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| **Pause the Pokies – A National Health Promotion Campaign** |
| **Setting/problem**  Addictive non-casino pokies make up 37% of gambling losses, costing New Zealanders $870 million in the financial year 2016/17.  Pokies give players unrealistic impressions of their odds of winning, confuse people about how much money they have lost, and encourage sustained periods of gambling – often in the hope of recovering losses.  “Gambling causes over twice the amount of harm than chronic conditions such as osteoarthritis (2.1x) and diabetes (2.5x), and three times the amount of harm from drug use disorders.” (Measuring the Burden of Gambling Harm in New Zealand. Wellington: Ministry of Health 2017)  **Intervention**  A national health promotion campaign, Pause the Pokies, was developed for Gambling Harm Awareness Week 2018.  Venues with pokie machines were asked to turn off their pokie machines in recognition of gambling harm, enabling people to take a break and check their gambling. The campaign was designed to increase safety in gambling environments by working with hosts, to raise awareness of gambling harm in the community, and to promote alternative activities to gambling.  **Outcomes**  **81 venues and clubs from around Aotearoa participated in Pause the Pokies 2018.** Seven health services managed the initiative with their local venues. A network of health promoters was established around the country and visits to local venues were coordinated. This strengthened the relationship between the health services and the venues.  With a view to increase community awareness, simultaneous alternative events were organised that would both engage people and generate local and national news stories. Four live music events were funded in different locations throughout Aotearoa to highlight that the space that pokie rooms occupy, was often the space for live music events which are currently a dying form of entertainment in many pubs and clubs.    **Implications**  A national campaign that strengthened relationships and encouraged venues to acknowledge gambling harm, was successfully conducted. Venues increased their harm minimisation efforts and were reminded to commit to providing safer environments.  All venues that sent in evaluations indicated that they were pleased with how Pause the Pokies went and expressed willingness to participate again next year.  **Preferred presentation format**  Oral presentation |