



Problem Gambling Research

Electronic Gaming Machine Users in Campaspe

Problem Gambling Research Project
March – June 2011

Campaspe Primary Care Partnership
in conjunction with
Central Victorian Health Alliance

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Participating gaming venues;

- Echuca Workers & Services Club
- Kyabram Club
- Echuca Hotel
- Border Inn Hotel
- Rich River Golf Club
- Moama Sports Club

Abbreviations

CPCP – Campaspe Primary Care Partnership

CVHA – Central Victorian Health Alliance

EGM – Electronic Gaming Machine

NSW – New South Wales

SCG – Central Goldfields Shire

SoC – Shire of Campaspe

VCGR – Victorian Commission of Gaming and Racing

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1. Executive Summary

Problem gambling is viewed as an important health and wellbeing issue for Victorians and similar to other health issues, is influenced by a diverse range of health, social and other determinants (Department of Justice, 2009). There are a wide range of gambling activities available to Victorians from raffles, lotto and scratch tickets to bingo, electronic gaming machines and betting on horses and sports events. Many people enjoy this form of legitimate social activity; however for some it can become problematic. Problem gambling is characterised by difficulties in limiting money and/or time spent on gambling which leads to adverse consequences for the gambler, others, or for the community (Neal, Delfabbro and O'Neill, 2005). Problem gambling can affect a number of facets of a person's life including their physical and emotional and mental health, relationships, study, finances and work. There is a strong link between problem gambling and depression, where nearly three out of four people with a gambling problem are at risk of developing depression (Thomas & Jackson, 2008).

This report presents findings of the Campaspe Problem Gambling Research Project which researched the demographics of electronic gaming machine (EGM) users across the Shire of Campaspe in Victoria. This project was supported by the Central Victorian Health Alliance who have also conducted a research project investigating problem gambling in the Central Goldfields Shire.

The project visited the three EGM venues within the Shire of Campaspe to interview patrons, venue staff and managers/owners. The project also recorded observed user demographics at each of the three venues and interviewed New South Wales (Moama) venue managers to gain an understanding of the impact of EGMs for Campaspe residents and obtain a NSW perspective.

The information collected indicates that each of the three EGM venues in the Shire of Campaspe has their own culture and unique EGM user demographic, rather than one clear demographic for all venues. Key demographics include:

- An even proportion of male and female users at the Kyabram Club and the Echuca Workers and Services Club, but a greater number of female users at the Echuca Hotel;
- A regular Indigenous user demographic was reported at two venues and one venue reported a high level of low socio economic users;
- Across each venue, more EGM users were alone than with a companion;
- Use of EGMs for personal time and relaxation was the most common response for motivation of EGM use;

- Only one person referred to using EGMs primarily for the chance of winning money and two people referred to the opportunity to socialise.

No clear data was collected that demonstrated whether the type of EGM venue (pub versus club) selects a particular user demographic.

When comparing and contrasting the EGM user profile of the Shire of Campaspe with the EGM user profile identified in the Central Goldfields Shire, the information collected in both projects demonstrates an association between EGM use and lack of social connection in the community.

There was no significant data that could be obtained through this project which demonstrated whether the gaming machines in southern NSW (Moama) has an impact on the Shire of Campaspe residents. Further research and data collection is required to enable solid comparisons between Moama and Echuca based venues and their EGM user profiles.

The main recommendations from this project are:

- For further research and data collection of NSW-based EGM venues to enable solid comparisons between Moama and Echuca based venues and their EGM user profiles
- For continued evidence-based work which aims to strengthen social connection in the community.

2. Background & Introduction

The Shire of Campaspe is located in north central Victoria, on the New South Wales border, and is approximately 180 kilometres from Melbourne. The Shire's largest town is Echuca, with a population of 12,360. Echuca is located adjacent to Moama over the Murray River in NSW. Campaspe Shire covers approximately 4,500 square kilometres with a total population of 38,983 (Shire of Campaspe, 2008). The Shire is considered to have areas of disadvantage however is not ranked as having one of the top 40 postcodes of most disadvantaged assessed statewide. Despite not being represented in this bracket, Campaspe has areas of disadvantage or a degree of disadvantage (Vinson, 2007). Large areas of the Shire are classified as moderately disadvantaged however, these areas are mostly agricultural areas and sparsely populated. Echuca has the highest median income and highest proportion of residents with a Bachelors Degree in the Shire whilst also having the highest level of renters and residents living in public housing in the Shire (ABS, SEIFA Index of Disadvantage). It is noted that the collection districts to the immediate south-west and north-east of the town's commercial centre exhibits the greatest relative disadvantage.

