



MEDIA RELEASE

05 September 2023
For Immediate Release

The Essendon Football Club's Other Unwanted Record

No Pokies at Essendon (NoPE) is saddened by the newly released FY 2022-23 [venue expenditure data](#) from the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission (VGCCC), that shows the Essendon Football Club's two poker machine venues recorded their highest combined player loss totals since the 2007-08 financial year. This is not the long-standing record that Essendon fans were hoping the club would break this September.

NoPE believes that these record gambling losses starkly highlight the failing of the Essendon Football Club. The data shows:

- Gamblers at the Essendon Football Club's two poker machine venues lost a combined total of \$14,721,208.14 over the period.
- The \$8.45m of player losses recorded at Essendon's Melton Country Club venue is \$1.3m more than the venue's previous high.
- This represents a 45% increase on the average annual loss recorded at the venue over the 10 years before Covid (2009-10 to 2018-19).
- Over \$40m was lost at the eight venues operated by Victorian AFL clubs (Essendon, Carlton, Richmond, St Kilda).
- While Carlton's \$19.1m losses across their four venues was the highest total, Essendon led the way on a loss-per-machine basis with \$77,480.04. Over \$11,500 more than the next closest club, Carlton.

NoPE condemns the damage caused by Essendon, and the AFL's, on-going addiction to poker machine revenue. In the midst of a cost-of-living crisis these figures, and the damage they represent, are even more concerning. After nearly two decades of on-field failure, one must question if the pokies-led business model of easy money regardless of the harm has entrenched a deeper malaise within the club.

NoPE President, Mike Read, commented that "In recent years we have seen AFL clubs rush to get out of the pokies business, recognising the immense social harm they cause. Essendon, instead, points to the revenue that gaming machines provide the football club, as though yet another disappointing season on-field justifies the continued damage that the predatory machines inflict. For a long time now AFL clubs have been guided by commercial interests but it's important that they don't forget they're also operating within communities. Part of that is to ensure they don't leave those communities worse off - an important test that the club, through their pokies operations, is currently failing."

Essendon have a choice to make; their gaming licences, or their social licence.

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