

**GAMBLING DIVISION
VENUE OPERATIONS
PRE-HEARING SIZE, LAYOUT AND
FACILITIES REPORT**

CLUB WODONGA

CLUB WODONGA**Pre-hearing Size, Layout and Facilities Report****Report date: 12 August 2025**

1	Trading name of premises:	Club Wodonga
2	Location:	48 Reid Street WODONGA VIC 3690
3	Venue Operators Licence: V25100590	Huon Hill Club Ltd
4	Liquor Licence: 31954430	Applicant holds a General Licence
5	Applicant (Gaming):	Huon Hill Club Ltd
6	Authorised Representative:	John Feros is listed as the Authorised Officer
7	Premises Approval Number:	Premises approval number P25001447 has been allocated to this premises application
8	Monitor Licensee:	Intralot Gaming Services (IGS)

CLUB WODONGA

History

Huon Hill Club Ltd is seeking approval for new gaming premises located at 48 Reid Street, Wodonga, VIC 3690. The application includes a request to operate 70 gaming machines at the proposed site. The applicant proposes to convert an existing hotel premise, Huon Hill Hotel, to a community club, operating under a full club liquor licence, trading as Club Wodonga. Huon Hill Hotel is owned and operated by Wodonga Nominees Pty Ltd and presently offers a range of food and beverage options but does not, and has never been approved to, operate gaming machines.

The applicant, Huon Hill Club Ltd, was approved as a venue operator licensee (VOL) on 07 May 2025. According to the NBA Group, who prepared the Social and Economic Impact Assessment report on behalf of the applicant, Huon Hill Club Ltd has been created as a company limited by guarantee to trade as Club Wodonga. Huon Hill Hotel is owned by JDA Victorian Investments Pty Ltd as trustee for JDA Victorian Investments Family Trust. The individuals associated with the Huon Hill Club VOL, John Feros, Dean Feros and Paul Henderson, are 2 of the 3 owners of JDA Hotels, the other being Alexandra Henderson (formerly Feros). JDA Hotels is a hospitality group business owned and operated by the Feros family. The applicant has advised that the proposed Club Wodonga will be managed by JDA Management Services (Victoria) Pty Ltd, trustee for the JDA Management Services (Victoria) Trust.

JDA Hotels currently owns and operates a total of 11 hotels: 8 in metropolitan Sydney, one in regional New South Wales, 2 in Queensland, and the Huon Hill Hotel in Wodonga, Victoria. In addition, the company operates 2 bottle shops and a Putt Putt miniature golf course, all located in Queensland. Eight of the hotels in New South Wales and both Queensland hotels are licensed to operate gaming machines. The company has not previously operated, nor been associated with, any gaming venues in Victoria.

The Huon Hill Hotel is located on the corner of Havelock and Reid Streets in Wodonga and shares a carpark and carriageway access, off both streets, with a Quest Serviced Apartments (Quest) property. Whilst the Quest apartments are on an adjacent site to the hotel, they are only separated by carpark and a vehicle carriageway. The 2 properties are connected by an elevated glass skywalk (enclosed bridge) between the hotel and Quest apartments, which provides pedestrian access between the buildings. The applicant has advised that the Quest apartments do not provide on-site dining facilities, so Quest visitors are currently provided access to the food and beverage facilities of the hotel. Currently the hotel has bistro, bar and lounge facilities including terraced and decked areas, children's play area, function and conference facilities and car parking for up to 141 vehicles.

There are currently three approved gaming venues in the City of Wodonga, all of which are hotels. Together, they operate a total of 150 gaming machines. The largest venue, Elgin's, is licensed to operate 80 machines; the Blazing Stump Hotel is licensed for 40 machines; and the Birallee Tavern is licensed for 30 machines. The regional cap for gaming machines in Wodonga is 304, meaning there is sufficient capacity to accommodate the 70 additional machines now being proposed.

There are a number of non-gaming licensed properties within close proximity of the proposed Club Wodonga premises, including the Wodonga RSL, Wodonga Bowling Club, and various cafes and restaurants.

The nearest gaming venue is Elgin's, located approximately 750 metres from the proposed new premises, operating every day from 10:00 am until 3:00 am the following morning.

As the Huon Hill Hotel has never been a premise approved for gaming, no previous inspections have ever been conducted by VGCCC inspectors.

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Planning

The applicant has lodged an application for a planning permit, with reference number 35/2025, with the City of Wodonga local government authority. The planning permit seeks approval for:

- buildings and works for alterations and addition to a hotel
- car parking waiver
- an increase in the area that liquor is allowed to be consumed or supplied under a licence, and
- the installation of gaming machines.

At the time of drafting this report, a review of the City of Wodonga planning list revealed that the planning application was under assessment with a status of 'Further information required'. Whilst the application as shown on the planning list does not detail the number of gaming machines being applied for, the Planning Permit Application documents supplied by the applicant's representative, NBA Group, indicate they are seeking planning approval to operate 70 gaming machines.

The applicant proposes the new café area will be used to provide breakfast to their patrons and those of the Quest apartments from 7 am daily. The applicant has not indicated whether they will be applying for a liquor licence variation, as the current licence permits trading on any day, other than Sunday, between 7 am and 1 am the following morning, with Sunday trading hours not permitted to commence until 10 am. Alternatively, they may not be seeking a licence variation and instead not provide alcohol until 10 am.

Based on the information provided, the applicant has not indicated how or where they intend to source the requisite 70 gaming machine entitlements from.

Premises and Gaming Machine Area / Layout and Suitability

The applicant has provided indicative gaming machine area and site plans of the proposed premises.

The premises site slopes slightly downhill from its location on Reid Street, resulting in the Huon Hill Hotel premises being split level. The main level, referred to in the applicant's supporting documents as the ground floor, houses all food and beverage facilities, whilst the lower level, referred to as the lower ground floor, appears to be used currently for back of house services.

