

Media release

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South Island regions bucking the trend on pokie spend

Pokie spend in the country's 1500 pubs and clubs may have decreased over the last year, but that is not the case in some South Island regions.

The Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) has just announced that gaming machine expenditure in the country's pubs and clubs in the year ended December 2009, has decreased 5.2 per cent compared to 2008.

But some South Island rural districts have had growth in the last quarter of between 10% and 41%.

Mackenzie District has experienced 41% growth in pokie losses over the July to September quarter while Kaikoura, Westland, Buller and Waitaki regions have lost between 15% and 10% more on the pokies over this past quarter.

Graham Aitken from the Problem Gambling Foundation says while it is heartening that the New Zealand-wide spend is showing a downward trend, some regions are still experiencing considerable growth.

"It is great to see the pokie spend drop and to see that gambling venues and gaming machine numbers have reduced. We believe people in New Zealand are really wising up to pokies and host responsibility could be beginning to work," he says.

"But there are still some regions experiencing considerable growth and we have no explanations for this. We will do some research to see if there are environmental factors that are in play."

Graham Aitken says PGF is nevertheless optimistic about the DIA results.

"Pokie machines are dangerous products and the more people are aware of that, the better."

"We look forward to seeing further decreases over the next quarters," he says.

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