

NAGS Panel discussion 2015 – Industry influence on gambling research

Speakers: Mark Griffiths, Mark Henley, Paul Delfabbro, Charles Livingstone, Robert Chappell. Facilitator Anna Thomas.

NOT FOR CIRCULATION

Facilitator

Thinking about the role of industry in research, the first thing to think about is what exactly do we mean by research by industry. What do we mean by industry? There's a few different ways you can define that. What I'm going to use today is really just thinking about people who buy products and services related to gambling as being industry. Some people would broaden that to also include those who derive an income from the gambling industry, i.e. state and territory governments that are deriving income from gambling and then using that to fund etcetera, etcetera. In this case, I still want that to be part of the discussion, but we'll be calling that government as opposed to industry just for clarity.

So what the panel is going to do today is to consider a variety of issues and questions when they're responding to the question of what the role is of industry in terms of gambling research. They'll do it in their own way, but what I want the audience I guess to be thinking about as people are talking and getting ready to answer questions, because there will be a lot of involvement from the audience I'm expecting on this, is to really be thinking about things such as the role of industry in terms of funding industry. Funding research, can that be done? When can that be done? Is there circumstances under which it should or shouldn't be done? Do they have a role in collaboration in research? Again, should they be collaborating at all? Under what circumstances can that be done and how can that be done, or come to be done?

Also thinking about how industry involvement may affect a researcher in any respect. What is the perception if someone is involved in collaborating with industry in terms of their research? Is it a potential blocker for additional funding later on? Is it a good way to get your interesting research done? Is it the only way to get research done in reality where we know that funding for research is a shrinking entity? Does it matter who you are? Is it more important for you to be really thinking about this issue and considering this as a new researcher? Is it easier for an established researcher to be able to have those kind of collaborations? What are the levels of transparency that are expected and needed in terms of this? So these are all different issues that we've got to consider today.

Now, what I'm going to do in terms of organising this, I'm going to ask a very, very broad question that each of the panellists have five minutes to respond to. I'm cutting them off at five minutes because I want to have lots of time to talk about different issues. Then we'll have a couple of questions, but opening it up really quickly to the audience to have involvement in this. So the really broad question that I'm asking each of the people to respond to is what do you see as the role of industry in research, and in responding to that, to consider under what circumstances, if any, do you think that industry can be involved in research, and when or under what circumstances should industry definitely not be involved in research? So the first person

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I'm going to ask to respond to that is Mark ss. Mark is a professor in gambling studies at the Nottingham Trent University.

Mark Griffiths

No, not anymore. Since two weeks ago. Now I'm a professor of behavioural addiction.

Facilitator

Yes. I actually took that from what you had in your NAGS folder. So you've had an update to that, but I believe yes, he is now the professor of addictions. He's spent almost 30 years in the field and is internationally known for his work on gambling and has published prolific work over this time. He's served on numerous national and international committees and gambling charities and has won national and international awards for his work. In addition to his academic work, he says he carries out consultancy work with the gambling industry and has been doing so since 1998. He has carried out work for over 30 companies in the area of player protection, harm minimisation, social responsibility and responsible gambling. None of his research has ever been directly funded by industry, but he has received funding from independent agencies that rely on industry donations, for example the Responsible Gambling Trust. So thank you Mark.

Mark Griffiths

I just want to put all my cards on the table. I know it's a gambling conference and that's a cliché, but I just checked this morning and just for the record I've written 130 reports for 33 different gambling companies in 14 countries since 1998. As Anna has just said, as far as I'm aware, of the 601 referee publications I've had to date, not a single one of those has been funded by the industry, although one of those was indirectly funded through a piece of consultancy I did, and there were two papers I have where other authors on the paper were funded by the industry and I then actually contributed to the paper. There are three papers out of that 601 that you could say have some kind of indirect funding.

Now, getting to the question of what Anna was talking about, it's not an easy question to answer and I think this depends on what country you're in. I mean, in the UK now a recent decision was made by our government that there would be no more research funding for gambling ever. As far as they are concerned now, the model is polluter pays and therefore the only money that's going to be available is either directly from the gambling industry or from the gambling industry donations to what we have in the UK called the Responsible Gambling Trust. This has also meant that I've been doing less and less gambling research.

One of the reasons my job has changed recently, only 25% of my work now, of my recent work, is on gambling and that is partly to do with the fact that funding opportunities are becoming less and less in the UK, and of course, I've always had the position that I didn't want any of my work to be directly funded by the government. Now, I've probably got another hopefully 20 or so years left in the gambling research business. If I stay in the UK I may well be forced to go down the route - if I want to carry on researching in the gambling area I'm going to have to get my money either directly or indirectly from the industry in some way, or join up with other collaborators, including maybe people on this panel, to do research from, if you like, more reputable funding agencies.

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I know when I first started out in the gambling studies field, I personally was in Great Britain probably seen as public enemy number one. I was always the academic that was wheeled out onto television and radio programs to, if you like, stand up to the industry and say what I thought about things and, you know, I suppose I got myself a reputation. I was never afraid to stand up and challenge what the industry were doing, whether in terms of irresponsible advertising or the fact that they were putting gambling opportunities in places where I didn't think they should be, for instance, putting things like amusement arcades right next to schools and colleges for instance.

But I soon realised within about 10 or 12 years of doing research I did have a knowledge base and I made the decision, and so my first piece of consultancy with the industry was in 1998 and I took that on because it was in the area of player protection and harm minimisation. Anyone that knows anything about me, as Anna said in the introduction, the only time that I will work, if you like collaboratively with the industry, is to do with harm minimisation, player protection, responsible gambling and social responsibility. If any company ever wants to use my kind of psychological research expertise in a way to, if you like, entice or exploit gamblers, I'm not interested at all. I suppose one of the reasons that I do work with industry on a consultancy side is because certainly the people I've worked with, they say we do not want problem gamblers. Problem gamblers are not part of our long-term business plan.

So for me, that's the same kind of areas that I'm coming from is that I don't want, you know, problem gambling is there, we can argue about how big the problem is, but obviously my aim would be to minimise harm and to reduce the prevalence of problem gambling. That is what the industry people that I work with are telling me they want to do as well. Now, you can argue well maybe some of those are paying lip service, but I would like to think that the companies I work with, and I can certainly think of 10 companies, all who have level four World Lottery Association accreditation, these are what I consider to be some of the most socially responsible companies in the world and I'm very proud of the kinds of things that I've advised and the measures and protocols and policies etcetera that companies have brought in as a result of me working in the area.

Now, as I say, at the moment I personally have never taken any money from the industry to do research, but if you asked me would I do it in the future, I couldn't say never say never. I'm sure there are going to be people on this panel who say you should never take it in any way, shape or form. Anyone that was at my keynote address yesterday, I talked about four or five particular studies using behavioural tracking and I can say hand on heart, if I wasn't collaborating with the industry, obviously none of those studies were funded by the industry - I'll just repeat what I said yesterday. My very first study was an observation analysis of eight slot machine gamblers in an amusement arcade in England. Now, I'm working with data sets that are up to 1,000,000 online gamblers. That for me is a real move forward. I think many of us who have been working in the area for many, many years have said if we want the field to move forward we have to start working collaboratively with the industry because the industry often has the very best data.

Now in terms of whether it's a loyalty card in a slot machine or whether it's behavioural tracking data on an online gambling site, we are now learning things about gamblers that we could never ever have learnt before. We're doing it on such a scale and we're not using psychology undergraduates to do our experiments, we're not interviewing people who may have social desirability vices or recall vices. We're talking about access to very objective information. I know I said in my presentation yesterday there's lot of weaknesses in that, I do think that the data that we have, by actually collaborating with the industry, is of high quality. We're talking ...

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Facilitator

Mark, I'm sorry.