The areas immediately surrounding the town centre of Kyabram exhibit the greatest levels of disadvantage with relative disadvantage decreasing around the periphery of the town (Shire of Campaspe, 2010)

Figure 1: Map of Campaspe Shire



There are currently 149 electronic gaming machines within the Shire of Campaspe. The machines are distributed as follows:

- Echuca Hotel -12
- Echuca Workers and Services Club - 84
- Kyabram Club - 53

The maximum permissible number of gaming machines set by the Victorian Commission of Gaming and Racing (VCGR) for Campaspe is 286. The Echuca Hotel has approval for a further 18 machines, whilst the American Hotel in Echuca has approval to commence gaming with 50 machines; both scheduled for installation in 2012. Post 2012 there will be 99 EGM licences available so it is possible that more machines will be added to this catchment in the future.

The Victorian cap of EGMs per 1000 adults is 10 machines. The entire Campaspe Shire area currently has 5.22 machines per 1000 adults, while for Echuca specifically, the EGM density increases to 9.42 per 1000 adults.

‘A key local gaming issue for Campaspe however is its location adjacent to NSW and in particular the large number of gaming venues in and around Moama on the opposite side of the Murray River and in close proximity to Echuca. To illustrate the issue, while Campaspe Shire has a total of 149 EGMs and Echuca has 96 EGMs, the area around Moama has 627 EGMs in 6 venues’ (Shire of Campaspe, 2011).

This is a significant increase in availability of EGMs to Campaspe residents and is more than seven times the state average of 6.42 machines per 1000 persons (Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation, 2010).

The Shire of Campaspe’s EGM expenditure for the 2006/07 financial year totalled \$7,543,749. In comparison to the 2005/06 financial year, this figure increased by 3.7% (Victorian Commission of Gaming and Racing, 2008). The Shire of Campaspe latest figures on EGM annual expenditure for 2009/2010 financial year was \$7,749,398 (see table 1.0 for more detail). The total spend was an increase of 2.7% compared to 2006/2007.

Table 1.0: EGM expenditure in the Shire of Campaspe

Venue	Total EGM expenditure 2009/2010	Average per machine
Echuca Hotel	\$ 717,971	\$59,830
Echuca Workers & Services Club	\$3,894,802	\$46,366
Kyabram Club	\$3,136,615	\$59,181
Total	\$7,749,398	

www.vcgr.vic.gov.au

According to the Victorian Commission of Gaming and Racing (2010), Campaspe Shire adults spend \$264 every year on gaming machines, which equates to \$5 every week. The Shire of Campaspe report a weekly median individual income of \$396 per resident, which decreases to \$391 per week once gaming money has been extracted (ABS, 2010). Further to this is the consideration of the number of gaming machines accessible to Victorian residents over the Murray River in NSW. When the Moama spend figure of \$793 per adult per year is taken into account, this equates to around \$15 every week.

NSW local government areas have been classified into three bands based on local EGM density and expenditure, as well as social and economic data. It is noted the Murray Shire, the local government area immediately adjacent to Campaspe which includes Moama, has been included in Band 3; that is, a municipality characterised by a high number of gaming machines and expenditure and low socio-economic rankings.

Campaspe Shire has developed and recently adopted the Campaspe Gaming Policy Framework (2011) in response to the Victorian Government's amendments to the Victorian Planning Provisions. It gives councils decision making power over the location of EGMs. It provides strategic justification around the need for a gambling planning framework to provide the opportunity for Council to respond to gambling as a planning concern. By increasing the planning control over gaming, Council is able to influence the location of gaming machines and give considerations to the social and economic effects of new gaming machines.

This policy states:

1. Gaming machines should not be located in, or within 5 kilometres of towns which function as small urban settlements with a limited service role to a small population catchment.
2. New gaming machines should be located in urban centres which can accommodate additional gaming because:
 - a. residents also have a choice of other types of non-gaming entertainment and recreation facilities in the local area, particularly alternative clubs or hotels; and
 - b. there are limited existing gaming opportunities for residents within 5 kilometres of the urban centre; and
 - c. there is identified future residential growth capacity.
3. Gaming machines can be located in areas remote from urban centres if associated with a tourism use, or a sports and recreation club with an extensive land holding. Such facilities should provide a range of entertainment or recreation options.
4. Gaming machines should not locate in areas of relative socio-economic disadvantage.

5. It is preferred that gaming machines be located where the characteristics of the area, site and venue contribute to a net community benefit.
6. Proposals for gaming machines should be able to demonstrate that the chosen location could reasonably be perceived as a destination in its own right.
7. It is preferred that within a town, gaming machines are located in tourism precincts, where available, ahead of residential and commercial areas primarily serving the local community.
8. The location and operation of gaming venues and any associated recreation and entertainment facilities should not be incompatible with the predominant surrounding land use.
9. It is preferred that gaming machines are located in venues which:
 - d. Have a range of other entertainment and leisure options;
 - e. Make non-gaming social and recreational activities the primary purpose of the venue; and
 - f. Limit their hours of operation.

Profile of EGM users

Statistics released by Gamblers Help to the Department of Justice identified a number of “at risk” populations for EGM use. These populations thereby became the target groups for problem gambling interventions. These groups are based on Victoria-wide statistics however there are some indications that this information maybe skewed by metropolitan data. The identified target groups are women aged 55-74, men aged 18-44, and populations classified as Indigenous, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, or have mental health and/or drug and alcohol issues.

