

**BEFORE THE NEW ZEALAND GAMBLING COMMISSION**

under the Gambling Act 2003

in the matter of an application by SkyCity Queenstown  
Limited for renewal of its Casino Venue Licence

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**AFFIDAVIT OF MICHELLE LEE-ANN BAILLIE**

*22* October 2025

**LeeSalmonLong**

Barristers and Solicitors

LEVEL 34 VERO CENTRE 48 SHORTLAND STREET

PO BOX 2026 SHORTLAND STREET AUCKLAND NEW ZEALAND

TELEPHONE 64 9 912 7100

EMAIL: tim.mullins@lsl.co.nz SOLICITOR ON RECORD: TIM MULLINS

EMAIL: bella.rollinson@lsl.co.nz SOLICITOR ACTING: BELLA ROLLINSON

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*MS AM*

## AFFIDAVIT OF MICHELLE LEE-ANN BAILLIE

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I, **Michelle Lee-Ann Baillie** of Tamahere, General Manager, solemnly and sincerely affirm —

### Introduction

1. I am the General Manager of SkyCity Hamilton.
2. I have been in this role for 11 and a half years, since April 2014. As part of my role, I am approved as an "associated person" under the Gambling Act 2003. My main functions are to lead the team and business to achieve our strategic and business goals by ensuring we have the best products, people and service, are compliant and responsible hosts, and are an involved and contributing member of our local community. I am also an "associated person" of SkyCity Queenstown. I was the General Manager of SkyCity Queenstown from May 2008 to April 2014.
3. In the organisational structure of SkyCity Entertainment Group Limited (the parent company of the group), the General Manager of Queenstown (Amanda Youell) reports to me, and the Hamilton team provide support to the Queenstown team in some areas including People and Culture, with a shared People and Culture Manager, Clare Ryan. I report to the Chief Operating Officer of the Group, Callum Mallett who reports to the Chief Executive Officer, Jason Walbridge.
4. I have 31 years' experience in the casino and hospitality industry in New Zealand. I have a BA in Political Science and Philosophy from the University of Canterbury and an advanced Certificate in Managerial Excellence from the University of Auckland. I began my career as a gaming machine attendant when Christchurch Casino first opened in October 1994. Fifteen months later, in January 1996, I joined SkyCity Auckland as a gaming machine supervisor, before holding roles as a gaming machine shift manager, gaming training manager (which included providing level 3 host responsibility training), as a hotel manager, and gaming projects manager.
5. I have completed various Host Responsibility training over the years, with more recent training including in-person Level 3 Host Responsibility on 14 July 2020, (now changed to Advanced Host Responsibility), an online Advanced Host Responsibility Knowledge Recall Test on 9 January 2025, and an online course, Host Responsibility Level 1 on 10 January 2025. I also complete annual training for AML/CFT with my most recent training including Customer Due Diligence on 31 January 2025 and Suspicious Activity Reporting on 1 July 2025.
6. In 2008 I became General Manager of the SkyCity Queenstown Casino, which extended to include management of the Wharf Casino in Queenstown when it was acquired by SkyCity in July 2013. Wharf Casino was then the smallest casino in New Zealand, and was licensed for 6 tables and 74 Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs). I was also a board member of the Queenstown Chamber of Commerce in 2012 and 2013.

7. I relocated to Hamilton in April 2014. Since starting my role here in Hamilton, the business has achieved positive growth, and has won numerous awards, for hospitality, strategy and marketing.<sup>1</sup> I was recognised as CEO of the Year in the Waikato Chamber of Commerce's Westpac Waikato Business Excellence Awards in 2017.
8. Outside of my core role, I was an Executive Committee Member of the Hamilton Central Business Association in 2015 and 2016, and a Director of Women in Gaming and Hospitality Australasia from 2018 – 2023. I am currently Co-Chair of the SkyCity Hamilton Community Trust, a member of Global Women in New Zealand and a member of the international committee for Global Gaming Women.
9. My affidavit describes:
- (a) My role overseeing the Queenstown Casino within the group;
  - (b) The history of the Queenstown Casino;
  - (c) The governance structure around the Queenstown Casino as part of the SkyCity group;
  - (d) The business, patronage, and staff; and
  - (e) An overview of compliance at Queenstown Casino, and within the group, especially in terms of Host Responsibility and AML/CFT.

