

2.4 LINKAGE GRANT SCHEME APPLICATION

Responsible Director: Julie Salomon

RECOMMENDATION

That Council formally participates in the joint application with the Centre for Population Health Research (Deakin University) for a three year Australian Research Council Linkage Grant focussed on 'Developing innovative local level responses to reduce and prevent poker machine harm'.

INTRODUCTION

The Centre for Population Health Research at Deakin University are seeking to partner with five local councils in its submission for an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant. The application to be submitted by the Centre for Population Health Research at Deakin University is to fund a proposed three year project (2018-2020) focused on developing innovative local level responses to reduce and prevent poker machine harm.

The City of Monash has been identified as a key partner in this research project due to its state wide leadership in the prevention of gambling-harm because of our history in successful project work, policy and advocacy in the community and the high levels of gambling harm in the municipality. Over \$109 million was lost through electronic gaming machines (EGM's) in 16/17, ranking Monash as the 6th in Victoria in terms of losses.

BACKGROUND

The Australian Research Council's (ARC) Linkage Projects scheme promotes national and international collaboration and research partnerships between key stakeholders in research and innovation. Research and development is undertaken to apply advanced knowledge to problems, acquire new knowledge and as a basis for securing commercial and other benefits of research. In this case it is relating to the prevention of gambling harm.

To facilitate successful collaboration between higher education institutions and other parts of the innovation system, Linkage Projects proposals can be submitted at any time and funding outcomes are announced within six months of proposal submission. Proposals for funding under the Linkage Projects scheme must include at least one Partner Organisation. The Partner Organisation is required to make a contribution in cash and/or in kind to the project. The combined Partner Organisation contributions for a Proposal (i.e. the total of the cash and in-kind contributions of the Partner Organisations) must at least match the total funding requested from the ARC.

DISCUSSION

Monash Council would join a number of other local government areas who have made in-principle commitments, including Hobsons Bay, Brimbank, Darebin and Hume. The project, if funded, will focus on three key areas:

- 1) **Mapping the pathways to the pokies:** Looking at the range of factors which may encourage individuals, peer groups, families and communities into venues with electronic gaming machines.

- 2) **Identifying challenges experienced by local level policy makers and services:** Documenting barriers in reducing and preventing gambling harm.
- 3) **Identifying solutions:** Generating a public health framework planning tool for councils to address harm from electronic gaming machines.

While there are a range of well recognised social harms associated with poker machines, to date there has been limited local level investigation into:

- The range of individual, social, environmental, and industry factors that may create pathways to community gambling venues, and which may subsequently normalise engagement in poker machine gambling for population sub-groups; and
- The challenges experienced by local councils in reducing and prevent poker machine harm.

Participating in this research and being a key partner in this project will enable Council to:

- Have direct access to new and up to date leading research, expertise and knowledge from a university partner;
- Support and identify future projects and initiatives that will enhance the ability of Council to deliver successful prevention programs;
- Influence research questions and promote data collection that will be relevant to local contexts, while pushing outcomes driven research;
- Help support a framework for local level harm reduction and prevention initiatives within Council plans; and
- Inform future advocacy work and local prevention projects

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Monash Council has made an ongoing commitment to limit gambling-related harm, through the City of Monash Public Health Approach to Gambling Policy Statement 2016-2020.

To support this, Council has included gambling-harm prevention as a focus within the key priorities outlined within the recently endorsed *A Healthy and Resilient Monash: Integrated Plan 2017-2021*. Annual actions delivered under this strategic plan will continue the health promotion initiatives delivered as part of the CANVAS project and other advocacy work related to gambling reform.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

As one of the five contributing Councils, Monash will continue to be recognised as a leader in the sector by building upon existing work in preventing gambling harm normalisation. This is particularly relevant to the actions outlined in the *A Healthy and Resilient Monash: Integrated Plan* with regards to the 'Prevention from Harm'.

Monash, as a municipality, will gain an incredible opportunity to demonstrate leadership and receive detailed local evidence to support and inform the continued work that it is undertaken in community development and health promotion. The City of Monash will be listed as a contributor and partner for all research publications derived from this grant.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cash contribution which the City of Monash will be required to make if this grant proposal is accepted is \$10,000 per year, for three years (2018, 2019 and 2020). A total project commitment of \$30,000.

If the grant application proves to be unsuccessful, the in-principle financial commitment of these funds would no longer be required.

CONCLUSION

If successful these research findings will guide Council actions for harm prevention in the future. Specific information around our community engagement with electronic gaming machines, as well as the challenges associated with de-normalising gambling products and behaviours, will lead to increased opportunities for better health outcomes for all residents.

The development of evidenced based strategies and local level policies could be implemented by Monash council and aid the municipality to overcome challenges to more effectively reduce and prevent poker machine harm.