A Study of Gambling in Victoria (Department of Justice, 2009) looked at the social connections and community participation of its respondents. It reported that 33% of problem gamblers were members of a social group as compared to 47% of non-problem gamblers. This study also enquired about whether respondents liked living in their community. 64% of problem gamblers reported “definitely” whilst 89% of non-problem gamblers reported “definitely”. Alternatively, 9% of problem gamblers reported they did not at all like living in their community compared to 1% of non-problem gamblers. Although this study included all forms of gambling, and not specifically EGM users, lack of social connection is a theme which emerged from this research project

Campaspe Problem Gambling Research Project

A lack of local evidence that identified the demographics of people using EGMs in the SoC has meant that targeted strategies to reduce the social impact of problem gambling on the SoC community have therefore been unable to be effectively designed or targeted. Recent scoping work conducted in Central Goldfields Shire by Central Victorian Health Alliance (CVHA) identified EGM user demographics contrary to what state-wide statistics had previously determined. CVHA supported Campaspe Primary Care Partnership to conduct a three month project to research the demographic profile of EGM users in the Shire of Campaspe, to determine whether local data aligns with, or contradicts, both Central Goldfields and Victorian State data.

The Campaspe Problem Gambling Research Project sought to define and understand the demographic profile of EGM users across the Shire of Campaspe. The four objectives were:

1. To define demographic profile of electronic gaming machine users in the three venues in the Shire of Campaspe and seek information regarding their motivations around why they play.
2. To determine whether the type of EGM venue (pub versus club) selects a particular user demographic.
3. To compare and contrast the EGM user profile of the Shire of Campaspe with those identified in Central Goldfields Shire.
4. To investigate the impact of the gaming machines located in southern NSW (Moama) on Shire of Campaspe residents.

3. Strategies & Methodology

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to obtain and record relevant information:

Venue gaming room observations

Three visits per venue (venues within the Shire of Campaspe) were planned for varying times/days of the week. It was anticipated that gaming rooms would have peak and off peak times and it was important for this to be considered when planning venue visits. See below for observation visit details.

Table 2.0: Venue gaming room observations

Venue	Date	Time
Echuca Workers and Services Club	Friday 8/4/11	10.00am -10.30am
	Thursday 14/4/11	6.30pm -7.00pm
	Wednesday 7/4/11	10.30am -11.30am
Kyabram Club	Wednesday 6/4/11	11.00am -12noon
	Friday 8/4/11	2.00pm -2.30pm
	Thursday 14/4/11	5.30pm -6.00pm
Echuca Hotel	Tuesday 5/4/11	10.00am -11.00am
	Friday 8/4/11	1.00pm -1.30pm
	Thursday 14/4/11	7.00pm -7.30pm

Informal interviews/conversations with venue patrons

The project planned to interview 10 EGM users from each of the three Shire of Campaspe based venues. The project employed a strategy of offering an incentive to participate (\$20 grocery gift cards). The project worker enquired about the participants EGM usage relating to their motivations, frequency of gaming and spend amounts. The discussion also enquired about social connections and community participation. See Appendix 1 for sample of Patron Interview prompt questions.

Informal interviews with venue owners/managers and key staff

It was anticipated that venue staff would have information and data relating to their venue's user profiles including key demographics of age groups and male/female ratios, and would be able to identify regular EGM users who may participate in an interviews with the project worker.

Accessing venue membership demographics

Venues that had membership programs (clubs only) were requested to supply membership demographics (age, gender, residential postcodes).

Kyabram Club

Over three visits to the Kyabram Club, 23 EGM users were observed, 11 females (48%) and 12 males (52%). 48% appeared to be aged 65 years or older and more than half of this group (55%) were alone. Overall there were 61% of people playing EGMs alone compared to 39% who were with a companion.

Table 3.2: Record of observations at Kyabram Club 6, 8 & 14/4/11

Male	Female	18-24yrs	25-34yrs	35-49yrs	50-64yrs	65+ yrs	CALD	Indigenous	Alone	Not alone
•				•					•	
•				•					•	
•				•					•	
•						•			•	
	•					•			•	
	•					•				•
	•					•				•
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	•				•		•		•	
•				•					•	
•				•						•
•				•						•

The Echuca Hotel

At the Echuca Hotel, 10 EGM users were observed. 70% of these users were female. The dominant age categories include 25-34 years of age (40%) and 35-49 years of age (50%). Only 30% of users were with a companion, compared with 70% of users who were alone.

