

RESPIN GAMBLING AWARENESS SPEAKERS BUREAU

BACKGROUND

Harm from gambling impacts not only people who gamble but also their loved ones, communities and workplaces. In addition, that harm extends beyond high-risk gamblers – Victorian studies have shown that low and moderate risk gambling accounts for 85% of gambling harm. The total cost of gambling to the Victorian community is estimated to be \$7 billion, with people who gamble, their families and social networks bearing 75% of this cost.

Funded by the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation since 2014, North East Healthy Communities oversees and coordinates the ReSPIN Gambling Awareness Speakers Bureau. North East Healthy Communities recognises that people who have overcome the effects of gambling harm have considerable expertise on the issue, which is of value to others. Many of these people want to share their story to lend hope and inspiration to others and bring the often hidden experience of harm from gambling into the open. People struggling with gambling harm want to hear the stories from those who have lived through the same struggles. The broader community also benefit from hearing personal stories of gambling harm, increasing their knowledge, understanding and empathy for those affected.

PARTNERS



METHOD

ReSPIN recruits, trains and supports people with lived experience of gambling harm to share their story of gambling harm and recovery across Victoria, thereby:

- addressing stigma associated with gambling and help seeking;
- enhancing community education;
- addressing myths about gambling;
- influencing public discussions about gambling harm; and
- giving a voice to people who have experienced various types of gambling.

From its inception to current expansion, North East Healthy Communities has refined, developed and promoted the ReSPIN Gambling Awareness Speakers Bureau, winning the Minister for Health Volunteer Award for Outstanding Achievement by a Volunteer: Innovation in 2016. The ReSPIN program has developed sought-after expertise in harnessing the passion and experience of volunteers who have been affected by gambling harm.

OUTCOMES

ReSPIN has developed into an award-winning volunteer program that supports people to share their story safely, and incorporates comprehensive training, ongoing professional development, and debriefing. Evaluation shows the value of lived experience in busting myths and reducing stigma and shame about gambling harm.

In 2019, ReSPIN has 32 active speakers, ranging in age from 22 to 78, who have reached over a million people by bravely sharing their story of hope and recovery with community groups, students, professionals, leadership groups, decision making bodies, and the media.

“Hearing her story was very powerful. She was tremendously moving and brave. I don’t think there was a dry eye in the house and she is to be commended for speaking so openly about her pain and shame. Hearing her story has given me so much more insight into what it could be like to live with such a harmful addiction and in fact any addiction. I have thought about it often and I feel that I am more empathetic, knowledgeable and aware than I ever was before. Thank you for your courage and openness”