



**ALLIANCE FOR
GAMBLING REFORM**

2021/22

**Submission prepared for
Greater Shepparton City Council**

**Partnership proposal
Alliance for Gambling Reform**

INTRODUCTION

The Alliance for Gambling Reform is a collaboration of organisations with a shared concern about the harmful aspects of gambling and its normalisation in Australian culture. We campaign for reforms of the gambling industry that reduce the harm it causes – particularly to local communities.

We know much more today about poker machines compared to when they were first introduced in Victoria - 2021 marks 30 years of poker machines inflicting harm on communities across the state. We now understand the deliberately deceptive, addictive and misleading programming of these machines and the devastating impact that this causes on hundreds of thousands of Australians and on our local neighbourhoods.

We recognise gambling addiction as a public health issue, with no acceptable level of harm from poker machines. We pursue policy changes that prevent and reduce the harm that flows from poker machine gambling, including;

- changes to the licensing regulations for poker machines that enable communities to have a say over the location of machines in their community;
- reduced opening hours that would see poker machine venues shut at midnight;
- elimination of machine design features that increase the likelihood of addiction such as losses disguised as wins and near misses; and
- \$1 maximum bet and maximum hourly loss rate of \$120 per hour.

These policies mark the beginning of a continuous process of preventing harm from poker machines, not the end.

The Alliance is seeking \$15,000 from Greater Shepparton City Council. In requesting these funds, we invite Council to commence a partnership as a Leadership Council. In 2020/21, 21 councils (Banyule, Brimbank, Darebin, Frankston, Glen Eira, Greater Dandenong, Hobsons Bay, Hume, Kingston, Knox, Maribyrnong, Maroondah, Melbourne, Mitchell Shire, Monash, Moreland, Mornington Peninsula, Noosa, Whittlesea, Wyndham and Yarra) made financial contributions to the Alliance as Leadership Councils.

These funds enabled the Alliance to offer individual support to councils for activities to prevent harm from gambling and allowed us to continue our ground-breaking work tracking the savings our communities made during the historic period of poker machine venue closure due to COVID-19, raising awareness of the harmful effects of sports gambling advertising - especially on children - and furthering our campaign for meaningful regulatory reform.

The Alliance is especially keen to commence a partnership with Greater Shepparton City Council because of the relatively high number of pokies per resident your community suffers (6.4 machines per 1000 adults versus the statewide average of 5). We understand there is appetite at Council to see a reduction in harm from gambling, including sports and online gambling. Council is to be applauded for hearing the community's alarm at the impact of the gambling industry standing up for their health and wellbeing. Greater Shepparton has too many poker machines and the impact of these machines on your local residents is substantial. Your residents deserve higher levels of protection which we aim to assist you to achieve. We have seen that poker machine operators cynically seek to concentrate machines in already stressed communities and our collaborative efforts will be required to address this imbalance.

INFORMATION – CONTACTS

	Contact 1	Contact 2
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Website	www.pokiesplayyou.org.au	www.pokiesplayyou.org.au

ALLIANCE FOR GAMBLING REFORM INFORMATION

Name of Organisation/Group	Alliance for Gambling Reform
Is your Organisation/Group known by another name	No
Australian Business Number (ABN)	14 829 021 950
Postal Address	Alliance for Gambling Reform c/o Our Community House 552 Victoria St, Wurundjeri Country, North Melbourne Victoria 3051
Incorporation Registration Number	266E
Type of organisation	Incorporated association
Registered for GST	Yes
Are you a charity	Yes
Charity type	Health Promotion Charity
Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) ?	Yes
Do you have any Tax Concessions?	N/A
Public Liability Insurance	Insurer: Chubb Policy number: 01EL543968

SECTION 1 : PROJECT SUMMARY

History of the Alliance

Since the introduction of poker machines, individuals and organisations have been advocating for measures to reduce harm. Occasionally, advocacy efforts have led to improvements such as the removal of ATMs from gambling venues. However, the power of the gambling industry is such that operators quickly mitigate against harm minimisation efforts and find new ways to exploit their harmful and dangerous products.

Prior to the creation of the Alliance, advocacy efforts were often ad-hoc and uncoordinated. Advocates sometimes supported conflicting strategies and had different reform asks. The gambling industry benefited from this lack of coordination with a slick and unified publicity and lobbying machine to ensure that they achieved outcomes which maximized profits whilst doing little to protect Australians from harm.

