



MEDIA RELEASE

FOOTBALL CLUB'S POKIE DEN PROPOSAL

15 December 2020

A proposed pokies den in the heart of Tarneit, to be run by a local football club, could take up to \$8 million from the community in its first year of operation.

The application by the Werribee Football Club to have 70 pokie machines would result in significant harm to the Tarneit and Truganina community, at a time when economic recovery and stability is more important than ever.

"We are concerned about this venue, with its proposed opening hours of 8AM-2AM daily, as it is in close proximity to a retirement village, a main train line and a major shopping precinct," said Alliance for Gambling Reform Chief Advocate, the Rev Tim Costello.

"Wyndham residents saved almost \$70 million from the pokies shutdown during the COVID-19 lockdown, money that has allowed families to put food on the table, pay their bills and gone into other local small businesses and boosted the local economy. COVID-19 recovery should be focused on local businesses that continue to be safe and free from harm.

"While the Werribee Football Club claims to have the intention of providing community services and amenities for the community through the income of these machines, the harm that will be done by this venue far outweighs any good it will do for the community."

Club Tarneit would be located in the Tarneit Major Town Square, where other cafes, bars, restaurants, and retail shops are planned for development, and where a Bunnings is under construction. The Tarneit Community Learning Centre is also nearby, where community groups hire rooms at a discounted rate.

The Werribee Football Club already operates the Tigers Clubhouse in Hoppers Crossing, where the existing 85 machines take nearly \$11 million every year from the community.

"It has also been very disappointing to see figures such as the Member for Werribee, the Hon. Tim Pallas, endorse this venue application given the harms of gambling in Wyndham have been significant with residents losing over \$106 million to the pokies in previous financial years," Rev Costello said.

"We saw the respite given to those suffering from gambling harm when pokies venues closed, but we also saw how vulnerable the community was during the COVID-19 restrictions. Given we see the harm that is created by the pokies, we are concerned that more machines in the heart of Tarneit will cause even further harm."

The Alliance is a national advocacy organisation which works to prevent and minimise the harm from gambling. Our aim is to remove the shame that surrounds gambling addiction, have the problem treated as a public health issue, and achieve the legislative changes needed to protect our communities.



ALLIANCE FOR
GAMBLING REFORM

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In Early December, VCAT rejected an application for a new venue from the Melbourne Storm with 80 machines further down Leakes Road in Truganina that "on the evidence available the social disbenefits of this proposal outweigh the social and economic benefits of the proposal."

"This was a really big win for the community and to ensure a similar outcome in Tarneit we need as many community members as possible to tell decision makers to reject the application," Rev Costello said.

To make a submission head to the VCGLR website. To sign up for updates or more info on how you can get involved in the fight against more pokies in Wyndham sign up using this link:
https://www.pokiesplayyou.org.au/wyndham_woods_rd

Link to VCAT Decision for 231 Leakes Road:

<http://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/cases/vic/VCAT//2020/1343.html>

For media inquiries contact Rebecca Thorpe on rebecca@agr.org.au or 0491 209 436.

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