

# Maroondah Gambling Harm Prevention and Minimisation Policy 2026

Date adopted: 15 June 2026

Responsible Service Area: City Futures

## Purpose

This *Policy* guides how Council will seek to prevent and minimise the social, health and economic harms caused by gambling through robust, evidence-based, transparent and consistent decision-making.

The Policy informs the gambling industry, the community, peak bodies, statutory authorities, Victorian local governments and other relevant stakeholders of Council's policy position, priorities and strategic objectives in relation to preventing and minimising gambling harm.

## Background / Context

Australia has the highest gambling losses per capita of any country in the world. In the 2024-2025, the City of Maroondah had a higher density of Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) and greater average player loss per 1000 people than the average for metropolitan councils in Victorian. Loss to EGMs in the municipality in the 2024-25 Financial Year was \$64.2 million.

Most people gamble in venues such as hotels, clubs and casinos, and the resulting harm disproportionately affects males, young people, First Nations people, culturally diverse communities, people with low educational attainment, high socioeconomic disadvantage, and people participating in a greater number of gambling activities.

More information can be found in the *Maroondah Gambling Harm Prevention and Minimisation Policy 2026 Background Report*.

## Scope

This Policy covers all forms of gambling with the potential to cause harm to the community and applies to:

- Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs);
- Online gambling;
- Sports betting;
- Keno;
- Commercial bingo;

<b>Policy Title:</b> Maroondah Gambling Harm Prevention and Minimisation Policy 2026		<b>Policy type:</b> << Insert text >>
<b>Current version approved:</b> << Insert text >>		<b>Current version number:</b> << Insert text >>
		<b>Policy review date:</b> << Insert text >>
<b>Parent policy:</b> << Insert text >>	<b>Child policy/policies:</b> << Insert text >>	<b>Policy responsibility:</b> << Insert text >>

- Casino games; and
- Horse/dog race wagering.

The policy is of particular relevance to EGMs as this is the form of gambling over which Council has direct influence through its statutory role in planning and decision-making processes.

This Policy supports but does not replace specific roles and responsibilities defined by the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* or the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003*.

## Objectives

This Policy seeks to achieve the following objectives which are developed in the context of, and aligned with, relevant adopted Maroondah City Council strategies, plans and research.

Council will work in partnership with relevant stakeholders to:

- Advocate for the adoption of measures to minimise the harmful impacts of gambling.
- Support services that assist those directly and indirectly affected by gambling harm.
- Enhance the community's access to social, recreational and cultural activities as alternatives to gambling.

## Policy Principles

Addressing gambling harm is the collective responsibility of a wide range of stakeholders. For its part Council will demonstrate leadership in preventing and minimising gambling harm by applying the following principles:

### Public health approach

Council acknowledges that gambling harm is a public health issue.

The public health approach to preventing and minimising gambling harm takes a broad view of the determinants and impacts of gambling harm. It is based on the following:

- Gambling harm occurs across a continuum of risk.
- There are multiple social, environmental, economic and technological determinants of gambling harm.
- Interventions are applied across the population rather than focusing on the individuals experiencing harm.

### Harm minimisation

The two pillars of a harm minimisation approach to addressing gambling harm are:

- managing the supply of and demand for gambling in the community, and
- reducing the adverse health, social and economic harms for individuals, their families and the wider community.

### Evidence based

Decision-making processes are informed by a robust evidence base.

### Intersectionality

The intersectionality of a person's low socio-economic and poor health status disproportionately increases the risk of gambling harm among vulnerable groups.

### Governance

Transparent and accountable governance enables Council to demonstrate leadership in its commitment to preventing and minimising the social, health and economic harms caused by gambling.

## Alignment with Council's mission and values

The prevention and minimisation of gambling harm, which is a public health issue, supports the Maroondah 2050 Community Vision that "Maroondah is a safe, inclusive and vibrant community...". This outcome also reflects the "safe and liveable" outcome area in the Maroondah 2050 Community Vision.

The strategic objectives in the Policy Position support the following community priorities detailed in the Maroondah 2050 Community Vision:

- Support for the community, particularly residents experiencing vulnerability, marginalisation and disadvantage, families, seniors, and young people.
- Enhanced health and wellbeing of the community.
- Transparent and accountable governance.
- Consultation and engagement with the community on matters that impact them.
- Collaboration and partnering with the local community, organisations and businesses.

