



CITY OF BALLARAT

Social Policy Position Statement



Minimising Gambling Harm

Context

Unlike many other recreational activities, gambling has the potential to generate negative social and economic impacts for the player, their family and friends, and the wider community. Adverse consequences resulting from gambling harm can include financial loss, relationship breakdown, emotional or psychological distress, issues with work or study, criminal activity, and reduced health and wellbeing.

In endeavouring to achieve a healthy and safe community, the City of Ballarat is committed to reducing gambling harm and supports the use of a broad range of measures and strategies to ensure the gambling impacts are reduced in the municipality.


The City of Ballarat has developed policy to provide guidance in relation to Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs). This includes the City of Ballarat *Gambling Harm Minimisation Policy 2022*, and the *Gaming Local Planning Policy* (Clause 22.07) of the *Ballarat Planning Scheme*. Additionally, a specific initiative is included within the *Ballarat Strategy 2040* (minimising the harm caused by electronic gaming machines), and the *Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2031* (reducing harm from smoking, gambling, alcohol and other drugs). The aim of these policies and strategies is to ensure an appropriate balance is struck between and the City of Ballarat's regulatory role and harm minimisation.

Sports betting and internet gambling are also fast-growing forms of gambling, increasing rapidly each year. The advertising and normalisation of sports betting and online gambling-and the resultant community impacts-are of concern to Council.

The *Victorian Local Government Act 2020* requires councils to provide the best outcomes for the community, while having regard to the long-term cumulative effects of decisions. Under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, there is a statutory responsibility for councils to consider the social and economic impacts of gaming machines in their municipality, referred to within Clause 52.28 of the *Victorian Planning Provisions*. The City of Ballarat is also required to protect, improve and promote health and wellbeing under the *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*, and to apply the 'precautionary principle' to preventing and controlling public health risk.

The City of Ballarat's role in minimising gambling harm

The City of Ballarat has a **shared** role in relation to minimising gambling harm in Ballarat.

	<p>Shared: The City of Ballarat is one of many responsible stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountable for some aspects • Some capacity to act • Moderate City of Ballarat role required to improve community wellbeing outcomes.
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In line with the *City of Ballarat Social Policy Framework 2018*, the principles of Equity, Inclusion, Proactive, Leadership, Collaboration and Compassion are to be considered in all new social policy development, will provide a foundation for action and can be seen in the current City of Ballarat roles in relation to minimising gambling-related harm. Fully integrating these principles into different aspects of social policy work will take time and will require the dedicated efforts of everyone involved.

Planner/ regulator

- Using relevant planning and regulatory controls available to local government to minimise gambling harm.
- Assessing Gaming Machine planning permit applications on their merits, seeking to reduce the harm from EGMs in Ballarat, with consideration to venue location, relationship to known risk factors, and ensuring that vulnerable communities are protected.
- Council will oppose any planning and licensing application for additional EGMs and the transfer of EGMs in the municipality where there is solid evidence that the application will have negative social and economic impacts and minimal community benefit.
- Discouraging an increase in EGM density per 1,000 adults and EGM expenditure in vulnerable communities and neighbourhoods.
- Council will require that applications for planning permits to install or use EGMs, or new or amended gaming licences are accompanied by rigorous and transparent social and economic impact assessments.
- Council will prohibit the siting and operation of any new or additional EGMs on Council-owned land. This does not retroactively apply to EGM applications commenced prior to the adoption of the *Gambling Harm Minimisation Policy 2022* on 27 April 2022.
- Council will prohibit permanent promotion and advertising of gambling products at Council-owned facilities outside of gaming floors, with the exception of pre-existing contractual obligations. This pertains to sports betting, online gambling, other forms of gambling and EGMs, with the aim of minimising community exposure to gambling advertising and the further normalisation of sports betting.
- Council will prohibit applications to the City of Ballarat Community Impact Grant Program from entities and venues operating EGMS, and owners of EGM licenses, beginning 1 July 2022. This will not impact the delivery of grants previously awarded prior to 1 July 2022.

Coordinator

- Supporting the All-In Gambling Project/ Ballarat Interagency Taskforce on Gambling, advocating for harm minimisation approaches and improved community awareness of gambling harms.

- Where possible, integrating gambling harm minimisation into other City of Ballarat policies.
- Council will work in partnership to support relevant organisations, providers, and agencies in their initiatives to increase access to services that address the impacts of gambling related harms, particularly for vulnerable groups, in line with best practice approaches.
- Council will promote services that assist those impacted by gambling harm, including family and friends affected by someone else's gambling.
- Council internal meetings will be held at venues that do not have EGMs. This is in line with Council's staff Code of Conduct Handbook, which commits to limiting exposure at work to gambling.

