

Calls to stem gambling harm

Ways to reduce gambling's significant impact on Hume residents have been raised at a community forum in Sunbury.

The joint Hume council and Sunbury Community Health event last Tuesday included a screening of the documentary *Ka-Ching! Pokie Nation* and was followed by a Q and A session.

Alliance for Gambling Reform campaign manager Kelvin Thomson sat on the discussion panel, alongside gambling researcher and Deakin University associate professor Samantha Thomas and ReSPIN Gambling Speakers Awareness Group community educator Gabi Byrne.

Mr Thomson outlined the severe harm being caused by gambling in Hume. He said an average of more than \$289,000 was put into gaming machines in Hume each day in the 2016-17 financial year.

Reducing gaming venue operating hours and raising awareness of gambling as a public health issue, like alcohol and tobacco, were among suggestions raised to combat the issue.

Hume council outlined its interest in establishing a community working group on gaming. Anyone interested in being involved should contact Nina Stephens on 9205 2200.

The council's draft Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021 includes working to decrease the area's electronic gambling losses by 20 per cent by the year 2025.

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