Legitimising harm:

A critical ethnography of gambling in a community

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Abstract

This thesis reports on a community study which explored the relationship between a small rural community and its club based poker machines. That enquiry aimed to broaden the general research focus from the dominant conceptualisation of individual gambling pathology to a community-level analysis. The theoretical and epistemological stance was also shifted, away from positivism (with its focus on measurable cause/effects), towards a critical constructionist approach. Employing ethnography, the research comprised extended community engagement, observation, document analysis and 51 individual interviews. Critical theory was applied to issues of ideology, discourse and power associated with poker machine gambling within the macro sociopolitical and local community contexts. The study found that, despite significant opposition, poker machines inveigled their way into this community with the support of powerful economic and political forces and influential club members. Location of the machines within an established club embedded them within networks of community relationships. Disbursement of community benefit ensnared many community members as beneficiaries of poker machine losses and rendered them complicit in gambling harms. The research identified that at times community ideology and interests acted as a powerful force against the establishment and expansion of poker machine gambling. Conversely, community ideology and interests also acted to legitimate the presence and operation of poker machines and to suppress opposition. This reflects the complex and contested nature of the construct of community. Reproduction of dominant gambling discourses, including those which frame gambling harm as pathology and an issue of individual responsibility, operate to conceal and condone gambling harms. These discourses marginalise and disempower community members harmed by gambling, while legitimating the club's deployment of poker machines. This has helped to maintain existing arrangements and to support the shared and powerful interests of the state, the gambling industry, and venues.

Statement of Authorship

Except where explicit reference is made in the text of this thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in the whole or in part for a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma. No other person's work has been relied upon or used without the due acknowledgement in the main text and in the bibliography of the thesis.

Signed: _____   Signed: _____

Dated: _____   Dated: _____

Deborah Greenslade   Professor John McDonald

Candidate   Principal Supervisor

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experience pertaining to the impacts of poker machines on local government and their communities.

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List of Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
CAC	Community Activity Centre
CR	Confidential Reference (see explanation in chapter 4)
CPGI	Canadian Problem Gambling Index
CWA	Country Women's Association
EGM	Electronic Gaming Machine
IPART	Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal
LGWGoG	Local Government Working Group on Gambling
PC	Australian Productivity Commission
RSL	Returned Servicemen's League
SACES	South Australian Centre for Economic Studies
VCGA	Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority
VCGLA	Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation
VCGR	Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation
VLGA	Victorian Local Governance Association

1

Introduction

This study explores the iterative effects of poker machines within a mid-sized rural township. Primarily the enquiry seeks to understand how the community's unique history, composition and context shape both the effects of poker machines within the community, and the ways in which the community respond to those effects. The influence of the macro socio-political context on both community and poker machine gambling will also be considered. There are four significant features that distinguish this enquiry. These relate to the focus, context, theoretical perspective and funding of the research; and each of these is discussed within this chapter. The rationale for shifting the analytical focus of this enquiry to encompass the community is also presented and definitions are provided for key terms utilised within this thesis. The final section briefly summarises its overall structure.

1.1 Context

The genesis of this enquiry stems from the liberalisation of gambling within Australia and a number of other, primarily western countries, during the latter decades of the twentieth century (Adams, 2008; Orford, 2011; Reith, 2007). In Australia, this liberalisation resulted in a rapid growth in gambling opportunities, particularly those associated with poker machines, known throughout Australia as pokies, or electronic gaming machines (EGMs), and internationally as fruit machines, slot machines or slots. Poker machine revenue within

Australia contributes significantly to state and territory budgets and supports community sport and social clubs. However, poker machines are also associated with significant negative impacts on individuals, families and communities (Productivity Commission, 1999, 2010).

Extant literature exploring the effects of poker machines has been largely generated from projects commissioned by governments or funded by the gaming industry. With few exceptions, this research has predominantly focussed on the individual pathological (or 'problem') gambler or on economic impacts. Understandings of the broader, often more complex effects of poker machines within their host community are limited. These themes are explored in more detail in the literature review.

1.2 Rationale for a community level focus

There are a number of compelling arguments to broaden the research focus from the individual gambler to an exploration of the community-wide effects of poker machine gambling. The paucity of research in this area is one justification; others relate to the way poker machine gambling in the Australian state of Victoria is delivered and regulated. Broadly there are seven significant reasons why a community level of analysis is necessary when considering the effects of poker machines:

1. *There is an identified lack of research regarding community-level effects of poker machine gambling*

   This identified paucity of research provides the first, and one of the most compelling arguments for the community-level of analysis adopted by this enquiry. Current research efforts regarding gambling have primarily focused on costing the socio-economic impact of gambling and measuring the prevalence and individual impact of problem gambling. While there is general recognition that poker machine gambling can impact at the

community level (Neal, Delfabbro & O'Neil, 2005, p. 125; Productivity Commission, 1999; Social & Economic Research Centre (SERC), 2001, p. 6), there is a dearth of research specifically examining the social and community impacts of gambling (Brown, Pickernell, Keast, McGovern, 2011; McGowan, 2004; Reith & The Scottish Centre for Social Research (ScotCen), 2006; South Australian Centre for Economic Studies (SACES), 2001).

2. *A call for gambling research to be situated in the everyday, social, cultural and historical context in which it occurs (McGowan, 2004)*

The second argument relates to a persuasive call by McGowan (2004) for gambling research to be contextualised and become sensitive to the historical, social and political settings in which it is played out. Based on an extensive review of the gambling literature from 1980 – 2000 (McGowan, Droessler, Nixon & Grimshaw, 2000; McGowan, 2004), McGowan notes that most gambling research is decontextualized, focused on pathology and conducted away from the setting in which it occurs. This study responds to McGowan's call by adopting a community study approach, locating the enquiry in the context in which the poker machine gambling occurs.

3. *The Victorian model of operation which has dispersed poker machines in community-based venues, coupled with the localised nature of poker machine gambling*

According to the Australian Productivity Commission (PC) there are around 200,000 poker machines in Australia; of these, around 186,000 are located within hotels, sports and recreation clubs (2010, p. 2.24). This disperses the majority of poker machines throughout communities. Many poker machine venues are positioned close to major shopping centres, recreation precincts or residential areas: at the very heart of communities, where people live, work, and shop and socialise. With strong evidence that the majority of poker machine gamblers travel only a short distance from home to

gamble (Delfabbro, 2011; Marshall, 2005; McMillen, Marshall, Ahmed & Wenzel, 2004), it can be surmised that the impacts of poker machine gambling will be most heavily felt within the community in which they are located.

> Where a casino is established then the community of interest is at the State level…
> Conversely the introduction of poker machines into local hotels and clubs will impact at
> the local, or regional level and thus the 'community of interest' is more confined (SACES,
> 2005a, p. 5).

4. *The Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation (VCGLR) and local government are required to consider the community effects of poker machines when assessing applications for new venues or to extend gambling in existing venues*

Within the Australian state of Victoria, state jurisdiction determines approval of poker machine venue applications. Under the Victorian *Gambling Regulation Act 2003*, premises may only be approved for gaming if the commission is satisfied that "[t]he net economic and social impact of approval will not be detrimental to the well-being of the community of the municipal district in which the premises are located" (2013, SECT 3.3.7). This legislation recognises potential effects of poker machines on communities and requires that these be assessed and considered. Currently these assessments are constructed from an amalgamation of social, economic and demographic data, which endeavours to build a picture of the community and to estimate the ways in which new or expanded poker machine venues will affect the local community. However, there is little available research specifically examining the community effects of poker machines.

5. *Legal precedent set by the Supreme Court of Victoria (2008:11) establishes the significance of community opinion in poker machine planning applications*

The significance of the community in poker machine applications was clearly established in legal precedent set by the Supreme Court of Victoria (2008:11). The Court's ruling in *Macedon Ranges Shire Council v Romsey Hotel Pty Ltd* & Anor (2008) found that the

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) "erred in law when it disregarded the evidence of community opposition to the proposed introduction of gaming machines." As McDonald and Ollerenshaw (under review) note, "this decision established a legal precedent for the State of Victoria, and recognised the voice of communities and local governments in planning approvals for EGMs", effectively repositioning communities as active agents in relation to community based poker machines (p. 19). Consequently, an equivalent shift in the level of research from the individual to local communities is demanded.

6. *Community is the level at which many of the effects of gambling harm are dealt with*

   The consequences of harmful gambling are frequently responded to at the community level by a range of individuals, including family, friends and colleagues; and by organisations and service providers, including local government, health and welfare services, businesses, and the education sector. Commenting on the introduction of poker machines into the South Australian community of Peterborough, Marshall (1998) noted that the problems relating to poker machines were being dealt with by the local population (p. 245). The often higher concentrations of poker machines in disadvantaged communities (Doughney, 2002a, 2002b; Livingstone, 2001, 2005; Rintoul, Livingstone, Mellor & Jolley, 2013; SACES, 2005a, 2005b; Wardle, Keily, Astbury & Reith, 2013; Wheeler, Rigby & Huriwai, 2006) would indicate that communities with the least capacity to absorb poker machine losses and organise a response to the effects of harmful gambling, are among those most heavily affected.

7. *Community effects of poker machine gambling are not limited to the sum total of problem gamblers in a given area*

   Much of what is currently surmised to be the community effects of poker machine gambling is deduced from epidemiological studies measuring problem gambling

prevalence, and research into the individual effects of harmful gambling. These assessments often attempt to extrapolate community consequence by multiplying findings from prevalence studies across the population of a given area. While this approach may provide a gauge of the prevalence of what is classified as 'problem gambling' at the community level, and a level of insight into the associated effects on the gambler and their networks, it fails to come to grips with the more complex and nuanced effects of community based poker machines. In particular, such an approach fails to account for the complex and multiple dimensions of community, including history, culture, place, shared values and identity. This research project recognises the complexity of communities and that variations in context and structure of communities will result in differential effects from poker machines. Exactly how these effects ripple through a community remains largely unknown though, and are thus an important matter for investigation.

1.3 Research focus

In addition to a broadening of the target for analysis, this research is also changing the theoretical and epistemological perspective from positivism (with its focus on measurable cause/effects), towards a critical constructionist approach. The application of a critical theoretical perspective provides a framework for this research to explore issues of power associated with poker machines, including the political and sociocultural structures that support hegemonic interests. Again this approach arises from McGowan's pleas for gambling research to also be "nuanced, politically engaged, and culturally informed" (2004, Para. 1). Receipt of funding independent of the poker machine industry and government was fundamental in enabling the adoption of a critical focus. Specific details of the project's funding are provided in section 1.5.1.

Specifically this research seeks to examine:

1. In what way has the introduction of poker machines shaped this community?

2. How does the local context shape the construction of and responses to gambling in this community?

3. In what ways do the present arrangements regarding poker machine gambling privilege and disadvantage individuals, groups and communities?

    a. What are the mechanisms by which this occurs?

4. What are the ideologies and discourses within the community pertaining to poker machine gambling?

    a. How do these shape the construction of, and responses to, gambling?

    b. What are the forces for continuity and change?

    c. Do these legitimate existing structural arrangements?

5. How are individuals, groups and organisations reacting to the proposed insertion of poker machines within their community?

    a. What are the forces that support or restrict them from influencing these decisions?

1.4 Significance of this enquiry

The significance of this research is attributable to four key characteristics: focus, context, theoretical perspective and funding. Firstly, this study shifts the focus from the individual problem gambler to explore the community-wide effects of poker machine gambling. Secondly, the research design adopted a community study approach to locate the study in the community context in which poker machine gambling occurs. Thirdly, the application of a critical theoretical perspective provides a structure for the enquiry to explore issues of power and the frameworks of ideology and discourse that support hegemonic interests. And finally, the research is funded independently of the vested interests of the industry and

state/territory governments that have consistently funded positivistic research focused on the individual problem gambler or the socioeconomic effects of gambling (see chapter 2).

1.5 Positioning this enquiry

This enquiry forms one element of a larger research project titled: *The Community Impact of Electronic Gaming Machines,* which commenced in mid-2009. The *Community Impact of Electronic Gaming Machines* project is a major, inter-disciplinary research study investigating how poker machines affect the health and wellbeing of communities. The project comprises three separate but interrelated studies:

Study 1:   A before-and-after comparative community study of the effect of poker machines on the psychosocial health and problem gambling rates of a community.

Study 2:   An investigation of the effects of gaming machines in localities that have a high concentration of machines and high rates of poker machine expenditure (losses).

Study 3:   This enquiry, a critical ethnography of the effects of poker machines in a rural community, completed as doctoral research.

These three studies were all conducted within the one Local Government Area (LGA) in the state of Victoria, Australia. The rationale and process for selection of this LGA is described in section 4.2. The situating of this doctoral enquiry within a larger, interdisciplinary research project provided considerable benefits for this enquiry. The significant benefits of this arrangement include provision of support, mentorship and networking opportunities, and access to project resources for research activities.

1.5.1 Funding and partnerships

Support for the *Community Impact of Electronic Gaming Machines* project was provided by an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Project grant (grant # LP0989647). The lead

industry partner was the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA), an association that advocates for social change and empowers local governments by strengthening their capacity to engage with their communities. In the late 1990s, the VLGA established the Local Government Working Group on Gambling (LGWGoG) in response to mounting concerns from local government regarding the adverse effects of poker machines. Since this time LGWGoG has actively worked to raise awareness of these, and to provide support and networking opportunities for council officers and to lobby successive Victorian State Governments for reform. The VLGA garnered significant interest and support for the project from local governments across Victoria, resulting in 28 of the 78 Victorian councils providing financial assistance for the project. No gambling industry funding was accepted for any of the studies conducted under *The Community Impact of Electronic Gaming Machines* project.

1.6 Definitions and terms

Hotels and clubs

The vast majority of poker machine gambling in Australia is provided within hotel and club venues. As there is some variance in the usage of these terms, both within Australia and internationally, it is useful to define their meaning as it applies to the Australian gambling context. Within Australia, as within the United Kingdom, the term hotel has two distinct meanings, denoting on one hand a business whose primary function is the provision of accommodation, and on the other, a venue whose primary function is the service of alcohol and meals (and sometimes, to a lesser extent accommodation). It is the second of these meanings that is relevant when hotels are discussed here. These venues are also known as pubs and sometimes as bars.

The term club as it relates to poker machine gambling in Australia is generally related to sporting groups, such as bowls, rugby, golf, and football codes; or to special interest groups such as Returned Servicemen's Leagues (RSLs) and cultural groups. Although they have a

membership base, both members and non-members are able to gamble within clubs (although non-members may be required to 'sign in'). Clubs are distinguished from hotel venues by their not-for-profit status. As a consequence, clubs receive preferential taxation arrangements. This is discussed in more detail in chapter 8.

Poker machines and poker machine gambling

As noted previously, electronic gambling machines are known by a number of terms. Within Australia these include EGMs, gaming machines, poker machines and pokies. Internationally they are known as fruit machines, slot machines or slots. Australians tend to describe the activity of gambling on these machines as 'playing the pokies', while the industry tends to describe it as gaming. There have been some criticisms of this terminology. Reith (2007) describes the term "gaming" as euphemistic, noting that, "with its connotations of play and leisure, [it] dissociates games of chance from their older, "harder" connotations of betting, wagering, and inevitably, financial loss"; and notes that this language is part of the normalisation of gambling (p. 36). Fallon (2008) makes a similar assessment in his doctoral thesis examining problem gambling in the club sector in the Australian State of New South Wales. Fallon rejects the use of terms such as electronic gaming machines, EGMs and gaming, on the basis that these descriptions draw attention to the leisure attribute of poker machines, but mask the gambling component (p. 19). Instead, Fallon (2008) elects to use the terms "poker machine" and "poker machine gambling", arguing they more accurately reflect the true nature of the activity and are "in keeping with the criticalist perspective of the research" (p. 19). This thesis will adopt Fallon's (2008) terminology, utilising the term poker machine "in preference to other more benign descriptions such as "EGM"" and the term poker machine gambling in preference to poker machine gaming (p. 19) or terms such as playing the pokies.

1.7 Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of 9 chapters. Chapter one provides an introduction to the central focus of the study and briefly contextualises the issue. Key foci of this chapter include the rationale for shifting the research focus to a community-level analysis and a summary of the significance of this project. The second chapter summarises and critically examines the extant literature related to the effects upon the community of poker machine gambling. A particular emphasis of this chapter is an analysis of the forces that have shaped the nature and direction of gambling-related research which is principally focused on gambling pathology. Chapter two concludes by drawing attention to the gaps in understanding associated with this level of analysis. Chapter three outlines the methodology underpinning this enquiry and its application of a critical theoretical perspective. The chapter also provides a detailed exploration of the concept of community and community theory. Conceptual challenges associated with community as a level of analysis are explored. These include the lack of a common definition for 'community' and the criticisms of community studies. Chapter four outlines the process for selecting the research community, the research methods employed in this enquiry and the ethical considerations. The fifth chapter provides an introduction to the research community, and seeks to frame the local gambling context within the broader political setting. How and why the bowls club came to establish poker machine gambling in the township and the community's engagement with the club are also key areas of focus. The research results and analysis are presented and discussed in chapters 6 to 8. Chapter 6 examines the interaction between community and poker machine gambling across three key periods. These have been labelled: insinuation, legitimation, and reaction. The various community responses to the presence and effects of poker machines are explored in relation to the community characteristics and ideological conceptualisations of the construct of community. The way the macro socio-political environment shaped local responses to poker machines and their role in the disempowerment and empowerment of communities around the issue of poker machines is also examined. The focus of chapter seven is upon

the dominant discourses related to gambling and gambling harm and the ways they are reproduced and reconceptualised within the local community. Discourses examined include those which position gambling as a matter of individual responsibility or which pathologise gambling harm. The role these discourses play in the production, reproduction and maintenance of power and social inequalities is of particular interest. Chapter 8, the final results chapter, explores the costs and benefits associated with the introduction of poker machines into the community being researched. Consistent with the critical theoretical approach, the way these costs and benefits are distributed throughout the community and their effects on the way community members respond to the presence of the machines are important considerations. Lastly, chapter 9 draws together the key findings of the thesis, describes the significance of these findings, and makes a number of recommendations.

2

Literature review:

Community effects of poker machines

2.0 Introduction

Scholarly interest in gambling is a relatively recent phenomenon which emerged during the widespread liberalisation of gambling in the latter decades of last century (McGowan, 2004; Reith, 2007). Following the medicalisation of gambling harms in the 1980s, international and Australian research has predominantly focused on the prevalence and pathology of 'problem gambling', and to a lesser extent, upon the economic and social effects of gambling (McDonald and Greenslade, 2010, p. ii). Despite recognition of the capacity of gambling and gambling harm to impact at the community level (Neal, Delfabbro and O'Neil, 2005, p. 125), there is an identified lack of research examining those very effects (Reith & ScotCen, 2006, p. 17; SACES, 2001, 2005a).

The literature reviewed in this chapter can be seen to fall broadly into two parts – that examining the origins and directions of gambling research, and that which explores what is known about the impact of poker machines at a community level. In selecting literature for this review, particular emphasis was placed on studies conducted within Australian to provide a depth of understanding to the local context. However, analysis of literature from

other countries indicates many of the findings are consistent with other jurisdictions, including New Zealand, the United States, Canada and Britain. The chapter commences by briefly describing the search strategies employed in reviewing the literature. Drawing on the work of academics including Castellani (2000), Collins (2006), McGowan (2004) and Reith (2007), the review then traces the development and direction of international and Australian gambling research and examines the factors which appear to have determined the paucity of community-focused research. Applying a critical theoretical lens, the chapter seeks to locate both the expansion of gambling and the direction of its research literature in relation to broader political, cultural and economic changes, including the rise of neo-liberalism. Incorporated throughout this section are reviews of a number of theoretical, opinion and policy pieces critiquing issues of power and subjugation related to gambling (particularly poker machine gambling) in the Australian and international contexts.

Attention then turns to what is known about the impact of poker machines at a community level. The construct of community is briefly considered, including the range of ways it has been conceptualised in both the community and gambling literature, with a more extensive analysis to be presented in chapter 3. The limited numbers of studies which have specifically set out to examine the effects of poker machines at a community level are then examined, along with additional research that offers insight into the range of ways poker machine gambling may affect communities. This review of the literature will conclude by drawing attention to gaps and limitations in current knowledge regarding the community effects of poker machines.

2.1 Literature search strategies

This chapter is informed by a review of the literature and the preparation of an Annotated Bibliography relating to the effects of poker machines at a community level (McDonald & Greenslade, 2010). The Annotated Bibliography comprised 126 items, including research

reports, books and literature published in peer-reviewed journals from 1980 to 2010.

Additional literature related to the community effects of poker machines which was published

between 2011 and 2013 has also been included. Literature for both the Annotated

Bibliography and this review were identified through a process which utilised manual and

computer literature searches of English language literature published between 1980 and

2013. Key words utilised in the search were:

- electronic gaming machines, and the various names by which they are known in

  Australia and New Zealand, UK, Canada and USA and elsewhere including:

  poker machines; pokies; EGMs; gaming machines; slot machines and fruit

  machines;

- impact (also effect and consequences);

- community impact (also effect and consequences);

- community impact assessment;

- community impact assessment framework; and

- socioeconomic impact.

The scope of the searches encompassed peer-reviewed and grey literature from a range of

sources, including journal articles, theses, reports published by governments, authorities,

agencies, and university departments and research centres; submissions to, and reports by,

commissions of enquiry; research commissioned and/or funded by government departments;

conference papers; and monographs and chapters in monographs. In addition, back issues

of every edition of the following journals were manually searched:

- *Gambling Research*

- *International Gambling Studies*

- *Journal of Gambling Issues*

- *Journal of Gambling Studies*

- *Asian Journal of Gambling Issues and Public Health*

As the focus of the bibliography was on the impacts of poker machines, the search excluded literature concerned with gambling prevalence studies, predictors and correlates of gambling behaviour, and treatment and harm-reduction strategies.

2.2 The liberalisation and growth of gambling

During the past four decades, governments in many countries progressively relaxed legislative constraints on gambling (Chambers, 2011). In many cases, gambling activities that had previously been restricted or that were active only on a small scale, such as lotteries, scratch cards, race betting, poker machines and casino table games, became state-sanctioned and commercialised (Adams, 2008; Orford, 2011; Reith, 2007). Legalisation and marketing saw gambling change from a morally questionable and aberrant or illegal activity to become a legitimate recreational pastime (Adams, 2008; Collins, 2006; Goodman, 1995; Orford, 2011; Reith, 2007). In jurisdictions including the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia, the result was an unprecedented growth in gambling products, access to gambling opportunities and consumption of gambling (Adams, 2008; Chambers, 2011). One of the most significant developments was the growth in continuous forms of gambling, including poker machines, in highly accessible venues such as bars and community clubs (Orford, 2011, p. 16).

Borrell (2008a, p. 159) and Reith (2007, p. 36) locate this liberalisation and spread of gambling within broader social changes which occurred at this time in many Western countries, particularly the move away from Keynesian economics and the embracing of neo-liberalism. Characterised by privatisation of government infrastructure, and low government taxation, expenditure and debt (Borrell, 2008a, p. 159; Economou & Costar, 1999, p. x), neo-liberal governments were increasingly drawn to gambling as they endeavoured to increase their revenue base without increasing direct taxation (Reith, 2007). Neo-liberalism's emphasis on industry deregulation and consumer sovereignty propelled the liberalisation of

gambling and undermined opposition to deregulation (Borrell, 2008a, pp. 159-161). According to Goodman (1995), numerous North American cities and states also legalised gambling under the belief that gambling provided the means to revitalise economically depressed communities (pp. 4 – 5).

2.3 The Australian context

With $19 billion expended on gambling products in 2008-09 (PC, 2010, p. 2.5), gambling represents a significant component of the Australian economy. Expenditure on poker machine gambling is the most lucrative segment of the Australian gambling industry, accounting for around $11.9 billion of this $19 billion (PC, 2010, p. 2.5). Within Australia, regulation of gambling is largely controlled by state and territory governments, who are also one of the primary beneficiaries, via taxes levied on gambling expenditure (also described as player losses). With the Federal government controlling most areas of taxation, the ability to levy taxes on gambling expenditure (or player losses) is an important source of revenue for the states and one that has grown significantly since the liberalisation of gambling in the 1980s. In the state of Victoria, gambling taxation comprises 13 per cent of taxation revenue collected by the State (PC, 2010, p. 2.11).

Regulatory frameworks governing the taxation and the availability of gambling products differ significantly across state and territory jurisdictions. For example, the Australian state of New South Wales (NSW) legalised poker machine gambling in 1956 (Hing, 2006). However, it was to be some 3½ decades before increasing fiscal pressures, intense industry lobbying and the improved ability to regulate the industry through computerisation, caused the other states and territories to follow suit (Costello & Millar, 2000, pp. 158-170; McMillen; O'Hara & Woolley,1999, p. 162). Poker machine gambling is now widely available throughout all Australian states and territories, except Western Australia (WA) where the availability of poker machines is restricted to the state's sole casino. This decision is considered to

account for the significantly lower rates of gambling harm experienced by Western Australia's citizens (PC, 2010, p. 5.20; SACES, 2005a).

2.3.1 Poker machine gambling in the State of Victoria

Poker machines were legalised in the Australian state of Victoria in 1992, and the State's regulatory framework provides for the licencing of a maximum of 30,000 machines. Of these, 2,500 are casino based, with the remaining 27,500 split evenly between hotel and club venues.

Between 1992 and 2012, the Victorian regulatory framework provided for all hotel- and club-based poker machines to be owned and operated by two companies – Tabcorp Holdings and Tattersall's. Under this framework, the duopoly was afforded the power to enter into contracts with individual clubs and hotels to install machines in their venues (subject to the granting of a license from the then-named Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority), to allocate machines to venues based on profitability assessments (McMillen et al., 1999, pp. 176 – 177), and to monitor machine performance and transfer machines from low performing venues to more profitable sites (Costello & Millar, 2000, pp. 94 – 95). This generous legislative framework enabled the duopoly to position machines so as to extract the maximum possible revenue from their catchments; a situation that has received considerable criticism from academics and social commentators (see for example Costello & Millar, 2000; Doughney, 2002a; Livingstone, 2001).

Under this arrangement, the Victorian government shared the proceeds of poker machine gambling (player losses) in a roughly three-way split with the duopoly and venue proprietors, the government drawing its share through taxation levied at 25 per cent on hotels and clubs. Hotels were required to pay an additional 8.33 per cent as a contribution to the Community Support Fund (a fund which distributes a portion of the Victorian Government's poker machine revenue to community programs and projects). Clubs were not required to

contribute to the Community Support Fund; instead they were required to expend an amount at least equivalent to 8.33 per cent of poker machine revenue at the club and community level (see section 2.8.1 and chapter 8 for more detailed discussions of community benefit). Even accepting that some revenue from the Community Support Fund may have returned to communities via grants, this arrangement saw a significant portion of player losses drawn from local economies through taxation, and appropriated as profits by the duopoly (Deakin Human Services & Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic & Social Research, 1997, p. 3; KPMG, 2000, p. 66). These losses to local communities were compounded when local venues were owned by large hotel chains and profits were repatriated to owners/shareholders.

In 2008 the state government announced it would not be renewing the duopoly's licence when it expired in August 2012 (Victorian Auditor-General, 2011, p. vii). Since August, 2012, machines have been owned and operated by venue proprietors and the proceeds of poker machine gambling has been distributed between the venues and the state government. Clubs continue to receive community benefit taxation concessions. Data for this research project was collected primarily during 2011. During this time the duopoly arrangement was still in place, however, it was also a time of transition, when clubs and hotels were preparing to assume ownership and responsibility for the management of the poker machines they were operating.

2.4 Governments' conflicted relationships with gambling

The increasing reliance of Western governments on gambling taxation has been frequently highlighted in the literature (Adams, 2008; 2012; Borrell, 2008a; Reith, 2007), as has the capacity of this reliance to compromise the ability of governments to effectively regulate the industry to reduce the harms associated with gambling (Adams, 2008; Adams, Buetow & Rossen, 2010; Adams & Rossen, 2012; Borrell, 2008a; Costello & Millar, 2000; Doughney,

2002a). In *Gambling, Freedom, and Democracy*, New Zealand author, Peter Adams (2008)

contends that risks arise when taxation derived from gambling constitutes a significant

portion of government revenue. At this point, he argues, it becomes increasingly less

attractive for governments to implement measures that would reduce gambling consumption

significantly, since alternative and electorally unpopular budgetary measures (such as an

increase in direct taxation) would be required (p. 33). Critiquing the outcomes of New

Zealand's implementation of a public health approach to gambling, Adams and Rossen

(2012) note that it "floundered in a network of vested interests" (p. 1051).

Examination of the effectiveness of measures adopted to ameliorate poker machine

gambling harms in the state of Victoria would appear to support Adams' contention. The

2001 regional caps, which were introduced on the number of poker machines in five areas of

socioeconomic vulnerability, provide a good example. The caps restricted the number of

poker machines to 11.7 machines per 1000 adults, or to the existing machine density in the

region at the time the cap was imposed, whichever was the lower (Regional Electronic

Gaming Machine Caps Review Panel, 2005, p. 8).

Research commissioned by the former Victorian Government into the effectiveness of this

measure concluded that the reductions in poker machine numbers were too small to result in

any real impact on accessibility (SACES, 2005b, p. v). Later that year, a parliamentary

panel, tasked with reviewing the caps, concurred with the SACES report, and recommended

that the cap be set at 8 machines per 1000 adults (Regional Electronic Gaming Machine

Caps Review Panel, 2005, pp. xv – xvi). However, despite these findings the Victorian

Government elected to set the cap at the lower of either 10 machines per 1000 adults, or to

the existing poker machine density in the region at the time the cap was imposed, and

extended caps to 19 regions (PC, 2010, p. 14.8). The recent assessment by the Victorian-

Auditor General that the evidentiary basis for the capping measure was weak and likely to

result in only minimal reductions in poker machine expenditure (2010) appears to support the earlier assessments.

Despite the caps, poker machine gambling losses continued in Victoria, ranging from $2.36 million in 2000-01 to $2.59 million in 2009 – 10 (Queensland Treasury and Trade, 2012). In an article published in The Age newspaper on 29th March, 2010, Dr Charles Livingstone illustrates the ineffectiveness of the caps on the Victorian suburb of Braybrook. Livingstone demonstrates that when the number of poker machines in the two venues in Braybrook "was reduced from 136 to 81 in 2007 – 08, the amount each machine made on average almost doubled: in 2008 – 09 they made an average $207,882 each, compared with $110,157 in 2006 – 07" (para. 9).

Other measures introduced by the Victorian government which have also been criticised as largely ineffective include: installation of clocks in venues (when most patrons wear watches) (Banks, 2011, p. 6); short periods of machine shutdowns (usually in the very early hours of the morning when venues are closed or patron numbers are very small) (Hancock & O'Neil, 2010, p. 37); Automated Teller Machine (ATM) withdrawal limits of $200 per transaction (with no limit on the number of withdrawals) and a ban on $100 note acceptors (while retaining the capacity to insert multiple notes) (PC, 2010, p. 20). Commenting on the ineffectiveness of these measures, the Productivity Commission noted that they have had "questionable effectiveness in reducing harm" (p. 19). The Victorian Auditor-General (2010) was also critical of the Victorian Government's approach to addressing harmful gambling, noting that no targets were set for measuring the effectiveness of the interventions implemented under the Taking *Action on Problem Gambling Strategy.* Despite this the Victorian government has recently signalled its intention to introduce legislation to establish a voluntary pre-commitment system (Dowling, 2013); although significant evidence suggests that such a system would be largely ineffective (PC, 2010, p. 10.22).

More effective measures to reduce or slow the rate of player losses have been called for on numerous occasions. These include a maximum bet limit of $1 per button-push, the prohibition of linked jackpots (which are particularly appealing to 'problem gamblers') (Zirnsak, 2002, p. 4) and a full pre-commitment system (Productivity Commission, 2010, pp. 54 – 56). Yet, as Zirnsak (2002) noted over a decade ago, government, opposition, and industry have steadfastly stonewalled calls for more effective measures, often citing the need to protect the "enjoyment of gamblers who do not suffer harms from their gambling" as "a screen to protect gambling tax revenue and industry profits" (p. 2).

As the above examples indicate, the Victorian government's approach to gambling harm has predominately focused on individual behaviour, rather than structural changes to enhance the safety of the gambling machine. Consistent with this approach, education and counselling and the promotion of 'responsible gambling' are key foci (see chapter 7 for a detailed discussion). Critics of these approaches argue that they disproportionately emphasise the role of the individual in the creation, maintenance and amelioration of gambling harm, masking and doing little to curb the economic interests of the beneficiaries of gambling (Borrell, 2008a; Campbell & Smith, 2003; Livingstone & Woolley, 2007).

It has also been argued that taxation on player losses in fact represents a regressive taxation regime. This is based on analysis demonstrating that the highest burden of gambling taxation is borne by the state's poorest communities, precisely where both poker machines and player losses are disproportionately concentrated (Doughney, 2002a, p. 16; Livingstone, 2005, p. 525). Additionally, a significant proportion (between 42 to 75 per cent according to the PC 2010) of this revenue is derived from individuals who are classified as either moderate risk or problem gamblers (p. 5.1).

2.5 The origins and direction of gambling research

Concurrent with the rapid international expansion in opportunities to gamble, discussed in section 2.2) was a growth in interest in the phenomena of gambling by researchers. McGowan (2004) traces the development of gambling research from what she describes as the "small beginnings" (para, 16) in the 1980s to the "explosion of surveys" in the 1990s (para. 22). As evidence of the intense research interest, McGowan points to the plethora of "new funding agencies, monographs, reports, scholarly journals, and professional electronic mailing lists" (2004, para. 3) that emerged during this time. As noted in section 2.2, this research, both international and Australian, has predominantly examined the prevalence and pathology of individual 'problem gambling'; and, to a lesser extent, the economic and social effects of gambling (McDonald and Greenslade, 2010, p. ii). There are two factors which have been fundamental in shaping the direction gambling research has taken: 1). The dominance of gambling research by the discipline of psychology (following the classification of problem gambling as a mental illness); and 2). The active involvement of gambling corporations and governments in the funding of both academic research, and contracted research by consultants.

2.5.1 The medicalisation of gambling harm

The listing of pathological gambling in the third version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III) in 1980 is well recognised as a turning point in the official recognition of harmful gambling as an illness (Castellani, 2000, p.35; Collins, 1996, pp. 355 – 356; Reith, 1999, p. 7). Yet publications framing harmful gambling within a medical paradigm first appeared during the first half of the twentieth century. In *The Age of Chance,* Reith (1999) discusses Freud's essay, *Dostoevsky and parricide*, (which examines the Russian author's harmful gambling), highlighting the essay's framing of "the gambler as a compulsive neurotic" (p. 6). While in *Pathological gambling: the making of a medical problem,* Brian Castellani (2000) discusses the significance of two works by Edmund

Bergler, *The Psychology of Gambling,* (his classic text published in 1958) and an earlier journal article, *The Gambler: A Misunderstood Neurotic*, published in 1943 (pp. 23 – 25).

It was, however, upon the listing of harmful gambling as a mental disorder in DSM-III, under the new nomenclature of 'pathological gambling' (Collins, 1996; Reith, 1999, p. 7) that the medical model of gambling "obtained a position of professional authority" (Castellani, 2000, p. 23). Stressing the significance of the inclusion of gambling in the DSM, Castellani (2000) notes that "at once the problems associated with it changed from vice to disease" (p. 20). Castellani goes on to identify this event as one marking a "shift in the discursive history of gambling", and to describe how this powerful new discourse of pathological gambling, it being now perceived as an illness, challenged the ways in which gambling had been conceptualised and treated during the previous century (p. 21).

The classification of harmful gambling as a medical illness also profoundly influenced research during subsequent decades; with the majority of research narrowly focused on pathology (McGowan, 2004). Consistent with the focus on pathology, gambling researchers developed and refined diagnostic tools such as the South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS), the Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI) and variations of DSM, and developed and assessed treatment modalities for problem gamblers (McGowan, 2004; Collins, 1996). Large scale problem gambling prevalence studies were conducted in Australia and many other countries, including New Zealand, the United States, the United Kingdom, Spain, Turkey, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Canada (McGowan, 2004, para. 25). Other research examined characteristics of problem gamblers, comorbidities, problem gambling within sub-populations and the impact of problem gambling at an individual level.

Consistent with Foucault's constitution of subjects and Hacking's (1996) *Making People Up*, once the category of pathological gambler was established, the production of research

knowledge concerned with the description, classification and identification of problem gamblers, reinforced it (Borrell, 2008a; Collins, 2006; Reith, 2007, p. 37 – 39).

> …the managerial 'prediction' of problems or 'pathologies' at an individual level will tend to translate into a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' i.e. one will find the problems *there* if one looks for them – *there*. Conversely one will not find them where one does not look – and if not motivated to look elsewhere (Borrell, 2008a, p. 293).

The resultant body of knowledge provides significant insight into problem gambling including definitions, prevalence, characteristics of problem gamblers, risk factors and co-morbidities, the impact of problem gambling at an individual level, and the effectiveness of varying treatment modalities.

However, this research is largely silent on the wider social construct within which gambling occurs (Fabiansson, 2009; Woolley, 2009), a point supported by Reith (2007) in her exploration of the genealogy of pathological gambling,

> Although steeped in a climate of commercial proliferation and economic deregulation, explanations of gambling problems were seldom couched in terms of consumer behaviour but were rather discussed within a reductive, materialistic epistemology of sickness and disease (p. 37).

This research emphasises the agency of the individual in the creation and maintenance of gambling related harms, and diverts research attention away from the part played by the poker machine product (Borrell, 2008b; Campbell & Smith, 2003, p. 143; Livingstone and Woolley, 2007, p. 364; Young, 2013) and the growing consumption and reliance on gambling profits by governments, industry and community organisations (Adams, 2009).

Furthermore, as the following illustrates, the contracted focus of research on individual pathology has left many other areas largely unexamined:

> This rather narrow focus tends to draw attention away from the wider effects of gambling on communities and societies as a whole. As such, studies of the impacts of gambling on particular social groups, its effects on communities and its relation to factors that involve wider social frameworks, such as socio-economic deprivation, have been relatively rare (Reith & ScotCen, 2006, p. 17).

This (disproportionate and limited) focus of the bulk of gambling research on the *problem gambler* - locating the problem within that individual - represents a serious imbalance, and is a compelling argument for the community studies approach adopted by this project.

2.5.2 Funding of gambling research

The direction of research has similarly been shaped by its funding. Much of the research knowledge regarding gambling has been generated from projects commissioned by governments or funded by the gaming industry (Borrell, 2008a, p. 333; McDonald, 2009). The preference of government and industry to fund positivistic research focused on the measurement, cognition and treatment of problem gambling has reinforced the research focus on individual pathology and restricted development of other research perspectives (Borrell, 2008a, p. 293).

As both industry and government have a pecuniary interest in maintaining the current gambling arrangements (Adams, et al., 2010), questions have been raised regarding the independence of gambling related research (Adams, 2008; Adams, 2011; Borrell, 2008a; Catford, 2012). Adams (2011) and Adams, et al. (2010) discuss how receipt of research funding from the gambling industry and government can compromise the independence of gambling researchers. In *Understanding Problem Gambling*, Borrell (2008a, pp. 333 – 348) provides detailed discussion of local and international examples of gambling corporations commissioning consultant and university studies that "cast the industry in the most

favourable light" (p. 333). While the following description by Adams (2008) of the range of relationships that have been developed between the gambling industry and researchers provides an indication of how pervasive gambling industry funding has become:

> …many examples of the way gambling providers establish relationships with researchers can be observed. These include funding professional chairs, contributing to university staff development funds, direct funding of research projects, sponsoring academic conferences, sponsoring overseas travel, engaging academic consultants, recruiting academics onto advisory boards, and so forth (p. 117).

Commenting on gambling research more generally, Adams (2008) contends that the gambling industry and government research resources are directed to preference particular categories of research. Adams (2008) classifies research topics into 'high' or 'low' convenience or inconvenience to gambling industry and government bodies. High inconvenience research topics are those that have the potential to call into question current gambling arrangements and the safety of the poker machine product. Adams argues that the majority of research resources are diverted to what he describes as low inconvenience research topics. This 'low inconvenience' research includes conducting large-scale prevalence studies, and developing and evaluating educational resources and treatment strategies for 'problem gamblers' (see pp. 118 – 123 for a detailed discussion).

Examination of research projects listed in the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation's *Strategic Business Plan 2013-2014* (VCGLR, 2013a) supports Adams' claims, with the research emphasis on epidemiological studies examining problem gambling prevalence and harms, and problem gambling treatments. These research agendas reinforce a discourse which locates the problem as residing within the individual 'problem gambler' and result in an academic literature dominated by studies in this area. This interpretation of the 'problem' as one of 'demand' (Bacchi, 2009), residing in the individual problem gambler, conveniently avoids focus on the gambling industry and government, or the gambling product (Campbell & Smith, 2003, Livingstone & Woolley, 2007). This is followed up in more detail in chapter 7.

There have also been claims that, given the dependence of governments on gambling revenue, gambling researchers who are critical of governments have been silenced (Adams, 2008). In 2003 in Victoria, Professor Linda Hancock, the chair of the Gambling Research Panel was sacked and the panel disbanded after it pursued a range of research investigating the harms caused by poker machine gambling and the lack of effective interventions by the Victorian government to alleviate the situation (Adams, 2008, pp. 121 – 123; Baker & Hannan, 2005).

The focus of this review now shifts from the origins and direction of gambling research, to what is known about the community level effects of gambling.

2.6 Research exploring the community level effects of poker machines

As noted previously, there is little research specifically examining the community level effects of gambling. As early as 1999, the Australian Productivity Commission's report *Australia's Gambling Industries* recognised the local and regional assessments of the impacts of gambling as major information gaps (1999, p. 23.6). More recently, the former Gambling Research panel noted the dearth of gambling research related to community level impacts when it commissioned the South Australian Centre for Economic Studies to explore the issue,

> Little is known about the impact of new patterns of gambling on employment opportunities, quality of life, recreational activity and detailed household expenditure at the local community level (Victorian Gambling Research Panel (GRP), cited in SACES, 2005a, p. 6).

In a similar vein, McMillen and Doran (2006) observed that, "questions about the long-term effects of gambling on individuals and communities are rarely addressed within the research" (p. 26); and a report prepared for the UK Gambling Commission suggested that the family and community significance of gambling could be further examined (Orford, Wardle, Griffiths, Sproston, & Erens, 2009). Two recent reviews of the gambling literature related to the community impacts of poker machines drew similar conclusions, noting that comparatively

little research attention had explored the community-level impacts of poker machines (Brown et al., 2011; McDonald & Greenslade, 2010).

However, the impact of gambling on communities has received sporadic research interest and, a number of international and Australian research projects have specifically sought to identify and measure the range of impacts of gambling at the community level. These studies – few and limited as they are – have primarily examined the socioeconomic effects of gambling. In America the impacts of new casino developments have been the subject of research projects (see for example Nicholas, Stitt & Giacopassi, 2002, 2004). Within Australia, and New Zealand, reflecting the local gambling context, these studies have essentially been concerned with the effects of poker machine gambling (SACES, 2005a, Wall, Peter, You, Mavoa, Witten, 2010). During the last decade, the approach to research upon community impacts has centred on the development and implementation of frameworks. These are discussed in sub-section 2.10.

2.6.1 Conceptualisations of community in the gambling research

McDonald and Greenslade (2010) found that the term 'community' has not been consistently used in the gambling research literature. This is consistent with the contested nature of the concept of community, both academically and in general usage (Bell & Newby, 1971; Crow & Allan, 1994; Crow & Mah, 2012; Delanty, 2003; Poplin, 1972; Wild, 1981). In the literature related to community effects of poker machines examined for their Annotated Bibliography, at least five distinct uses of the term were identified:

1. The term 'community gamblers' has been applied to gamblers who live and gamble in their local community (compared to tourist or destination gamblers).
2. 'Community sample of gamblers' refers to a sampling strategy to recruit study participants (as distinct from clinical samples of problem or pathological gamblers who are receiving a professional treatment).
3. The 'community effects' of gambling has also been used to refer to the effects on an aggregate of the individuals who gamble within a given locality.

4. The 'community' impact of gambling has been used simply as a synonym for the 'social' impact of gambling.
5. 'Community' has been used to refer to geographic locality studies of the impact of gambling.

(McDonald and Greenslade, 2010, p. iii)

To a large extent these usages of 'community' are problematic, variously constructing community as a geographical territory, a socio-economic system, an aggregate of problem gamblers or a passive recipient of gambling 'impacts'.

The geographic and socio-economic constructs of community are evidenced in the use of local catchment data for poker machine venues; local government area (LGA) data for poker machine expenditure; the measurement of economic costs and benefits; and the imposing of caps based on the socioeconomic standing of communities. The construction of community as a socio-economic system is also evident in the positioning of community as a beneficiary of gambling proceeds. In Victoria this occurs through the allocation of Community Support Fund resources or clubs' distribution of Community Benefit. These latter conceptualisations of community ostensibly allow the economic benefits of poker machines to the community to be traded off against the socio-economic harms. Community is also conceptualised as an economic *market* of consumers (whose interests are guarded by the state), as "a collection of consuming, purchasing individuals" (Borrell, 2008a, p. 305). This neo-liberal construction of community inter alia silences or renders invisible the less tangible moral, cultural and political effects of poker machine gambling described by Adams (2008). Alternatively, community is viewed merely as an aggregate of problem or pathological gamblers, assembled from state-wide prevalence studies, or again as a passive recipient of gambling corollary, as an object to which things are done. Such conceptualisations ignore the agentic capacity of communities to respond to and shape the effects of poker machine gambling. Generally speaking, these narrow usages of 'community' ignore the broader, more complex, less tangible understandings of all that may be implied by the term, including a sense of attachment and belonging and an understanding of relationships, factors which SERC

(2001) notes are in many ways "sensed" (p. 40) by local residents who, when surveyed "are capable of expressing opinions as to gambling impacts at this level" (p. 40).

Despite the recurrent reference to 'community' in gambling research then, little attention has been applied to defining the term in the gambling literature. This can in part be attributed to the well-documented difficulties in defining community more broadly (see for example Bell and Newby, 1971; Crow & Mah, 2012; Dempsey 2002) which are taken up in chapter 3. It is also perhaps a difficulty which has been avoided by research choice: witness again the lack of attention within gambling research to 'community' as a more general entity. This can be contrasted with the abundant research attention ascribed to pathological or problem gambling and the efforts to classify and define these behaviours.

A notable exception is the work by SERC (2001). This report, although published over a decade ago, retains significance for its recognition that the "concept of community is crucial" when assessing gambling impacts (p. 39). Noting the frequency of use of 'community' in the literature and the lack of a standard definition (p. 39), the authors then specifically sought to develop one. Consistent with the community studies literature (Bell & Newby, 1971; Dempsey, 2002; Wild, 1981), the authors noted the incorporation in the definition of both spatial and social dimensions and the notion of a "shared community of interest" (SERC, 2001, p. 39). Drawing on work by the Nova Scotia Alcohol and Gaming Authority (1998), the researchers proposed the following definition of what constituted community for the purpose of measuring "gaming" impacts:

- All residents in a relevant geographical area;
- Social groups, which would include sporting clubs; service clubs; church and other voluntary groups including ethnic associations. While some of these might be parties in commercial transactions the predominant characteristic will be mutuality of interests;
- Social networks which will cover defined groups which form because of the common experience of frequenting places where gaming occurs (p. 39).

The authors' careful delineation of 'community' adds a significant level of precision to their framework. Additionally, the descriptors of community impacts (including development of community facilities, effects on recreation and socialisation, financial contributions to community groups, costs to agencies from problem gambling, and incidence of crime (pp. 39 – 40 & 73 – 76) provide a base for considering a more comprehensive range of effects of poker machine gambling on communities. The definition and descriptors however still leave many characteristics of community unexplored, including networks of relationships, and a sense of belonging and connection. The issues associated with defining community, and its central importance in the gambling debate, will be taken up in detail in chapter 3.

2.7 Accessibility

The SERC (2001) report also notes that the impacts of gambling on communities will vary in response to differences in community composition and characteristics (p. 40). Enquiries in which these have been explored relate them to variations in the accessibility and distribution of poker machines. Research examining accessibility has highlighted the correlation of accessibility of poker machines with gambling frequency (Young, Markham & Doran, 2012), gambling expenditure and problem gambling (PC, 1999). The issue of accessibility has been found to be multidimensional, encompassing geographical location, venue features such as opening hours, ambient appeal and so forth (Delfabbro, 2011, pp. 294 – 295; Marshall, 2005; Thomas et al., 2011).

Distances travelled to gamble have also been examined by a number of studies and it is now accepted that the majority of poker machine gamblers travel only a short distance from home to gamble (KPMG, 2000, p. 57; McMillen, et al., 2004, pp. 81 – 82). This suggests that the impacts of poker machine gambling are predominately felt within the community in which they are located. This localisation of the impacts of poker machine gambling was one of the key rationales for undertaking a community level of analysis (see chapter 1).

Another dimension of accessibility is the relationship between the distribution and location of poker machines and socioeconomic disadvantage. The high proportion of the state's poker machines located in socio-economically disadvantaged localities has been frequently noted in the literature (Doughney, 2002a; Livingstone, 2001, 2005; SACES, 2005a, 2005b). For example, studies comparing Melbourne's distribution of poker machines with Australian Bureau of Statistics Socio-economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) have consistently found poker machines to be more concentrated in suburbs and areas which house the least advantaged populations (Doughney, 2002a, 2002b; Livingstone, 2001, p. 50; Marshall & Baker, 2001). With a strong relationship between poker machine density (availability) and poker machine expenditure (Doughney, 2002a, pp. 13 – 29; Livingstone, 2001, pp. 50 – 51, 2005, pp. 524 – 525), it is clear that the costs and benefits of poker machine gambling are not distributed equitably across society. Similar relationships have been observed in other jurisdictions: Wheeler et al. (2006) found that poker machines were "disproportionately sited in the most deprived areas of New Zealand" (p. 95); and research by SACES (2008) conducted in Tasmania found "there is a greater propensity to locate gaming machine venues and gaming machines in relatively disadvantaged areas and machines in disadvantaged areas earn higher revenue" (p. 243). Research by Wardle, et al. (2013) in Great Britain similarly found that socio-economic deprivation was plainly (although not universally) correlated with the distribution of gambling machines.

Findings from a recent study conducted in Melbourne, Australia, provides further insight into the relationship between socioeconomic disadvantage and poker machine losses (Rintoul, et al., 2013). Researchers found that the level of poker machine losses increased as disadvantage increased. The density of poker machines was found to be a mediating factor, accounting for "40% of the apparent effect of disadvantage" (p. 329).

While the body of research around problem gambling provides a detailed understanding of how these costs are felt by the minority of (problem) gamblers, far less is known about how these costs are viewed, experienced and made sense of by the majority of the community.

2.8 Impacts of harmful gambling

A large part of what is currently understood to be the community effects of poker machine gambling is drawn from studies into the adverse impacts of problem gambling on individuals, their families and to a lesser extent the wider community. These studies vary in focus, scope, and methodology, from small qualitative studies (Darbyshire , Oster & Carrig, 2001; Patford, 2009), to larger scale, population surveys (McMillen et al., 2004), and economic studies which seek to ascribe dollar cost to each impact (Victorian Competition & Efficiency Commission (VCEC), 2012).

The association between poker machines and harmful gambling is well recognised in the international and Australian academic literature (Lund, 2006; McMillen, et al., 2004; PC 1999, 2010; Potenza, Steinberg, Wu, Roundsaville & O' Malley, 2006). In 2010, the Australian Productivity Commission estimated that poker machines account for 75 – 80 per cent of problem gamblers (p. 13). The Commission further noted that harms from poker machines are not limited to those classified as problem gamblers, and that poker machines "pose considerable problems for consumers in general" (p. 13).

The continuous nature of poker machine gambling activity, their popularity, wide spread availability and accessibility (PC, 2010, pp. 13 – 14) and the voracity of Australian machines are all factors which have been identified as contributing to the higher rates of losses and adverse effect. Additionally, the perceived safety and friendliness of venues (Brown & Coventry, 1997) and the low initial outlay to participate, position this form of gambling to appeal to a wide demographic. This association of poker machines with significantly higher rates of player losses and harms than other forms of gambling (PC, 2010, pp. 2.11 – 2.12)

distinguishes poker machine gambling from other forms of legal gambling in Australia and other jurisdictions with similar gambling arrangements, such as New Zealand.

The Productivity Commission's (1999) diagrammatic illustration of the impacts of problem gambling (see Figure 1) classifies impacts into 6 domains: personal, financial, legal, interpersonal, community services, and work and study; there are also a number of sub-domains. These domains have been adopted as the organisational means by which the range of impacts of problem poker machine gambling identified in the literature will be discussed. It should be noted however that even this model oversimplifies the density and complexity of the web of interconnectedness involved in the total dynamic.

Figure 1. Impacts of harmful gambling
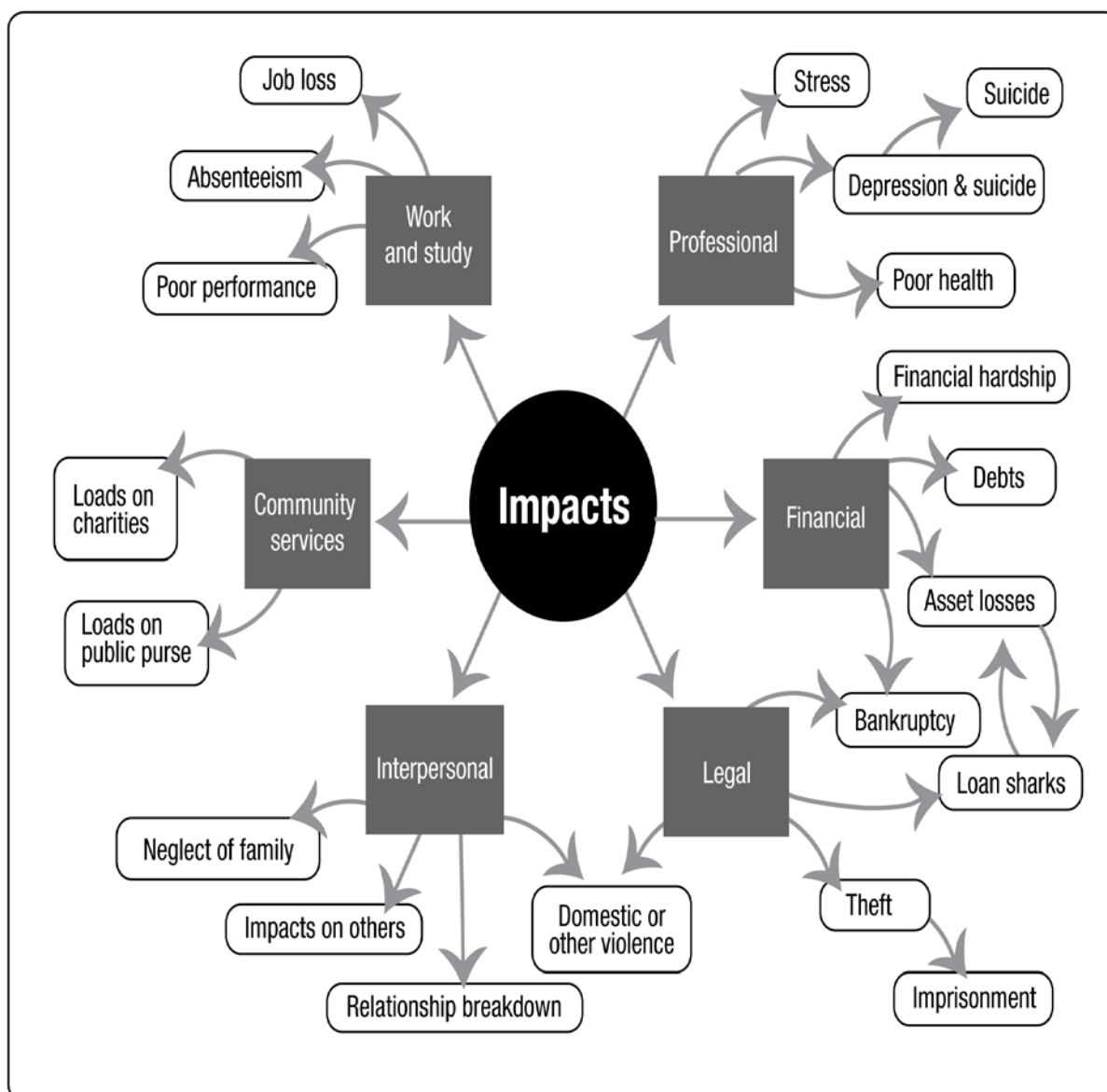
Productivity Commission (1999, p.7.3, Figure 7.1, Impacts of problem gambling)

Personal impacts

Researchers have identified multiple personal impacts associated with problem gambling, including: anxiety (de Castella, Bolding, Lee, Cosic, Kulkarni, 2011), drug and alcohol issues (de Castella, et al., 2011; PC, 1999), stress, guilt and distress and general poor health (Productivity Commission, 1999). For example, a New Zealand study by Lin, et al. (2010) examining the relationship between time and money spent gambling (mainly poker machine gambling) and quality of life, found that higher gambling losses were associated with poorer

emotional and physical health. A qualitative study of female partners of gamblers (predominantly, but not exclusively associated with poker machine gambling) revealed the ripple effects of problem gambling, with all partners reporting they experienced emotional suffering including anxiety, depression, fear and resentment (Patford, 2009). Similarly, a range of negative effects of gambling problems on partners were also identified by Holdsworth, Nuske, Tiyce and Hing (2013), including impacts on emotional and physical health and erosion of relationship with partners.

Significantly, problem gambling has been found to be associated with depression, suicide ideation, attempted suicide and suicide (Blaszczynski & Farrell, 1998; Chow-Fairhall, et al., 2006; de Castella, et al., 2011; Productivity Commission, 1999). In a study of problem gambling amongst individuals presenting to a mental health service, de Castella et al. (2011) found that "the prevalence of problem gambling identified in the study cohort was more than four times that reported in the general community" (p. 1). Most recently, a Victorian coronial report released in October 2013, found that problem gambling was a contributing factor in 128 suicides during the previous decade (Victorian Coroners Prevention Unit, 2013).

The nature of the causal relationship between problem gambling and issues such as mental health problems and drug or alcohol misuse (often described as co-morbidities) has been the subject of considerable debate (Delfabbro, 2011, p. 113.; PC, 1999, p. 7.25; Reith & ScotCen, 2006). Drawing attention to the complexity of causation, Reith & ScotCen (2006) note, "It can often be difficult to disentangle the effects of gambling from those of a range of other factors. While problem gambling may exacerbate other dependencies, these in turn may exacerbate problem gambling" (p. 42). Delfabbro (2011) noted that, while the question of whether gambling causes problems or whether people with problems gamble to alleviate their problems remains unanswered, "It is very likely that gambling, either (at best) exacerbates existing problems and causes further harm to those who are most vulnerable,

or (at worst) it creates problems for people who did not previously have any problems"

(p. 114).

The range of adverse impacts of problem gambling on others are well documented in the academic literature and include: family breakdown and relationship stress (Dickson-Swift, James & Kippen, 2005; Kalischuk, Nowatzki, Cardwell, Klein, & Solowoniuk, 2006; Krishnan & Orford, 2002; PC, 2010; Zirnsak, 2002; Law, 2005); family violence (Borderlands Cooperative, 2007; Korman, Collins, Dutton & Dhayananthan, 2008); and loss of friendships (New Focus Research, 2003, p. 53). Studies have also revealed significant impacts on children including: child neglect (Tu'itahi, Guttenbeil-Po'uhila, Hand & Htay, 2004); poorer household nutrition and variety (Schluter, Bellringer & Abbott, 2007); insufficient food (Law, 2005). In a unique phenomenological study with children who had a parent with problem gambling, Darbyshire, et al. (2001) identified that children experienced multiple and pervasive losses due to their parent's excessive gambling. These included loss of material goods, loss of the parent, loss of a sense of home, loss of relationships and loss of trust and security (pp. 41 – 42).

Financial impacts

Generally speaking, many of the harms problem gamblers experience have been found to be associated with financial losses (PC, 2010, p. 16) and poker machines are associated with high gambling losses. For example, in Australia, 62 per cent of the total expenditure on legal gambling in 2008-09 was attributed to poker machine gambling (PC, 2010, p. 2.5), while poker machine gambling (outside of casinos) in New Zealand accounted for $854 million of the $2.1 billion lost on the main forms of gambling (New Zealand Department of Internal Affairs, 2013).

This review has identified a range of adverse financial impacts associated with poker machine gambling and problem poker machine gambling. These include: economic hardship

(Law, 2005; PC, 1999, 2010, p. 16); bankruptcy (Law, 2005; McMIllen, et al., 2004, p. 26; Scull & Woolcock, 2005; PC, 2010, p. 16); homelessness (Antonetti & Horn, 2001; Holdsworth, Tiyce & Hing, 2012; Scull & Woolcock, 2005); indebtedness (Law, 2005; SACES, 2008; Scull & Woolcock, 2005); and loss of assets including the family home, retirement savings and so forth (Law, 2005). The impacts of financial hardship on family members was highlighted in a study by New Focus Research (2003) in which all participants experiencing problems with their gambling spoke of expenditure on gambling limiting recreational opportunities for their family and of "being increasingly unable to provide material needs (food, clothing, shelter) for their families" (p. 50).

Individuals and groups who are socioeconomically disadvantaged are more likely to suffer adverse economic impacts of increased gambling due to their limited financial means (Australian Institute for Gambling Research & Labour & Industry Research Unit, 1999). It is also important to note that gambling expenditure/losses do not have to be significant to result in financial hardship. In a study of the impacts of problem gambling on low income earners, Law (2005) found that even apparently small losses, as little as $15 per fortnight, can have significant consequences for individuals on a low income (p. 40). The difficulty for low income individuals to recover from gambling-related financial losses was highlighted by Nixon, Solowoniuk, Hagen, Williams (2005) in their research exploring problem gambling amongst older adults.

There is also evidence that individuals on a limited income may be drawn to gambling not for its entertainment value, but in the hope of improving their financial situation. Tiyce and Holdsworth's (2011) qualitative study exploring the experiences and perceptions of people who were homelessness and had problems with gambling, found that "despite its potential pitfalls" participants identified a number of benefits of their gambling (p. 12). For example, participants identified gambling was as a way to improve their financial resources and felt it gave them "a sense of hope for improved situations", p. 13). Similarly, Morrison's (2004)

research with Maori women in New Zealand revealed that despite the significant adverse effects for themselves and their extended families, the interview participants identified numerous positives associated with poker machine gambling, including the hope that they could win their way out of poverty.

Evidence presented by the Productivity Commission (2010) indicates that the percentage of adult Victorians who used a poker machine at least once in a 12 month period has declined to 21 per cent (p. 2.22). When coupled with estimates that moderate risk and problem gamblers account for 42 to 75 per cent of total poker machine spending (PC, 2010, p. 5.1), this indicates expenditure on poker machines is derived from an ever more concentrated segment of the population. While in the past it has been difficult to obtain an accurate estimate of the size of losses experienced by those classified as problem and moderate risk poker machine gamblers, the Productivity Commission, (2010) has done some work in this area. Drawing together a number of studies and a combination of individual poker machine playing-styles data and data from prevalence surveys, the Commission estimated that annual expenditure by problem gamblers averaged around $21,000 (p. 5.33). The Commission noted that the higher share of spending by higher risk gamblers "weakens the incentives for venues to deal with problem gambling if they are a significant source of their revenue" and "may also weaken the extent to which governments act to aggressively limit problem gambling or its adverse financial effects for gamblers, since gambling taxes and licence fees are an important source of revenue" (2010, p. 5.32).

The ripple effects of problem gambling on regional economies was also noted by service providers participating in a study conducted by New Focus Research (2003): "The financial/economic impact of problem gambling affects the wider community, with many service providers mentioning the effect of problem gambling on the local economy and small businesses in rural communities" (p. 50) (see also Deakin Human Services & Melb Inst of App Eco & Soc Services,1997).

Legal impacts

Research has also examined the association between gambling and the fear of crime (Nichols, Stitt & Giacopassi, 2002) and actual crime. Research has revealed problem gamblers are more likely than non-problem gamblers to commit crime to obtain money (McMillen, et al., 2004, p. 26; PC, 1999).

A number of studies have recently explored the relationship between gambling and the occurrence of crime in more depth. These studies have established a relationship between harmful gambling and the committing of income generating crime (such as theft, fraud, break & enter, forgery, false pretences, larceny and robbery) either to fund gambling or to make up the shortfall in living expenses (Crofts, 2003; Wheeler, Round, Sarre & O'Neil, 2008; Wheeler, Round & Wilson, 2010). Research conducted into the potential relationship between poker machine expenditures and property (income-generating) crime rates reported to police in local areas in South Australia in 2002–2003 found that the higher the expenditures on gaming machines in a particular local area per adult, the higher the income-generating crime rate in that area (Wheeler, at al., 2008). Likewise, a report commissioned by the Tasmanian Department of Treasury concluded that "a *positive, significant relationship* was found between gaming expenditure and nearly all crime rates…with the strongest relationship between income-generating fraud crime and gaming expenditure" (SACES, 2008, p. 207).

