1.9 MONASH PROBLEM GAMBLING RESEARCH PROJECT 2012 - 2013 FINAL REPORT
(FH:COM124; CF2013008; LIAS77)

Responsible Director: Julie Salomon

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to present the Monash Problem Gambling Research Project 2012 – 2013 final report and seek endorsement to make the research findings publicly available.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS/ISSUES

The Monash Problem Gambling Research Project 2012 – 2013 objectives were to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the impacts of problem gambling in Monash?
2. What are the specific impacts on vulnerable members of the Monash community?
3. What practical health promotion strategies can be developed to prevent harm from problem gambling?

The research has identified that based on all Monash adults, there is a higher proportion of moderate risk and problem gamblers in Wheelers Hill (4.2%) and Clayton (4.1%) compared to Victoria overall (3.1%). Ashwood and Chadstone were also identified by stakeholders in the qualitative consultations as the suburbs of Monash most impacted by problem gambling.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This Monash Problem Gambling Research Project 2012 – 2013 was funded within existing budget allocation through the 2012/13 differential rate.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

The Monash Problem Gambling Research Project 2012-13 has provided Council with evidence base data on the impacts of gambling on the Monash community, including identification of those more vulnerable to the harms from gambling and proposes a range of health promotion strategies.

The Monash Problem Gambling Research Project 2012-13 demonstrated Monash City Council’s leadership within the local government sector in relation to problem gambling in our community.
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RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

2. Endorses the release of the Monash Problem Gambling Research Project 2012 - 2013 Final Report research findings.

INTRODUCTION

In response to the Council’s concerns and a lack of an available local evidence base, Council imposed a differential rate 2012-2013 on commercial gaming venues that operate EGMs within the Monash municipality. This differential rate has funded the Monash Problem Gambling Research Project 2012-13.

BACKGROUND

As stated in the Monash Responsible Gambling Strategy 2012-2015, Council recognises that gambling is a lawful activity. However, a small but significant number of people, their friends, family and community experience a variety of negative impacts.

Research is one Key Action Area in the Monash Responsible Gambling Strategy. The differential rate 2012-13 on gaming venues provided the funds required to undertake this action, to research the impact of electronic gaming machine (EGM or pokies) in Council’s municipal district. The research looked at the extent of harm from gambling in the municipality, including vulnerable communities, and what preventative strategies can be undertaken to reduce harm.

The research project focused on EMG gambling as this is more highly correlated with harm than any other form of gambling (Productivity Commission Report on Gambling, 2010).

The City of Monash has the highest number of EGMs per local government area in metropolitan Melbourne. The expenditure in Monash was over $122 million dollars in 2011/12. Approximately 70% of Monash EGM
expenditure is gambled within the most vulnerable suburbs within Monash municipality.

**DISCUSSION**

The Monash Problem Gambling Research Project aimed to provide an evidence basis to inform specific strategic actions from a Local Government perspective; relating to preventing and minimising the negative impacts of gambling in Monash (especially among vulnerable communities).

A Steering Group was established to oversee the Gambling Research Project comprising of 4 Council officers and 1 community member who has strong experience and expertise in gambling research.

Schottler Consulting was commissioned to undertake the key research component from November 2012 – May 2013. The objective of the gambling impacts research was to answer the following research questions:

a) What are the impacts of problem gambling in Monash?
b) What are the specific impacts on vulnerable members of the Monash community?
c) What practical health promotion strategies can be developed to prevent harm from problem gambling?

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to conduct the research. Schottler Consulting was principally concerned with analysing quantitative data sources.

Council appointed a Senior Social Researcher for 4 months to coordinate and facilitate the extensive stakeholder and community consultation and to research into Gambling and Local Government. Consultations were held with key service providers, community members, state government departments, internal Council staff and Gamblers Help. Local EGM venue managers and industry representatives were consulted independently by Schottler Consulting.

To add an economic impact perspective, Marsh Risk Consulting was commissioned to undertake an analysis of EGM expenditure within the municipality and venues in close proximity to Monash.

The final Monash Problem Gambling Research Project includes:

A. A Well Hidden Issue – Summary Findings
B. Impacts of Problem Gambling in the City of Monash – Schottler Consulting
C. Analysis of the expenditure of electronic gaming machines within the City of Monash.
D. Senior Social Researcher Report
Due to the number of research components to the Monash Problem Gambling Research Project the report titled A Well Hidden Issue – Summary Findings (refer Attachment 1) is the principle document for the project providing a detailed summary of the key findings. The detailed research reports including the Impacts of Problem Gambling in the City of Monash – Schottler Consulting, Analysis of the expenditure of electronic gaming machines within the City of Monash and the Senior Social Researcher Report will all be available as companion documents. An executive summary of the companion documents are attached to the report.

It is proposed that all reports are made publically available upon request.

**OVERALL FINDINGS**

**Impacts**

Based on an analysis of data from Department of Justice (2009), there are (approximately) 42,875 non-gamblers, 84,654 non-problem gamblers, 6,575 low risk gamblers, 2,329 moderate risk gamblers and 548 problem gamblers in Monash. Overall, the prevalence of problem gambling amongst adults in Monash is 0.4% compared to 0.7% in Victoria.

However, based on all Monash adults, there is a higher proportion of moderate risk and problem gamblers in Wheelers Hill (4.2%) and Clayton (4.1%) compared to Victoria overall (3.1%).