Advocate

- Supporting the Alliance for Gambling Reform and providing support for other relevant campaigns for gambling industry reforms where identified.
- Developing an advocacy action plan to address the advocacy commitments outlined in the City of Ballarat *Gambling Harm Minimisation Policy 2022*.
- Advocating to the State Government to reduce the City of Ballarat regional cap of 663 EGMs, and
- Advocating for any EGMs given up by venues to be automatically removed from the regional cap.
- Advocating to ensure State Government is regulating the gaming industry in an appropriate manner, supporting advocacy efforts that increase transparency, efficiency, and equity in the regulatory and decision-making processes.
- Advocating to government and peak bodies for effective reform of the gambling industry, including the adoption of maximum bet and cash insertion limits consistent with the Productivity Commission and the Alliance for Gambling Reform, including (but not limited to) restricting access through reduced poker machines and trading hours, limiting maximum bets to \$1, removing deceptive features such as 'near misses', and losses disguised as wins.^{1,2}
- Encouraging all gaming venues to adopt harm minimisation strategies.
- Ongoing monitoring of data within the local gambling context, including EGM expenditure, online and sports betting, and intersectional experiences of gambling harm.
- Advocating for the amendment of legislation to transfer stronger controls over EGMs to local government.

Educator

- Researching and accessing data on the local gambling context to inform community awareness and advocacy.
- Supporting educational efforts undertaken by the Ballarat All-In Gambling Project and other local projects.

Key messages– gambling harm

- The City of Ballarat supports and advocates for gambling harm minimisation approaches from a public health perspective.
- Australians spend more per person on gambling than any other country in the world, almost double New Zealand's rate.

- Gambling is understood to be a public health issue with outcomes that affect communities and individuals.
- Australians spend more money on gambling than other activities that can be addictive and dangerous, including alcohol, tobacco and all illegal drugs.
- For every person directly harmed by gambling, between five and 10 friends, family and others (including employers) are also affected.
- There has been a rapid growth in online gambling and sports betting in recent years. However, poker machines remain the number one cause of gambling losses and gambling harm.
- Gambling is being normalised through prolific advertising on TV, in print media, on billboards, through sponsorship of sporting teams and events, and engaging children through humour, cartoons and catchy music.³
- Mass media poker machine advertising is banned in Victoria.
- From 30 March 2018, gambling ads were banned during the broadcast of live sports between 5am– 8.30pm on commercial free-to-air TV, radio and pay TV. The new restrictions supplement existing rules about gambling ads during live sport and enhanced community safeguards during times when children are part of the audience.

Key messages- poker machines

- The City of Ballarat is concerned by the prevalence and accessibility of poker machines in Ballarat and their harmful impacts.
- The City of Ballarat supports a reduction to the regional cap of 663 Electronic Gaming Machines.
- The City of Ballarat supports the regulatory controls recommended by the Productivity Commission and the Alliance for Gambling Reform, including (but not limited to) restricting access through reduced poker machines and trading hours, limiting maximum bets to \$1, removing deceptive features such as ‘near misses’ and losses disguised as wins.

Key data and trends

According to the Alliance for Gambling Reform, Australians spend more per person on gambling than any other country in the world- almost double that of New Zealand.² Australians also spend more money gambling than on other activities that can be addictive and dangerous, including alcohol, tobacco and all illegal drugs, as seen below.



Source: Alliance for Gambling Reform²

There has been a rapid growth in online gambling and sports betting in recent years.⁸ However, EGMs continue to remain the most significant cause of gambling losses and gambling harm each year.

The City of Ballarat is concerned by the prevalence and accessibility of EGMs in Ballarat and their potential harmful impacts. Both the number of gaming machines and expenditure per adult is higher than many other regional Victorian municipalities.⁵

Ballarat residents lost an average of \$33.7 million to poker machines in 2020-21, (this figure was impacted by venue closures from COVID-19; comparatively, \$57.5 million was lost in 2018-19).⁴ There were 647 poker machines across 14 venues in the City of Ballarat in 2020-21, which is 97.59 percent of the legislated local area cap of 663.⁵ Gaming machine caps are a legal limit on how many gaming machine entitlements are available within specific geographic areas of Victoria. In Ballarat, the number of poker machines equated to 7.29 machines per 1,000 adults in 2020/21.⁵

Despite the perception that gaming venues contribute back to communities through gifts, donations, sponsorships, volunteer expenses and veterans support, only 3.3 percent of the total losses on Ballarat pokies machines in 2019-20 were given back through community benefits.⁶

Further background information about the impact of gambling harm, legislative controls, data, research and resources can be found through the following links, and through the related City of Ballarat policy documents listed below.