It has been reported that research exploring the relationship between problem gambling and crime has been hindered by an identified under-reporting of gambling-motivated crime in police records (Crofts, 2003; Smith, Wynne & Hartnage, 2003, p. 44), a reluctance by offenders to acknowledge gambling as the motivation for income generating crime (SACES, 2005a) and an unwillingness of many victims (frequently family, friends and employers) to report crimes (PC, 1999). Differentiating the effect of poker machine expenditure from other risk factors for crime (such as income levels, age, drug and alcohol consumption and police

presence) have also posed a challenge for researchers. However, recent methodological

advances enabled Wheeler, et al., (2010) to model the relationship between poker machine

loss and crime. In their analysis, the researchers found that poker machine expenditure per

capita is significantly positively associated with nearly every type of crime; only illegal drugs

had a more significant impact on crime. Additionally, analysis discovered, "only limited

evidence that gaming expenditure in Victoria is endogenous (in terms of those who live in

areas with high crimes being more likely to gamble)" (p. 65).

Community services impacts

Impacts associated with problem gambling on the health, charity and public welfare sectors

have been frequently raised in the literature. The PC (1999) noted the increased demands

on counselling agencies from those experiencing problem gambling and that financial

hardship created by problem gambling can lead to increased demands on social security

and agencies providing material aid (pp. 7.56 – 7.57). A recent Victorian report assessing

the costs of problem gambling highlighted similar impacts (VCEC, 2012). In a survey

conducted with clients of Gamblers Help services, Graffam & Southgate (2005) found that

development of gambling problems created a "new pool of community service users who

had previously not used community services", increased the frequency of use of existing

community service users, and was associated with an increase in "the range of community

service types used" (p. 13). There was also a strong association with poker machine

gambling amongst the Gamblers Help clients who participated in the survey with 83 per cent

of survey participants identifying poker machines as one of their preferred gambling activities

(p. 83). However, much of the evidence here appears to be anecdotal rather than empirical

(Graffam & Southgate, 2005, p. iii; SACES, 2005a), with agencies and services not always

systematically collecting reliable data regarding demand for services stemming from problem

gambling. Feelings of shame and stigma also inhibit the admission by some service users

that gambling harm is the reason for seeking assistance (SACES, 2005a).

Gambling and problem gambling have also been associated with a decrease in volunteerism and charitable donations, both of which can impact on the community sector. Data presented the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) in a report which examined the registered clubs industry in NSW, showed an association between increased gambling profits and a reduction in volunteering, particularly once profits reached $1 million dollars or more (2008, p. 51). Reviewing this data, the Productivity Commission (2010), attributed these changes to the increased revenue enabling clubs to employ staff to undertake duties previously carried out by volunteers (p. 6.14). While the occurrence of (often significant) volunteering in gambling clubs has been acknowledged (Brown et al., 2011; IPART, 2008; PC, 2010), the PC made a distinction between the 'occurrence' of volunteering in venues and the 'creation' of volunteering through gambling revenue (pp. 6.13-6.16). The Commission also noted the ability of poker machine gambling to affect volunteering more broadly, noting that "community gambling may lead to broader cultural changes that undermine volunteering" (p. 6.15). Other studies by Griswold and Nichols (2006) have also noted an association between gambling and reduced volunteerism. Griswold and Nichols found that the presence of a casino within 15 miles of a community significantly reduced social capital, which they measured by a range of factors including volunteerism, along with trust, meeting friend/family obligations, civic, group participation and giving. Analysis by SACES (2005a) indicated a sharp decrease in donations to the Salvation Army Red Shield Appeal in the years 1993-96 follows the introduction of poker machines and casino gambling in Victoria (pp. 214 – 216). Similarly, Marshall's (1998) study found, "The impact of poker machines on fundraising in Peterborough was one of the most frequently raised concerns" (p. 241). Given the important role volunteering often plays in community life, these findings may be particularly pertinent to this enquiry.

Work and study impacts

A number of adverse impacts on employment and study associated with problem gambling have been noted in the literature. These include: disruption to study and work (Abbott, 2001,

p. 58; PC, 1999), poor productivity, job loss and changing jobs due to gambling (McMIllen, et al., 2004; Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General, 2012, p. 75). In addition, recent research has drawn attention to an association between employment in the gambling industry and the development of gambling problems (Hing & Breen, 2008; Hing and Nisbet, 2009).

2.8.1 Exploring these effects at the community level

The literature reviewed in this section provides a comprehensive understanding of the multiple ways harmful gambling can affect individuals and some of the ways those effects work to encompass family members, friends, colleagues and others. These studies also help to describe the range of issues that are likely to exist within the community being researched within this project. However, the general line of enquiry still remains predominately focused on the individual gambler and on her or his immediate social and familial networks. Although some studies have explored the response by family members and friends to problem gambling (see for example, Darbyshire et al., 2001; Patford, 2009), there is little understanding of how the broader community responds to and makes sense of, the presence of gambling harms. This is particularly the case when gambling harms arise from gambling offered within the community itself. This study's community-level focus provides the opportunity to build on and extend these detailed understandings of the impacts of gambling harm on individuals.

2.9 Economic benefits and costs

It is clear that poker machine losses provides an economic benefit to governments, either in circumstances whereby governments are the providers of gambling (such as in Canada and the Netherlands (Adams, 2008, p. 152), or through the taxation of player losses (Kerry, 2011; Orford, 2011; PC, 2010, pp. 7 – 9), and that this taxation is often hypothecated to fund worthy causes such as education, hospitals, community groups and so forth (Pickernell,

Brown, Worthington & Crawford, 2004). It is also evident that the venues that operate poker machines also derive economic benefits, part of which supports employment within local communities, the enhancement of venue facilities and the provision and subsidisation of activities and services such as restaurant meals and drinks (PC, 1999, 2010). In addition, within Australia, it is claimed that significant profits from poker machines operated by club venues are frequently invested in the development and enhancement of sporting and club facilities, and that these facilities are enjoyed by a wide range of community members. This is apparent even to the casual observer and is supported by the research literature (PC, 1999, 2010; IPART, 2008).

However, assertions that poker machine gambling delivers broader economic benefits to communities, including net employment, increased spending in local businesses and increases in tourism, have either been discredited, or do not appear to be supported by the research conducted over the last decade (Borrell, 2008a; Pinge, 2008; SACES 2005a; SACES 2008). An example of a study which has been discredited is a study conducted by ACIL Consulting (2001) that highlighted positive economic effects of poker machine gambling on the economy of Ballarat, a regional Australian city. This study was conducted for the poker machine operator Tattersall's and examined the costs and benefits of poker machine gambling, concluding that the benefits significantly outweighed the costs. However, as documented by Borrell (2008a) this study has since been analysed and discredited by three university-based economists (for detailed analysis see Borrell, 2008a, pp. 333 – 335). Perhaps the most recognisable impact of the development of the poker machine gambling industry is the creation of employment. The PC (2010) found the gambling industry to be a major source of employment across Australia, employing gambling staff and staff in a range of other non-gambling areas such as food, beverage and entertainment (pp. 2.13 – 2.14). However, the Commission (2010) later notes that "the gambling industries do not create *net* employment benefits, because they divert employment from one part of the economy to another" (p. 6.1). The Commission further emphasised this point when it asked:

> Would the bar and gaming staff, accountants, entertainers and cooks employed in the gambling industry be unable to find a job in the absence of the gambling industry? Were they unemployed before the growth of the gambling industry? Are such people currently unemployed in Western Australia? (2010, p. 6.27).

The Commission's (2010) assertions are supported by a number of Australian studies that have examined the employment impacts of poker machines on the host community, including reports compiled by SACES (2005a, 2008) for a number of Australian states.

As early as 1998, Marshall's study of the introduction of poker machines to the South Australian town of Peterborough found that while,

> [a]n overall job gain/loss assessment was beyond the scope of this study, but since minimal employment opportunities have arisen as a result of poker machines and since some losses may be attributed to them, the overall picture has probably not produced a net employment gain (p. 243).

Later studies have indicated that in comparison to other sectors, the poker machine industry uses very little labour for every $1 million of turnover (Pinge, 2008, p. 5; SACES, 2005a, p. 62). For example, in a study assessing the impact of poker machines on local communities, SACES (2005a) notes that the gambling industry employs 3.2 staff per $1 million of gambling income; in comparison, the liquor and beverage sales sector employs 8.3 staff per $1 million of income, and food and meals sector employs 20.2 jobs per $1 million of takings (p. 62). Likewise Pinge (2008) who in his study of the economic impact of poker machines on the regional economy of Bendigo noted that the poker machine gambling sector "is a very capital intensive sector which uses very little labour for every million dollars of output" (p. 5). Pinge's (2008) analysis found that consequently, the diversion of spending to poker machine gambling from more labour intensive sectors such as retail or cafes and restaurants "will lead to a fall in employment in the national, state or regional economy" (p. 5). Furthermore, a later study by SACES (2008) regarding the social and economic impacts of gambling in Tasmania analysed ABS Labour Force Survey data, and found no evidence that the

introduction of poker machines had a positive impact on the level of hotel and club sector employment in that state (p. 142).

A number of these studies have also examined the impact of *multiplier effects* within communities hosting poker machine venues. Multiplier effects are the benefits to the local economy of the venue expending poker machine revenue (player losses) with local suppliers of food and other services that have the effect of multiplying the economic benefits. The literature indicates that the benefits of multiplier effects are variable, and dependent on the business practices of individual venues. For example for net spending (with for example, food suppliers) to benefit the local community, the venue would have to source supplies locally. In addition, the meals provided by the poker machine venue would have to be supplied in addition to those already supplied by local cafes and restaurants, not at the expense of them.

Marshall's (1998) study in Peterborough found, "only one hotel could claim to purchase the bulk of its food supplies locally whilst the rest obtained supplies from Adelaide and Port Pirie" (p. 243). While acknowledging the benefit to the local economy of other expenditure such as renovations to the hotel venues to accommodate the poker machines, Marshall points out that, "these renovations are however, one-off benefits which will not continue" (p. 243). Marshall's (1998) research actually identified a detrimental impact on local businesses from the introduction of poker machine gambling to the Peterborough township caused by a diversion in expenditure from existing businesses to poker machine gambling:

> All the hotels in Peterborough have reported increased profits, whilst other firms and organisations are suffering declines in turnover and revenue. It would appear that a shift has occurred in the expenditure patterns of the limited and declining wealth in the community. There does not appear to have been any trickle-down effect from the new-found wealth in the hotels as employment and spending has increased minimally if at all (Marshall, 1998, p. 244).

As Marshall's research is one of the few studies exploring the community costs and benefits of the introduction of poker machine gambling in a rural setting, it is of particular interest to this study.

Pinge (2008) sought to specifically isolate food and beverage sales from his calculations into the economic impact of poker machines on the regional economy of Bendigo, arguing that if these services were not provided by poker machine venues, they would be provided by other businesses. Once food and beverage were removed from the calculations, Pinge (2008) found that the sector was a "relatively small purchaser of inputs" in comparison to other sectors, spending 6 per cent of total revenue on local inputs in comparison to retail/ accommodation, and cafe/restaurant sectors that spend 36% and 39% respectively (Pinge, 2008, pp. 5 – 6). The conclusion by Pinge (2008) that a diversion of expenditure from these sectors to poker machine gambling would "be expected to lead to a fall in demand for local intermediate goods and services whether this is at the national, state or regional level of the economy" (pp. 5 – 6), appears to support the earlier findings by Marshall (1998).

Additionally Pinge's (2008) assessment (also conducted during the period in which poker machines were owned and operated by the duopoly) found that the transfer of almost 67% of player losses away from the community (via a combination of taxation to the state government and fees and charges to the duopoly) significantly reduced the proportion of player losses that were able to be expended in the local economy by the venue. Similarly, a report examining the social and economic effects of poker machines in non-metropolitan communities also noted the potential for leakages of economic activity from regions via the repatriation of state taxation, duopoly profits and venue profits out of the local communities. (Deakin Human Services & Melb Inst of App Eco & Soc Services,1997). While the new arrangements whereby venues own and operate machines are likely to see an increased proportion of player losses (expenditure) remain within local communities, state taxation will still draw approximately half of all losses from local economies. In those cases in which

community gambling venues (usually hotels) are owned by large corporations, leakages of economic activity will be significantly higher.

Research reviewed has also examined the impact of poker machine gambling on tourism. Although opportunities for gambling have been linked with increased tourism, both nationally and internationally, studies by SACES (2005a, 2008) indicated the wide availability of poker machine gambling within the Australian context negated any positive impacts on tourism:

> The benefits associated with additional spending by interstate tourists are also likely to be small or even non-existent given the availability of similar forms of gambling across all states and territories of Australia (with the exception of Western Australia in respect of gaming machines) (SACES, 2008, p. 143).

Similarly, a longitudinal community study by KPMG Consulting (2000) also found that poker machine gambling did not provide a substantial boost to tourism (p. 59).

It is evident from the research reviewed in this section that there are a range of economic benefits and costs associated with poker machine gambling. It is also apparent that these benefits and costs are distributed in ways that privilege some and disadvantages others. However, the research reviewed provided less insight about how the distribution of these economic costs and benefits is actually experienced within the context of a small community.

2.9.1 Community benefit funding

Adams (2008) uses the term 'community benefit funding' to describe a variety of ways in which some of the proceeds of gambling are distributed back to communities (p. 50). Referencing the arrangements in New Zealand, Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia, Adams describes how the amount of community benefit funding and the means by which it is dispersed varies across and within countries. Adams notes that in Canada, the United Kingdom and New Zealand, "where community benefit funding is identified as one of or the primary purpose for permitting gambling" significant funds are

available for dispersal to community organisations, particularly from poker machine gambling (p. 50). As an example he cites arrangements in New Zealand, where he notes, notwithstanding its relatively small population of 4 million people, community benefit funding of between $400 and $600 million per year is generated by gambling (pp. 50 – 51). In Australia and some states in the United States, gambling in taxed more heavily, and direct contributions to communities or community funds are less (Adams, p. 50).

Adams documents and discusses the range of ways in which community benefit funding can be collected and dispersed, including "direct industry contributions", "community-administered contributions", "government administered contributions", "government-brokered contributions", "and government-mandated contributions" (pp. 51 – 56). Regardless of the method of distribution, Adams cautions that individuals and organisations receiving community benefit funding from gambling are exposed to a number of risks. These include being ethically compromised and risking reputational damage, the potential jeopardising of organisational sovereignty and silencing of an organisation's ability to criticise the industry, and creating interpersonal tensions between those within the group or organisation who hold opposing views on accepting gambling funding (pp. 50 – 61).

Adams' (2008) work is particularly pertinent to this research project because he shifts attention from beyond the predominant focus of the individual gambler, to explore broader, more nuanced, less tangible effects of gambling, such as the power of alleged 'community benefit' to shape and control responses to the presence and effects of gambling. Adams's (2008) text is one of the key works to have informed the direction and focus of this project and has provided a perspective through which to interpret the research findings (see chapters 5 & 8).

2.9.2 Community benefit funding in Victoria

In the Australian state of Victoria different arrangements regarding community benefit funding are applied to hotel and club venues. Hotels are required to contribute 8.33 per cent of gambling revenue to what is known as the Community Support Fund. Clubs, on the other hand, are required to expend an amount at least equivalent to 8.33 per cent of poker machine revenue upon activities or services at the club and community level. This expenditure is validated through the submission of an annual Community Benefit Statement (CBS) to the gambling regulator (the VCGLR). Failure to complete a CBS or to contribute at least 8.33 per cent of revenue to community benefit can result in the club being liable to pay an additional 8.33 per cent of poker machine revenue in taxation (VCGLR, 2013b).

However, as the range of expenditures that clubs are able to claim as community benefit is broad - ranging from donations and sponsorship, and expenses associated with volunteering, to staff wages and capital expenditure (excluding those related to gaming purposes) - it is unlikely that clubs would be unable to meet this requirement. Exploration of the literature identified significant criticisms of the classification of expenses constituting community benefit, both within Victoria and in other Australian states. Researchers have been particularly critical of expenses which constitute the normal costs of running a business, such as wages, maintenance, plant and equipment, being classified as community benefits (Livingstone 2007) and of the "miniscule" revenue returned to communities in comparison to poker machine losses (Livingstone, Kipsaina & Rintoul, 2012, p. 8) (see also Con Walker, 2007). On the other hand, research by Brown et al. (2011) reported concerns (particularly amongst club managers) that Community Benefit Statements under-report some of the intangible community benefits generated by clubs, including: "improved community access, a safe venue and facilitating social gatherings" (p. 9) (see also pp. 81 – 88). The work of these academics was especially informative in this study's analysis of the distribution of community benefit within the chosen research community.

2.10 Social costs and benefits

A small number of studies in the literature have highlighted a range of positive social and economic impacts associated with poker machine gambling (and gambling in general). Identified benefits are primarily associated with increased recreation opportunities. In a number of research projects reviewed, the association of poker machine gambling and the provision of safe and comfortable environment for social opportunities (particularly for women) was one of the principal benefits noted (Brown & Coventry, 1997; Morrison, 2004; New Focus Research, 2003). Opportunities for social support and social interaction for isolated and/or marginalised groups has been noted by Australian and international studies. For example, an American longitudinal study by Bilt, Dodge, Pandav, Shaffer and Ganguli (2004) found gambling (bingo and other non-specified gambling) may offer social support to older participants who could be otherwise isolated. In an Australian study by Holdsworth, Tiyce and Hing (2012) homeless participants reported that they gambled to find relief from stress and that venues provided a warm and welcoming space, as well as a temporary sense of social connection generally denied to those experiencing homelessness (p. 48). In New Zealand, Morrison's (2004) study of Maori female problem poker machine gamblers also identified that the comfort and relative glamour of the venue was an important consideration for these women, who had little material wealth.

However, researchers have also noted that the attractiveness of venues can be a double-edged sword and that the participants' gambling can create multiple adverse effects (Holdsworth, Tiyce and Hing, 2012; New Focus Research, 2003). In a qualitative study with 20 women poker machine players, Holdsworth, Nuske and Breen (2012) found that most of the women who identified as having a problem with their gambling, "gambled to deal with social isolation" (p. 31) and, that 4 of the 10 gamblers who self-identified as recreational gamblers, recorded a PGSI score indicating that they were moderate-risk or problem gamblers (p. 24). Findings by Thomas and Lewis (2012) – that some older and socially

isolated problem gamblers were reluctant to acknowledge their problem gambling because they did not wish to lose the social connection with venue workers and other patrons (p. 48) – also highlight the risks associated with a reliance upon gambling to provide opportunities for socialisation. Additionally, the New focus Research project (2003) pointed to the "curious contradiction between sociality and social isolation" associated with problem poker machine gambling, noting that while many participants spoke of the sociality of venues, most gambled alone (pp. 38 – 39).

Preliminary investigations indicate that the gambling club in the research community plays a key role in community life. These studies therefore provide a significant foundation for this project's exploration of the effects of poker machine gambling within the community context. Particularly relevant is the analysis which draws attention to the link between poker machines and the provision of facilities for social interaction (Brown & Coventry, 1997; Morrison, 2004; New Focus Research, 2003) and the potential costs which can be associated with the benefits (Holdsworth, Nuske and Breen, 2012; Thomas and Lewis, 2012).

2.11 Assessment frameworks

During the last decade there has been a new line of enquiry centred on frameworks for socio-economic impact that have sought to gain a more holistic understanding of the community impacts of poker machine gambling. Most notable are: the work by SACES (2005a, 2008) and SERC (2001) in Australia; the work of Adams, et al. (2004) in New Zealand; and in Canada, Anielski & Braaten's (2008) framework, and, building on their work, the framework proposed by Williams, Rehm and Stevens (2011). The strengths of the framework approaches are that they broaden the focus from the individual to the community and reveal a wider array of effects of poker machine gambling and harmful gambling. For example, SACES (2005a) surveyed community medical clinics to assess rates of patient

presentations to general practitioners for gambling related issues; while Anielski & Braaten's framework The Social and Economic Impacts of Gambling (SEIG) (2008) included factors such as "community social capital (i.e. sense of cohesion, trust, belonging)" (p. 46). By employing both quantitative and qualitative data, framework approaches can provide both breadth and depth, while the triangulation of these different data contributes to the validity of research findings.

The framework approach represents a major step forward from the research of the 1980s and 1990s. However, there are still a number of limitations within these approaches. The most significant of these is that researchers have had difficulties demonstrating impact for all identified indicators. In the study by SACES (2005a) into the community impacts of poker machine gambling, the researchers found that data limitations restricted their ability to measure or establish causality for many of the community impacts identified, including demand for emergency relief, bankruptcies, work performance and negative social capital impacts. These limitations included the absence of data for some categories, and discrepancies in data collection practices between agencies such as to render data collation difficult.

Some difficulties reported with the framework approaches have related to an over-reliance on positivist, quantitative research designs. This created a degree of tension. On one hand, there was the recognition that the effects of poker machine gambling are diverse and extend beyond the gambler to the wider community. Yet, the research methodologies proposed, were frequently unable to isolate and measure those non-linear effects. Additionally, although the framework approaches substantially broaden the focus of gambling impacts, they are still to an extent prescriptive. The identification and definition of the range of possible measures for inclusion within the framework effectively constructs a boundary which prescribes the scope of effects for research focus. In some cases this can exclude what researchers may consider to be essential elements in the full assessment of any

impact of gambling upon the community. For example, issues of power and social justice are largely absent from the frameworks examined, as are issues such as the capacity of gambling to shape relationships and the way community members respond to both the presence of gambling and its effects.

2.12 Conclusion

This chapter has presented and critically discussed extant literature regarding the community effects of poker machines, including literature examining the origins and directions of gambling research, and that which explores what is known about the impact of poker machines at a community level. This review has confirmed previous findings that the focus of the majority of this research has been associated with gambling pathology and the impacts of harmful gambling on individuals (McGowan, 2004). The resulting body of literature provides significant insight into the prevalence and characteristics of problem gamblers, and the range of impacts of problem gambling at an individual level. However, this emphasis on gambling pathology has also produced a discourse that constructs gambling harm as an issue of individual, rather than community, concern.

This emphasis on pathology has restricted the development of alternate research perspectives, contributing to the identified scarcity of literature specifically examining the effects of poker machine gambling at the community level (McDonald & Greenslade, 2010; Reith & ScotCen, 2006, p. 17; SACES, 2001, 2005a). However, widespread location of machines in community clubs and hotels, combined with research revealing the localised nature and effects of poker machine gambling (KPMG, 2000, pp. 57-58; Young, et al., 2012), clearly establishes community as the recipient of gambling benefits and harms, and thus as a crucial focus of gambling research.

Current understandings of the likely impacts of gambling at a community level have been largely garnered by multiplying and generalizing the impacts of gambling harm on individuals and their networks or from studies examining economic impacts. However, the diversity and multidimensional nature of 'community' suggests the likely effects of poker machine gambling are far more complex than the sum total of the (gambling) individuals who reside there. Although the development and application of framework approaches has broadened the research focus by identifying a wider range of economic, psychological and social impacts of gambling on communities, this line of enquiry has been hindered by availability of data associated with some of the identified impacts.

Consequently, many questions remain regarding the impacts of poker machine gambling upon and within the local community context. For example, how does the presence of poker machine gambling shape the social fabric of a community, including its social cohesion, political functioning and sense of security? Furthermore, what role does community with its particular culture, history and other distinctive features have in shaping the effects of poker machine gambling? And finally, what power, if any, does the wider sociopolitical context have in shaping the local gambling context and responses to gambling impacts?

This critical review of the literature has informed the planning and focus of this doctoral enquiry, indicating the shift to a community-level of analysis, and the shift in the research approach is warranted. Informed by this review, this project addresses an important research question. It is hoped the findings will generate new insight into the community effects of poker machine gambling and will have direct relevance for communities and local governments. The following chapter introduces critical and community theory, both of which form the foundation for this investigation, while chapter 4 will describe the research methods utilised in this study.

3

Critical theory and community

3.0 Introduction

As the title suggests, this chapter is has two key components that together underpin the theoretical and methodological framework on which this thesis is constructed. The first sections are concerned with critical theory, and include historical perspectives and contemporary applications of the exploration of issues of power and social justice. These sections also describe how the adoption of a critical theoretical perspective shaped the focus of the research, the interpretation and analysis of the data and the selection of critical ethnography as the research methodology.

The focus of the chapter then turns to the concept of 'community' in order to achieve an understanding of the term sufficient for the needs of this thesis. This will involve the exposure of its multiple and fraught significations and the tracing of the history of its ideological construction. Drawing on critical theory, this chapter also explores how critical scholars view the construct of community, in particular those who examine 'community' as places where issues of power and conflict are played out. Lastly, this chapter deals with community studies, tracing the history of the genre, criticisms of earlier approaches and the resurgence of interest in community studies in the last decades of the twentieth century.

To conclude, the rationale for utilising a community studies approach in this research project is laid out.

3.1 Critical theory

The concept of critical theory is concerned principally with exploring issues of power and social justice (Dant, 2004; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008; Muncie, 2006). Critical theorists challenge commonly held values and assumptions about ways of knowing and the social world, "deconstruct the discourses and narratives that support them" (Muncie, 2006, p. 51), and expose how their continued existence serves hegemonic interests (Crossley, 2005, p. 114; Crotty, 1998, p. 59 & 157). It is an approach to research dedicated to identify and "reveal oppressive and discriminatory social processes and structures" (Muncie, 2006, p. 52), and to advocate for change to the status quo and enhanced social justice (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008).

Critical researchers see the role of research to both reveal and then assist to redress injustice (Madison, 2005). In contrast to interpretive research, which seeks to understand an issue or phenomena; research conducted from a critical perspective aims not just to understand, but to understand and campaign for change (Henn, Weinstein & Foard, 2009). As Kincheloe & McLaren (2008) explain, "critical researchers often regard their work as a first step towards forms of political action that can redress the injustices found in the fieldsite or constructed in the very act of research itself" (p. 406). Likewise, Henn, Weinstein and Foard (2009) argue that for "…critical social researchers, research is a political activity that requires all researchers to align to particular value positions whether these be consciously expressed or not" (p. 36). Critically driven research is therefore unapologetically partisan.

According to Muncie (2006) critical research's "'critical" credentials are especially clear when it is employed to reveal the hidden agendas, partialities and limitations of 'official' research"

(p. 52). This understanding of critical research has particular bearing on the ways government and industry funding have contributed to and reinforced the emphasis within research on gambling pathology. This approach, discussed in chapter 2, has the effect of assigning responsibility for the creation of gambling harm to individual gamblers, enabling the role of industry and government to remain unexamined and unchallenged (for a detailed discussion see Young, 2013).

3.2 Key principles of critical theory and critical research

Dant (2004) observes that, "the phrase 'critical theory' is of course very loose" (p. 156) and he is not the first to note that there are numerous, often quite different theories which take a critical view of society and the human sciences (see for example, Crotty, 1998; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008; Schwandt, 2007). As a result, critical theory resists precise definition (Kincheloe & McLaren). However, for the benefit of this research project it is useful to attempt to draw out some of the key understanding associated with it. Kincheloe & McLaren's (2008) construal of critical theory and critical research is a valuable guide in this endeavour. Drawing widely on historical and more contemporary approaches, the authors set out what they contend, are eleven crucial concepts relating to critical theory. Presenting what they label as their *Idiosyncratic Interpretation of Critical Theory and Critical Research*, Kincheloe & McLaren issue a word of caution, stressing that critical theory and critical research is not static; rather, they argue, critical theory is constantly evolving, "always encountering new ways to irritate dominant forms of power" (p. 407). A brief discussion of each of Kincheloe & McLaren's eleven concepts follows:

Critical enlightenment

Kincheloe & McLaren (2008) outline how critical enlightenment is the process of analysing and highlighting competing power interests between groups and individuals within a society, identifying who wins and who loses in particular "social arrangements" (p. 409). Privileged

groups, they argue, may support the status quo that advantages their own situation (and may simultaneously disadvantage others). As the authors note, "the dynamics of such efforts often become a central focus of critical research" (p. 409). Freeman (2010), editorialising in *Critical Social Theory and Evaluation Practice,* describes the complexity of critical enlightenment processes, contending that the status quo may be maintained and concealed by social, cultural and political processes,

> Central to a critical theory argument is that systems like capitalism produce knowledge in such a way as to obscure their oppressive consequences. Unjust practices reflecting economic, cultural and political systems, therefore, do not manifest themselves in straightforward ways but become distorted and hidden over time within contextually and culturally embedded practices (2010, p. 2).

The ways by which current arrangements regarding poker machine gambling privilege some individuals and sectors has been demonstrated by a number of Australian and international scholars (see for example Adams, 2008; Borrell, 2008a; Doughney, 2002a; Rintoul, et al., 2013). This project seeks to apply their critical analysis to this field based research to identify how these processes play out within a community context, and to explore the macro- and community-level, social, cultural and political processes which work to preserve the status quo.

Critical emancipation

According to Kincheloe & McLaren (2008) those who pursue emancipation seek freedom from social and political forces that constrain and "insidiously shape who we are" (p. 409). Often these forces are the product of tradition and custom, and gain their power from being accepted as correct and natural. Critical theory strives to expose these forces and give individuals "the power to control their own lives in solidarity with a justice-oriented community" (p. 409). Building on the aims of critical enlightenment, this project is emancipatory in its objectives to explore and expose those social, historical and political forces that support continuing inequities in the distribution of gambling related harms and

benefits and by challenging the presentation of current arrangements as being the correct, natural and only options. Kincheloe & McLaren (2008) are quick to note the limits of critical emancipation, stressing that "no one is ever completely emancipated from the sociopolitical context that has produced him or her" (409).

The rejection of economic determinism

Kincheloe & McLaren (2008) reject the orthodox Marxist notion that "economic factors dictate the nature of all other aspects of human existence" (p. 410). Instead the authors recognise that economic factors are one of the "multiple forms of power" which direct and shape "everyday life" (p. 410). The authors list "class, race, gender, sexual, cultural, religious, colonial, and ability-related concerns" (p. 407) as other sources of domination, but also emphasise how economic factors can never be separated from these "axes of oppression" (p. 410). Similarly, this investigation is concerned with the ways in which multiple forms of power are implicated in the operationalization of poker machines and the various ways in which benefits and adverse impacts are shared within the chosen research community. While powerful economic forces are undeniably associated with the poker machine industry, this project is also interested in other sources of community-based power which shape both the effects of poker machines and how individual community members respond to those effects.

The critique of instrumental or technical rationality

Kincheloe & McLaren (2008) consider instrumental or technical rationality "one of the most oppressive features of contemporary society"; describing it as "more interested in method and efficiency than in purpose" (p. 410). Many rationalistic scholars, they argue, become so focussed on issues of method and procedure "that they forget the humanistic purpose of the research act" (p. 410). This concept has application to the medicalisation of gambling problems and the narrow focus of much of the gambling research on issues of pathology. This predominantly positivist, reductionist approach segments and 'dissects' individuals,

separating them from their everyday lives (Borrell, 2008a, p. 33), arguably depriving the researcher of a richer, contextualised and more holistic understanding of gambling related issues.

The concept of immanence

The concept of immanence refers to the critical researchers' refusal to focus on the mere understanding an issue and of the factors that have shaped it, but on "concrete social reform" or "what could be" (p. 410). Kincheloe and McLaren identify that, in qualitative research, the concept of immanence "involves the use of human wisdom in the process of bringing about a better and more just world, less suffering, and more individual fulfilment." (p. 411). The authors further state that "with this notion in mind, critical theorists critique researchers whose scholarly work operates to adapt individuals to the world as it is" (p. 411). The concept of immanence renders problematic the process by which government, industry and venues shape their approaches to gambling, based as they are upon a framing of harmful gambling as a pathology residing in the individual 'irresponsible' gambler.

A reconceptualised critical theory of power: Hegemony

The term hegemony derives from the Greek work hegemon which means "leader, prominent power or dominant state or person" (Macey, 2000, p. 176). Hegemony is concerned with the *oppressive* aspects of power and its "ability to produce inequalities and human suffering" (p. 411). Drawing on the work of Antonio Gramsci, Kincheloe and McLaren reason that power is not always exercised by physical force, "but also through social psychological attempts to win people's consent to domination through cultural institutions such as the media, the schools, the family, and the church" (p. 411). Although people may be disadvantaged and oppressed by the way power is arranged and distributed they may not question or challenge this arrangement if they perceive it to be "natural and inevitable, beneficial for all" (Crossley, 2005, p. 114). In such circumstances those who are oppressed or disadvantaged by the inequitable distribution of power accept the view that it is the correct

and proper or only arrangement, and may even advocate for its continuity. According to Crossley (2005), "a group which has secured a relationship of hegemony has won the hearts and minds of the people. It exercises intellectual and moral leadership" (p. 114); while Macey (2000) argues that a "conception of the world becomes hegemonic when it … comes to belong to a popular culture that permeates the whole of civil society" (pp. 176 – 177).

Hegemony is a significant element in the analytical apparatus of this project: its application helps explicate the means by which inequities regarding the distribution of the benefits and adverse impacts of poker machine gambling within the community are largely accepted as natural and inevitable. In particular, chapters 6, 7 and 8 of this thesis critically analyses hegemonic conceptions of club-based poker machines, particularly the view that their deployment benefits the whole community and that they provide a more benign form of gambling than do those poker machines which are located in hotel venues.

A reconceptualised critical theory of power: Ideology

Within critical theory, ideology has come to refer to groups of ideas or ways of looking at things, often implicit and assumed (Crossley, 2005, p. 147) which shape our understanding of behaviour and our world (Schwandt, 2007, p. 145). Ideologies can work to legitimate and support hegemonic interests by presenting inequitable distributions of privilege, power and resources as the only option and part of the natural order (Crossley, 2005, pp. 147 – 148). Kincheloe & McLaren (2008) challenge simplistic understandings of ideology as a "monolithic" and "unidirectional entity" imposed on individuals, instead contending that ideology is "much more subtle, ambiguous, and situationally specific form of domination" (p. 412). Richards (1990), in her detailed community study, *Nobody's Home*, makes a similar point when she states "ideologies are not made in heaven or by power elites and beamed out at a vulnerable population" (p. 106). Rather, Richards argues, individuals take on and shape ideologies in line with their own values and historical understandings (p. 106). Ideological representations of the construct of 'community' and how these representations

have become enmeshed with localised poker machine gambling are a key focus of this

project. This discussion is taken up later in this chapter and forms a significant component of

the discussions in chapters 6 and 7.

A reconceptualised critical theory of power: Linguistic/discursive power

According to Kincheloe & McLaren "language is not a neutral and objective conduit of

description of the 'real world'"; rather than describing the world as it is, critical scholars

understand that language constructs how we see it (2008, p. 412). This is supported by Hall

(1992) who describes discourse as "a group of statements which provide a language for

talking about – i.e. a way of representing – a particular kind of knowledge about a topic"

(p. 91). Because discourses can shape understanding of an issue by constructing issues or

subjects in certain ways, discourse is associated with power and control (Burr, 1995). But

not only do the discourses relating to an issue shape the way it is constructed and thought

and talked about, but their acceptance also restricts the other ways the issue can be thought

about or constructed (Hall, 2001). Orford (2011) notes that the way an issue is framed or

understood can often serve the interests of powerful groups within society, including, "the

interests of an expansionist gambling industry" (p. 123). The ways by which dominant

discourses regarding poker machine gambling and problem gambling play out within the

local community context, and shape the way community members respond to the presence

and effects of poker machines, are of particular interest within this project and form the basis

of the analysis and discussion in chapter 7.

Focusing on the relationships among culture, power, and domination

Kincheloe & McLaren (2008) endorse the growing interest in culture by critical researchers,

noting how during the last decades of the last century culture has come to be seen as a

pivotal component in studies of power and domination. Critical theory seeks to reveal how

popular culture represents and portrays individuals and groups from differing racial, class,

gender and sexual backgrounds, and "the highly complex effects of the reception of these

images and signs" (2008, p. 413). As noted in chapter 2, there has been a rapid and significant expansion of gambling across many "high-income countries" since the 1980s (Rintoul, et al., 2012, p. 1). At the same time there has been a dramatic cultural shift in the way gambling has been regulated, promoted and portrayed, all of which have combined to transform the perception of gambling from an immoral and undesirable activity to a more culturally acceptable one. In Australia and a number of other countries, heavy promotion and legalisation of gambling by have assisted to normalise gambling and to position it as a legitimate and normal recreational pastime (Adams, 2008; Collins, 2006; Goodman, 1995; Orford, 2011; Reith, 2007).

The centrality of interpretation: critical hermeneutics

Historically, hermeneutics was concerned primarily with the interpretation of the meaning of scripture (Macey, 2000). Today though, hermeneutics refers to the interpretation of the meaning of any object, including, "a *text*, a work of art, social *action*, the utterances of another speaker, etc." (Schwandt, 2007, p.136). Critical hermeneutics retains this focus on interpreting meaning, but overlays it with critically informed understandings of how ideology and discourse can distort communication and understanding. Kincheloe & McLaren (2008) describe critical hermeneutical analysis as "a form of cultural criticism revealing power dynamics within social and cultural texts" (p. 414). Consistent with the objectives of critical theory "transforming society and emancipating individuals from false consciousness" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 52) is a key objective of this analysis. In the interpretation and analysis of data within this project (including interviews, policy documents, media reports and academic research) the concept of critical hermeneutics is fundamental: who produced the data, along with the historical and social context in which it was produced are crucial issues (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008, p. 414).

The role of cultural pedagogy

Kincheloe & McLaren (2008) utilise the term cultural pedagogy to highlight the link between the production of culture and the generation of knowledge, the shaping of values and of identity (p. 415). The authors contend that "framing" culture as a form of education with the power to shape the generation of knowledge, values and identity, assists "critical researchers make sense of the world of domination and oppression as they work to bring about a more, democratic, and egalitarian society" (p. 415). In particular, they use the term cultural pedagogy to refer to "the ways particular cultural agents produce particular hegemonic ways of seeing" (p. 415). Those whose financial resources give them access to and control of mass media are the "new 'educators'" (p. 415). Cultural pedagogy, referring as it does to the often undisclosed role of culture as arbiter, is a useful concept for this project: it will assist in the explication of the often powerful but unacknowledged forces at work within the chosen research community and in the wider sociopolitical context.

3.3 Critical Ethnography

> Critical ethnography begins from the premise that knowledge is a resource as powerful as any tangible tool. As a tool, new ways of thinking become implements by which we can act upon our world instead of passively being acted upon (Thomas, 1993, p. 61).

Having chosen to frame this research project in a critical paradigm and utilise a community studies approach, the application of critical ethnography was a necessary progression. Critical ethnography provides a vehicle to put into action aspects of critical theory to support the structure, implementation and analysis of the research. As Madison (2005) remarks "critical ethnography becomes the 'doing' or 'performance' of critical theory" (p. 15).

The origins of ethnography as a research method can be traced to early twentieth century anthropology and anthropological theory, where it was employed by anthropologists such as Mead, Boas, Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown in their studies of comparative cultures (Creswell, 2007; Crotty, 1998; Madison, 2005). Ethnographic fieldwork traditionally involved

the researchers' immersion within a different (non-western) culture and their living within it for an extended period of time. The aim of ethnography was to "document and interpret their [the culture's] distinctive way of life, and the beliefs and values integral to it" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 1). Today a number of other disciplines, including sociology and education, also deploy ethnographic techniques, to study a setting or 'subculture' within the researcher's own society.

Critical ethnography shares many similarities with conventional ethnography: a prolonged time in the field to develop rapport with participants for example, and a reliance on qualitative interpretive research methods to both describe and understand cultural behaviour, (Schwandt, 2007, p. 96). The crucial difference, emphasised by Thomas (1993), is that critical ethnography has a political purpose, seeking to "describe, analyze, and open to scrutiny otherwise hidden agendas, power centers, and assumptions that inhibit, repress, and constrain" (pp. 2 – 3). "Conventional ethnography describes what is; critical ethnography asks what could be" (Thomas,1993, p. 4). Agar (1996) argues that it was the global rise in aggressive capitalism since the 1980s that prompted ethnographers to begin exploring issues of power (p. 26). According to Agar, ethnographers have always been concerned with "*context* and *meaning*", but a burgeoning neo-capitalism has prompted ethnographers "to ask another question – what systems of *power* hold those contexts and meanings in place?" (p. 26).

Critical ethnography requires that assumptions be identified and confronted (Madison, 2005, p. 5; Thomas, 1993, p. 3). Through prolonged engagement, the critical ethnographer works to identify underlying ideologies and discourses that support hegemonic interests and act to preserve the status quo. This work of the critical ethnographer is eloquently and succinctly captured by Agar (1996) when he states,

> What power, what interests, wrap this local world so tight that it feels like the natural order of things to its inhabitants? Are those inhabitants even *aware* of those interests, aware that they have alternatives? (p. 26).

The complexity of this task, of unravelling and challenging ideological representations that present the status quo as the only possibility, cannot be underestimated, and present as one of the greatest challenges for the work of the critical ethnographer.

Questions as to whose interests are privileged and whose are restricted within current arrangements are fundamental areas of focus. Such critical scrutiny is consistent with what Madison (2005) asserts to be the critical ethnographer's "ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular *lived* domain" (p. 5). In doing this, critical ethnography rejects conventional ethnography's model of the ethnographer as a "detached, neutral, participant observer" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 51), and favours research which is openly partisan.

Furthermore, critical ethnography is highly appropriate to the community studies approach adopted for this project. Although methods and methodologies associated with the community studies genre are becoming more diverse, Crow and Mah (2012) recently noted that ethnographic approaches of observation and in-depth interviews remain popular approaches in the field of community studies – and for good reason. The application of a critical lens to these ethnographic approaches provides the means to explore issues of privilege, power and social justice in relation to the way community-based poker machines are regulated, operationalized, and their benefits and adverse effects distributed.

3.4 Community: multiple and contested meanings

References to the concept of community are ubiquitous (Blackshaw, 2010; Dempsey, 2002; Kenny, 2011; Plant, 1974): they pepper government policy, and business language, product marketing and everyday conversation. Developers build "planned communities"

governments engage in "community strengthening" and construct "community centres", commercial enterprises rebadge themselves as "community supermarkets" and "community banks", those who share professional or cultural ties are referred to as, for example, the "academic community" or the "Chinese community", and people come together to take "community action". Yet what does it really mean?

Crow and Allen (1994) refer to community as a way of describing, "the broad realm of local social arrangements beyond the private sphere of home and family but more familiar to us than the impersonal institutions of the wider society" (p. 1). Similarly, Cohen (1985) describes community as "that entity to which one belongs, greater than kinship but more immediately than the abstraction we call 'society'" (p. 15). Referencing the qualities of community, Brown and Schafft (2011) describe community as "a group of people organized around certain commonly held interests and attributes that help to create a sense of shared identity" (p. 35). In the chosen research community, interview participants repeatedly referred to their "community" and the "sense of community", variously using the term to describe the geographical area, social relationships, the people, their shared history and their connection to each other and the township.

While the appeal of the concept of community is undeniable, even this cursory consideration of the term reveals it to have multiple applications and multiple meanings. These multiple descriptions have made the concept of 'community' a difficult one to define, and prompted Dempsey (2002) to proclaim "there is no more slippery concept in sociology than community (p. 140). The complexity and elusiveness of 'community' has been the subject of much scholarly discussion (see for example: Bell & Newby, 1971; Crow & Allan, 1994; Crow & Mah, 2012; Delanty, 2003; Poplin, 1972; Wild, 1981). While there is agreement that community can describe locality, shared interest or identity, social interaction and other more intangible concepts such as feelings of belonging and attachment, different definitions ascribe different weight to the various elements (Crow & Allan, 1994, p. 192). The following

quotation by Plant (1974), taken from his well-regarded essay, Community and ideology, is illustrative of this point:

> Community has been linked to locality, to identity of functional interests, to a sense of belonging, to shared cultural and ethnic ideas and values, to a way of life opposed to the organisation and bureaucracy of modern mass society, etc. – a whole nexus of traits some of which may well turn out, on analysis, to be incompatible (p. 13).

It is unsurprising then that, despite sociologists having an interest in the concept for over 200 years, a commonly agreed meaning of community has never been achieved (Bell & Newby, 1974; Dempsey, 2002). The work of Hillery (1955) is often cited to demonstrate the degree to which the meaning of 'community' is contested (see for example Bell & Newby, 1971, 1974; Dempsey, 2002; Kenny, 2011; Plant, 1974). Hillery (1955) identified 94 separate definitions of 'community' and subjected them to analysis looking for commonalities. In all 94 definitions, Hillery (1955) found only one common factor, "all of the definitions deal with people", noting that, "beyond this common basis, there is no agreement" (p. 117). Plant (1974) attributes the difficulties associated with defining the meaning of community to its having not only wide descriptive meanings, but also having an evaluative or normative meaning. Descriptions of what community is are often entwined with what community should be (Bell & Newby, 1974; Plant, 1974; Wild, 1981; Dempsey, 2002).

Moreover, understandings of what constitutes community, methods of study and ways of theorising the concept have continued to evolve since the publication of Plant's essay. Crow & Mah's (2012) examination of 100 works related to community published since 2000, revealed "much new thinking on the concept of community" (p. 1). Advances in communications technologies mean people can now come together 'virtually' in an online community and share common interests regardless of physical location (Blackshaw, 2010; Kenny, 2011) while increased mobility and globalisation have reduced the importance of traditional geographic boundaries (Crow & Mah, 2012). Understandings of how boundaries are constructed both physically and symbolically have also been extended (Cohen, 1985;

Crow & Mah, 2012). A number of researchers have also challenged the ideological

representations of community and exposed a darker side, showing that communities can

also be places of exclusion and inequality (Everingham, 2003, p. 21), "disunity and conflict"

(Brent, 2009, p. 250). Additionally, Crow and Mah (2012) note an increasing tendency in

recent research for community to be used paradoxically. On one hand deployed positively to

represent characteristics such as "social belonging, collective well-being" (p. 2) or the "Good

Life" as Bell and Newby refer to it (1974, p. xliii), but on the other hand, as Mooney and Neal

(2009) highlight, used negatively to describe or categorise social problems or problem

populations.

These multiple even paradoxical ways of understanding community create challenges for

those seeking to work with the concept (Dempsey, 2002); and as Hancock, Mooney and

Neal (2012) have warned: "It has become something of a sociological given that using the

concept of community is asking for trouble" (p. 345). Crow and Mah (2012) on the other

hand, offer a far more optimistic assessment of the challenges associated with community

and the variation in approaches to the concept, contending that "the different approaches

actually makes for vibrant and productive debate about what community relationships are,

what their challenges are, and what they have the potential to achieve" (p. 5).

3.5 Conceptualising and defining community

This section begins by exploring one of the most common understandings of community:

the idea of a group of people sharing networks of social relationships and having a sense of

belonging, often (but not always) associated with a place such as a town, neighbourhood or

other setting (see Dempsey, 2002; Wild, 1981). Hillery's (1955) analysis, while often cited to

highlight disagreement over meaning (as here above), found these concepts to be a feature

of the majority of definitions he examined. According to Hillery, 69 of the 94 definitions he

examined were "in basic agreement that community consists of persons in social interaction within a geographic area and having one or more additional common ties" (1955, p. 111).

Although this idea of community appears straightforward, there is much variation as to how the various elements are combined. For example, place or location, while often associated with community is not fundamental to the occurrence of community and individuals may experience common bonds and a strong sense of attachment with others who are geographically dispersed and whom they may never meet (Dempsey, 2002, p. 142). Likewise, "people may be linked by social ties of interdependence and yet have no sense of belonging together" or may not know each other but have feelings of attachment (Dempsey, 2002, p. 142). Overlaying these elements is the concept of boundaries and an understanding of the role they play in defining community and distinguishing members from non-members.

3.5.1 Community as 'social ties'

The notion of 'community' being built around a group of people who form networks of social relationships can be traced back to Tönnies (1974) and was, as noted previously, a feature in many of the 94 definitions of community analysed by Hillery (1955). More recently Crow and Mah (2012) examined social networks within the theme of 'connection'. Networks of social ties or connections may occur within a range of 'community' structures, including a community of location such as a neighbourhood or town, a workplace or a special interest group. There is recognition that the degree and nature of social ties developed within community can vary from community to community and between individuals in the same community (Dempsey, 2002).

Dempsey (2002) discusses local social ties as they relate to communities of place, particularly the relatively small communities that have been the focus of much of his research (for example Smalltown) and as he notes, the focus of a number of other Australian

community scholars including, "Oxley 1978; Wild 1974; Poiner 1990; Dempsey 1990; Collis 2000" (p. 142). According to Dempsey, small communities of place in particular can give rise to the development of social ties because there is increased likelihood that those who reside there will know or at least know of each other and form bonds and connections as they interact via engagement in day-to-day activities such as working, shopping, recreation and so forth. This is perhaps especially true for more isolated rural communities where residents may spend more of their time within the local area and hence engage more frequently with fellow community members.

Clearly though, as levels of mobility and communication technologies have increased, there is less likelihood that the community where individuals reside will be the one place where they work, socialise and engage in other activities. As a result, for many individuals social ties extend beyond the physical boundary where they make their home (Bell & Newby, 1971). In addition people may, as Kenny (2011) notes, be a member of many communities: she provides a case study of an individual who identifies herself as belonging to a number of communities, including the Greek- Australian community; her workplace; the suburb where she grew up and many of whose long term residents she still knows; her children's school and their partner school in East Timor with which they have formed close links; and her book club (p. 54). Adding a further a layer of complexity, many of the multiple communities to which individuals feel membership may exist within the one community of place or extend beyond the boundaries of place.

Communities of interest (Wilmott, 1986) were identified in the chosen research community based around sport and other recreation pastimes including choir, playgroup, church groups, service clubs, schools, workplaces and so forth. For many people in the research community, the sporting club which operated the poker machines represented a large and prominent community of interest, with sporting membership in particular associated with extensive social networks and a sense of belonging. The extensive club facilities including

playing rinks, a restaurant, poker machine gambling area and meeting room added a geographical or place component to the bowls club community.

Offering a deeper understanding of social ties, Bell and Newby (1976) and Dempsey (citing and extending on Bell and Newby's work) discuss variations in the degree and quality of social connections which may develop, contending that the characteristics of the connections may be used to assess the occurrence of community (Dempsey, 2002, p. 144). In particular, they suggest that community is associated with social ties amongst individuals which are multi-stranded rather than single stranded, and are overlapping and close-knit rather than loose-knit (p. 144). Multi-stranded ties occur when individuals are linked not by just a single activity such as membership of the same club, but are linked by two or many ties. For example individuals may be members of the same club, their children attend the same school and they work for the same organisation (Dempsey, p. 144).

As Dempsey notes, within small rural settlements such as Smalltown (the subject of his study) the likelihood of multi-stranded social ties developing is high as there are limited employment, recreational, educational and commerce opportunities for residents, so increasing the likelihood that people will "keep coming across one another and find themselves in relationships of mutual interdependence" (p. 145). On the other hand, the concepts of loose-knit and close-knit refers to the degree to which an individuals' social network of friends, acquaintances, relatives, work colleagues and so forth overlap and connect with each other. Loose-knit ties describe situations when most of the individuals in a person's social network do not know one another or have anything to do with one another except through their common association with the one individual. Close-knit networks on the other hand occur when many of the people in an individual's social network also know and interact with each other. As Dempsey notes, close-knit networks are a common feature of rural communities. Within the chosen research community, the existence of social ties that

were both multi-stranded and close-knit was repeatedly highlighted by interview participants as a defining characteristic of the township.

Dempsey (2002) describes how the existence of strong social ties and strong networks of relationships can result in the "giving and receiving of social, emotional, and material support among locals" (p. 147). Equally, he contends, these social ties can be a powerful force of control within communities. The network (or parts of it) may function more like a group, bringing to bear "collective pressure" on individuals to behave or think in a certain manner, and that close-knit social bonds within community can act to constrain behaviour even if individuals do not have the subjective feeling of belonging together or sense of attachment (pp.142 – 145).

3.5.2 Community as 'sense of belonging'

At times the shared interests and social bonds discussed above invoke a sense of solidarity or common identity and can generate a sense of belonging or affinity to others and to place, what Brown and Schafft (2011) describe as a sense of "we-ness" (p. 35). In many ways these deep feelings of attachment are the 'essence' of what people often describe when they talk about community. Dempsey (2002) point out that this experience of belonging together is a subjective experience and distinguishes it from the objective experience of the development or presence of common social ties discussed previously (p. 141). This sense of belonging and attachment can be, and is often, associated with a particular place such as a township, neighbourhood or workplace. However, as Crow and Allan (1994, p. xvi) and Willmott (1986) remind, not all communities are territorial, and that a sense of belonging or attachment can occur amongst groups of people who share some form of common interest or identity, but who are geographically dispersed (Dempsey, 2002). Examples of such communities may include: "Italians spread throughout Sydney" (Wild, 1981, p. 14), or a group of people who identify "with a particular sport or sporting team, or with a particular

form of music, such as heavy metal or classical, or dress, such as punk or gothic"
(Dempsey, 2002. P. 142).

A number of scholars have followed the practice of Bell and Newby (1976) who use the term
communion as a way of referring to this subjective experience of belonging together (for
example Dempsey, 2002, p. 142; Wild, 1981). Here however the term 'sense of belonging'
will be used to describe this experience of fitting in and feeling an affinity with or sense of
connection to a community. While a sense of belonging is often associated with
communities with strong social ties and networks of social relations, as Dempsey (2002)
points out, one does not necessarily lead to the development of the other. Individuals may
have a range of social connections within their community but feel no sense of belonging,
and conversely, individuals with few social bonds may feel a deep sense of belonging and
attachment to their community (p. 142).

3.5.3 Community as 'location or place'

Historically, the most common application of the concept of community is in reference to
location or place. Used in this way the concept describes groups of people sharing a
common geographical location, such as a township, suburb or neighbourhood or other place
based grouping such as a workplace, or an institution such as a school or a prison. While as
Willmott (1986) observes, on one level, location community can refer to "simply the
population of a particular geographic area" (pp. 83 – 84), communities of place (as they are
often described) are frequently more complex units, with the physical location having the
ability to shape the nature of social relationships which develop. For example, as noted
previously, close geographical proximity can result in regular face-to-face contact and social
interaction, and consequently, a reliance on fellow community members to meet daily
physical and emotional needs. Members of these communities are commonly thought to
share similar values, and the provision of mutual support and the building of networks of
association lead to the sense of belonging described in the previous section.

Of course there can be great diversity between place-based communities in "the number and strength of local ties and in the degree of local identity or community sense" (Willmott, 1986, p. 90). The exact nature of social relationships and local identity within a community may be influenced by characteristics including length of residence, familial connections, physical isolation, connections based around a common industry or ethnic identity, and the presence of an external threat which can draw the community together (Willmott, 1986, p. 91).

However, as previously cited, it is not vital to have a locale for the occurrence of community. People can form social ties and sense of belonging when geographically dispersed. This is particularly the case in recent years with the developments and widespread availability of communications technology combined with high levels of international and local mobility all of which give rise to the formation of 'virtual' and 'transnational' communities (see Crow and Mah, 2012), and a decrease in the significance of place in everyday life. However, for many communities the place or location element remains a key element, as Mooney and Neal (2009) stress: "community cannot be understood only in terms of space and place…[but] approaches to community cannot shed geography" (p. 14). The ability of place or location to shape the occurrence or nature of community is of particular interest within this thesis.

3.5.4 Normative / evaluative meaning of community

To the multiple descriptive meanings of community must also be added those of an evaluative or normative reference. As a result, the term is repeatedly used prescriptively, describing an idealised view of what community should be, the implication being: "community is good for people and its absence bad" (Dempsey, 2002, p. 140). The difficulties arise when the normative meanings of community are not distinguished from empirical descriptions of community. Minar and Greer (1970) succinctly captured the way these dual meanings fold around each other in their introduction to *The Concept of Community*, in which they stated:

> For community is both empirically descriptive of a social structure and normatively toned. It refers both to the unit of a society as it is and to the aspects of the unit that are valued if they exist, desired in their absence (p. ix).

This normative meaning can be attributed, at least in part, to the overwhelmingly positive connotations of the term community itself (Blackshaw, 2010; Wild, 1981, p. 18), a belief that community is always a good thing. This perception was noted by Williams (1985) in his now well-cited description of community, in which he stated that, "unlike all other terms of social organization (state, nation, society, etc.) it [community] seems never to be used unfavourably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term" (p. 66). In a similar vein Blackshaw (2010) describes community as "a word most agreeable to modern ears", noting "not only does it come ready-made with its own inner glow, but it also has a hand-made, home-made quality about it" (p. 19). The positive associations of community are perhaps best conceptualised in Bauman's (2001) often-cited description,

> Community is a 'warm' place, a cosy and comfortable place. It is like a roof under which we shelter in heavy rain, like a fireplace at which we warm our hands on a frosty day. Out there, in the street, all sorts of dangers lie in ambush ... In here, in the community, we can relax – we are safe (p. 1).

These romanticised, ideological notions of community have had a significant effect on the way the concept has been deployed. Plant (1974) attributes the difficulties sociologists have had defining community to their failure to recognise this this normative or prescriptive meaning shapes the way community is understood (p. 28).

The origins of these evaluative or normative dimensions of meaning can be traced back to the early German scholars who were concerned with the loss of traditional rural communities caused by growing industrialisation and associated urbanisation. One of the most significant portrayals of such a sense of community is by German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies' (1855-1936) whose delineation of social relations came to be associated with rural and urban environments (Crow & Allan, 1995; Crow & Mah, 2012). Tönnies' Gemeinschaft und

Gesellschaft (usually translated as 'community and society or association') was first

published in 1887 and still continues to influence how the concept is used.

According to Tönnies, the characteristics of Gemeinschaft or community are that it is "self-

contained, united by kinship and common bonds and predominantly rural" (Kenny, 2011,

p. 46). In Gemeinschaft members were relatively immobile in both a social and a physical

sense, their place within the hierarchy of the community was fairly stable, and they did not

travel far from the community. As a result, such communities were homogeneous, with

members sharing similar values based on a shared way of looking at the world (Plant, 1974,

p. 24). Gemeinschaft relationships are intimate, face to face and enduring (Plant, 1974,

p. 23; Bell & Newby, 1971, p. 24). In contrast, for Tönnies, Gesellschaft

(society/association) was the opposite of community, and hostile to all its values. As Kenny

(2011) notes, Gesellschaft is characterised as, "competitive, individualistic, impersonal and

based on contractual ties" (p. 46) and by Geoghegan and Powell (2009) as, "heartless,

impersonal and hostile" (p. 432).

Tönnies' long-lived Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft distinction has had a profound influence

on how the concept of community is viewed. According to Plant (1974) the uncritical

acceptance of Tönnies' work here is one of the reasons why such ideological

representations of community have persisted. As noted earlier, critical scholars have drawn

attention to the ability of ideology to distort and mask inequitable social, gender and

economic relationships by presenting them as normal and natural (Burr, 1995). It is precisely

in this way that such (unacknowledged) ideological representations of community have the

capacity to suppress all but Bell and Newby's "Good Life" (1974, p. xliii) idea of community,

thus denying the existence of inequity and exclusion within the idea of community and

allowing its continuance. This is explored in more detail in section 3.5.

3.5.5 The importance of boundaries

Fundamental to the construction of community is the designation of the boundaries that serve to distinguish the community and its members from other areas and non-members (Crow & Allan, 1994). Boundaries can be physical, defining for example a neighbourhood, an institution such as a school or university, or a township such as the chosen research community; equally, as Cohen (1985) contends, they may be symbolically constructed. The concept of boundaries is one of the four themes Crow and Mah (2012) use to examine various dimensions of understanding and research related to community. According to Crow and Mah (2012) boundaries can be "both physical and 'mental', related to identity and experience, but also to place" (p. 20). They also note that while boundaries can have a positive connotation and signify inclusion and support for those who are contained within a community, they can also have a negative association for some and be associated with exclusion and non-belonging.

While geographic borders can mark off the physical boundaries of a community, other conceptual boundaries can be applied within the community to distinguish members of the community from outsiders. In this sense, being physically present within a community does not guarantee membership of that community. This point is noted by Dempsey (2002) when he comments that, "in Australia, non-locals are often referred to disparagingly by locally born people as 'two-bob blow-ins'" (p. 148). While this idiom may be rarely used today, the phenomenon to which it refers is still contemporary: some interview participants in the research community drew sharp distinctions between 'genuine' community members and others who for some reason were considered non-members or undesirable.

Physical community boundaries can also shape the nature of social ties and sense of belonging that develops within a community: Crow and Allan (1994), for example, propose that "places with strong physical boundaries are a potent base for territorial communities" as they can restrict movement in and out of the community, and that this isolation can be a

basis for the "development of a strong local identity" (p. xvi). To illustrate their point, Crow and Allan discuss Tiger Bay in Cardiff which historically was largely isolated from the rest of the city due to the (both created and natural) barriers of canal, railway line, dock and road. Despite being ethnically heterogeneous, the geographic isolation contributed to the creation of a strong and distinct local identity.

Crow and Mah (2012) single out the rural community as an important type of community that is 'spatially' and also 'mentally' defined. Likewise, Dempsey (2002), reflecting primarily on rural communities, describes the way in which a degree of geographical isolation has the capacity/power to contribute to the development of social ties, describing how the boundaries, "encourage residents to pursue their interests locally, to enter into work and economic ties, and to pursue their leisure interests and find many of their friendships near where they live" (p. 146). Historically, the township chosen as the research community experienced a similar degree of isolation to Cardiff's Tiger Bay, with natural features providing a barrier as one boundary, and limited transport opportunities and geographic distance from other communities contributing to the community being relatively self-contained.

Evidently in the 21st century it is rare for communities to be contained by significant physical boundaries, for, as Crow and Mah (2012) observe, "spatially defined boundaries" have been unsettled by advances in technology and transport and social changes such as migration (p. 21). Kenny (2011) makes a similar point, reminding readers that boundaries today are "porous" (p. 45), while Everingham (2003) describes them as "fluid" (p. 18). However "porous" and "fluid" such boundaries are, they still retain the ability to act as a powerful shaping force in the formation of community identity; physical boundaries (distance in particular, still maintaining its tyranny) have the ability to act as spatial demarcation, permitting the delineation of what and who comprises a community from what and who does not.

Clarke (2009) describes how this "dynamic of inclusion and exclusion" associated with community raises "a second question about what belongs to people because they are a part of a community", including access to resources such as welfare and services (p. 94). Clark's observations can be extended and applied to the chosen research community prompting not only an exploration of the various and contested understandings regarding who does and does not 'belong' to the community but also of how that plays out in how the 'resource' of community (including care, support, inclusion and belonging) is dispersed.

3.6 Critical theory and the construct of community.

Currently the concept of community remains overwhelmingly associated with a positive and desirable state. Its mobilisation invokes the "inner glow" described by Blackshaw (2010) and the sense of warmth and safety described by Bauman (2001). However, critically-orientated scholars have also presented a range of alternate perspectives pointing out that the experience of community may not be "inclusive or socially just" for all members (Everingham, 2003, p. 7) or may be the site of conflict (Brent, 2009; Mooney & Neal, 2009). The widespread deployment of the concept of community by government has also been subjected to a critical theoretical analysis by a number of researchers (including Bryson & Mowbray, 1981; Cockburn, 1977; Everingham, 2003; Hancock, Mooney and Neal, 2012; Mowbray, 1992, 2005). Common criticisms relate to the perception that the way 'community' is understood and deployed, frequently contributes to the maintenance of hegemonic interests associated with governments and the capitalist economy (Cockburn, 1977). Furthermore, it is contended, notions of community are mobilised by neo-liberal governments keen to devolve themselves of the responsibility (and expense) of the provision of social services. In this way community is deployed as both the 'problem' and the 'solution' to social issues (Hancock, Mooney & Neal, 2012; Mooney & Neal, 2009), many of which in reality have their origins in broader social and economic structures (Cockburn, 1977).

3.6.1 The 'dark' side of community

While community is most frequently used to describe networks of social connections, trust, reciprocal relationships and a sense of belonging, its reality may be informed by other and very different elements. As Shaw (2007) notes, "far from generating harmonious social relations, community can create, or at least reinforce, social polarization and potential conflict; differentiation rather than unity" (p. 29). As discussed previously in relation to boundaries, the construction of community requires some delineation between who is included within the community and who is not a member. Community therefore, by virtue of its very definition, incorporates (because it in part creates) elements of exclusion and marginalisation (Crow & Mah, 2012). Crow and Mah's (2012) analysis of contemporary community studies under the theme of 'difference' noted that while communities can be places where "social and cultural diversity" are celebrated, differences within communities can also be "divisive, related to social exclusion, conflict and inequality" (p. 14). This was particularly the case, they observed, in studies conducted in the UK exploring the economic recession, and tensions regarding migration, multiculturalism and the 2011 riots. These themes of conflict, separation, inequity and exclusion are also explored by other authors, including, Brent (2009), Mooney and Neal (2009).

This appears to create a paradox, with, on one hand, the concept of community implying unity and cohesion, but on the other incorporating a "plurality of interests" (Shaw, 2007, p. 28) many of which may be competing. Communities are places where social realities of inequality, disempowerment and social division are played out, yet the ideological representations of community can conceal these inequities, masking them behind a veneer of harmony, cooperation, fraternity and consensus. Illustrating this point, Berger (1998) comments on the way applying the concept of community to a group such as academics or feminists implies unity and a shared culture, effectively masking the presence of internal conflicts (p. 326).

