

MEDIA

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**THE REAL
STAKES**

Community football unites to tackle Australia's \$31.5 billion gambling crisis

February 26, 2025

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 5:30pm February 27, 2025

Three of Australia's largest community football leagues have joined forces to address online gambling-related harm in sport, as research reveals alarming rates of gambling behaviour among young players¹.

The Victorian Amateur Football Association, Adelaide Footy League and Perth Football League have launched The Real Stakes – a community-led program that will reach nearly 40,000 community members across 208 clubs.

The program aims to challenge the normalisation of online sports gambling in Australia and provide crucial support to those most at risk of harm.

Starting from March, The Real Stakes will deliver 15 in-person workshops and nine webinars across metropolitan Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia.

The program includes comprehensive educational resources, support materials, and specialised training for coaches and volunteers on identifying and addressing online sports gambling-related harm.

A dedicated themed round in May will promote awareness of online sports gambling-related harm across all three leagues, while an online hub will provide ongoing access to tools and resources. The program's effectiveness will be measured through a comprehensive research and evaluation framework.

The Real Stakes has been developed to address the real harm that online sports gambling can cause not only in amateur sport, but also the wider community.

Recent quantitative studies across the three leagues commissioned as part of program development showed one in three young men felt pressured to bet by their mates, while 20% of players aged 15-34 reported betting more than they can afford.

[REALSTAKES.COM.AU](https://realstakes.com.au)



Deane Pieters, CEO of program developer Elevate Strategic, said the initiative comes at a critical time, with Australians collectively gambling \$31.5 billion per year, equating to the highest per capita in the world, according to the Queensland government's Australian Gambling Statistics report².

"We're facing a crisis in Australian sport," Mr Pieters said.

"What we do know is that gambling participation has more than doubled in less than a decade, with the most dramatic growth among players aged 20 to 49 - the heart of community football³.

"Our research shows that 84% of people want online sports gambling-related harm openly discussed in their clubs.

"The Real Stakes delivers practical tools and support to identify and address harm related to online sports gambling, learn how to prevent it and understand how to support your friends or even yourself"

Adelaide Footy League CEO John Kernahan highlighted the league's independence from gambling industry partnerships as a unique opportunity to create positive change.

"For 94% of our players, their football club plays a crucial role in their mental health," Mr Kernahan said.

This program services as a reminder that true mateship is about supporting each other, while also raising awareness of the real harm that online sports gambling can cause to help protect the next generation of players.

Adelaide Crows AFLW player Ebony Marinoff has joined as a program ambassador, emphasising the initiative's role in protecting the next generation of players.

"As an AFLW player, I see how deeply gambling advertising has become ingrained in sport," Ms Marinoff said. "Young players, particularly women just entering the game, are constantly exposed to gambling ads and promotions.

"The true strength of community football lies in its ability to unite people and drive positive change. *The Real Stakes* is about preserving what makes our sport special—community spirit, mateship, and a strong focus on wellbeing both on and off the field."

Port Adelaide AFL Program Ambassador Travis Boak highlighted the impact of gambling on young players throughout their football journey, from junior levels to the professional ranks.

"Every AFL player begins their journey at a local community football club," Mr Boak said.

"These clubs shape our values and foster lifelong friendships.

"Now, these same clubs are stepping up to tackle online sports gambling-related harm, setting a strong example of how community sport can lead the way in addressing important social issues."

The Real Stakes, which is being delivered through a Strong and Resilient Communities (SARC) Activity Grant, which is an Australian Government Initiative, represents a significant step forward in addressing online sports gambling -related harm through community sport.

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