



**National Council of
Women of New Zealand**

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Wahine O Aotearoa

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**Submission to the Ministry of Health on the Consultation Document:
Preventing and Minimising Gambling Harm 2007 - 2010**

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella organization representing 38 Nationally Organized Societies. It has 31 branches throughout the country attended by representatives of those societies as well as some 150 other societies, and many individual members. The Councils function is to work for the well-being of women, the family and the community at local, national and international levels through research, study, discussion and action. NCWNZ welcomes the opportunity to make this submission on behalf of our members.

NCWNZ members are very concerned at the cost that gambling has on individuals, families and the community in New Zealand. We had thought that many of the steps that are listed to be put into practice during the 2007 – 2010 were to have been addressed by now as a consequence of the 2004 – 2010 Strategic Plan. As an example we are still hearing of people spending very large sums of money and the casino not putting into place measures such as having someone talk to the person about their rate of spending, or trespassing them so that should have stopped the gambler. We feel that review, research and evaluations are fine but they must be followed up by action.

Of the seven objectives we would like to see the following:

1. Promote healthy public policies in relation to gambling harm

Our members would recommend that the words 'and publicize' after the word promote.

2. Encourage supportive environments to minimise gambling harm

We do not think that encourage is strong enough, people need real human contact and a sense of belonging to a community and know where to receive that support.

3. Enhance the capacity of communities to define and address gambling harm

NCWNZ would like the wording for this to be described more clearly, for example 'enhance' means the human resources and funding will be available. We are also very concerned that there are so many 'Pokie' bars being set up in low decile areas and these communities often have less ability to stand up to stop this happening. It is particularly concerning that when these bars are in low cost housing areas it is much easier for women to gamble. (This is borne out in the figures regarding the greater number of women gambling.)





4. Maintain and develop accessible, responsive and effective interventions

Effective interventions need to be very well resourced and if extra funding is needed over and above that received from gambling profits then this should be supplied, as this in the long run will save time and money of community programmes)

5. Assist the development of people's life skills and resilience in relation to preventing or minimising gambling harm

NCWNZ would again say that this is going to need funding so that it can really reduce gambling harm.

6. Enhance workforce capacity

Again we would rather see the word enhance replaced with a stronger statement eg: Recruit, equip and train the workforce to allow for a greater number of problem gamblers to receive help.

7. Develop a programme of research and evaluation

This is very important and we support it fully, so that resources can be directed to the areas where it is most needed.

NCWNZ members have been working in their own communities to try and stem the rise in the number of people becoming addicted to gambling, and to halt the growth in 'pokie' outlets especially in high decile areas that are largely populated by those most affected by gambling, eg Maori and Pacific peoples. Low decile areas have the resources and skills to protect their communities and therefore we do not see a large growth in 'pokies' there. Statistics tell us the decile 1 – 3 have 4.5% of 'pokies' while decile 8 – 10 have over 30%.

Dr James Doughney, economist at Melbourne's Victoria University and author of *The Poker Machine State* (2002) would like to see the number of 'pokies' in New Zealand halved as at the moment we have 5 machines for every 1000 people. (New Zealand Herald 15-09-06).

NCWNZ would support this recommendation.

We would also welcome the prosecution of owners of gaming establishments that do not follow the law in regard to problem gamblers. Until there is a public accountability of those in this trade, they will go on not using the steps that are needed when someone is obviously spending too much time and money gambling.

Our members have also voiced a concern that there is not enough control over gambling over the Internet or in the workforce.

We thank you for the opportunity to reply to this discussion document.

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National President

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