3.6.2 The 'decline' of community narratives

One of the common themes running through much of the literature related to communities is that of change and loss (Crow & Allan, 1994). Notions of 'community lost' are an enduring theme, with Wild (1981) observing over three decades ago that "however defined, community is frequently depicted as an *object* which disappears with the passing of time" (p. 12); while Delanty (2003) notes, "community is seen as something which has been lost with modernity and something which must be recovered" (p. 10). Historical representations of community lost date back to the eighteenth century to the work of Tönnies and other German scholars, who lamented the breakdown of traditional social and kinship ties; attributing these changes to the disruption of local communities of place and the growing urbanisation triggered by the industrial revolution. In the community selected for this enquiry, while research participants emphasised community strength, strong narratives of change and loss also dominated discussions of community, often coupled with nostalgia for earlier times.

Depictions of community lost are a strong feature of the work of academics such as Robert Putnam (2000) and the political communitarian movement. In *Bowling Alone*, the influential dissertation on the loss of community in America, Robert Putnam contends that "without at first noticing, we have been pulled apart from one another and from our communities over the last third of the century" (2000, p. 27). Notions of the loss of community are also represented in the communitarian movement. Communitarianism came to prominence in the 1990s and can be characterised by a nostalgic view of community past. Running through much of the communitarian literature is a strong narrative of 'community in decline' with the decline of community posited as the leading cause of social problems (Cooper, 2008; Everingham, 2003).

According to Everingham (2003), Putnam and many leading communitarians (including Amitae Etzioni) emphasise a rebuilding of community as a solution to social problems

(pp.5 – 6). Bryson and Mowbray (2005), Everingham (2003) and Mooney and Neal (2009) are among the scholars who point to the influence of Putnam, and of communitarians such as Etzioni, on political thought and public policy. Everingham (2003) in particular notes how contemporary representations of 'community' lost feature strongly in social policy in countries such as Australia, Britain and North America

Putnam and Etzioni, have been criticised for the way their nostalgic view of community overlooks the negative aspects of community, including division, exclusion and subjugation (Everingham, 2003; Mooney and Neal, 2009, p. 22). Elaborating on this criticism, Everingham (2003) argued, in the 1950s, that 'family values' oppressed women, isolated families in the suburbs and oppressed minority groups. The activists of the 1960s who challenged the values connected with communities saw them as based on "social exclusion and repression" (p. 4). Furthermore Everingham (2003) asks: what is the 'community' that is declining? Arguing it is an "unexamined entity" she asks pointedly: "what *kind* of community are the many and varied discourses of community attempting to recreate?" (p. 3).

3.6.3 Community as the 'problem' and 'solution'

One of the greatest criticisms of the discourses around 'community lost' or community in decline is that it can have the effect of locating the cause of social issues within the communities in which they manifest. Social issues become the result of broken communities, rather than of government or society failure (Hancock, Mooney & Neal, 2012). In this way 'community' becomes both a diagnosis and remedy of social ills (Rose, 1999, p. 173). This was highlighted by Bryson and Mowbray (1981) in their well-known article, *Community: The spray on solution,*

> If traditional communities did not suffer certain problems, and modern society does, then the transition from rural or village, to city life can be unobtrusively given causal status. Problems can be attributed to modern urban or industrial systems rather than to a class society and the capitalist political order (Bryson & Mowbray, 1981, p. 256).

Bryson and Mowbray (1981) contend that the mobilisation of notions of the loss of community serves conservative governments by deflecting responsibility for social problems from inherent disparities within capitalist societies to the (wanting) attributes of selected local communities (p. 256) – a position also argued by a number of other academics (Cockburn, 1977; Cooper, 2008; Everingham, 2003; Hancock, Mooney & Neal, 2012).

Writing about local community action projects which sought to address disadvantage in deprived areas of London in the late 1960s to 1970s, Cockburn (1977) describes how there was a "strong social pathology bent" underlying the projects, the consequence of which was that "the problems of deprivation, were located in individual, family and community failure" (p. 124) rather than being recognised as outcomes of the inequitable distribution of power and resources (p. 126). Cockburn's research describes how government policies and business decisions had shaped the local context, creating the high unemployment and lack of housing that triggered other social problems.

In addition to community being used to depoliticise social issues, Bryson & Mowbray (1981) and McDonald (1996) are highly critical of the way governments utilise concepts of community as a justification for the transferring of responsibility for the provision of services from governments onto the local community. Often this is implemented under the mantra: communities know best what communities need and government should step out of the way and let communities find local solutions to local problems. However, the reality is often less straightforward with questions arising as to exactly who constitutes the local community, how issues are identified and tackled, what is the capacity of communities to address local issues and significantly, how adequate are the resources that are to be provided? Bryson and Mowbray (1981) and Mowbray (2005) stress this last point, arguing that one of the outcomes of this approach is all too frequently a reduction in governmental expenditure on social services and a shifting of responsibility back onto community members.

> Minimization of public expenditure is a fundamental plank in conservative economic policy which is served by the use of 'community' to denote certain programs that involve a transfer of responsibilities to the local (community) level – which in practice and just incidentally, usually means to women (Bryson & Mowbray, 1981, p. 263).

As will be discussed later in this thesis, members of the research community showed a remarkable willingness and capability to fill shortfalls in governmental service provision, going as far as to create a local-based organisation to provide support services to the isolated, elderly and infirm.

3.6.4 Control and legitimisation

Other authors have described how the concept of community has been mobilised by governments and utilised as an instrument of control over local organisational structures or as a cynical justification for government policies. Often programs denoted as community-led or directed are in actuality subject to significant governmental control with predetermined goals and stringent funding and reporting guidelines (Bryson & Mowbray, 1981; Mowbray, 2005) or are a cynical exercise in governmental public relations.

Referring to the Australian context, Mowbray (2005) describes the implementation of the *Community Capacity Building Initiative (CCBI),* a program implemented by the state government of Victoria under their community-building policy. Promoted as a way for small rural communities to develop social capital, enhance and strengthen their communities and take control of their future, the application process actually preferenced communities already displaying high levels of social capital including volunteerism and well-established networks. This, according to Mowbray, afforded the government the opportunity to attribute these pre-existing community qualities to the success of the CCBI program (pp. 259 – 263). Far from being community driven, the CCBI projects were tightly managed with "matters as trivial as stationery and petty cash…centrally controlled, along with public comment" and "State government control…facilitated by a statewide implementation plan with milestones

expressed in terms of target dates" (p. 260). Most importantly, according to Mowbray, the projects were structured "in such a way as not to encourage community advocacy over anything contentious" (pp. 261 – 262). Accordingly, Mowbray (2005) notes, bigger issues including matters of equity associated with the distribution of power and wealth remained unchallenged.

3.6.5 Appropriation

The widespread appropriation of the term by governments and business has also been critiqued, with particular focus on the utilisation of the concept as a tool for marketing and by governments to soften other words or make change more palatable (Bryson & Mowbray, 1981; Kenny, 2011; Mowbray, 1992). As Mowbray (2005) notes: "if the term community is attached to something, the direct implication is that it is wholesome – and its proponents caring, responsive and progressive" (2005, p. 257). As a consequence, community is frequently *appropriated* and prefixed with other terms such as school, policing, art, activity centre, sports, clubs and even shops, to create terms such as: community school; community policing; community activity centre; community club and community shopping centre (Blackshaw, 2010, p. 7; Kenny, 2011, p. 52). Under these circumstances, organisations draw on the positive associations of 'community' for the benefit of their enterprise without the need to reshape or reorientate their business or organisation to serve or benefit 'community' in any real or significant way.

As is argued above (key principles of critical theory and critical research) language itself is complicit in the creation of the reality it purports merely to describe; similarly the exploitation of the term 'community' to lend a positive association to other terms is of particular interest. These issues are taken up in some detail in chapter 6.

3.7 Community activism/power

Kenny's (2011) observation that communities can be "a *site where relations of power are constructed and controlled*" (p. 46) and "as the *site of people's power*" resonates with the critical theoretical focus of this project. This is particularly the case in those episodes of community activism associated with the introduction and expansion of poker machine gambling within the township that will be explored in chapter 6. Of special interest is the extent to which the icon of 'community' was mobilised and deployed by both sides of the debate. An additional area of interest is the political, social and cultural factors both within the macro- and local community context which promoted or discouraged community activism in relation to the issue of poker machines and the degree to which these same factors influenced the outcome.

3.8 Is 'community' still a useful concept?

The contested nature of the term has led some scholars, such as Stacey (1969), to advocate the abandonment of the use of the term altogether. Blackshaw (2010) questions whether "efficacy of community for sociology" (p. 9), citing issues of imprecision and drawing attention to its appropriation by neo-liberalism as a factor in the decision by some scholars to turn away from the concept. More recently, Crow and Mah's (2012) research revealed some scholars "avoiding the definitional problems associated with community as a contested concept" by utilising other concepts related to community such as "locality, neighbourhood, networks, social capital, belonging, friendship or the city (p. 3).

Notwithstanding the criticisms related to the contested meaning of community and the ways in which it has been appropriated and operationalized by vested interests, the enduring appeal of the concept of 'community' within public and academic discourse suggests that its abandonment as a useful term is an unlikely possibility. Furthermore, there appears no

satisfactory alternative term to capture the richness of meaning associated with concepts of locality, social bonds and sense of attachment that the term community invokes.

Academics who have advanced arguments in defence of the concept of community include Delanty (2003), who, countering Stacey's argument, contends that while many terms used in social science are contested, this does not render their use obsolete; and in any case, to abandon the use of the term 'community' would simply necessitate replacing it with another word (p. 2). In her thoughtful discussion of the concept of community, Kenny (2011) asserts that it remains a useful concept, but emphasises that care needs to be taken with its defining and use. In particular Kenny stresses the importance of differentiating between community as an empirical description and normative/prescriptive representations,

> It is useful to distinguish between the idea of community that is used to identify the context of an activity (physical and conceptual) and the idea of community that is nostalgic and ideological (p. 52).

While strongly maintaining a critical theoretical perspective, Blackshaw (2010) challenges the argument that appropriation of the concept by neo-liberal governments is justification for abandoning the term. Instead, Blackshaw contends that the concept of community "deserves the critical attention of sociologists" precisely because it has been appropriated by neo-liberals (p. 9).

Crow and Mah's (2012, 2011) work regarding the conceptualisation and meaning of community demonstrates that while there may not be consensus around the precise meaning of community, the concept continues to have current relevance and therefore utility. Finally, Dempsey (2002) also argues that the concept still has value, particularly as it relates to place, an important definitional aspect of many Australian studies focussing upon small rural communities.

Dempsey's reasoning is particularly apposite to this project which is situated within a fairly small rural community of place. It is this understanding of community which forms the foundation of how the concept will be understood and applied within this thesis. Overlaying this definition of community as a territory are the commonly shared understandings of community being associated with networks of social relationships and a feeling of belonging and the prescriptive or normative meaning of community, as outlined by Plant (1974). Thus when the concept of community is applied within this thesis it incorporates the following four understandings of community:

- Territory or place

- Networks of social relationships

- A sense of belonging or affinity

- Normative or prescriptive meanings.

This definition recognises that people can hold membership of multiple communities and that these are likely to extend beyond the place where they make their home. Consistent with the critical theoretical perspective informing this project, this definition looks beyond the ideological representations of community and recognises that community can be both places of inclusion and exclusion, belonging and non-belonging (Crow & Mah, 2012; Everingham, 2003). Thus this definition draws in notions of boundaries; both actual and symbolic (see Cohen, 1985) acknowledging that boundaries may be both "porous" (Kenny, 2011, p. 45) and "fluid" (Everingham, 2003, p. 18). Additionally, and importantly, community is recognised as a "site where relations of power are constructed and controlled" and where from time to time these power relations are challenged and community becomes the "site of people's power" through community activism (Kenny, 2011, pp. 45 – 46).

3.9 Community studies

Community studies as a genre developed in the early twentieth century from the discipline of social anthropology (Wild, 1981, p. 98). During the following three decades community studies were held in high regard and many studies were conducted in North America and Europe which are still discussed today - see for example Bell & Newby's (1971) discussions of Middletown, Yankee City and The sociology of an English village. However, despite their early popularity, community studies came under a number of theoretical and methodological criticisms. Primarily these were related to the lack of a commonly-accepted definition for the concept of community, questions of reliability and rigour, and a reduction of the importance of place in people's lives owing to increased mobility and urbanisation (Allan & Phillipson, 2008, pp. 163 – 164; Bell & Newby, 1971, pp. 15 – 18). Other criticisms as outlined by Crow (2000) related to "neglect of conceptual issues like power and conflict, reliance on an essentially descriptive methodology, and failure by researchers to transcend the specificities of place and time" (p. 173). Lastly, the ethnographic methodology favoured by community studies required significant resources of time and therefore revenue. As a consequence, by the 1970s community studies came to be less favourably regarded by researchers, who, by and large, considered the approach acceptable for investigating obscure and atypical localities, but of less relevance for "understanding mainstream transformations in the patterning of the late twentieth century social life" (Allan & Phillipson, 2008, p. 164).

Developments in the field of community studies and research methodologies have addressed these criticisms, and while concerns have not been put to rest entirely, the usefulness of community studies appears once again to be recognised, and the field is experiencing something of resurgence (Crow, 2000). This is evidenced by the wealth of recent studies compiled by Crow and Mah (2011) for their annotated bibliography and in the broad interdisciplinary attention being paid to the concept of community (Crow and Mah, 2012). Differing disciplines bring different approaches and foci to research and

conceptualisation of community. Crow and Mah (2012) praise these multiple disciplinary approaches, describing them as having "the potential to be greater than the sum of the individual parts" (p. 6). Crow and Mah (2012) observed a similar diversity in the methods utilised to research 'community' with new approaches including, "visual, online, mobile, network and participatory methods" (p. 4). However, as they note, more established approaches, including the ethnographic observation and interviews utilised in this project, are still widely used (p. 4).

3.9.1 In defence of community studies

The contestability of the concept of community (Bell & Newby, 1971; Delanty, 2003; Kenny, 2011; Plant, 1974; Wild, 1981) has constituted one of the criticisms levelled at the community studies genre. While achieving a commonly agreed meaning to community is unlikely to occur (Crow & Mah, 2012), as highlighted in section 3.7, writers appear more accepting of the multiple meanings and uses of the concept. The plethora of recent community studies research documented by Crow and Mah (2011) indicates a willingness by scholars to engage with community even as a contested concept. As discussed previously, by clearly outlining the descriptive meaning and the delineation between descriptive and normative aspects of meaning, working definitions of the concept can be shaped to meet research requirements. Furthermore, the diversity of the concept of community can also be seen as strength (Crow and Mah, 2012).

Questions of the reliability and rigour in the findings of community studies have also been an area of concern, particularly in relation to the earlier community studies. Some of these criticisms can be understood in relation to positivism's position as the dominant research paradigm during the first two thirds of the twentieth century. During this period qualitative research methods, including those associated with community studies, such as participant observation, interviews and document analysis, were routinely criticised for lacking in scientific rigour and reliability. Although it is the case that stronger guidelines for conducting

qualitative research have been developed, with the benefit of almost forty years of paradigm debates many concerns related to qualitative research methods have been addressed. In particular, the attempt to apply the very positivistic concepts of 'reliability' and 'rigour' to these qualitative approaches has been challenged by leading qualitative researchers such as Lincoln and Guba (1986). Lincoln and Guba's (1986) 'trustworthiness' criteria for qualitative research provides many answers to these criticisms and is discussed in greater detail in the methods section of chapter 4. Additionally, as Crow (2000) notes, many contemporary community studies employ a mixed methods approach, utilising both qualitative and quantitative data.

Perhaps one of the most pervasive criticisms of community studies has been the notion that community is an irrelevant concept in modern society. With greater globalisation, mobility and advances in communication methods, it seems likely the importance of locality has diminished for many individuals. Although the relevance of locality in contemporary society has declined, place still matters, and as Crow and Mah note, "remains very important for communities and identity" (2012, p. 24). Communities of place such as neighbourhoods and towns may not be the sole setting in which many relationships are acted out, but "approaches to community cannot shed geography" (Mooney and Neal, 2009, p. 14) for people still live, form relationships, and conduct daily activities somewhere (Bell & Newby, 1971; Wild, 1981; Dempsey, 2002).

Community studies as a genre has also been criticised for failing to take analysis beyond the descriptive narrative (Crow, 2000, p. 174; Hillyard, 2007, p. 24), neglecting conceptual issues like power and conflict (Crow 2000, p. 173). While this may have been the case historically, more recent assessments of community studies research has countered these arguments (Hillyard, 2007; Crow and Mah, 2012). For example, Hillyard (2007) discusses scholars who applied critical analysis to their rural studies, including Williams (1973) whom Hillyard contends critically analysed the way 'rural' was nostalgically epitomized in literature,

and the work of Newby (1977a) whom Hillyard notes explored the poverty and exploitation of rural farm workers in Britain. Crow and Mah's (2012) review of community studies literature published this century reveals a plethora of research that is both diverse and theoretically informed and which demonstrates a willingness by researchers to engage critically with the contested concept of community.

3.9.2 Adopting a community studies approach for this project

As outlined in section 1.2, McGowan's (2004) call for gambling research to be located in the context in which it occurs, and the identified lack of research into community level effects of poker machine gambling are crucial arguments for moving the focus of this project to a community level of analysis. Further reasons relate to the inextricable link between 'community' and poker machines, forged in many western countries through arrangements such as the placement of poker machines in community spaces, the localised nature of poker machine gambling and its effects (Marshall, 1998; SACES, 2005a), and the linking of poker machine revenue to charitable activities and government funded programs at the community level. In the Australian state of Victoria, this link has been further developed through the legal and regulatory significance afforded to 'community' in licence and planning applications. The final rationale outlined relates to the limitations associated with a reliance on available (largely quantitative) data to assess the breadth of the effects of poker machines on communities. These data, including problem gambling prevalence estimates, gambling expenditure, and demographic data, are commonly used to 'construct' the likely impacts of poker machines within communities. However, as demonstrated in chapter 1, community impacts are far broader, diverse and more subtly nuanced than the sum total of gamblers or problem gamblers (however extrapolated) might reveal.

As noted previously, it is contended that the adoption of a community studies approach to this project provides significant advantages. Firstly, as the analysis of the community studies literature in this chapter has revealed, community studies is a dynamic and creative genre,

encompassing a diversity of research approaches and range of methods. The prolonged

engagement at the community level associated with it assists in the creation of a multi-

layered, more rounded understanding of how social issues shape, and are in turn shaped by,

the local context. As Crow (2008) notes,

> at their best, community studies show how the various parts of a community, including those
> that spill beyond local geographical boundaries, fit together and how the whole of the
> community is greater than the sum of its individual parts (p. 137).

Additionally, a community studies approach allows the project to tap into the rich literature

related to the construction and understanding of community, thereby providing the

theoretical tools to explore the range of ways 'community' is conceptualised and constructed

within the chosen research community and to examine the ways in which these

constructions and understandings of 'community' both shape and are shaped by the

presence of poker machine gambling. Application of critical theoretical perspectives to

notions of community provides the means to explore issues of power related to the provision

and effects of poker machines at both the macro and community level.

Secondly, and perhaps most compellingly, a community studies approach engages with the

narratives and discourses that interview participants bring with them when they describe

their township and the local effects of poker machine gambling. Community members met

and interviewed during the research repeatedly used the word 'community' to define their

way of life, the qualities of localised relationships and sense of attachment they felt to each

other and to place. While the variance in these representations of 'community' and their

frequent overlaying with ideological/normative meanings confirmed the contested nature of

the concept, the frequency with which 'community' was drawn on also illustrated the

concept's centrality to residents' identity. In this sense this project's focus on the concept of

community reflects the relevance and significance of the term for the residents of research

community themselves. Furthermore, the concept of community was strongly represented in

the bowling club's narrative explaining the introduction, continued deployment and expansion of poker machine gambling.

Thirdly, a community studies approach provides the means to explore "macro-level processes and at the same time [show] how individuals' everyday lives fit in to broader social trends" (Crow, 2000, p. 179). For example how the neo-liberal ideologies that have shaped government policy and programs, including the rapid liberalisation and globalisation of gambling, are experienced in the everyday lives of people involved. What is more, a community studies approach recognises that many contemporary social issues, such as the impacts of poker machine gambling, have a spatial element. This was emphasised by Crow (2000) when he stated,

> The observation that broad social processes like globalization have uneven spatial effects means that the specificities of location matter, and against this background the capacity of community studies to explore these specificities in detail represents a positive advantage of the approach (p. 176).

The work of academics such as Doughney (2002b) and Rintoul, et al. (2012) has drawn attention to the uneven distribution of poker machines and poker machine losses across communities of advantage and disadvantage. While it is evident that the effects of poker machines are experienced differently between and within communities, it is only by exploring these impacts within a community context that the exact variations in the way the effects reverberate through a community can be made explicit.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has explored critical theory and the concept of community and shown how these two key components underpin the theoretical and methodological framework on which this thesis is constructed. Critical theory and critical ethnography were chosen as a means of exploring issues of power, equity and social justice associated with poker machine gambling. Critical theory was deliberately selected as a counter to the predominantly positivist,

individual pathology, directing the majority of current research into poker machine gambling. This chapter has also described how critical ethnography provides the means to put into action aspects of critical theory and it has offered a framework to guide the structure, implementation and analysis of the research.

The difficulties associated with defining the concept of community were also discussed in this chapter, including how these issues are compounded by the prescriptive or ideological meanings associated with the term. While it was noted that the lack of a commonly agreed definition has caused some researchers to avoid using the concept, this chapter has argued that the widespread use of 'community' is testament to the continued relevance of the concept. Additionally, there is sufficient common understanding of some of the key components of community for a working definition to be constructed. On this basis, a definition was proposed for this thesis in which community is understood to incorporate networks of social relationships and a sense of belonging associated with a territory or place. Incorporated in this definition is the understanding that the concept of community is imbued with multiple normative or prescriptive meanings.

Critical community scholars have drawn attention to the 'dark side' of community, contrasting it with the normative or ideological representations as a place of warmth and security. Attention has also been drawn to the ways in which the concept of community has been appropriated by governments and businesses and mobilised to impart the positive feelings associated with community to policy, programs and various enterprises. Critical analysis of the 'decline of community' narratives emphasised how these can have the effect of locating the cause and solution to social issues within the communities in which they manifest, rather than social issues being understood as a consequence of broader social and political forces such as capitalism and neo-liberal driven policies.

Finally this chapter has explored the genre of community studies and its applicability for this project. Major criticisms associated with community studies were acknowledged and addressed, including issues with definition, the relevance of locality in contemporary society, and allegations that community studies historically failed to engage with conceptual issues such as power and conflict. Criticisms that the community studies approach lacks validity and reliability were also addressed, leading this researcher to concur with Crow & Mah (2012) that "when it is conducted in a theoretically-informed and methodologically-rigorous fashion, community research matters" (p. 39).

Building on this, the chapter then presented the rationalisation for utilising a community studies approach in this research project, describing how it was drawn from a number of factors associated with the conceptualisation and understanding of the concept of community, and the way these relate to the way poker machine gambling has been constructed by governments, the industry and members of the chosen research community. In particular it was argued, a community studies approach locates the research in the context in which the gambling activity occurs, examining real people in a real place interacting with and responding to the presence and impacts of poker machine gambling. A community studies approach also enables the research to explore the "uneven spatial effects" (Crow, 2000, p. 176) associated with poker machine gambling and to assess these in relation to understandings of the inequitable distribution of resources and power within community and wider society. Finally, the chapter has argued how community both as the recipient of poker machine harms and remunerations and as an agency of resistance and legitimation to the presence of poker machines provides the natural setting for this study and the appropriate lens through which to critically examine the effects of poker machine gambling.

4

Research context, methodology and methods

4.0 Introduction

The chapter will trace the research process from planning through to implementation and analysis. The chapter commences by introducing and describing the research community and the process by which it was selected. The governance of the project is outlined with reference to both the larger ARC funded project described in chapter 1, and this enquiry. The challenges and successes associated with entering the research community are also described, along with the research methods and approaches to data collection and analysis utilised in this enquiry. This also includes measures undertaken to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the data and the research findings, including triangulation and testing of preliminary research findings. Ethical considerations which directed the research process are described, including the additional requirements arising from the location of the research in an intimate rural community. Finally this chapter will describe the strengths and limitations of the research methods employed.

4.1 Selection of the research community

Selection of a research community was conducted in cooperation with the researchers involved in the broader research project. Following the advice of Creswell (2007), selection criteria were developed to assist in this process. The following 6 criteria were considered central to meet the varying requirements of each of the 3 case studies, included in the broader research project, including this enquiry:

1. Poker machines will have been recently installed in the community, thus enabling a more rigorous assessment of the effects of their introduction.

2. The community has a degree of "boundedness", so that the full effects of the introduction of poker machines can be measured within the confines of that locality. This is based on conclusive research that most gamblers use poker machines within 5 kilometres of their home (Delfabbro, 2011; KPMG, 2000, p. 57; McMillen, et al., 2004; pp. 81 – 82). This criterion excludes metropolitan areas from the study.

3. The community is of a sufficient population size to have a reasonably well developed local economy, health and welfare services, education system (for example, kindergarten and primary school), and a range of groups and voluntary associations. This is to ensure that the full effects of the introduction of poker machines can be ascertained.

4. The community has a range of socioeconomic advantage and disadvantage. This is to avoid building bias into the project design by situating the research in a predominately disadvantaged community where it is anticipated adverse effects would be greater.

5. Key stakeholders are supportive of the research project, and are able to facilitate access to the community and its members.

6. The community is within reasonable travelling distance of the research team's base.

Using a matrix, five potential locations were assessed for their ability to meet each of these criteria (see Appendix A). Although no one community proved suitable for all 3 case studies,

a local government area was identified which comprised a number of communities that satisfied the different requirements of each of the three enquiries. The LGA selected was given the pseudonym The City of Finchley. A general description of the LGA is provided in chapter 5.

The six selection criteria were also applied to select the most suitable community within the LGA for this enquiry. After careful consideration, a township in the north of the LGA was chosen and ascribed the pseudonym of Buttercross. The Buttercross township was identified as the optimal research community as it satisfied five of the six selection criteria, including that it was a bounded community with a well-developed economy and services, it had a mix of socioeconomic advantage and disadvantage, there was support for the research from local stakeholders and it was a reasonable travelling time from the researcher's home. As poker machines had been present in the township for a number of years, it did not satisfy the criterion that electronic gaming machines be recently installed in the community. Although two communities within Finchley did have new poker machine venues planned, these were precluded as potential sites as there was uncertainty as to when and whether they would proceed.

4.1.1 Limitations and benefits of Buttercross as the research community

Positioning the research within a community in which poker machines had been operational for an extended period involved forsaking the ability to explore firsthand the immediate impacts associated with the introduction of poker machines to a community. While many interview participants provided descriptions of the initial impacts, these were undoubtedly 'thinner' than the rich descriptions provided of more recent events and at times accounts of the same event differed markedly. This decision also resulted in a greater difficulty in determining causal pathways for reported impacts. Under these circumstances, obligations to triangulate data (Patton, 2002, p. 247 - 248) to confirm reported events and construct

robust chains of evidence were magnified. Layering the recollections of multiple participants with other sources of information (such as media reports) provided 'thicker' descriptions and more detailed understandings. These strategies assisted the building of richer accounts of events and ensure validity.

On the other hand, the selection of a community with an established poker machine venue also provided the enquiry with a number of unique opportunities. In particular, the enquiry was able to explore the longer term impacts of the introduction of poker machines, including processes by which the community adapted to and accommodated the presence of poker machines, and the ways the community responded to both the benefits and adverse impacts.

The relatively small size of the Buttercross community and the historically stable nature of the population (see chapter 5) also provided a number of advantages. In particular, it provided the capacity to observe the complex network of relationships within the community and to track the way these relationships shaped responses to the presence of poker machines and their range of impacts. It is hypothesised that these relationships and effects would be more difficult to trace and document in a larger metropolitan setting, such as the south of the LGA, where these relationships and related effects would be less contained, and diluted by the combination of higher population and a more developed and complex commercial sector.

4.2 Project governance

A Project Steering Group was established in 2009 to guide and facilitate both the larger project and this enquiry. The objectives of the group include the provision of advice and support with regard to such matters as financial and in-kind contributions, intellectual property, specialist advice on poker machine gambling and local government, media

communication and information dissemination, and the applicability and utilisation of research findings. Membership of the Project Steering Group was drawn from the Local Government Working Group on Gambling (LGWGoG) and included representatives from the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA), council officers and councillors representing a number of Victorian councils, other interested persons, and members of the research team.

The partnership arrangements with the VLGA and LGWGoG have been fundamental to the success of the project. Meetings of the Steering Group were initially held bi-monthly, immediately following LGWGoG meetings. As the research progressed, meetings were scheduled on a needs basis and the project team reported back to and received support and guidance from the broader LGWGoG meeting.

A requirement was also recognised for the formation of a project reference group within the Finchley LGA. The purpose of this group being to enhance the provision of local knowledge; act as a sounding board on key decisions; facilitate access to research participants; help to interpret the results of the study, and; advise on the most effective strategies by which to share information. On 4 April 2011 the research team presented the project to a group facilitated by Council which brought together local venues, the industry and local health and welfare agencies. The group was ascribed the pseudonym of the Finchley Responsible Gambling Forum. The forum endorsed member participation in the community-based Project Reference Group and a number of meetings were attended by all members of the research team.

However, despite endorsing membership participation in the community based Project Reference Group, it became apparent that the composition and nature of the Finchley Responsible Gambling Forum were not consonant with the aims and objectives of the research project. Representation on the Responsible Gambling Forum was dominated by

poker machine venues and the poker machine industry. The venue and industry

representatives were, by and large, disinterested in the research projects. At times some of

the membership exhibited behaviours which were uncooperative, antagonistic and

obstructive. These behaviours were not reflective of the membership representing the health

and welfare sector and Council or, of representatives of the Buttercross Bowls Club.

However, the actions and attitudes of some poker machine venue/industry personnel

created an unfavourable environment within the meetings to progress the research. Quite

simply, many within the reference group had no appetite for research which in any way

challenged aspects of their business-model, and thus they did not constitute an appropriate

audience for the revelation and discussion of preliminary research findings. Consequently

members of the research team disengaged from the Responsible Gambling Forum.

These comments are not intended as a criticism of the management or accomplishments of

the Forum and it is recognised that the Forum's endorsement of its role as a local reference

group for the project was secondary to its primary purpose. Nevertheless, the responses by

some venue and industry representatives witnessed within the forum are consonant with

Borrell's (2002) experiences with industry representatives on the steering groups for

community-based gambling research projects that she conducted. Borrell's (2002) describes

the actions of gambling industry representatives on these steering groups as often being

"obstructionist, openly self-interested and undermining of community efforts to find

constructive solutions to gambling related problems in the community" (cited in Borrell,

2008a, p. 344).

To compensate for the absence of a local based project reference group the researcher

drew more extensively on key informants both within Council and the wider health and

welfare sector and within the local community of Buttercross. On reflection, the connections

with the research project and the local community could perhaps better have been

strengthened through the establishment of a local based reference group in the Buttercross

township. This strategy would have provided all the intended benefits envisaged for the community-based project reference group (enhancing the provision of local knowledge; acting as a sounding board on key decisions; facilitating access to research participants; helping to interpret the results of the study, and advising on the most effective strategies to share information). This group could also have served the important function of providing opportunities for the dissemination of emergent and final research findings back to the local community, similar to the state level function of the VLGA's Local Government Working Group on Gambling and the Steering group. While there are plans to report back findings from this enquiry to the local community as part of that process within the larger project, it is likely the ongoing interaction with a predominately community based reference group would have led to a broader and more direct dissemination of findings.

4.3 Entering the research community: Challenges and successes

Paton (2002) relates that the early phases of fieldwork can be "frustrating and give rise to self-doubt" but also "exhilarating…and a time of testing one's social, intellectual, and physical capabilities" (p. 313). This range of emotions was reflective of experiences of this fieldworker during this enquiry, and undoubtedly presented the researcher with a number of successes and challenges.

4.3.1 Negotiating entry

Negotiating initial access to the research community commenced during the process for selection of the site for the enquiry. During this phase, members of the research team, particularly the project leader, liaised with staff at a number of Victorian councils regarding the suitability of their LGA for the research enquiries. Suitability criteria included the gaining of support for the research, as outlined in the previous section. On June 1, 2010, after the Finchley LGA was selected as the preferred option, members of the research team participated in a presentation to councillors and the corporate management team.

Councillors and senior management expressed enthusiasm for the research, and approval was given to proceed with the project.

Initial entry to the community selected for this enquiry was facilitated by a council officer who had worked closely with many members of the local community, including the bowls club through involvement in a number of projects. The Council officer was extremely supportive of the research and offered a range of support and assistance including sharing the extensive knowledge regarding local communities and the history of poker machine gambling within the LGA. The officer's assistance extended to escorting this researcher and other members of the research project team to a number of communities within the LGA, negotiating office space for the researcher in the township, introducing the researcher to members of the local community and providing details of key contacts.

The council officer also facilitated access to the neighbouring community of Dale Hill via the Dale Hill Estate Residents Action Group. The action group had been formed to oppose the establishment of poker machine gambling within the community. Group membership was drawn from the local community and neighbouring Buttercross and included community members representing residents, businesses and church groups. During the early phases of the enquiry the researcher attended meetings of this action group and established a number of relationships with individuals, some of whom had connections to the Buttercross community.

To assist early engagement and inform community members of the immanence of the research, an information brochure describing the aims of the enquiry and providing a brief overview of extant research was prepared and distributed widely throughout the community (see Appendix L). The brochure invited community members to participate in the research, acknowledged both the benefits and adverse impacts associated with poker machines and provided the following general overview of the range of effects to be explored:

This research will focus on understanding the many effects of EGMs within a community. These include: social; health and wellbeing; recreational; financial; political; and moral effects; along with effects on sense of security and social cohesion within a community. Both the costs and benefits of poker machines to communities will be considered.

4.3.2 Multiple layers of access

There are also settings within settings. Much in the same way that your house is divided into bedrooms, living rooms, bathrooms, an ethnographic setting is also differentiated. (Marvasti, 2004, p. 46).

Like Marvasti's (2004) home analogy, the Buttercross community comprised a multitude of smaller groups and organisations constructed around workplaces, clubs, friendship and family groupings and a range of other affiliations. At times these "settings within settings" required the re-negotiation of entry, and this upon numerous occasions; and significant work was undertaken to facilitate and consolidate the establishment of networks as an integral aspect of community-based research. In this way, negotiating access to the research community became a continuous and multilayered component of time in the field. As with the initial negotiations around access to the community, gatekeepers and key informants connected to and within the community were a vital point of entry. The process by which access to the bowls club was negotiated is illustrative of this point and will be described in the following paragraphs.

During the earliest phases of fieldwork a number of visits were made to Buttercross to facilitate orientation to the community, including meetings with some of the key informants and gatekeepers identified by council staff and community members. During this phase initial contacts were made with senior figures from the bowls club. The aim of this engagement was to inform the club of the research project and to explore their interest in participation. The senior roles held by these individuals clearly positioned them as 'gatekeepers' to the club and without their support overt access to the club and those connected with it would have been unlikely. Support for the research was confirmed during an initial meeting and

access to staff and club members was subsequently facilitated; the Board of Directors was informed of the enquiry, and assistance provided to obtain copies of artefacts such as the three club histories and permission was also gained to spend time within the club environment.

The support provided to the study by the club exceeded what had been anticipated: for example, staff were permitted to participate in interviews during work time if that was their preferred choice. While a range of flexible options were provided to each interview participant regarding possible locations and times for interviews, a number elected to participate in the interview during work time. This gesture was highly appreciated and no doubt assisted to recruit more staff than may otherwise have been the case. Although this may have raised some issues of confidentiality (with others in the workplace being aware of who was participating in an interview) these issues were also encountered when interviews were conducted in other workplaces.

4.3.3 Rapport and self-presentation

Being an outsider to the research community, the importance of "building trust and credibility at the field site" (Creswell, 2007, p.1 38) and developing rapport with community members was paramount. Marvasti (2004) describes rapport as relationships within the field "built on trust, respect, and mutual obligations", likening them to all "functional relationships" (p. 47). Consistent with the advice of Marvasti a number of strategies to assist in developing rapport was utilised including: taking an interest in the community and individuals met through the research, expressing a desire to learn about the effects of poker machines within the community, taking care to dress appropriately for the occasion, using language appropriate to the context and the participant's background and utilising self-disclosure.

One important element of building this rapport was the presentation of the researcher to the community as neutral regarding the issue of poker machines. This positioning arose out of a

desire to gain a holistic understanding of the effects of poker machines within the research community and a desire to explore the issue from a range of perspectives. This positioning enabled engagement with community members with a range of allegiances and views on the issue of poker machines and ultimately the ability of the research to explore the range of ways poker machines had affected the community.

However, side by side with this portrayal of the researcher went the body of critical theory underlying the research and the partisan nature of that critical research. The researcher entered the field with a clear understanding from the literature and key informants of the adverse impacts associated with poker machines and the inequitable distribution of both these impacts and the proceeds of poker machine gambling. This understanding and the critical theoretical perspective had shaped the framing of the research questions (see section 1) to explore the iterative effects of community and poker machines, including issues of power, ideology and discourse (see also chapter 3).

The issue of partisan research and the presentation of the researcher to the community as neutral was a source of ongoing internal dialogue for the researcher. This dialogue questioned the ethics involved in presenting to the community as neutral, while possessing a high level of awareness of the adverse impacts of poker machines. While these tensions were never fully resolved during the time in the field, several strategies proved helpful: the application of the validity and trustworthiness measures described in section 4.7, a strong commitment to remain open to all findings, open acknowledgement of both the benefits and adverse effects of poker machines (see for example the community information sheet, Appendix L) and a genuine desire to understand all perspectives. By such measures as these, the space between those seemingly divergent positions was narrowed.

4.3.4 Field roles, boundaries and relationships

During the fieldwork period the researcher's level of engagement with the research community fluctuated between that of an onlooker to more active membership. On occasions the researcher achieved significant involvement with community members, joining them as they participated in regular activities and events, such as singing in a community choir, helping out at a playgroup or attending and participating in a meeting for health and welfare workers.

During much of the time spent in the field however, the role occupied was essentially peripheral to the 'real' life of the community, and it was at times a source of frustration that a deeper level of membership or connection with the community was not achieved. Growing up in a small rural community provided the researcher with an awareness of the deep level of understanding that comes with intimately belonging to a community. Such a level of "knowing", while never actually denied the visiting community researcher, is certainly difficult to achieve, particularly during the relatively short period of 12 months.

A number of barriers also affected the capacity to achieve a consistently deeper level of community engagement. These included the travelling time between Buttercross and the researcher's home, which placed a limitation on the number of visits feasibly able to be made to the community each week; and a lack of accommodation available in the community, with the nearest suitable accommodation a 25-30 minute drive away. In an attempt to overcome these impediments, the researcher rented space in a share house for a period of three months to provide the facility for overnight stays when required, and to enable a deeper level of engagement with the community. However, changes in the composition of the share house tenants between the signing of the lease and moving into the house significantly altered the suitability of this space for the prolonged stays initially envisaged. It still however provided the option for occasional overnight stays and served as a base during the time spent within the community. Perhaps most importantly, the exercise

enabled the researcher to develop additional perspectives on aspects of life within the township.

This desire to achieve a deep level of engagement with the community was compromised, perhaps even contradicted, by a rejection on the part of the researcher of any covert research activity; for that reason, the researcher clearly presented *as* a researcher when engaging with community members. However, as is the nature of human relationships, the researcher was inevitably drawn to some community members more than to others. On occasion when a deeper level of connection was achieved, concerns arose that a professional distance between researcher and research participants had not been maintained. This juggling of competing tensions is captured persuasively by Paton (2002) in the following quotation,

> The intricate web of human relationships can entangle the participant observer in ways that will create tension between the desire to become more enmeshed in the setting so as to learn more and the need to preserve some distance and perspective (p. 319).

4.4 Qualitative methodology

A qualitative methodology (aligned with critical research as described in chapter 3) was selected for this project. Common to qualitative enquiry, social constructionism was the epistemological stance underlying the research methodology. According to Crotty (1998), constructionism is:

> … the view that *all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human being and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context.*

Social constructionists, therefore, view knowledge and meaning as created (constructed), rather than as discovered (Burr, 2003, p. 4; Crotty, pp. 9 & 42). Social constructionists understand that there is no absolute truth and that "different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon" (Crotty, p. 9). Moreover, what is accepted as knowledge about a phenomenon is always historically and culturally relative,

and therefore subject to change over time (Burr, 2003). Furthermore, Burr contends that "knowledge and social action go together", that is, the construction of knowledge and understanding around a phenomenon has direct implications for how that phenomenon is responded to (p. 3). This has particular applicability for the field of gambling research, where differing constructions of the causes of the phenomena of gambling harm have certainly invited certain responses or social actions (p. 3) and discouraged other approaches to addressing gambling harm. This is explored in subsequent chapters.

Consistent with a qualitative approach, the research was naturalistic and interpretive (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002). The emphasis in the qualitative approach to conduct research in natural settings "at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study" (Creswell, 2009, p. 175) was fundamental in the decision to locate the research in a community context. The selection of a qualitative methodology distinguishes this enquiry from the bulk of gambling research which utilises quantitative approaches (see chapter 1 and 2) and which is inclined to be deductive, take place in artificial or controlled settings, and involve attempts to manipulate the phenomena being studied (Patton, 2002, p. 39). This qualitative approach is consistent with McGowan's (2004) persuasive call for gambling research to be contextualised and sensitive to the historical, social and political settings in which it is played out (see chapter 1).

The emphasis in qualitative research on understanding and meaning, and the acknowledgement of the researcher's role in this process of interpreting findings (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002) also recognizes that the researcher's background inextricably shapes research outcomes. While this applies to both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, only qualitative research acknowledges this process. Quantitative studies endeavour to neutralise the impact of the researcher on the research in order to maintain 'objectivity'. However, as Paton (2002) notes, "numbers do not protect against bias; they merely disguise it" (p. 574). Consistent with qualitative practices, the

position of the researcher in the research is acknowledged throughout this thesis and the

researcher's background and leanings, including a social constructionist epistemology and

the application of a critical theoretical perspective within the research, are made explicit to

the reader (see chapters 1 and 3). Strategies utilised to ensure validity and trustworthiness

in qualitative research are described in section 4.7.

4.5 Data collection methods

This enquiry utilised a number of traditional qualitative methods of data collection including:

participant observation, interviews and document and artefact analysis, along with

secondary data analysis. Responding to McGowan's (2004) call for "nuanced, politically

engaged, and culturally informed gambling research grounded in the social, cultural,

historical, and everyday contexts in which gambling is embedded" (para.1), multiple data

collection methods were employed to assist the researcher to develop an understanding of

the complex and multi-dimensional ways in which poker machines affect the host

community. Additionally, utilising multiple methods contributed to the validity or

trustworthiness of the findings through triangulation of data (see section 4.7).

4.5.1 Observation

Patton (2002) recommends "direct participation in and observation of the phenomenon of

interest" (p. 21) to assist the researcher to more fully understand the complexity of the issue.

Participant and nonparticipant observation were utilised to build a more holistic

understanding of the range of ways poker machine gambling shapes the township of

Buttercross, complementing and extending understandings gained from interviews and other

data collection methods (Patton, 2002). Observations were conducted in a range of settings

in the research community including at the bowling club in and around the poker machine

venue, the restaurant and other club facilities. Observations were also conducted in and

around the township and shopping centre, at meetings within the local community and wider

LGA and at other community activities to which the researcher was invited, such as a playgroup, a community singing group and a number of meetings attended by the researcher. The level of engagement fluctuated between onlooker observer to participant observer (Patton, 2002; Spradley, 1980) and this was influenced by both the phase of the research (Spradley, 1980) and "the nature of the setting, the quality of the research relationships…formed and the opportunities for participation" (Coffey, 2006, p. 215). For example when the researcher attended sessions of a community choir and a local playgroup or meetings of health and welfare workers, she was welcomed into the groups and invited to participate.

Observations conducted during the earlier phases of data collection supported familiarisation with the research community. While the majority of observations involved full disclosure of the role of the researcher, in some cases, such as observations conducted in public spaces such as cafes and restaurants, full disclosure was not possible. In these instances (as with all phases of data collection) clearly visible identification was worn identifying the researcher and her affiliations to her university. In addition, the researcher and research team members took a number of measures to inform the community of the research projects by publishing a number of articles in the local media and council newsletter describing the research project. Accompanying photographs identified members of the research team.

An observational protocol (Creswell, 2007) was utilised to record information collected during observations (see Appendix B). Information documented in the protocol included the setting, the activity observed, descriptive notes related to the observation, and reflections on what was observed. All notes were recorded after the observation, however, to enhance accuracy, an effort was made to minimise the time between conducting and recording observations.

Given the hidden nature of many of the impacts of problem poker machine gambling, it was anticipated that observation may be less enlightening than is usually the case with

ethnographic studies and there would be a greater reliance on interviews to gather data. This proved to be the case; however, observations were still invaluable for building understandings of the community of Buttercross and the way members of the local community interacted with the bowls club.

4.5.2 Interviews

The value of interviews, according to Patton (2002), is that they enable the researcher to find out those things we cannot directly observe, including a person's feelings, thoughts and intentions, and details of events that may have occurred in the past (pp. 340 – 341). Interviews are commonly classified as either structured (closed, forced-choice responses) or unstructured (open-ended responses) Schwandt (2007). Patton notes that "qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit" (p. 278), while Babbie (2013) likens the qualitative interview to "a conversation in which the interviewer establishes a general direction" (p. 154). In keeping with this, open ended interviews were utilised "to elicit stories of experience" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 163) and access the perspective of the person being interviewed, rather than the researcher determining the precise content of what is discussed as may be the case with structured or closed question interviews, strategies more common in quantitative approaches to research.

In preparing for face-to-face interviews the researcher was guided by the recommendations of a number of authors who have written on interview techniques and who recommend a careful consideration of factors including: establishing rapport, selecting a suitable setting, selecting, sequencing and scripting of questions, the use of prompting questions, and the development of strategies to deal with the challenges to gain adequate data from all interview participants regardless of variations in personality, occupation, backgrounds (Creswell, 2007; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995).

Interview schedules were prepared to guide discussions during each interview. Three schedules were developed to accommodate anticipated differences in the focus of interviews undertaken with general community members, those directly linked with the venue/club and those individuals with a professional interest in the issue of poker machines. Copies of each interview schedule are provided in Appendices C, D and E. The majority of interview participants were provided with a copy of the interview schedule prior to their interview and informed that they were entitled to decline to discuss questions or prompts during their interview (although none did). This was a deliberate strategy to enable participants to contemplate some of the impacts of poker machines prior to the interview and also to empower and reassure community members who had agreed to participate in an interview by providing them with some knowledge regarding the direction the interview may proceed. However, this approach also risked the schedule being interpreted as a set of closed questions and on a couple of occasions interview participants took initial control of the interview, reading and answering their own questions. In each case the interviewer was able to mover the participants' focus away from the schedule and re-establish a more conversational format to the interview. These occurrences demonstrated the difficulty in striking a balance between the need to provide participants with knowledge regarding the interview process and still avoid predetermining the direction of the interview.

Each interview was scheduled at a time and location to suit participants, taking care to ensure the locations were familiar to participants and comfortable for them. Locations included the office space being utilised by the researcher, the participants' places of work, or the participants' homes or other space as nominated by the participant. Interviews ranged in time from 20 minutes to over one hour in length.

Profile of Interview participants

A total of 51 interviews were conducted as part of this enquiry. Participants were selected on the basis that they were identified as willing to share their experiences and opinions and able

to offer insight into the research topic. Care was taken to ensure participants selected represented a range of organisations, groups and demographics within the community. The bulk of interview participants (44) were drawn from local community members, with community members being defined as those living in or around Buttercross or employed predominantly in the township. The remaining seven interviews were conducted with individuals with a connection or interest in both poker machines and the Buttercross township, but not actually residing there or working solely in Buttercross. Organisations represented by the fifty-one participants included:

- the bowls club (staff, management and club members – including those in positions of responsibility)

- education sector

- local government (Councillors and Council Officers)

- sporting, recreation and service clubs

- health and welfare sector

- church groups

- business people

- retirees, parents with young families and parents with older children

- general community members.

As is commonly the case in many communities, some participants held multiple roles within the community. The gender of participants was roughly equivalent, with 28 females and 23 males participating in interviews. The majority of participants were aged over 30 years and although there was a good cross section of individuals from 30 to 80 years, only one person identified as aged in their 20s. Although some interview participants spoke of the impacts of harmful poker machine gambling on young people, the voice of that group is not directly represented in this research.

Recruitment

Identification of potential research participants occurred through reviewing listings of community groups and organisations, discussions with key informants within the City of Finchley and during observational fieldwork undertaken during the orientation and later phases of fieldwork. Snowball sampling was also utilised and proved particularly effective in the context of a rural community where the networks of kinship and friendship facilitated access and introductions. While this was an advantage to recruitment, this process required active monitoring by the researcher to ensure the participants recruited via snowball sampling and community networks did not result in a skewed sample.

While requests to participate in the interview process generally received positive responses, not all those approached were interested in participating. In addition, interviews did not proceed with a number of community members identified by key informants and via snowball sampling. At times difficulties were incurred making contact, at other times the community member had other more pressing demands on their time. The researcher was reluctant to press individuals and conscious of not wanting to be intrusive, therefore if a potential interview participant did not return calls, this was interpreted as an indication she or he was not interested in participating in an interview. This may not have always been the correct interpretation and this decision may have cost the researcher the opportunity to interview some participants.

Dealing with the data

Each interview was recorded, with the participant's permission, and later transcribed. Patton (2002) advocates researchers themselves transcribe all or some of their interviews and type handwritten field notes etcetera, as this "provides an opportunity to get immersed in the data, an experience that usually generates emergent insights." (p. 441). In accordance with these recommendations, the initial interviews were transcribed by the researcher. However, as the volume and length of interviews increased, balancing the time required to maintain this

process with time in the field became challenging, and the services of a transcribing service were eventually employed. In accordance with the ethical considerations relating to confidentiality of data, a professional and reputable transcribing service was selected to conduct transcription which adhered to National Privacy Principles contained within the National Privacy Act 1988.

Transcribed interviews were returned to participants for validation and clarification (see Appendix F for a copy of the accompanying letter). This was an important aspect of ensuring the validity of the research findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1986; Schwandt, 2007) and of providing a degree of control and empowerment to the individuals who agreed to participate in an interview. The exception to this was one participant who emphatically stated she did not wish to receive a written record of the interview. In addition, each interview participant was made aware of his or her ability to withdraw consent to participate in the research at any stage prior to or during the interview or after the interview up until the point data analysis occurred (see informed consent section 4.9.2).

Of the 50 interview participants who received their transcripts for validation, eight participants asked for their transcript to be modified. Generally these changes were minor modifications to grammar or syntax or changes designed to protect the identity of problematic gamblers and their families - the latter reflecting both a sense of care for fellow community members and evidence of the shame and stigma associated with harmful gambling. In addition, one interview participant withdrew consent to participate in the research. In accordance with the individual's wishes the audio and written transcript of the interview held by the researcher was subsequently destroyed. Although this was disappointing as the participant had provided significant insight into the community effects of poker machines, it was not surprising. The controversy surrounding the issue of poker machine gambling and the multiple and at times conflicting views individuals can hold

towards the presence of poker machines within their community can leave individuals feeling conflicted.

4.5.3 Document review and artefact analysis

Documents, records and archives can provide a valuable source of information to the researcher (Patton, 2002) and a wide range of documents and artefacts were retrieved and examined as part of data collection. Local documentation included: council planning, consultation and policy documents; annual reports and websites; media (radio and newspaper) archives; and local histories. At a State level documents analysed included governmental policy and legislation. Access to potentially useful localised documents, such as those held by Council and those associated with the bowls club, was negotiated during the early stages of fieldwork.

Unsurprisingly one of the largest collections of material relating to the township was found in the local history section of the municipal library. This housed a range of historical documents including records of Council meetings, family and local area histories and archives of local newspapers. The library's archive of local newspapers proved to be especially valuable as the emphasis in this media on localised events resulted in an excellent record of the important issues of the day. An element of this analysis included the retrieval and examination of each edition of local newspapers from 1996 (the year the club installed poker machines) and the retrieval of news reports relating to poker machine venues and the effects of poker machines within the municipality and poker machine venue advertisements. This analysis assisted to build a picture of the way poker machines were represented to communities and establish community sentiment concerning the proliferation of poker machines during the early years of the roll out within Victoria, particularly the year the bowls club was enacting its plan to install poker machines. Reports within the local media were also integral to the triangulation of data, often assisting in the confirmation or clarification of interview participants' accounts of events. This was particularly useful when events had

occurred some fifteen years previously (such as the community action against the installation of poker machines) or when accounts between interview participants varied.

4.5.4 Secondary data

Additional sources of data were also located and analysed to assist in building a picture of the township of Buttercross and a richer understanding of the ways the effects of poker machines reverberate through the community. These data comprised a range of ABS data; gaming expenditure and other data compiled by the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation (VCGLR); and data compiled by the City of Finchley Social Planning Unit.

4.6 Data analysis

Guided by Patton (2002) the period of transition between data collection and analysis was utilised to conduct an inventory of the data. This involved checking that all field notes were completed, that all data were correctly labelled and that there were "no glaring holes in the data" (p. 440). Nvivo 9 software was utilised to assist with data storage, collation and analysis. Prior to commencing thematic analysis, each transcript was printed and read and re-read a minimum of three times to enable the researcher to gain an overview of the whole interview before dividing it into parts (Creswell, 2007, p. 148, citing Agar, 1980). During this phase, following Creswell's recommendations, memos – that is "short phrases, ideas or key concepts that occur[ed] to the reader" (p. 151) - were recorded in the margins of the transcripts. Some of these reflections informed the development of the sensitising concepts (see below).

Using Nvivo software, the researcher then began the more formal process of thematic data analysis. Initial analysis was guided by Auerbach & Silverstein's (2003) technique of sensitising concepts (see also Patton, 2002) – a listing of categories that can be used as codes to group data during initial analysis. The sensitising concepts, which were drawn from

extant literature, engagement with key informants, transcription of early interviews, memoing and theory, provided a useful starting point for the coding of interview transcripts. However, heeding Patton's (2002) caution against the overreliance on predetermining concepts, care was taken not to draw early conclusions, but to remain flexible and open to what was contained in the data.

Consistent with a qualitative approach, data analysis was an inductive, bottom-up process commencing with describing and organising (coding) the data as explained by Braun and Clarke (2006); Creswell (2009); Miles and Huberman (1994), and Patton (2002). Where appropriate, sub-codes were developed to further categorise and describe related blocks of data. After additional, extended immersion in the data, the researcher gradually sorted and consolidated the codes into potential themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89). Initial themes were discussed with members of the supervisory team, the steering group and key informants, and postgraduate colleagues. Questions that arose during the research, such as the contrast between what seemed to be community acceptance of the poker machines within the bowls club and strong opposition to the proposed installation of poker machines within the hotel, were also posed to later interview participants. This helped to tease out and canvas a range of alternate perspectives. It is important to note that data analysis was not a linear process, rather it involved working back and forward between the themes and the database; a process described in detail by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Dominant gambling discourses reproduced by interview participants when framing localised gambling and gambling harms were documented as part of the initial coding and sub-coding of the interview data. Following the identification of discourse as a significance research theme, the researcher returned to and further scrutinised the coded data. Following the advice of Cameron (2001), the researcher searched for the presence of "consistent patterns" of talking about or framing an issue in the data as opposed to comments reflecting dominant

discourses (p. 129). Discourse theory and the identification of discourses in the research data is discussed in more detail in chapter 7.

Consistent with the constructionist orientation of the researcher (Burr, 1995), thematic analysis moved beyond what Braun & Clarke (2006) describe as the "sematic or explicit" content of the data to identify themes at a "latent or interpretive" level (p. 84). Braun and Clarke describe how thematic analysis at the latent level seeks to "identify or examine the *underlying* ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations – and ideologies – that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data" (p. 84). This approach was also consistent with and supportive of the critical stance adopted within this enquiry and was helpful with the exploration of how differing perspectives of the one issue were formed, for example the positive and adverse impacts of poker machine gambling within Buttercross and why some community members experienced harmful gambling while others did not.

Analysis of documents involved gaining an understanding of how and why they were produced, determining the accuracy of the documents, and linking documents with other sources of information (Patton, 2002, p. 499). Additional critical analysis of documents examined underlying discourses and ideology; including whose 'voice' was heard in the documents and whose voice was silent (Madison, 2005); and with regard to policy analysis how 'problems' were constructed and what they were defined to be (Bacchi, 2009).

Following thematic analysis, additional analysis was conducted on the interview data to collate descriptions of localised gambling harm. With the damaging effects of problematic gambling on individuals and families well documented in the academic literature (Abbott, 2001; Law, 2005; PC, 1999), the primary purpose of this research was not an attempt to replicate those findings within a community setting. However, examining how the effects of poker machines were understood by this community necessitated documenting the stories community members were telling about what those effects were, including the effects of

gambling harm. Additionally, the recurring downplaying or denial of the existence of harmful

poker machine gambling in Buttercross (found across a wide spectrum of data) prompted

this analysis to test these contentions. This piece of analysis resulted in the collation of 89

descriptions by interview participants of either gambling they had observed which they

considered harmful or of cases of gambling harm. Of these descriptions, 49 were strongly

linked to the bowls club (see discussion chapters). Analysis of these accounts indicated that

where descriptions focused on the impact of harmful gambling on specific individuals, 2-4

interview participants appeared to be describing the one individual.

Concern for the privacy of individuals described in these accounts was evident with some

participants being reluctant to provide specific details of individuals, or stressing the

importance of concealing their identity. This confirms both the issues of shame and secrecy

that still surround gambling harm and demonstrates the importance of the issues of privacy

and confidentiality associated with conducting research in a small rural community.

Responding to these concerns, and in accordance with the ethical requirements of the

University's Human Research Ethics Committee, a number of measures were implemented

to mask the identities of both interview participants and individuals whose gambling was

discussed (see section 4.8).

4.7 Validity or Trustworthiness

In qualitative research one of the most discussed issues is the concept of validity, that is, do

the findings accurately represent the situation to which they refer, and are the findings

backed by evidence? (Schwandt, 2007). Many social researchers express unease with the

notion of traditional validity criteria, originally developed with reference to quantitative

research, being applied to qualitative research. Some researchers reject the concept of

validity altogether, preferring the notion of trustworthiness, a term devised by Yvonna Lincoln

and Egon Guba for a set of criteria to assess the quality of qualitative enquiry (Schwandt,

2007, p. 299). Qualitative researchers typically utilise a number of strategies to strengthen the trustworthiness of their research findings and a brief discussion of key approaches utilised in this research is included below:

4.7.1 Reflexivity

Hammersley (2004) emphasised that "researchers are always part of the social world they study" and cannot remove themselves from the research process (p. 934). This is particularly the case in qualitative research where, as Patton (2002) observes, the researcher becomes the instrument for data collection. Developing self-awareness is a way of enhancing the capacity of the researcher (the instrument) to conduct fieldwork and data analysis (Patton, 2002, p. 64), a process that has come to be known as reflexivity (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Hammersley, 2004; Patton, 2002). Hammersley (2004) recommends that researchers repeatedly reflect on their own role in the research process (p. 934). Through a continual process of critical self-reflection and self-disclosure, the researcher is able to identify personal biases that may influence the data. As Patton (2002) notes

> Reflexivity reminds the qualitative inquirer to be attentive to and conscious of the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and ideological origins of one's own perspective and voice as well as the perspective and voices of those one interviews and those to whom one reports (p. 65).

The researcher utilised her field journal entries for this purpose, and also benefited from discussing these issues with members of the supervisory team and other researchers.

4.7.2 Triangulation

Triangulation refers to the utilisation of multiple methods (e.g. interviews, observation and document analysis), multiple data sources (e.g. parent, teacher and student) and multiple perspectives on a phenomenon to strengthen claims. In planning this enquiry the researcher deliberately set out to collect and double-check findings using multiple data sources from multiple data collection methods, building a verification process into data collection and, as a result, both researcher and audience can have greater confidence in the findings (Lincoln &

Guba, 1986; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). Use of triangulation was instrumental in building richer, thicker descriptions of past community events where the recollections of individuals were sparse or inconsistent, and in the confirmation of the veracity of interview content. Triangulation was achieved through overlaying the recollections of multiple interview participants' from a range of backgrounds and affiliations, with other sources of information including media reports, local histories, academic writing and governmental reports.

4.7.3 Peer debriefing & devil's advocate approach

This involved the researcher having the support of reliable and well-informed colleagues with whom ethical and political dilemmas could be discussed and emerging ideas developed and tested (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Schwandt, 2007). Both the researcher's supervisor and associate supervisor assumed this role during supervision sessions and a number of ethical and political dilemmas were discussed during the data collection, analysis and writing process.

4.7.4 Prolonged engagement

According to Lincoln & Guba (1986), prolonged engagement refers to the devotion of adequate time in the field to build rapport, understand the context and gather detailed, rich data. The researcher engaged with the research community for a period of over twelve months. During this time, 60 days were spent within the Finchley LGA and Buttercross community and an additional 8 days were spent observing Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) hearings pertaining to venues within Dale Hill and Buttercross. Establishing office space within the community provided a base for community engagement and facilitated additional points of connection. In addition, as discussed in subsection 4.3.4, the researcher rented space in a share house for a period of three months to enable overnight stays when required.

4.7.5 Thick description

As the term suggests, this refers to the quality, detail and depth of the data collected. Thick description enhances the reader's understanding of the issue and enables them to judge for themselves the extent to which the researcher has accurately drawn conclusions from the data and to make judgements regarding transferability of the findings to another situation (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). As discussed in sections 4.2 and 4.6.3, thick description was at times achieved through the layering (triangulation) of multiple 'thinner' data sources from a range of perspectives.

4.7.6 Interview verification

As described in some detail in section 4.6.2, prior to data analysis, interview participants were provided with copies of their transcripts to validate accuracy of the content (Lincoln and Guba, 1986; Schwandt, 2007) and to enable participants to make any alterations to content to ensure the transcript was an accurate reflection of what they wished to convey. This approach was motivated by the researcher's desire to ensure participants' views were not misrepresented in the research, that they retained a degree of control over the information they contributed to the research and how it was to be conveyed.

4.8 Ethical considerations

This section identifies and addresses the particular ethical issues raised by this enquiry including: ethics approval; informed consent; confidentiality; potential distress; security of data and maximising benefits. The consideration of ethical issues was guided by the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research,* jointly developed in 2007 by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Australian Research Council (ARC) and the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC).

4.8.1 Ethics approval

Ethics approval was sought from the University's Human Research Ethics Committee and approval was granted on 27 July, 2010. For a copy of Ethics approval see Appendix G.

4.8.2 Informed consent

As highlighted in paragraph 2.2.1 of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (NHMRC, ARC & AVCC, 2007), a person's decision to participate in research must be voluntary and based on sufficient information of both the research and the implications of participation in it. To enable this, information regarding the research must be presented in a way which is accessible to each participant (2.2.3), with the researcher assessing the most appropriate method of communication (verbal, written, or other methods), paying regard to educational background and level, age, the presence of any visual, hearing or communication impairment, and the participants' cultural background and first language (5.2.16). Informed consent forms and a plain language statement regarding the research were provided to all interview participants prior to data collection (Appendices H, I, J, K). Recognising that difficulties with literacy are not uncommon in Australian society, the researcher discussed the content of the informed consent and plain language statements with each participant, as well as providing them with time to read each document. While the researcher was prepared to employ additional measures if warranted by individual circumstances, she did not become aware of any such needs.

While informed consent for interview participants is relatively straightforward in the context of ethnographic work, obtaining of informed consent in relation to observational fieldwork is less so. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) discuss this matter, particularly in relation to covert participant observation. While this research proposal rejected the use of covert participant observation, non-participant observation was conducted during fieldwork. As much of this occurred within public settings, it was not possible to fully inform all participants. However, as discussed in section 4.5.1, the researcher wore clearly visible identification

during all aspects of fieldwork, and steps were taken to inform the community more broadly of the research project and the identity of the researcher.

4.8.3 Confidentiality

Protecting the privacy of participants is a fundamental ethical consideration, and the project took a number of steps both to conceal the identity of the research community within this thesis and to ensure participant anonymity. Steps taken to conceal the identity of the research community included: refraining from utilising identifying visual artefacts within the thesis, including maps, photographs and drawings of the community and surrounding landscape; generalising descriptions of the landscape and community; and not naming the indigenous tribe who inhabited the area prior to white settlement. In addition, references that identify the research community were excluded from the bibliography and are cited by the generic descriptor CF (confidential reference) and differentiated with a numeral and the year of publication. These references are located within a separate bibliography maintained by the researcher.

Conducting the research within a small community made it imperative to adhere strictly to anonymity measures to prevent individuals from being identified by fellow community members in the thesis research or related publications. Steps taken to conceal the identity of the research participants included: security of data measures, use of pseudonyms for research participants and the research community (Marvasti, 2004), and removal of identifying information in this thesis (discussed previously). To further protect identity, a version of Creswell's (2007) recommendation to construct case studies and vignettes from composites of participant data, rather than the data of one individual, was utilised, whereby some case studies were deconstructed and presented as separate cases. In addition, the identities of participants with a connection to the club venue were further concealed by removing references to gender and the nature of their association with the club. Consequently, all those associated with the club including club members, staff and those in

positions of authority, are identified by the same pseudonym "Club Participant" and differentiated only by a numeral.

