THINK TANK REPORT

CHINESE RESTAURANT SHIFTWORKERS AND HARM FROM GAMBLING

29 May 2014
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Executive Summary

This report summarises and documents the proceedings of the Think Tank on Chinese Restaurant Shift Workers and Harm from Gambling, held on the 29th of May 2014 at Box Hill Town Hall in the City of Whitehorse. The Think Tank was moderated, recorded, interpreted and summarised by Borderlands Cooperative.

The purpose of the Think Tank was to bring together Local Councils, community health services, support services and community groups working in the Eastern Metropolitan Region (EMR) to discuss the causes of harm from gambling amongst Chinese restaurant and shift workers and propose ways to deal with this issue and provide more support to these workers. The program has been funded by the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation.

The four sections of the report offer:

- A summary of recent research on harm-from-gambling in the local area which initiated the Think Tank discussion.
- A reflection of the first discussion session at the Think Tank, which developed a detailed portrait of the lives, attitudes and aspirations of Chinese shift workers. The discussion focussed on the factors that make this group susceptible to harm-from-gambling, unlikely to recognise the risks and largely unaware of opportunities for help.
- Possible avenues for engaging this hard-to-reach group in a dialogue about responsible gambling.
- Suggestions and recommendations for immediate and future steps.

A key suggestion from the discussion included the importance of proactively starting a dialogue with and within the affected communities about the issue. The Think Tank identified four broad approaches to starting a dialogue about gambling with restaurant shift workers and the broader Chinese community:

- **Pro-actively reaching out** to those affected by harm-from-gambling at the strategic point when recreation gambling is reaching crisis level.
b) **Seeking out connections with Chinese community leaders and institutions** and soliciting their aid in disseminating messages about harmful levels of gambling and sources of assistance.

c) **Embarking on** a longer-term process of **consultation and relationship-building with restaurant shift workers** themselves to raise awareness of the problems and devise solutions.

d) **Investigating and addressing language barriers** and exploring establishing linkages with English language services as possible attractive alternatives to gambling.
Introduction and Overview

This report is a summary of discussions held on the 29th of May 2014 (during Responsible Gambling Awareness Week) at a Think Tank hosted by Whitehorse City Council. A supporting working group included representatives from:

- Boroondara City Council
- Chinese Peer Connection Program/EACH
- Gambler’s Help Eastern (EACH)
- Inner East Primary Care Partnership
- Knox City Council
- Manningham City Council
- Monash City Council
- MonashLink Community Health Service Ltd
- Whitehorse City Council

An invitation was sent to 62 identified professionals across a broad range of agencies as identified by the working group. Twenty-one persons representing the following agencies attended the Think Tank:
In August 2013, the Inner East Primary Care Partnership (PCP) consulted with member agencies across the Inner East Melbourne catchment and explored their current work in addressing gambling-related harm in the catchment. These consultations identified gambling behaviour amongst Chinese restaurant shift workers as a key concern for Eastern Metropolitan Region agencies and that this needed to be further explored and potentially responded to. Research undertaken by Monash Council in 2013, ‘Impacts of Problem Gambling in the City of Monash’ and more recent research soon to be released by Manningham City Council both identified Chinese restaurant and shift workers as an at-risk group for problem gambling in the Eastern Metropolitan Region, reinforcing the notion that this was an issue of broad and growing concern.

The purpose of the Think Tank, hosted by Whitehorse City Council, was to bring together Councils, community health services, support services and community groups and others working in the region or interested in the issues, to discuss the causes of the harm emanating
from gambling amongst this group and deliberate about possible solutions and effective interventions, including primary prevention approaches.

Participants were addressed by Paul, who shared his own experiences of becoming addicted to the lure and the promises of gambling. Representatives from Monash and Manningham City Councils presented their local research which identified Chinese restaurant shift workers as a group at risk of gambling harm, followed by Gambler’s Help Eastern/EACH who explored the determinants of harm from gambling for this potential client group.

The first section of the report offers a summary of recent research on harm from gambling in the local area, a summation that kicked off the Think Tank discussion. The second section reflects the first discussion session at the Think Tank, which developed a detailed portrait of the lives, attitudes and aspirations of Chinese shift workers, focussing on the factors that make this group prone to harm from gambling, unlikely to recognise the risks and largely unaware of opportunities for help. The third section concerns itself with possible avenues for starting to engage this hard-to-reach group in a dialogue about responsible gambling. The report concludes with a short section of recommendations for immediate next steps.

