

7. Prevention of Gambling Harm

Many Australians enjoy an occasional flutter. However for some, gambling can be highly destructive – ruining lives and destroying families.¹

Australians spend more than \$20 billion every year on gambling as a whole.² Nearly \$12 billion a year is specifically spent on electronic gaming machines (also known as EGMs or poker machines) and three quarters of people who have a serious problem with gambling are pokie players.³ As a community, we have a duty of care to ensure gambling on electronic gaming machines is safer and protect people whose gambling is out of control.⁴

Council is concerned regarding the impact that gambling has on the most vulnerable members of our community, particularly the harm caused by electronic gaming machines. The electronic gaming machines located within the Monash municipality are concentrated in areas (such as Clayton and Chadstone) where the highest proportion of financially-disadvantaged residents live.

A Public Health Approach

The dramatic expansion of legalised gambling has seen researchers and policy analysts place gambling within a public health framework.⁵ Monash Council understands gambling as an evidence-based public health issue which impacts individuals, families and communities.

A number of external and deliberate factors play a significant role in this public health issue, with documented harm outcomes that can include addiction, significant loss of financial resources, health, social and economic impacts such as suicide, depression, relationship breakdown, lowered work productivity, job loss, bankruptcy and crime.⁶

Evidence suggests a public health framework offers the potential to address this harm. It can do so through creating a safer physical and psychological environment for individuals and reaching them before problems become entrenched.⁷

Council's public health action is dedicated to working with our local Monash community to raise awareness about gambling harm, build resilience and encourage community ownership, positive action and participation in non-gambling community pursuits, decrease stigma and encourage help-seeking.

Prof. Thomas says. 'As a society we need to move away from the idea that problem gambling is only the fault of individuals, and acknowledge that gambling is a whole-of-community responsibility.'⁸

The relationship between electronic gaming machine accessibility and police-recorded domestic violence

An emerging body of research has documented an association between people experiencing high levels of harm from gambling and domestic violence in a range of study populations and locations through an analysis of 654 postcodes in Victoria 2005-2014.⁹ Postcodes with no electronic gaming machines were associated with 20% fewer family incidents per 10,000 and 30% fewer domestic-violence assaults per 10,000, when compared with postcodes with 75 electronic gaming machines per 10,000.¹⁰

This research suggests the uneven provisioning of electronic gaming machines across Victoria may be contributing to the incidence of domestic violence in areas with many electronic gaming machines, and that domestic violence impacts should be considered when regulators make decisions about granting licences for electronic gaming machines.¹¹

On-line Gambling

Digital technologies are rapidly changing Australia's gambling industry.¹²

Online gambling is the fastest growing gambling segment, growing at 15% per annum, with over \$1.4 billion gambled online each year. Digital technology is also enabling illegal operators to reach our phones, our televisions, our home computers at any time of the day or night.¹³

Australians are losing between \$64 million and \$400 million every year betting in illegal offshore sites, and this means tax revenue is also lost. In the online world, the proportion of problem gambling is three times higher than in other forms of gambling.¹⁴

The Australian Government has responded to illegal offshore wagering operators that do not provide the legal and consumer protections for Australians by developing a response to the 2015 Review of the Impact of Illegal Offshore Wagering where stronger consumer protection is the centrepiece of the reforms.¹⁵

