

For immediate release

AFL and NRL ladder of alcohol advertising addiction

10 April 2019: A study launched today highlights the extent that foreign multinationals leverage the popularity of the AFL and NRL to market their alcohol brands to kids.

The report by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) analysed the prevalence of alcohol advertising in the AFL and NRL by reviewing clubs' official websites, merchandise and social media channels.

The analysis found that 17 of 18 men's AFL clubs accept money from the alcohol industry with the worst ranked team, the Geelong Cats on the top of the ladder with three major and one minor alcohol advertising deals.

In the NRL, 15 of the 16 official clubs accept money from the alcohol industry with the North Queensland Cowboys on top of the ladder with four major and one minor alcohol advertising deals.

In both codes, six clubs have at least one major advertising deal with an alcohol company, and a further 11 in the AFL, and nine in the NRL, have at least one minor advertising deal.

Trish Hepworth, FARE Director of Research and Policy, says the study found that alcohol advertising deals are widespread in the AFL and NRL, with brands promoted across a range of channels, including merchandise and playing kits.

"Of the 18 teams in the the men's AFL, all but one have deals with alcohol companies. In the NRL, all but one of the 16 clubs have a range of deals with alcohol companies. These teams are being paid to promote various harmful alcohol products to sports' youngest fans," Ms Hepworth said.

"The worst ranked team in the AFL was the Geelong Cats with three major and one minor alcohol advertising deal, followed by West Coast Eagles, Melbourne Demons, Port Adelaide and Gold Coast Suns," she said.

AFL stalwart and former St Kilda President Rod Butterss has applauded the Western Bulldogs for being the only men's AFL club free of alcohol advertising.

"As an ambassador for the national campaign to [End Alcohol Advertising in Sport](http://www.endalcoholadvertisingin.org.au), I congratulate the 'doggies' for being the only club to resist the temptation of accepting money from the alcohol industry," Mr Butterss said.

"It just goes to show that alcohol advertising deals are not a pre-requisite for success or popularity," he said.



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The AFL competition has surpassed one million members for the first time in the game's history and continues to build on record membership and operational growth, with Mr Butterss noting that this should be a very stable base to begin the process of severing ties with the alcohol industry.

NRL stalwart and former player Steve Ella is also an ambassador of the [End Alcohol Advertising in Sport](#) campaign, and is calling on the NRL to put its fans before profiting from the greedy alcohol industry.

"The NRL made \$46 million profit last year and had more than one million viewers watching the NRL Telstra Premiership, which is great exposure for the sport, but not at the expense of kids who were exposed to three alcohol ads every minute of finals game," he said.

"North Queensland Cowboys have four major and one minor alcohol advertising deals, followed by New Zealand Warriors, Brisbane Broncos, Canberra Raiders and Wests Tigers. NRL's youngest fans deserve better," Mr Ella said.

Four of the world's largest foreign-owned alcohol companies have stitched-up the majority of alcohol advertising deals with the AFL and NRL, with Carlton & United Breweries (AB InBev, Belgium) having the most advertising deals.

Ms Hepworth says although alcohol is legal, this addictive, psychoactive and carcinogenic drug leads to almost 6000 deaths every year in Australia and is a factor in more than 200 diseases and injury conditions.

"Alcohol is one of the most heavily promoted products worldwide and our Aussie Rules clubs are being used by these foreign multinationals to mass market alcohol brands to Australian audiences, particularly targeting young people," Ms Hepworth said.

There is overwhelming evidence that exposure to alcohol marketing encourages children to start drinking from an earlier age and is linked to increased consumption, including among school children and those who play the sport.

"These deals between alcohol multinationals and Australian sporting codes are toxic given that alcohol contributes to the three leading causes of death among adolescents – unintentional injuries, homicide and suicide," Ms Hepworth said.

"Alcohol is no ordinary commodity because of the high cost to the Australian community, \$36 billion a year. This is an unacceptable price to pay. Our sports clubs have a great opportunity to be part of the solution and model healthy sponsorship," Ms Hepworth said.

Mr Butterss, Mr Ella and Ms Hepworth are available for interview.

[View the full report here.](#)

*Survey period 11-28 February 2019. Club sponsors may have changed since survey was conducted. Disappointingly, Melbourne Storm has subsequently moved to having two alcohol sponsors.

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