

THE CITY OF
GREATER GEELONG

GAMBLING HARM MINIMISATION COUNCIL POLICY

VERSION: 1

Approval Date: DD Month YYYY of official approval

Approved by: Council

Review Date: 01/12/2024

Responsible Officer: Manager, Healthy Communities

Authorising Officer: Chief Executive Officer

Contents

Introduction	3
Purpose.....	3
Scope	3
Definitions.....	4
Policy.....	5
Implementation of this Policy	7
Monitoring and reporting	7
Advice and assistance.....	7
Records.....	7
Review	7
References	8

Introduction

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to guide Council and the City of Greater Geelong in responding to all forms of gambling, with a focus on the wellbeing of our community and through adopting a harm minimisation framework.

SCOPE

This policy focuses on the reduction of harm for all forms of gambling. It balances the right to entertainment with the need to promote wellbeing.

The policy provides guidance for responding to planning permit applications for the use of and installation of Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) and gaming licence applications to the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation (VCGLR).

DRAFT

Definitions

This section defines the key terms used in this policy.

CITY

The City of Greater Geelong organisation led by the CEO.

COUNCIL

The City of Greater Geelong Council comprised of elected Councillors and led by the Mayor.

ELECTRONIC GAMING MACHINE

The Victorian Government *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* (p.17, amended 10 March 2021) defines:

'An Electronic Gaming Machine (EGM), is any device, whether wholly or partly mechanically or electronically operated for the purpose of playing a game of chance or a game of mixed chance and skill. As a result of making a bet on the device, winnings may become payable'¹.

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM

The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) of the City, as constituted at a point in time.

GAMBLING

The Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation defines 'gambling as requiring a player to risk losing something of value (usually money) for the chance of winning more. Gambling outcomes may depend on correctly predicting an uncertain outcome (such as a particular horse coming first in a race), or luck (such as a winning combination of symbols on a pokie machine)'².

The Victorian Government *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* (p.45, amended 10 March 2021) defines:

'For the purposes of this Act, **gambling** means an activity in which—

- (a) a prize of money or something else of value is offered or can be won; and
- (b) a person pays or stakes money or some other valuable consideration to participate; and
- (c) the outcome involves, or is presented as involving, an element of chance'³.

HARM MINIMISATION

Harm minimisation is a framework that considers the health, social and economic consequences of an activity to the individual and the community. The three core elements of harm minimisation are supply reduction, demand reduction and harm reduction:

- Supply Reduction: Achieving appropriate EGM/1,000 adult population densities; promote sound planning.
- Demand Reduction: Promoting and supporting alternatives such as recreational and social pursuits, community education (for instance, gambling risks) and addressing economic disadvantage.
- Harm Reduction: Promoting gamblers help services; promoting responsible gambling and advocating for inbuilt safety mechanisms in EGMs; promote safety.

¹ <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/gambling-regulation-act-2003/087> (accessed 16 March 2021)

² <https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/resources/glossary/#g> (accessed 16 March 2021)

³ <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/gambling-regulation-act-2003/087> (accessed 16 March 2021)

Policy

The focus of this policy is on the wellbeing of our community and it is underpinned by a harm minimisation framework which balances the right to entertainment with the need to promote wellbeing in the context of public health and consumer protection. The policy guides decision-making, compliance, and accountability.

PRINCIPLES

The underpinning principles of this policy acknowledge;

- Gambling is a legal activity within the State of Victoria.
- The need to balance the right to entertainment with the need to promote wellbeing.
- Gambling will be considered within the context of public health and consumer protection.
- Problem gambling is a public health issue affecting the community, not just the individual.
- The impact of electronic gaming machines should not be unevenly distributed through communities or populations.
- The City will take a whole of organisation approach to minimising harm, acknowledging that all its activities can contribute to minimising harm.
- Land use planning at the local level has a significant role in addressing and regulating EGMs.
- Council's regulatory and legislative mandate has the capacity to minimise harm from EGMs.

COUNCIL'S INFLUENCE

Implementation of the policy will be guided by:

PLANNING & REGULATION: Promoting sound planning

The focus will be on using the City's planning and regulatory powers to influence gambling choices, particularly in vulnerable communities by;

- Using the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* (the Act) to make a submission to the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation (VCGLR) on applications for electronic gaming machines (EGMs) based on the social and economic impacts of the application and on the wellbeing of the community.
- MSS – Municipal Strategic Statement clauses 21.07 and 22.57.
- Legal - utilising expertise regarding the implementation of relevant Acts and development of responses to EGM applications.
- Statutory Planning - considering planning permit application impacts in the context of this policy when reviewing any new planning permits for the inclusion of gambling in a venue.

