

Smoking and gambling

Smoking and gambling in New Zealand

In 2010 the NZ Gambling Commission overruled the Department of Internal Affairs and allowed a suburban venue run by The Lion Foundation to put pokie machines in an outdoor smoking area.

In 2011 the Commission is now allowing the casino in Auckland to build a “smoking deck” complete with pokie machines.

The Department of Internal Affairs submitted in the original appeal that pokie machines should not be located in smoking areas because the Secretary of Internal Affairs is;

“...required by the Gambling Act to be satisfied that the risks of problem gambling at a venue are minimised – and there is a correlation between smoking and problem gambling”.¹

The Commission however, claimed “The condition is unlikely to have any materially beneficial effect on the risk of problem gambling at the venue”.²

This view is not consistent with current research, or with practices in other countries. In Australia, which has some of the most liberal gambling laws in the world, there was outrage in South Australia as Adelaide Casino tried to introduce “alfresco gambling” in smoking areas. The Australian Office of the Liquor and Gambling Commission quickly intervened to shut the machines down. The Australian Gambling Minister at the time said;

“The Government has a very clear policy that we do not allow smoking in areas where poker machines are being played”.³

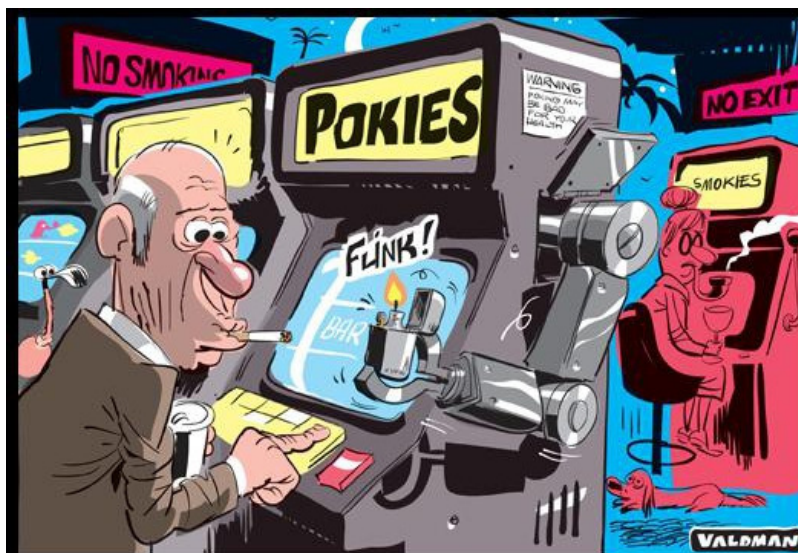


Figure 1: Valdman. 2010 Adelaide Now

There is extensive evidence that performing several addictive behaviours simultaneously magnifies the addictive effects. One study found that smokers ‘craved’ gambling more than non smokers and had lower perceived control over their gambling.⁴

Another study showed the complex mechanisms operating between anxiety, smoking and gambling.⁵

“Smoking is a powerful reinforcement for the trance-inducing rituals associated with gambling”.⁶

In a 2006 Ministry of Health report stated that 58% of problem gamblers smoked compared to just 24% in the rest of the population.⁸

Another MOH report showed that problem gamblers were 3 times more likely to be daily smokers, and they stated that they increased the amount they smoked while they gambled.⁹

New Zealand Gambling Helpline calls decreased by **33%** after the Smoke-free Act came into law.

Venues allowing smoking and gambling are not tolerated in Australia, but they are allowed in NZ

Smokers are 5 times more likely to be gamblers by the age of 21¹⁰

After the Smoke-free Environments Amendment was introduced in December of 2004 gambling losses decreased by 3% between 2004 and 2006, from \$2.04 billion to \$1.98 billion.

Comorbidity refers to when two or more problems occur at the same time, like drug addiction and depression. The evidence suggests that a high proportion of people presenting for help with gambling are also dealing with other health or behavioural issues.

A recent review of the scientific studies of the co morbidity of tobacco smoking and gambling concluded that;

“Although conclusive evidence is lacking, a growing body of literature suggests that smoking and gambling might share similar neurobiological, genetic and/or common environmental influences.”¹¹

The Australian Productivity Commission (APC) suggested that if a person is a smoker they are five times more likely to be gambler by the age of 21 years.¹⁰

The APC also reports on a survey found that the majority of clients with problem gambling also experienced between four and seven other issues in addition to their gambling. A study by the Problem Gambling Research and Treatment Centre in Victoria into the risk and protective factors associated with problem gambling found that:

- ◆ 36 per cent had a ‘severe mental disorder’
- ◆ the rate of ‘likely hazardous alcohol use’ was 50 per cent
- ◆ the risk of depression was 71 per cent
- ◆ the rate of daily smoking was 57 per cent

“An awareness of co-occurring behaviours inspires an obvious targeting strategy for gambling disorder prevention, early intervention and screening efforts.”¹⁰

In the UK recent analysis of the British Gambling Prevalence Survey showed that:

- ◆ cigarette smokers were significantly more likely to gamble in the past year compared to non-smokers
- ◆ cigarette smokers were over three times more likely than non-smokers to be a problem gambler
- ◆ the prevalence rate of problem gambling among those with poor health were over three times as likely to be a problem gambler compared to those with good health.¹¹

It was reported to the Australia Productivity Commission that when smoking bans were introduced in New South Wales, a significant share of gamblers having a break to smoke outside the venue did not return to the venue for further gambling.¹⁰

This was because when they left the machine for a smoke they ‘broke the trance’ and decided to go home.

The results in Australia have further implications as the effects of bans on smoking inside venues can provide useful evidence about the helpful impacts of forced breaks in play for all people using pokie machines.

It is the position of the Problem Gambling Foundation of New Zealand that to allow gambling and smoking to happen concurrently in a venue has the potential to cause harm.

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