

# MEDIA RELEASE



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

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**UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 3:00pm 27 FEBRUARY 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 players<sup>1</sup>.

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.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://aifs.gov.au/research/research-snapshots/regular-online-betting-australia-2022>

**REALSTAKES.COM.AU**



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.

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 report<sup>2</sup>.

"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 football<sup>3</sup>.

"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"

Victorian Amateur Football Association CEO Jason Reddick commented that community sports play a vital role in fostering connection, promoting wellbeing, and building a sense of belonging.

"The growing influence of online sports gambling poses a significant threat to the foundational values of connection, wellbeing and belonging" Mr Reddick said.

"It's crucial that we address the damaging impact of online sport gambling to ensure a safe, supportive environment for all participants.

"That's exactly what this program is about. Empowering everyone, from players and coaches to volunteers and presidents, to protect and support each other from gambling harm."

Five-time All Australian and current Richmond FC AFLW player, Monique Conti has joined as a program ambassador, saying the initiative will help protect our sport and our players.

"At the heart of community sports is the opportunity for individuals to grow, connect, and thrive," Ms Conti said.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/statistics/theme/society/gambling/australian-gambling-statistics>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cqu.edu.au/news/708252/national-research-reveals-online-habits-double-in-a-decade>

“However, the rise of online sports gambling has introduced new risks that can deeply affect participants on a personal level. For many, the pressure to bet or win can lead to unhealthy habits, financial distress, and emotional strain.

“This shift not only impacts the wellbeing of athletes and enthusiasts, but it also threatens the positive, supportive environment that community sports are meant to foster.

“It’s essential that we take action now to address this growing issue, ensuring that our sport remains a source of connection, camaraderie and support.”

Two-time Carlton Football Club Best & Fairest and All Australian, Jacob Weitering said he knows firsthand the pressure to perform and succeed but also understands how easy it can be to get caught up in the distractions – including online sports gambling.

“Most of us have been exposed to online sports gambling in some form, it doesn’t matter if you’re a professional or amateur athlete, or even just someone trying to watch a game,” Mr Weitering said.

“Sport should be a place where we support each other, and we should strive to provide that support – and The Real Stakes will play an important role in that.”

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.

## **ENDS**

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