



# Gambling in Moreland 2015-2020

A strategy to reduce  
harm from gambling



Moreland City Council



# A word from the Mayor

Moreland City Council has long been at the forefront of the campaign to reduce problem gambling. We began our campaign in the 1990s, when the pokies were first introduced into Victoria. Today, poker machines remain the primary focus of our concern. While the rise of online gambling and sports betting is certainly worrying, these forms of gambling in fact represent a tiny proportion of the gambling industry's income.

Poker machines are designed to addict, and they remain the source of the vast majority of damage done to our community from gambling. Research shows us that over 75% of problem gamblers 'play' these machines. But who is really playing whom? The poker machine industry depends on problem gamblers for its survival. They provide 40% of the money fed through the poker machines according to the Productivity Commission. For many problem gamblers, the losses and social consequences are devastating. To make a real difference, we must tackle this complex problem at its heart.

Council will enhance our leadership in policy reform by advocating for improved regulation towards consumer protection. We are proud to be a founding partner of the new Alliance for Gambling Reform which coordinates the efforts of local governments, public health and community advocates, all equally determined to make a real difference to this complex problem. Lobbying for the introduction of \$1 maximum bet limits and \$120 maximum losses per hour on poker machines will be a key focus. These two simple measures will significantly reduce harm and have little impact on occasional poker machine users.

In the next five years Council will build a local 'coalition of concern' around this important issue to increase community awareness and convert concern, into action.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Meghan Hopper". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

**Cr Meghan Hopper**  
**Mayor**



# A strategy to reduce the harm from gambling

*Gambling in Moreland 2015 - 2020* is Moreland City Council's Strategy to reduce the negative impact of gambling on residents and the wider community. It will guide Council action and decision-making towards the next decade. The Strategy is informed by evidence from independent research, advice from local service providers and the views of residents including – importantly – those with a lived experience of problem gambling.

**Problem gambling is characterised by difficulties in limiting money and/or time spent on gambling which leads to adverse consequences for the gambler, others, or for the community.**

The Strategy has a strong focus on electronic gaming machines (hereafter called poker machines). This is due to their dominant role in the gambling industry and their contribution to problem gambling. 40% of total poker machine losses come from problem gamblers, according to the Productivity Commission (2010). It estimated that 75% to 80% of problem gamblers use poker machines.





