

HUME CITY COUNCIL

GAMBLING

HARM POLICY

Policy reference No:	POL279
File No:	HCC18/445
Adopted by Council:	xx xx xx
Date for review:	November 2030
Responsible officer:	Manager Community Health & Wellbeing
Department:	Community Health & Wellbeing



We're **better**, every day,
we're in it **together**,
we **show up**, all for Hume



1 Policy Statement

- 1.1 Gambling is a harmful product that can undermine the health, wellbeing, and economic security of the Hume community. As a local government, and with gambling activities on Council owned or managed land, Hume City Council has both a responsibility and a role in preventing and reducing harm.
- 1.2 Gambling harm is shaped by social and economic factors and can lead to financial stress, mental health, family violence, and homelessness, impacting not only individuals but families and the broader community. Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) remain a major source of harm, especially in areas experiencing disadvantage. Growing online gambling and sports betting also pose new risks, particularly for younger residents.
- 1.3 This policy provides a clear framework for Council's decisions, land use, partnerships, and advocacy. It reflects Council's commitment to minimising gambling harm in line with legislation and community expectations.

2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- 2.1 Articulate Council's public health approach to gambling, and outline Council's commitment to reducing the impacts of gambling harm on the Hume City community.
- 2.2 Establish a clear and consistent Council response to decision making on gambling related matters within Hume City, and, where appropriate, in other neighbouring municipalities.
- 2.3 Inform Council's advocacy priorities on gambling reforms to achieve the best outcomes for local communities, particularly those most at risk of gambling related harms.
- 2.4 Strengthen partnerships and collaborations to effectively advocate for gambling reforms.

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- 2.5** Align with Council's Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs), partnership agreements, funding agreements and policies, including but not limited to, local planning policy on gaming (Hume Planning Scheme clause 52.28 Gaming), Lease and License Policy, Social Justice Charter 2021 and Council Plan 2025 – 2029.
- 2.6** Emphasise our role and duty of care as a local government in prioritising the safety and wellbeing of our residents and creating safe and inclusive environments free of harm.

3 Scope

- 3.1** EGMs remain the product which causes local communities the most gambling related harm. It is also the area where local government authorities have a regulatory and statutory mandate to consider applications for new, additional or amended EGM licenses.
- 3.2** Whilst EGMs remain the main focus, this policy also encompasses:
- a) Community education and engagement on the harms caused by gambling
 - b) Monitoring of gambling trends, specifically the increased prevalence of online gambling and sports betting
 - c) Advocacy for gambling reform
 - d) Work to provide safer and inclusive environments free from gambling harm

4 Objective

The policy seeks to:

- 4.1** Reduce gambling-related harm across the Hume City community: To minimise the negative health, social, and economic impacts of gambling on individuals, families, and the broader community through evidence-based prevention, education, and harm minimisation strategies.

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5 Policy Implementation

5.1 Protecting Public Health:

Council will:

- 5.1.1** Identify opportunities to promote non-gambling social, leisure and entertainment venues and activities within Hume City as alternatives to gambling, with particular consideration for groups at risk of social isolation and those who may seek safe, welcoming spaces. Activities should reflect the diverse needs of different genders, age cohorts, and cultural backgrounds.
- 5.1.2** Promote partnerships with organisations, service providers and other agencies that improve community access to services, information and activities that address the impacts of gambling and improve community awareness of the harms associated with gambling.
- 5.1.3** Elevate the need for increased services to support communities affected by gambling harms, particularly in Hume City's Growth Areas.
- 5.1.4** Continue to monitor evidence-based research on gambling and its effects on communities to support and strengthen its knowledge of effective practices to minimise gambling related harms.

5.2 Leadership and representation:

Council will:

- 5.2.1** Continue to recognise its role in reducing gambling harm by taking a proactive and longer-term policy approach to current and future gambling matters, especially matters that impact on Hume City's communities most at risk of gambling harms.
- 5.2.2** Work closely with peak bodies and other community organisations in recognition of Council's important role in the collective voice on the minimisation of gambling harms in Hume City and across Victoria.
- 5.2.3** Make submissions to State and Federal Government in response to

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calls for public comment on relevant gambling related matters.