1. Setting the Scene: Chinese Restaurant Shift Workers and Harm from Gambling

In recent decades, Melbourne’s Chinese-born population has grown considerably, and the Inner East Region in Metropolitan Melbourne is now home to a considerable number of this migrant community. Municipalities within the Inner East Melbourne catchment include Chinese-born persons as a much greater share of their total population than Greater Melbourne as a whole. In Greater Melbourne as a whole, 2.3% of the population are Chinese-born, whilst in the City of Monash, 8.2 % of the total population are Chinese-born (13,764 persons). In Manningham the figure is 6.0% (6,578); in Boroondara it is 4.2% (6,690) and in Whitehorse 7.4% (11,043 persons). Along with this large population of Chinese born people, the region is home to an extensive number of Chinese restaurants/take away establishments and a significant number of Chinese people work within these settings.¹

¹ Sourced from ID Social Atlas [http://atlas.id.com.au/]
Research suggests that Chinese-speaking populations have a unique relationship to gambling and gaming. Social gambling is widespread as a preferred form of entertainment and socialisation in Chinese communities in China and other migrant countries, including Australia. Research suggests that, whilst gambling is under-reported by Chinese-Australians, the reported prevalence of problem gambling is substantially higher amongst Chinese-speakers than in the general population and that harm from gambling is growing within this community. Particularly those employed in shift work, such as restaurant workers and those working in factories and takeaway food spots, have been identified as disproportionately affected by harm from gambling.

*Impacts of problem gambling in the City of Monash*, a 2013 research report conducted by Monash City Council, identified restaurant workers as an at-risk group for harm from gambling, due to their tendency to engage in gambling activities to pass the time between their shifts when working at restaurants and after restaurant closing times (when few alternative venues are open.) According to this report, due to a lack of alternative recreation activities available between lunch and dinner shifts and after midnight, restaurant workers regularly participate in gambling to pass time or to relax after their shifts. The Monash research also identified that people of Asian backgrounds would often gamble due to social isolation or depression. Manningham Council’s forthcoming research on problem gambling in the Manningham Community reinforces these themes for the EMR.

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2 Feldman, S., Radermacher, H., Anderson C. & Dickins, M. A Qualitative Investigation of the Experiences, Attitudes and Beliefs about Gambling in the Chinese and Tamil Communities in Victoria (Victoria: Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation), 19-23, 30-42 and 44-54


5 Schottler Consulting, *Impacts of problem gambling in the City of Monash: Key Findings*, Schottler Consulting Pty Ltd, 2013, p.28

6 Manningham Council *Social and Economic Impacts of Problem EGM Gambling on the Manningham Community* (Draft), 2014
The Think Tank Process

The following account of the Think Tank discussion was moderated, recorded, interpreted and summarised by Altin Gavranovic and Jacques Boulet from the Borderlands Cooperative with the support of the Think Tank working group, members of which reviewed and offered feedback to successive drafts leading to this final Report.

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7 The Borderlands Cooperative is a small non-profit organisation – since 1998 - involved in community, social and international development, ecological sustainability, social justice and participatory approaches to research and evaluation. Building in sustainability measures and assessments has been a central feature of our social research and evaluation of projects and programmes. We have been involved in research and evaluation related to gambling, harm from gambling and prevention since 1998, having collaborated with a range of local councils and organisations active in this area. We adopt a participatory approach with community development intentions in all our project work. Contact: borders@borderlands.org.au 03-9819 3239
2. Chinese Restaurant Shift Workers: A consideration of the issues

What makes restaurant shift workers particularly prone to harm from gambling? The answer is not a simple one and, in fact, the Think Tank discussion highlighted a complex interplay of various cultural and social factors. The contributing factors discussed on the day can be roughly grouped into three thematic areas: the social context and the aspirations of first-generation Chinese migrants; the influence of the restaurant working environment; and the particular experience of gambling and help-seeking in Chinese culture; we will consider these in turn.

2. a) The Social Context: the Chinese migrant experience

The Think Tank members discussed what is going on in the lives and experiences of Chinese migrants that contributes to their over-representation amongst those who suffer from harm from gambling? How do their life-experiences and social context lead them to seek solace and solutions at gambling venues? The discussion took as its point of departure that the life of Chinese migrants, like that of many other migrants in Australia, is not especially easy. Most of them have come to Australia in the hope of making a better life for themselves and, especially, for their children and family. But life in their adopted country often involves many struggles and sacrifices.

