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## Exploring children's experiences in community gambling venues: A qualitative study with children aged 6-16 in regional New South Wales

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## Exploring children's experiences in community gambling venues: A qualitative study with children aged 6-16 in regional New South Wales

### Abstract

**Issue addressed:** Community-based gambling venues provide a range of activities for children alongside adult products, such as gambling. However, there has been little examination of children's experiences with, and exposure to, a range of gambling and non-gambling activities within venues.

**Methods:** Visual sociology methods were used to measure unprompted recall, prompted recall, current use and intended adult use of activities in community gambling venues in 44 children who attended venues. Qualitative data were also collected to gain further insight into children's perceptions of the venue and the activities within.

**Results:** Children displayed high unprompted and prompted recall of gambling and nongambling activities within the venue. Children indicated positive perceptions of the venue overall. Just over half of the children (52.3%) reported current use of gambling activities in the venue. The large majority of the children indicated that they would attend community gambling venues as an adult (90.9%).

**Conclusion:** This research provides a starting point in understanding the extent to which children are exposed to gambling products in community gambling venues.

**So what?:** This research will be important for researchers, policy makers and practitioners in developing health promotion initiatives to prevent children from being exposed to gambling products in community settings.

**Summary:** This qualitative study aimed to examine children's experiences within community gambling venues. The study found that children displayed high recall of gambling and non-gambling activities within venues and indicated positive perceptions of the venue overall. Comprehensive approaches are needed to prevent children from being exposed to gambling products in community settings.

### Disciplines

Business

### Publication Details

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24 **Summary**

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26 venues. The study found that children displayed high recall of gambling and non-gambling  
27 activities within venues and indicated positive perceptions of the venue overall.

28 Comprehensive approaches are needed to prevent children from being exposed to gambling  
29 products in community settings.

30

31 **Key words**

32 Children; gambling; community based gambling venues; electronic gambling machines;  
33 evidence based practice; health advocacy; rural and regional health.

## 34 **Introduction**

35

36 Harmful gambling has been identified as an important public health problem,<sup>1</sup> with gambling  
37 losses estimated at about \$23.6 billion annually in Australia.<sup>2</sup> While previous gambling  
38 research has been criticised for focusing on ‘responsible gambling behaviours’,<sup>3</sup> more recent  
39 research has explored the range of socio-cultural, environmental, industry, and political  
40 factors that may normalise the use of gambling products and venues.<sup>4, 5</sup> Thomas and  
41 colleagues [2018],<sup>4</sup> define the normalisation of gambling as:

42

43 *“The interplay of socio-cultural, environmental, commercial and political processes*  
44 *which influence how different gambling activities and products are made available*  
45 *and accessible, encourage recent and regular use, and become an accepted part of*  
46 *everyday life for individuals, their families, and communities.”* (p. 53-54, adapted  
47 from Parker [2013]<sup>6</sup>).

48

49 While this definition provides an important step forward in conceptually understanding the  
50 factors that may contribute to the normalisation of gambling activities and products, there has  
51 been very limited research investigating how factors within gambling venues may shape or  
52 normalise a) gambling attitudes and behaviours, and, b) the socio-cultural acceptance of  
53 harmful gambling products within community settings.<sup>7, 8</sup> For example, research with adults  
54 has identified that increased access to and availability of gambling venues within local  
55 communities influences gambling behaviours,<sup>9</sup> and that non-gambling activities may soften  
56 the perceptions of risk associated with gambling products within these venues.<sup>10, 11</sup> Other  
57 recent research indicates that while adults who attend community gambling venues primarily  
58 attended for non-gambling reasons (for example cheap meals), many of these individuals also  
59 reported using gambling products located in the venue, including electronic gambling  
60 machines (EGMs),<sup>12</sup> which is associated with increased gambling harm.<sup>13</sup> However, there is  
61 much less information about the range of factors that may contribute to shaping children’s  
62 attitudes and behaviours towards gambling products located within community settings.<sup>14</sup>  
63 Given that young people may regularly frequent community gambling venues, understanding  
64 their perceptions of these venues and their attitudes towards the activities within venues, is  
65 important in developing comprehensive health promotion driven responses to gambling harm  
66 prevention.

