GREATER DANDENONG
City of Opportunity

A Brief Guide to
Social Impact
Assessment

INCLUDING
- Population projection
- Service demand forecasting
- Local area profiling
- Potential impacts
- Liquor premises – assessment issues
- Gambling venues – assessment issues
- Gender and social impact assessment
- Consultation
- Links to relevant tools and data

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BASIS FOR ASSESSMENT

Housing development
Rezoning
Business and Industry
Sport and recretion facilities
New services
Settlement issues
Safety concerns
Gambling and licensed premises

1 PLANNING

Nature of development
Likely consequences of development
Current land use and social conditions
Stakeholder identification, consultation
purpose and methods

Licensed premises

Opening hours
Characteristics of venue
Managment of venue
Incidents at or near venue
Satefy issues
Traffic and transport
Cumulative impact
Proximity to sensitive land uses

Gender equity

Employement and education
Sport rec. and social opportunity
Safety
Transport access
Equal participation in impact
assessment and any decision-making
Consideration of gender in assesing
impact and in alleviating
adverse consequences

2 RESEARCH

Inspection
Aspects of built form
Aspects of the community

EGM gambling venues

Social disadvantage
Capped areas
Losses
EGM density
Population growth
Proximity to vulnerable groups
Prosperity of local business
Resident opinion
Council gambling policy
Benefits of gambling venues

5 REPORTING

Details of the development
and community affected
Capcity of services to respond to impact
Measures to alleviate unfavorable impacts
Report back to stakeholders and others
Evaluation and relection
Ongoing monitoring of social conditions

3 IDENTIFYING SOCIAL IMPACTS

Housing
Population change
Service delivery and access
Disadvantage
Recreation
Settlement issues
Commercial development
Amenity
Transport
Safety

4 CONSULTING

Planning
Identifying stakeholders
Nature, level and methods of consultation
Setting of consultation
Considering stakeholder needs

CONTENTS

Social impact assessment is a method for investigating the effects of a development – often consulting those affected by it - and planning measures to alleviate its harmful consequences and accentuate its benefits. These notes outline the impact assessment process, including planning, acquiring information about the development which has triggered the assessment, exploring conditions within the relevant locality, identifying the potential social impact and segments of the affected community, consulting with stakeholders, and preparing a report.

Links to resources are featured in the text, including sites to help prepare local area profiles, forecast population, design surveys, and assess applications for licensed premises or gambling venues.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENTS WHICH MAY ATTRACT A SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- *Housing*: residential subdivisions, large or multistorey housing developments, social housing, supported or aged housing, student housing projects, caravan or cabin parks, rooming houses.
- *Rezoning*: of public open space, rezoning to residential use, or any other major change in land use.
- *Business and Industry*: commercial developments, such as shops, offices, factories or industrial developments.
- *Sport and recreation facilities*: sports clubs, recreational facilities, playgrounds or parks.
- *Infrastructure*: highways, bridges, new or upgraded transport routes, parks, capital works and others.
- *Services*: new child care, kinder, schools, tertiary institutions, aged care, medical facilities, community centres
- *A policy decision* with implications for a local community
- *Safety*: developments likely to influence safety or perceptions of personal safety.
- *Gambling venues and liquor outlets.*

STAGES OF AN IMPACT ASSESSMENT

1 Planning an Assessment

You may consider matters such as:

- The nature of the proposed development, its timelines, land requirements, facility shape and size .
- Conditions in the locality which are likely to influence the impact of the development.
- Sources of information about existing conditions and possible impacts; gaps in available data.
- Possible consequences or impact of the development, over the short, medium and long-term.
- Stakeholders, including people or institutions sponsoring the development.
- The purpose of, and most appropriate method for, consulting with stakeholders, where required.

2 Acquiring Background Information about the Affected Area Community

Inspect, and perhaps photograph or map, the area, considering land uses open spaces, amenity, transport, services and facilities.

Aspects of built form, transport and natural environment of the area may be investigated through personal inspection, technical assessment (eg: traffic) or map layers prepared by a council GIS Unit. This may include:

- Location and size of the area where the development is planned, and of the locality and community which may be affected
- Opportunities for physical activity, including access to shared pathways and open spaces, and features which encourage mobility of disabled people, children and others.
- Availability of health or welfare services, social and recreational outlets, shops and community centres.
- Public transport, including location of routes and schedules.
- Environmental considerations, including traffic emissions, noise and vibration; other air pollution; open spaces, parks and vegetation; water quality and consumption.
- Amenity

Aspects of the Community. Information about the structure, values and experiences of a community may be obtained through meetings and interviews, and perhaps later quantified in a survey. Aspects of the community may include:

- Community services, schools and other educational institutions
- Community groups, networks and leaders
- Community values, aspirations, concerns and connections to the locality
- Local business and other economic activity

Statistical information about the local community, drawn from the Census and other sources, may include:

- Population by age, projected growth, cultural diversity, spoken languages and English fluency.
- Educational attainments, income levels, labour force status and employment patterns.
- Housing structure, size, tenure, landlord type and rent-related financial stress.