- 5.2.4** Adequately resource Council responses to applications relating to all EGM matters, including representations at VGCCC and VCAT Hearings, if, and when, required.
- 5.2.5** Avoid hosting any community activity, event, program or social outing in venues that have EGMs or gambling activities, unless there is no viable alternative.
- 5.2.6** Ensure the Hume Annual Community Grants program does not fund activities, programs or events that occur in venues that have EGMs or gambling activities.
- 5.2.7** Not support new or additional gambling-related advertising at Council owned or managed facilities.
- 5.2.8** Block and filter internet accounts across Council provided equipment and internet (WIFI) to ensure Council-owned devices are not being accessed for gambling activity at any Council facilities.
- 5.2.9** Support interested community groups/organisations/sports clubs to divest themselves of sponsorship, grants or in-kind support from EGM venues by providing advice and investigating alternative opportunities.

5.3 Council's regulatory and statutory response to electronic gaming machines:

Council will:

- 5.3.1** Undertake a Social and Economic Impact Assessment for each application that is referred by the VGCCC for new or amended EGM licenses in Hume City and assess each application on a case-by-case basis in accordance with this policy and its Local Planning Policy (Hume Planning Scheme clause 52.28 Gaming).
- 5.3.2** Review the provisions of the Schedule to Clause 52.28 as part of Council's next Planning Scheme Review required under section 12B (1) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987, to make recommendations on the alignment between any gambling related policy and Council's Planning Scheme.

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- 5.3.3** Formulate an appropriate response to each formally notified gaming licence application in neighbouring Councils, when the assessed impacts (both positive and negative) of the application demonstrate that there will be a net detrimental impact on Hume residents.
- 5.3.4** In its capacity as landlord/licensor, pursue opportunities for divestment from EGMs with gaming venues located on Council owned or managed land. This will also be linked to Council's advocacy for a sinking cap, to ensure that divested EGMs do not re-enter Hume City via a gaming application by another venue.
- 5.3.5** Ensure venues with EGMs located on Council-owned or managed land will be required to pay full market rent under all new or renewed lease agreements.
- 5.3.6** Require venues with EGMs located on Council owned or managed land to submit Council defined annual Community Value Statements under all new or renewed lease agreements.
- 5.3.7** Not support any gaming license application if Council's Social and Economic Impact Assessment demonstrates that there will be a net detrimental impact on the local, surrounding or Hume City-wide communities.
- 5.3.8** Not support any referrals from the VGCCC which propose new gaming venues on Council owned or managed land, or any increase in EGMs at venues currently located on Council or Crown owned land.
- 5.3.9** Maintain independence from the gambling industry. Except where required by its role as landlord or licensor, Council will not offer or accept financial contributions, in-kind support, or grants from owners or operators of EGMs or other gambling-related entities. Additionally, Council will not promote community grants or initiatives sponsored by local EGM venues.
- 5.3.10** In its capacity as landlord/licensor, not consent to an increase in EGMs at venues on Council owned or managed land. Council will also include a prohibition of location and operation of EGMs in all

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future licenses/leases on Council owned or managed land, where a gaming venue does not currently exist.

- 5.3.11** Not support applications to change gaming venue operations (including, but not limited to, venue design, operating hours, machine configurations) if Social and Economic Impact Assessments or other assessments demonstrate that the proposed changes will have a net detrimental impact on the local, surrounding or Hume City-wide communities.
- 5.3.12** Formally notify the VGCCC of unrealised community benefits in Hume from gaming applications for their investigation and enforcement for compliance as contained in gaming applications and VGCCC Decisions, such as building works; donations/gifts/sponsorships; contributions towards activities, infrastructure, projects or programs and other listed community benefits as proposed by the applicant or decided upon by the VGCCC.
- 5.3.13** Notify the VGCCC if negative impacts from gaming applications are demonstrated to be notably greater than conveyed, such as the gaming losses in the first 12 months.
- 5.3.14** Actively monitor and manage all EGM venue signage to ensure compliance with the Planning and Environment Act and Gambling Regulations Act.

