

Features • Tuesday 6 July 2021 • By Bishop Jeremy Greaves

## “Gambling took over for me when...it was all I could think about”



A new campaign launched in time for this year's [Responsible Gambling Action Week](#) involves different people telling the story of when gambling took over their lives. Allen, David and Louise all talk about how it was not until gambling completely took over their lives that they realised they needed help.

Responsible Gambling Action Week is an annual event that encourages gamblers to stay within their limits and also highlights the support available to people who feel gambling may have become a problem for them or someone they know.

This year's theme is 'When gambling took over...', to remind people that gambling problems can affect anyone, from all walks of life, and there is help available.

Per capita, Australian adults are the largest spenders on gambling in the world, at around double the average of other Western countries ([The Economist](#)) and we know from research that 70 per cent of Queenslanders gamble.

While only a small proportion of these people will develop a problem with gambling, 60 per cent of clients of gambling help services say that gaming machines are their biggest challenge.

In Queensland there is one poker machine for every 112 people and in the three-month period from October to December 2020, players spent over \$740 million on poker machines – that's over \$8 million every day.

In Queensland, the odds of winning the top prize on a poker machine is around 1 in 7 million and the machines are cleverly designed to make you think you're getting close to a bigger win so keep you playing for longer. Machines might also offer the option of playing 'multiple lines' which imply an increase in odds. But no matter what, the odds are the same and the more you play the more you lose.

A [major Government-funded study in 2017](#) showed that across Australia, electronic gaming machine (EGM) players were over-represented among people for whom welfare payments formed their main source of income and overall, gamblers living in low-income households spent, on average, a much greater proportion of their household's total disposable income on gambling than high-income households (10% vs 1%).

EGM players are substantially overrepresented among vulnerable groups, including those aged 50 and older, people who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, who had 10 years or less of schooling or had completed a certificate or diploma, were retired, lived alone or with only their partner, lived in an inner regional area, those who had lowest incomes, and those who drew their main source of income from welfare payments. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that there are often higher concentrations of poker machines in suburbs where there are higher percentages of people on welfare or on the lowest incomes.

Gambling is often portrayed as an essential part of Aussie identity and it can be fun to have the occasional flutter, but it is important to be mindful of when 'gambling takes over' and what help and support is available if that happens for you or for someone you care about.

If you, or someone you know, needs help with a gambling problem, the following organisations and resources can assist:

Gambling Helpline: 1800 858 858

[Gamblinghelp](#)

[GamblingHelpOnline](#)

Lifeline: [Problem Gambling Fact Sheet](#)

Bishop Jeremy Greaves is the Heads of Churches Representative on the Queensland Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee (RGAC). The Queensland RGAC is a partnership between community, industry and Government. Its membership includes gambling support providers, industry peak bodies, community groups and Government. The RGAC is recognised in the Queensland Responsible Gambling Strategy as being the cornerstone of the Queensland Government's approach to responsible gambling and a primary source of advice on emerging social concerns associated with gambling in Queensland.

**Author's note 06/07/2021: Following publication of the above, I received the latest figures for Queensland electronic gaming machine (EGM) expenditure, with total EGM club and hotel player expenditure in Queensland for the first quarter of 2021 being \$647,199,835.**

**Sunday Devotions • Monday 12 July 2021 • By Ann Joseph**

## **Sunday Devotion: 18 July 2021, Eighth Sunday after Pentecost**

*Dominus regit me* – The Lord is my shepherd

**Main Readings:** [2 Samuel 7.1-14a](#); [Psalm 89.21-38](#); [Ephesians 2.11-22](#); [Mark 6.30-34, 53-56](#); [[Jeremiah 23.1-16](#); [Psalm 23](#)]

**Supplementary Readings:** [Psalm 145.13-21](#); [Acts 14.8-18](#); [2 Samuel 7.18-29](#); [Psalm 23](#); [Ephesians 2.1-10](#)

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." ([Psalm 23.1](#))

Early in 2003 I lost four important men in my life: Uncle John Joseph (my husband's namesake, his godfather and wise old mentor); my father-in-law Frank; my maternal grandfather Joe; and, then my darling Johnny, my husband of 20 years. Later that year our beautiful dog Shilo (who was a part of our family for 12 years) succumbed to cancer.

By the time Johnny died in April, I had mastered the art of writing eulogies and planning funerals and built some pretty good connections with clergy and funeral homes. Psalm 23 was always the scripture of choice: "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil, for you are with me." Every single day someone's loved one is lost and Psalm 23 gets a good old workout.

In these times of uncertainty and sadness when the news of people dying and suffering around the world is a constant (especially since the outbreak of COVID-19), we are reminded that we all have in our hearts and minds some form of pain hidden deep and ever present – some people experience some form of grief every single day. We must always remember that our dear Lord restores our soul, our faith and our heart, and with his goodness and mercy he brings healing and comfort and wraps us in his loving arms as, "He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

Our Lord is always with me...remember that he is always with you, too.