

Liquor and Gambling harm minimisation

ENGAGEMENT SNAPSHOT

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WHEN: Wednesday, June 7 to Tuesday, July 11

Note: At the same time as this consultation, there was a Notice of Application for a Planning Permit for a Dan Murphy's outlet in High St.

ENGAGEMENT METHODS: To encourage residents to get involved, we promoted the opportunity for people to have their say through our communication channels, including public notices, emails, social media and a have your say page on makewodongayours.com.au. There were also stakeholder meetings and three surveys targeted to gaming venues, liquor licensees and community.

KEY STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

4 meetings were held

32 stakeholders attended these meetings

RESPONSES

2 submissions through Make Wodonga Yours

1 relevant social media comment

21 survey responses

COMMUNICATIONS

4758 emails

46.16% average open rate

12 click-throughs

4 Facebook posts

1481 reach

2 likes and reactions

3 Instagram posts

379 reach

6 likes and reactions

1 LinkedIn posts

383 impressions

2 likes and reactions

167 website visits

86 unique pageviews

2 public notices

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COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS (18 RESPONDENTS)

56% respondents visit bars, hotels, nightclubs and clubs in **Wodonga**.

Of these, 100% do so to meet friends and socialise and 10% use the pokies.

50% respondents who don't visit **Wodonga** venues socialise elsewhere or feel there is a better choice

67% respondents visit bars, hotels, nightclubs and clubs in **Albury**.

Of these 82% do so to meet friends and socialise and 18% use the pokies.

50% respondents who don't visit **Albury** venues socialise elsewhere and 33% feel unsafe or there is a better choice

More than 50% respondents believe alcohol causes problems outside the venue or bottle shop, in public places and in the home

86% respondents have experienced or know someone who has experienced alcohol-related harms.

36% respondents have experienced or know someone who has experienced harm from gambling.

- **43%** respondents agree bars, restaurants, pubs and nightclubs support Wodonga's night-time economy.
- **57%** respondents strongly agree Wodonga should have more family friendly venues that don't have pokies
- **64%** respondents strongly agree the health and safety of our community is affected by people who abuse alcohol
- **71%** strongly disagree there should be more bottle shops in Wodonga.
- **50%** respondents disagree pokies venues bring benefits to the community and **79%** strongly disagree that there should be more pokies in Wodonga.

What do you think Wodonga Council's role is in relation to preventing harm from alcohol and gambling?

Do you have one? Seems like something for regulator and police.

In approving liquor/ gambling licenses and venues. In zoning for late-night venues and considering public safety. In promoting economic development and responsible night life through urban design.

Yes by banning pokies we can limit the harm on criminal activities plus reduce possible degradation of society who struggle

Encouraging and supporting family friendly venues and events.

To voice the concerns of the local community in projects that are being planned for the future.

Harm minimisation including reduced business approvals for alcohol outlets-

Stopping more alcohol outlets planning approvals. Encouraging more patrols of CBA

To support the campaigns of subject matter expert organisations and to facilitate/encourage education from primary school level. This is a long-term strategy,not limited to one budget or election cycle and needs ongoing commitment.

