

Gambling policy consultation

Participant feedback

Participation

A number of consultation methods were utilised in the development of this policy to ensure that the Monash community were provided with an opportunity to have their say on gambling harm prevention within Monash.

A survey was available on Shape Monash from 4 March to 3 April 2022. Participants were recruited via Shape subscribers, social media and email lists. A total of 390 visits to the page resulted in 48 respondents to the survey. Emails were received directly from four community members as a result of the promotion of the survey.

A stakeholder survey was available and each of the 15 gambling venues within Monash were invited to participate via email with the exception of one venue that did not respond to a request for an email address. Zero responses were received for the stakeholder survey.

Officers attended seven Advisory Committee meetings (Disability, Gender Equity, LGBTIQ+, Multicultural, Positive Ageing, Sustainability and Youth) to discuss gambling and encourage advisory committee members to attend a joint advisory committee consultation. A total of 15 advisory committee members attended the joint consultation, all advisory committees had a minimum of one representative.

Officers conducted two interviews with community health organisations including LINK Health and Community and Gamblers Help EACH.

Internal consultation with relevant Council officers also occurred to ensure the proposed policy aligned with current policies, frameworks and planning requirements.

Participants

Demographics were included within the survey, and the below details describe demographics of the 48 survey respondents.

Participants were screened to exclude employees of pokies venues, health promotion agencies and help providers, who were consulted separately. Respondents were mostly aged 50 years and over (80%), with a total of 8 participants in the younger age groups. The majority were residents with just one person whose connection to Monash was as a worker. Most suburbs were represented.

Suburb	Number
Ashwood/Burwood/Chadstone/Oakleigh South	7
Glen Waverley	16
Hughesdale	2
Mount Waverley	18
Mulgrave	1
Oakleigh/Oakleigh East	2

Almost half (44%) of respondents are connected with one or more community groups in Monash.

Community group member	21
Sports club member	13
Faith-based group member	6
Volunteer group member	2

Women (48%) and men (46%) were equally represented, with 3 participants not providing their gender.

Gender	Number	%
Not disclosed	3	6%
Men	22	46%
Women	23	48%

Participation in gambling was low among survey participants, with only a few participating infrequently in Tattslotto, pokies or race betting.

Survey Results

These statements summarise Council’s position and current commitments to prevent harm from gambling. Please rate how important each position statement is to you.

Support for Council’s policy positions were strong. The results and samples of respondent comments are shown below. The full list of verbatim comments is included as an appendix (see Appendix A).

Policy statement				
Council should continue to protect our most vulnerable communities against any detrimental social, economic and health impacts of any new electronic gaming machine (pokies) applications.				
	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
All respondents		4%	8%	88%
Women			4%	96%
Men		9%	14%	77%
Respondent comments: <i>“Council should get rid of pokies that way they will protect people from harm”</i> <i>“I think Monash has enough poker machines and no new applications should be considered.”</i> <i>“Vulnerable people need protection, from our children through to our elders.”</i> <i>“Tighter restrictions on when and where are pokies are available.”</i>				
Policy statement				
Council should continue to maintain independence from the gambling industry by refusing direct financial or ‘in kind’ contributions from the gambling industry.				
	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
All respondents	2%		10%	88%
Women			13%	87%
Men	5%		9%	86%
Respondent comments: <i>“...I would definitely not want Council to be associated with any industry that has the potential and a proven track record of destroying lives and families.”</i> <i>“Any pokie machine tax coming to Council should be used for gambling help.”</i> <i>“we cannot totally banned gambling, as some take it as recreation and just for fun. A independ(ant) council can balance both side.”</i>				

Policy statement				
Council should work with community groups and organisations that use Council land, facilities or receive Council funding to promote social environments that don't associate with gambling.				
	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
All respondents	4%	8%	25%	63%
Women		9%	22%	70%
Men	9%	5%	27%	59%
Respondent comments:				
<i>"Council should severely limit ties with groups and organisations that directly or indirectly associate with gambling and work closely with those that show transparency in their non-association with the gambling industry."</i>				
<i>"Care should be taken that low level gambling eg raffles, bingo not affected"</i>				
<i>"It is a challenge for some groups to maintain their activities without support from some form of gambling - eg. Bingo. Council should continue to support such groups to the maximum extent possible to reduce their reliance on gambling income."</i>				
Policy statement				
Council should continue to advocate for regulatory reform to prevent harms to public health from gambling/pokies and promote harm minimisation strategies.				
	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
All respondents	2%	6%	17%	74%
Women		9%	13%	78%
Men	5%	5%	19%	71%
Respondent comments:				
<i>"... Negative effects should be proven and loudly represented in reform. Strategies to avoid these must be proven effective, otherwise they are a waste of government and council funds."</i>				
<i>"Keep the statistics in front of the Monash community"</i>				
<i>"Not aware of the Council's advocacy for regulatory reforms."</i>				
<i>"Planning permission should change to require gaming rooms to have windows and doors to outside. Darkened rooms with no view to outside are designed to help people divorce their minds from reality."</i>				
<i>"Community education from young age, starting from schools"</i>				

