

Greater Bendigo Reducing Harm from Gambling Policy

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Owner:	Active and Healthy Communities
Responsible Director:	Health and Wellbeing
Relevant Legislation/Authority:	<i>Planning and Environment Act 1987, Interactive Gambling Act 2001, Gambling Regulation Act 2003, Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008</i>
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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Greater Bendigo Reducing Harm from Gambling Policy (the Policy) is to outline Council's future approach to reducing harm from gambling across the Greater Bendigo community.

High rates of harm from gambling were identified in the planning for the City of Greater Bendigo Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017 – 2021 and Healthy Greater Bendigo 2021 - 2025. Whilst the overall amounts lost on gambling across the City are not available, the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation (VCGLR) reported that in 2018-19 the Greater Bendigo net losses on Electronic Gaming Machines were \$50,671,968.

This policy replaces the previous City of Greater Bendigo (City) Gaming Policy "Accessible but not Convenient" which was developed in 2007. It recognises the statutory and regulatory changes that have occurred since that time and the increased knowledge and understanding of the social and economic impacts of gambling on the community.

2. BACKGROUND

Local government has legislative requirements to protect and promote the health and wellbeing of the community. In October 2021 Council endorsed the municipal public health and wellbeing plan Healthy Greater Bendigo 2021 – 2025. One of the areas for action identified in the plan is harm from gambling.

Whilst there are many different forms of gambling, the most predominant source of financial loss and harm in Australia comes from Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs). Whilst the Victorian State Government is responsible for the regulation of EGMs, the requirements of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme mean that the EGM planning and approvals process lies within Council's jurisdiction. This means that Council can directly influence the quantity, location, and social and economic impacts of EGMs within Greater Bendigo. It can also ensure active participation by the community in these decisions.

The Gambling Regulation Act 2003 enables local government to make submissions to the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor (VCGLR) in the form of a social and economic impact assessment for potential new applications for EGMs within its municipality or a neighbouring municipality.

3. SCOPE

The Policy outlines Council's position on gambling and will be applied to all matters relating to gambling within Greater Bendigo. This includes planning, decision-making, projects and programs. The Policy will also be applied to all applications submitted or referred to Council for EGMs in new venues, as well as applications for additional EGMs by existing EGM operators.

The Policy takes a public health approach recognising that the level of harm created by gambling ranges from no harm through to very severe levels of harm, and that the harm may be experienced not just by a person who gambles but also by their family, friends and the wider community. It is now well established that such harm is experienced by many people who gamble but would not meet the definition of 'problem gambler.'

4. DEFINITIONS

In this policy:

City means the City of Greater Bendigo and includes the Chief Executive Officer employed by the Council and all other staff employed by the Chief Executive Officer.

Council means the Greater Bendigo City Council and includes the nine Councillors.

Electronic Gaming Machine (EGM)

refers to gaming machines as defined by the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003*

Gambling means activities in which:

For the purposes of this policy 'gambling' refers to activities involving electronic gaming machines, casino games, lotteries, race betting, sports betting and similar activities. It excludes activities such as card games, raffles, sports tipping competitions and bingo for club social activities and fundraising

Greater Bendigo means the municipal area governed by the Greater Bendigo City Council.

5. PRINCIPLES

The Policy's objectives are to minimise the negative social and economic impacts of gambling on the Greater Bendigo community by:

- Discouraging an increase in the availability of opportunities to gamble, particularly in socio-economically disadvantaged communities
- Advocating to other levels of government to reduce exposure and opportunity to gamble
- Working with organisations, clubs or community groups to minimise their financial dependence on the proceeds of gambling
- Supporting organisations that provide services to members of the community who experience harm from gambling
- Providing community education about the harms related to gambling.

6. POLICY

Over the next four years Council will:

1. Lead

- 1.1. Continue to acknowledge gambling as a public health issue and, where appropriate, integrate harm prevention and reduction into future planning and programming. This includes, but is not limited to, the Council and Health and Wellbeing Plans, Municipal Strategic Statement and the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme.
- 1.2. Continue to promote a variety of non-gambling events, activities and programs that encourage residents to lead active and healthy lives.
- 1.3. Take a public health approach in all gambling-related communication. Ongoing Council communication will utilise terms such as 'gambling', 'people harmed by gambling', 'gambling losses' and 'EGM/Poker machine operators' and 'gambling industry' as opposed to 'gaming', gaming expenditure, 'problem gamblers' and 'pokie venues'.
- 1.4. Actively promote the conduct of City activities, social outings, meetings or municipal events at venues that don't promote any form of gambling or operate EGMs.
- 1.5. Not permit advertising and/or the promotion of gambling of any form at Council owned or managed facilities.
- 1.6. Minimise financial support or provision of grants for activities that take place in gambling venues.
- 1.7. Work with community groups and organisations to end financial dependence on gambling sponsorships and revenue.
- 1.8. Respond to and support gambling-related research, data collection or government enquiries.

- 1.9. Not accept any new financial or in-kind contributions from commercial gambling or EGM operators.