Strict regulations and assistance in rehabilitation

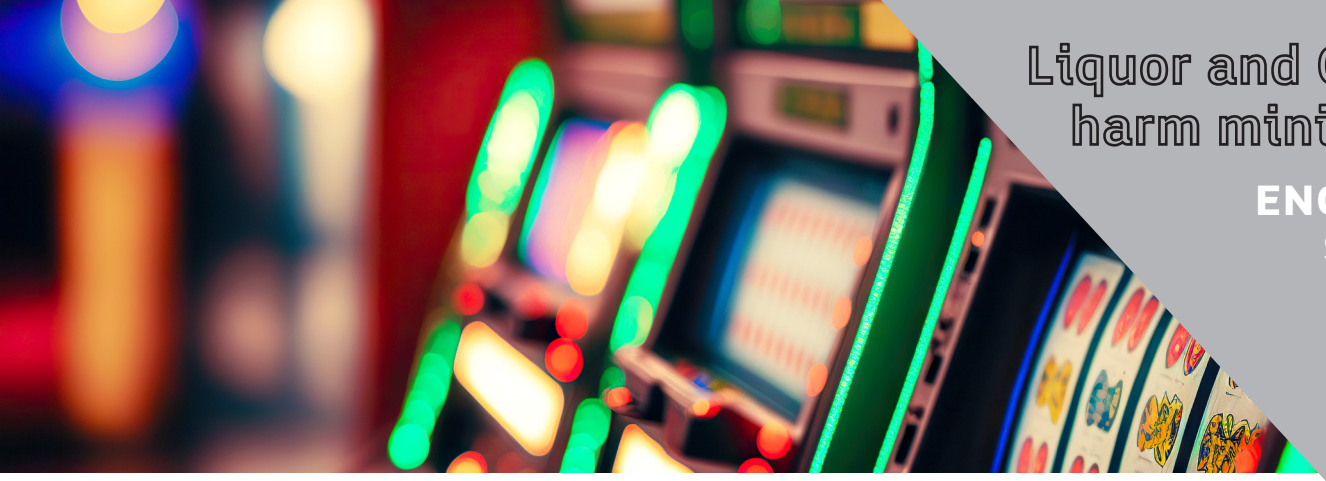
Other comments from respondents

Your decisions in this area will impact the health and relationship of our younger generations for decades to come

Thank you for bringing these issues out of the shadows of shame and indifference. Our community needs to know the cost it incurs directly or indirectly through these despicable activities.

Gambling and drinking is a huge problem we cant get rid of drinking but if you banned gambling in all aspects it maybe a better future for all

Note: There were two Liquor Licensee survey responses and one Gaming Venue survey response recieved. These results were provided directly to the consultant and not included in the Engagement Snapshot



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SUBMISSIONS

Make Wodonga Yours submissions

- 1. Both alcohol and gambling are precursors to addiction, with areas of commonality and concurrent use or consumption.

  2. The cost of their impact on our Community is high, despite the proportion of those adversely affected.

  3. City of Wodonga has a responsibility to its population to identify activities which have high community harm potential—as evidenced by the agencies that respond to members affected by them—and utilise regulatory mechanisms to minimise harm where it exists.

  4. If this means restrictions are applied then that is what needs to occur and Council should take an active role in making this happen.

  5. There is a place for an assessment of the nature and magnitude of these problems need to be presented to Councillors and Officers via consultation with those agencies who are charged with 'cleaning up the mess' of Industries that disseminate these harmful products and activities.

  6. Representatives should be sought from—and not limited to—Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, Albury Wodonga Health Emergency Departments and Adult Mental Health, Gateway Health and the Department of Justice for advice on the social and financial impact to the Community by alcohol and gambling.

  7. What direct health consequences are experienced by vulnerable people, who then take up a disproportionate amount of support agency time and resources addressing problems that are attributable to these harmful industries?

  8. To what degree is the growth of business prosperity in Wodonga, and overall quality of life, being impeded by the re-direction of discretionary and essential income into alcohol and gambling to a select group of vendors, supported by pernicious Industries?

  9. This is not an appeal to prohibition, but one to harm minimisation and pulling any regulatory levers that can achieve this goal.

  10. Education is a key part of this strategy, but so is restricting access and this can be achieved by reducing hours of access to electronic gambling machines ('pokies') so that consumers are not exploited by vendors and the companies that design them deliberately to be addictive. It was recently reported in The Guardian (19 May 2023) that:
  "...Roy Morgan research, prepared for Liquor and Gaming NSW, found that 22.8% of those playing poker machines between 2am and 8am were problem gamblers, while 41.8% were classified as "moderate risk problem gambling".
  It would therefore seem an appropriate and responsible harm minimisation strategy to shut down all poker machines at 11pm in venues that have them.

  11. For long-term success education needs to be an ongoing strategy with communication that continues beyond budget cycles. Aside from daily exposure to healthy messaging campaigns through City of Wodonga, our education sector needs to be conveying these same messages to their students throughout their school life.