HEALTH & WELLBEING: Promoting and supporting alternative social and recreation pursuits

- Be guided by the *Our Community Plan 2021 – 2025* strategic priorities.
- Council, through the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*, has a mandated responsibility to care for the community reflected through the integration of the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP) into the Community Plan.
- Be guided by the City's strategy and policies, including the *City of Greater Geelong Fair Play Strategy 2017*, and consider funding and supporting services, infrastructure and initiatives that provide alternative social and recreation choices to gambling.
- Support local community-based organisations that generate some of their income from gambling activities, to reduce their reliance on gambling income streams.
- Recognise that gambling is harmful for many people, and therefore seek to actively promote safe and responsible gambling practices.

- Recognise that the harmful costs from gambling are born by the individual who gambles, their circle, and the community at large. This can in turn impose substantial costs and unintended negative consequences for the community.

PARTNERSHIPS & ADVOCACY

- Capacity building – developing the capacity of the community and the City of Greater Geelong to understand and respond to the impacts of gambling, including the delivery of socially equitable and responsive infrastructure and services.
- Partner with research institutions to develop a strong, robust and defensible evidence base that will enhance the City's capacity to effectively influence the location, management and operation of EGMs within the municipality, whilst also contributing to the broader evidence base.
- Partner with local government networks, community organisations and key partners to utilise their expertise in broader advocacy issues, to achieve change and to reform the systems and structures that cause gambling-related harm to the Geelong community.

COUNCIL LEADERSHIP

As in many matters that affect the social and economic wellbeing of the community, council plays a leadership role to support a harm minimisation framework. Over the next four years Council will:

- In the context of reducing and managing the current number of EGMs in Geelong, advocate to the state government for a review of the current EGM cap in Geelong.
- Invest in community infrastructure, community programs and activities as alternatives to all forms of gambling.
- Resource activities that enhance capacity building including the promotion and support of the many alternate and positive forms of recreation in our community and ensure community awareness raising is provided annually through the annual gambling harm awareness week and relevant community education programs.
- Assess all applications for EGMs against a Social and Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA) guided by the Greater Geelong Gaming Policy Framework and taking into consideration community expectations and/or concerns regarding problem gambling. An associated report and recommendations for response to the VCGLR will be provided to Council and considered at a gazetted Council meeting.
- Not hold Council or City meetings, community events, activities, programs and social outings in venues that have EGMs.
- Install and maintain internet filtering to prevent access to gambling sites on all City public wi-fi.
- Not permit gambling promotion or advertising on / in City-owned facilities. This pertains to all forms of gambling.
- Support and encourage the clubs with EGMs to allocate their gambling-related community contributions to relevant services targeted towards minimising gambling-related harm.
- Incorporate gambling questions in relevant community surveys and during community consultation in order to better understand gambling harm within Greater Geelong and further support policy and program development.
- Support any community or sporting club, group or organisation to divest themselves of EGMs or end financial dependence on gambling sponsorship or revenue. This would be achieved through an agreed transition business plan.
- Ensure the community grants program prioritise organisations, clubs and groups who undertake initiatives with a focus on gambling prevention or harm minimisation, or who support alternative recreational activities to gambling.

Implementation of this Policy

MONITORING AND REPORTING

Applications for Electronic Gaming Machines (planning permit and VCGLR licence) will be advised by this policy and assessed against the social impact assessment guidelines outlined in the Council Procedure for Assessing Electronic Gaming Machines. This policy will be updated as per the normal council requirements.

ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE

The Responsible Officer for this policy manages the provision of advice to the organisation regarding this policy.

A person who is uncertain how to comply with this policy should seek advice from this person or from their Manager.

RECORDS

The City must retain records associated with this policy and its implementation for at least the period shown below.

Record	Retention / Disposal Authority	Retention Period	Location
Gambling Harm Minimisation Procedure – to assist with translating policy into practice	Healthy Communities Department	Destroy 7 years after procedures are superseded	Records Explorer once developed

REVIEW

The City should review and, if necessary, amend this policy within four years of the approval date.

References

- City of Greater Geelong: Our Community Plan 2021-2025
- Greater Geelong: A Clever and Creative Future
- City of Greater Geelong Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS)
- Greater Geelong Gaming Policy Framework 2007
- City of Greater Geelong Fair Play Strategy 2017
- The Victorian Gambling Regulation Act 2003 (1 July 2020)
- The Planning and Environment Act 1987
- The Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008
- The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- The Victorian Commission for Gaming and Liquor Licencing | <https://www.vcglr.vic.gov.au/>
- Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation | <https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/>