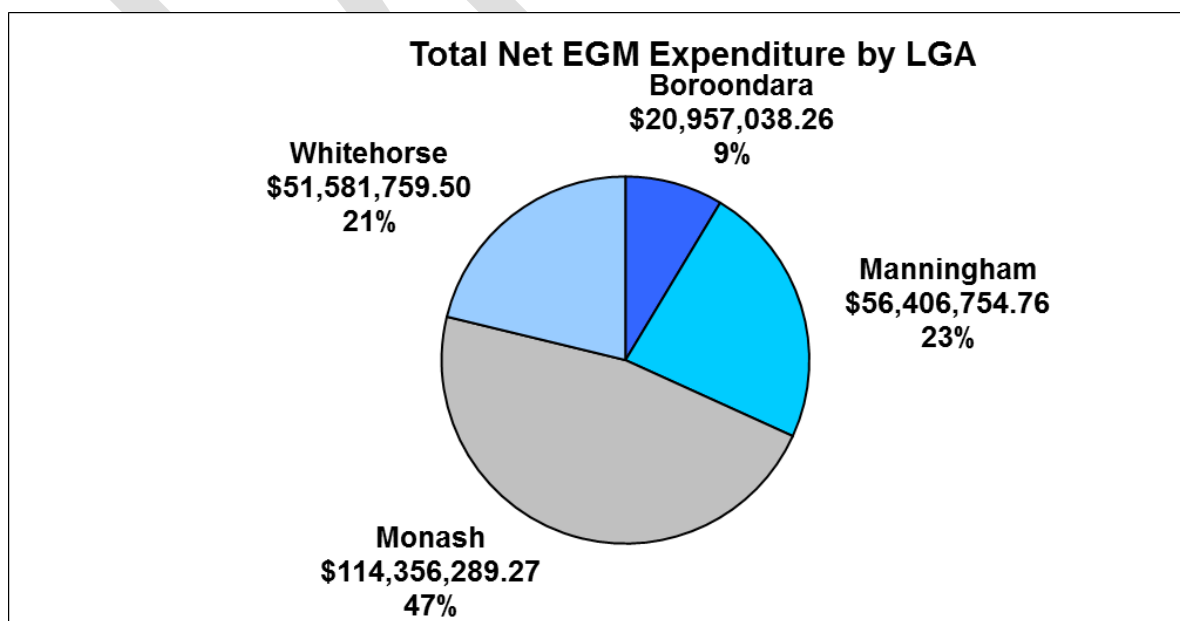
Online gambling applications increase the accessibility and normalisation of gambling and enable individuals to bet on a huge range of sports all across the world, 24 hours a day.¹⁶ During a football broadcast it's now more common to see an ad for online sports betting than it is to see an ad for meat pies.¹⁷ Given that Australians spend more than \$20 billion every year on gambling, and with the rise in access to gambling, there has been a dramatic increase in reports of online gambling addiction, particularly among young men.¹⁸

There is also a great deal of concern around the 'normalisation' of sports and online gambling in Australian media culture over the last few years. Research out of Deakin University shows that children are able to recall the marketing for sports betting - three quarters of children can recall at least one sports betting brand, while more than a quarter can recognise four or more.¹⁹

Inner East Melbourne Statistics

In 2014-2015, the Inner East Melbourne catchment had 2,034 electronic gaming machines in 33 gaming venues.²⁰ The area had a total net EGM expenditure of \$243,301,841 and \$466.72 per adult. There were 3.9 EGMs per 1000 adults and 15,797 adults per gaming venue (refer table 1).²¹

Table 1: EGM Losses in 2014/15 across the Inner East Metropolitan Area²²



Monash Gambling Statistics

More than \$111.3 million was lost on electronic gaming machines in Monash in the 2015/16 financial year, the sixth highest amount of losses in any Victorian council area. There has been a slight decrease in the amount lost in Monash; expenditure was \$114 million in the 2014/15 financial year, and in 2012 expenditure within Monash on electronic gaming machines totalled \$122 million.²³

There are 952 electronic gaming machines in the City of Monash, and 15 gaming venues. On average, \$305,181 was lost to electronic gaming machines each day within the community.²⁴

Table 2: Monash EGM Expenditure Comparisons 2010/11 and 2015/16 provides a comparison of the expenditure on electronic gaming machines in Monash in 2010/11 and 2015/16. There has been a slight decrease in the amount of money spent since 2010/11 – this is directly attributable to drop in the number of electronic gaming machines in Monash from 1,000 to 952 over this period.

Table 2: Monash EGM Expenditure Comparisons 2010/11 and 2015/16²⁵

Venue	EGM 2011/12	Expenditure 2011/12	EGM 2015/16	Expenditure 2015/16
Clayton RSL	71	\$3,851,337	71	\$3,778,941
Forester Arms Hotel	46	\$5,772,909	46	\$4,454,841
L'Unico Bar & Bistro	28	\$5,151,538	35	\$4,484,231
Leighoak	92	\$7,164,485	92	\$7,636,778
Matthew Flinders Taverner	75	\$13,553,814	75	\$11,467,406
Monash Hotel	50	\$7,092,497	44	\$5,311,513
Oakleigh Junction Hotel	46	\$5,676,527	45	\$5,433,392
The Vale Hotel	56	\$8,991,434	55	\$7,969,973
Vegas at Waverley Gardens	75	\$11,684,425	75	\$11,043,569
Village Green Hotel	79	\$14,746,368	75	\$11,526,166
Waverley RSL Club	67	\$3,053,889	67	\$3,702,890
Wheeler's Hill Hotel	50	\$5,451,858	40	\$4,538,896
Century City Entertainment	75	\$9,136,576	65	\$8,765,891
Mountain View Hotel	85	\$10,885,114	62	\$8,423,579
Mulgrave County Club	105	\$10,139,649	105	\$12,853,052
TOTAL	1000	\$122,352,420	952	\$111,391,118
NET CHANGE IN SPEND				-\$10,961,302