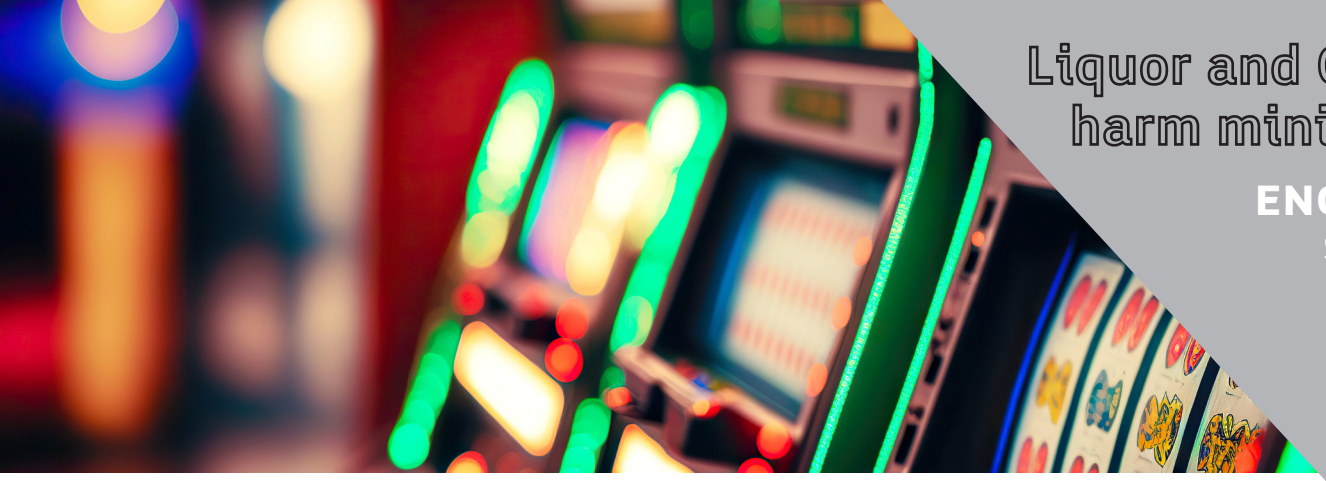
12. Limiting access to alcohol is also an important element of minimising harm. Venue applications should be viewed through this prism first, rather than the default of allowing a new business to be given a 'green light' with no consequence to the damage caused by the products it sells.

13. Those businesses that wish to window dress their harmful products and services as 'fun', 'legal', 'enjoyable', 'social' and 'culturally embedded' need to understand that we, the Community, no longer accept these hollow, disingenuous and self-serving platitudes crafted by marketing people who have no interest in Community well-being, but only in making profits. Those large enough that point to their web-page showing that they have a 'social and ethical responsibility policy' should be equally treated with distrust, because they have no real grasp of the problems they create and only wish to deflect attention away from this to show that they might be 'doing something' to protect their social license.

- I am commenting about the possible granting of yet another liquor licence to Dan Murphy for High Street Wodonga. It is an insane idea that Wodonga needs another liquor outlet. Given the level of harm alcohol causes in the community are politicians and councillors so blind so as to approve this?? We have an incredible 95 alcohol outlets in the town of Wodonga - this is already extremely excessive and we should be withdrawing licences, not issuing new ones. Unfortunately it also opens the possibility of corruption in the granting of licences.

Social media comment

- I dont know whether it is in a Council's remit to interfere in what is personal choices for people for entertainment and relaxation. If you want to reduce apparent harm of alcohol and gambling, you will need to close all pubs, restaurants and BOTTLE SHOPS. Otherwise butt out. As long as gambling is available at everyone's fingertips on the phone/onlne 24/7 what are you as a Council thinking of achieving by sticking your noses in everyone's business. Alcohol and gambling are choices and are legal.



