



Arthritis NZ
Mateponapona
Aotearoa

Submission to the Governance and Administration Committee Select Committee from Arthritis NZ

**15th August 2025
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Arthritis New Zealand wishes to speak to this submission

Overview and concerns

Arthritis NZ has been in operation providing services and support to people affected by Arthritis since 1966. Today our services include provision of our helpline Arthritis Assist which deal with a range of issues affecting people with arthritis. We also run webinars led by experts on arthritis management, work with health professionals and organisations such as Pharmac, Health NZ and New Zealand Rheumatology Association and advocate on behalf of people affected by arthritis.

Over 750,000 people in this country have arthritis and Arthritis NZ is the community organisation that supports them. The most common forms of arthritis are

- Osteoarthritis- over 450,000 people diagnosed
- Gout arthritis- over 200,000 people diagnosed
- Rheumatoid arthritis- over 100,000 people diagnosed

In addition, there are a number of other less well known forms of arthritis such as, axial spondylarthritis, (including psoriatic arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis and other inflammatory arthritis), juvenile idiopathic arthritis and systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) also known as lupus.

More than 45,000 people are also estimated to have more than one form of arthritis.

It is important to note that gout is often not recognised as a form of arthritis when it is in fact the second most common form of arthritis and disproportionately affects Māori and Pacific due to a genetic predisposition.

This submission will focus on the issue of community funding that is received from local Gaming Trusts and the significant effect that the legislation may have upon the services provided by Arthritis NZ.

We are gravely concerned and ask the committee to seriously consider the impact this legislation will have upon community organisations that rely on Gaming Trust funding to provide essential services to the community.

Our recommendation

- We recommend that the committee expresses strong support for amending the legislation to require online casino operators to provide funding at the same levels to community groups as is required from Gaming Trusts.

We wish to appear in person to speak to our submission.

Current funding support from Gaming Trusts received by Arthritis NZ

- 1.1. Arthritis NZ receives approximately 20% of its funding from a number of community gaming trusts- This funding was used to help support our Arthritis Assist helpline and our online education programme
- 1.2. **Arthritis Assist** is our front-line service used by people needing assistance in a variety of ways. It provides information and support on all forms of arthritis and over the past 2 years has seen a 374% increase in the numbers of people seeking this support. On average 89% of callers report feeling that this service was helpful and 80.5% would recommend this service to others. Feedback received included *“I have suggested to 2 clients that they contact you in addition to a GP clinic visit”*
“It’s a great support system. Arthritis is a cruel disease and it’s hard to get support from GPs and friends and family who may not really understand how difficult and painful it can be”
- 1.3. **Our online webinar programme.** This provides opportunities for people with arthritis to access information about managing arthritis from wherever they live in New Zealand. These webinars are also recorded and added to our YouTube Channel These webinars are very well attended- for example a webinar on Hand Therapy featuring two professional hand therapists attracted 848 webinar registrations and 350 YouTube views.
- 1.4. The funding received from Gaming Trusts assisted us to provide these services and without such funding it will be much more difficult to keep providing them.

2 The impact of the Online Casino Gambling Bill

- 2.1** This proposed legislation allows for 15 overseas operators to be licensed with government receiving income from license fees, tax and GST. There is no requirement for licenses operators to return any funds to the community. This is a fundamental shift away from the model that has sustained many of our services.
- 2.2** Global evidence shows that online gambling is rapidly replacing traditional gaming machines. This trend is expected to accelerate in this country with no mechanism provided to replace the loss of funding we expect will follow this legislation.
- 2.3** Arthritis NZ will be particularly affected. Gaming Trust funding is significant for us as we only receive 20% of our income from contract funding through Health NZ/government. We will be forced to seek alternative funding to replace this, including increased government funding.
- 2.4** We note the Minister's assertion that we do not yet know what impact online gambling will have on Gaming Trust grants. Will she review and change the legislation if serious impact is evident? Can the Committee seek a response to this question?
- 2.5** We also note her comment that if community returns are required on top of fees and taxes New Zealand would become one of the highest taxed jurisdictions for online gambling, making licences less valuable. Gambling has had social licence in this country precisely because of community returns being seen as a rationale for gambling. The removal of a requirement to ensure there are continuing community returns will remove this social license for gambling.

3 Our recommendation

- We recommend that the committee expresses strong support for amending the legislation to require online casino operators to provide funding at the same levels to community groups as is required from Gaming Trusts.

Arthritis New Zealand wishes to speak to this submission