

**OFFICERS REPORT****GRANTS FROM COMMUNITY SUPPORT FUND & MONASH COUNCIL'S GAMBLING POLICY**

Submitting Councillor: Cr Saloumi

**MOTION**

*That Council*

*In line with Council's resolution on 31 May 2016 to adhere to City of Monash Public Health Approach to Gambling Policy Statement 2016 – 2020, Council must return all monies sought and provided through the State Government's Community Support Fund since 31 May 2016 in order to commit to its resolution to maintain independence from the gambling industry.*

**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

This Council Motion poses significant budgetary implications to Council. The implications that need to be considered if this Council motion was successful are that all monies received from the Community Support fund since May 2016 would need to be returned.

Officers have sought further clarification on the actual amount of money that Council has received from the Community Support Fund since May 2016 and it is believed that the following are accurate figures:

- \$500,000 for the WA Scammell Reserve Pavilion Upgrade Project
- \$400,000 for the feasibility study for the MGA/Wheelers Hill Cultural Precinct

**IMPACT ON INTERNAL RESOURCES**

Nil.

**COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICIES**

Established in 1991, the Community Support Fund (CSF) is a trust fund governed by the Gambling Regulation Act 2003 to direct a portion of gaming revenues back into the community. Taxes on gaming machines in Victorian hotels contribute approximately \$146 million each year to the Fund. Funds from the CSF support a range of programs, which in turn support a wide variety of projects in the community. As prescribed by the legislation, the CSF receives revenue generated from electronic gambling machines in hotels.

The Community Support Fund primary focus is on, but not limited to, supporting problem gambling, drug education, youth programs, and arts and tourism. It currently has budget allocations for portfolios across the Victorian Government in Drug & Alcohol Treatment and Rehabilitation, Sport and Recreation, Community Services and Responsible Gambling. <sup>i</sup>

This motion directly calls out the current policy clause 2.7 within the adopted *Public Health Approach to Gambling Strategy 2016-2020*, specifically under the policy priority of 'Gambling as a Public Health Issue'.

*Policy point 2.7: Council will maintain independence from the gambling industry. Council will not accept financial contributions from gambling venues and will not promote community grants or initiatives offered by local poker machine venues.*

"Financial Contributions from Gambling Venues", in relation to the Approach to Gambling Strategy 2016-2020, refers to Council taking a direct cash grant or any form of financial assistance directly from a local gambling venue or those who have a vested interest in the continued profitability of gambling regulation within our community.

The intent of clause 2.7 is to keep Council as an impartial body in regards to making decisions that have to do with gambling harm. This is consistent with a public health approach and response to limiting the harm of gambling on our community ensuring the health and wellbeing of the community in mind. This clause also enables City of Monash to continue extensive advocacy to highlight the widespread gambling harm that is being caused locally, including harm through the normalisation of gambling culture and the proliferation and access to electronic gaming machines (EGMs) at local venues. It is not intended to preclude access to State Government funding that is drawn from revenue received from gambling operators.

In addition, Council's 'A Healthy and Resilient Monash: Integrated Plan 2017 - 2021' has actions stated within this plan which include 'improving the health and resilience of individuals and communities through proactive services and programs; and advocate to limit gambling-related harm.'

The City of Monash's view that the reduction of harm from gambling is a public health priority aligns with Council's prior efforts regarding pushing for industry reform and the minimisation of gambling-related harm. Council has advocated previously for industry reform, including within the State Government, to reduce their reliance on income derived from EGMs. Our current *Approach to Gambling Policy* highlights this.

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

The City of Monash lost \$110,209,894.94 through Electronic Gaming Machines in the 18/19 financial year, which ranked 7<sup>th</sup> in overall losses for Local Government Area's in Victoria.

Council currently works with a number of key external partners that receive financial support from the State Government, including LINK health, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation and Gamblers Help. These organisations all deliver services that benefit our community especially those that have had negative impacts from gambling harm.

#### **FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

The *Public Health Approach to Gambling Harm Strategy 2016-2020* has been a pivotal policy document to support Council in its decision making to help reducing gambling harm in the local Monash community. The receipt of funds through the CSF is not inconsistent with the current policy, which aims to ensure that Council is not compromised in making decisions on

gambling related matters as a result of the acceptance of funds to Council from local gambling venues.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.dtf.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/Community%20Support%20Fund%20-%20Total%20expenditure%20by%20program%20for%202017-18.DOCX>