

THE CITY OF  
GREATER GEELONG

# GAMBLING HARM MINIMISATION POLICY

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**VERSION: 2**

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**Approved by:** Council

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**Responsible Officer:** Manager, Healthy Communities

**Authorising Officer:** Chief Executive Officer

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# Introduction

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## **PURPOSE**

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

The policy replaces the 'City of Greater Geelong Electronic Gaming Machine' which was developed in 2017 and reviewed in 2020.

## **SCOPE**

The policy balances a right to undertake legal revenue-generating activity with the overarching need to promote community health and wellbeing. It recognises that gambling harm can be experienced by individuals, their loved ones and the wider community.

The policy outlines Council's position on gambling and refers matters regarding all forms of gambling within Greater Geelong, including responding applications for the installation of new and additional Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) to the Victorian Gaming and Casino Control Commission (VGCCC).

The policy focuses on preventing and reducing harm by promoting alternatives to gambling, evidence-based planning and community connection. It is underpinned by a harm minimisation framework that centres on supply reduction, demand reduction and harm reduction.

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# Definitions

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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.

## COMMUNITY BENEFIT STATEMENT (CBS)

A gaming venue with a club or racing club licence which receives gaming machine revenue in a financial year must lodge an audited Community Benefit Statement (CBS) with the VGCCC.

Club and racing clubs can show how gaming proceeds help contribute to their wider local communities through the CBS. Clubs must demonstrate they gave the equivalent of at least 8.33% of the venue's gaming revenue to approved community purposes or activities.

## ELECTRONIC GAMING MACHINE (EGM)

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'.<sup>1</sup>

## 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 or luck'.<sup>2</sup>

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

'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'.<sup>3</sup>

For the purpose of this policy, raffles, bingo, and sports tipping for fundraising activities have been excluded.

## HARM MINIMISATION

Harm minimisation is a framework that considers the health, social and economic consequences of an activity to the individual and 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.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/gambling-regulation-act-2003/087> (p.17, amended 10 March 2021, accessed 16 March 2021)

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

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



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# Policy

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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 undertake legal revenue-generating activity 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 undertake legal revenue-generating activities with the need to promote wellbeing.
- Gambling will be considered within the context of public health and consumer protection.
- Gambling is a public health issue affecting individuals, families, and the broader community.
- The City will take a whole of organisation approach to minimising harm, acknowledging that all its activities can contribute to minimising gambling-related harm.
- The impact of electronic gaming machines should not be unevenly distributed through communities or populations.
- 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 experienced from using EGMs.
- Clubs venues with EGMs have a legislative responsibility to provide at least 8.33% of their net gaming machine revenue towards community benefit. The City therefore acknowledges that a small percent of EGM revenue is returned for community purposes or activities.

## POLICY STATEMENTS

The following priority areas and policy statements will guide Council's actions and decision-making for the life of this policy. Council will:

### 1. HEALTH & WELLBEING: Promoting and supporting alternative social and recreation pursuits

- 1.1. Be guided by the *Our Community Plan 2021 – 2025* strategic priorities.
- 1.2. Recognise that 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.
- 1.3. Encourage the development of strategy and policies that consider funding and support services, infrastructure and program initiatives that provide alternate social and recreation choices to gambling.
- 1.4. Be guided by the City's Social Equity Framework 2022-2025.
- 1.5. Support local community-based organisations that generate some of their income from gambling activities, to reduce their reliance on gambling income streams.
- 1.6. Recognise that gambling is harmful for many people, and therefore seek to actively promote responsible and safe gambling environments.
- 1.7. 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.

### 2. 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 life of this policy, Council will:

- 2.1. Advocate to the State Government to review the current regional EGM cap in Geelong and influence legislative reform based on evidence-based public health research and policy.
- 2.2. Invest in community infrastructure, community programs and activities as alternatives to all forms of gambling.
- 2.3. 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 gambling harm awareness initiatives and relevant community education programs.

- 2.4. Assess applications for new and additional EGMs against a Social and Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA) guided by the Greater Geelong Gaming Policy Framework and taking into consideration community attitudes, feedback and/or concerns. An associated report and recommendations for response to the VGCCC will be referred to Council at a Council meeting.
- 2.5. Not hold Council or City meetings, community events, activities, programs, and social outings in venues that have gambling activities (as defined in this policy).
- 2.6. Install and maintain internet filtering to prevent access to gambling sites on all City public wi-fi.
- 2.7. Not permit gambling promotion or advertising on / in City-owned facilities. This pertains to all forms of gambling.
- 2.8. Support and encourage the clubs with EGMs to allocate their gambling-related community contributions to relevant services targeted towards minimising gambling-related harm.
- 2.9. Incorporate gambling questions in relevant community surveys and during community consultation to better understand gambling harm within Greater Geelong and further support policy and program development.
- 2.10. Actively 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.
- 2.11. In assessing eligible community grant applications to the City, the current grant guidelines will apply two gambling related conditions. These are;
 

PRIORITISING APPLICATIONS - If the total request for funding exceeds the grant funds available, the City will prioritise

  - Applications from organisation that do not receive funding from electronic gaming machines or other forms of gambling.

WHAT WON'T BE FUNDED

  - Political, gaming or gambling activities.
  - Fundraising events, prizes, gifts, awards, or sponsorship costs, such as trophies, medals, money, and vouchers.
  - Facilities designated for electronic gaming machine operations (community infrastructure grant program).

### 3. PARTNERSHIPS & ADVOCACY

Council is in a unique position to collaborate with local organisations and advocate to other levels of government to reduce gambling-related harm experienced by the Great Geelong community. Council will:

- 3.1. Further develop the capacity of the community and the City to understand and respond to the impacts of gambling, including the delivery of socially equitable and responsive infrastructure and services.
- 3.2. 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.
- 3.3. Partner with local government networks, community organisations and key agencies 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.
- 3.4. Advocate to the State Government to reduce the regional cap and advocate for any EGMs given up by venues to be automatically removed from the regional cap. This will contribute to reduced expenditure on EGMs and achieve moving the City of Greater Geelong from the top five local government areas with greatest expenditure in Victoria.

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# Implementation of this Policy

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## MONITORING AND REPORTING

Applications for both new and additional EGMs will be advised by this policy and assessed against the social impact assessment guidelines outlined in the Council Procedure for Assessing Gambling Applications Against Council Policies document. 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

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## REVIEW

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



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# References

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