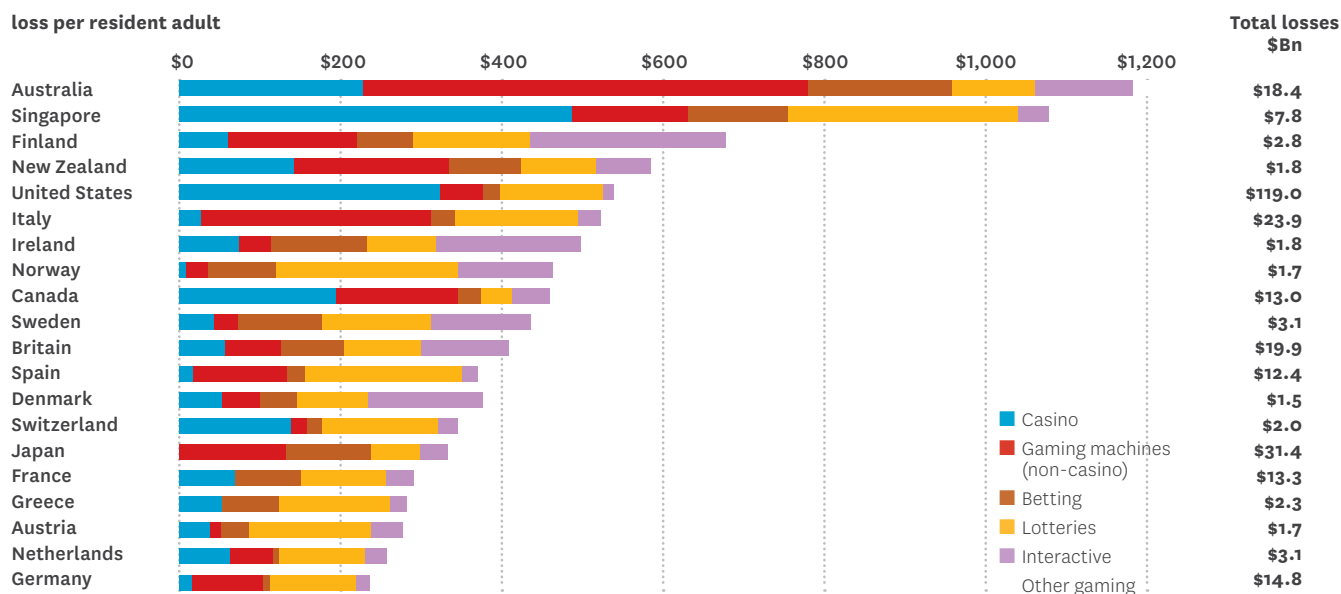


**Australians spend more on gambling  
per head than comparable countries.  
Poker machines are the source of over  
two thirds of total gambling losses.**

# Gambling – a national overview

**Australians spend more on gambling per head than comparable countries. Poker machines are the source of over two thirds of total gambling losses as shown below. Poker machines in hotels and clubs are the source of almost half these total losses.**

## Global gambling losses 2013



Source: H2 Gambling Capital published in the Economist.com

Interactive (online) gambling has grown rapidly in recent years, fuelled by intensive marketing increasingly embedded in high profile sport.

While still a very small proportion of total gambling losses, it will increase without effective control of advertising and inducements such as 'free credit'. Young men in particular are at risk from online and sports betting operators that target them. The nexus between gambling and sport is a growing concern for public health advocates including Council.

In September 2015 the Federal Social Services Minister announced a review of the *Interactive Gambling Act 2007*. He highlighted its focus on the impact of illegal offshore wagering operators on consumers and, most particularly on Australian interactive and sports betting companies. Council will advocate for enhanced consumer protection measures for Australian operators as well as those operating offshore.

## The Victorian context

Victorian Governments across the political spectrum have been reliant on gambling (especially poker machine) revenue over the past two decades. Approximately 10 per cent of Victorian taxes came from gambling taxes in 2014-2015 and almost 60 per cent of that came from poker machines. In 2012 the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission, estimated that problem gambling cost Victorians between \$1.5 billion and \$2.8 billion a year.

In recent years there has been a small decline in poker machines losses across Victoria (including Moreland). Despite this, losses from problem gamblers have not declined and may even have increased according to gambling expert, Dr Charles Livingstone. In a 2014 report to the Municipal Association of Victoria Dr Livingstone presented evidence of an increase in poker machine losses from problem gamblers. He compared the paradoxical effect with rates of cigarette smoking: "Although smoking rates have declined significantly, amongst those who continue to smoke the prevalence of disease is unaltered."

# Moreland Gambling Profile

Households surveyed reported that household members gamble:

**53%** on scratchies/Tattslotto

**26%** on horse racing

**23%** on poker machines

(at least occasionally), and

**8%** on sports betting

Moreland Household Survey 2013

Of those who gambled, poker machines were accessed at multiple locations including hotels (**47%**), the casino (**25%** down from 31% in 2011), RSL clubs (**42%** up from 37% in 2011) and sports clubs (**22%**).

Moreland Household Survey 2013

## 38% → 53%

Sports gambling was most likely to be accessed online (53% up from 38% in 2011) followed by at a hotel (18% down from 33% in 2011).

Moreland Household Survey 2013

## 74%

of Moreland survey respondents believed poker machines had a net negative impact on the Moreland community with **9%** believing they had a net positive impact.

Local Impact of Electronic Gaming Machine (EGM)  
Gambling in Moreland Report 2011



## 50%


of Moreland residents in 2014 reported that there are too many poker machines in their area.

Community Indicators Survey 2014

Online gaming was a common way to gamble on horse racing (**28%** up from 22% in 2011) followed by at the track (**27%**) and hotels (**24%**).

Moreland Household Survey 2013





**Negative impacts  
included financial  
problems, family  
neglect, addiction and  
social isolation.**

Local Impact of Electronic Gaming Machine  
(EGM) Gambling in Moreland Report 2011

# Poker machine losses in Moreland

In 2014-2015 more than \$63.5 million was lost on poker machines in Moreland. That’s \$174,031 every day, or \$468 per adult.

