

ELECTRONIC GAMING MACHINE (EGM) GAMBLING POLICY

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1. INTRODUCTION

This Policy outlines Council’s position on Electronic Gaming Machine (EGM) gambling within the municipality. The Policy does not address other forms of gambling (eg. sports betting or TAB) over which Council has no dedicated planning control or avenue to comment, other than through advocacy.

The Policy reflects Council’s legislative and regulatory responsibilities under the Local Government Act 1989, the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 and the Gambling Regulation Act 2003.

Council will have regard to this Policy when making a submission to the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation (VCGLR) on:

* an application for approval of a premises as suitable for gambling under section 3.3.6 of the Gambling Regulation Act 203 (Gambling Act) and;
* a request for an amendment of conditions of a venue operator’s licence under section 3.4.19 of the Gambling Act.

2. SCOPE

The Policy defines Council’s role to assess the social and economic impacts of EGMs. It does not address the statutory planning functions of the Council, which are addressed in the Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme at Clause 22.8.

The Policy identifies the potential for harmful impacts to health and wellbeing from EGM gambling and Council’s legislative role to protect the health and wellbeing of its community. The Policy is informed by evidence of specific vulnerabilities affecting the many and distinct communities of Yarra Ranges (see Yarra Ranges Health Profile, local area planning profiles). It outlines Council’s role to protect vulnerable community members against any detrimental impacts of EGM gambling, through a health and wellbeing approach.

The Policy recognises that the location of EGMs in Victoria is regulated by the Gambling Regulation Act (2003).

3. POLICY STATEMENT

4.1 Council acknowledges Electronic Gambling Machine (EGM) gambling is a legal recreational activity in Victoria. While the majority of people who partake in gambling do so without experiencing adverse effects, a small but significant number of people experience harms from gambling and also experience a variety of personal, family and financial problems as a result. This also affects the broader community.

4.2 Council takes a precautionary approach to the impact of decisions in relation to EGMs. This principle implies that there is a social responsibility to protect the public from exposure to harm, when scientific investigation has found a plausible risk. In assessing the potential for detrimental impacts Council will:

1. Assess, on merit, the net social and economic impacts of applications for new or additional EGMs in the municipality to ensure they are not detrimental to the health and wellbeing of the community. This assessment may include a community survey.
2. Understand the evidence and research about the impact of EGMs on community health and wellbeing.
3. Identify any particular vulnerability to EGM gambling in the municipality, informed by the evidence.
4. Subject to available resources, consider partnering to support formal research projects to better understand the health and wellbeing impacts of EGMs on communities. This may be in partnership with peak bodies, Universities and other local governments.

4.3 Council will, as part of its legislated role under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, monitor the health and wellbeing of its community in relation to EGMs. Council will also seek to minimise harms through its advocacy, programs and services and by working in partnership with community services, Gambler’s Help and other local governments.

4.4 Council will exercise its right to make submissions to the VCGLR where it believes, based on available data; an increase in the number of EGMs may result in a net social and economic detriment.

5. RELATED DOCUMENTS

5.1 A range of Council work and local research informs the Policy:

1. Research on EGM gambling undertaken by universities, governments and other bodies.
2. Demographic data specific to Yarra Ranges such as the ID demographic profile, the Yarra Ranges Health Profile, local area planning tools and Council’s community wellbeing approach, including an understanding of the determinants of health.
3. The Community Wellbeing Plan 2009 – 2013 includes priorities to improve mental health and reduce health inequities. The Yarra Ranges Health Profile informs the Community Wellbeing Plan and examines data on the health status of residents. The Health Profile highlights health issues and resulting vulnerabilities in Yarra Ranges including the location of EGMs in the municipality and the extent of losses resulting from EGM gambling.
4. The Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme includes Clause 22.08 which sets out Council’s planning scheme amendment on gaming.
5. The EGM Process Guidelines outlines the governance processes associated with receipt of an application and preparation of a SEIA through to appearing at the VCGLR hearing.