

"GAMBLING'S INFLUENCE ON AGENCIES UNDERMINES REAL CHANGE"

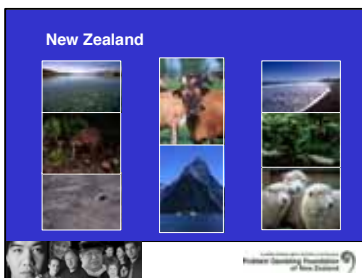


John M Stansfield
Chief Executive Officer
Problem Gambling Foundation of New Zealand



Thank you for the invitation to speak tonight; as you probably already guessed from my accent, I am not from the USA. My name is John Stansfield and I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Problem Gambling Foundation of New Zealand.

It is always a pleasure to be in back in the States and a pleasure to be amongst good people concerned for their communities and fighting the good fight.



For those of you who have not had the opportunity to visit our beautiful country allow me a few moments for some shameless promotion for our tourist industry before I scare you with our gambling environment. 4 million people and 40 million sheep, a country where men are men and sheep are nervous. Over 12 million hectares are devoted to farming. Over 6 million hectares of native forests and a further 2 million for plantation forestry. We have mountains and lakes, a fabulous coast and the greatest beaches.



This is where I live on Waiheke Island just 35 minutes from downtown Auckland.

Gambling in New Zealand

- 87% of those seeking help for gambling problems cite pokies as their primary problem
- No pokies, no problem
- Pokies predominantly sited in the poorest communities
- Pokies are in bars, clubs and 6 casinos



Here are just a few facts about VLT's, EGM's or pokies as we call them in NZ. In New Zealand 87% of those seeking help with gambling problems have a primary problem with pokie machines. The machines are the problem, no machines no problem. That appalling statistic is worse in some communities over

96% of indigenous women seeking help cite pokies as the main problem.




We have pokies in Bars and clubs and in the six casinos. Most are in bars and clubs and these are highly distributed. Outside our 6 Casino's there are 1800 venues for playing the pokies. As bad as that sounds it's an improvement just two years ago we had over 2100 venues and we expect to continue to reduce

the availability of this dangerous product.

Question ...

Are governments, problem gambling researchers and treatment agencies conspiring with the gambling industry?



The question I want to pose to you tonight is: "Are Governments, Problem Gambling researchers and treatment agencies conspiring with the gambling industry"?

In discussing this question I want to look at who the real beneficiaries of the gambling industry are and how addiction as a conceptual framework allows and encourages us to blame the victims of gambling while exonerating the perpetrators of the harm.

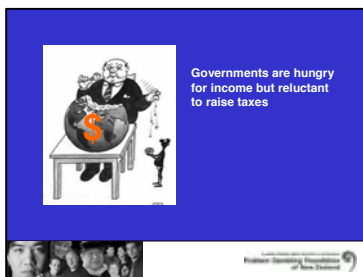
I want to start by looking first of all, at who are the beneficiaries of the gambling industry.



Well, I guess the first candidate is an absolute no brainer, and that would be the gambling industry itself, which is doing very nicely thank you very much, although there has recently been a veritable tidal wave of tears over the impact of the smoke free legislation (New Zealand's most effective gambling harm minimization measure to date) its still profitable in a way that robbers don't even dream of.



In my country the gambling industry will turn over, over \$12 billion this year. Gamblers, many of them the poorest members of society who are least able to lose the money, will lose over \$2 billion. In order to declare these handsome profits, it is necessary to externalize some of the costs. In New Zealand this year, 5000 people will be convicted of gambling related crime. As in Australia, gambling now rates as the second highest motivator for serious property crime. Legions of families will be torn apart, careers destroyed and in the worst cases, people will take their lives in despair. These social and economic costs need to be counted and the industry should be sent the bill. It's a very profitable industry only because it does not pay the true costs of its operation. Something is has in common with other extractive non-sustainable industries. As coalmining strip mined the environment so gambling strip mines the social fabric of our communities and just like mining often leaves a huge mess behind which it does not clean up.



The second major beneficiary of the gambling pandemic is Governments. Governments hungry for income but reluctant to raise taxes. But gambling is a tax. It's a tax on the poor. It is a deeply regressive tax which transfers wealth from the brown to the white from the women to the men from the poor to the rich.



