

## Legislating for Impact Assessment

### Social Impact Assessments For Gambling Venue Policies

*Sue Torkington - Problem Gambling Foundation; James Baines - SIA practitioner; Debbie Edwards - Ministry of Health, Public Health; Helen Walker – Wellington City Council policy, Local Government policy perspective*

#### ***Gaming Act 2003***

What lessons have been learnt about the effectiveness of legislating SIA on this occasion?

What can be done over the next two years to improve the usefulness of SIA when it comes time to review the Gambling Venue Policies?

#### ***Gaming Act 2003***

Section 3 states that **the purpose of the Act** is to:

- a. control the growth of gambling;
- b. prevent and minimise the harm caused by gambling, and including problem gambling;
- c. authorise some gambling and prohibit the rest;
- d. facilitate responsible gambling;
- e. ensure the integrity and fairness of games;
- f. limit opportunities for crime or dishonesty associated with gambling; and
- g. ensure that money from gambling benefits the community; and
- h. facilitate community involvement in decisions about the provision of gambling.

#### ***Gaming Act 2003***

Section 4 of the Act states that **harm**:

- a. means harm or distress of any kind arising from, or caused or exacerbated by, a person's gambling; and
- b. includes personal, social, or economic harm suffered:
  - c. by the person; or
  - d. the person's spouse, partner, family, whanau, or wider community; or
  - e. in the workplace; or
  - f. by society at large.

### ***Gaming Act 2003***

Section 101(2) states that in adopting a policy, Council must have regard to the social impact of gambling within the District

- (a) How have the circumstances changed for TLAs?
  - (i) A new role for TLAs
  - (ii) A new assessment requirement to become familiar with
  - (iii) A new orientation to assessment - harm minimisation as an explicit objective
  - (iv) On the public health agenda
  - (v) Highly polarised stakeholders but with a shift in the balance of influence

*1. What are we trying to do in carrying out an SIA as part of the process for developing GVPs?*

The text-book answer

- (a) profiling the community
- (b) scoping the issues and likely social consequences
- (c) assessing the level and significance of each type of impact in the community
- (d) considering the options for avoiding or mitigating negative impacts
- (e) feeding back and validating the findings with groups who have participated in the assessment process
- (f) establishing the basis for on-going monitoring and evaluation

The pragmatic answer

- (a) trying to engage the community in policy setting; a catalyst for community action
- (b) exchanging information with a whole range of groups in the community
- (c) assembling information useful for decision makers
- (d) assembling information useful for submitters
- (e) creating the basis for informed debate within the community
- (f) trying to make hidden problems more visible
- (g) trying to get beyond the polarisation that often exists

2. *What issues did we encounter in doing the 2003 SIAs?*

Variability in the preparedness of TLAs to initiate SIA activity, because of:

- (a) local SIA capacity;
- (b) time constraints imposed by the legislation and the timing of the legislation;
- (c) lack of current information for the local community on:
  - (i) the extent of gambling problems;
  - (ii) the level of gambling activity and the composition of the gambling population;
  - (iii) the distribution of financial benefits across groups in the community;
  - (iv) residents' attitudes to gambling.

Also: uncertainty of options for TLA discretion.

How much influence could TLAs have?

- (a) What sort of national information was available as an indicator?

