

# **Gambling: A Social Hazard**

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## **Gambling: A Social Hazard**

Hutia te rito o te harakeke,  
Kei hea te komako e ko,  
Ki mai koe ki au ?  
He aha te mea nui o tenei ao,  
Maku e ki atu  
He tangata, he tangata, he tangata .

If we pull the heart of the flax out where will the bell bird go  
But if I was to ask what is the most important thing of all I would say, it is people, it is  
people, it is people.

### **Introduction**

New Zealand as a country prides itself on its history and the stance it has taken on social issues both internally and internationally. Examples are New Zealanders were the first country in the world to give women the right to vote in 1893, they have taken a proactive stance against nuclear armament in the Pacific, stood up against racial inequalities in South Africa and have actively promoted peace in different countries. Other overseas countries have also seen New Zealand as a nation with positive race relations between Maori the indigenous population and non-Maori.

New Zealand has also have also considered that its values its people, and that social and economic development of our country should go hand and hand together and one should not proceed at the expense of the other. This was one of the key findings of the Royal Commission on Social Policy in 1998. (Keith & Dyll, 1998)

These views have to some extent become lost with the introduction of policies in the late 1980-90's which have focussed on economic restructuring of the economy at the expense of their impact on the development of different groups in the community, especially Maori. (Te Puni Kokiri, 2000)

Currently in New Zealand there is another review of gambling or gaming legislation. If we review current and proposed policy options, it could be concluded that the protection of our physical environment is considered more important than the active protection of our people.

This is despite Maori values and aspirations where Maori recognise the intimate physical and spiritual relationships they have with their environment but conclude that people are the most important resource.

This paper is written from a Maori and indigenous perspective and it will suggest that it is now timely to look at gambling as a social hazard. The author will also suggest that gambling should not be treated in New Zealand any differently than biological or chemical hazards. Introduction of new and current gambling games into the New Zealand and Maori communities requires careful consideration. If it is agreed to this approach the introduction of new game of chances such as “Risk” or “Powerball”, will require appropriate licensing, management, monitoring and ongoing independent research to assess the ongoing social, economic and cultural impacts.

It is also suggested that the Hazardous Substances and Organisms Act 1996 and associated amendments currently in place in New Zealand perhaps provides a model which could be adapted for the consideration of the introduction and management of different forms of gambling.

This Act sets out a defined structure which is required to be in place for the management of biological and chemical hazards. It includes recognition of the protection of people and future generations, Maori values, the Treaty of Waitangi and an emphasis on public health safety.

### **Gambling A Growing Political Issue**

Gambling is now a growing sensitive political issue in New Zealand. Many Maori and New Zealanders are unaware of the history of gambling in New Zealand and knowledge of the Treaty of Waitangi which defines Maori and New Zealanders respective rights to be involved in all policies and legislative matters which are important to their wellbeing.

Different communities and stakeholder groups such as the Government, gambling operators, such as owners of casinos and poker machine licences and beneficiaries from gambling proceeds, such as community and sports groups, all now have diverse views as to what gambling policies and legislation should be in place in New Zealand.

Our cultural environment shapes their views as the role and the place gambling occupies in their life and the society which they live within. (McMillian, 1996). It is suggested that the diversity of views held by different stakeholders will make it difficult to come to a consensus view on gambling policy in New Zealand and therefore, will make it hard to radically reshape our current gambling legislation.

Current legislation focuses on interests of gambling operators and government to generate income, employment, and tourism or so called community benefit rather than public health and safety. Furthermore, legislative decisions in New Zealand in relation to gambling is a “conscious” vote which therefore allows politicians freedom to express their own individual views regarding gambling. However, as gambling is so politically sensitive and many governments link gambling with their taxation policies, politicians will likely support their respective party views. (Ruben, 1966)

### **Historical Overview: Gambling Cultural Baggage and Social Hazard**

Maori are a unique indigenous population who prior to contact with non-Maori had no history or traditional concepts relating to gambling. Maori also had no history of brewing alcohol or consumption of tobacco. (Hutt, 1997 Reid and Pouwhare, 1992, Grant, 1994, Compulsive Gambling Society, 1997) Today Maori often consume all three products in different settings, especially in pubs and social clubs creating co addiction problems.

