



**National Council of  
Women of New Zealand**

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Wahine O Aotearoa

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**Submission to the Government Administration Select Committee  
on the Responsible Gambling Bill**

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella organisation representing 43 nationally organised societies. It has 35 branches spread throughout the country to which women from some 150 societies are affiliated. Its purpose is to work for the well being of women, families and society through research, discussion and action. It also represents a number of individual women.

The submission has been prepared by the members of the Social Issues Standing Committee from NCWNZ policy and from comments received from members throughout the country.

NCWNZ has opposed the proliferation of new forms of gaming and the accessibility of gaming venues through many resolutions dating back to 1902. The social impacts caused by the expansion of gambling are of major concern. We suggest that careful impact studies similar to that done in Bendigo, Australia be conducted in New Zealand cities and regions to better assess just what the effect the impacts will have. Government should recognise that community consultation can be misrepresented by the huge resources that the proponents of gaming have at their disposal. We believe it is important to implement the changes that are proposed in this Bill. Figures published in the Herald 21 March 2002, suggest gambling turnover was measured in New Zealand at \$1 billion in 1991 and \$9.8 billion last year. We submit, therefore, that as well as legislation, educational tools and treatment programmes for the victims of gambling are urgently needed, to counter the damage that gambling addiction causes.

**We wish to make the following comments**

**Part 1 – Clause 2**

In recent years the number of gaming machines (pokies) has increased alarmingly. NCWNZ supports this clause which puts limits on the number of gaming machines that may be operated at any one venue. We also support Local Government being encouraged to develop a policy setting out venues for gaming machines in their districts. This would require policing/monitoring to a high level, to be paid for by the licensee. Under good town planning principles, clusters of gaming premises should not become 'gaming ghettos'.

**Part 2 Gambling**

**Clauses 77/78**

We support the Government's proposal to introduce electronic monitoring and stricter controls over non-casino gaming machines.

**Clauses 174/175/176**

It is very important that there are regulations in place when there are applicants for a licensed promoter's licence to enable better control of licensed premises.





### **Part 3 – Clause 247**

Distribution of money for Community purposes needs to be from an independent national body. Membership should include representatives of charitable and community organisations which benefit from the profit distribution. There should be regional sub-committees working as part of the National body in order that local needs, understood by local people, be brought before the National body.

### **Part 4 – Clauses 271-276**

At present children and adolescents can legally play pokie machines as there is no age limit. It is vital that the proposed law change which would put an eighteen year old age bar on pokie machines be implemented as soon as possible. Restrictions on youth gambling have been poorly policed. Although it is illegal to sell or give anyone under 16 years a scratchie ticket there has not been one single prosecution.

#### **Sub-part 4 – Sources of compliance costs**

A problem gambling levy (collected monthly by the Inland Revenue Department) to fund prevention and treatment programmes is very desirable.

The increasing numbers of people addicted to gambling must be of major concern. Those on lower incomes gamble disproportionately more, often with disastrous results for their families. Gambling affects family life, finances, communication and health. The results can be physical, mental, and emotional.

It is not as easy to treat this addiction as the people promoting gambling would have us think. Recently a good deal of crime (especially in the financial sector) has been the result of the difficulties gamblers have got themselves into, so therefore the levy needs to reflect the cost of prevention and treatment programmes.

The concern relating to advertising the 'real odds' is the one area that does not appear to have been addressed in any detail in this Bill. Advertisements should not state or imply a promise of winning. The advertisement should be required to state the actual possibility of winning even if it is in the form of "you may be the one in a million". We view with great concern the advertisements which show gambling as a game full of joy and excitement.

### **Conclusion**

NCWNZ retains the same concerns that have already been expressed in reviewing the several gaming documents issued since 1995. These are: the greatly increased expenditure on gaming, the damage to communities and individuals' lives, the need to give communities a say in decisions about gaming in their area, the importance of advertising the 'real odds', and the need for an overall regulatory structure. It is pleasing that this Bill under discussion addresses some of the concerns.

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