

6.2 NOM NO. 2-2023 - ADVOCATING FOR MANDATORY CASHLESS GAMBLING - MOTION

Submitting Councillor: Cr Josh Fergeus

MOTION

That Council:

1. *Notes the letter from seven Victorian Councils: Casey, Darebin, Greater Dandenong, Hume, Monash, Whittlesea, Wyndham, on 24 February 2023 to Premier Daniel Andrews, describing their deep concerns at the harm being experienced throughout the community from gambling, and calling on the Premier to support mandatory cashless gambling.*
2. *Notes the motion from the City of Brimbank which was unanimously supported on 21 February, "That Council writes to the Victorian State Premier, the Victorian Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, the Victorian Leader of the Opposition and Brimbank State Members of Parliament, in light of recent announcements by the NSW and Tasmanian governments, calling for a bipartisan approach in introducing reforms that utilise mandatory pre-commitment systems and cashless cards to reduce the harms of electronic gambling on working and vulnerable people in the West."*
3. *Notes that the Tasmanian Government has committed to rolling out mandatory cashless gambling by December 2024.*
4. *Notes the Alliance for Gambling Reform has released a policy on mandatory cashless gambling and how it can be used to reduce harm from gambling.*
5. *Notes the growing discussion in the media across February 2023 regarding mandatory cashless gambling.*
6. *Notes that as an Alliance for Gambling Reform Leadership Council, we have given our support to the Alliance for Gambling Reforms' campaign drawing the attention of the Victorian State Premier, the Victorian Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation and the Victorian Leader of the Opposition, to the escalating losses from poker machines in Victoria and asking them to give their support for mandatory cashless gambling with binding and default limits here in Victoria in the current term of government.*
7. *Writes to our local lower and upper house State Members of Parliament asking for their support for mandatory cashless gambling to help protect our local community from gambling harm.*
8. *Communicates with our community regarding this advocacy through our communication channels.*

BACKGROUND

The Alliance for Gambling Reform (the Alliance) is a collaboration of organisations and with a shared concern about the harmful aspects of gambling and its normalisation in Australian culture. They are a registered health promotion charity. Our council is a supporter of the Alliance.

The Alliance supports public policy and regulatory regimes that make Australia a safer, healthier, and more equitable society by reducing the level of gambling harm. They prioritise

policies and actively campaign for changes that prevent gambling harm and minimise its consequences.

Their policies are developed by drawing on the lived experience of people who have been harmed by gambling, in addition to their understanding of public health policy evidence and research. They believe lived experience is critical to developing informed understanding of problems and possible solutions.

Defining gambling harm: The Alliance takes a public health approach to gambling harm. They use the term 'harm' to describe any negative consequence that results from a person's own or another's gambling. These commonly accepted harms include: financial problems, relationship conflict or breakdown, health problems, emotional or psychological distress, reduced capacity in other parts of your life, cultural harms and criminal activity. Gambling harm extends beyond addiction, often impacting many people, not just the person who is gambling. Family members, friends, employers and the broader community can also be harmed by someone else's gambling.

Cashless gambling systems allow for a user to use a poker machine without inserting any cash and ordinarily involves a card or a digital wallet. They can also limit how much money can be added (limits) and allow for self or third-party exclusion from using machines. They can provide gamblers with real time data about their spending.

When done right, cashless gambling can reduce harms from poker machines and the Alliance for Gambling Reform has given their support to mandatory cashless gambling and outlined the features and specifications that must be a part of any cashless gambling system if it is to be effective as a harm reduction measure. A key requirement for the system to be effective as a harm reduction measure is that it must be mandatory. *See Attachment [Alliance for Gambling Reform Cashless Gambling Policy](#)*

The Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation says that a universal cashless system with binding limits is considered the gold standard for reducing harm from poker machines.

Tasmania last year became the first state to commit to a mandatory cashless gambling system and the Alliance welcomed the model which will be in place by the end of 2024.

