



FIVE MINUTES WITH SARGT TRUSTEE,  
AND LIMPOPO GAMBLING BOARD CEO

# SEROBI MAJA

licencing the casino in Polokwane. I was then seconded for a period of eight months, starting in October 2000, after which I applied for and was appointed chief executive of the Board in July 2001.

**QUESTION:**

What is the extent of organised gambling in Limpopo and how do you see it developing in future?

The province has awarded two casino licences and the Board has invited applications for the third and last licence for the Burgersfort-Sekhukhune District. In addition, the Board is engaged in the process of licencing limited payout machines in all the districts of the province.

Furthermore, the Board licenses and regulates all horseracing activities in the province. With regard to the development of gaming in the future, there's much scope for the licensing of gaming establishments such as bingo halls, and even a horseracing track.

**QUESTION:**

Do you think unorganised or private gambling is a significant factor in Limpopo?

The province, and indeed the rest of the country, has to deal with illegal gambling activities such as 'fafi' and slot machines. Our Law Enforcement Division together with the SAPS and other State security agencies continue to effect arrests almost on a weekly basis.

**QUESTION:**

The SARGT is a national body, but can it be assumed that you will pay particular attention to Limpopo because of your local knowledge?

Charity begins at home. However, as I have been elected by the nine provincial boards to represent them on the SARGT as a trustee, I am obliged to ensure that the National Responsible Gambling Programme caters for all provinces equally.

**QUESTION:**

How do you think Limpopo benefits from organised gambling?

The province benefits from licensed gambling establishments in the form of levies and taxes that accrue from these facilities in order to provide all the infrastructural needs. Furthermore, these facilities create job opportunities for hundreds of people in the form of direct and indirect jobs.

In addition, small, medium and micro enterprises benefit from these establishments through their provision of goods and services thereby empowering the local businesses. As these companies have the obligation to empower the previously disadvantaged individuals, the board continues to ensure that all licensees have empowerment partners that must benefit from the dividend flows.

**QUESTION:**

What do you regard as danger areas which will have to be watched?

Gambling should be a leisure activity, however it has the potential to create problem gamblers and thereby lead to a number of social problems. That is why the SARGT and the National Responsible Gambling Programme are important structures that must work tirelessly to ensure that such risks are minimised.

**QUESTION:**  
Could you briefly describe your personal background?

I am a Limpopo man, born and bred. I was born in Polokwane 55 years ago, completed my university education at Turfloop in 1976 and joined the public service in 1977.

I became head of the Department of Safety and Security before joining the Limpopo Gambling Board as chief executive officer in 2001.

I have travelled extensively to attend gambling conferences dealing with the regulation of gaming, as well as responsible gambling. I'm married with five sons.

**QUESTION:**  
How did you become involved in the gambling scene?

I was requested by the Provincial Government in Limpopo to move from the Safety and Security Department to the Gambling Board to assist in the process of

## WORKSHOP FOR TREATMENT PROFESSIONALS

The three day workshop for treatment professionals from 6 to 8 October was attended by 44 clinical psychologists and social workers forming part of the NRGPs treatment and counselling network - 11 from Gauteng, nine from the Western Cape, five each from Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga, four from KwaZulu-Natal, three from North-West, two each from Northern Cape and Free State, and one each from Limpopo, Namibia and Swaziland.



Treatment professionals represent the core of therapeutic intervention in the country. They currently operate in nearly 60 towns and suburbs all over South Africa, as well as Namibia and Swaziland.

According to the NRGPs medical director Dr Rodger Meyer, this was the second such gathering to be held and it was pronounced a huge success.

"It was an excellent way of bringing treatment professionals up to speed with the latest developments that impact on their field work, and it was a valuable networking opportunity for them to meet one another and confer on matters of a professional nature in such a pleasant social setting."

The programme covered an interesting range of topics, ranging from Internet gambling by executive director Professor Peter Collins to self-exclusion issues by Advocate Alicia Gibson, one of South Africa's foremost experts on gambling regulation.

