

## What is the appetite in your Council for advocacy?

Arguably, many of the changes required to reduce harm from poker machines need to be made by the State government and the poker machine industry.

Councils can be very effective in advocating for their local communities. Councils that want to advocate strongly on this issue, and reflect this in their policies, should consider:

- Ensuring their activities are consistent with a public health approach recommended by the Public Health Association of Australia.
- Working in partnership with other councils and relevant stakeholder groups. The VLGA can assist in this area.
- Using the best available data, evidence and research. The Gambling Information Resource Office is an excellent resource in this area.
- Joining the Alliance for Gambling Reform.

## THE FACTS



## REDUCING HARM FROM GAMBLING

HARM FROM GAMBLING IS  
**SERIOUS + PREVALENT + PREVENTABLE**

## THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT POLICY



### VISION

Be clear on your vision

“To advocate for a fairer society where the gambling industry no longer causes social and economic harm in the community of Yarra” (City of Yarra, December 2016)



### LANGUAGE

Use the right language

“The City of Whittlesea has a long-term commitment to reducing the harms associated with gambling, a position that works hand-in-hand with our goal of promoting health and wellbeing in the community.” (City of Whittlesea, 2014)



### LEVERS

Pull the right levers

“Land use planning at the local level has a significant role in addressing and regulating the use of electronic gaming machines.” (City of Moreland, 2015)



### INTEGRATION

Integrate gambling harm prevention into other council policies

“Council will not provide sporting grounds, Council venues or use of Council property to any sporting club, community group, organisation or association who directly operate or own EGMs in Darebin or elsewhere.” (Darebin City Council, 2017)

These are some examples from Victorian Councils. However, your policy needs to reflect your community, and begins with a conversation about harms from gambling locally.

## TIPS

1. Focus most council resources where you have the greatest influence. Councils have a statutory responsibility to respond to the planning permit applications for poker machines and have a role in licensing processes with the VCGLR.
2. We recommend that you do not call your policy a “responsible gambling” policy. This language emphasises individual responsibility and behaviours, and may increase stigma, rather than focusing on systems and settings that need to change.
3. Your policy should focus on preventing harm from gambling, not reducing problem gambling. At a population level, most of the harm from gambling is experienced by low and moderate risk gamblers, not problem gamblers.
4. Your policy should aim to decrease losses from gambling, not increase the “community benefit”. A focus on maximising “benefits” is counter to good public health practice. In some cases, councils that have sought to maximise benefits from poker machine operators have found their decision making compromised when it comes to dealing with applications.

## NO BRAINERS



DO NOT TAKE  
ACTIVITY GROUPS  
TO GAMBLING  
VENUES



DO NOT FUND SPORTS  
OR CULTURAL CLUBS  
THAT OPERATE POKER  
MACHINES, OR PROMOTE  
SPORTS BETTING



DO NOT HOLD  
COUNCIL EVENTS  
OR ACTIVITIES  
AT GAMBLING  
VENUES

## WORTHWHILE BUT DON'T BANK ON IT

These activities are often delivered as part of council health and wellbeing plans. They are helpful in this context but are very difficult to target to people experiencing gambling harm. Leave them in your health plan, don't make them a major part of your gambling policy and action plan unless the strategies are specific to gamblers or gambling venues.



## THE MOST IMPORTANT LEVER



PLANNING  
PERMIT



COUNCIL



LICENCE



VCGLR

PLANNING PERMITS FOR POKER MACHINE ARE A COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITY.

LICENCES FOR POKER MACHINES ARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE VICTORIAN COMMISSION FOR GAMBLING AND LIQUOR REGULATIONS BUT COUNCIL CAN HAVE INPUT.

**Council can oppose poker machine licenses and reject planning permits. And they can empower their communities!** Communities that mobilise have been more successful in opposing poker machines than communities which leave the work to Council.

What is the appetite in your Council for strong and effective action and regulation?

NO REGULATION → SELF REGULATION → REGULATION

Ineffective |-----| Highly effective

Inaction allows harm to continue.