67

68 Research has demonstrated that children are regularly exposed to gambling products and the  
69 marketing for these products within everyday community settings.<sup>15-17</sup> While research has  
70 predominantly focused on children's exposure to promotions for sports betting products,<sup>15, 17,</sup>  
71 <sup>18</sup> environmental cues, marketing messages, and perceptions of adults' engagement with these  
72 products can also have a significant impact on positively shaping young people's gambling  
73 attitudes and future consumption intentions.<sup>19</sup> While some community gambling venues  
74 specifically provide a range of non-gambling activities specifically for children (for example  
75 playgrounds)<sup>7</sup> there is much less understanding about how non-gambling and gambling cues  
76 may influence children's attitudes within these venues. For example, do young people  
77 perceive community gambling venues as positive for the community because of the range of  
78 child friendly activities, and is there any evidence that children who hold positive perceptions  
79 towards these venues are also likely to say that they will attend the venue and use gambling  
80 products within the venues when they are older?

81

82 Furthermore, researchers have suggested that community gambling venues may be influential  
83 in building positive perceptions for children because of the role of these venues in the social  
84 and cultural capital of communities.<sup>20</sup> This includes facilitating a sense of community  
85 belonging through a range of non-gambling activities, and through the promotion of venues  
86 as 'safe and family friendly venues that cater for the whole community' (p. 164).<sup>20</sup>

87 Researchers note that:

88

89 *“Even if the club environment encourages socialising through sports activities,*  
90 *gambling activities are an integral, a customary, and acceptable family entertainment*  
91 *activity, especially in areas where there is a lack of alternative affordable*  
92 *entertainment venues.” (p. 165).<sup>20</sup>*

93

94 While we do not argue that venues aim to directly encourage children's consumption of  
95 gambling products, research indicates that children are exposed to gambling products within  
96 these community settings,<sup>14</sup> and as such it is important to examine the factors that may shape  
97 children's attitudes and behaviours towards both gambling products and the settings where  
98 these are located. Focusing on children who attend community gambling venues, the research  
99 aimed to explore three research questions:

100

- 101 1. What is the unprompted and prompted recall of gambling and non-gambling activities  
102 within the venue by children, and what are their attitudes towards these activities?  
103 2. What are children’s overall perceptions of community gambling venues, including  
104 their value within community settings?  
105 3. Is there evidence that positive perceptions towards venues may influence children’s  
106 intentions to visit community gambling venues as adults, and to use the gambling  
107 facilities within these venues?  
108

## 109 **Methods**

110

111 The data used for this investigation was part of a larger project which explored the factors  
112 that shape children’s attitudes towards gambling in community gambling venues.<sup>14</sup> Data  
113 collection methods were deliberately designed to be child-friendly with the interview  
114 procedure designed to allow the child to engage with the researcher and prioritised free  
115 narrative and reflection on their experiences.<sup>21</sup> This research used data collection methods  
116 that have been shown to be effective with children in other gambling research studies,<sup>15, 19</sup> as  
117 well as research methodologies drawn from other public health studies involving children.<sup>22,</sup>  
118 <sup>23</sup>

119  
120 Approval was obtained from the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee prior  
121 to the study commencing.  
122

## 123 *Setting*

124

125 This study specifically focused on children who attended community based clubs with EGMs  
126 in regional New South Wales (NSW). In regional NSW, clubs provide community sporting,  
127 recreation and cultural facilities to the communities in which they are located.<sup>24</sup> While the  
128 online marketing for these venues promote the clubs as family-friendly and child appropriate  
129 locations,<sup>7</sup> these venues also derive an estimated two thirds of overall venue revenue from  
130 EGMs.<sup>25</sup> EGMs are the gambling product linked with the most economic and social harm,  
131 with NSW residents losing \$6.1 billion per year on this form of gambling.<sup>2</sup> This study chose  
132 to focus on a specific regional area due to the limited research conducted on gambling in  
133 regional areas,<sup>26</sup> the high concentration of EGM venues and high EGM losses in this  
134 particular area,<sup>27</sup> and research with rural communities which suggests that these venues are

135 part of the socio-cultural capital of the community.<sup>20</sup> While the majority of revenue for clubs  
136 comes from EGMs, these venues also contain a range of other gambling products including  
137 bingo, Keno, raffles and sports betting (for further description see Bestman and colleagues  
138 [2016]<sup>7</sup>), and are licenced to sell alcohol products.<sup>28</sup>

139

#### 140 *Recruitment*

141

142 The sample included families who had visited a local club in the area studied that contained  
143 EGMs, in the previous 12 months. Participants were recruited through convenience sampling,  
144 local businesses and snowball sampling techniques. The study was explained to parents and  
145 children and verbal assent was gained from the children before the interview began. Parents  
146 provided written consent for their child's participation in the project. Family groups were  
147 reimbursed with a \$20 grocery voucher for the time taken to participate in the study.