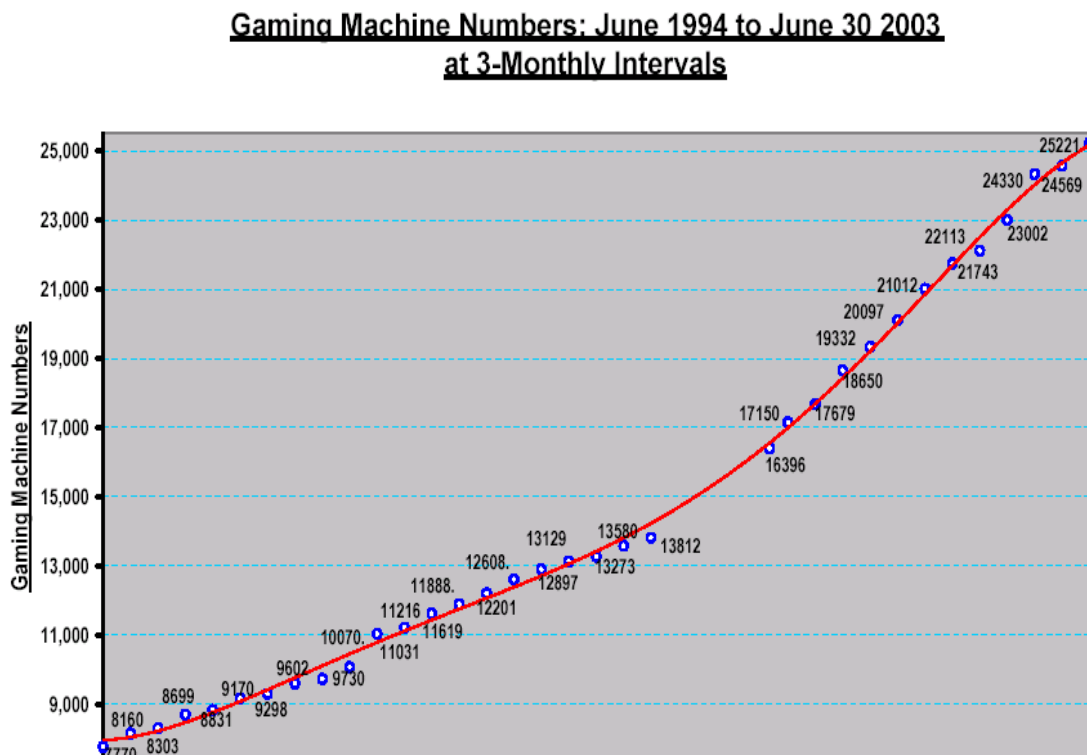
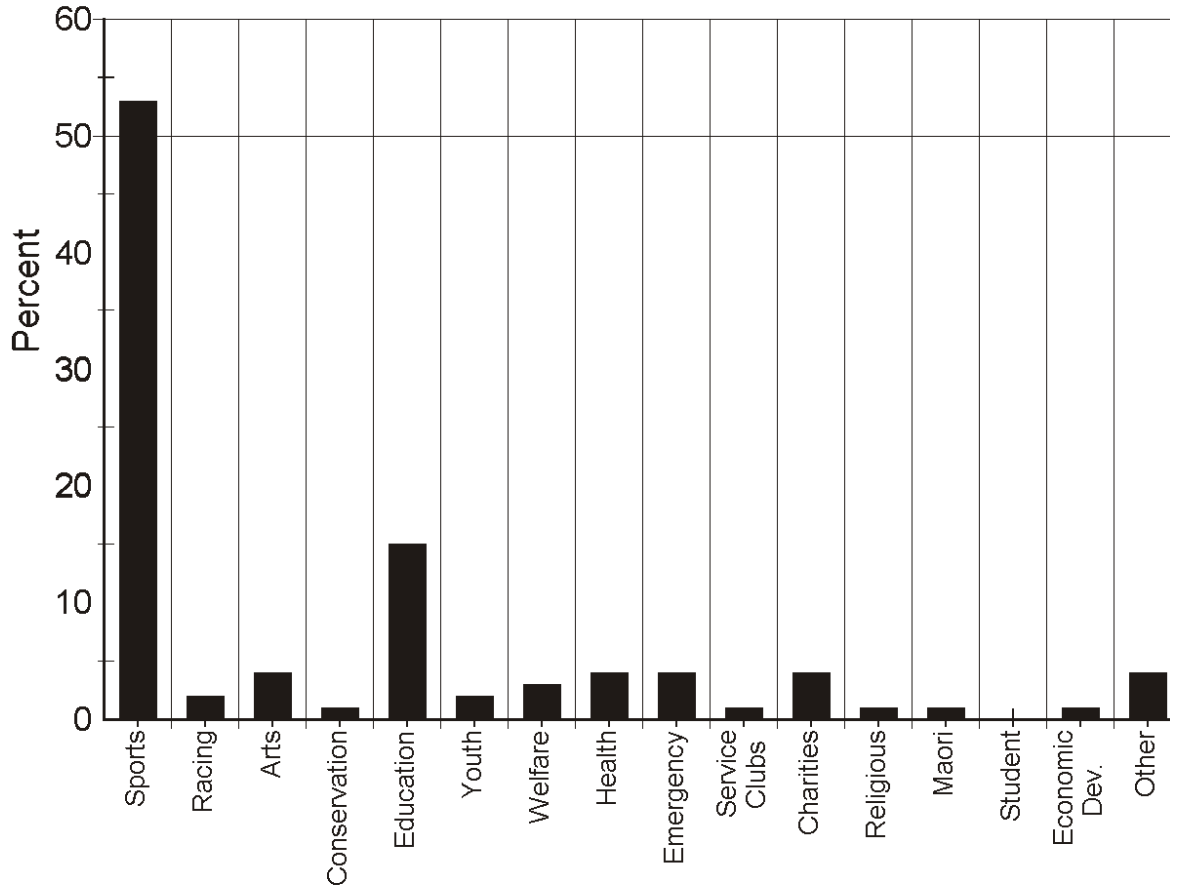


Figure 1. Gaming Machine Numbers

Levels of participation in gambling by New Zealanders



**Figure 2. National pattern of distribution of funds from Pokie machine profits, 2002**

Non-casino pokie machine venues at June 2003.

