



## **Media release**

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### **More fallout from pokies**

The people of Hawkes Bay have to deal with yet another disaster driven by problem gambling and pokie machines says the Problem Gambling Foundation of New Zealand.

In the first of 2010, we have another fraud case emerge that has been reported widely in the media, where financial resources, trust, friendships, reputations, personal freedom and jobs are all casualties.

There are shocked community members, grieving families, angry ex-workmates and someone facing a loss of freedom - all down to an obsession with gambling on pokie machines.

Graham Aitken from the Problem Gambling Foundation says gambling is a major driver of fraud in New Zealand and any business can be a victim of gambling's darker side.

"While the public may raise questions about the business systems at the place of work, the personal behaviour of the gambler and the host responsibility precautions taken at the venues, we yet again find ourselves asking the question 'why do we justify these machines being in every part of our communities?'," he says.

"We are addicted to the large sums of money which go through these machines (nearly \$1 billion last year) and the small spin-off to charities in our communities," Graham says.

Estimates of how much is lost by problem gamblers range from 40% to 60% of all losses. That's \$400 million to \$600 million every year.

"There will be those who say 'more fool them', but when you see the gamut of the destruction as this case starkly shows, we are all quite obviously guilty of complicity to an overwhelming community funding fraud," Graham Aitken says.

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For further information please contact:

Graham Aitken  
Problem Gambling Foundation of New Zealand  
Ph (09) 369 0605 or 021 728125