What is the appetite in your Council for advocacy?
Arguably, many of the changes required to reduce harm from poker machines need to be made by the State government and the poker machine industry.

Councils can be very effective in advocating for their local communities. Councils that want to advocate strongly on this issue, and reflect this in their policies, should consider:

• Ensuring their activities are consistent with a public health approach recommended by the Public Health Association of Australia.
• Working in partnership with other councils and relevant stakeholder groups. The VLGA can assist in this area.
• Using the best available data, evidence and research. The Gambling Information Resource Office is an excellent resource in this area.
• Joining the Alliance for Gambling Reform.

THE FACTS

In the 2015-2016 year poker machines were responsible for $2.6 billion in losses in Victoria.

Since their legalization in 1992, they have been responsible for $64.6 billion in losses to the state.

There are 29,165 machines in the state of Victoria. Of these 2,608 are in Crown Casino, with the remainder in Melbourne’s communities.

$1.8 billion is lost at Crown Casino, $827 million is lost at the TAB and Victorian bookies, and $525 million in lotteries and $20 million on Keno.

Gambling causes as much harm to the health of Victorians as diabetes, bipolar disorder and cannabis dependence combined.

3 in 4 people who are hurt by gambling are using poker machines.

The Victorian government gets about $1 billion each year from electronic gambling machine taxes.

Victoria’s tax dependence on gambling is 9 per cent of state raised taxes and Western Australia’s is 4 per cent.

For assistance and further information contact the VLGA 9349 7933 vlga@vlga.org.au

THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT POLICY

VISION
Be clear on your vision

“To advocate for a fairer society where the gambling industry no longer causes social and economic harm in the community of Yarra” (City of Yarra, December 2016)

LANGUAGE
Use the right language

“The City of Whittlesea has a long-term commitment to reducing the harms associated with gambling, a position that works hand-in-hand with our goal of promoting health and wellbeing in the community.” (City of Whittlesea, 2014)

LEVERS
Pull the right levers

“Land use planning at the local level has a significant role in addressing and regulating the use of electronic gaming machines.” (City of Moreland, 2015)

INTEGRATION
Integrate gambling harm prevention into other council policies

“Council will not provide sporting grounds, Council venues or use of Council property to any sporting club, community group, organisation or association who directly operate or own EGMs in Darebin or elsewhere.” (Darebin City Council, 2017)

These are some examples from Victorian Councils. However, your policy needs to reflect your community, and begins with a conversation about harms from gambling locally.
Focus most council resources where you have the greatest influence. Councils have a statutory responsibility to respond to planning permit applications for poker machines and have a role in licensing processes with the VCGLR.

We recommend that you do not call your policy a “responsible gambling” policy. This language emphasises individual responsibility and behaviours, and may increase stigma, rather than focusing on systems and settings that need to change.

Your policy should focus on preventing harm from gambling, not reducing problem gambling. At a population level, most of the harm from gambling is experienced by low and moderate risk gamblers, not problem gamblers.

Your policy should aim to decrease losses from gambling, not increase the “community benefit”. A focus on maximising “benefits” is counter to good public health practice. In some cases, councils that have sought to maximise benefits from poker machine operators have found their decision making compromised when it comes to dealing with applications.

These activities are often delivered as part of council health and wellbeing plans. They are helpful in this context but are very difficult to target to people experiencing gambling harm. Leave them in your health plan, don’t make them a major part of your gambling policy and action plan unless the strategies are specific to gamblers or gambling venues.

Council can oppose poker machine licenses and reject planning permits. And they can empower their communities! Communities that mobilise have been more successful in opposing poker machines than communities which leave the work to Council.

What is the appetite in your Council for strong and effective action and regulation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO REGULATION</th>
<th>SELF REGULATION</th>
<th>REGULATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ineffective</td>
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<td>Highly effective</td>
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Inaction allows harm to continue.