Further Information

- **Legislation and regulation information:**
responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/resources/legislation-and-regulation/
- **Information about Regional Caps:**
vcglr.vic.gov.au/gambling/gaming-venue-operator/understand-your-gaming-licence/caps-and-limits
- **Research, data and publications:**
 1. responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/research/published-research/
 2. responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/resources/publications/
 3. pokiesplayyou.org.au/resources_data_research
 4. gamblingresearch.org.au/

Services and support

Where to get help

Gambling is a sensitive topic for many people. If you or someone you know is seeking additional support regarding gambling, please contact one of the services listed below:

- **Child and Family Services Ballarat-** providers of **Gambler's Help** services in Ballarat.
115 Lydiard Street North, Ballarat
Phone: (03) 5337 3333.
Website: cafs.org.au/gamblers-help/
- **Gambler's Help-** assists those with gambling problems- or family and friends affected by someone else's gambling- with free and confidential advice, including therapeutic and financial counselling, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
Phone: 1800 858 858.
Website: gamblershelp.com.au

- **Lifeline:** Lifeline provides free professional and confidential telephone counselling, support and information services.
Phone: 13 11 14.
- **Gamblers Anonymous:** support group for people with a gambling problem.
Phone: (03) 9696 6108
Website: gaaustralia.org.au
- **National Debt Helpline:** support for debt and speak to a financial counsellor.
Phone: 1800 007 007.
Website: ndh.org.au/about-national-debt-helpline/

How community members can get involved

Advocacy

Community members can take opportunities to advocate against gambling harm:

- Respond to submissions for additional gaming machines when applications are submitted to the VCGLR
vcgr.vic.gov.au/CA256F800017E8D4/VCGLR/775C37E1F7909A1DCA257B320078027A?OpenDocument
- Promote and get involved in gambling awareness programs provided by Child and Family Services Ballarat within schools, workplaces and sporting clubs.
cafs.org.au/gamblers-help/
- **School sessions run by Cafs in Ballarat:** cafs.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/VRGF_SchoolEdProgram_DL-School-Brochure_AUG21.pdf
- **Community Engagement:** For enquiries relating to community-based work in Ballarat, please contact John Bradshaw (Gamblers Help Community Engagement Officer) at Cafs (john.bradshaw@cafs.org.au). Community engagement includes the delivery of activities aimed at addressing the prevention of gambling harm, including the take-up of Gambler's Help services, at the local level. This can include attending community events and providing education to workplaces, community groups, schools and other organisations.

Related City of Ballarat policy documents

- City of Ballarat Gambling Harm Minimisation Policy 2022
ballarat.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-04/Gambling%20Harm%20Minimisation%20Policy%202022%20Final.pdf
- Social Policy Framework 2018
ballarat.vic.gov.au/city/about-us/social-policy
- Ballarat Strategy 2040– Minimising the Harm caused by Electronic Gaming Machines (p.118)
ballarat.vic.gov.au/city/city-strategy/ballarat-strategy-2040
- Gaming Local Planning Policy – Clause 22.14 of the Ballarat Planning Scheme
planning-schemes.delwp.vic.gov.au/schemes/ballarat/ordinance/22_lpp07_ball.pdf
- Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021- 2031
ballarat.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-10/Health%20and%20Wellbeing%202021-2031_LR.pdf

Contact

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Position statement review by August 2023

References

1. Productivity Commission Inquiry Report (2010). Available: pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/gambling-2009/report (Accessed: 22/05/2018)
2. Alliance for Gambling Reform. Available: pokiesplayyou.org.au/the_alliance (Accessed 22/05/2018)
3. Deakin University. *Gambling on our children's future*. Available: invenio.deakin.edu.au/gambling-on-our-childrens-future/ (Accessed 23/05/2018)
4. Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation. *Electronic Gaming Machine LGA Level Density and Expenditure*. Available: <https://www.vcglr.vic.gov.au/resources/data-and-research/gambling-data/population-density-and-gaming-expenditure> (Accessed 29/10/21)
5. VCGLR. Population density and gaming expenditure. Available: <https://www.vcglr.vic.gov.au/resources/data-and-research/gambling-data/population-density-and-gaming-expenditure> (Accessed 06/05/2022)
6. SOCIAL STATISTICS FOR VICTORIAN COMMUNITIES. *Community Benefits Provided by Club EGM Gambling venues: 2018/19*. Available: <http://socialstats.com.au/downloads/club-contributions-to-the-community.xlsx> (Accessed 29/10/21)
7. VCGLR. Community benefit statements. <https://www.vcglr.vic.gov.au/gambling/gaming-venue-operator/understand-your-gaming-licence/your-obligations/community-benefit>
8. Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation. Expenditure on gambling in Victoria and Australia. Available: <https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/resources/gambling-victoria/expenditure-on-gambling-victoria-and-australia/> (Accessed 03/12/2012).