

# REDUCING GAMBLING HARM IN COMMUNITY SPORT

A ROADMAP FOR LOCAL COUNCILS



In collaboration with:



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# Introduction

## Purpose of this document

To support local councils to take a coordinated approach to reducing gambling harm by removing barriers and providing resources that help them implement and embed changes within community sport settings.

## A public health approach

A public health approach rests on shared responsibility for population health, from individuals and community groups to businesses, corporations and governments at all levels. It requires the recognition that all have a role to play in supporting an integrated and comprehensive strategy, aimed at achieving goals for the common good.

Harm from gambling can happen much earlier than people realise and affect the health, wellbeing and financial security of even those who gamble infrequently. The majority of gambling harm in Victoria is experienced by people whose gambling behaviour is not classified as problem gambling.



# Gambling associations in community sporting clubs

## The ways that local sporting clubs may be associated with gambling:

- Ownership or operation of electronic gaming machines.
- Receiving direct sponsorship or benefits from a gambling venue.
- Gambling fundraisers that clubs' host – poker nights, raffles, etc.
- Normalising gambling through club practices/culture – having horse racing on tv's, punters clubs, lots of talk about gambling at the club.
- Receiving sponsorship or benefits from a betting company.
- Hosting events or functions at gambling or racing venues.

## Participation and community attitudes:

- Nine in ten Victorian sport fans are concerned about the amount of gambling promotion young people see at sport. [1]
- Seven in ten Victorian sport fans do not think gambling should be part of experiencing sport. [1]
- The vast majority of local sporting clubs in Victoria (97%) do not have betting company sponsorships. [1]
- One in three sports bets in Victoria are placed by 18 to 24 year old males – this is the first generation to have grown up with betting ads.
- Those who watch or play sport are more likely to engage in sports betting. [1]

[1] La Trobe University Love the Game Survey, 2021

# How participation in sport can reduce risk factors related to gambling harm

The table below outlines well researched benefits of participation in sport and their link with reducing risk factors related to gambling harm:

What sport provides	Positive by-product that reduces gambling harm risk
Physical activity -->	Improved mental health
Connecting with others -->	Reduced social isolation
Belonging / part of a group -->	Sense of purpose and emotional safety
Personal & physical safety -->	Positive space to escape; alternate recreation
Sense of achievement -->	Stronger confidence and self worth
Routine and structure -->	Improved school engagement; employment opportunities/transferability
Social supports & mateship -->	Safe conversations; challenge stigma
Health promotion setting -->	Setting and structures that allow disseminating information and education.
Role models -->	Influence attitudes/norms (also be negative - see below)

...however, sporting clubs may also increase gambling harm risk factors:

- ✗ High barriers (cost, time) to entry and non-inclusive - do not make people feel safe or welcome (negative self-esteem/socially excluded).
- ✗ Normalisation and exposure of/to gambling – talk about betting, social circles centred on gambling interest, and encouraging patronage of gambling venues.
- ✗ Promote stigma and hyper masculinity – encourage risky behaviours, bragging about wins only.
- ✗ Over focus on performance – member wellbeing is secondary to winning.

# Reducing gambling harm through community sport - a roadmap for action

## Step 1: REVIEW

Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan (MHWP) and Gambling Policy to review actions related to sport and/or healthy, safe and inclusive environments.

## Step 2: MEET

With Sport and Recreation Team to identify opportunities that align with level of readiness and capacity.

## Step 3: MAP

Use the table below to map key focus area/s and actions that align with outcomes in your councils MHWP and policies.

Following are a list of actions that your council can take to support gambling harm reduction through community sport.

Each activity has been categorised under sub-headings and ranked according to its level of effort and potential impact.

# i. Council Led Policy

## Low:

- Key actions from Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing plans and Gambling Policy that refer to sporting clubs and environments to be circulated to local sporting club representatives.
- Schedule quarterly meetings between council's Health/Social Planning and Sport & Recreation teams to review actions / discuss opportunities in sport setting.
- Provide an example template for a recommended gambling harm prevention policy to local clubs [Love the Game can provide this].

## Medium:

- Set a target percentage for local sporting clubs that have a gambling harm prevention policy at their club [[contact VRGF to obtain this data](#)].
- Mandate sporting clubs who own or operate gaming machines to have a clear policy to build on their responsible service of gaming.
- Include criteria within Council grants program for clubs applying for funding to be [signed up to 'Love The Game' program](#).
- Create or build upon a rewards program that recognises club development in this space (healthy, safe, inclusive environments).

## High:

- Develop a holistic Healthy Sports Club program to reward clubs that build healthy environments across several health areas, including gambling harm prevention [e.g. [Monash Healthy Sports Clubs](#)].
  - Engage an evaluator to determine social return on investment of local sport in your area [[Latrobe Uni Community Football Study](#)] to provide business case and/or identify effectiveness against its Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan.
  - Establish a position on items such as gambling signage and advertising at council owned sport facilities.
  - Incentivise clubs to implement gambling harm minimisation or reduction through financial rewards or subsidised costs related to club operations [e.g. ground hire, subsidising professional development/capacity building courses].
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## ii. Supporting leadership in local clubs

### Low:

- Encourage local sporting clubs to sign up to Love the Game.
- Create a Sporting Club Database to avoid clubs having to navigate multiple programs/systems and duplication of club data entry to alleviate their time and support their journey to change.

### Medium:

- Host a local sporting club forum to present on social and health initiatives local clubs can adopt to reduce harm and invite Love the Game to present (this could be held in conjunction with other providers, such as Good Sports).
- Review local club websites for gambling advertising/sponsors.
- Encourage clubs to review their current club principles and values statements, to see if they accurately reflect the environment they want to create.

### High:

- Work closely with a small number of targeted clubs on a coordinated effort that seeks to reduce or prevent gambling harm whilst supporting the club to diversify or grow its revenue or membership.
- Work with sporting clubs who are operating gaming machines or receiving significant revenue from gambling around gambling harm minimisation initiatives.



## iii. Educating members/ residents & awareness raising

### Low:

- Distribute Love the Game collateral and information to local sporting clubs or arrange a presentation at a club forum.
- Share gambling harm education resources with local sporting clubs, including local support seeking (Gamblers Help) services; and promote help-seeking apps.

### Medium:

- Share emails to local clubs around local gambling stats and the roles clubs can play to help minimise harms, or download messaging from Love the Game.

### High:

- Co-host a Gambling Harm Awareness Week event with a sporting organisation and focus on raising awareness among community sport setting or target groups.

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## iv. Partnerships / engaging your local community

### Low:

- Support residents to express their concern about gambling to their sporting club.
- Contact your local Gamblers Help Community Engagement staff to establish relationship / access to collateral.

### Medium:

- Include lived experience stories in gambling harm awareness campaigns.

### High:

- Partner with local community health organisations to ensure at risk or vulnerable members of the community are provided with opportunities for increased physical activity and social connections through sport and recreation. Examples:
  - <https://reclink.org/activities>
  - <https://thebigissue.org.au/our-programs/street-soccer-program/>