- Community strength, including volunteering, citizen engagement, participation in schools, sense of belonging, and perceptions of safety. However, aside from volunteering, these are only available at a municipal level, and being the products of small-sample surveys, are not particularly reliable.
- Recorded offences - available at a municipal and postcode (by order from VicPol) level.
- Health conditions – With the exception of disability, generally available only at a municipal level, frequently out-of-date and often not easily interpreted.1

Municipality or Suburb-wide Profiles

The locality affected by a development may include residents in proximity to the development, the wider region encompassing the residential locations of those who work in the area, the catchment of businesses affected by the development, regional networks of residents or workers, or the area served by local community services.

If the area likely to be affected by a development corresponds with a particular municipality or suburb, or if it may be confidently assumed that conditions in the area match those of the municipality or suburb to which it belongs, then municipal or suburb-level information may supply an adequate profile of the relevant community. The links below provide information about the population and social conditions within each Victorian municipality and suburb.

Profiles of Victorian municipalities (from the findings of the 2011 Census)

Profiles of Victorian suburbs and townships (from the findings of the 2011 Census)

General information on health, housing, community, employment, birthplaces and settlement, education, incomes, safety and crime, gambling, transport at municipal level (Various sources)

Guide to social data on the internet

Local Area Profiles

Often however, a development will exert an influence upon a smaller, more local area. If so, a local area profile is what you need. Creating your profile of a local, customized area, requires the following steps:

1. Using mapping software, or recruiting the assistance of mapping staff at your council, identify the area of interest. It may look a little like the image below.


2. Overlay a map of SA1 areas (Statistical Area 1 – which is the smallest area for which the Australian Bureau of Statistics aggregates its Census findings) upon your map

3. Label the SA1 areas which correspond most closely to the area of interest. The label you require here is called the **SA1_7DIGITCODE_2011**. It is the unique name given to each of these SA1 areas. Below, it has been selected from a list of possible labels, using mapping software.

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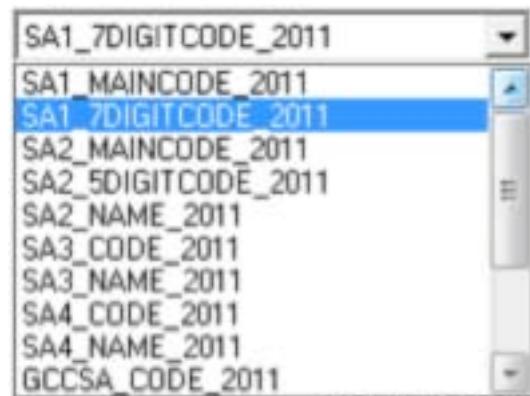
1   Much of the available data about social capital, community connectedness and health, is derived from small sample surveys of municipalities. Since there is no guarantee that the sample of people surveyed were representative of the population being studied – especially as most people contacted to participate in phone and written surveys refuse to do so, virtually assuring a substantial response bias - the findings of such surveys serve only as an approximation of conditions within the municipality, and supply no indication at all of circumstances within a smaller area.

4. Now you should see a map of the social impact area, with lines dividing it into smaller areas, like pieces of a jig-saw puzzle. These are the neighbourhood-sized SA1 areas. In the example below, those areas have been shaded.
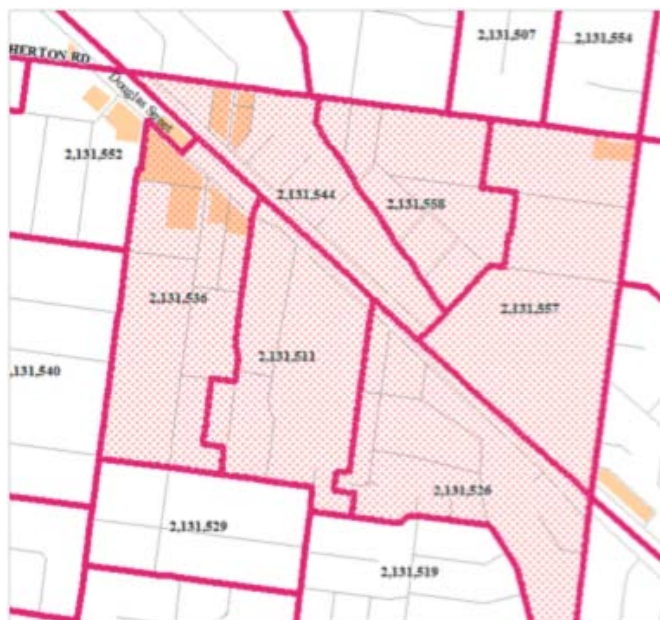
5. If the SA1 areas which form your area are few (say, less than 10 or so), simply copy their 7-digit codes directly from the map on your screen. If there are many more SA1 areas, their 7-digit numbers may instead be exported into Excel using mapping software (council mapping staff should be able to do this easily).

