

Media release

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## **New research should inform gambling policy**

The Problem Gambling Foundation says all Councils should consider new research which has found that there is almost one new problem gambler for each additional pokie machine (electronic gaming machine) in a community.

The research was conducted by Professor Max Abbott, Director of AUT University's Gambling and Addictions Research Centre, Dr Judith Stubbs from the University of NSW, City Futures, Sydney, Australia and John Storer from Judith Stubbs and Associates, Australia. Together they did a meta-analysis of the 34 studies conducted in Australia and New Zealand, thus providing the most complete study of gambling prevalence in Australasia to date.

The findings were clear - every additional pokie machine in a community results in .8 new problem gamblers. Further, there is no evidence that this plateaus.

Graeme Ramsey, Problem Gambling Foundation CEO, says research such as this should inform gambling policy.

"This study clearly shows that if new pokie machines are put into New Zealand communities, we can expect to see new problem gamblers – in fact, nearly one new problem gambler for each new machine," he says.

The authors say the findings support a view that restricting the per capita density of electronic gaming machines (EGMs) will lead to reduced gambling harm.

"Policies related to restricting or reducing the density of EGMs are likely to play a significant role in containing or reducing gambling-related harm," the authors state.

"Holding or reducing EGM numbers would appear prudent based on our findings and is likely to lead to reduced harm," they say.

Graeme Ramsey says the Problem Gambling Foundation advocates for a sinking lid policy to reduce the number of pokies in communities.

"We know how dangerous these machines are and the best policy that Councils can adopt to reduce the number of pokies and the harm caused by gambling is a sinking lid on pokie machines," he says.

'Sinking lids' have contributed to the number of pokie machines in New Zealand dropping from 25,221 in 2003 to 19,359 to end of December 2009.

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