Grant (1984) has suggested that gambling should be seen as “cultural baggage”, introduced into New Zealand by the new settlers. He notes that non-Maori settlers have used gambling to: provide entertainment, create individual and collective wealth, develop social and cultural services and redistribute assets and resources to different individuals and groups on the pre tense of “luck”. Maori have then followed non-Maori and integrated gambling into Maori cultural activities and being Maori. This is reinforced

through gambling advertising and Maori involvement in new gambling developments such as the opening of casinos. (Bayley, 1999)

Gambling as a concept is often not defined when discussed but broadly, it is as “to risk anything of value on a game of chance or on the outcome of any event involving chance, in the hope of profit “ Arnold P. (1978) .<sup>1</sup> A discussion document released by the Department of Internal Affairs entitled “ *Gaming Reform in New Zealand: Towards a new legislative framework* “, has defined gambling as to “place a stake or bet on a game”, with the intention of aiming to win or receive something of value. This definition includes all legal legitimate forms of gambling from raffle tickets, scratchies, horse racing, sports betting, housie, poker machines to casinos. The Department of Internal Affairs has also suggested that the terms gambling and gaming should be used interchangeably even though many in the community are not sure as to what the term gaming means. (Department of Internal Affairs, 2000)

Gambling is now integral part of the social, economic and cultural infrastructure of Maori and New Zealand societies. For example, Creative New Zealand, the Film Commission and the Hillary Commission<sup>2</sup> are all statutory dependent upon funding from the Lottery Grants Board, which receives its funding from the Lotteries Commission, which operates a weekly national lottery and other games.

Similarly Maori are dependent upon these bodies for funding for cultural and sporting developments and the Lottery Grants Lottery Marae Heritage and Facilities, to fund the

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<sup>1</sup> Arnold P. (1978) *The Encyclopedia of Gambling The games, the odds, the techniques, the people and places, the myths and history*, Collins Publishers, Glasglow, pg. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Creative New Zealand allocates funding to support New Zealand’s major cultural bodies and new and coming artists. The Film Commission supports the development and maintenance of New Zealand’s film. The Hillary Commission is currently being restructured to form a new body but it is responsible for supporting the development of sport and physical activity in the community.

development and conservation of marae (ancestral houses) rather than legitimate tax funding to support the development of Maori culture as a taonga. (treasure)

The ethical issues of Maori receiving money from gambling has not been considered in any significant depth by Maori individually or collectively as gambling is so normalised and is an integral part of Maori cultural activities. This development means that many Maori organisations are now dependent upon gambling for their cultural survival unless alternative policy decisions are made or created to support Maori aspirations for economic security and independence.

To achieve some degree of tino rangatiratanga (self determination) several Maori tribal groups are now actively involved in gambling through casino licences, owners of shares or through poker machine licences. There is however, growing reluctance for Maori organisations to publicly highlight their involvement in casinos or the ownership of poker machines licences for they are aware of the adverse criticism they will receive from both Maori and non-Maori.

### **Public and Maori input invited**

The New Zealand public has been invited to have a say in the gambling review and to suggest the role and place gambling should play in New Zealand society and therefore, what appropriate legislation should be in place.

Maori have also been encouraged to have say in the review. A series of hui (meetings) have been held in late April 2001 and specific reference groups teleconferences have been held to encourage Maori input. Limited information entitled “Maori and gambling”, which outlines briefly Maori involvement in gambling, such as 500 Maori organisations holding housie licences, and the impact of gambling on Maori has been provided by the Department of Internal Affairs. (Department of Internal Affairs, 2001. No information of any significance has been provided as to how Maori have benefited economically, socially or culturally from gambling.

