



COMMUNITY WAIKATO

"Supporting strong communities"

Hei tautoko kia tuu pakari ai ngaa haapori

Submission to the **Commerce Select Committee**

Gambling (Gambling Harm Reduction) Amendment Bill

Community Waikato is a Charitable Trust which provides capacity strengthening services to over 600 community and social service organisations in the Waikato region. We support organisations that are working at the coal face in their communities trying to minimise the massive impact of problem gambling. '40% of the income from Pokie machines comes from problem gamblers' (Problem Gambling Foundation 2010)

Community Waikato supports this bill and believes it will make significant progress towards better regulation of the gambling industry.

- We support giving local communities, through their Councils, the power to cut the number of Pokie machines in their area or eliminate them altogether. Our local communities experience first hand the impact of Pokie machines and need to have greater control over the number and nature of gambling outlets that are acceptable in their backyard.
- We support raising the minimum amount of money available for community groups from 37.12% to 80% It will have a timely impact on the ability of the community sector to retain much needed services at a time when needs are growing but funding is getting increasingly difficult to access. Community organisations are working diligently to minimise the huge social costs on our communities but these same community organisations are increasingly forced to support their local communities on the smell of an oily rag. This change will more than double the current amount of community funding made available from gambling machines, while taking concrete steps to reduce harm from problem gambling.
- We strongly support the proposal to replace the current Pokie Trust structure with local distribution committees similar to those already set up for COGS. This is a tried and tested system for transparent delivery of funds back to local communities. It has accountability back to its communities and as a result has a high level of credibility. This is in direct contrast to the lack of confidence and credibility attributed to Pokie Trusts, which in the main
 - do not engage with their communities
 - have well documented non compliance issues, and
 - Struggle with being seen to make any effort to be accountable in any meaningful way.
- It is difficult for us to understand the rationale behind providing Pokie money to be used to provide stake money for horse racing. We acknowledge that this has been historically included as a charitable purpose but we now have the opportunity to correct this and put the proceeds of gambling back where it is most needed; while at the same time we continue to work on reducing the level of harm caused by the gambling industry.
- Finally we support the introduction of player tracking and pre commit cards which will impact on the amount of money lost and time spent on Pokie machines. This will go some way to balance the efforts put into seducing players into spending more time and money on machines by the gambling industry and the subsequent downstream effects on families and communities.

- We acknowledge that there are some groups in our sector who don't feel able to speak in favour of the bill because of worry that they will put themselves at risk of losing funding from Pokie Trusts if the bill is unsuccessful.

We are confident that the changes put forward by the Bill will have a positive impact on our communities because there will be more individual support for problem gamblers, more funds to distribute locally, local accountability and local decision making about who gets funding and local input into where pokies are placed in the community.

We wish to speak to our submission if the select committee hears submissions in the central North Island. We do not have funds to enable us to travel to Wellington.

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