

Pokie losses eat at town spend

By Matt Crossman

Almost \$20 million was pumped into poker machines in Sunbury last financial year.

New Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation figures reveal losses on the town's 230 machines increased \$230,000 in 2014-15 to \$18.1 million.

A total \$8.6 million was lost on the 103 machines in the Macedon Ranges, an increase of close to \$300,000.

Sunbury Community Health's child, youth

and family services manager, Marcus Bosch, said while Sunbury losses paled in comparison to areas such as Brimbank and Broadmeadows, the human impact remained substantial.

"Sunbury Community Health sees so much damage caused by poker machines," he said.

While pokies benefit clubs and lead to some employment, Mr Bosch said their presence was a net loss for the community.

"It's well established that the more poker machines in a particular district, the more spending money is reduced ... which has a

“ Sunbury Community Health sees so much damage ”

- Marcus Bosch

serious impact on local businesses and jobs.”

Sunbury has five licensed gaming venues; the Macedon Ranges has three. The Olive Tree Hotel was Sunbury's pokies hotspot, with \$5.8 million lost on 43 machines.

More than \$5 million went into 31 machines

at the Royal Hotel, while Sunbury Bowling Club's 78 pokies raked in \$3.6 million. A total of \$1.7 million was lost by punters on the 38 machines at Sunbury Football Social Club, and \$1.8 million was lost on Sunbury United Sporting Club's 40 machines.

In the Macedon Ranges, \$1.4 million went into Kyneton Bowling Club's 25 machines; close to \$2 million was lost on the 28 pokies at Kyneton RSL; and almost \$5.1 million went into 50 machines of Gisborne's Victorian Tavern.