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## Cost of problem gambling could be as high as \$2.8b: report

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Just weeks before the Spring Racing Carnival it has been revealed that there are 30,000 problem gamblers in Victoria and the social and economic cost of gambling addiction could be as high as \$2.8 billion a year.

The Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission has released its final report into the economic and social cost of problem gambling in Victoria, with it estimating the likely cost to be between \$1.5 billion and \$2.8 billion in 2010-11.

The commission found losses on poker machines accounted for half of all gambling, with casino gaming accounting for another 25 per cent.

"Gambling expenditure in Victoria was approximately \$5.2 billion in 2010-11 and \$5.5 billion in 2011-12," it said.

The report said excess gambling by problem gamblers accounted for between \$1 billion to \$1.4 billion and the "intangible costs associated with impacts on mental wellbeing for problem gamblers and their families" was between \$400 million and \$1.2 billion.

"A relatively small proportion of the population — around 30,000 problem gamblers and their families — therefore bear the majority of the costs," the report said.

"The Commission's estimates suggest that the costs of problem gambling to the Victorian Government are significant, at between \$74 million and \$147 million in 2010-11."

It found that indirect costs also fall on the Victorian justice system and were estimated at approximately \$26 million.

The study recommended that to improve the information base for policy development, regulation and service delivery the government should "articulate its priorities for problem gambling-related research" focusing on better identification of people in the health, social welfare and justice systems, better understanding of the harms suffered by problem gamblers and their families

through targeted studies of problem gamblers; and evaluating the effectiveness of current harm minimisation measures.

*This story was found at: <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/cost-of-problem-gambling-could-be-as-high-as-28b-report-20130910-2thi4.html>*