The NRGPs counselling line co-ordinator Barbara van der Spuy and counsellor Johan Arries delivered a joint presentation that highlighted the reasons for changing the name from helpline to counselling line, the increase in staff from six to nine telephone counsellors working in three shifts on a 24 hour rotation in six official languages, the increase in the number of incoming telephone lines from one to four, the availability of two international lines, as well as the introduction of the new Beta release computer programme.

Other guest speakers were Chris Fisser, chairperson of the National Gambling Board, who outlined the role of regulators, while Derek Auret, CE of the Casino Association of SA (CASA), gave a breakdown of industry challenges.

Paul Slot of Money Sense delivered a presentation on the new NRGPs programme that is being introduced in Gauteng via companies whose employees can access this useful debt management service if their problem gambling has led to debt. (see article on page 3).

Our treatment professionals were glad to have another useful tool they could give to the problem gamblers they consult – something concrete that would help them get their financial lives under control again.

For the treatment professionals the workshop offered an opportunity for them to give their inputs in the development of course materials – updating the NRGPs treatment programme, a new course on intervention planning compiled by Tracy Helps, and the three-session family programme by Susan van Niekerk.

## AURET: KEEP EYES PEELED FOR PROBLEM GAMBLING



If South Africa's 33 casinos are to insist on their rightful place in the formulation of gambling policy, "our reciprocal duties are nowhere more obvious than in the area of problem gambling", CASA CE and SARGT trustee Derek Auret told the group of treatment professionals attending the workshop in Gauteng during October.

In an overview of the past 10 years entitled "achievements, issues and challenges", Mr Auret said that recent experience had shown how important it was for the industry to take a pro-active rather than a reactive stance when it came to problem gambling.

For example, when lawmakers decided three years ago to introduce new measures to deal with problem gambling, industry representations resulted in the removal of many of the most undesirable features "largely because we were able to demonstrate our determination to ensure that the integrity of the industry is maintained and that adequate systems are in place – via the NRGF – for addressing problem gambling effectively."

He added: "if we are to maintain our partnership as an industry with government, it is essential that we continue to show our ability and readiness to confront and resolve the few ethical and legal problems that arise from time to time in the casino industry."

Mr Auret said that it was not "a mere accident of history" that no adversarial relationship had developed between regulators and industry in the past 10 years, as had happened in some other jurisdictions.

It was the outcome of a "constructive engagement between government and industry which recognises the salient importance of our industry's proven ability to contribute positively to socio-economic development through new investment, employment creation, and the provision of new non-gambling tourism infrastructure.

"Our task now is to develop the strengths of that partnership, to consolidate and cement its benefits and to add institutional weight to the structures and organisations through which we seek to obtain

consensus about what is needed to ensure the sustainable health of the industry, which is in the interest of all its stakeholders, not least of which, government."

In his overview of achievements, Mr Auret said that in just 10 years since the passing of the "ground-breaking" 1996 National Gambling Act, South Africa's network of casinos "has become a significant industry by any yardstick, and in particular ... a key component of South Africa's tourism and leisure industry". He pointed out that:

- The industry had been responsible for over R15 billion in new investment in the nine provinces, adding more than R40 billion to the GDP in terms of economic multipliers.
- Between 2003 and 2006, casino gross gaming revenue grew from R8,2 billion to R11,5 billion in 2006; in just the past 12 months, turnovers increased by up to 20%, in some cases, with EBITDA up by more than 25% in many instances.
- The industry had created almost 100 000 direct and indirect jobs, and in 2005 alone accounted for over R1,07 billion in provincial gaming taxes and VAT which, together with company tax, contributed R2,7 billion to overall revenue.
- Members had invested heavily in infrastructure and tourism plant, including two new international convention centres, over 5 000 new hotel rooms and a wide range of other public-interest projects, such as internationally known golf courses, new roads, eco-tourism facilities, airport re-development, museums and wellness centres.