Policy statement				
Council should communicate with the Monash community on key issues of gambling including local gambling data, Council's advocacy initiatives, harm prevention messages and referral pathways for help with gambling addiction.				
	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
All respondents	4%	11%	23%	62%
Women	9%	5%	18%	68%
Men		18%	27%	55%
Respondent comments:				
<i>"I do believe comms related to ongoing support is also important, especially as people with a gambling addiction may only reach out or be willing to accept help when they've already been severely impacted and are in dire straits."</i>				
<i>"It would good to have gambling related information in the newsletters (I believe I saw it last month), on signages in Council property, both physical and virtual."</i>				
<i>"Gambling addiction often starts from loneliness so perhaps that should be addressed."</i>				
<i>"Important for the community to understand the issues around the impact of gambling on local communities."</i>				
Policy statement				
Council should protect children, young people and vulnerable members of our community from gambling harm by not allowing any forms of promotional material in relation to gambling or associated venues to be displayed where the community come to work, socialise or recreate on Council land.				
	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
All respondents	2%	2%	6%	90%
Women				100%
Men	5%	5%	9%	82%
Respondent comments:				
<i>"The more people see advertising on gambling, the more it is seen as a normal recreation."</i>				
<i>"Please do all you can to reduce gambling advertising. My footy/cricket obsessed 12-year-old son is exposed to a horrifying amount watching sport on TV. We do not need it where he plays Sport as well."</i>				
<i>"Advertising is everywhere and needs to be changed."</i>				
<i>"The council should not be providing or enabling advertising from organisations that directly or indirectly cause/contribute to harm in the community."</i>				

Policy statement

Council should advocate for a continuation of the current maximum municipal cap of 777 EGMs (pokie machines) in the municipality and will oppose any increase to that number or the inappropriate relocation of existing machines to areas that are considered vulnerable.

	Don't know	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
All respondents	2%	2%	4%	9%	83%
Women				13%	87%
Men	5%	5%	10%		81%

Respondent comments:

"Cap should be strictly maintained and reduced over time. Planning permission should change to require gaming rooms to have windows and doors to outside. Darkened rooms with no view to outside are designed to help people divorce their minds from reality."

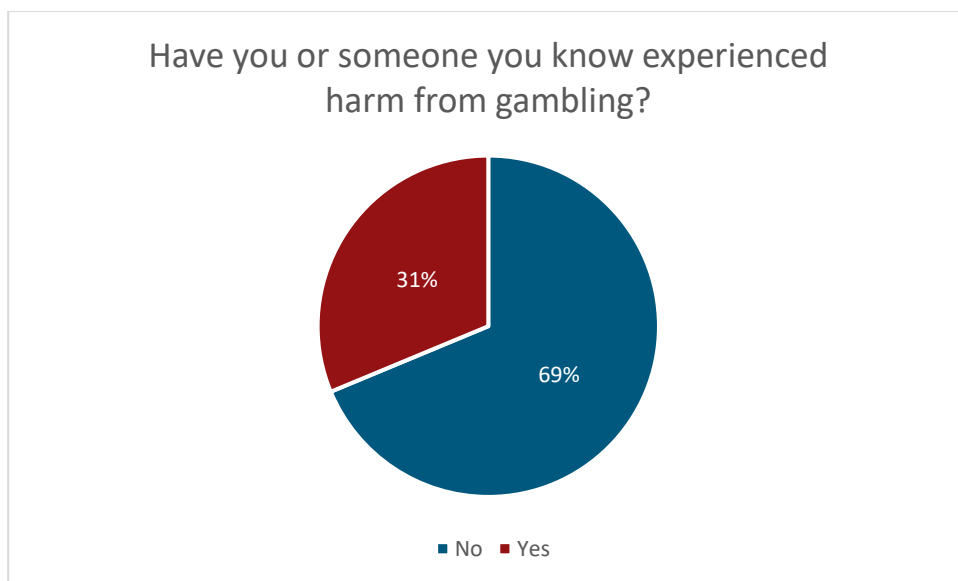
"It should be lower than 777- I would advocate for far fewer machines."

