

## 8.1 NOM NO. 11 - COUNCILLOR DISCRETIONARY FUND

Submitting Councillor/s:	Cr Stuart James
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### MOTION

That Council:

1. Notes that Council's Public Health Approach to Gambling Harm Policy was passed in November 2022, with at least 85% of respondents to the extensive consultation supportive of the various positions in the policy.
2. Notes that the policy states that Council will not provide support, funding, publicity or promotion for community groups, organisation or sports clubs that promote or advertise gambling and that the policy states that "all relevant Council policies and guidelines will align with this policy position".
3. Notes that applications to Council's Discretionary Fund are governed by a policy.
4. Notes that Council has a long-held policy of not providing funding through its Community Grants Program to Community Groups that meet regularly in gaming venues.
5. For the avoidance of doubt, resolves that applications to the Council's Discretionary Fund will not be accepted if the applicant meets regularly in, or promotes or advertises gaming venues.

### INTRODUCTION

Based on recent discretionary applications, there appears to be a belief that "all relevant Council policies" does not include the "Council Discretionary Fund Policy". I think it is important for Council to clarify its position relevant to other Council policies.

### ISSUES AND DISCUSSION

Council's Public Health Approach to Gambling Harm Policy was passed in November 2022.

All policy statements had a high level of support. Statements included:

Council should:

- Protect our most vulnerable communities against any detrimental social, economic and health impacts of any new electronic gaming machine (pokies) applications (**96% agreed**).
- Maintain independence from the gambling industry by refusing direct financial or 'in kind' contributions from the gambling industry (**98% agreed**).
- Work with community groups and organisations that use Council land, facilities or receive Council funding to promote social environments that don't associate with gambling (88% agreed).
- Advocate for regulatory reform to prevent harms to public health from gambling/pokies and promote harm minimisation strategies (**92% agreed**).
- Communicate with the Monash community on key issues of gambling including local gambling data, Council's advocacy initiatives, harm prevention messages and referral pathways for help with gambling addiction (**85% agreed**)

- Protect children, young people and vulnerable members of our community from gambling harm by not allowing any forms of promotional material in relation to gambling or associated venues to be displayed where the community come to work, socialise or recreate on Council land (**96% agreed**).
- Advocate for a continuation of the current maximum municipal cap of 777 EGMs (pokie machines) in the municipality and will oppose any increase to that number or the inappropriate relocation of existing machines to areas that are considered vulnerable (**92% agreed**)

Recently, an application came to the Council Discretionary Fund from a group that meets in a gaming venue which was supported. In my view, this is at odds with the Gambling Harm Policy which states: *Council will not provide support, funding, publicity or promotion for community groups, organisation or sports clubs that promote or advertise gambling* and that the policy states that **“all relevant Council policies and guidelines will align with this policy position”**. Given that the discretionary fund is governed by a policy, it follows that applications from community groups that are effectively promoting gambling venues, by regularly holding meetings at such venues, would not be allowed to apply.

Through its Community Grants program, Council does not fund community groups that regularly meet in gambling venues, Council programs including social inclusion programs for seniors do not occur in gambling venues and community groups or sporting clubs that have sponsorship arrangements (e.g. endorse gambling venues through the display of their logo on uniforms, websites or newsletters) risk losing future support from Council. It appears hypocritical for Council to then allow groups to bypass this position, which is overwhelming and strongly supported by our community, by applying to a discretionary fund.

I think it is important that Council clarifies and reaffirms its current position by specifically resolving that “all relevant Council policies” includes the policy governing Council’s discretionary fund.

## FINANCIAL

There are no financial implications for Council.

## CONCLUSION

Monash is a leading advocate on dealing with gambling harm, something which is very strongly supported by our community. Council should ensure that this loophole is specifically closed.

## ATTACHMENT LIST

1. Officers Response to NOM [8.1.1 - 2 pages]

**OFFICERS REPORT**

**COUNCILLOR DISCRETIONARY FUND**

Submitting Councillor: Stuart James

**MOTION**

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2. **Notes that the policy states that Council will not provide support, funding, publicity or promotion for community groups, organisation or sports clubs that promote or advertise gambling and that the policy states that "all relevant Council policies and guidelines will align with this policy position".**
3. **Notes that applications to Council's Discretionary Fund are governed by a policy.**
4. **Notes that Council has a long-held policy of not providing funding through its Community Grants Program to community groups that meet regularly in gaming venues.**
5. **For the avoidance of doubt, resolves that applications to the Council's Discretionary Fund will not be accepted if the applicant meets regularly in, or promotes or advertises gaming venues.**

**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

Nil budget implications, matter refers to Discretionary Fund processes which is within existing budget.

**IMPACT ON INTERNAL RESOURCES**

N/A

**COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICIES**

This Notice of Motion relates to Council's Health and Wellbeing Plan (Priority 3: Harm Prevention) and Council's Public Health Approach to Gambling Harm Policy. Specifically, policy points 3.3 and 3.4:

- 3.3 The Monash Community Grants Program will not fund activities or events that occur in venues that have EGMs or gambling activities.
- 3.4 Council does not provide support (including use of its facilities), funding, publicity or promotion for community groups/organisations/sports clubs that promote or advertise gambling, particularly EGMs, sports betting, and online gambling

***RELEVANCE TO WORK ALREADY UNDERTAKEN BY OFFICERS OR COMMITTEES***

The passing of this Notice of Motion will align the Discretionary Fund eligibility criteria with the eligibility criteria and officer processes implemented through Council's Community Grants programs.

This Notice of Motion, if passed, will align with Council's stance on use of Council resources by community groups and organisations promoting or endorsing gambling, as outlined in the Public Health Approach to Gambling Harm Policy (refer to policy statement 3.4 above).

***FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS***

N/A