Arguably the most outstanding milestone of the past decade, he said, was "the degree to which government and the industry have succeeded in forging a collaborative partnership that has led to South Africa's ability to boast one of the world's most ethical and socially responsible gambling regimes".

It had been possible to achieve a "felicitous equilibrium" because "the tripartite alliance of government, industry and regulators has recognised – in both legislation and practice – that the public interest is best advanced through the co-operative governance of an industry that, if allowed to operate without restraint, has a considerable potential to cause social harm."

Mr Auret said it was important to re-emphasise the importance of research and empirical evidence in policy formulation, noting that "the South African gambling industry has been meticulous in its monitoring of international best practice and is in constant interaction with the world's leading academic and industry experts.

"It is, however, not always apparent that legislators or policy-makers are as rigorous in their attempts to understand either the lessons of international research or the consequences of their threatened interventions in the business of the industry.

"All too often, anecdotal hearsay or unscientific prejudice are allowed to influence what should be a rational debate and create a climate which is not conducive to the establishment of a stable, predictable and coherent regulatory environment," he said.

## NRGP PLAY MADE HIM THINK AGAIN

Loren Jordaan recently had a striking example of how the NRGF's schools outreach programme, with its lectures and play, can work, when a 20-year-old male student at a Pretoria school called in to ask for help.

According to Loren the student told her that a performance of the NRGF play at his school "made him realise that he needs to deal with his problem before it gets worse."

The student told her that he sold sweets at school to earn some extra income, but he was hooked on gambling with dice, card

games and "umChina", using the capital he earned from his sales. Even worse, "he is ... also stealing from his parents. Even though he is not stealing a lot of money, he still feels bad about it."

He "has known for a long time that he has a problem," Loren says, "because his school work started deteriorating, and he is repeating Grade 11 because of his gambling." He has realised that he needs treatment, not just for his own problem but to make it possible to "also help his friends who are in the same situation as him.

"He is saying that they get involved in fights, and he thinks it's not worth it, risking one's life for fifty cents (or) one rand."

The student's brave decision to confront his personal demons and possibly help others brought its reward right away when Loren referred him to one of the NRGF's expert counsellors to guide and support him in his struggle.

It's not a happy ending yet, of course. But we can fairly say that the stout-hearted student has made a good start on his journey.

*The new presentation format is making an impact on learners, judging by the number of callers in this age group to the problem gambling counselling line.*



## MAKING MONEY SENSE

**PEOPLE WHO GET INTO TROUBLE WITH GAMBLING DO SO BECAUSE THEY USUALLY SPEND MORE MONEY THAN THEY CAN AFFORD, NOT JUST ON GAMBLING, BUT ON ALL EXPENDITURE.**

This is why the NRGF and the Gauteng Gambling Board have collaborated with Money Sense, an independent, confidential, personal finance support programme, that was launched in 2002 to assist individuals in improving their financial lifestyle.

This partnership is based on the premise that gambling should be something for which people budget in the same way as for other forms of entertainment.

It uses the financial position of an individual as a base to provide practical financial and debt management skills training. This is achieved by combining the experience and personal financial knowledge of the founders of Money Sense with the latest computer technology.

The education process starts with the individual providing honest input on what he/she earns and how this is spent each month. The report provides an individual with the opportunity to understand the implications of that financial lifestyle.

Money Sense provides a personalised report with practical information and tips to help them save money, balance spending and make informed financial decisions. This assessment compares spending to South African norms and provides useful practical money management information and tips. The personalised Financial Health Rating often serves as a reality check.

There is regular communication with the employees participating in the Money Sense programme via the Money Brief newsletter and the call centre which is manned by well-qualified staff. Employees may contact the call centre during office hours or email questions.

"The success of this programme is based on its simplicity and the fact that the service is confidential and independent," says Paul Slot.

Money Sense does not sell or promote any product or service. Its sole purpose is to educate and inform individuals on financial and debt management skills, which, over time, will help them to balance and improve their financial position.