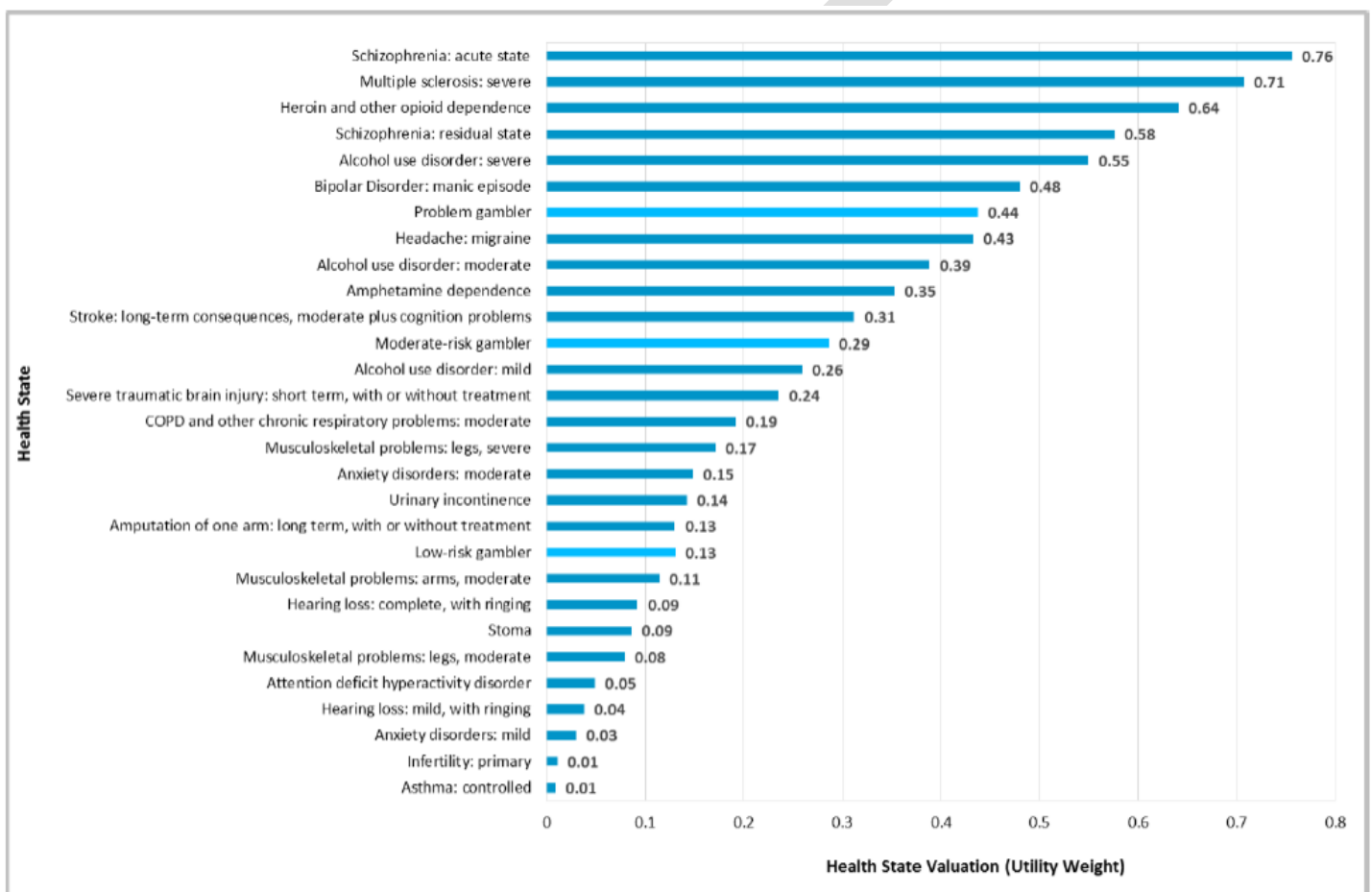
Gambling Harm

Recent data from a recent study titled *Assessing gambling-related harm in Victoria: a public health perspective* (the 'Harm Study') confirms gambling related harm is more widespread than just the 'problem gambler'.²⁶

This study, commissioned by the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation (VRGF), systematically investigated gambling-related harm in Victoria and assessed the aggregate 'burden of harm' with reference to different risk levels of gambling and other comparable conditions.²⁷ The project used a standard public health methodology endorsed by the World Health Organisation to measure the impact of gambling on quality of life.²⁸

Table 3: Health-Related Quality of Life utilities for gambling compared to other Health States details the findings of the Harm Study and compares the health-related quality of life (HRQL) weights estimated on a ratio scale between zero and one; with zero or one being equivalent to death and the other end of the scale reflecting ideal health and well-being. This utility represents the benefit to an individual in living one year in the condition specifies, and when measured across a sample, reflects a consensus view of preferences for different health outcomes.²⁹ Harm can therefore be described as a decrement to one's utility and the harms associated with of low, moderate and problem gambling can be compared directly to other health-related conditions in Victoria.