Mark Griffiths

That's fine. Now you know why my nickname in England is Mr [unclear 0:10:04]. **Facilitator**

I did get warned you might be the person. Actually, you're not the only one though. But you will get a chance to respond and to outline a bit more about those points soon. The next person I'm going to ask to speak to this question is Mark Henley. Now, Mark is an economist who works for the Uniting Communities in Adelaide as the manager of advocacy and communication. He's a life member of the South Australian Council of Social Sciences and has advocated on gambling policy since 1992. He comes with a consumer protection perspective across a wide range of social accounting policy program areas, including poverty, homelessness, essential service pricing, credit and debit issues. He's a long-term member of the South Australian Leaders of Christian Churches' Gambling Taskforce and provides secretariat support to that.

He's also had extensive involvement with the Australian Churches' Gambling Taskforce and has worked closely with industry in South Australia to collaboratively develop codes of practice and consumer protection measures that are practical. He also chairs the Gambling and Public Health Alliance International and International Network of Gambling Advocates who are committed to promoting a public health approach to gambling and to international co-operation to deal with gambling regulation, particularly as applied to online and internet wagering and gambling. Thank you, Mark.

Mark Henley

Thank you very much. So I'm an advocate. I'm an advocate for those people who are adversely affected by gambling. That's unequivocally who I am. My role in research is as a consumer. I do not do research. I have no published research papers, however I have written well over 25 submissions to various gambling inquiries, hearings, etcetera, etcetera. I know that doesn't count as research. My focus unequivocally is on public policy. So the question is the role of industry in gambling research. Well, let's do what the researchers and the industry says we should do, which is take evidence based practice. What's the evidence based practice around this question?

Number one, very few, very few actual gambling providers would have read any gambling research reports. I'd suggest that very few industry bodies would have performance indicators that they measure their progress on against gambling harm and gambling harm reduction. I look at a major piece of research that was undertaken in this country a few years ago, the Productivity Commission, still cited by Robert Williams and others as one of the best ever pieces of gambling research. That piece of research was consulted widely. It had expert evidence. It was cited, as I said, by Robert Williams as one of the best pieces of gambling research undertaken in the world, gives a whole lot of methodological criteria. The report gave clear recommendations, and what was the industry response? To campaign vigorously, and I mean vigorously against implementing any of the recommendations that flowed from the evidence from the research, from the work that was done there.

So evidence based practice, the role of gambling with regard to gambling research, ignore it. That's the reality. That's the practice. Industry seeks to ignore gambling research, unless of

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course they see that there's money in it for them. If not ignore it, then to deny it or repudiate the individuals who are involved with the research. Again, this is the evidence based practice. The first question you need to be thinking about is what are the outcomes. What are the outcomes that we can agree we want to achieve from research? Research that I suggest must inform one or more of three different areas. Research must inform public policy. How do we reduce the harm from gambling? How do we provide greater consumer protection in dealing with this product which is a dangerous product? So P number one, policy. Research, if not policy, certainly is to inform practice, how we go about applying policy, how we go about the implementing of programs and services, how we go about regulation.

Research potential policy, area number 3 is programs. So for me, unless research is actually making and intending to make a contribution to policy, practice or programs, it's simply no help. I've said that the response or that the current role of industry in gambling research is largely to ignore it. I'm not saying that that's how it should be. In fact, I would suggest that we actually do want advocates as well as health services, government, regulators, industry to actually be coming together with some understanding of what are the questions that we really do want answered by research. To achieve that, what are some steps that we could take, baby steps, to start things happening? An agreed data information base. Dare we even try and work out some sort of agreed outcomes of research. Ultimately, I'd like to think that we could actually negotiate a protocol as to what was actually done with the research once it's produced. Thanks.

Facilitator

Thank you, Mark. Paul Delfabbro is the next person on the list I'd like to respond to this question. Now, Paul, possibly you don't know, but just in case I'll outline a little bit about Paul. He is a professor in psychology in the School of Psychology at the University of Adelaide where he's Deputy Head of School. He's published over 200 papers and reports and gives many presentations on topics including gambling, but also child welfare and out of home care. He's currently president of NAGS and serves on the editorial board and associate editor on a number of international journals including the International Gambling Studies and Addiction.

During the last five years Paul says he has undertaken financial professional work including statistical analysis report writing or review work for a number of organisations, including state governments and departments, the Australian Federal Government, many provinces in Canada, the UK Responsible Gambling Trust, the New Zealand Gambling Commission, Australian Psychological Society, as well as some small reviews for responsible gambling checklists for casino groups and the Australasian Gaming Council. He has also provided expert reports and statements in hearings involving the regulation of gambling and responsible gambling initiatives and other issues and policies. He has given evidence in a number of court cases involving problem gambling and given presentations relating to responsible gambling and gambling research. He says he's worked collaboratively with industry bodies on government funded projects related to responsible gambling. He has not been involved in any research involving the marketing or refinement of gambling products for commercial operations.

Paul Delfabbro

Great. Thanks Anna. So what's the role of industry in research? Well, I think the very first thing, as a psychological researcher, one of the first problems we have with our research is ecological validity. We find it very difficult to do research that's going to be relevant to the real world, which actually involves real gamblers. So for me, it's often inevitable that the industry will have to be involved with research. Laboratory research has its role. You can do certain things

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quite well in laboratory, but ultimately if you want to capture some of the emotional realism of gambling, how much people are gambling and some of those emotional responses, you really need to work in real environments in order to capture some of that realism. So it's inevitable to do good quality gambling research and have it in some shape or form to be able to go into gambling venues and at least simulate those gambling venues very effectively. I think sometimes you can do that. Lots of times I think you do need to go and look at what's happening in the venues and that sometimes involves working with players in real gambling environments.

For that reason, having industry support I think will always be necessary. Industry people also know a lot about gambling too. They do see clients every day and studies we've done looking at indicators of problem gambling, on the whole the venue staff are quite good, telling us many of the things that were indicators of problem gambling, very similar to what you get from doing the research involving the gamblers themselves. So industry people do have some important insights into research; even research involving responsible gambling. Sometimes some of the technical expertise of industry can be very useful too. Sometimes there could be misconceptions about how machines work and various other aspects of the industry and sometimes having the industry perspective on a research report is very important to get that technical advice. Sometimes it's often not available elsewhere because we've had industry along to NAGS to explain how machines work. We often don't have that information.

Industry funding research is more challenging. As I mentioned, like Mark I would typically never accept funding for something that relates to testing and making a new product more addictive. I've often had sort of over the beer discussions about what would make a machine particularly addictive and what would make a machine particularly responsible and we sort of know what those things probably are, but I'd certainly never be involved in research that involves the marketing of gambling products. I don't have a problem with people taking reviews that might involve peak bodies. I've done some reviews for the Australasian Gaming Council that I was happy to do on responsible gambling measures. We've done some clinical. There's been some stuff on self-exclusion too done for that. I've done some work where I've looked at indicators of responsible gambling or of problem gambling in venues that staff are using as checklists to sort of see whether they've got a problem. I go through and check their list to make sure they've got all the right indicators. So I'm sort of happy to do that type of work.

I think as Mark indicated too, the university does draw a distinction between consultancy work and research work. Consultancy work is technical work where your skills are used just to do a technical job. So if someone said to me, "I've got a whole lot of data. Take that data and just run a few correlations and chi-square tests and present some stats, just cold, hard, objective information", I'd have less trouble with anyone who came to me and said, "Well, I've got some industry data and I've run some analysis" and they just want some summaries. It's how you write it up and use it for research that's different. For me, research is something where I would typically not choose to be funded directly by the industry. I think you might have some independence. Some criticism can be made of government funded research too. I think every project you do has to be treated on its own merits and I think as Mark indicated, maybe across jurisdictions as well. For me, it's about common sense. If you saw someone who reviewed a gambling product for example and said it's safe and then you turned around and saw that it was funded by the industry, you might have some questions to be raised about the conflict of interest. Those conflicts of interest are everywhere in everything we do. That's not so credible.

