

6.4 PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITY FROM GAMBLING HARM

Submitting Councillor: Cr Josh Fergeus

MOTION

That Council:

- 1. Notes the work of the Alliance for Gambling Reform in preparing for a COVID-19 recovery which prioritises public health over profit;*
- 2. Writes to the Premier of Victoria requesting that the State Government follows the advice of public health experts by ensuring that pokies machines are only re-opened in a manner that addresses the harm that it causes.*

BACKGROUND

The City of Monash supports the Alliance for Gambling Reform as a Leadership Council. The Alliance has written to the Premier asking him to protect our communities at a time where they are the most vulnerable by addressing gambling harm. The Alliance has approached Leadership Councils requesting that they consider doing the same.

DISCUSSION

As the Alliance for Gambling Reform states:

“As we are entering this stage of COVID-19 safe thinking, we are all considering how we can protect our communities and boost the local industries and businesses that are the most productive and create positive impacts at this time. This means that we need to promote social activities that are safe and minimise further harm to our residents, such as live music, the arts and thriving and safe local hospitality options including a clubs and pubs sector free from gambling harm.

Money can be invested back into the community via productive local businesses and support for the vulnerable at risk of homelessness, family violence and mental-ill health issues.

Similarly, local governments often bear the immediate costs associated with gambling harm, so we are inviting our Leadership Councils to advocate for a coordinated response to minimising gambling harm when venues open up. These measures include reducing opening hours, removing 'losses disguised as wins' and supporting clubs to become gambling free through sinking caps and buyback measures such as in the ACT.

Public health experts have been asking for these harm reduction measures for years, and now we're asking the Premier to continue to heed the advice of these experts in this time of crisis by enacting these measures.”