"Can Council advocate for plain poker machines (similar to cigarettes)? Can there be time limits on poker machines so they automatically turn off every hour for 10 minutes say?"

Have you or someone you know experienced harm from gambling?

One in three respondents had some experience of gambling harm, to either themselves or someone they know.

More men than women had or knew someone that had experienced harm from gambling (36% of men, 22% of women). Of the three people that did not disclose their gender, two (66%) had experienced or knew someone that had experienced harm.



Would you like to tell us about the gambling harm you or someone you know have experienced?

Eleven of the respondents shared stories of harms experienced by themselves, friends and family, summarised below. The full list of verbatim comments are included in the Appendix (see Appendix A).

Most of the responses to this question detailed stories involving financial hardship that impacted themselves (due to another's gambling behaviour) or someone they knew.

"As a child, I experienced a long period of financial hardship as a result of problem gambling by a parent."

Almost half of the responses involved breakdown of a relationship or impact on the family.

"Severe mental illness depression and poverty created, the ex-wife and children now also in poverty and all highly traumatised..."

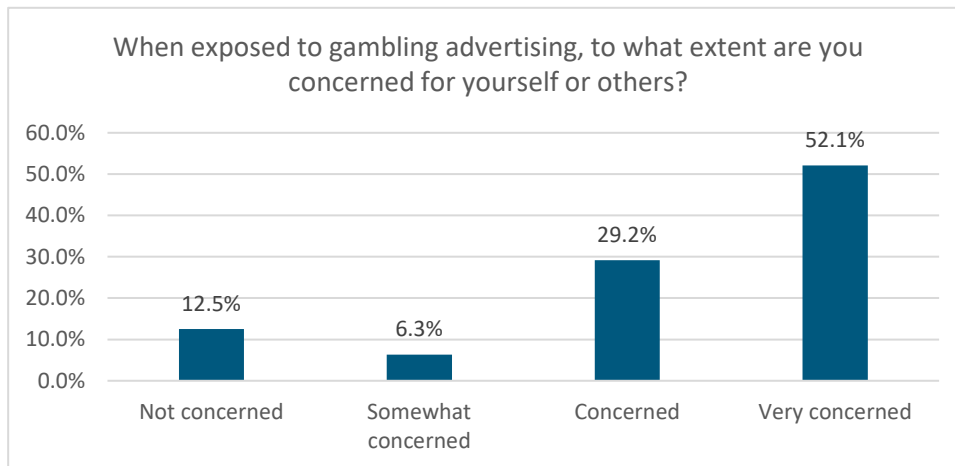
Several other responses mentioned criminal activity or health impacts as a result of gambling.

"A relative of mine was a problem gambler and stole money from their employer. That relative was convicted of a criminal offence and served time in jail. At the time, that relative was married with a young child. It cost that relative their home and marriage; and the child from that marriage missed out growing up with their father."

When exposed to gambling advertising, to what extent are you concerned for yourself or others?

More than 80% of respondents were concerned or very concerned about exposure to gambling advertising.

More women than men were concerned or very concerned about gambling advertising (87% of women, 77% of men). Of those that did not disclose their gender, 66% (n=2) were concerned or very concerned.



Email responses were received from four individuals throughout the initial consultation period. The themes of this input were expressing support of Council's position on reducing gambling harm, expressing concern about family violence within Monash, concerns about use of funds through the Community Benefit scheme, concerns about gambling venue opening hours and a want for more community education on the harms associated with gambling.

Interview results

Interviews with three community health organisations were conducted online via Microsoft Teams. A total of four staff from two agencies were involved. The responses to questions asked are summarised below.

