



AFL boots politicians after accusations of favouritism

MP footy fixture row

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THE AFL has banned politicians from putting their names on footy fixtures after it was embroiled in an election row and accused of favouring the Labor Party.

Federal Labor MP Rob Mitchell spent \$11,500 of his taxpayer-funded printing allowance on 70,000 official AFL fixture cards for his seat of McEwen.

They include the AFL and Labor logos, two pictures of the MP, contact details, and a slogan that he is a strong voice for the electorate.

"It was about keeping my name in front of people and giving them a good thing I know they will use," Mr Mitchell said.

But Victorian Liberal senator Scott Ryan slammed "a sleazy mix of sport and politics". "The Labor Party have hit a new low, dragging the AFL into naked partisanship," Senator Ryan said.

AFL corporate affairs manager James Tonkin said 67 companies, such as real estate agents, tyre dealers, bakeries, plumbers, media and sports retailers, had been given approval to use the official fixture template.

He confirmed the AFL had approved Mr Mitchell's request, but "we now acknowledge concerns that co-branding with local MPs or candidates could be misconstrued as a political endorsement by the AFL, which is an apolitical sporting organisation.

"As a result we have instructed our contractors that no further approvals will be given to similar requests from local MPs or candidates," Mr Tonkin said.

It is believed unhappy AFL figures had tried to offer the same deal to the Liberal Party, and the AFL then revoked Labor MPs Bill

Shorten and Mike Symon's permission to print fixtures.

Mr Shorten said he'd had permission for four years, and "the AFL have been spooked by Tony Abbott's threats of retaliation".

He will now print the Essendon District League fixture; he is No.1 ticket holder for the Maribyrnong Park club. "EDFL is the way football used to be: not too commercialised," he said.

