

July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018

## **A Faith Response to the Social Cost of Gambling Harm**

*The Faith Communities Council of Victoria (FCCV) has issued the following statement on the Social Cost of Gambling Harm:*

Gambling is normalised in our society and marketed as entertainment but it can result in significant harm for the gambler and those close to them. Australians are the world's most prolific gamblers, based on per capita spending.

Gambling harm is a negative consequence, caused or made worse by gambling, that affects the health or wellbeing of an individual, their family or community.

The social costs of gambling harm are enormous: relationship difficulties; emotional or psychological distress; financial, health and cultural problems; issues with work or study; and criminal activity.

And these negative effects seem to fall disproportionately on those with low incomes and disadvantaged, including culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse communities.

Across our faith traditions, we declare:

- Our faiths care for the well-being of people and we will offer support to those within our communities and the community around us who have been harmed by gambling;
- We will assist those impacted by gambling related harm to access the support services they need; and
- We will support existing campaigns for gambling reform to advocate to the Victorian and Commonwealth government for changes to reduce gambling harm across pokies, wagering and online gambling activities.

Faith groups in Victoria have already achieved significant reforms to reduce gambling related harm over a prolonged period of time, but further reforms are needed to rein in the harm the profit seeking activities of the gambling businesses inflict on our community.

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Such solutions must not stigmatise people harmed by gambling. They instead must involve restrictions on gambling products and types of gambling that are made legally available, make gambling businesses responsible for the harm they cause and reduce the influence of gambling businesses over government policies and laws that should be reducing gambling related harm.

We hope all political parties support such reforms and our faiths stand ready to offer our support to them.

*Faith Communities Council of Victoria (FCCV) is comprised of the following peak bodies: Baha'i Community of Victoria, Brahma Kumaris Australia, Buddhist Council of Victoria, Hindu Council of Australia (Victoria), Islamic Council of Victoria, Jewish Community Council of Victoria, Sikh Interfaith Council of Victoria and Victorian Council of Churches, who have endorsed this statement in whole or in part.*

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