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Casino to help at-risk gamblers

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IN a South Australian first, the Adelaide casino is introducing an early intervention program to detect problem gamblers.

Five new staff are being employed who will be trained – with the help of counselling groups – to build rapport with customers and identify issues they may have with gambling and alcohol.

Designed with the assistance of the Churches Gambling Taskforce and Break Even counselling network, the program is expected to be in place before Christmas.

SKYCITY Adelaide's marketing general manager Trudy McGowan said problem gambling was not good for business nor all the people it affected.

"Our aim with the early intervention program is to ensure that people who are experiencing issues in managing either their gambling behaviour or alcohol-related behaviour, get the help and support they need before it becomes a major issue for them," she said.

SA Churches Gambling Taskforce chairperson Mark Henley said the relationship between treatment providers and the casino was achieving positive results.

"The employment of dedicated staff is a sensible measure to reduce problem gambling," he said.

"The focus on preventing harmful behaviours before problems arise is an initiative to be applauded."

Mr Henley said early intervention was very important.

He was impressed the casino management was taking harm reduction seriously.

Ms McGowan said the casino was interested in maintaining a sustainable business "and customers who run into problems and no longer gamble for enjoyment are not suitable customers".

"We recognise that a small number of our customers may fall into this at-risk group where gambling could potentially become an issue so we dedicate considerable time and resource into putting systems in place to manage this," she said.

The five new staff members will be called Host Responsibility Co-ordinators. At least one will be on duty when the casino is open.

Ms McGowan said they would build relationships with customers which would enable them to spot changes in behaviour.

They will then approach customer and offer them assistance and information.

They also will work with treatment providers and facilitate the process of self-barring requests from individuals or families.

The program, which has been developed over the past 12 months, will be reviewed every three months.

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