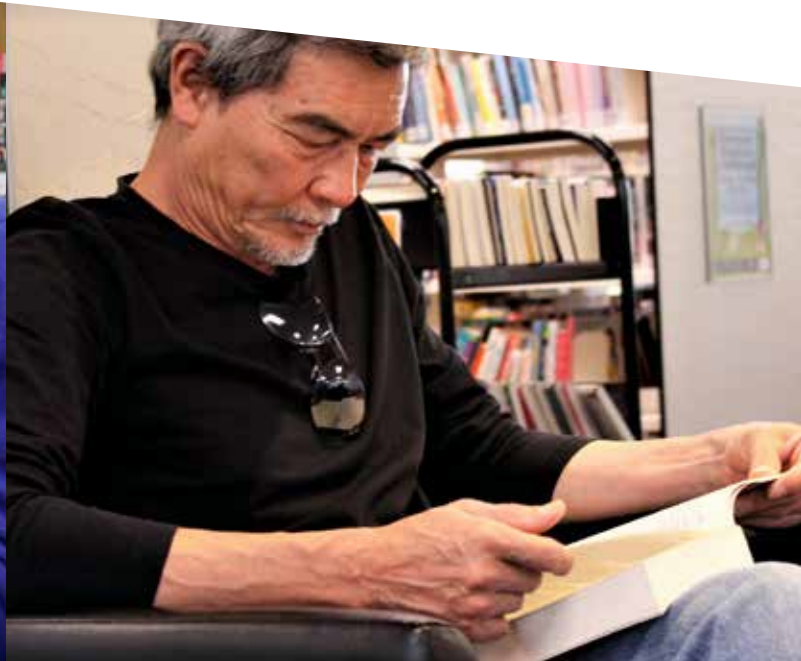


Invest in You

Try no charge and low cost
activities in Brimbank

October 2021



Acknowledgement of Country

Brimbank City Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of this land, the Wurundjeri People, and pays our respects to Elders past and present.

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A woman with dark hair, a bindi on her forehead, and red lipstick is smiling. She is wearing a dark jacket over a light-colored shirt. The background is dark with some blurred lights, suggesting an outdoor night setting.

Introduction

Changing the Brimbank Story

Gambling harm is a major issue in Brimbank. For over a decade the community has had the highest losses to Electronic Gaming Machines (EGM's or pokies) in Victoria.

Daily losses in 2021 regularly average at over \$440,000 a day.

Research shows that providing practical support to encourage alternative leisure opportunities can help prevent the development of gambling problems. (Jackson, Darren, Dowling, Coles-Janess and Christensen, 2014).

This booklet provides information about low cost and no charge activities that can help you, family or friends build skills, improve your wellbeing and connect with others.

Brimbank City Council is strengthening our community by providing accessible places, activities and resources that offer an alternative to gambling.

Visit your Libraries, Neighbourhood Houses and Community Centres, and Leisure Centres to start your journey.

You can change your story by 'investing in you'.



There are a number of no charge and low cost online services and activities the Brimbank community can access.

Finding Cool Places

Cool Places is an online and printable map provided by Brimbank City Council to show you where to find accessible, comfortable, social spaces such as libraries, neighbourhood houses and community centres, parks, reserves and leisure centres. It also includes where to find free services such as water refill stations, public toilets, disabled car parking and train stations.



<https://www.brimbank.vic.gov.au/coolplaces>



Libraries

Brimbank City Council has five libraries located in Deer Park, Keilor, St Albans, Sunshine and Sydenham that offer a wide range of accessible, no charge services and activities for all ages and abilities. These include Book Groups, Connect & Chat Groups, Practice your English Classes, Digital Literacy Classes, and Create and Chat Sessions.

Not a member? Join online www.brimbanklibraries.vic.gov.au or call for more information **9249 4640**

Home Library Service

The Brimbank Home Library Service is available for Brimbank residents who are unable to visit the library due to illness, frailty, disability or carer responsibility. Books and other items are selected to meet individual interests and delivered to their home.



