

52 Martin Place
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Premier Berejiklian

We are writing to you today as Co-covenantors of the Fairfield Multicultural Interagency on behalf of (insert number) local agencies and associations operating in Fairfield City. We are asking your Government to consider investing in Libraries After Dark in Fairfield City.

Libraries After Dark, initiated in Victoria, is a program that uses libraries to provide gambling & alcohol free activities which a wide range of community groups can access. The program extends library opening hours into the evening and employs a project manager to enable the coordination of socially inclusive and safe recreational activities. The program can also provide a community development function by using a soft entry approach to introduce residents to social issues which impact them, such as gambling. In Victoria, the Libraries After Dark Program was funded by the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, and was delivered in four Melbourne council areas (Hume, Whittlesea, Darebin and Moreland) as a pilot program. Since then, the Victorian State Government has provided another \$4 million to roll out the program across the state.

Gambling Harm in Fairfield City is significant. The City is ranked one of the highest councils in regards to poker machine losses. Fairfield City loses \$1.4 million a day to poker machines, which equates to \$517 million per year. Fairfield City residents can be considered at medium risk of gambling harm. Gambling harm is also strongly linked to issues of family breakdown, domestic and family violence, financial stress and poverty, crime, and mental health issues. As agencies working with the local residents, we witness firsthand the devastation caused by problem gambling in children, families and individuals.

Through its community engagement and education, the Libraries After Dark can help break down the shame and stigma around gambling problems, strengthen community resilience towards gambling harm, and build a stronger community overall.

We believe that this request is timely, as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted and the community adjusts to a post COVID-19 world, the need for reconnection and inclusive and affordable activities is likely to intensify. Libraries After Dark can build and strengthen social networks. It provides the community with culturally appropriate activities and creates additional local employment. It offers a venue for our residents who are socially isolated, older people, younger people and families to reconnect.

The community campaign is seeking the State Government to invest \$300,000 over two years to pilot the program. We believe this is a small investment, for a program which can have a large impact on the individual lives of the local community for years to come.

We look forward to hearing from you regarding our request, and are keen to continue this conversation with the NSW Government.

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