Following the failure of national reforms proposed by federal independent Andrew Wilkie, a number of eminent Australians and longtime gambling reform advocates began conversations with a view to creating a body that could run a successful campaign to counter the power and influence of the gambling industry and see meaningful reform introduced to protect Australians from poker machine harm. The Alliance grew from these conversations. One of Australia's foremost communications and marketing experts, the late Neil Lawrence, was a key leader in this area and the ground-breaking documentary that he produced, *Ka-Ching*, marked a critical turning point in our ability to reframe debate around poker machines to focus on their dangerous, addictive and misleading features.

With the financial backing of some generous private philanthropy, the Alliance was created to forge a far more effective approach by driving collaboration across these different fronts. In doing so, the Alliance is building a powerful base of supporters at the grassroots to propel forward and re-frame the case for change so that it is more compelling and more likely to succeed than previous efforts.

We are a national alliance but have a strong presence in Victoria and local government is very much at our core. Indeed the Alliance was formed shortly after the successful *Enough Pokies* campaign which Victorian councils formed in the lead up to the 2014 state election. Other organisations involved in the Alliance include the MAV and the VLGA.

In the six years since the Alliance's inception, support for the organisation amongst allied organisations and individual supporters has grown. The public narrative regarding harm from gambling products has begun to shift to one that focuses on public health rather than reinforcing stigma to individuals suffering gambling harm. Influential brands continue to seek to divest from the harmful gambling industry. The achievement we are most proud of as an organisation is the increased focus on elevating the voices of people with lived experience of gambling harm through the dedicated Voices for Reform program.

Summary of Alliance activity

The Alliance is advocating for reforms to the gambling industry to reduce the harms it causes. Our focus is on poker machines but we also advocate for changes to sports and online gambling which would also reduce harm.

We are confident that **our campaign can win** because we have a strong strategy:

1. **If we re-frame gambling harm** from an individual responsibility to a public health issue industry and governments have responsibility for, then we will reduce shame and stigma, and increase pressure on governments to act.
2. **If we build a national supporter base** of individuals, 'Voices for Reform' who've experienced gambling harm, Leadership Councils and community organisations that share our commitment to preventing gambling harm, then we will increase our organisational power to influence effective policy outcomes.
3. **If we reduce the credibility and influence of the gambling industry** and contrast with positive examples of gambling-free or pro-reform clubs, then we will limit the power of industry to influence perverse policy outcomes.
4. **If we advocate to decision makers**, centring those with lived experience, then we will be more effective at achieving systemic policy reform.

The past twelve months has seen continued achievements for the Alliance in terms of media profile and movement building. In the face of the huge impact COVID-19 and the associated historic closure of all poker machine venues across the state, the Alliance team rapidly developed and implemented our #BuildBackBetter campaign. This impactful campaign included tracking and publicising the savings made in communities due to poker machines being switched off, and calling for reduced opening hours as a simple and practical measure to preserve the savings as part of COVID-19 recovery measures.

We now have a dedicated #EndGamblingAds campaign seeking to limit harm from sports and online gambling, particularly towards kids who are vulnerable to the 'normalisation' of gambling through gambling advertising saturating our sports coverage. This call for further divestment of responsible brands from the gambling industry builds on the achievement of passing 'peak pokies' for AFL clubs, with over 50% of clubs exiting or announcing their plans to get out of the poker machine business.

In addition, the Alliance has continued to assist community members and Leadership Councils to actively participate in VCGLR licensing applications which has reduced the 90% plus success rate which poker machine operators used to achieve at the Commission with their applications.

The Alliance Voices for Reform program is going from strength to strength. The program empowers people with experience of gambling harm to participate in reform advocacy in ways that are meaningful to them. The program is an innovative, impactful and essential part of the Alliance campaign for gambling reform.

2021 presents so many opportunities - not least that media reports of scandalous and criminal behaviour have finally culminated in the stripping of Crown's licence following the Bergin Inquiry in NSW, and the announcement of a Royal Commission into Crown in Victoria and WA. This scrutiny of the power gambling interests hold in our state is a goal that the Alliance has long been advocating for, and represents a huge opportunity to work together to secure meaningful gambling reform, the best in years.

