

Fact Sheet for Players Hotel Application

Background

The Castello Group is a property, hotel and development group that has been operating gaming venues since 1994. Castello's currently operates eight venues across Victoria, including the Jim Dandy Hotel and the Players Hotel (Nu Hotel) in Dandenong which were acquired in 2014.

About the application

The Castello group has lodged an application for the removal of 25 poker machines from the Jim Dandy Hotel to be installed in the Players Hotel (Nu Hotel) bringing the total amount of poker machines to 50. The remaining five currently installed at the Jim Dandy will cease to be in operation. The applicant submits that the Jim Dandy Hotel will no longer operate as a gaming venue - currently the venue is for sale.

Location losses

Currently the City of Greater Dandenong loses more than \$121.4 million on pokies per year, making it the third highest area for losses in Victoria.¹ The increase of 25 more poker machines at the Players Hotel will transform the venue from a small venue to a medium venue. It has been estimated that if the application is approved an additional \$1.9 million will be lost from the community in the first year of operation, this is due to an expected increase in patrons.²

The Venue

Responsible Service of Gambling

Currently the Players Hotel does not meet the 'Venue Best Practice Guide' recommended by the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation.³ A venue should install barriers to the gaming room to minimise visibility in order to protect children, non-gambling patrons and those taking a break from gambling. Currently, the main entrance of the Hotel from the street opens into the gaming room. The gaming room is also easily accessed from the public bar and the TAB bar through two corridors with no barriers in place. This grants easy access to the gaming room and means the noise from the machines is not contained, making it appealing to children and other patrons (particularly for people experiencing harm from gambling). Gaming machines are also visible when walking past the corridors and when ordering at the bar.

The Best Practice guide also stipulates that food and beverages should be available to patrons and not served at the machines in order to encourage breaks from play. Currently no food is offered on the premises and tea and coffee is served at the machines.

Research has also been conducted showing that the more activities available at a venue the safer a gambling environment, leading to lower risk of gambling harm.⁴ The Players Hotel only offers gaming, liquor and TAB entertainment.

¹ Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, 'Pokies Across Australia – Greater Dandenong' [website], (2019) <<https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/resources/gambling-victoria/pokies-across-victoria/greater-dandenong/>> accessed 23 April 2019.

² Progressive Venue Services, 'Expenditure Report: The Castello's Players Hotel', *Victorian Commission For Gambling and Liquor Regulation*, (March 2019) <[https://www.vcgr.vic.gov.au/Website/registers.nsf/0/90306048d185fb8fca2583e5001a031b/\\$FILE/Application%20-%20Players%20Hotel%20Expenditure%20Estimate%20Final%20Report%20-%20March%202019%20\(00436432xE0F3C\).pdf](https://www.vcgr.vic.gov.au/Website/registers.nsf/0/90306048d185fb8fca2583e5001a031b/$FILE/Application%20-%20Players%20Hotel%20Expenditure%20Estimate%20Final%20Report%20-%20March%202019%20(00436432xE0F3C).pdf)> p.15, accessed 23 April 2019.

³ Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, *Venue Best Practice Guide* (2016), <<https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/resources/publications/venue-best-practice-guide-114/>>, 4, accessed 23 April 19.

⁴ Nerilee Hing and John Haw, 'Influence of venue characteristics on a player's decision to attend a gambling venue', *Research Report (Health Effects Institute)* [online journal] (2010), <Influence of venue characteristics on a player's decision to attend a gambling venue>, xxv, accessed 01 May 19.

The Players Hotel is currently open from 9am-5am Monday – Saturday and 10am-5am Sunday. The Productivity Commission into Gambling 2010 recommends that venues should shut down for at least six hours per day and should be shut from 2am.⁵ People who use poker machines after midnight are more likely to be people experiencing harm from gambling.⁶

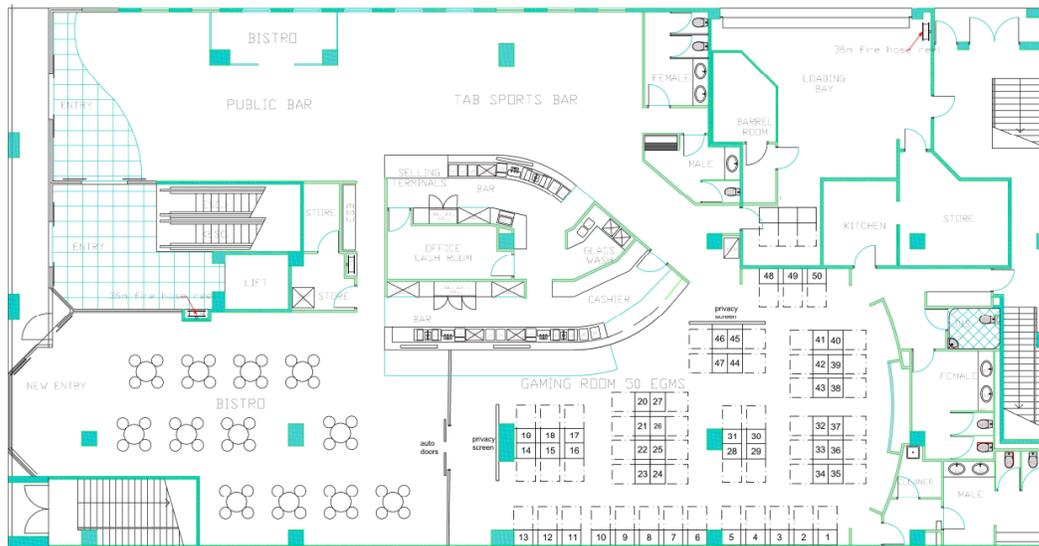
Proposed renovation

The applicant has stated that if the application is approved, they will spend \$750,000 on renovating the Players Hotel. This work will include; the introduction of a café/bistro dining area, refurbishment including new carpet and furniture, refurbishment and re-location of the gaming room including adding screens and automatic doors. *Please see below for renovation plans.*

Players Hotel existing ground floor plan



Players Hotel proposed ground floor plan



Publicly available documents found at: Castello Players Hotel, 'Appendix 3B and 3C', Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation, (17 December 2018)

<<https://www.vcgr.vic.gov.au/CA256F800017E8D4/VCGLR/775C37E1F7909A1DCA257B320078027A?OpenDocument#>>

⁵ Productivity Commission, *Gambling* (2010), <<https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/gambling-2010/report/gambling-report-volume1.pdf>>, 14.35, accessed 23 April 2019.

⁶ Productivity Commission, *Gambling* (2010), <<https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/gambling-2010/report/gambling-report-volume1.pdf>>, 14.29, accessed 23 April 2019.