

Gambling Harm Minimisation Policy

Community engagement summary report
July 2024

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2 Background

This document provides a summary of stakeholder and community feedback on the draft Gambling Harm Minimisation Policy.

Council has developed a draft gambling harm minimisation policy for community review, that takes a public health approach to address gambling; and recognises the harm caused to individuals, their families, and the community.

In the past year alone (2022/23), almost \$160 million has been lost to electronic gaming machines across Casey. This represents the greatest losses for the municipality in a twelve month period and has occurred as emerging forms of gambling (e.g. online, sports betting) have also seen rapid growth, catering to new segments of the population.

Council's commitment to reducing harm from gambling activities is set out in Casey's [Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-25](#), which provides direction on the municipality's health and wellbeing priorities and builds upon Council's previous [Electronic Gaming Machine \(EGM\) Strategy 2015-20](#).

From 27 May to 21 June, a community engagement process was held to gather community and stakeholder feedback on Council's approach to minimising gambling harm and supporting community wellbeing through the proposed policy actions and key focus areas.

Key findings

Participants were given the opportunity to feedback on the focus areas of the policy. The focus areas being:

- Advocacy
- Community development and engagement
- Planning and regulation
- Leadership
- Research and data

Ten submissions were received during the public exhibition consultation. Nine submissions were received from private individuals and one submission was received from a gaming venue. All focus areas were commented on with some other comments included too.

- Advocacy received 4 comments
- Planning and regulation received 6 comments
- Leadership received 3 comments
- Research and data received 3 comments
- Community development and engagement received 2 comments
- There were also a further 3 comments falling into the other category

Key findings across the key areas:

- Council should work to reduce the number of Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs)
- Support for Council joining the Victorian Local Governance Association's Local Government Working Group on Gambling.
- Advocate for different items including pre paid gambling cards, complete banning of EGMs, reduce the opening hours of gaming venues
- Support and agreement that Advocacy is one of the most important sections to influence state government
- Independence needed from the gambling industry

- Support for the leadership section of the policy
- Council should not commit to renewing any of the current agreements
- Council should push back further against gambling
- Council needs to be clearer that gambling venues cannot be marketed on Council land or facilities.
- Emphasise the importance of seeking diverse, credible research sources and avoiding confirmation bias.

3 Consultation overview

3.1 Consultation purpose

The consultation was designed to provide the community with the opportunity to provide input into the draft policy, with comments going to officers to make any changes before going to Council for the plan be endorsed.

3.2 Consultation process

The tools and techniques selected for this project were informed by the project content, stakeholders and type of feedback sought.

Key tools for communicating the project

- Council's e-newsletter, Casey Catch up
- Emails to key stakeholders
- Social media

Key methods for gathering feedback

- Online engagement through Casey Conversations, including opportunity to provide feedback via survey which included open ended opportunity to share thoughts
- Contact email address and phone number of Council Officer provided for interested community members to ask for further information or provide feedback
- Printed information available, as required.

Details	Activity
27 May– 21 June 64 visitors 10 contributions	Casey Conversations Website Project information and online survey hosted on the engagement platform Casey Conversations. This also included FAQs.

4 Who we heard from

Survey respondents were given an option to share some demographic details. Some key responses include:

- Some residents who responded were from Cranbourne North, Hampton Park, Narre Warren.
- We heard from respondents who were 25-29, 30-34, 55-59, 60-64, 65-69

5 Consultation findings

The following section summarises the key comments which arose in community feedback on the draft Gambling Minimisation Policy. Each policy area and feedback areas are provided below.

5.1 Planning and Regulation

Respondents who chose to comment on Planning and Regulation shared the key comments below.

Topic	Community feedback
Number of EGMs in the area	Council should try to ensure the total number of EGM[s] in Casey is not increased. The Policy] should look at ways to reduce the number of EGMs in Council area. I would want to see Council again take the bold step of updating the Casey Planning Scheme for the banning of any new EGM facilities Council should not approve planning permits for new EGM venues where a net social or economic benefit for the local community benefit has not been demonstrated and the policy commitments should reflect this Any applications must show a strong commitment to supporting local charities etc. to help counteract negative effects of gambling. If not very strong commitment it should be denied. Council can discourage planning permits in the pre-application stage, however council should not approve planning permits for new EGM venues where a net social or economic benefit for the local community benefit has not been demonstrated and the policy commitments should reflect this. I believe this is a distinction that this policy can make.

5.2 Advocacy

Respondents who chose to comment on Advocacy shared the key comments below.