For me, the only possible danger I think of being involved too much with industry over time, particularly as your funding source, is that you may become less critical of industry. So as Mark

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indicated, if industry becomes a primary source of funding you may be less likely to criticise less responsible things they do. Now, people who know me know I'm pretty much very objective. When someone says, "I'm going to put headphones on players playing poker machines" you can go on Google now and you can see my views on that. No way. But if a regulatory body says, "Well here's a new feature that involves a little minor change to a jackpot feature", I'm happy to review that and then say, "Well I don't think that's going to cause too many problems." My principal focus has always been on responsible gambling and if anyone asks me to do work it's typically that type of work. I've never done, as I said, work relating to marketing of products. So that's my general - very similar to Mark in many ways I think.

Facilitator

Thank you Paul. Next I'll get Dr Charles Livingstone to respond to the question. Charles Livingstone, for those who don't know, has been at Monash University since 2006 where he works in the School of Public Health and Preventative Medicine. His work is focused on critical gambling research, mainly interested in the harms associated with poker machines and how to minimise those harms. He has a PhD in social theory from the University of Melbourne and Masters of Economics from the University of New England and has been published widely in gambling research and in health economics and health services research.

Charles says he's received money from Victorian and South Australian governments, the funding for which were derived from hypothecated - I practiced this and I thought I know I'm going to say it wrong. Gambling tax research for research purposes. Basically government receiving money from gambling tax revenue and then using it for research purposes. The Australian and New Zealand School of Government and from non-government organisations including the UK based Campaign for Fairer Gambling, Uniting Care Australia, the Anglican Church of Southern Queensland and research into multiple aspects of poker machine and other gambling, including regulatory reform, existing harm minimisation practices and technical characteristics of gambling forms. He has received travel and corporation grants from the Alberta Problem Gambling Research Centre, the Finnish Institute of Public Health, the Ontario Problem Gambling Research Committee and the Problem Gambling Foundation of New Zealand. He is a chief investigator on an Australian research council funded project researching mechanisms of influence on government by the tobacco, alcohol and gambling industries.

He has undertaken consultancy research for local governments and non-government organisations in Australia and the UK seeking to restrict or reduce the concentration of poker machine and gambling impacts and was a member of the Australian Government's ministerial and expert advisory group on gambling in 2010 and '11. He's also a member of the Alliance for Gambling Reforms and the Australian Grants. We should also admire his dedication. He flew in from New Zealand at nine o'clock last night and then got up in the morning at five o'clock to fly here in order to be part of this debate. He thinks it's that important. Thank you, Charles.

Dr Charles Livingstone

Can you hear me? Does this thing work? Is this thing working? That's what you always say isn't it? If I sort of go to sleep in the middle of this it will not be because I'm boring myself, although it may be possible. I do say this stuff a lot. Look, I come at this, you know, I'm the radical here. I come at this from a fairly hard line view. I come from a public health school and a long public health background. I've been interested in public health since I basically started doing further education and my economics degree was actually around a study of the benefits, costs and resistance to the installation of a sewerage system in Melbourne, which didn't happen

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until the 1890s, which surprises many people. In fact, Melbourne used to be called Marvellous Smelbourne because of the stench of the sewerage running down the streets. That was an obvious problem and it was amenable to regulation but it wasn't solved until people started agitating in a very political way.

Now, you might not think there's much of a connection between sewerage and clean water and the gambling industry, but let me say the situation is remarkably similar. It's similar because what we have is a harmful product. It's a harmful product. Everyone agrees it's a harmful product. We may disagree as to the extent of the harm it's caused, but we now know from some good, emerging research that the spectrum of gambling harm is very similar to the spectrum or the distribution of harm say from alcohol, which is a classic public health problem. So we have a distribution which looks a bit like a standard distribution, and all our focus tends to concentrate on those people at the most harmful end of that distribution. But in fact, in the aggregate, most of the harm occurs in that big bulge in the middle where people don't seem to be having a problem. Now, we know that's true of alcohol and we also now are starting to see good quality research, which suggests that that is true in gambling consumption as well. So it's a classic public health problem.

So what do we do about that? Now, the gambling industry, as [Mike Dawe] said last year at NAGS - I wasn't there, but I read his speech. He rang me up very enthusiastically afterwards to declare that he'd escaped in one piece, which I think he was in some doubts about. How do we deal with it? What's the best way to deal with that? Well, if it's a public health problem, then it's being marketed by people who have a very powerful vested interest in maintaining something like the current level of harm production. Now, they may not consciously be aware of that, but that's what they do and I think everyone in the gambling industry knows, particularly in the poker machine gambling industry in Australia, which is the best example, knows that most of their profits come from people who have a level or other of gambling problem. You know, and that's just the obvious part of it. That long tail of people who appear not to have a problem we now know are also experiencing harm and their children are and their families are and all the rest of it. So it's a classic public health problem.

So what do we do with that? Do we engage with the industry, the people who are creating the harm and try and persuade them not to create harm, even though it will halve their profits? Or, do we do what we've done with tobacco and road safety and everything else that we've had improvements in over a long time in public health? Do we seek proper and appropriate regulation? Proper and appropriate regulation, which has the effect of reducing harm to the greatest possible extent and not window dressing. Now, my colleagues on the left here have talked a lot about responsible gambling and how they're keen to participate with industry in developing better practices for industry around responsible gambling, and you know, I understand where they're coming from with that.

The problem with that though is that I've been arguing now for a long time that responsible gambling, as it's actually practised, is actually a piece of window dressing invented by industry as Alex himself has written I think in the early 2000s, a very influential paper about the origins of responsible gambling, in which he pointed out that it was a response by industry to increasing demands from public and political forces for them to reign in the level of harm that was being seen to be produced. So they thought, we'd better get ahead of this wave and so they invented the term responsible gambling. Now, responsible gambling had a number of functions, but the key one, in my opinion, is to download the responsibility for harm onto individuals. So what we end up with then is a very industry friendly individual focus on the creation of harm.

In other words, the fact that we have produced an incredibly addictive device, the poker machine or whatever, or online gambling apps that let you bet every 10 seconds, whatever we created, that's not the problem. The problem is a bunch of weak willed individuals who are unable, for whatever reason, to control their urges. So we wait until they fall off a cliff and then we try and patch them up as best we can. Now, of course we have to patch them up, but we don't put a lot of effort into stopping them from falling off the cliff in the first place. Why don't we do that? Because it's not in industry's interests for that to occur. Now, like [Mike Dawe] I argue that taking money from the gambling industry, for whatever purpose, serves to justify their position. It will be used by them in some form or another as a PR or a promotional exercise. It's a way for them to legitimate what they're doing. So to co-operate with them in any way - am I running out of time? I have. I shouldn't have told those stupid jokes. So I'll finish on that note in the hope that I might get a response later. Thank you.

Facilitator

Thank you. I'm sure that you will. I'm going to ask one or two follow up questions and then I'm going to open things up to the audience. Oh, sorry. [overtalk]. My apologies, Rob. You're sitting right beside me too. Sorry, you were just tucked in the back there. Robert Chappell everyone. Now, Robert is a really important member of this panel. A director of South Australia's Independent Gambling Authority and represents South Australia in the Gambling Research Australia. So he is in effect, a funder of gambling research coming from the government side and is also a representative of government in this discussion. So that's really an important person to have on the panel. The Independent Gambling Authority is a seven member board whose functions include the making of mandatory advertising and responsible gambling codes of practice, the discipline of major licensees and the conduct of a research program.

He's also a lawyer by profession and prior to coming to South Australia, worked as leading counsel to the Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority. He cites the highlights of his time in South Australia the initial licensing of the South Australian TAB as a non-government operator, the implementation of minimum standards for the presentation of mandatory warning messages in advertising and a ban on live odds, the parallel regulation of interstate betting operators, the public inquiry into the management of gaming machine numbers and the implementation of not one, but two gambling exclusion schemes. Thank you, Robert.

