

Cigarette company vetoes Quit ads at MCG

By TREVOR GRANT

Australia's top sporting venue, the Melbourne Cricket Ground, is off-limits to the anti-smoking lobby.

Richmond Football Club, which plays its home games at the MCG, made this discovery a few days ago when it tried to sign the State Government-financed Quit campaign as its main sponsor.

Richmond was one of several VFL clubs to approach Quit about the possibility of sponsorship but the proposal was doomed from the start because of a contract between the Benson and Hedges company and the Melbourne Cricket Club.

As one of the main advertisers on the MCG scoreboard, Benson and Hedges has the right to block from advertising products at the ground any company it deems as opposition.

Benson and Hedges made it clear to the MCC that it sees Quit as the opposition. The MCC secretary, Dr John Lill, said: "We have a contract to administer and there's nothing that can be done."

The co-ordinator of the Quit campaign in Victoria, Ms Dorothy Reading, confirmed yesterday that informal talks about sponsorship had been held with several VFL clubs, including Richmond. But she said the ban on MCG advertising was not the only reason Quit was unlikely to take up VFL sponsorship. "They talk figures (that) seem to be out of our league," she said.

The *BENSON and HEDGES* Scoreboard

DEAD	NUMEROUS
DYING	HUGE NUMBER
ILL	TOO MANY TO MENTION

TANDYBERG

Richmond's general manager, Richard Doggett, said yesterday his club had approached Quit after learning of its move into sponsorship in Perth. The WA Quit campaign was a main sponsor of the Festival of Sport to celebrate the America's Cup and was the key sponsor of the recent Australian swimming championships in Perth. "We made our bid purely on commercial grounds. There is nothing moralistic about it," Doggett said.

The WA Quit campaign, financed by the WA Government, ran into the same problem as its Victorian counterpart when it tried to advertise at the WACA ground in Perth during the Benson and Hedges one-day cricket challenge in early January, an important part of the Festival of Sport.

The executive director of the WA Quit campaign, Mr Mike Daube, said yesterday his organisation had spent \$500,000 on sponsorship of the festival. "But we weren't able to put up our signs at the WACA because of an agreement between the cricket authorities and Benson and Hedges."