148

#### 149 *Data collection*

150

151 Face-to-face qualitative interviews were conducted with 27 family groups between April and  
152 October 2016. Each took between 45-80 minutes and with the consent of participants,  
153 interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. Data presented in this paper relate  
154 specifically to the data collected for children in the study. Demographic data were collected  
155 from parents about each child's age, gender, postcode and frequency of attendance at venues.

156

157 Data were collected from children using three specific methods. First, children were asked to  
158 draw the venue they attended. The researchers provided minimal instruction regarding how  
159 this should be done, so that children were not unduly influenced in their responses. However,  
160 given previous research that suggests not all children are comfortable drawing,<sup>22</sup> participants  
161 were also told that if they did not want to draw they could write about what they saw at the  
162 venue instead. It was explained to participants that there were no right or wrong way to  
163 complete the activity, but that they should complete it based on their own experiences. Where  
164 there were multiple children from the one family, the researchers encouraged children to  
165 think about their own experiences in the venues. Children completed this activity away from  
166 parents and researchers and were given as long as they wished to complete their drawing.  
167 Following the drawing activity, children were asked to explain their drawing to the  
168 researcher. This activity was used to assess unprompted recall of the venue.

169

170 Second, children were presented with a laminated picture board containing 24 images of  
171 products and activities they *might* see at a community gambling venue, referred henceforth as  
172 activities. The images selected for inclusion were based on those found in a previous scan of  
173 venue websites in the local area,<sup>7</sup> and were grouped into:

- 174 a) Children or family-related activities including, children's areas, children's discos,  
175 children's meal promotions, family days, family meals, family prizes, games, and a  
176 playground.
- 177 b) Gambling or alcohol activities including bingo, EGM area, Keno, sports betting,  
178 raffles, and the bar.
- 179 c) Other recreational activities including a bowling green, cheap meals promotions, golf  
180 course, live music, meeting friends, restaurant, special occasions, sports facilities,  
181 television, and watching sport.

182

183 To assess the *prompted recall of activities*, researchers asked children to indicate using the  
184 picture board, the activities they had seen before in the venue. Children were also asked to  
185 identify the activities they had used before in the venue (measuring current use), and were  
186 asked which activities children intended to use in the venue when they were adults  
187 (measuring intended use as an adult). The children were told they could select as many or as  
188 few items on the picture board as they wished. A photograph of each picture board and  
189 drawing was taken before progressing to the qualitative section of the interview.

190

191 Finally, qualitative open-ended questions were used to explore children's perceptions of the  
192 venue. These included what children liked or did not like at the venue, what they perceived  
193 the venue did for the community, whether children thought they would attend the venue as  
194 adults and what activities they would participate in. If there were more than one child present  
195 in the interview, the researcher ensured that each child had the opportunity to answer each  
196 question separately.

197

### 198 *Data analysis*

199

200 Demographic data were analysed using descriptive statistics. Postcodes were used to  
201 calculate Socio-Economic Indicators for Areas (SEIFA) status through the Index of Relative  
202 Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage for each family. Each postcode was given a



203 score between one and 10, where one represents the lowest 10% of socio-demographic areas  
204 and 10 represents the highest 10% of socio-demographic areas.<sup>29, 30</sup>

205

206 To analyse the drawings, the research team employed an analysis method suggested by  
207 Horstman and colleagues [2008],<sup>31</sup> where each drawing was analysed as a whole and analysis  
208 included any visual aspects, written text within the drawing and verbal explanations provided  
209 by children. Drawings were initially coded based on the categories identified by a previous  
210 study of venue websites.<sup>7</sup> Data were then further coded inductively based on the specific  
211 items children had presented in their drawings. Qualitative data based on children's  
212 discussions of the content of the drawings were used to guide the researcher's interpretation  
213 to identify children's own meanings in their drawings.<sup>31</sup> The research team met and discussed  
214 the coding framework. Codes were then quantified and analysed using descriptive statistics.  
215 Data from the picture board activity were quantified and entered into SPSS version 19.  
216 Descriptive statistics including frequency counts were performed to determine the activities  
217 children had identified in the three components of the picture board activity. Qualitative data  
218 were also used to provide additional insights regarding children's experiences within venues.  
219 Transcripts were read and themes were developed and compared across children's responses,  
220 using a thematic approach to analyse the data<sup>32</sup> to identify children's perceptions towards the  
221 venue, activities within the venue, and future use of venue.