Robert Chappell

Thanks, Anna. Yes, and no doubt we'll get around to our third gambling exclusion scheme by the end of the decade. It's always wonderful following Charles Livingstone, and you're never in any doubt about what Charles thinks and I would say it's actually given me pause for thought as he was going through that, and I think it's all true. It's a perfectly legitimate way of looking at any sort of vice which, despite our best common sense, we choose to engage in. All the psychologists in the room will understand that. What's a problem for everyone else is something that we're individually able to manage, so it's okay. I'd like to start by just reminding everyone that industry is indeed a significant contributor to research right now, because in the industry, those gaming machine manufacturers, there are floors and floors and floors of people developing the next game, and that is research and development that's the core part of their business. Although gaming machine manufacturers in particular are technology companies and they're very good at getting your little bits of circuit boards talking to other little bits - I was going to say transistors, Paul, but that would make me ...

The thing that makes the large international gaming companies valuable was the intellectual property in the product that they have and we should always remember that. I think I agree with a lot of the things that everyone said on the way through so I'll just try to pick my marks here. We were having a smaller conversation yesterday about issues for the future of gambling research, particularly that sort of research that enables capacity to be developed and people to mature into confident, fully fledged researchers whose work can be relied on. Personally, I don't think there would be any problem in charming the industry into kicking a million dollars a year into a bucket of money that could be administered say by [Jan MacMillan], Alex [unclear 0:33:54] and [Max Abbott] to hand out PhD scholarships or to fund medium sized grant work, because there'd be money and we always need some money to do things. There'd be a proper circuit breaker in terms of the right governance framework to make sure that it was only a minor public relations opportunity for the industry as opposed to something that could influence the outcome. So I think it's perfectly alright to charm the industry into paying for capacity development, provided that you've got the right governance structure.

Do I think it would be helpful to have industry on advisory committees, particularly when there's no vote attached to the outcome, and I think Paul was alluding to this before that it's often really useful to have technical input into some of these questions, because after going to Gambling Research Australia meetings for about 12 years, we had particular reasons for being at that table and we had particular things we needed to come away with and it was all focused on trying to find a way to answer our immediate policy questions in a way that was meaningful for everyone in the room. Can I tell you, that was a very big challenge. There'd be a couple of PhD studies in that all on its own. Occasionally spicing that up with a bit of serious industry knowledge would be really good, and that could be managed in circumstances where there was no weight attached to that or it was a guest appearance.

But do I think that we're ever going to be in a position to allow industry money to flow into research that actually informs policy? I just can't see it. When governments, and I'm speaking about the government as a decision maker, when governments need to look at what the policy settings are going to be, to do that sort of sewerage regulation that Charles was talking about before the Yan Yean dam was opened in 1888, it's terribly important that whatever is done is going to have the sort of credibility that will enable the policy debate to withstand the sort of furnace like activity that happened here over the last three or four years on the question of pre-commitment, which on one view can only be seen as the great opportunity missed. When you look at the voracity of that debate and what the real drivers of that debate were and it was sort of fear and loathing on both sides, if we are to have research to inform policy, it has to be absolutely unimpeachable.

Now, some of us have got enough memories of this place and [Michael Walker] to look back to the start of the previous decade and that attempt that was done to model the impacts of new harm minimisation measures on gaming machines, and it was going to be terribly, terribly expensive and the only way it was going to be done was through engaging with industry funding. I think it was a great piece of work and I think the people who did it learnt a lot from it, but there were a couple of years of discomfort after those reports were produced and it was all about the challenge that went to the validity of those outcomes because of the way they were funded. Even if you get the precise answer and even if everything is alright, if there's someone out there who wants to disagree with it and can find a means to attack it, and that means is where the money's come from, then you are better off trying to find a better way, a different way of doing it. So I think at that point I'll hand back to you Anna.

Facilitator

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Thank you Rob. Now, I wanted to ask a follow up question that I'm going to direct to Paul actually initially and then other panel members can respond to that if they feel that they've got something to add to that. So the follow up question really is one of the things we're talking about, the reason that we're having this kind of conversation is we are living in a world of limited funding and quite shrinking funding in terms of research. If we all had limitless access to money then we wouldn't need to be having some of these conversations. So in this, you know, concerns have been raised around whether or not we can have funding from industry, whether that be directly or indirectly, which at the moment is through particular research centres generally, or through governments who are driving funding, if we've got those same sort of issues which are some of the ones that you were just touching on Rob in terms of when we can do it.

So what I'd really just delve into a little bit more is, you know, there's issues that are raised around this type of funding in terms of whether there's inadequate research funders, are people encouraged to ask some of the easy questions and answer some of those, you know, more reluctance to actually tackle some of the difficult questions for things that might lead to discomfort for the funders in terms of the answers that may come from that research, potentially censorship of publications, of results and/or of implications, and/or even researcher self-censoring. So when there is no avert control over it that people actually start to self-censor in the concern around whether they'll get future funding, they want to keep the relationships perhaps a bit more positive towards these people. So I'm wondering Paul, if you could respond to that in terms of really thinking about those realities, what can be done to actually mitigate issues and ensure vigour of research in that type of context.

Paul Delfabbro

I think you talk about government, I mean obviously government's often the most common source of funding. I think one of the challenges I know over the years, a number of people in the audience, Christine [unclear 0:39:34] worked with over the years in government. I think state government level's quite important to look what department funds your research too, because I think often I've done reports or been involved with research where we know that we're looking at certain harm minimisation measures which might lead to reductions in gambling expenditure. So take for example the pre-commitment for example. If a perfect pre-commitment scheme, or a very good one came in, we know from the research certainly that Sarah did in South Australia that you'd be very lucky to have a reduction in expenditure.

Now, if that were funded by the portfolio of the minister who came to talk to us yesterday, she might say well that's a really good outcome, that's something which is what we aim to achieve through our department, social inclusion, families, we're helping families reducing problem gambling. Now, if on the other hand that were funded by the Department of Treasury and Finance whose, of course, state government revenue is very heavily reliant upon EGM revenue, then the Treasury might say, "Well, if our taxation revenue goes down, they might feel a bit uncomfortable about some of the findings." I think for government, and maybe different parts of government, which may have different competing objectives, so even though Treasury might say ultimately we want to help problem gamblers", we're sort of saying at the same time "Well, we know we're probably going to lose a bit of gambling revenue."

So I think, I mean, looking at positioning the funding of research, so clearly government will play a role. You probably need to look at where you position it and so it may well be that in placing it in Treasury for example you may have - even the Treasury people themselves said to me, "Well, we've got a possible conflict of interest here. We'd like to see something good done, but at the

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same time we know we're going to be talking to the Treasurer if revenue goes down." So I guess that's an important consideration at government level. So when it comes to good practice I would say certainly having a dedicated minister I think is very important, having the right department involved I think is very important.

Facilitator

Thank you. Did anyone else want to add something to that? Mark.

Mark Henley

Look, if I might, I mean I think we need to be a little bit more creative and look outside of the gambling industry as to how funding is made available for research, and dare I say it, advocacy in dramatically asymmetrical industries. I mean, I actually am employed two days a week with funding through Energy Consumers Australia to work on energy regulation issues. This money comes directly from a pool which is collected by the Australian Energy market operator, which is basically a very small levy, but it's a levy on all electricity bills across the country. So \$2 million is raised that way for electricity and consumer advocates to be engaged in the policy debates and the regulatory debates and processes. There are some related processes. So that's an independent body established to collect the money, an independent body that allocates the money and then it's game on effectively.

Relatively similar models are used in telecommunications in the finance industry, in insurance and banking. So look, I think we need to look at industries other than just gambling as to how these same issues of consumer engagement and research are undertaken in controversial contentious issues. In the energy space for example, the industry accepts the fact that the funding body, the consumer funding body has funded consumer groups to actually be involved directly in the Australian Competition Tribunal Appeal. Never happened before, but that is accepted by all parties as a reasonable part of the process.

