



Casinos

Now – the current regime

Under the Casino Control Act 1990, anyone can apply for a licence to:

- Set up new casino premises
- Operate a casino.

The ability to seek a premises licence has been temporarily suspended until 16 October 2003 by a statutory moratorium that started in October 1997.

The Casino Control Authority is responsible for considering casino licence applications, decisions to suspend or cancel licences, and setting casino licence conditions.

In considering applications for casino licences, the Casino Control Authority is not required to hear or consider submissions from community groups or the results of community polls. It is also required to give more weight to the economic impacts of the proposed casino than it is to the social impacts.

The Responsible Gambling Bill

The current licence holders (operators and premises licence holders) will retain their licences.

The Bill carries over many of the provisions in the Casino Control Act. However, the key differences are as follows.

Licensing

No new casino **venue** licence applications will be considered. Casino **venue** licences may be renewed (as permitted under the current Act) at the end of the current licence period.

The licence renewal process will:

- Provide for greater community participation at licence hearings and through community polls
- Require the applicants to show how the proposed licence renewal will benefit the local and regional communities around the casino and New Zealand generally.

These provisions will ensure that communities have a say in the continuation of casinos in their area and that social and economic impacts are considered equally.

Anyone will be able to seek a casino operator's licence. However, any new operator will be required to operate in existing casino premises.

Licence conditions

The current licence conditions will continue to apply to the existing casinos.

The Secretary for Internal Affairs will be responsible for setting new licence conditions and for making amendments to current conditions. A significant change is that the Secretary will be permitted, in liaison with licence holders, to amend the conditions attached to each licence. At present a licence condition can be amended only if the licence holder seeks a change.

Existing casinos will not be permitted to increase the size of their gambling operation and will not be permitted to provide Internet gambling.

The TAB may negotiate with casino operators to operate TAB outlets in casino premises.

Who will regulate casinos?

Because no more casino premises may be licensed, there is no need to have a full time independent body such as the Casino Control Authority. The Authority will therefore be dissolved.

The Secretary for Internal Affairs will take over the day-to-day regulatory activities of the Casino Control Authority such as setting operating standards, procedures and licence conditions.

A new independent Gambling Commission will be established to among other things, consider casino operator licence applications and hear appeals on a decision by the Secretary to suspend or cancel a certificate of approval for a casino employee.

Branding casinos

Non-casino sites (for example gaming machine venues) will **not** be permitted to advertise themselves as casinos or give the impression they are casinos. This will come into effect three years after the Act receives its Royal assent.

Associated persons

The Secretary for Internal Affairs must approve associated persons (anyone with a significant influence in the operation and management of a casino). Anyone who is currently an associated person will still be approved.

Where a person comes to have a significant influence in the operation and management of a casino without the knowledge of the licence holder (eg, a major share transaction), the licence holder must inform the Secretary of the transaction as soon as the licence holder knows about it. At that point the Secretary must investigate the suitability of the person.

Where the Secretary refuses to approve any associated person, the person may appeal the decision to the Gambling Commission.

Facts and figures

Casinos in New Zealand

Five casinos are currently operating in New Zealand:

- Sky City (Auckland)
- Christchurch
- Dunedin
- Sky Alpine (Queenstown)
- Steamer Wharf (Queenstown)

Riverside Casino (Hamilton) is due to open late in 2002.

Expenditure on casino gambling (turnover minus prizes) for year ended 30 June 2001: \$369 M

Number of machines and games in casinos (January 2002)

Table games	169
Gaming machines	2,240