The Alliance is keen to continue to develop its partnership with Greater Shepparton City Council. The Council unfortunately still has a high number of machines per person when compared to the state average, and your community deserves higher levels of protection.

SECTION 2 : OUR PROPOSAL**Campaign Name**

The Alliance for Gambling Reform

How much funding is the Alliance requesting from Council?

\$15,000 p.a.

How will Greater Shepparton City Council benefit from this campaign?

The greatest benefit for Greater Shepparton City Council of this campaign comes from working in concert with the Alliance, more than 20 other local councils and our partner organisations to advocate for state and national legislative reforms.

The legislative changes advocated by Greater Shepparton City Council and the Alliance will reduce gambling harm and disadvantage far more than is possible by councils working in isolation from each other.

In addition to the benefits of working in collaboration, remaining a financial partner entitles Council to:

1. Opportunities to work directly with a member of the Alliance's politics and media strategy team at a grass roots level to ensure that local messaging is crafted in a way that amplifies, and is amplified, by the broader Alliance campaign.
2. Opportunities for Alliance spokespeople such as Chief Advocate the Rev. Tim Costello, Dr Susan Rennie and Voices for Reform lived experience advocates to comment and support local media coverage of gambling issues in Greater Shepparton.
3. Media and strategic support for any matters relating to poker machine licencing and planning and Council advocacy.
4. Enhanced ability to develop and deliver effectively on local gambling policy, with a particular focus on advocacy, community consultation, support and education.
5. Promotion of Greater Shepparton City Council gambling related events to Alliance supporters, such as consultation forums, festivals and community events, educational events or *Ka-Ching!* screenings.
6. Your residents and ratepayers will understand the relevance and timeliness of this issue and see their Council as a leader in this field.

SPECIFIC PROJECT / CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES 2021/22

Below are some of the activities which we are looking to deliver over the next year.

- A. **30 YEARS OF POKER MACHINES IN VICTORIA:** We will highlight 30 years of gambling pain since the introduction of poker machines in the state, calling for this 3 decade experiment on our communities to end and for meaningful reform to reduce gambling harm going forward. There will be exciting opportunities for councils to advocate on these issues and raise community awareness of harm and necessary reform as desired. In the new environment created by COVID-19 there is potential for the historic savings people made whilst poker machine venues were closed to disappear and for gambling harm to shift online, so we will need to work vigilantly to protect our communities from this threat in a time of increased isolation and vulnerability. The Alliance and partner organisations continue to pursue our state reform asks, including extinguishment of unused EGM licences, banning harmful machine features like losses disguised as wins, reducing opening hours and introducing maximum \$1 bets. It's the ideal time for councils to be engaging with your local MPs on these issues to find out if they are going to be a champion for real reform in this term of parliament, and we can provide support to do this effectively.
- B. **ONLINE AND SPORTS GAMBLING:** Launched in 2019, the #EndGamblingAds campaign aims to reduce the normalisation of gambling through sports advertising, which kids are particularly vulnerable to. Whilst poker machines still account for the largest share of Australian gambling losses, sports and online gambling is the fastest growing source of losses. This campaign aims to raise awareness of gambling harm in sport, challenge normalisation of gambling as part of sport and call on sporting organisations and broadcasters to distance themselves from the harmful gambling industry.
- C. **REFRAMING THE DEBATE:** The shift across the nation from states marking 'Responsible Gambling Week' to 'Gambling Harm Awareness Week' is a huge win and sign that the debate is changing to focus on the addictive nature of gambling rather than using the industry's self-serving messaging of 'responsible gambling'. It's important to keep using a public health lens whenever we talk about gambling harm so we support ongoing efforts to get industry to curb harm from its products, encourage decision-makers to take responsibility for protecting communities and lift the burden of stigma and shame off individuals. Core to this is involving people with lived experience in our campaigning through the Voices for Reform program.
- D. **WORKING WITH LOCAL SPORTING CLUBS TO REDUCE THEIR GAMBLING DEPENDENCE:** Increasingly, local council policies are tackling the unhealthy relationships between the gambling industry and local clubs. We will be working with Leadership Councils and sporting clubs to take advantage of opportunities to reduce their dependence on poker machine revenue or other gambling sponsorship, including championing the success of safe and inclusive clubs that have made the decision to be free from gambling harm.
- E. **LIVED EXPERIENCE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADVOCATES:** Work with councils and Voices for Reform to build relationships with politicians to secure policy wins, especially around extinguishment of unused licenses and establish a group of MPs prepared to advocate for reform in this term of parliament.