Most superficially, these struggles are simply attempts to adapt to a new, quite different environment and to the Australian lifestyle. Chinese urban migrants often report missing the vibrant night life of their home towns and feeling bored in Australia. And, of course, many Australian cultural and social activities are simply not very attractive or welcoming to someone not familiar and at ease with the norms, expectations and sometimes language of the dominant culture. Moreover, even if some of them potentially could be of interest, engaging in these social spaces frequently requires levels of language skills and cultural familiarity not easily attainable to a first generation migrant who is also concerned with carving out a future for themselves and – especially - their children. As noted during the discussion, if we look beneath the problem of there not being ‘anything to do’ or not having
the cultural background required to access the social world of mainstream Australia, we
discover the deeper problem that many migrants feel that they do not have the luxury to
seek a good life for themselves. Unlike those who were born and raised here, migrants bring
to Australian society hopes and aspirations that aren’t easily recognised or met by the social
system. Under such complex and difficult living circumstances, mere survival (rather than
pleasure or improvement of one’s situation) becomes an overwhelming priority for many.

For instance, we have to consider the fact that, for many of those who end up in restaurant
shift work, this form of employment entails a significant loss of social status. The Australian
emphasis on skilled migration means that many migrants are educated professionals in their
home countries; however, their aspirations to the kind of status and respect they could once
command are often unrecognised and unmet in their new environment. Employment (and,
consequently, life as a whole) for many becomes a matter not of personal aspiration but sheer
survival. The struggle for survival can easily become a significant and almost exclusive focus for
many migrants in a country where their skills and aspirations aren’t easily recognised and
valued and lack of language and connections often prevent access to and progress in many
areas of employment. This sense of ‘struggling to make it’, together with family-oriented value
systems, means that aspirations for a better life find an outlet mainly in securing social
advancement for their children through education rather than any significant improvement in
their own situation.

This is a context, of course, which leaves little room for pleasure or the cultivation of rich
social connections, not even mentioning the latent and sometimes overt forms of racism Asian
migrants encounter in public life as, unfortunately, occurs in Australia. This sense of a struggle
for survival in a foreign land tends to make for a hard life focussed mainly on material security
and well-being. Personal satisfactions and social connections tend to get neglected, leading to
a loss of connectedness both to the wider community, the migrant community and within
the family (especially for men, as was reported from feedback from members of the
community: children don’t ‘know’ their fathers). As this group of people gets older and their
children drift away, they frequently find themselves at a real loss and their precarious sense of
belonging becomes an increasingly serious problem, often with mental health consequences.
In this context, a habit of workplace gambling can easily turn into harmful gambling; gambling offers the illusory prospect of effortless material betterment, of course, and this is no doubt part of its appeal to a population whose aspirations for a better life are in other ways frustrated. But more profoundly it offers a distraction from the difficulties and isolation of this kind of migrant life, a much-needed dose of excitement and pleasure, and a way to vent frustrations not just with a difficult and unrewarding working day, but also with a difficult, burdensome and quite lonely life.

Key Learnings:

- Migrant life is often experienced as difficult, requiring struggle and sacrifices;
- Adapting to a new culture and finding appropriate sources of leisure and sociability can be difficult because of language and culture barriers;
- Migration is often accompanied by a loss of social status and barriers to personal ambition, leading many migrants to become preoccupied with survival at the expense of personal aspiration, self-care and social connectedness;
- The ambition of educated migrants stuck in restaurant shift work is channelled into their children, and as they grow older their lack of satisfaction and precarious sense of belonging put them at risk;
- In this context, gambling offers the prospect of effortless material betterment, an exciting and pleasant pastime, distraction from difficulties and isolation, and a way to vent frustrations with the migrant experience.

2  b) The Workplace Context: the Restaurant Environment

The Think Tank members also how working conditions of Chinese restaurant shift workers contribute significantly to the pressures and attraction for this group to gamble. To understand why this is the case, we need to consider the structure and experience of their typical working day.

The discussion considered the shift worker’s working day, which generally begins around 10.30 am and ends late in the evening, with a break between the lunch and dinner service (generally from 3 to 5 pm.) Restaurants are tense working environments; competition in the industry is high and the work of both kitchen and service staff has to be done quickly and very competently in hot, sometimes cramped environments. As noted above, many of these
workers are professionals or trained tradespeople who have fallen into shift work for want of other employment, and they experience this kind of work as uninteresting and unfulfilling. And, of course, it is relatively poorly paid work which isn’t seen as very prestigious. But it is tense and highly demanding work, and after four or five hours in the intense, stressful world of the restaurant and kitchen, people are exhausted and want to do something to rest and relax before the next shift.

When the lunch shift ends, the workers tend to all go to the ‘Pokies’ gambling venues close to their workplace. While they go to the venue as a group, the gambling itself is highly individualised. Workers travel to the gambling venue in their own vehicles and, once there, they gamble by themselves (also given the physical nature of the electronic gambling machines and the way in which they are set up) rather than with each other. The gambling experience isn’t one of playing together or meaningful interaction; they acknowledge each other’s presence but they play in isolation.

