

LEADING AUSTRALIANS CALL FOR AN END TO ALCOHOL SPONSORSHIP IN SPORT

21 September 2017: A number of leading Australians have lent their support to a campaign to remove alcohol sponsorship from professional sport.

The call comes a week out from the AFL and NRL Grand Final, and as evidence mounts about the harm to children as a result of exposure to alcohol advertising.

World Vision Chief Advocate Tim Costello has lent his full support to the [#BoozeFreeSport](#) campaign.

He says there should be absolutely zero alcohol sponsorship of sport, and says the current regulatory framework is failing to protect children.

“The Federal Government has to step up, as do State Governments and say, ‘yes, we know there is going to be powerful lobbying from these very powerful vested interests, but we exist to protect children’”, Mr Costello said.

[#BoozeFreeSport](#) is a campaign endorsed and supported by the Public Health Association of Australia, McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth, St Vincent’s Health Australia, the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, the Australian Health Promotion Association and the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education.

Former President of the St Kilda Football Club, Rod Butterss says that for too long booze, drugs and gambling have been a part of AFL culture.

He says it’s now time for league to cut its ties with alcohol.

“The kids they love their sport, they idolise their sporting heroes. And in the same breath the League is showing them that drinking and binge drinking is acceptable and healthy. It is not,” Mr Butterss said.

Former Healthway Chief Executive, David Malone was successful in reducing alcohol’s presence in the Western Australian sporting arena, and says alcohol and sport don’t mix.

“We don’t want alcohol promoted where young people are captive to that audience, because there is good evidence that the promotion of alcohol encourages young people to drink alcohol earlier and in more significant volume,” Mr Malone said.



FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn says that despite that evidence, Australia's major codes continue to cling to alcohol sponsorship, all the while, doubling down on efforts to make their game more attractive to families and kids.

"There is an opportunity for one of the major codes to break from the pack, step up and sever their ties with the alcohol companies, not because they are forced to do so, but because it is the right thing to do," Mr Thorn said.

David Hill, author, former President of the North Sydney Bears and an outspoken critic of tobacco sponsorship in sport in the early 90's isn't holding his breath.

"Sporting bodies have proved that faced with the choice between doing what is morally right, or taking the sack of money, they are most likely to take the sack of money," Mr Hill said.

St Vincent's Health Australia Group Chief Executive, Toby Hall says in the face of such resistance, it is Australian parents that must become a catalyst for change.

We know a strong majority of Australians want to see an end to alcohol sponsorship in sport. Now we need to mobilise those Australians and ensure their voices are heard by the Commonwealth Ministers who can address their concerns," Mr Hall said.

Mr Thorn and Mr Butterss are available for interview.

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#BoozeFreeSport: Why we are calling for an end to alcohol sponsorship in sport

Millions of Australian children and families watch the AFL, NRL, and cricket; sports which are saturated with alcohol promotion. So much so that it's becoming impossible to know where the game ends and the alcohol marketing begins.

Yet all the evidence shows that exposure to alcohol advertising is associated with young people drinking more and from an earlier age.

That's why we're calling for an end to alcohol sponsorship in sport. Let's protect our kids by removing alcohol sponsors from Australia's favourite games.

We know Australians care deeply about this issue and change is possible but we need your help to get there. As a Booze Free Sport community, we can encourage Australia's favourite sports to give up alcohol sponsorship; encourage governments to assist offending codes to break their addiction of alcohol sponsorship dollars, inspire and ignite change across all professional sporting codes; and build a better future for our kids.