



Problem Gambling

Now – the current regime

There are few statutory measures directly aimed at preventing or minimising harm associated with gambling.

No Government agency has direct responsibility for the prevention and treatment of problem gambling.

Problem gambling services are purchased by the Problem Gambling Committee, which comprises representatives of the gaming sector and problem gambling service providers.

Services are funded via a levy on non-casino gaming machine operators and voluntary contributions from casinos, the Lottery Grants Board and the TAB.

There is no specific prohibition on remote interactive gambling (e.g. gambling on the Internet). Although not many New Zealanders gamble over the Internet at present, there are some concerns about the growth of remote interactive gambling and its problem gambling potential.

There are only three age limits placed on gambling in New Zealand: 20 for casinos, 18 for race and sports betting, and 16 for Instant Kiwi. There are concerns about the absence of an age limit for non-casino gaming machines.

The Responsible Gambling Bill

Integrated problem gambling strategy

The Ministry of Health will be responsible for problem gambling services, including treatment services, public health services, research and evaluation. (Cabinet will shortly decide when the Ministry of Health will assume this responsibility.)

The Department of Internal Affairs will implement regulatory measures to prevent and minimise the harm caused by gambling, as outlined below.

Problem gambling levy

All costs of problem gambling services incurred by the government will be recovered from the gambling sector by a problem gambling levy on player expenditure, to be collected by the Inland Revenue Department.

The problem gambling levy will be fixed each year.

The levy will be imposed initially on gambling in the following sub-sectors: casinos, non-casino gaming machines in pubs and clubs, etc, racing (including the TAB and racing clubs), and the Lotteries Commission.

The amount that each gambling sub-sector will be required to pay will be based on two criteria: the level of harm caused by each sub-sector (determined by what people seeking help consider is the primary cause of their problem); and the proportion of total player expenditure in each sub-sector.

Harm minimisation measures

The Bill includes powers to make regulations on a range of harm minimisation issues including:

- The number of gaming machines at certain sites

- Stake and prize limits for gaming machines
- Admission to and exclusion from gaming machine venues
- Requirements for design, layout and furnishings of venues
- Intensity of gambling that may be conducted
- Information or messages provided to patrons
- Codes for responsible advertising
- Problem gambling awareness training for employees
- Systems or processes ancillary to the gambling activity.

Other problem gambling provisions in the Bill

An operator licensing system that is related, among other things, to the risk of problem gambling.

A specific prohibition on the provision of remote interactive gambling in New Zealand. The only provider permitted to provide remote interactive gambling is the TAB, which will continue to be restricted to “real life” race and sport betting.

Age limits: 20 years for gambling in casinos; 18 years for class 4 gambling, including gambling on non-casino gaming machines; 18 years for Instant Kiwi. (The Racing Act already contains an age limit of 18 years for race and sports betting).

Requirements on certain gambling operators to identify problem gamblers and to issue exclusion orders on known problem gamblers.

Powers for the Secretary for Internal Affairs to set standards for the design, manufacture and performance of gambling equipment.

Facts and figures

Prevalence of problem gambling

Based on a study of 6,452 people in 1999, social science researchers Abbott and Volberg estimated that 58,000 to 107,700 (2.1% to 3.9%) of New Zealanders aged 18 and over have had a gambling problem at some time in their lives. This figure is almost certainly conservative, for a variety of reasons.

Problem gambling is defined as “all the patterns of gambling behaviour that compromise, disrupt or damage personal, family or vocational pursuits”.

Growth in number of problem gamblers seeking help, 1997-2000

	1997	2000
New telephone helpline clients	2,033	3,690
New personal counselling clients	890	1,942

Statistics on new problem gambling personal counselling clients in 2000 show that the primary source of their problems are:

Non-casino gaming machines	68.4% of clients
Casino gaming machines	12.5%
Race betting	10.6%

Public attitudes to problem gambling (Department of Internal Affairs 2000)

- 87% of New Zealanders surveyed agreed that “There is a problem in NZ with people being heavily involved in gambling”.
- 98% agreed that “There should be special help and support available to people who want to give up gambling”.
- 79% said that the gaming industry should provide money through a tax or levy to help people give up gambling.
- 53% identified “limiting the harm gambling can cause people” as one of the top two factors that should guide gaming legislation.