222

## 223 **Results**

224

### 225 *Sample characteristics*

226

227 A total of 44 children from 27 families participated in the study, ranging in age from six to 16  
228 years with an average age of 11.93 years (SD 2.6). Most children were aged 11 years or older  
229 (n=32, 72.7%) and just under two thirds of children were male (n= 28, 63.6%). Families  
230 resided in a range of SEIFA areas, with six children (22.2%) in the lowest three deciles; 19  
231 (70.4%) in the middle four deciles and two (7.4%) in the top three deciles. All children had  
232 visited a community gambling venue at least once in the year prior to the study, with 25  
233 (56.8%) attending less than once a month, ten (22.7%) attending once a month, and nine  
234 (20.5%) attending more than once a month with their family.

235

236 *Recall of activities within community gambling venues*

237

238 Table 1 presents data relating to children’s unprompted and prompted recall of activities in  
239 the venue. Just over half of children displayed unprompted recall of at least one children’s  
240 activity in their drawing (n=25, 56.8%). The most common activity included was the  
241 playground, drawn by a third of children (n=15, 34.1%). Over one third of children (n=17,  
242 38.6%) included at least one gambling or alcohol activity in the unprompted recall activity,  
243 with the bar (14, 31.8%) being the most recalled activity, followed by Keno (n= 6, 13.6%)  
244 and the EGM area (n= 6, 13.6%). Some children included specific detail in their drawings,  
245 for example one boy aged 12 labelled an “*Irish bar*” in his drawing. Five children (11.4%)  
246 drew beer and wine on the bar in their drawings. Eight children (61.5% of children who  
247 referred to a gambling activity) included multiple gambling activities in their drawing.

248

249 In the prompted recall activity, children selected between two and 23 items on the picture  
250 board, with an average of 13.8 items per child (4.9 SD). Over 90 per cent of children (n=41,  
251 93.2%) recalled at least one gambling or alcohol activity (bar) when prompted, with over half  
252 of children (n=26, 59.1%) recalling having seen more than three adult activities in the venue  
253 when prompted. Children also had high recall of other activities in the venue with the  
254 restaurant being the most recalled activity for both unprompted (n=34, 77.3%) and prompted  
255 (40, 90.9%) recall.

256

257

**Table 1**

**Unprompted and prompted recall of activities within the venue**

258

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Unprompted recall</b>	<b>Prompted recall</b>
<i>Child or family activities</i>		
<b>Any children’s activity</b>	<b>25 (56.8%)</b>	<b>44 (100.0%)</b>
Playground	15 (34.1%)	35 (79.5%)
Children’s area	7 (15.9%)	30 (68.2%)
Games	5 (11.4%)	28 (63.6%)
Family meals	0	34 (77.3%)
Children’s meal deals	0	28 (63.6%)
Disco	0	18 (40.9%)
Family prizes	0	12 (27.3%)
Family days	0	9 (20.5%)
Other*	9 (20.5%)	-
<i>Alcohol or gambling activities</i>		
<b>Any gambling or alcohol activity</b>	<b>17 (38.6%)</b>	<b>41 (93.2%)</b>
Keno	6 (13.6%)	35 (79.5%)

EGM area	6 (13.6%) <sup>#</sup>	32 (72.7%)
Raffles	3 (6.8%)	31 (70.5%)
Sports Betting	1 (2.3%)	25 (56.8%)
Racing <sup>*</sup>	1 (2.3%)	-
Bingo	0	7 (15.9%)
<b>Any gambling activity</b>	<b>13 (29.5%)</b>	<b>39 (88.6%)</b>
Bar	14 (31.8%)	38 (86.4%)
Alcohol <sup>*</sup>	5 (11.4%)	-
<i>Other activities</i>		
<b>Any other activity</b>	<b>39 (88.6%)</b>	<b>44 (100.0%)</b>
Restaurant	34 (77.3%)	40 (90.9%)
TV	11 (25.0%)	36 (81.8%)
Watching sport	4 (9.1%)	35 (79.5%)
Live music	1 (2.3%)	22 (50.0%)
Bowling green	1 (2.3%)	20 (45.5%)
Cheap meals	0	31 (70.5%)
Special occasions	0	26 (59.1%)
Meeting friends	0	22 (50.0%)
Sports facilities	0	13 (29.5%)
Golf course	0	1 (2.3%)
Other <sup>*</sup>	9 (20.5%)	-
Number provided reflects the number of children who selected item. Percentages represent the number of children that selected item, proportional to the total sample (N=44).		
<sup>*</sup> Items emerged from analysis of children's drawings. This was not measured in picture board activity.		
<sup>#</sup> This measure reflects both drawing of the EGM area and EGMs.		