"Experience has shown that personal financial skills training is a process, and not an event," Slot said. "Gambling is entertainment; it is not a way to get rich quickly, or to supplement one's income, or to pay off debts."

# COMPULSIVE GAMBLING INTERVENTIONS:

## POINTS TO REMEMBER – Tracy Helps

Help the problem gambler if you can – but always remember that the client is actually his or her family. That was one of the points Tracy Helps spelled out in a paper on the nuances of the delicate art of intervention which was presented at the treatment professionals' conference in October 2006. Other points she made were:



### What is an intervention?

An intervention is the action taken by family, friends, employers or other concerned persons to actively assist someone to change unacceptable gambling-related behaviour.

Sometimes, when a person engages in self-destructive behaviour but will not accept help, concerned others take advice and guidance from a mental health professional and then address the person in a clear, respectful but firm manner.

The interventionist encroaches on the gambler's lifestyle with the help of family and friends, and confronts him/her with the reality of the compulsion and its consequences.

### Goals of an intervention

The gambler's initial goal is to come out of denial, and then make a commitment to get help. For the gambler's family it is to become a cohesive, educated and focussed group.

### Why is an intervention justified?

There are several justifications for an intervention, which is the most supportive and powerful method for opening up people to accept assistance.

Denial is so effective that compulsive gamblers are often unable to comprehend the level of their self-destruction, and are therefore not in a position to make a real choice while they are stuck in their compulsion. Giving them access to help lets them make this choice; and if they continue to gamble after treatment, they are better informed at least.

Compulsive gambling is a progressive condition which will continue to escalate without an intervention. Addiction of any sort is a selfish process, and compulsive gamblers are unlikely to be able to relate to the damage they are causing to the people around them.



The desperation caused by the consequences of gambling encourage gamblers to hold on to the fantasy that one more win will relieve them of all the pressure, and they will pursue this goal at great cost to themselves and others.

Experience with other addictions proves motivation is not a prerequisite for successful treatment. Most addicts are forced into treatment by physical, emotional, social or legal consequences. An intervention can take the place of this type of consequence.

### When is a family intervention recommended?

A family intervention is appropriate whenever a gambler needs help but refuses to accept it.

### Will an intervention be successful?

Interventions can succeed because the gamblers are lovingly forced to look at how their addictive behaviour has hurt their nearest, but obviously there is no guarantee that an intervention will be successful. However, it does give the gambler the opportunity to engage with the help which is available. Even if an intervention fails, the gamblers learn that help is available and that they can stop gambling if they try, and they have been shown how to access that help.

In an intervention, the family is treated in much the same way as the gambler concerned, so that they are put in a position where they can make choices about their own lives.

### Guidelines for interventions

There are a number of steps in the process of intervention:

#### *Educating the family and breaking its own denial*

The gambler's family must be educated about compulsive gambling. Family denial is as real and as powerful as the gambler's, and

it will continue to hope for spontaneous remission. Even though they have asked for help, the professional must still break down their denial so that they can use the information to recognise their loved one's problem, and then guide them to the realisation that spontaneous remission is unlikely to occur.

### Gathering collateral information

Once the family has accepted that its loved one is a compulsive gambler its members must collect collateral information from as many people in the person's life as possible – preferably in written form, so that it can be presented to the gambler and later to the treatment professional.

This information must spell out the effect that the gambler is having on the people involved and must be specific and direct. At the same time emotional blackmail is not appropriate and must be avoided, because the idea is to make it clear to the gambler what the consequences of the gambling are.

### Deciding if an intervention is appropriate

Families can be as dishonest as the gamblers, so it is important that the professional review the collateral information and decide if an intervention is appropriate. Then the family must decide; the professional must not direct its members into intervening.

They do have other choices; they may choose to remove themselves from the situation, or simply live with the problem. But it must be their choice, and they need to make it with their own needs in mind as much as those of the gambler.

