

THE POKIES PLAY YOU

Response from Tim Costello to record AHA donations

Tuesday, March 26, 2019

Alliance for Gambling Reform spokesman and director Tim Costello made the following comments today after [the disclosures in *The Age*](#) that the Australian Hotels Association spent almost \$1 million in donations ahead of the recent Victorian election:

"The pokies industry is Australia's equivalent of the NRA and these latest disclosures of a \$1 million donations splurge by the AHA in Victoria are nothing short of disgraceful."

"Whether it is One Nation soliciting donations from the NRA or the AHA giving \$500,000 to Victorian Labor and \$300,000 to the Coalition parties, this sort of influence peddling is completely unacceptable and comes on top of the record [\\$3 million in 2017-18 gambling donations](#) disclosed last month."

"Just like guns are America's blind spot, the world's most saturated pokies market is one of Australia's greatest political failings as it causes enormous social damage through suicide, bankruptcy, family violence, imprisonment and fraud, which is particularly concentrated in disadvantaged communities."

"I call on Premier Daniel Andrews and Opposition leader Michael O'Brien to explain these donations today and for the major parties to pay the tainted pokies money back to this ruthless rent-seeking industry."

"These latest revelations confirm once again why Australia needs a Royal Commission into the influence peddling, weak regulation and enormous damage caused by the gambling industry through the \$24 billion a year lost by gamblers, almost \$14 billion of which is through the 200,000 poker machines strewn across 5000 pubs, clubs and casinos."

"It is so blatant to have an industry deluge cash on the major Victorian parties shortly after they colluded to [pass legislation](#) approving lucrative new 20 year pokies licences for the pubs and clubs."

"Woolworths, through its 75%-owned subsidiary ALH, was the largest contributor to the \$1 million donations splurge by the AHA ahead of the Victorian election and I call on the Woolworths board to join the likes of NAB, BHP and Rio Tinto and ban all political donations, resigning the ALH membership of the AHA if necessary."

"We need to start treating the gambling industry like tobacco through comprehensive advertising bans, restrictions on donations and a public health approach but before any legislative action, the major parties need to replicate their voluntary ban on accepting tobacco donations when it comes to their dealings with the gambling industry."

- [Listen to Tim Costello](#) discuss the guns and pokies issues on ABC Melbourne this morning.

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