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GAMING POLICY

This policy applies to a planning permit application to install or use a gaming machine, or use land for the purpose of gaming.

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Policy basis

This policy implements the objective and strategies of clause 21.02 of the Municipal Strategic Statement by setting out how and where gaming venues and electronic gaming machines should be located.

Research has concluded that there are links between social disadvantage, problem gambling and proximity to gaming venues. Although gaming machines may be accessible to the community as a form of entertainment, they should not be convenient and should be located at a distance that requires a pre considered decision to gamble.

The location of electronic gaming machines should have regard to the socio-economic characteristics of a community, avoiding relatively disadvantaged areas that are most vulnerable to the potential harmful effects of gaming.

Surf Coast Shire is renowned for its rich and diverse environmental, cultural and scenic landscapes and character, which are highly valued by its existing, and growing number of, residents and tourists. People come to the Surf Coast for its many outdoor entertainment and recreational opportunities such as swimming, surfing, bushwalking and fishing. Gaming facilities are not part of the existing attraction, with relatively few venues offering electronic gaming machines. It is essential that the approval of any new gaming facilities will not have a detrimental impact on the existing amenity, culture and character of Surf Coast townships.

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Objectives

To avoid the risk of exacerbating problem gambling.

To ensure that the installation or use of electronic gaming machines will not have a detrimental impact on the amenity, culture or character of a community.

To ensure that the location of electronic gaming machines will not be detrimental to the social and economic well-being of the community.

To protect the amenity of existing uses surrounding gaming venues.

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Policy

It is policy that proposals for gaming machines are assessed against the following criteria:

Appropriate areas

- Gaming machines should be located:
 - In major urban settlements which service a large population catchment;
 - Where the community has a choice of non-gaming entertainment and recreation activities operating during the times that the proposed gaming machines will operate;
 - Where the gaming machine densities (based on the permanent population) are lower than the regional Victorian average;
 - Away from towns that are classified as having high housing stress; and
 - Away from towns where the levels of socio-economic disadvantage are in the bottom 33% as set out in the SEIFA Index of Relative Disadvantage for Postal Area Codes.
- Gaming machines may be located outside established townships where they are in a sports or recreation club with a land holding of more than 2 hectares.

Appropriate sites

Gaming machines should be located on sites:

- That minimise the likelihood of people passing the venue in the course of their usual business or everyday activities;
- Towards the periphery of town centres and tourism precincts, outside of the main transport, shopping, community and civic functions of the centre/precinct; and
- Away from foreshore activity areas and key community facilities.

Appropriate venues

Gaming machines should be located in venues that:

- Are a destination in their own right;
- Promote non-gaming activities that increase net community benefit;
- Have a range of entertainment, leisure and/or recreational options other than gaming as the primary purpose of the venue;
- Have gaming floor area of less than 25% of the total floor area of the venue;
- Will not detrimentally affect the amenity of the surrounding area through their appearance, signage or generation of noise and disturbance; and
- Do not allow for 24 hour-a-day operation.

It is policy to discourage the display of large, illuminated signage associated with electronic gaming activities.

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Application requirements

An application must include the following information to the satisfaction of the responsible authority:

- Details about the existing and proposed distribution of electronic gaming machines in the municipality, and where appropriate adjoining municipalities.
- A comprehensive impact assessment outlining the environmental, economic and social benefits and costs of the proposed gaming machines, including a description of the existing character and culture of the town.
- Details of the nature and extent of net community benefit expected from the proposal and how the benefits are to be secured and distributed to the local community.
- If relevant, details of existing gaming expenditure at the venue (over a 3 year period prior to the application) and a forecast of the anticipated expenditure at the venue if the proposal was to be approved.
- Details of existing and proposed gambling and non-gambling related entertainment and recreation facilities at the venue and within the local area.
- If gaming machines are to be relocated from other venues, the likely social and economic impact of the proposal on those venues and the local area within which those venues are located.
- If the applicant contends that gaming expenditure is likely to be transferred from other venues, the applicant is to provide:
 - particulars as to how the level of transfer has been calculated (including, but not limited to, comparison per machine expenditure at the venue prior to and then after the additional machines, current usage levels of machines at the venue, projected usage level of machines at the venue after the additional machines);
 - the amount of transfer expenditure anticipated;

- the resulting impact on revenue of the venue from where the expenditure is transferred; and
- the resulting impact on the venue from where the expenditure is transferred (such as loss of employment, loss of complementary expenditures, loss of customers, impact on ability to provide services etc).
- If it is proposed to move gaming machines from one part of the municipality to another, details of the relative social and economic differences between the two towns.
- An explanation as to why the gaming machines are being transferred.
- The relative socio-economic disadvantage of the township and the broader catchment of the venue in comparison to the Victorian average in the SEIFA Index of Relative Disadvantage.
- A venue management plan identifying operating hours and strategies to manage patron behaviour and minimise problem gambling in relation to the design and management of the venue, including the applicant's responsible gaming practices.
- Details of the design and layout of the premises including all proposed signage, location and number of car parking spaces and evidence of compliance with the relevant gaming regulations for premises layout and design.
- Details of what gaming and non-gaming entertainment and recreation venues and social infrastructure exist within 5km of the venue.
- The distance to shopping complexes and strip shopping centres, community facilities, counselling services and public transport.
- Pedestrian counts outside the proposed venue on different days and at a variety of times.

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Decision guidelines

Before deciding on an application the responsible authority must consider as appropriate:

- The effect of the proposal on gaming machine densities in the locality in comparison to the regional Victorian average.
- Whether approval is likely to increase the socio-economic disadvantage of the local community.
- Whether the location of the gaming machines or gaming premises will facilitate or discourage convenience gaming.
- Whether the venue offers a range of entertainment, leisure or recreation options.
- Whether permanent residents will have a choice of gaming and non gaming entertainment and recreation venues in the local area.
- The impact of the proposal on the amenity of the area, surrounding land uses, and the character and culture of the township.
- The net community benefit to be derived from the application.

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Reference documents

Surf Coast Shire - Gaming Policy Framework (2008)