### Supporting the family in making the decision to make an intervention

At first the family members may be apprehensive and confused, and are likely to be angry that they have to be involved in the process at all, fearing that the gambler will retaliate in a hurtful way or that the process will fail, and feeling general sadness that it is happening to a person they love. The professional needs to support and process these feelings in order to equip the family members to follow through with the intervention and ensuring that the family and gambler can access treatment.

# INTERNET PROBLEM GAMBLING:

## WHAT IS BEING DONE – Joseph Kelly

With the introduction of legal internet gambling on the cards for South Africa, we publish an expert survey on the situation world-wide, specially written for NRG News by three acknowledged international experts on online gambling.

They are Alex Igelman, a prominent attorney whose practice deals only with gambling and entertainment matters; Professor Joseph Kelly, Professor of Business Law at the State University of New York at Buffalo; and Rick Smith, executive director of the Interactive Gaming Council.

There are about 85 jurisdictions that have legislated internet gambling. Until recently Antigua and Barbuda hosted more operators than any other jurisdiction, followed by Costa Rica, Kahnawake Mohawk (Quebec), Curacao, Malta, Gibraltar and the United Kingdom (betting only).

Comprehensive regulatory regimes for internet gambling have been implemented in Antigua, Kahnawake (First Nations in Quebec), Alderney, the Isle of Man, Gibraltar, Malta, the Philippines and Australian States. Other jurisdictions such as Costa Rica have decided to grant business licenses to internet gaming companies but not require the licensees to demonstrate suitability and solvency.

Many other jurisdictions such as St. Kitts, Belize and Dominica have regulations, but they are not as comprehensive as those of Antigua or Kahnawake. Both the United Kingdom, pursuant to the Gambling Act of 2005, and the US Virgin Islands, have passed legislation allowing internet gaming licensing, with contrasting outcomes.

Other jurisdictions, such as Sweden and France, have enacted legislation which allows only government-sanctioned monopolies to operate legal internet gaming, with Italy, the Netherlands and provinces in Germany continuing to protect local monopolies.

On 13 October 2006 the United States enacted anti-internet gambling legislation (the Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act, 2005) by attaching the measure to an unrelated port-security law. The legislation, which passed without being reviewed by the US Congress, is something out of the days of the Supreme Soviet or the worst aspects of the apartheid regime.

The matter is further complicated by Antigua's action against the United States before the World Trade Organisation, which was successful on most major arguments but not yet in the final conclusion as the process drags towards its finality. The United States Department of Justice has sent a threatening letter to the US Virgin Islands, dissuading them

from licensing internet gambling operators despite having legislation in place.

Concerning problem gambling, there are two trade organisations that require members to take measures to minimise problem gambling and under-age gambling. The Interactive Gaming Council (IGC), located in Vancouver, Canada and eCOGRA, located in London, are both trade organisations that insist gambling members adhere to high standards of suitability and player protection. Both require gambling operators to take affirmative steps to minimise both compulsive and under-age gambling.

The IGC's Code of Conduct requires that members make every effort to limit access by minors, including but not limited to the use of age/identity verification tools, and also take steps to identify and minimise the effects of compulsive/problem gambling.

Specific documents of relevance include the recently revamped Responsible Gambling Guidelines and Helping Hand programme, as well as the Advertising Code of Practice (<http://www.igcouncil.org>). Measures include implementing bet limits (individual bet and cumulative losses), self-exclusions, account information and reference and dispute links.

The IGC has worked with the Internet Content Rating Association to encourage members to include coding to assist parents with blocking minors from accessing gambling sites. It also works co-operatively with international responsible gambling bodies to further develop initiatives in this area.

One example is support for the efforts of gamAid, a UK company whose problem gambling service is the first to operate in the context of a borderless industry. eCOGRA states that barring under-age aspirant players and protecting addicted gamblers from harming themselves financially is at the centre of their latest initiative, to implement specific in-house policies and a comprehensive range of independently enforced requirements designed in collaboration with the G4 responsible gambling group.