Call the Home Library Service Officer on **9249 4180** for further information

Libraries After Dark – Discover Something New at Your Community Lounge

Sunshine Library is open Thursday night until 10pm for Libraries After Dark.

Libraries After Dark provides access to no cost activities such as gardening, music, writing, business skills, start-ups and creative workshops. Programs are held in four week sessions to enable participants to build skills and friendship. This service can also reduce the dependency on visiting gaming venues for entertainment by providing safe, affordable long-term alternative experiences during the day and evening. Creating opportunities to encourage lasting community connection.



For further information or to suggest a program idea call the Libraries After Dark Coordinator at Sunshine Library on **9249 4640**

Resources



Use your library membership to connect www.brimbanklibraries.vic.gov.au

Ancestry



Discover your ancestors with the world's largest family history website. Start a family tree, browse census records and more online

Borrow Box



Borrow Box allows you to download e-books and e-audio straight onto your mobile device

Coursera, Khan Academy, EdX



Khan Academy



Lifelong learning is available to all of us. Want to try something new, discover learning opportunities through these online resources

Digital Learning



DIGITALLEARN.ORG
A PLA INITIATIVE

Free learning tools to help you with technology and the digital world.

Hoopla



Hoopla is a free digital media service that allows you to borrow movies, music, audiobooks, eBooks, comics and TV shows to enjoy on your computer, tablet, or phone – and even your TV!

Libby



Libby provides access to over 4,600 best-selling and classic e-book titles and 1000s of e-magazines

Mango Languages



Learn a new language or improve your English. There are over 70 languages to choose from.

Pressreader



PressReader delivers an endless stream of newspapers and magazines from around the world.

Studiosity



Looking for work or returning to study? Studiosity, a free online help program from real people, can help steer you in the right direction

Neighbourhood Houses and Community Centres

Brimbank's 10 Neighbourhood Houses and Community Centres are vibrant, safe, culturally diverse spaces. They support the community by providing low-cost and no charge programs and activities such as physical exercise, health and wellbeing, digital literacy, arts programs, hobbies, sport, and much more. Neighbourhood Houses and Community Centres also deliver a wide range of community events where people of all ages can connect with each other.



For further information about centre locations and programs call **9249 4555** or visit **www.brimbank.vic.gov.au/community/neighbourhood-houses-and-community-centres**

Social Prescribing and Brimbank Neighbourhood Houses and Community Centres

Social Prescribing is a no charge service that links people with social activities, programs or groups as a way of improving overall health and wellbeing. A health professional will meet with you to discuss your goals and then make a referral to a suitable activity or program, such as tai chi or social groups that support your health needs. Ask your Neighbourhood House or Community Centre staff about this service.



Brimbank Learning Futures (BLF)

For many reasons, people's education can get disrupted. BLF helps people get back on track so that they can gain skills and are better able to find work. The approach is flexible, responsive to individual needs.



To find out more about BLF programs please call **9249 4116** or email **learning@brimbank.vic.gov.au**

Services for Seniors

Brimbank Council values and supports our older community members to have good quality and independent lives. We provide a range of services, community support, and recreational programs to assist you, your family, and your carers, including:

- Bimonthly meetings
- Brimbank Active Seniors
- Brimbank Seniors Forum
- Annual Events
- Seniors Festival (month of October)
- Seniors Grants (annually)



For further information about any of these services call **9249 4000** or visit <https://www.brimbank.vic.gov.au/aged-care-and-seniors>

Senior Social Support Programs/Groups

This program is for residents of Brimbank who are 65 years and older.

The program offers a range of local activities and provides opportunities for people to socialise away from home. A main meal is provided along with assistance with transport. Culturally specific programs are available.