Despite the emphasis on anonymity by the researcher, time in the field demonstrated that confidentiality was not an issue of concern for all interview participants as the following journal account reveals,

> I met with Fran Smith this afternoon to discuss the local history. As I made tea and prepared to take notes Fran provided me with a running account of a number of interviews I had conducted with community members during the previous month. The details had been relayed to her over previous days as she moved about the community visiting friends, attending meetings, shopping and visiting a local service. She explained that during each encounter she had mentioned she was meeting with me this week, to which she had received replies including, "Oh Deb came out home to see us last week", "Yes Deb was here interviewing staff a couple of weeks ago" and so forth. As she spoke I was thinking of the lengths to which I had gone to ensure I posted transcripts back to participants in a range of different envelopes so as not to inadvertently identify interview participants to postal staff (15 July, 2011).

4.8.4 Harm, discomfort and inconvenience

Patton (2002) draws attention to the potential of interviews to affect the interviewee by drawing out "thoughts, feelings, knowledge and experience" (page 405) that, while possibly cathartic for some, may also cause personal distress. Given the range of negative social impacts of harmful gambling for individuals and their family, friends and colleagues (see for example: Abbott, 2001; Law, 2005; Productivity Commission, 1999, 2010), the researcher prepared for the possibility that interview participants could experience personal distress. On entering the field, the researcher had twenty years of experience in teaching and community work and considered herself well equipped to gauge participant distress, and to respond appropriately should any occurrence arise. As an additional preparation, prior to commencing interviews, the researcher contacted a local Gambler's Help service to clarify referral pathways and seek guidance regarding the most effective responses to distress associated with gambling harm. Details of local support and counselling services were also provided to all interview participants as part of their informed consent.

Although many interview participants discussed the adverse impacts of the gambling on family, friends and community members, and relayed feelings of sorrow, disappointment and even on occasion anger, no interview participant exhibited visible distress during the interview due to the issue of harmful gambling. This may have been because no significant distress was experienced, and there are good grounds to assume this as few participants spoke of being directly affected by the consequences of another's harmful gambling. However this not to say that interview participants did not experience distress either during or after the interview process; only that any such distress was not visibly or verbally conveyed to the researcher.

4.8.5 Security of data

A range of strategies were deployed to ensure the security of collected data, particularly interview data and field notes. These included:

- storing consent forms and transcripts separately

- assigning non-identifying pseudonyms to research participants and their interview recordings and transcripts (Creswell, 2009)

- storage of taped interview recordings and transcripts of interviews in a locked filing cabinet (in a locked room). These data will be stored for a period of five years following thesis submission. After this time they will be destroyed

- computer access was restricted through the use of passwords

- when travelling between the university and research site, all identifying documentation was carried in the luggage compartment of the car where feasible.

During the research enquiry one significant breach of data security occurred when the researcher's home was broken into in mid-2012 and among other items, the laptop used for the research project was stolen. The laptop contained de-identified interview transcripts, journal notes and data that had been coded and grouped within Nvivo software. The incident

was reported to Victoria Police and the University's Ethics Officer. In accordance with

directions from the Ethics Officer, an Incident Report form was completed. The Officer did

not advise any further action. The possibility that the confidentiality of interview participants

may have been breached by this incident was cause for great concern. However, the

adherence to the strategies described above allayed some of these concerns. The laptop

was password protected and interview data was de-identified. In addition, members of

Victoria Police expressed the view that the hard drives of stolen PCs and laptops are

generally wiped before being on-sold. All interview data, including that coded within Nvivo,

was backed up and able to be restored, along with the majority of journal entries.

4.8.6 Maximisation of benefits

Findings from the study will be disseminated widely to ensure maximisation of benefits for

research participants and others involved in supporting the research. Opportunities have

been and will continue to be sought to present research findings in a range of formats (talks,

workshops, conference presentations, doctoral thesis, fact sheets, journal articles and media

articles) catering to a range of audiences (general community members and those closely

associated with the bowls club, council officers, academics and those working in the health

and welfare sector).

4.9 Study limitations

There were a number of limitations in both the design and the implementation of this enquiry.

The first was the weighing up and trading-off between the six criteria developed to identify

the optimal community and the time restraints of doctoral research. This process (described

in section 4.1) resulted in the selection of a research site which restricted the ability to

explore first-hand the *immediate* impacts associated with the introduction of poker machines

into a community. However, as also discussed in 4.1.1 the site selected also opened up new

fields of enquiry within the project enabling an exploration of the longer-term impacts of the

introduction of poker machines, including how the effects of poker machines both shape and are shaped by the community.

A further limitation of the implementation was that, despite an extended period of connection with the community, the research does not present the 'holistic' understanding of the range of ways poker machines affect Buttercross as was initially envisaged. What has been achieved is an understanding of this community through the prism of those interviewed. Further, this perspective has been observed and analysed through the prism of the researcher's own beliefs and prejudices taken into the field.

Other limitations dealt with throughout chapter 4 include the failed attempt to establish a local community reference group to guide the project and assist with the dissemination of research findings back to the community (see section 4.2), and the limited space given to voices of younger people (noted in section 4.5.2).

5

Community, Club and Context

5.0 Introduction

This chapter has three primary purposes. The first is to give the reader an initial picture of the research community, including the local bowls club that is the sole poker machine venue in the township. The second is to outline the history of the establishment and expansion of poker machine gambling within this community and some of its more immediate effects; and thirdly, this chapter aims to position these events within the macro sociopolitical context in which they have occurred. In building this portrait of the community, its poker machines, and the wider influenced and influencing forces, this chapter lays the foundation for the combined results/discussion chapters that follow.

5.1 Buttercross community

This section describes the history, geography and demography of Buttercross. However, this provides only part of the community portrait; and a richer understanding of this community is provided in the sections in which residents themselves describe their community. These commentaries continue throughout the chapters that follow.

The township of Buttercross is located in the far north of the Local Government Area (LGA) of Finchley. Finchley lies proximate to a large city in Victoria, Australia. The municipality is diverse in both landscape and composition. The south of the LGA comprises highly urbanised, densely populated and culturally diverse communities. On the other hand, the north of the LGA has until recent years been characterised as rural in character, sparsely populated and culturally homogenous.

For at least 5000 years prior to European settlement, indigenous people lived on the land, now known as Finchley LGA, and travelled the area (CR1, 1992). Although some aspects of the climate and landscape would have been restrictive to pre-contact Aboriginals, the region was well supplied with fish, eels and birdlife and fresh water. Some areas of the region would also have provided supplies of "chert, silcrete and quartz for stone tools" (CR1, 1992, p. 4). Many places in the area retain their indigenous names.

European settlement occurred in the early 1800s when the first squatter holding was established. The area went on to become known for its agricultural industries, particularly dairy farming. However, diminishing returns during the latter decades of last century, led to an exodus from farming and much of the surrounding farmland has now been developed into housing estates or divided into small holdings. Nonetheless, the community retains a strong rural ambience. A number of the aforementioned holdings line the stretch of road approaching the township from the south and the paddocks are dotted with horses and foals, providing a picturesque approach to the community.

A number of community members have strong historical links to the area going back generations. The community's rurality and, until recent decades, relative isolation and stable population, can be seen as contributing factors in the formation of a strong local identity. The township has experienced significant change in recent years, due largely to population growth and changes in land use. Encroaching urbanisation from the south of the LGA has

also repositioned the town from a relatively isolated farming community to a community

spanning the urban/rural interface. The decline evidenced in many rural communities is

absent from Buttercross which has experienced relatively rapid population growth over the

preceding decades, growing from 1,553 inhabitants in 1991, to a population of 4,299 in 2011

(.id community, 2013). Just as the southern parts of the municipality are notable for their

cultural diversity, Buttercross residents are distinguished by their predominantly Anglo-

Saxon heritage (.id community, 2013).

Interview participants suggested that new residents are drawn to the township by the appeal

of a country lifestyle either in the township or on one of the small acreages described above.

Some newer arrivals indicated they moved to Buttercross because they believed a rural

community provided a superior environment in which to raise their children. The appeal of

the community to families is supported by findings from the 2011 Census that showed a

population characterised by quite a high proportion of children. Children aged 0 to 17 years

comprised 26.9 per cent of the population. This is higher than the Victorian average which is

22.4 per cent (.id community, 2013). With 11.7 per cent of the population aged 70 years and

over, older adults also comprise a higher proportion of the population in comparison to the

Victorian average of 10.1 per cent (.id community, 2013).

While in the past, the area would have appealed to families and individuals seeking more

affordable housing, the price of housing within the township is now less affordable than that

offered by new developments in the LGA. To accommodate the growing population, a

number of housing subdivisions have been developed over the last two decades, adding to

the original cluster of older style housing in the core of the township. These cater to a range

of homebuyers and include a subdivision on the township's outskirts containing very large

homes on double lots and a number of subdivisions comprised of regular sized and smaller

lots. Further population growth is forecast with the community expected to grow to 6,500

inhabitants by 2031. However, Buttercross will probably and essentially remain a rural

township. This is due, at least in part, to the barriers to expansion provided by natural and man-made features to the town's north and south.

Home ownership appears to be highly valued within the community with 2011 Census data revealing 30.5 per cent of households own their home and a further 46.4 per cent are purchasing (.id community, 2013). The Census data also revealed that 19.5 per cent of households rent their accommodation, which is less than the Victorian average of 25.9 per cent (.id community, 2013). Census data indicates there is a trend of fewer households living in social housing compared to Victoria – 2.5 per cent compared with 3.2 per cent (.id community, 2013). However, this was not found to be statistically significant.

The 2011 Australian Census data also reveals that the township has a range of advantage and disadvantage. The SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD) scores combine a range of Census data (including education level, income, mortgage repayments, employment and so forth) to rank geographic areas across Australia in terms of their relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage. Lower scores indicate an area is relatively disadvantage compared to an area with a higher score. IRSAD scores in some of the older parts of the township of Buttercross range from 922 – 955; this places these areas in the 18th – 27th percentile. In the newer areas of the township, IRSAD scores range from 1029 – 1069 (ABS, 2013), placing those areas in the 45th – 66th percentile, and indicating they are relatively more advantaged.

Although there are some opportunities for employment within Buttercross in sectors such as health, education, hospitality, trades and retail and some of the small businesses catering to the needs of the rural sector, many new residents travel out of the town for work. Although the community has always had a number of residents who commute, the influx of new residents in recent years has seen this population grow. Some community members

expressed the opinion that long commutes reduce opportunities for newer arrivals to make connections within the local community or hinder the pace at which this might occur.

Despite its close proximity to a major city, the town is poorly serviced by public transport. Public transport for the town's residents is limited to a bus service which runs every hour or so and shares the single lane road with other traffic. Data from the 2011 Census illustrates this point, showing only 2.6 per cent of residents travelled to work by public transport, compared with 11.0 per cent of Victorians. Consequently, there is a heavy reliance by residents on motor vehicles with 78.5 per cent of commuters travelling to work by private vehicle, compared to 67.4 per cent across Victoria (.id community, 2013).

The growth in population, and the town's position as a service centre for smaller outlying communities, has had a number of benefits, in particular significant developments in the town's retail and service sector. Community members recall that in the early 1970s the town's main street was unsealed and home to only six shops. However, Buttercross now offers a range of stores, including supermarkets, a pharmacy, butcher, greengrocer, hairdressing salons, bakeries, cafes and take-away food outlets, variety stores, clothing and footwear retailers, an opportunity shop, banks, and real estate agencies. Throughout the fieldwork period there was constant construction in progress within the shopping precinct.

Despite the retail sectors' apparent prosperity, the sector has not been without its difficulties. Retailers reported having had to contend with loss of custom each time a major shopping centre has opened in the more urban south of the municipality, and residents recalled that as recently as ten years ago empty shops were a feature of the streetscape. Furthermore, while the development was almost universally welcomed by interview participants, there was also a feeling by a small number that it had occurred at the cost of the historical feel of the town's main street. Over the past decade or so many of the older buildings have been removed to

make way for new businesses and some expressed concern that the design of the new buildings has not been particularly sympathetic to the existing architecture.

The township also has a range of services and infrastructure including a community house, Showgrounds, and a Community Activity Centre (CAC). The CAC provides a range of facilities, including a hall, meeting space and a kindergarten. At the time of writing the CAC was undergoing a major redevelopment to extend and modernise existing facilities. The redeveloped facility will also create new facilities for Early Years children's and space to locate a much needed library in the future.

Community members interested in sporting recreation also have their needs well-catered for with a range of sporting clubs and facilities including football, netball, cricket, basketball, tennis, swimming, gymnasiums, lawn bowls and equine pursuits. The town also has a range of educational and early childhood services including two primary schools and a secondary college, child-care centres, kindergartens, Maternal and Child Health Care services and a number of playgroups.

There are also six Christian churches within the community. The formation of a combined Christian churches group to share the provision of emergency relief and material aid within the township was described by a number of participants as an indication of the community's cooperative and caring characteristics. Others presented the work of the group as an indication of the changing community demographics and of the adverse impacts of the presence of poker machines.

Health and welfare services within the township include a medical centre, aged care facilities, a community health centre, optometry, physiotherapy, alcohol and drug counselling, dental and so forth. Notwithstanding these services, there is general agreement that there is a deficiency in health and welfare services in Buttercross and residents rely on

outreach from a number of bigger organisations to meet need, or are required to travel to the

larger urban centres in the south of the LGA to access services. This restricts access as

outreach services are by their nature often provided on a part-time basis, such as a half-day

per week. The lack of privacy in a small community and the limited public transport options

further restricts access to health and welfare services for some residents.

5.2 Close-knit

"… a tight knit community, everyone knows everyone."   Trevor

As with many rural townships, community life in Buttercross is underpinned by a network of

social, economic and familial relationships. Although a number of participants reported that

the strength of these community ties has been challenged in recent years by an influx of new

residents, strong community relationships remain a dominant feature of the Buttercross

community.

Indeed, such was the strength and depth of the networks of community relationships in

Buttercross that this characteristic was evident from the researcher's earliest engagement

with the community. The first weeks of fieldwork in Buttercross were predominately spent

getting a feel for the district and chatting with community members about the research.

During this time the researcher met a number of locals and the strong networks of social ties

were highlighted time after time when community members would reel off lists of names of

key individuals for the researcher to contact, along with a lengthy list of their community

connections - often going back many decades. From those early days, the strength of

affection and sense of belonging locals felt for their community was also highly evident, with

the friendliness of fellow residents one of the most highly valued qualities.

Those interviewed described numerous advantages of living within such a close-knit

community, including opportunities to connect, a sense of safety and a sense of belonging.

Tina was just one of many participants to highlight the positive attributes of the township when she stated, "I like the semi-rural atmosphere. It's community, it's caring and I believe it to be quite a safe environment". Likewise James, who has called Buttercross home for more than forty years, emphasised the strong community connections in the township. Illustrating the point by explaining that community members know each other so well that the ordinary act of attending the local shops is no quick task as he will see many of his friends and acquaintances, "We go up to the shop … every week, Friday or Saturday when I go up. I know every second person in the street. You stop and talk. Everybody knows everybody".

It seems apparent that knowing many of your fellow residents and their family histories generates a sense of security and a connection to the township and other residents. Kate, a retired community member who has recently returned to the township after a four year absence, explained that the strong community connections within the township were the primary motivation for her return.

> I wanted to come back here because it's a real community feeling here and I missed it….Yes, people connect more. It's hard to describe it. It's just something in the general atmosphere that seems to be more of a community.

Kate's sentiments about Buttercross were confirmed in a survey examining community strength that was conducted by the Department for Victorian Communities. Measuring twenty indicators of community strength, the survey was conducted in Buttercross and two other neighbourhoods across the Finchley LGA. When compared with the other two neighbourhoods and the metropolitan average, survey participants in Buttercross were more likely to feel: valued by society; safe on the streets alone after dark; and that community members were friendly, good neighbours and helpful to each other (CF2, 2005). These findings came as no surprise to many, including Bridget, a local government employee, "And it showed what we'd sort of known internally, intuitively, that there were high levels of people feeling very connected in that community in knowing each other".

5.2.1 Getting involved and belonging

Buttercross is also an active community with a culture of engagement and volunteerism. These attributes were confirmed by the aforementioned community strength survey which revealed very high levels of attendance at community events and membership of both organised groups and groups that had taken local action. Additionally, 75 per cent of survey participants felt there were opportunities to volunteer in their local community and 44 per cent actually engaged in some form of voluntary work. Again Buttercross rated more highly on all these indicators than the other two communities surveyed and the metropolitan average (CR2, 2005). Census data collected in 2011 also indicated a culture of volunteering with 19.1 per cent of residents over 15 years indicating they had volunteered through a group or organisation in the previous 12 months. This is higher than the Victorian average of 17.7 per cent (.id community). The interview data supported these findings, with many participants describing a high level of community involvement. The stories of Amanda and Jack, presented below, are illustrative of these findings.

Amanda, a fit and active woman in her seventies who has lived for almost fifty years in the township described her extensive involvement with local groups and her story is typical of many interviewed.

> You know, when you've got children you do lots of things but I still do a little bit in the community. I'm involved in the CWA, go to the local church. Play bowls. Help with the court house information centre. I was a Guide leader and the Guide commissioner for a few years. The first committee I was on was the kinder committee.

Likewise, Jack, an equally fit and active community member in his seventies discussed his deep connections to the township.

> I've been here all my life. I've known most of the people and the families living around the area. Also I guess I've taken an interest in the layout of the area too, like the mountains and the valleys and the hills.

Over the years Jack too has had extensive involvement in community life.

I'm currently in the Rotary Club of Buttercross. I've been involved in church work around for many years …I played football too so I was involved in the local football club, although I don't have much involvement now….I was president of the school council at one stage through the eighties.

Further evidence of these close community networks was observed in the way groups and organisations within Buttercross have forged strong cooperative working relationships. This was noted by a number of interview participants included among them Olivia, a community member, also in her 70s, who has lived most of her adult life in the area. Olivia explained how she believed these ties across multiple groups assist volunteer organisations and community groups to interact and coordinate their efforts for the benefit of the community, "I find that within the township most people will work together, most organisations will support one another…I think the camaraderie and the working together is, it's a plus". Reflecting on the cooperative approach between community groups in Buttercross Olivia indicated she believed it was a quality distinctive to their township, and linked it to the size of their community, "I suppose there might be other places that have it but I don't really know. The bigger it gets, you lose that sort of crossover between one organisation and another".

This culture of volunteerism and the prolonged connection to the township of many residents can mean that over a lifetime community members may find themselves involved with a range of different organisations and committees. Not only do these multiple involvements support the functioning of a range of community groups and programs, they also assist residents to build extended networks of friendships and associations across a range of groups and organisations within the community. The result of which is a highly networked and integrated community, and the experience for many of a strong sense of belonging. These findings are similar to Dempsey's (1990) community study of a small rural township documented in *Smalltown.* The highly networked nature of this community and the value community members place on friendly and harmonious relationships are crucial elements in

this thesis's exploration of both the effects of poker machines within this community and the way community members respond to those effects.

5.3 New arrivals and changing times

However, when the building of social ties and a sense of belonging is reliant on involvement in community life, it can also mean that those, who for whatever reason, fail to become involved in these groups are marginalised from the community and excluded from the benefits of these ties. As noted in section 5.1, Buttercross has experienced an influx of new residents in recent years. Community change was a recurring theme in many of the interviews, with participants describing significant changes to the composition and feel of the township. While many saw the growth and change within Buttercross as a positive, others associated these changes with a decline in the quality of community life and community relationships.

By far the most consistent view of the impact of the growth in the town's population was the erosion of the strength of social ties. According to many interview participants, Buttercross was no longer a town where everyone knew everyone,

> It has changed a lot with the different diversity of everybody in town. It's probably not as in-knit as it was. It's very - oh I don't know how to put it - everybody knew everybody and you walked down the street and everybody knew everybody and would say, hi. Cath

> You know if you walk down the streets, even probably 10 years ago - you're going to probably bump into quite a few people you knew. You can actually just about walk down the street and not bump into anyone who you do know. John

> It's a lovely, friendly community. I've lived here for 30 odd years probably… But it - you're noticing the difference now. It used to be you'd be able to walk down the street and say hello to everybody, but now it's grown so much that you're not able to do that anymore. Christina

> I've been in the town about 48 years.   If you came in to buy the bread, it took you two hours because you knew everybody, everybody. It's different now. You can walk down the street and not recognise anybody on occasions. Ray

For some this was viewed as not just a change in the composition of their community, but as decline in the quality of their community. There is a sense of security that comes from either knowing or knowing of, the majority of people within the local community. Buttercross was once a place where people not only knew the majority of other community members, but also knew their history and their family's history. There was a real sense that the relatively rapid expansion in population had unsettled the composition of the community and diluted the extent and quality of social ties.

According to a number of interview participants, it was not just the increase in populations that was the issue, but that some newer arrivals to the township were at times slow to integrate and connect with the community. One of the reasons offered for this by some community members was that Buttercross was a 'commuter' or 'dormitory' town for some newer residents. As discussed in chapter 3, historically those who lived in rural communities would have spent most of their life within the context of that community, but advances in transport, communications and the nature of employment have unsettled "spatially defined boundaries" (Crow and Mah, 2012, p. 21). This was evidenced in Buttercross where some who have made their home in the township, retain their major connections elsewhere, at least initially. Long hours spent commuting restricts time available to become involved in local clubs and community life. This was noted by Charles when he stated "Some of the new people have embraced the idea of the township as a community strongly and enthusiastically, and others simply commute ". Charles' comments were echoed by Trevor, a local businessman with extensive community links:

> …generally what happens with the younger people that move in, you find in most cases that both husband and wife are both working, and they're working where they used to work before they moved to the area. So they'll travel to and from work on a daily basis.

Commuting also impacts on family life and the recent housing developments in the LGA have, as Dominic noted, added significantly more traffic and extended the commute for some workers, "Hours of work are long…with the growth out this way, the travel times

increase. So families who could have spent some time together now spend more time on the road". Reflecting the needs of commuting families, and of course the broader needs of working families, both primary schools in Buttercross offer before and after school care.

There was also a belief expressed by some interview participants that some of the newer arrivals do not hold the same values as existing residents. Helen, a professional woman who moved to the township with her family six years ago, reflected on these differences:

> We've got this influx over the last 10 years of all these brand new people and so it's, sort of the town's in two. You have the older generation that have been here forever and their kids have all grown up together and then you have this influx of new people. This influx of new people they're, it's different. They have a different concept because they've come from the city up to here.

For other community members the influx in new residents was bringing unwelcome urban values and social problems to Buttercross, undermining the quality of their rural lifestyle and causing a decline in the quality and nature of the community.

> You notice there's a lot more, well, crime rate, yeah. Whether it's because it's cheaper to live out here now, you're getting a different sort of person move out here. Yeah, like I said, now the police have to extend the police station because of after hours Friday nights and Saturday nights with pubs and hoons. Yeah, so that's probably the worst part about what's happened since I've moved out here but that happens everywhere. We're not just isolated; it's all over the place now. Joe

> It's really changed over the last couple of years with a lot more housing estates and there's a lot more commission homes up here now than there ever was. People are finding that a bit more difficult… They reckon there's a bit more vandalism in town and things like that. Cath

> We've also now got a fair component of community housing and sadly that has attracted some undesirables. That's caused a few problems. Club Participant 2

These strong narratives of change and loss featured in many discussions of community by interview participants and were often coupled with nostalgia for earlier times. As noted in chapter 3, notions of community lost are an enduring theme in academic literature and public discourse related to community (see for example Crow & Allan, 1994; Delanty, 2003; Wild,

1981). These are examined again in chapter 6 in relation to the community responses to the establishment of poker machine gambling within Buttercross.

Despite the evidence that the changing nature of the community composition may have shifted the extent and strength of community relationships and resulted in a proportion of the town's population with little connection to their community; interview participants still emphasised friendliness, social ties and a sense of belonging when describing the nature of their community. Stuart, a local religious leader noted this point, "I'd say it's still a cohesive community, though probably with the influx of a lot of new people in the last five years, it's probably not quite as cohesive as it used to be". On the other hand, Mike, felt that despite superficial changes, the essence of the close-knit community remained:

> It's grown but I don't think it's changed, personally. I still go up the street, from the time I moved up here til now, I go up on the Saturday and I get stopped from every second person to say hello to. That's never changed. So I don't think it's changed that much, other than in structure, more people in the town and that.

Some participants also expressed a view that many of the town's new residents had come to Buttercross seeking a country lifestyle, and embraced the opportunity to connect with their new community. As Helen stated, "a lot of the people that have come up from the city they want that country lifestyle. So even though they're new to the community, they would stop and say, hello, in the street". Helen herself is an example of this. Moving to the township ten years ago, she and her husband have established strong community networks. Both volunteer with the local CFA, and Helen works locally and is well known within the community. Their children provide additional points of anchorage to the community through school, sports and their social networks.

Similarly Pete, who relocated to Buttercross eight years ago, was looking for a community where he could connect and get to know and be known by his fellow community members.

> Because I like the small town feel, I like the way people interact, I like to know that you can go down the street and have a chat to the shop owners and they know who you are and you know who they are rather than just being a number in suburbia. So I do like that very much about this type of community which I love very much.

Like Helen, Pete has made significant efforts to link into the community. Despite commuting out of the township for work, Pete has regularly volunteered on local committees and taken up positions of leadership "I just like seeing that true positive community aspect of living and being on the committees in the township". For Pete, the opportunity to volunteer and give back to his community has assisted him and his family to integrate into the community and become valued community members.

Correspondingly, based on the interviews conducted with recent arrivals to the community for this project, those interviewed were highly connected through work, volunteerism and family and friendships. It may be the case that two of the methods utilised in this research to recruit interview participants - snowball sampling and approaching clubs and organisations - favoured those residents who were more actively connected to their community. However, it does demonstrate that the traditional features of strong community engagement and tight networks are still very much a feature of Buttercross today.

These differing accounts, variously outlining the demise or strength of 'community' in Buttercross, are also a reminder of the contested nature of the concept of community (Crow & Mah, 2012; Dempsey, 2002; Kenny, 2011). What interview participants saw as constituting community, while having some commonality around social ties, sense of belonging and locale, varied in the extent to which they felt this was present or had changed. Reflecting the adage - one person's loss is another person's gain - descriptions by some of the 'loss' of community, caused by the influx of new arrivals, coexist with stories of 'finding' community from some who had purposely moved to Buttercross seeking just that.

5.4 Independent and self-reliant

One of the strongest features of Buttercross is its reputation for independence and self-reliance. This characteristic appears to have its roots in the town's agricultural past and relative isolation in earlier years. Reflecting on this community characteristic, Bridget indicated she believed that it was related to both a high level of community connection and a belief within the community that due to geographical and population factors, they were regularly overlooked by their Council:

> I think what I've also experienced through community consultations is people have a sense of having to do it for themselves, that they always think council never does anything for the township, so we do it ourselves. There's some amazing community groups up there that are very strong that do perform really important roles. So I think that's a reflection of that high community connection and involvement in the area.

These qualities are exhibited in the way the townsfolk have worked together on many occasions to resolve issues and develop community facilities. For example, despite the small number of businesses operating in the 1970s, the Buttercross Trader's Association worked with focus to develop the business precinct, contributing funds to seal the main road, and one trader donated land to Council to be used for a car park. Perhaps the most powerful example of the community's 'do it yourself' attitude was the formation of a community support service to address what was perceived as a gap in service provision for elderly and isolated community members. An interview participant described how the group is entirely run by volunteers and provides a range of community services including transport to medical appointments, child care for community education classes, and a weekly luncheon for some older community members.

This community spirit was to the fore in recent years when the area was affected by a significant natural disaster and community members rallied to support those individuals and families affected. This event had a profound impact on Buttercross. Although the township itself was spared, a number of smaller neighbouring communities were catastrophically

affected. Many lives were lost in the region and the homes and livelihoods of many more people were destroyed (CR3, 2010). The consequences of this natural disaster were being heavily felt by community members during the year this enquiry was conducted.

5.5 The Buttercross Bowls Club

The formation and construction of the Buttercross Bowls club, which houses the town's 40 poker machines, provides another example of the community's independence and self-reliance. According to the Club's 25, 35 and 50 year histories (CR4, 1980; CR5, 1990; CR6, 2005) the club was formed in 1955. Assisted by £850 in debenture guarantees from community members, land was purchased to enable the construction of 2 greens and a club facility. The following extract from the club's 50 year history indicates that, from the beginning, self-reliance and independence were both valued and articulated by club officials:

> Sidney…on his own started to lobby people to attend a meeting and raise funds through debentures for a Bowls Club. To his credit he always said *we do not want Council land, be independent, and buy our own block of land* which he did with help of others (CR6, 2005, p. 1. Emphasis added).

In 1956 the original clubhouse was constructed with the support of volunteers, donations of items from community members, and local traders who provided discounts on building materials. The first green was also constructed with voluntary labour. Even though these events occurred over fifty years ago, the establishment of the club still lives in the memory of a number of older citizens, including Jack and Club Participant 4. Their reflections emphasise the significance of the establishment of the club in the township's history and of the prevailing "can do" attitude within the community - an attitude seen in the high levels of volunteerism and community connection discussed previously.

> I was here of course when it was first built. Sidney Wright who was very good at bowls was one of the main instigators at getting that bowls club up and running.   Jack

> The land was bought by the locals and they built the first building themselves. There was no money from council or government. It was a local initiative. They built the greens themselves. They used to - the men used to maintain them.   Club Participant 4

Club Participant 4 reflected that the bowls club has always been a strong club in both a sporting sense and through its strong connections within the community. The 25, 35 and 50 year club histories support this view, indicating that prior to the installation of the poker machines in 1996 the club was already a focal point for sporting activity and community functions such as dances (CR4, 1980; CR5, 1990; CR6, 2005). Obtaining a liquor licence in 1980 further enabled the club to cater for events such as weddings, and these catering jobs provided not only a source of revenue for the club, but became social occasions for club members (CR5, 1990).

5.5.1 Expanding and developing

According to the 25 year history, the original clubhouse included a kitchen ("half of which was the ladies' room"), a main hall, a men's room and an office, with the toilets located outside (CR4, 1980, p. 5). Testamentary to the members' energy and enthusiasm for their club, club histories record that facilities at the clubhouse were upgraded at least four times between 1956 and 1990 (CR4, 1980, CR5, 1990). These histories indicated that subscriptions, green fees, catering, raffles, stalls, dances, donations and tournaments were just some of the array of fundraising activities which financed these early improvements. And these fund-raising activities themselves were either productive or supportive of that very sense of community envisioned by the original founders.

Poker machines were introduced into the Buttercross bowls club in December 1996. The introduction of poker machines triggered further waves of renovations at the club, initially to create a gambling area and develop dining facilities, and later to further expand and develop club facilities and services. Developments funded by revenue derived from poker machine expenditure (losses) included: new greens, a members' room, car parking, and the poker

machine gambling area. The construction of a community meeting room during the club's most recent round of renovations has provided a comfortable and well-equipped meeting space. Gambling revenue has also enabled the club to develop a bistro and a function area. The bistro has a reputation for good meals and reasonable prices, and attracts considerable custom, serving an average of 500 meals per week. It is also warm in winter and cool in summer (a detail noted by a number of older interview participants) and has the capacity to seat around 100 diners.

5.5.2 Community hub

Unsurprisingly, the combination of excellent facilities and service, and perceived value for money, has positioned the club as the preferred venue for community celebrations such as birthdays, end-of-year functions and wakes. The club has wide appeal, even to those who do not gamble.

> Earlier this year we had my daughter's engagement party there. So it's events like that. I choose not to gamble. But as a community it's a facility where people go.

The designated meeting space has also proven popular. The room is made freely available to community groups and venue staff are accommodating of their needs, setting up the room and providing a very warm welcome. In addition, members of groups using the facility are able to avail themselves of complementary hot drinks and biscuits in the gambling area:

> But the convenience of the bowling club, for most of our members, its central location, everyone knows where it's at, and the cooperation that the staff and the management provide for us when we hold any of those functions, makes it quite easy for us to utilise that facility. Trevor

By way of contrast, at the time of data collection, groups using meeting space at the CAC (also a popular and well-utilised facility) incurred a $30.00 fee. Some small, not-for-profit community groups found this fee prohibitive, particularly those who met weekly. Additionally, when hiring CAC space, group members had the added responsibility of setting up and

packing up the space. Predictably more and more community groups have chosen to meet at the club; during the data collection period the local branch of the CWA elected to move its meetings to the bowls club.

As well as supporting the development of club facilities, a portion of the revenue generated through poker machine expenditure (losses) is used to provide cash and in-kind donations to a number of other clubs and individuals. The combination of meetings, donations, functions and dining draws many community members to the club, and has worked to position the club as a focal point of community life. Such is the level of community engagement with the bowls club that it is often referred to as a community hub or a pseudo CAC (Community Activity Centre).

In an endeavour to present a visual depiction of the connections between the community and the bowls club and its poker machines, a word cloud was created (see Figure 2). The word cloud shows the clubs and organisations that receive a benefit from the bowls club along with the main social functions the club hosts.

As can be seen from the word map, the links that the bowls club and its poker machines have made or maintained throughout the community are extensive, including links with multiple community clubs and organisations. When employment and business connections are also added, it is clear that many community members would have multiple connections with the club and receive some form of benefit from the club and its poker machines.

Figure 2. Word Cloud depicting community engagement with the club

As with the networks of community relationships described in section 5.2.1, these multiple connections between the club and the community are pivotal in understanding both the effects of poker machines within the community and the way community members respond to those effects. Consequently they will be referred to throughout the 3 results/discussion chapters.

At this point, this discussion moves from the local research setting of the community and its bowls club, to the macro context. Of particular interest are some of the political, economic and socio-cultural forces that have been shaping communities from the introduction of poker machines in the State of Victoria in the early 1990s.

5.7 Political, economic and socio-cultural context

The key foci of this section are a number of dominant forces influencing and shaping rural Victorian communities from the 1990s – when poker machines were established in the community – through to the present time. Of particular interest are four interrelated factors: i) neo-liberal ideology; ii) the radical reform agenda implemented by the Kennett State Government; iii) the regulatory framework governing poker machines; and iv) the active expansion of the poker machine industry. This work seeks to contextualise the discussion of the results in the following 3 chapters. While this discussion is primarily focused on the Australian State of Victoria, numerous parallels can be drawn with events in New Zealand and in a number of European countries and parts of North America, as well as other Australian states (see for example accounts provided in the work of Adams, 2008; Borrell, 2008a; Orford, 2011; Reith, 2007).

5.7.1 Neo-liberalism

During the period the bowls club was preparing to install poker machines, the political landscapes within Australia, New Zealand, the UK and the USA were shaped to varying

degrees by the ideology of neo-liberalism. Neo-liberalism gained prominence in the 1980s

and became a dominant force shaping economic and political policy of the Reagan and

Thatcher governments. As discussed in chapter 2, characteristics of neo-liberalism include

low government taxation and expenditure on services such as welfare, low levels of

government debt, privatisation of government infrastructure, and industry deregulation

(Borrell, 2008a, p. 159; Economou & Costar, 1999, p. x.; McDonald, 1996; Reith, 2007,

p. 36). As noted previously, this represented a dramatic shift from Keynesian economics that

had dominated western economic thought since the end of World War II (Hughes, 1998;

Pusey, 2003). In Australia, neo-liberalism was first adopted at a federal level by the Hawke

and Keating Labor governments and enthusiastically embraced by their successor, John

Howard (Fairbrother, Svensen & Teicher, 1997). At the state level, Jeff Kennett's Liberal-

National Coalition governed Victoria from 1992-1999 and was an ardent proponent of neo-

liberal economics (Economou & Costar, 1999).

The neo-liberal dictum of 'individualism' and 'user-pays' saw governments withdraw from the

provision of many services they had traditionally provided, and actively promote the need for

self-reliance in areas as diverse as funding of retirement, health care and education.

Commenting on the radical, neo-liberal driven, economic reforms in Australia during the

1990s, Michael Pusey (2003) describes the principal purpose as being "to make us less

dependent on states and governments and more dependent on economies, markets, prices,

money, and more directly upon ourselves" (p. 1).

Impacts of neo-liberal policies on rural communities were significant. McDonald (1996)

describes how, "the rationalisation and centralization of public sector services (particularly in

health, education, transport and welfare), have produced stagnation or decline in many rural

communities" (p. 61). Similarly, Tonts & Jones (1997) describe how governments withdrew

from "regional development strategies, rationalised the levels of public service provision, and

devolved much of the responsibility for community well-being to the local level" (p. 171). As

noted in chapter 3, critics of these processes have highlighted how concepts of community

have been mobilised by economically conservative governments to justify this transferring of

responsibility for service provision from governments to the local community (see for

example the work of Bryson & Mowbray, 1981; McDonald, 1996; Mowbray, 2005). This

enabled what was effectively a cost-shifting exercise to be rebadged as community

empowerment.

In addition, as successive federal governments sought to reduce taxation and expenditure,

state and territory level governments within Australia were "steadily starved of revenue"

(Borrell, 2008a, p. 160). As noted in chapter 2, constitutionally limited in their ability to raise

their own income, the search for new streams of revenue by the states and territories was a

contributing factor to the wide spread liberalisation of gambling - one of the few areas in

which they could levy taxes (Borrell, 2008a, p. 160; Hughes, 1998).

5.7.2 Kennett, local government and a gambling led recovery

In Victoria, Jeff Kennett's Liberal-National Coalition was a passionate proponent of neo-

liberalism (Costar & Economou, 1999). After the election in October, 1992, and faced with

significant state debt, then Premier Kennett immediately set about implementing a radical

reform agenda including, "cut[ting] a swathe through Victoria's public sector" (Mowbray,

2000, p. 217). Hayward's (1999) description of the impacts of the government's budgetary

reforms after just over a year in office provide an indication of the scale of job losses and

spending cuts,

> By the end of 1993, it was revealed that some 37,000 public servants and 8000 teachers (the
> equivalent of 20 per cent of the budget sector workforce) had lost their jobs; 35,000
> employees of government businesses were made redundant; over 300 schools were closed;
> and many programs were simply axed or were retained with large increases in user charges
> (pp. 136-137).

Additionally, in an unprecedented move, the Kennett Government sacked democratically elected councils (McDonald, 1996, p. 65). Under forced amalgamations, the number of municipalities was reduced from 210 to 78 (Kiss, 1999; Mowbray, 2000, p. 217). Interview participants involved in this research project described how in the shake-up Buttercross became the rural tail to the large, primarily metropolitan, municipality of Finchley. Commissioners were appointed to replace the sacked councils and to implement a range of state government reforms (McDonald, 1996, p. 65). These reforms included reducing staff numbers, selling assets, appointing CEOs, overseeing the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering, and capping rates (Hill, 2000; Kiss, 1999).

In 1996, the year the club established poker machine gambling in Buttercross, commissioners were still in place in Finchley. This remained the case until 1997 when council elections were re-held in the municipality. This arrangement left residents without a democratically elected council to represent them on planning and other issues or to advocate for communities on state policy issues, such as harms emerging from the rapid roll-out of poker machine gambling.

Although, as noted previously, the Kennett government did not introduce poker machines into Victoria, his government was highly supportive of the gambling industry. During his time in office poker machine numbers in Victorian clubs and hotels grew rapidly to over 27,000 machines in mid-1999 (see Table 1). A further 2,500 poker machines were located in Melbourne's Crown Casino, and the then Premier Kennett's spruiking of a gambling-led recovery received considerable criticism (see Costello and Millar, 2000, pp. 189 – 190).

Table 1
Number of Poker Machines and Expenditure/Losses by Year in Victoria

Date	No. of Poker machines in Victoria	Net poker machine expenditure/losses (million). Adjusted for inflation (2013 dollars)
30/06/1992	3,928	
30/06/1993	12,941	$426.2
30/06/1994	17,485	$1092.5
30/06/1995	21,150	$1474.3
30/06/1996	23,368	$1832.6
30/06/1997	25,781	$2142.7
30/06/1998	26,770	$2445.0
30/06/1999	27,035	$2842.7
30/06/2000	27,297	$3063.8
30/06/2001	27,280	$3153.5
30/06/2002	27,224	$3315.6
30/06/2003	27,084	$2932.2
30/06/2004	27,118	$2816.2
30/06/2005	27,113	$2957.9
30/06/2006	27,147	$2943.0
30/06/2007	27,187	$2968.7
30/06/2008	26,875	$2918.7
30/06/2009	26,792	$2990.0
30/06/2010	26,662	$2781.5
30/06/2011	26,778	$2742.2
30/06/2012	26,699	$2740.2
30/06/2013	26,665	$2483.8

Source: Brown (2013)

5.7.3 The poker machine regulatory framework

The regulatory framework governing poker machines at the time is also an essential element in understanding the context in which poker machines were introduced to Buttercross. It is also an important factor in understanding the course and impact of the community action that occurred, which is the focus of discussion in chapter 6.

Under initial gambling regulations introduced in Victoria, if the poker machines were to occupy less than 25 per cent of the venue's floor space, state gambling regulations did not require clubs and hotels to gain planning permission for their installation (Costello & Millar, 2000, pp. 190 – 191). This enabled venues to bypass council planning processes (Costello & Millar, 2000, pp. 190 – 191). These rules subverted the role of local government, making it a powerless bystander as poker machine gambling was rolled out across the state. This arrangement does not appear to be unique to the Victorian context, with Orford (2011) describing his experiences in Britain whereby the emphasis in draft proposals of the 2005 Gambling Act "were tilted in favour of the convenience of gambling operators and the expansion of gambling" (p. 199). Similarly, writing of the New Zealand experience (while referencing other jurisdictions), Adams (2008) notes how industry-government alliances frequently left communities without a say as to "the nature and extent of gambling in their communities" (p. 15).

A further significant feature of the Victorian framework was the reservation of half of the available poker machine licences for club venues. Arguably, the effect of this was to prompt many community clubs to, at the least, consider becoming gambling venues. The following extract, taken from the bowls club's 35 year history published in 1991, indicates this was certainly the case for the bowls club, and at least some club members viewed poker machines as a means to *progress* the club,

> It is expected that the release of this short history…will benefit the 35 Year History of the Club. These thoughts of what has been achieved…will encourage us to continue and make similar progress over the next few years. *The introduction of poker machines is one such contentious area* (CR5, 1990, The Future. Emphasis added).

This extract's description of poker machines *as a contentious* issue appears an acknowledgement that not all within the club and community would be supportive of such a proposal.

A final important feature of the Victorian framework was that, for the first two decades, ownership and operation of all of the state's poker machines outside of the casino was awarded to the Tabcorp/Tattersall's duopoly. As discussed in chapter 2, the duopoly was afforded considerable control over the placement of machines which enabled them to assess venue applications based on profitability and to position machines to maximise revenue (Costello & Millar, 2000, pp. 94 – 95; McMillen et al., 1999; Productivity Commission, 1999).

5.7.4 Full steam ahead

The expansive nature of the poker machine industry was a fourth factor shaping communities at this time. While the numbers of poker machines had increased exponentially across Victoria since 1992 (see Table 1), within the City of Buttercross the most significant growth occurred in the year of the bowls club's application. During the twelve months from 27 Dec 1995 – 18 Dec 1996, five new poker machine venues commenced business across the municipality. This brought the total number of venues to nine (refer to Table 2). Overwhelmingly venues were located in the urbanised, more heavily populated and economically less advantaged areas in the south of the LGA, with the bowls club becoming the sole poker machine venue in the rural regions of the north.

In order to gauge insight into community sentiment regarding the proliferation of poker machines at this time, newspaper archives from 1996 were examined. Particular attention was paid to coverage related to poker machines in a free local newspaper distributed across the municipality. Multiple poker machine venue advertisements were retrieved and examined. These included numerous full-page advertisements, many announcing the arrival of the "pokies". A number of news reports were also retrieved from that year relating to poker machines, some which were given front page prominence. In general there are two themes related to poker machines running through the paper that year, one of poker machines as an exciting new form of entertainment and the other that poker machines are exploitative and damaging. Interestingly, the expression of the first theme occurs only in paid

graphic and editorial advertising. All news reports focus on adverse social and economic impacts or the rapidity of the expansion taking place. A selection of headlines and key quotations from the articles and headlines and key messages from the advertisements are presented in graphic form in Figure 3 and Figure 4.

Figure 3. Graphic representation of key advertisement messages
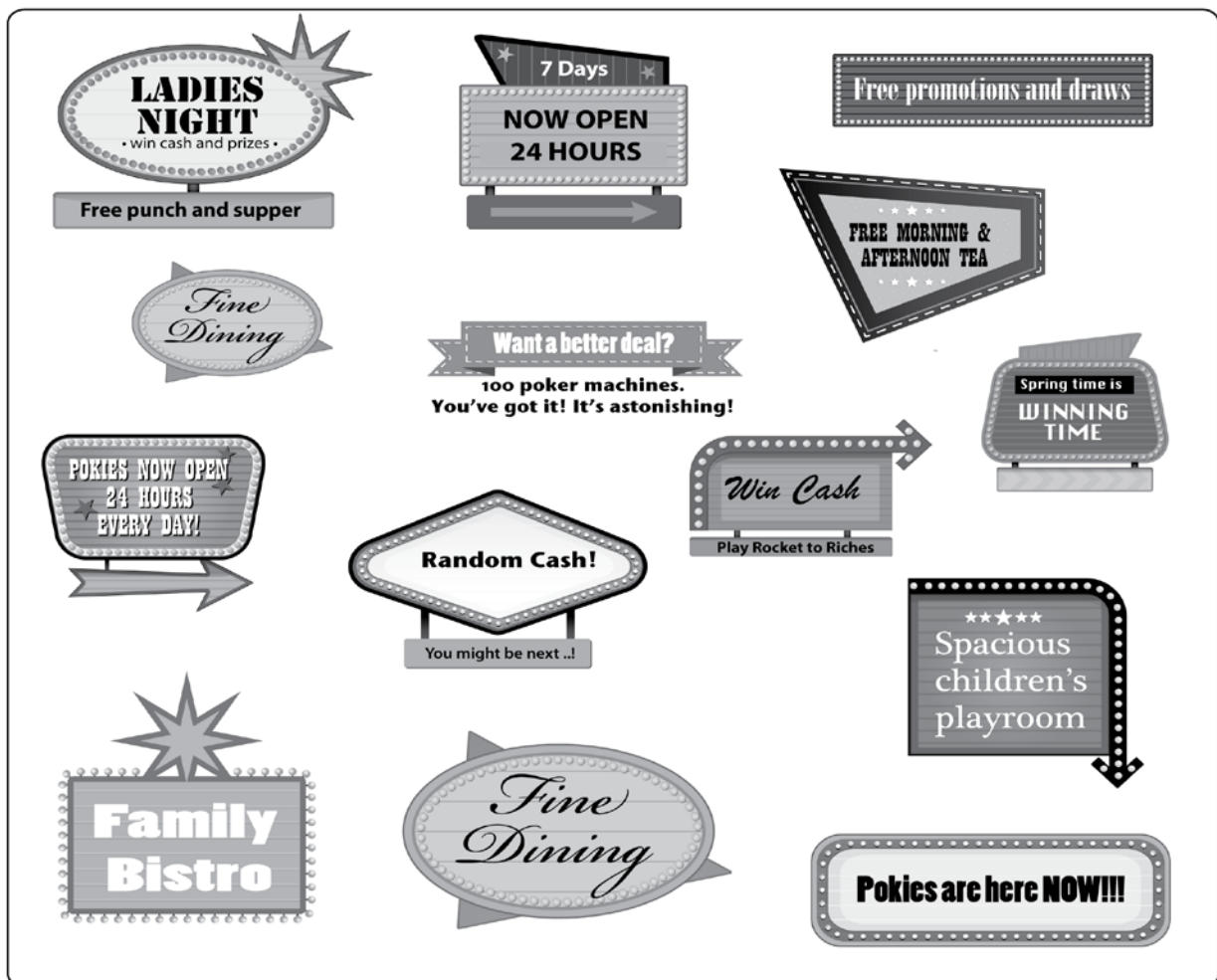
In 2001, the Brack's Labor government introduced, "relatively stringent legislation restricting the advertising of poker machines" (Livingstone, Woolley, Borrell, Bakacs & Jordan, 2006, p. 34). However, in 1996, no such limitations existed and advertisements enthused about enhanced facilities for socialisation and relaxation, low-priced meals and drinks and most often the exhilarating prospect of winning money. Vying for custom, venues offered enticing

promotions where patrons could win cars or cash via lucky draws. Others offered budget-priced meals, often with the bonus of vouchers to gamble for free.

Although it could be argued that these advertisements merely reflect the industry attempts to build an image of poker machine gambling as "fun, entertainment, as a social outing and a bit of excitement" (Costello and Millar, 2000, p. 120), they also capture a sense of the energy and vitality enveloping the industry in the early years of the roll-out. There is an air of excitement within the advertising at the array of dining and entertainment options on offer and the prospect of winning. As these venues appeared to have no difficulty attracting patrons, it seems reasonable to assume that at least some within these communities were attracted by the imagery of these buoyant and upbeat ads, and for a time at least, making use of the new dining and recreation facilities the poker machines were funding.

On the other hand, local journalists were providing a more sober assessment. Analysis of coverage related to poker machines from late 1995 to the end of 1996 paints a picture of a municipality being inundated with poker machines, and of health and welfare services struggling to cater to growing demands for assistance from those harmed by gambling. Reports reveal that adverse social and economic effects were identified both within the municipality and at the state political level. The decision by the government of the time to cap the number of poker machines in clubs and hotels at 27,500 (SACES, 2005a, p. 27) was reported, including an acknowledgement by then-Premier Kennett of a "fundamental groundswell" of community concern regarding poker machines (CR7, 1996, January 31, para 8).

A full, front-page article appearing midyear was headlined "Pokies Invasion" (CR8, 1996, June 19). This was perhaps not an exaggeration given that the five new venues established that year took the municipality's poker machine total to 530 (almost a doubling of the number in just twelve months) and resulted in losses of $49.2 million across the municipality (see Table 2). Another article reported on a $340,000 expansion of problem gambling counselling

services (CR9, 1996, September 11). A worker quoted in the article explained the growing

demand for services by commenting simply: "more machines, more problems" (para.6). A

financial counsellor interviewed for the same article told of many local bankruptcies resulting

from harmful gambling and, emphasising the rapid expansion, complained "there seems to

be new venues opening all of the time" (para.12).

Figure 4. Graphic representation of key newspaper headlines and quotes

As some neighbouring clubs transformed their sports and recreation facilities courtesy of

poker machine revenue, it is perhaps unsurprising that others, such as the bowls club seeing

these improvements, elected to follow suit. However, given the stories emerging in the press

at this time, it seems unlikely that those clubs and hotels positioning themselves to benefit

from poker machine revenue would have been unaware of the risks to some of their

prospective patrons and club members.

Table 2
Number of venues and Poker machines in the Finchley LGA

Date	Venues	Poker machines	Net Expenditure (million). Adjusted for inflation (2013 dollars)
June 1992	0	0	
June 1993	3	115	$2.8
June 1994	4	275	$20.9
June 1995	4	275	$36.4
June 1996 ∗	9	530	$49.2
June 1997	9	575	$68.7
June 1998	9	580	$81.3
June 1999	9	611	$97.0
June 2000	9	616	$103.6

∗ Figures for this period appear to include a large shopping centre based hotel venue and the Buttercross Bowls Club, both of which had received approval from the VCGA, but did not commence operations until August 1996 and December 1996 respectively.

Source: Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation (2013) & Brown (2013), crosschecked with newspaper archives

5.8 Club buys into the pokies dream

It is within this climate of "individualism", "user pays", reduced government expenditure on

community facilities and services and a pro-gambling approach by the state government that

the poker machine industry flourished within Victoria. It is perhaps not difficult to appreciate

why poker machines became an attractive proposition for the bowls club, and many other

clubs, seeking to enhance their financial viability and develop club facilities.

Interview participants described how consideration was initially given to forming a combined

sports club within Buttercross to operate poker machines, with proceeds to be shared

amongst a number of local sporting groups. This did not eventuate and ultimately the local

bowls club took the opportunity and applied for a licence for 30 machines. Club Participant 2

recalled that the decision by the bowls club to install poker machines was instigated by the

club president at the time, "…he researched the possibilities and came up with a variety of figures. Then we had a look at it and thought maybe this is a goer".

According to Club Participant 2, the primary motivation of the Buttercross bowls club's introduction of poker machines was to ensure the long-term financial viability of the club without imposing additional fees on the members, many of whom were on a limited income: "the great majority of our members at the time were genuine pensioners. They only had so much expendable income". Other interview participants attributed the reason for the installation of poker machines to an entrepreneurial and forward looking spirit and a means of benefiting the community.

> A lot of the bowlers didn't want them no, but again they had to think about - the people that actually put them in thought about what they wanted in the future and you've got to think of the future. To run what they've got, to keep what they've got, they had to have a business and at the time the clubs - all the clubs - you know there were bowling clubs, there were other RSL clubs and all that were given this opportunity of getting all these gaming machines and it works in New South Wales and all the other places that have got them, the clubs have gaming machines for making money. Club Participant 1

According to Club Participant 1, in installing poker machines, the club had merely taken up the opportunity provided by the state government to secure an ongoing revenue stream. This second theme was also supported by Club Participant 2 who during the course of their interview when asked about future "visions" for the club described "talk about another synthetic green… an upstairs car park; all sorts of grandiose plans" but cautioned, " they all take dollars". It is interesting to note here the assertion of Club Participant 1 that the poker machines were also seen as a way to benefit the community, as this notion of club-based poker machines as *community benefactor* is a theme that recurred throughout the research.

The degree to which the ideas connected with neo-liberalism shaped the bowls club's decisions around poker machines and notions of community more broadly are difficult to establish with precision. However, some characteristics of neo-liberal ideology do sit

comfortably with the qualities of the Buttercross community discussed earlier in this chapter. In particular, the characteristics of self-reliance, resourcefulness and ingenuity which were the foundation of many community building projects including sports facilities , a volunteer care service, and even the original construction of the bowls club and rinks.

5.8.1 Not everyone's dream

Recognising that it was a "huge undertaking" to transition a community based bowls club into a poker machine business, the Club's board of directors put the decision to the vote of all club members.

> We did put it to the membership, it wasn't a board decision to just do it, because it was such a huge undertaking and as we do now, if there's going to be anything major which could have an impact, we put it to the members. Club Participant 2

The majority of the club's membership voted in favour of the application, indicating the proposal had widespread appeal at the club level. However, as prophesied in the club's 35 year history, the proposal did indeed prove *contentious* amongst some within the club and wider community. Although participants' accounts varied, it seems that between "one" and "some" members left the club in protest.

Interview participants, including Club Participant 7, recalled the application generating opposition within the club, " …it was once again mainly the elder ones who were a bit, dubious about getting the poker machines in; having seen what they've done everywhere". Likewise, Club Participant 3 also recalled disapproval of the proposal by some members, "…there was a lot of people that, you know, came through those doors that didn't want the pokies. Apparently they had this big petition".

The introduction of poker machines also proved contentious amongst the community more widely and a number of individuals came together and formed the *Buttercross Alliance Against Gaming* to oppose the introduction of poker machines to the community. The

motivations of the Alliance and the methods they deployed in opposing the poker machine

proposal tells much about their conceptualisation of community and also about the extent to

which communities were closed out of the venue approval process at this time. Both of these

points form key foci of the discussion in chapter 6.

5.8.2 Sealing the deal

The story of how the bowls club eventually came to secure their poker machines was

described by Club Participant 2. Club Participant 2 explained how originally the club applied

to Tattersall's, but was refused on the basis the company did not consider that the poker

machines would generate a viable return: "We approached Tattersall's and we provided

them with all the information and they said no, knocked us back". The club persevered and

was eventually successful in convincing Tabcorp, the other member of the poker machine

duopoly, that the machines would generate a satisfactory turnover:

> We then provided the same information to Tabcorp. They were very iffy, weren't prepared to
> sign off on us. We kept at it and they were concerned that we wouldn't make a go of it, that
> our net machine revenue wouldn't be sufficient. But after a while they did sign off. I think with
> some degree of trepidation, but we've kicked off since that time. Club Participant 2

The responses of both Tattersall's and Tabcorp to the club's application for poker machines

calls attention to Costello & Millar's (2000) assertion that poker machines are "first and

foremost, a commercial enterprise" (p. 121). It also provides an example to illustrate the

discussion in section 5.7.3 regarding the power ascribed to the duopoly to determine

machine placement to maximise revenue through maximum losses (Costello & Millar, 2000,

pp. 94 – 95; McMillen et al., 1999; Productivity Commission, 1999).

Although utilising poker machines as a revenue source is at times portrayed as "easy

money" the initial start-up costs were a considerable undertaking for what was then a small

volunteer based community sports club. Club Participant 2 recalled how the club had

difficulty finding a bank to finance the venture, which included the renovations required to

convert the simple club house and function area into a poker machine business and restaurant, along with the other start-up costs. The commitment of some club members to the proposal and to their club was evidenced by the fact that a number of club members made unsecured loans to the club to ensure they could demonstrate financial security to the bank.

> Well I really think we are truly a community club. The people here care about the place, to the extent at one stage we were walking a thin line financially and we went to the members and told them the situation and quite a few put their own money in. We were pretty tight with what we needed to do.   We'd make sure that we kept the bank manager happy. We didn't want to go into a negative situation. We wanted to demonstrate to the bank that we were a reliable thing. So we went to the members and we got a pool of money, which we never used but it was there. Club Participant 2

That some club members had the financial capacity to provide loans to the club appears to, at least in part, contradict the argument that the club was comprised largely of members with limited financial means and that the ongoing viability of the club was dependent on the utilisation of poker machines to generate an additional stream of revenue. Rather it seems the second justification provided seems more probable, that the club contained some "forward thinking" members who had a "vision" for the club beyond that of a simple country bowls club with comfortable, but modest facilities. The legalisation of poker machines in Victoria presented the club with an opportunity to realise that vision, and, under the leadership of the board, the club took up the opportunity.

It is to be noted here that the actions of the club and the initial responses by both Tattersall's and Tabcorp run counter to the standard depiction of the duopoly as avaricious and exploitative of disadvantaged communities. In this case, the community was not targeted by the industry. Instead, a local club lobbied to bring poker machines into their community as a means of supporting building and development works. That it was a community organisation that established poker machine gambling within Buttercross has had significant implications for the ways the community has responded to their presence, and to the associated social

and economic impacts. This theme underlies much of the discussion presented throughout the following results and data analysis chapters.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the community of Buttercross, including its people, history and distinctive characteristics. Evidence has been presented illustrating that despite recent changes, the township's historical connections to the land and farming activity still shape its current identity. Buttercross essentially remains a rural township, and as with many rural townships, its community life is underpinned by a network of social, economic and familial relationships.

This chapter has also explored some of the collective understandings and representations of 'community' within Buttercross, demonstrating how the construct of 'community' was repeatedly drawn upon when social interaction and individual and collective identity came to be defined. Two powerful themes related to community were woven into participants' accounts of their community, one which represents Buttercross as a strong, cohesive and supportive community, and the other which characterises the quality of 'community' as under threat from a rapid influx of new arrivals. Consistent with the theoretical constructs of community discussed in chapter 3, notions of 'community' presented by interview participants were often normative and prescriptive, blending portrayals of the community as it is with what participants felt community should be.

The strong historical links between the bowls club and the wider community were also drawn out, including the role the club traditionally played as one of the focal points for sporting and social life. As documented in the chapter, the introduction of poker machine gambling enabled the club to further develop this role and has assisted to position it at the heart of community life. The establishment of poker machine gambling in Buttercross was also

examined and located in relation to community characteristics including independence and self-sufficiency. The club's decision to adopt poker machine gambling to ensure financial viability and progress the development of club facilities was also positioned within a combination of political, economic, and cultural factors at the macro level, in particular the neo-liberal reform agenda at the state level and the rapid liberalisation and expansion of poker machine gambling across Victoria.

In assembling this portrait of the community and its poker machines and the wider influencing forces, this chapter has sought to lay the groundwork for the presentation and discussion of the research findings. Chapter 6 begins this process with a more detailed exploration of the establishment and expansion of poker machine gambling in Buttercross and the range of responses it has elicited at the community level.

6

Insinuation, Legitimation and Reaction

6.0 Introduction

As documented in chapter 5, poker machine gambling has been a feature of the Buttercross community since 1996. During this time community reactions to poker machines have ranged from support to indifference to hostility. Consistent with the theoretical foundations of this thesis, this chapter seeks to position and understand these responses in relation to the characteristics of the Buttercross community and the powerful normative and ideological representations of 'community' expressed by residents. These characteristics of the community were discussed in some detail in chapter 5 and theorised in chapter 3.

This chapter examines the interaction between 'community' and poker machine gambling within the township across three key periods. These are: i) the period in 1996 leading up to and including the introduction of poker machines into the Buttercross community which has been termed *insinuation*; ii) the period between 1997-2010 which was characterised by relative acceptance of or resignation to the presence of poker machines within the bowls club, which has been termed *legitimation*; and iii) the period between 2010-2012 when applications to expand poker machine gambling both within Buttercross were met with varying levels of community opposition. This period has been termed *reaction*.

This chapter also builds on the analysis presented in chapter 5, exploring how and why the bowls club established poker machine gambling and has continued to foster and endorse it as a legitimate source of club revenue. Key to this analysis is an understanding of the macro sociopolitical and economic forces shaping communities, clubs, and attitudes towards gambling during the previous 2½ decades. These forces were discussed in chapter 5, and include, neo-liberal ideology, the legislative framework governing the operation of poker machines and the poker machine industry, and the radical, neo-liberal driven reform agenda implemented within Victoria by the Kennett Liberal-National Coalition during the 1990s.

6.1 Poker machine gambling in Buttercross

Following the legalisation of poker machines in Victoria in 1992, there have been seven applications associated with the establishment and expansion of poker machine gambling within the township. As Table 3 illustrates, subsequent to the club's installation of poker machines in 1996, the club successfully applied to increase the number of machines in 1999, 2003 and most recently in 2012. This resulted in an incremental increase in machine numbers from 30 to 50. In contrast to the club's successful applications, the Buttercross hotel's 2003 application to install 22 poker machines was refused by the then named VCGA. A second application by the hotel to install 30 machines was made to the Commission (then known as the VCGR) in 2010, but did not proceed to hearing, being adjourned indefinitely at the applicant's request. In June 2012, the applicant indicated intention to progress with the application; but a month later again determined not to proceed.

As noted in the introduction, community responses to these applications have varied. Four of these applications triggered episodes of significant community action. These triggers were the club's initial application in 1996, the hotel's 2010 and 2012 applications and the club's 2012 application. The activities of those opposing the applications comprised the formation of action groups, letter-writing campaigns and the circulation of community

petitions. As will be discussed throughout this chapter, a number of macro and local factors

shaped the degree of success of each of these campaigns. Of equal significance within this

chapter are the periods when there was apparent acceptance or no public opposition to the

presence of poker machines within the community and the factors which may have shaped

that acceptance or resignation.

Table 3
Phases of poker machine gambling in Buttercross

Period	Application and outcome	No. of machines in town
1. Insinuation 1996	Buttercross Bowls Club applies to establish poker machine gambling • Proposal sold to community as an opportunity to develop club facilities • Significant community opposition occurs • 18 December 1996, poker machine gambling commences in Buttercross	30
2. Legitimation 1997-2010	Buttercross Bowls Club applies for an increase in machine numbers • Dec 1999, club advertises the arrival of new poker machines	35
	Buttercross Bowls Club applies for an increase in machine numbers • Dec 2003, VCGA approves a further 5 poker machines for the bowls club	40
	Buttercross Hotel applies to establish poker machine gambling • Dec 2003, application refused by the VCGA	
3. Reaction 2010-2012	Buttercross Hotel again applies to establish poker machine gambling • 2010, application made to VCGR for 30 poker machines • Significant community opposition occurs • Applicant requests VCGR adjourn the hearing indefinitely Buttercross Hotel notifies VCGLR of intention to proceed with application for 30 poker machines • Significant community opposition occurs • Shortly afterwards the applicant indicates they will not be proceeding with the application Buttercross Bowls Club applies for an increase in machine numbers • 2012, VCGLR grants club a licence for an additional 10 machines • Community opposition occurs • Council subsequently indicates it will seek a review of the VCGLR decision at VCAT • 2013- VCAT upholds the VCGLR decision granting the club a licence to install the additional machines	50

The Gambling Regulation Act 2003 (which came into effect in 2004) enabled the formation of the Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation (VCGR) which combined the roles of the Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority (VCGA) and the Office of Gambling Regulation

6.2 Period 1: Insinuation

This section explores events leading up to the commencement of poker machine gambling within Buttercross, including the actions and motivations of both the proponents and opponents of the proposal. Of particular interest is the way each group conceptualised community and how those conceptualisations directed them to frame poker machines as either a threat to, or enhancement of, community principles and interests. Although the club's proposal generated considerable community opposition, powerful macro and community level forces assisted to insinuate the poker machines into the community and position them at the centre of community relations. This section begins with a discussion of the diverse community reactions to the bowls club's poker machine proposal and an exploration of these responses in relation to community ideology and interests.

6.2.1 One community, multiple responses

> …when the bowling club first applied to get pokies, there was a fair push to prevent them from doing so. I wasn't involved with that, but the local minister was at the time. John

As briefly noted in chapter 5, when word of the bowls club's plan spread through Buttercross, a number of community members were sufficiently concerned about the introduction of poker machines that they formed a community action group to oppose the proposal.

