



New research-driven assessment tool empowers clients to take control of their gambling

Gambling is one of the biggest problems facing Australians today, and Relationships Australia Queensland (RAQ) is at the forefront of efforts to help those affected by problem gambling to access support.

Up to five million Australians are potentially affected by problem gambling each year, and that number is expected to increase in coming years.

It was clear to Relationships Australia Queensland that our clients needed a more dynamic form of service delivery specific to the complex context of problem gambling.

Enlisting the help of several other organisations, RAQ set out to create the Gambling Recovery Star, a research-informed assessment tool that would act as the foundation for this new kind of service.

Drawing on a participatory action research framework and the existing Outcomes Star created by Triangle UK, the RAQ Gambling Recovery Star helps practitioners empower people struggling with problem gambling.

It encourages the gambler to be the agent for change by helping them work with the practitioner to develop case plans and goals that focus on outcomes.

The prototype of the Recovery Star was tested in 2020 after a year of co-design workshops driven and run by an inter-agency working group.

Despite the added challenges of COVID-19, the tool was piloted on 100 Gambling Help Service clients, and the analysis of the data during this pilot strongly supported the effectiveness of the Recovery Star.

That's why, after over a year of development, RAQ launched the Recovery Star in 2021 as part of its intake process for the Gambling Help Service.

The new approach is clearly making a difference for clients like Jonathan.

Jonathan came to RAQ asking for support after struggling with a gambling problem for over twenty years, first with horse racing and more recently with online poker machines.

He wanted to take control of his gambling to ease the pressure on his family.

In his initial counselling session, his practitioner used the Gambling Star with him to set goals and find what motivated him. Above all else, he wanted to be a better father and partner.

He set the goals of rebuilding trust in his relationship and controlling his gambling, but in the process of counselling realised it would be better if he stopped gambling altogether.

Jonathan finally left RAQ after he had stopped gambling entirely for over six weeks, feeling confident he could handle the problem on his own.

Relationships Australia Queensland is proud of the work they and all of their partners have done during the creation of the Recovery Star.

They hope that gambling help services around the world can now benefit from using the tool to support their clients, empower them to take control of their gambling and move towards the future they want.