

## Electronic Gaming Policy

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Directorate:	Community Services		
Responsible Officer:	Director of Community Services		
Policy Type:	Discretionary		
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### 1. Purpose

This Policy forms a framework to guide Council's advocacy and community engagement in relation to gambling, as well as its response to applications for electronic gambling machines (EGMs) or venues within and near the City of Greater Dandenong.

The Policy is supported by extensive research as well as internal and external consultations, undertaken as part of its development.

### 2. Background

Council developed its Electronic Gaming Policy in 2014, which has since directed Council activities relating to EGM gambling. This policy replaces the 2014 policy and is consistent with the content of the Council Plan 2017-2021, Objective One: 'A Vibrant, Connected and Safe Community', and with the Community Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021, Year 1 Action Plan Objective .3.4.1, 'Actively participate in the Alliance for Gambling Reform'.

High levels of EGM gambling expenditure incurred by Greater Dandenong residents, coupled with relatively low incomes, make gambling-related problems an issue of long-standing concern for Council and for the community.

Losses to EGMs in Greater Dandenong exceeded \$121 million in 2017-18, the equivalent of \$968 per adult in this community and the highest rate of gambling losses

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in Victoria. Estimated losses by Greater Dandenong residents to other forms of gambling exceed \$100 million per annum.

EGMs represent the bulk of gambling losses and cause the majority of gambling-related problems among residents.

Estimates put the number of residents with severe gambling problems at approximately 4,000. The effects of gambling are also experienced by others with less severe gambling problems, who persistently lose more money than they can afford, obliging them and their dependents to curtail expenditure on food or other essential household items.

Locally, consequences of gambling include poverty and financial pressure, personal distress, a diminished social life, family conflict, violence and breakup, decreased attendance and productivity at work, deceptive or criminal actions to obtain money, and homelessness. Children are the often unacknowledged victims of such gambling-related problems.

While research reveals that gambling generates no net economic benefit, local clubs return revenue to the wider community in the form of gifts, donations, sponsorships, volunteer expenses and support for veterans, to the amount of six cents for every dollar lost by residents.

### 3. Scope

This Policy encompasses community education and engagement in relation to gambling as well as advocacy for reform to the regulation of various types of gambling. It also relates to applications for new venues or additional EGMs, submitted to Council as statutory planning applications or referred to Council by the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation (VCGLR).

### 4. Human Rights and Responsibilities Charter – Compatibility Statement

All matters relevant to the Victorian Human Rights Charter have been considered in the preparation of this Policy and are consistent with the standards set by the Charter, in particular, those bearing upon:

- Privacy and reputation
- Freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief
- Freedom of expression
- Peaceful assembly and freedom of association
- Protection of families and children
- Taking part in public life.

## 5. References

Planning and Environment Act (1973)  
Gambling Regulation Act (2003)  
Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006  
Council Plan 2017-21  
Community Wellbeing Plan 2017-21.

## 6. Council Policy

### 6.1 Advocacy

**6.1.1** Council will advocate, and support the advocacy of other local governments or organisations, for reform to the regulation of gambling, including, but not limited to:

- reduction in the number of EGMs permitted under the caps, in municipalities of socio-economic disadvantage and relatively high EGM density
- measures to diminish gambling harm such as \$1 bet limits, removal of EFTPOS facilities from venues, compulsory pre-commitment, reduced venue operating hours and removal of misleading or addictive design features
- restrictions upon gambling advertising
- prohibition of donations by the gambling industry to political parties, candidates and parliamentarians.

**6.1.2** Council will collaborate with other local governments and work within State-wide and national forums to advocate for reform.

**6.1.3** Council will respond to government and parliamentary inquiries that present an opportunity to advance gambling reform.

### 6.2 Research and Monitoring Gambling Trends

**6.2.1** Council will monitor and make information available about:

- gambling conditions and trends, and the nature and extent of gambling harm
- relevant policy or legislative developments.

