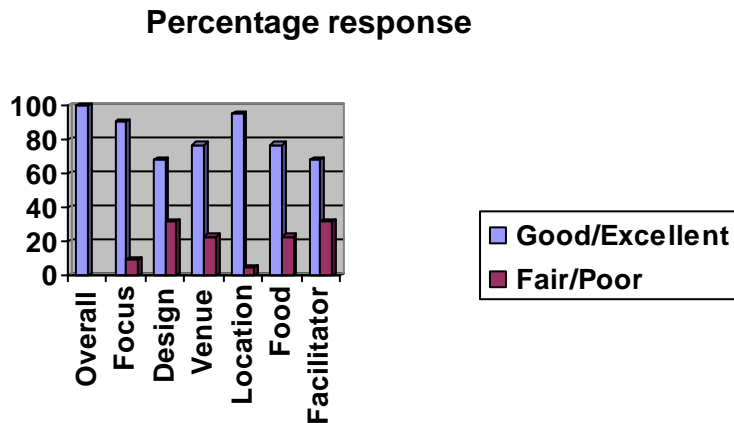
- Formation of ongoing international relationships that build a strategy towards an international NGO
- Create an “International Forum on Gambling and Public Health” with three domains
  - Research
  - Treatment and Services
  - Policy and Public Health
- Over the next twelve months identify key priorities and goals
- Develop representative committees for each domain
- Take an inclusive approach including research
- Support and coordinating leadership by AUT Gambling Research Centre and Gambling Helpline with further support from McGill University and Australia National University for the next 12 months

- Use conferences and Email contact as opportunities to develop the Forum, its priorities and objectives
- Encourage the development of a collaborative rather than competitive approach
- Invite wider international membership to the domain caucuses
- Develop an international ‘clearing house’ for information and research results
- Reconvene in 12 months to review actions achieved and progress made. *The current plan is for the Think Tank to reconvene in Auckland in May 2005.*

The original planning committee has held meetings to discuss how to disseminate the feedback from the Think Tank and how to establish and engage the working parties to continue the process. AUT and the Helpline will continue to coordinate the steering of Think Tank activities over the next 12 months with the ultimate aim of the Think Tank gaining a wide international ownership. Discussions have begun with other organisations willing to host (sub-) Think Tank meetings.

Arrangements have been made for proceedings from the Think Tank (i.e. selected background papers) to be published in a special edition of the journal *International Gambling Studies*. The papers will undergo a formal peer-review process so it is anticipated that the proceedings edition of the journal will be available in 2005. It is intended that abstracts and PowerPoint presentations from the Think Tank will be available in a special edition of the electronic journal *eCOMMUNITY: International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*. These should be available later this year.

Feedback was sought from participants on their evaluation of the Think Tank. The overall response was:



In general, participants thought that the highlights of the Think Tank were the opportunity to network and to participate in/listen to the discussions and presentations of up-to-date information and research. They felt that the event could have been improved if the discussions were more focused and if there had been less repetitiveness amongst the presentations. Additional comments were mainly congratulations to the organisers and wondering what the next steps will be.

### **Next steps**

Gary Clifford attended the National Council on Problem Gambling's Conference in Phoenix and gave an update on the Think Tank to a helplines working group. There was general consensus that a Think Tank would be of benefit to helplines and that helplines should meet more often at international conferences. One outcome of the Phoenix meeting was agreement that an online forum for helplines should be established. Gary is in the process of setting this up.

Gary, together with Liz Stephenson from Manitoba, will also be giving a 'North-South' overview of the Think Tank at Insight Nova Scotia in October.

We now need to mobilise the working groups to which people signed up in Auckland. In case you cannot remember which list you added your name to, a list is attached (Appendix 1). We now seek volunteers to start the process of identifying and documenting key issues for each of the working groups, co-opting collaborators, deciding on research/project priorities, and putting together a plan of action. Please inform Dr Maria Bellringer (Email: maria.bellringer@aut.ac.nz) if you would like to take a lead role (otherwise we might tap you on the shoulder!).

### **Some issues to be addressed**

- Licensed gambling has spread rapidly over recent decades. The policy and regulatory frameworks seem on the one hand to be permitting this growth while on the other failing to create any uniformity in the approach to standards, testing of products or monitoring the social and economic costs of gambling. To what extent should we be investing in public policy conventions or 'treaties' based on an evidentially led approach? What would such conventions look like?
- Research on presenting problem gambling populations has been somewhat piecemeal. What can we do in terms of international collaboration on systematic research? What sort of outcome or longitudinal research is required as a priority? What are the barriers and how do we overcome them?
- How do we promote and institutionalise collaboration or dialogue among researchers, service providers and regulators to advance the concepts of consumer protection and harm prevention?
- What are the most effective approaches to educating/informing consumers in a global harm minimisation strategy?
- What sorts of technologies do service providers need to keep up with the increasing demand for, and potential sophistication of, services? How will these be developed and provided?
- How can services be developed and delivered most effectively for the increasingly transient gambling population and for cyberspace gamblers?

#### ***Treatment and Services sub-group meeting***

A half- to one-day meeting of the Treatment and Services Working Group is being planned for Wednesday 10 November 2004, immediately prior to the NAGS conference on the Gold Coast, Australia. This will be organised in conjunction with the Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation (Micheil Brodie) and with support from Australia National University (Prof. Jan McMillen). Please inform Maria Bellringer as soon as possible if you would like to attend/participate in this meeting.

## APPENDIX 1

### Think Tank Working Groups: Interested Participants

<b>Research</b>		
Phillida Bunkle	Tony Carr	Vivian Cheung
Andrew Duncan	Debbie Edwards	Sitaleki Finau
Linda Hancock	Nerilee Hing	Nemu Lallu
John Lepper	Charles Livingstone	John Markland
Jan McMillen	Timothy Ore	Tracy Schrans
Sean Sullivan	Richard Tan	Rachel Volberg
Masood Zangeneh		

<b>Treatment/Services</b>		
Patrick Au	Andrea Brebner	Vincent Burke
Vivian Cheung	Andrew Duncan	Debbie Edwards
Krista Ferguson	Linda Hancock	John Hannifin
Lynette Hutson	Nemu Lallu	John Lepper
John Markland	Neil Mellor	Jane Oakes
Cynthia Orme	Campbell Roberts	Adrian Scarfe
Sean Sullivan	Richard Tan	Phil Townshend
Barbara van der Spuy	Jim Westphal	Masood Zangeneh

<b>Policy and Public Health</b>		
Phillida Bunkle	Vincent Burke	Vivian Cheung
Debbie Edwards	Krista Ferguson	Sitaleki Finau
Ralph Gerdelan	Linda Hancock	John Hannifin
Nerilee Hing	Carolyn Hobson	Nemu Lallu
Paul Lavulo	John Lepper	Dave Macpherson
John Markland	Jan McMillen	Graeme Minchin
Richard Northey	Timothy Ore	Roger Parton
John Raeburn	Campbell Roberts	Tracy Schrans
John Stansfield	Elizabeth Stevenson	Richard Tan
Rachel Volberg	John Wong	Nick Xenophon
Masood Zangeneh		