6. Now open the spreadsheet whose link is provided below.

   'Local Area Profiler' for creating profiles of smaller, customised areas (from the 2011 Census)

7. Next, open the first sheet in this file and make the adjustment to the settings of Excel which is described there. Then close Excel and re-open the file. (you only ever have to do this once on your computer)

8. Type, or copy & paste from Excel, the **7-digit SA1** codes which you copied from the map earlier, into the second sheet of the file (below).

9. Then click the button labelled **Create Profile**, situated at the upper right-hand side of the screen (also in image below).
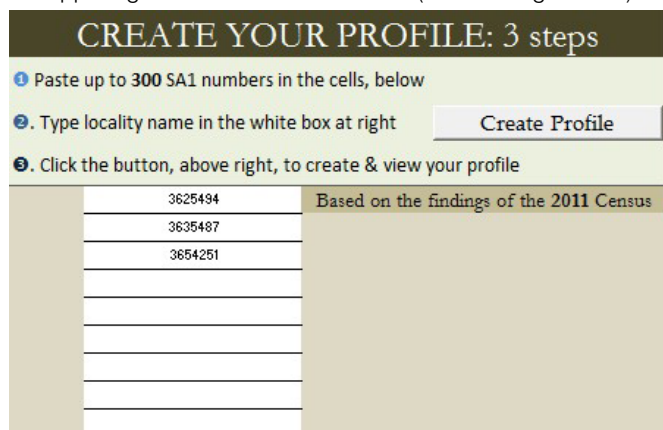
10. Proceed to the third sheet to view and print the profile of your area. It will include information about age, birthplaces, spoken languages, English fluency, education levels, income, employment, housing, transport, disability and more. It will look like the image below, and can be printed as a three-page summary.

Local Area Profiles

from the findings of the 2011 Census and based on results aggregated to SA1 areas

Locality name or description	Type name of locality here	
Population	**Number**	
	1,750	

Age Profile	Number	Per cent of Population
0-4	140	8.0
5-9	134	7.6
10-14	174	9.9
15-19	178	10.2
20-24	105	6.0
25-29	86	4.9
30-34	93	5.3
35-39	133	7.6
40-44	162	9.2
45-49	141	8.0
50-54	117	6.7
55-59	75	4.3
60-64	79	4.5
65-69	49	2.8
70-74	36	2.1
75-79	14	0.8
80-84	25	1.4
85+	11	0.6
Indigenous residents	24	1.4

Birthplaces	Number	Per cent of Population
Afghanistan	**0**	0.0
Australia	1,536	87.7
Bosnia	0	0.0
Burma	0	0.0
Cambodia	0	0.0
Canada	4	0.2
Chile	0	0.0
China	15	0.9
Croatia	0	0.0
Cyprus	0	0.0
Egypt	0	0.0
England	36	2.1

Sometimes, reliable information about matters of relevance – such as the prevalence of drug, mental health or gambling problems, and family violence - is unavailable at a local level. In this instance, conditions known to be associated with such issues may instead be considered. For example, since low incomes and educational levels are associated with elevated gambling losses, it would be reasonable to suppose that gambling losses may be higher in localities where incomes and educational attainments were low. Such conclusions though, are suggestive but not conclusive.

In addition, consultations with stakeholders, discussed further on, may also supply background information about community values, aspirations and other matters which lie beyond the reach of conventional statistical sources. This is where a true understanding of the community begins.

3 Identifying Social Impacts

Identify and prioritize the possible favourable and detrimental consequences of the development. This section summarizes the general social impacts which may be encountered in many developments. Succeeding pages review impacts associated with licensed premises and gambling venues.

a/ Potential Social Impacts – in general

Housing

- Change in the amount, type and affordability of housing stock.
- Socio-economic, age and ethnic characteristics of the likely residents of new housing in the area.
- Change in level of local housing choice.
- Appropriateness of new housing to the needs of the community.
- Housing accessibility and suitability to aged or disabled people.
- Growth in housing prices, potentially displacing lower-income residents from the area.
- Reduced appeal of the area to the housing market, potentially leading to rise in the concentration of social disadvantage in the locality.