Facilitator

Thank you, Mark. That's similar to what Rob was saying I think about putting money into a central pool from which things can [unclear 0:43:24]. Charles, did you happen to ...

Dr Charles Livingstone

I just want to make a couple of points. First one is what I'm talking about is there's a level of moral hazard that attaches to certain sources of funding. So if you take money from the industry, clearly you're going to be in strife morally, if you like, you know, the concept of moral hazard, not borrowing in terms of what your moral beliefs are but in terms of the likelihood that you're going to be doing the industry's business. If you take money from, let's say, a fund derived from the proceeds of gambling, which is administered by an arm's length statutory authority which has continued funding for a period of time, guaranteed by government and has no industry representatives on it, something like the VRGF, then you're perhaps a little bit better off. Considerably better off let's say. I'll say much better off.

But can I say this. Here's an example. Now, many years ago the Victorian government changed and the Labor Party came to power. They were full of zeal and enthusiasm and they appointed a thing called the Gambling Research Panel with which Rosa I think is familiar and probably has some nightmares about still. But what that panel did was very independent. It was

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headed by Linda Hancock, who many of you will know, and Linda is a very independent minded soul, and started funding research which I think it's reasonable to say, it's reasonable to draw the conclusion that it was probably annoying the government more than somewhat and so they just turned it off. Just like that they turned it off. That's where the hazard starts to accrue.

If you're relying on an organisation or a funding source which derives significant revenue from - and this is a point that Paul was making - it derives significant revenue from this source, then there is always a danger that they're going to get annoyed if you bite the hand that feeds you. Most researches are smart enough to know that they're not going to kill the goose who lays the golden eggs. I think that's a reasonable supposition to take. So that's one point I wanted to make. The second point I wanted to make is that, you know, I'm not saying that everyone who takes money from the industry is evil and that they should be taken out and shot. Sometimes you can actually get access to good stuff by using the industry, but the problem is, if you co-operate with the industry, you're the guy or the gal who gets access to that data.

So if you don't co-operate with them for the sort of reasons I put out, you don't get access to that data. So what you're doing is you're narrowing down the stock of people who are going to have access to data which could be usefully analysed perhaps in a different way. All that data is in the public domain. It should be in the public domain. It's a result of a public social licence. It's a public good, so it should be a condition of licensing that that sort of data becomes publicly available and accessible to researchers who know how to use it. So I'll stop there.

Facilitator

Thank you. I actually would like to follow on from that if that's okay, because that was actually one of the other questions I've got around that, is the access to data and to participants. I know you've said things in the past about the idea that regulation could be introduced, or if you like, industry to co-operate with research to provide access to that data and potentially to participants to allow that research to happen. Would that be something that could protect in that sense, that you know, then if we are actually moving away from particular people being allowed access to the data but only if they're not again perhaps responding to the difficult questions with that data. So I'm just wondering, actually Paul I think your area in South Australia has done something along those lines.

Paul Delfabbro

Yes, Anna. There are a couple of new concepts in South Australia called account based cashless gaming and automatic risk monitoring, part of a legislative package in 2013. The casino across the road actually has two of these systems operating and it's going to be mandated for the gaming machine industry by the end of 2018. In the prescribed criteria for application for recognition you have to give an undertaking as part of your application for recognition that you will make the data available to us and to the government for any research where the principal investigator reasonably requires the data.

Now, it's not quite the Livingstone gold standard of the data has to be available to anyone who knows how to use it, but at Gambling Research Australia this has been an issue about how do you get access to industry data when the data are by default proprietary and there was no upfront licensing obligation for them to warehouse data for investigative purposes. So with these particular new activities it's been built in at the front end that whoever's making the application understands that they have to warehouse the data and make it available to us. Of course, because we are an independent statutory authority with good intentions, we will

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commission, in fact we are in the middle of commissioning a piece of research at the moment for the casino one and we'll require the operators to make the data available.

Facilitator

Before I move on, did anyone else want to comment on that?

Mark Griffiths

Well, I just like to comment on lots of things. The one thing that hasn't been raised so far I'd like to raise. There seems to be a kind of implicit assumption that everything we've said today is that the government funding is somehow better than industry funding. In my experience, I mean, in Britain we have got - I mean, I would like a statutory levy but we haven't got one in the UK. We've got something called the Responsible Gambling Fund which was introduced by our government as a way of forcing the industry to put donations aside to help in treatment, intervention, research and education. Now, the reason I'm kind of sceptical about all this is in our government we have something called the All Party Gambling Scrutiny Committee. This is 21 members of Parliament, 21 very influential members of Parliament, who effectively rule on all the regulation and policy in the UK. What was very interesting, when you read their conflict of interests in the conflict of interests register, 18 of those 21 were actually executive directors or non-executive directors of gambling companies in the UK. Almost everyone on that committee had a vested interest in making money from the gambling industry.

I'm kind of seeing things on both side of the fence in the sense I've done lots of consultancy with the industry, but I've also had lots of research funded by the government. The most obvious one is the British Gambling Prevalence Survey, which I was involved with for about 10 years. This is the largest amount of money that the government give out for gambling research in the UK and I was very pleased to be part of that. But I can tell you now, when it came to dissemination of the results, we were absolutely told that we had to sing from a particular hymn sheet with a particular message, not to say particular things. When I've worked with the industry, collaboratively and a consultancy sense, they've never said to me, "Mark, you can't say that, can't do that." For me, government has actually been always far more concerned about how you disseminate the results, the message that you give.

So can I just give an example here? I wrote about this in a recent paper that was published in [unclear 0:50:58] International Gambling Studies. I mean, I actually personally think that a person's own personal view of gambling actually affects how you write and disseminate, rather than who you're funded by because I think every funder, whether it's a homelessness charity, whether it's the government, whether it's the industry, actually still wants you to get over a particular message. So here's a real example I just wanted to give out. We'll take Britain. Britain's got a population of 64 million people. In terms of the British Gambling Prevalence Survey, depending on what your view of gambling is, you could give exactly the same result, and I've got five different ways you can say something. I've got one sentence each. I'm really trying to highlight the point here.

So here's the first one. The state says the overwhelming majority of the samples surveyed had no gambling problem. So the original finding is that under 1% have a gambling problem in the UK. So you could report that the overwhelming majority of the sample surveyed had no gambling problem. Only a tiny minority of the samples surveyed, 1% had a gambling problem. Ninety-nine percent of the samples surveyed had no gambling problems. One percent of the samples surveyed had a gambling problem. Words like only or a tiny minority changes it. So for

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instance, if I was anti-gambling I could write findings from the survey indicate that approximately one million adults have a gambling problem.

Now again, when I've been working for government they spend hours and hours, we work out every sentence in a way that they want the message to be done and it's all to do with what your view - if you're anti-gambling, gambling neutral or pro gambling. I said yesterday, "I haven't got an anti-gambling bone in my body." I'd like to think I was gambling neutral in the way that I write things. I rarely put words like only or a tiny minority. I just report 1% of this, 99% and that's how to do it. But I just want to get over this thing that the idea that getting money from government is somehow better or morally correct than other sources, I don't think always is the case.

Facilitator

Thank you, Mark. It's always useful to keep in mind, yes, we all do we have our biases and statistics can be used in a number of ways. Now, what I'd really like to do now is throw it over to the audience if people have questions and I might get someone to grab this mic so we can actually pass it around so people can hear the questions. Thank you.

Female

Hi. So a lot of the talk here is about bias and the bias that industry funding might cause in research, and what I haven't heard a lot of talk about is actually [unclear 0:53:44], about how bias operates, when in fact there is lots of evidence about other fields, about the pharmaceutical industry and about nutrition and about tobacco, about the influence that even small amounts of money that people receive from industry can have on their later research findings. So I'm interested in what the panel has to say about the actual research finding about bias.