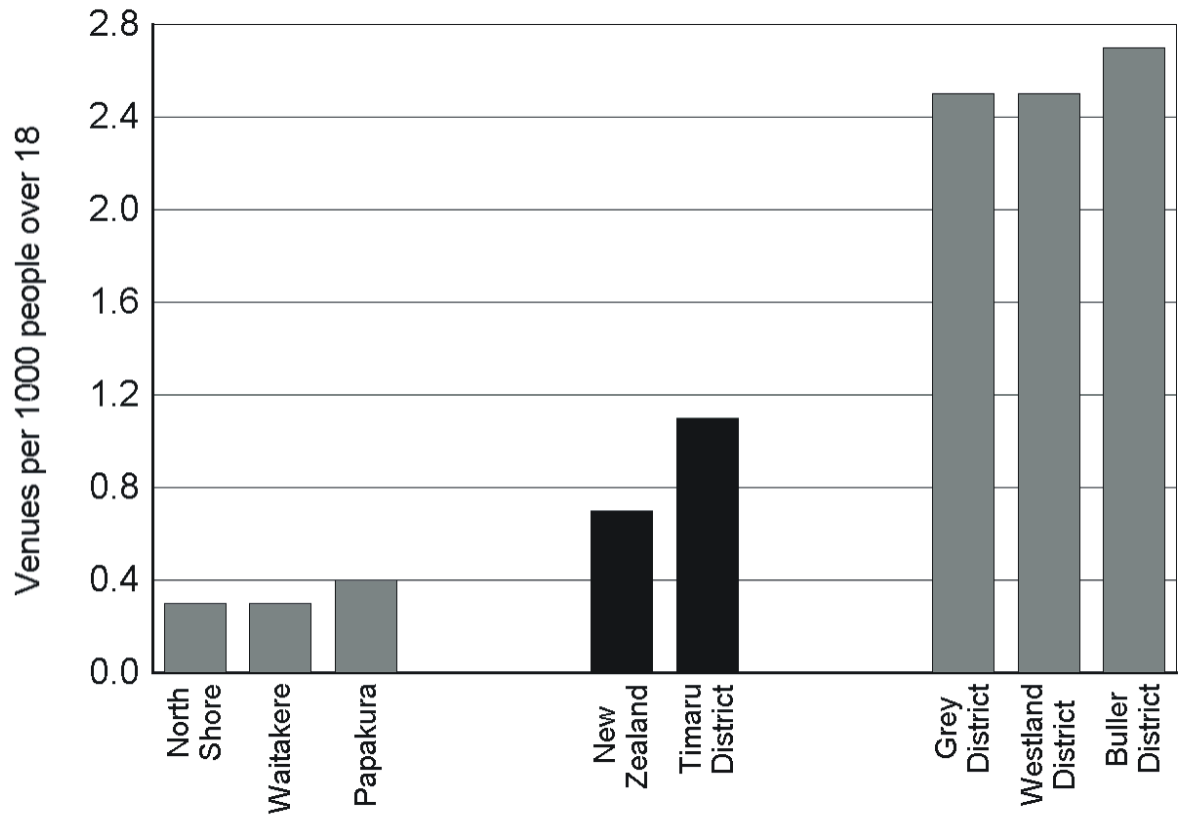


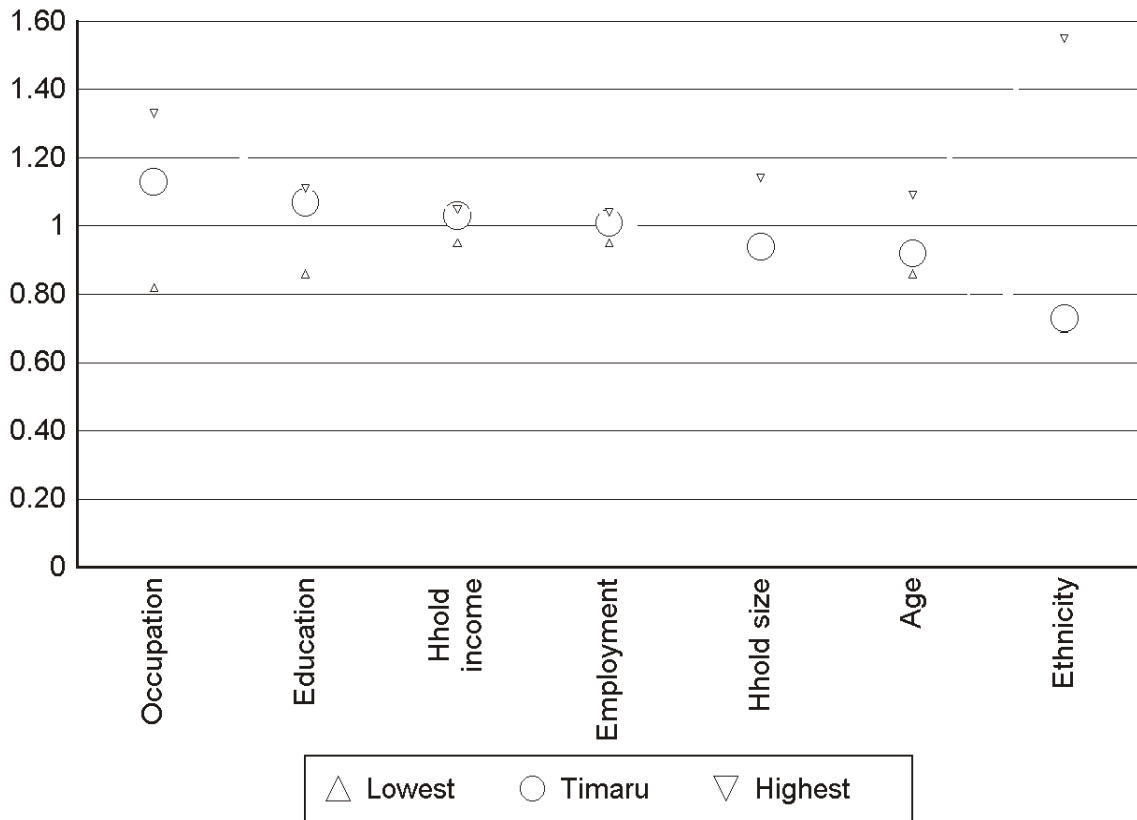
Figure 3. Comparing Timaru District with the rest of New Zealand for non-casino pokie machines at June 2003.

***Incidence of problem gambling in Timaru***

Based on Timaru District's population aged 18 years and over of 32,571 we estimate:

1. Between 1,800 and 5,000 other people affected by problem gamblers.
2. Between 360 and 1,000 problem gamblers.

Relative vulnerability to problem gambling of the population of Timaru District.



**Figure 4. Showing the relative vulnerability to problem gambling of the Timaru District population when compared with the population of New Zealand.**

3. *What lessons have been learnt about the effectiveness of legislating SIA on this occasion?*
  - a. Variability in the perceptions of problems and therefore the resources/time devoted to SIA;
  - b. Most TLAs had very little, if any, local data to feed into their analyses;
  - c. Unlikely to have established a process for on-going monitoring and review;
  - d. In many cases, the TLA experience of SIA will have been much less beneficial to policy making than it might have been, had there been no constraints on time and knowledge.

4. *What can be done over the next 2 years to improve the usefulness of SIA when it comes time to review the original GVPs?*

Looking at the main issues encountered in 2003

- a. The timing issue should be totally avoidable in future - no-one has to wait the passing of legislation;
- b. Uncertainty about options and discretions should no longer be a problem; the second time around it is not new;
- c. The other two issues require attention.
  - (i) local SIA capacity;
  - (ii) Lack of current information for the local community

***Building local SIA capacity***

1. Establish a community-based forum to:

- a. Initiate/coordinate programme of monitoring;
- b. Work with local gambling providers to promote good practice in responsible gambling;
- c. Promote improvements in capacity and accessibility of personal counselling services;
- d. Work with professionals (gambling addiction) to promote general public awareness as well as specific skills.

SIA familiarisation/training

- a. Address local information needs

Establish monitoring procedures for:

- a. Problem gambling;
- b. Benefit distribution;
- c. Venue policies on harm minimisation;
- d. 'reasonable steps'.

Institute periodic ratepayer surveys on:

- a. Gambling participation;
- b. Knowledge of problem gambling;
- c. Preferences for benefit distribution;
- d. Attitudes to current policy settings or need for change.