

10 September 2024

Te Tari Taiwhenua, Department of Internal Affairs

Re: Submission on DIA's Proposal for Changes to Grants Data Collection Process

Asian Family Services (AFS) is a nationwide non-governmental organisation in New Zealand that provides a wide range of social and mental wellbeing services tailored to the Asian community. AFS specialises in minimising gambling harm through clinical interventions, public health, Multi Venue Exclusion (MVE), peer support, and cultural support. Our Asian helpline offers multiple languages, including Mandarin, Cantonese, Hindi, Korean, Japanese, Thai, Vietnamese, and English. Additionally, AFS offers other mental wellbeing services, such as psychological services, school-based mental wellbeing services for children and youth, and parenting programmes, available both in person and online through qualified bilingual clinicians. Our service is also at the forefront of research focused on gambling harm, mental health, and addiction issues within the Asian community.

Recommendations

AFS submits its opposition to the proposed suspension of gender and ethnicity data collection, particularly with respect to ethnicity data. We strongly recommend that the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) continue collecting ethnicity data to ensure that grants are equitably allocated to diverse communities.

Rationale

According to the Ministry of Health, Māori, Pacific, Asian and low-income New Zealanders are disproportionately affected by gambling harm. Asian individuals in New Zealand **are 9.5 times more likely** to experience harmful gambling compared to their European/Other New Zealand counterparts. Asian Family Services' 2021 Responsible Gambling Report, commissioned by Te Hīringa Hauora, found that 74.7% of Asian report having gambled in some way in the past 12 month, with 27.6% of Asian played gaming machines or pokies. There is currently no detailed data on the ethnic distribution of financial losses related to pokie machine gambling. Drawing on over 26 years of working experience, AFS has supported thousands of Asian individuals and families affected by

Asian Helpline 0800 862 342 Confidential & professional services www.asianfamilyservices.nz

First Floor, 128 Khyber Pass Road, Grafton, PO Box 8021, Symonds Street, Auckland 1150

pokie machine gambling, some of whom have lost their entire life savings, properties, and businesses. The devastating impact of pokie gambling within Asian communities highlights the critical need for ethnicity-specific data to guide informed policy decisions and resource allocation.

Under the Gambling Act 2003, societies operating pokie machines are required to return at least 40% of their profits to the community. However, as New Zealand's population grows more diverse—**Asians now constitute 17.3% of the population**, according to the 2023 Census—it becomes increasingly important for the DIA to monitor whether grants are being fairly distributed across ethnic communities. Without ethnicity data, it is impossible to ensure that funds are allocated in a way that reflects New Zealand's demographic diversity, raising concerns about the transparency and fairness of the funding model.

From an Asian community perspective, the lack of targeted support in grant distribution is troubling. Asian New Zealanders, despite their significant and growing numbers, are underrepresented in decision-making processes around the allocation of gambling proceeds. The absence of ethnicity-specific tracking exacerbates the feeling of marginalisation, particularly given the substantial contributions of Asian communities to gambling profits. There is little evidence to suggest that these communities are benefiting proportionally from the grants system. Therefore, the continued collection of detailed ethnicity data is essential to ensure equity, transparency, and accountability in the use of gambling-generated funds.

References

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