Table 3.3: Record of observations at Echuca Hotel 5, 8 & 14/4/11

Male	Female	18-24yrs	25-34yrs	35-49yrs	50-64yrs	65+ yrs	CALD	Indigenous	Alone	Not alone
	•			•					•	
•						•			•	
	•			•					•	
	•			•					•	
	•		•							•
	•		•							•
•				•						•
•				•					•	
	•		•						•	

Venue manager/staff interviews

Echuca Workers and Services Club

The interview with the manager of the Echuca Workers and Services Club provided information and insight into their regular EGM user profiles. The manager reported a lower socio economic user profile of people aged 60 years and older, as well as a higher indigenous user population as compared to other venues in the area. The manager also reported a lower standard of dress code which was not actively monitored, and in their opinion, attracted a lower socio economic class of people. They reported that the club is located in the shopping precinct of Echuca making it easily accessible to many people.

The club provided membership demographics as tabled in Appendix 2. Despite the demographics providing a breakdown of age, gender and residential postcode of its members, it does not distinguish between those who use EGMs and those who do not. The membership program encompasses all areas of the club's business including, but not limited to bistro, TAB, bingo, EGM and bar. This data showed that the total number of members from the Shire of Campaspe is 1,483 or 75%, while the total number of members who reside outside the shire is 493 or 25%. 79% of the club's total Shire of Campaspe members were aged 61 years or older, which supports the high EGM user demographic of people aged 60 years or older as reported by the venue manager. The 21-31 years age bracket demonstrated a greater number of male members (71%) compared to female members (29%). All age brackets above 31 years showed a relatively even spread of male and female members.

Echuca Hotel

The Echuca Hotel owner reported a core group of regular EGM users and shared that the user profile mainly consisted of younger employed males (20-30yrs) who socialise at the pub and are frequent EGM users during the week in the late afternoon. There were no males in this age bracket who were observed during the visits, however no observations were conducted during the late afternoon, which is the time the owner reported this age group generally use the gaming machines.

The manager also mentioned, but with less emphasis, 25-35 year old indigenous males and females who attend the pub on a fortnightly cycle, and 60+ males and females who are predominantly the midweek users.

The manager noted a greater number of tourists on weekends in comparison to weekdays which they believe is due to the venue's location near the tourist precinct of Echuca.

The manager questioned whether patron interviews would elicit honest and open answers. The owner suggested this would be unproductive and preferred the project officer not approach users. The owner was open to the project officer observing in his gaming room at different times throughout the project time. With respect, patron interviews were not conducted at this venue.

Kyabram Club

The manager of the Kyabram Club reported their venue to be quite in a number of ways. The manager reported that the club is located in a zoned residential area of Kyabram and is the sole gaming venue in the town. The manager believes the club has a good community focus, emphasising the financial contribution that the club makes to the community annually. The manager reported that male night shift workers, aged 35-50 years, are one of the main EGM user groups at the club, who tend to play the machines alone on weekdays from approximately 10am to 12noon. Females aged in the 35-50 years age bracket are another group of regular users, who also attend alone, on Tuesday through to Thursday. Over the three visits to the venue, six people were observed to be in the 35-49 age bracket, all of whom were male. Five people were observed to be in the 50-64 age bracket, four of whom were female, and one who was male.

The manager also reported that Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings tend to have larger groups attending the club for meals with Wednesday being busy due to seniors discount meal day, although there was no reference made to how many of these guests use EGMs while visiting.

Membership demographics were obtained for the Kyabram Club and as with the Echuca Workers and Services Club, are not specific to EGM users only, but include all aspects of the club. This data showed that the total number of members is 3,213 with 88% of these members residing in the Shire of Campaspe. The age group with the greatest number of Shire of Campaspe members is 80 years and older with 25% followed by 70-80 years with 21%. There is an even spread of males and females across each age group, with a slightly higher number of females than males aged 80 years and older (58% and 42% respectively).

See Appendix 3 for Kyabram Club membership demographics.

Moama venues

Discussions were also held with managers of three Moama (NSW) based venues. They reported differing legislative operating guidelines to Victoria. In terms of their venue location, they did not believe they had a significant impact on EGM use from Shire of Campaspe residents, although no data was able to be obtained to support this. The managers also

reported a higher dress standard, which is actively monitored, at their venues in comparison with Shire of Campaspe venues. One manager also commented on the 'complete package' available at his venue which included accommodation, sporting activities, meals and gaming. This therefore attracted a large amount of tourists and those who were more financially 'well-off'. Other Moama based venues were approached for discussion, however response was poor and no relevant information was obtained.

EGM user interviews

36 people were approached for an interview at two clubs, over three visits. The Echuca Workers and Services Club was visited twice, and Kyabram Club once. 14 people (39%) agreed to interviews and 22 declined (61%), the majority of which were at Echuca Workers and Services Club, during the second visit. During the second visit, the project officer was also able to offer incentives to EGM users where appropriate in order to encourage participation in interviews.

Of the 14 participants who agreed to be interviewed, only one person voluntarily left their machine to be interviewed. Others questioned how long the interview would take and some continued playing whilst being interviewed. It is possible that the quality and detail of the information given may have been influenced by the level of distraction by those continuing to use the EGM while being interviewed.

