

GAMBLING INFORMATION #3

Advocacy for poker machine reform

Reforms to reduce the harm, and increase consumer safety, of gaming machines include initiatives such as better machine features and better information.

A comprehensive public health approach to gambling is necessary to reduce harm from gambling, including poker machine reform. These reforms can include:

- regulatory changes to ensure pokies are safe and consumers are protected
- technological interventions to allow gamblers to better track and control their expenditure of time and money
- systems to allow early identification of those with a developing gambling problem
- prohibitions on dangerous marketing such as promotions or rewards.

Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) are unsafe because they contain a number of intentional features to ensure that gamblers continue to play and lose money rapidly. Some of these features include:

- losses disguised as wins where the player receives visual and audio feedback suggesting they have won when in fact they have lost
- 'loaded reels' to create the impression of near misses
- ability to play multiple lines and credits at once so that even on a '1 cent' machine, a push of the button can cost \$5 and players can lose over \$1000 an hour
- ability to load up significant amounts of cash into the machines
- continuous form of gambling that is high-impact.

Customer Service Centres

Cranbourne
Centro Cranbourne

Narre Warren
Magid Drive

Narre Warren South
Amberly Park
Shopping Centre

Telephone: 9705 5200
Facsimile: 9704 9544

TTY: 9705 5568
TIS: 131 450
(Translating and
Interpreting Service)

Magid Drive
PO Box 1000
Narre Warren VIC 3805

Email:
caseycc@casey.vic.gov.au
Website:
www.casey.vic.gov.au

This information page was developed by the Local Government Working Group on Gambling (LGWGOG) which comprises of a group of local government professionals sponsored by the Victorian Local Government Association (VLGA).



KEY FACTS: EGMs in Victoria

- In 2011-12, Victorians lost \$2.7 billion on EGMs. Approximately \$1 billion of these losses are paid as taxes to the Victorian Government
- The social and economic costs of problem gambling in Victoria were estimated to be between \$1.5 billion and \$2.7 billion in 2010-11¹
- As at 30 June 2012, there were 26,778 EGMs in Victoria, located in 509 venues
- The average net losses per adult were \$601
- The adult population per venue is 8,756
- 90 per cent of people living in metropolitan Melbourne reside within 2.5kms of an EGM venue
- EGMs represent 40 per cent of total losses of problem gamblers
- In August 2012 new gaming arrangements came into operation in Victoria, giving hotel and club operators a greater share of profits.

The VLGA proposes that local governments consider the following reforms:

- \$1 bet limits and total losses capped at \$120 per hour and / or full (or 'mandatory') pre-commitment system
- removal of unsafe machine features identified above included losses disguised as wins, 'loaded reels' and cash acceptance limit
- cost of using EGMs better displayed on machines
- player information better displayed to gambler (eg. losses, time spent)
- removing unlimited withdrawals from EFTPOS machines in gaming venues
- systems to allow the earliest possible identification of those with a developing gambling problem, and to facilitate early intervention.

¹ VCEC (2012), *Counting the Cost: Inquiry into the Costs of Problem Gambling*

Why should local government get involved in advocacy for EGM reform?

- EGMs are associated with higher prevalence of problem gambling (approximately 80 per cent of problem gamblers have issues with the pokies).
- Local government is responsible for assessing the impacts of new EGMs under the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* and the planning system.
- EGMs are widely understood to be an unsafe product. They are designed to ensure a sizable proportion of consumers will develop an addiction. Around 15 per cent of weekly users are problem gamblers and this group accounts for approximately 40 per cent of losses.
- The negative impacts of problem gambling and EGM gambling on community well-being are a significant public health issue, particularly in social and economically disadvantaged communities.
- Local government is ideally placed to develop and implement local policies and actions to address health and the broad range of determinants that influence health. They can implement these strategies in a variety of ways such as service delivery, policy, advocacy, capacity building and information provision.

How will the community benefit?

- improved public health and community wellbeing
- improved consumer safety
- reduction of problem gambling and impact on community and public revenue
- community voice better represented in gambling regulation.

Key messages for local government	Recommendation
Problem gambling from EGMs is a public health issue requiring a range of responses from governments at all levels	Advocate to the Australian and State Government to commit to harm minimisation measures to prevent problem gambling and increase consumer safety
The gaming industry is responsible for the safety and integrity of their products and has a significant role to play in preventing and minimising the potentially negative outcomes for persons using their products	Advocate for implementation of regulatory interventions to address electronic gaming machines product safety, as identified in this advocacy sheet

Gambler's Help Services

Gambler's Help

- This is a 24 hour phone counselling service. The website has some self-help tools.
- 1800 858 858
- www.problemgambling.vic.gov.au

Gambling Help Online

- This provides free, online counselling by trained staff, including live counselling and email support. The website also has self-help tools.
- www.gamblinghelponline.org.au
- Gambler's Help service programs are funded through the Community Support Fund and were established with the introduction of gaming machines in Victoria.

Metropolitan services

Region	Gambler's Help service	Phone
Eastern metropolitan suburbs	EACH http://www.each.com.au/gamblers-help-eastern/	1300 131 973
Inner metropolitan suburbs	The Salvation Army _____	(03) 9653 3250
Northern metropolitan suburbs	Banyule Community Health _____	1300 133 445
Southern metropolitan suburbs	Bentleigh Bayside Community Health _____	(03) 9575 5353
Western metropolitan suburbs	https://www.ipchealth.com.au/	(03) 9296 1234

Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation (VCGLR)

- 49 Elizabeth Street, North Richmond, VIC 3121
- 1300 1 VCGLR (1300 182 457)
- contact@vcglr.vic.gov.au
- <http://www.vcglr.vic.gov.au>