Prior to commencement of services, residents will need to organise an Assessment via My Aged Care. Call 1800 200 422 for further information or to arrange an appointment.

This service is funded under the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) and an affordable fee is charged based on your income level.



Prior to commencement of services, residents will need to organise an Assessment via My Aged Care. Call **1800 200 422** for further information or to arrange an appointment.

Disability Services

Brimbank City Council is committed to ensuring all community services are accessible and maintain people's independence and quality of life at home and in the local community.

Services include respite care, home care, personal care, home maintenance and meals on wheels.

Brimbank City Council also supports the Brimbank Disability Network Group, which meets bi-monthly to discuss issues around access and inclusion in the community.



For more information on any of these services call **9249 4000** or TTY: National Relay Service **13 3677**, visit <https://www.brimbank.vic.gov.au/disabilities> or email: info@brimbank.vic.gov.au

Brimbank Community Register

If you live in Brimbank, are over 50, or have a disability, you can join the Brimbank Community Register to receive regular phone calls and an ID card.

Joining the register can help you in two ways:



Phone calls: Register and we will phone you on a weekly, fortnightly, or monthly basis – whatever you choose. If a call is not answered after three attempts, we notify your next of kin and/or the police will visit your home.



Identity cards: Register and you will receive an identity card for use by emergency personnel. You should keep this card with you at all times as this identity card will hold important information that can be a quick and easy reference for Emergency and Medical personnel to be able to help you as quickly as possible.

The register is a joint initiative between Brimbank City Council and Victoria Police. Joining is voluntary and registration is free. It's also confidential and secure.



For more information on any of these services call **9249 4220** (Monday-Friday 9am till 12 noon)

Parks, Gardens and Walking Trails

Council offers a wide range of parks, playgrounds and reserves that include outdoor exercise spaces for people of all ages.

There are 25 Council-managed outdoor exercise equipment areas located in neighbourhoods where people can stay healthy and exercise outdoors for no charge.



For more information and a full list of locations, please visit www.brimbank.vic.gov.au/leisure-parks-and-facilities/parks/parks-brimbank/outdoor-exercise-equipment

Brimbank Leisure Centres

Brimbank City Council operates a leisure and aquatic centre in Sunshine.

A St Albans Pop-Up Gym is available during the construction of the new state of the art health and wellbeing hub, which will include a leisure and aquatic centre.



For more about Leisure Centres programs and activities, call **9249 4615** email: slc@brimbank.vic.gov.au or visit <https://leisurecentres.brimbank.vic.gov.au>

Volunteering

Volunteering is a great way to give back to the community, learn skills, keep active and meet new people.

Brimbank City Council welcomes volunteers from the community all year round and can assist with training and support.



For more information about volunteering please call **9249 4789** (Monday-Friday 9am till 12 noon)
email info@brimbank.vic.gov.au



The Brimbank Story

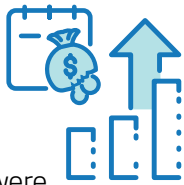
For over a decade Brimbank has had the highest pokie machine losses in Victoria

Estimated savings during COVID-19 shutdown period in 2020 were over



\$90 Million

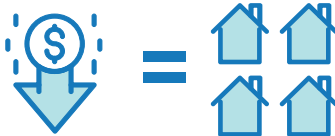
Average daily losses in the six months following re-opening of gaming venues were



highest
ever recorded in Victoria

Daily losses in Brimbank 2021 have reached over

\$440,000



This is the equivalent to four family houses being lost every week in Brimbank

Number of **pokie venues**

15



Average **fortnightly earning for a pokie machine** in Brimbank



(based on 2020-21 figures):

\$6,478

Number of **pokie machines** in Brimbank

953



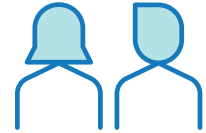
This is the limit.