Role for Greater Shepparton City Council residents

The Alliance will continue to work with Greater Shepparton City Council to tailor the communications strategy and materials to suit residents so that they can:

- Learn more about the need for legislative reform to minimise gambling harm
- Share educational materials with their friends, family, neighbours and peers
- Get involved in advocacy for reform of the industry through social media, email or volunteer events in the council area
- Participate in community engagement activities organised by the council that have been designed to align with Council policy and Alliance goals

Role for Greater Shepparton City Council

Cooperation at this level of advocacy is most effective when councils and the Alliance work together to develop and deliver materials and activities.

- Greater Shepparton communications team sharing relevant community demographic and communications research specific to the shire so that Alliance staff can tailor communications plans and materials to suit
- Use of Alliance communications materials in Greater Shepparton
- Promotion of relevant Alliance community engagement actions to residents and community groups in Greater Shepparton
- Greater Shepparton City Council community development team working with Alliance staff and board members when developing community development activities
- Greater Shepparton City Council advocacy team coordinating with Alliance staff and board on activities such as government submissions and meetings with Ministers

Credentials of AGR staff and board

The Board of the Alliance is made up of individuals who bring expertise, networks, and organisation and other skills required by the Alliance.

Members of the Board are;

Sharon Dickson, Chair

Dr Mark Zirnsak, Deputy Chair

Tom Cummings

Elizabeth O'Shea

Ethan Taylor

Anna Kennett

David Crosbie

David Beguely

Dr Susan Rennie

Jan Black, Municipal Association of Victorian (MAV), is an adviser to the Board

The Alliance has a number of employees who assist the Board and supporter organisations with Alliance activities and campaigns:

Gordon Ramsay, Executive Director

Margaret Quixley, Campaigns Director
Rebecca Thorpe, Communications Advisor
Dr Kate da Costa, NSW Campaigns Coordinator
Rose O’Leary, Victorian Campaigner
Taya Stocks, Sports Gambling Campaigner
Katherine Copsey, Council Gambling Harm Advisor
Kasuni Mendis, Council Gambling Harm Support Worker
Sara Lubowitz, Voices for Reform National Coordinator
Anna Bardsley, Voices for Reform Victorian Coordinator
Isadora Poole, Digital Campaigner
The Rev. Tim Costello, Chief Advocate

AUTHORITIES & DECLARATIONS

I certify to the best of my knowledge, that the information provided in this submission is correct and discloses a full and accurate statement of the Alliance for Gambling Reform’s details and proposal and agree to meet accountability set by Council.

Authorised person’s name	Katherine Copsey
Signature of authorised person	
Position held	Council Gambling Harm Advisor
Date	6/7/2021



2nd December 2021

Mr Peter Harriott
CEO
Greater Shepparton City Council
Locked Bag 1000
SHEPPARTON, VIC, 3632

Dear Mr Harriott,

LETTER OF SUPPORT – REDUCING THE HARM FROM GAMBLING

Primary Care Connect extends their support to Greater Shepparton City Council in their efforts to reduce the harm from gambling within our community.

Primary Care Connect have a commitment to the state-wide health promotion priority area “reducing harm from gambling” and our Gamblers Help team would like to work in conjunction with Greater Shepparton City Council in tackling the issues in relation to gambling harm.

We aim to work in partnership to improve the health and wellbeing of our community to deliver effective, evidence-based initiatives to prevent gambling harm and provide support for those seeking help. We take a public health approach to our work, which means we focus on prevention, early intervention and support.

Providing help services and raising community awareness will remain the core of what we do, together we can advocate for effective gambling harm minimisation strategies.

Primary Care Connect looks forward to an ongoing partnership with Greater Shepparton City Council in efforts to reduce the harms from gambling.

Kind regards

DocuSigned by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Lorains', enclosed in a blue DocuSign signature box.

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Megan Lorains

Acting CEO

Primary Care Connect

'your community health connection'

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www.primarycareconnect.com.au



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