Background

Homelessness and problem gambling appear to be intimately linked, but both are difficult to research, being hidden problems. While there has been little research concerning the link between gambling and homelessness, there is widespread anecdotal information indicating that one of the consequences of problem gambling is housing stress, which sometimes extends to homelessness. However, attributing causation between problem gambling and homelessness is difficult because a range of factors and underlying issues may be associated with both the homelessness and the problem gambling including socio-demographic, mental health and other personal factors.

Aims

To 1) examine the relationship between homelessness and problem gambling; 2) identify the impacts of homelessness and the impacts of problem gambling; and 3) examine the compounding factors associated with both homelessness and problem gambling such as mental illness, substance abuse, unemployment, financial stress, housing risk (stress) and crime.

Methods

Key methods comprise 1) development of an issues paper on gambling and homelessness; 2) in-depth qualitative interviews with around 15 homeless people with gambling-related problems to gather information about their personal experiences concerning their housing situation and their gambling behaviour; and 3) in-depth qualitative interviews with service providers for people under housing stress in the Northern Rivers region of NSW.

Outcomes

This research is especially important in an area like the Northern Rivers region of NSW where there are high levels of homelessness. A better understanding of problem gambling and housing risk is needed to assist support services and governments in extending strategies to assist those at housing risk as well as those who are homeless.