

August 2010

Dear Tawa Community Board members,

Thank you for the Board's submission on the recent Gambling Venues Policy review. As part of the review process we noted the suggestion that Council look at altering the proposed approach to:

- permit pokie venues to be established anywhere in the Wellington City district with limitations on where located (to prevent clusters)
- set a population based cap on the numbers of pokies that may be permitted in all zones (with no exception)
- no restriction on TABs

As was correctly noted, under the Gambling Act 2003, all existing non-casino gaming machine venues were "grandfathered" (i.e. they retained their existing licences). This means that Wellington City Council only has the legal authority to approve/refuse new licence applications for gaming machines or gaming machine venues in its district. It also means that the Council cannot set any conditions (such as limitations on the location of gaming machine venues) on those licence approvals.

The Wellington City District is currently split into seven gambling zones. Despite the fact that the largest, the Central Area Zone, is an unrestricted zone (no restrictions on the number of gaming machines or their venues), gaming machine numbers and venues in this zone have been falling steadily since 2003 and continue to do so (machine numbers dropped from 391 in 2007 to 379 at present and gaming machine venues fell from 25 in 2007 to 24). Given that gaming machine numbers continue to decline in the unrestricted Central Area Zone (and the fact that this is not an identified area of concern), the Council did not consider a cap on gaming machines in this zone to be an appropriate policy response at this time.

The Council has decided that the amended policy approach with population-based caps on the suburban zones is a more effective mechanism of selectively targeting the 'areas of concerns'. In addition, the Council set population based caps in the suburban zones that are believed to result in modest reductions in gaming machine numbers in these targeted areas until the policy is reviewed in three years time.

The Council believes this is a fair and balanced response that permits it to fulfil its obligations under the Gambling Act and protect susceptible populations in 'areas of concern'. At the same time, it also reduces the risk to community organisations with activities dependent on money from non-casino gaming machines by allowing a managed reduction of this funding source over time.

Thank you to the Tawa Community Board once again for this submission.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B O'Sullivan', with a large, sweeping underline stroke.

Brian O'Sullivan

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