

6.1 ROYAL COMMISSION INTO THE GAMBLING INDUSTRY

Submitting Councillor: The Mayor, Cr Stuart James

MOTION

That Council:

1. Notes that a motion supporting a Royal Commission into the gambling industry was supported by an overwhelming majority of Councils at the 2019 Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) National General Assembly (NGA), including Monash, and that point 2 of this resolution mirrors that adopted motion

2. Calls on the Federal Government to:

a. Establish a Royal Commission into the gambling industry and the \$24 billion in annual gambling losses nationally, the highest in the world in per capita terms.

b. Embrace national harm minimisation policies to reduce gambling harm in Australia, such as:

i) Supporting a ban on credit card usage with Australian licensed online gambling companies;

ii) Introducing further restrictions on gambling advertising, emulating the approach taken with the tobacco industry;

iii) Establishing a national ombudsman scheme to process consumer complaints and resolve customer disputes with online gambling companies;

iv) Introducing a ban on federally registered political parties from owning gambling licenses issued by Australian governments, including for the operation of poker machine venues.

3. Calls on the Federal Government, with the support of ALGA, to investigate the gambling industry's influence on the democratic process, including political donations and third-party campaigning.

4. Resolves not to accept any corporate sponsorship for Council based activities from gambling/gaming entities, without exception

BACKGROUND

Council has received a request from Frankston City Council to support its advocacy campaign in reducing gambling harm on its community. Frankston Council adopted a Notice of Motion outlining a number of recommendations as outlined in the attachment, at its Council meeting on January 28 2020.

As a result of this motion, a letter to all Mayors in Australia has been sent. This letter was prepared with support from the Alliance for Gambling Reform. The City of Monash has been requested to join the call for a Federal Royal Commission into Gambling Harm.

This correspondence calls for individual Council to write to the Federal Government and join other Local Governments, aligning with the Alliance for Gambling Reform campaign to request a Royal Commission into the gambling industry, and adopt harm minimisation policies.

Currently City of Monash is part of the Alliance for Gambling Reform, working in partnership with this body and other Councils to minimise gambling harm on our local community.

DISCUSSION

The latest data shows that across Australia, almost \$25 Billion dollars was lost in 2017/18 on gambling, an increase of 5 per cent from the year before.

The last serious investigation of the gambling industry was by the Federal Productivity Commission that concluded in 2011. This report highlighted that significant changes to harm minimisation strategies were required. Proposed measures included reducing the maximum bet limit per button push to \$1 and limiting the amount of cash that can be inserted into a machine at one time.

Research since the Productivity Commission report has revealed that harm to health caused by 'low' and 'moderate' risk gambling is greater than that experienced by 'problem' gambling. This change in our understanding of gambling harm warrants a re-assessment of the industry and its societal costs.

Our understanding of gambling harm as a public health issue requires a wider scope than the Productivity Commission, and requires the Federal Government to fully investigate the problems within the gambling industry and take action to address these.

At the ALGA NGA in 2019, Councils supported, with an overwhelming majority, a motion to call for a royal commission into the gambling industry. Monash was one of the Councils who supported the motion, in-line with our long-held position on fighting problem gambling within our municipality.

As such, the call for support from the Frankston City Council on this matter is consistent with the current policy position of and leadership by the City of Monash.

CONCLUSION

Monash Council has made a commitment to limiting gambling-related harm through the City of Monash *Public Health Approach to Gambling Policy Statement 2016-2020*. Furthermore, City of Monash has included gambling-harm prevention

as a focus within the key priorities outlined within the A Healthy and Resilient Monash: Integrated Plan 2017-2021.

ATTACHMENT

Officers' Advice
Letter from Frankston Council