

GAMBLING HARM PREVENTION POLICY

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish City of Ballarat’s strategic position, responsibilities, commitments, and approach to preventing and minimising gambling-related harms in the municipality. This policy will also inform Council’s submissions to the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission (VGCCC) in response to applications for new gaming licences or amendments to existing gaming licences, and the assessment of applications considered under the relevant clauses of the Ballarat Planning Scheme.

Reduction of gambling harm is a health priority for the Ballarat community and aligns with City of Ballarat’s strategic objectives.

2.0 Scope

The Gambling Harm Prevention Policy is a ‘whole of Council’ approach to guide Council in fulfilling its statutory responsibility to prevent and minimise gambling-related harm in the community.

This policy applies when considering:

- Council owned and managed facilities (including sites operated under leases, licences, joint-use agreements, or committees of management).
- City of Ballarat assessment of new or amended planning permit applications related to electronic gaming machines across the municipality.
- City of Ballarat submissions to the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission (VGCCC) regarding gambling licence applications or amendments.
- City of Ballarat support of gambling harm prevention initiatives.
- Assessment of applications to City of Ballarat’s community grant streams, and applications by the City of Ballarat for external funding.
- The delivery of initiatives, programs and events facilitated and supported by City of Ballarat.
- Council’s advocacy activities relating to gambling harm prevention and industry reform.

The policy supports future improvements to the Ballarat Planning Scheme relating to gaming provisions. As the level of government closest to the community, Council is best placed to understand the impact of gambling and to prevent and mitigate the negative impacts of gambling on their communities. Accordingly, the City of Ballarat undertakes roles as a planner and regulator, community partner, and advocate. The ways in which this will be undertaken are outlined in 3.0 Policy Statements.

This policy provides strategic direction rather than detailed operational actions, with specific decision-making criteria and implementation mechanisms to be embedded within the Ballarat Planning Scheme and supported through ongoing organisation-wide operational practices.

While the policy is relevant to all gambling activities that take place in the municipality, its primary focus is on Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) and gambling at gaming venues, as this is where Council has greatest influence through its statutory roles and decision-making processes. Additionally, this form of gambling continues to cause significant losses and community harm.

3.0 Policy Statement

The policy is founded on a public health approach to the prevention of gambling-related harm. This approach acknowledges a shared responsibility for improving the health of population groups and subgroups, rather than just the health of individuals. The public health approach to gambling-related harms:

1. Recognising that gambling harm is caused by a complex interplay of individual, socio-cultural, environmental, commercial, and political determinants; and
2. Advocating for independent (that is, free from gambling industry influence) policies and strategies that seek to prioritise health and wellbeing, and protect individuals, their communities, and families from being harmed by the gambling industry, its products and practices.

3.1 Policy Principles

These policy objectives align with Council's statutory roles, namely: planning, regulation, and enforcement; community partnerships; and advocacy.

3.1.1 Planning, Regulation, and Enforcement

Protect communities most vulnerable to gambling-related harm by strengthening Council's statutory planning role to influence the location, operation and design of venues with EGMs through improvements to local policy within the Ballarat Planning Scheme.

3.1.2 Community Partnerships

Continue to work with stakeholders and community partners to increase access to education, services and opportunities to engage in healthy lifestyles.

3.2 Planning, Regulation, and Enforcement

- City of Ballarat will protect vulnerable communities by managing the location, design and operation of gaming venues and preventing convenience gambling, supported by ongoing strengthening of the Ballarat Planning Scheme to support this direction.
- City of Ballarat will use a gendered and intersectional lens to assess the potential social, economic and health impacts of gaming licence and planning permit applications
- City of Ballarat will not support an application for a gaming licence or planning permit where there is no clearly demonstrated net benefit to the community. A net community benefit assessment involves weighing the social and economic impacts of a proposal, with particular consideration of gambling harm and impacts on vulnerable groups, to determine whether the proposal delivers a clear overall benefit to the community. City of Ballarat will adopt an evidence-based approach to strengthening the capacity of the Ballarat Planning Scheme to effectively manage and influence the location, operation and design of EGMs.
- Council encourages applicants to have early engagement with City of Ballarat to ensure harm prevention design principles are embedded in any planning permit and gaming licence applications from the outset. Council will prohibit the siting and operation of any new or additional EGMs on Council-owned or managed land.