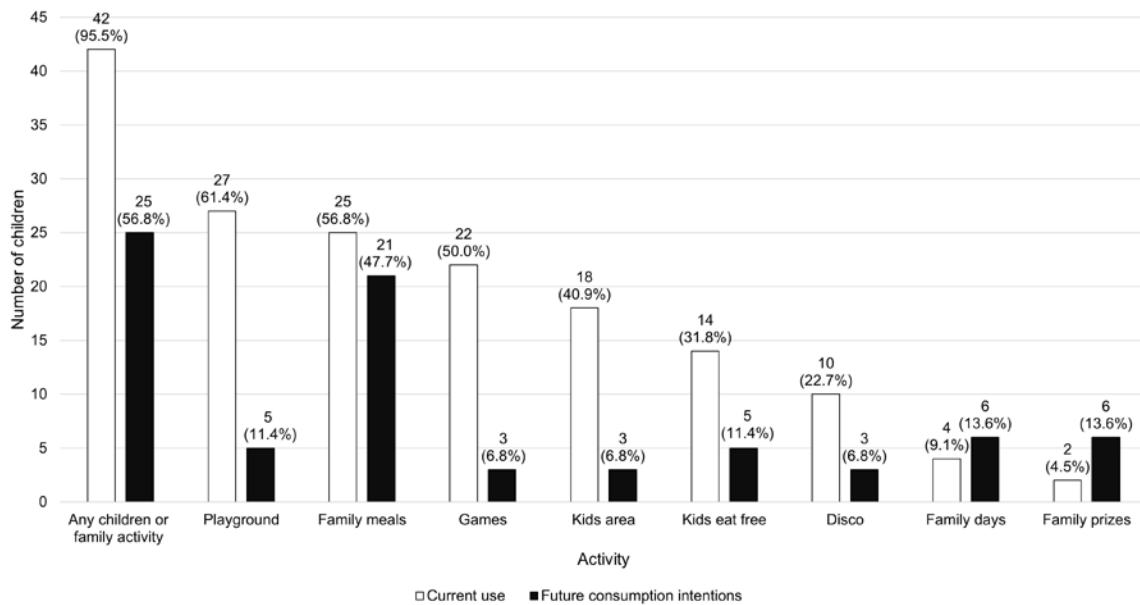
259

260 *Children's attitudes towards the non-gambling activities within community gambling venues*

261

262 Figure 1 contains children's current use of child and family activities within the venue and  
263 their intended future use of these activities as an adult. While almost all children indicated  
264 current use of at least one child or family activity at the venue (n=42, 95.5%), children's  
265 intended future use of these activities decreased for all activities except for family days and  
266 family prizes. Just over half of children (n= 25, 56.8%) indicated an intention to use the  
267 children or family activities in the venue as an adult. While the most commonly mentioned  
268 activity was attending for family meals (n=21, 47.7%), a small number of children indicated  
269 they would use children's activities such as the playground (n=5, 11.4%), children's area  
270 (n=3, 6.8%) or children's meal deals (n=5, 11.4%) as an adult with their own children. There  
271 were no differences seen across age, gender or frequency of attendance.

272



273

274

Note: The numbers above each column represent the number of children who selected each activity

275

276

*Children's attitudes towards the gambling activities within community gambling venues*

277

278

Figure 2 contains children's current use of gambling activities within the venue and intended future use of these activities as an adult. Half of children (n= 23, 52.3%) indicated that they currently used at least one gambling activity while in the venue, with raffles being the most common gambling activity used (n=19, 43.2%). Several children described participating in gambling activities with family members while in the venue:

283

284

*"I do play Keno but I never hand it in. I get my pop to hand it in".* Boy, 10 years, attended less than once a month.

