

Why are pokies so harmful?

Every problem gambler, on average, affects six other people. Gambling problems inflict harm on partners, children, parents, siblings and grandparents, and there is consistent evidence linking harmful gambling and family violence.¹



Pokies give players unrealistic impressions of the odds of winning, confuse people about how much money they have lost, and encourage sustained periods of gambling – often in the hope of recovering losses. Pokies can be played at various betting amounts, when played at high intensity it is easy to lose \$1,500 an hour.²

Solitude



Unlike card games, with pokies it is just you and the machine. People often talk about a mental state, called 'the zone', where you lose all sense of self and time when playing the pokies. It is the uninterrupted play and solitude that keeps you in the zone.

Continuity



Pokies are considered the most harmful form of gambling, because it is a continuous activity. With card games you usually have to wait for the next game to start, but with pokies you can immediately continue from one game to another, just press a button and play again.

Speed



There are a limited number of card games you can play in an hour, but with pokies you can play up to 1200 unique games. In addition research this is called 'event frequency', where the number of events are so frequent that it doesn't really leave you any room to think; you're just drawn into the next game and the next game, and so on.

1. Dowling, N. (2014). The impact of gambling problems on families (AGRC Discussion Paper No. 1). Melbourne: Australian Gambling Research Centre.

2. Productivity Commission 2010, Gambling, Report no. 50, Canberra.