

19 May 2016

Taking the awkward out of talking about problem gambling

South Western Sydney Local Health District is helping people take the awkward out of talking about problem gambling during Responsible Gambling Awareness Week (RGAW) 23-27 May 2016.

SWSLHD Gambling Help Service Clinical Psychologist Christopher Mosses said it was important that people felt comfortable and confident to raise their concerns about a friend or family members' problem gambling.

"The theme of RGAW 2016 is *family and friends* for a very important reason. The support of family and friends can make a major difference in helping problem gamblers muster the strength to overcome their gambling addiction," Mr Mosses said.

"One of the biggest challenges can be raising the issue of problem gambling. It can be a very awkward thing to do. People are often afraid that mentioning someone's gambling problem may damage their relationship with that person.

"That's where we come in. We are here to offer advice and support to family and friends of problem gamblers, providing them with practical advice to address a challenging situation.

"Of course we're also here to help those who think they may have a gambling problem and are unsure of how to bring up the subject with their family and friends," he said.

Problem gambling warning signs include:

- Betting more than you can really afford to lose;
- Needing to gamble with larger amounts of money to get the same feeling of excitement;
- Continuing to gamble to try and win back money that has been lost;
- Borrowing money or selling possessions to get money to gamble or cover expenses;
- Experiencing health problems including depression, anxiety or stress caused by gambling;
- People criticising your gambling or telling you that you have a gambling problem, regardless of whether you believe them.

During Responsible Gambling Awareness Week, Gambling Help has launched a new campaign, Talkward, which uses animated e-cards to help break through stigma and encourage dialogue and support from family and friends.

The e-cards can be customised and personalised, humorously focus on a thorny subject but carry a serious message: now we've got the awkward bit out of the way, let's have a talk in real life.

Other activities in Liverpool during the week include talks and information stalls at local clubs and collages, and an information stall at Liverpool Hospital.

To access the e-card and a new the self-help booklet, visit www.gamblinghelp.nsw.gov.au

The Gambling Help Service assists problem gamblers and their families in south western Sydney free of charge and with complete confidentiality.

For help or to make an appointment call 9616 4060 (business hours) or 1800 858 858 (24hr Gambling Helpline).