The group, the *Buttercross Alliance Against Gaming* was comprised of residents, traders, social workers and local church representatives. The Alliance utilised a number of approaches to raise awareness and garner support within the local community. A number of interview participants recalled the group's activities, including Charles, who was a member of the Alliance: "petitions were put together, and the number of people who signed them was quite amazing"; and Jack, who was friends with some of the Alliance members,

> I knew at the time that there was a petition going around to try and get it stopped by the local Uniting Church minister and also a few other friends that I know that were involved in running a petition to try and stop the pokies.

The Alliance also held an anti-gambling forum which heard from representatives from the Victorian Council on Problem Gambling and the Brotherhood of St Laurence about impacts of harmful gambling (CR9, 1996, June 5). Club Participant 4, a long-time resident and bowls club member was one of several interview participants who recalled attending the meeting to protest against the poker machines, "the pokies were already there when I joined [the bowls club]. I did go to a meeting against them that was held"; as did Beverly, a local business owner and also a long-term community member: "all the people there were up in arms and didn't want the poker machines, at all. They didn't want them in the hotel, they didn't want it in the bowling club".

Although poker machines had only been legalised within Victoria for four years, it appears that there was already evidence emerging to support the view that poker machines would adversely impact some community members. This assumption is supported by the previous chapter's analysis of local media coverage related to poker machines, which highlighted both the rapid rollout of poker machines across the Finchley municipality and the adverse social and economic impacts being attributed to poker machine gambling (see section 5.7.4).

The bowls club's decision to embrace poker machine gambling as a revenue source was also a contentious issue within the club. As outlined in chapter 5 (see section 5.8.1), interview participants described club members' opposition to the move and the concern regarding the effects on the local community. Although, as noted, accounts varied, interview participants also described between "one" and "some" members who left the club in protest of the decision to pursue poker machine gambling.

However, some segments of the club and community also either supported or were indifferent to the proposal. As noted in chapter 5, the proposal was put to club members and a majority indicated support. In addition, some of the interview participants who were not members of the bowls club, including Tom and James, recalled that they did not become

involved with the activities of the Alliance as they either supported or did not oppose the

proposal at the time.

> About the time when I arrived here ...I can vaguely remember people coming around with
> petitions to stop the installation of poker machines… I never signed the petition because I
> didn't see any purpose. If they wanted poker machines, they can have poker machines,
> because they're legal - that's the attitude I had. Tom

> Well, I had nothing to do with it. I can recall when they were put in because … it was in the
> local rag… and it was on the front page, a photo him and - I forget who the minister was now.
> But they were really getting stuck into the pokies at the bowling club. But I took no notice
> because I wasn't involved with it and it didn't worry me that much. I'm not one of these blokes
> who'd get up in front of a crowd and say you've got to do this or do that. I just go with the
> flow. James

These data reveal community members held a range of opinions and beliefs in relation to

poker machines. These various and contested responses to the proposal to install poker

machines within the club challenge the narratives of Buttercross as a cohesive and united

community (see chapter 5). These findings are consistent with the work of critical scholars

such as Everingham (2003); Brent (2009); Mooney and Neal (2009) who have highlighted

how the concept of 'community', while implying unity, cohesion and homogeny, can mask a

diversity of values, views and desires, divisions and conflicts (see section 3.5).

The evidence presented in chapter 5 also indicated a growing awareness at this time of the

adverse effects associated with poker machines. Given this awareness, it seems likely these

differing responses by community members to the introduction of poker machines involved

more than simply each member's individual understanding of the harms and benefits of

poker machines. The issue was not so rationally framed. If it had been, it seems unlikely that

members of a club with strong community ties would have persisted with an application to

install poker machines in the face of mounting evidence of poker machine related harm and

of opposition from within the community and from some club members. Rather, other forces

appeared to be shaping the way community members framed the gambling issue, and

affecting the ways in which each assessed, or set a value on, the claims concerning the various benefits and adverse effects which were current at the time. One of these factors relates to the way in which individual community members understood and made sense of the construct of 'community' and whether or not they saw poker machines as being compatible with this conceptualisation.

The ensuing sub-section extends the discussion of community ideology commenced in chapter 3, while the two sub-sections that follow it present and discuss some of the data which provides a deeper insight into the contested conceptualisations of the construct of 'community' evidenced in the actions of the bowls club and the Alliance.

6.2.2 Community ideology and the rural locale

Chapter 3 discussed how the concept of community has both an empirical and a normative or ideological dimension of meaning and how this can result in understandings and portrayals of what community *is*, being overlaid with idealised versions of what community *should be* (see for example Kenny, 2011; Plant, 1974). The presence of very powerful shared (ideological) understandings around the notion of community in Buttercross was also discussed in some detail in chapters 3 and 5. One of the identifying features of ideologies is their enduring nature and their ability to shape actions. This point was emphasised by Richards (1990) when she described ideologies as "sets of ideas that hang together and hang around, influencing behaviour" (p. 105). Richards (1990) explored how ideologies around family and home and community powerfully shaped the lives and actions of the inhabitants of a new housing development, sanctioning and encouraging certain behaviours, such as "becoming 'involved'" (p. 279) and constraining others, such as becoming too familiar with neighbours (pp. 220 – 250).

Of particular interest to events in Buttercross are ideological representations of small rural communities. Hummon's (1990) work exploring urban, suburban and small town ideologies

sheds light on some of the "shared ideological images of community" associated with small

townships (p. 50). These include portrayal of small towns as, "the locus of the good life – a

place of caring and community, a simpler world, and a haven from the problems of modern,

urban life" (p. 50 - 51). Likewise in *Smalltown*, Dempsey (1990) also found evidence of the

existence of ideological representations of rural life which favourably distinguish it from

urban life. Community members in Dempsey's study attributed the superiority of rural life to a

number of factors and qualities of their community, including:

> …the natural friendliness of country people, a practical approach to life, long-standing
> customs of mutual assistance in what is a demanding environment inadequately served by
> government, and the geographical location, and the small size of the population which has
> forced them to work together for the common good (Dempsey, 1990, p. 52 – 53).

These representations of community are not dissimilar to the community qualities identified

by residents of Buttercross, including 'caring', 'friendly', 'cohesive', 'resilient', and 'safe'.

There was an almost universal endorsement of this representation of Buttercross by

research participants with significant emphasis given to the sense of connection, social

bonds, and mutual-care and warm social relations within the township. In addition, the

proactive "do it yourself" approach to building community facilities and addressing

community needs articulated and witnessed in Buttercross was also attributed by some to a

perceived absence of external governmental support (see chapters 3 and 5).

However, in Smalltown, Dempsey's (1990) research revealed that the construction of the

community as friendly, mutually assisting, egalitarian and cohesive was not entirely true or

certainly not true for all residents. While Hummon (1990) argued that much of what people

believe about community, while containing the "proverbial element of truth" is "highly

evaluative and selective in their portrayal of community life" (p. 9). As such he contends that

what people believe about community is to a large extent constructed, "fundamentally

interpretive, involved in a presentation of reality rather than a simple "reflection" of reality"

(p. 9). This is consistent with Richards' (1990) contention that, while ideologies often contain

elements of truth, their power rests in their ability to "mask, obscure, distort" how we understand our world (p. 105). Similarly in Buttercross, while there is a degree of shared understanding and values, and the qualities of cohesion, mutual care, resilience and friendliness are certainly characteristics of the community, these qualities are neither consistently nor universally in attendance. Consistent with the understandings of 'community' articulated by critical scholars (see section 3.5), the proposal by the club to introduce poker machine gambling and the opposition by the Alliance drew back the mask of 'community' as collectively cohesive, caring and unified, and revealed a diversity of values and the clear presence of conflict and division. These diverse responses to the club's proposal also exposed that community itself is a contested construct, meaning different things to different people.

6.2.3 Conceptualising community and positioning poker machines

"We don't want something like this that could come in and cause social problems"
(Ross, Alliance member, in CR10, 1996, May 8, para. 7)

The way members of the Alliance and the bowls club conceptualised community appears to have been a dominant factor in the ways they viewed the imminent introduction of poker machines. Evidence suggests that members of the Alliance shared a commitment to traditional ideological understandings of rural communities. For example, in a letter to the editor, written by member of the Alliance posed the question, "What sort of community does Buttercross want to be?" (CR11, 1996, June 19, p. 16, para.1). The author directs readers to consider that in their township "at least 1 per cent of the community are potential compulsive gamblers whose addiction will adversely affect spouses, children, family, employers and friends", concluding that with ripple effects, "about 300 people who are our friends, neighbours and family members" (para.1) would be affected. The author of the letter is emphasising the profound way in which he believes the poker machines will shape his community and negatively affect fellow residents. His concluding comments seem to

challenge the bowls club to look beyond the immediate financial benefits of the poker

machines to consider their wider community impact: "I am deeply disturbed when any

community group decides that it will raise funds through gambling without carefully

considering what effect its actions might have" (para.2).

As noted earlier, community ideology constitutes powerful normative forces prescribing what

community should be (Plant, 1974, p. 13) which can contribute to the development of shared

norms and values governing behaviour of community members (see for example Dempsey,

1990, and Richards, 1990). By proposing to host poker machines and their potential harms

within the community, the bowls club, in the eyes of the Alliance, could be understood to

transgress these shared understandings of community.

Underlying the concerns regarding the impact of poker machines is a strong ideological

concept of how community should be. The Alliance member's appeal for readers to consider

the impacts of poker machines on fellow community members reflects a belief of community

as one which provides mutual-care for its members. This understanding of community is

challenged by the actions of the bowls club to introduce to the community a product which

will bring benefits to some - "raise funds" (para.2) - at the potential expense of other

community members.

This contention is supported by the content of an earlier media article (CR10, 1996, May 8)

which discusses the petition the Alliance group were circulating. The article documents the

following 3 key objections of the Alliance to the introduction of poker machines, (as listed in

the petition):

- the venue is in an inappropriate location, close to a kindergarten, nursing home and guide
  and scout hall
- local traders will be financially disadvantaged because considerable sums of money will be
  spent on gaming instead of in local businesses, and

- there will be social problems created by gaming such as breakdown of family values and possible increase in crime (para.6).

The petition illustrates the Alliance's primary concerns regarding the gaming machines was their belief they would be socially and economically detrimental to residents and local businesses within their community. This is consistent with the recollections of a number of interview participants, including Jack: "they didn't believe it was the right thing for the pokies to come into Buttercross…They were concerned I guess of the impact and the end results that happen to families sometimes".

Here the poker machines are positioned as a threat to core community concepts such as community as a place of mutual care, belonging and safety. The report that over 400 people had signed the petition (CR10, 1996, May 8) indicates a relatively widespread acceptance of the notion that poker machines were a threat to community wellbeing.

Alliance members also expressed concern with the regulatory process, maintaining that many within the community were unaware of the bowls club's intentions to install poker machines until after Council had approved the planning permit for the addition of the restaurant and gaming venue to its club rooms (CR12, 1996, March 27). Notwithstanding the Alliance's concerns, as noted by Club Participant 2, the club had complied with the planning requirements of the period related to informing the community, including writing to residents close to the venue and displaying the notice of planning on site: "we also had to put our notices on the surrounds of the club. Those in the immediate vicinity, we had to advise them by letter of our intentions and inform them of their rights".

In addition the board had taken the decision to the club members, most of whom were also members of the local community. Yet, according to Alliance member Charles, there was a feeling that while the legal requirements had been fulfilled, community members had not been adequately made aware of the decision,

> I mean, we all know the old trick of, you know, developers being required to put up a notice about a development to satisfy a requirement that they've publicised. They'll put a notice in the paper, or whatever, and it's always in tiny print (or) on a noticeboard somewhere without overhead lighting or anything like that.

On one level these concerns provide a concrete example of the shortcomings in the regulatory framework (highlighted in chapter 5) which skewed the application process in favour of venues and disempowered and excluded communities. However, the perception that the community had somehow been excluded from the discussions related to bringing poker machines into the township and that they should have been involved also confirms the strong normative and prescriptive understandings of community shared by the Alliance members. Woven into the objections is a strong attachment to their notions of what their community was and should remain. The concerns demonstrate an underlying conviction that as community members they should have the opportunity to articulate and influence the way the community develops. The bowls club, in seemingly prioritising the needs of their club over what the Alliance considered the broader community wellbeing, fractured the Alliance's ideological conceptualisations of community as being an entity comprising shared values and goals for the common good of community members.

The comment by Alliance member Ross, "It's just that we feel that Buttercross is a nice little town and we don't want something like this that could come in and cause social problems" (CR10, 1996, May 8, para 7) indicates that the Alliance were mobilised into action by a desire to protect 'community' as they conceptually understood it. This ability of ideological representations of community to initiate and motivate community action was noted by Crow and Allan (1994) in relation to inner city urban politics, who reminded readers that the ideological idea of community is "one around which social forces may be mobilised with great effect" (p. 21). The authors further elaborate this point by describing and citing Parry,

Moyser and Wagstaffe's (1987, p. 229) conclusions,

> …that community allegiances are an effective base for collective action. Community identity is important because "it provides an additional political resource in the struggle to promote or to defend interests. A sense of community can help to support political activity" (p. 21).

These perceptions of the value of 'community' and the desire to protect and shape the local context are found not only in this period of contestation, but in much of the subsequent community action against poker machines in Buttercross, and more widely. For example, McDonald and Ollerenshaw (under review) identified that the "socio-cultural symbolism of community" was a powerful factor underlying the success of the Romsey hotel community campaign (p. 10). This is discussed in section 6.4.1. Equally, however, as will be discussed later within this chapter, this research has revealed how community ideologies and networks of community relationships can also work to suppress collective action and opposition to poker machines.

6.2.4 Conceptualising poker machines as a community asset

"…the best thing that ever happens to Buttercross." Club Participant 4

Given the evidence at the time of the adverse impacts of poker machine gambling, it was unsurprising that the Alliance symbolised poker machines as a threat to 'community'. An unanticipated finding however, was the extent to which the bowls club also drew on representations of community, positioning poker machines as a symbol of community enhancement. The recollections of Club Participant 4, provides evidence that this positioning was occurring even in the planning stages,

> When I went to that first meeting to protest against them, this man said, he said this would be the best thing that ever happens to Buttercross. I thought how it can be the best thing to introduce gambling into the community. But that was the attitude.

Club Participant 4's comments are supported by Club Participant 7's recollections of the motivations behind the move to establish poker machine gambling within the club,

> The club was a go ahead club. It was an old club; it had been there for forty odd years…and they decided that they wanted to get pokies, so they went round venues looking everywhere for about six months investigating it. And decided that poker machines were the go, to benefit the bowling club as well as the community.

As this quotation illustrates, members of the bowls club behind the decision to acquire poker machines had a different vision for community. This vision was associated with the creation of club facilities to provide a venue for enhanced sporting facilities and social interaction; a place to *do* 'community'.

The analysis of the township's history, presented in chapter 5, demonstrated that the creation of communal facilities, such as the tennis courts and pavilion and the original bowling green and clubhouse, has been a regular occurrence within Buttercross. In a community with a long history of adopting a "do it yourself" approach to the development of community facilities, the approach by the members of the bowls club to realise their vision for their club through the use of poker machines is perhaps an understandable extension of what they had always done. And as pointed out in chapter 5, it was also highly consistent with and supported by macro sociopolitical forces including neo-liberalism and the state government's promotion of gambling. The difference is significant, however: rather than the construction of a new community facility drawing together the community to achieve a mutual goal, the decision to establish poker machine gambling divided the township, and set the club in opposition to sections of the community.

> They kept saying it's an asset to the town. It'll be an asset to the town. Now, it can be an asset in one way that they have a nice building and they supply a nice area for people to go to. But it's not an asset when it's - well they don't make people gamble, they gamble of their own initiative, but having the facility there to make it easier for people to lose their money. Club Participant 4

What is clear from these events is that 'community' is a contested construct. While both groups mobilised notions of community, they were not describing exactly the same thing. In a sense each group was dipping into the collection of ideological representations of

'community' and selecting those attributes that best fitted their way of viewing the world. That people make their own meaning from ideology, that they shape it and make sense of it, was discussed in some detail by Richards (1990),

> Nobody is only a recipient of ideology; ideologies are not made in heaven or by power élites, and beamed out at a vulnerable population. They are mediated through, changed by, and recreated by people in active relationships to these idea packages, not merely by victims of them (p. 106).

Meanings of community while shaped from above or externally by the broader socio-cultural context are also shaped at a grass-roots level from within communities by the history, people's own values and philosophies. And this is the important point here, that while some of the dominant ideologies around community discussed in section 6.2.2 can be seen to be shaping the way community members responded to the proposition of poker machines, the ways in which individuals and groups within the community took on and interpreted those ideologies varied radically. Both the Alliance and the bowls club framed their actions in terms of ideological representations of community. What differed was the way each group reproduced and transformed community ideologies within the context of their own values and beliefs, and how they subsequently viewed poker machines as either congruent or incongruent with their conceptualisation of community.

6.2.5 Dominant power structures and ideologies prevail

Although segments of the Buttercross community were vehemently opposed to the establishment of poker machine gambling in the township, their opposition was no match for the powerful forces supporting their insinuation. As discussed in chapter 5, the roll-out of poker machine gambling across the state (as in many jurisdictions) was endorsed and encouraged by a neo-liberal government keen to secure new revenue streams without increasing taxation, a regulatory regime which was subsequently supportive of the expansion of poker machine gambling; and a powerful and vigorous poker machine industry (Adams, 2008; Borrell, 2008a). These dominant macro sociopolitical and economic forces

were powerful shaping agents, restructuring and transforming communities, clubs, and attitudes towards gambling during this period.

The regulatory framework that facilitated industry expansion gave little voice to community opposition and at the time did not allow submissions from local government. In addition, as also discussed in chapter 5, the power of local government, the third tier of government in Australia, was severely compromised in the state of Victoria during this period. The replacement of democratically elected councils with state-appointed commissioners reduced local government to the role of an instrument to implement state government policy (McDonald, 1996, p. 65) and restricted the ability of local government to advocate on behalf of communities.

While supported by economic and political forces at the macro level, the insinuation of poker machines into Buttercross was also supported by forces in the local community context. As noted previously, the introduction of poker machine gambling was championed by influential community members within the club, who mobilised community ideologies, such as self-reliance and working together for the common good, to support their proposal, selling poker machine gambling to the community as a means to develop communal facilities.

Largely disempowered and marginalised from participation in the application process, the Alliance's opposition was destined to fail, and the Bowls club's application for 30 poker machines was approved by the VCGA. In effect, as described in chapter 5, the only real hurdles the club confronted in obtaining poker machines were convincing Tabcorp that the placement of poker machines within the club would generate adequate revenue, securing finance for the proposal and obtaining council planning permission for extensions to the club house.

6.3 Period 2: Legitimation

This section examines the period from January 1997 following the insinuation of poker machine gambling into Buttercross, through to late 2009. During this period the opposition to the poker machines publicly expressed prior to their arrival appeared to dissipate, and the machines became not only largely accepted by community members, but appeared to secure a legitimate place within the community. Despite the club making two further and successful applications to increase machine numbers during this era, (see Table 3), no evidence of community opposition to these applications was discovered by this research project.

The processes by which legitimation occurred are a key focus of this section, and centre on the location of the poker machines within a club which enabled them to become enmeshed within ideological constructions of community. In this way, the interests and discourses associated with gambling and conceptualisations of community became woven together and regarded as almost complementary. This section also discusses a number of other identified macro- and community-level forces which worked to encourage either the acceptance or at least tolerance of poker machines, and to suppress public displays of opposition.

6.3.1 Appropriation of 'community'

> "…well I really think we are truly a community club. The people here care about the place" Club Participant 2.

The positioning of poker machines within the space of a community club in Buttercross had profound implications for the way community members came to view the machines and their effects within the township. As in most communities, clubs and associations have historically comprised an important component of community life in Buttercross. By facilitating social interaction, the pursuit of interests, the construction of community facilities and provision of services (see discussions in chapter 5) clubs have become strongly associated with

conceptualisations of community. In Buttercross, there was significant evidence that many community members saw such clubs as synonymous with community.

This was particularly so for the bowls club and multiple references were made by interview participants to the bowls club as a "community club" or "community hub", concatenating community and club together. Many participants also identified the club as an integral element of the community. The comments by workers Patricia: "I don't know much about it, but I know that it's a little social hub", and Bridget: "the bowls club was described as the quasi-CAC, and CAC is the Community Activity Centre", are typical of the way the club was viewed. Comments by those associated with the venue, such as Club Participant 7, also reflect this positioning: "yeah, so, community wise, as I said earlier, we're sort of the hub". Community member Christine also made a similar point:

> Of course when you get there you always meet somebody that you know, and especially in this area. So it's a good spot to meet and talk, and you either have a few drinks or they sit and have coffee…

What is apparent is that placement of the poker machines within the club extended this coupling of community and the club to incorporate the poker machines, effectively enabling poker machines to *appropriate* the concept of community. In chapter 3, discussion of the work of critical community scholars highlighted how prefixing community to other terms can imbue community's positive, feel good connotations (Bryson & Mowbray, 1981; Kenny, 2011; Mowbray, 1992) to products or services that may not in themselves have any such merits. Location of poker machines within the Buttercross bowls club appears to have had a similar effect, enabling, to a degree, the poker machines (and the potentially dangerous activity of gambling) to become cloaked by community's positive qualities, including a sense of belonging (Dempsey, 2002; Wild, 1981), and feelings of warmth, safety, and care (Bauman, 2001). This appropriation of 'community' appears to have tempered the response of residents to the presence of gambling in their township, and helped to legitimate the club's deployment of poker machines.

6.3.2 Embedding in community

As noted in chapter 5, when poker machine gambling was established within the bowls club, it was already a focal point for community celebrations and sporting and social activity. Following the launch of poker machine gambling, these existing connections with the community were further extended when revenue derived from the gambling paid for the expansion of recreation, dining and meeting facilities within the club, and provided a range of in-kind and financial benefits to other organisations.

> The poker machines have provided an avenue of revenue so that they could improve their club facilities…So I think here it just meant that a small bowling club was able to provide good facilities. Obviously the meals and all of those things come into it then. So it becomes more of a community hub. Stuart

> …the club has physically much better facilities as a result of having the extra income. I think, you know, that's part of the success in terms of strong membership and so on. It's a nice place to be; comfortable, and a really presentable sort of place. It's quite a nice place to go for a meal, so it's a bit of a social hub in that way. Charles

As noted in chapter 5 and visually represented in the Word Cloud presented in Figure 2, the evidence supports the picture of large numbers of the community being drawn to the club for a broad range of activities, including meetings, meals and important celebrations such as wakes and birthdays. The descriptions of the club's wide appeal by local residents Tina, Pete and Stephen illustrate its central role in community life:

> So it sort of can have that community, like a place for people to go, a place where people go for meals. People purely go there for bowling… For some people in the community, they'd never go through the front door. For other people it's a sporting activity, it's a social activity, it's a venue for raising charity money. It was an affordable venue for me to have my daughter's engagement party there which met a wide criteria of who was coming. A lot of these other things can be done at other venues around the town but it seems to be a base for a lot of different things like that.   Tina

Thursday night is a really big night down there… I think there's the mandatory meat raffle and those sorts of things that go off. It's really quite a focal point for Thursday evening for a lot of people. Certainly the meals that they serve down there is really - I can only say they're really, really good from the time that I've had. But it is a very, very well used venue from the morning right through to the evening and on weekends. Not just for pokies but for a whole range of aspects. So it is a major part of the township here. Pete

It's a place of social meeting. Their facilities provide a meeting place for the Rotary club and I'm not quite sure if others meet there. But I know the Rotary club did and I assume they still do. It's a place of community events. If you were looking for somewhere to hold a twenty first, engagement party, a retirement of a teacher, we've had those sort of things there. It's a good place if you've got to stay up to have a meal, depending on who's in the kitchen at the time. Stephen

What is clear from these descriptions, here, and in chapter 5, is that locating poker machines within the bowls club effectively put them at the centre of the social and economic activities of the club. The club's good reputation and extensive community relationships become enmeshed with the business of poker machines. Although there was a discordance between the existing club activities and the business of poker machine gambling (see chapter 8), by linking into the network of community relationships, and by association, with the club's good reputation, the poker machines (and the consequences of gambling activity) secured community acceptance. The involvement of well-connected and respected community members in the bowls club and therefore, by association, with the poker machines, also provided a tacit endorsement of the poker machines at the club.

This strategic positioning of the club as the focal point for community and celebratory events has formed an association between poker machines and everyday life in Buttercross. The machines have become woven into the fabric of community life, with everyday activities such as meetings, and milestone occasions including engagement parties and wakes, occurring

within proximity to the poker machines and within facilities built with poker machine (losses) revenue:

> It's pretty much a focal point of the town. Everybody knows of the bowling club, knows people that go to the bowling club, know somebody who bowls and that side of it. Pretty high regard, even though they have the gambling side of it there, it's not looked down upon. Cath

> On the other hand, there's a group I know that meet there every Tuesday night for dinner who are all widows or widowers, and they have a ball. An absolute ball…They play the pokies, and they have just the best time. They're all over 75, and they put probably $5 in, and it's a great night. One of these women who was recently widowed said this is - I don't know what I'd do without it. So it's fabulous for her. Sally

The incorporation of poker machines into the cultural fabric of this community has helped to shape community acceptance of the machines and to normalise, legitimise and condone their presence. The club has successfully won the support of many within the community who have come to view the club's deployment of poker machines as a natural and beneficial arrangement (Crossley, 2005, p. 114). The power of clubs, in particular, to legitimate poker machine gambling has been highlighted by a number of researchers (Adams, 2008; Con Walker, 2009; Livingstone and Adams, 2011), with Adams (2008) noting,

> EGMs in venues such as sports clubs, tribal venues, or war veteran organizations will on the whole be accessed by their own membership…Besides engaging their own constituencies, the other main drawbacks to this arrangement are the manner in which it normalizes and legitimizes gambling at a grassroots community level…. (p. 53).

These themes underlie much of the discussion of the research findings throughout the rest of the thesis.

6.3.3 Crossing the community boundary

Within the community literature, the concept of boundaries is most commonly discussed in relation to the physical locale, and the inclusion or exclusion of individuals and this understanding of boundaries is explored in chapter 7. However, this research project revealed that the concept of boundaries can also assist to explain the eventual acceptance

of the presence of poker machine gambling within Buttercross by large segments of the community.

Chapter 3 discussed the importance of the concept of boundaries in the defining of community (Crow & Allan, 1994), and noted that the rural community is an important type of community in which boundaries can be "physical and 'mental', related to identity and experience, but also to place" (Crow & Mah, 2012, p. 20). Chapter 3 also emphasised how, while boundaries can signify inclusion and support for those who are contained within a community, boundaries also exclude, defining who and what are not part of the community. Data was presented earlier in this chapter that illustrated how, for the Alliance members, poker machines were perceived as incompatible with their conceptualisation of community and therefore as a threat to community wellbeing. The symbolic boundary (Cohen, 1985; Crow & Mah, 2012) Alliance members drew around Buttercross to define community, clearly excluded poker machines. However, proponents of the introduction of poker machine gambling conceptualised community differently, and poker machine gambling was an acceptable element within community as they understood it.

By championing the establishment of poker machine gambling, and selling it to the community as a means to build community facilities, key members of the club can be seen to have acted as an intermediary between the community and the poker machines. Their actions assisted the machines to transverse the boundary of community. As evidence presented in the previous paragraphs highlighted, once implanted within the club, the association of the club with community facilitated acceptance of their presence.

Interestingly, acceptance of the poker machines within the bowls club as a legitimate feature of the community was qualified and did not necessarily extend to poker machine gambling within other venues. Here another boundary was being drawn. Some interview participants

associated with the bowls club drew a distinction between the club's poker machines and

those in the larger venues in the south of the municipality:

> …but we're not a big venue. We don't draw - that's what I said, don't associate us with the
> ones down town because down town you've got the Club Venue Y and you've got the Hotel
> Venue X and all that and you've got a multicultural society that like to gamble and they've all
> got a lot of money that they can gamble with in a sense, so they all go to those clubs.
> They've got 100 machines, they fill 100 machines, Club Participant 1

> Whereas a bigger town, you go to a venue, the Hotel Venue X has got about 100 machines,
> no one knows anybody. The staff hardly know patrons except for the ones there every day all
> day. Club Participant 7

Other participants made a distinction between club-based machines and those located in

hotel venues. Participants often acknowledged problems associated with poker machine

gambling, but expressed a belief that the bowls club and their machines were in some way

different. This relabeling or reframing of the club's poker machines within interestingly fluid

'mental' boundaries, helped to legitimate and sanction their presence in the community, even

amongst those who were generally opposed to poker machine gambling. This perceived

distinction between club- and hotel-based gambling venues – the boundary drawn between

"their" community and the "others" in the hotels – was a significant factor influencing

community responses to poker machines and their effects within Buttercross and will be

revisited later in this chapter and again in chapter 8.

6.3.4 As good as it gets: Acceptance of domination

"They are quite well accepted, *they are here now* and that's a part of what we do."

Club Participant 5 (emphasis added).

As noted previously, the bowls club successfully applied to increase machine numbers twice

during this period and the hotel also applied, albeit unsuccessfully, to install 22 machines.

Much of this section has argued that the absence of public opposition to the applications by

the bowls club and the limited opposition to the hotel's application was evidence that the presence of poker machines within the community was largely tolerated or accepted.

However, two community workers offered an alternate perspective, contending that the lack of outward opposition may also be ascribed, at least partially, to recognition by community members of their state of disempowerment. To Pippa, for community members who feel powerless to change the status quo, the acceptance of the poker machines is a pragmatic response, arising out of necessity rather than choice, "…we sort of edit our aspirations and wishes according to the cloth of what seems possible". Ryan too, made a similar assessment:

> Why bang your head against a wall. Everyone knows that you can protest about the bowling club but it's not going to change a damn thing. All you're going to do is you're going to piss off a few people in the community who do benefit from it and you're still not going to get the pokies taken out of the bowling club because once they're in you can't get them out. They [the community] actually realise hey, well, yes we might have problems with the bowling club but at least they're doing some good in the community and there's nothing we can do about it anyway so why are we going to bother.   Ryan

As Ryan's comments indicate, this pragmatism is combined with the pervasive influence of the perception of community benefit and the importance of the networks of community relationships, both of which are capable of engendering either an acceptance or tolerance of the poker machines.

Ryan's observation that continued opposition could damage community relationships: "all you're going to do is you're going to piss off a few people in the community", is particularly apposite to this study. The identification of Buttercross as a caring, friendly and cohesive community and the value residents place on these qualities have already been discussed on a number of occasions within this thesis. In her research around rural identities, Neal (2009) identified a similar value placed on harmonious relationships, observing that tensions and

social divisions were rarely observed or discussed by participants, and they were denied

when raised (pp. 35-37). In *Smalltown*, Dempsey (1990) proposed that the value of

harmonious relationships and "sense of belonging" for community members was so great as

to cause residents to overlook "real differences in social standing as well as in economic

power" (p. 150). Dempsey contended that, "for those who engage in face-to-face

relationships, harmony, co-operation, pleasantness and acceptance are psychologically

more tenable than tension, social distancing and rejection" (Dempsey, 1990, p. 150).

Notwithstanding the different source of potential tension in Buttercross, the same principles

can be applied to the reluctance of many community members to voice concerns or take

action regarding the poker machines for fear of being seen to go against the club and

therefore as a disrupter of harmonious relations. These concepts are captured in Figure 5

which provides a short case study. However, while residents in Smalltown overlooked social

differences, in Buttercross it was the harms associated with the club's poker machines that

appeared to be overlooked (or downplayed or seen as being compensated for by the

benefits): all in the interests of maintaining community harmony.

Figure 5. An account of the importance of maintaining harmonious relationships

In 2011, a board member of a community organisation became aware of grant money being offered to assist organisations to develop policy to discourage the use of poker machine venues for functions and meetings. The rationale behind the grant initiative was that many who develop problems with poker machine gambling report being introduced to gambling through seemingly benign activities (attending meetings, social functions and so forth). The board member was keen for their organisation to apply for the grant. However, on considering the matter, the manager and the rest of the board felt they could not risk jeopardising their relationship with the bowls club and its extended network, opting instead for a less contentious (and arguably less effective) policy. Explaining the decision, the manager noted:

[B]ecause we're a community group we couldn't set ourselves up in opposition to another community - a well-respected, liked, patronised venue that I had quite happily been to meetings at... I've since had a discussion with the group who were offering the money to use it to set up a policy of not accessing online gambling with our free internet and that sort of thing. Where I'm quite comfortable with that, in fact I think that's really sensible and we'll do it anyway.

When Anna, a community worker with extensive experience and insight into the issue of poker machine gambling was asked to reflect on these events, she concluded that the decision not to take action was based on the weighing up of the likely impact of two opposing risks – the risk of gambling harm to community and organisation members, which is largely hidden, and hence appears as a "theoretical" risk, as opposed to the seemingly highly visible risks of alienating an extremely well regarded community club:

… [it is] very difficult for people to balance up, to understand, because the potential harm is more hidden, … they wouldn't know if there was someone with a gambling problem and so it's easy to assume that that wouldn't impact on any one of the people who were their clients, for example, or who were their staff … they might think, well, we get the principle, we'd like to do something but, in fact, it doesn't really apply to us. And yet, the potential harm from implementing a policy seems more visible.

6.3.5 Subtle shifts in power and control, sowing the seeds of change

Even though the period from 1997 to late 2009 was marked by a relative acceptance of the status quo regarding poker machine gambling within Buttercross, significant lobbying was prompting change in the broader sociopolitical context. A number of developments took place during this period which progressively provided a measure of power to local government concerning poker machine applications. Groups including the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) and the Victorian Interchurch Gambling Taskforce were highlighting community concerns regarding the adverse effects of gambling and were pressuring the State government to implement reforms to reduce harm.

The introduction of the Gambling Legislation (Responsible Gambling) Act 2000 marked a turning point for local government. One of the many changes to the regulation of poker machine gambling introduced by the Act was the provision for local government to have a greater say in the application process for venues. Given the previous exclusion of local government from the regulatory process, this appeared to be a significant shift in power and certainly paved the way for greater involvement in issues associated with poker machine gambling by local government. However, although a tighter legislative framework and more council control was welcomed, their arrival came perhaps too late: by the time these changes were finally introduced, the period of rapid industry expansion had already occurred during the 1990s and many LGAs were already saturated with poker machines (see Table 1 & Table 2 in chapter 5).

Following these changes, many local governments set about developing gambling policies for their municipalities. The Victorian Local Governance Association was again an important participant in these events, supporting councils by producing the *Local Government Gambling Policy Framework* to guide councils through this process (Savin, 2002). The City of Finchley developed its policy in 2002*.* According to the policy document, it was founded on a "commitment to the mitigation of the negative impacts of gaming" (CR18, 2002, p. 3).

While maintaining the Council did "not advocate the prohibition of Electronic Gaming Machines" (p. 3), the policy effectively drew a line in the sand, stating "It is envisaged that there are sufficient numbers of EGMs in the municipality" (p. 29).

The implications of these changes are illustrated by examining the application by the Buttercross hotel in 2003 to install poker machines. When the hotel made its application to the (then named) Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority (VCGA) for 22 machines, owing to the initiatives implemented in the Gambling Legislation (Responsible Gaming) Act, the Finchley Council was able to be an active participant in the application process. The Council was required to receive notice of the hotel's application and permitted to submit social and economic impact statements to the VCGA. These circumstances contrasted markedly to the exclusion of Council from the bowls club's original application to the VCGA.

Despite the promise made in the hotel application of a sizeable contribution to the community, examination of the VCGA decision revealed the Finchley Council opposed the application, and the VCGA document notes that the Council's submission was supported by statements from a number of local service providers including the local community health service and the Salvation Army (CR23). The application by the hotel was ultimately declined (CR23). This marked the beginning of proactive involvement by the Finchley Council with regard to poker machine applications in Buttercross.

6.4 Period 3: Reaction

The period of relative acceptance of poker machine gambling within Buttercross drew to an end in December 2009 when the hotel renewed its attempt to obtain poker machines. During the following three year period, there were two additional waves of community opposition, one, associated with an attempt by the hotel to introduce poker machines and another, more restrained, in response to an application by the bowls club to increase machine numbers.

The strength of the community response against the hotel's application was overwhelming, astounding even those who had formed the action group to oppose the application. One of the first activities the group organised was an information stall which was conducted over two consecutive Saturdays in March, 2010 in the main street of Buttercross. Discussing the reaction to these information stalls, community member Moira describes how the community response surprised even those involved in the action group,

> …we got so many signatures in such a short time. And I was just surprised at how anti pokies they were…But everyone was very enthusiastic about signing, saying we don't want poker machines at the Hotel…And ah it was amazing. One woman came across the street, she could see us and she called out, I'll sign that…and we just thought we'd be sitting there and nobody would be making a fuss, you know, they'd be walking past. But we got over a thousand signatures.

Council officer Bridget also described the strong community response,

> ...very quickly, I think over only two weekends, (they) organised stalls in the main street and took petitions but also took those little testimonials as well, which were very powerful. That was very interesting because it did start to give you a bit of a picture of what people were thinking rather than just signing a petition. They got a really high response really quickly. They engaged local businesses to support the petition as well too. So there was a lot of support for the campaign against the pokies.

Within three weeks the action group collected 58 testimonials, many describing stories of gambling harm, 14 letters from individuals and businesses opposing the granting of the gaming licence and 1,012 signatures to the petition.

The following month Council was informed that the applicant had requested the VCGR to adjourn the hearing date indefinitely. Although it appears likely the hotel's proprietors withdrew the application on business grounds, comments by interview participants indicates that community members opposing the venue were buoyed by this turn of events,

interpreting the action as a victory for the community,

> But we had an active part in not wanting to increase the number of poker machines in the township … Today we've had a really good response. It doesn't mean that it won't be tried again down the track but we've certainly had a good effort in doing the initial halt of that occurring in our township. Pete

The application for the 30 machines at the Buttercross hotel was again briefly set in motion when in June 2012 the hotel owners indicated they would be proceeding with the application. The response from the community to this news was again rapid and oppositional. The newly formed combined management committee for the community house and the Buttercross Community Building Initiative (CBI) immediately called a meeting to inform the community and gauge community sentiment. The meeting was well attended by both community members and workers involved in the township and those present indicated an intention to oppose the application. A month later, the applicant indicated to council that they would not be proceeding with the proposal. A newspaper headline captured the community sentiment when it proclaimed: "Community 'wins' in Buttercross pokies battle" (CR14, 2012, July 30).

Community opposition to the expansion of poker machine gambling was reinforced in December 2011 when an application by the bowls club to increase their number of poker machines from 40 to 50, also initiated an episode of community reaction. Council also opposed the application on the grounds it would be "detrimental to the well-being" of the local Buttercross community and the wider municipality. In an article in the local media the manager of the bowls club indicated the extent of community sentiment against the proposal, when he acknowledged the "fierce community opposition to increasing the number of machines from 40 to 50" (CR13, 2012, May 10).

The strength and speed of the community responses to the 3 applications suggests community sentiment against the expansion of poker machine gambling within Buttercross

was strong. This contention is supported by the analysis of interview data which identified multiple references to the community *having enough* poker machines, such as comments by Olivia, "I think we've got enough, more than enough", Dan, "yeah look what we've got is enough", Trevor, "so I wouldn't want to push them out of our township. However, I think we've got enough", Sally, "I wouldn't like any more - I wouldn't like the pub to put some in or the football club. I think enough is enough. I think that's adequate", and Bridget,

> I do recall people saying enough is enough. People weren't saying…we don't want pokies at all, they were just saying stop the hotel. That was quite clear and it was that, oh, we've got enough attitude.

Given the apparent community acceptance or tolerance of the poker machines within the club during the previous 15 years, the public opposition to the club's application marked in particular a significant turning point.

This section of the chapter examines these three waves of reaction, and the coalescing of a number of factors within the macro, socio-political and local community context that appear to have played a role in engendering and supporting community opposition. At a macro level, shifts occurred in some of the forces that supported the introduction and continuance of poker machine gambling in Victoria, particularly the regulatory framework which had disempowered the community(as represented by the Council), and supported the vested interests of government and industry. At the community level, shifts within the way power and knowledge regarding poker machines was distributed appear to have shaped these periods of reaction against applications and provided agency to community. The perceived differences between club- and hotel-based poker machines, and ideological conceptualisations of community, also appear to have played a role in triggering community reaction. However, notwithstanding these episodes of reaction, many of the power-structures identified in the previous sections remained. These continued to temper or suppress the incidence or success of community opposition to poker machines, and shaped the way the

community conceptualised and responded to applications, particularly the application by the club.

6.4.1 Romsey Hotel and the repositioning and empowerment of community

As discussed previously, during the decade after poker machines were first legalised in Victoria, the regulatory framework effectively excluded communities and local government from the application process, enabling the industry to expand without impedance. The introduction of the *Gambling Legislation (Responsible Gambling) Act 2000* provided some measure of power to local government and provided them with the opportunity to make submissions in poker machine applications. However, the interests of communities and local government continued to remain largely subordinate to those of the state government and industry (see Borrell, 2008a, pp. 306 – 312, for a detailed discussion regarding VCGR hearings). This position shifted markedly with the Supreme Court decision on the Romsey hotel decision which radically repositioned communities as active agents in poker machine applications (McDonald & Ollerenshaw, under review). The following discussion draws heavily from McDonald and Ollerenshaw's (under review) analysis of the community campaign in Romsey and the implications of the Supreme Court's decision.

This case began in 2004 in the rural Victorian township of Romsey when the owner of the town's only hotel applied to the then-named VCGR to install poker machines. The application generated a significant and sustained campaign of community action opposing their introduction. The community stance was supported by the Council. The hotelier's application was refused by the VCGR, and the hotel owner sought a review of the decision through the Victorian Civil Appeals Tribunal (VCAT). The Tribunal subsequently approved the hotel as suitable for poker machine gambling. Contending that VCAT had ignored evidence of strong community opposition, the Council took the matter to the Supreme Court of Victoria. The Court ruled that VCAT "erred in law when it disregarded the evidence of community opposition to the proposed introduction of gaming machines" (Summary of

Judgement, 2008). The matter was returned to VCAT, and on 12 November, 2009, VCAT overturned the decision by the VCGR.

The success of Romsey had two key effects across the State of Victoria, both of which can be understood in terms of critical theory. Firstly, the Romsey case went some way to redressing power imbalances between community and the powerful alliance of government and industry. The legal precedent created by Romsey repositioned communities as legitimate and powerful participants in the poker machine application process. As McDonald and Ollerenshaw (under review) note,

> This decision established a legal precedent for the State of Victoria, and recognised the voice of communities and local governments in planning approvals for EGMs. This policy shift shows that in a genuinely democratic state, the power of individuals, groups or organisations – however dominant – is never absolute (p. 19).

Secondly, the Romsey decision created a sense of empowerment and optimism throughout other communities and local governments within the State of Victoria; they too could successfully take on the powerful poker machine industry. A point noted by Community worker, Anna,

> Ever since Romsey, communities have been spurred on with the idea that it's worthwhile. What you've seen is the community in Jan Juc fought pretty hard and those machines didn't go ahead, and the community in Castlemaine is fighting hard. In Laurimar the council fought hard and they won. Anna

As Anna points out, a number of other successful campaigns have been waged in Victoria since Romsey.

Although the Romsey decision resulted in a partial redressing of the power imbalances between subordinate community groups and the state, the legislative framework remains adversarial, legalistic and prohibitively expensive, and these forces continue to work to undermine the power of communities and local government to participate fully and equally in

venue applications. For example, despite receiving no direct revenue from poker machine gambling, councils incur significant costs when they fund and resource staff to make representations regarding venue applications at the VCGLR. These costs escalate substantially if councils elect to seek to have VCAT review a VCGLR decision, as this process invariably entails engaging legal representation, the commissioning of reports, and engaging of expert witnesses. As examples, McDonald and Ollerenshaw (under review) noted that the costs Shire Council in pursuing the Romsey hotel case was an estimated $650,000 (p. 17); while it was reported that the costs to the Finchley Council of a VCAT appeal against the establishment of a poker machine venue in the community of Dale Hill was $225,000 (CR15, 2012, April 10). Not all councils are in a position or willing to add such substantive costs to their operational budgets:

> I don't know. I think just in the Dale Hill case, the thing I will say is the ability for local governments to respond to these things really varies on whether your council will resource you. We're lucky here, where the council has said do what it takes to fight an appropriate fight, because they very much - one of the councillors words were in the council meeting was, we're drawing a line in the sand, enough is enough. Not all councils have those resources at hand. Bridget

Furthermore, the highly legalistic and adversarial nature of VCGLA and VCAT hearings can result in council officers, community members and expert witnesses being subjected to intense and highly stressful cross-examination. This was observed on a number of occasions by the researcher during data collection. Council officer Bridget made a similar point,

> I think it's hard for communities to engage in a process that is one where you have legal experts and subject matter experts and you get cross examined in an adversarial manner. It's not an easy process to engage in, or understand. Or then be up on a witness stand and expect to have evidence behind the statements in terms of studies that have been done on this thing. You know, it's a big ask.

6.4.2 Shifts in community knowledge and awareness mobilising resistance

The education of key community leaders and community members regarding the complex issues associated with poker machine gambling also appears to have played an important role in empowering community opposition to local applications. Discussing the mobilization of support for social movements, Edwards and McCarthy (2004) note the importance of public awareness and public education (p. 140), in a similar vein, McDonald and Ollerenshaw (under review) identified the accessing and synthesising of information was a crucial factor in the success of the community campaign in Romsey. Critical theorists, Kincheloe and McLaren (2008) also draw attention to the power of knowledge in their discussion of critical enlightenment (see section 3.1). As discussed in chapters 2 and 3, while arrangements regarding poker machine gambling privilege some and disadvantage others, they may not be so understood or described. Individuals may accept current arrangements when they are supported by discourses and ideologies (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008) which downplay or shift the blame for harms, or which emphasise the benefits of poker machine gambling (see for example Borrell, 2008b; Orford, 2011). The critical theoretical concept of enlightenment, as outlined by Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008 (see chapter 3), involves identifying the competing power-interests between groups and individuals within society, and identifying within these, those groups or individuals who benefit and those who are disadvantaged by the arrangements.

In Buttercross, the enlightenment of some within the community occurred through a number of overlapping processes, including involvement of committee members in a local project aimed at reducing problem gambling, and the education efforts of Council and health and welfare staff. Additionally, given that the effects of Romsey reverberated throughout the state (McDonald & Ollerenshaw, under review) around the time of the first episodes of community reaction in Buttercross, it is also conceivable that the well-publicised events in Romsey played a part in the education and empowerment of workers and some community members within the township (see comments by interview participant Anna, in section 6.4.1).

In the 12 months or so prior to the hotel's 2009 application, poker machine gambling had been a focus of the Buttercross Community Building Initiative (CBI) committee. As noted previously, CBIs were state government projects aimed at developing community facilities and services, which were piloted across a number of Victorian communities. In many cases, committees were comprised of community members who were well connected within their local community and held positions of influence.

Issues associated with poker machine gambling had come to the CBI's attention through the group being the recipient of a project grant from the Victorian Department of Justice in 2008. The grant of $120,000 (provided over two years) was aimed at assisting local communities to develop alternative recreational activities to gambling. According to Council staff member Bridget, the awarding of the grant was significant in orientating the members of the CBI to issues associated with harmful gambling in their community. Bridget noted that prior to this time, poker machine gambling was not on the committee's list of priorities. In fact, committee members were initially uninterested in applying for the grant as they did not consider gambling to be an issue within the community.

The CBI committee became drawn into the hotel's application for poker machines when it was revealed the application contained a proposal by the hotel to make significant funds (up to $40,000 per annum) for community projects available to the CBI (CR22). Members of the committee considered the proposal, and despite the significance of the funds on offer, resolved not to accept the community benefit contribution. Furthermore, as noted earlier, members of the committee resolved to form an action group to oppose the application. These actions illustrate how, in the space of two years, this influential group had moved from a position of indifference regarding the issue of poker machine gambling, to a high level of awareness and readiness to take action.

> So the project I was talking about before really sparked a little group made up of some of those people and some more people came on-board to think up a community response to the application. Bridget

This core group of well-connected and respected community members who had become informed regarding the issues associated with poker machines then set about raising community awareness and informing the rest of the community.

This awareness-raising was supported by Council and key staff in the health and welfare sector:

> I was involved in terms of providing information about what the application was and the information I know in general about gaming and what that means. But that group got very passionate and very organised.   Bridget

> I did provide some resources … that I thought might be of use to the community. I did some social marketing things that I thought might be useful to help the community have a voice and speak to other members of the community about why that [the introduction of poker machine gambling at the hotel] might not be desirable. Anna

A flier produced by Anna highlighted poker machine losses within the local community and reframed those losses in terms of disadvantage and damage to the community. This challenged the more common discourses around poker machines and problem gambling which positioned poker machines as a community asset, downplaying the issue of gambling harm and marginalising those experiencing gambling harm from the broader community (see chapter 7 for a detailed discussion).

Finchley Council supported the community opposition to poker machines through the resourcing of staff who, as noted earlier, were able to provide information and advice to community groups. As noted earlier, the Council also allocated significant resources to fund legal campaigns where communities opposed new venues or the expansion of poker machine gambling in existing venues. Council's proactive stance appears to have had an

energising impact on the community and was recognised and appreciated by community

members such as Charles:

> We had the support, when we asked for it, of local council. They, I think, tested the waters
> and felt that the community didn't want more gaming machines, and so they advocated on
> behalf of the community. Council, I think, did a very good job. The social planning
> department - and in recent times Buttercross Council has been very effective at tapping
> community sentiment and community feelings about those sorts of social issues, and has
> been much more supportive Charles

However, even with these shifts in community knowledge and awareness, the research also

revealed some limitations to its efficacy, and discovered instances in which misinformation or

lack of information regarding poker machines had the capacity to encourage an acceptance

of the status quo and suppress community action. A number of interview participants

demonstrated significant misconceptions about the regulation of poker machine gambling

and the extent of the harms and benefits associated it. For example, as the quotations below

illustrate, some participants were under the impression that the township was protected by a

cap on the number of poker machines, or that if poker machines were approved for the hotel,

the hotel would share the bowls club's poker machines, meaning that the net number of

machines in the community would not rise:

> No. I didn't need to [get involved with the community campaign]. I knew it wouldn't happen
> [introduction of poker machines in the hotel]. I think having my other knowledge of my other
> background and knowing what the cap is and all that side of it, I think I didn't need to worry
> about it. Cath

> I didn't know whether that would actually increase the number or not because I think a lot of
> the time the powers that be sort of put a certain amount into an area. If they thought perhaps
> the bowls club wasn't performing as well as what they could be, that when someone else gets
> a licence that they may sort of adjust it a bit by perhaps taking some off the bowls and putting
> in the hotel or whether they gave them a total new amount. Perhaps, I don't know what the
> scenario would be there, but I would be against any additional number. Jack

In Victoria, the state government can be understood to contribute to these community

misconceptions through processes that restrict advocacy work by employees of some

government funded programs. Workers are often restricted from speaking out against government policy, a point highlighted in the following comment by one community worker, "look, I wasn't working directly there because in my role, I'm actually not supposed to do that kind of thing". Given the powerful role that well-informed workers can play in information provision and advocacy with communities, such restrictions can enable inaccurate discourses around gambling and problem gambling to persist, and can therefore be potent inhibitors of change to the status quo.

As detailed in chapter 2, the production and distribution of knowledge related to gambling and problem gambling is largely resourced or commissioned by government and industry (Adams, 2008; Borrell, 2008a, p. 333; McGowan, 2004), both of whom have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. The preference of both government and industry to fund positivistic research focused on measurement, cognition and treatment of problem gambling has contributed to the pathologising of problem gambling and the creation and maintenance of discourses which position responsibility for gambling related harms with the end user (Borrell, 2008a). Other research priorities, such as problem gambling prevalence studies, further contribute to the understatement of gambling-related harm and the focus upon, the 'responsible gambling' discourse. The ways by which these wider discourses are reproduced and reinterpreted at the community level are a key focus in the following chapter.

The point is made here however that government and industry continue to wield significant control over the production and distribution of gambling-related knowledge. Consistent with the critical theoretical concept of hegemony, that knowledge discourages community dissent, encourages the acceptance of current poker machine gambling arrangements and, particularly when poker machines are located in clubs, endorses the view that the status quo is "as good as it gets".

6.4.3 Community ideology and the contrasting conceptualisation of hotel and club based machines

Evidence suggests community opposition to the three applications was also linked to variations in the ways in which hotel- and club-based poker machines were conceptualised by community members, and positioned in relation to understandings of the construct of community. This thesis has clearly established that very powerful and shared understandings around the notion of community were highly evident within the Buttercross township (see chapters 3 and 5). The discussion of the community's opposition to the bowls club's establishment of poker machine gambling within the club also highlighted how these shared understandings of the construct of community and the ideological positioning of poker machines as a threat to community performed an important role in initiating and sustaining the Alliance's opposition (see section 6.2). Earlier parts of this chapter described how, despite this opposition by large segments of the community, once poker machine gambling was established, their placement within the club assisted to enmesh the machines within ideological conceptualisations of community and contributed to the acceptance and legitimation of their presence. However, this acceptance of the bowls club's machines did not extend to a generalised acceptance of poker machines, and distinctions continued to be made between the club's operationalization of poker machines and those in other venues within the municipality (see section 6.3.3). Hotel-based poker machines, in particular, were conceptualised by many within Buttercross as fundamentally different to club based machines. This was a significant and recurring theme within the research and is illustrated by the following quotes from interview participants:

> …thinking of it that way that would purely be seen as revenue raising for profit. Whereas perhaps at the bowls club it's revenue raising but it's a facility which may be different. So maybe I don't mind when pokies are linked to sporting facilities but not to making a profit… Dominic

> Look, as I say, I think if the pub got them I'd be a little bit sad, but I think with the bowling club having them, that's good. Maybe the footy club because it's a club, as well. Sally

> I don't think they should be in pubs. I definitely disagree with them being in pubs. Clubs are different, they're a social - pubs a different, go around and have a beer. That's just my opinion that they shouldn't be in pubs. Mike

While club-based machines were perceived as benefiting community, through the provision of improved facilities, donation to community groups and so forth, those operated by hotels were viewed as benefiting only the business owners. With gambling profits perceived as flowing out of the community, evaluating hotel applications did not involve the same level of trading-off perceived benefits against perceived harms. This perception of hotel venues as incongruent with conceptualisations of community effectively positioned them outside the community boundary and appears to have been a strong mobilising force in community opposition to the hotel's bid to secure poker machines. These perceived distinctions between hotel and club based poker machines are examined again in chapter 7 in relation to dominant gambling discourses and in chapter 8 in relation to community benefit.

This externalising of the hotel from conceptualisations of community appears to have been further reinforced by the fact that the hotel owners resided outside the Buttercross township and the fact that the hotel was just one of a number of hotels the owners operated. Although the hotel was physically within the community, external ownership appears to have been a factor in the exclusion of the hotel from community conceptualisations, and consequently to the type and strength of the community reaction to the application:

> The owners of the Buttercross Hotel are not local owners. That was never expressed to me in any way, but maybe that was part of it. I think it's actually proposing a different thing on the ground to experience from a community's perspective, turning your local pub into a pokie venue. Bridget

Given the close-knit nature of Buttercross and the already noted reluctance of individuals to jeopardise harmonious relationships with fellow community members, it was perhaps easier for individuals to stand up and oppose an application when they did not have close associations with the owners. This positioning of hotel-based machines as being somehow

fundamentally different to club-based machines appears to have enabled community

members to see the hotel's proposed poker-machine gambling as a threat to community,

while largely continuing to accept the current machines within the club. This is evidenced in

the careful distinction made by the CBI group regarding their opposition to the hotel's

proposal:

> We had probably about two or three people that wrongly alluded that we didn't want any
> pokies in the town. We set them straight. We said we've got poker machines here in the
> town, we don't believe that we have the need for any more than what we've already got.
> Pete

Here again these actions could be understood as a reluctance to undermine the cohesive

vision of community by being seen to go against the bowls club or by being seen to criticise

their use of poker machines. Also as discussed previously, this acceptance of the current

arrangement is also to very likely to be related to a pragmatic recognition that the presence

of machines within the club is not something that can be altered.

While evidence suggests that this perceived distinction between club- and hotel-based

machines helped to mobilise and maintain community opposition to the hotel applications, it

appears they concomitantly undermined opposition (particularly public opposition) to the

club's application to extend poker machine gambling. The street stalls, petition, and other

public displays of opposition in response to the hotel's application, were initially absent in the

opposition to the bowls club's application. Later, when petitions and a community survey

were circulated prior to a VCAT review of the VCGLR's decision (a review requested by

Council), the community response appeared to be more restrained.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the reaction of community members to the establishment and

expansion of poker machine gambling within their community, and the forces that support or

restrict community participation in this process (see research question 5). This chapter has

described how poker machine gambling within Buttercross has progressed through three distinct phases: insinuation, legitimation and reaction. Divergent community responses to the introduction and ongoing presence of poker machines were exposed by the research, including support, indifference, acceptance, and opposition. This chapter has contended that these divergent community responses were shaped by powerful ideological conceptualisations of community in interactions with the range of forces within the macro and local community contexts. The differing ways in which community members conceptualised community and positioned poker machines as either an enhancement or threat to that conceptualisation, reinforced the notion that community is a contested construct (Blackshaw, 2010; Crow & Mah, 2012; Dempsey, 2002; Kenny, 2011; Mooney and Neal, 2009) and illustrated the range of ways in which community members differed in their interpretation; acceptance and sense making of the ideologies associated with community (see Richards, 1990, p. 106).

The chapter has depicted how shared interests of government and of a powerful gambling industry operated within a range of neo-liberal based policies to engage with networks of community relationships, and how a deep desire to maintain harmonious community relationships facilitated the insinuation and legitimation of poker machine gambling in this community. Research findings presented in this chapter established how the physical placement of the poker machines within a community club placed them at the centre of community life. This association with a community club enabled the machines to appropriate the positive connotations of community, and assisted their enmeshment within ideological conceptualisations of community. This enmeshing of the club and its poker machines with community ideology supports the hegemonic interests of the poker machine industry, the government and venues, legitimating the presence of poker machines within the community and assisting to construct poker machines as a normal and unremarkable arrangement (Crossley, 2005, pp. 113 – 117).

This chapter also explored recent episodes of community opposition to the expansion of poker machine gambling within Buttercross which have disrupted this hegemony. During these periods, community members perceived venue applications as threatening ideological conceptualisations of community and reacted against them. The application of a critical theory lens revealed the ways in which forces within the local context (and within the broader socio-political milieu at the time each occurred) were able to support or discourage the mobilisation of community action against poker machines.

The almost unquestioning belief that club-based poker machines are fundamentally different to hotel based machines was found to be an underlying force driving community action against the hotel's application for poker machines, and that these same forces impeded community action against the expansion of poker machine gambling within the bowls club. Multiple factors in the macro and local context appear to have contributed to this sentiment and shaped the community agency regarding this issue. These included the poker machine industry, legislative framework and the policies of the state.

The following chapter builds on this analysis to explore in more detail the way members of this community interpreted and responded to the presence and varying effects of poker machine gambling and the role played by dominant gambling discourses in shaping those responses.

7

Reproducing and Reinterpreting Dominant Gambling Discourses

7.0 Introduction

This chapter explores the ways in which community members respond to and interpret the various effects of poker machine gambling and harmful gambling in the township. There are strong links with the evidence presented in chapters 5 and 6 that the interplay between the location of the poker machines within a club, networks of community relationships and the various benefits derived from the machines, powerfully influence the way many in the township respond to their presence. Of particular interest is the way discourses associated with gambling and harmful gambling within the wider social context are reproduced and reconceptualised within the local community and the role these discourses play in shaping community responses and attitudes. This addresses one of the key research questions (Question.4, listed in chapter 1).

This analysis draws strong links with earlier analysis of the way residents narratively and conceptually characterise their community as strong, cohesive, supportive and independent (see chapters 3 and 5). The interplay between these conceptualisations of community and dominant gambling discourses is a key focus. Moreover, the complex and nuanced dynamic

between dominant gambling discourses and a range of broader sociopolitical forces are also explored. These include the shared interests of the gambling industry and the state, economic and political policies inspired by neo-liberalism, and the framework regulating poker machines (all discussed previously in chapters 5 and 6). Maintaining the critical theoretical focus of this thesis, the role of discourses in the production, reproduction and maintenance of power and social inequalities is the main subject of the chapter.

Additionally this chapter will present evidence of a new discourse – one which frames gambling clubs as community benefactors. It will be contended that the identification and description of the gambling club as constituting a community benefactor discourse was only possible through the approach of this project to undertake the research within a community context.

7.1 Benefits and adverse impacts of poker machine gambling in Buttercross

As noted in chapter 5, the installation of poker machines in the bowls club resulted in various advantages for the club and broader community, including expansion of the club's existing role as a focal point for community celebrations and sporting and social activity. Existing connections between the club and the community were also extended as revenue derived from poker machine gambling enabled the club to provide a range of financial and in-kind community benefits. These included financial sponsorships and donations to sporting clubs, groups and individuals, provision of free meeting-space to a range of other clubs and organisations, and multiple smaller in-kind donations of products such as meal vouchers. These extensive connections between the bowls club and numerous other clubs, organisations and individuals within the township were documented in chapter 5 and visually represented in a word cloud (see chapter 5, Figure 2). Chapter 6 contended that these multiple benefits from the poker machines, in combination with their association with a

community club, assisted to enmesh them within ideological conceptualisations of community, thus supporting the acceptance and legitimation of their presence.

A number of community members interviewed for this research proposed that the various benefits stemming from the poker machines had been achieved without any significant trade-off in community harm. The contention of these community members was that poker machines in Buttercross were in some way more benign than in other communities as the particular features of both the Buttercross community and the bowls club mitigated harmful gambling. This research did not measure the prevalence of what is classified as 'problem' gambling nor attempt to make any comparisons between incidents of problem poker machine gambling in Buttercross and other communities. Nevertheless, accounts of harmful gambling and gambling-related harm described by interview participants were collated and analysed. These accounts revealed eighty-nine descriptions of harmful poker machine gambling and its impacts, forty-nine of which were strongly linked to the local community and the bowls club. This analysis challenges the perception that the introduction of poker machine gambling to the community had occurred with minimal adverse impacts. It is quite plausible that the hidden nature of problem gambling, and the difficulty some participants experienced in the identification of problem gambling, contributes to some community members either not seeing problem gambling or not recognising it when they do see it. The hidden nature of problem gambling and its association with shame and stigma are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

There was great variation in the descriptions of harmful gambling documented. Some accounts were current, others occurred at various times during the preceding decade. Selected descriptions indicated an on-going issue with gambling. Analysis revealed that where descriptions focused on the impact of harmful gambling on specific individuals, the likelihood that four of these accounts related to the one individual and that individual's family. Descriptions of problem gambling provided by the interview participants also ranged in

detail. A number comprised thorough accounts of the gambling of family, friends and colleagues, while others provided briefer descriptions or described observations of poker machine gambling that troubled interview participants.

Selected accounts of harmful gambling are presented throughout this chapter where they provide evidence of the ways dominant gambling discourses were reproduced within the local community to make sense of and explain the occurrence of gambling harm. Simultaneously, these accounts also provided evidence of the ways individuals and their networks were negatively affected by the existence of poker machines in the local community.

Consistent with the diverse impacts of harmful gambling documented chapter 2, the adverse impacts described by interview participants included financial hardship and loss of assets (Law, 2005; Productivity Commission, 1999, 2010), the breakdown and impairment of relationships and friendships (Dickson-Swift et al., 2005; Kalischuk et al., 2006; Krishnan & Orford, 2002; Productivity Commission, 2010; Law, 2005), cases of child neglect (Darbyshire et al., 2001; Tu'itahi et al., 2004) and impacts on emotional and mental health (de Castella et al., 2011; Delfabbro, 2011; Lin et al., 2010; Productivity Commission, 1999). The ripple effects of harmful gambling on family, friends and work colleagues was also evident in these accounts and is consistent with assertions by the Productivity Commission (1999) that for every person experiencing problems with their gambling, an average of 7.3 "significant others" are affected (p. 7.34).

It is clear that these accounts of gambling related harm form part of this community's narrative – the story inhabitants tell themselves about the kind of community they have created. The way the stories are framed as they are told and retold provided insight into how gambling-related harm was both understood and responded to in this community. As noted in the introduction, what is of particular interest in this chapter is the way these responses to

the benefits and adverse effects of poker machine gambling are mediated through a complex dynamic of dominant gambling discourses interfacing with community features and broader macro sociopolitical forces.

7.2 Critical theory: Discourse

Consistent with the underlying theoretical perspective of this thesis, the investigation of discourse within this chapter takes a critical approach. The concept of discourse as it relates to critical theory was introduced in chapter 3 as one of Kincheloe & McLaren's (2008) eleven crucial concepts in their *Idiosyncratic Interpretation of Critical Theory and Critical Research.* Although the concept of discourse is used in differing ways, in critical social theory, largely due to the work of French social theorist Michel Foucault, discourse has come to refer to particular ways of talking about an issue or subject (Crossley, 2005; Hall, 1992; Orford, 2011). Foucault (1972) contended that discourses are, "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (p. 49), that is, that ways of taking about an issue or subject are not simply an expression of the way an issue is understood, but that discourses actually *construct* that understanding (Burr, 1995; Hall, 2001). This is similar to Kincheloe & McLaren's assertions (discussed in chapter 3) that language is not merely a tool for describing the world, "a neutral and objective conduit of description" (2008, p. 412), but rather, language is fundamental in the construction of our view the world (p. 412). This is consistent with Cameron's (2001) assertion that "reality is 'discursively constructed', made and remade as people talk about things using the 'discourses' they have access to" (p. 15).

