

# Should kids bet on the Cup?

by [Jayne Kearney](#)

At the risk of being kicked out of the country I am going to ask whose kids had a little flutter on the Melbourne Cup today?



Kids should just stick to the hat parade on Cup day. Pic by Rebecca Michael

I heard a radio announcer talking about her spend for the day - which was just fine - until she tacked on at the end, "and the kids have a little \$10 bet each."

Okay – let's forget for a minute that it is illegal for persons under 18 to gamble and think just a bit about the oft documented impact of problem gambling on Australian society. \$18 billion a year in losses and seven people affected by each person with a gambling problem.

That's a lot of Aussies who would probably much rather the nation didn't stop for a horse race.

I don't have a particular problem with the Melbourne Cup. It's just not a big deal to me.

Not that I wasn't given an opportunity to love it.

I remember when I was a kid how we used to gather around the school's only television set, clasping our sweep tickets in our sweaty post-lunchtime hands. One year I recall the winner and place getters of the sweep receiving, not only a fistful of coins, but also a beautifully crafted (cardboard) medal designating them as a 'winner'. Oh, the euphoria for those lucky kids. And the yearning from the rest of us.

But I didn't think that still went on - what with wowsers like me around. Until my eight year old daughter mentioned that her class was having a sweep and the winner would get a prize. I looked at her shining eyes and felt my stomach drop.

At this point I probably should offer that I have watched a close family member destroy their life through problem gambling, so my wowsersism comes from a fairly dark place.

I just know that if a Melbourne Cup sweep win shows one of my kids that gambling can be a rush then it's one more obstacle I have to overcome as I try to protect them from a life of 'chasing' that high.