These initiatives are reflected by the commitment of the eCOGRA "Play It Safe" operators, who have included specific responsible gaming measures, aids and advice on their sites, and have appointed staff to look after this critically important operational requirement.

Trained staff will learn how to identify problem gamblers using Brief Intervention Techniques (BIT) and role-playing exercises, the aim being to intervene and deter these situations from arising (<http://www.ecogra.cor/news>). eCOGRA, has held two training sessions (Cape Town and London) to educate members on how to reduce under-age and problem gambling.

The British Government legalised remote gambling with the Gambling Act of 2005, and has indicated it will require licensees to take measures to minimise under-age and problem gambling. In fact, the draft Licence Conditions and Codes of Practice of the Gambling Commission would mandate that licensees:

- Provide clear information about responsible gambling and the help available to problem gamblers
- Train employees about possible problem gambling and how to identify it
- Make it possible for customers to exclude themselves, through customer services or automated mechanisms on websites
- Should make customers aware of how much time and money they have spent on their sites.

Furthermore, on 31 October 2006 the UK took the initiative of hosting a 32-nation conference (including France, Germany, Spain, Italy and South Africa) to agree to an international code of principles for internet gambling.

The preliminary draft, which will be revised by respective jurisdictions, stated that the nations concerned agreed that "remote gambling should not be a source of crime", that it should be fair to the consumer and that the "protection of children and vulnerable people" should be a key objective.

# KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK

Keep it up. That's the message for the NRGP from Leigh Gardner, an American academic and socio-economic researcher whose interests run from modern casinos owned by Native Americans to using mediaeval history to understand the emergence of the state.

She has done a lot of things in a short time, and done them very well. Raised mainly in Albuquerque, New Mexico, she finished high school in Virginia and then went on to New York University, where she not only obtained a BA (summa cum laude) in research methods and public policy but also received a Certificate of Achievement Award, given to the female student with the highest grade point average in the graduating class.

After this Leigh went on to earn an M.Phil (with distinction) in economic and social history from Oxford University, and is currently a Clarendon Scholar at Oxford's Jesus College, working on a doctorate in economic and social history, which she hopes to finish in 2009.

Leigh is not just a repository of book knowledge, however. Since 2000 she has undertaken considerable research and field work, most of it to do with Native American tribes, ranging from their early history to contemporary policy issues and economic development, with special emphasis on gambling facilities on tribal reservations.

Among other things she was a research assistant at the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, housed within Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, where she worked on a national study of the social and economic impacts of casinos on Native American reservations.

Prior to this, as a research assistant at the National Indian Gaming Association, a 184-member trade association representing Native American tribes engaged in commercial gambling, she prepared lobbying research material included in testimony to the US Congress.

In this capacity, she also assisted in acquiring and organising the country's foremost collection of academic data relating to Native American gambling, leading to the

compilation of the first and most comprehensive guidebook to appear so far.

In between all this she published considerable research material, mainly on gambling on Native American reservations in the USA, but also went back in time to make presentations at Oxford on a vastly different topic: mediaeval government.

Her contact with the NRGP introduced her to a facet of the gambling industry which was vastly different from the US system, yet presented certain socio-economic similarities.

In addition to what might be called European-style casinos, the US also has many others which are run on the reservations belonging to Native American tribes scattered over the country, from remote locations in outlying areas to densely populated urban and peri-urban areas (two of the largest, the Mohegan Sun and Foxwoods casinos, belonging respectively to the Mohegan and Mashantucket Pequot tribes, are located between Boston and New York).

Under US law Native American tribes recognised as governmental entities by the federal government are entitled to operate casinos for the purposes of economic development on the reservations concerned. These casinos are owned and operated by tribal governments, and their revenue is allocated towards the provision of

government services such as education and infrastructure.

When these needs have been fulfilled, there is scope for per capita distribution of gambling revenues to tribal members within the Native American Gaming Regulatory Act (the federal legislation regulating Native American gambling).