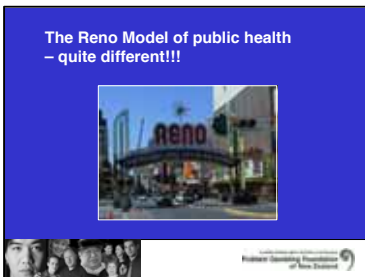
In New Zealand Governments are both the provider of gambling services, the legislator of the gambling environment, the regulator of the gambling practice, the enforcer of those regulations and a huge beneficiary by way of gambling duties and taxes of the industry. Now as the Australian Productivity

Commission Bendigo Report so clearly shows, Governments and communities do not have a net benefit from the gambling industry. The harm outweighs the income. There is really only one winner in gambling and it isn't the people, it isn't the gambler and it isn't the Government. That's right, it's the gambling industry. I know of no reputable study which suggests that governments and communities are better off as the result of gambling.

The community benefit lie continues to be told and must be vehemently challenged and resisted at every opportunity. If we fail to defeat the lie we allow an environment in which weak or greedy regulators will ensure gambling prospers and proliferates.

A further group of beneficiaries are the burgeoning problem gambling research industries. Some of these well meaning folks chart a long and profitable career for themselves and their colleagues as they decide what best to do about this terrible scourge of gambling. I had an interesting discussion with a problem gambling researcher at a conference recently. He was telling me we would need a lot of money and several years to research safety in gambling machines to prove they harmed people and then more money and years to work out how to make them safer. I thought he was off beam but I went on to a second problem gambling conference where an eminent international researcher mused that what was really needed was a 50 year longitudinal study. That's a lot of salary. I wonder what indicators they will use,

number of funerals attended??



Perhaps the most disturbing trend in Problem Gambling research has its roots right here in the USA it's called the Reno model.


Differentiating NZ and Reno models of public health

	Reno	NZ
Paradigm	Clinical/pathological	Social/public health Public health/health promotion
Focus	Deficits, illness, gambling settings, professional, expert, top down	Capacity, resilience, empowerment, total environment, democratic
Intervention Methods	Treatment, referral, information	Community action, policy dev, advocacy, capacity and skills-building
Populations of interest	Pathological gamblers, at-risk customers	Whole communities, families, cultural groups, age groups, all customers
Cultural dimension	Not mentioned	Bicultural/Treaty/Maori, Pacific, Asian
Attitude to industry	Friendly	Wary
Research	Positivist, epidemiological	All types, incl. action, evaluation, qualitative

the answer to all problems Key concepts

Reno model of public health: Concepts and language

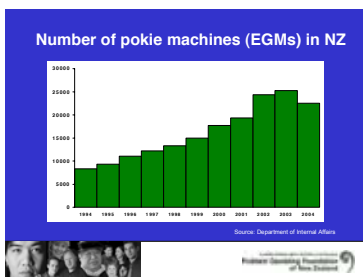
- Responsible gambling
- Reduce or eliminate potential harms
- Harm = diagnosable disorder
- Risk (= frequency of playing)
- Target = 1-2% pathological gamblers
- Professional care
- Prevention by targeting vulnerable community members
- Science: empirical evidence, research, precise epidemiology
- Psychometric instruments to detect harm
- Accurate referral, clinical evaluation and treatment matching
- Allow industry to pursue its legitimate recreational role
- Minimizing interference to healthy gamblers
- Prevention (no promotion)
- Clinical model



Now this treatment should get you better. You'll be back on the machines in no time.

Finally there are people in organizations committed to helping problem gamblers. The Problem Gambling Sector. Now I can speak with some authority about this. I lead the largest problem gambling organization in the world, PGF has 67 staff, a mirror tower in the business district in Auckland Branches throughout the land and I can tell you we owe it all to pokie machines.

Are People in Washington worried about illegal drugs, yeah people at home are hysterical about them. We have even had some very high profile crime. Not as much crime as generated by gambling however. The reason pokies could get more dangerous than drugs is that pokies are legalized normalized and advertised. That's a whole lot of green lights for a dangerous industry.



Pokie machines have been **the** growth in gambling in New Zealand. So it was with some surprise as I

The Reno model is a huge confidence trick on communities and will advance the interests of the gambling industry and researchers at the expense of the rest of us. The Reno model has few friends in NZ and has been under scrutiny in Canada nevertheless it is being sold at conferences all around the world as

I am a great believer in research but not as an excuse for inaction.

We don't allow trucks and cars into our country unless the manufacturers can prove they are safe. Why not pokies? Why has the burden of proof been lifted from industry and dropped on the community? Where is consumer protection laws? Why has it not been applied?

joined that organization that I found that pokie machines themselves had never really been the organizations target.

