



SPORT | Issue No. 21 | *Banning sport*

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I finished my last eNews article with “We live in interesting times”.

The New South Wales government has banned greyhound racing from 1 July 2017. In legal terms exactly what does that mean? It means that by an act of parliament, the New South Wales government proposes to make an activity which has been regarded a sport illegal from 1 July next year in New South Wales.

Throughout the history of this sport this activity has been legal. The decision to ban the sport comes about as a result of a report by former High Court Judge Michael McHugh AC QC which documents some extreme animal cruelty within the sport. Whilst this sport has been banned in New South Wales, it is still lawful in the other states and territories in Australia. The ACT has indicated that it will support the ban in New South Wales.

As well as being a sport, it is an industry which employs several thousand people in New South Wales, as well as being the life passion of many of the sport’s participants. It strikes me as strange that an activity which conducted properly appears to be lawful but, as a result of misbehaviour of allegedly many participants, will now be deemed unlawful.

One assumes then that the view taken by the New South Wales government is that the degree of unlawful behaviour by the participants is so great that the whole sport should cease.

An alternate view might be that, as with all behaviour which is in breach of the law, it is incumbent upon the regulators to hold these people breaking the law accountable and in all other walks of life this appears to be what occurs.

Greyhound racing is a small sport where the participants are often battlers and generally they do not have a loud voice. The vast majority of the population (including myself) are completely ambivalent about greyhound racing but strongly opposed to animal cruelty. Most people would be flat out telling you where greyhound

racing occurs in Queensland. But, should that mean the participants in the sport can be treated dismissively?

I’m not in favour of unlawful behaviour, whether that is animal cruelty or any other big significant breaches of the law, but if every time the participants in any activity break the law we ban that activity as opposed to dealing with the lawbreakers, what type of world and country do we live in?



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