2. Advocate

- 2.1. Support advocacy work targeted towards preventing and minimising gambling harm and collaborate with, and contribute to, other local government organisations, local government peak bodies and gambling networks to advocate for reform and develop state-wide advocacy strategies.
- 2.2. Advocate to the State Government for gambling regulatory reforms aimed at reducing harm from gambling, including, but not limited to:
 - Lowering the municipal EGM cap to reflect the current number of EGM licenses in the City
 - Introducing \$1 maximum bet limits
 - Mandatory pre-commitment measures
 - The removal of Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) and other cash dispensing machines from EGM venues
 - A reduction in the maximum permissible number of gaming machine entitlements within the City and neighbouring municipalities
 - Reduced operating hours for EGM operators
 - Changes to the rules governing community contributions
 - The removal of machine features which are misleading and addictive.
- 2.3. Advocate to State and Commonwealth Government to not conduct activities involving community members or local government employees at venues operating EGMs when alternative venues are available.
- 2.4. Work with and support current EGM venues, relevant organisations, providers, agencies and initiatives to educate the Greater Bendigo community on the overall negative public health impact of gambling and the risks involved with EGMs.
- 2.5. Encourage all gambling venues to provide as responsible a gambling environment as possible, and to offer non-gambling entertainment options.
- 2.6. Oppose any future plans for a casino in the City.

3. Regulate

- 3.1. Oppose any planning and licensing application for additional EGMs and the transfer of EGMs within Greater Bendigo where there is reliable evidence that the application will have negative social and economic impacts and minimal community benefit.
- 3.2. Not permit new or additional EGMs on Council owned or managed land.
- 3.3. Discourage new or additional EGMs in disadvantaged areas or in small communities and settlements where there are minimal or no alternative attractions.

- 3.4. Seek to limit possible EGM operating locations in low socio-economic areas or locations in which children are commonly present, by updating prohibited and discouraged gaming areas spatially represented in Clause 52.28, 22.28 and the Discouraged Gaming Areas incorporated document in the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme to account for recent development, updated SEIFA data, and changes to land zoning.
- 3.5. Seek to limit operating hours of EGM venues through permit conditions in the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme.
- 3.6. Support the allocation or reallocation of community contributions related to gambling to gambler's help or relevant services aimed at reducing harm associated with gambling.
- 3.7. Support surrounding municipalities' submissions to VCGLR where there is reliable evidence that the application will have negative social and economic impacts and minimal community benefit.

4. Inform

- 4.1. Continue to monitor gambling-related research, evidence, data, legislative or policy changes, and gambling trends, including harm prevention and minimisation.
- 4.2. Work with the Greater Bendigo community to raise awareness on gambling harm and the negative impacts of gambling and encourage participation in non-gambling related activities.
- 4.3. Inform the community of Council's role and actions to address or minimise gambling-related harm.
- 4.4. Provide updated gambling data on the Council's website and make statistical data and information available in alternative formats upon request.
- 4.5. Ensure that the community is informed of planning applications for EGMs submitted to Council.
- 4.6. Involve and encourage community members, organisations and other relevant stakeholders to provide input into decision-making processes and Policy and program development.
- 4.7. Seek external funding opportunities that will contribute towards harm prevention or minimisation programs within Greater Bendigo.
- 4.8. Create opportunities to incorporate gambling questions on existing surveys and during community consultation in order to further understand gambling harm within Greater Bendigo.

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 Council

It is the role of Council to adopt the Policy

7.2 City of Greater Bendigo employees

All City employees have a responsibility to ensure adherence to the policy

The Active and Healthy Communities Unit is responsible for:

- Administrative review of this policy and all associated reporting to Council
- Ensuring all Council staff are aware of the Policy and its application
- Application of relevant components of the Policy
- Reviewing the Policy as required

The Statutory Planning Unit is responsible for:

- Application of relevant components of the Policy

8. RELATED DOCUMENTS

Readers are encouraged to access relevant documents and/or resources which are available as per the below.

These include:

- Greater Bendigo Council Plan - Mir Wimbul 2021 - 2025
- Healthy Greater Bendigo 2021 - 2025
- Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme
- City of Greater Bendigo – Gaming Policy Review. Final Report. Prepared by K2 Planning Pty Ltd and 10 Consulting Group. November 2018
- Review of the Economic Impacts of Gambling. SGS Economics & Planning. September 2018
- Review of the Social Impacts of Gambling. City of Greater Bendigo. November 2018
- Gambling Regulation Act 2003
- Gambling Regulation (Pre-commitment and Loyalty Scheme) Regulations 2014
- Gambling Regulations 2015
- Gambling Regulation Amendment (Gaming Machine Arrangements) Act 2017
- Gambling Legislation Amendment Act 2018
- Planning and Environment Act 1987

Further information or advice on this policy should be directed to Active and Healthy Communities.

9. HUMAN RIGHTS COMPATIBILITY

The implications of this policy have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

10. ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a City unit, a change to the name of a Federal or State Government department, and a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. However, any change or

update which materially alters this document must be made through consultation with the staff Consultative Committee and with the approval of EMT or where required, resolution of Council.

11. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Date Approved	Responsible Officer	Unit	Change Type	Version	Next Review Date
<i>December 2021</i>	<i>JC</i>	<i>Active Healthy Communities</i>	<i>Develop</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>December 2023</i>