#### **My role in relation to SkyCity Queenstown**

10. I have been providing leadership and management support to the General Manager of SkyCity Queenstown since 9 July 2018, when the position was changed to report to me. I have been able to use my previous direct experience in the position, along with my industry and leadership experience to provide guidance and support to the General Manager and wider team.
11. I was responsible for appointing Amanda Youell to the General Manager position in February this year, following the resignation of Jonathan Browne (known as Jono). Amanda's recruitment process was rigorous and thorough, with multiple interviews, psychometric testing, and engagements with the senior management of the SkyCity group.
12. Amanda was successful due to her hospitality and marketing experience, local knowledge, and ability to learn, as well as having high integrity and being action-focused. Her ability to bring fresh eyes has been valuable, particularly when combined with the significant experience of long-term employees and with strong gaming and casino knowledge within the

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<sup>1</sup> Best Social Responsibility Award – Hamilton Central Business Awards 2020; Best Improved CBD Site – Bowl and Social – Hamilton Central Business Awards 2017; Excellence in Marketing – NZ Hospitality Awards 2017; Strategy and Planning – Waikato Business Awards 2016; Hospitality Tourism Business of the Year – Waikato Business Awards 2015.

broader group. As General Manager, Amanda is expected to lead the team and to represent SkyCity within the Queenstown community.

13. I have spent the last few months supporting Amanda's induction into the casino industry following her appointment to the role. The senior management team are aware that this is her first role in the industry and have offered significant assistance to ensure that she has all the support that she needs in stepping into this role. Amanda has made good progress learning about the casino industry and took an active role in the implementation of Carded Play in Queenstown, particularly when Gaming and Cage Manager, Andrew Gray, was on leave.
14. My interactions with Amanda include weekly "one to ones" where we discuss recent activity, team performance, and key initiatives. I also support Amanda in attending regular business performance meetings, budget planning, and discussions on key projects, including the future direction of the property in Queenstown. I have increased delegated financial authority for Queenstown with larger projects coming through me and sometimes to COO Callum Mallett for approval. Amanda and the Queenstown team also receive ad hoc support from being part of the group, with many experts and specialist teams available to them.
15. Amanda has an experienced team on the ground in Queenstown, particularly in the compliance and operational fields with Andrew Gray, the Gaming and Cage Manager and Robert (Rob) Nicholls, the Security, Surveillance & Host Responsibility Manager. In turn they both have horizontal support from across the group for their respective fields, especially AML/CFT and Host Responsibility policies and procedures.

#### **History of SkyCity Queenstown Casino**

16. The original venue licence was granted to Queenstown Casinos Limited (as it was then called) under the prior legislation by the then Casino Control Authority on 18 June 1999.<sup>2</sup> The company was held 60% by SkyCity group until December 2012, when the balance of the shares were acquired from Skyline Enterprises Limited.
17. The corresponding Casino Operator's licence for Queenstown is held by SkyCity Casino Management Limited (**SCML**), granted by the Casino Control Authority on 7 May 1998. It does so under an agreement approved by the Casino Control Authority on 1 December 2000.<sup>3</sup>
18. The Queenstown Casino itself originally opened for business in December 2000.
19. As I mentioned, I became general manager in 2008 and moved to Hamilton in 2014. From May 2015 to December 2024, Jono Browne was the general manager. In the period before Amanda was appointed, Andrew Gray was acting general manager with my support (a role he has filled previously in-between GM appointments and during longer periods of leave). I understand that he is also providing evidence.

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<sup>2</sup> [Current Venue Licence](#).

<sup>3</sup> [Casino Operator's Licence](#).