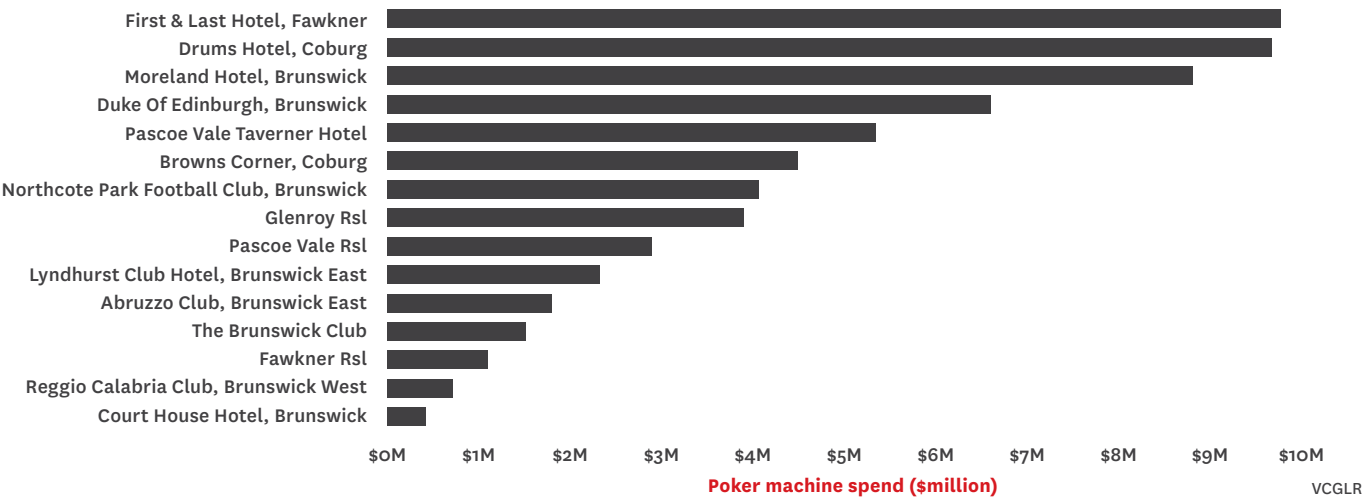
There are 671 poker machines operating in 14 Moreland venues (hotels and clubs). That’s a ratio of 5.3 machines per 1,000 adults. In 2014-2015 well over \$9 million was lost in each of Moreland’s highest earning gambling venues, the Drums Hotel in Coburg and the First and Last Hotel in Fawkner.

Victorian Commission for Gambling & Liquor Regulation (VCGLR)

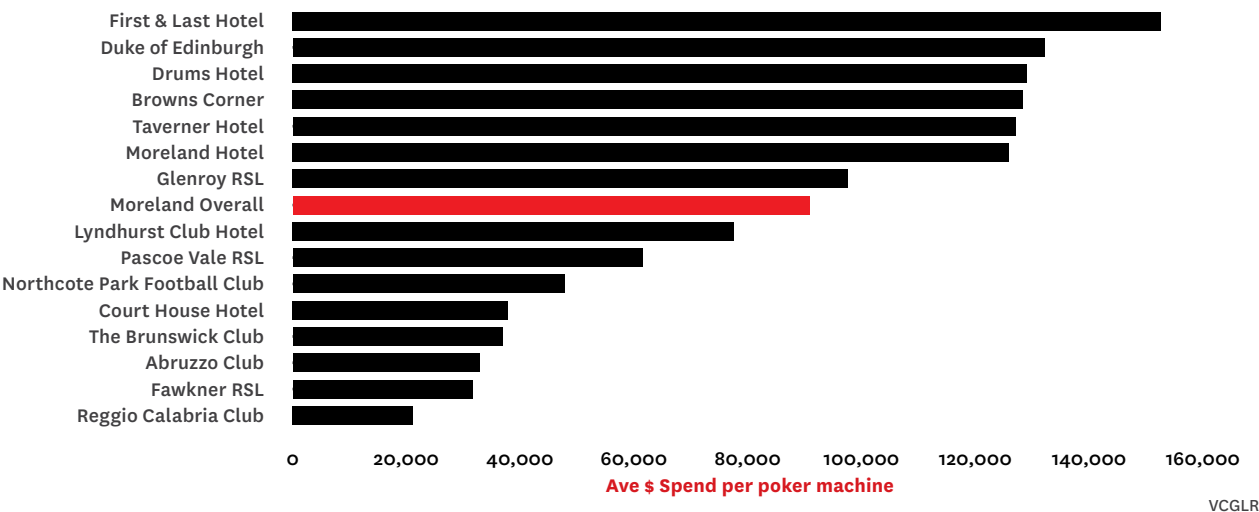
Poker machines in Moreland earn more per year than most local residents.