Because discourses can shape our understanding of an issue by constructing issues or subjects in a certain way, discourse is intrinsically implicated in power and control. Illustrating this, Burr (1995) describes how power inequality between men and women is upheld by "prevailing discourses of femininity", while discourses which present capitalism and education as providing everyone with equal opportunities work to support the

maintenance of the "greater wealth and opportunity of the (relatively powerful) middle class" (p. 55). Discussing dominant gambling discourses, Orford (2011) also contends that the way an issue is framed or understood can serve the interests of powerful groups within society, including the "interests of anti-gamblers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, or the interests of an expansionist gambling industry in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries" (p. 123).

In a large part, the power of discourses is derived not only from the way they construct an issue in certain ways, but also the ways in which those particular constructions or framings of the issue then become *naturalised* (Cameron, 2001; Crossley, 2005; Edwards, 1998; Fairclough, 1985). By *naturalising,* discourses present social constructions of an issue "not as the outcome of social practices that might be questioned or challenged, but simply as 'the way things are'" (Cameron, p. 123). As Edwards (1998) notes, the acceptance of a particular discursive interpretation of an issue as 'natural', discourages questioning or scrutiny of the discourse, and as a consequence it "remains 'unexamined'" (p. 69). Further, as Cameron notes: "naturalization obscures the fact that 'the way things are' is not inevitable or unchangeable. It both results from particular actions and serves particular interests" (2001, pp. 123). Accordingly, not only do the discourses relating to an issue shape the way that issue is constructed and thought and talked about, but the very acceptance of these discourses as being normal and natural also limits the possibility of the issue being thought about or constructed in any other way (Hall, 2001, p. 72). For example, framing harmful gambling as pathology or one of individual responsibility circumscribes the debate, and works to exclude other possible structural and situational factors which can contribute to gambling harms – as for example, the ways in which gambling is provided.

Understanding that the views of the powerful in society may be privileged over those who are disempowered, critical researchers concerned with matters of discourse therefore seek to tease out and draw attention to the ways in which particular issues or groups are

discursively constructed. Often the matter of much of this research is written documentation, including policy, reports, textbooks, media reports, research, and transcripts of speeches by influential figures, and so forth (see for example the gambling discourse analysis conducted by Orford, 2011, pp. 123 – 146; and Borrell, 2008b).

Of further consideration for critical researchers are the circumstances that have led to the production and sustaining of particular discourses (van Dijk, 2011, pp. 33 – 34). Who writes or collates the policy; who funds and conducts the research; who briefs the media and controls what is disseminated; and whose voices and interests do all of these reflect and serve? Furthermore: "Why have certain discourses been produced (and not others)? What social conditions have allowed certain discourses to emerge and not others?" (Ruiz Ruiz, 2009, Para. 44). Or as Borrell (2008b) eloquently states in her discussion of dominant discourses around gambling and gambling harm: "*who* gets to decide what is knowledge: Who are the gatekeepers carrying the keys of legitimacy? What are the conduits through which they speak? What are they saying? (p. 196).

7.2.1 Dominant discourses related to gambling and gambling harm

There are a number of recognized discourses related to poker machine gambling and gambling harm, and in recent years these have been the focus of analysis by researchers. For example, Borrell's (2008b) analysis of the location and nature of 'agency' related to gambling in industry reports and selected academic research related to gambling (primarily involving poker machines) revealed that "individualistic" discourses were replicated and reinforced through industry documents and gambling research (p. 213). Research by Reith (2007) also discusses the discursive construction of harmful gambling as pathology and an issue of individual responsibility, linking this construction to neo-liberalism and the construct of the sovereign consumer. In a similar vein, Livingstone and Woolley (2007) discussed what they termed the 'business as usual' discourse. This discourse, they contend, is also founded in part by "over-extending the sense of consumer sovereignty" in relation to

gambling (p. 362) thus positioning the individual gambler's actions as the causal agent of gambling harms and hence the focus of intervention.

In 'An Unsafe Bet' Orford (2001) lists eleven separate historical and present-day discourses associated with gambling. Five of these frame gambling in a negative manner as "*immoral, irrational, exploitative, distasteful and destructive*" (p. 145), and Orford describes the ways in which these discourses motivated opposition to the liberalisation and expansion of gambling as early as the eighteenth century and continue to play a role in present gambling debates. Orford notes that the discourse which provides the most powerful resistance to further expansion of gambling currently is that of gambling as a destructive force "*which views gambling as pathological for individuals and as detrimental to public health*" (p. 145). Each of the remaining six discourses discussed by Orford frame gambling in a positive manner as "character building" (p. 145) and as,

> *a harmless form of amusement, something that enhances cultural and economic life,*
> *something that citizens should be free to choose without interference, which is a matter of*
> *normal unrestricted business, and as an activity which consumers can engage in responsibly.*
> (p. 145 – 146).

Orford argues that the last five of these discourses in particular combine to "*provide powerful support for gambling expansion*" (p. 145).

7.2.2 Shifting the focus to community-level discourse analysis

This enquiry sought to explore whether these dominant gambling discourses within society (present in policy, reports, research, media and so forth), were reproduced within the context of the Buttercross community, and if so, to what extent and with what effect. While the concept of community level discourse analysis is not new, examination of the literature revealed the focus of such research to be most commonly applied to broader notions or levels of community, including 'online or virtual communities' and 'communities of practice' such as 'the academic community' or the 'legal community'. In seeking, for example, to

understand ways to facilitate change in agricultural practices, Fleming and Vanclay (2009) explored discourses present in the Tasmanian agricultural community; while Barnard's (2009) research examined the ways dominant and alternate discourses shaped conceptualisations of depression and sexuality amongst members of the lesbian community (p. 373).

Although less common, research explicitly examining discourse within the context of bounded communities has been conducted. For example, Stapelton and Wilson (2010) explicitly sought to shift the focus to community-level discourse in their exploration of political life (p. 312), drawing research participants from "urban communities" in East and West Belfast (p. 314). Also of relevance was Stapelton and Wilson's interest in "the micro and macro contexts of community-based political discourse" (p. 312). Similarly, Wendt (2009) explored the power and influences of discourses in relation to domestic violence in a number of small rural communities in the Barossa Valley. Of particular relevance to this research's focus on gambling and community is Borrell's (2008a) discussion of a number of studies and community consultations she coordinated and researched in which she contrasts the use of dominant gambling discourses articulated by community representatives and local poker machine venue representatives (pp. 235 – 252).

The data drawn on for the present study primarily consisted of transcribed interviews, local media reports of poker machine applications, and documentation and reports associated with those applications. As outlined in chapter 4, the transcripts were generated from interviews conducted with community members and a number of others with an interest in the issue of poker machine gambling in the Buttercross township. Media articles related to Buttercross were collected by the researcher and a key informant and community member; the reports within the data were accessed from the website of the VCGLR.

In determining criteria for the identification of a discourse within the community context (as opposed to comments reflecting dominant discourses), the researcher was guided by Cameron (2001). Discussing the identification of discourses in data analysis, Cameron (2001) stresses the importance of establishing the presence of "consistent *patterns*" of talking about or framing an issue in the material being analysed (p. 129). Cameron emphasises that discourse analysis is "not just a matter of picking out isolated examples for comment", as it is the *repetition* of the same way of talking about or framing an issue "in many instances and on many occasions, that does the work of naturalizing a particular view of reality" (p. 29).

The processes undertaken to thematically analyse the data for this research project were described in chapter 4 and will not be reiterated here, except to note that it was the identification of "consistent patterns" (Cameron, 2001, p. 129) in the way community members framed issues of poker machine gambling and gambling harms that established the existence of dominant and new gambling discourses within the community context. To support these assertions, many examples of dominant gambling discourses are collated within this chapter.

Analysis of research data (predominately interview transcripts, but also media articles and documentation associated with venue applications) led to the identification of five discourses that dominated the way poker machines and harmful poker machine gambling was talked and written about in Buttercross. These were: i) the discourse that frames problem gambling as an individual pathology (see discussions by for example Borrell, 2008a, 2008b; Orford, 2011; Reith, 2007, 2008); ii) the responsible gambling discourse (Borrell, 2008a, 2008b; Orford, 2011; Reith, 2007, 2008); and iii) the cultural and economic enhancement discourse (Orford, 2011, pp. 138 – 140). Two additional discourse were also identified which are particular to poker machine gambling and which were not part of Orford's typology or specifically articulated by other researchers: iv) the gambling club as community benefactor

discourse; which does not appear to have been documented in the literature to date; and, to a lesser extent, v) the discourse of product safety, a competing discourse which challenges the validity of the previous four discourses. While work by Livingstone & Woolley (2007), Livingstone and Adams (2011), and Woolley (2009) has clearly promoted the product safety discourse, it does not appear to have been the subject of discourse analysis as such.

The following five sections of this chapter will examine each of these discourses in detail, drawing on the data analysis, the work of the academics discussed above, and discourse scholars including, Burr (1995), Cameron (2001), Hall (1992, 2001), and van Dijk (2011). These sections will also examine how these discourses frame understandings of poker machine gambling and problem poker machine gambling, and shape responses both within the local community context and in the wider sociopolitical milieu (see for example, Bacchi, 2009; Borrell, 2008a, 2008b; Korn, Gibbins & Azmier, 2003; Livingstone & Woolley, 2007; Reith, 2007).

7.3 Cultural and economic enhancement discourse

The replication and reproduction of Orford's (2011) "cultural and economic enhancement discourse" was clearly evident in Buttercross. According to Orford this discourse links the development of gambling opportunities with enhanced recreational and cultural activities and economic development (pp. 138 – 140).

This linking of the club's operation of poker machines and the enhancement of recreational opportunities in this township was common amongst interview participants. Club Participant 2 highlighted the township's previous dearth of entertainment and how this had been turned around through poker machine gambling:

> I would hope it's here for entertainment purposes. The town is very restricted with just what it had to offer, so it's enabled us to provide a venue for entertainment purposes which we wouldn't have done otherwise. A good meeting place for people and the town.

Similarly, Club Participant 8 and club patron Trevor also drew attention to the sport, recreation and dining opportunities that had been either developed or enhanced through poker machine revenue:

> Well I think you know for our age, for my age people and the people that play bowls, I think it's wonderful. I think it's really good that they've got, you know, so many teams and they encourage younger ones to come and play for a special occasion and things like that…The bowls club is really, really good. Club Participant 8

> Well, when they did the renovations, and they spent a substantial amount of money in upgrading the existing facilities and doing extensions to the building, and everyone was looking with interest to sort of see what we were going to get as an outcome, and certainly the facilities have improved considerably on what they were, and that's improved the dining facilities and everything. Trevor

Additionally, a number of interview participants including some closely associated with the bowls club, and some from the wider community, noted the economic benefits of the club, particularly the creation of local employment and generation of trade for local businesses:

> Staffing wise our wages bill the previous financial year was in excess of $700,000…That's also a lot of money generated for the community…So, probably the main things, it has facilitated the facilities which we are able to have for anyone who wants to use them basically and the sporting side of it and plus the employment. Club Participant 5

> I do know quite a few of the staff who are local, which is lovely, because it means that they don't have to drive two hours to go to work. They live around the corner and it must be a really good job for them... Any industry that creates a job - particularly in a pleasant environment - is a positive for the town… It's just another industry that creates jobs, I think. Sally

> …and some of the things have a financial spin off for us supporting the local businesses, traders. Club Participant 2

> It employs people. It employs people in our community so you've got employment. … and then there's the flow on of providing food from the shops if they shop locally. So it's like that flow on effect of putting into the community in that sense. Tina

As Livingstone and Adams (2011) note, clubs in particular promote their financing of community facilities and activities as justification of their use of poker machine gambling (p. 5). Illustrating this promotion, Livingstone and Adams (2011) noted that "at least 149 submissions of 422 in total" made to the Australian Productivity Commission's most recent enquiry into gambling, emphasised the development of community facilities and activities (p. 5).

At the broader societal level, the regulatory regime governing poker machines reinforces this discourse. Examination of the VCGLR's *Gambling Application, Approval of Premises for Gaming*, (which must be completed by applications for new venues and those applying for additional machines) reveals an emphasis on 'economic benefits' (VCGLR, 2013a). While some focus in the required criteria is placed on assessing problem gambling risks to prospective patrons and provisions for managing 'problem gambling', greater emphasis is placed on the 'positive' economic benefits of the application. These include employment, infrastructure investment, supply contracts, tourism and how revenue will be distributed within the municipality (VCGLR, 2013a).

In recent years economic analysis has challenged aspects of this discourse. In particular, the assertion that poker machines create net jobs has largely been discredited, with analysis by Pinge (2008) and SACES (2005a) demonstrating that poker machine expenditure is derived from a transfer in spending from other sectors of the economy and thus results in a shifting of employment from one sector to another. Their findings were supported by the Productivity Commission's (2010) assertions that "the gambling industries do not create *net* employment benefits, because they divert employment from one part of the economy to another" (p. 6.1). Furthermore, a study assessing the impact of poker machines on local communities by SACES (2005a) found that in comparison to other sectors, the poker machine industry uses very little labour for every $1 million of turnover, employing 3.2 staff per $1 million of gambling income in comparison with liquor and beverage sales, retail, food and meals

sectors which each employ between 6.5 to 20.2 staff per $1 million of takings (p. 47). Similar

findings were also made by Pinge (2008), in analysis conducted in the regional Victorian city

of Bendigo.

However, in the local community context this discourse of cultural and economic

enhancement through gambling retains currency, predominantly as the enhanced facilities,

employment and other benefits are tangible and highly visible and reductions in employment

in associated industries are less evident. The acceptance of this discourse as self-evident

and commonsensical helps to insure that its validity was rarely questioned in the local

context. Although, as noted, this discourse is not always able to withstand closer scrutiny, its

power to retain currency despite contrary evidence lies in its having become *naturalized*

(Edwards, 1998, p. 69). As with many other discourses, it becomes part of accepted

community wisdom and taken-for-granted knowledge (Cameron, 2001, p. 123; Crossley,

2005, p. 61). This discourse supports the interests of state, industry and venues as it

positions poker machine gambling, as Sally said, as being "just another industry that creates

jobs", and one which does not simultaneously render visible the economic and cultural

detriment of poker machine gambling.

7.4 Gambling club as community benefactor discourse

Analysis of gambling discourses within Buttercross also revealed the existence of a major

discourse that does not appear to have been documented in the literature to date. This

discourse has been termed "the gambling club as community benefactor" discourse. This

finding extends Orford's (2011) typology, situating it within a local community setting. The

discourse is particularly apparent in contexts (such as Australia and New Zealand) where the

location of poker machines in community based clubs embeds them within communities and

establishes the community as a direct recipient of gambling benefits (see Adams, 2008, for a

detailed discussion of the New Zealand gambling context).

Orford's (2011) 'gambling as cultural and economic enhancement' discourse frames gambling as a source of economic benefit to the community, a provider of employment, and taxation revenue for good causes. It also frames gambling in terms of recreation and links it to other cultural activities (pp. 138 – 140). The discourse that frames the club as a community benefactor goes beyond describing gambling as providing both economic and cultural benefits, to position the club as almost a patron of the local community. In this sense the club has come to be viewed by many, as not just an integral part of this community, but as working for the community:

> I think they had a view of where they wanted to take the club…And, what they wanted, what they could provide for the area…And they could see the revenue from the machines being a catalyst to, to do that. Club Participant 5

> …that's big to be able to give out money of any sort really, as a donation, consistently, not just as a one off. They are doing it quite consistently. So I think that's really a good thing … Sally

> It employs people, that's another thing. They employ maybe a dozen people. So that's employment in the town for people. They apprentice quite a few young people as chefs in the kitchen. That's all a bonus. That work wouldn't be here otherwise. Letting the rooms out which there's cost to them for that, with power and so forth. They're quite generous with the letting out of the rooms. Very generous…It is a nice atmosphere. Club Participant 4

> We had a fete this year …and they donated some meal vouchers. A number of meal vouchers for our auction. So they support us in those ways. In the past as part of our Phys Ed some of their older group invite our students down as part of their PE. To learn how to play lawn bowls and have coached them in that too…

Chapter 5 described how the proceeds of the poker machines in the Buttercross Bowls Club are channelled into club facilities and services, and how these facilities are virtually given over to the community. The extent to which the community avails itself of the bowls club's facilities was illustrated through the presentation of a word cloud (see Figure 2) depicting the extensive use of the club's facilities made by numerous community groups and individuals. Interview participants from the Buttercross community expressed virtually universal pride in

the excellent dining and recreation facilities provided by the bowls club and accredited their

presence to the revenue from the poker machines. Financial contributions by the bowls club

(some real and some assumed) to community groups and individuals were also frequently

discussed by interview participants from the local community. The belief that the club's poker

machines had enhanced facilities for the whole community was strongly evident, as was the

view of the club as a social hub of the community, the facilities and activities providing a

place for all community members, including the lonely and isolated, in which to socialise.

These themes were explored in detail in chapters 5 and 6. The quotations below are

indicative of the general perception amongst research participants:

> …those bowlers have got a brand new green. That green here was pulled apart right down to
> base. They re-plumbed it, refit it. It cost them thousands and thousands, $200,000 or
> $300,000 just to do the green... They've put rain tanks in. They've done a lot of work around
> the car parks and everything else.... They've got a restaurant attached ... That's all been paid
> for by the pokies.   Club Participant 5

> I'd rather a club to have them than a pub I think. For the bowling club it has meant the
> facilities have increased, they've beautified it. It used to be a bit dingy but it's really looking
> quite fancy now and they're adding meeting rooms and - it's a nice place for the elderly of the
> town to go and enjoy themselves, in their bowling, or in their pokies whatever. But the bowling
> particularly, it's given them a really nice area to have and a lot of those people have worked
> for years for that club.   Sally

> They make the club available to various organisations; they've re-modernised it. They've
> certainly improved its appearance and done a lot of rebuilding and I would assume that's from
> the proceeds of poker machines. So, that would be a benefit because it's added to the value
> of the club, and the appearance. Of course....the RSL and the Lions and I think Rotary and
> various other organisations have open access to the place for meetings. Tom

In a community with limited dining and recreation facilities the benefits provided through

poker machines revenue are highly visible, so it is unsurprising that community members

have come to see the broader community as the beneficiary of the club's poker machines.

This discourse is particular to club based machines, and a distinction between club and hotel

based machines was frequently made by interview participants:

> As for the benefit of poker machines, I'm of the opinion that any money they make from a club goes back into the community. Whereas, in a hotel, if there is a profit, the money goes into the pocket of the owner of the hotel. With a bowling club being a community organisation, I think that whatever money they make would have an effect on the community.   Tom

> It's community, it's a bowling club. They don't make profit for profit. Nobody's gaining from it. None of the members gain any money from this, they just gain facilities.
>
> Club Participant 5

Alignment and coalescence of this "club as community benefactor" discourse with existing conceptualisations of the Buttercross community and broader political forces further reinforces its validity. As previously described in chapters 5 and 6, the use of the machines by the bowls club to enhance facilities replicates and extends the "do it yourself" dictum that has historically been a key part of the community's identity and a key approach to the development of community infrastructure (see chapter 5). Furthermore, commonality exists between traditional community values of independence and self-reliance and some of the tenets of neo-liberalism which permeate macro political and business discourse.

As with the cultural and economic enhancement discourse, there is significant evidence of the "gambling club as community benefactor" discourse within broader society and its strong association with club based venues. At a state level, the Victorian regulatory regime dictates differential taxation rates to clubs and hotels - applying a reduction of 8.33 per cent to club-based poker machines (*Gambling Regulation Act, 2003*). This discourse is also reflected in the language used in governmental regulations and reports which for example refer to the 'community benefits' provided by the clubs and require clubs to submit an annual 'Community Benefit Statement' to account for contributions to their community (VCGLR, 2013b). In recent years, analysis by Livingstone (2007) and Livingstone, et al., (2012) has challenged the legitimacy and value of what is accepted as community benefit. These researchers have demonstrated that the bulk of community benefit expenditure is used to cover venue running-costs such as wages and maintenance, with only a small portion

constituting donations to charitable causes within the local community (see chapter 8 for a more detailed discussion of community benefit).

At the local community level, the power of this discourse rests in its ability to engender community acceptance of and even support for the presence of poker machines. The critical theoretical concept of hegemony explains how winning the hearts and minds of a population can support vested interests (Crossley, 2005, p. 114). Although people may be disadvantaged and oppressed by the way power is arranged and distributed, they may not question or challenge this arrangement if they perceive it to be a natural (Edwards, 1998) or just "'the way things are'" (Cameron, p. 123) or largely beneficial (Crossley, 2005, p. 114). As noted previously, one of the key mechanisms by which this hegemony proceeds is through the allocation of resources and institutional arrangements. For example, government and industry funding of research have constrained the research agenda to conceptualisations of gambling and harmful gambling in terms of individual responsibility and pathology. This dominant world view is further institutionalised through the resourcing and promotion of services such as Gamblers Help counselling for "problem gamblers"; with restrictions on staff engaging in advocacy ensuring disrupting hegemonies are silenced.

Although, as discussed in chapters 5 and 6, the power of communities to contest venue applications is, despite recent changes, still limited, it is in the interests of venues, the industry and state if community opposition, which could delay or avert expansion into new markets, is minimised. Clearly, a community which perceives the introduction, presence or expansion of poker machine gambling as beneficent, is more likely to be acquiescent, hence enabling the extraction of revenue through poker machines to proceed largely unchallenged.

The 'club gambling as a community benefactor' discourse works to make identical the interests of club and community. The possibility of dissent is therefore removed or delimited. This community has reacted on four occasions to the establishment of new venues and

expansion of existing venues. However, as documented in chapter 6, reaction towards the club, particularly since the poker machines became established, has been on a smaller scale in comparison to the reaction to the hotel's applications. The conceptualisation of the club as working for the community, was, as noted in chapter 6, an important means by which the presence of the machines were legitimated and community opposition suppressed or managed.

Although (as will be discussed in chapter 8) a limited number of interview participants disputed this discourse of the Bowls Club deploying poker machine gambling for the community, acceptance was widespread. Consistent with Edwards' (1998) discussion around the naturalizing function of discourse, whereby the "discourse itself remains 'unexamined'" (p. 69), critiquing of this discourse was limited to a comparison of the club to hotel venues. And in that comparison, clubs are perceived as providing more return to communities.

The occurrence of problem gambling however, has the capacity to disrupt and undermine this discourse. To maintain this framing of poker machine gambling as beneficial requires that the negative impacts be addressed or explained. The discourses which define problem gambling as pathology or addiction, or which shifts responsibility for managing gambling to the gambler, enables the industry, state and venues to distance themselves from liability for negative impacts (Borrell, 2008a, 2008b; Livingstone & Woolley, 2007; Reith, 2008). In the local community context there was also evidence that these exculpatory discourses shaped the ways in which community members responded to the issue of harmful gambling.

The discourse which presents problem gambling as addiction or pathology has a strong relationship with the responsible gambling discourse and the two discourses are often expressed concurrently and dichotomously – the irresponsible, sick or addicted problem gambler who is a minority, against the 'normal' responsible recreational gamblers, who are

the majority (Borrell, 2008b, p. 210; Orford, 2011). Because of the synergistic interplay between these two discourses, while they are initially explored separately in the following two sections, a further discussion of their combined effects is presented in section 7.8.

7.5 Problem gambling as a pathology discourse

> I do think that's a very individual thing, I think it's an individual's own problem and that they should sort it out, that's my opinion. Club Participant 8

The construction of excessive gambling as pathology or addiction is a powerful discourse that has shaped the way harmful poker machine gambling is understood and responded to. According to Reith (2007) the phenomenon of 'problem gambling' and associated discourses can be located within broader social changes, including neo-liberalism and the "'consumption ethic'" of modern consumer societies (p. 33). Reith links the widespread liberalisation and expansion of gambling during recent decades to the symbiosis between neo-liberal policies promoting "reduced intervention in social and economic life" and lower taxation, and gambling as a means of addressing the "revenue vacuum created by such policies" (p. 36). Reith draws attention to the resultant shift, which saw Western governments move from categorising gambling as a harmful product and restricting access, to significantly liberalising and promoting gambling consumption (see also Adams, 2008; Collins, 2006; Orford, 2011). Significantly, as noted in chapter 2, governments also became one of the primary beneficiaries of this consumption (Adams, 2008; Adams, Raeburn, De Silva, 2009).

Reith (2007) highlights the tensions inherent in modern consumer neo-liberal society in which individuals are simultaneously "encouraged to consume, to give in and abandon themselves to the pleasures of self-fulfilment, and on the other, to exercise self-control and restraint" because the neo-liberal state has withdrawn from this role (p. 40). It is within this context, Reith argues, that the concept of problem gambling has emerged and been positioned "as a problem of inappropriate consumption whose defining features - lack of

control and loss of reason - are conceived as attributes that undermine the ideal of consumer sovereignty and the basis of the consumption ethic" (p. 41).

The concept of problem or pathological gambling was discussed in chapter 2 where it was noted that the origins of the medicalisation of harmful gambling go back to the early twentieth century to the work of scholars including Freud (Reith, 1999, p. 6) and Bergler (Castellani, 2000, pp. 23 – 25). It was the inclusion of problematic gambling in DSM-III in 1980 though that marked its official recognition as a disease, rather than a vice (Castellani, 2000, p. 20). Once the category of the 'pathological' or 'addicted' gambler was established, the production of knowledge by researchers served to reinforce its existence (Reith, 2007, p. 38). This included developing and refining diagnostic tools such as the South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS), which enumerated and rendered observable the construct of the pathological gambler (Collins, 2006, p. 361). Reith (2007) links this process to Foucault's "constitution of subjects", whereby such processes provide, "the conceptual tools for conceiving – thinking of – subjects in new ways, creating a language with which to describe and discuss them, so rendering them increasingly visible to social enquiry and also increasingly "real"" (p. 38).

As also noted in chapter 2, this classification of gambling as a medical illness not a social issue profoundly influenced the direction of research during subsequent decades, contracting the focus of the majority of research to the level of the individual 'pathological' or 'problem' gambler. Large-scale problem gambling prevalence studies were conducted in many countries, along with research examining the characteristics of problem gamblers, the presence of co-morbidities, the impact of problem gambling at an individual level and so forth (McGowan, 2004). While acknowledging the value of this research, Livingstone and Woolley (2007) highlight the power and influence of the focus of this research in shaping the way harmful gambling is understood, noting how "it discursively constructs problem

gambling as an innate human quality, ignoring the behaviour-shaping capacities of

sophisticated technologies and practices" (364).

At the community level there was strong evidence of the replication of this discourse among

some respondents. Sally, Club Participant 7, Jack, Joe and Andrew, reflecting on local cases

of harmful gambling, drew on the gambling as pathology discourse to interpret what they had

observed:

> But I mean she has a total gambling addiction, she's fully addicted to it.   Sally

> The downside I think is the addiction of people playing poker machines and not being able to
> stop… don't know what they can do about that. I mean we've mentioned self-exclusion
> programs, talking to people, it doesn't change. Club Participant 7

> But some people, like you just know that they actually suffer with an addiction… In her life,
> there was fairly strong addictions and the pokies were a temptation. Once it starts, they just
> keep on going. Jack

> If you want to play them, you can go anywhere. Especially if you're really addicted to
> gambling, you'll soon sniff them out. Joe

> For the amount of people that are caught with this disease, if they want to call it a disease, I
> think it's not doing any harm in the town. Andrew

The strong links between harmful gambling as pathology discourse with the 'responsible

gambling' discourse, noted earlier, are reflected in the comments by Dan and Jackie who on

the one hand frame the issue as one of self-control ('responsible gambling'), but also

describe problematic gambling as an addiction:

> I don't have anything against people playing pokies or that. But I do have a problem with
> people who can't control it. I don't blame the venues. It's an addiction I suppose like you
> have with drugs. Dan

> Because of my discipline, I don't think they're a problem because I don't have a problem. I
> believe people have a choice. However, in saying that, people who have an addiction don't
> have a choice because the addiction takes over that choice. Jackie

Jackie's references to "discipline" and "choice" and Dan's reference to "people who can't control it" along with their references to "addiction" represent a blending of the two discourses. On one hand describing the excessive gambler as 'sick' and unable to help him or herself, while on the other hand implying that with more self-discipline the issue may have been avoided. Both ways of constructing harmful gambling posit the problem within the community members whose gambling has become excessive – either their behaviour is *irresponsible* and they should address it by *gambling responsibly* or they are addicted or unwell and should address it by seeking treatment through counselling (see for example, Borrell 2008b). Jackie's response that people "have a choice" and "don't have a choice" highlights the essentially contradictory nature of the discourses. This aspect of the issue causes difficulties for Trevor and Julie, as discussed below.

Within the context of the local community, this way of framing excessive gambling narrows the focus of harmful gambling to the level of the individual and his or her behaviour or pathology. Other structural or situational factors that may contribute to harmful gambling, such as the poker machine product and the way it is delivered and regulated are excluded or downplayed within this critique (Campbell & Smith, 2003, p. 143; Livingstone and Woolley, 2007, p. 364). Although (as the quotations below indicate), there was certainly recognition at the community level of the complexity of gambling-related problems, some respondents still advocated for individualistic solutions such as education, and drew on the discourses of responsible gambling and pathology to make sense of localised harmful gambling:

> As far as problem gambling is concerned, I really do believe that it's a mistake to over-regulate. People need to be made responsible for their own actions… we shouldn't have to rely on being over-regulated, too many laws controlling things. However, having said that, I do understand that some people still have that problem that they can't help themselves and I don't know what the answer is. I think the powers that be need to keep on looking for better ways to educate people. Trevor

> I mean people become addicted to a lot of things and that's just another avenue. But I mean, unfortunately it's a financial one too and it becomes a burden on families. But it has to be a partnership with everyone. I'd prefer them not to be around, but I think in a democratic society people have to make up their own minds too and then also be responsible for themselves. But that's hard too if people don't have those skills to be able to do that. So it comes back to that education. It's a tricky one. Julie

The calls by Julie and Trevor for "better ways to educate people", are consonant with "neoliberal ideologies of freedom, choice, and consumer sovereignty" as articulated by Reith (2007, p. 39) (see also Borrell, 2008b; Livingstone and Woolley, 2007). Again this accentuates the agency of the individual in creating gambling-related harms (or in failing to deal with them), so leaving the role of the poker machine product largely unexamined (Borrell, 2008b; Campbell & Smith, 2003, p. 143; Livingstone and Woolley, 2007, p. 364), and enabling the state, industry and venues to proceed unchallenged. Julie's comment that people "become addicted" to lots of things illustrates how this discourse can likewise work to normalise the occurrence of harmful gambling at the community level, positioning gambling as just another product to which people can become addicted.

7.6 Responsible gambling discourse

The discourse of responsible gambling has applications across a wide range of gambling stakeholders, including the gambling industry, government, community agencies, communities and those who gamble (Fabiansson, 2010; Reith, 2008, p. 150). Nevertheless, the way the discourse has come to be applied, predominately allocates responsibility for consuming gambling products safely (and hence also gambling problems) to the individual gambler (Borrell, 2008b; Orford, 2011). Furthermore, a number of academics have criticised the nebulous nature of the responsible gambling construct. Livingstone and Woolley (2007) go as far as to describe it as an "elastic and goalless term" (p. 363). Similarly, Orford (2011) contends that for many, responsible gambling has come to merely mean "the opposite of

problem gambling" and unlike for alcohol consumption, no clear guidelines for frequency or level of consumption are provided (p. 179).

Similar to the discourse that pathologises gambling harm, the responsible gambling discourse coalesces with the vested interests of states and the gambling industry. There is a salience with the responsible gambling discourse and neo-liberalism's dual principles of "the reduction of external governance" and "an increasing emphasis on individual self-control" (Reith, 2008, p. 151). Neo-liberalism's emphasis on "consumer sovereignty" (Livingstone & Woolley, 2007, p. 362) and "individual freedom and choice" (Reith, 2008, p. 151) support this positioning of the gambler as "a voluntary, freely choosing agent purchasing gambling products and services" (Borrell, 2008b, p. 206). This sentiment was clearly evident in comments by one community member, Trevor,

> My attitude to that is people have the choice. They have the choice of putting their money in the poker machine or leaving it in their pocket to be able to spend elsewhere and I think that that should always left to be the choice of the individual.

Consistent with this interpretation, the predominant *responsibility* of the industry and the state is to ensure the consumer is well informed of the risks associated with gambling, thus enabling them to consume gambling products responsibly (Reith, 2008, p. 152). The way this tension between decreased external (governmental) control and increased emphasis on self-control plays out in gambling is succinctly summarised by Reith (2007),

> It is now the task of the sovereign consumer to temper his or her enjoyment of the thrills of gambling with a prudent awareness of the risks involved, to exercise self-control, to manage losses and, in extreme cases, even to exclude himself or herself from gambling venues altogether - because no one else will (pp. 40 – 41).

A critique of a number Australian and international industry and research documents by Borrell (2008b) revealed "individualistic" (p. 213) discourses to be replicated and reinforced through industry documents and gambling research. Other researchers, including Campbell and Smith (2003), Livingstone & Woolley (2007) and Orford (2011), have also drawn

attention to the central place of the responsible gambling discourse in the way the industry and government policy frames gambling, both within Australia and internationally.

Even a cursory examination of the current situation in Victoria reveals that the concept of 'responsible gambling' continues to pervade the way gambling is discursively constructed by government. Take for example, the statutory authority, the *Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation.* Since July 2012, the Foundation has had responsibility for the gamut of government gambling related services, including community education and information provision, funding of problem gambling services, and research. Examination of the Foundation's website reveals the Foundation as a clear and uncritical advocate of the responsible gambling concept. The Foundation lists among its purposes the aim to "focus on the impacts of problem gambling and foster responsible gambling", with responsible gambling defined as, "…gambling in a way that: is controlled; is within your financial means"; and "doesn't interfere with your life or the lives of those around you" (*Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation*, 2013). Further, one of the Foundation's key activities is an annual awareness campaign, *Responsible Gambling Awareness Week*, which aims to raise awareness of "the importance of responsible gambling practices" (*Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation*, 2013).

Given its domination in government policy and its exploitation by the industry, it is perhaps not surprising that the research found strong evidence that the discourse of responsible gambling had penetrated this community and was being reproduced at the community level. Analysis of the interview transcripts revealed twenty-five of the forty-three community members who participated in an interview, placed the responsibility for gambling safety principally upon the individual engaging in the gambling. The comments of Andrew and Stephen, who have had a long connection with the community, are summative of how some community members framed problem gambling:

> Most people think straight; like I said to you before, the people that have - maybe I might know two that have had problems at the bowling club but it's not a regular occurrence. Andrew

> ...and also comes down to personal I suppose, choice, discipline, family discipline that there are inherent problems in human nature. Whether it be drinking, whether it be gambling, drinking, relationships, anger, all sorts of different things. Some people and probably the majority of people can handle it and some people can't. Stephen

Andrew's assertion that "most people think straight" and Stephen's comment that "the majority of people can handle it" illustrates the way the responsible gambling discourse reinforces the notion that harm from poker machine gambling is a minor issue and predominately related to faulty cognition or as Stephen puts it "inherent problems in human nature". This discourse essentially positions gamblers as consumers with a responsibility "to consume in a way that is responsible, towards others – their families, for example – and towards their own health" (Orford, 2011, p. 144).

The extension of this is that (at least some of) those who are gambling excessively are either failing in this responsibility or on some level making a considered choice. The acceptance of this discourse and replication of it within the local context is evident in the following remarks from Club Participant 4 and Club Participant 8:

> The fact that they've got a machine in the foyer to go and draw money out indicates that people spend what they've got in their pockets and go and get more. That's a concern to me. But, it's their choice, they're adults. That's a weakness. Club Participant 4

> And you think well, that's their business. If they choose to spend money on the machines instead of buying a house, that's their decision and I do know of people who have tried to say well you know you could put a deposit on a house and they say I don't want to change my lifestyle, and that's their choice. Club Participant 8

Again, the neo-liberal idea that gamblers are freely-choosing consumers (Borell, 2008b, p. 206) emerges clearly, reducing those who observe the gambling of fellow community members to the status of mere (although often concerned) observers of possibly excessive

or harmful gambling. The discourse denies them any other role. While the venue has in

place its own obligatory measures to enable gambling to take place in a responsible manner,

these are on the whole relatively minimal, and predominantly focus on education and

awareness-raising. But as Amanda's following remark illustrates, when viewed through the

prism of 'responsible gambling' these measures can appear significant:

> …we have our cup of tea after bridge in the pokie area. I walk around and look at the
> machines and they've all got signs on them, "Are you gambling more than you can afford?",
> you know. "There's only one winner", it tells them. "How long have you been gambling?"
> "Have you checked the time?" They've been made to do all those things at venues and they
> do it but people still - it's a bit like the cigarettes, all the things on the cigarettes but people still
> smoke. People just seem to be their own worst enemies. Amanda

Amanda's observation that those gambling on the club's poker machines are made well and

truly aware of the risks and that "there's only one winner", also supports the contention by

Livingstone and Woolley (2007) that current gambling arrangements are based on "a neo-

liberal interpretation of the concept of consumer sovereignty", which simultaneously presents

gambling as a "'risky' diversion" and gamblers as "freely choosing, well informed consumers

of this risk" (p. 362).

So powerful is this discourse that few respondents who articulated this view looked beyond

the individual for explanations of harmful poker machine gambling. Even when the features

of poker machines were alluded to as a contributing factor, some respondents proposed the

solution was a need for yet more education – rather than changes to the gambling product

(see discussions under 7.5). Even Trevor, who described how he had "over-indulged" in the

past and gambled more than he could "afford to have done", clearly drew on the responsible

gambling discourse to make sense of his own experiences of poker machine gambling, and

used it to frame the gambling of others:

> I'd be the first to admit that there's been times when I've over-indulged and as I say, I find,
> personally, I feel that the machines are very anti-social. You can be sitting on a machine for
> half an hour and not even say boo to the person beside you. You're just so consumed in the
> machine and sometimes that's what people want…But I think, sometimes, like there's been

times when I've been caught and I've walked away from the facility saying right, I'm never going back there again because I know that I've put more money through the machine than I can afford to have done. But there's other times when I've gone there and sat down and been able to really enjoy, get up and walk out…Really it's up to the individual to try and set their limit.

Again what is evident is the way the responsible gambling discourse fuses and is fed by neo-liberalism's emphasis on the sovereign consumer (See Borrell, 2008b, p. 206; Livingstone & Woolley, 2007, p. 362). And again the emphasis is exclusively placed on the gambler's conduct and choices (even by gamblers themselves), rather than upon the safety of the gambling product and how it is regulated, dispersed and provided (Borrell, 2008b; Livingstone & Woolley, 2007; Orford, 2011). Consequently, "issues such as the accessibility of gambling, its formats, and the profit motive underlying its availability are relegated to the background" (Campbell and Smith, 2003 p. 143).

7.6.1 Responsible v. irresponsible

A further effect of the 'responsible gambling' discourse is the way it separates those whose gambling is problematic from the majority of the community. The discourse effectively sets up two distinct groups within Buttercross: those who are 'irresponsible gamblers' and those who are not: the rest of the community (including those who gamble 'responsibly). The power of this discourse is evidenced by its wide acceptance within the community and the fact that it is rarely questioned (Edwards, 1998, p. 69). It has become part of what community members collectively and intrinsically 'know' about poker machine gambling – what Crossley (2005) describes as "habitual and taken-for-granted" knowledge (p. 61). The 'responsible gambling' discourse resonates with those, such as Jackie, who value the traditional qualities associated with residents from rural communities – "I call them ethical, trustworthy, friendly". The incorrigible problem gambler contrasts markedly with the discursively constructed *responsible gambler*, and the traditional values and norms of this rural community.

Descriptions by community members of their own gambling or that of friends or family also reproduced and reinforced the 'responsible gambling' discourse. Respondents who identified themselves as poker machine gamblers often explained their own gambling in terms of the 'responsible gambling' discourse, firmly locating themselves within the 'responsible' majority. Such accounts often emphasised the participant's self-discipline in relation to poker machine gambling and money management in general. There was an expressed pride by some interview participants in possessing the qualities of self-control and discipline, of not being like the problem, or 'irresponsible', gamblers.

> My parents play them quite a bit and they're retired. I wouldn't say they're really well off or anything, but they gamble responsibly. Mum goes once a week with a friend and they put in $10 each and once that $20 is gone they walk away from it and it's a bit of fun. Mike

> Yeah, I go - in very early days, when I was in the services and had only just reenlisted, I had a job in New South Wales, when the poker machines had a handle. .... and I was told by the senior .. NCO. He said, you put your betting money in your right-hand pocket - and they were shillings - and he said, pull the handle every time. And every time if something comes out, put that money in your left-hand pocket. When your right hand pocket's empty, go home… That's what I subscribe to now, except that it's harder with electronic machines because I've got to count. ..... if I put $1 in and I bet ten cents at a time, I'm allowed ten picks. I don't care what's on the counter but at the end of 10, I have a look and see what's there. If there's something left I take it home. Tom

> ...if my husband and I are there for dinner we might play the poker machines for 20 minutes after we've had dinner and then go home. I do enjoy playing them I have to tell you that.... I never go in there expecting to win. I set myself limit of say $20 and once I lose that, that's it, no more. Jackie

> I mean, I wouldn't go for dinner without going in and putting in $2 into the pokies. Always. My husband…hates it with a passion. See I'm not passionate about it, either way. I'd be most horrified if one of my family was there all the time but I don't have that issue. Sally

Application of critical theory reveals how the discourse of 'responsible gambling' advantages the powerful interests of the providers and beneficiaries of poker machine gambling – government, industry and venues – by minimising their liability in the creation and maintenance of gambling problems (Borrell, 2008b; Campbell & Smith, 2003; Livingstone &

Woolley, 2007, Orford, 2011). This enables the business of poker machine gambling to continue unchecked. At the same time this discourse marginalises those experiencing problems with their gambling by labelling them as somehow defective (Borrell, 2008b; Orford, 2011, p. 145), "an individualized flawed consumer" (Livingstone & Woolley, 2007, p. 361). This discourse disempowers those experiencing gambling harm, holding them singularly liable for those harms, and denying them the benefit of structural and situational changes that could offer protection from poker machine detriment (Campbell & Smith, 2003, p. 143; Livingstone & Woolley, 2007, p. 367).

7.7 Product safety discourse

In recent years a competing discourse has emerged which positions poker machines as an unsafe product that has been dispersed throughout Australian communities with insufficient attention to the safety of end-users (Livingstone & Woolley, 2007). The product safety discourse is closely related to the broader argument for all gambling to be addressed within a public health framework (Borrell, 2008a, pp. 75 – 77; Korn, Gibbins & Azmier, 2003; Marshall, 2009). Within Australia, the promotion of this discourse by academics (including James Doughney, Jennifer Borrell, Charles Livingstone and Richard Woolley), and a number of politicians and community advocates, who are working for gambling reform (including Nick Xenophon, Andrew Wilkie, Tim Costello and Paul Bendat), has resulted in this discourse featuring more frequently within the macro context. Consequently dialogue advocating solutions which address structural features of the machines is becoming more frequent. This is consistent with Burr's (1995) assertion that dominant discourses are "not ensured their position for eternity". They can face a "'takeover bid'" from "competing discourses" which offer differing ways of constructing an issue (p. 55).

The product safety discourse provides an alternate means of framing poker machines and poker machine gambling harm, and is one that does not stigmatise and marginalise those

experiencing gambling harm. Additionally, by reframing agency (as outlined by Borrell, 2008b) this discourse disrupts the existing dominant discourses and directs approaches to harm-mitigation to include the gambling product.

Evidence of the presence of the product safety discourse within the macro sociopolitical context can be found in the 2010 Australian Productivity Commission's report into gambling which recommended a number of structural changes to the delivery of poker machine gambling, including that "each state and territory government should implement a jurisdictionally-based full pre-commitment system for gaming machines by 2016" (p. 54), and that, "in 2016, all EGMs should be limited to a $1 bet, with an exemption until 2018 for venues with less than ten machines that also face significant implementation costs relative to revenue" (p. 56).

The product safety discourse was also evident in the (now defunct) deal between the (then) Australian Federal Labor (minority) government and Tasmanian MP Andrew Wilkie to introduce a system of pre-commitment to enable gamblers to pre-set maximum gambling losses on poker machines. Concepts of product safety are similarly evident in the *One Dollar Bet Limits* policy of the Greens, Australia's 3rd largest political party. As demonstrated in the following extract, the Greens policy explicitly links poker machine related gambling harm to the structural features of poker machines, "because of the potential for harm caused by the high loss rate of Australian machines, the Greens will limit bet rates on all pokies to bring losses under control". The focus of the policy is thus changing the way the machines function by including "a maximum bet limit of $1 per spin" inclusion of "a load up limit of $20" and "jackpots of no more than $500" (*The Greens*, 2013).

The power of the product safety discourse lies in its ability to work to disrupt the discourses which pathologise gambling harm, or which frame it as an issue of individual responsibility. By challenging the safety and legitimacy of the poker machine product, this recent discourse

provides people with another way to conceptualise poker machine harm, and therefore with other means to mediate harms. In this sense this discourse can be viewed as a mechanism for transformation. This is illustrative of Cameron's (2001) contention that, "emergence of new kinds of discourse is not only a *consequence* of social change, but also an *instrument* of social change" (p.130).

Within the research project, this discourse was particularly evident in the ways in which health and welfare professionals framed poker machine gambling harms,

> The fact is people who get into trouble with these machines are using the machines quite frequently in exactly the way that the makers of those machines intended. That is to say they're there and they're stuck on them, and they're hooked and pulled into this trance-like state. That's exactly what the psychologists and other people intend when they go to all those lengths to design machines that are going to keep people sitting in front of them for as long as possible. Anna

> Well that's what the research seems to be showing is, the number of regular players might be reducing a little bit, but the money is going up. So it just means the machines are getting even more, inverted commas 'addictive'. They are clever, cleverer in extracting money from people. Pippa

Within the context of the local community however, the product safety discourse was less evident, although some respondents, such as Cath, did discuss the safety of poker machines and questioned their place in the community:

> They take notes now where they only took coins, where you physically had to get up out of your chair, walk over to the cashier, change your notes for coins and in that time you could think, well maybe I shouldn't be putting my hand in for that next 20 bucks. Now they can just pull it out of their pocket and the machine actually takes your note. ….. No. You don't have that get up and walk away thinking, should I really spend this next $20 or $10 or whatever it is. If they only want to spend another 10 or a 20 and if they've only got a 50, they're putting that whole 50 in that machine. That's pretty scary, from my point of view anyway. Cath

However, comments by others, such as Beverly, demonstrated that even when the features of the machines were in question, they are viewed through a lens of individual responsibility:

> And they think the next thing is going to happen is they are going to win, they are going to win. And they do, the trouble is they win a little bit, then they think and then they think, oh well I've just won something, I'll put it back in and they think they're going to win again and then they think they're going to win again, you know and it just gets to them. Beverly

Interview participants made many fewer references to structural and supply side aspects of gambling when discussing the harmful gambling of community members or the references were still overlaid with the dominant gambling discourses of pathology and individual responsibility. This supports the contentions throughout this chapter of the significant power of dominant or pre-existing discourses to shape the framing and conceptualisation of issues such as poker machine gambling. Within the context of Buttercross, the connection between the dominant individual responsibility and pathology discourses and ideological conceptualisations of community provided a significant barrier to the reproduction of the product safety discourse. In addition, as noted previously, these dominant discourses are continually reinforced by government and the industry through mediums as diverse as the media, printed materials at the venue level, the approach of government-funded counselling services and so forth.

7.8 Reproducing discourses in the community context

As noted earlier, the harms associated with gambling that is problematic have the potential to challenge and disrupt the discourses that frame poker machines as a means of cultural and economic enhancement and as a community benefactor. However, as described in the previous sections, dominant discourses which positioned problem gamblers as differing from the majority, or as defective or irresponsible, worked thereby to downplay or condone poker machine harms, to sanction the club's use of poker machines and the community member's enjoyment of the proceeds of poker machine losses. Previous sections also described how these dominant gambling discourses were reproduced and sustained within society through processes including research funding, community education, the poker machine regulatory framework and the media.

This section consolidates this analysis; it examines factors at the *community* level which work to reproduce and legitimate these dominant discourses. Of particular note is the way in which the concealment of harmful gambling works to reinforce and reproduce the dominant discourses that position gambling harms as an illness or a matter of individual responsibility. The way these dominant discourses are reconceptualised and adapted within the local community context, and how they work to maintain current gambling arrangements, are also matters of interest.

7.8.1 Concealment and reproduction

The previous sections discussed how the discourses which describe harmful gambling as an illness or a matter of individual responsibility can disempower and marginalise those experiencing gambling-related harms, position them as defective, and set them apart from the 'responsible' and 'un-addicted' (Borrell, 2008a, 2008b; Livingstone & Woolley, 2007; Orford, 2011). The way these discourses act to blame gambling harms on the individuals experiencing them contributes to the shame and stigma associated with problematic gambling (Thomas, Lewis & Westberg, 2012). Shame and stigma can in turn lead to concealment of gambling issues (Evans & Delfabbro, 2002), inhibiting help-seeking behaviour (Evans & Delfabbro, 2002; Hing, Nuske & Gainsbury, 2012; Holdsworth & Tiyce, 2012; Thomas, et al., 2012), and at times deterring gamblers from revealing gambling problems as the reason for seeking assistance (SACES, 2005a). The hidden nature of many of the social costs of gambling has also been noted as a barrier to researching the full extent of these impacts (Deakin Human Services & Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, 1997, pp. 104, 147, 186, 231, 271).

Sean, a community member involved in a local men's group, compared the shame and stigma associated with problem gambling, and the subsequent concealment of the issue, to that previously associated with depression.

....I think a lot of it might be hidden… like depression people are coming out and talking about it ... It's more out in the open now…I think gambling is still one of those taboo things that maybe we just don't talk about, we sort it out.

Consistent with the findings of SACES (2005a), some health and welfare service providers reported clients concealing gambling problems when seeking services. Adam, who manages a welfare agency servicing Finchley, noted that some clients initially present for one issue such as relationship stress or financial hardship, only to reveal later that the underlying issue is problem poker machine gambling, "then five or six sessions down the line we find that the issue really has resulted from gambling". Abby, who was involved in distributing material aid in Buttercross, also drew attention to the shame and concealment, "Usually, when they seek help is when they've got to a stage where it's a huge problem and it's usually hidden because they're so ashamed of themselves. There's a lot of shame". A similar point was made by Charles, based on his experiences distributing material aid locally, "Certainly from the engagements with people that I've experienced they do everything they possibly can to cover up in some way, to their own detriment, in lots of ways".

A limited number of participants, including Kay, also shared accounts of how some gamblers would actively work to mask the extent of their gambling,

> …and once they get found out, they'll go somewhere else. Because it is a small community and they're more likely to see someone else who they might - you might go in there and you'll see your aunt's next door neighbour and your aunt's next door neighbour will say to the aunt, oh I saw Kay playing the pokies the other day. So, they'll go elsewhere. Kay

Kay's supposition that community members whose gambling is accelerating may "go somewhere else" "once they get found out" was supported by Tim, whose partner worked at the bowls club for a number of years,

> We have seen with some others they mightn't always play here locally. If they become too regular it can become a bit of a stigma that they're sort of known as a, so they may go elsewhere, where they're not so well known if they still want to play the machines as much as what they do. Tim

The active concealment of gambling problems by gamblers is likely to be a significant factor in the view put forward by some interview participants that problem poker machine gambling did not occur in Buttercross, or was a minor issue there. This contention is supported by analysis of the interview data which revealed that, despite multiple descriptions of gambling harm being collated during the research (see section 7.1), interview participants who identified gambling harm in the township only described between 1 – 3 accounts. The consequences of this are that evidence of the localised impacts of problem poker machine gambling is fragmented and divided amongst community members, denying most a comprehensive awareness of the extent of the impacts. To illustrate this effect, consider each account of harmful gambling or its impacts as one piece of a jig-saw puzzle, then consider the effect if those pieces were sprinkled through the community so that some people held one, two or three pieces and some held none. Clearly the whole picture is not captured by any one possessor of information, and as a consequence the magnitude and implications of harmful poker machine gambling are either not seen or only minimally seen.

An incident that occurred during fieldwork reinforced this point. The researcher had just concluded an interview with the head of a large local organisation. During the interview the participant had emphasised that they were not aware of any problematic gambling amongst the many families connected with their organisation and were confident they would hear of any such issue. At the conclusion of the interview, there was a serendipitous meeting of Jenny, a community member whom the interview participant had named as a potential interviewee. After introductions, the interview participant proceeded to tell Jenny how they had informed the researcher they had no issue with problem gambling amongst the organisation's community of families. Jenny, who volunteered with a local welfare service, responded by informing the participant that there were indeed families experiencing harms from poker machine gambling, but that the participant would not be aware of it.

It seems counter-intuitive that gambling harms could remain hidden in the context of a single club in a fairly small rural community. Given the intimacy of the community one would anticipate that gambling harms would be highly visible, and indeed, in some ways they were. There were frequent references by interview participants to "seeing the same ones there", made in reference to the club's poker machines. However, on another level, the full effects of gambling harm were often hidden, with community members knowing little beyond the person being at the venue for prolonged periods of time. It appeared that the full effects of harmful gambling (noted in 7.1) such as not being able to pay bills or buy food or simply get ahead financially (see for example Law, 2005), were often acted out in the privacy of home.

Analysis suggests that the ways in which many within Buttercross interact with the venue may further reinforce these perceptions. Some interview participants, including Joe and Jackie, reported that on visits to the club they did not observe high numbers of community members using the machines, concluding that detrimental poker machine gambling was therefore not a significant issue:

> Yeah, I think you really just get the - I know they do have a lot of trouble with poker machines elsewhere, but they're not really ever that busy in there. Even on a big Saturday night, you can go and have a meal, and there's probably eight or 10 people playing the poker machines, so it's not a great problem but then, like I said, it's usually the same people that are there playing all the time. Joe

> Quite often you can go in there - it's probably two months since I've been in there to play their pokies - and there're not a lot of people in there. It's only on a Thursday night, which is your members' night, where it's packed and that's generally with the bowls club members because of the raffles and the draws. Once they're done, everybody clears out. So there're not a lot of people left. Jackie

However, as Kay noted, those who do not spend long periods at the club may not see the whole picture and may consequently form misconceptions regarding the extent and effects of poker machine gambling in Buttercross:

> A lot of the people don't - they're not aware of what's going on. Like, if you're going to go the pokies on a Saturday night for dinner, have a play at the pokies, you don't know that there's always people going there during the week, first thing in the morning and sitting there all day. So it is a bit hidden. Kay

Evidence suggests that community members may collude with those whose gambling is problematic to protect them from shame and stigma. A number of interview participants, who discussed gambling harms of others, expressed concern for the privacy of the individuals they described. Some participants were reluctant to provide specific details of individuals or stressed the importance of concealing their identity. While this can partially be attributed to issues of privacy and confidentiality associated with conducting research in a small rural community (discussed in chapter 4), this was also reflective of issues of shame and stigma associated with harmful gambling. There was a sense that friends and community members shared or identified with the shame and were seeking to protect the gambler and their family.

This concealment and masking of harm contributes to the continuance of gambling-related harm to individuals and families, and helps to legitimate the presence of poker machines within the community. Furthermore, the full magnitude of the issue is concealed from service providers, the local community and broader society. In contrast, the discourses which describe gambling as a source of economic and cultural enhancement, or which position the gambling club as a community benefactor, draw attention to the tangible benefits of poker machine gambling. The beneficiaries of the concealment of problematic gambling are those with a vested interest in the status quo – the state, industry and local venues - who as the Productivity Commission (2010) noted, derive the bulk of their profits from gambling of a problematic nature (p. 5.2) and whose business model is advantaged by any measure which masks the social and economic harms of their product.

7.8.2 Reconceptualization

This chapter has so far contended that although dominant gambling discourses of pathology and responsible gambling are being challenged by the competing discourse of product safety, powerful economic and political forces continue to support the continual reproduction of earlier and dominant discourses. This section extends this analysis, and explores how within the local context, reproduction of these discourses was at times sustained through a process of reinterpretation and reconceptualization which moulded and shaped the discourses to dovetail with existing historical and cultural community characteristics

The conceptualisations of Buttercross as a close-knit, friendly and independent rural community whose members share similar values and are often bound by shared history and familial connections has been a recurring discussion in this thesis. Chapter 5 also described how narratives of change and loss (a consistent theme in the community literature, see for example Crow & Allan, 1994; Delanty, 2003; Wild, 1981), and community membership (see Crow & Allan, 1994; Crow & Mah, 2012) played out in Buttercross. Evidence was provided that many newcomers to Buttercross quickly built community ties and a sense of identity within the community through their paid and voluntary work and their efforts to connect with existing groups. However, as chapter 5 highlighted, there was also a perception amongst interview participants that some newcomers, particularly those who were not able to establish an identity through work, or who could not would not engage with community groups, remained on the margins. Chapter 5 described how these individuals were present within the physical boundary of the community, but were perceived as not sharing the community's values and characteristics, and so were not always viewed as genuine community members. This is consistent with discussions by Crow and Mah (2012) that boundaries can be associated with both inclusion and exclusion, and that boundaries can be other than physical (Cohen, 1985).

Analysis of the way in which the dominant gambling discourses of illness or addiction and responsible gambling were reinterpreted and reconceptualised within Buttercross suggested that at times these discourses merged with and were reinforced by community perceptions of individuals who were already sitting on the fringe of the community:

> Well I think that some people are going to always be vulnerable because of their circumstances, because of their situation in life. From my experience and from the ones that we've helped over here, they've been people on pensions, people on healthcare cards, people who are doing life fairly tough. It's [poker machines] just an avenue for them to get out and do something. But as I said, the unfortunate thing is that they often then rely on relief money and welfare money to keep them going. Stuart

> I think it's the addiction part that's the trouble. Some people can take it or leave it but then it seems to get them in, doesn't it? They just don't [know] when to stop. That's the problem. They all think they're going to win.   I think a lot of the people who have sort of left school when they're - what is it now? It used to be 14. Sixteen, isn't it? With not much education behind them; I think that's how they operate and a lot of them have come from like the ministry homes. They don't seem to get off the circle; like grandma did it and mum did it and now I'm doing it. If you're really stuck, you ring St Vinnies…then they play the system. Olivia

> Like we had a lass that come to live up here and the first thing she did was she found the poker machines. And that's where she used to head every Wednesday, when she used to get her pension. It didn't matter how much she lost there, it didn't matter what the little boy was going to eat the next day or anything, it didn't matter, just as long as she headed to the pokies... She just knew that she could come to the churches or come to any, like the opportunity shop or anything and know that she could get hand-outs… there's a lot of people who the first, like come into a town and that's the first thing they'll look for is the poker machines. To go and sit our all day long. Beverly

As indicated by these quotations, there was at times evidence of a merging of the responsible gambler discourse, which positions those whose gambling is excessive as irresponsible, and perceptions of some newcomers as being financially inept and responsible for their poverty. Illustrating the interplay between these gambling discourses and the poor and marginalised community members, is the fact that the identification of those individuals as problem or irresponsible gamblers was facilitated by their marginalised status.Their subsequent reliance on health and welfare services for emergency relief to pay

rent and bills and provide food for their families rendered their irresponsible or problem

gambling visible to community members such as Stuart, Olivia and Beverly. These

individuals were further marginalised by their identification as problem gamblers and their

dissimilarity from other community members was further reinforced.

Additionally, a limited number of interview participants actually excluded these individuals

from their assessment of community harm generated by poker machine gambling. In these

instances, it appeared that by positioning the person experiencing gambling harms as the

agent of their harm and also defining them as not belonging, as being an "outsider", the

harms associated with the community's poker machines were able to be downplayed, or

even excluded from the community altogether.

> ...they weren't really locals, most of the ones. Then, as soon as they hit the problem, they
> move on; I've seen them in other places since…Yeah, they were only probably renting here
> anyway…I don't know whether that's just people can't control themselves or what it is - I don't
> know. Andrew

> Oh yeah, kind of a friend. It kind of broke the friendship up kind of thing, but they're not in
> town anymore, they moved away.   Mike

It appeared that by minimising and dismissing the connection and legitimacy of these

individuals within the community, the harmful impacts of the poker machines on the

community fabric were also able to be minimised and dismissed. The way the discourses of

'individual responsibility' and 'problem gambling as pathology' marginalise problem gamblers

from the majority of community members, further shapes and reinforces this discursive

reasoning.

However, other accounts of gambling harms illustrate how this stereotype (of the transient

and marginalised members of the community being those who did not control their gambling)

did not account for or explain the whole impact of the poker machines. Kay's comment that,

"I know of people from all walks of life that develop a problem. Well here, anyway", was

supported by the many accounts noted earlier in this chapter and described in chapter 5, in

which the problematic gambling of friends and relatives was described, many of whom were well-connected to the local community and possessed substantial assets such as the family home. The following section discusses how some community members appeared to view or frame the excessive gambling of some fellow community members differently, reinterpreting and redefining the problem gambling and responsible gambling discourses to accommodate the gambling of these (favoured) individuals.

One of the interesting distinctions made by some within the community as to what constituted problem gambling versus what was acceptable gambling, was the individual's capacity to fund their gambling. On some levels this is a valid distinction to make, as many of the harms experienced due to harmful gambling are associated with financial losses (Law, 2005; Productivity Commission, 2010). Additionally, gambling "within your financial means" is one of the key tenets of responsible gambling as it is described on the website of the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation (*Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation*, 2013).

However, the understanding of what it meant to be able to 'afford' one's poker machine expenditure seemed to be a fairly elastic term. For some community members it meant the individual was gambling within their means and using only their disposable income allocated for recreation. But for some participants it was taken to mean the gambler had the wealth or access to resources to support their (at times excessive) gambling. Evidence that someone could afford their gambling most frequently came from perceptions regarding the individual's wealth or that of their family:

> …she'd sit there all day and play that and she'd walk out. Now you could say has she got a problem? She'd come every second day of the week, but that's her play money. She's not even hitting [her capital] - you know she makes that in five minutes from the dividends.
> Club Participant 1

The most prominent example of this view related to an elderly community member who according to those who knew them, spent the best part of each day at the club, much of it engaged in poker machine gambling. These assertions were confirmed by research observations. Some people who knew the elderly community member did not seem concerned that this person spent the bulk of their life at the venue and 'put a lot of money through the machines', instead, it was stated on a number of occasions that this person would never run out of money.

To conceptualise gambling as problematic only if it causes severe and immediate financial stress is to disregard the many other ways in which long-term, or even periodic, excessive gambling impacts gamblers, their families and networks (see chapters 2 and 5 and section 7.1). Taken to the extreme, this definition of being able to 'afford' one's gambling (and therefore not being a problematic gambler), could literally be applied to everyone who presented to the venue with money in their pocket,

> ... somebody who's here constantly and emptying their wallet and going to the ATM until their money runs out and stuff like that. Yeah, you do see that but they seem to be back the next day and able to get some more money so they've run their limit out for the day of whatever they can get out of the bank and they still come back the following day. To me, if they can do that, obviously they've got the funds to do it, so what can you say to them? You've got a problem? I don't think so. Club Participant 6

What is apparent from these discussions is that at the community level, discourse reproduction is a dynamic process. While dominant gambling discourses work to shape the way community members view and make sense of gambling and gambling harms, community members are also actively engaging with the discourses, shaping and reconceptualising them to fit with their observations, understandings and interests. The interplay between dominant gambling discourses and existing understandings of community, such as who receives community membership, further assists reproduction and continuity of these discourses within the local community context.

7.8.3 Inaction

> We don't advise people; we don't walk up to somebody and say, have you got a gambling problem? Because we could be offending somebody that hasn't got a gambling problem and it's not our job to do that. Club Participant 1

This final section examines how the reproduction of dominant gambling discourses – particularly those of responsible gambling and gambling pathology – work to maintain existing poker machine arrangements. Through the positioning of the gambler as having the unique capacity to address issues of gambling harm, both the responsible gambling and pathology/addiction discourses, encourage inaction at the community level and legitimate inaction at the venue level. Through this process, the concerns of community members, such as Jack and Liz, are filtered through the lens of responsible gambling or gambling pathology; disempowering them and relegating them to the role of concerned but otherwise uninvolved onlooker:

> Sometimes it does concern me then when I see people that I know who are regularly pouring money into the machines. It does concern me. I thought I just hope they don't get too hooked where it might destroy their business or whatever or get into financial problems. That does concern me at times. Jack

> There are people out there that they just aren't in control. We see that here, it is a small minority of patients that do struggle …So you wonder if for that reason they shouldn't be tempted… I don't know, it is a hard call because I think perhaps in a way you have got to be responsible for your own goings. But some people can't, they can't do it. Liz

The concerns that Jack and Liz expressed for fellow community members who may be experiencing problems with their gambling is in part reflective of the close-knit nature of Buttercross. Despite changes in community composition and size in recent years, traditional rural values remain and Buttercross can largely be described as a caring community. That there was this sense of 'unease' regarding gambling harm is therefore perhaps predictable within the context of a cohesive and caring community. What is of significance is the way community members respond to this 'unease', and the roles that the 'responsible gambling' and 'pathology' discourses played in shaping those responses. Descriptions of observations

of excessive gambling within the community were at times characterised by a sense of helplessness. Respondents described being unsure that what they were seeing was problematic gambling, and displayed a reticence to intervene, often noting that to do so would risk offending the gambler by incorrectly labelling them as a 'problem gambler'. The framing of problematic gambling as an issue of 'individual responsibility' determines the way community members deal with this 'unease', prompting inaction. Rationally, if the troubling gambling behaviour is the responsibility of the individual gambler, there is little that others can do other than provide support if requested. At the same time people's observations of both problem and 'normal recreational' gambling within the local gambling environment of the club reinforced the 'responsible gambling' and 'pathology' discourses which pervade government, industry and research and the wider society.

