Invercargill
CITY COUNCIL

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Gambling Venues Policy



Invercargill City Council Gambling Policies Review 2026

Statement of Proposal

Invercargill City Council is reviewing its gambling policies, which we are required to do by law every three years.

This is a chance for the community to have their say on how pokies and TAB venues operate in our district. Although Council isn't responsible for licensing or regulating gambling venues, gambling venue operators have to get Council's approval before they can establish new venues, move existing venues, or transfer their licensed pokie machines.

Currently Council has a cap on the number of licensed gambling venues and pokie machines, and wont give approval for any increase in those numbers. However, in certain circumstances, Council will consider an application for an existing venue to relocate, or for two venues to merge, or for a corporate society to transfer its pokie machines from one licensed venue to another.

Council has two policies relating to gambling: one for Class 4 venues (pokies) and one for standalone TAB venues. The actual rules in both policies are very similar for both types of venue.

What is being Proposed to Change?

The first suggested change is to combine our two existing policies into one single policy. The rules for both TABs and Class 4 venues are very similar, and we always consult on both policies at the same time. There is no particular reason to maintain two separate documents. By combining them in a single "gambling venues" policy, it should also be more straightforward for members of the public to find and understand our rules around gambling.

Council considered two main options for the revised draft policy. First, to keep the current approach of having a cap on the number of venues and pokie machines, and to continue to consider applications to relocate or merge venues or to transfer machines from one venue to another. Second, to move to a sinking lid policy, which would mean that in addition to not allowing any new venues, Council would also no longer allow applications for relocations, mergers or transfers. This would mean that over time the number of venues and machines would naturally decline.

As part of its initial review, Council considered relevant information including the current data and statistics about gambling in the district, historic and national gambling trends, grants made by corporate societies from pokie revenue, and the rates and impact of gambling harm in our community. We also had some informal feedback from stakeholders including those in the gambling industry and those involved in harm reduction. See the report to the Community and Regulatory Committee on 13 October 2026 for more detail, and you can watch the Councillors' discussion in the recording of that meeting.

Following this initial review, Council has opted to consult on keeping our cap on the number of venues and pokie machines, as well as retaining the ability for operators to apply to relocate or merge existing venues or transfer pokie machines between venues. Other amendments have been made to the draft policy to provide clarity around application requirements. In effect though, this policy would maintain the status quo approach to gambling venues in Invercargill.

What do you think? Although Council has chosen an option for consultation, no final decision has been made. It is really important that we hear from the community, to help inform the right choice for Invercargill.

How can I make a Submission?

Consultation is open from 28 October to 29 November 2026. The easiest way to make a submission is through our Let's Talk website: https://letstalk.icc.govt.nz. Alternatively you can pick up a submission form from Te Hīnaki Civic Building on Esk Street, the Bluff Service Centre, the Invercargill Public Library or Murihiku Marae, or you can email us at policy@icc.govt.nz or call us on 03 211 1777.