Nonetheless, research indicates that most of the workers (both wait and kitchen staff) are regular gamblers and the social pressure to gamble in the shift breaks is quite high. The awkward 3pm-5pm timing of the shift break and lack of information about alternative forms of recreation together mean that workers often struggle to find something else to do, and the cash-in-hand payments common in the industry makes it easy to hide and spend the day’s earnings. The time is too short for them to go home and the pokies gambling venue is air-conditioned and comfortable and doesn’t require much in the way of English-language skills. The fact that most people from the restaurant are attending gaming venues as well creates a sense of belonging and acceptance, and the gambling lets people blow off steam or escape the frustrations of the work day.

When the evening shift ends (which, again, it does at an awkward time of night, when many other public spaces have closed) the workers who have done well at the local gambling venues during the day will probably head home to rest up for the next day. Those who’ve lost money during the afternoon, however, may head to the Casino to chase their luck.

A final remark should be devoted to the issue of ‘luck’; whilst we cannot with any depth offer a detailed exploration of ‘luck’ in Chinese culture, it is one of the most auspicious concepts of
good fortune joining prosperity, longevity, happiness and wealth. A number of festivals as well as everyday rituals and habitual behaviours carry expressions of the belief in luck as one element within the cultural configurations of Chinese people(s) and, living in diaspora conditions, opportunities to ‘experience’ luck are sought after and easily ‘re-cognised’ as a way of maintaining aspects of the accustomed belief system and its associated habits.

**Key Learnings:**

- Restaurant work is tense, stressful and difficult. At the same time, it is perceived as uninteresting, low-pay and low-status work by educated migrants and within the diaspora communities.
- Many restaurant shift workers gamble in the break between shifts (3 to 5 pm.) They go to gambling venues as a group and experience social pressure to gamble.
- While shift workers go to gambling venues as a group, the gambling itself is a solitary, isolated activity.
- Workplace factors that influence a shift worker’s tendency to gamble include:
  1. social pressure,
  2. lack of awareness of alternatives,
  3. ease of spending cash-in-hand payments, and
  4. the need to escape the stress and frustration of the work-day
- Gamblers who did well during the afternoon shift break go home after the evening shift; those who lost money tend to go to the Casino after finishing work and try to ‘re-coup’ the losses.

2  **c) The Cultural Context: Chinese Attitudes to Gambling and Seeking Help**

The Think Tank also considered - a final dimension of the tendency of Chinese shift worker to be more at risk of harmful gambling, and less able to stop the slide into gambling-related

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8 Sung, Vivien 2002 *Five-fold happiness: Chinese concepts of luck, prosperity, longevity, happiness, and wealth* San Francisco: Chronicle
crises, has to do with Chinese cultural attitudes surrounding gambling and seeking of assistance with such problems.

As already mentioned above in the paragraph on ‘luck’, gambling has long been a common social pastime in Chinese culture. Friendly betting on card-games and Mah-jong is a normal part of the social world in many parts of China and children often learn patterns of recreational gambling from parents and relatives. This casual gambling tradition is part of the social glue that connects people and communities together. It is therefore not seen in a particularly negative light and is even to a large extent considered normal.

Even something as specific as the habit of Chinese restaurant shift workers to pass the time between shifts by gambling is, in fact, a pattern that existed long before the proliferation of gambling venues in Melbourne, and, in fact, even prior to the arrival of Chinese shift workers in Australia. As was noted during the discussion, the between-shift gambling patterns also exist in places like Hong Kong and was probably a tradition brought to Australia from various Chinese urban communities.

Of course, there is also an awareness within the Chinese community of the distinction (fuzzy though it may sometimes be) between this kind of recreational gambling and ‘problem’ gambling. While recreational gambling is seen as relatively benign, problem gambling is, on the other hand, regarded as a source of stigma and shame. As in the West, it is regarded as a sign of failure, irresponsibility and lack of self-control, and brings shame and stigma both on the problem gambler and their family. As a consequence, once the slide into problem gambling begins, it is not something that can be easily talked about within the Chinese community. Problem gamblers will, as a consequence, be reluctant to discuss the issue until they are facing a crisis.