Results of EGM user interviews

Frequency of gaming

Of the 13 responses to the question 'how much time do you spend at the pokies?' over 50% reported that they play two to three times per week, while three responded that they play once a week. Three people commented that they up to two hours playing the machines per visit, and interestingly one person stated that they spend 40 hours a week at the club, although part of that time was also for socialising and not using the EGMs.

Spend amounts

Of the 13 responses to 'how much money do you spend at the pokies?' two people reported spending \$200 per week. 31% reported \$100 per visit, although their visit frequency ranged from once a week to once a month. Two people did not know how much they spent per visit. Seven people added a justification for their amounts spent, with six of these referring to paying their bills first.

Community participation

When participants were asked whether they belonged to, or participated in community organisations, clubs, sporting groups or volunteering, 67% of participants reported not being currently involved. They were either not interested or felt they were past this stage in life. Some responses included “I was involved in the past....but not now, too old for that” and “no, not interested in community groups”. Two people reported community involvement; one volunteered in the aged care sector and the other helped with indigenous youth outings.

Employment status and educational qualifications

60% of participants were retired with previous occupations including qualified tradesmen, unqualified seasonal cannery workers and retail workers. 54% reported having no tertiary qualification, although 38% reported having some type of formal qualification. 20% of participants were employed full time in the health sector and 20% were shift workers.

Motivation to use EGMs

A range of responses were received in relation to an individual's motivation to use EGMs. Most significantly, however, was the association of playing EGMs as a distraction from other personal issues. 60% of participants referred to their gaming as personal time and a form of relaxation or 'down time'. Only 20% stated that they used EGMs as a social outlet and 10% indicated that they discouraged conversation or socialising with other gamers. Only one person made reference to the chance of winning money.

See Appendix 4 for all responses.

5. Discussion & Emerging Themes

The following discussion is based on professional judgements, formed impressions and personal opinion of the project worker.

Key findings through observations and venue staff interviews include:

- An even proportion of male and female users at the Kyabram Club and the Echuca Workers and Services Club, but a greater number of female users at the Echuca Hotel;
- Across each venue, more EGM users were alone than with a companion;
- Two venues reported a regular Indigenous user demographic and one venue reported a high level of low socio economic users.

Key findings from the patron interviews include:

- Use of EGMs for personal time and relaxation was the most common response for motivation of EGM use;
- Only one person referred to using EGMs primarily for the chance of winning money and two people referred to the opportunity to socialise;
- A lack of social connection in the community was apparent in many of the participants;
- Over 50% of users reported playing EGMs two to three times per week;
- 46% of users reported spending \$100 or more per visit;
- Justification for use of EGM and amount spent was common with 42% indicating that they made sure their bills were paid first;
- 60% of participants were retired, 54% reported having no tertiary qualification and 20% were employed full time in the health sector and another 20% were shift workers.

Response to request for participation in an interview

Only 39% of EGM users accepted the invitation to be interviewed, some stating they preferred to be left alone, others stating no reason. It is possible that those willing to be interviewed did not have a perception that their EGM use was, or could become, potentially problematic and thus were comfortable to discuss various aspects of their gaming, including time and money spent on EGMs. It is also possible that EGM users did not want to be identified in the gaming room, and were not comfortable with progressing with an interview despite their responses being de-identified.

At the Echuca Workers and Services Club, the gaming floor worker approached the users with the project worker during the first visit, while during the second visit the project worker was

alone when approaching the users for an interview. It is possible that the anonymity between the project worker and the users assisted in gaining their agreement to participate in an interview, as well as the project worker stating at the beginning that the users would not be identified in the reporting. The gaming floor worker knew all of the EGM users who they introduced to the project worker, which may have been a deterrent to them participating in interviews when first approached.

Of the 14 participants interviewed, only one person voluntarily left their EGM for the interview, some even continued playing whilst talking with project officer. Those who continued to play did not seem to be concentrating on their gaming and did not appear to use any type of strategy to play, but rather kept playing regardless of result of previous spin. Essentially, their gaming appeared to be an automated, tuned-out response requiring minimal focus or attention, which was supported by one participant who stated that their time playing EGMs is to “zone out and forget about worries in life”.

Dress code and venue atmosphere

All managers of the Moama-based venues involved in the project reported having a higher dress standard, which was actively monitored, compared to venues in Echuca. The managers also made reference to their observed correlation between the stricter dress code, and the higher socio-economic status of patrons at their venues. Observations at the Moama Bowling and Rich River Golf Clubs indicated a much stricter dress code and a more up-market environment with recently renovated and modern interior at the Moama Bowling Club. Participants who were interviewed at the Echuca Workers and Services Club stated they felt comfortable attending this venue as there was not a strict dress code. The manager of this venue commented on the regular patrons being of a lower socio-economic class. This anecdotal information may then indicate that a stricter and actively monitored dress code will attract patrons of higher socio-economic class, while people of lower socio-economic class will more frequently attend venues with more relaxed dress codes.

