

# Engagement Summary Report

## Public Health Approach to Gambling Harm Policy update

### Executive summary

Community engagement on the updated Public Health Approach to Gambling Harm Policy (the policy) aimed to understand whether the refreshed draft policy met the needs of community in preventing harm from gambling in Monash and to determine new opportunities for implementation of the policy.

Through a range of all-of-community and targeted engagement strategies, we heard from:

- 51 community members via the Shape Monash survey,
- 7 community members at a community lunch, and
- 4 industry stakeholders via written submissions.

Council received over 100 comments in total via Shape Monash and written feedback.

Themes identified through community engagement include:

- Support for Council's work in gambling harm prevention, alongside a call for increased action.
- The importance of working closely with sporting clubs to educate and support them to remain financially viable without sponsorship from gambling entities.
- The need to increase promotion for local social and recreational activities as alternatives to gambling activities.

Feedback from stakeholders recommended minor wording changes to improve clarity or incorporate newly released data. Lived experience experts provided insights into harm prevention measures they found useful in their recovery journey that could support implementation of the Policy.

### Next steps

All input provided throughout consultation will be considered and where appropriate, included in amendments to Council's Policy or be used to inform Policy implementation. The draft updated policy will be presented to Council in mid-2026 with the recommendation to endorse the Policy for finalisation. Once finalised, Officers will begin implementation of the Policy.

## Background

Council's Public Health Approach to Gambling Harm Policy (the Policy), outlines the commitments Council will make to prevent gambling harm in Monash. The last Policy was endorsed in 2022 with a commitment to review the Policy every 2 years or as required.

In 2024-2025, Officers reviewed updates to the evidence base, conducted an updated Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) and met with internal teams to understand any implementation issues or process changes that may impact Policy implementation. The updated Policy was drafted based on the review and submitted to the January 2026 Council meeting for endorsement for public viewing and community consultation.

Opportunities to make changes from the previous policy emerged as a result of the literature review and internal stakeholder engagement processes. These included:

- Updates to evidence of gambling harm
- Reduction in the length of the Policy and less technical language
- Options for alternative spaces and programs for the community to encourage alternative activities to gambling and increase social connection opportunities
- Addressing gambling harm through education and capacity building through community grants recipients, sports clubs and community groups
- A greater focus on the broader gambling environment, including recognising the potential harm caused by community fundraisers that have strong pro-gambling elements
- An identified need to respond to gambling harm in identified at-risk cohorts and settings, including young people, older women and sporting clubs
- Clearer wording to clarify Council not providing support or resources to community groups or clubs that actively promote gambling, leveraging the Sports Club Framework and leasing agreements
- Clearer wording regarding Council's role in preventing gambling harm through community education, resourcing and advocacy

## How we engaged (We asked)

Community Engagement on the updated Public Health Approach to Gambling Harm Policy aimed to assess whether the revised Policy met community needs in preventing gambling harm in Monash, and to identify new opportunities for its implementation.

The review of the evidence base and the Gender Impact Assessment identified cohorts of the community most at risk of experiencing harm from gambling. The engagement strategy included all-of-community approaches as well as targeted engagement with key cohorts, including young people, older people, people with lived experience of gambling harm, multicultural communities including First Nations and people experiencing financial disadvantage. Officers also welcomed feedback from stakeholders including peak bodies for gambling harm prevention, gambling operators based in Monash, sports clubs and community grant recipients.

The opportunity to provide feedback on the Policy was advertised using the below methods of communication:

- Targeted emails to:
  - Shape Monash subscribers

- Council's advisory committee members
- Monash sporting clubs
- Monash Community Grants Program recipients
- EGM venue operators
- Peak body organisations and local stakeholders
- Articles in:
  - February Monash Bulletin
  - Monash Mail (weekly e-newsletter)
  - Victorian Gambling Environment Update
- Flyers were displayed at local neighbourhood house noticeboards
- Social media posts
- Consultation with:
  - Wurundjeri Cultural Heritage Centre
  - Monash Council Youth Advisory Committee
  - Monash Council Positive Ageing Reference Group
  - Power Neighbourhood House community lunch

