



# MEDIA RELEASE

28/06/2024  
For Immediate Release

## No Winners as Essendon Finally Avoids Second Half Fadeout

Essendon fans have been left questioning their club once again but this time the reason was an improved second half performance. Data released on Friday by the [Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission \(VGCCC\)](#) showed a 7.3% increase in pokie losses at the spiritual home of Essendon, Windy Hill, during the second half of FY 2023-24.

Overall \$14.4m was lost on 190 Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) across Essendon's two venues in FY 23-24. Of this, \$8m came from Essendon's Melton Country Club venue, despite having fewer EGMs than the Windy Hill venue. While this represents a 4.8% decrease compared to FY 22-23, it concerningly continues a trend of losses 20% greater than the five-year pre-COVID average.

At a loss-per-machine level Essendon's \$75,881 was the highest of the four Victorian clubs who are also pokies operators. In total \$40.2m was lost at venues operated by Victorian AFL clubs.

These figures should be seen in context of the human cost:

- It is estimated that at least half the money lost on pokies is from problem gamblers. <sup>(1)</sup>
- Research shows one person's experience with gambling harm can negatively affect six other people. <sup>(2)</sup>
- Studies have shown a greater prevalence of crime in areas with a higher density of poker machines, including intimate partner violence. Avoiding these violent environments is also a known driver for many women who develop gambling issues to first enter pokies venues. <sup>(3)(4)</sup>
- A former prisoner at the Dame Phyllis Frost women's prison told the ABC last week that about 75% of women in the prison were there as a result of gambling addiction. <sup>(5)</sup>

The VGCCC acknowledged the role of gambling providers in contributing to gambling harm when stating that "they alone choose to provide gambling services which cause harm." <sup>(6)</sup>

AFL clubs with pokies operations could make a real difference to their communities by ending their dual role as gambling providers.

### About NoPE:

No Pokies At Essendon (NoPE) is a grassroots group of Essendon fans actively advocating for the Essendon Football Club to make a meaningful and public commitment to exit the poker machine business.



## MEDIA RELEASE

Quotes attributable to NoPE President, Mike Read:

“We speak about clubs who exit the gambling industry as ‘deciding’ to get out but this language ignores that those who maintain their pokies operations are also making a decision. They’re not just passively stuck with the choices former board members made 30-odd-years ago. Rather these clubs (Essendon, Carlton, Richmond, St Kilda, Brisbane and Port Adelaide) are making an active decision and they’re doing so knowing that pokies are predatory, that they’re designed to addict, and that the harm they cause have devastating effects on the community.”

“In football, people talk about culture being the key to a successful club. The Essendon Football Club though has a dual existence. It exists as both a football club and a gambling company. One of these existences relies on players losing for the club to be successful - It’s unclear whether the culture created by this easy money has made the club forget which one.”

—END—

1. Associate Prof Charles Livingstone, Transcript of evidence, Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, 2023. (p8)  
<<https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/49c3cf/contentassets/2f10d0388c2f41bd91b599d0d8531bea/paec-gambling-liquor-inquiry-24-july---charles-livingstone.pdf>>
2. Belinda Goodwin et al., ‘A typical problem gambler affects six others’, Journal of Gambling Studies, vol. 17, no 2, 2017, p. 283, doi: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14459795.2017.1331252>>.
3. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-10-21/poker-machines-and-high-rates-of-domestic-violence/7949798>
4. Mainey, Lydia, et al. “All That Glitters Is Not Gold: Women’s Experiences of Using Gambling Venues to Escape Intimate Partner Violence: Women’s Experiences of Using Gambling Venues to Escape Intimate Partner Violence.” *Behavioural Addiction in Women: An International Female Perspective on Treatment and Research*, edited by Fulvia Prever, Routledge, 2023, pp. 285–91, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003203476-37>.
5. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-07-26/gambling-court-prison-poker-machines-carolyn-crawford-addiction/104016290>
6. VGCCC Position on Gambling Harm, point 7.  
<https://www.vgccc.vic.gov.au/about-us/our-values/our-position-gambling-harm>

### About NoPE:

No Pokies At Essendon (NoPE) is a grassroots group of Essendon fans actively advocating for the Essendon Football Club to make a meaningful and public commitment to exit the poker machine business.