Location and accessibility

Echuca Workers and Services Club is located within the central shopping precinct of Echuca making it an easily accessible venue. It was reported by venue staff and the interviewed patrons that the courtesy bus is often used to transport people home from the club with their groceries. That is, some patrons will do their grocery shopping and then attend the club for EGM use, utilising the courtesy bus for transport home afterwards. It is considered by some patrons to be a free ride home with their shopping. Venue staff and the interviewed patrons

observed the courtesy bus to be for some patrons, a free trip home with their shopping and the primary reason for using the gaming machines. Further information is required to determine whether these patrons are only playing EGMs solely to be eligible for the courtesy bus, or if they would be EGM users regardless of the free transport available to them at this venue. Further information is also required to support the anecdotal evidence that these particular EGM users do not have their own means of transport indicating a lower socio-economic demographic.

The Echuca Hotel is located in the tourist area of Echuca, slightly removed from the central shopping precinct. This could possibly make access more difficult as some would require their own transport to get to the Echuca Hotel.

Social connection

When asked about belonging to community organisations, clubs or sporting groups, or volunteering, eight out of the 12 participants reported not being currently involved in, or associated with, any community groups. Only two reported going to an EGM venue for social reasons. On the contrary, one person stated that they actively discouraged people from talking with them at the venue and that they wanted to be left alone.

Anecdotal information provided by venue staff also supports the notion of regular EGM use and poor social connection. They reported the male night shift workers, who are regular patrons of the Kyabram Club on weekday mornings, attend alone after their shift, as a time to unwind. Whilst it is not known what their level of connection and involvement is in their community, it could be assumed that opportunities for social activities outside of work could be limited to other shift workers or those who do not work regular day time hours. Observations at both the Kyabram Club and Echuca Hotel also noted more EGM users who were alone than with company.

The Department of Justice Study of Gambling in Victoria (2009) refers to a theme of lack of current or ongoing social connection amongst problem gamblers in comparison with non-problem gamblers. It is not clear whether gambling, or more specifically EGM use, precipitates a lack of social connectedness or whether a lack of social connectedness leads to problematic EGM use. While it is also not clear from this particular project whether participants were non-problem or problem gamblers, it is important to consider the possibility that their lack of social connection may have a negative impact on their gaming habits.

It is recognised that community participation and social inclusion contributes to positive mental health through greater self esteem and self satisfaction (VicHealth, 2005). This raises the question whether people who use EGMs lack this sense of belonging to their community which

may create or lead to solitary and/or problem gaming habits. Alternatively, does the amount of time and money spent on EGMs potentially impact on the time and money available to participate in the community? The link between poor social connection and EGM use is evident in this study. Further research will inform the most appropriate strategies to address this issue.

Frequency of use, amount spent and impact on personal finances

The interviews conducted resulted in a variety of responses to the questions relating to frequency of gaming, the amount spent and the impact on personal finances. As previously noted, when answering the question regarding the spend amount, 54% of the people interviewed provided comments which were considered justification referring to only using EGMs 'after the bills are paid' or seeing it as their 'spending money'. While it is the choice and right of the individual how they spend their money, it is worth considering whether their need to justify their money they dedicate to EGM use relates to feelings of guilt or embarrassment. Validating their decision to spend money on gaming may in effect overshadow the actual spend amount and because in their opinion it is affordable, it is therefore acceptable practice. It cannot be assumed what level of impact each individual's amount spent on EGMs has on their finances, however it is important to consider the potential negative effect it may cause to the individual and others in their lives. If money spent on gambling is a priority over money spent on participation in community or social activities, this may have a detrimental effect on the level of social inclusion the individual, and potentially their family, has in the community.

Venue choice and sense of safety

The owner of the Echuca Hotel had a solid understanding of the patron demographics of their venue. They believed that the regular patrons would most likely not use EGMs at other Echuca/Moama based venues. The owner stated a higher proportion of visitors over the weekend which is supported by the hotel being based in the tourist precinct of Echuca. Younger employed males often socialise at the pub and are frequent EGM users during the week in the late afternoon. It would not seem to be unusual that young men would chose a pub over a club as a venue to socialise and use EGMs.

One participant (female aged 65+yrs) interviewed at the Kyabram Club reported that she "wouldn't go to a pokies venue if it was a pub.....I feel safer at a club." She felt that pubs attract a younger male demographic and can, at times, become noisy and uncontrolled. This is in agreement with the project based in the Central Goldfields region, where it was reported

by their female participants that a club-type environment provided a sense of safety, whether to socialise, play the gaming machines, or both. While not referred to by any participants, the Kyabram club is the only venue in Kyabram with EGMs and thus the only choice of venue for local residents who do not want to travel to Echuca or Moama.

No participants at the Echuca Workers and Services Club commented on their choice of venue. It is known that this venue is centrally located in the town and provides a courtesy bus to its guests, however what level of influence this has on it being the venue of choice for its patrons cannot be presumed without more information.