Not one more pokie machine can legally be set up in Brimbank

One pokie machine for every

173

adults living in Brimbank



Fortnightly income for a **single aged pensioner**



(including Pension Supplement and Energy Supplement):

\$952.70

Playing the pokies more than once a week, or for more than



30 minutes

at a time, could mean you are at risk of gambling harm

* Statistical information about gambling is sourced from the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation.



Changing the story begins with knowing the traps

- Pokies are programmed for customers to lose their money slowly over time
- If you have a win, the machine is designed to get that money back
- There are no lucky machines and they are never “due” to pay out
- The lights and music are designed to keep people playing
- Losses may be disguised as wins
- Some people find the pokies are a way to escape from feeling sad, lonely or depressed
- Only take the amount of money you are prepared to lose and don’t take your credit card

What If You Can’t Stop?

- Pokies can change the way your brain works
- Some people zone out and lose control over the time and money they are spending
- People with gambling addiction need to be treated with compassion not judgement
- People who seek help for their gambling have a strong chance of recovery



Are You At Risk?

Some of the signs

- Gambling more than once a week
- Borrowing money from family and friends
- Having trouble sleeping
- Thinking about gambling a lot
- Spending less time with family and friends
- Having lots of loans
- Not paying bills
- Spending more and more time gambling
- Being secretive
- Taking a lot of days off or frequently unaccountably absent during the day
- Telling lies
- Forgetting, missing, important appointments



Invest in You - A Pathway Out of the Pokies



This story is one person's pathway away from the pokies and the behavioural change techniques she used, including replacing gambling with a love for photography. Her story is told in the hope that others may benefit from her approach.

As an adult educator **Kate** (**name changed*) was well versed in teaching others, but when it came to understanding the nature of her own pokie addiction, the lessons were more hard won.

Needing reprieve from a family violence situation, Kate found solace in the pokies. While playing the machines she felt moments of peace, reduced anxiety, excitement and freedom from being controlled and judged. The pokies allowed her to block out the reality of her home situation and enter a state of numb escapism.

With the death of her partner the threat of violence was lifted, but Kate's addiction to the machines wasn't. While she understood that she was wasting her time and money, she also felt trapped in her habit. She felt ashamed and her depression was overwhelming.

However Kate's desire to want a better life for her and her son drove her to look for ways to address her dependence on the machines. She knew that being "strong" and doing it alone was not working.

She started by being really honest with herself about the reality of her situation and began talking with trusted friends and a counsellor.

Her natural curiosity as an educator led her to study behavioural change techniques. She started reading self-help books and educating herself about habits, the brain and neural plasticity.

Hypnosis helped and she was able to channel her anxiety about the pokies into vivid visualizations that turned the gaming venues into filthy disgusting places that needed to be avoided at all costs. This change in the way she thought about the pokies led her to be repulsed by them.

A key strategy was replacing the habit of using the pokies with something far more beneficial and interesting. Kate returned to her love of photography with a passion.



From this experience Kate learnt that in order to get away from the pokies she needed:

- the desire to stop
- help and support from professionals
- the belief she could change
- something to replace the pokies; such as photography

Life is much better now.



Libraries After Dark Program Vietnamese Stories 1001

In partnership with the Invest in You project and the Australian Vietnamese Women's Association, Libraries After Dark offered people with lived experience of gambling and affected others an opportunity to write about their experiences.

Led by writer Malcolm Hill, and supported by a translator and counsellor, the group created a safe space to tell some hard truths and create compelling stories.

Over the weeks of the program, trust was built, confidence gained and words overflowed. The conversations between gamblers and affected others were particularly powerful.

Participants are now sharing their stories with their community through radio interviews, videos and articles. They want to show the human face of gambling and let people know the power of truth telling.