## Feedback (You said)

### Who we heard from

Our consultation aimed to engage with all of community as well as target groups including young people, older people, multicultural communities, First Nations communities and people with lived experience of gambling harm. During the community engagement period, we heard from:

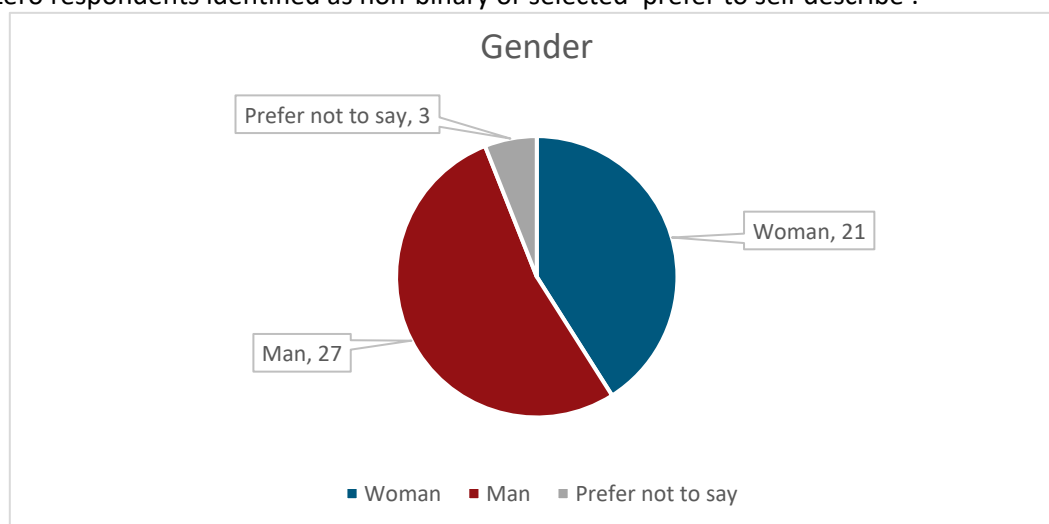
- 49 respondents via Shape Monash
- 2 respondents via email
- 7 community members at a community lunch at Power Neighbourhood House
- Members from the Youth Advisory Committee and Positive Ageing Reference Group
- Stakeholders: Gambling Harm Lived Experience Experts, Victorian Local Government Association (VLGA), the Alliance for Gambling Reform (AGR) and the Department of Justice and Community Safety

Local EGM operators were identified as a stakeholder but did not provide their feedback.

The Wurundjeri and Bunurong Land Councils were invited to provide feedback. Bunurong was not in a position to participate during the consultation period. A cultural consultation session was held with Wurundjeri policy experts and Elders.

