

THE POKIES PLAY YOU

Coles divestment, Gold Coast Casino and Victorian RSL

Tuesday, March 5, 2019

The Alliance for Gambling Reform today congratulated Coles for [successfully divesting](#) its Queensland-based poker machine business but slammed the Queensland Government for proceeding with a second casino on the Gold Coast.

Alliance spokesman and director Tim Costello said:

“Coles have done the right thing [selling out](#) to a KKR-controlled business called the Australian Venue Company which I hope will continue the Coles advocacy for the introduction of \$1 maximum bets.”

“With Coles having successfully divested, the onus is now on Woolworths, Australia’s biggest and most ruthless pokies operator, to remove itself from the 12,000-plus pokies operated by Bruce Mathieson in the ALH joint venture, which is 75% owned by Woolworths.”

“It is so disappointing that on the same day Coles has exited its Queensland-focused pokies business, the Queensland Government has announced plans to proceed with a second casino on the Gold Coast.”

“If this proceeds, Queensland will have 6 casinos which is clearly excessive when you also consider the 42,324 poker machines which are currently operating in 1124 pubs and clubs across Queensland, draining a record \$2.4 billion from pokies gamblers in 2018.”

Mr Costello said The Alliance was also delighted to see the [emergence of a campaign](#) by young Victorian veterans to encourage the Victorian RSL to fully divest from the predatory pokies industry.

“It is truly inspiring to [see and hear the comments](#) by younger veterans, such as Camberwell City RSL President Dave Petersen, who make a persuasive case for RSL pokies divestment based on both financial and social grounds.”

“There are currently 54 RSL-branded pokies dens in Victoria which are draining more than \$200 million a year from gamblers, making RSL Victoria the 3rd biggest pokies operator in the state after Woolworths and Crown Melbourne.”

“The Victorian RSL should get with the program and follow the lead set by Coles, Melbourne Storm, Collingwood, Melbourne and the Western Bulldogs and commit to full divestment of their pokies division, which does nothing to help veterans.”

Media contact: Stephen Mayne: stephen@agr.org.au 0412 106 241