Total poker machine expenditure by venue (July 2014- June 2015)



\$ spend per poker machine by venue (2014/15)





# The social and economic costs of gambling

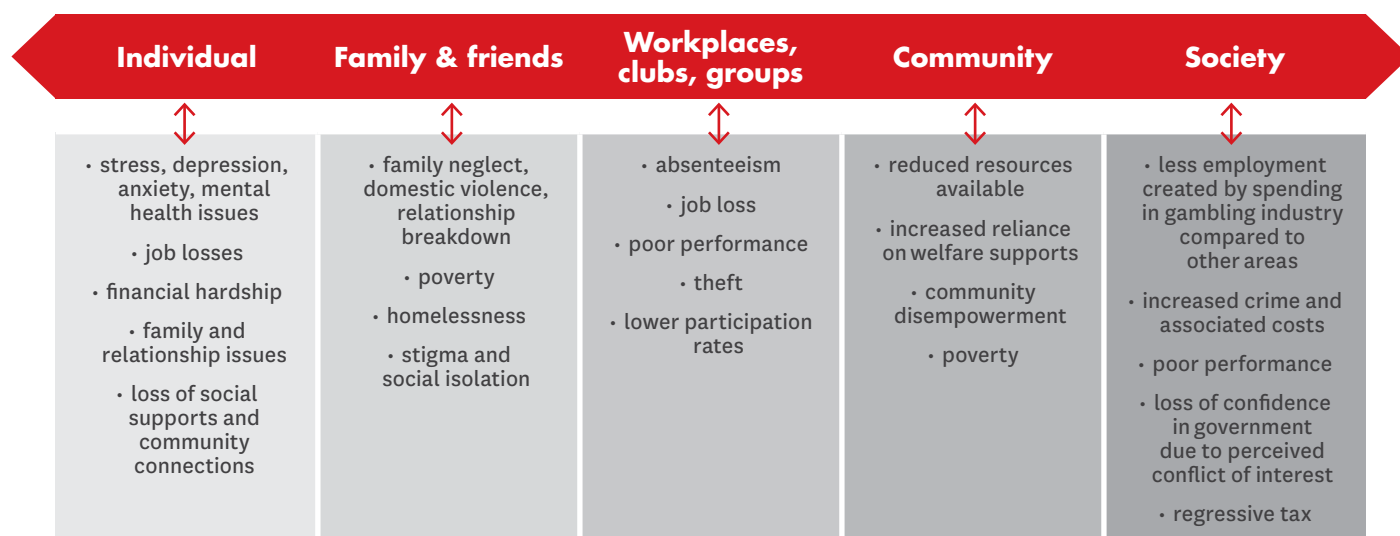
The harms from problem gambling include suicide, depression, relationship breakdown, mental and emotional ill-health, bankruptcy, job loss and crime. A growing concern is the relationship between family violence and problem gambling. Along with other social determinants of health that contribute to people being vulnerable to gambling harm, multi-pronged interventions and integrated solutions are required.

In 2013 a Victorian Coroner's Report documented 128 gambling related suicides since 2000. According to a 2010 Alfred Hospital Study one in five suicidal patients who presented to its emergency department was a problem gambler.

There is considerable shame and stigma that constrains many problem gamblers disclosing, or seeking help. It is estimated that approximately 15 % of problem gamblers contact Gamblers Help. Of those in Moreland that did seek help since July 2014, poker machines were identified as a problem in 60 percent of cases.

For each person experiencing problem gambling between five and ten others are affected, according to the Productivity Commission. The wider community also pays the price.

## Problem gambling cost the Australian community \$4.7 billion a year



Source: Health promotion resource guide for problem gambling in Melbourne North

Problem gambling cost the Australian community \$4.7 billion a year according to a conservative estimate of the Productivity Commission (2010).

