

THE POKIES PLAY YOU

Alliance slams slap on the wrist for Mounties for letting child play poker machine

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Mounties in Fairfield, the club ranked 1st in NSW for poker machine profits, has been fined a measly \$6000 after video footage showed staff ignored a child playing a machine in the club. The Alliance for Gambling Reform is calling for a complete overhaul of the penalties for breaches in NSW after this appallingly low penalty was handed down yesterday in the District Court.

"The fine applied to Mounties for this outrageous breach of regulations amounts to a tiny 0.009% of annual poker machine profits. Mounties paid for this fine in less than 48 minutes of machine operations" said Alliance for Gambling Reform NSW Campaigner Kate da Costa

"Mounties operates in Fairfield, an area of NSW so badly impacted by gambling harm that a total cap on pokies was placed on the council area in 2018's legislative review. While the cap does nothing to reduce numbers, it is at least a recognition by the government that Fairfield residents should be protected."

"No pub in Australia would allow a small child into a bar area, let alone get a drink. This incident shows how sloppy clubs really are about monitoring their gambling areas. They pay lip service to gambling harm minimization measures, but have no real interest in closely observing what goes on in the gambling rooms. How can we have any faith that they manage self-exclusions - the main technique for gambling harm minimization that the industry claims to use - if they can't even keep kids out of pokie rooms?

"Penalties for breaches of the regulations should hurt the operators. They should be framed as a percentage of the revenue, and, like the three-strikes law, clubs and hotels should face the real risk of losing all their poker machine licences for significant and persistent bad behaviour.

"ClubsNSW tells us all the time that poker machines are necessary, that the Responsible Conduct of Gambling training is sufficient, that clubs do wonderful things in their communities. We say, enough is enough. We call on District Court magistrates to recognize that these are not mere technical breaches of an obscure regulatory code. These are not victimless crimes.

"The Woolies divestment shows that the message is getting through – this is a toxic industry. The NSW government and judiciary must do all they can to accelerate the cultural change we need to protect NSW citizens, who collectively lose \$17million a day on poker machines.

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