Gardening Not Gambling – Plants Not Pokies

The Bosnian Planned Activity Group worked with staff from Libraries, Neighbourhood Houses and the Invest in You project to trial a project specifically targeted at offering an alternative to visiting pokie venues. Led by Senada Ekic, the group was allocated four plots at Westvale Community Centre. Four workshops on soil, composting and planting, garden bed maintenance, and indigenous plants were delivered. The group now meets to socialise and tend to the plots on a permanent basis.



Photo credit: Boris Cerina

Start your New Story with the 100 Day Challenge

The 100 Day Challenge is a program for people who want to change their relationship with gambling.

The 100 Day Challenge offers participants 100 alternative recreational activities over 100 days, supporting them to take a break from, or cut back on, their gambling. The challenge can be accessed through app and web-based formats. It is a flexible program designed with the help of professionals to give participants the support they need. And it's all done anonymously.

People can set individual goals, get support and advice, discover new activities and chat to others who are also up for the challenge. For more information, visit: <https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/reducing-harm/awareness-campaigns/100-day-challenge/>



Why alternative activity is so important

““ These days, instead of going to the pokies, I look for creative projects at home. One of my favourites is creating photo books from old family photos. It's preserving our history and allows me to share special memories with my grandchildren. ””

- Carolyn

““ When I need to get out of the house, I head to the beach instead of the pokies. Just sitting in my fishing chair and listening to the sounds of the sea, or casting a line is relaxing. ””

- Alex

““ I returned to doing the things I enjoyed in my teens; riding my bike, gardening and my love of animals. I purchased plants and joined a gardening group. I connected with a local football club and watched football with other supporters. I took up snorkelling which was something I never expected to do as I have a fear of sharks, but once I started snorkelling I found it immensely enjoyable and relaxing. I continue to explore other healthy activities. ””

- Ian

““ Gambling to the point where you suffer harm involves a lot of time away from family and friends. When people stop gambling, the shame they feel can prevent them from reaching out to their previous support networks. This can increase feelings of isolation, loneliness and depression. Planning alternate healthy activities is vital to coping with this new way of life. ””

- Ian

““ I walk my dog Bindy every day, I go to the gym, I joined the RSL Darts team and I volunteer for the Wilderness Society. Keeping busy helps me stay in recovery. ””

- Ian

““ As a child I enjoyed riding a bike, so as a reward for abstaining from gambling I purchased a bike. Now I can ride for hours without even realising the time that has passed. ””

- Alex

““ I used to gamble obsessively, and when I conquered my addiction, I needed something meaningful to take its place. I've taken up playing [a musical instrument]. Now I'm obsessed with learning new tunes, and I play with a folk group every Thursday evening. We also play at (pokies free!) pubs once in a while. ””

- Stuart



Getting Help

Getting help is the first step to reducing gambling harm. Deciding where and how to start your journey can be confusing, so using a specialist service can help you get started. Below are just some of the gambling support services available in Victoria. For further information and services please visit Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation



<https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/for-professionals/health-and-community-professionals/gamblers-help/>

Gambling Support and Wellbeing Information

Service/
Activity/
Resource

IPC Health Gamblers Help



Description

Gambler's Help is a free confidential non-judgmental service available to individuals, families, friends and communities affected by gambling harm

Contact

If you or someone you know needs support please contact Gambler's Help IPC Health on **7037 2104** or Gambler's Helpline **1800 858 858** or visit



www.gamblershelp.com.au

Service/
Activity/
Resource

Multicultural Gambling Harm Prevention Services (MGHPS) - Settlement Services International



Description

MGHPS offer free, confidential services, including counselling, community information sessions, online and in-person group therapy, and more, to individuals and families experiencing negative effects from gambling. Support is available to all Victorian residents in-language.

Our services specialise in supporting community members from migrant, refugee, and multicultural backgrounds to overcome the negative effects of gambling, but are available to all Victorians. Free of charge service.