20. The operator's licence allows for up to 86 EGMs and up to 12 table games, subject to some flexibility for substitute tables. In addition, the ratio of EGMs to table games must not exceed 15 to 1.
21. It is the smallest Casino operating in New Zealand, following the closure of the Wharf Casino. The gaming area is located on level 2 of Stratton House on Beach Street in central Queenstown. The property includes local favourite Wild Thyme Bar and Restaurant, which is known for great value food and occasional live entertainment, including comedy nights, Quiz nights, feature events throughout Winter Pride, and partner events, e.g. end of season celebration for the SkyCity Stampede ice hockey team. More recently, the Peacock Lounge has opened in the previous Horizon Room space, adding an upmarket cocktail lounge for private hire and events.
22. The Casino is open every day from 11am until 1am the following morning, except Christmas Day, Good Friday and it opens on 1pm on Anzac Day. Hours have varied over the years to meet customer demand and available staffing and can still be adjusted as required.
23. SkyCity Queenstown was initially designed by Moller Architects as a stylish boutique casino with a restaurant focused on show-casing local produce. The current Peacock Lounge was initially the Summit Room used for hosting events but was also able to be commissioned for VIP gaming as required. The property was refurbished in 2012 including new carpet and other soft furnishings to modernise the space. A further refurbishment is being scoped for 2026.
24. After obtaining 100% ownership, SkyCity refurbished the Summit Room to become the Horizon Room to align to similar branding in Auckland as a dedicated table games area for VIP gaming customers. With the change in customer mix related to COVID-19, the Horizon Room was used as a means to spread out EGMs. The EGMs were removed from the room earlier this year to the main casino area and the Peacock Lounge opened as a high-quality events/functions space in July. Enhancements have been made to signage at street level but, due to being a tenant in Stratton House (the building is owned by Trojan Holdings Limited), improvements outside of our leased footprint are not within SkyCity's direct control.

### **Governance**

25. The governance of the Queenstown Casino comes under that of the wider SkyCity group. As a relatively large, publicly listed company operating in New Zealand and Australia, the group has a comprehensive written set of policies and board committees to support the governance of all the parts of its business, SkyCity Queenstown included.<sup>4</sup> The major board committees are:
  - (a) Audit committee (financial, reporting, tax, and treasury);
  - (b) People and Culture (human resources, performance, remuneration, incentives, and succession planning);

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.skycityentertainmentgroup.com/about-us/governance/>



- (c) Governance and Nominations Committee (overall governance, committee appointments, director independence, conflicts of interest, ethics, compliance, host responsibility, and problem gambling programmes and initiatives); and
  - (d) Risk and Compliance Committee (risk assessment, management, monitoring of regulatory and legal compliance).
26. There is a charter for the board of the group itself, and charters for the committees, and various policies covering:
- (a) Board and Committee processes;
  - (b) Continuous Disclosure, Trading Policies, and Share Schemes (as a publicly listed company);
  - (c) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion;
  - (d) Ethical Sourcing and Modern Slavery;
  - (e) Various remuneration and incentive plans;
  - (f) Health and Safety;
  - (g) Whistleblowing; and
  - (h) External vendor terms.
27. The Casino has its own dedicated staff of around 50-60, whose managers are set out in the organisational structure provided with the application.<sup>5</sup> One important update to that is that, as I have mentioned, Amanda Youell has taken over Jono Browne's role as general manager.
28. Structured oversight and governance of the Queenstown property occurs on a regular schedule at various levels of the overall group:
- (a) Importantly, in the compliance area, Amanda and I attend the 6-weekly group-wide Host Responsibility Senior Management Group Meetings and the AML Senior Management Group Meetings as Members. I also attend a H&S Senior Management Group meeting.
  - (b) There are monthly financially focussed review meetings with senior management that Amanda and I attend. Callum, Murray McCall (GM Finance NZ) and sometimes the CFO Peter Fredricson and CEO Jason Walbridge are present at these.
  - (c) From a strategic perspective, Amanda and I attend regular Group Operations meetings and quarterly planning days called QBRs (these include all those directly reporting to Callum, but include Amanda due to her management of a site) and monthly updates

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<sup>5</sup> [Organisational Structure of SkyCity Entertainment Group \(in respect of SkyCity Queenstown\).](#)

from Jason/the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). I also attend SLT QBRs.

- (d) The Board oversees the operation of the Queenstown property via reporting for each meeting under each of the relevant areas. Callum attends board meetings to represent the operational side, inclusive of Queenstown.
29. Queenstown, like all group properties, has support from group functions (largely based in Auckland), including Legal, Risk, Internal Audit, Finance, Health & Safety, AML and Host Responsibility in the context of structured oversight and also ad hoc assistance as the need may arise.
30. The people dealing with each specialist field are available "horizontally" across the group. The various policies and compliance procedures for New Zealand properties (remembering that there is a differing regime in South Australia, where the Adelaide Casino is) are largely consistent, with relatively minor adjustments to account for the sizes of the sites – for example, some of the roles completing various duties are different.
31. In addition, Amanda and I have a regular weekly "one to one" meeting and then the two of us catch up with Callum, approximately once a month, separately from my one to one meetings with Callum.
32. SkyCity group has a Code of Conduct that it publishes, setting out the expectations for everyone on the team.<sup>6</sup> While there were predecessor policies for staff members, this new Code (from 2024) is available to and applicable to all staff members. It applies to everything we do, across the many policies and standard operating procedures that make up the detail of how all of the group's activities are conducted.

