

Written by Administrator  
Thursday, 04 April 2019 11:29 -

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SINGAPORE - After half a day spent in a casino at Marina Bay Sands (MBS), Mrs Irene Takushi, 68, had lost almost every cent she had on her, which amounted to \$2,000, to gambling.

The Singaporean, who is married to a Japanese-American and lives mostly in the US, had refused to leave the casino until she had had her fill, citing the recent [\\$50 uptick in levy fees for casino entry](#) which kicked in on Thursday (April 4), and which she blamed for her losses. Despite the higher fees, Mrs Takushi says she will not be deterred.

"I will come back tomorrow," she promised.

Out of the 19 people The Straits Times spoke to outside the casinos at Resorts World Sentosa (RWS) and MBS, aged 25 to 80, none welcomed the higher levies. Among them, 12 were women, and seven were men, and 11 were Singaporeans or permanent residents (PRs).

"It is hard for older people to pay," said senior Ong Boon Chin, 80.

Mr Ong, a retiree, is one of the fortunate few who managed to escape the higher levies by renewing his annual pass before the new prices kicked in. He comes to the MBS casino every morning, to spend time with a group of friends.

The new annual pass costs \$3,000, up from \$2,000, while the daily levies [now cost \\$150 instead of \\$100](#)

These charges apply only to Singaporeans and PRs and are intended to deter casual and impulse gambling by locals, said the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Social and Family Development.

The number of locals who visit the casinos each year was not revealed in the Tote Board's annual report for its 2017-2018 financial year.

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However, both casinos have received the green light to expand their gaming areas, by 2,000 sq m and 500 sq m, for MBS and RWS respectively. But the expansions can cater only to higher-tier non-mass market players, premium patrons who are mainly tourists, according to the authorities.

Foreigners have free entry to the casinos.

Five of the patrons polled said they would not be returning to the casinos because of the 50 per cent increase in price. Said a regular patron, Madam Judy Yap, 74, "This fee increase will affect casual players the most, especially us seniors who bet in small amounts."

Madam Yap said she would not be renewing her annual pass when it expires next year.

However, four remained undeterred by the increase.

A visitor to the casino at Resorts World Sentosa, who declined to be named, said: "\$150 is too high, but I have no choice. I will still go."

For others such as Mrs Takushi, the higher levies may be an incentive to take even bigger risks. "I paid \$150 already, so what? Might as well," she reasoned.

Gamblers wishing to seek help can call the National Council on Problem Gambling's hotline on 1800-6-668-668.

**Read more** <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/casino-goers-give-thumbs-down-to-latest-levy-hikes-but-not-all-will-be-deterred>