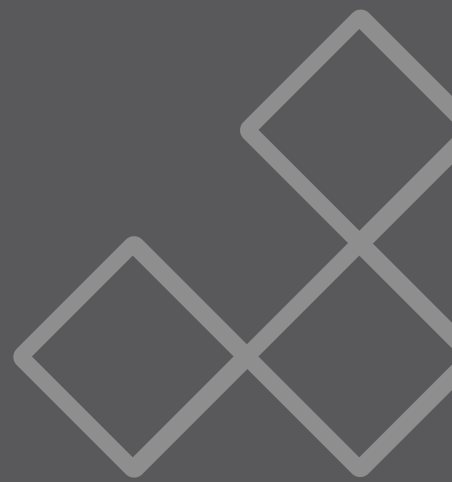




# Reducing harm from gambling

At a glance



## Background

Gambling is lawfully provided in Victoria through wagering (racing and sports betting), lotteries, keno and bingo, casino table games, and electronic gaming machines (EGMs), which are colloquially known as pokies, located in hotels, clubs and the Casino.

People gamble in person and also increasingly online.


Local Government plays an important role in managing the social, economic and health and wellbeing impacts of gambling in local communities, particularly in relation to EGMs, which is the area it has most influence in terms of venues located within and adjacent to their boundaries.


With EGMs today considered one of the most harmful gambling products in Australia, 'playing the pokies' is increasingly being recognised as a public health concern with that harm extending beyond financial losses to health and social issues that impact families, friends, employers, workmates, businesses and the community generally.


## Statistics in the City of Maribyrnong

**471** Pokies (electronic gaming machines) in nine venues across the municipality - the maximum allowed by law.

**=** This equates to 6.3 machines per 1,000 adults.

 This is a reduction from 511 in 2017, but is still ninth highest rate in Melbourne.

 Nearly half of all pokies in the City are located in Yarraville and Braybrook.

 Residents have tended to spend more than \$50m annually on pokies. In 2014, it was \$52.9m and in 2019 it was \$58m.



2020 was an exception due to COVID-19 - the figure more than halved, though spending during the months that facilities were open was higher than the average monthly spend.

**\$773**

The average amount each adult would spend per year on pokies if every adult in the City was playing the pokies.



This is one of the highest per adult figures for any local government area within Melbourne – with only Greater Dandenong and Brimbank rating higher.



The spend is highest in the suburbs of Braybrook and Maidstone.







## The problem

Gambling for many people is a fun recreational activity. While it can provide short-term relief from pressing problems and stress – it often also adds to them in the long-term – fuelling health and psychological impacts (including anxiety, smoking, drinking), financial stress and poverty, family violence and crime.

This then becomes an issue that goes beyond individuals – impacting families, friends, employers, workmates, businesses and the community generally. For this reason, far from a harmless leisure activity, 'playing the pokies' is increasingly being recognised as a public health concern with harm extending beyond financial losses to health and social issues, such as depression, family violence and other criminal activities.

A report released in 2016 by the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation showed gambling presents a significant burden to the wellbeing of the Victorian community generally.

## Council's role in addressing gambling related harm

Council plays a direct role in assessing the social and economic impact of applications for electronic gaming machines (EGMs) through the Gambling Regulation Act 2003 and the Gaming Policy Clause in the Maribyrnong Planning Scheme.

It also advocates for changes to the regulation and management of all forms of gambling, including EGM's, online gambling, sports betting, racing, keno, lotteries and the casino.

Council's approach to managing the impacts of gambling harm focuses on preventing and reducing harm by promoting alternatives to gambling, evidence-based planning and community connection - balancing the right to entertainment with the overarching need to promote community health and wellbeing.

It also acknowledges the importance of equitable access to services supporting people directly and indirectly affected by gambling-related harm. However, this is the responsibility of external agencies and service providers, and outside the scope of Council's core responsibilities.

# Reducing Harm from Gambling Policy 2021-2025

Council's draft Reducing Harm from Gambling Policy seeks to address the impacts from gambling in all forms, with a focus on electronic gaming machines (EGMs), which is where Council has the most ability to influence outcomes.

The draft Policy is an updated version of the previous Gambling Policy 2016-2020, and outlines three key objectives:

- ensure all new EGM applications in the City undergo a social and economic impact assessment
- advocate for measures that will lead to a reduction in gambling harm in the City
- encourage alternatives to gambling

These objectives are mirrored in the draft Policy principles and supported by a series of proposed actions, which reinforce the previous Policy commitment to continued advocacy to State Government for gambling reforms including: the introduction of a \$1 maximum bet, a system that supports players voluntarily limiting time and money spent, and reduced operating hours.

The draft Policy also seeks to continue limiting opportunities for gambling on Council-owned premises by:

- not entering into future leases with any new gaming operator seeking a facility on Council-owned land (noting there is currently only one active lease for the Yarraville-Footscray Bowling Club until 2024)
- working with venue operators to restrict the inclusion of EGM's on Council-owned land
- banning gambling promotional material in Council-owned facilities or Council websites

In addition, under the updated draft Policy, Council is proposing a new action that would see a ban on official meetings, events and community activities at all gaming venues.

You can access the full policy at [yourcityyourvoice.com.au/gambling](https://yourcityyourvoice.com.au/gambling)



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