



POKIE LOSSES ON THE RISE

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GAMBLERS lost \$887,896 in Kerang poker machines in the first half of this year — an increase of \$6636 on the same period in 2018.

The money was spent on the 45 machines at the Kerang Sports and Entertainment Venue, which is the only poker machine venue in the shire.

In the last financial year more than \$1.9 million was lost on pokies within the Gannawarra shire, an increase of 1.39 per cent on figures released for the 2017-18 financial year.

The local increase compares to an overall gaming expenditure increase across Victoria of 0.13 per cent.

The end of financial year figures were recently released by the Victorian Commission for Gaming and Liquor Regulation.

A spokesperson for the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation told the Gannawarra Times there could be a number of rea-

sons for changes in player losses on poker machines in a particular area, including population changes, economic conditions and the number of people who gamble while visiting from elsewhere.

“The addition of new or temporary residents, such as contract workers brought in for a specific project, can also make a difference,” the spokesperson said.

“If they are young, on high salaries and relatively isolated from family or friends, they are more at risk of gambling at higher rates.

“Harm from gambling can have significant implications for the health, wellbeing and economic security of those who are affected, either directly or indirectly.”

The spokesperson said common types of harm include emotional distress, reduced savings or money to spend on family or recreational activities, relationship problems, financial difficulties, and work or study performance issues.

Kerang Sports and Entertainment venue manager, Mathew Chamberlain, said the venue encouraged responsible gambling.

As well as running a self-exclusion program, Mr Chamberlain said the club had recently been promoting the YourPlay program, which enabled patrons to track and set limits on their gaming.

‘Sporties’ is a licensed club run by the Kerang Bowling Club, which went into the venture to ensure the upkeep and continuation of the bowling club and its facilities, Mr Chamberlain previously told the Gannawarra Times.

Mr Chamberlain said the venue made a very significant contribution to local groups in the community.

For the fourth year, Sporties recently distributed funds as part of its community grants program, handing out \$10,000 to 20 community groups.

“This was just a small part of the contribution the club makes to the community,” Mr Chamberlain said.

“We consider ourselves a great hospitality venue, where locals and visitors can enjoy everything that Kerang Sports and Entertainment has to offer,” he said.

However, according to La Trobe

University gambling researcher Kathleen Maltzahn, almost any level of poker machine gambling is detrimental to players.

“We used to think it was just problem gamblers who experienced harm but the research shows that even people who gamble less are harmed by it,” Ms Maltzahn said.

Research has shown that even occasional gamblers experienced financial, emotional and psychological harm as a result of the practice.

Ms Maltzahn said more losses were being experienced in lower socioeconomic areas, partly because more machines were located in those areas.

“The research is really clear that poker machines are concentrated in poorer areas,” she said, noting another factor affecting gambling in rural areas was the lack of entertainment options.

Ms Maltzahn said the majority of her research subjects expressed the view that there should be more poker machine control.

POKER MACHINE LOSSES

Source: VCGLR

Gannawarra

2018-19 poker machine losses: \$1,942,269
2017-18 poker machine losses: \$1,915,571
Increase: 1.39 per cent
(18th in Victoria for socioeconomic disadvantage)

Swan Hill

2018-19 poker machine losses: \$8,486,157.84
2017-18 poker machine losses: \$8,074,234
Increase: 5.1 per cent
(11th in Victoria for socioeconomic disadvantage)

Mildura

2018-19 poker machine losses: \$29,990,565.10
2017-18 poker machine losses: \$28,052,969
Increase: 6.9 per cent
(5th for socioeconomic disadvantage)

Loddon

No machines
(9th in Victoria for socioeconomic disadvantage)

Buloke

No machines
(24th in Victoria for socioeconomic disadvantage)