The Gambling industry is huge; larger than others with an impact on public health as shown right.



Data supplied by Alliance for Gambling Reform



**\$16 billion Gambling**



**\$14 billion Alcohol**



**\$13 billion Tobacco**



**\$7 billion Illegal Drugs**



**Council recognises that electronic gaming machines (poker machines) are legal technologies used at least occasionally by 20 – 25 % of Moreland residents. Council is concerned about their potential to harm those at risk from problem gambling. Advocacy for enhanced consumer protection measures for poker machine users is therefore a central policy objective.**



# Moreland City Council Gambling Policy

Council's Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013- 2017 identifies a reduction in the significant harm caused by problem gambling as a key outcome. Council's Safer Gambling Policy articulates the public health approach to achieve this outcome. It is founded on the following principles:

- Primary prevention and harm minimisation
- Transparency of information and a clear evidence base
- Improving health and wellbeing
- Engagement, partnership and advocacy

## **Safer Gambling Policy Statement**

To reduce the harm from gambling Moreland City Council applies a primary prevention and harm minimisation approach. Council will work in partnership with the community, service providers and gambling venue operators towards vigilance in delivering safer gambling services. An evidence-based approach to planning, regulation, advocacy and community education will seek to reduce the negative impacts of current and emerging forms of gambling.

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## **Moreland Local Planning Policy on Gambling**

Land use planning at the local level has a significant role in addressing and regulating the use of electronic gaming machines (poker machines). Council wishes to ensure that the location of electronic gaming machines takes into account local characteristics which make a community more vulnerable to the negative effects of gaming.

Amendment C157, adopted by Council in July 2015, will introduce a Local Planning Policy on Gambling into the Moreland Planning Scheme, following Ministerial approval. The objectives of the Policy are to:

- Discourage new gaming machines in disadvantaged areas as defined by the SEIFA index of relative disadvantage
- Ensure that the location, design and operation of a gaming machine premises minimises the social and economic impacts caused by gaming machines and delivers a net community benefit.

# A framework for future action





## Leadership

Council will strengthen its leadership in local gambling policy reform and program development through advocacy for:

- increased consumer protection measures for gambling industry consumers especially poker machine users
- safer gambling products and operations
- more effective industry regulation
- restoration of local government rights to levy differential rates on gaming venues

## Priorities

- \$1 maximum bets & \$120 per hour maximum losses on poker machines
- *Enough Pokies* legislative reforms to enhance poker machine license regulation

## Partnership

Council will work in partnership with community, government, and industry bodies at all levels to implement this Strategy.

## Priorities

- Advocate for poker machine reform as a foundation partner of Alliance for Gambling Reform (AGR), a newly established national coalition of local government and community organisations
- Advocate for 'Enough Pokies' regulatory reforms in Victoria with the MAV and VLGA
- Participate in the VLGA Local Government Working Group on Gambling
- Collaborate with local government, public health and community development organisations in inner north west of Melbourne to strengthen problem gambling prevention efforts in the region
- Support development of a local 'coalition of concern' to enhance community understanding and action in relation to the risks of gambling



### State election Social harm appeal

## Councils call for rethink on pokies

**Richard Willingham**  
State Political Correspondent

The social and economic damage poker machines do to communities, especially in disadvantaged areas, must be given greater consideration when assessing new pokies, local councils are urging both sides of politics.

In the lead-up to the November 29 state election nearly 30 councils, the Municipal Association of Victoria and church groups are calling on whoever wins government to bolster the gambling commission's rules around assessing the impact of new poker machines.

Central to the Enough Pokies campaign is to place the burden of proving community benefit on the applicant. Currently applicants must prove there is no "net economic or social detriment" and councils say that too often the needs of communities are ignored with the process heavily weighted in favour of applicants.

Campaign spokesman Monash mayor Geoff Lake said the group was not about banning pokies. The net detriment test, he said, needs to take into consideration the social and economic status of an area. "There needs to be safeguards for suburbs in poorer areas when assessing new areas," Cr Lake said. Importantly, Cr Lake, who is a Labor Party member but says his position is not party-related, said the changes would not affect the state's gambling tax revenues.

