

THE POKIES PLAY YOU

AFL puts cart before the horse with pay deal

Tuesday, June 20, 2017

The Alliance for Gambling Reform today took issue with the AFL and its players union for locking in an excessive pay deal before resolving how to wean AFL clubs off their pokies addiction.

Alliance spokesman and director Tim Costello said the huge pay rises would put even more pressure on clubs to push the envelope of gambling to stay competitive and retain the best talent.

“AFL clubs, led by Hawthorn and Carlton, are collectively fleecing almost \$100 million a year off their poker machine operations and gambling joint ventures in order to pay players and meet other expenses,” Mr Costello said.

“The AFL promised to come up with a Responsible Gambling Policy to help wean clubs off the pokies and this should have been done before today’s 6 year pay deal was finalised.”

New AFL chairman needs to deliver on gambling reform

Mr Costello said new AFL chairman Richard Goyder has a commendable personal record through his commitment to \$1 maximum bets at Wesfarmers, but the AFL needs to do more to demonstrate the code is taking gambling harm seriously.

“Mr Goyder was a real trail-blazer at Wesfarmers and as a new leader at the AFL, I hope he can put his stamp on the organisation by turning around the gambling practices – particularly when his old club Fremantle has no pokies,” Mr Costello said.

The Alliance was particularly disappointed when the AFL recently lobbied hard against proposed restrictions on gambling advertising in order to protect the value of its media rights and joint venture arrangements.

“The Senate is this week considering a package of media reforms including some limited restrictions on gambling advertising during live television broadcasts,” Mr Costello said. “The scope for pushing further on these much-needed advertising restrictions has been hampered by this excessive pay deal at a time when broadcast media business models are under intense pressure.”

Revenue share give players an incentive to increase gambling

The Alliance is also concerned that the leaders of Australia’s football industry have embraced revenue sharing as a pay model because this will further incentivise the insidious penetration of gambling into multiple facets of the game.

“Loading up the superannuation of players with a share of unbudgeted revenues will now have the perverse effect of players potentially pushing for more gambling ads, sponsorship and high intensity pokies operations,” Mr Costello said.

“The industry should be building in incentives to do the exact opposite – how about a tax deduction for players who donate funds to community sporting clubs which promise to go clean of all gambling funding?”

In conclusion, The Alliance is deeply disappointed with this deal and calls on individual clubs, board directors and players to push the AFL Commission to pro-actively reduce its gambling dependency, rather than locking in an irresponsible pay rise before it has figured out how to reduce the scourge of gambling poisoning our great game.

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Summary of AFL Club pokies dependency in 2016

Club	2016
Hawthorn	\$22,917,505
Carlton	\$21,622,984
Brisbane	\$15,100,000
Essendon	\$12,153,232
Collingwood	\$11,916,286
Melbourne	\$10,709,749
Port Adelaide	\$7,250,000
Western	
Bulldogs	\$5,822,340
Richmond	\$5,429,032
Geelong	\$5,159,430
St Kilda	\$2,144,663
Totals	\$120,225,221