

# COUNCIL CANDIDATE POLICY GUIDE



ALLIANCE FOR GAMBLING REFORM



In 2018-2019, nearly \$10 billion was lost through all forms of gambling in NSW, with \$6.5 billion dollars of that being lost on poker machines alone. Since then, despite or more likely because of COVID-19 disruptions, stress and anxiety, \$20 million dollars is lost every day on poker machines in NSW, across 2,326 venues with a combined total of 89,000 EGMs.

## HOW TO ADDRESS GAMBLING HARM AT A COUNCIL LEVEL

### COUNCIL SOCIAL POLICY



A clear future vision to reduce gambling harm in a municipality and a commitment to treat gambling harm as a public health issue is required.

Measures can include:

- To not hold council events or activities at gambling venues
- To not make council grants available to venues or organisations that operate EGMs
- To not allow future poker machine on Council land, and plan and support the transition away from gambling use by existing venues
- To make organisations that operate EGMs ineligible for rates discounts.
- Discarding the phrases 'responsible gambling' and 'problem gambling' from council documents and discussions. These phrases reinforce stigma by placing responsibility for gambling harm and addiction on the individual instead of on the systems and structures in place that enable gambling harm
- Shift to the public health narrative of referring to 'gambling harm'



### PLANNING & ENFORCEMENT



- Do an assessment of local impacts of poker machine venue applications, and commit resources to opposing those that will negatively impact the community
- Maximise community awareness of and engagement with poker machine venue applications
- Adopt internal HR and operational policies that address gambling harm
- Commit to making submissions on every application lodged, even when an Local Impact Assessment is not required.

### ADVOCACY



- Advocate to state and federal governments for legislative reform to reduce and prevent gambling harm
- Create awareness in the local community by creating news stories around gambling harm and undertake other harm minimisation projects
- Advocate to the state government to amend the EGM application process to allow councils to have a greater say



## 1

### Local Government Advocacy Asks

#### 1. Support gambling-free public space

Social isolation is a key risk factor to gambling harm, that's why communities need local, convenient and safe ways to connect with others that don't centre around gambling. Councils can play a crucial role in providing opportunities to socialise away from gambling through support for gambling-free public spaces and programs like Libraries After Dark, which is successfully operating in Victoria.

#### 2. Back gambling-free community sport

There is no place for gambling in community sport. Years of insufficient funding has seen a growing dependency on sponsors and grants funded through the profits of gambling harm. Councils can play an active role in supporting community clubs and codes to go gambling-free through business planning support and conditional access to public grants and facilities.

#### 3. Stop the expansion of gambling in our suburbs & towns

Nobody wants to see more suburban-casinos. They are a drain on communities already exposed to more poker machines per person than anywhere else in the world. Councils can support their communities by opposing new venue applications. By challenging the narrow focus of "positive contribution = a cheque" in the legislation, and demonstrating adverse social and economic impacts in the LGA, councils can help build stronger social systems, and protect the local small business community. Councils can encourage local venues to implement meaningful responsible conduct of gambling practices, including participating in trials, for instance of digital wallets. Councils can also establish gambling harm reduction subcommittees in their Interagencies, and through forming Health Alliances with local health districts and Primary Health Networks, and supporting the formation of other gambling reform networks among community service providers.

## 2

### State Government Advocacy Asks

#### 1. Address gambling harm as a public health issue

Gambling harm impacts the entire community in a multitude of ways from emotional and financial, to family breakdown and mental ill-health. Harm is experienced by people who gamble and those close to them. State governments can holistically address the adverse impacts of gambling by taking a public health approach to policy interventions. The first step is to prioritize the prevention of harm when any changes are made to legislation.

#### 2. Improve the responsible conduct of gambling

State governments can introduce new technologies, such as digital wallets, that help people manage their gambling, strengthen self-exclusion programs and at the same time, stop money-laundering through poker machines. They can prohibit inducements, including loyalty schemes, which are commonly used by the gambling industry to recruit, retain and incentivise customers based on the amount of money they lose. They are particularly harmful because they encourage people to gamble longer and spend more than intended. State governments can reduce gambling harm by removing perverse incentives to gamble.

#### 3. Reduce venue opening hours

Harm occurs in gambling pubs and clubs at all hours of the day, but especially after midnight. Existing shutdown requirements are ineffectual in addressing accessibility and harms as they apply in periods with very low demand. State governments can reduce gambling harm by extending shutdown periods and mandating closure of gambling rooms from midnight to 10am.



## 3

### Federal Government Advocacy Asks

#### 1. End gambling ads

Gambling advertising is known to encourage riskier betting, increase the amount of money bet, and elicit excitement that encourages people to bet even when they don't want to. Children are particularly vulnerable to this growing normalisation. The Federal Government can reduce harm by removing all forms of gambling advertising like it did with tobacco.

#### 2. Close the loophole on credit

Gambling with borrowed money is well-established as a risk factor for harmful gambling. It doesn't make sense that credit restrictions placed on wagering firms and pay-day lenders do not also extend to banks. The Federal Government can reduce harm by prohibiting all forms of gambling with credit.

#### 3. Federal oversight of wagering companies

The Northern Territory Racing Commission has become the primary regulator for sports gambling almost by default after 20 betting agencies established operations in Darwin for tax purposes. They are conflicted, and ill-equipped to effectively respond to gambling harm. The Federal Government can reduce harm by establishing a national gambling regulator with oversight and enforcement powers of wagering firms and casinos.



#### Overall Commitments:

- Identify Gambling Harm as an issue in your Community Strategic Plan
- Create a Gambling Harm Minimisation Policy
- Use Planning and Enforcement mechanisms
- Advocate for reform at State and Federal levels