



Electronic Gaming Machine (EGM) Policy

Policy Owner	Community Development Coordinator Community and Recreation
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Please check Council's Intranet to ensure this is the latest Revision

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Purpose

Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) are a part of Mitchell Shire's recreation and entertainment offering; however, for a significant few EGMs can cause serious personal, financial and social impacts. These impacts often have flow-on effects to the wider community and can be particularly harmful in communities that are considered vulnerable.

This Policy sets out Mitchell Shire Council's (Council) position on electronic gaming machines (EGMs) and seeks to:

- define Council's role in assessing the net social and economic impact of EGMs on local communities; and
- minimise unacceptable social and economic harms from EGM gaming.

The Policy adopts a public health approach to responding to and mitigating the potentially negative consequences of EGMs for individuals, families and communities. This approach is consistent with the Council's regulatory responsibilities under the *Local Government Act 1989* and the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*.

Scope

Council will have regard to this policy when making a submission to the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation (VCGLR) on:

- an application for approval of a premises as suitable for gambling under section 3.3.6 of the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* (Gambling Act); and
- a request for an amendment of conditions of a venue operator's licence under section 3.4.19 of the Gambling Act.

This policy does not apply to consideration of planning permit applications for gaming made under the Planning and Environment Act 1987. In those instances, the Local Planning Policy on Gaming at Clause 22.01 of the Mitchell Planning Scheme will be applied.

This Policy does not address non-EGM forms of gambling (e.g. wagering, sports betting, bingo) regarding which Council has no regulatory role. However, this Policy will also guide Council's advocacy activities relating to problem gambling within the Mitchell Shire community, including that associated with non-EGM gambling.

Policy Statement

1. Council recognises that EGMs are a legitimate and legal recreational activity within Mitchell Shire which many people enjoy.
2. Council notes that EGMs are associated with a higher prevalence of problem gambling compared to other forms of gambling.

3. Council accepts that for problem gamblers, EGMs can be the source of significant adverse social and economic consequences with flow on impacts to their families and the wider community.
4. Council aims to maximise the benefits and reduce the negative impacts relating to EGMs.
5. Council supports the Victorian State Government cap of 239 EGM licenses in Mitchell Shire intended to protect vulnerable communities from the harmful effects of gambling. Council is opposed to any increase to the existing cap.
6. Council will not support new EGM venues, additional EGM licenses and the transfer of EGM licenses between venues unless satisfied that the Social and Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA) undertaken by the applicant clearly shows that there will be 'no net detriment' to the wellbeing of the community in which the premises is located.
7. Council will exercise its right to make a submission to the VCGLR in cases where it is not satisfied that the 'no net detriment' test has been achieved as part of an EGM application.
8. Council requires that the 'no net detriment' test be applied to all EGM license applications, regardless of the need for a planning permit. Council will assess each application on a case by case basis.
9. Council will ensure community views are genuinely taken into account as part of EGM license applications. Council will require applicants to use independent researchers and to be able to provide copies of the survey instrument and raw data.

Other Actions

Partnerships

- Council will seek to identify and mitigate harms associated with EGMs by working in partnership with community services such as Gambler's Help, peak bodies and other local governments.
- Council will support activities which promote responsible gambling and educate the community regarding the harms of EGMs.
- Council, in association with other stakeholders, will continue to develop, maintain and promote a range of sporting, leisure and recreation facilities and opportunities that offer an alternative to EGMs.
- Council will establish and maintain a dialogue with local EGM venue operators to support compliance with Responsible Gambling Foundation guidelines,

encourage harm minimisation practices and ensure that venues remain informed about local community issues.

Research and Advocacy

- Council will undertake research to better understand the health and wellbeing impacts of EGMs on the Mitchell Shire community.
- Council will advocate for additional support services and programs within the municipality for problem gamblers.
- Council will participate in EGM-related research and advocacy activities led by the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) Local Government Working Group on Gaming and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV).

Definitions

Electronic Gaming Machine (EGM) also known as Poker machines are computers with randomised mathematical programming inside. On the screen, the machine shows rows of symbols or pictures. The person using the EGM inserts coins and makes a bet on whether the machine will show certain combinations of pictures, which coincide with the machine paying out a prize in coins (small amounts) or a larger amount (called a jackpot) which the cashier pays out. The machine's programming tells it to pay out prizes in varying amounts and at random intervals.

Problem gambling - difficulties in limiting money and/or time spent on gambling which leads to adverse consequences for the gambler, others, or for the community.

Responsible gambling - is the provision of gambling services, including EGMs, in a way that seeks to minimise the harm to customers and the community associated with gambling activities.

Responsibilities

The directorate responsible for upholding this policy is:

- Sustainable Communities

Related Documents

This Policy responds to the following legislation:

- *Local Government Act 1989*
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*
- *Gambling Regulation Act 2003*
- *Planning and Environment Act 1987*

This Policy links with the following Council plans:

- *Mitchell Shire Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-17*
- *Mitchell Shire Community Plan 2020*

Other related documents include:

- *Social and Economic Impact Assessment Framework for EGMs (Inner Northern Working Group on Gaming)*
- *Guides to the application processes for electronic gaming machines (VCGLR)*
- *Social and Economic Impact Assessment Framework (VLGA)*

Monitoring and Evaluation

Council will monitor implementation of the Electronic Gaming Machine (EGM) Policy annually and report on related actions via the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan Action Plan.

Council will review the Policy every four years to align with the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan or earlier in response to legislative changes or changes in Council's strategic directions.