**6.2.2** Statistical data and research about gambling will be maintained on Council's website.

## 6.3 Community Consultation, Support and Education

- 6.3.1 Council may support community education and awareness-raising initiatives that are complementary to existing programs.
- 6.3.2 Council will seek to inform residents about the destructive consequences of gambling and advise them of available support for people adversely affected by gambling.
- 6.3.3 Council may, at its discretion, provide advice, information or publicity, to gambling-focused community groups whose goals and activities are consistent with Council policy, objectives and standards.

## 6.4 Council's Relationship with the Gambling Industry

- 6.4.1 Council will prohibit to the extent possible, any proposal to install further EGMs on Council-owned or managed land or facilities.
- 6.4.2 Council will not accept financial or in-kind contributions from any club or hotel that derives revenue from EGMs. The exception to this policy statement will be any proposed investment by such club or hotel that increases the amenity of its operations on leased City of Greater Dandenong-owned land and facilities, where such investments are considered by Council to offer significant community benefit.
- 6.4.3 Council will not provide funding to any club or hotel that derives revenue from EGMs.

## 6.5 EGM Applications

This section of the policy relates to EGM gambling applications, which are applications for approval to operate EGMs at non-gambling venues, or for additional EGMs at an existing venue.

In response to such applications, State legislation prescribes a dual role for councils in the process of approval. This is as follows:

- the granting of planning approval for the addition of further EGMs, or establishment of a new gambling venue
- the opportunity to respond to an application by submission to the VCGLR.

## Relevant factors in considering EGM applications

**6.5.1** The merits of each EGM application will be considered by Council on a case-by-case basis. Accordingly, when deciding whether to support or oppose an application, Council will consider the full range of economic and social benefits and liabilities of any proposal. Additionally, to guide Council's approach towards applications, Council will discourage locating additional EGMs in:

- Venues located in an area with high levels of socio-economic disadvantage among residents living within a 2.5 kilometre radius of the venue. This is to be verified by evidence, which may include:
  - low incomes
  - limited English fluency
  - high unemployment
  - limited educational attainments
  - high proportion of government-subsidised housing
  - disadvantage measured by the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage.
- Venues in an area where the density of EGMs is relatively high, measured as the number of EGMs per 1,000 adults within 2.5 kilometre of the subject venue.
- Venues situated in an area where the average estimated EGM expenditure per adult within 2.5 kilometre. of the subject venue is relatively high.
- Venues in close proximity to activity centres, strip shopping centres, transport hubs and other areas where people go about their daily routines, which may encourage convenience or impulse gambling.
- Venues within 500 metres of sensitive land uses, including, but not limited to, areas frequented by children, families or vulnerable residents; welfare agencies; gambling support service providers; counselling service providers; mental health services; schools; and aged care facilities.
- Circumstances of substantial opposition or specific objections from residents, community groups, agencies or other Councils, in relation to specific features of an application.
- The presence of other conditions where it is determined by Council that approval of the application would exert a substantial adverse influence upon the local community.

In weighing such considerations, Council may decide to oppose an application where it concludes that the proposal would result in a net negative impact upon the local community.

## Response to EGM Applications

**6.5.2** As an initial response to an EGM application within Greater Dandenong, Council may prepare a Social and Economic Impact Assessment to help guide its response to that application.

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- 6.5.3** Council may then determine to respond to an EGM application to the VCGLR by either of the following steps:
- Inform the VCGLR that it does not wish to make a submission
  - Oppose the application by written submission to the VCGLR
  - Oppose the application by presenting a submission to the VCGLR, supplemented by oral testimony at a hearing to determine the application.
- 6.5.4** Any formal Council resolution determining Council's response to an application within Greater Dandenong to the VCGLR will be made at an open meeting of Council.
- 6.4.5** Council will notify residents of gambling applications within Greater Dandenong, in print or social media, or through its website. These notifications will inform residents of their right to present a submission to the VCGLR expressing their views about the application.
- 6.5.6** Council may inform the VCGLR or the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) of its opposition to any application in an adjacent municipal district. This is where it considers that the proposal would exert a net negative impact upon the wellbeing of Greater Dandenong residents, or upon people employed within this municipality.

## 7. Related Documents

City of Greater Dandenong documents:

- Gambling-related Issues for Local Government; and
- Community Engagement Framework.