Disadvantage

- Exclusion of, or disadvantage to, particular groups - such as older people, families with children, low-income earners, disabled people, those with limited English fluency or others - due to the development.
- Concentration of social disadvantage, as for instance, due to low-quality housing development in a disadvantaged area, or a high concentration of government-subsidized housing.
- Changes in the cost of living for local residents, arising from a reduction in public transport availability, rise in the cost of shopping, or other causes.

Settlement

The settlement of a substantial number of recently-arrived migrants may raise concerns about the levels of social acceptance and support accorded them, as well as their access to English tuition, education, job training, health services and social or recreational opportunities. Relevant considerations include:

- Accessibility and capacity of migrant settlement services and other relevant agencies.
- Number and cultural background of the settlers, their spoken language, fluency in the use of spoken English, labour force status, educational attainment and incomes.
- Settlers' own account of their experiences, needs, concerns and aspirations.

Recreation

- Change in level of, demand for, or access to, parks, playgrounds and other recreational facilities.
- Availability of meeting places, social opportunities and appealing, accessible open spaces.

Commercial

- Alterations in retail level or mix.
- Changes in the volume and pattern of local employment, and the duration of these effects. This might arise from the establishment of a new shopping centre or industrial development, or closure of a large firm. Its impact upon the local community may be limited though, as employers in metropolitan areas tend to recruit staff on the basis of their fitness for the job, rather than their proximity to a place of employment. For the same reasons, such developments are unlikely to directly change income levels in a metropolitan community.

Amenity

- Noise, vibration, dust, odour or air pollution, due to nearby construction or an ongoing activity.
- Change in the amenity or aesthetic appeal of an area.

Transport

- Increase in traffic intensity, congestion and pollution, or changed access to shops, services or homes, due to the development of transport infrastructure (such as a highway or railway line), diversion of traffic into an area, establishment of a church or community centre, or major residential development.
- Division of a community, or separation of part of a community from shops or services, by a major roadway.
- Proximity of housing to public transport routes [over 500 meters is regarded as onerous for some residents].
- Integration of new housing or an activity centre with an existing neighbourhood, via roads, footpaths and cycling tracks.
- Accessible, safe access to local destinations for pedestrians, wheelchairs, cyclists and public transport.

Safety

- Changes in level of safety or perceptions of safety, coupled with a possible need for more policing.
- Incorporation of safe design principles in the planning of the project, such as:
- Natural surveillance, including visibility of public areas from private residences;
- Safe pedestrian linkages, including appropriate lighting, especially of otherwise secluded areas, clear visibility, vegetation which does not reduce vision, and no dark or secluded areas
- Clear distinctions between public and private spaces; and
- Activity mix.

Population Change

Change in the population and its age profile – which may result from the addition of housing to an area.

It may not safely be assumed that the characteristics of people who occupy new dwellings will match the profile of residents in the municipality as a whole, or even in a neighbouring area. Therefore, when an abrupt alteration in the size or age structure of the population is expected, a population forecast should be prepared. Such projections usually include information about:

- Change in population.
- Change in age profile.
- Resulting change in demand for early years, youth, educational and aged care services.

A link is provided below, to assist in preparing a population forecast, if required as part of an impact assessment. The file enables you to install relevant information, including:

- the existing population of the locality and its age structure,
- the number of new dwellings to be added to the area, plus the likely age profile of their occupants,
- age-specific birth and mortality rates for your municipality, and
- the rate of movement of people of various age groups, into and out of your municipality.

The process is actually less difficult than it sounds, as most of this information is already available within the file.

‘Local Futures’, population projection tool

Demand for Services

A change in population and age profile - due to a housing development, for instance - may alter local demand for early years, education, youth, community, aged care and public transport services. If a population projection is prepared using the population projection tool referred to above, a service demand forecast will be generated automatically. It is situated on the sheet named ‘Service Demand’.

1. To view the forecast, select the start and end year on that sheet (below). This displays the forecast population for both years as well as the corresponding change in service demand, shown on the far right.

Population Change and Service Demand in My Locality

2. Criteria for determining service demand (eg: maternal and child health nurses per 1,000 children aged 0-4, etc) are set out on the next sheet, labeled ‘Service benchmarks’, illustrated below. You may also adjust these criteria, if required, to suit local conditions or service delivery targets.

Setting the Service Benchmarks

3. Finally, if a forecast of the population in the affected locality has already been prepared – making the population forecasting tool unnecessary for your purposes – then the projected population can be simply copied or typed into a file identical to the one labelled ‘service demand’. This file will automatically calculate the demand for early years, education, aged care and other services, based on the population you type into it. The file is available here.

Related considerations include:

- A rise in service demand which may require a council to advocate for Federal or state funds for further services.
- Proximity of residents of a new housing development to community, health, welfare, educational and other services, shops, parks and recreational facilities.
- Change in access of existing residents to health, welfare, education, community and commercial services.