Electronic Gaming Machine (EGM) losses in Victoria have increased by 12.45% in 2022 when compared to 2019 (2020 and 2021 had reduced operational days due to COVID lockdowns and this resulted in lower losses in those years). The total losses for 2022 hit a new record high of \$3.04 billion in 2022.

DISCUSSION

The NSW Liberal Premier has committed ahead of the March 2023 election to a cashless gambling system across all NSW venues which would be rolled out by the end of 2028. The cards include some features which would help to reduce harm from gambling.

Victoria has not indicated any intention to bring in similar mandatory measures to its 30,000 pokies, but on 7 February 2023 Premier Andrews flagged that he had softened his long-held

resistance to such measures when he said in response to questions about a similar system in Victoria, "Will there never be any future changes? I wouldn't rule that out; I wouldn't say that."

On 21 February the City of Brimbank passed a motion to write to the Premier, the Minister, the Opposition Leader and their local members of parliament calling for bi-partisan support on mandatory cashless gambling.

On 24 February, seven Victorian councils wrote to the Premier of Victoria asking for him to support mandatory cashless gambling.

Both the letter and the motion have received media attention, with articles in the Age, and stories on Channel 7 and 9 and radio discussions on mandatory cashless gambling and Victoria's growing EGM losses.

The Alliance for Gambling Reform has written to Leadership Councils and asked them to co-sign letters which will be sent to the Premier, the Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation and the Leader of the Opposition to ask them to support mandatory cashless gambling with effective harm minimisation methods in this term of government and Monash has supported this joint advocacy.

Further, the Alliance is calling on Leadership Councils to write to their local upper and lower house members of parliament, to invite discussion on this issue with council and to give their support for the need for mandatory cashless gambling in Victoria.

The City of Monash should write to our local upper and lower house members of parliament, asking them to lobby for mandatory cashless gambling here in Victoria to stem the tide of growing losses and to reduce the harm to their community from poker machines.

CONCLUSION

Council should continue its commitment to protecting our community from gambling harm and support the campaign from the Alliance and join other Victorian councils showing leadership on gambling reform and advocate to local MPs on behalf of our local community to urge them to lobby for bipartisan support of mandatory cashless gambling in Victoria in this term of government.

NOM NO. 2-2023 – ADVOCACY FOR MANDATORY CASHLESS GAMBLING – OFFICER’S REPORT

Submitting Councillor: Cr Josh Fergeus

Responsible Officer: Russell Hopkins, Director Community Services

MOTION

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BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Nil budget implications, work required can be completed within existing resources.

IMPACT ON INTERNAL RESOURCES

Nil impact on internal resources.

COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICIES

The Notice of Motion relates to the *Monash Health & Wellbeing Plan*; Priority Three: Harm Prevention and Council's *Public Health Approach to Gambling Harm Policy*, in particular the following policy statements:

2.2 Council will continue to advocate for regulatory reform to reduce harmful practices in the gambling industry including but not limited to:

...

Advocate for changes to regulations concerning the design of EGMs to reduce characteristics designed to promote persistent machine use and addiction.

2.3 Council will apply a public health approach to harm prevention and focus on collaborative action with State Government, Alliance for Gambling Reform, peak bodies, community partners and other councils to reduce and prevent gambling harm within Monash.

RELEVANCE TO WORK ALREADY UNDERTAKEN BY OFFICERS OR COMMITTEES

The Notice of Motion is pertinent to the work Officers are currently undertaking to implement the priorities within the Public Health Approach to Gambling Harm Policy.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Through the Public Health Approach to Gambling Harm Policy, Council has committed to advocating for a range of gambling harm prevention measures; including but not limited to the continuation of existing limits for EGMs within Monash (review expected to occur in 2023) and changes to the Community Benefit scheme where sponsorship arrangements should not be considered Class A deductions for club licenced EGM operators.

Officers recommend the letters sent to MPs on behalf of Monash Council include a recommendation to ensure 'implementation and regulation' of the proposed mandatory cashless gambling system include ongoing harm prevention measures.