The strategic objectives in the Policy Position align with Council's five roles that form the framework of the Council Plan 2025-2029 which are plan, deliver, facilitate, partner and advocate.

This Policy supports the priority in the Maroondah Liveability Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031 which is to "Work in partnership to prevent and minimise gambling related harm in the community through collective advocacy, health promotion and raising awareness around the impacts of harmful gambling behaviours."

## Policy position

While gambling is legal in Victoria, gambling harm is recognised as a significant global public health concern<sup>1</sup> associated with a range of health, social and economic harms to people who gamble, their family and the wider community.

Council is concerned about the significant cost burden caused by gambling harm to the community, service providers and all tiers of government.

### 1. Strategic planning and regulation

Council will undertake its strategic planning and regulatory roles to protect those most at risk of gambling harm by:

- Embedding gambling harm minimisation as a priority area in Council's strategic documents, including future Council and Health and Wellbeing Plans.
- Managing the location and operation of EGMs through the planning process.
- Assessing the social and economic impacts of applications considered under the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* and Maroondah Planning Scheme.
- Enforcing planning permit conditions.

### 2. Capacity building

Council will build the community's capacity to enhance health and wellbeing by:

- Raising awareness of the causes of and risks associated with gambling.
- Raising awareness of support services available to people directly and indirectly affected by gambling harm.
- Supporting efforts by community organisations to reduce their reliance on gambling revenue.

### 3. Advocacy

Council will address the community's concerns about the harmful impacts of gambling by:

- Advocating for reforms to the regulatory framework that improve the design and operation of gaming venues and EGMs and reduce exposure to gambling through advertising.
- Representing the community in response to applications considered under the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* and *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.
- Making submissions to state and federal government proposals in relation to gambling matters.
- Maintaining strong partnerships with peak bodies such as the Alliance for Gambling Reform and other local governments to enhance advocacy impacts.

### 4. Collaboration

Council will collaborate with our stakeholders to prevent and minimise gambling harm by:

- Strengthening collaborative partnerships with agencies responsible for delivering services to people affected by gambling harm.
- Collectively enhancing access to and use of activities and facilities that provide social, leisure, entertainment, cultural and recreational alternatives to gambling.
- Collaborating with adjoining local authorities when responding to applications considered under the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* and *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

### 5. Leadership

Council will demonstrate leadership through managing its facilities and programs to prevent and minimise harm from gambling by:

- Prohibiting exposure to gambling on Council-owned or managed land.
- Not providing community grants, financial assistance, or in-kind support to organisations or businesses that operate EGMs.
- Not funding any programs or activities held in facilities that operate EGMs.
- Maintaining independence from the gambling industry by not accepting direct financial contributions nor participating in the distribution of financial contributions from the gambling industry
- Not promoting events or activities held at venues with EGMs.
- Not holding any activity, event, function or program at venues that operate EGMs.
- Endeavouring to filter and block gambling related internet sites for devices connected to the Council's core ICT Network.

## Policy implementation

The Policy will be implemented through Council's planning, policy, programs and decision-making processes.

This will involve the following:

- Integrating the Policy principles into all Council strategic and decision-making processes.
- Continuing to monitor trends in gambling behaviour, and the determinants and impacts of gambling harm on community health and wellbeing.
- Collaborating with stakeholders to identify opportunities to collectively address gambling harm such as through Gambling Harm Awareness week.

- Raising awareness of the Policy within the community, the gambling industry, peak bodies, local government and service providers.

## Roles and Responsibilities

Relevant departments across Council will be responsible for implementing the Policy.

## Related legislation

Planning and Environment Act 1987

Local Government Act 2020

Health and Wellbeing Act 2008

Gambling Regulation Act 2003

Interactive Gambling Act 2001

Gender Equality Act 2020

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005

## Related policies, strategies, procedures and guidelines

Maroondah 2050, Our Future Together

Council Plan 2025-2029

Liveability, Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy 2021-2031 (Maroondah’s Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan)

Maroondah Planning Scheme

## Definitions

<b>Advocacy</b>	Public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy.
<b>Community</b>	<p>People who have a stake and interest in the City of Maroondah, including those:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• who live, work, study, conduct business or provide services in the municipality,</li> <li>• involved in local community groups or organisations,</li> <li>• who visit, use or enjoy the services, facilities and public places located within the municipality,</li> <li>• who share an interest, a sense of identity or a shared common goal, and</li> <li>• providing gambling activities.</li> </ul>
<b>Electronic gaming machine</b>	<p>A computerised gambling device with a video screen displaying symbols on simulated reels. Cash is inserted into the machine and buttons are used to place bets. The machine randomly determines the position of symbols on the screen. Wins are returned as credits back into the machine.</p> <p>Also referred to as EGMs, pokies, pokie machines or poker machines.</p>
<b>Gambling</b>	The placement of a wager or bet on the outcome of a future uncertain event. Gambling includes gaming and wagering activities. <sup>2</sup>