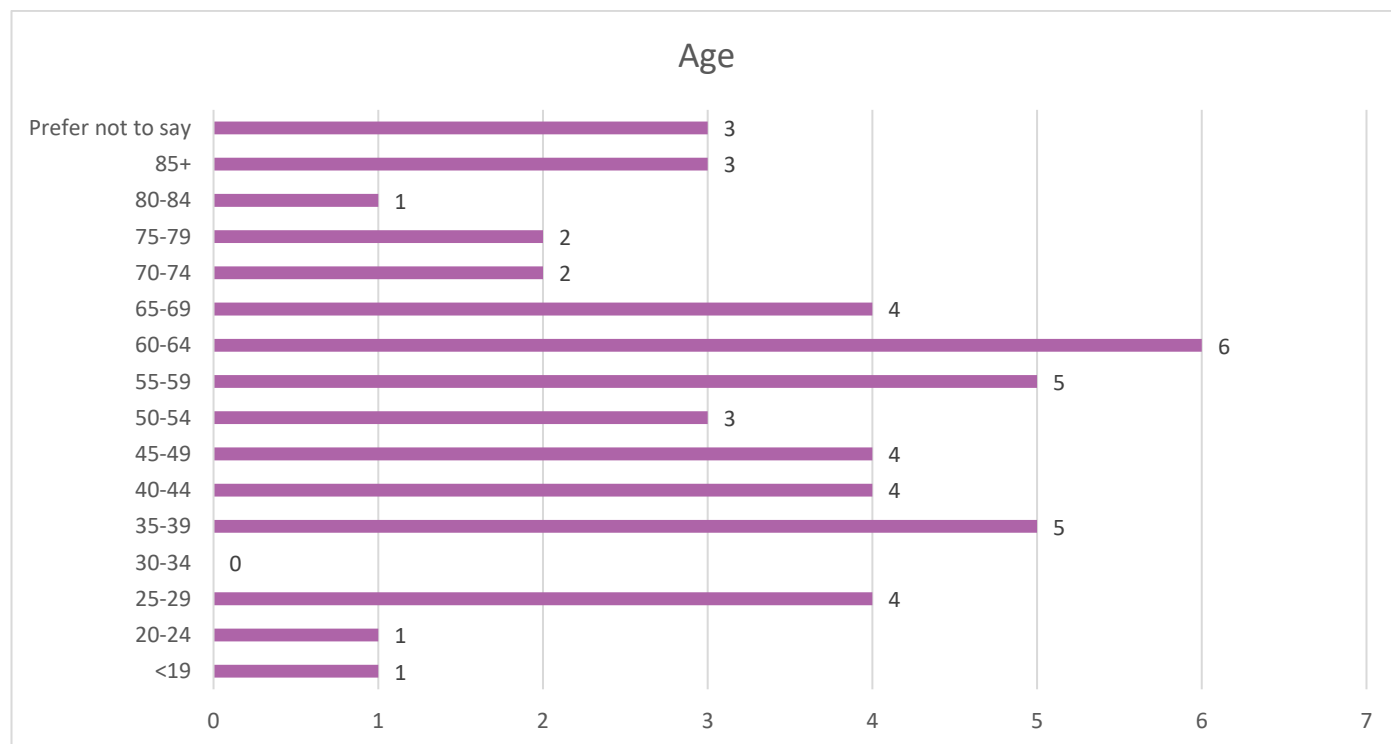
## Gender

Of the 51 responses to the Shape Monash survey, 21 identified as a woman, 27 identified as a man and 3 preferred not to say. Zero respondents identified as non-binary or selected 'prefer to self describe'.



## Age

Survey respondents ranged in age from 19 to 85+ years old. Given that gambling harm can affect people across the lifespan, with young people and older adults often at higher risk, this range reflected a well-represented mix of ages.



## Connection to Monash

When asked about the respondent's connection to Monash:

- 41 lived in Monash
- 5 worked in Monash
- 7 were a member of a community group based in Monash
- 11 were members of sports clubs based in Monash
- 0 respondents to the survey identified as a gambling operator

## Diversity indicators

- 9 respondents identified as having a disability or long-term health condition
- 2 respondents spoke English as a second language (primary languages spoken were Mandarin and Cantonese)
- 2 respondents identified as being part of the LGBTIQ+ community
- 3 respondents identified as a primary carer

## Experience of gambling harm

More than half of survey respondents (60%) had experienced harm from gambling or knew someone that had experienced harm.

## What we heard from the community

### Approach on gambling harm prevention

36 respondents provided feedback on our approach to reducing gambling harm. Majority of the respondents were in support of Council's updated Policy and approach with:

- 64% supporting Council's updated approach to gambling harm prevention
- 22% wanting a stronger Policy (many recommending Council ban all pokies in Monash) and
- 14% were not in support of Council's approach to gambling harm prevention (most citing concern for sports club revenue without gambling sponsorships or support for gambling venues to be considered community spaces).

People who had lived experience of gambling harm or knew someone impacted were more likely to agree with Council's approach to harm prevention or call for a stronger policy and 'ban all pokies', with 70% of people with lived experience agreeing with Council's approach or wanting a stronger policy, compared to 36% of people with no lived experience of gambling harm.

