

28 February 2022

Waitaki District Council

20 Thames Street

Oamaru 9444

**Re: Submission for Waitaki Council's Class 4 Gambling Venue and TAB Venues Policy Review 2022**

Asian Family Services (AFS) has been providing support to Asian communities living in Aotearoa New Zealand since 1998. Our organisation is a charitable trust and is New Zealand's only service provider for people of Asian backgrounds who are affected by mental health issues and gambling harm. Our gambling harm minimisation services are delivered under a Ministry of Health contract and funded from the gambling levy. Our service operates in three areas: the Asian Helpline, clinical intervention, and public health work.

AFS supports the sinking lid policy options outlined in the statement of proposal. For an effective policy that better protects the health and wellbeing of the community, we submit that Option 2 (sinking lid policy with no new venue licenses) and Option 3 (sinking lid policy with no new machine licenses) should both be adopted.

We also support and endorse PGF Group's submission and the recommendations that a sinking lid policy should have the following three provisions:

- **No relocations:** If a venue with electronic gaming machines (EGMs) is forced to close or voluntarily closes, the council will not permit the EGMs to be relocated to any venue within the council area.
- **No club mergers:** There will be no club mergers under any circumstances.
- **A ban on any new venues:** No permit will be given to operate any new venue or club in the council area if that venue proposes having EGMs, including TAB venues.

## Asian Population in Waitaki

According to 2018 Census data, the Asian population in the Waitaki District ranked 4<sup>th</sup> among other districts in Canterbury.

**Table 1: Asian population ranking in main Canterbury regions**

Rank	Area	Total Population	Percentage of Asians	Asian Population
1	Christchurch	369,006	14.9%	54,982
2	Ashburton	33,423	7.4%	2,473
3	Selwyn	60,561	6.4%	3876
4	Waitaki	22,308	5.3%	1,182
5	Waimate	7,815	5%	391
6	Timaru	46,296	4.4%	2,037
7	Kaikoura	3,912	4.1%	160
8	Hurunui	12,558	3.9%	490
9	Waimakariri	59,502	2.9%	1,726
10	Mackenzie	1,347	2%	27

(Data resource: Stats NZ, <https://www.stats.govt.nz/tools/2018-census-place-summaries>)

The table below also shows that the Asian population in Waitaki has grown approximately 1.75% at every Census cycle.

**Table 2: Ethnic groups for people in Waitaki District, 2006, 2013, and 2018 Census**

	2006 (%)	2013 (%)	2018 (%)
Asian population	1.8	3.1	5.3

(Data resource: Stats NZ, <https://www.stats.govt.nz/tools/2018-census-place-summaries/waitaki-district>)

As the Asian population in Waitaki is growing steadily, we recommend that the Council consider Asian's voices at the policy level and adopt a sinking lid policy to protect Asian people from gambling harm.

## **Asian Gambling Behaviour**

Sobrun-Maharaj, Rossen, and Wong (2012) identified that one of the contributing factors for mental health issues for Asian peoples is problem gambling.

Analysis of data from the Health and Lifestyles Survey over several years shows that, after adjusting for a range of socio-economic factors and gambling predictors, when compared to European/Other, Asian people's risk for individual gambling harm was 9.5 times higher. Furthermore, those who engaged in Class 4 gambling were more than twice as likely to be at risk of some level of gambling-related harm compared to other gamblers.

Over the past 12 months, AFS provided 4664 counseling sessions to more than 1,447 gambling clients around Aotearoa. Our problem-gambling clients were afflicted with co-existing issues such as suicidal ideation, financial hardship, domestic violence and severe depressive and anxiety symptoms due to problem gambling.

According to the New Zealand Asian Responsible Gambling Report (2021) conducted by AFS, 74.7% of Asians engaged in some forms of gambling activity in the last 12 months. Unfortunately, due to being either new to the country, or unfamiliar with the health system and services in New Zealand, many who experienced gambling harm did not seek early intervention. The delay in seeking help was partially due to a lack of understanding of behavioural addiction concepts. Often addiction is only understood as a substance abuse issue. The report also indicated that 78.7% of Asian gamblers identified stigma as one of the reasons that prevented them from early help-seeking.

### **The main Asian groups who are most vulnerable to the harm of pokies**

During the past 23 years, AFS has seen many Asian clients who were addicted to pokies. We particularly find that the groups below are most vulnerable to gambling harm from pokies:

- Restaurant workers (chefs, kitchen hand, barista, etc.);
- Cleaners;
- Builders/construction workers;
- Older people;
- International students;
- Work visa holders.

### **The main reasons that Asian peoples play pokies**

The most common reasons why Asian people play pokies are because:

- Low-barrier game: No English requirement, easy to go and play solo;
- Emotional escape (release stress, run away from conflict with others, etc.);
- Combatting loneliness;
- Making easy money;
- Addiction-driven playing: to win back lost money.

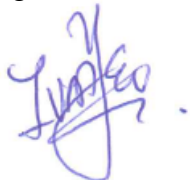
### **Sinking Lid Policy**

We often hear from our clients that, “I don’t want to be hooked on the pokie machines. I want to take back control.” However, the outcome is the exact opposite. It is important to realise that pokie machines are specifically designed to lure people to keep playing and betting more money.

An increase in pokie machines and venues will expose Asian people, migrants and the refugee community to more harm from Class 4 gambling. We support the Council in adopting a sinking lid policy with no relocations or venue mergers permitted.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit.

Ngā mihi nui,



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## Reference

1. Asian Family Services & Trace Research Ltd. (2021). New Zealand Asian Responsible Gambling Report 2021. Auckland, New Zealand. Asian Family Services. <https://www.asianfamilyservices.nz/resources/resource-items/new-zealand-asian-responsible-gambling-report-2021/>
2. Health Promotion Agency. (2018). 2018 New Zealand Mental Health Monitor: Questionnaire. Wellington: Health Promotion Agency.
3. Sobrun – Maharaj, A., Rossen, F., & Wong, A, S, K. (2012) The Impact of Gambling and Problem Gambling on Asian Families and Communities in New Zealand. Centre for Asian & Ethnic Minority Health Research, University of Auckland. <https://www.fmhs.auckland.ac.nz/assets/fmhs/soph/sch/cahre/docs/Final%20GAF%20report%202012.pdf>
4. Stats NZ (2018). Retrieved October 29, 2021, from <https://www.stats.govt.nz/tools/2018-census>.