

24 March 2022

Whakatāne District Council

Re: Submission for Whakatāne District Council's Class 4 Gambling Venues Policy 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.

AFS 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. The service operates in three areas: the Asian Helpline, clinical intervention, and public health work.

AFS commends the Council's consideration of a sinking lid policy and appreciate the strong gambling harm minimisation focus. A sinking lid policy is one of the best policies available to reduce gambling harm and losses from gambling. We support Section 6 of the draft policy which outlines no relocations of Class 4 venues within the Whakatāne District. However, allowing for mergers – for any reason – undermines the efficacy of a sinking lid. We strongly urge the Council to amend Section 7 (Clubs intending to merge) of the proposed policy document to not allow for club mergers .

Asian Family Services endorses and supports the submission made by PGF Group on Whakatāne District Council's Gambling Venues Policy, especially the following three recommendations:

- **No relocations:** If a venue with 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 Whakatāne District Council

In comparison to the proportion of Asian population nationwide (15.1%¹), the number of Asian residents in Whakatāne District is small (3.4%²), but it is increasing.

The table below shows that the Asian population in Whakatāne District has grown approximately 0.9% at every Census cycle.

Table 1: Asian population in Whakatāne District

Whakatāne District	2006 (%)	2013 (%)	2018 (%)
Asian population	1.6	2.4	3.4

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

The Asian population in Whakatāne District, particularly in the areas where there are pokie venues, is growing rapidly.

Table 2: Number of Asians living in the area where the pokies venues are located

Area	2013 (%)	2018(%)	Increase Rate(%)
Whakatāne Central	4.4	6.4	↑ 2
Ōhope	1.3	3.2	↑ 1.9
Edgecumbe	2.1	4.7	↑ 2.6
Matatā	2.1	4	↑ 1.9
Murupara	0.8	0.8	—

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

We recommend that the Council consider Asians' perspectives at the policy level and adopt a sinking lid policy to protect Asians from gambling-related harm.

¹ <https://www.stats.govt.nz/tools/2018-census-ethnic-group-summaries/asian>

² <https://www.stats.govt.nz/tools/2018-census-place-summaries/whakatane>

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.

Further research indicates that some aspects of Asian culture (e.g., *yin-yang* in Chinese culture) encourage Asian peoples to take greater risk on low-probability games compared to Europeans, which makes Asian peoples more susceptible to gambling harm (Dai, 2012).

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 78.9% of Asian gamblers identified stigma as one of the reasons that prevented them from early help-seeking (Appendix One).

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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References

1. Asian Family Services & Trace Research Ltd. (2021). New Zealand Asian Responsible Gambling Report 2021. Auckland, New Zealand. Asian Family Services. <https://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%20IGAF%20report%202012.pdf>.
4. Dai, Z. (2012). Delay discounting, probability discounting, reward contrast and gambling: a cross-cultural study. Unpublished PhD's thesis, University of Canterbury. https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10092/7128/thesis_fulltext.pdf;sequence=1.
5. Stats NZ (2018). Retrieved March 21,2022, from <https://www.stats.govt.nz/tools/2018-census>.

Appendix One: New Zealand Asian Responsible Gambling Report 2021

Gambling activities in the last 12 months

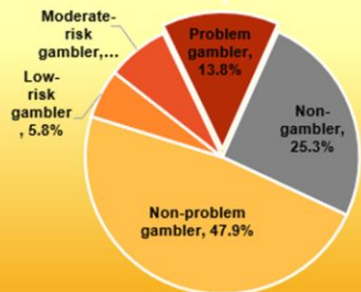
Bought lotto or instant scratch tickets	67.8%
Private games with friends for money	27.7%
Played gaming machines, or pokies	27.6%
Played Casino table games	25.2%
Placed a bet with the TAB	23.9%
Online gambling and gaming	19.7%

According to New Zealand's "The Gambling Act 2003", lotteries, prize competitions and instant games are also classified as parts of gambling. Are you aware of this classification?

Yes 53.5% No 46.5%

Problem Gambling Severity Classification within NZ's Asian Population

Approximately **71,736** NZ Asians are problem gamblers 



Distribution of Problem Gamblers (13.8%) by Ethnicity (>3%)

Indian	54.4% 
Chinese	15.5%
Filipino	8.7%

Asians perceive that Asian (76.5%) or Maori/Pacific Island (74.1%) gamblers are stigmatised by society to a slightly greater level compared to a European gambler (65.7%).

Expressions of Self-Stigma about Gambling by Asian Gamblers

Disappointed in yourself	35.5%
Guilty	27.8%
That you lack willpower/self...	27.0%
Ashamed	26.2%
Weak	21.3%

New Zealand Asian Responsible Gambling Survey

2021

Asian Family Services
Together enriching lives

Top 5 Perceived Factors for Developing Gambling Addiction

Lack of financial budgeting/plan	58.6%
Loneliness	49.9%
Job-related stress	48.0%
Certain personality characteristics: being competitive, or...	47.8%
Environmental factors, such as family or friend...	47.3%

Expressions of Public Stigma about Gamblers with Addiction

Agree	
Have unrealistic beliefs about winning at gambling	65.9%
Have an addictive personality	61.4%
Are irresponsible with money	57.9%
Are always in debt	51.8%
Are in denial about having a gambling problem	51.7%

Top 3 Channels for Seeking Gambling Support

From family or friends	51.3%
Through self-help strategies	34.9%
From a face-to-face support group	27.8%

Top 3 Help Seeking Barriers

Lack of awareness regarding the...	49.3%
Limited knowledge of available...	46.7%
Harmful gambling is hidden due to...	45.5% 

Sample Size = 705 Asians in New Zealand (4.37%), including 527 gamblers

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