Broader considerations include the influence of the development upon vulnerable members of the community; future opportunities

that will be forgone as a result of the development; the relationship between the social impacts identified and the characteristics of the community; and the perceptions of community members themselves about the social impact.

One guide to likely impacts and their consequences is the experience of similar developments elsewhere. Accordingly, it can be useful to obtain reports about such developments or the testimony of people familiar with them.

b/ Potential Social Impacts of Licensed Venues

Internal Considerations

- Capacity – high capacity may lead to the simultaneous exit of many patrons, raising the risk of violence.
- Hours of opening – late hours (closing after 1 am) are associated with negative impact.
- Seating ratio & crowding – lack of seating is linked with higher alcohol consumption.
- Music – live music may be associated with higher alcohol consumption.
- Availability of meals tends to be associated with lower alcohol consumption.
- Shatterproof glass, CCTV, adequate crowd control.
- Clear lines of sight from bar to toilets, drinking and dancing areas.
- Sexually explicit activities.

Management

- Management of the venue, including security measures, staff training, adherence to 'good neighbour policy', membership of the 'Good Sports Program' and commitment to preserving local amenity.
- Staff training in responsible service of alcohol and compliance with rules on the sale of alcohol to minors.
- Drink promotions, which may contribute to drunkenness and rowdy behaviour.
- Data about incidents and issues at or near a venue, including demerit points of venue, police or council records of violence, inappropriate dumping of rubbish and broken glass from alcohol bottles.

Area Around Venue

- Adequacy of outside footpath for queuing. Clear sightlines.
- Floor plan of proposal, including red line (the area where alcohol may be consumed), entry and exits, nearby footpaths

and hallways, car parking and demarcation of dry zones in and around premises.

- Signage, including directions to transport and requests that patrons respect the amenity of the area.
- Extra lighting, including at entrances associated car parks, especially for staff at the end of their shifts.
- Doors and windows oriented toward the footpath and away from residential areas and schools.
- Activation of street frontage, creating surveillance.
- Fences at venues on busy streets, to prevent intoxicated patrons stumbling onto the street.
- Proximity to entrapment locations such as car parks and enclosed open spaces.
- Removal of bushes that block site lines.
- Effect of noise, antisocial behaviour and light from traffic and the venue itself, upon local amenity.
- Traffic control measures.
- Transport – high number of patrons leaving after 11 pm, due to nearby premises closing at similar times, limited local access to regular public transport or taxis, or insufficient nearby parking, may contribute to unfavourable impacts. Preferably, a venue should be located within 400 m of public transport.

Region of Venue

- It is widely held that a mix of local premises, such as restaurants, cinemas and small bars, have little adverse impact. On the other hand, premises which are larger; open after 11 pm; operate at capacity with queuing; largely require patrons to stand as they drink; are linked to alcohol-related property damage; have attracted complaints to the police or enforcement proceedings; or are in areas with nearby packaged outlets (which allow people to drink before and after attending a venue), may raise the prospect of detrimental impacts.
- Proximity to any other licensed venues may result in cumulative impact, which the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure instructs should at least be applied to premises that would be licensed after 11 pm and which are situated among a cluster of premises – defined as one with either 3 or more premises within 100 meters of the subject land, or 15 or more premises within 500 meters.
- Close proximity of higher-risk venues (hotels, nightclubs) to packaged liquor outlets (bottle shops, licensed supermarkets) is considered adverse. On the other hand, low-risk venues (wine bars, BYO restaurants, licensed cafes) may be encouraged near higher-risk venues, to provide a diversity of venues.
- Proximity (not less than 400m.) to nearest private residence and to sensitive uses such as schools, housing, health, welfare or financial support agencies; concentrations of youth; public housing; gateways; and areas of socio-economic disadvantage, or high levels of family violence.
- However, the wider locality affected by a venue may include its primary catchment area, encompassing the region where harm may result in domestic and other settings, as a result of the intoxication of its patrons.

Links to information about alcohol-related issues:

Guide to decisions by VCAT on licensed premises

Alcohol-related issues for Victorian communities

c/ Potential Social Impacts of Gambling Venues

Social impact assessments of applications for new gambling venues or increases in egm numbers tend to focus upon those issues which are accorded weight by the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation (hereafter, 'the Commission') – which determines applications for egms and gambling venues in Victoria. It may be mentioned that the prospect of challenging a gambling application are bleak - In 2012-13 just one of 21 contested applications were refused.

Social Disadvantage

- Local disadvantage – the Commission recognises that more egms or venues may impose a burden upon socially disadvantaged communities. It generally places weight upon conditions in the area 2.5 to 5 km from the venue, rather than overall municipal conditions. If however, it can be shown that the patrons of the venue come from a wider area, then the profile of the residents in that broader region should be considered. Data required to generate a profile of the catchment of a gambling venue is available from the *Local Area Profiler* described earlier and available **here**.

