

## **Media release**

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### **Children going hungry because of pokies**

The Problem Gambling Foundation says more needs to be done to stop children in the Far North going hungry because their parents are spending money playing on the pokies.

The New Zealand Herald reports today of the frustrations of Te Aupouri Maori Trust Board, which has been feeding children at five schools in Kaitaia because "Mums and Dads are investing in the poker machines."

Graham Aitken, Problem Gambling Foundation Acting CEO, says so often it is the children that are the innocent victims.

"The children aren't getting fed because the money that puts food on the table is being fed into the pokie machines," he says.

"The impact of problem gambling on families doesn't stop at poverty – it can lead to family breakdown, domestic violence, suicide and crime."

Mr Aitken says there is a significant social cost to communities from pokie machines.

"We want to see less of these dangerous machines in communities to reduce the harm that they cause," he says.

"Over 40 percent of the money lost on pokie machines comes from people who have a problem with gambling on pokies."

Kaitaia and surrounds has 81 pokie machines in six venues. Nearly \$4 million per year is lost on pokie machines in the region.

The Problem Gambling Foundation believes people should have more say in the number of pokie machines and venues in their community.

"We welcome the Government's plans for reviews on gambling legislation in the near future," Graham Aitken says.

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