7.2 WAVERLEY WAR WIDOWS AND WIDOWED MOTHERS ASSOCIATION
(JS: COM137)

Submitting Councillor: Cr Geoff Lake

**MOTION**

That Council makes an exception under the City of Monash Public Health Approach to Gambling: Policy Statement 2016-2020 to ensure that the Waverley War Widows and Widowed Mothers Association continues to be eligible to receive Monash Community Grants Program funding while meeting at the Waverley RSL.

**INTRODUCTION**

At the 31 May 2016 Council Meeting, Council adopted the City of Monash Public Health Approach to Gambling: Policy Statement 2016-2020. The new policy has strengthened Council’s position in relation to gaming and in particular Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs). In particular, Clause 4.4 states that:

*Through the Monash Community Grants Program, Council will not fund community groups who meet in venues that have EGMs*

One group that has been affected by this policy is the Waverley War Widows and Widowed Mothers Association which meets monthly at the Waverley RSL.

In view of the Waverley War Widows and Widowed Mothers Association’s special relationship and history with the Waverley RSL, I propose that Council make an exception to the City of Monash Public Health Approach to Gambling: Policy Statement 2016-2020 in this case and allow this group to continue to be eligible to receive funding from the Monash Community Grants Program.

**BACKGROUND**

The Waverley War Widows and Widowed Mothers Association has a long and important history of over 40 years in supporting widows of ex-servicemen in Monash. This social club provides the opportunity for over 50 Monash seniors to meet at the Waverley RSL, a venue that has a very special purpose and specific meaning and relationship in honour of their husbands’ services to Australia.

Council has been funding this group since 2000, through the Monash Community Grants Program. Over this time, the group has received a fairly modest annual allocation, with this year’s allocation being $467.50. Council also commenced funding this group in 2015 for the hire of a bus to undertake an annual outing. Council’s funding ensures that this group remains connected.
with their community whilst maintaining their important relationship with the Waverley RSL.

DISCUSSION

I recently met with the president of the Waverley War Widows and Widowed Mothers Association, who impressed upon me the importance and significance of continuing this funding to the group of 50 Monash seniors and the vital importance to the group that it maintain its link with Waverley RSL.

In my meeting with the president, I was advised that the group provides ongoing support to ex-service widows through monthly social activities. She also conveyed to me that the group has a significant number of frail members who very much look forward to their monthly meetings and maintain an invaluable social connection.

Council is proud of the national leadership and advocacy role it has undertaken to minimise the impact of gambling to those in the broader and local community. The *City of Monash Public Health Approach to Gambling: Policy Statement 2016-2020* is evidence of this. This is an important policy which adopts a policy position against providing Council funding to groups which meet in a venue which operates poker machines. This is intended to incentivise groups to relocate to other venues where their current and future members will not be exposed to gaming machines just as a result of participating in community group activities. This is particularly important in the case of people who are, or have previously been, problem gamblers and who may find it challenging or impossible to participate in the community activities offered by a club which meets in such a venue. Council strongly believes that no person should feel unable to participate in these circumstances which is why Council has enacted this policy. It is reasonable that groups affected by the policy (there are three) consider moving to alternative venues which Council has indicated we will assist them with if they want to continue to be eligible to receive Council support between 2016/17.

However, the Waverley War Widows and Widowed Mothers Association is in a special position given its strong and special association with the Waverley RSL. In my view, I believe that given this association, Council should create a special exemption for this group to allow it to continue to receive Council funding under the Community support Program despite continuing to meet at a gaming venue. I do not recommend that this exemption should apply beyond this group.

Accordingly, I recommend that Council agree to rectify the current situation by acknowledging the importance of continuing to support the Waverley War Widows and Widowed Mothers Association outside of the new policy parameters for the reasons I have outlined above.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS
If this report is accepted, then the group will continue to be eligible for funding under the Monash Community Grants Program funding pool. This is currently $467.50 plus bus hire.

**CONCLUSION**

Whilst Council has long been concerned about the proliferation of poker machines in our neighbourhoods and I am not proposing for this to change, I think it is appropriate for Council to create a special exemption for the Waverley War Widows and Widowed Mothers Association given its special association with the Waverley RSL.