Problem gambling agencies have largely grown up under an addictions paradigm. Now the addictions paradigm is well known, it is well researched, it's been around for

Beneficiaries: researchers & agencies

- Research is important, but not as an excuse for inaction
- The Reno Model: advances the interests of the gambling industry and researchers
- Agencies have grown from a disease model, to an addictions model – but that doesn't focus on the real problem ...

Problem Gambling Research Centre of New Zealand

some time in alcohol and drugs, its thought to be a much better, more informed model than the disease model which came before it. But the problem with the addictions paradigm when related to problem gambling is it simply doesn't focus on the real problem

Professor Mark Dickerson reminds us “For regular players the issue is not one of pathology but the strong emotional/physiological responses during the session of play is a natural human experience. The expectation that the player will be able to continue to make controlled informed, rational decisions during such a session of continuous gambling is ill founded.....The experience of impaired control is for the average player part of the pleasurable experience of gambling.”

The addictions paradigm inevitably draws us to the conclusion that we are dealing with some poor individual whose life has been wrecked because they themselves have some personal, social, and educational deficits. That is the problem exists because of the person, and that persons weakness. That's frankly arrant nonsense. The problem exists because the gambling machine does exactly what the gambling machine was designed to do, entrance people and rob them of their money.

Beneficiaries: researchers & agencies

- The addiction's paradigm focuses on the individual – that the problem exists because of a person's weakness
- Inside the addictions paradigm you can't solve the problem
- Have agencies have become accomplices to the industry?

Problem Gambling Research Centre of New Zealand

The addictions paradigm is wonderfully comforting thing, if you are in the treatment profession, because you can don your white coat and you can go out and cure people. You can save the sick, you can heal the hurting. That is enormously rewarding. Very good people do it, all over the place. But inside the

addictions paradigm, you cannot solve the problem. You are condemned to forever

sitting at the bottom of the cliff, in your bright little ambulance, waiting to clean up the carnage. You are the handmaiden to the industry, walking round behind it with your mop and your bucket., cleaning up the mess and sanitizing the scene.

Before pokie machines, we didn't have women with gambling problem in New Zealand. Now they are there in their hundreds and thousands. Did they all suddenly become weak. Did they all suddenly lose their way and become sick addicts or were they suddenly confronted with a very unsafe product, doing precisely what it intended to do. Part them from their money as quickly as possible.

There are a number of problem gambling agencies in New Zealand, not nearly as many as are in The USA but there is some competition for ideas about how you do things. Many of those agencies are silent on gambling harm, they weep quietly in their rooms for the damaged and wait for the next cheque to arrive, so that they continue their holy and good work of curing the sick. To this extent, they are accomplices to the industry. They are engaged in a conspiracy of silence. Exposed on a daily basis to the horror, that is gambling harm, they do not speak out for fear they will not be funded.

It is time for those agencies to speak up. If they truly care about the carnage they see they must speak out. In any place where the public has been told the truth about pokies restrictive legislation has resulted. Why are our treatment agencies so quiet and in some cases even supporting sectors of the industry in their tussles with regulators? Is it because they work from an outdated paradigm that sees this public harm as a private trouble? Is it because those agencies are hopelessly compromised by the crumbs of income they receive from the industry? Is it that advocacy is too scary and treatment is too safe?



One solution to this is to embed advocacy within treatment. To reenvision and redefine treatment. This means adding empowerment to treatment and shifting the goalposts.

Under the old paradigm it may have been a success if John left treatment with greater control over his gambling or that John no longer gambled.

Under the new paradigm a success is when

John left treatment with greater control over his gambling or that John no longer gambled.

John has a greater resiliency and ability to solve life's problems.

John understands gambling in a social, economic, political and cultural context.

AND

John understands that what happened to him when he lost his family, his job and was criminalized was not an accident but a deliberate and known outcome by a pernicious industry that was laughing all the way to the bank.

At one level John tells his story in a new way and at another John is angry and active and informing his community.

Gambling is harming all the community not just those with gambling problems only an approach which focuses beyond the individual will eliminate the harm..

It is time to stand up and tell the truth. If pokies disappeared from New Zealand tomorrow 80% to 90% of my organization work would disappear too.

So to would an unsustainable and unethical level of harm.

Our mission is to eliminate harm caused by gambling.