Robert Chappell

Do you mind if I just start with Helen's question, because you've reminded me of something I wanted to say earlier. Earlier this week we were having a bit of a barney in the room at the end about predicted monitoring and loyalty programs and we had a couple of people who I think are still at the conference today who act as consultants to the industry. It reminded me that one of the creative ways of regulation is to say to the industry here's our problem, our regulator's problem that you the gambling provider are causing, and we want you to go out and tell us how you're going to solve it. So tick number one, you can pay for the research. Tick number two, find some really highly qualified Nova Scotian consultants to tell you how to solve the problem and then come and tell us, come and satisfy us that it's robust.

The thing that you said that made me think about that is of course, most of the R&D in the pharmaceutical industry is about finding a new super drug that can kill the superbug that they made last month and about all the stuff that's wrapped around that. I think that can be a huge problem because it's the question that gets asked that propagates the bias through the process. But from a public policy point of view I think that the idea of putting it back to the industry to come up with the answer to the defined problem and substantiate it through robust and thorough research, is probably an underutilised tactic in the war to make all gambling recreational.

Dr Charles Livingstone

I mean, Helen's perfectly correct and we know from evidence in the pharmaceutical industry and indeed in tobacco and alcohol, that the funding source does actually empirically influence the

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results. That's why many of the leading medical journals will no longer publish articles about drug trials for example if the data was derived from an industry funded trial, because it is inherent. It's an inherent bias. Whether it's intentional, whether it's unintentional, unconscious or whatever, it's there. It's clearly evident. I think the same principle applies in gambling research. Maybe it's just the golden goose thing. I don't know. But whatever it is, it's there and it's real. Peter Adams and I wrote a piece which was in Addiction last month on this topic and we've got a whole bunch of references in that that people who are interested can have a look at. There's a plug for my article. But it is unequivocal that the source of funding has an inherent bias to it in terms of those sorts of results. There's no question.

Paul Delfabbro

The point raises that all this does come from tobacco and alcohol. I mean, the most famous one of course is the famous [unclear 0:56:50] studies where he showed that cigarettes, cancer was more associated with genetics rather than of course the actual level of consumption. Now, there's always parallels of course. The guilt by association drawn with alcohol and tobacco, but it's not easy to find any evidence to show the bias in gambling research. Now, there's certain research in America which is often said to be, you know, people raise questions simply because of the level of industry involvement of some of those research centres, but one of our things that we need to do is be able to put that evidence on the table and say here is a research report in the gambling field which I know was undertaken by industry funded researchers and this is why I think it's biased.

What I tend to find is that particularly in the public health area people often - I see this with the road traffic research too - people tend to inflate the problems quite often so as to keep getting the funding for the problem. [unclear 0:57:43] research and [unclear 0:57:45] stuff. I've read all those reports and it's not what they say if you read them carefully. It's not what they say in the public domain. So there's a lot of bias, however in the other direction a lot of research. So it's I think a very important thing that we look for that evidence in the gaming field. It certainly does exist. I agree with Charles. It exists in the other fields like alcohol and in tobacco, but we need to see it in gambling research and so far I want to see that evidence. I want to see a paper written documenting that evidence.

Mark Griffiths

Sorry, can I just make one point about comparisons with the smoking industry and alcohol industry? Yes, I would say gambling is a consumptive activity that to a small minority of people we know it causes harm. Charles made the point, I mean, I hope you did say this Charles. You just said gambling is a harmful product. My argument is gambling is a harmful product to some people. When I gamble I don't think there's any harm to me whatsoever. Are you saying that when I gamble it is being harmful to me? I mean, it's just a straight question. I don't believe that gambling is actually - if I smoke one cigarette I think that does do harm to my body. I mean, I stole this off Paul by the way. I talked to Paul during the break. But it's something I totally agree with. I've never smoked, but if I might smoke one cigarette I don't care about addiction. I think that cigarette would be doing my body harm. When I do one gamble or I have an evening at the roulette table, I don't think it does me any harm whatsoever. But Charles made the point just saying gambling is harmful, whereas I would say gambling is harmful to a small minority of people.

Dr Charles Livingstone

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Well, I mean, my strong view is that gambling is a harmful activity and there are many examples. We've all met people who have been harmed very significantly by it. What I'm saying is that what the emerging research is starting to show is the continuum of harm for gambling is similar to the continuum of harm for alcohol. So you know, if I have a glass of wine with dinner tonight, that's probably not going to do me any harm. But if I decide that I'm going to get stuck into it every night and drink a bottle or a couple of bottles a night, then clearly it is and my risks of various harms increase enormously. The other thing I think we need to think about is to stop individualising this problem. It's a population health problem. It's a public health problem. So individualising it is not going to help us find a solution. Treating it as a population health problem where we're talking about risks and how to properly manage those risks, is a much more constructive way to engage with this problem.

Facilitator

Thank you.

Mark Henley

Can I just make a very quick comment? Just coming back to the question of bias. I think there's an issue both with the bias in research, but there's also a really major problem I think with the bias that comes with interpretation and use of the research. So it's producing and using the research where there's bias in both.

Paul Delfabbro

Yeah I agree with Mark. Both Marks, I think, make a very valid point. I mean, I see it used on both sides. I see certain anti-gaming campaigners still going around saying 25% of the world's gaming machines are in New South Wales, after all these years have been corrected. So we're I'm saying there's bias I think. There's definitely bias in the way the information is used. I'm more concerned with how the evidence is being used more than I do necessarily about the actual numbers themselves.

Facilitator

Thank you. Yes, it's an important point around the bias and certainly in terms of both producing and using the research and we've had some good ideas about how potentially to control that.

Male

When I came into the research field there wasn't really disclosure or funding sources for much things. So there's no doubt plenty of journal papers out there [unclear 1:01:34]. So it would be really difficult to work out those [unclear 1:01:39]. But I do notice in the last five years or so there's no disclosure, so that's really important to have that as well.

Facilitator

Thank you Matt. That is a really important point. It was one of the things I had on my list. So would people like to comment around the importance of disclosure and transparency?

Mark Griffiths

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Well, all I would say is that it's absolutely necessary. Obviously [unclear 1:02:02] International Gambling Studies has a really strict policy now in terms of disclosure. That's why I said right at the start how many reports I've written, how many companies I've worked with. I've got nothing to hide and I think that's absolutely fair and should be done.

Paul Delfabbro

[unclear 1:02:18] are of course disclosures we make as NAGS members as well, and so I think Addiction is another journal which also has similar disclosures. Every time you produce a paper you have to write a disclosure about your funding sources, conflicts of interests.

Dr Charles Livingstone

I think that's all well and good and I agree entirely that there should be full disclosure. The problem is what you mean by full disclosure. So someone who's got a long history of funding of industry and then who goes off and writes a paper funded by the Saskatchewan Gambling Institute or something, which has some arm's length relationship, they will disclose that they were funded by that, but they don't necessarily disclose a series of relationships going back 20 or 30 years with the gambling industry. So you know, I mean, we've got to be a little bit more serious than we have been. I think one way around that is to simply have a central register which the journals put up on a website, so people have a full disclosure of their interests with a link to it, you know, electronically relatively easy to do and at least everyone's out there and we know where they're coming from.

I'm also not saying just because you've taken industry money in the past means you should be blacklisted forever. I think it's reasonable for people to come to a change of heart or a change of view to understand that taking industry money is very fraught and that they would like not to be fraught. So, you know, if people want to change the way they do it and support a new approach that's great, but we really need a much deeper and better disclosure than even is certainly currently in practice and even though it's much better than it used to be.

Facilitator

Thank you.