Maori views expressed at hui and the teleconferences have been diverse and not united. This is symptomatic of the lack of real Maori involvement in gambling policy development in New Zealand. (Dyall, 2001) As an outcome of the lack of a Maori consensus view relating to gambling and few written submissions provided by Maori, it is suggested that it is highly likely Maori views will be marginalised. They will also be overshadowed by the submissions provided by organisations which have a defined interest in gambling and resources to contribute.

One of the terms of reference the review team is required to address is to “ review the social and private costs of gambling such as crime, fraud and problem gambling. In particular the review team, is required to examine the extent and nature of the social costs of gambling in Maori communities and make recommendations of the means of containing them and how to fund such interventions.” This is the only terms of reference where Maori are mentioned. This terms of reference suggests that the Crown and the current Government acknowledge that gambling has been and is a social hazard for Maori and has contributed to the weakening of Maori values and social structures as the whanau ( family). Current Government Maori health policy “ *He Korowai Oranga*”, is now directed to strengthening and rebuilding Maori whanau in recognition of the outcome of previous and current policies on the health and wellbeing of Maori. No compensation has yet been offered to Maori whanau for the consequences of poor public policies. ( Ministry of Health, 2001)

Currently, in the gambling area the Government also has no overarching defined Treaty of Waitangi policy which clearly defines the rights and responsibilities of gambling policy agencies operators and gambling treatment services to achieve for and on behalf of Maori as a Treaty of Waitangi partner. No commitment has also been made to analyse the submissions received from a Treaty of Waitangi perspective.

## **Gambling: A Social Hazard for Maori**

Considering the word “ hazard” it is defined in the University of English dictionary as “a game of dice, “to risk, to put in danger of loss of injury”. Any introduction of a hazard into a community is therefore a gamble as it involves risk.

From the perspective of Maori as tangata whenua in New Zealand gambling is a social hazard and should be seen and managed in a similar way as the introduction of new or modified biological and chemical hazards into New Zealand society.

Increasingly it is being recognised that the adverse effects of gambling does not fall evenly across the New Zealand total population but increasingly Maori are likely to have two to three times the risk of problem gambling than non-Maori.

Despite limited recognition of problem gambling as a public health issue in New Zealand there is recognition that

- Ethnicity, and in particular identifying as Maori is now a key indicator of likely risk of problem or pathological gambling. ( Abbott and Volberg, 2000)
- Maori gamblers spend more on gambling than non-Maori despite the limited individual and household incomes Maori have which therefore impacts on the quality of life of Maori whanau and children. ( Abbott and Volberg, 2000 )
- Maori under use gambling treatment services in relation to need. ( Gruys M. A et.al, 2000 and 2001)
- At least a quarter of all clients who seek help from gambling treatment or help counselling services identify as Maori even though Maori adults represent 10% of the New Zealand adult population. ( Gruys et.al, 2000, and 2001 )
- Over third of male and female prisoners report that they have had problems with gambling sometime in their life. Over half of the prison population in New Zealand are Maori. ( Abbott and McKenna, 2000, Abbott, McKeena & Giles, 2000)