- Measures of disadvantage which have been accepted by the Commission include the SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage, education level, incomes, unemployment, English fluency, proportion of dwellings that are rented from the government, and housing stress - generally assessed as the proportion of income spent by residents on housing rental or purchase, compared with the metropolitan average.

- Avoid attempts to attribute unfavourable local circumstances - such as crime rates or bankruptcies - to egm gambling, as the Commission correctly supposes that such matters have multiple causes, making it impossible to gauge the extent to which gambling contributes to these conditions.

- Gambling applicants may contend that forecasts of population increase, growth in local employment, or even the mere existence of strategic or economic plans for the area, assure the locality of future prosperity, making current disadvantage less relevant. It is reasonable to ask for evidence of this assumption – which is generally absent – and it can often be shown that local population or employment growth has occurred in the past without occasioning any corresponding improvement in local social conditions.

Caps

- The Commission generally holds that addition of egms or venues in locations that border the residential portions of capped municipalities may jeopardize the welfare of residents in those vulnerable communities.

Gambling Losses

- High rates of gambling losses (egm losses per 1,000 adults) within a municipality or the smaller catchment of the venue, are perceived by the Commission as a burden upon that community, particularly so if there is evidence of social disadvantage.

- It is preferable to show that the level of social disadvantage and/or rate of gambling losses, are higher within the catchment of the particular venue, than for the municipality as a whole. Otherwise, you are effectively advancing the proposition that there should be no further egms in the municipality – which is not regarded by the Commission as a legitimate viewpoint.

- The Commission may consider that an increase in expenditure at a venue holds much less potential for harm if those funds are likely to be transferred from nearby venues, resulting in little or no net increase in the burden of gambling losses upon that community. If however, the egms are being transferred from a more distant venue - albeit within the same municipality - one could reasonably maintain that the smaller population living within the catchment of the venue may indeed face the prospect of increased losses.

EGM Density

- Density is measured as egms per 1,000 adults, and may be compared with the corresponding municipal or state-wide level. If the local density of egms is relatively high, one may contend that an increase in egms would impose an onerous burden upon the local community.

Population Growth

- Actual or projected growth within the catchment of the venue may be considered likely to offset high rates of losses or egm density as well as raising the demand for recreational facilities - possibly making a gambling venue with social facilities an appealing prospect, in the view of the Commission.

Location

- Proximity to welfare agencies can be measured using a mapping program – so long as relevant agencies have been mapped already – or by simply pacing out the distance between venues and nearby agencies. Proximity to welfare agencies (say, less than 200 m. or so) is not favoured by the Commission, where if it can be shown that many of their clients may be susceptible to gambling-related problems.

- Proximity to schools does not generally perturb the Commission, which has acknowledged with favour, evidence that local school communities are not unduly affected by gambling venues.

- Close proximity to shops is not supported by the Commission, on the grounds that such a location may prompt impulsive gambling by shoppers.

Prosperity of Local Business

- The prospect of the diversion of funds from local businesses by a gambling venue is viewed with little concern by the Commission, which perceives this as a natural consequence of the operation of a market economy.

Gauging Resident Opinion

To be accorded any merit by the Commission, surveys of residents should be:

- of those living near the venue.
- of a sizeable number of residents.
- a random, or at least seemingly representative, sample.
- unbiased, including mention of the positive attributes of the proposal.
- designed to record concerns about particular features of the application, rather than documenting general opposition to gambling.

Less weight may be given to local opposition to a proposal if there are already established venues in the area.

Though in some instances, surveys have contributed decisively to successful opposition to gambling applications, most survey findings presented by councils have been discounted by the Commission on the grounds of defective methodology.

Council Gambling Policy

A council gambling policy may be criticised by the Commission if:

- it is revealed that no community consultation was conducted in its development,
- it applies a *net benefit* test, instead of the *no net detriment* test required under the Gambling Regulation Act, or
- the policy effectively instructs council to oppose all gambling applications - which the Commission regards as preventing Council from assessing each application on its merits.

Prospective Benefits of Gambling Venues

The following features of gambling applications may be considered beneficial by the Commission:

- Responsible gambling practises of venues.
- Offers by applicants to support local causes or charities.
- The potential for a venue to provide a social outlet (particularly in an area which has relatively few), expand recreational choices for locals, improve its dining and entertaining facilities, or contribute to tourism.
- The prospect of increased employment at a new or expanded gambling venue.
- RSLs, owing to their services to veterans.