<p><b>Gambling-related harm</b></p>	<p>Any initial or exacerbated adverse consequence due to an engagement with gambling that leads to a decrement to the health or wellbeing of an individual, family unit, community or population.<sup>3</sup></p> <p>These harms include relationship breakdown, compromised mental and physical health and wellbeing, financial losses, demand for services, lost work productivity and crime.</p> <p>Gambling-related harm can be divided into seven key areas: Financial harm, relationship disruption, emotional or psychological distress, decrements to health, cultural harm, reduced work or study performance and criminal activity. These harms can further be considered as general harms (which occur at any time), crisis harms, which are acute and occur in specific situations and may be associated with attempts to seek help, and legacy harms which occur long after gambling has ceased.<sup>4</sup></p>
<p><b>Gaming</b></p>	<p>All legal forms of gambling other than wagering, such as lotteries, EGMs, casino, interactive gaming and minor gaming.<sup>5</sup></p>
<p><b>Gaming venue</b></p>	<p>A gaming venue is classified as a ‘gaming premise’ under the Maroondah Planning Scheme. The definition of a ‘gaming premise’ is ‘land used for gambling by gaming, and where there is the ability to receive a monetary reward’.</p> <p><i>The Gambling Regulation Act 2003</i> permits the use of EGMs in venues with a pub licence (hotel operating under a General Liquor Licence), club licence (operating under a Full Club Liquor Licence) and racing club licence (operating under a Full Club Liquor Licence).</p> <p><i>The Gambling Regulation Act 2003</i> defines a club as a ‘club, society or other association of persons by whatever name called and whether incorporated or unincorporated’.</p> <p>There is no definition of a hotel or racing club under the <i>Gambling Regulation Act 2003</i>.</p> <p>Some clubs operating EGMs in Victoria provide sporting activities such as golf, tennis or bowls.</p>
<p><b>Harm prevention</b></p>	<p>A range of non-statutory measures which seek to avoid the risk of gambling-related harm from occurring in the first place. These measures focus on protecting those most at risk of gambling-related harm by avoiding access to opportunities to gamble.</p>
<p><b>Partnership</b></p>	<p>A relationship between the Maroondah City Council and stakeholders, and between stakeholders themselves involving shared responsibilities for implementing a range of actions that seek to achieve a common goal such as preventing and minimising gambling harm.</p>
<p><b>Policy</b></p>	<p>Sets out Council’s position with respect to a particular matter. It includes a set of principles and strategic objectives that provide a definite direction for the organisation.</p>
<p><b>Stakeholder</b></p>	<p>An individual or group identified with a strong interest in a particular topic in regard to Council’s decision-making and/or are affected by the outcome of any decisions.</p>
<p><b>Vulnerable groups</b></p>	<p>Groups within the community at an elevated risk of gambling-related harms as a result of their age, socio-economic status, gender, cultural and linguistic background or exposure to opportunities to gamble.</p>

<b>Wagering</b>	All legal forms of gambling on racing, sporting events and other approved events (e.g., elections). Wagering includes all the racing and sports betting activities. <sup>6</sup>
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## Supporting document

*Maroondah Gambling Harm Prevention and Minimisation Policy 2026 Background Report*

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<sup>1</sup> [Global Local: Gambling \(lgiu.org\)](http://GlobalLocal.org)

<sup>2</sup> Australian Gambling Statistics 40<sup>th</sup> Edition

<sup>3</sup> Browne, M, Langham, E, Rawat, V, Greer, N, Li, E, Rose, J, Rockloff, M, Donaldson, P, Thorne, H, Goodwin, B, Bryden, G & Best, T 2016, Assessing gambling-related harm in Victoria: a public health perspective, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/report/measuring-the-adverse-consequences-from-gambling>

<sup>5</sup> Australian Gambling Statistics 40<sup>th</sup> Edition

<sup>6</sup> Australian Gambling Statistics 40<sup>th</sup> Edition