## Advocacy Approach

Question 2 prompted for feedback on Council's advocacy approach. Majority (n=48) of respondents agreed with the advocacy approach (73% agreed, 6% unsure and 21% disagreed). Responses provided for this question mirrored feedback received on our approach to gambling harm prevention. Comments included:

- Some respondents would like Council to advocate for banning pokies all together and some disagreed with the Policy stance regarding gambling entities sponsoring sports clubs
- Other responses recommended banning gambling advertising completely
- Some respondents did not feel Council should be involved in gambling harm prevention
- Other specific advocacy requests included advocacy to remove ATMs from gambling venues, a ban on donations by the gambling industry to political candidates and members of parliament and advocacy for gambling harm to be included in the State Government Health & Wellbeing Plan.

Noting a small sample size, men were more likely to disagree with Council's approach to gambling harm prevention (19% of men disagreed compared to 0% of women) and advocacy commitments than women (30% of men disagreed with advocacy commitments compared to 9.5% of women). All comments received regarding concern for sports club financial viability without gambling revenue were provided by men. There was insufficient data available to compare respondents that did not identify their gender.

## Feedback and comments on the policy

Six respondents provided further comments on the policy:

- Two recommended an increase in tax for gambling entities (similar to alcohol and tobacco) and recommendation that the tax received goes towards supporting those impacted by gambling harm, concern that state/federal government receive tax from gambling therefore will not support reform, clarity sought on the exclusions mentioned for small scale fundraising raffles/bingo sports clubs and community groups may run and recommendation for Council to report back to community with updates regarding reform and harm prevention efforts (wins and challenges).

Themes:

### **Council should do more to prevent harm from gambling.**

Eight survey respondents recommended Council implement strong measures to prevent gambling harm such as 'banning pokies', limiting operating hours, enforcement of gambling taxation that provides for people experiencing harm from gambling.

Example quotes:

*"Go back to the old days where there were no pokies ..get rid of them in Victoria"*

*"I expect Monash to actively refuse all EGM related permits"*

*"Education works for some but a gambler will gamble if there is opportunity. Stop these opportunities within the city of Monash. Just ban these things!!!!"*

*"...The businesses that have these gambling games etc make millions, they should be made to pay for the gambling harm that they create."*

*"I watched tv last night & had to sit through 20 ads for gambling!!! Stop all gambling ads on tv and media & sponsorship"*

### **Sporting clubs**

Some respondents expressed concern for financial viability of sporting clubs if they are unable to receive sponsorships from gambling entities,

*"Sponsorships provided by local hotels should not be disallowed simply because they offer pokie machines"*

*"People who gamble are always going to gamble. Removing strong community ties causes clubs to lose money and will cause clubs to potentially close with rising costs involved with keeping the doors open at clubs"*

Respondents also acknowledged the significant role sporting clubs play within the community and supported education within clubs.

*"I definitely support the working with sporting clubs and community groups aspect of this approach, as they are vital parts of the community but are also heavily reliant on sponsors that may include gambling."*

*"Good to see an educative approach too and ensuring sports clubs understand they play an important role in preventing harm"*

### **Social and recreational alternatives to gambling**

Comments were received regarding lack of community awareness of existing social and recreational activities that may prevent loneliness/boredom and potentially harm from gambling. Music, recreational activities and cheap food were highlighted in the consultation as potential attractions for gambling venues.

*"Many older people attend to pokies venue due low cost of food."*

*"Morning melodies in Monash is currently held in Gambling venues and it be of benefit if the organisation is running these could arrange alternative venues"*

*"Having moved into Oakleigh nearly 15 months ago I was surprised at there being no family hotels for a traditional pub meal"*

### **Support for Council's work in gambling harm prevention**

Many respondents expressed support for Council's prioritisation of gambling harm prevention. Quotes received included:

*"Fantastic work!!"*

*"Very proud of your approach as a Monash resident!"*

*"The proposed limitations on the expansion of Electronic Gaming Machines, restrictions on gambling promotion within Council-owned facilities, and commitment to advocacy for stronger regulatory reform reflect a preventative and community-focused strategy that is consistent with Council's obligation to promote the health and wellbeing of its residents."*