On the other hand, Chinese migrants will often be equally reluctant to seek help within mainstream counselling and service organisations. The factors influencing this reluctance are manifold and complex but most derive from the above-mentioned tendency for many Chinese migrants to be relatively disconnected from Australian society and focused on survival rather than self-care. Of course, language might be an issue in accessing (or even being aware of) support services for problem gambling, and cultural barriers also exist to using services, such as counselling, that rely on very Western habits of self-disclosure. For family members of problem gamblers, seeking such outside help could also be seen as a kind of betrayal.
Key Learnings:

- Recreational gambling has for a very long time been an important part of Chinese social life and is regarded as a benign way to have a good time with others.
- More specifically, gambling amongst shift workers during breaks is a tradition brought to Australia from overseas.
- Problem gambling, on the other hand, is seen as a source of shame and stigma for gamblers and their family and is not easily talked about within the Chinese communities.
- Those at risk from harm from gambling are also reluctant to seek help from social services due to language and cultural barriers.
3. Ideas for Action: Reaching out to Shift Workers and the broader Chinese community

Given how entrenched gambling patterns are across this at-risk group and how disconnected the group is from government and community support services, the discussion highlighted that devising effective responses and interventions is a complex challenge. For the programs that develop as a result of this discussion to be effective, they will have to tune in to the particular mindset(s) and life situation(s) outlined above and in other research as mentioned before. This will, in turn, require a proactive engagement with the community and preparedness to let the community itself participate significantly in devising interventions from community organisations, especially if they are to be of a preventative nature.

The discussion focused on the importance of pro-actively starting a dialogue with and within the affected communities about the issue. The Think Tank identified four broad approaches to starting a dialogue about gambling with restaurant shift workers and the broader Chinese community:

a) Pro-actively reach out to those affected by harm from gambling at the strategic point when recreation gambling is starting to slide into crisis.

b) Seek out connections with Chinese community leaders and institutions and solicit their assistance in disseminating messages about problem gambling and sources of assistance.

c) Embark on a longer-term process of consultation and relationship-building with restaurant shift workers themselves to raise awareness of the problems and devise solutions.

d) Investigate and address language barriers and the tendency of Chinese migrants not to take advantage of free language classes.

3 a) Reaching out at the point of crisis

While Chinese shift workers are for a variety of reasons suggested to be a ‘hard-to-reach’ group, the discussions highlighted one key moment at which they may be more receptive to intervention: when their gambling begins to slide into a crisis. The discussion and related
research suggested that this is the point when the **gamblers themselves begin to seek help**, at least with their attempts at meeting financial obligations, and it is also a time when **family members may become concerned enough to speak to someone** about the issue. This is a key moment when **the slide into problem gambling can be interrupted** and people can be (re-) integrated in the community.

At this juncture, the discussion identified **two possible pathways** through which information about harm from gambling can reach those affected by harm from gambling:

- **Sources of financial assistance as pathways for assistance with gambling-related harm:** We can identify the sorts of people and places the problem gambler is likely to go to for financial assistance: financial advisors, banks and short-term loan providers. It might be possible to work with providers of such services in the affected communities to raise awareness of problem gambling and empower them to refer problem gamblers on to other kinds of support services.

- **Family members and the next generation as pathways for assistance with gambling-related harm:** The families of those affected are an obvious second group through which problem gamblers can be reached. In particular, the children of shift workers (and second-generation Chinese migrants more generally) seem like obvious points of connection to this otherwise socially isolated group. Their dual language and cultural proficiency across both the Chinese community and mainstream Australian culture render them into ideal links between service providers and the affected group. Such second-generation bridging persons could themselves most easily be reached through their schools.

On the other hand, **involving children also has its drawbacks.** Amongst other things, it expects children to play and maintain roles which are beyond their capacities and which may – in the end – work against harmonious family relations because of resentment and the loss of ‘face’.

In sum, it is crucially important to closely work with the Chinese communities and their organisations which already have developed degrees of expertise and access and which are

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aware of the cultural dimensions at work in these matters, which leads into the second approach.

**Key Learnings:**

- Chinese shift workers are a ‘hard-to-reach’ group and, as such, might be more receptive to intervention when their gambling begins to slide into a crisis.

- At such a time, it might be possible to reach them through the instances they seek help from: financial service providers (banks, financial advisors, short-loan providers, etc.) and their families. The children of first-generation migrants may be a possible conduit for information and assistance but involving children has drawbacks, putting too much pressure on them.

3  b) Connecting to Chinese community institutions

Given that Chinese restaurant shift workers are, for a variety of reasons, disconnected from mainstream Australian community agencies (and thus likely to be unresponsive to messages and services emanating from this quarter), it seems **imperative to collaborate with institutions more likely to be seen as ‘their own’ and – therefore likely to be more - trusted.** It seems imperative to identify and reach out to respected institutions within the Chinese community that would be open to collaborating on raising awareness of these issues. **Some potential collaborators** identified during the Think Tank discussion are the following:

- **Chinese spiritual leaders and groups.** A Chinese restaurant workers’ Mission is active in Melbourne and spiritual leaders have had ongoing involvement with Council workers and service providers. Though absent from this particular Think Tank, Chinese spiritual groups were a visible presence during other Responsible Gambling Awareness Week events.