5.4 Strengthening partnerships and advocacy:

Council will:

- 5.4.1** Continue to partner with community organisations, peak bodies and venue operators to support joint advocacy efforts to minimise risks and harms from gambling within the Hume City municipality and across Victoria.
- 5.4.2** Advocate for a reduction to Hume's current regional cap of 851 EGMs and will oppose any increase to that number or inappropriate relocation of existing machines to areas that are considered vulnerable, considering the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas

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(SEIFA) index of disadvantage, and future population projections.

5.4.3 Continue to advocate and support the co-operative call on the Federal and State Governments for the regulatory and legislative reforms required to reduce gambling harm and provide greater protection by:

- a) permanently reducing gaming room operating hours, with all gaming rooms to be closed between midnight and 10.00am
- b) introduction of mandatory pre-commitment
- c) the redesign of gaming machines to reduce harm and addiction, including \$1 maximum spin
- d) providing incentives to gaming venues to remove their machines
- e) eliminating sports betting advertising, particularly during the live viewing of sport
- f) addressing ease of access to online gambling apps and gambling advertising, especially the reduction and prevention of children's exposure to gambling products, platforms and advertising.
- g) the reduction in the annual EGM losses and number of EGMs across Victoria, whilst retaining 50:50 split between hotels and clubs

5.4.4 Closely monitor Community Benefit Statements and Community Value Statements submitted by gaming venues to ensure accurate data is collected and used to advocate for greater direct benefits to local communities.

5.5 Building local responses to local issues:

Council will:

5.5.1 Promote, provide and partner on opportunities and initiatives for community and staff to learn about gambling losses, harms, prevention and help seeking, thereby building capacity to respond and advocate on local gambling matters in Hume City.

5.5.2 Partner, participate in, and/or support research efforts into the

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harms caused by gambling to inform local knowledge of its impacts, trends, and effective harm minimisation strategies and practices.

- 5.5.3** Provide public notice to the community when there is an application for new EGM licenses, an increase in or transfer of EGMs, consult where applicable and publish copies of all gambling related submissions it makes on Council's website.
- 5.5.4** In partnership with local service providers, resource, promote and seek external funding for a range of non-gambling social, cultural and recreational programs and events as an alternative to gambling in Hume City, including targeted strategies for those most at risk.

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6 Definitions and Abbreviations

Term	Definition
EGMs:	Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs), also referred to as gaming machines, pokies or poker machines.
Council	Council means Hume City Council, being a body constituted as a municipal Council under the Local Government Act 1989.
Gambling Harms:	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. Gambling can harm not only the person who gambles but also family, friends, workplaces and communities. (Foundation for Responsible Gambling website: https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/resources/glossary/)
Gaming:	Gaming usually refers to a gambling activity that takes place on an EGM.

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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 a pokie machine) (Foundation for Responsible Gambling website: https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/resources/glossary/) Gambling presents itself in a range of forms, such as Betting, Wagering, EGMs, Lotto, Scratchies, Dog and Horse Racing and TAB. Some of these forms of gambling such as commercial bingo (run for profit) have grown significantly due to their accessible platforms and online presence.
Gambling Losses	Refers to the total amount of money spent on gambling that is not returned to the participant in the form of winnings.
Regional Caps:	Regional Caps have been created through Ministerial Orders by State Government to limit the number of EGMs within a municipality. Hume City has a Regional (Hume-wide) Cap of 851 EGMs, therefore Hume City cannot have more than 851 EGMs operating within the municipality until such time as the State Government changes it through a gazetted Ministerial Order.
Sinking Cap	Relates to the advocacy work for the automatic lowering of the Regional Cap in Hume City, if and when, EGMs are divested from Clubs.
VCAT:	Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal

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VGCCC	Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission. Independent regulator of Victoria's gambling industry
Community Value Statements	Community Value Statements are annual reports, defined by Council and required under all new or renewed lease agreements for EGM venues located on Council-owned or managed land. They must demonstrate the real benefits and social impact delivered to the local community, including financial contributions, support for community groups, and activities that promote wellbeing. These statements aim to improve transparency and help Council assess how gaming venues contribute to or impact the community.

7 Related Documents

- 7.1 Hume City Council – Community Vision
- 7.2 Hume City Council – Council Plan (incorporating the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan)
- 7.3 Hume City Council – Hume Planning Scheme
- 7.4 Hume City Council – Social Justice Charter

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