

THE POKIES

PLAY YOU

**Essendon Football Club's
Pokies are taking more than
\$11.5 million
from struggling communities.**

**Tell the Essendon Board to
get out of pokies NOW.**

**AFL clubs such as Collingwood, Melbourne and
the Western Bulldogs have all announced they
are ditching their poker machines and Essendon
Football Club should follow their lead.**

pokiesplayyou.org.au

Essendon lock in three-decade pokies lease

Melton City Council voted unanimously on Monday night to approve a 29-year lease extension allowing the Essendon Football Club to continue operating Melton Country Club and its 89 poker machines until the end of 2047.

The lease for the venue, at which gamblers lost \$5.69 million in 2017-18, was due to expire in 2022.

Councillor Steve Abboushi, who in the lead-up to the vote labelled it a "difficult situation", was unable to attend Monday's council meeting due to family commitments.

The decision was slammed by gambling reform advocate Tim Costello, who was critical of the Melton RSL's support for the lease extension.

The Melton RSL's submission to council, seen by The Age, said it would like to renew the lease would put in place a "most desirable use" for the premises, having a "most desirable use" in the branch.

"Essendon knows you do not enrich a football club on the back of personal misery and broken lives, which is why other AFL clubs have decided to get out of pokies," said Costello

THE AGE, 11 DECEMBER 2018

'This ain't over': Essendon's pokies plan thwarted, for now

A motion to temporarily block Essendon Football Club's controversial 29-year pokies lease has been upheld by Melton City Council officials.

The council voted unanimously on Monday night to allow Essendon to continue operating Melton Country Club and its 89 poker machines until the end of 2047.

However a rescission motion - which has the effect of repealing a previous council resolution - was later put by councillor Steve Abboushi in a bid to hear from more voices in the community regarding the plans.

"We need an opportunity to hear from all sides, not just Essendon's," said Cr Abboushi, who couldn't attend Monday's council meeting due to family commitments.

The rescission means debate will resume on the Essendon lease at council's next meeting in February, provided Cr Abboushi's motion is seconded by another councillor at the beginning of the meeting.

"I will always consider these matters with an open mind - I just feel that allowing a 29-year lease extension of a council-owned facility without an opportunity to consider all the associated issues is quite serious," Cr Abboushi said.

"There was absolutely no debate on this matter on Monday (at the council meeting) and I can't understand why."

The Age understands an alternative plan for the lease may be put to council at its next meeting, allowing for the Melton RSL to lease the venue at a peppercorn rent for their

meetings, cutting the Bombers out of the deal entirely.

Gambling reform advocate Tim Costello appealed to Essendon president Lindsay Tanner, who he called a "principled man", to make the decision easy for Melton Council by revoking Essendon's application.

"This ain't over," Mr Costello said.

"Collingwood and other clubs have shown divesting from pokies is doable ... Essendon has no excuse now."

AFL Fans' Association president Gerry Eeman was also critical of the Dons' plans, saying "pokies are legal, but most fans don't like their clubs being involved with them."

"Fans feel that gambling now saturates the football world, and they don't like it," Mr Eeman said.

THE AGE, 13 DECEMBER 2018

Stand up today and ask your board

1. Why has Essendon sought a new 29 year pokies lease from City of Melton when other clubs like Collingwood are exiting the pokies industry?
2. How much clear profit do we make each year from our pokies operations at Windy Hill and In Melton?
3. How much have we paid so far to buy new 20 year pokies licences from the Victorian Government and how much are we expecting to pay in total for the 190 entitlements?