286

287

Some children provided positive descriptions of the gambling activities within the venue:

288

289

*"I like the raffles because it's fun to watch it."* Girl, 11 years, attended less than once a month.

291

292

In contrast to their intended future adult consumption of child and family activities, children's intended future adult consumption of gambling activities increased for all activities, with the biggest increase seen for intended use of the gaming area (EGMs). While no differences were

294

295 seen across age, gender or frequency of attendance, children who indicated current  
296 consumption of gambling were more likely to indicate intended adult use of these activities.

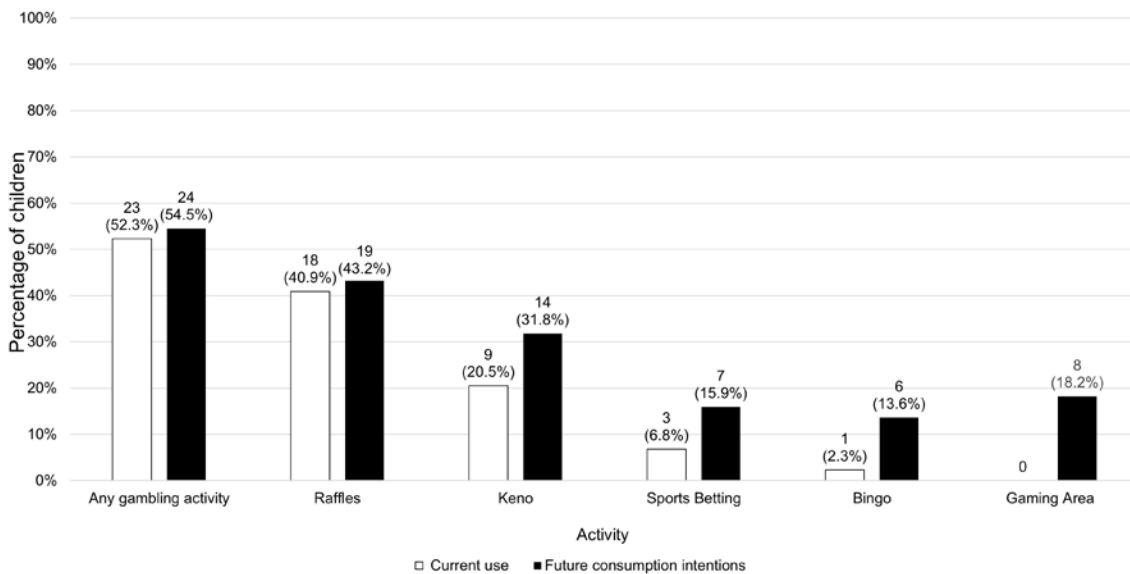
297

298 Many children who indicated current use of gambling activities, for example raffles, referred  
299 to their previous experience with these gambling activities as their rationale for gambling as  
300 adults. For example, one boy aged 16 said he would participate in gambling activities as an  
301 adult because “*they are enjoyable*”, while another boy, aged eight years said he would use the  
302 raffles because “*I like to win stuff*”. Some children said they were interested in trying adult  
303 gambling products because these were activities they were not allowed to currently use. For  
304 example, one girl aged 12 who did not choose any gambling activities said she would attend  
305 the venue for special occasions because “*that’s what we do with Mum and Dad*”, however her  
306 brother aged 14 said he would use raffles and Keno gambling activities “*because they’re*  
307 *what I’ve seen other adults do*”. A small number of children indicated some knowledge of  
308 how they would gamble as adults. For example, one boy aged 15 said he would gamble on  
309 raffles because he perceived he would be given free raffle tickets with food receipts. Another  
310 child aged 14 who said he would try EGMs as an adult also commented on wanting to use the  
311 adult only areas in the venue:

312

313 “*So if I didn’t have kids I’d go to like the areas where only adults can go where you*  
314 *watch sport and then I think there’s sports betting in there, I’m not sure...I know that*  
315 *it’s sport everywhere around there so they’ve got little TVs everywhere and it’s just*  
316 *sport, different sort of sports on.*” Boy, 14 years, attended at least once a month.