- **Community groups catering to subcultural, geographic/ethnic and generational sub-groups in or servicing particular needs** within the broader Chinese community. Chinese Community Social Services, the Chinese Health Foundation and Chinese Senior Citizens Groups may all be relevant partners in gambling-related projects. Further, the varying urban/metropolitan or rural origin of the Chinese workers is a
factor which deserves consideration when attempting to work with those affected by problem gambling.

- **Chinese Business Councils** are another possible group to reach out to, especially given that this is a workplace-related issue for the affected group.

- **Chinese radio and newspapers** have already been used with some success to raise awareness of gambling and other issues. There may be potential for ongoing collaboration with Chinese media.

- **Organised gambling addiction groups** based on Alcoholics Anonymous 12-step programs are already operating locally. Their ability to help with outreach to the specific shift worker group may be limited, but it would be worth connecting to these groups to at least find out how they were formed and what made them successful.

- **Contacts from previous research**; several studies of attitudes towards problem gambling in the Chinese community in Victoria Melbourne have recently been completed (namely: Monash Council’s 2013 report *Impacts of Problem Gambling in the City of Monash* and the recent research soon to be released by Manningham City Council, both mentioned before) which involved extensive community consultations. Perhaps contacts developed during this research could be drawn on to identify potential in-roads into the Chinese community.

### 3 c) Consultation and relationship-building within the affected group

Given that some **consultation has already been successfully undertaken** with Chinese restaurant shift workers through their places of work (particularly the focus group assembled for the qualitative research study done by Manningham Council), **there clearly exists some potential to involve restaurant shift workers themselves directly** in this conversation about harm from gambling and effective prevention and other interventions. Ideally, **the focus group approach could be expanded into an ongoing collaboration with representatives from the affected group**.

Obviously, many of the barriers considered when discussing the reluctance of this group to access support and assistance services would work just as much against their participation in ongoing consultation. None the less, a **proactive, workplace-based focus group approach** has certainly been effective previously and **could be a useful ongoing tool to gain input and insight** from the affected community. If this approach were pursued, it was noted that it would
likely be more effective if the consultation were run by someone who is seen as belonging to the community, rather than a non-Chinese facilitator or Council worker who would be perceived too much as being an outsider. Such external experts would, of course, be able to play a supporting role in the consultation.

Finally, initiating a dialogue with problem gambling services in China could be useful; certainly in Hong Kong several conferences and exchanges have taken place about more effective ways of working with problem gamblers and their families. It would be useful to consult the persons and organisations involved as to culturally appropriate ways of intervening in this issue.

Key Learnings:

- Previous research – as well as Paul’s testimony at the Think Tank - suggests that it would be possible and useful to involve Chinese shift workers themselves in conversations about this issue and how to respond to it.
- Establishing workplace-based focus groups could be a useful ongoing tool to gain input and insight from this group, especially if these focus groups were run by someone who is seen as belonging to the community.
- Initiating a dialogue with problem gambling services in China could be a useful way to generate ideas for culturally-appropriate interventions.

3 d) Investigating and addressing language barrier issues

Despite the existence of free language classes, it was noted in the Think Tank discussion that some Chinese shift workers do not take advantage of services to assist with learning the English language. While in some ways understandable in view of their focus on survival (to which the enormous task of acquiring English language proficiency is often not essential), this is an unfortunate trend in that it isolates those within the Chinese community from many services and social activities that are available only through interaction with the English-speaking community.

It may be useful for those working in the field of preventing harm-from-gambling to explore linking in with various English language services, as well as Neighbourhood Houses and

Lai, A (Ed.) 2008 Counsellors’ Reflections on Gambling: Hong Kong’s Experience Caritas Addicted Gamblers Counselling Centre, Hong Kong
libraries offering English classes. If they were timed appropriately, attending such classes could perhaps be an attractive alternative to gambling during shift breaks.

Of course, if future work was to pursue this avenue of intervention, it would also be helpful to find out more about the barriers to taking up such language classes. Interventions would differ considerably, depending on whether it was lack of time, lack of awareness of services, lack of appreciation of the benefits of language skills, the perceived difficulty of the task or simply timing issues that were keeping shift workers from learning English.