Robert Chappell

At Gambling Research Australia I used to be constantly frustrated by the difficulty we had getting people from whom we commissioned a report to actually disclose that it was a piece of report commissioned by us, because sometimes like it was their own idea that we'd stuck 10% into. So the fact that when the industry's funding you they don't have an obligation for you to disclose that tells you something about where it's coming from. So I think that that's absolutely right, but on the other hand, Charles, I mean it's a bit like that old story about the journalist not knowing that Sir Warwick Fairfax was the owner of the Sydney Morning Herald. Some of these things are quite obvious and the man in whose memory this session is held used to delight us at these conferences in telling us about his personal in venue experiences and about how he had the way of beating the machine, which coming from a senior, well it's all about doubling up you see. If you're lucky enough. So I mean, I think disclosure and also a bit of adult understanding of who it is that's doing the writing, where they're coming from, really helps you understand what they're saying.

Male

I just wonder whether it works the other way as well, that if you're perhaps a researcher with a strong indication in the sort of anti-gambling side of things, whether you should be disclosing money you get from not for profits or organisations that might be keen to either fund research or support research that would be negative towards gambling.

Dr Charles Livingstone

Well, can I just say my disclosure statement now in most of the articles I produce is longer than most of the article, and poor old Anna had to read out - poor young Anna I should say had to read out that long list at the start. So you know, I'm more than happy to disclose that. But I think there is a distinction and I'm sure there's distinction between the strong and immediate powerful vested interest of an industrial scale industry which is extracting billions of dollars from some of the most socially vulnerable people in the world, in our country and around the world, and a charitable organisation that would like to see a little bit more regulation of poker machines in Fairfield, New South Wales. I think there's a significant difference. I'm not saying you shouldn't disclose who you get your money from. I think everyone should and you should do it with as much tenacity as possible, but a bit of adult intelligence as Robert was just pointing out doesn't go astray either.

Male

Some of the different views that we've heard from the panel about the usefulness of industry research, which sort of in some ways range from Robert's [unclear 1:06:38] to the industry who actually do the research until a government offer solutions, which implies inherently that they will be able to get competent unbiased researchers to provide people with valuable evidence and satisfy Robert's high standards for information to accept that. I think you may well potentially be creating a catch-22, but anyway, that's another thing. I'd just be interested in the panel's views on what, if you started with a blank sheet of paper - and I concede that none of us do - if you start with a blank sheet of paper, how would you structure research funding in the gambling industry today?

Facilitator

You've got all the power in the world. What would you do with it?

Mark Henley

I think going back to the idea of Robert, like talking about the levy again, I think the model of having a levy where a certain portion goes towards research is certainly a good starting point. [unclear 1:07:31] funding services and where the researchers - Robert will probably say yes to this one - where it's actually research is for an independent body that's not partisan. I think that's what you need, which is not sort of in the lack of control of Treasury.

Mark Griffiths

Well, I've already said, statutory levies [unclear 1:07:54] for at least 20 years. The thing about our industry in the UK, in terms of the funding body that was set up to fund, educate, prevent and treat etcetera, only one million pounds was being raised a year, which I think is what, \$2 million Australian dollars a year. A very tiny amount. Basically our minister for government said,

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“Look, if you don’t contribute substantially more I’m just going to slap the levy on you.” So they raised it up to five million and that’s the level we’ve got now. But of course, if we introduce statutory level we’d be talking about tens of millions of pounds that could be spent on treatment, intervention, prevention, education. Obviously that’s what I’d prefer because I’ve got a vested interest, conflict of interest, being a researcher, because I’d probably get more money for it.

Richard Chappell

I think in a mature world we wouldn’t worry about hypothecation and levies. It’s different in the UK, but governments in Australia make a lot of money out of gambling tax and the idea that you just take 1% or 2% off the top of it is a bit nonsensical. It should just all go into a big bucket and someone should come up with a number like one, two, three, four million dollars a year for policy focus work nationally that can be gotten from all the governments that are making the money and then handled through a governments process that could probably be a bit more nimble than the GRA one, or perhaps the centre for which Anna works, which I think has a really good structure there to support these things.

But I think the other thing we need to come back to is the capacity building thing and the mechanisms for doing that need to be different. If it’s decided as a public good that there should be more people to follow in Charles’ footsteps who are prepared to say brave and unpopular things and have a proper grounding in practice before they do that, then there needs to be better capacity to get money out of the Australian Research Council or other funding bodies where there’s no need for success. One of the problems with government funded research is that policy officers like myself who are signing on the dotted line that we really should commit a million dollars to this thing, or \$300,000 to this thing, the worst thing for us is actually not an adverse outcome, or one that says this is a dangerous product or that we should close down all the slot machines or anything like that. The worst thing for us is a final report that is full of spelling mistakes, logical errors, plagiarism, any number of other things that have come across my desk in various [unclear 1:10:33] and the desks of Helen and David and various other people in the room. A failed project that is a bungled project is the absolute worst thing for a government funding agency because the media and tax payer expectation is that every cent of government money is spent perfectly.

Mark Griffiths

Or one that never actually appears in a viable form.

Richard Chappell

Yes. Well that’s right, a project that’s never finished. There was one GRA project like that that had the word [unclear 1:11:00] in it at one stage that was just a nightmare. Those are the things that we fear more. So it’s important to be able to tolerate failure in the development of researchers, and that’s why PhD scholarships and small grants and that sort of thing where it doesn’t really matter whether the stuff that comes out at the end of it is meaningful as long as it adds something to the body of it and we’ve built capacity. That needs to be funded through another mechanism I think.

Dr Charles Livingstone

Can I just quickly add to that if I may? I mean, when you look at mechanisms for funding research, it seems strange to me that in Australia the only way to do it is with some sort of

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dedicated gambling research fund. The ARC in Australia and the NH&MRC generally don't fund gambling research very much and I think that they don't do that because there is this fund over there and it's sort of a bit the situation Mark was talking about in the UK that the ARC and the NH&MRC generally don't fund it because they think that the states threw these programs money. I mean, that's such bullshit really. Sorry. I mean, there's no reason why you can't do this sort of policy focus research that you're talking about in the way we sort of more or less do it now, although using something more like the BRGF model. Like, you know, you guys are pretty independent in my experience.

I mean, Christ help us, I don't see why they don't get money ARC and the NH&MRC anyway. But why can't they give them a bit more money and say fund a bloody decent gambling research using the same peer review processes that we use for every other research project. Now, we've all got our problems with those things, you know, success rates of 17% or something. Twelve, whatever the last one was. The last one is always worse than the one before. But nonetheless, for all of its faults at least it's got a process which is as independent as we're like to get. The other thing, quickly, quickly, quickly. Your faith in evidence based policy is incredibly courageous in my experience and I'd like to think that you as a good agency went out to commission good research and then turned that into policy, and perhaps you do have some success in that, but I tell you what, if you do you'd be the only one in Australia. It's really hard for research to be timely for policy purposes I think [unclear 1:13:30].

Male

Hello. I'm from Gambling Help Services. I suppose I have some concerns about the misuse of research and the results of research itself by the industry, such as behavioural tracking which could be used in less than ethical ways in order to determine which triggers and levers to pull in order to perhaps milk the game or have more money, perhaps to exploit problem gamblers with that full profit motive. So I was just wondering if you could comment on things like that?

Mark Griffiths

Well, since I gave my keynote actually yesterday on that very topic, I mean, you could say you could always use information or data in one of two ways: you can use it positively or negatively. My understanding of the situation in places like the UK for instance, companies can't get operating licences unless they're showing what they're doing in terms of player protection, harm minimisation, responsible gambling and social responsibility. One of the things that we're now in the UK trying to force people in the industry to do is use that behavioural tracking data for good, and the point is that if they don't use it for good and they use it for the exploitative practices that you were talking about, then they won't have their licence renewed, and our government is getting more - sorry, not the government - our government commission is getting more and more involved in actually wanting to see that tracking data from the slot machine companies, from the online gambling companies.

So I mean, I'd say maybe 10 years ago I was very negative in terms of thinking all this data was just going to be used for exploitative purposes. Now I think there is a real ground swell of a turn of opinion in terms of we can use this for good. Again, I was talking to Glenda from [unclear 1:15:17] yesterday and she was saying that here in Australia they want to get involved in the predictive systems, be able to track data and actually forcing companies to use that data for good and I think that's a good thing.

