

Community Action Project for the Reduction of Gambling-Related Harm in the Waikato Area

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Introduction

Te Runanga O Kirikiriroa was successful in tendering for the Community Action Project for the Reduction of Gambling-Related Harm in the Waikato Area. An Urban Maori Authority established in 1987 to “*improve the holistic health and wellbeing of Maori and Pacific Island Peoples in the Hamilton City area*”, this project was amongst the first to be conducted by the newly opened Research and Development Unit of the organisation.

In December 2002, the project was officially launched by the Mayor of Hamilton City at the Hamilton City Council Reception Lounge. The large number of attendance by representatives of a wide range of organisations indicated from the outset, the level of interest in both the issue of gambling, and the project itself.

Since that time, the Research and Development Unit (RDU) of Te Runanga o Kirikiriroa (The Runanga) have completed this project. In doing so, we have completed the only project of its kind in the Waikato area.

It is with great pleasure that we present the findings of this project.

Background

This project was established for the purposes of contributing to the Public Health Goals of the Problem Gambling Committee. Eight months in duration, the underlying themes were very broad and included that the project would:

Promote increased knowledge, responsible choices and community participation in relation to gambling issues and the minimisation/resolution of gambling problems by individuals, tangata whenua, communities and industry;

Protect all groups from gambling-related harm, including a refinement of approaches for population groups, through responsible gambling policies, community support programs and public safety approaches;

Prevent gambling-related problems in individuals and groups through public awareness, early identification of problems and the provision of information, counseling and other interventions.

Aims

The aims of this project were to:

- Work for the reduction of gambling related harms in Waikato communities through the stimulation, initiation and co-ordination of activities that would result in an understanding of the harmful impact of gambling activities in the Waikato and the development of co-ordinated community approaches that would contribute to building resilience to gambling problems and harm in individuals, families, whanau and Waikato communities; and,
- In particular, the Research and Development Unit of Te Runanga o Kirikiriroa would work and engage with the Waikato communities to prepare these communities to ‘take ownership’ of the project so that gambling issues could be addressed and resolved from local perspectives.

In order to fully address these aims, a number of specific objectives to assist with the effective and efficient completion of this project were identified.

Objectives

The key objectives of this project were to:

- Collaborate with stake holders who have an interest and involvement in gambling issues; this will include community groups, health, education and social service providers, Hamilton City Council groups, Government agencies and the gambling industry;
- Work together with the stakeholders to identify the health, social service and economic issues associated with gambling and problem gambling issues in the Waikato areas;
- Collaborate with the community to consider and establish the most effective co-ordinating mechanisms to deliver services targeting gambling issues in the Waikato area;
- Develop a communications plan outlining resource development and a media strategy; and,
- Support Pacific Peoples' Addiction Services to carry out a communication plan on behalf of the Pacific Peoples communities.

Research Methodologies

There were two key methods used to complete this project. The first was the use of a kaupapa Maori approach. The second was the use of key aspects of qualitative research.

Data Collection Methods

There were two primary methods of data collection used for this project. The first was the use of hui with a wide range of individuals and organizations. The second method of data collection was through the use of focus groups and a community meeting.

Key Findings

The results of the data analysis highlighted a number of key strategies that included:

Education

This was at a range of levels from increased knowledge and information dissemination through to the establishment of a pilot education programme.

Personal or whanau-based strategies

This was either in the form of individual approaches such as limiting the time or amount of money for a gambling experience, through to whanau-based strategies such as whanau support, whanau awareness and increased knowledge to the whanau.

Increasing the visibility of key messages regarding gambling

Radio and television were identified as the primary mediums for distributing key messages. The ways that this could occur varied from a media campaign with different messages, through to the creation of documentaries, use of role models to promote messages and increasing the frequency of advertising regarding current treatment services.

Limitations of the Project

Due to a limited timeframe, this project conducted focus groups in specific communities, rather than all communities in the Waikato area. Development of a communication plan, or the key findings regarding this project was the key outcome. Creation of such resources and actual implementation of the same were beyond the scope of this project.

Recommendations

- As a result of the findings, it is recommended that:
- Development continue over an extended time period regarding the reduction of gambling-related harm in the Waikato area;
- Future work occurs regarding the development of strategies and policy identified by the communication plan (refer to section 4.6.4, pages 23 and 24);
- The strategies identified in this project provide clear information for the purposes of improving current policy and advice;
- The strategies identified in this project assist with future policy creation and development;
- That an appropriate level of funding be provided to future projects of this kind, given the community-based approach and the public health nature of this issue;
- That communication focused strategies be utilized regarding the reduction of gambling-related harm;

- Communities continue to be included in any future planning and development of strategies regarding the reduction of gambling related harm in the Waikato area; and,
- That an appropriate level of funding be designated for the purposes of the Pacific Peoples' strategy.