

Problem gamblers on northern beaches on the increase, say South Pacific Private and Lifeline

The number of problem gamblers on Sydney's northern beaches is increasing, with experts saying they've heard stories of people losing their \$2m homes.

Julie Cross, Manly Daily Subscriber only | November 10, 2019 12:00am

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There has been a worrying increase in the number of problem gamblers on the northern beaches, with experts saying they've heard stories of people losing their \$2m homes because of their addiction.

The latest statistics estimate that there are around 8000 people living on the northern beaches who are problem gamblers or are deemed at risk of becoming one.

In a bid to try and tackle the problem specialist addiction treatment centre, South Pacific Private, based in Curl Curl, and Lifeline Northern Beaches have joined forces to raise awareness of the issue.

"The number of clients at South Pacific Private with a primary diagnosis of gambling disorder has doubled in 2018 compared to the previous year," Tamara Buchanan, relationship manager, said.



Generic picture of the South Pacific Private Hospital in Curl Curl. Picture: Hollie Adams.

"And the numbers could be even higher considering the high propensity for co-occurring conditions like drug or alcohol dependence or depression or anxiety disorders, which are more likely to be recorded as the primary diagnosis."

Ms Buchanan added that anecdotally they were hearing stories about gamblers losing homes – some worth up to \$2m.

She blamed some of the increase on interactive gambling sites – accessible via phones and PCs – which makes it easy for gamblers to bet 24/7.

Tragically, statistics show problem gamblers are 19 per cent more likely to take their own lives and young men are more likely to become problem gamblers.

"We have seen clients who have lost their homes, their families and their entire life's savings because of their gambling," Debbie Christov, financial counselling co-ordinator, said.

"Lifeline's Problem Gambling Support Group has been set-up to help before the situation becomes this severe."

South Pacific Private and Lifeline Northern Beaches will co-host a community event, where friends, family and loved-ones of people who may be at risk of becoming problem gamblers can learn more about what problem gambling is, when does it become a problem and what to do to get help.

South Pacific Private clinicians will provide information and there will be a Q&A with a panel comprising South Pacific Private and Lifeline experts.



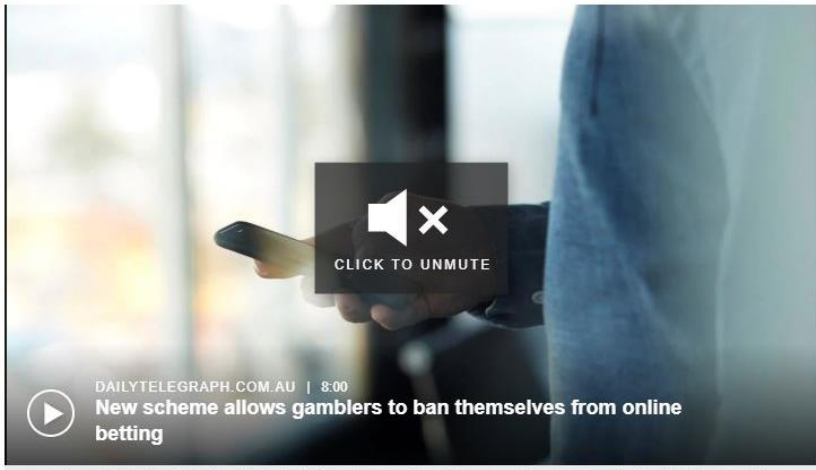
Lifeline Northern Beaches CEO David Thomas. Picture: Braden Fastier

David Thomas, CEO of Lifeline Northern Beaches said problem gambling not only effects the gambler, it has far reaching consequences and impacts the whole community.

Former Wallaby, author and journalist Peter FitzSimons, will be the Master of Ceremonies for the evening. He is also Patron of The Footpath Library for homeless people, many of who are victims of problem gambling.

To register your spot at the Secret Gambling Business event, at Novotel Sydney Manly Pacific on November 22, at 6pm, go to: trybooking.com/BFXUC.

For more information about the Problem Gambling Support Group, call Lifeline Northern Beaches on 9949 5522 or visit lifelinenb.org.au.



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Meanwhile, in response to the need for more gambling support services on the northern beaches, Lifeline launched a no-cost Problem Gambling Support Group in March this year.