#### **The business, patrons, and staff**

33. Queenstown is a tourist destination, and the Casino, including both its gaming and hospitality aspects, forms part of the offering for many visitors. The majority of patrons are from out of town, while there is a minority of local patrons, many of whom are well known to the staff.
34. When I was manager on the ground in Queenstown, I do not recall many issues with patrons outside of some alcohol issues from time to time. Those were all managed well by the security staff. Since the foyer area is not a gambling area, is the only entrance, and is well staffed, there was little in the way of issues with minors trying to gain entry, although it has happened on occasion, usually due to a misunderstanding from Australian visitors of the different age limit to enter a casino in New Zealand.
35. Wild Thyme Bar and Restaurant is supported by both locals and tourists. It has long been a favourite destination for locals with a well-known group of retired businessmen meeting for lunch every Friday for many years, and locals popping in for lunch during the work day. Evening customers to the restaurant and new Peacock Lounge are mixed, with many enjoying a meal

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.skycityentertainmentgroup.com/media/uxajlutq/nz-code-of-conduct-2024.pdf>

or a break while also gaming, but others visiting for good value local produce or a delicious cocktail, to watch sport, attend an event, or enjoy occasional live entertainment.

36. Host responsibility issues with patrons were rare, predominantly due to customer mix. However, self-exclusions did occur from time to time. There were seldom concerns with AML/CFT compliance either. The small size and ease of observation of customers means that the staff are able to keep a good eye on all the patrons and detect any "problem gambling indicators" (PGIs).
37. My observation, following my taking up a reporting line from the Queenstown general manager in 2018, is that this has remained the position. It is borne out by the statistics for Queenstown's exclusions and reasons for turning patrons away, which I understand Amanda will produce with her evidence.
38. Mandatory Carded Play (MCP) went live in Queenstown on 8 July 2025 as part of SkyCity's ongoing commitment to customer care. It is going well to date and has had less impact in Queenstown than we initially thought due to a fairly frictionless sign up process and good support from the Queenstown team.
39. I will leave Amanda to give more detail on the present status of staff in Queenstown. However, I observe that there has always been a level of turnover in frontline hospitality staff, as with a lot of these types of businesses in Queenstown, where the team has a fair proportion of employees on work visas, rather than being permanent residents or citizens living locally long term. That said, many staff on visas have plenty of experience in the gaming industry overseas and a lot of the gaming team have been with SkyCity for some time.
40. Importantly, there are several senior staff members with longstanding experience at SkyCity Queenstown. Andrew Gray, who has been there for nearly 25 years (from day one) and Rob Nicholls, who started in 2008 (following a long career in Australia).

#### **Compliance: Host Responsibility and AML/CFT**

41. Both Host Responsibility and AML/CFT compliance are at the forefront for the group and the operation of the Queenstown Casino by SCML.
42. I understand that the relevant regulatory and government authorities consulted have no concerns with the persons associated with SkyCity Queenstown, nor the compliance records of the relevant companies.<sup>7</sup>
43. I make a few comments about these here, understanding that others will set out more details about how they implement compliance measures at Queenstown.

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<sup>7</sup> [Response from NZ Police](#); [Response from NZ Insolvency and Trustee Service \(MBIE\)](#); [Response from Companies Office \(MBIE\)](#); [Response from Department of Internal Affairs](#).