"We are just asking to curb the predatory behaviour and reduce pokies moving from wealthier areas to poorer ones."

A government spokesman said the commission could currently only approve an application if satisfied the community will not suffer economic or social detriment.

Cr Lake gave the example of a Clayton venue that wanted to increase the number of machines it had. The council opposed it but the venue argued at the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation that the money raised from the pokies would pay for an upgrade of the drinking and gaming areas, which would benefit the wider community.

Monash University public health expert Charles Livingstone said there were 154 commission decisions on new venues or increases to venue size between July 2008 and September 2014.

"Of these, 140 were granted in full, three were partly granted, and 11 were unsuccessful," he said.

In 68 instances the local government opposed the application yet 57 applications were successful, with three more partly successful. "We need to consider more local issues. At the moment it is focused on the whole local government area, not the local suburb."

Labor's gaming spokesman, Martin Pakula, said if Labor were fortunate enough to be elected he would be prepared to sit down and discuss the proposal.

**THE POKIES  
PLAY YOU**

[www.pokiesplayyou.org](http://www.pokiesplayyou.org)

**ENOUGH  
POKIES**

## Innovation

Council will promote deeper and wider views on problem gambling to reduce stigma for those affected, and to enhance community support for those at risk and those close to them.

### Priorities

- Collaborate with those with a lived experience of problem gambling and with agencies that support them
- Support creative projects that explore/share stories and raise community awareness. A partnership with Snuff Puppets community arts company and neighbourhood houses is a priority
- Focus on gambling risks and problem gambling prevention in local community development and public health partnership initiatives

## Evidence

Council affirms a transparent, evidence-based approach to decision making in planning; industry regulation; policy and program development; advocacy and community education on gambling.

### Priorities

- Monitor application of the Local Planning Policy on Gaming to regulate the location and operation of gambling venues
- Assess the social and economic impact of poker machine license applications and represent community interests in regulatory processes
- Monitor research on existing and emerging forms of gambling and their impact on local communities
- Support independent research on gambling that has local relevance or direct application by Council. A partnership with an ANU-led research team conducting spatial impact analysis of gambling in Melbourne is a priority
- Enhance understanding of the role of problem gambling among the multiplicity of social determinants impacting on community health and wellbeing, especially those impacting on disadvantaged and cultural and linguistically diverse communities and the link between problem gambling and family violence

**Search 'Quit Pokies app' to download this free online tool**





**For more information or help**  
[www.responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au](http://www.responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au)

**Gamblers Help**  
1800 858 858

**Gamblers Help Youthline**  
1800 262 376

## Selected references

*Duds, Mugs and the A-List: The Impact of Uncontrolled Sports Betting*, Financial Counselling Australia, 2015

*The impact of the introduction of poker machines on communities: Health and Wellbeing Consequences*, Federation University Australia, 2014

*The Victorian Gambling Study: a Longitudinal Study of Gambling and Health in Victoria 2008- 2012*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, 2014

*Counting the Cost: Inquiry into the Costs of Problem Gambling*, Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission, December 2012

*Local Impact of Electronic Gaming Machine (EGM) Gambling in Moreland*, Report 2011

*Gambling Inquiry Report No. 50*, Productivity Commission, 2010



Moreland City Council

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#### Moreland Language Link

有關摩爾蘭德市政廳  
的詳情請致電

9280 1910

要进一步了解Moreland  
市政府的信息，请拨打

9280 0750

Per informazioni sul Comune  
di Moreland telefonare a

9280 1911

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Πο πληροφορίες σχετικά με το  
Δήμο Moreland τηλεφωνήστε στο

9280 1912

للحصول على معلومات عن بلدية مورلاند  
اتصلوا على الرقم

9280 1913

Moreland Belediyesi hakkında bilgi  
almak için aranabilecek telefon

9280 1914

#### All other languages

including អង់គ្លេស, Croatian,

Tagalog, Indonesia, Polski,

සිංහල, Español,

اردو, ગુજરાતી

9280 1919

Nếu muốn biết thêm chi tiết về Hội đồng  
Thành phố Moreland, xin quý vị gọi số

9280 1915

मोरलैंड सिटी काउंसिल के बारे में जानकारी  
प्राप्त करने के लिए फोन करें

9280 1918

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