

# Alcohol, gambling and unhealthy food companies bombard families with ads during State of Origin

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Public health groups are calling for an end to harmful marketing in sport as a new analysis shows a quarter of sponsorships of the 2023 State of Origin are by companies that profit from alcohol, gambling and unhealthy foods.

The analysis by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) found 16 harmful product sponsorships of the NSW and Queensland State of Origin Teams and the Series, including seven alcohol company sponsorships, seven unhealthy food and two gambling company sponsorships – 25 per cent of all sponsors.

FARE CEO Caterina Giorgi said that children and families watching the State of Origin were being bombarded with alcohol, gambling and unhealthy food marketing.

“Sporting events like the State of Origin have become one big ad for harmful products, like alcohol,” Ms Giorgi said.

“We know that the younger that children are exposed to alcohol marketing, the more likely they are to start drinking earlier and to drink at higher levels, putting them at risk of greater harm.”

Alliance for Gambling Reform CEO Carol Bennett said the State of Origin should not have gambling advertising.

“Families should be able to enjoy sporting events without being confronted with gambling ads,” Ms Bennett said.

“There is no place for harmful product marketing, like gambling advertising and sponsorship, in sport.”

Food for Health Alliance Executive Manager Jane Martin said unhealthy food sponsors should not be allowed to tie their brands to sporting events.

“Companies that profit from these unhealthy products have been allowed to enter sponsorship deals with sporting codes and teams for too long,” Ms Martin said.

“They spend millions of dollars on this marketing because they know that it enables them to increase their profits, by selling more and more high energy, low nutrition foods, contributing to the growing burden of preventable and chronic illnesses.”

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) President Dr Nicole Higgins said the marketing of harmful and unhealthy products in sport needs to stop.

“Australian families should be able to enjoy sport without having to be confronted with a barrage of ads and logos pushing alcohol, gambling and unhealthy foods,” Dr Higgins said.

"Every day, as GPs, we see people whose health and wellbeing has been negatively impacted by these harmful industries. The multi-million-dollar marketing and sponsorship deals by these harmful, addictive and unhealthy companies have no place in sport. For the sake of the community's health and wellbeing, these sponsorships need to end."

Tooheys, Jim Beam, The Star and McDonalds are sponsors of the NSW team, while XXXX, Ned Whisky and McDonalds have sponsorship deals with the Queensland team. The State of Origin Series is sponsored by Bundaberg, VB, DrinkWise, Sportsbet, KFC and Solos.

Both teams' official State of Origin jerseys and shorts feature harmful product sponsors; the NSW jersey has Tooheys New and The Star branding, while the Queensland jersey has XXXX branding. The NSW shorts have McDonalds branding and the Queensland shorts have XXXX and McDonalds branding.

Eleven of the 16 sponsors identified were running ads on Facebook and Instagram while the first 2023 State of Origin Game was being broadcast on May 31, placing a total of 135 unique ads on the social media platforms.

Just over a third (35.5%) of these ads related to sporting competitions, including the State of Origin.

The State of Origin has a large audience which includes children and families. [In 2022](#) the decider had a national audience of 2.585 million views on linear television and 463,000 viewers on Live Broadcaster Video on Demand (BVOD).

**Caterina Giorgi, CEO Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education is available for interview.**

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