### *Host Responsibility*

44. As an organisation we place great importance on host responsibility and are proactive in our approach, recently introducing MCP across all our New Zealand properties, with Queenstown the first site to go live on 8 July 2025.
45. SkyCity Queenstown benefits from being part of SkyCity Entertainment Group which has a comprehensive harm minimisation framework and focus on customer care which is implemented at all our locations. I will leave it to Rob Nicholls to describe in more detail how things work on the ground at the Queenstown site, and the wider set of resources that go towards that function.
46. From my perspective, this area is a key priority. If Amanda had any concerns, then she would raise it in a one to one with me, or if it was significant enough, as it arose.
47. Formal audits of host responsibility compliance, responsible service of alcohol, and minors on the floor, are all within the structured reporting that are escalated to me and Callum.
48. The recently introduced MCP system acts as a direct control on the amount of time that patrons can spend gambling on EGMs, and enforces breaks, using a technology solution; and for table games, using a combination of technology and staff action. It was part of a suite of improvements (and associated significant investments) that were made by the group after it was uncovered that earlier technology measures intended to assist with continuous play (play over a certain threshold of time without a break) were not working as they should. The group acted swiftly once it was uncovered to deploy mitigation measures to ensure that continuous play was better detected in 2022. An application by the Secretary for Internal Affairs was made for a suspension of SCML's licence in respect of a patron from the Auckland Casino whose continuous play was not detected by the historic systems on several occasions. The application was resolved by agreement with the Secretary that the Auckland Casino would close for 5 days.

### *AML/CFT*

49. AML/CFT is serviced from a centralised team based in Auckland. If there are issues arising at Queenstown then these are reported to that team who review it. If there is anything that is not done correctly or needs to be followed up, then they will advise the Queenstown team. I will be notified if there are any issues or concerns that are not resolved by the team there. I have recently had input into the latest Enterprise Wide Risk Assessment for AML and have given feedback on both Hamilton and Queenstown. We also recently had input into the new AML strategy and code of practice.
50. I note that last year, SCML agreed to pay a penalty relating to largely (although not exclusively) historical AML/CFT matters that span the period from 2018–2023. Comprehensive steps have been taken to address the issues identified, implementing significant enhancements to its AML/CFT framework and compliance culture.
51. SkyCity Queenstown is a responsible casino operator and member of the local community. The business has an open and transparent working



relationship with the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) and a strong compliance history for nearly 25 years. Various audits have been conducted by the DIA with no material issues identified and areas for improvement promptly addressed.

#### **Charitable Trust and other contributions**

52. The Casino has always been a contributor to the local community in Queenstown, as an entertainment destination, employer, purchaser of local products and services, member of local organisations, and through community partnerships and funds distributed by the SkyCity Queenstown Community Trust.
53. The SkyCity Queenstown Casino Community Trust<sup>8</sup> is an independent charitable trust that receives funding under the premises licence. The rates set in the licence are 2.5% of the net profit of the Casino operation or \$100,000 per annum, whichever is greater. The independent trustees are Joanne Conroy, Darren Rewi, Anna Hiatt and Kate Cherrington. Previous General Manager, Jono Browne, was on the Trust as SkyCity Queenstown's representative and Amanda Youell has recently been appointed as a Trustee after successfully going through an independent interview process.
54. Since it was established, the SkyCity Queenstown Community Trust has distributed 709 grants, totalling more than \$2.73 million to charitable organisations in the Queenstown Lakes District. In the FY25 funding round, the Trust set out grants totalling about \$170,000 across Wanaka and Queenstown. The amounts have ranged between \$115,000 to \$178,000 over the past five years.
55. Outside of the funding for the independent Charitable Trust, the Casino is involved in sponsorship and support for a range of initiatives covering sports, environmental and community initiatives. We have previously supported Winter Festival, the Queenstown Jazz Festival, and the Gibbston Food and Wine Festival when they were operating and have had a long-standing relationship with Winter Pride (previously operating as Gay Ski Week). We are currently the naming rights partner of the SkyCity Stampede Men's Ice Hockey Team, sponsor of the Excellence in Community Contribution Award at the Queenstown Chamber of Commerce Business Awards, and support environmental initiatives including the Wakatipu Trails Trust and Bee the Change.
56. In addition, the Queenstown Casino pays its share of casino duty, the problem gambling levy, and the normal income and transactional taxes and levies of businesses in New Zealand.

#### **Concluding remark**

57. I am proud to oversee a capable team who take care to provide a safe and compliant casino environment and friendly service to tourists and locals in Queenstown. We appreciate the Commission's consideration of our

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<sup>8</sup> [Consolidated Deed of Charitable Trust - SkyCity Queenstown Casino Community Trust](#)

application for venue licence renewal and look forward to continuing to operate a successful boutique casino and supporting the local community.

AFFIRMED at Hamilton this 22<sup>nd</sup> day  
of October 2025 before me:



Michelle Lee-Ann Baillie

A solicitor of the High Court of New Zealand

Anna Humphries  
Solicitor  
Hamilton