- The prevalence of problem gambling amongst female prisoners in New Zealand has identified the highest rate of problem and pathological gambling which has been recorded in any previous survey apart from surveys of people seeking or receiving treatment from pathological gambling. ( Abbott and McKenna, 2000)
- Maori women are increasingly seeking help with problem gambling related to playing the pokie machines. The increasingly visibility of problem gambling for Maori women makes the profile of Maori gambling different from other indigenous populations who share a similar socio economic profile as Maori. ( Volberg and Abbott, 1997)
- Maori have high rates of conversion to new games of chance as they are introduced. Maori are involved in both continuous and non-continuous forms of gambling.( Volberg and Abbott, 1997 and Abbott and Volberg, 2000)
- Maori males and females present at least ten years earlier than non-Maori which suggests the effects of earlier exposure and normalisation of gambling in Maori communities. ( Compulsive Gambling Society, 1998)
- Maori when assessed for problem gambling in gambling treatment services have a slightly higher severe problem than Pakeha. ( Gruys et.al, 2000 )
- Maori use gambling to fulfill different functions and role in their life, such as to win money, for excitement, to socialise, to support worthy causes, to relieve boredom and to escape from personal trauma, poverty and transfer of Maori cultural values. ( Abbott and McKenna, 2000, Abbott, McKeena & Giles, 2000, Morrison L 1999).
- The current Maori pattern of gambling and risk of problem gambling relates to Maori experience of colonization and the underclass position Maori occupies in New Zealand society. ( Abbott and Volberg, 2000)
- Maori gamblers consider that problem or pathological gambling is worse than other addictions as it is so destructive to individuals, whanau and communities. ( Dyll, 2001)

- Problem gambling not only affects the quality of life of problem gamblers it also impacts on their families and children and communities. Problem gambling as alone or with other addictions inhibits people's and families abilities to control and manage their own lives. ( Dyall, 2001 )

### **Problem Gambling : Not on the New Zealand Public Health Agenda**

Taking account of the impact gambling has on Maori as population group, it should be noted that problem gambling is not yet recognised as a significant or emerging public health issue in New Zealand and is not part of the Labour Government's New Zealand Health Strategy (2000).

Furthermore, although problem and pathological gambling are recognised as legitimate mental health problems, which can lead to other mental health and physical health problems active prevention or treatment is not promoted in the public health system. Currently, both mental health and public health agencies are cautious of becoming involved for they fear that the cost of prevention or health care intervention may be transferred to Vote: Health.

At present major gambling operators in New Zealand in collaboration with gambling treatment providers agree each year the amount they will fund determined by their perceptions of the adverse effects gambling creates in the community in relation to problem gambling.<sup>3</sup>

### **Gambling Legislation: Requires Recognition Gambling As a Social Hazard**

The purpose of Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 this Act is" *to promote the environment and the health and safety of people and communities, by preventing or managing the adverse effects of hazardous substances and new*

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<sup>3</sup> Funding is collected through the Problem Gambling Committee which currently operates in conjunction with a contracted body which purchases gambling treatment services. There is not Maori representation on this committee as of right only as a provider of a gambling treatment service.

*organisms.*” (Section 4) A hazard is defined in this Act as having one of the following intrinsic properties: explosiveness, flammability, a capacity to oxidise, corrosiveness, toxicity and eco toxicity. These are hazards especially, if in contact with water or air.

To support the implementation of this Act two principles underpin its purpose. First, all persons exercising their functions, powers, or duties are required to recognise and provide for” *the safeguarding of the life-supporting capacity of air, water and eco systems.*” Secondly, there are to ensure “*the maintenance and enhancement of the capacity of people and communities to provide for their own economic, social and cultural wellbeing and for the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations.*” (Section 5)

In addition to the key principles defined within the Act, all persons are also required to take into account: *sustainability of all native and valued introduced flora and fauna, intrinsic value of ecosystems, public health, the relationship of Maori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands.... and other taonga (treasures )* ( Section 6).

Persons are also Act required to recognise the principles of Treaty of Waitangi in all activities. (Section 8). Recognition of the Treaty Waitangi is important for it identifies the respective rights and responsibilities for both Maori and the Crown and requires both parties to work in partnership for the best interests of Maori and all New Zealanders.

The Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act (1996) also has enabled the establishment of an independent body with members appointed by the government called the Environmental Risk Management Authority. Membership of the Authority is politically appointed, however, their role is to protect the public’s safety and future wellbeing. Maori representation is not defined; as of right on this body but is dependent upon political good will.