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STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS - SUMMARY FEEDBACK

- Council planning and development processes, and policies and assessments relating to new liquor licensing applications, should take into consideration the impacts on existing establishments (hotels, pubs etc.), for example will new developments impact on patronage numbers, public transport and taxi accessibility, and anti-social behaviour, etc.
- Public intoxication reform is coming to Victoria in November 2023, meaning being drunk in a public place will not be treated as a criminal offence. Police noted their concern with Wodonga having a lack of 'sobering up centres' meaning the police in some cases will be required to detain people in holding cells, which puts resourcing strain on the police and is also inconsistent with a public health approach to intoxication. The police noted that if someone picked up doesn't have a safe or suitable address to be taken to, they often have to detain them in holding cells which may disproportionately impact on some people more than others, such as people experiencing homelessness who have no physical address to be taken to. The police would like Wodonga Council to advocate for the establishment of a sobering up centre in Wodonga.
- Some members noted the need for Wodonga venues to have a more coordinated approach to larger scale events, such as informing venues of large scale events, so they can manage large numbers of patrons attending their establishments, for example race days, winery walkabouts etc.
- Police and establishments both noted that Wodonga's liquor establishments (hotels, clubs, pubs) see very small numbers of problems (assaults in venues, RSA breaches, etc.) but noted the need to remain proactive and ensure good policies and processes, including a engaged Wodonga Liquor Accord, to ensure a future Wodonga does not see a surge in issues relating to licensed venues.
- Various factors contribute to the risk of harm from alcohol and electronic gaming machines (EGMs) in the community. These include financial losses, the availability and accessibility of gambling, the normalisation of gambling through technology and local culture, and different risk factors based on gender. The intersection of gambling with drugs and alcohol is also identified as a source of crime, damage, and family disruption. The disruption caused by COVID-19 has impacted behavioural social apprenticeships and increased the risk of harmful behaviours.
- To protect those at risk, stakeholders propose several strategies. These include advocacy for system changes, pilot programs, and funding models, as well as promoting social limits and implementing advertising controls. Education is seen as crucial, with a focus on providing statistical information and personal stories, collecting data, destigmatising gambling problems, and challenging existing beliefs. Regulating the industry, including opening and closing hours of venues, was suggested, along with cross-border collaboration to ensure policies are aligned. Increasing funding for harm prevention initiatives and addressing the specific needs of military trainees was also mentioned. Finally, promoting a safer alcohol culture in Wodonga is seen as an important aspect of reducing harm.
- The feedback emphasised the need for a comprehensive and collaborative approach, encompassing education, regulation, community engagement, and cross-sector partnerships to effectively address the risks associated with alcohol and EGMs and protect the community from harm.
- The stakeholders involved in the Liquor Forum recognise the need for improved coordination between Albury and Wodonga to reduce the risks associated with alcohol harm. One aspect of this coordination involves sharing information about customers who are banned from venues. The venues perceive electronic gaming machines

(pokies) as a way to enhance their offerings to customers, including improved food options and reduced prices. Two venues are actively working to improve their facilities and are seeking to acquire more machines.

- Some venues express a commitment to community capacity building and have undertaken initiatives targeting young people and alcohol consumption. While the venues are willing to collaborate, they are wary of additional regulatory burdens, as they perceive Victoria to be the most regulated state in Australia regarding gambling.
- Overall, the stakeholders in the Liquor Forum aim to foster collaboration between Albury and Wodonga, while ensuring that the venues' efforts to enhance their offerings align with responsible gambling practices and do not contribute to increased harm.
- The council engaged in discussions regarding growth and CBD redevelopment, emphasizing the identification of strategic growth areas and the potential for economic development. They stressed the importance of adopting a clear approach and defined goals to avoid a haphazard approach to economic development. Ensuring public safety in public spaces was highlighted as a priority, aiming to create an environment where the community feels secure and comfortable. The growth of liquor and gambling establishments was acknowledged, with an understanding that careful decision-making is necessary to balance growth opportunities with harm minimisation and responsible practices. The council expressed a desire to find practical solutions that achieve desired outcomes without creating excessive bureaucracy or burdens on businesses.