3.3 Community Partnerships

- Council will continue to support relevant initiatives and collaborative approaches to preventing gambling harm, including the Ballarat Gambling Harm Prevention Taskforce, and other organisations, providers, and agencies in their efforts to increase access to services, support, advocacy and community education.
- City of Ballarat will support and assist coordination of collaborative work within the municipality in advocating for harm minimisation approaches and improved community awareness of gambling and related harms, including increased understanding of the different ways that gambling harm may be experienced depending on gender, culture, and other intersectional attributes, and the provision of gambling harm education efforts. This includes exploring and supporting initiatives that tackle the impacts of gambling on young people and sharing these opportunities with local networks.
- City of Ballarat will encourage and support initiatives that seek to prevent gambling harm or offer alternate recreational options the community, especially for population priority groups listed within

the City of Ballarat *Municipal Health & Wellbeing Plan 2021-31*. This includes: Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities; culturally diverse communities; LGBTIQ+ communities; people with a disability; women and gender diverse community members; early years and children; young people; older people; and financially vulnerable people.

- Council will prohibit applications to the City of Ballarat *Community Impact Grant Program* from groups and organisations which derive significant income or benefit from gambling and will not fund activities which focus on or promote gambling.
- City of Ballarat will support community events that expand access for the community to non-gambling social, leisure, entertainment and recreation opportunities for the community, including the provision of safe, non-gambling alternative venues and activities.
- Council will maximise the opportunity for the community to engage in Council's strategic, regulatory, and decision-making processes relating to applications for gaming licences and planning permits.
- Council will not accept sponsorship or other forms of financial or in-kind contribution for Council run events or programs from any club or commercial gambling provider that derives revenue from EGMs.
- Council will discourage sporting clubs operating out of Council-owned or managed venues (and/or on Council-owned or managed land) from accepting revenue or sponsorships from sports betting companies or entities operating EGMs. Council will support clubs to consider alternative revenue streams and engage with local education opportunities to strengthen clubs gambling harm minimisation commitments.
- The promotion or advertising of any gambling activity or venue will be prohibited on Council-owned or managed land and within Council facilities. This includes, but is not limited to, advertising in clubrooms, on sports ground fencing and on scoreboards (outside of pre-existing contractual arrangements). This restriction applies to all forms of gambling advertising, including sports betting, online gambling, and EGM venue operators. Non-compliance by user groups or tenants may result in jeopardising their continued use of the facility.
- Council will promote support services in all communications regarding gambling harm.

3.4 Advocacy

- Council will advocate to government and peak bodies for effective reform of the gambling industry
- Council will continue to access and monitor local gambling data, including monitoring monthly and annual EGM losses reported via the VGCCC website, including regular updates to the City of Ballarat *Gambling Harm Minimisation Position Statement*.
- Council will continue to consult with the Ballarat community, in collaboration with the Ballarat Gambling Harm Prevention Taskforce, to understand the community's advocacy priorities, and utilise the findings to inform advocacy priorities and actions.
- Advocate for systemic and legislative change within the gambling industry, promote harm prevention best practice and improve education to reduce gambling harm in the Ballarat community.

4.0 Supporting documents and references

4.1 Legislation

- *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* (Vic)
- *Gender Equality Act 2020* (Vic)
- *Interactive Gambling Act 2001* (Cth)

- *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic)
- *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (Vic)
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* (Vic)
- *Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation Act 2011* (Vic)
- *Gambling and Casino Control Commission Act 2011* (Vic)

4.2 Associated documents

- Ballarat Planning Scheme
- Ballarat Strategy 2040
- City of Ballarat Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021- 2031
- City of Ballarat ‘Minimising Gambling Harm’ Social Policy Position Statement 2022
- City of Ballarat Community Impact Grant Program Eligibility Criteria

4.3 Definitions

City of Ballarat	Means the body corporate constituted in accordance with the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> .
Council	Means the group of Councillors who are democratically elected to represent the Ballarat municipality in accordance with the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> .
EGM	An electronic gaming machine. It is a computerised gambling device that has a video screen displaying symbols on simulated reels. Cash is inserted into the machine and buttons are used to place bets. The machine randomly determines positions of symbols on the screen. Wins are returned as credits back into the machine.
Gambling	The placement of a wager or bet on the outcome of a future uncertain event. This may include (but is not limited to) gaming machines, wagering, sports betting, trade promotion lotteries, raffles, lotteries, casino table games, lucky envelopes and Keno.
Gambling related harm	Any initial or increased detrimental consequence due to an engagement with gambling that leads to a negative impact to the health or wellbeing of an individual, family unit, community, or population.
VGCCC	Means Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission, the independent statutory authority which regulates Victoria’s gambling and liquor industries. The commission conducts hearings (both public and private) on matters such as approval for proposed gaming premises, or requests for increased gaming machines.

5.0 Administrative Updates

From time to time, circumstances may change, leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this policy. Where an update does not materially alter this policy, such a change may be made

administratively. Examples of minor administrative changes include changes to names of Council departments or positions, changes to names of Federal or State Government departments or a minor amendment to legislation that does not have material impact. Where any change or update may materially change the intent of this policy, it must be considered by Council.

6.0 Policy owner

Executive Manager Engaged Communities

7.0 Authorisation

Adopted by Ballarat City Council on 22 July 2026 (R132/26)