Advocate for different policies

Require them [EGM venues] to issue prepaid gambling cards that can be viewed by gambling control government agency

We would also recommend that council undertake more advocacy around the EGM venue application process

I am concerned by the limited items it plans to advocate for

Council must continue to advocate for a reduction in opening hours of gaming venues further to the current state government reforms and push for more reforms of the industry including maximum \$1 bets, removing losses disguised as wins.

I would encourage Council to push the Federal government for a complete ban of all gambling advertisements in all media sources - print, electronic, broadcast, etc.

Join groups

I encourage Council to join the Victorian Local Governance Association's Local Government Working Group on Gambling

The Alliance for Gambling Reform has great resources relating to these areas of reform. Council should join the Alliance to ensure that its advocacy aligns with other councils and strengthen the calls for change through strategic planning and information sharing.

Other

More analysis from the land use planning side is required to determine where there are gaps in the local planning scheme and relevant policies.

A key method of preventing harm in Casey will require for a reduction of EGMs in the municipality which will require intervention by the State Government to take back relinquished EGM entitlements and council should advocate for this to happen.

The Urban Growth Zone presents a vulnerability for the City of Casey however addressing the lack

of it's inclusion in the regional caps will help reduce that risk so I am pleased advocacy around the regional caps are included in the policy

5.3 Leadership

Respondents who chose to comment on Leadership shared the key comments below.

Topic	Community feedback
Strengthening the policy	While the policy includes some PUBLIC CONSULTATION – GAMBLING HARM MINIMISATION POLICY Page 5 of 11 statements that, if implemented, would distance Council from EGM venues and those that accept funding from EGM venues, the language within this section of the policy is weak. It doesn't appear to be a genuine commitment to change. Instead, the policy relies on soft language such as “not support”, “endeavour to transition”, and “discourage”. I am concerned that this soft language signals that Council is not truly committed to following through with these changes. This language should be strengthened to demonstrate Council's commitment. I applaud council's policy commitments in the leadership section of the policy, however feel this could be significantly strengthened. ANZAC Day events should be the only exception to holding events in gaming venues however, with the understanding that veterans are vulnerable to gambling harm. Employment related events should not be held at gaming venues under any circumstances or any other events that are targeted at vulnerable groups of people who could be at higher risk of harm. The policy should include the commitment that Councillors (when they return) and Council staff will not attend gambling venues when representing Council in an official capacity – the only exception being ANZAC Day events. Council should update its Leasing and Licensing Policy to not permit gambling promotion or

	advertising on Council-owned land, including sports betting, online gambling and EGM.
Non renewal of current policies	Council should also commit to not renewing any of the current agreements (e.g. those with Amstel) after the current agreement ends. Continuing these agreements threatens Council's independence from the industry – a key element of the public health approach. With the facilities at Bunjil Place, there is no genuine need for Council to host events at gambling venues.
Community	Support for Community Organisations: Avoid penalising community organisations receiving funding from EGM venues. Provide clear definitions for terms like "Gambling Advertisements" to prevent unintended consequences and support alternative funding mechanisms. Council can also use its leases and licenses to encourage sporting clubs to not take sponsorships and donations from gaming venues, or in the least encourage better culture around signage through the seasonal tenancy agreements, and the Advertising Signage on Council's Active Recreation Reserves Policy. Other Councils (e.g. Darebin) have adopted a stronger approach to Council grants which I support. This includes that Council community grants are not made available to sporting clubs, community groups, organisations, associations or businesses that (1) own or operate EGMs, (2) receive sponsorship or grants from EGM revenue, or (3) meet in venues that have EGMs. Council could also use its leases and licenses to encourage sporting/community organisations to not accept sponsorship or donations from gambling venues or other gambling companies

5.4 Community Development and Engagement and Research & Data

We received one comment for both topics below.

Topic	Community feedback
Community Development and Engagement	Partnership with VGCCC: Partner with the VGCCC to leverage their expertise and resources. Focus on localised, targeted initiatives to raise awareness and provide support services.
Research & Data	Objective, Evidence-Based Policy: Emphasise the importance of seeking diverse, credible research sources and avoiding confirmation bias. Regularly update policies based on the latest data and maintain transparency in reporting and decision-making.

6 Consultation evaluation

This report presents the findings from the analysis of the community feedback gathered during community engagement from 27 May– 21 June 2024.

The consultation was promoted to key stakeholders supplied by the Project team and also the wider Casey community via social media and the website.

The Casey Catch-Up e-newsletter also ensured the wider Casey community was given the opportunity to provide feedback.

The engagement program received a total of 10 contributions across the time period. The responses received were detailed and provided the team with strong feedback across the policy which will be responded to in a separate document on the Casey Conversations page.