

To
Clerk of the Committee
Government Administration Select Committee Office
Select Committee Office
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Submission on the Gambling Amendment Bill (No 2)

From
Sustainable Otago Christchurch Inc.
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We do wish to appear before the Committee to speak to our submission.

Introduction

1. Sustainable Otautahi Christchurch (SOC) is an incorporated membership society, formed in 2005, which carries on the vision of two previous local voluntary organisations, Sustainable Cities Trust and Christchurch-Otautahi Agenda 21 Forum. Our vision is “Christchurch people practicing, living and demonstrating sustainability in all that they do.”

2. Sustainable Otautahi Christchurch seeks to:

*ensure that all people have their **basic needs satisfied**, so that they can live in dignity, in **healthy communities**, while having the **minimum adverse impact on natural systems** both now and in the future.*

3. We submit that the Select Committee widens the review of gambling and takes this opportunity to make more major reforms to help ensure that the legislation meets its intended purposes:

- Controlling the growth of gambling;
- Preventing and minimising the harm caused by gambling, including problem gambling;
- Authorising some gambling and prohibiting the rest;
- Facilitating responsible gambling;
- Ensuring the integrity and fairness of games;
- Limiting opportunities for crime or dishonesty associated with gambling;
- Ensuring that money from gambling benefits the community;
- Facilitating community involvement in decisions about the provision of gambling.

Gambling and sustainable healthy communities

4. Gambling can have a significant impact on **community sustainability**.

5. There is considerable evidence that increased availability of gambling is associated with an increase in the prevalence of problem gambling. Problem Gambling statistics indicate that gaming machines are the most harmful form of gambling.

6. There is a disproportionate distribution of gaming machines in the most economically deprived areas in New Zealand. These are the communities most at risk of developing problems. This distribution of gaming machines can concentrate the negative impact of gambling in areas which are already deprived, and thereby increase inequalities in our communities and comprising families’ ability to *have their basic needs satisfied*.

7. There are significant social and economic costs associated with problems gambling, including financial costs, effects on productivity and employment, crime, personal and family impacts, and treatment costs. It appears that problem gamblers are at high risk of committing crimes in order to finance their gambling activities (Abbott. and McKenna

2000, Abbott et al 2000, Australian Institute of Criminology and Price Waterhouse Coopers 2003). This compromises people's ability to *live in dignity, in healthy communities*.

8. We acknowledge that pokies do generate some funding for community activities. However, patterns of consumption suggest that they impose horizontal inequities. They place a heavy burden on a minority of low income families and have a disproportionately severe impact on people experiencing gambling problems. This will have a negative impact on our objectives of *ensuring that all people have their basic needs satisfied, so that they can live in dignity, in healthy communities*.

Recommendations

9. Sustainable Otautahi Christchurch recommends the Select Committee consider ways to:
 - a. strengthen harm minimisation and consumer protection measures;
 - b. ensure greater enforcement of host responsibility requirements;
 - c. strengthen measures to ensure community participation in decisions regarding supply/licensing arrangements;
 - d. strengthen conflict of interest safeguards for councillors making decisions regarding gambling venue policies;
 - e. review current arrangements regarding funding distribution of the net profits of Class 4 gambling to ensure that processes maximise community benefit, transparency, and equity in terms of distribution.