When only gamblers are considered, results suggest that Monash adults may have higher levels of ‘at-risk’ gambling, compared to the overall Victorian population (12.0%) in:

- Mulgrave (16.4%),
- Chadstone/Oakleigh (14.4%),
- Wheelers Hill (13.5%),
- Glen Waverley (12.9%) and;
- Clayton (12.6%).

Clayton, Ashwood and Chadstone were also identified by stakeholders in the qualitative consultations as the suburbs of Monash most impacted by problem gambling.

The research report outlines specific impacts on vulnerable members of the Monash community. Both the qualitative and quantitative research identified the following groups in the community as at risk of harm from gambling:

- People of Asian backgrounds,
- International students,
- People from low socio economic backgrounds,
- Older people experiencing social isolation,
- Restaurant workers,
- People with mental health issues/other addictions,
- Trades and manual labour workers (especially shift workers),
- Young males in football and cricket clubs.

Overall rates of help seeking for problem gambling in Monash showed that use of counselling services was low overall. Only 5% of moderate risk/problem gamblers sought help during July 2011-June 2012, compared to 9% in Victoria. In addition, suburbs of help seekers did not align well to areas of risk identified, implying that help seeking needs to be better targeted to communities in need.

**Analysis of EGM Expenditure**

Key reasons contributing to the high expenditure within Monash relate to the higher proportion of hotel venues (which generally derive much greater levels of expenditure than clubs) and the substantial experience of the majority of venue operators within Monash.

The current research found that limited change in expenditure has followed the removal of EGMs from venues within Monash in the ‘capped areas’ in 2007. Therefore it does not always follow that fewer numbers of EGMs within Monash will result in lower levels of expenditure.

EGM expenditure within Monash has been relatively stable since 2006 and the declining trend shown in the data mostly relates to the removal of EGMs from the Matthew Flinders, rather than a general decline impacting all venues. However, there was a material fall in expenditure occurring after June 2012. This fall corresponds with the time ATMs were removed from gaming venues in accordance with State Government regulations.

**Health Promotion Strategies**

Analysis of consultation data shows that many in the community believe strengthening partnerships, advocacy, building community capacity and resilience are important roles for local government. In relation to harm from gambling, the research has shown that:

a) The current gambling assistance in Monash appears to be inadequate to meet the needs of the multicultural community. For example, the Chinese Gamblers Help service is located outside the municipality in Box Hill.

b) Stigma is a real concern, especially as people present to services with a ‘more acceptable reason’. Welfare and community services that may be supporting help seeking for gambling harm (such as churches, CALD groups or community organisations), are not funded or skilled specifically to respond to gambling harm.
c) The impact on the community should also be defined at a community level, not just as aggregate of individuals with problems. Similarly, quantitative data is required both at the aggregate level and also at small area level (suburbs) to make evident the size of the issues.

d) The difficulty in determining objective measurable evidence for the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation was noted in this research.

In relation to ways that Council may be able to assist, the research suggests:

a) Developing and implementing a program to raise professional awareness of problem gambling impacts and the role of problem gambling in health and wellbeing on the community in Monash.

b) Working with internal business units of Council, together with the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, to implement materials across the Monash community to raise awareness of problem gambling signs and the need to seek help (particularly in Asian community members residing in Monash).

c) Developing and implementing health promotion strategies to respond to at-risk gambling behaviour in each of the identified risk segments.

d) Reviewing Council policy and planning documents to identify the potential to incorporate strategies to respond to problem gambling.

e) Working together with the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation to respond to problem gambling and problem gambling risk factors in Monash.

The research project outlines a number of recommendations including key Health Promotion activities and strategies. These recommendations will be considered in the development of the Health and Wellbeing Partnership Plan 2013 – 2017. In addition, the current Monash Responsible Gambling Strategy 2012 – 2015 will be reviewed against these recommendations for possible inclusion in this strategy. A further report will be presented to Council outlining the program for action.

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

Research is one Key Action Area in the *Monash Responsible Gambling Strategy 2012 - 2015*. Within the Council Plan 2013 – 2017 ‘Strengthened community resilience to the harm from gambling’ is one of the community outcomes stated. This action will also be considered in the development of the *Health and Wellbeing Partnership Plan 2013 – 2017*, as it was in the Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2010 – 2013.

The recommendations within the Research Project provide a clear direction for the development of Council’s activities and programs to strengthen the Monash communities’ resilience from the harm from gambling.
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS
This Monash Problem Gambling Research Project was funded within existing budget allocation through the 2012/13 differential rate.

CONCLUSION
The Monash Problem Gambling Research Project 2012-13 has provided Council with evidence base data on the impacts of gambling on the Monash community, including identification of those more vulnerable to the harms from gambling.

Health promotion strategies have been proposed that Monash Council could develop in partnership, to reduce harm from gambling at a local level.

The Monash Problem Gambling Research Project 2012-13 demonstrated Monash City Council’s leadership within the local government sector in relation to problem gambling in our community.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: A Well Hidden Issue – Summary Findings

Attachment B: Executive Summary of the Impacts of Problem Gambling in the City of Monash – Schottler Consulting

Attachment C: Executive Summary of Analysis of the expenditure of electronic gaming machines within the City of Monash.

Attachment D: Senior Social Researcher Summary Report