



Policy to Reduce Harm from Gambling

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1. Statement and Purpose

The purpose of the Rural City of Wangaratta Policy to Reduce Harm from Gambling (the Policy) is to outline Council's future approach to protecting the Wangaratta community from gambling harm.

The Policy seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- Protect the community from the social, psychological, and economic harms caused by gambling.
- Strengthen our partnerships with organisations that provide services to people directly affected by gambling-related harm.
- Strengthen the community's capacity to understand the risks and impacts of gambling-related harm.
- Support advocacy to State and Federal government to protect the Wangaratta community from gambling-related harm.

2. Scope

The Policy outlines Council's position on gambling and will guide Council's roles and responsibilities in relation to all forms of gambling within the Rural City of Wangaratta. The Policy will also guide Council in making decisions on planning permit applications for Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) and representing the community's views on applications for EGM licences.

While there are many forms of gambling, it is important to emphasise that the financial losses from EGMs are greater than any other form of gambling in Victoria. It is also the area that local government can have the greatest influence.

The Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission is responsible for the regulation of all forms of gambling, including EGMs. Under the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and the Rural City of Wangaratta Planning Scheme, Council has the capacity to regulate the location and operation of EGMs. Council has the opportunity to represent the community's views on applications for EGM licences under the Gambling Regulation Act 2003.

The scope of this Policy covers four pillars.

PILLAR	COUNCIL'S COMMITMENT
1. Manage and support	Council will prevent or manage all forms of gambling on Council owned land and will support community groups, organisations and businesses offering gambling products to reduce their reliance on gambling-derived revenue.
2. Partner and advocate	Council will be a leader in advocating to Federal and State Government and adjacent local governments, to implement harm reduction approaches, policies and legislation amendments.
3. Plan and regulate	Council will fulfill its statutory and land-use planning obligations to regulate gambling activities in the municipality and reduce the incidence of gambling-related harm.
4. Inform and engage	Council will support initiatives that increase the community's awareness of the risks and impacts of gambling-related harm.

3. Policy Statement

Council is committed to protecting the Wangaratta community from gambling-related harm through this Policy and related Strategic Plan.

Council will actively seek to reduce losses from gambling by meeting its requirements as a responsible authority in accordance with the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and the Gambling Regulation Act 2003.

Council will adopt a public health approach, recognising that there are multiple social, economic and environmental determinants of harm. This approach acknowledges that harm may be experienced not just by the person who gambles but also by their family, friends and the wider community (1).

A whole of community approach to protecting the community from harm will be utilised. Part of this approach includes Council opposing an increase in the number of Electronic Gaming Machines in the Wangaratta community.

Taking an evidence-based public health approach to the prevention of gambling harm includes the use of accurate, evidence-based, and non-stigmatising language. Council will use terms such as 'gambling' in place of 'gaming', 'people harmed by gambling' in place of 'problem gamblers', 'gambling losses' in place of 'expenditure' and 'EGM operators' in place of 'gaming venues'. This language identifies that gambling behaviour is influenced by a combination of factors, including characteristics of the individual person, social and cultural norms, aspects of the gambling environment, and broader policy and legislation (1).

Council acknowledges that some forms of gambling considered lower risk, such as raffles, are utilised by community organisations for the purpose of fundraising. While Council does not actively support these activities, it is understood that these are a major source of revenue for clubs and community organisations. Council commits to working with clubs to reduce their dependency on gambling revenue but will not penalise clubs for lower risk activities where the main purpose is fundraising.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

1.1 Council

It is the role of Council to adopt the Policy, and to continue to be leaders in the community in support of the improved health and wellbeing for residents and visitors of the Rural City of Wangaratta.

1.2 Rural City of Wangaratta employees:

All Council employees have a responsibility to ensure adherence to the policy.

The Community and Recreation unit is responsible for:

- Administrative implementation and review of this policy and all associated reporting to Council.
- Ensuring all Council staff are aware of the policy and its application.

The Statutory Planning Unit is responsible for:

- Application of the policy to inform decisions on planning permit applications for new EGM operators or increases in the number of EGMs in existing venues.

5. Breaches

Breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action in accordance with Councils Enterprise Agreement.

6. Human Rights

This policy has considered and complies with the Human Rights and Responsibilities contained in the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

Council, Councillors and members of Council staff are a public authority under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 and, as such, are all responsible to act in accordance with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006 (the Charter).

7. Gender Impact Assessment

This policy has considered and applied Council's Gender Impact Assessment Process and satisfies the provisions established in the Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic).

8. Monitoring and evaluation

The Community and Recreation Team will develop a four year implementation plan for the actions listed in the Strategy to Reduce Harm from Gambling. This implementation will be presented to the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and will be reported on annually to CMT and Councillors.

9. Definitions

Community Benefit Statement Community benefit statements provide the framework for reporting expenditure on community benefits by club and racing club gaming operators that receive gaming revenue in a financial year. A community benefit statement verifies whether the community benefit provided by the club is equal to at least 8.33 per cent of its net gaming machine revenue.

Community Support Fund (CSF) Hotels operating electronic gaming machines (EGMs) are required to contribute 8.33 per cent of this revenue to the CSF which is a trust fund governed by the Gambling Regulation Act 2003. The funds are directed back to the

community (not necessarily the community from which the revenue was generated) to support initiatives such as programs supporting people affected by gambling-related harm and substance abuse; youth programs; sport and recreation programs; art and tourism programs; and costs associated with administering the CSF.

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Electronic gaming machine (EGM)

An electronic gaming machine is a computerised gambling device that has a video screen displaying symbols on simulated reels. Cash is inserted into the machine and buttons are used to place bets. The machine randomly determines the position of symbols on the screen. Wins are returned as credits back into the machine.

Gambling

Gambling/betting requires 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 an Electronic Gaming Machine).

Gambling-related harm

Any initial or exacerbated adverse consequence due to an engagement with gambling that leads to a decrement to the health or wellbeing of an individual, family unit, community or population. These harms include relationship breakdown, compromised mental and physical health and wellbeing, financial losses, demand for services, lost work productivity and crime.

Gambling related harm can be divided into seven key areas: Financial harm, relationship disruption, emotional or psychological distress, decrements to health, cultural harm, reduced work or study performance and criminal activity. These harms can further be considered as general harms (which occur at any time), crisis harms, which are associated with attempts to seek help, and legacy harms, which occur long after gambling has ceased

Public health approach

A public health approach involves utilising scientific knowledge, evidence-based strategies, and community-

based interventions to improve the health and well-being of populations by focusing on prevention, health promotion, and addressing the underlying determinants of health.

References and related policies

References

- (1) Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation (2015) Background Paper: Using A Public Health Approach in The Prevention of Gambling-Related Harm. <<https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/documents/21/using-a-public-health-approach-in-the-prevention-of-gambling-related-harm.pdf>>

Legislation

- Planning and Environment Act 1987
- Gambling Regulation Act 2003
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008
- Local Government Act 1998 (amended 2021)

Related documents

- Council Plan (2021-25)
- Rural City of Wangaratta Community Vision 2033
- Rural City of Wangaratta Planning Scheme

Version History		
Version Number	Date of change	Reasons for change
1.0	6/10/2023	
2.0	20/02/2024	Incorporation of changes based on submissions
3.0	04/03/2024	Dividing Strategy into Policy and Strategic Plan documents