**Key Learnings:**

- Chinese shift workers tend not to take advantage of English language classes, which conspires to isolate them from English-based sources of support both in the gambling area and generally in participating in community life and other endeavours.
- There may, therefore, be some benefit to linking harm-from-gambling initiatives with English language services and other providers of ESL classes.
- Knowing what the barriers to attending English-language instruction are is fundamental to being able to engage with the Chinese shift worker community on this issue.

**4. Immediate Recommendation**

There was general consensus during the Think Tank discussion that it would be helpful to establish a working group to help transform some of these ideas into practical action. The items in the second section of this report would provide possible successive agenda items for such a forum or working group. This could take the form of a regular (perhaps quarter-annual) forum or working group organised by one of the Local Councils or perhaps run by several of them in partnership. Workers or other persons wishing to be involved in this working group should contact the Inner East PCP on 8822 8423.
Conclusion

There may be a need for a more generic forum to facilitate collaboration on the issue of harm-from-gambling. Currently responses to the issue are quite fragmented and disconnected amongst agencies. A more organised and streamlined response could take the form of a regular (perhaps quarter-annual) forum organised by one of the Local Councils or perhaps be run by several Councils and regional bodies in partnership.

More community-oriented and (primary) preventative approaches could include:

- Approaching the workplaces – restaurants, cafes, reception centres – in which Chinese shift workers are employed and working with the owners or managers;
- warnings and informative posters about the risks of gambling could be developed and distributed to the restaurants and placed at easy-to-see places in kitchens and elsewhere;
- and discussions could be held on potential alternatives to gambling that might help break the cycle and culture of regular gambling.

Finally, the existing Chinese welfare and cultural organisations, churches and spiritual meeting places could be approached with a view to create or strengthen awareness of the problem gambling issue and, more importantly, its personal and family consequences as discussed during the Think Tank and reported above. It is imperative to assist the Chinese communities and their organisations in learning to discern the differences between culturally and recreationally appropriate and safe forms of gaming and gambling and those which may lead to harm, addiction and dependency and the subsequent consequences for the families of victims.

Last but not least, it is crucial to try and better understand the personal and social reasons Chinese restaurant and shift workers may slide from the appropriate to the harmful form of gambling and more local and culturally sensitive research should be encouraged and funded to this effect.
Following the delivery of the Think Tank during Responsible Gambling Awareness Week 2014, the Inner East PCP were successful with a Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation grant of $252,000 to deliver a gambling harm prevention initiative in the Inner East Melbourne catchment targeting Chinese restaurant shift workers. For further information, please contact the Inner East PCP on (03) 8822 8423.
References and Resources


Lai, A (Ed.) 2008 Counsellors’ Reflections on Gambling: Hong Kong’s Experience Caritas Addicted Gamblers Counselling Centre, Hong Kong

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Schottler Consulting, Impacts of problem gambling in the City of Monash: Key Findings, Schottler Consulting Pty Ltd, 2013

Sung, V. 2002 Five-fold happiness: Chinese concepts of luck, prosperity, longevity, happiness, and wealth San Francisco: Chronicle


Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority, 2000 The Impact of Gaming on Specific Cultural Groups, Melbourne: Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority
Appendices

Appendix 1: Working Group members & contacts details

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## Appendix 2: Think Tank Evaluation

### Individual RGAW Event – Post Event Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Name</th>
<th>Think Tank – Chinese restaurant shift workers: fostering a responsible gambling environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date and Time</td>
<td>Thursday 29 May 2014, 9am – 12:30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Box Hill Town Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organised by</td>
<td>Whitehorse City Council in partnership with:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Gamblers Help Eastern/EACH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Monash Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Boroondara City Council</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Manningham City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Knox City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• MonashLink Community Health Service Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Chinese Peer Connection Program/EACH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Inner East Primary Care Partnership (PCP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In kind expenses include:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Working group staff time including project management by IEPCP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final attendance (number)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 25 people registered for this Think Tank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 21 people attended on the day including representatives from:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This Think Tank was an opportunity to bring together relevant professionals, experts and Chinese community representatives and leaders to share knowledge, experience, information and ideas for action and collaboration. The exchange of knowledge around gambling exposure and behaviour amongst Chinese restaurant shift workers will act as a springboard to generate future collaborations and partnerships to improve social connectedness and raise the profile of responsible gambling messages.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9am – 9:30am</td>
<td>Registrations and Refreshments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30am – 9:35am</td>
<td>Welcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:35am – 9:40am</td>
<td>Outline for the day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:40am – 9:50am</td>
<td>Personal gambling story shared by Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:50am – 10am</td>
<td>Monash and Manningham research – what do we know locally?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10am – 10:10am</td>
<td>Determinants of problem gambling – Gamblers Help Eastern/EACH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:10am -10:30am</td>
<td>Panel discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30am -11:10am</td>
<td>Facilitated discussion - Unpacking the issue: what are we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>currently doing to respond locally?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:10am – 11:30am</td>
<td>Morning Tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30am – 12:20pm</td>
<td>Facilitated discussion – Identifying future collaboration opportunities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12:20pm – 12:30pm: Close and Evaluation
Was the event successful?
(include what worked, what didn’t work as applicable)
(brief)

The Think Tank was extremely successful in engaging a diverse mix of professionals into the one room to exchange ideas and information about how agencies across the Eastern Metropolitan Region may be able to respond to this issue collaboratively.

