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Crown Casino targeting seniors

By Richard Willingham

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CROWN Casino is luring senior citizens and cash-strapped community clubs to the casino by offering rebates, exposing vulnerable people to problem gambling, gambling researcher Professor Linda Hancock says.

Professor Hancock, from Deakin University, will today release her book *Regulatory Failure: The Case of Crown Casino*, in which she argues that the regulation of the casino is failing people because of "weak sanctions" on the irresponsible service of alcohol and on those failing to implement the Responsible Gambling Code of Conduct.

In the book, Professor Hancock said seniors and people from non-English-speaking backgrounds were being targeted by Crown's "Red Carpet Program", which was promoted to social clubs as an outing. Bus packages are available for groups and clubs can earn a rebate but only if they stay for at least four hours, or six for a non-gambling function.

Patrons are given gambling vouchers, as well as lunch coupons, upon arrival.

Visitors on tours are also signed up to loyalty programs, which exposes them to marketing for other gambling products.

In her book, Professor Hancock quotes a survey of 204 participants on six Crown bus packages from northern suburbs social clubs, which found evidence of "at-risk" gambling behaviours with 42.9 per cent spending more than they had planned and 23.7 per cent saying they planned to return to the casino to win back money.

The Age contacted Crown Casino's media department but received no reply by deadline.

