



<b>Document Name:</b>	<b>Gambling – Position Statement</b>
<b>Document</b>	V3
<b>Endorsed Date:</b>	October 2024
<b>Review Date:</b>	October 2026

Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC) has issued this position statement to provide an overview of the impacts of gambling in the City of Whittlesea and communicate its position in response to this issue.

### **Definitions:**

Gambling To stake money or risk anything of value on the outcome of an event involving chance when the probability of winning or losing is less than certain.

Gambling Harm Any kind of harm or distress arising from, or caused or exacerbated by, a person’s gambling. It can affect the person who gambles, as well as the people around them, including family, friends and work colleagues.

Gambling Venues Venues containing Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs), casinos, sports bars, Totalisator Agency Board (TAB) outlets, racetracks and racecourses, licenced bingo or keno venues.

### **Overview of the issue:**

There are many forms of legally available gambling products in Victoria including electronic gaming machines (EGMs), casino games, wagering (TAB), online sports betting, keno, lotteries and bingo. Of these products, EGMs are responsible for the highest gambling losses, accounting for 3.022 billion dollars of the Victorian Gambling Industry’s in 2022-23<sup>1</sup>.

EGMs have a particularly devastating effect on families and households in the City of Whittlesea, with our municipality experiencing the fourth highest losses to EGMs across Victoria behind Brimbank, Casey and Hume<sup>2</sup>. This is an increase from experiencing the seventh highest losses to EGMs across Victoria in 2015-16. The City of Whittlesea contains 10 gambling venues and 691 EGMs, which is 168%

<sup>1</sup> <https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/resources/gambling-victoria/expenditure-on-gambling-victoria-and-australia/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/resources/gambling-victoria/pokies-across-victoria/whittlesea/>

of allowable machines. This resulted in the following losses in the City of Whittlesea between 2022 and 2023<sup>3</sup>:

- A daily loss of \$377,660 to EGMs
- An annual loss of \$137,846,028 to EGMs

The City of Whittlesea possessed 3 of Victoria's top 10 highest loss EMG venues, in order of loss they were Epping Plaza Hotel, Bundoora Tavern and Plough Hotel. Losses at Epping Plaza Hotel in 2022-23 alone were \$25,193,210.86.

Increasingly young people are being exposed to new forms of gambling through social media, online advertising and sports coverage combined with increased accessibility and opportunities to gamble via the internet and smart phone access. The Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation (VRGF) has recently labelled those aged 18 to 24 as one of the most at-risk groups for gambling harm, with up to 80% having taken part in the last twelve months<sup>4</sup>.

Gambling is not only affecting City of Whittlesea residents financially. According to the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, individuals are likely to experience multiple dimensions of harm as a result of gambling (e.g. relationship strain, emotional or psychological distress, decreased physical health, reduced performance at work or study, cultural shame etc.)<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore, the prevalence of people experiencing harm from gambling is higher than common belief. Gambling harm is almost twice as common as major depressive disorders in Victoria and 85% of people experiencing harm are 'low to moderate risk' gamblers, not as is commonly perceived, by people experiencing significant problems with their gambling<sup>6</sup>.

The prevalence of individuals experiencing harm for gambling is increasing each year, made worse by developments in digital technology enabling punters to place bets 24 hours a day – 7 days a week. As a growth area, City of Whittlesea residents are even more at risk of gambling harm – with fewer alternative recreational venues and opportunities.

Recent evidence by Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety identified that gambling does not directly cause intimate partner violence but can intersect with it in a range of different ways<sup>7</sup>. It was also found that economic abuse is highly prevalent among women experiencing gambling-related intimate partner violence.

### **Our Position:**

WCC recognises that gambling in the City of Whittlesea is a serious issue and as a result individuals, families and the broader community are experiencing harm in different ways. Our organisation is committed to preventing gambling harm in our community and is responding to this issue by:

- Supporting local gambling research and awareness-raising

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/news/health/playing-or-paying-the-odds/#:~:text=The%20lure%20of%20gambling%20appears,in%20the%20last%20twelve%20months>

<sup>5</sup> Assessing Gambling Related Harm in Victoria, a Public Health Perspective, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> [https://anrows-2019.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/30090022/ANROWS-RtPP-Hing-Gambling\\_and\\_IPV.pdf](https://anrows-2019.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/30090022/ANROWS-RtPP-Hing-Gambling_and_IPV.pdf)

- The commitment to participate in advocacy against the installation of more EGMs in the City of Whittlesea when and as applications are made by local venues
- Ensuring our organisational practices reflect our commitment to prevent and reduce gambling harm in the community as outlined in our *Gambling Policy*
- Seeking out funding opportunities so WCC can implement community projects to prevent (and reduce) gambling harm in the City of Whittlesea
- Providing community members with information about gambling harm and relevant referral pathways and support services.

### Accessing Support:

Gambler’s Help North & North Western, Banyule Community Health, provides a range of services and advice for people experiencing issues with gambling. People can access free counselling, information about financial issues or can talk to someone who has had similar experiences. A full list of services offered by Gambler’s Help North & North Western can be found online at <https://bchs.org.au/services/gambling-support/gamblers-help/>

### Related documents

<b>Related procedures, guidelines, forms etc</b>	
<b>Related frameworks</b>	
<b>Related policies</b>	Gambling Policy
<b>Relevant legislation or standards</b>	

### Document Change History

Version	Status*	Comments	Author	Ratified by	Date Ratified
V1	Endorsed	Initial Statement	Emma Antonetti – Equity and Impact Manager	Board	24/04/2017
V2	Endorsed	Update format, edits	Sandra Natale – Quality Consultant	Board	March 2020
V3	Reviewed	Updated data, edits	Emma Antonetti – Equity & Impact GM	Board	October 2024

\* Valid values for this column are: *DRAFT, ENDORSED, REVIEWED (no revision)*