Links to information about egm gambling losses, egm densities, and egm gambling Issues:

Gambling losses, egm densities, venue numbers & addresses, by municipality

Maps of estimated gambling losses across metropolitan Melbourne

Summary of EGM gambling issues for local government

Links to further information about gambling losses and egms, from the VCGLR:

Inquiries and hearings of the VCGLR

Community Benefit Statements of Gambling Venues

Caps or limits upon egm numbers in municipalities

Summary of reasons for decisions on gambling applications, given by the VCGLR

A more extensive guide to gambling social impact assessments:

Social Impacts of Pokies, including an Assessment Framework

d/ Gender and Social Impact Assessment

Available evidence shows that outcomes for women are less favourable than for men, in areas such as employment, incomes, aspects of family life, personal safety and English fluency.[2] The process of impact assessment, as well as its outcomes, should seek to redress conditions which accentuate or sustain gender inequity.

The Assessment Process and its Findings

Women's participation in the assessment of social impact may be limited by educational attainments, experience of such processes, previous exposure to public forums or employment, childcare or other obligations. Efforts should therefore be made to provide them with the means to fully participate in consultation and decision-making in social impact assessments. Gender equity can be a primary consideration in both the processes and outcome of an impact assessment.

Impact Assessment Process – should include:

- Consideration of gender in planning and conducting the assessment.
- Examination of comparable social data for females and males.
- Consultation with women's groups and networks.
- Incorporation of gender-equitable procedures into the impact assessment process.
- Fostering women's participation and leadership in consultations and decision-making
- Ensuring that women are not marginalised in the consultative process or assigned gender-stereotypic roles.

- 2 13% of women aged 20-24, and 10% of males, are neither in paid work nor enrolled in education.
- 25% of women aged 15+, and 47% of males, are in full-time employment.
- Personal incomes among women in Victoria are 60% of those received by men.
- Among people 25 to 44, in full time employment, women perform a median of 6.1 hours unpaid work around the home per week, compared with 3.2 hours among men
- Six in seven sole parents are females. Female sole parents are younger, on lower incomes and less likely to be in paid employment, than their male counterparts.
- Two-thirds (64%) of assaults experienced by women occurred in the home, compared with 14% of those experienced by males.
- Women account for four-fifths of applications for intervention orders, victims of violence in police callouts and SAAP emergency housing clients. One in seven (17%) males report feeling unsafe at night in their local area, compared with nearly half (45%) of women.

- Presenting opportunities for women to participate in single-gender consultations, if appropriate.
- No tolerance of gender discrimination or intimidation in consultations.
- Selecting meeting times and venues with thought for safety, transport access, child care or other domestic arrangements.

Findings – may be reached with consideration of:

- Conditions which reinforce or perpetuate gender inequality.
- Differences in the impact of the development upon women and men.
- Measures to achieve gender equity among any proposed steps to lessen unfavourable impacts.
- Gender-related targets to monitor social conditions after the assessment, if required.

The Social Impact

Issues which might be relevant in assessing the likely social impact of a development, are set out below.

- Safely designed and maintained public places, including lighting, surveillance, graffiti management, avoidance of entrapment spaces, good sightlines and other elements of safe design
- Services and programs with suitable opening hours and staffing.
- Sport and recreation settings that provide a safe and inclusive environment for women and girls, and provide men and women with equal access to resources and activities of their preference.
- Community facilities designed to provide safe and convenient access, including childcare, baby changing areas, breast feeding facilities and appropriate lighting and other safety features.
- Access to services, considering cost, distance to travel, public transport availability and child care needs.
- Settlement services, including efforts to facilitate women's access to language, education, employment and other programs.
- Timing of service delivery to meet the needs of working families and support shared parenting.
- Access to social opportunities, and gender-equitable social environments, in the local community.
- Extension of economic opportunities to women, in the development itself or in mitigation of its impact.
- Consideration of geographic isolation, which can contribute to social isolation and aggravate abuse for many women.
- Access to services which help to address family violence and activities which alleviate isolation.
- Availability of child care.
- Public transport accessibility

4 Consulting with Stakeholders

Consultation, where required, can motivate, educate and attract support from, the community, as well as helping one to reach well-informed decisions in the best interest of stakeholders. Engagement should be sincere in intent, meaningful, transparent, inclusive, thorough, timely, foster positive relations with the community and incorporate feedback to stakeholders.

The consultation process may include planning; appointing a co-coordinator and contact person; identifying and establishing relationships with the stakeholders; determining consultation methods, level, timeliness and resources; and following-up with stakeholders after the consultation. A few suggestions about these steps are presented below.

Plan

Obtain background information. Determine if a similar engagement has previously occurred, if engagement is required by legislation, which segments of the community and geographic areas should be involved, how the consultation will be conducted, what will be discussed, expected outcomes and how decisions should be reached.

