



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Essendon Football Club's Sad Addiction to Gambling Revenue

No Pokies at Essendon (NoPE) Inc met with the Essendon Football Club (Essendon) during the past week to call for the end to Essendon's investment in poker machine licences and deliver an Open Letter, signed by 241 supporters, calling on Essendon to get rid of its Poker Machine licences.

NoPE President, Mike Read, commented that "NoPE has been overwhelmed by the support of Essendon supporters and members who have signed up to this open letter in their hundreds, calling on the Club to stop its involvement in the poker machine industry." NoPE Inc thanks the Club for agreeing to meet. The Club has undergone significant change over the past year, and its willingness to sit down and talk was appreciated.

At the Meeting, NoPE made the case why Essendon should exit the poker machine industry, including that poker machines are predatory; that problem gambling cost Victoria over \$2.4 billion in 2014/2015; that VGCCC Expenditure Data showed over \$200 million lost by people at Essendon's two pokies venues since 2006; that problem gamblers make up 35% of the total spending on pokies.

NoPE was disappointed that the Club made no effort to dispute any of these or any other moral arguments about why it should not be involved in gambling. Instead, the Club took the position that stopping its gambling revenue would jeopardise its financial position. Put simply, Essendon Football Club is addicted to gambling.

As a grassroots organisation of Essendon supporters, NoPE respects the need for the financial stability of Essendon Football Club. However it does not accept that the only way that this can be achieved by a major AFL Club like Essendon, is through gambling revenue. As community expectations have changed, six of the 10 Melbourne-based AFL clubs have got rid of their poker licence investments.

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

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