Table 3: Health-Related Quality of Life utilities for gambling compared to other health states³⁰



The Harm Study findings identify that high level gamblers experiences harm only marginally less severe than someone experiencing bipolar disorder (manic episode) but more harm that someone experiencing a migraine headache and alcohol use disorder.³¹

Moderate-risk gamblers experience higher levels of harm than those experiencing mild alcohol use disorder and severe traumatic brain injury.³²

Low-risk gamblers experience harms equivalent to those who have had one arm amputated.³³

The direct harm from gambling is not just on the person gambling, but can affect family, friends and children. The social cost to the community of high level gambling is estimated to be at least \$4.7 billion a year.³⁴

The actions of one person experiencing significant harm from gambling negatively impacts the lives of between five and 10 others. This means there are up to five million Australians who could be impacted including friends, family and employers.³⁵

It is evident that as ‘a society we need to move away from the idea that problem gambling is only the fault of individuals, and acknowledge that gambling is a whole-of-community responsibility.’³⁶

Harm to self

The Harm Study also found that low and moderate-risk gamblers account for a majority of the aggregate years of health life lost in Victoria. In total:

- 50.24 per cent of years lost to disability were from low-risk gamblers;
- 34.52 per cent of years lost to disability were from moderate-risk gamblers; and
- 15.24 per cent of years lost to disability were from problem gamblers.³⁷

The aggregate years of healthy life lost each year in the Victorian adult population due to one’s own gambling, for those experiencing gambling related harm or at low or moderate risk were calculated to be 101,675 years.³⁸

Table 4: Harm by sample size and Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) category³⁹

Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI)	Utility weight	Prevalence in population (%)	Total of Victorian population	Years of life lost to disability (YLD ₁)	Proportion of YLD ₁ (%)
Low risk	0.13	8.9	391,206	51,082	50.24
Moderate risk	0.29	2.8	122,667	35,099	34.52
Problem gambler	0.44	0.8	35,415	15,494	15.24
Total gambling problems		12.5	549,289	101,675	100

As shown in Table 4, half of the total of years of life lost to disability due to one’s own gambling harms are attributable to the Victorian adult population who are at low-risk for developing a significant issue with gambling (50.2%), followed by those at moderate-risk (34.5%) and high level gamblers (15.2%)⁴⁰

Monash Public Health Approach to Gambling Policy Statement 2016-2020

In May 2016, Council adopted a Public Health Approach to Gambling Policy Statement.⁴¹ The statement commits Council to a range of actions including:

- Opposing any relocation of existing Monash electronic gaming machines to disadvantaged areas within Monash;
- Continuing to advocate to the State Government to reform the Gambling Regulation Act so greater regulation and restrictions are placed on the gambling industry;
- Promoting a range of non-gambling social, cultural and recreational opportunities in Monash to encourage people to make engaged, active and healthy lifestyle choices;

- Disallowing gambling activity, promotion or advertising in Council owned facilities such as sporting pavilions; and
- Refusing funding to community groups that meet in venues that have electronic gaming machines.⁴²

Monash's Health & Wellbeing Partnership Plan 2013-2017 also outlines Council's commitment to building an Engaged, Confident and Connected Monash. Priority 2 of this plan states that Council will '*...embrace a community that fosters diversity; where all people are given the same opportunity to lead healthy, socially engaged and fulfilling lives.*'⁴³

To this end, a key action of Council is to build the community's resilience to harm from gambling (Priority 2.2).⁴⁴ The new Health & Wellbeing Partnership Plan 2017-2021 will continue to adopt a range of health promotion strategies to build community resilience and prevent harm from gambling in Monash.

Alliance for Gambling Reform

Monash Council will continue to be a strong advocate for gambling reform. In 2015/16 Monash Council was a member of the Alliance for Gambling Reform (the Alliance or AGR), a newly formed national collaboration of organisations with a shared concern about the harmful impacts of gambling in Australia. The Alliance seeks to campaign for reforms to the gambling industry to protect vulnerable communities and people from being targeted by the infiltration of electronic gaming machines and to reduce harm from electronic gaming machines.

In July 2016, Monash Council resolved to sign an open letter to Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Opposition Leader Bill Shorten, calling on them to support reforms to Australia's gambling industry.

Monash Council resolved to throw its support behind the gambling reform agenda of the Alliance which includes:

- Banning advertising for sports betting during G-rated television time periods;
- Introducing legislation that limits poker machine harm to a maximum \$1 bet and a maximum loss of \$120 per hour; and
- Federal parliament holding a Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform to build on existing knowledge of the problems and solutions.

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