"Native American casinos serve different needs to commercial casinos," Leigh says. "Generating revenue is one aim, but another is often to generate jobs, especially for reservations in remote areas, where other opportunities for employment are sorely lacking. The result is that people are moving back to reservations they had to leave to find work."

Given the fact that Native American reservations often have high levels of poverty, do local people spend their eating money on gambling? Not really, Leigh says. "Many reservations are heavily checkerboarded, and the casinos attract money from the surrounding areas." Many are located near interstate highways, and have become attractions which draw tourists from other parts of the US and even from abroad.

Leigh was enthusiastic about the NRGP after visiting its head office and treatment centre at Kenilworth, describing it as "a fantastic programme".

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*From left to right: Loren Jordaan (NRGP operations and training manager), Leigh Gardner and Lucille Booth (NRGP bookkeeper).*



## PROBLEM GAMBLING LINE COUNSELLORS COME OUT TOPS!



**Contrary to popular belief, counselling is not merely 'talking to people about their problems'. It takes patience and a very specific skill to counsel a person effectively and to motivate them to do something about their problem.**

The 'art' of telephone counselling is even more difficult than face-to-face counselling because the counsellor only has the auditory sense to rely on, as opposed to eye contact, facial expressions and body language in face-to-face counselling.

Often the telephone counsellor is the first port of call after a client (gambler or family member/significant other) has made the decision to ask for help or at least find out what help is available for his particular problem. The manner in which this first contact is handled by the counsellor and perceived by the client, may decide whether the caller is going to stay on the line and be referred or put the phone down never to call or ask for any help in any form whatsoever again.

To ensure that problem gambling counsellors meet the requirements of the skilled counsellor, and that they are dealing with the caller in a professional manner as they are trained and supervised to do, they are required to role play with each other regularly as well as make test calls to each other and with their trainer/supervisor.

"This year we decided to rise to the challenge and to invite Life Line trained counsellors to test our counsellors," said co-ordinator Barbara van der Spuy. "Our counsellors requested that they only be informed that this was a test call at the end of the call. Their reasoning was that if they did not know that they were being assessed, they would be less nervous and their skills could be more authentically tested."

Six Life Line counsellors assessed the nine problem gambling line counsellors during September/October. Skills tested included the following:

- tone of voice (approachability of counsellor)
- questioning and listening skills
- reflection of content
- ability to touch on underlying issues
- the ability to motivate a client/family member/significant other to go for counselling without giving advice.
- the ability to explain the NRG service in a clear and understandable manner to the caller.

The assessors were asked to give an overall mark starting with 'poor', 'fair', 'good', 'very good' and ending with 'excellent'. The norm when assessing counsellors often is that a few counsellors will be graded as fair, most people will be graded as good, with a few exceptions graded as very good. The counsellors rose to the occasion with three scoring a 'good' five scoring a 'very good' and one scoring the ever elusive 'excellent'.

## MESSAGE TO THE NRG: KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK - *continued from page 6*

Its major strong point, she said, was the close co-ordination between regional and national organisations, both statutory and non-statutory, and different areas of the industry itself. By contrast, she added, in the USA the various sectors of the gambling industry mostly tended to operate independently of one another.

Another strong point, she said, was data collection and research: "That's something a lot of organisations (in the US) often don't do, but it's the only way of keeping track of change over time. And the on-going research effort, and also the depth of the research, is more than I've seen elsewhere.

"One of our frustrations when we undertook the national study of Native American gaming was the incredible difficulty we had getting

data – people just didn't collect it, and a lot of what existed was fragmented."

Leigh mentioned things to watch out for: "Both countries should direct more resources towards research on informal gambling, although it's very difficult. But you have to try to figure out what is going on and what to do about it, and efforts should be made to continue the thorough and objective research being done in South Africa.

"Most researchers in the US tend strongly to one side or the other of the political debates surrounding gambling. Research here doesn't seem to have the same politicisation. The data and figures are there, which makes it much easier to know if problems are arising and to address them."