New South Wales perspective

It was difficult to obtain specific data and information from venues located in Moama. Anecdotal information provided by the managers who were interviewed indicated that their venues had a stricter dress code than Echuca venues, which impacted on the demographic of patrons attracted to their venue. The package approach including meals, accommodation and gaming also appealed to the tourist market. Venue operators also believed that they did not have a significant proportion of EGM users who were Shire of Campaspe residents. It is evident that further research and data collection is required to enable solid comparisons between Moama and Echuca based venues and their EGM user profiles.

Employment/education

Seven out of 13 participants who provided information about their occupation and education stated they had no tertiary qualifications. Additional to this, one was not working at present and two had trade qualifications. The remaining three were from the health and community services sector and two of these worked in aboriginal health. They were not approached in a venue, rather they responded to an email sent to local health and welfare service providers, which explained the project and the need for EGM users to be part of the research. Both of these participants offered for the project worker to interview them and were forthcoming to discuss and explain their EGM use, expenditure, frequency and social connections. This may indicate that they did not view their EGM use as problematic. It is possible these workers are not aware that Aboriginal populations are one of the Victorian Problem Gambling target demographics, or that they do not regard their EGM practices as potentially role modelling for those they work with. The health sector, and those who work with Aboriginal communities, may be an area for future research and education.

Benefit of EGMs to the local community

All managers/owners interviewed reported that their venue contributes significant financial benefits to their respective local communities. Examples provided included greater employment opportunities, sponsorship of tourism and community events, financial contributions to sporting clubs, schools and local facilities. One Moama manager reported that “Moama would not be what it is today if it were not for the pokies...the expansion, population, sporting venues, tourism, and infrastructure”. It was also noted that the issue of increased community benefit was perceived very important by the wider community.

Comparison between user profile of Shire of Campaspe & Central Goldfields Shire

The Shire of Campaspe has two clubs and one pub with EGMs, while the Central Goldfields Shire has only two clubs. Each of three Shire of Campaspe based EGM venues had their own culture and unique demographic and no one target group was identified as the key demographic across the Shire.

The research project in the Central Goldfields Shire (CGS) had a pre-identified target demographic of women aged 55-74 years, while the Campaspe research project did not have a pre-identified target demographic. Within the two CGS venues, only 20% of observed EGM users were male and their venue operators estimated as many as 90% of regular users to be female. For the Shire of Campaspe, the venue observations found the number of male and female EGM users was relatively even with 54% female and 46% male. The membership demographics of the Echuca Workers and Services Club and the Kyabram Club also demonstrated similar numbers of male and female members.

6. Conclusion & Recommendations

The information collected during this project, both through participants and anecdotal, indicates that each of the three EGM venues located in the Shire of Campaspe have their own culture and unique demographic. While a key aim of this research project was to define the demographic profile of EGM users across the Shire of Campaspe, with the information collected it is not possible to define one key group, rather each of the three venues demonstrated differences in their regular user cohort.

This project did not provide any solid data which demonstrated that the type of venue attracted a particular demographic. One female participant at the Kyabram Club stated that she would not feel comfortable using EGMs at a pub, while observations at the Echuca Hotel, the only pub, recorded 70% of all patrons as female. Further observations and participant interviews would be required to determine whether particular demographics are attracted to a particular venue.

The CVHA project based in the Central Goldfields Shire, which targeted women aged 55-74 at risk of problem gambling, found that these women used EGMs as a social opportunity in a safe environment or as an activity to fill in time where they felt they had not other alternatives. The motivation was not to gamble and further work with these women around alternative social opportunities resulted in this group reducing their gaming and increasing their sense of social connectedness. An emerging theme from the participant interviews in the Campaspe project indicated a lack of social connection within their communities. Several people reported that the gaming venues were a source of connection for them (“it’s a social outlet, the older people come here for comfort and companionship”), while others reported no activity within the community and their motivations to use EGMs being about time to themselves (“something to do...me time”). The need for continued work which addresses social connection in the community is supported by the findings of both this study and that based in Central Goldfields.

There was no significant data that could be obtained through this project which demonstrated whether the gaming machines in southern NSW (Moama) has an impact on the Shire of Campaspe residents. The three Moama venue operators who were interviewed believed that they did not have a significant proportion of EGM users who were Shire of Campaspe residents, however no data was able to be collected which could support or oppose this statement. It is clear that further research and data collection is required to enable solid comparisons between Moama and Echuca based venues and their EGM user profiles.

Recommendations:

- For further research and data collection of NSW-based EGM venues to enable solid comparisons between Moama and Echuca based venues and their EGM user profiles
- For continued evidence-based work which aims to strengthen social connection in the community

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Appendix 1 Patron Interview

Age _____

Male___ Female___

Occupation_____

Social Connection

- family
- Sporting club
- Community group
- Volunteering

What motivates you to use pokies?

Why this venue?

How much time do you spend at pokies?

Do you attend alone or with others?

How much money do you spend?

How does it impact on your personal finances?

