



**TE KOROWAI TURE O WAITAKERE
WAITAKERE COMMUNITY LAW SERVICE**

WAITAKERE CITY COUNCIL – GAMBLING VENUE POLICY 2008

This submission is from:

Waitakere Community Law Service.
Te Korowai Ture o Waitakere
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Waitakere.

The Waitakere Community Law Service (WCLS) was established in 2004 as a Community based organisation. The purpose of the service is to provide people in Waitakere City who have high unmet legal needs, access to legal services.

We deliver a range of essential services, including: Free legal advice to various communities of Waitakere, legal information, representation, assistance and advice. Our clinics offer legal advice and information on matters pertaining to consumer and debt, employment rights, family matters, tenancy issues and difficulties with benefits and government organisations.

1. Our mission at Waitakere Community Law Service is to break down the financial barriers to Waitakere people accessing legal information and advice.
2. The Waitakere Community Law Service supports fully the Councils proposed Option 2 of its Gambling Venue Policy. Option 2 is a sinking lid policy and this will limit the number of pokies over time in Waitakere (Sinking Lid on machine and venue caps).
3. The Waitakere Community Law Services assists low socio-economic families in Waitakere. Many of our clients present with financial, debt and family problems. Research provided to us in relation to this submission indicates a strong link between gambling and these areas of law. With the economic crisis looming it seems timely to safeguard our community from further financial stresses, especially those individuals and families who are already struggling. The Waitakere Community Law is concerned that pokie Machines in Waitakere are placed in the low socioeconomic areas. This exacerbates the problems that we see and sends a message to our community that targeting vulnerable people is acceptable.

4. The Waitakere Community Law service is greatly concerned about the link between gambling and crime. Gambling crime can involve forgery, embezzlement, credit card scams, domestic violence, child neglect, vandalism, loan sharking, money laundering, breaking and entering and home invasion. About 10,000 people committed illegal activities in the last year because of gambling
5. The Waitakere Law Service sees pokie gambling in our communities as the cause of significant harm to individuals, whanau and communities. For Maori especially (who are 14.4% of our client base) there are significant associations between pokie gambling, poverty and crime.
6. The Waitakere Community Law Centre understands that many community groups receive pokie money from pokie trusts. However by our community allowing funding from such a harmful source we are compromising our overall health aims for Waitakere, as well as allowing the targeting of the poor to be an acceptable practice. The Waitakere Community Law Centre is concerned about the reduction in funds available to *positive* community organisations and projects. Waitakere Community Law Service would support any attempts by council to off-set any short term reduction of funds. Waitakere Community Law Service would further support Council and the community exploring long term alternative funding structures for community based projects and organisations.
7. A sinking lid policy will not mean all pokies are removed from Waitakere as pokie trusts may suggest. It will however send a message to our local community, and to New Zealand that Waitakere is questioning the continuation of such a harmful product funding our health and community sector, and that alternative funding sources need to be addressed.

The Waitakere Community Law Service recommends that Waitakere City Council adopt Option 2 sinking lid policy, as it is pathway to creating a healthier and wealthier city. By choosing a Sinking Lid Policy, Waitakere City Council will also be showing that they are a progressive council who are again leading the way in supporting community and health initiatives. Waitakere Community Law Service also suggest that Council consider taking steps to (1) off-set any short term impacts to funds available; and (2) explore long-term changes to the funding of community projects and organisations.

The Waitakere Community Law Service does not wish to speak on this matter.

Yours faithfully

Paula Bold-Wilson
Manager