
ORDINARY MEETING

OF

COMMUNITY, SPORT AND RECREATION COMMITTEE

MINUTE ITEM ATTACHMENTS

Time: 10.30 am
Date: Tuesday, 16 June 2015
Venue: Committee Room 1
Ground Floor, Council Offices
101 Wakefield Street
Wellington

Business

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2.1 Review of the Gambling Venues Policy 2010

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| 1. Geoff Curson Tabled Information | 2 |
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NEWTOWN BUDGETING & ADVOCACY SERVICE

Level 1
94 RIDDIFORD STREET
NEWTOWN
PH: 04 389 8121
EMAIL: newtownbudget@xtra.co.nz

Gambling Machine Submission WCC Tuesday 16th June 2015 Key points

- Clients do not always tell us they have a gambling problem. Mostly due to shame.
- Often things are way out of control by the time they do approach us for help.
- Sometimes we discover a pattern of behaviour from looking at their bank statements. Often transactions involving Pokie Machines.
- Pokie machines are the most common form of gambling that we observe.
- Sometimes the debt is enormous and owed to several high interest lenders.
- Insolvency may be the only way out but this is still not a long term solution.
- They must be receiving help from another agency e.g counselling - before we will work with them.
- Often they may want us to try to help negotiate new payment arrangements with lenders – e.g smaller each week to sustain debt repayment in their budgets.
- If we help them with this we take a risk with our reputation because a bank or lender can associate our service with their failure to stick to a plan.
- Some of these clients stop working with us and disappear. We do not know what happens to them if this is the case.
- Most of these people would like to have the source of gambling removed because they can feel compelled to repeat the addictive behaviour when they walk past these venues.
- We do not support any increase of gambling machines. We do support decreasing numbers.

Show budget worksheet to those present.

Submission to WCC on Review of gambling venues policy

- I endorse machines not being confined to alcohol outlets
- I endorse capping, preferably strictly limiting. numbers in any area
- I do not endorse there being no limit to machines in the central city.

The poor have no other medicine but only hope . . . for what thou hast not, still thou strivest to get. - Shakespeare.

Hope may be the initial driver but it can quickly swing to desperation, of “next time” or fear of the one you miss will be the winner.

And it’s where – in low decile communities among the poor and the not so very poor, that the cutely nick-named “pokies” and their like proliferate.

In big casinos with the luxurious upstairs gaming rooms where the ostensibly rich and desperate waste thousands if not millions, the poor but hopeful sit spellbound to their cheap seats, longing for the crash of coins.

I have played the gambling game and can completely empathise. I’m too tight fisted.

Batting away at the pokies is mesmerising, it leads to “borrowing” money for essentials such as family food, clothing, rent, heating, medical treatment etc

It also can involve very large chunks of time – family time, work time leading to child neglect and sackings.

Pokey-type practices are ostensibly for entertainment or good causes. Losing money is not entertaining and there have been many reports of “good causes” not receiving their proper share of donations.

Pokies and their like sound and at first seem harmless but couple with a couple of rounds with the chaps or a few lonely “spots”, they can and do lead to loss and sadness in a widening circle that the one with the finger on the button. Yes they can be fun but it’s hard to see a life or lives lost is “fun”

I’m not alone in seeing where a “little flutter” can lead.

I have visited casinos here and in particular overseas – some very tiny and elite– where you are made to hand over your handbag and anything else that might look suspicious, and where armed guards hover ready.

As well as wretched families I have seen blood on floors, on casino walls and on footpaths outside – All chasing that remedy “hope”.

There’s always next time of course.

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Good afternoon

My name is Joe Kelly, and I'm an organiser with FIRST Union. FIRST Union, the Finance, Industrial, Retail, Stores and Transport union, has approximately 27,000 members, many of whom live in Wellington. You will meet our members any time you visit a bank or shop at a major retailer. They deliver your groceries, weave your carpets and make your clothes (if you buy New Zealand made).

Some of our members, in the oil and finance industries are highly paid. Many, particularly those who work in the retail industries, are poorly paid. Despite working thirty to forty hours per week many of our members are often dependant on government subsidies like Working for Families and local government subsidies such as council housing. When their low pay won't cover the bills they turn to quick finance from loan sharks, and frequently they also turn to gambling. Some of our members may also benefit from money spent gambling, in the form of dividends to sports or community groups; I will return to that in a moment.

FIRST Union has long been aware of the relationship between poor wages and gambling. Our members honestly disc us, as I just mentioned the fear and stress of not being able to afford to live and the appeal of pokie machines; the faint hope that a big win will carry them through another week. Some of them are upfront about the gambling addiction that has resulted, as they chase a win that will pay off their ever-increasing debts.

Now, you may be thinking that I am conflating two issues here; low wages and problem gambling; this review is considering the latter rather than the former. We believe the two issues to be hard to separate. FIRST Union would like to acknowledge the Wellington City Council for moving towards a living wage, thus far the only council in New Zealand to do so. We understand that an element in this decision was the improved social outcomes that might be expected as workers move to wages that enable them to 'live rather than just exist', to quote the Living Wage Movement. We encourage the council to consider whether pokie machines are supporting, or diminishing, the ability of ordinary workers in this city to live rather than just exist, and whether having no limit on the number of venues in the central city, for example, impacts on that.

Ironically, our members may also benefit from gambling, as you're no doubt aware, in form of grants to sports and community groups that they are involved in. FIRST Union is sceptical of both the scale of these grants and how they are paid out.

I refer now to the 2012 report for the Department of Internal Affairs by former Community Gaming Association Chief Executive Francis Wevers. The report, commissioned then ignored by the Department, noted that corrupt behaviour in the pokies industry is, quote "all-pervasive and pernicious" and that there is "endemic non-compliance" in the industry. The report; 'Options for Change in the Class 4 Gambling Sector' is one I recommend you read. It outlines how racing and a limited number of major sporting codes are able to secure "large, regular and ongoing streams of funding" from gambling money while other community groups and smaller sporting codes go begging. Competition between pokie trusts was such that they had found "numerous and ingenious ways to entice venues to leave existing relationships". The New Zealand Herald reported on March 9th that half of all inspections of pubs and clubs with pokies machines identify breaches or non-compliance with the law. And we await the conclusion of 'Operation Chestnut'; the largest investigation in the history of the gambling sector. Conducted by the DIA, Serious Fraud Office and the Organised Financial Crime Agency NZ, it has scrutinised \$30 million in gaming grants made by