The applicant proposes undertaking the following building works to the premises, if their application is successful:

Lower ground floor

- gaming machine area (GMA) to accommodate 70 gaming machines, incorporating a lounge area in front of the gaming bar
- designated outdoor smoking area (DOSA) located to the rear of the GMA, and
- café and bar area incorporating a café lounge and alfresco/outdoor dining.

Ground floor

- expand existing Sports Bar, incorporating indoor and outdoor areas
- new TAB area
- additional enclosed dining areas
- reconfigured DOSA's, and
- relocated and expanded children's play area.

An assessment of the proposed plans and evidence reports provided indicates the following positive harm minimisation aspects:

- The Gaming Machine Area (GMA) is located on a different level from most of the proposed venue's hospitality facilities. As a result, patrons accessing the dining areas, TAB, function spaces, and Sports Bar will not be exposed to the GMA or gaming machines.
- Due to its location, the GMA is expected to function as a destination room. Patrons are likely to enter with the intention of playing the gaming machines, rather than being influenced by incidental exposure.
- The elevated glass skywalk connecting the Quest apartments leads to the venue's ground floor and does not provide direct access to the GMA.
- The GMA entrance from the covered entry/exit point is screened by a curved partition and a single door. It is unclear whether the door is made of glass or an opaque material.
- Access from the ground floor to the lower ground floor (where the GMA is located) is via stairs or a lift. Both access points open into a lobby that is separated from the GMA by the café area.
- The children's play area is located on a different level to the GMA, eliminating potential issues related to visibility or sound from gaming.
- Gaming cashier and bar services are located within the GMA, helping ensure that a Responsible Gambling Officer is always present in the room.
- A designated respite/lounge area is available within the GMA for patrons wishing to take a break. Although it remains near the gaming machines, an adjacent café and lounge area also provides a more removed space for respite.
- The applicant has confirmed that food and beverages will be available in the café/lounge area during the hours the GMA is open.

The following negative aspects related to harm minimisation were identified in the proposed plans and supporting evidence reports

- the GMA is located immediately adjacent to the café area that the applicant proposes to use to provide breakfast services to the Quest apartment guests. To access the café, patrons will be required to walk past the entry point to the GMA via the covered entry/exit way, which may result in patrons using it as the means of accessing the café. Appropriate and well-placed signage will be required to avoid confusion.
- once in the café / café lounge areas, there are two entry points into the GMA, one of which appears to be an opening with no door (directly in front of the opening between the café and gaming bar server counters). The other entry point appears to be a sliding door however there is no indication as to whether it is glass or a non-see-through material
- whilst we would prefer to prevent external views into the GMA from the car park and surrounds, including the Quest apartments, there is a genuine concern regarding the amount of natural light and external views that will be provided to patrons from within the GMA. The only glassed area apparent on the indicative plans appear to be 4 small windows on the perimeter wall between the GMA and the DOSA, with views of the DOSA and enclosing wall. A lack of natural light and windows that afford a view may not be sufficient to mitigate against creating an immersive environment. From a harm minimisation perspective, it is important that patrons receive visual cues of the passage of time (e.g. day to night, weather changes, etc.) to ensure they don't become immersed in their gaming
- the applicant has not indicated on the indicative GMA plan where any Cash Redemption Terminal (CRT) will be located. There is sufficient space within the proposed GMA to house a CRT, the applicant will just need to ensure that it is not located within 2 meters of any gaming machine

available for gaming

- the EFTPOS facility for the purpose of withdrawing cash (shown on the plans as ATM) is located immediately adjacent to the entry point to the GMA, just on the café side of the proposed green line. Whilst its proposed location is not a breach of legislation, appropriate screening may be needed to prevent the promotion of its availability to gaming patrons.

If successful, the applicant has indicated that an estimated \$6 million will be spent on redeveloping the proposed club premises.

In relation to the indicative GMA plan with a proposed layout of 70 gaming machines, there appears to be sufficient space within the proposed area to house that number of gaming machines.

Comment

Applications for new venues, variations to the licensed number of gaming machines and the relocation of GMAs are assessed by Gambling Division inspectors against standards and guidelines in relation to:

- the size, location and layout of the GMA
- type and height of perimeter barriers
- floor numbering and layout of gaming machines
- windows
- proximity of the GMA to other facilities within the venue (e.g. children's play areas), and
- any liquor or statutory authority conditions imposed.

These criteria enable us to make informed assessments as to whether the size, layout and facilities of a venue will be suitable for the management and operation of gaming machines regarding the following sections of the Act:

Section 3.3.7

Matters to be considered when determining applications for the approval of premises for gaming.

Section 3.3.16

Modification of gaming machine areas.

Sections 3.4.17

Amendment of conditions - variation of the number of gaming machines permitted in an approved venue.

Section 3.4.18

Proposal of amendment by venue operator - request by a venue operator for an amendment of licence conditions.

If the concerns raised regarding:

- the entry points into the GMA from the adjacent café and café lounge area
- placement of signage and appropriate directions on how to access the café
- placement and screening of the EFTPOS facility
- lack of windows creating an immersive environment, and
- the potential to force a patron into the GMA to access the DOSA

are addressed, we consider that the size, layout and facilities of the proposed new premise, Club

Wodonga, will be suitable for the management and operation of 70 gaming machines.

Prepared by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Stuart Woodward'.

Stuart Woodward
Senior Gaming Inspector, Venue Operations
Gambling Division

Date: 02/06/2025

Noted:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Jorja Skaltsas'.

Jorja Skaltsas
Deputy Director, Licensing and Compliance
Gambling Division

Date: 12/08/2025