

7.4 GAMBLING REFORM CAMPAIGN

Submitting Councillor: Cr Geoff Lake

MOTION

That Council:

1. *Notes the joint announcement on 14 July 2016 by Senator Nick Xenophon, Andrew Wilkie MP and the Alliance for Gambling reform to progress gambling reforms in the new Parliament; and*
2. *Endorses the open letter (attachment 1) to the Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and the Opposition Leader Bill Shorten in support of the reforms.*

INTRODUCTION

This report seeks Council support to sign the open letter in support of the gambling reform agenda proposed by Senator Nick Xenophon, Andrew Wilkie MP and the Alliance for Gambling Reform to discuss the need for urgent action on problem gambling in the new Parliament.

BACKGROUND

Monash Council is a current partner of the Alliance for Gambling Reform (**Alliance**) which campaigns for gambling legislation changes in the industry. At the 30 June 2015 meeting, Council (amongst other things) endorsed Monash's formal involvement in supporting the Alliance, its campaign plan and my continuing involvement in it as Council's representative.

The Alliance is a national collaboration of organisations with a shared concern about the harmful impacts of gambling in Australia. It is governed by a board which I chair. It seeks to campaign for reforms to the gambling industry to reduce poker machine-related harm and protect vulnerable communities from the increasing impacts of this harm as a consequence of more machines being moved into disadvantaged areas by the industry. The mission of the Alliance aligns closely with and progresses components of the local government *Enough Pokies* campaign which was led by Monash Council in 2014.

DISCUSSION

The Alliance for Gambling Reform is concerned with the damage caused by predatory gambling in our clubs, pubs and sporting events and seeks the support of Alliance partners for this campaign.

The open letter advocates to Mr Turnbull and Mr Shorten to:

1. Introduce a ban on sports betting advertising during G-rated time periods;
2. Establish a Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform to build on existing knowledge of the problems and solutions; and
3. Introduce Legislation that limits poker machine harm to a maximum of \$1 bet and maximum loss of \$120 per hour.

The policy positions set out in points 2 and 3 above are consistent with the goals of the 'Enough Pokies' campaign, as well as the public health approach outlined in the Monash Council Gambling Policy Statement. In relation to the first point relating to sports betting, concerns around sports betting have been raised a number of times in the past in the Monash Council chamber – in particular by Cr Davies who has identified this as an issue he would like to see a greater focus being placed upon by Council in its advocacy work. Given this prior interest among Monash councillors and given that sports betting is also a main priority for reform by the Alliance for Gambling Reform, it is quite appropriate for Council to also support and embrace this reform measure.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with Monash's involvement in supporting this advocacy campaign.

CONCLUSION

The Alliance seeks to campaign for reforms to the gambling industry to protect vulnerable communities and people from being targeted by the infiltration of poker machines and to reduce harm from poker machines. Supporting the activity of the Alliance is consistent with, as well as in line with, Council's previous work on gambling issues and advocacy in the past. In addition, advocacy in relation to a ban on the inundation of sports betting advertising during general television viewing times is consistent with Council's and the community's concerns in this area and previous positions expressed by councillors. Accordingly, I recommended that Council sign the open letter and support Monash's continued leadership position on these issues.

ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1: Open letter to Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Opposition Leader Bill Shorten

*ATTACHMENT***Dear Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Opposition Leader Bill Shorten**

You have an opportunity to make a difference to the lives of hundreds of thousands of Australians by supporting proposals for gambling reform that Senator Nick Xenophon, Andrew Wilkie MP, The Alliance for Gambling Reform and Rev. Tim Costello put forward on 14 July 2016:

1. A ban on sports betting advertising during G-rated time periods;
2. A Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform to build on existing knowledge of the problems and solutions; and
3. Legislation that limits poker machine harm to a maximum \$1 bet and maximum loss of \$120 per hour.

These are the first steps towards reducing the devastation caused by gambling harm in Australia. Australians lose \$21 billion through gambling every year, with 500,000 Australians experiencing financial stress, mental illness and relationship breakdown as a direct result. Gambling causes twice as much harm to the health of Australians as diabetes, bipolar disorder and cannabis dependence combined.

These first steps have been supported by the Greens and other cross benchers, now they need your support.

The Alliance for Gambling Reform brings together over 60 organisations that are deeply concerned with the damage caused by predatory gambling in our clubs, pubs and sporting events.

We support an evidence based, public health approach to preventing and minimising harm from gambling, coupled with giving communities a real say on poker machines and gambling in their communities.

[Signed Tim Costello]

[Alliance organisation names and logos]