317



318

319 Note: The numbers above each column represent the number of children who selected each activity

320

321 *Perceptions and future use of community gambling venues*

322

323 Children had positive attitudes towards the venues they had visited, including that the venue  
 324 was a “*nice environment*”, or “*fun*”. When describing their attitudes, most described the  
 325 playground, and the restaurant or food items as their main reasons for liking the venue. One  
 326 ten year old boy said that he liked that “*you can just play around wherever you want really*”,  
 327 while others commented that the venues were “*family friendly*”. Children had a range of  
 328 positive associations with venues, particularly when they related to family events and  
 329 activities. Some stated they attended the venue as part of family rituals such as raffle night  
 330 every Friday, or special celebratory events such as birthdays. Some children specifically  
 331 noted the role of the club in facilitating these activities:

332

333 *“I think that it’s a nice thing to learn to get out and celebrate something or even just*  
 334 *have a set idea of gathering with family...When someone mentions that we’re going to*  
 335 *the club it’s often a real sense of – it’s very good to think about. Like it’s just*  
 336 *something we all look forward to and we see it as a special occasion even though we*  
 337 *do go quite frequently.”* Girl, 14 years, attended more than once a month.

338

339 Some children described the broader positive community impact of venues for local  
340 communities. For example, children described the contributions that venues made to the  
341 sponsoring of sport (and particularly junior sport). This included one ten year old boy who  
342 referred to his local venue's ownership of sporting fields. Other children listed specific  
343 sporting teams sponsored by the venue, including football, soccer and netball teams. One boy  
344 aged 12 years referred to school based football teams that were sponsored by venues:

345  
346 *"I know they support tons of schools because when we verse them in the gala*  
347 *days...they had their school jerseys on and it's like 'Sponsored by [venue]' ". Boy, 12*  
348 *years, attended once a month.*

349  
350 A small number of children described broader community contributions from venues. For  
351 example one boy aged 16 years stated that venues *"bring everyone together and raise money*  
352 *for local causes"*.

353  
354 While children were also asked about things that they did not like at the venue, few children  
355 were able to provide a response. Those who did often focused on the noise or crowds at the  
356 venue. For example, one adolescent boy stated that the activities for smaller children should  
357 be separated from eating areas so as not to disturb other diners, and an adolescent girl stated  
358 that she did not like that sport was constantly shown in the bistro. Only a small number of  
359 children stated that provision of gambling or alcohol in the venue could be negative. For  
360 example one girl aged nine years said she didn't like gambling and betting because *"some*  
361 *people go over the top with it"*, while another boy aged 16 said he didn't like that Keno was  
362 shown on televisions *"right next to where all the kids are"* because *"it should be in a separate*  
363 *area"*.

364  
365 The majority of children indicated that they would attend the venue as an adult (n=40,  
366 90.9%). Most children said without prompting that they would attend with family or friends.  
367 When prompted, some children said they would go with their families for events like special  
368 occasions or with their family if they *"had to"*. One boy aged 11 said he would go to the  
369 venue for dinner if he had a girlfriend. Other children said they would attend the venue as  
370 adults with their own families. For example, one boy said he would take his children to the  
371 venue for their birthday while another explained:

372

373           *“It would be fun to take your kids there so you could have a little meetup with friends,*  
374           *and have their kids to play around in the play area.”* Boy 10 years, attended less than  
375           once a month.

376

## 377 **Discussion**

378

379 This study aimed to explore the factors that influence children’s perceptions of community  
380 gambling venues and the gambling products within. The study raises three points for  
381 discussion.

382

383 First, while it is no surprise that children recall children’s activities and other aspects of the  
384 venues that they attend, one third of children showed unprompted recall of gambling  
385 activities, with half indicating that they currently engage in some gambling activities within  
386 the venue. Although it is illegal for children to participate in gambling and for adults to  
387 facilitate gambling for children under 18,<sup>33</sup> the reported use of products such as Keno within  
388 dining areas may be important to consider when exploring the factors that contribute to  
389 shaping children’s attitudes and behaviours towards gambling products and environments.  
390 Although, as with other research,<sup>20</sup> children may not be physically placing bets within  
391 venues, children perceive that they are participating in gambling activities. While research  
392 shows that children’s initiation into gambling may often be through their family,<sup>34</sup> we know  
393 much less about the social and cultural contexts behind children’s introduction to gambling.<sup>35</sup>  
394 Further settings based investigations are required that examine the role of the venue in  
395 facilitating gambling behaviours through the presence of gambling in locations which are also  
396 considered to be family friendly. This could also include the potential for health promotion  
397 measures, such as eliminating the co-location of gambling in all areas that are accessible to  
398 children. We would caution that the current use of gambling products such as Keno, raffles  
399 and bingo by children and their families may play a role in normalising gambling for children  
400 by becoming part of their everyday experience within venues that are perceived to be positive  
401 locations. While EGMs are considered to be the most harmful gambling product,<sup>1</sup> the  
402 emphasis on EGM product harms may create the perception that it is acceptable to expose  
403 children to other forms of gambling, such as raffles and Keno which are in areas where  
404 children attend. Further research should also specifically examine whether perceptions of  
405 lower intensity gambling products contribute to children’s perceptions of risk associated with  
406 higher intensity gambling products.