## What we heard from stakeholders

Feedback from stakeholders was overwhelmingly positive, quotes received included;

*“We commend the Council on their serious efforts to reduce gambling harms in the City of Monash”*

*“The number of detailed and considered policy points, that in totality sets the policy up as one of the highest standard in the state in providing a strong response to gambling harm in the local community.”*

*“ This updated policy clearly demonstrates Council’s commitment to ongoing leadership in this space.”*

Majority of feedback received from stakeholders recommended minor wording changes to improve clarity or incorporate newly released data.

## How we will consider your feedback (We listened)

### Community

Respondents to the Shape Monash survey provided rich feedback on Council’s Policy and approach to gambling harm prevention.

Feedback received showed majority of respondents were supportive of Council’s approach to gambling harm prevention and advocacy commitments. Many respondents recommended an even stronger Policy position to ban all EGMs in Monash/Victoria. Council acknowledges the extreme harm EGMs can cause and share concern regarding EGM accessibility. Currently, a public health approach to gambling harm prevention, recognising social and economic detriment to the local area as are recommended by peak bodies and researchers. The draft updated Policy includes a recommendation of a sinking cap (reducing the number of EGMs allowed in Monash and not replacing any EGMs that are sold or transferred out of Monash) to prevent more EGMs entering Monash.

Concern was raised by respondents regarding loneliness, boredom, lack of entertainment and lack of knowledge of local low-cost restaurants as reasons why community members may be vulnerable to harm from gambling. A key action recommended because of this consultation is for officers to explore profiling free/low-cost social spaces that provide entertainment e.g. music or food as alternatives to gambling as part of Policy implementation.

Some comments were noted regarding Council’s previously endorsed policy statement regarding not providing Council facilities or funding to community groups and sporting clubs that have sponsorship arrangements with gambling entities. Concern was raised regarding sporting club viability if they were unable to receive gambling revenue. Club licensed EGM venues are mandated to give back to the local community through donations or sponsorships under the Community Benefit Scheme in lieu of paying tax to State Government. In Monash, sporting clubs and community groups are able to receive donations from gambling entities, however sponsorships with requirements to promote the venue to club members/supporters are not permitted under the Policy. Action is recommended as a result of this feedback: to amend the Policy to provide clear guidance regarding groups and clubs being able to receive donations from gambling entities.

A summary of the actions recommended as a result of community input. Officers will:

- Explore profiling free/low-cost social spaces that provide entertainment e.g. music or food as part of Policy implementation
- Amend the Policy to provide clear guidance regarding receiving donations from gambling entities.
- Explore opportunities to connect Gamblers Help with the Oakleigh area

- Amend the Policy to explicitly include cohorts which data shows are most at risk of gambling harm (young people, First Nations communities, older people and multicultural communities) as target audiences for harm prevention communication and education.

## Stakeholders

Officers will amend the Policy with the minor wording changes and updates to data as suggested by stakeholders.

The feedback below from lived experience experts will be prioritised and implemented:

- Avoid potentially triggering language and imagery
- Explore options for community education on the addictive nature of EGMs
- Promote Gamblers Help as a 'free' service and one that is available to family and friends of people experiencing harm
- Provide support to community members seeking to provide input on EGM applications and gambling harm prevention generally

Through the engagement process with First Nations organisations, Officers picked up an omission of First Nations data in the current draft Policy. Population studies do not provide disaggregated data on First Nations experiences of gambling harm; qualitative studies are necessary to depict experiences of First Nations communities.

- Available studies on First Nations experiences of gambling harm will be incorporated into the Policy/background document
- Officers will continue to seek opportunities to engage with First Nations community and organisations to address harm from gambling

## Next steps

All input provided throughout the community engagement period will be considered and where appropriate, included in amendments to Council's Policy or be used to inform Policy implementation. The draft updated policy will be presented to Council in mid-2026 with the recommendation to endorse the policy for finalisation. Once finalised, Officers will begin implementation of the policy.