On the whole the responsibility for poker machine gambling behaviour remained narrowly centred on the individual gambler. In this way the problem was clearly framed as one of what Bacchi (2009) describes as "demand", rather than of "supply" (p. 81). As noted earlier in this chapter, this deflects attention from the poker machine product and the way it is dispersed and regulated (see Campbell and Smith, 2003; Livingstone and Woolley, 2007).

> People come through the door with money. We're a gaming institution and we make money from gaming machines. If they want to put their money in the machines it's not our obligation to do anything about it unless we think they've got a problem and they start taking it out on other customers and they start smashing the machines, kicking the machines, arguing whatever, becoming abusive, then we could... Club Participant 1

The reproduction of these discourses was strongly evident at the venue level where staff and some others closely associated with the club, regularly framed harmful gambling as a matter of individual responsibility or pathology. These discourses, by positioning staff and others closely associated with the venue as being 'outside' the problem, and so powerless to intervene (even though sometimes concerned) clearly shaped the way they responded to incidents of harmful gambling:

After all my years' experience, well you know because they're there every day. You also know, that they talk to the machines, they pat the machines. They are stuck to the machines, they don't drink, they hardly talk. Ah, they're chasing their tail all the time, wanting more money. They win and put it all back. Yeah, it's ah, easy to spot. Sad part is, we really can't walk up to them and say to them, look I think you're spending too much. I can go up to them and say to them, how you going? And talk to them about sport, but then they want to get back to their machine. Club Participant 7

It's hard to explain, you can just tell the person to talk to and the people not to talk to. And if they want assistance I'm sure they'll, I'd prefer them to come to me. I would never, ever approach anyone. Never. Club Participant 3

If they come up to us and say I've got a gambling problem, but even then we can only give them a piece of paper that gives them a bit of information. We can tell them that there's a self-exclusion program … or here's a card from Gamblers Anonymous…If we get people coming in and they say oh my dad's got a problem or my mother's got a problem or my sister, … that's all we can give them. We'd say look go to them; they know all the ways to do it and they'll give you the best advice. Club Participant 1

We can't go up to them and say you've got a problem. It's got to be brought to our attention to fix it. So, and then we can't fix it, all we can advise them is to go to Gamblers Help. So you know, really, as far as I'm concerned we don't have anything to do with it except offer them a card if it comes to our attention.   Club Participant 6

On the one hand these statements illustrate the enormous challenges that venue staff face in meeting the personal and professional obligations (often with minimal training) which must in turn inform their responses to the gambling harm they witness or suspect (see PC, 2010, pp. 119 – 122). However, they also illustrate how framing gambling harms as ultimately an individual responsibility fosters a passive response to the occurrence of harmful gambling. On a macro and micro level, such responses support the maintenance of the status quo and the continuance of gambling harm. As noted earlier in this chapter, these approaches have been criticised on the basis that they disproportionately emphasise the role of the individual in problem gambling and deflect attention from the roles played by industry and government (see for example Livingstone & Woolley, 2007). These criticisms were mirrored by health

and welfare professionals, such as Anna and Pippa who were interviewed for this research

project:

> …that club would know who those people are. I think the clubs or venues - like that small
> venue - collude a lot more in some respects to keep that hidden…let's keep this problem
> between you and us because it's not in our interests that you're outed as a problem gambler
> and it's not in your interests either. These people are not anonymous to the venues…the fact
> that it's not been dealt with more actively really means there is a kind of collusion… venues
> have a responsibility to be doing something about it, and yet they do something very rarely.
> Anna

> They use these definitions of responsible gambling. Oh this means that the venue should be,
> but actually the name, the phrase grammatically means the gambler should be responsible.
> … with alcohol you say responsible serving of alcohol. It should actually be responsible
> serving of gambling. That would be the parallel phrase. They don't say responsible
> drinking… So then, of course, the suggestion is that they are not responsible, so they are
> immoral, they are not responsible, if they are not gambling properly. So that's encouraging
> that complicity, to keep it secret…They don't want to wave a banner round saying I'm wasting
> all my family's money here.   Pippa

Despite considerable and trenchant criticism, the promotion of the concept of responsible

gambling remains the predominate approach to addressing problem gambling by the

Victorian government and the Victorian poker machine industry.

7.9 Conclusion

This chapter has employed critical theory to explore how dominant gambling discourses

were reproduced and reconceptualised within Buttercross, shaping the way community

members understood and responded to the harms and benefits of poker machine gambling.

Drawing on gambling discourse critiques, including those by Borrell (2008a, 2008b),

Livingstone and Woolley (2007), Reith (2007, 2008) and Orford's typology of gambling

discourses (2011, pp. 123 – 146), the chapter has examined a number of existing dominant

gambling discourses. These include those which describe gambling as economically and

culturally beneficial to communities and those which construct gambling as an issue of

individual responsibility or frame problematic gambling as an illness or addiction. The

chapter presented research to support the contention that these discourses are strongly evident in the macro socio political spectrum and widely reflected in government and industry framing of poker machine gambling. The interests of the state and the powerful gambling industry are served by the way these discourses work to emphasise the narrowly dispersed economic benefits. Simultaneously, these discourses downplay the occurrence of gambling related harm and posit responsibility for attendant harm with individual gamblers (see Borrell, 2008a, 2008b; Livingstone & Woolley, 2007; Orford, 2011; Reith, 2007). This chapter has presented strong evidence of the replication of these three dominant discourses at the community level, and has contended that it was the consonance of these discourses with existing conceptualisations of community that enabled them to penetrate and find traction in the Buttercross community.

Data presented also indicated that Orford's (2011) "gambling as cultural and economic enhancement discourse" (pp. 138 – 140) was widely replicated within the township where the enhanced facilities for activities and employment from the club's poker machines were highly visible and utilised by large segments of the community. The acceptance of this discourse as self-evident and commonsensical ensured, despite periodic media scrutiny, that its validity was rarely questioned. It was noted that the power of this discourse is derived from its ability to position the poker machine gambling industry as just another business providing another consumer product, normalising and sanitising the industry, and deflecting attention from the detrimental effects of poker machine gambling.

Extending the cultural and economic benefit discourse (and Orford's typology), this chapter then presented evidence of a new discourse which frames gambling clubs as community benefactors. It was noted that this discourse is particularly apparent in contexts whereby large numbers of poker machines are embedded in community-based clubs, establishing the community as a direct recipient of gambling benefits. This was revealed as a powerful discourse which has particular strength in Buttercross where the bowls club is an integral

part of the community and many community members derive direct or indirect benefit from its poker machines. The club's self-narrative that the machines are deployed to profit the whole community is a key element in the creation and replication of this discourse.

This chapter went on to detail how the occurrence of poker machine gambling harm challenges the legitimacy of both the 'cultural and economic enhancement' and the 'club as community benefactor' discourses. Furthermore, the receipt of gambling benefits can position community members as complicit in the attendant harms.

The replication of the responsible gambler discourse and the problem gambling as addiction or illness discourse in the local community context was found to marginalise and disempower those harmed by gambling, positioning them as being variously flawed, irresponsible, ill and/or addicted. Both discourses firmly locate the unique responsibility for gambling harms with the individual gambler who must act to become a more responsible consumer of gambling products or to address the addiction or pathology (Borrell, 2008b). The widespread reproduction of these discourses in Buttercross advantaged the venue and all those who benefit from the proceeds of harmful poker machine gambling by absolving them of responsibility in the production of gambling-related harm.

Later sections of this chapter extended the analysis of discourse to explore how processes of concealment and reconceptualization aided the reproduction of the responsible gambling and pathology/addiction discourses within the Buttercross community. These sections highlighted how the individualisation of problem gambling contributes to shame and stigma and ultimately to the concealment of gambling problems. Consequently, collective awareness of the harmful gambling of individual's within Buttercross was diminished and the club was able to maintain the narrative that its poker machines provided community benefits with minimal community harm.

Further, the analysis indicated that within the community context, the construct of what constituted problem gambling was flexible and to some extent contingent on whose gambling was being discussed. The affinity between the conceptualisations of the responsible gambling discourse and conceptualisations of community values and characteristics assisted to further marginalise some community members and position them outside the community boundary. Again the primary effect was to legitimate the existence of gambling-related harm amongst some individuals, or to devolve community responsibility.

The chapter also discussed an emerging discourse of product safety that frames poker machines as an unsafe product, and questions their widespread use in their current configuration. This discourse challenges and disrupts the discourses that pathologise harmful gambling, or explain it as a matter of individual responsibility, or frames poker machine gambling as a cultural or economic enhancer. This chapter advanced evidence to show that although this discourse was frequently evident in the way health and welfare professionals framed gambling harms, reflecting its emergent status, it was less evident at the community level within the transcripts of interview participants.

Finally, this chapter assessed the influence of these discourses on the capacity of this community to respond to harmful gambling, contending that these discourses condone and even encourage active engagement in gambling activity, and provide support for inaction on the personal, venue and community level. This influence was particularly evident at the venue level.

8

Trade-offs and Playoffs

8.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the localised benefits and costs of converting what was a community-based sports club into a poker machine business. The chapter begins by revisiting and extending the dialogue in previous chapters around the many tangible benefits delivered by the poker machines and further examining the value of these facilities to this small rural community. Following this, changes at the club level precipitated by the poker machines are then explored. The role and place of volunteers within the club, and the sometimes competing interests of business and club members are likewise investigated.

Consistent with the critical theoretical stance underlying this research, the theme of power underpins this chapter. Issues of power inform the exploration of the club's relationship with its previous business partner Tabcorp and the dynamic between club hierarchy, club membership, gamblers and the poker machine business. Matters of power are also a key focus of the analysis of the ways in which the costs and benefits of poker machines are shared within the community, and the exploration of the capacity of the idea of 'community benefit' to shape and influence how recipients respond to the adverse effects of poker machines. Finally, power is also seen to underlie the critical examination of two

interpretations of the nature of the relationship of poker machines with the club and the local community. The first, that it is one of symbiosis: that is, the relationship provides mutual benefit to both the industry and the club and community; and the second, that the relationship is parasitic: that is, the poker machines extract measurably more from the community than they return.

As the final results/discussion chapter, this chapter also draws together and builds on key findings of previous chapters. The findings in chapters 5 and 6, regarding the interaction between community ideology and community characteristics, and the legitimation of the presence of poker machines and their consequences, is of particular importance. Also of specific interest are the findings in chapter 7 regarding dominant gambling discourses and their role in endorsing the club's use of poker machines and in legitimating gambling harms.

8.1 "You look at what we've got"

The incorporation of a poker machine business into what was essentially a grassroots-inspired community sporting club (see chapter 5) has resulted in a number of benefits for both club and community members. There is no doubt that funds from poker machines have provided all that was envisaged when they were first introduced: the quality playing surfaces, financial security, comfortable club facilities and enhanced entertainment options. The enjoyment and use of these facilities by club members and the wider community was emphasised by many interview participants, and observed on many occasions during visits to the venue by the researcher. These benefits are discussed in some detail in chapters 5, 6 and 7. These findings are consistent with the observations by the Productivity Commission (2010) that consumers have effectively 'voted with their feet' to indicate that they value the expanded facilities and entertainment options of clubs which have been funded through gambling revenue (p. 6.11).

A number of community members also expressed a pride in the quality of the facilities and acknowledged that it was beyond what might normally be hoped for in a small regional community:

> Yeah but to have the facilities they've got here, you look at what we've got, how many grass greens are there left in Victoria? Most of them have gone to carpet…But they've got greens; they've got a full-time greenkeeper. Club Participant 1

> Eighteen months ago there was a, oh what did they spend? Seven or eight hundred thousand dollars on redoing, built this room and built a members room, another room out there which is used basically for meetings and for any community groups that want it. They dug up this green, spent about a hundred thousand dollars, which gives Buttercross now a green, probably two greens really, that are equal of any anywhere in metropolitan Melbourne… So for a small place and a small club it's been able to provide quite significant facilities.
>
> Club Participant 5

Indications are that both the size and quality of these facilities will continue to be developed as debt incurred from previous refurbishments and the purchasing of poker machine entitlements and machines is paid down, and the club benefits from the new funding and licensing arrangements which commenced on 16 August, 2012. Documents associated with the club's 2012 application to the VCGLR for ten additional machines, and the subsequent VCAT hearing (discussed in chapter 6), described plans for the future expansion and development of the club and its facilities (CR19, 2012).

However, while the appreciation of the club's facilities and the role it plays in community life was almost universal, there was also an acknowledgement of a range of costs to some segments of the community associated with the poker machines, and that valued aspects of the club had been lost after poker machines were introduced. The following sections and sub-sections critically explore these costs and losses and how they have in a sense been traded-off against the value of the club's substantial recreation and dining facilities and other forms of community benefit.

8.2 Transformation and loss

While the primary intention of bringing poker machines into the club was to upgrade facilities and ensure the ongoing financial viability of the club (see chapters 5 and 6), their introduction also brought about a number of changes to the function and organisation of the club. As one interview participant recalled, the changes sparked by the poker machines displaced and angered some club members,

> Yeah and a couple of them were very upset because once it became commercial, the people that'd volunteered there all their life, say in the kitchen or different spots like that, they got very uptight about it. Felt that they weren't doing the right thing by the people or the township. Andrew

For example, with the commercialisation of the kitchen and bar, some long-held voluntary roles were made redundant. Prior to poker machines, some club members volunteered their time to cater for weddings and special functions, working together to prepare and serve the meal, wash dishes and clean the kitchen. This appears to have been a time of camaraderie and fellowship and Club Participant 8 spoke fondly of it: "previous to that we had raised money to run our club by catering. Did weddings, did some beautiful catering functions." When the poker machines business was developed and a commercial kitchen and restaurant opened there was no need for the band of volunteers to cater for functions. Although community members appeared to have adjusted to the changes, a sense of nostalgia and loss remained:

> and then the rules changed and we had to have caterers in and we were not allowed to do anymore catering, it was all done by the hired caterers…So that was a big change because we put a lot of hours into working to raise money... Club Participant 8

> …and of course all these new health regulations, they're not allowed to do this and you're not allowed to do that and you're not allowed to do something else. You just pay per head now and most people seem to prefer that these days. They don't want to do it themselves anymore; or missus down the road doesn't bring in a whole plate of sandwiches or something. That aspect's lost really. Once upon a time they'd cater for it themselves and there'd be ample. Olivia

These changes constituted a significant shift in power and perhaps status within the club. The catering volunteers, who were formerly primary generators of revenue for the club, were largely replaced by the poker machines because of their capacity to extract significant financial resources from the local community for the club.

In the case of Club Participant 8 and Olivia, while there was acceptance of this change, and responsibility for the cause of the change was attributed, not to the poker machines, but to sources of power external to the community, such as government regulations. Reflecting the narratives of 'community decline' discussed in chapters 3 and 5 (see for example Cooper, 2008; Crow & Allan, 1994; Everingham, 2003), Olivia also attributed the changes to a failure by some to get involved in their community, a loss of community spirit.

Other voluntary roles which ceased or were reduced after poker machines were introduced were also discussed, including working the bar, green-keeping and cleaning the clubrooms. It was also noted by one participant that perhaps not all were missed:

> I think the bowlers were glad that people work there [saved] them going there and giving their time up and missing out on bowls or going down there cleaning the club out. Gave them more time to bowl. Club Participant 7

This capacity of poker machines to shape and change volunteering opportunities within the club was congruent with findings by IPART (2008) and the Productivity Commission (2010). The IPART report which examined the registered clubs industry in NSW found that increased profits from gambling in clubs (particularly once revenue reached $1 million dollars or more) appeared to have the effect of reducing volunteers within clubs. Largely this stemmed from increased revenue, enabling clubs to employ staff to undertake duties previously carried out by volunteers. The Productivity Commission noted that the community may rightly expect that clubs would employ staff if they had the financial capacity and that the creation of paid employment is worthwhile. However, the findings from this research

project suggest that when this employment practice causes the loss of voluntary roles, then some club members may be adversely affected.

The Productivity Commission (2010) also compared rates of volunteering in each of the Australian States and Territories to poker machine gambling expenditure, gambling dependence, and share of community gambling occurring in clubs rather than hotels (p. 6.16). While the PC (2010) acknowledged that significant levels of volunteering was associated with poker machine clubs, the distinction was made between the occurrence of volunteering within clubs which had gambling and the cause of that volunteering, issuing the reminder that "there is a difference between where volunteering takes place and mobilising volunteering within the community" (PC, 2010, p. 6.14). The Commission's conclusion that "regardless, the results do not support a positive impact of club-based gambling on volunteering" (PC, 2010, p. 6.15) supports the findings of this research that volunteering within the club occurs alongside the poker machine business, but is not created by the presence of the poker machines. The exception to this is the work by some of the board of directors, who reported undertaking significant voluntary work associated with the operation of the poker machine business, including their compliance with legal and other requirements.

Although perhaps less in number and different in their function, opportunities to volunteer at the club remain. Club members continue to assist the employed green-keeper and help with tasks such as building maintenance and the teaching of bowls to school groups. Additionally a ladies gardening club commenced during the data collection period:

> But no, a lot of volunteers. The volunteers look after the gardens. They do maintenance jobs around. The tradesmen in the club do maintenance jobs around the club, whether it be electrical or carpentry and that, at no cost to the club. Club Participant 4

> Working bees, we always get a good roll up. We've got a little garden club going now. They just did that off their own bat; it's great. Club Participant 2

With other volunteering opportunities remaining, it could be argued what occurred was just a subtle shift of roles within the club, minor changes in comparison to the benefits the poker machines provided. However, given that interview data was collected some fifteen years after the voluntary catering roles were altered or lost, the fact that those times and activities are still remembered by community members suggests there was a deep sense of attachment to those positions by at least some of the volunteers, and an acknowledgement of the value of those roles by the broader community.

This sense of attachment to voluntary positions is supported by research highlighting the significant personal satisfaction that can be experienced through volunteerism. For example, Holmes (2009) found that although individuals are motivated to volunteer for a multitude of reasons, they overwhelmingly saw themselves as the primary beneficiaries of their volunteering. Volunteerism has also been associated with higher levels of subjective wellbeing (Pilkington, Windsor & Crisp, 2012) and mental health in older, non-working adults (Pavlova & Silbereisen, 2011), a category that encompasses many members of the club. Holmes' (2009) research also highlights the strong sense of attachment volunteers can develop for the organisation they give their time to: "for all the respondents, the organisation where they volunteered was a special place, somewhere they had after all chosen to become involved with" (p. 6). This suggests that the acts of volunteering that helped to create and initially run the bowls club may have been a significant factor in the building of the strong bonds to the club some members still demonstrated (see chapter 5). It remains to be seen if the reduced reliance for volunteers within the club will change the nature of the attachment that future members may form with the club. But certainly the massive revenue from the poker machines has resulted in an erosion of the traditional understandings and obligations associated with club membership. This suggests the cost/benefits of the club's adoption of poker machines extend beyond and are more nuanced than the more commonly-cited impacts of gambling problems and the highly visible development of the club's facilities.

8.3 Colonisation and contestation

> "… but it's a business now. It's 13 years they've been running the business. Most of the people that come here now accept the fact that it's what it is." Club Participant 1

Concepts of loss and change can also be applied to the control and ownership by club members of the space within their club. Interview data clearly indicated that incorporation of the poker machine business generated a range of changes to club function and priorities. At times these changes seem to have caused tensions amongst some bowls club members and those who work there. It is likely that all clubs, being comprised of individuals with a range of differing needs, values and understandings of club membership, would have to resolve such differences from time to time. However, it appears the poker machine business has added another layer of complexity to these relationships, altering the dynamics of power within the club, and transforming the way issues are prioritised and addressed.

Many of these tensions seem to stem from what Livingstone and Woolley (2007, p. 363) describe as the colonising of community space by poker machine businesses when the machines were placed in the readymade space of existing hotels and clubs. When poker machines moved in and colonised these spaces they often pushed out the existing, less profitable activities such as live music from hotels (Australian Institute for Gambling Research, 2000; Borrell, 2008a; p. 252). Within Buttercross the bowls club was originally a space for sporting activities, club member socialising and periodic community celebrations such as weddings which, as noted in the previous section, doubled as fundraising opportunities for the club. To accommodate the poker machines, this community space was assumed, remodelled and reconceptualised as a space of commercial enterprise, albeit coexisting with a community club.

However, the disparate requirements of the space by the business and club members seem to have resulted in the two entities periodically competing for this community space. Staff

and club members described how on occasion some club members express anger and frustration at being denied access to facilities due to their use for commercial functions: "you find a lot of the older members get a bit angry because they seem to think that [you're] taking the club away from them", Club Participant 3.

> They've got their nose out of joint because we used to take over their club room. We'd made a restaurant out of their main club room, so when they wanted to use the room they had to ask permission so they didn't like that. But I mean it was their own people, the directors, that were telling them that they were going to use it so they had that bit of give and take…
>
> Club Participant 1

Discussions with senior people within the club indicated a willingness to work hard to resolve these tensions and to give priority to the needs of club members where possible. A number of examples were provided where the needs of club members were accommodated, including the building of a designated club-room for members and the purchase of a portable dance floor to replace the dance floor removed during restaurant refurbishments. However, these points of tension, and comments that the club had lost some members due to its decision to install poker machines (see also chapter 5), suggest the poker machines have been something of a divisive force within the club. It seems evident that bowls club members do not share a unified vision regarding the role and purpose of poker machines within their club and that the "business" of poker machines may at times conflict with the needs and wants of those club members whose primary association with the club is based on sporting activity.

At times the business arm of the club also generates issues for others within the club as they strive to mediate between the needs of the business and the needs of club members:

> Some still make comments, "This is a bowls club, not a restaurant."… That happened not long ago, because we can be quite busy sometimes and we are trying to, you know we take up all their space … That can annoy some, because they still see it as their club and they don't understand how to share ... they seem to forget that it's a business now. Club Participant 3

> They've got a bigger club room so they're [the bowlers] happy now that they've actually got a
>
> room that they come in and that's their own. If we take over that room now they get their
>
> noses out of joint for a little while, but whenever they want this big room [the restaurant] they
>
> get it. So they've got priority on the big room. So we lose customers and business while they
>
> take over the backroom for their functions and all that sort of stuff. Big bowls days they can't
>
> fit into their room. Eighty plus they can't fit in so they come and take over our room.
>
> Club Participant 1

While it seems clear from these and other comments made by club members and staff that

the business arm of the club frequently attempts to accommodate the needs of the bowlers,

this does not appear to always be feasible nor, as the comments imply, desired. The

introduction of the poker machine business has rendered the space ambiguous and

contended: it vacillates between being a space for members and community groups to freely

enjoy (see the word cloud in chapter 5), and a commodity that can be exchanged for

financial gain. Parallels can be drawn with these findings of the commodification of club

space and Borrell's (2008c) observations, formed during her own research on poker

machine gambling, that "community life and space is increasingly commodified and

commercialised" (p. 271). Such comments are consonant with observations by a number of

academics upon the ways in which commercialised gambling has contributed to the

commodification of numerous other aspects of contemporary existence, including:

risk/chance (Reith, 2013; Young, 2010); interior life (Livingstone, 2005); and leisure (Borrell,

2008a).

Within the bowls club, the commercialisation and commodification of the space has tilted the

balance of power and control, taking it away from club members. In comparison to the

requirements of 'the business', the demands for the space by members appear less

important and their grievances petty. Club Participant 3's comments implying that the

tensions are caused by a disinclination of club members to share their club space "they don't

understand how to share" may well be true. However, the suggestion that the tension also stems from a misconception by members who "still see it as their club" may be more revealing. The colonisation of the club by the poker machine business has created a substantial change in the ownership of the power to control club space. While some recognise and capitulate to the power of the poker machine business, not all club members have been prepared to subordinate their right of access, and the use of club space is periodically contested.

Club Participants 3 and 1's comments, that "it's a business now" clearly imply a differentiation between the bowls club before poker machines and the present arrangement which they view as first and foremost a commercial enterprise. While the primary reason for bringing the poker machines into the club was to fund the redevelopment of club facilities, these same facilities, despite the superior standard of the extended and reshaped space, are not universally accepted as adequate compensation for the loss of autonomy over club space.

8.4 Changing demands and benefits of club membership

A further (more limited) finding of the research was that the revenue derived from poker machine gambling has also changed the way club membership is conceptualised by some members. Evidence presented earlier demonstrated how, prior to the advent of poker machine gambling, the club relied heavily on the voluntary work of members to build, maintain and develop the facilities. Although during those times, club membership provided a range of benefits to members, it also came with a range of obligations and duties requiring members to give their time and energy back to the club. Research findings indicate that, for some, the embedding of poker machines and their vast revenue within the club has worked to redefine the value of membership which now emphasises the commercially-tangible benefits provided, and as discussed previously, devalues the members' voluntary work. This

was evident in comments that emphasised what some considered to be the unreasonably high expectations of some club members regarding the level of subsidy of their memberships, entertainment, food and beverages:

> … and I think that's where they lost the people that used to come all the time because the ones that did get their nose out of joint just refused to come and the others wanted everything for nothing because you've got the pokies there and you're supposed to get it for nothing when you've got the pokies. Club Participant 1

This comment suggests that the benefits of club membership have come to be measured by some at least, in terms of their economic value. This perception of club membership was also evident in the way the use of the poker-machine loyalty-card spilled across to all club members who were rewarded with 'loyalty points' for simply attending their clubhouse:

> But they [members] reap the other benefits from them [the poker machines] as well. Because there is an in-house club, an R and R Club and they can get bonuses and things out of that by swiping their card every day. But they won't play poker machines, but they'll go and swipe their card every day and get the benefits. Which could mean, if they get so many points up they can get a free meal. Club Participant 7

While the commercialisation and commodification of aspects of club activities has provided liberation for some from the obligations of fundraising and volunteering, there is also a sense that something has been lost. Olivia's comment cited earlier, "you just pay per head now and most people seem to prefer that these days", suggest both a lament for the past and recognition that the change suits some. Likewise Club Participant 7's comments that "I think the bowlers were glad that people work there (saved) them going there and giving their time up", and Club Participant 1's comments that a number of club members, "just don't really give a rat's clacker. They just come and bowl and go home. They pay their fees and that's what they want to do", paints a picture of club membership that simultaneously delivers more tangible benefits while making fewer demands upon members.

With the commercialisation and commodification of so many aspects of personal and community life in recent decades it is not possible to determine the extent to which these changes within the club can be attributed solely to the introduction of poker machines. However, it is clear that the poker machines and the enormous funds they draw for the club from the community have had a significant impact on both the value and place within the club of its members, and the ability of ordinary club members to make use of their club space. With the value to the club of the poker machines quantifiable (and equating to millions of dollars per annum), and the decline in value to the club of the voluntary labour, the balance of power within the club has clearly shifted to reside in the poker machines themselves. This marks a significant shift from the accounts of the early days of the club when the contributions of club members were the lifeblood of the club and vital to the club's survival (see also chapter 5).

8.5 Partnership and power

The previous section examined the trade-offs between the substantial tangible facilities built on poker machine revenue against the loss of tenure of community space, shifts in the power of regular club members and shifts in the way club membership was viewed and constructed. Following this, the focus now moves to examine the trade-offs associated with the club's relationship with its former business partner Tabcorp and the poker machine enterprise.

Becoming a poker machine venue effectively wedded the Buttercross Bowls Club to a company highly focused on increasing its size and profitability. While any new relationship entails a period of adjustment and accommodation, the degree of difference in the partners' backgrounds and values can amplify or moderate the extent of adjustment required. By many measures, the linking of this country bowls club to Tabcorp Holdings was a marriage of opposites. Although the relationship endured until the dismantling of the duopoly (see

chapter 2) in August 2012, Tabcorp at times showed itself to be a demanding partner, and one able and willing to exert sizeable pressure in its business negotiations with the club.

Much of the power of both Tabcorp and Tattersall's can be attributed to the considerable control the regulatory framework afforded the duopoly for the first two decades of legalised poker machine gambling in Victoria (1992 – 2012). As described in chapter 2, under the arrangement the duopoly was able to assign machines to venues based on profitability assessments, monitor ongoing machine performance and transfer machines between venues to maximise profitability (Costello & Millar, 2000, pp. 94 – 95; McMillen et al., 1999; Productivity Commission, 1999). An investigation by *The 7.30 Report*, a Victorian current affairs program*,* documented cases whereby the duopoly removed machines from sites they deemed to be underperforming, concluding that, "Victoria's clubs have found that, unless they reach profit targets set by the companies [the duopoly], they lose their machines" (Bunworth, 2000, February 14). Similar assertions were made by Costello & Millar (2000, p. 121). These reports indicate that the freedom of venue owners/managers to deploy the machines to meet the particular revenue requirements of their club or hotel, was a highly limited one, and clearly subordinate to the profit demands of the duopoly.

8.5.1 Capitulation and resistance

The Buttercross bowls club experienced the duopoly's intention to extract the maximum possible revenue from its catchments during the early years of the club's partnership with Tabcorp. The company, apparently dissatisfied by the machines' turnover tried to broker an arrangement whereby the poker machines would be transferred to a local hotel and profits shared between the club and hotel. Although individual venue data regarding losses (expenditure) was not publicly available in Victoria until 2008, analysis of aggregate data covering the period from 1992 – 2004, indicates poker machine gambling in hotels in Victoria generated twice the revenue of poker machine gambling in clubs (Livingstone, et al., 2006, p. 91). This suggests the likely outcome of the deal would have been higher poker machine

losses within the community and higher returns to Tabcorp, but a much reduced income-stream for the bowls club. One club director indicated that they believed the reduced income would not have been sufficient to maintain the club in a solvent state. Despite significant pressure from Tabcorp, including a visit to the club by a team of upper managers, the club was able to convince Tabcorp that it should retain its poker machines. A number of inferences can be drawn from this event.

While on one hand this event demonstrated a willingness of the bowls club directors to stand firm against Tabcorp, it also clearly demonstrates the 'privilege' of hosting poker machines was contingent on attaining an adequate level of player losses (revenue). Given that the club retained the machines and there were no further moves by Tabcorp to relocate them, it seems reasonable to assume that the losses harvested by the poker machines was eventually acceptable to Tabcorp. Due to the unattainability of loss data for individual venues in Victoria prior to July 2008, this explanation cannot be substantiated. However, loss data for the years since venue data has been available (see Table 4) show that the annual expenditure/losses on the bowls club's poker machines have been sizable, although expenditure/losses have declined in real terms over this period.

Given what is known about the significant contributions that 'problem gamblers' and 'moderate problem gamblers' make to venue revenue (42 to 75 per cent according to the PC 2010, p. 5.1), the pressure by the duopoly on venues to achieve certain levels of revenue would appear to compromise that venue's ability to adequately respond to patron problem gambling. This argument was discussed more fully in chapter 7.

Table 4
Poker machine loss/expenditure data for the Buttercross Bowls Club

Financial year ending	Annual poker machine expenditure /losses	No. poker machines	Average expenditure (loss) per machine	Average expenditure per club machine Victoria
30 June 2009	$3,301,892	40	$82,547	$79,550
30 June 2010	$3,216,091	40	$80,402	$73,585
30 June 2011	$2,897,536	40	$72,438	$71,780
30 June 2012	$2,953,969	40	$73, 849	$72,529
30 June 2013	$2,666,559	*50	*	

All loss/expenditure figures adjusted for inflation (using the Reserve Bank of Australia Inflation Calculator) and expressed in 2013 dollars. * Approval for the10 additional machines occurred midway during the financial year; therefore it is not possible to calculate average machine expenditure for this year.

Additionally, this event raises a number of questions regarding the club's capacity to autonomously determine how it deployed its poker machines within the community. Regardless of whether or not the club may have been content with a moderate stream of income from the poker machines to enable the development of facilities and ensure economic viability, ultimately the levels of revenue (player losses) were largely determined by what was satisfactory to Tabcorp. The provisions within the regulatory framework which gave the duopoly control over the deployment of their poker machines (Costello & Millar, 2000, p. 94; McMillen et al., 1999; Productivity Commission, 1999) provided them with a powerful tool in their dealings with venues. In entering into a partnership with Tabcorp the club conceded a level of power and autonomy. However, these events suggest this concession of power was far from all encompassing. The retention of the poker machines by

the club, despite significant pressure from Tabcorp, clearly demonstrates that the club was not without some control within the relationship.

The club's willingness to fight to retain the poker machines also emphasises the value of the poker machines to the club. Preservation of the enhanced facilities and club functions was reliant on the continuation of poker machine revenue (see chapters 5 and 6). Arguably, it seems the club was ultimately prepared to compromise the health and wellbeing of some poker machine patrons in order to maintain its revenue source. This theme was discussed in more detail in chapter 7.

In recent years the club has again withstood pressure from Tabcorp as the company actively campaigned to encourage clubs to enlist in *Tabcorp Gaming Solutions* (TGS), by 16 August 2012 (the date when the duopoly ceased and clubs and hotels assumed ownership of their poker machines and also responsibility for machine maintenance, government compliance, staff training and so forth). The Victorian State Government's April 2008 decision to end the duopoly (Victorian Auditor General, 2011) effectively cut the duopoly out of the lucrative three-way split of profits they had enjoyed with the government and venues. However, both businesses moved quickly to maintain an interest in poker machine gambling in Victoria by offering packages of services to venues to provide poker machine repairs and maintenance, compliance support, strategic planning aimed at maximising profit and so on. Costs of packages were calculated on a daily fee per poker machine. Tabcorp Holdings appear to have been relatively successful in encouraging venues to purchase their suite of support services with their 2013 Annual Report stating that they had contracts covering approximately 8,500 poker machines in Victoria (Tabcorp Holdings, 2013). In competition with Tabcorp Holdings, Clubs Victoria offered members access to its version of a support program known as Mercury (Mercury, 2013).

Conversations with club directors and managers at both Buttercross bowls club and other venues within a Victorian regional city, indicated that Tabcorp Holdings was exerting considerable pressure on clubs to sign to TGS. Clubs who chose not to sign reported sometimes finding their access to linked jackpots and other services withdrawn. An article in The Age newspaper suggested pressure on clubs to sign with Tabcorp Gaming Solutions may have commenced as early as 2009, with the report describing how "several club managers claim Tabcorp has threatened to remove their poker machines if they refuse to sign up" (Houston, 2009, July 19, para 5). However, the Buttercross Bowls Club resisted the pressure – perhaps in this case made easier by the fact that their dependency on the relationship with Tabcorp was drawing to an end.

8.5.2 Wedded to the machine

Conversely, with the club highly reliant on the proceeds of poker machine gambling to service debt, pay salaries and meet general running costs, the club's relationship with its poker machines is set to continue. This narrative – that the only way the club can continue in its present form is to retain the poker machines – was present in the interviews with members of staff and the board, and appears to be promulgated by the board to the general club membership.

> We keep getting told that we wouldn't have the paid green keeper if we didn't have the pokies. That's the catch all cry. If we didn't have the pokies we'd have to raise so much money outside the club to maintain the club. Club Participant 4

Even though, as Club Participant 1 pointed out, there appears to be a desire by some club members to do away with the poker machines, "…and a lot of them now sort of say oh we'll go synthetic [greens], we'll go synthetic and we'll get rid of all that [poker machines]", there is also a realisation that the network of infrastructure and employment the club has accumulated is built largely on a foundation of poker machine revenue.

> ...but what are they going to do with the [club facilities] - this building would be empty. This [gaming] room would be empty, that [dining] room would be empty, that [meeting] room would be empty and the grass [bowling greens] would be dead. Club Participant 1

As outlined by a club official in the witness statement supplied to the VCGLR as part of the club's 2012 application, the club's survival is effectively bound to the ability of the poker machines to continue drawing revenue from the local community:

> The Club is dependent on the revenue from the gaming machines and the complementary expenditure to service its loans, to maintain the facilities that it has developed over the years, and to continue its financial community contributions. If the gaming revenue was threatened the Club would face serious financial problems and may not be able to service its loan, the facilities would fall into disrepair, and any future up-grades and community contribution would be unsupportable (CR, 2012, p. 7)

The success of the poker machines has therefore become an ongoing priority for the club. Despite the association of poker machines with 'easy money', they constitute a business which, like any other business, is susceptible to loss of trade to its competitors. The industry shake-up which preceded the ending of the duopoly in August 2012 resulted in a profusion of applications to the VCGLR for both new venues and increases in poker machine numbers in existing venues. Between 2009 and 2012 the VCGLR received applications from three venues within just over a 10 kilometre radius of the Buttercross Bowls Club. Although, to date, only one of these applications is set to proceed (one having been rejected on appeal to VCAT and the other application withdrawn, as discussed in chapter 6), the applications give an indication of the level of activity within the industry during this period and the potential for the bowls club's poker machine revenue to be diminished by competition from new venues.

The imperative to maintain revenue and remain 'ahead of the game' in a competitive market has seen the club increase the number of poker machines it operates from 30 to 50 machines since commencing operations (see chapter 6). A review of the documents submitted by the club in support of its application to the VCGLR and VCAT reveal that the club's primary motivation for wanting to increase the number of poker machines was to further improve venue facilities (CR20, 2011). However there was also a strong argument that the club was seeking to "to ensure its ongoing financial viability" (CR20, 2011, p. 40)

and to "arrest the decrease in its market share lost to larger venues" (CR20, 2011, p. 39). This is consistent with comments made by Club Participant 5 regarding the importance of "…being able to compete with bigger venues" in the area by increasing the number and variety of poker machines:

> If you sort of get left behind you become a smaller venue as time goes on and you know, the gaming patrons do know the machines. They know which one is a new one, which ones are old ones and which ones give them the best chance of getting the free spins etcetera so, there is a bit of science to it from the patrons' side of it sort of thing. Club Participant 5

This analysis of interview data and the club's application for additional poker machines very clearly highlights that the sporting and social benefits of the club have become entwined with the poker machines – perhaps even inextricably so. There is an implicit conviction that the relationship with its poker machines is vital for the club's economic viability. Such a view also favours the need for the economic success of the poker machines at the possible expense of community wellbeing where the interests of each are seen to be in conflict.

8.6 Symbiosis or parasite?

As discussed earlier in this chapter and in chapters 5 and 6, the deployment of poker machines by the bowls club has resulted in a number of benefits to both the club and the wider community, but has also caused a number of adverse impacts. This section looks to explore the nature of the relationship between Tabcorp and the poker machines and the bowls club and the wider community. Of particular interest are two disparate views of poker machines articulated by interview participants. Borrowing from research into the relationship of media and sports as described by Real (1998), two divergent models, both related to biology (p. 16), can be used to describe the relationships.

In one model, the relationship with the poker machines and the community is symbiotic, "so that each both gives and takes in the relationship, leaving each better off than it would be without the other" (Real, 1998, p. 16). In the second model the relationship of the poker

machines to the community is parasitic in nature, drawing from the host and giving little in return (Real, 1998, p. 16, citing Rader, 1994). The depiction of poker machines as parasitic is not uncommon and has been deployed by both academics and within the media (see for example The New Zealand Herald; 2005, June 8; Pinge, 2008). Those within the community who viewed the relationship between the poker machines and the club/community as symbiotic, emphasised the tangible benefits to the club and community, and frequently downplayed adverse effects. Those who viewed the poker machines as parasitic stressed the costs to community health and wellbeing and were of the view that the poker machines extract far more from the community than they return.

In an attempt to critically assess the aptness of each of these models to the Buttercross community, the following sections undertake an analysis of the club's community benefit and then seek to explore the origins and costs of these benefits.

8.7 Community benefit

As described in chapter 2, under the current regulatory regime for poker machines in Victoria, club poker machine venues enjoy a preferential taxation arrangement in comparison to hotel poker machine venues. This arrangement exempts clubs from the 8.33% contribution to the Community Support Fund which hotels are required to pay, whilst at the same time requiring that at least an equivalent amount is expended at the club and community level. Clubs are required to validate expenditure of a minimum of 8.33 per cent of poker machine revenue on community benefits through the submission of an annual Community Benefit Statement (CBS) to the gambling regulator (VCGLR, 2013b). Failure to complete a CBS or to contribute at least 8.33 per cent of revenue to community benefit could result in the club being liable to pay an additional 8.33 per cent of poker machine revenue in taxation (VCGLR, 2013b).

The range of expenditures clubs are able to claim as community benefit is diverse and

includes such items as donations and sponsorship, voluntary expenses, staff wages and

capital expenditure such as building renovations, plant and equipment (excluding those

related to gaming purposes). Although research by Brown et al. (2011) identified concerns

by managers of gambling clubs that CBS categories are too narrow, restricting the ability of

clubs to demonstrate the less tangible benefits they provide to communities, such as

facilitating socialisation (p. 81-89), research identified for this project was more likely to

critical of the breadth of expenses constituting community benefit (see for example,

Livingstone, 2007; Livingstone, et al., 2012). One interview participant employed in the

health and welfare profession left no doubt as to his opinion of community benefit when he

stated,

> The community benefits have always been rorted. I'm sure the bowling club offers subsidised
> meals, but again how much of that is community benefit and how much of that is sucking
> people into go gamble. You know, even, there's free cheese in a mouse trap. Ryan

Similarly Club Participant 4 also took issue with the way community benefit is able to be

calculated. Club Participant 4's comments, listed below, are a reminder that the members of

thousands of sporting and recreation clubs regularly volunteer their time to coach, umpire

and train junior teams to grow their sport. Yet club-based poker machine businesses receive

special acknowledgement and taxation concessions for this work:

> They conduct bowling for the schools, with classes and bowls members are asked to go along
> and supervise and teach. All those hours that bowls members put in go towards the
> community contribution. They get around it in all ways. Right. They're not handing anything
> out really, only that the bowls club members go along, they might put two hours a week in, 10
> members. I don't know how many. So there's 20 hours of community benefit…no money
> actually changes hands but it's still considered community benefit. Club Participant 4

Particular criticism has been singled out for the inclusion of staff wages and capital

expenditure such as building renovations, plant and equipment in community benefit, which

are seen by some to constitute the normal costs of running a business. This was noted by

the PC (2010) when it stated "community benefits reported by clubs include expenses not

usually seen as genuinely arms-length community benefits" (p. 6.7). Australian academic

Charles Livingstone has led and conducted research projects examining community benefit

paid by clubs (Livingstone 2007 & 2008; Livingstone, et al., 2012). This ability of clubs to

claim staff wages, club renovations and other expenses as community benefit led

Livingstone (2007) to declare,

> Most businesses would struggle to argue that employment expenses or the costs of
> renovations somehow constitute a philanthropic or benevolent benefit to the general
> community. Of course, employment and access to facilities are a benefit of sorts, but no other
> category of business is systematically supported by government to make a virtue out of the
> necessity of employing staff and deploying resources to attract customers (Discussion
> section, para. 12).

Livingstone concludes that it would be "virtually impossible" for a club in Victoria not to

comply with the community benefit requirements "other than failing to lodge a return"

(Discussion section, para. 13). While the guidelines regarding what constitutes a community

benefit were tightened after a ministerial order in July 2008 (PC 2010) following the release

of Livingstone's (2007) research, all of the expenses listed above are still allowable within

the State of Victoria. Prompting the Commission (2010) to note,

> Using these criteria, in the commercial sector, many employment and investment decisions
> aimed at maximising shareholder interests could be seen as encompassing 'community'
> contributions (p. 6.8).

8.7.1 The club v hotel dichotomy…again

The preferential taxation arrangements for club and hotel venues appear to be largely based

on the assumption that clubs primarily operate poker machines to benefit their members and

local community, whilst hotels operate poker machines for the sole benefit of the proprietor

or shareholders. So strongly was this accepted that a number of the community members

interviewed, even when unable to list any contributions made by the bowls club (beyond

access of club facilities), still did not question their assumption. Helen was just one of a

number of interview participants to demonstrate this when she stated:

> From what I understand a lot of pokie, that the extra money that's collected is not just for prizes but does a lot of community work, but I don't know completely about that. That was my understanding. Helen

> I don't know what they do with their money. It's supposed to go back into the community. I know that they, when we tried to get seats in the township from the CBI, I know they donated a seat out the front. I suppose that came out of coffers for that. There are percentage rules, aren't there? Olivia

Likewise Cath, when she said, "well the idea was the clubs would actually put back into the community where the pubs don't. That's just pure revenue". This dichotomous view of hotel and club based poker machines was highlighted in chapters 6 and 7. However, there are actually many similarities between hotel and club poker machine businesses, particularly when the taxation concessions, which effectively fund clubs' community benefit through taxpayers money, are discounted.

However, also as noted in chapters 6 and 7, poker machine clubs successfully tap into ideological conceptions of community, effectively masking and downplaying the business side of their operations that are primarily concerned with the extraction of revenue from their immediate neighbourhood. The acceptance of the view that clubs operate poker machines for the benefit of their local community legitimates the presence of poker machines within the community, limits the way damage on the community is understood, and works to condone that damage. This supports the hegemonic interests of the poker machine industry, the government and venues. As noted in chapter 7, so pervasive and enduring is the acceptance of the discourse of gambling clubs as community benefactors that it persist even in the face of evidence of significant harms to community members.

It should be noted, however, that other interview participants expressed a different view, contending that clubs return little to their local communities. This view was most common

amongst those involved in the welfare sector or the provision of emergency relief, but was

also expressed by community members not involved in these areas:

> As far as any other role in the community I don't know of any other role it plays. It's
> somewhere to have a meal, and of course spend time on the pokies, and a good social
> sporting focal point for people interested in bowls, but I don't know of any other activity, or any
> other contribution. Now, I know that under the terms of operating a pokie machine venue
> there must be a community contribution, so I'm sure there is. But my guess or my perception
> is that it's a contribution of minimal compliance… Charles

Charles' assertion that the club's community contribution would be of 'minimal compliance' is

tested in the following section which seeks to examine the community benefit claims of the

bowls club.

8.7.2 Unscrambling the club's CBS

As part of this research, copies of the bowls club's Community Benefit Statements and net

poker machine expenditure (loss) data for the four financial years spanning 1 July 2008 –

June 2012 were retrieved from the website of the Victorian Commission for Gambling and

Liquor Regulation (previously known as the VCGR). Selection of these financial years was

based on the availability of comparable CBS data and the availability of venue expenditure

data. The activities or purposes that constituted allowable community benefits and the

format and categories of CBS changed in the financial year beginning 1 July 2008, restricting

the ability to readily conduct comparative analysis with earlier data. Additionally, expenditure

data at a venue level was not made publicly available in Victoria prior to the 2008/09

financial year. Table 5 lists the activities or purposes that constituted allowable community

benefit claims between 1 July 2008 and 30 June 2012.

As noted by Livingstone (2007) and Livingstone, et al., (2012) many of the allowable claims

for community benefit in Victoria are for costs associated with running and marketing a

business, and only a smaller portion relate to activities or purposes that would generally be

considered philanthropic or charitable. Using the work of Livingstone (2007) as a guide,

Table 6, column 5, seeks to separate those community benefit items that would be generally considered costs associated with running a business (Class B) from those items that would generally be considered philanthropic or benevolent, plus the cost of complying with the auditing requirements of the CBS (Class A and C).

Table 5
Description of CBS claim categories within classes A, B and C

Class of Claim	Category within the Class
Class A	(a) Donations, gifts and sponsorships (including cash, goods and services) (b) Cost of providing and maintaining sporting activities for use by club members (c) Cost of any subsidy for the provision of goods and services but excluding alcohol (d) Voluntary Services provided by members and/or staff of the club to another person in the community (e) Advice, support and services provided by the RSL (Victorian Branch) to ex-service personnel, their carers and families
Class B	(a) Capital expenditure (b) Financing Costs (including principal and interest) (c) Retained earnings accumulated during the year (d) Provision of buildings, plant and equipment over $10,000 per item excluding gaming equipment or the gaming machine area of the venue (e) Operating costs
Class C	(a) Provision of responsible gambling measures and activities but excluding those required by law (b) Reimbursement of expenses reasonably incurred by volunteers (c) CBC preparation and auditing expenses

It was not possible to separate the provision of venue facilities to community groups (which would generally be considered benevolent) from the subsidisation of food and drink (which as Livingstone notes amounts to marketing) as both have been grouped together in Class A (c) since 2008, following a Ministerial Order (2008), and the value of the subsidisation of food and drink is not clearly apparent in the schedules for the years 08/09, 09/10 and 10/11. Therefore it was determined to classify both 'facilities access' and 'food and drink subsidisation' as benevolent/philanthropic contributions, even though it is recognised that to do so would be to exaggerate the benevolent contribution of the bowls club.

As depicted in Table 6, during the four financial years examined, the net poker machine expenditure (losses) on the bowls club's 40 poker machines was in excess of $11.6 million. Analysis of the CBS for the same period discloses that the bowls club's total claim for community benefit amounted to in excess of $3.5 million or 30 per cent of poker machine revenue/losses. However, if expenses such as staff wages and other business running costs are excluded, this figure is substantially reduced. This is shown in column 5 in Table 6 which calculates Category A and Category C expenses. These include those expenses which would generally be considered benevolent, including: volunteer costs, facility use by community groups, cash and in-kind donations, provision and maintenance of sporting activities, and food and beverage subsidisation (excluding alcohol). Under this scenario the amount paid as the club's community benefit drops to $540,713. This constitutes 4.65% of the over $11.6 million lost on the poker machines in the four years examined. This is well below the 8.33 per cent tax concession the Victorian State Government provides to club venues. The following paragraphs analyse two selected components of the club's community benefit in greater detail: facility use by community organisations, and provision of cash donations.

Table 6
Bowls Club CBS Claims as a component of poker machine revenue/losses

Financial year ending	Poker machine losses / revenue	Total community benefit claimed (Class A, B, C)	Class A, plus Class C community benefit claims	Class A community benefit claims as % of losses
30 June 2009	2,978,881	$876,172	$130,383	4.38%
30 June 2010	$2,986,149	$799,911	$131,582	4.41%
30 June 2011	$2,779,255	$901,598	$143,419	5.16%
30 June 2012	$2,883,331	$980,528	$137,329	4.76%
Total **Jul 08-Jun 12**	**$11,627,616**	$3,558,209	$542,713	4.68%

Facility use by community organisations

One of the major components of the club's Class A community benefit claim during the four years examined arises from the club making its facilities available to the community without charge for functions and meetings. As described in chapter 5, the club is a popular venue, many community groups meet there, and the club is often the preferred venue for wakes and other functions. The club attributes a theoretical hire charge to the use of the space and this forms part of the club's community benefit. In the four financial years to 30 June, 2012, $106,527 of the club's Class A community benefit claim of $540,913 was attributed to facility use by other groups and individuals. This category of community benefit has grown rapidly in the past four years from $12,800 for the financial year ending 30 June 2009, to $45,927 for the financial year ending 30 June 2012. This reflects the growth in the use of club facilities for meetings and other functions largely made possible by the expansion of venue facilities during the 2008 renovations to club amenities. There is no doubt the use of free meeting space in a comfortable and modern facility with access to complimentary tea/coffee facilities is highly valued by the community (see also chapters 5, 6 and 7), and that the club is genuine in its desire to support other community groups and see its facilities utilised for community functions.

However, it is not a one-way transaction and there are also benefits to the club in drawing community groups into the venue for meetings. The coming and going of a range of community members enhances the social atmosphere of the venue. Perhaps more important are the findings described in chapter 7, that the regular presence of respected community members assists to legitimate the use of poker machines by the club and tacitly endorse their presence within the township. Additionally, chapter 7 described how the reception of this type of benefit can suppress the capacity of community members to speak out against the adverse impacts associated with the club's use of poker machines.

Furthermore, as pointed out by a member of the health and welfare sector, the strategy is good for business, with some who attend the venue for meetings remaining to dine at the club or use the club's poker machines:

> In terms of the other contributions that venue operators make in terms of supporting clubs and sporting organisations, I think what I feel about that is that they choose what they want to support. They also choose what they want to support that further promotes them as a venue… I have a real problem that they get promotional mileage from that. You would imagine that if they would value something as a promotional value to them that it ends up increasing the use of the poker machines and creating more, further problems down the line. Adam

Analysis of the interview data showed a number of recipients of the club's community benefit felt a sense of indebtedness to the club (see also chapter 5) and sought to repay it through dining at the club or using the poker machines:

> And they will provide meeting rooms gratis. Yes, expecting of course that you do all the right things and buy alcohol, drink and gamble with them. But yes there isn't - I've been to several meetings there and there's actually no pressure… Jan

> Well, we try to repay the favour where the whole team goes round there once a year and has a meal, and we usually have our committee break up round there just to thank them for supporting us. Joe

> Yeah, I suppose; when we have meetings, I know I'm the only one that goes out and puts the obligatory $5 in the poker machine. You think well I'm here, I'll put $5 in - more of an entrance fee than anything… Tom

However, as Tom goes on to point out, not all who use the club seem to feel this sense of obligation:

> None of the other members - really, the other members go out and I've been over there when Lions have had meetings and at the close of the meeting, they certainly don't all rush out to the poker machines - they go home. From my knowledge of being over there, they've probably got a regular clientele and it's not aligned to any of the clubs. Tom

Tom's final comment that the 'regular clientele' using the poker machines are not associated with the community groups accessing the club's meeting space supports his claim that

receiving community benefit does not necessarily cause recipients to go on to gamble on the club's poker machines .

However, it also raises questions of equity around the questions: who within the community are contributing the major share of the poker machine revenue, and who are enjoying the benefits? Tom's comments that the 'regular clientele' are 'not aligned to any of the clubs' challenges the notion of the relationship between the club and its poker machines with the community as one of symbiosis. They suggest instead that, in the case of the meeting space community benefit, the cost is being borne by one group (and those who have a relationship with them) while the benefits are being enjoyed by another group. The now widely-cited calculations that between 42 - 75 per cent of poker machine losses are derived from problem and moderate risk gamblers (PC, 2010, p. 5.1) further weaken the applicability of the symbiosis model.

Cash donations

Analysis was also conducted of the cash donations claimed in the club's Community Benefit Statements for the four financial years commencing 1 July 2008 and ending 30 June 2012. Club Participant 2 indicated that the club receives weekly requests for cash or in-kind donations. While smaller requests such as for meal-vouchers or bottles of wine appear to be rarely refused, requests for financial assistance are not always accommodated:

> Pretty well every week we do get some organisation writing to us looking for some help but we do what we can when we can, but some of them are a little bit too remote…in what we feel is a connection to us. Club Participant 2

Each request is considered by the board of directors and while Club Participant 2 indicated there is no defined procedure for the allocation of community benefit, his comments infer the club applies some informal criteria, including "there's got to be an indication of self-help".

Although cash donations are perhaps what many people would think of when they hear of community benefit, analysis reveals such donations constituted only a very small proportion of the bowls club's CBS. Over the four financial years examined, the club has provided a total of $70,244 in cash donations. This equates to 0.6 per cent of the over $11.6 million the poker machines have drawn from the community. Although the lack of detail required in CBS statements restricts the possibility of detailed analysis of cash donations, interview participants indicated the club was a major sponsor of the Buttercross football club and a local festival and made a number of smaller donations to the Buttercross netball and cricket clubs. Some further insight into where cash donations were distributed was gained from analysis of the documents prepared for the club to support its 2012 application to the VCGLR. These reports were accessed from the website of the VCGLR. An Economic Impact Assessment lists financial donations by the club for two financial years, 2009 – 10 and 2010 – 11 (CR20). According to the report, a total of $31,520 was donated to the local community during these two years. The major beneficiary was the local football club which received $10,000 over the two year period, followed by a local festival which received $7,100, a local pre-school which received a one-off donation of $5,000 to assist with grounds redevelopment and a local community radio station which received $3,000. The remaining $6,420 in donations ranged in size from $200 to $1,400 and these were distributed to the local tennis, cricket and netball clubs, friends of the CFA, a charity golf day, the Agricultural Society and a school student to sponsor an overseas exchange.

This breakdown and prior discussion serves to confirm three common criticisms of cash donations that comprise poker machine community benefit:

1. The donations are distributed inequitably across the community, often favouring sporting organisations, particularly male-dominated sports, as is the case in Buttercross: "they generally approach us. With the football club they have various packages with different dollar values. We took the top package. So we're a major

sponsor" (Club Participant 2); and the donations do not benefit those who are the

primary contributors to the poker machine revenue:

> I think I have issue with that because where the problems are, they're [venues] not
> necessarily targeting those resources to where the issues are and where they've
> created issues for the community that didn't exist before they started operating poker
> venues. Adam

2. The lack of transparency and accountability around how donations (which, due to the

   taxation concessions, are effectively taxpayers' dollars) are allocated within

   communities.

3. The donations are "miniscule" in comparison to the poker machine losses

   experienced by the community (Livingstone, et al., 2012, p. 8).

However, as the comments of one of the senior staff within the club indicate, the club

feels that it does make significant contributions to the local community and that it would

like to increase the level of contributions once its financial position is more secure:

> He [board member] indicated how, just before I started, how we give a lot of money away. He
> said, I'd really like to be able to give more away. He said we've got to look after home a little
> bit and you know pay some of the loan back and do that, but he said once we get the new
> machines we may be able to get more involved in the community, you know. It seems to be
> the thrust of the thinking behind the committee. Club Participant 5

The club's 2012 application to the VCGLR for approval to operate ten additional poker

machines supports this view, with the club indicating it would like to increase its financial

contributions to the community to up to $160,000 annually. This proposal in discussed

further in section 8.9. However, it should be noted that this was not a firm undertaking and

the club added the rider that this was subject to the club's financial position (CR20, 2011).

8.7.3 And the winner is ….

> "The only benefit I see by having the poker machines is the benefit for the bowls club…" Sean

> "I can see the benefit it is to the local bowls club." Stuart

> "Well, obviously there's the economic benefits to the bowls club. That's probably it." Kaye

Consistent with the findings of the P.C. (2010, p. 6.1), the analysis in the previous sections supports the views above that the primary beneficiary of poker machine losses (expenditure) within Buttercross is the bowls club and its bowling members who have benefited from the greatly enhanced sporting and recreation facilities, while enjoying modest club membership fees. Other members of the community have also benefited, albeit to a lesser degree, through their use of the club's dining and recreation facilities or by membership of community groups which receive cash or in-kind donations from the club or take up the offer of complimentary meeting space.

The assessment by a number of community members of the club's motivation for installing the poker machines and making contributions back to the community also challenged the construction of the nature of the club's relationship with the community as symbiotic. Interview participants such as Abbey highlighted the benefits to the club: "…my understanding is the reason they brought the pokies in was to sustain themselves, that was my - but I could be wrong". Fellow community members, Cath and Charles, made similar assessments:

> I haven't seen or even heard or read anything coming from the revenue from that particular venue. I know it would help the bowls club itself, because I know most bowls clubs don't make a lot of money, so that'll help pay for their greens keepers and their maintenance side of it…I don't know if it does put back much into the community at all to be honest. Cath

> …I believe the bowls club is a strong, vibrant group in the community that is not very outward looking in terms of the rest of the community. If you belong to the bowls club you're part of a strong group. But if you're outside that group I don't know that - I don't see - I don't know of any groups that have benefited from a relationship with the bowls club.   Charles

Such findings are not unique to the Buttercross community and its poker machines, and raise questions about the tax concessions provided to clubs, which effectively see the general community forfeiting taxation revenue to pay for the community benefit clubs' distribute (P.C., 2012, p. 6.19). As the findings discussed in chapters 6 and 7 demonstrate, these benefits in turn assist to legitimate the presence (and harm) of poker machines (Livingstone, 2007), so the taxpayer is in effect assisting the assimilation of poker machines into the fabric of local communities by subsidising the clubs' contributions to the local community. Unlike other government grants these resources are provided with minimal guidelines as to how they are to be expended (IPART, 2008). In the State of Victoria the level of detail required in the CBS is minimal, contributing to a lack of transparency and to the perception that decision-making around which community groups and sports clubs will be chosen as beneficiaries of the cash donations is arbitrary. The acknowledged gender inequity on the boards of sporting clubs (Vicsport, 2013) is another concern. In the case of the Buttercross Bowls club, the committee was an all-male one at the time of data collection. A significant percentage of financial donations were directed to the sponsorship of a couple of key sporting codes (football and cricket), arguably reflecting the interests and connections of the all-male board:

> I know they're really good sponsors of the football club. They're one of our second tier sponsor level …Also, we have a lot of the bowls club people actually come and watch us play on Saturdays. Joe

Concerns such as these lead the Productivity Commission (2010) to conclude,

> …there are strong grounds for governments to significantly reduce gaming tax concessions. This would address the inequity and inefficiency of current arrangements. The changes would provide governments with a revenue source that they could distribute through accountable budgetary processes to the community at large. To the extent that any subsidies remain, they should be commensurate to the benefits, and there should be improved disclosure of, and accountability for, community contributions (p. 6.30).

Furthermore, when contrasted with the gross community losses on poker machines, Community Benefit is, at the very least, a highly inefficient means of providing funds to local communities (Livingstone, et al., 2012). This argument was supported by community member Pete, and Anna, an employee in the health and welfare sector:

> Because at the end of the day it's about community people putting money into pokies for communities to be able to benefit from it. I think it would be far better if people are really wanting to put money into the cricket or the football or those sort of things that they give them a donation straight up without having to go through the middle man of the tax and everybody else of putting it into a poker machine. So I think that would be a far better outcome if people are really serious about their community organisations. Pete

> I think the bowls club benefits from having poker machines because it gives them a source of revenue which is pretty significant which they could otherwise never dream of having… I suppose there might be the odd donation to various clubs…I don't think there is any way in which the benefit of those donations would outweigh the disadvantages of taking $3 million out of the community. A few thousand dollars here or there does not, in any way, compensate for the loss of $3 million. Anna

In addition, the State government taxation concessions to clubs arguably constitutes a privileging of those clubs operating an poker machine business over grassroots community clubs that rely on traditional fundraising methods and the goodwill of volunteers to sustain their club.

Of course since poker machines were introduced in Victoria there have been three other winners: the Victorian State Government and Tattersall's and Tabcorp - the duopoly which until August 2012 received a sizeable share of poker machine gambling losses:

> That's the thing, the benefits - for want of a better way of calling it - are quite concentrated, the benefits that go to the government, they get a third of it. They get one million in taxes. The venue gets $1 million revenue and the operator gets a million dollars. Everyone gets a third. So one million goes to Tabcorp shareholders or whoever owns those machines. How much - if that one million was dragged back into the community how would it be spent? … That's a lot of money being sucked out of that - every community that's got pokies. Sean.

Sean's final comment: "that's a lot of money being sucked out of that - every community that's got pokies" points a question commonly asked: Who is really paying for the benefits the poker machines provide? This is the focus of the following section and is also discussed in chapters and 6 and 7.

8.8 Transferring costs

> So the problem with pokies is it's income generating for the government and it's income generating for the organisation that has the pokies. So if it's income generating for them, it's income lessening for a lot of other people. Stuart

It is clear that many within Buttercross derive some measure of benefit from the presence of poker machines. As noted in the previous section, some of the revenue derived from the poker machines is directed to sporting and charitable causes within the community. However, it is equally clear that a proportion of these benefits are gained at the expense of others within the community who are directly or indirectly bearing a cost from poker machine gambling. Stuart's comment that poker machines merely redistribute wealth, rather than create wealth, was supported by the findings of the PC (2010, p. 6.1).

Additionally, as discussed in chapter 7, whilst venue facilities and services funded by poker-machine revenue are highly visible, the costs/harms associated with poker-machine gambling are often hidden or minimised with the shame and stigma attached to problem gambling prompting many to conceal negative impacts. Two key areas of impact highlighted by interview participants were the harms to gamblers and their networks, and the impacts on the organisations that seek to assist those community members. The sub-sections below provide a summary of each, and illustrate some of the ways the costs of problem gambling are transferred within the township.

8.8.1 Gambling harms

A significant body of research exists suggesting poker machines within a host community transfer a high risk of harm to regular users of the product (P.C 1999, 2010). Poker machines are an exploitative, extractive industry which requires the creation of new problem gamblers to sustain profitability. With significant research linking poker machine gambling and problem gambling to venue proximity (Delfabbro, 2011; McMillen, et al., 2004; Marshall, 2005) it is evident that introducing poker machines into a community leads to the creation of problem gambling when it previously did not exist. Analysis by the Productivity Commission (2010) found that 42 to 75 per cent of poker machine expenditure is derived from moderate risk and problem gamblers (p. 5.1).

Chapters 5 and 7 of this thesis detail a range of accounts of harms linked to poker machine gambling primarily associated with the poker machines located in the Buttercross community. These accounts also document some of the impacts of harmful gambling that interview participants described, including economic hardship, child-neglect and relationship stress and breakdown. These descriptions combined with descriptions of the many ways these costs extend from the gambler to their families, friends and other community members reveal the benefits of poker machines as being gained at a high cost to some community members and some members of the bowls club.