Richard Chappell

{ FILENAME * MERGEFORMAT }

It is a good thing, but can I just say if you want to look at current practice around that, look at the Woolworths ALH loyalty program, which is a disgrace. It sits on the top of the sort of pre-commitment scheme so called that's been introduced in Victoria and is essentially a marketing tool, and the Crown system which has enormous potential but is being used to market products to people and in many cases people with very serious gambling problems who have ended up stealing tens of millions of dollars. So it's happening already I'm sorry to say.

Male

I think it's crazy to believe that industry isn't going to use it for profit making purposes.

Mark Griffiths

In terms of loyalty data, that has been used for years.

Male

It's not just problem gambling. [unclear 1:16:15] harm in low and moderate risk gamblers, and that tracking stuff is going to be good at identifying them. They're the ones they want to keep in their chain of business. I mean, it's absolutely ridiculous to think that they wouldn't be using it.

Paul Delfabbro

We found from the UK stuff and the social media study that companies tend to fall into two groups. There are those who collect the data through systems where they just can't use it because in the form it's not very easy to convert into data which you can analyse the way we analyse it. The other ones who have got the data in a form which is, you know, it's all SQL, it's all nicely formatted and they can use it, they're the ones that know a lot about their customers. So the social media project we interviewed quite a few big players in the US [unclear 1:16:58], I could tell some stories about those, and they knew their clients inside out. They knew exactly who was buying these games, what demographic it was. They knew a lot. So it's all in two groups, those who can get the data in polished form probably have already looked at it and know their clients, but the rest of them come to you because our data's a mess, can you turn it into something useful. They don't really know their clients as well as they should.

Facilitator

Any more questions?

Male

Just wondering if I can get the panel's opinion on, I guess, whether there's differences in stage of career and whether that's related to how it's perceived in terms if you take industry money and things like that. So someone like me for example, I'm an early career researcher, I don't think that I wake up every day looking at my email wondering am I going to get some new funding source or a fellowship or something like that that I can apply for. I'm starting to get students now who I'm thinking about how am I going to help their PhDs and things like that. Another example is even coming to NAGS, you know, there was opportunities for some students to come supported by industry funding and they turned it down because they thought it was all bad. So I just wonder what the panel's opinion is of that and is there ever a point where it's okay to do that in terms of just from a practical perspective how are ECRs going to get funding for example to do the research to then start their careers and move forward.

{ FILENAME * MERGEFORMAT }

Paul Delfabbro

You might find the universities generally have polices about this anyway. So for example, universities have very strict rules about where you can accept funding. So for example, I would go to the university and say I've got a big gaming machine manufacturer about to give me a hundred grand to do a lot of research. They would say that it's too similar to [unclear 1:18:49] and say no you can't receive money in that form. So it wouldn't be an issue at many universities because of the way in which they operate. Obviously ANU I think has similar concerns about [unclear 1:19:01] and things like that I think too. So that's how it works. It might be an issue in some cases but yeah, other party questions are more different to answer.

Mark Griffiths

The thing is with universities now, if somebody comes with money wherever it's coming from, the universities will take a lot to say no to things, and that's the honest truth. I've got one PhD student at the moment and I know some of you know her in the room, Maris Bonello, who's the responsible gambling operator at Unibet. I mean, her PhD with me is being paid by her company.

Paul Delfabbro

My feeling is, coming back [unclear 1:19:42], the universities are so desperate for funding these days, I think we expect that the concerns about the source might actually become a bit less because of the way things are going. I might be wrong.

Facilitator

So following on from that, is there a way we can help inform and protect new researchers, because I do think that this is a really important question.

Paul Delfabbro

We have a NH&MRC national conduct for the ethical conduct of research and that talks about various things to do with publication and authorship and so on. But it could be argued that doesn't contain much now about disclosures and conflict of interests and that type of thing. We could argue that in the review process of that document, which the universities are taking increasingly seriously, we could look at possibly some changes to that document which might include such disclosures which might indicate that support for something that might be in the public good could be seen to be appropriate for more transparency in the reporting and so on. So the sort of things we've talked about. So that may be a process that occurs in the future.

Facilitator

I just want to throw a question in here that I think is quite pertinent in this particular case that we're in at the moment, if people could respond in terms of the role of industry within research discussions. Now Rob touched on that. We've had things such as conferences. NAGS talks about being open to everyone and everyone being involved. Also the role potentially of industry on advisory boards and committees. You, Rob, were talking about the potential technological knowledge and experience that could be gained from that if they have a vote in terms of that. So, you know, interested in people's views on that because I know that this panel actually has some different views on that.

{ FILENAME * MERGEFORMAT }

Mark Henley

I'll try and be really quick. I mean, it hasn't been unknown in past conferences for people like Ross Ferrar and the late John [unclear 1:21:24] to come along and tell us what they actually really thought about things and it comes back a little bit to what I said before. If you know who they are and where they're coming from and we're all adults, we can filter the message. So I don't actually think that there's any more - what's the word - moral jeopardy about associating people in that way. Coming from a regulatory background, I'm used to sort of being unpopular with them and saying no most of the time. So you get to have a certain sort of robust conversation happening. So I think it's really just getting used to it and if you want to see how it might work you just need to look to North America where just about every fellowship or school is badged with the name of some hero of the gaming industry and that's basically where all the money comes from through foundations or other things. So it can be done, but we need to know what we're doing and come in with our eyes open and our ethics meters switched on.

Dr Charles Livingstone

I'll be very quick. I'm predictably hard line on this. The issue to me is that this is basically a scientific meeting. If you go to any other scientific meeting anywhere around the world in most disciplines you don't see the industry wandering around. You certainly don't see them sponsoring the drinks this evening or last night or whatever it was. You don't see them doing that, and I think it's very important that we start to say if we're going to have a scientific society which studies gambling, then it should be a scientific society that studies gambling, not a society that's open to an industry to turn up, promote their wares, buy drinks and talent scout young researchers which is essentially what they do in my opinion.

Mark Henley

For the College of Psychiatry at their annual conferences do have whole sections sponsored by the drug companies. They do have displays by the drug companies. I was on the board of [unclear 1:23:27] for six years in the 90s and we went through the agonies of how much really put the limits, but it was accepted because there was a need for that industry money to keep it going. We'd like to think as well that everybody's adult and will pick and choose what they hear. But it does happen.

Dr Charles Livingstone

I'm not saying it doesn't happen. I'm saying I don't think it's a good practice and I think increasingly in the medical profession it is being seen as a bad practice. Sorry. Increasingly in the medical profession it's being seen as a bad practice and it's being dropped I think.

Facilitator

So I was doing really well as a moderator right up until [overtalk] in the last two minutes. Anyway, what I did want to have happen here and I think we can actually have happen here from now on is that this is the start of a conversation, not the end of a conversation. I think it's been a fabulous panel in terms of really opening up certain questions and topics. I think it's really important as Mark did alert to, we all have biases and it's not just industry or research. We shouldn't be seeing ourselves as completely neutral. We always try to be as neutral as we can as researchers, but we do all have biases.

The idea of building a central pool of money, a pot that can go into that can be perhaps funded and overseen by someone as independent as possible and we need to make sure whoever's on that independent board is in fact an independent board, that would be fabulous. When can we start that up? Sounds really great. But also they need to protect that source of funding, which was also alluded to as being really important so that people can do the research that needs to be done. The importance of access to data also being seen as really, really important to allow researchers to actually answer some interesting questions. And the importance of disclosure and transparency and I know there were some other things discussed, but I am wanting to finish on time so I wonder if you can join me in thanking all the panellists here today. There's a couple of housekeeping issues just before we go.

Female

Can we also thank Anna for a wonderful job of moderating?

Facilitator

People did warn me about this, that there might be fisticuffs, that it would be a real problem, but ...