Question	Responses
<p>Monash City Council's position towards gambling (specifically pokies) harm prevention has been to advocate against increases in the municipal cap for pokies machines and to oppose applications for new machines which are likely to cause harm to our vulnerable community.</p> <p>Do you agree or disagree with this position? Can you comment on why?</p>	<p>All interviewees agreed with this statement.</p> <p>Wouldn't want to see the municipal cap change.</p> <p>Would support Council to oppose new applications.</p> <p>In the event that municipal caps do increase, (organisation) would like to see advocacy around policy changes to influence accessibility of existing machines e.g. opening hours.</p>

	<p>Would like to see limits to increases in caps across all of Monash not just vulnerable areas although understand why vulnerability is called out here.</p>
<p>The existing Monash City Council Public Health Approach to Gambling Harm prevention prohibits the promotion of gambling organisations (and associated venues) to display advertising on Council land.</p> <p>Do you agree or disagree with this position? Can you comment on why?</p>	<p>All interviewees agreed with this statement.</p> <p>Not too much to comment – this one is pretty clear from our perspective.</p> <p>Very important for sports clubs to not be promoting gambling to young people. There is a double win in sports clubs not advertising pokies venues as pokies venues are environments that promote alcohol as well.</p> <p>Gambling advertising is a substantial issue. Watching footy on TV is almost impossible to not see advertising. Local clubs shouldn't be able to promote harmful activities including gambling.</p>
<p>Monash City Council takes a public health approach to gambling harm prevention.</p> <p>Do you agree or disagree with this position? Can you comment on why?</p>	<p>All interviewees agreed with this statement.</p> <p>Need to be addressing the social determinants of health rather than just working at the intervention point. Prevention across all levels (upstream / downstream prevention initiatives all necessary).</p> <p>Really like that Council are focussing on the systems around the individual rather than the individual themselves. Gamblers Help focus on the tertiary prevention stage but systems and policies are equally important.</p> <p>Good to focus on the whole local government area rather than the individual. An individual might be more likely to seek help if they're not feeling specifically targeted.</p> <p>Stigma around identifying someone has a gambling addiction is a big issue so Council working community-wide on this issue is a good thing.</p> <p>Partnership also an important thing – coming together with multiple agencies.</p> <p>Need to consider the connection with gambling harm and family violence. Pokies can be an escape or a safe space after hours for people</p>

	<p>experiencing family violence. Need to consider impact of actions e.g. advocating for reducing venue hours on all genders.</p>
<p>As a provider of support to people affected by gambling, do you have any other comments, areas of concern or suggestions on how Council can prevent gambling harm within Monash?</p>	<p>We're really seeing the normalisation of gambling, particularly for young people. It's concerning for the future when those young people are older.</p> <p>Anecdotally there was a difference in pokies losses in pubs and clubs offering outdoor dining last year. Less opportunity for people to be tempted to bet on pokies if their entire interaction is outdoors.</p> <p>There are extra barriers for people from diverse backgrounds to engage in support. Often multicultural community would rather talk to people within their community than going to an external agency for support. Stigma also a significant issue.</p> <p>Encourage Council to take an intersectional approach to the policy and associated actions –</p> <p>Encourage Council to continue to work in partnerships to approach the topic.</p>

Advisory Committee consultation results

The following results summarise discussions held at the Joint Advisory Committee consultation with 15 advisory committee members from across Council's various advisory committees.

Question	Responses
<p>How do you feel when you see gambling advertising? Where do you see it?</p>	<p>'concerned' (especially for young people) 'horrified', 'disgusted', 'annoyed', 'reinforces harmful stereotypes', 'obsession', 'wealth', 'in your face', 'constant', 'wanting to be included'</p> <p>We notice it: On TV, radio, bus shelters, pop up on phone, venues, during sport, newsagencies. Thankfully not much within Monash.</p>
<p>What are your views on this statement?</p>	<p>Why just vulnerable? Why not everyone?</p>

<p>“Council should protect children, young people and vulnerable members of our community from gambling harm by not allowing any forms of promotional material in relation to gambling or associated venues to be displayed where the community come to work, socialise or recreate on Council land.”</p>	<p>Agree but maybe some facilities are relying on this sponsorship to support their facilities (e.g. sports clubs) – other options for sponsorship</p> <p>Alliance of like-minded councils might be better placed to advocate</p> <p>Monitor advertising in public places e.g. shopping centres, public transport.</p> <p>Would like the statement to finish at ‘displayed’ – not allow any advertising anywhere.</p>
<p>Council vision</p> <p>Participants were asked to vote on their top 3 vision statements for a future for the City of Monash.</p>	<p>The vision statements that resonated most with attendees were:</p> <p>Monash a municipality that treats harm from gambling as a public health issue and works in partnership with other agencies to prevent harm to the community.</p> <p>Monash is a municipality that empowers its community to live healthy, connected lives free from gambling harm.</p>