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Legislative Statement for the First Reading of the Online Casino Gambling Bill

Presented to the House of Representatives in accordance with Standing Order 272

This legislative statement is presented to support the First Reading of the Online Casino Gambling Bill introduced to the House on 30 June 2025.

The Online Casino Gambling Bill will regulate online casino gambling in New Zealand to facilitate a safer and regulated online gambling market, prevent and minimise online gambling harm, limit the opportunities for crime and dishonesty, and provide protections for consumers.

Background

Online casino gambling is already well established in New Zealand; however, the market is currently unregulated. This legislation will strengthen our ability to control advertising, set harm minimisation requirements, provide consumer protections, raise revenue for the Crown, and require contributions to the cost of New Zealand services to prevent and treat gambling harm.

Policy intent

The Bill establishes a licensing regime for online casino gambling. It prohibits the conduct and advertisement of unlicensed online casino gambling.

As most online casino gambling is conducted by offshore entities, the Bill has explicit extra-territorial application. The Bill also empowers active co-operation and information sharing with overseas regulators for compliance monitoring and enforcement purposes.

Licensing

The Bill establishes a three-stage competitive licensing process to determine who may apply for a licence and the amount payable for a licence. Licences will be granted for up to three years with a right of renewal for up to five years. Up to 15 licences will be issued in the first regulatory period.

Provisions are made for the appeal of decisions to refuse to grant a licence or suspend or cancel a licence.

The Bill permits licensed operators to advertise, subject to restrictions which will be set out in regulations. The purpose of permitting licensed operators to advertise, with restrictions, is to attract customers to regulated online casino platforms, rather than unregulated platforms.

Duties and other requirements

The Bill requires all licensed operators to verify that consumers are at least 18 years old, to exclude problem gamblers and to take all reasonable steps to ensure the risk of harm from gambling is minimised.

Other requirements are ensuring that the gambling platform is operating and available, displays a registration icon and plays a registration audio mark, and that operators collect and retain specific information. Operators are also prohibited from offering credit for online casino gambling.

The Bill also provides a high-level complaints framework, which sets out requirements for licensed operators' complaints processes and provides for complaints to the Secretary.

The Secretary will be required to maintain a public register of operators and licences.

Compliance and enforcement

The Bill provides the Secretary with the power to monitor licence holder's compliance with licence conditions and other legislative requirements, obtain information, and detect, investigate and take action against breaches. The Bill allows the Secretary to suspend or cancel licences as well as use a range of enforcement tools to drive compliance with legislative requirements.

The Bill provides for an offence of placing a bet on behalf of a person under 18 years.

Regulation making powers

The Bill establishes regulation making powers including for harm prevention and minimisation, consumer protection, and record-keeping, advertising and marketing. Regulation making powers also cover regulations relating to fees, levies, or charges to enable cost recovery, as well as minimum standards relating to online casino gambling technology.

Consequential amendments

The Bill makes several consequential amendments including to the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Financing of Terrorism Act 2009 to make licensed operators "reporting entities" under that Act and to amend the definition of "transaction" to include online gambling transactions. This will allow for better identification of suspicious activity and support anti-money laundering outcomes.

The Bill also includes consequential amendments to the Gambling Act 2003, the Gaming Duties Act 1971, the Tax Administration Act 1994, and the Gambling (Problem Gambling Levy) Regulations 2025.

Legislative matters

The Bill currently holds a category 3 priority on the 2025 Legislation Programme, meaning it is a priority to pass by the end of 2025.