Contact

For free, confidential support,  **1800 329 192** or visit



<https://www.ssi.org.au/services/health-wellbeing-and-social-support/gambler-s-help-multicultural-services-victoria>

Service/ Activity/ Resource	Arabic Welfare Incorporated	
Description	Languages spoken: Arabic, English Services: counselling support and referral to English-language financial counselling	
Contact	For information or to make an appointment:  9380 9536 or  info@arabicwelfare.org.au	
	 https://www.arabicwelfare.org.au/	
Service/ Activity/ Resource	Australian Vietnamese Women's Association	
Description	Languages spoken: Vietnamese, English Services: services for aged, family, child and individuals. Support includes gambling and financial counselling	
Contact	For more information or to make an appointment: Richmond office: 9428 9078 Braybrook office: 9396 1922 or  info@avwa.org.au .	
	 https://www.avwa.org.au/en/	
Service/ Activity/ Resource	Federation of Chinese Associations, Social Welfare Centre	
Description	Languages spoken: Cantonese, Mandarin, English Services: counselling support and financial counselling	
Contact	For information or to make an appointment:  9650 1293 or  info@fca.fedsun.org	
	 https://www.avwa.org.au/en/	

Service/ Activity/ Resource	Chinese Peer Connection	
Description	<p>This service provides confidential peer support to Chinese speaking individuals who are being impacted by problem gambling</p> <p>All telephone support provided by trained Chinese speaking volunteers with personal experience of recovering from problem gambling</p>	
Contact	<p>Free and confidential</p> <p>Also open to partners, families and friends of the gambler</p> <p> 1300 755 878</p>	
	<p> https://www.each.com.au/service/chinese-peer-connection/</p>	
Service/ Activity/ Resource	Peer Connection	
Description	<p>Peer Connection is a free, confidential and easy to access telephone peer support service for people struggling to stop/control their gambling and for people impacted by another person's gambling</p> <p>All our peer support volunteers have experienced gambling harm themselves and can share their own stories of harm, hope and recovery</p>	
Contact	<p>For more information contact pcintake@bchs.org.au or  9450 2007 or visit</p>	
	<p> https://bchs.org.au/services/gambling-support/peer-connection/what-is-peer-connection/</p>	
Service/ Activity/ Resource	Lifeline	
Description	<p>Lifeline is a national charity providing all Australians experiencing emotional distress with access to 24 hour crisis support and suicide prevention services. Lifeline is committed to empowering Australians to be suicide-safe through connection, compassion and hope</p>	
Contact	<p> 13 11 14 or</p>	
	<p> https://www.lifeline.org.au/get-help/information-and-support/problem-gambling</p>	

Service/ Activity/ Resource	Beyond Blue	
Description	Beyond Blue provides information and support to help everyone in Australia achieve their best possible mental health, whatever their age and wherever they live	
Contact	 1300 22 4636  Chat online: https://online.beyondblue.org.au/#/chat/start  us using this link: https://online.beyondblue.org.au/email/#/send  https://www.beyondblue.org.au/	

Gambling Education Services

Service/ Activity/ Resource	Not a Dollar More	
Description	A podcast where you hear from others who have been there too. This podcast series has stories of hope and recovery, ideas for change and ways to get help. Presented by a person with lived experience themselves the podcasts are designed for people who are worried about their gambling or who are worried about another person's gambling or for people who want to know more about the problems gambling can cause	
Contact	Listen below:  https://notadollarmore.org.au/	

Brimbank City Council

Telephone 9249 4000

Email info@brimbank.vic.gov.au

Post PO Box 70, Sunshine, VIC 3020

Hearing or speech impaired?

- TTY dial 133 677
- Speak & Listen 1300 555 727
- www.relayservice.gov.au, then enter 03 9249 4000



Find us on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube

 www.facebook.com/brimbankcouncil

 www.twitter.com/brimbankcouncil

 www.youtube.com/brimbankcitycouncil



131 450

Local call costs apply



Use Brimby, the online virtual assistant
brimbank.vic.gov.au

www.brimbank.vic.gov.au