Appendix 2 Echuca Workers and Services Club Demographic Results

Members from the Echuca Workers and Services Club (by geographical location)

Location	Members (total)	Percentage
Shire of Campaspe	1483	75%
Elsewhere	493	25%
Total	1976	100%

Members from the Echuca Workers and Services Club who live within the Shire of Campaspe (By age group and gender)

	No DOB		1-20		21-31		31-40		41-50		51-60		61-70		71+	
Gender	M= 19	F=12	M=11	F=6	M=41	F=17	M=39	F=38	M=99	F=74	M=153	F=113	M=200	F=195	M=233	F=235
% members (Gender) in Shire of Campaspe	61%	39%	65%	35%	71%	29%	51%	49%	57%	43%	58%	42%	51%	49%	50%	50%
Shire of Campaspe (Total)	45		20		74		98		212		346		545		636	
% from Shire of Campaspe	69%		85%		78%		79%		82%		77%		72%		74%	

NB. These figures represent the total membership of the Echuca Workers & Services Club which include all facets of the business including main bar, bistro, TAB and gaming room. It does not distinguish between those members who utilise the EGM and those who do not.

Appendix 3 Kyabram Club Demographic Results

Members from the Kyabram Club (by geographical location)

Location	Members (total)	Percentage
Shire of Campaspe	3213	88%
Elsewhere	419	12%
Total	3632	100%

Members from the Kyabram Club who live within the Shire of Campaspe (By age group and gender)

	Under 10		Under 20		Under 30		Under 40		Under 50		Under 60		Under 70		Under 80	
Gender	M=17	F=16	M=59	F=42	M=162	F=113	M=144	F=151	M=234	F=227	M=293	F=302	M=332	F=331	M=345	F=472
% members (Gender) in Shire of Campaspe	52%	48%	58%	42%	59%	41%	49%	51%	51%	49%	49%	51%	50%	50%	42%	58%
Shire of Campaspe (Total)	33		101		275		299		461		595		663		790	
% from Shire of Campaspe	85%		97%		85%		91%		89%		85%		87%		92%	

NB. These figures represent the total membership of the Kyabram Club which include all facets of the business including main bar, bistro, TAB and gaming room. It does not distinguish between those members who utilise the gaming machines and those who do not.

Appendix 4 Recorded responses from patron interviews

Frequency of use:

- Twice a week for up to 2hrs each time
- Once a fortnight until the money runs out
- Once a month
- Once a week at varying venues
- Twice a week for 1 – 1 ½ hours each time
- Two – three times per week for 1-2 hours
- Two or three times a week
- Once a fortnight
- Two or three times a fortnight
- Twice a week
- 40 hours a week at the club, but I don't spend all of that time on the machines...I'm here to socialise
- One day per week for about 2 hours
- Once a week

Spend amounts:

- Don't really know but I make sure the bills are paid first
- \$70 - \$100 limit and I budget for this
- \$100 per visit (once a month)
- I don't spend anything, I watch my wife loose \$5. I like the TAB better.
- \$100 a visit (2 days/week), I budget this so that I can spend time here.
- Don't know, but not beyond my means
- \$100 per week
- Up to \$100 per visit (once a fortnight). It doesn't impact on my personal finances because all my bills are paid
- Too hard to average out
- \$50 per week
- \$200 per week after the bills are paid
- \$80 ...it can last ½ hour or 4 hrs, you just never know. I pay my main bills first, rent, power, gas. Whatever is left can be spent on myself....if that interferes with food money then I budget my groceries accordingly.
- \$50 limit.....I see it as my spending money

Social connection and community participation:

- "no, not interested in community groups"
- "no longer, I'm passed that stage in life"
- "no, my husband does all of the community and volunteering work on my behalf"
- "I was involved in the past....but not now, too old for that"
- "yes, I do volunteer work doing massage in aged care places"
- "yes, within the community. I help with youth gatherings and outings"
- "not close to family"
- "no"
- "I go to other clubs with family as a group, but other than that, no"
- "can't walk because of arthritis in my hip, so I don't go out to any groups or clubs"
- "Yes, we go to Probus and bowls" (husband and wife reported the same)

- “no but played footy when I was younger”

Employment status and educational qualifications:

- 2x Full time health workers
- 2x Retired tradesman (chef, plumber) – qualified tradesmen
- Retired house wife and seasonal cannery worker – no tertiary qualifications
- 2x Retired retail worker – no tertiary qualifications
- Retired farmers wife
- Disability pensioner – (nursing workplace injury and compensated) – qualified EN
- Stay at home mum – no tertiary qualifications
- Cannery shift worker – did not complete trade qualification
- Shift worker –Abattoirs – unqualified
- Not working at present

Motivations to use EGMs:

- “Zone out and forget about worries in life”
- “This is my down time after work”
- “Something to do.....me time”
- “I get to forget about everything”
- “the money pay outs”
- “For relaxation”
- “something to do on your own”
- “for the social atmosphere.....I meet up with others from the community”
- “time out for myself. I don’t go to socialise and don’t encourage anyone to talk to me. I just want to be left alone”
- “it’s a social outlet.....the older people come here for comfort and companionship”

