

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The online gambling environment is fast evolving, and online operators are finding new and innovative ways to attract and retain customers. Online gambling is one of the riskier forms of gambling as it is continuous, accessible 24/7, and easy to hide.

However, in Aotearoa New Zealand, the Gambling Act 2003 is outdated, and we are yet to regulate offshore online gambling. It is not illegal for New Zealanders to be gambling offshore, but we remain largely unprotected from the harms that are associated with overseas online gambling.

Our rōpū is seriously concerned about the level of gambling harm in Aotearoa New Zealand due to online gambling, particularly unregulated offshore online gambling. We consist of the AUT Gambling and Addictions Research Centre and gambling harm service providers: PGF Services, Asian Family Services, Mapu Maia, Purapura Whetu Trust, Te Piki Oranga, and Whare Tiaki Hauora. Collectively, we provide specialist gambling harm support services to mainstream, Māori, Pasifika, and Asian communities across the motū, and conduct research to inform policy and professional practice.

Over the years, we have seen more clients, their whānau, friends, and wider communities who are being negatively affected by offshore online gambling harm. Offshore online gambling harm is a widespread public health issue, yet there is no system in Aotearoa that records offshore gambling activity. More importantly, services are not adequately funded to provide comprehensive support to those experiencing online gambling harm like the other main forms of gambling.

We agree in principle with the Government's intention to regulate offshore online casino gambling, but harm minimisation and consumer protection must be at the forefront of any regulation.

The purpose of this Position Paper is to provide the Government and other stakeholders with key evidence-based recommendations that will maximise consumer protection and reduce harm from online gambling in Aotearoa New Zealand. We hope that our recommendations will provide a framework for the Government to develop regulations that are fit-for-purpose and prioritise the prevention and minimisation of online gambling harm to keep all New Zealanders safe.