While most within the community would not accept the harm of fellow community-members as a reasonable exchange for pleasant facilities and discounted meals, the choice is never clearly laid before it, and certainly not in these terms. As discussed in chapters 2, 5 and 6, the issues are confused by a range of factors including: the discourses that present problem gambling as an individual responsibility or an illness; the highly-visible and widely-enjoyed benefits poker machines fund; the provision of the gambling within the framework of a highly-regarded community club; and the largely hidden nature of harmful gambling:

> I don't think it's really affected the community that bad. I don't think there's a real problem. Not in our community anyway. Maybe with a few people, they might have a problem with it, but other than that, I don't think it's really affected the community good or bad. Maybe for the better, because it's done up the bowls club and it's made it a more social thing and it's given them a bit more money for a local community club type thing. I know that they do put so much money into the community with it and that sort of thing. It probably does help the community a little bit I suppose. Mike

Mike's thoughts are typical of how many within the community process the issue of the effects of the club's use of poker machine gambling to raise revenue, simultaneously weighing up and trading off the highly visible benefits against the largely hidden harms.

8.8.2 Church and welfare groups

The transfer of costs associated with gambling harm was a strong theme from those from the health and welfare sector and religious organisations:

> I've talked to people who run drop in centres and they say they'll go to the venue on their Centrelink payday and they put all their money in the machine and they said then for the next two weeks we support them, we feed them, they come and get free meals here. So that's the community picking up that because the community money went into the machines, the community is then supporting those people to survive for the next two weeks. Pippa

Health, welfare and church groups described multiple accounts of providing material aid such as food, clothing and assistance with bills to individuals and families affected by harmful gambling:

> …from the role of the churches in supporting people in need, I don't think there's been any doubt that there has been an increase in the numbers of people who need support because of the presence of the gaming machines. Charles

Participants indicated that material aid provision to those affected by gambling harm places an additional burden on the already stretched resources of some services, and at times may limit their capacity to support others in need. Additionally, as many groups rely on donations from congregation or community members to provide aid, there may be additional pressure

on members to contribute beyond their intention or capacity to enable the service to

continue:

> …for us it's very significant because it eats up our resources, which means we have less time
> and energy to assist others… it's something often not factored into the debate about poker
> machines, is that it actually costs the community in more than one way … And part of that is
> there is a cost to us because while we're assisting someone who has in my view, an
> avoidable pokie addiction, we are unable to assist someone who may have just as much of a
> profound problem associated with some other issue. Adam

> I'm not sure where the buck stops but it's actually causing huge problems and extra strain on
> the counselling community because these people then require counselling and help to fight
> their addiction and try and get their lives back on track so they can buy their clothing and food
> and pay their rent and their bills. Abbey

Interview participants indicated that the precise extent to which gambling harm was affecting

requests for material aid was difficult to ascertain, as there was reluctance among many

seeking help to acknowledge their gambling as a causal factor in their need for aid. The

shame and stigma associated with harmful gambling appears to be a major contributing

factor:

> Then five or six sessions down the line we find that the issue really has resulted from
> gambling…that kind of case work…tends to be more protracted than other work. So it's not
> something that can be immediately resolved in two or three visits or one instance of
> assistance. It tends to be ongoing and it tends to then occupy a lot of our resources to
> support that person through that process… which means we have less time and energy to
> assist others. Adam

> It also probably means that organisations like ourselves that are supplying emergency relief
> are giving out money that's probably not really emergency relief. So you're actually giving
> funds to people who have blown their money on the pokies, rather than people who are
> perhaps in genuine hardship. Where they've lost a job or the breadwinner has become sick or
> a fire or whatever. Stuart

These transfers of costs are imposed on religious and welfare organisations by the venue,

government and wider industry. Morally there is a sense that people cannot be turned away,

but they are effectively powerless to do much more than provide an 'ambulance at the

bottom of the cliff':

> So there's a certain moral obligation I suppose, to continue to help because you want to make
> sure that the children are being fed and they're being looked after. But at the same time, you
> know, trying to help these people realise that gambling is not going to be the answer. Stuart

Finally, there was an indication amongst some interview participants that the collective

benefit to the community did not compensate for the collective detriment:

> … we do cover welfare donations to support people in our community …Now some of that
> would be contributed back to gambling. I don't know what the statistics are but I know of the
> few that I've mentioned already that that would be connected. So there is sort of a circular
> thing going so when you say - I'm coming back to saying well it's individual choice because I
> value individual choice. I value the right to make valued judgements from an individual
> perspective. But when that impacts, you can't just say it's individuals that it impacts and it's
> community money going back into solve the problem. Stephen

> …the community as a whole I think does not get a collective benefit from that…I tend to focus
> on the collective benefit rather than the individual benefit. So collectively we lose in financial
> terms. We lose in our capacity to assist people in crisis because pokies, the problems
> associated with pokies take up our time to support people who are impacted negatively by
> them. Adam

However, as stated earlier, the collective detriment is rarely catalogued within the

community. Even the agencies and religious organisations picking up the costs associated

with harmful gambling are at times unaware they are doing so.

8.8.3 The probity diversion

In an interview on ABC radio with Richard Stubbs, antigambling campaigner Tim Costello

described poker machines as, "a business model based on social damage" (25/6/12).

Despite the fact that clubs take less revenue per poker machine than hotel venues, and are

therefore arguably involved in lower levels of harm generation, the findings of this research

project would seem to confirm his assertion.

Of interest here though is the way the bowls club represents itself in respect to its use of

poker machines. Interviews with Club participants and analysis of the club's most recent

application to the VCGLR show an effort to position the club as ethical, respectable and

financially conservative. For example, Club Participant 2 made a number of references to

matters of probity during their interview. Pride was expressed in the calibre of patron the club

attracts: "…we insist on good behaviour, which doesn't necessarily happen at other places"

and the fact that the board is entirely voluntary and accepts no financial incentive for

involvement:

> They re-wrote the constitution and one clause that was insisted on was that no director would
> receive any remuneration, other than bona fide expenses, with the thought that hopefully it
> would attract the right people for the right reasons. Club Participant 2

Mentions were made of the 'onerous' rules and regulations around community benefit

statements:

> We have to demonstrate that we put so much back into the community, either by way of
> money or other considerations and they're very strict on the timetable for that. If we don't get
> it in on time you're then charged a higher rate, so there are penalties attached to it. Club
> Participant 2

And references were also made to the extensive red tape members go through every five

years:

> …we had to renew our licences every five years. That takes a bit of work but we get through
> it. The VCGR people are pretty good, pretty understanding, but at the same time they're
> responsible too, they have rules which have to be obeyed and we do the best we can… It's
> pretty well going through the whole procedure we had to do initially, making application again
> and it's posted so people can object to it, if they so choose. All the directors have to be
> renewed as well, so we have to get all their personal information, National Police Certificates,
> financial reports, mercantile agencies, they are all submitted. It takes a bit of time to put it
> together but we get there. Club Participant 2

Likewise in the application to the VCGLR the club highlights the voluntary nature of the

board and describes its charitable work and its proactive approach to dealing with problem

gambling. The careful descriptions of plans to pay down existing debt prior to commencing

further renovations paints a picture of the club as financially conservative (CR21, 2012).

There is of course an irony in the club making a virtue of its careful management of financial

affairs while its business model relies on (at least some) of its gambling clientele being

prodigal.

The emphasis on the strict rules and regulations governing the administration of poker

machines appears to have been presented as evidence of the club's integrity and morality –

the assumption being of course that these regulations work to ensure everything is above

board and appropriate. However, as Livingstone and Woolley (2007) highlight, there is a

distinction between the state's high level of industry regulation ensuring the probity of the

industry (and the safeguarding of their taxation stream) compared to those designed to

ensure the safety of the product for the user.

8.9 Community benefits and community indebtedness

The previous sections described how the poker machines enable the bowls club to draw

millions of dollars from the Buttercross community and how the enjoyment and distribution of

these resources privileges some groups and individuals and disadvantages others.

Furthermore, previous sections highlighted how the costs of harmful gambling which result

from the poker machines are also inequitably distributed within the community. In particular,

costs were borne predominantly by those experiencing gambling harms and their networks,

and the services and charities which support them.

This section now looks to explore other costs associated with poker machine community

benefit, shifting the level of focus to that of organisations, groups and individuals, and the

trade-offs they may unwittingly incur in accepting poker machines revenue. This section

draws links to key themes in chapter 7, including the power of dominant gambling discourses

which assist in the characterisation of the club's poker machines as a benign source of

crucial community funds, and serve to legitimate and minimise the perception of gambling harms. Links are also made to chapters 5 and 6, particularly the exploration of how community benefit and the network of interconnected relationships can influence the response of individuals to the presence of poker machines and poker-machine related harm. The stifling of dissent regarding the club's machines and the rendering of community members as complicit in gambling harms are two important themes.

The potential implications for organisations receiving community benefit derived from gambling were highlighted by a number of interview participants working within the health and welfare sector. The common view was that organisations accepting poker machine benefits may unwittingly receive a range of costs along with the benefits. These included compromising the organisation's integrity and damaging their reputation, silencing the agency from speaking out against gambling relating harms, and compromising their ability to advocate for change. One highly experienced professional from the health and welfare sector described how industry donations can effectively enable the gambling venue to appropriate the "good name" of the recipient organisation for their own promotional benefits:

> You are giving your endorsement to it [the venue] because they will put in the newsletter we gave money to a certain agency, they actually use you for their marketing. It's actually quite cheap, they get you quite cheap… they are benefitting from your good name and all the millions of dollars they've got, they get it very cheaply that sort of PR and marketing. Pippa

Pippa, also argued that organisations accepting community benefit from gambling can find themselves acting as an advocate for the gambling industry:

> It comes up every now and again in the media, there will be someone criticising the local industry or, … criticism of charities and groups taking the money. Then those charities and groups end up speaking up for the industry, because they are defending themselves, their own relationship. So they come out and they say, oh well we take their money and it doesn't influence this and it helps us with that. So you actually end up with a lot of cheap advocacy from organisations running on a shoestring.

This scenario was played out on the national stage some months later in December, 2011, when Father Chris Riley, a well-respected figure in the Australian State of New South Wales, aligned himself with Clubs Australia to publicly oppose the Federal Labor Government's proposed mandatory pre-commitment scheme for all Australian poker machines. Father Riley works with disadvantaged youth through *Youth Off the Streets* (YOTS), an organisation he established in the early 1990s. The priest's community work has been publicly recognised in recent years, he is the recipient of an Order of Australia and a Human Rights Medal and in 2012 he was named the NSW Australian of the Year (*Australian of the Year Awards*, 2012). However, Father Riley's decision to lend his name to the Club's Australia campaign brought strong condemnation from churches, politicians and ant-gambling campaigners (Gardiner, 2011, December 7). The revelations that Father Riley's YOTS charity had regularly received donations from the gaming industry lead to allegations that his support had been bought by the industry. Tom Dusevic, National Chief Reporter for the Australian Newspaper, summed up the web of compromise and indebtedness accepting gambling revenue can create when he wrote:

> It is a chilling reminder about the reach of the gaming industry, the conflicts of interest facing charities and community groups hard up for a dollar, and how well-meaning folks are often forced to rationalise taking blood money generated from problem gamblers and their families to do good deeds (2011, December 10, Para.6).

While recognising the financial pressures which often drive agencies to accept gambling revenue, Health and welfare professional Anna also emphasised how the acceptance of gambling funds may impede an agency's ability to advocate against the adverse impacts of the industry or a particular gambling venue:

> And I think it's very compromising of organisations or clubs' ability to be impartial in respect to whether the pokies are a good thing in the community. I'm of the view that taking money from gaming venues is a bit like taking money from cigarette companies or that kind of sponsorship, that it's something people should not do. I think that's really hard in communities where there's no other sources of revenue.

Anna and Pippa's comments support the argument put forward by Peter Adams in *Gambling, Freedom and Democracy* (2008), regarding risks associated with receiving gambling revenue. Adams argues that receiving community benefit from gambling constitutes a form of 'moral jeopardy' and that receipt of benefits can quietly compromise the ability and desire of individuals and organisations to speak out against the damaging aspects of gambling or to speak out in defence of the industry. Adams (2008) describes how these compromises can occur in a number of ways. Agencies may choose not to speak out against the gambling industry for fear they may jeopardise future funding opportunities, particularly if the agency comes to rely on that funding to deliver much-needed programs. Or as was the case with Father Riley, when they do speak out against the harms of gambling, it may be within a framework that positions problem gamblers as the 'problem', effectively absolving the industry and its product of responsibility (see discussions on dominant gambling discourses in chapter 7). Additionally, Adams (2008) notes that once an agency has accepted gambling-related funds, they are often effectively silenced from criticising the industry (p. 21) as to do so would leave the agency open to accusations of hypocrisy.

Such accusations were witnessed by the researcher on two occasions during data collection. On each occasion the accusation was made during a local government-convened meeting attended by a group of representatives from venues and health and welfare agencies. The purpose of the group was to reduce poker machine gambling harms. Both accusations were made by the one individual, a manager of a poker machine venue and made in response to industry criticism by a local welfare service which, among its many services, supported individuals and families experiencing gambling related harm. The manager alleged that his venue had made a donation to the welfare service for the purchase of school books and that the agency was therefore hypocritical to have accepted the donation, and then later criticise the industry. Although the claims that gambling funds were donated to the agency were vehemently denied and the agency's policy which forbids the acceptance of gambling revenue was emphasised, the club manager repeated the allegations at a subsequent

meeting. A disturbing aspect about this story is that the club manager's claims did not have to be accurate for the organisation's integrity to be questioned. Closer, but less public, investigation found no record of such a donation. The source of the manager's claim appeared to be an offer made, but subsequently not accepted, in the same forum some years previously:

> … they did make a very conscious decision here [at the organisation] when it came up that there was going to be some sort of community chest, they brought it back to the organisation, talked about it and said no we don't want to because of the harm it causes we don't want to get money from that source. Pippa

Arguably, although denied by the agency and unsubstantiated by the venue manager, even the allegation of receiving funds derived from gambling was sufficient to challenge the agency's integrity. Had the claim been correct, the agency would undeniably have been vulnerable to accusations of hypocrisy, and this vulnerability may have rendered the agency reluctant to speak out about the effects of harmful gambling on future occasions.

This case also clearly demonstrates the importance of agencies having a clear policy position regarding donations derived from gambling. In the case of this employee, they were supported by a clear policy framework which gave her the confidence to dispute the claims: "…it is part of [the organisation's] policy not to take money from gambling, prostitution and tobacco" Pippa. However, this is not a universal stance across the health and welfare sector, a point demonstrated by Anna's situation as she contrasted the relative attitudes to community donations from the tobacco and gambling industries,

> The reason we've accepted that it's not okay to take money from tobacco companies - is because it legitimises the business of the tobacco companies and silences dissent. There's some moves at university level and other people saying we shouldn't be taking money from gaming venues; it's very much the same. We're not really there yet in terms of people agreeing that it is the same. Anna

Indeed, within Buttercross individuals representing church and community clubs and organisations at times indicated a willingness to accept donations from the bowls club. These cases seemed to be motivated by a pragmatic view that if the gambling is going to occur some of the proceeds might as well and in fact should be directed to either supporting the work of those dealing with the impacts of harmful gambling or other initiatives supporting the local community:

> If there's money there to go back to the community, then it might as well go into something that's doing something worthwhile. I don't know where their funds that they allocate to the community go to. In fact I don't know if anyone does because there's never anything published on those types of things is there? Sean

> It would be great if they had a voucher system that they could hand out with some of their profits, that would be good, but that doesn't mean I agree with it. If it's going to be there, it would be good to see some of those profits used in that way… Abbey

These varying attitudes to the consequences of receiving community benefit indicate the complexity of this issue for community groups and organisations. In a climate of dwindling revenue sources and escalating need, the prospect of additional resources may be appealing. This is particularly so in a community such as Buttercross where donations are provided within the context of a local community club and offered with genuine goodwill. In such a context, where harms can, as discussed in chapter 7, be to a large degree hidden, acceptance may appear innocuous and without consequence. But as this section has highlighted, provision of community benefit from gambling venues and the gambling industry can subjugate recipient organisations, compromising their ability to actively oppose the gambling industry and recruiting them as unwitting advocates of poker machine gambling.

8.9.1 Individual trade-offs

Although not common, some organisations, such as Pippa's and Anna's, are enacting policy and protocols related to the receipt of funds derived from gambling. This is consistent with the recommendations of Adams (2008) who has written in detail of the need for community

organisations to enact policies related to the receipt of donations derived from gambling revenue to protect organisational integrity and shield their staff from "moral jeopardy" (Adams, 2008, pp. 147 – 165).

However, it is a different matter entirely for the residents of Buttercross, many of whom regularly engage with the bowls club and receive the benefits of poker machine gambling in dozens of small ways over months or even years. Chapter 5 illustrated the extent of these connections through the presentation of a 'word cloud' illustrating the numerous community clubs and organisations whose members receive community benefit from the club and the central role the club has come to play in community life. As discussed in chapter 5, these benefits occur within the dense networks of relationships which characterise the Buttercross community, the maintenance and harmony of which is highly valued by many community members.

Jack's story illustrates the multiple ways club-based poker machines can draw in community members, enmeshing them in a web of community benefit, associations and indebtedness. Jack's story also illustrates the complexity and strength of these relationships and the conflict for some individuals when personal opposition to gambling collides with the benefits they receive. Jack met with the researcher on a couple of occasions and during discussions and an interview he described his multiple connections to the bowls club, including a blend of family ties, friendships and the receipt of community benefit. Jack reported that he is in a service club which regularly utilises free meeting space at the bowls club and he enjoys the social opportunities afforded by the club - dining at the club and the comfort of knowing many of his fellow diners will be friends and people he knows:

> In that sense, it's a place where we often see a lot of our community, where we can say hello to one another and catch up with people we haven't seen for a time. I see that as an advantage.

Additionally, Jack's wife and son worked at the club for a number of years and were well treated: "... my son worked there and my wife worked for maybe 5 years at the club. I think she enjoyed those times there and they appreciated her."

However, during his interview, Jack also revealed that he was personally conflicted regarding the presence of poker machines within his community. Jack declared that he was opposed to gambling, and this opposition appears to be based on a combination of religious beliefs, personal values and a keen appreciation of the harms created by poker machine gambling. Primarily this understanding has come about through observing the significant harm caused by poker machine gambling within his network of friends and neighbours, and Jack relayed a number of stories of this nature. One case included that of a community member who lost a significant inheritance in a short space of time. Jack reported that this person's house was falling into disrepair and they were now without the resources to maintain it. This person's one opportunity for financial security and comfort during their old age was gone and they were now living in poverty:

> .. we personally know a person who came into money…they did lose it all. They put it all in the pokie machines. They were really hooked on it and kept playing here locally. You can see the results of that in their property too because it sort of looked like it was neglected.

Jack also expressed an appreciation of the economic impact of poker machines on communities and of the extractive nature of the industry: "…I know by experience a lot of money is sucked out of communities where the pokies are. It's definitely families that do suffer and people suffer with their addictions."

The following reflections by Jack illustrate how the discussions and interview appeared to provide him with an opportunity to clarify for his own benefit the extent and implications of his multiple connections with the bowls club:

> And so sometimes I'm for areas that stand against them, like the new area of Dale Hill or somewhere like that where they are fighting like Buttercross did initially to say no, we don't want the pokies here in our town or in our estate. I guess like I'm not a gambler myself so I'm

not for the gambling or the pokies. I can see it is a terrible addiction for people once they really get hooked with it. I would say personally, I'm sort of against any form of gambling that's possible. On the other hand, as I've said, when I'm involved with the service clubs and things like that I've seen the advantages, help of, you know, where money – a certain amount of money by regulation to is put back into the community and they are required to help. I guess I'm seeing the for and against.

As this quotation suggests, Jack seemed to struggle with the issue of enjoying the benefits the club provided him on one hand, while on the other, being morally opposed to gambling; and he frequently returned to the questions of the benefits of poker machines versus the harms, finally concluding, "I guess personally I don't gamble so I'm not for it. I guess personally I would say it's better they weren't here."

To recap Jack's position, he is a man whose family members have benefited through employment by the presence of poker machines in the township, while some of his neighbours and friends have lost many of their material resources. Jack enjoys the facilities the poker machines have funded which enable his service club to meet in a comfortable venue without cost, and permit him to enjoy the camaraderie of his fellow community-members when he dines at the venue. Although Jack appreciates the devastating impacts poker machine gambling can have on families and communities, so potent is the combined influence of his connections with the club that they prevail over his concerns regarding gambling harms and his strongly held religious and moral opposition to gambling. Consequently, Jack, like many others, has become entwined in the web of benefits and personal pleasures the poker machines can fund.

Jack's story powerfully illustrates one of the important arguments presented by Peter Adams (2008) in *Gambling, Freedom and Democracy*. Adams contends that as the proliferation of profits from gambling spreads through our societies it "engages more and more people in a web of benefits and privileges" (p. 16) and that the acceptance of these benefits "progressively compromises their ability to openly question the way gambling is being

provided" (p. 16 – 17). Adams illustrates his theories by presenting a number of hypothetical scenarios which he created from an amalgamation of his observations and experiences working with the community sector and in gambling research (pp. 18 – 24). These scenarios depict community members and workers who find their integrity compromised and their dissent effectively silenced by their receipt of some form of benefit from gambling. Examples provided include funding for a much-needed community program, employment in the industry, or not wishing to jeopardise a valued business relationship. Adams argues that it is only when these actions or inactions are viewed collectively that the real power of gambling to corrupt and undermine democratic processes can be fully appreciated.

In the case of Jack, he is an individual who enjoys a high community standing and possesses an acute appreciation of the negative impacts of poker machines on some community members. However, given the array of relationships and benefits Jack enjoys from the bowls club's poker machines, it is difficult to imagine him speaking up or taking action against the presence of the machines within the club or any application to extend their numbers. In effect, Jack's ability and want to speak out has been silenced by the benefits he and his family have received. Jack's case is of interest as the range of direct and indirect benefits he has received from the poker machines and the way those benefits are enmeshed within the networks of community relationships appears characteristic of many interview participants.

8.9.1 Increasing community benefit

An observed trend during recent years has been the growing size of the financial component of community donations built (by the applicants) into applications concerning new poker machine venues and increases in machine numbers. For example a proposal for a venue in a community nearby to Buttercross included a community contribution of $70,000 per annum (CR16, 2011). The recent application by the bowls club for ten additional machines included a proposal to increase community donations to $150,000 by 2016/17, assuming the club's

financial position enabled them to do so (CR17, 2013). These increasing amounts remain a
very small component of total losses, particularly since August 2012 when venues assumed
ownership of their poker machines, and retained a larger portion of poker machines revenue
(losses) under new taxation arrangements. However, to local community groups and not-for-
profit organisations, these amounts can be significant, particularly if there is a lack of
awareness around total venue revenue as was the case in Buttercross.

Those, such as Adam, with an understanding of the industry and an insight into the harms
associated with poker machine gambling were dismissive of the additional community
donations:

> I think the most that has been offered is $75,000 in terms of contribution back to the
> community … I mean that's just, for me is just laughable really in terms of what it actually
> costs to the community as a whole. That $75,000 is not going to fix those problems.

As Adam explained, in his experience, the costs of gambling harms are multiple and far
outweigh any financial contributions made by the venues:

> The costs are actually so intense because one individual who has a real issue with pokie
> addiction, it impacts on their family relationships, it impacts on the health and wellbeing of not
> just themselves but their spouse, their children. It impacts on the service infrastructure in a
> multitude of ways… I don't know what the average loss of someone who is deemed to be a
> problem gambler is. But if you multiply that by over the number of people in Finchley who
> would be problem gamblers, $75,000 doesn't cut it. Adam

However, these growing contributions do increase the risks of community organisations and
groups becoming drawn in to the web of compromise and complicity associated with
accepting the proceeds of poker machine gambling – particularly as the research revealed
readiness amongst some to accept such sources of revenue. There is a significant risk that
these larger community donations may further distort and soften the perception of the impact
of poker machines, legitimating their presence by advancing the position that the relationship
of the poker machines with the community is symbiotic, and work to conceal its parasitic
nature. Furthermore, these more substantial community donations can have a range of other

effects, with agencies as Adams (2008) highlights, becoming reliant on gambling revenue to maintain programs, and gambling providers using the donations ti legitimate their operations.

8.10 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the costs at the club level of the decision to incorporate poker machines, exploring how the debt incurred to accommodate the poker machines, and the ongoing costs associated with maintaining the facilities and services, wedded the club to an on-going dependence on poker machine revenue and to a 16 year relationship with Tabcorp Holdings, one half of the Victorian poker machine duopoly. Evidence suggests that the presence of poker machines within the club and the dependent relationship with Tabcorp Holdings precipitated a range of changes in the way the club functioned, and of the control ordinary club members had within their club. The costs to the club's reputation and standing are also discussed.

When Club Participant 1 proudly states "you look at what we've got" he inadvertently invokes a second consideration, to look at what it has cost. With the majority of the vast revenue the poker machines draw in from the community concentrated on enhancing the club, the club's facilities have become a highly visible and celebrated temple to the benefits of poker machines. Conversely, the costs of the benefits are never drawn together for public scrutiny. They are generally borne quietly by those who gamble far beyond their means and by those dependent on them. Shame and stigma disempower those harmed by gambling, ensuring they remain quietly in the shadows. This enables many within the community to avoid having to confront the uncomfortable truth that a large part of what they enjoy is built on the despair and loss of fellow community members. This chapter has described how health and welfare services and church groups also share the costs as they respond to requests for financial support from those adversely affected by local poker machine gambling. Again the shame of

gambling to excess habitually inhibits frank communication when those that seek assistance proffer more 'suitable' reasons for their financial strain.

Critical analysis of the cash and in-kind benefits flowing from the poker machines revealed that they constitute a very small portion of the community's total gambling losses. In addition, gambling proceeds are inequitably distributed, preferencing those members of the community actively involved in (certain) sports and other community groups or with the material resources to participate in the dining opportunities the club provides. Following from the work of Peter Adams (2008), the moral and ethical consequences of directly and indirectly accepting the proceeds of poker machines gambling were also discussed.

This chapter has built on the contention put forward in chapter 6 that club-based poker machines legitimate their presence within communities by tapping into existing community ideology. The chapter has also tested two models to describe differing views offered by interview participants regarding the relationship of the poker machines with the local community. Critical analysis of the benefits and costs of poker machines to the club concluded that while the relationship is sold to community members and the wider community as one of symbiosis, with a mutual 'give and take' providing benefits to both, it is essentially parasitic in nature. Once embedded within the community, the poker machines actively feed on their host, drawing a disproportional share of resources and compromising the community's health and wellbeing. The club has facilitated this embedment by concealing and disguising the parasitic nature of poker machines.

Despite those costs, the club reconciles its reliance on gambling revenue through a self-narrative that it is fiscally responsible and community-minded, and that gambling is fundamental to its economic viability. The reproduction of dominant gambling discourses plays a key role in this reconciliation, assisting the underestimation and denial of the harmful effects of the poker machines, and working to emphasise their benefits. These

circumstances enable this and other clubs to differentiate their poker machine businesses from that of hotels and to maintain a positive relationship with the host community. In this way the bowls club maintains a reputation for integrity, despite the community incurring a cost from the club's continued deployment of poker machine gambling.

9

Conclusion

This study set out to critically explore the relationship between community and club-based poker machines. Four significant features defined this enquiry and distinguished it from the majority of extant gambling research. These related to the focus, context, theoretical perspective and funding of the research. This chapter presents a summary of the key research findings and extrapolates the theoretical, policy and everyday implications of these discoveries in a series of recommendations. Options for further research are similarly discussed, along with an assessment of the enquiry's key contribution to the scholarly literature.

9.0 Rationale and research focus

Chapters 1 and 2 presented a comprehensive rationale for this study and its focus on a community level of analysis. Broadly, this related to the paucity of community-focused research within the extant gambling literature, and to the particular characteristics of poker machine gambling which position community as a primary recipient of gambling benefit and harm. This is particularly the case in countries such as New Zealand and Australia, where poker machine revenue directly supports community sport and social clubs and local charities.

As previously noted, the field of gambling research emerged following the rapid liberalisation of gambling opportunities during the latter decades of the 20th Century (Adams, 2008; Orford, 2011), and from the ensuing concern regarding gambling harm. Notable in this expansion of gambling was the proliferation of poker machines. The expansion of gambling can be located within broader social changes occurring at the time, including the ascendancy of neo-liberalism across many western democracies (Borrell, 2008a; Reith, 2007).

As highlighted in chapter 2, the direction of gambling research was profoundly shaped by the classification in 1980 of gambling as a medical illness (Castellani, 2000; Reith, 2007), narrowing the research focus to the level of the individual 'pathological' or 'problem' gambler (McGowan, 2004). Subsequent government and industry funding further shaped the direction of gambling research, reinforcing the conceptualisation of gambling harm as an individual pathology and addiction. Consequently, relatively few studies have explored the community-level effects of poker machine gambling. Furthermore, studies which have focused on a community level of analysis have reported methodological constraints (McDonald & Greenslade, 2010). This lack of research permitting a community level of analysis provided one of the most compelling arguments for the community focus within this enquiry.

The researcher was also persuaded to adopt a community level of analysis by McGowan's (2004) call for gambling research to be situated in the historical, political and everyday context in which the gambling occurs. This argument resonated with the social constructionist epistemology underpinning this qualitative enquiry. McGowan's call was particularly apposite to the operationalization and locational features of poker machines which work to enmesh them in the local community context. These include the placement of poker machines in existing community spaces such as sporting and interest clubs, and in hotels or small suburban based casinos, as well as the localised nature of poker machine

gambling and its effects (Marshall, 1998; SACES, 2005a). The aforementioned linking of poker machine revenue to charitable activities and government-funded programs at the community level further embeds poker machines within community (see Adams, 2008; Livingstone & Adams, 2011). In the Australian State of Victoria, where this enquiry was conducted, this link has been further developed through the legal and regulatory significance afforded to 'community' in licence and planning applications (McDonald & Ollerenshaw, under review).

Shifting the theoretical and epistemological stance, from positivism to a critical constructionist approach, positioned this enquiry to examine issues of ideology, discourse and power associated with poker machine gambling, within both the macro sociopolitical and local community contexts. Specifically the research sought to examine:

1. In what way has the introduction of poker machines shaped this community?

2. How does the local context shape the construction of and responses to gambling in this community?

3. In what ways do the present poker machine gambling arrangements privilege and disadvantage individuals, groups and communities?

    a. What are the mechanisms by which this occurs?

4. What are the ideologies and discourses within the community pertaining to poker machine gambling?

    a. How do these shape the construction of and responses to gambling?

    b. What are the forces for continuity and change?

    c. Do these legitimise existing structural arrangements?

5. How are individuals, groups and organisations reacting to the proposed insertion of poker machines within their community?

    a. What are the forces that support or restrict them from influencing these decisions?

9.1 Findings and recommendations

Applying a community level of analysis, and situating the research within the community context, enabled this enquiry to gain new insights into the complex array of ways by which the presence of poker machines can affect community. This complex of effects, and the way community members responded to them, were found to be inextricably linked with powerful ideological conceptualisations of community in interaction with a range of forces within the macro and local community contexts.

One of the earliest findings of the enquiry was the channelling of poker machine revenue (player losses) to the continual upgrading and development of club facilities and the manner in which the club shared these resources with the community. The coming and going of community members for meetings, dining and bowls, and the routine use of the club for wakes, birthdays, engagements and so on, positioned the club space as a focal point of community life, assisting to legitimate and normalise gambling. The extensive links between the club and the wider community and its value to community members was a recurrent theme amongst interview participants, many of whom viewed the club as a community benefactor. This was further reinforced by the club's provision of donations and sponsorship to community groups and individuals. The finding of a link between poker machine gambling and the development of sports and venue facilities was not unexpected, being consistent with other research findings (Hing, 2006; IPART, 2008; P.C., 2010). However, the extent to which the club's use of poker machines had enabled it to position itself as a hub of community social and cultural life was unanticipated.

This enquiry also revealed that benefits derived from poker machine gambling existed in tension with a range of costs. Predominantly these were associated with gambling harm. The club reconciles its use of poker machines through a self-narrative that portrays it as being fiscally responsible and community-minded and that poker machine revenue is

fundamental to the club's economic viability. Reproduction of dominant gambling discourses play key roles in this reconciliation, permitting the discounting or denial of the harmful effects of poker machine gambling and the accentuation of the benefits. Some who discounted and denied gambling harm in the community contended that the characteristics of the community and the location of the machines within a club protected community members from adverse outcomes. However, the documentation of multiple descriptions of harmful poker machine gambling during the research challenged this contention (see chapter 7). These findings were consistent with the gambling research literature, which has clearly established links between poker machine gambling and high levels of gambling harm both in Australia and internationally (see for example, Lund, 2006; McMillen, et al., 2004; P.C., 1999, 2010; Potenza, et al., 2006). Unlike the benefits of poker machines, which were highly visible and celebrated, costs were frequently concealed. Findings that gambling costs were borne by family, friends, colleagues, and local charities were also consistent with previous research (P.C., 1999; VCEC, 2012).

The occurrence of harm, even when the gambling was provided within the context of a community and venue which was identified by some as offering a range of protective factors, suggests that present measures to prevent and ameliorate gambling harm are inadequate and additional measures are called for. These insights lead this researcher to support calls by Adams, et al., (2009), Korn, Gibbins and Azmier (2003), Marshall (2009), and the Productivity Commission (2010), for a public health approach to the prevention and resolving of poker machine harm at an individual and community.

Recommendation 1

It is recommended that statewide programs to prevent and ameliorate the harmful effects of poker machine gambling adopt a genuine public health approach, incorporating structural changes to the gambling product. Programs should be resourced and targeted at the community level where the effects of gambling harm are predominately being felt.

Recommendation 2

It is further recommended that governments provide gambling venues and their staff with the tools to more effectively support their patrons to 'gamble responsibly' by implementation of 'full' pre-commitment and $1.00 bet limits as recommended by the Productivity Commission (2010, chapters 10 & 11).

Furthermore, this enquiry revealed that, despite presenting as benign and safe spaces, poker machines venues are neither; instead, they pose multiple risks to community members. The multiple descriptions of harmful poker machine gambling documented during the research highlighted the association of poker machines and harmful gambling. However, as highlighted by Adams (2008), gambling is also associated with ethical and moral risks. This enquiry revealed how engagement with the club simultaneously positioned community members as recipients of poker machine expenditure (losses), ensnaring them in a web of indebtedness and gratitude. Consistent with the arguments outlined by Adams (2008), this process rendered community members complicit in gambling harms, and compromised their ability and inclination to voice opposition to the presence or expansion of gambling in the community.

During this enquiry, the researcher became aware of a small number of community organisations within the state of Victoria that have recognised the ethical and moral jeopardy posed by the receipt of the proceeds of gambling (Adams, 2008). In line with the arguments outlined by Adams (2008), these organisations have moved to develop and implement policies related to gambling and gambling community benefit funding. Key strategies within these policies have included restricting the use of gambling venues for work and client outings, and prohibiting acceptance of the proceeds of gambling. This enquiry's findings suggest all organisations and groups may benefit from developing and implementing similar policies. The finding that community relationships and the value of the club to community

groups can act as a barrier to the execution of such policy changes (see chapter 6) suggests that implementation at the state or regional level may be beneficial.

Recommendation 3

It is recommended that community organisations, clubs, and workplaces develop and implement policies to safeguard their members, service users, and staff from exposure to the potential harms associated with poker machine gambling by restricting the usage of gambling venues.

Recommendation 4

It is recommended that community groups and organisations develop and adopt policies to protect their integrity by prohibiting the acceptance of the proceeds of poker machine gambling.

Recommendation 5

It is recommended that the findings of this research be made available to key non-government agencies so that the critical importance of policy development is understood from a community context perspective.

Consistent with previous analyses (see Livingstone, 2007, Livingstone, et al., 2012), the research confirmed that the cash and in-kind benefits returned to the community from poker machine gambling (known in Victoria as 'Community benefit') constituted a fraction of the revenue lost (expended) on the club's poker machines. The 8.33 per cent concession provided to poker machine gambling clubs represents tax forgone by the general community and is an inefficient and inequitable means of providing funding to community clubs and charities (Livingstone 2007; Livingstone, et al., 2012; PC, 2010). Consistent with other research, much of what the club claims as community benefit constitutes general business

running costs (Livingstone, 2007; Livingstone, et al., 2012). These taxation concessions

preference club poker machine businesses over other clubs and assist to legitimate the

presence of poker machines within communities.

Recommendation 6

It is recommended that, taxation concessions for club based poker machine businesses

should be phased out in accordance with the recommendations by the Australian

Productivity Commission (2010, p. 6.30-6.32). Revenue currently forgone by providing

gambling clubs with taxation concessions would more equitably benefit community

organisations if it was collected by government and distributed to community groups via an

independent body.

Recommendation 7

It is further recommended that governments assist gambling clubs to diversify the means by

which they raise revenue, enabling them to reduce their reliance on the proceeds of

gambling.

Charities and welfare groups servicing the Buttercross community highlighted the significant

burden on the health and welfare sector imposed by harmful poker machine gambling. It

seems reasonable that costs to these organisations imposed by the poker machine industry

should be redressed through the allocation of a greater proportion of the revenue derived

from poker machine expenditure (losses) to the organisations dealing with the effects of

gambling harm. Given the adverse effects associated with the receipt of gambling proceeds

(discussed earlier and discussed in detail by Adams, 2008), this should only occur under a

framework which separates the distribution of revenue from the gambling industry, local

venue, or gambling taxation. Any funds distributed to communities should be clearly framed

as a compensation for gambling harms, rather than a community benefit of gambling. The

costs to local government associated with responding to venue applications and occurrence of gambling harm should similarly be redressed.

Recommendation 8

It is recommended that local government, community groups and organisations campaign for a higher proportion of the proceeds derived from poker machine gambling to be returned to local communities; specifically to charities, local government and other organisations currently bearing the costs associated with harmful poker machine gambling and with venue applications. It is imperative that this compensation be distributed in such a way as to avoid further legitimisation of community based gambling.

One of this enquiry's key findings was an understanding of the means by which poker machines were able to insinuate their way into community and achieve a legitimate presence. The enquiry revealed that this process of insinuation and legitimation was inextricably linked with the location of the machines in a community club. Chapter 6 traced the history of poker machine gambling in Buttercross and revealed how, from the beginning, the provision of poker machines was linked to, and exploitative of, understandings of community. As described in chapter 6, key figures within the club mobilised the construct of community to justify the establishment of poker machine gambling within the township, presenting poker machines as a means of building facilities to benefit the whole community. Association with a community club enabled the poker machines to 'appropriate' the positive connotations of community (discussed in chapter 3), including a sense of belonging, feelings of security, wholesomeness and safety (Bauman, 2001).

While the existence of a club's strong link with the local community may be viewed as a protective measure for the population when assessing proposals to introduce or expand poker machine gambling, these findings have illustrated that the presence of strong community links do not prevent the occurrence of poker machine gambling harms.

Recommendation 9

It is recommended that those responsible for assessing new or extended poker machine gambling applications (local government and VCGLR) should be cautious of proposals/assessments which emphasise the community benefits associated with club applications.

This enquiry also provided insight into the way community members made sense of and responded to both the benefits and costs of poker machine gambling, and how these were shaped by a number of powerful forces. These included dominant gambling discourses, ideological conceptualisations of community, and socio-political and cultural forces at both the macro and local community level. The discourses which differentiate the effects and ethics of club-based machines from those in hotels also played an important role in legitimating the club's use of poker machines.

Consistent with previous findings, the research confirmed that dominant gambling discourses which explain gambling harm as individual responsibility and pathology are widely reflected in government and industry framing of poker machine gambling (Borrell, 2008a, 2008b). At the community level, the resonance of these discourses with existing conceptualisations of community enabled their replication and reproduction. These discourses were shown to marginalise and disempower those harmed by gambling by positioning them as being primarily responsible for the creation and maintenance of gambling harms (Borrell, 2008a). These discourses reduce help-seeking behaviour by reinforcing shame and stigma (see Thomas et al., 2012) and work to condone current gambling arrangements and support inaction on harmful gambling. This was particularly evident at the venue level. The normalisation of these discourses (Cameron, 2001; Crossley, 2005), and their acceptance as self-evident and common sense meant their validity was rarely questioned (Edwards, 1998, p. 69).

The amelioration and prevention of gambling harm has been significantly weakened by an over-emphasis of the concept of 'responsible gambling' and its reliance on the agency of the gambler (Borrell, 2008b), while failing to provide gamblers with the tools to manage their gambling (PC, 2010). The subsequent minimising of the role of the gambling product and its delivery (Livingstone and Woolley, 2007), legitimates gambling harms.

Groups, organisations and individuals may inadvertently enable the continuation of gambling harms by reinforcing and validating dominant gambling discourses. This may occur through seemingly-benign actions such as utilising the term 'responsible gambling' in the title of working groups and organisations, or overemphasising the role of the individual gambler when promoting the concept of responsible gambling (and under-emphasising the role of other factors including venues, regulation, and the gambling product).

However, the emerging discourse of product safety, (see Livingstone & Woolley, 2007) provides a means to challenge and disrupt the individual responsibility, pathology, and cultural or economic enhancer discourses. Through the rejection of practices which reproduce and reinforce dominant gambling discourses, and the promotion of the product safety discourse, groups, organisations and individuals may powerfully assist the enactment of change.

Findings that workers are often in a first-hand position to identify regulatory and policy amendment which may address gambling harm, indicates that current restrictions on advocacy imposed on government funded gambling help services should be rescinded. Prohibiting advocacy by these professionals hinders development of effective measures to ameliorate gambling harm and prevents active participation in the democratic process at the local community and broader level.

Recommendation 10

It is recommended that the Victorian State Government reprioritise current strategies to prevent and reduce gambling harm to include greater emphasis on structural and regulatory changes to the gambling product and environment.

Recommendation 11

Following from Recommendation 10, it is recommended that health and welfare services, local government, community groups, and the media challenge the dominant representations of harmful gambling as being issues of primarily individual responsibility or pathology.

Recommendation 12

It is recommended that the Victorian State Government take steps to endorse advocacy by government-funded agencies as a key measure to prevent and ameliorate gambling harms.

Sociopolitical and cultural factors were shown to have the power to support or suppress local based community action around the introduction or expansion of poker machine gambling. Likewise, local factors including strong networks of community relationships and the desire to maintain harmonious relations were also revealed to be powerful agents capable of supporting or suppressing community action. The endorsement of local government and key individuals was shown to be a powerful creator of community agency in any opposition to the introduction or expansion of poker machine gambling.

Strong links were also revealed between community members' conceptualisation of community and their assessment of poker machine gambling as either detrimental or beneficial to Buttercross. The differing ways community members conceptualised community and positioned poker machines as either an enhancement or threat to that conceptualisation reinforced the contested nature of community (Blackshaw, 2010; Crow & Mah, 2012; Dempsey, 2002; Kenny, 2011; Mooney and Neal, 2009). They also demonstrated the range

of ways in which community members differed in their interpretation, acceptance and sense-making of the ideologies associated with community (see Richards, 1990, p. 106).

Recommendation 13

It is recommended that community advocacy and action to oppose the introduction and expansion of poker machine gambling be supported and fostered by local government, community organisations and advocates for gambling reform.

This enquiry documented high levels of misinformation at the community level regarding the safeguards provided through regulation, the effects of poker machine gambling, and the extent of benefits distributed to the community. This misinformation supported acceptance of current gambling arrangements. Local government, community groups, anti-gambling advocates, and the media can all assist to expose these misconceptions and more accurately inform communities regarding issues including: the (real) level of gambling losses returned to communities, government and industry complicity, and so forth.

Recommendation 14

It is recommended that misinformation and politicisation regarding poker machine gambling at the community level should be actively and continually countered by local government, community groups, anti-gambling advocates, and the media

9.2 Considerations for further research

As discussed in the earlier sections of this chapter, the application of a community level of analysis and critical theory enabled this enquiry to gain new insights into the effects of poker machine gambling. Further application of qualitative, community-based, and critically-orientated research has the potential to provide additional insights into the effects of poker

machine gambling and community. Additional areas for consideration include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Critically-based, independently funded research to explore the power structures, institutional arrangements, and protective mechanisms that privilege poker machine beneficiaries, including the industry, the state, and individual venues.

- Research to explore mechanisms to challenge dominant gambling discourses at a community and macro level, and the effects of those approaches. These may include strategic use of the media, informing of key community members, community education, and so forth.

- Further research to explore the links between gambling clubs and the legitimation of poker machine gambling. This could incorporate comparative analysis of the similarities and different effects of hotel-based gambling venues within a community context.

- Following from the initial aims of the broader research proposal, a mixed-methods, comparative, before and after, case-study of matched communities (one with and one without poker machine gambling) to better assess and isolate the effects of poker machine gambling.

- The limited voices of young people were an identified limitation in this study (see section 4.7.2). Responding to this, further research with a specific focus on the experiences of young people and poker machine gambling within a community context is recommended. Multiple areas could be explored, including processes of initiation and normalisation (see Fabiansson, 2010), qualitative exploration of harmful poker machine gambling on young people, including the short and longitudinal study of effects.

9.3 Contributions to knowledge

Overlaying a qualitative, community study methodology with critical theory provided new insights and understandings into the multiple ways the effects of poker machines shape and are shaped by the construct of community. The following points summarise the key contribution to knowledge realised through this study. Specifically, this research has:

- Reinforced the importance of a community level of analysis in the exploration of the effects of poker machine gambling, and demonstrated that a community studies methodology provides a flexible and useful research approach which is not constrained by a reliance on availability of quantitative data;

- Extended understandings of the diverse and complex ways though which 'community' and poker machines interact;

- Provided insight into the way poker machines can make their way into 'community' and legitimate their presence, despite evidence of harm;

- Revealed that while community can legitimate and support and condone poker machine gambling, it can also be a powerful force against its introduction and expansion;

- Extended current understandings of dominant gambling discourses by revealing how they are reinterpreted and reproduced within the community context, and the ways in which they work to play down, legitimate and condone gambling harm. Although many respondents expressed deep concern regarding the adverse effects of poker machine gambling, this research has also established that there were powerful forces that allowed others within the community to rationalise or make allowances for these effects; and

- Presented evidence of a new discourse which frames gambling clubs as community benefactors. This discourse is particularly apparent in countries including Australia and New Zealand whereby large numbers of poker machines are embedded in

community-based clubs, establishing the local community as a direct recipient of gambling benefits.

9.4 Concluding remarks

This thesis set out to explore the community level effects of poker machine gambling. The research questions posed at the outset (and repeated in this chapter) focused the enquiry upon an exploration of the iterative shaping capacity of community and poker machines, issues of power, ideology and discourses, and community empowerment and disempowerment. While many of the benefits and adverse consequences of poker machines – facilities development and harmful gambling – were foreseeable, the community level of analysis revealed that the effect of poker machines on community was neither straightforward nor predictable.

Consistent with the critical theoretical concept of hegemony, the dominant groups associated with poker machines, the government, and the industry, and to a lesser extent the influential members within the club, have won over many within the Buttercross community who now largely accept poker machines within the club as a normal and natural part of their community. However, these power arrangements are not universally accepted. While the research has disclosed the institutional arrangements and coalition of interests operating at the broader level that protect and privilege the gambling industry and state, it has also revealed how community can be an agency of resistance to the presence of poker machines, challenging the powerful vested interests which work to marginalise and subjugate communities, and legitimate gambling harm.

Appendices

Appendix A
Research Site Selection Criteria

Criteria	Site 1	Site 2
Recent or imminent installation of poker machines	☒ Application hearing with VCGR in Feb 2010 for new venue (60 EGMs) as part of larger residential / commercial development. Long lead time before installation.	☑ VCGR granted application in October 2007 for 80 EGMs at a community sports club. 50 EGMs already granted at hotel. Relatively low ratio of poker machines per person.
Bounded community	☑ Rapidly growing rural residential area with 5,453 people. Residential spread has made it contiguous with nearby community, but reported strong level of identification of local people with their community.	☑ Population in 2006 of 14,162. Rapid population growth estimated to be almost 30,000 by 2011.
Local economy, education and service system	☑ Retail services, schools, GP, voluntary associations, etc.	☑ Extensive local economy (including new town centre), primary and secondary schools, voluntary groups, residents' association.
Range of socio-economic advantage/disadvantage	☒ Relatively advantaged community with a SEIFA Index of Disadvantage of 1077.4. May be high levels of household debt.	☑☒ Slightly advantaged SEIFA score and Jesuit study ranking. Median monthly housing loan repayment is $1800 compared to national average of $1300.
Local stakeholders support research	Unknown. Can work through VLGA to establish contacts.	Unknown. Can work through VLGA to establish contacts.
Reasonable travelling distance	☑	☑

Criteria	Site 3	Site 4
Recent or imminent installation of poker machines	☒ Buttercross has 40 club based machines. The introduction of poker machines to this community is not recent as they were installed in the club in 1996. Advantage of using Buttercross town is that longer-term effects of poker machines are likely to be manifest. ☑ New Poker machine gambling venues are proposed for two communities within the LGA which currently do not possess poker machines.	☑ A club has been granted permission to install 70 EGMs. Unsure of opening date – most likely to be late 2010 or 2011.
Bounded community	☑ All 3 sites are bounded communities. All 3 are major residential growth areas.	☑ New bounded and branded residential development with 2,500 residents planned. Current population of about 700, but borders disadvantaged community to the south.
Local economy, education and service system	☑ Buttercross has very well developed service system. Leafield/Dale Hill has kindergarten, primary school, some retail etc. Leafield has a population of 3430.	☒ Local economic and service system only just starting to evolve. Likely to be a high degree of economic and social participation in urban areas outside the community.
Range of socio-economic advantage/disadvantage	☑ Buttercross town has a range of advantage and disadvantage (SEIFA score in older part of town is 960.6, and newer housing development is 1028.5). Leafield and Dale Hill are quite advantaged, but households likely to carry high debt levels and suffer mortgage stress.	☒ Home prices start from $650 k. Unlikely to be disadvantaged community, but possibly high levels of household debt and financial stress.
Local stakeholders support research	☑ Local government initial support.	☒ Developer probably unlikely to support research.
Reasonable travelling distance	☑	☑

Appendix B
Observation Protocol

Setting:	Activity:	Date/Time:
Length of Observation:	**Role of Researcher:**	

Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

Appendix C
Interview Schedule (Community)

- Can you tell me a little about yourself?

- Tell me about life in the township of Buttercross

- What involvement (if any) does the local club have in your day to day life?

- What roles does the local club play in community life in Buttercross?

- It's quite a few years now since the club installed poker machines. How did that change the club?

- I'd like to discuss some of the ways some individuals or organisations might benefit from the poker machines. Which groups or individuals (if any) have benefited from the poker machines?

- Would you say receiving some kind of a benefit from the poker machines influences how those individuals think about poker machines or respond to any issues associated with them? Can you think of any examples of this?

- Which (if any) individuals, businesses or organisations haven't received a benefit or may have been disadvantaged in some way?

- What can you tell me about the issue of community members who have problems with their gambling?

- What are your views towards having poker machines in your township?

  o What have you observed are the main effects on Buttercross of having poker machines here in the community?

  o How would you feel about additional poker machines being installed in a second venue in the community or in neighbouring communities?

- Have you been involved in any submissions for or against poker machines? What involvement have you had?

- Is there anything else you would like to say?

Appendix D
Interview Schedule (Club)

- Can you tell me about your work here at the Buttercross Club?

- What roles does the local club play in community life in Buttercross?

- It's been fourteen years since the club installed poker machines. What can you tell me about that course of action?

- What is the current role/significance of poker machines within the club in comparison to other aspects of the club?

- Can you tell me about the profile of your poker machine patrons?

- I'd like to discuss some of the ways some individuals or organisations might benefit from the poker machines.

  o Which groups or individuals (if any) have benefited from the poker machines?

- Which (if any) individuals, businesses or organisations haven't received a benefit or may have been disadvantaged in some way?

- What can you tell me about the issue of patrons who have problems with their gambling?

- What are your views towards having poker machines in your township?

  o What have you observed are the main effects on Buttercross of having poker machines here in the community?

  o How would you feel about additional poker machines being installed in a second venue in the community or in neighbouring communities?

- Have you been involved in any submissions for or against poker machines? What involvement have you had?

- Is there anything else you would like to say?

Appendix E
Interview Schedule (Professional)

- Tell me about yourself and your work?

- What can you tell me about the Township of Buttercross?

- What role does the local bowls club have in day to day community life in Buttercross?

- It's quite a few years now since the bowls club installed poker machines. How did that change the club?

- What would you say were the main effects on the community of Buttercross of having poker machines in the township?

- I'd like to discuss some of the ways some individuals or organisations might benefit from the poker machines. Which groups or individuals (if any) have benefited from the poker machines?

- Would you say receiving some kind of a benefit from the poker machines influences how those individuals think about poker machines or respond to any issues associated with them?

- Which (if any) individuals, businesses or organisations haven't received a benefit or may have been disadvantaged in some way?

- What can you tell me about the issue of community members who have problems with their gambling?

- What are your feelings towards having poker machines in the Township of Buttercross?

- How do you feel about additional poker machines being installed in a second venue in the community?

- Have you been involved in any submissions for or against poker machines? What involvement have you had?

- Is there anything else you would like to say

Appendix F
Letter Sent to Participants with Transcript

Dear

Re: interview transcript for your approval

Firstly I would like to thank you again for participating in the research I am conducting. Your contribution has provided invaluable insights into the community effects of electronic gaming machines.

Please find enclosed a transcript of your interview which I am sending you so that you may check that what is written accurately reflects what you said and/or wanted to say.

If you wish to amend what is written, please clearly mark any changes on this copy of the transcript and return it to me in the enclosed self-addressed envelope within two weeks of receiving this letter. Alternatively, you are welcome to phone through any changes and I can make them on your behalf.

If I have received no response from you within fourteen days, I will assume you are satisfied with the content and accuracy of the transcript and will proceed with the data analysis.

Should you have any questions or would like further information, please do not hesitate to contact me via phone, email or letter.

Yours sincerely

Deborah Greenslade

Appendix G
Ethics Approval

Principal Researcher:	John McDonald
Associate/Student Researcher/s:	Helen Aucote Angela Murphy Deborah Greenslade
School/Section:	BSSH
Project Number:	A10-077
Project Title:	The community impacts of electronic gaming machines
For the period:	23/7/2010 **to** 31/12/2013

Please quote the Project No. in all correspondence regarding this application.

REPORTS TO HREC:

An annual report for this project must be submitted to the Ethics Officer on:
23 July 2011
23 July 2012
23 July 2013

A final report for this project must be submitted to the Ethics Officer on:
31 January 2014

Ethics Officer
23 July 2010

If any changes are to be made to this project, a 'Request for Amendments' form must be completed and forwarded to the Ethics Officer for approval.

Appendix H
Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT

PROJECT TITLE:	The community impacts of electronic gaming machines
RESEARCHERS:	Associate Professor John McDonald, Dr Helen Aucote, Ms Deborah Greenslade

Consent – Please complete the following information:

I, ... of . . . .

. . . .

hereby consent to participate as a subject in the above research study.

The research program in which I am being asked to participate has been explained fully to me, verbally and in writing, and any matters on which I have sought information have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that: all information I provide (including questionnaires) will be treated with
the strictest confidence and data will be stored separately from any listing that includes my name
and address.

- aggregated results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in scientific and academic journals

- I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from it will not be used.

- once information has been aggregated it is unable to be identified, and from this point it is not possible to withdraw consent to participate

SIGNATURE: . . . . **DATE**: . . . .

Appendix I
Plain Language Statement (Community)

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT

PROJECT TITLE: **The community impacts of electronic gaming machines**

RESEARCHERS:
- Associate Professor John McDonald, senior lecturer and researcher in Health Sociology from the University of Ballarat
- Dr Helen Aucote, lecturer in Psychology and researcher from the Australian Catholic University's Fitzroy campus
- Ms Deborah Greenslade, PhD student in Sociology from the University of Ballarat

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT:

This research is investigating the community impacts of poker machines (also called electronic gaming machines or pokies). This research is funded by a grant from the Australian Research Council; the Victorian Local Governance Association and a number of councils, including the City of Finchley, are also providing in-kind and financial support.

The research will be conducted in communities located in the City of Finchley. Specifically, the project will investigate: (1) the social, psychological, cultural and political effects of gaming machines; and (2) the response by action groups, communities, and local government to the (proposed) introduction of gaming machines. As part of our research we hope to talk with residents of the community, local government councillors and council staff, gaming industry representatives and owners/operators/staff of gaming venues, business owners, community groups, and managers/staff of health and welfare support services.

As someone living within the City if Finchley, I would like to invite you to participate in this research as your experiences and opinions regarding the community impacts of EGMs will provide a unique insight into this issue. If you take part in this research it will involve participating in an interview which will take approximately 1 hour and will be conducted at a time that is convenient for you and your work/personal commitments. The interview will be audio tape-recorded and the transcription sent back to you to verify accuracy.

All the information you provide in the interview will be securely stored and only the three researchers will have access to it. Furthermore, to maximise confidentiality, all data provided will be aggregated and de-identified. Because of the profile of this project we cannot guarantee complete anonymity. Results from this research may be reported in scientific and academic journals, but no identifying information will be used in any publication arising from the research.

Your participation in this project is voluntary and your confidentiality will be maintained at all times. You are free at any time up until and during this interview to withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation in this evaluation.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete the Informed Consent Form and return it to me prior to participating in the interview.

If you experience any distress as a result of participating in this interview we recommend that you follow the procedures for accessing professional support, either through your workplace or via:

- **Lifeline on 13 1114**

- **Gambler's Help on 1800 858 858**

If you have any questions, or you would like further information regarding the project titled:

"The community impacts of electronic gaming machines", please contact the lead researcher, Associate Professor John McDonald on 5327 9611 or email   j.mcdonald@ballarat.edu.au

Should you (i.e. the participant) have any concerns about the **ethical** conduct of this research project, please contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, Research & Graduates Studies Office, University of Ballarat, PO Box 663, Mt Helen VIC 3353. Telephone: (03) 5327 9765, Email: ub.ethics@ballarat.edu.au

CRICOS Provider Number 00103D

Appendix J
Plain Language Statement (Club)

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT

PROJECT TITLE: **The community impacts of electronic gaming machines**

RESEARCHERS:
- Associate Professor John McDonald, senior lecturer and researcher in Health Sociology from the University of Ballarat
- Dr Helen Aucote, lecturer in Psychology and researcher from the Australian Catholic University's Fitzroy campus
- Ms Deborah Greenslade, PhD student in Sociology from the University of Ballarat

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT:

This research is investigating the community impacts of poker machines (also called electronic gaming machines or pokies). This research is funded by a grant from the Australian Research Council; the Victorian Local Governance Association and a number of councils, including the City of Finchley, are also providing in-kind and financial support.

The research will be conducted in communities located in the City of FInchley. Specifically, the project will investigate: (1) the social, psychological, cultural and political effects of gaming machines; and (2) the response by action groups, communities, and local government to the (proposed) introduction of gaming machines. As part of our research we hope to talk with residents of the community, local government councillors and council staff, gaming industry representatives and owners/operators/staff of gaming venues, business owners, community groups, and managers/staff of health and welfare support services.

As someone involved with an EGM venue within the City if Finchley, I would like to invite you to participate in this research as your experiences and opinions regarding the community impacts of EGMs will provide a unique insight into this issue. If you take part in this research it will involve participating in an interview which will take approximately 1 hour and will be conducted at a time that is convenient for you and your work/personal commitments. The interview will be audio tape-recorded and the transcription sent back to you to verify accuracy.

All the information you provide in the interview will be securely stored and only the three researchers will have access to it. Furthermore, to maximise confidentiality, all data provided will be aggregated and de-identified. Because of the profile of this project we cannot guarantee complete anonymity. Results from this research may be reported in scientific and academic journals, but no individuals will be identified in any publication arising from the research.

Your participation in this project is voluntary and your confidentiality will be maintained at all times. You are free at any time up until and during this interview to withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation in this evaluation.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete the Informed Consent Form and return it to me prior to participating in the interview.

If you experience any distress as a result of participating in this interview we recommend that you follow the procedures for accessing professional support, either through your workplace or via:

- **Lifeline on 13 1114**
- **Gambler's Help on 1800 858 858**

If you have any questions, or you would like further information regarding the project titled:

"The community impacts of electronic gaming machines", please contact the lead researcher, Associate Professor John McDonald on 5327 9611 or email   j.mcdonald@ballarat.edu.au

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Appendix K
Plain Language Statement (Professional)

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND INFORMED CONSENT

PROJECT TITLE: **The community impacts of electronic gaming machines**

RESEARCHERS:
- Associate Professor John McDonald, senior lecturer and researcher in Health Sociology from the University of Ballarat
- Dr Helen Aucote, lecturer in Psychology and researcher from the Australian Catholic University's Fitzroy campus
- Ms Deborah Greenslade, PhD student in Sociology and also from the University of Ballarat

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT:

This research is investigating the community impacts of poker machines (also called electronic gaming machines or pokies). This research is funded by a grant from the Australian Research Council; the Victorian Local Governance Association and a number of councils, including the City of Finchley, are also providing in-kind and financial support.

The research will be conducted in communities located in the City of Finchley. Specifically, the project will investigate: (1) the social, psychological, cultural and political effects of gaming machines; and (2) the response by action groups, communities, and local government to the (proposed) introduction of gaming machines. As part of our research we hope to talk with residents of the community, local government councillors and council staff, gaming industry representatives and owners/operators/staff of gaming venues, business owners, community groups, and managers/staff of health and welfare support services.

As a professional working within the City if Finchley I would like to invite you to participate in this research as your experiences and opinions regarding the community impacts of EGMs will provide a unique insight into this issue. If you take part in this research it will involve participating in an interview which will take approximately 1 hour and will be conducted at a time that is convenient for you and your work/personal commitments. The interview will be audio tape-recorded and the transcription sent back to you to verify accuracy.

All the information you provide in the interview will be securely stored and only the three researchers will have access to it. Furthermore, to maximise confidentiality, all data provided will be aggregated and de-identified. Because of the profile of this project we cannot guarantee complete anonymity. Results from this research may be reported in scientific and academic journals, but no individuals will be identified in any publication arising from the research.

Your participation in this project is voluntary and your confidentiality will be maintained at all times. You are free at any time up until and during this interview to withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation in this evaluation.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete the Informed Consent Form and return it to me prior to participating in the interview.

If you experience any distress as a result of participating in this interview we recommend that you follow the procedures for accessing professional support, either through your workplace or via:

- **Lifeline on 13 1114**

- **Gambler's Help on 1800 858 858**

If you have any questions, or you would like further information regarding the project titled:

"The community impacts of electronic gaming machines", please contact the lead researcher, Associate Professor John McDonald on 5327 9611 or email j.mcdonald@ballarat.edu.au

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Should you (i.e. the participant) have any concerns about the **ethical** conduct of this research project, please contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, Research & Graduates Studies Office, University of Ballarat, PO Box 663, Mt Helen VIC 3353. Telephone: (03) 5327 9765, Email: ub.ethics@ballarat.edu.au

CRICOS Provider Number 00103D

Appendix L
Project information handout

The Community Effects of EGMs

About the research……

An exciting research project is being conducted in your community, which will give you a chance to have a say about the impacts of poker machines. As the researcher, I am interested in all perspectives, both positive and negative.

Deborah Greenslade, PhD Student

Who is the research targeting?

As part of our research I hope to speak with a broad cross section of community members, including:

- residents of the community;
- community groups and sports clubs;
- managers/staff of health and welfare support services;
- local government councillors, council staff;
- education services;
- churches;
- gaming industry representatives and owners/operators/staff of gaming venues; and
- business owners.

Funding for the research

This research is funded by a grant from the Australian Research Council; the Victorian Local Governance Association and a number of councils, including the City of Finchley, are also providing in-kind and financial support.

Where is the research taking place?

The research will be conducted in communities located in the City of Finchley with a particular focus on the Buttercross township and the response by action groups, communities, and local government to the (proposed) introduction of gaming machines.

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Research Background

Annual profits from gambling in Australia exceed $16 billion. Over 65% of this revenue comes from electronic gaming machines (also called EGMs and poker machines). Profits from EGM gambling fund sports and special interest clubs and provide a significant portion of state and territory government tax revenue.

EGMs are also associated with high levels of problem gambling and most research into gambling has tended to focus on the individual "problem gambler". Research to date has largely ignored the complex community level impacts of EGMs. Consequently, there is little understanding of how the effects of EGMs ripple through a community.

This research will focus on understanding the many effects of EGMs within a community. These include: social; health and wellbeing; recreational; financial; political; and moral effects; along with effects on sense of security and social cohesion within a community. Both the costs and benefits of poker machines to communities will be considered.

Giving communities a voice

A major aim of this research is to give a voice to communities on the impacts of poker machines. I am interested in talking to a range of community members and hearing all points of view. If you feel you have something to say about the effects within your community from poker machines, and/or would like to share your insights and experiences, I would be pleased to hear from you.

Would you like to know more?

Do you have any questions about this research?

Are you interested in participating in this research and sharing your experiences and opinions regarding the effects in your community of poker machines?

Please contact Deborah Greenslade

Contact details removed

Alternatively, contact the lead researcher, Associate Professor John McDonald

Contact details removed

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