Following this Think Tank, we will be expanding the working group to inform, collaborate and act on the issues and ideas discussed during the Think Tank. The completed attendee evaluations have informed us that 9 professionals are interested in joining the working group.

Invitations were sent via email and followed up by the working group via email and phone. The invitation list was very targeted with working group members being allocated the responsibility to invite people from the invitation list who they had an already established relationship with. The working group felt this method would foster stronger support and attendance on the day. It also ensured existing relationships were utilised and strengthened in gathering registration for this event.

Goals and outcomes:

1. **Promote the Think Tank to a targeted invitation list. Working group members to utilise existing relationships to encourage relevant professionals to attend.**
   - An invitation was sent to 62 targeted professionals across a broad range of agencies as identified by the working group

2. **Engage a professional facilitator to deliver the Think Tank and develop a comprehensive outcome report which will facilitate future local collaboration and action on the issue.**
   - Borderlands Cooperative – professional facilitators were engaged to deliver the Think Tank and develop the outcome report. The working group worked very closely with Borderlands Cooperative in the lead up to the Think Tank to ensure a very comprehensive and successful Think Tank was delivered.

3. **Engage a former international student to share their story during the Think Tank**
   - Paul, volunteer at Chinese Peer Connection was engaged to share his personal story about his own experience with gambling harm as a Chinese community member.

4. **Build momentum, interest and energy around the issue locally and provide a platform**
for networking and sharing of knowledge and ideas for collaborative action.

- 7 attendees identified particular agencies who they wished to engage with following the Think Tank discussions. The working group will ensure these are followed up.

4. **Recruit new members to the local working group to respond**

- 9 attendees have advised they want to join the working group and continue to be engaged in discussion around the issue and collaborative action

5. **Develop and deliver a comprehensive outcome report (to be ready for dissemination by end of June 2014).**

- Pending completion at time of this evaluation. The outcome report will be disseminated to all participants in a few weeks which will capture the discussions had at the Think Tanks and act as a tool to facilitate further exploration around where our combined efforts are best placed to respond to these issues. Future collaborations and partnerships between agencies to respond to both issues will be facilitated further by the working group.
Please rate the following guest speakers:

- Paul - Personal Story: 8.3% (1) poor, 41.7% (5) excellent
- Ina Tan - Gamblers Help Eastern: 25.0% (3) poor, 41.7% (5) excellent
- Emily Halliburton - Monash City Council: 27.3% (3) poor, 36.4% (4) good
- Kirsten Reedy - Manningham City Council: 8.3% (1) poor, 41.7% (5) excellent
- Jacques Boulet - Borderlands Cooperative - Facilitator: 16.7% (2) poor, 33.3% (4) good
Please rate the general overview of the event:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>v. Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisation and communication</td>
<td>8.3 % (1)</td>
<td>41.7 % (5)</td>
<td>33.3 % (4)</td>
<td>8.3 % (1)</td>
<td>58.3 % (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venue</td>
<td>33.3 % (4)</td>
<td>41.7 % (5)</td>
<td>58.3 % (7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catering</td>
<td>58.3 % (7)</td>
<td>58.3 % (7)</td>
<td>58.3 % (7)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Some direct quotes from attendee evaluations:

Did the event provide learning opportunities?

- “Yes - the cultural and immigration influences on the issue.”
- “Yes. Fantastic. Learnt about the way new migrant parents perceive their role and their focus on making $$”
- “Yes, now understand restaurant workers position more (hard work, cash work).”

Do you feel there is opportunity for your agency to respond to this issue in future?

- “Yes, CALD work is in our Community Education Plans, also a priority at EACH.”
- “Yes. - want to be involved in producing ideas - will be part of any relevant event”
- “By having regular team meetings and discussion/planning with the working group.”
- “Yes absolutely.”
- “Yes. Community workshop/seminar/group work.”

Other comments

- “Very good to bring out this long, hard-solved issue to discussion and think about the solution to help this specific target group.”
- “Well done”
- “Great forum”