407 Second, children in this study had positive perceptions of the venues they attended primarily  
408 due to the non-gambling activities within venues and the social rituals associated with these  
409 activities. While research has often focused on the role of advertising,<sup>7, 15</sup> the current research  
410 indicates that family behaviours and social rituals within venues may also contribute to  
411 shaping children's gambling attitudes and behaviours. Further research is needed to explore  
412 the long-term effects of positive perceptions of gambling venues for children, and particularly  
413 whether children's perceptions of venues as family-friendly and social rituals within them,  
414 act to reduce the perceived risk associated with gambling products. This will be important in  
415 understanding how social rituals may reinforce and embed gambling behaviours into the  
416 'habitus' (practices) within venues.<sup>36</sup> Future research should also observe whether there are  
417 differences in attitudes towards gambling of children who attend and who do not attend  
418 community gambling venues.

419

420 Finally, the majority of children in this study said they would continue attending venues as  
421 adults, with half of children indicating they would use gambling activities in the venue as an  
422 adult. Recent research that has found that adults primarily attended community gambling  
423 venues for non-gambling activities, such as use of the restaurant; however adults who  
424 attended venues regularly were more likely to report that they also gambled on EGMs.<sup>12</sup>  
425 Other data also indicates that half of EGM users have dinner at venues while gambling.<sup>37</sup>  
426 While children who indicated intended use of gambling products may be at increased risk of  
427 gambling harm, children who do not specifically indicate future participation in gambling  
428 activities may still be at risk through their exposure to gambling products within community  
429 venues. Given that exposure to advertising can increase product initiation and reduce  
430 perceptions of harm,<sup>38, 39</sup> this research provides a starting point into the investigation of  
431 children's exposure and perceptions of harm towards gambling products in community  
432 gambling venues. It is also useful to consider the role of children's non-gambling activities in  
433 encouraging parents to view community gambling venues as child appropriate spaces. Given  
434 that children are not responsible for the decision to attend community gambling venues,  
435 researchers should examine how the interplay of commercial, socio-cultural and  
436 environmental factors may shape parental attitudes and encourage attendance at community  
437 gambling venues. This will be important in disrupting the pathway to normalisation and  
438 ensuring that both parents and children understand the risks associated with gambling  
439 products in environments that may traditionally be perceived as less harmful.

440

441 This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the study was  
442 conducted using a small study sample in one specific geographic area of Australia. It should  
443 also be noted that this sample contained children who currently attend community gambling  
444 venues, with a high proportion of children who indicated current consumption of gambling  
445 products, with no comparison group who do not attend venues. While the methodologies  
446 employed may be time and resource intensive, further research should seek to expand this  
447 study and explore children's recall across different geographic areas. Further, research should  
448 seek to compare children's perceptions of gambling spaces in a sample of children who  
449 attend the same venue to determine additional factors that may contribute to children's  
450 understanding of adult gambling products and behaviours. Finally, this preliminary research  
451 suggests that children may be aware of adult products in a setting they perceive to be  
452 positive; however further research should investigate children's behaviour longitudinally to  
453 determine whether there is a relationship between children's attendance at venues containing  
454 gambling products and adult gambling behaviours.

455

## 456 **Conclusion**

457

458 This research has found that children who attend community gambling venues had high recall  
459 of a range of activities within the environment, including gambling and non-gambling  
460 activities. Findings support the hypothesis that non-gambling activities in community  
461 gambling venues play a role in shaping children's perceptions of venues and the gambling  
462 activities within. This research provides a starting point for further examination into how  
463 gambling may become normalised for children that attend community gambling venues. This  
464 will be important in developing comprehensive health promotion strategies to prevent  
465 children who are exposed to gambling environments from experiencing gambling related  
466 harm as adults.

467

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