Identify Stakeholders These may include:

- Residents – sometimes of particular geographic location, age groups, gender, family types, ethnic identity, housing type or tenure, or people with disabilities, recent settlers, commuters, students and others.
- Local workers, business proprietors and business networks.
- Community organizations, such as community centers; playgroups; service organizations; social, ethnic, sport, leisure or environment groups; and neighborhood watch.
- Agencies, such as health care providers, welfare services, schools and other educational institutions, government departments, emergency services and utilities.

Peak bodies may be consulted, as for instance, Vic Health, Victorian Council of Social Services, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Bicycle Network, Cancer Victoria, Turning Point, the Responsible Gambling Foundation, National Heart Foundation, Diabetes Institute, Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, Disability Advocacy Network and others.

Reach Stakeholders

- Stakeholders may sometimes be reached through community leaders or other key contacts, support services, welfare agencies, social groups and networks. One may inquire into their circumstances, perceptions and experiences, and ask how they wish to participate.
- Stakeholders should be informed about the topic and how they may benefit from participating.
- Payments or vouchers can be provided to stakeholders to meet the cost of transport, child care or time, and to affirm the value of their contribution.

Methods of Stakeholder Consultations may include:

- Websites – for disseminating information, conducting surveys and exchanging ideas.
- Surveys – face-to-face, phone, internet or mail. A guide to survey technique is provided here
- Larger meetings – sometimes promoted in the media and attracting a wider range of participants
- Focus groups – typically about specific topics and featuring a few people
- One to one interviews – time-consuming, but permitting a closer examination of issues
- Advisory, steering or reference groups – which may meet regularly to guide the impact assessment process
- Expert judgment – the advice of relevant experts

Each method has it attributes and limitations. A few opportune methods are usually better than many.

Nature of the Engagement

A consultation is essentially a conversation which can vary in its direction, depth, duration and in the level of stakeholder participation.

- To merely inform stakeholders of the development, reports, media releases, website or a contact person may be adequate.
- Where feedback of a simple and straightforward nature is sought, meetings, surveys or the internet may suffice.
- Such testimony though, often comes without context, and makes no distinction between personal opinion, and views based on thoughtful consideration or extensive experience. Learning *why* people hold particular views instead requires that they are accorded the time and opportunity to more fully recount their experiences, thoughts, values and feelings, in their own way. For this, discussions and interviews may be most appropriate.
- More prolonged and collaborative engagement may be needed where stakeholder interest or the potential impact of the development is high, or in the presence of substantial political, financial, social or environmental risk. In such circumstances, consultation may last longer, require more resources, or accord greater influence to stakeholders upon the process or its outcome. Such collaborative processes may include interviews, focus groups, and advisory or steering groups.

Provide a Setting for Consultation

- Schedule consultations with consideration of the timing of cultural and religious occasions, conducting the consultation in an appropriate venue - perhaps in a familiar support agency, community centre or other venue - at a safe location, accessible to wheelchairs and near public transport and car parking.
- Provision of food and drink may foster a relaxed atmosphere, while presenting participants with a welcome opportunity for social contact.

Consider Stakeholder Needs

- Take thought for the particular needs of stakeholders. Translation or interpreting may be required for some CALD groups, as well as promotion of the consultation in ethnic media, and engaging one cultural group at a time, if appropriate. Other people may need time to tell their stories in an unhurried fashion and in a one-to-one setting. Understand participants' mobility or communication requirements.
- For those uncomfortable with a mixed-gender setting – as for instance, some CALD groups and young people, or when discussing issues of personal sensitivity – consider consulting in single-gender settings.
- When discussing matters of a potentially sensitive nature, be able, if required, to refer participants to appropriate professional assistance.

5 Preparing the Report, including Steps to Reduce Adverse Impacts

The social impact assessment is a decision-making process. Therefore, upon its completion, a report should be prepared for all stakeholders and feedback offered to those affected by the development about how their input has influenced the final decision. Outcomes may also be reported in the print media, on a website or by other means.

The report should feature details of the development itself as well as the conditions within the affected locality and community, an outline of the consultation and research process, a review of the social impacts and whom they affect, measures of the capacity of existing services to meet any increased needs, and a description of any proposed measures to reduce potentially adverse impacts. While value judgements may emerge during a social impact assessment, it is essential to weigh all relevant evidence, before delivering a balanced and logical conclusion.

One may also explain how any unfavourable consequences may be lessened, either through amendment of the development, measures to extenuate its effects, or compensation of those affected.

Later on, it may become necessary to monitor the actual extent of impact, identifying those affected, documenting any unexpected consequences, and recording the progress of efforts to alleviate adverse impacts of the development. One might also identify the information required to continue monitoring local conditions.

Finally, one may reflect upon the impact assessment process, identifying improvements which could be incorporated into future consultations.

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