This body has defined powers and responsibilities it is required to implement. All applications for the introduction of new biological and chemical hazards in New Zealand must be registered and considered by this body. A fee is required with each application registered. The Authority is also required to keep a register of all applications and to

monitor all applications to ensure that the nature of their approval or decline of application has been upheld.

As well as the management of chemical and biological hazards, the Authority is also required to be involved in decisions related to genetically modified organisms. It is in this area that at times the Authority has been in the spotlight regarding its decisions. Recently, there have been criticisms of the Authority in its unwillingness to accept community and or Maori views to be of equal value as scientific views, which could significantly influence the economic future of New Zealand.<sup>4</sup>

A recent example, is local tribal group's opposition to a human gene being mixed with a cow gene to produce a cow, which could then produce special milk, which may assist people with specific health problems. The tribe has also opposed the use of their land which is leased for agricultural research being used for this research as waste from the animals may contaminate their land for now and future generations.

Although there are limitations to this act, its purposes, principles and the requirement to establish an independent body to review the introduction of biological or chemical hazards are important. Overall, this Act requires a defined process and structure in place governed by certain values and principles. Adopting this form of legislation could redefine the place of gambling in New Zealand society.

### **“ Powerball” and “Risk”:** Examples of New Social Hazards

There is now growing competition amongst gambling operators in New Zealand to maintain and where possible increase their gambling profit margins. Each is always looking to the introduction new games of chance, which could increase their income. New games of chance can be introduced into New Zealand without any real consultation with Maori, the public, or consideration of its impact as a new social hazard.

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<sup>4</sup> The Waitangi Tribunal set up to hear treaty grievances has also had to address similar issues in relation to the conflict regarding Maori values and scientific views which have threaten Maori resources such as food, waterways and land

The Lotteries Commission, for example, is an independent statutory body. Its purpose is to run weekly lotteries and other forms of gambling on behalf of the government to support community development. This body has just announced that it intends to replace TeleBingo with a new game called “Risk”.

This new game has been planned to encourage and increase youth and older peoples’ participation. These are two groups which are known to be vulnerable to problem gambling and like other marginalised groups may use gambling to escape boredom, loneliness and other personal traumas (Maling, 2001)

This new game follows on from another game introduced by the Lotteries Commission earlier this year called “Powerball”. The Lotteries Commission has announced that within a short time, approximately three to four months, sales from this game has achieved more than \$32 million. This game has also saved the Lottery Grants Board from reducing its grants to defined statutory bodies which support arts, sport and film developments in New Zealand. ( Catherall, 2001)

Although this new game may seem positive by some key stakeholders, such as the statutory bodies dependent upon gambling, no consideration has been given to the opportunity costs of New Zealanders investment of over \$32 million in this new game. (Goodman, 1995) There has also been no consideration of it impact it has had on supporting the normalisation of gambling in New Zealand society or contribution it has made to problem gambling in the community or impact on Maori wellbeing.

## **Conclusion**

Gambling can be regarded as a social hazard in New Zealand. The Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 currently in place in New Zealand provides a model for considering how new and current social hazards as gambling could be considered, reviewed and managed.

People have a right and responsibility to be involved in matters, which effect their wellbeing and this legislation supports public participation.

Consideration of indigenous values and status in New Zealand is also recognised. This is important for indigenous peoples' often see that they have a dual responsibility to be both the kaitiaki (guardian) of the physical environment within which they live and to protect the human resource for they provide the seed for the next and following generations.

However, due to the effects of colonisation, oppression, democracy and now globalization the views of indigenous peoples are often marginalised and considered irrelevant. Gambling is now big business in most developed and developing countries and should now be on the public health agenda of countries for the effects of gambling are wide ranging.

Problem gambling is now recognised in New Zealand as a significant factor, which effects imprisonment and therefore Maori imprisonment. We now need to develop gambling legislation, which focuses on the health and wellbeing of people and future generations, not the income, position of gambling operators or beneficiaries of gambling.

“ He kakano i ruai mai i rangiatea mai rano”

Maori values and knowledge transcend time

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