

Dissenting Report

Senator Sean Edwards – Liberal Party of Australia

1.1 Senator Edwards notes the right of law abiding citizens to watch their chosen sport in peace and notes that taxpayers who don't necessarily subscribe to a given sport nonetheless expect publicly funded sporting infrastructure to be treated with respect. He also notes that state, territory and federal police forces are charged with enforcing such laws as to assert those rights.

1.2 Senator Edwards expresses his thanks to relevant police forces for their professional conduct and often thankless work in this area. He notes that law enforcement professionals understand how best to manage relationships with those with whom they deal in the course of their work and that the ultimate responsibility for the proper conduct of soccer fans rests with soccer fans themselves, not the police. It is regrettable that they should be subject to unnecessary and undue ridicule within this report, both overt criticism and loaded language. Senator Edwards registers his dissent.

1.3 The report is unnecessarily disparaging towards NSW Police and the media, which may be considered blame shifting. We say don't shoot the messenger.

1.4 NSW Police acts reasonably to enforce community standards of behaviour and examples were provided of Western Sydney Wanderers fan behaviour that was discordant with those standards. Evidence was heard that Western Sydney Wanderers fans are disproportionately represented in such matters.

1.5 Acting Commissioner Clifford of NSW Police provided evidence that during a given period of time in which 8 fans were banned across the entire NRL, 100 fans were banned at the Western Sydney Wanderers club alone. The report appears to suggest that this reflects police bias. Senator Edwards notes that Mr Clifford's evidence was not meaningfully rebutted and nor was its allegation of prejudice supported by evidence. Senator Edwards asserts his objection and believes that to pardon such behaviour and blame police is beneath the Senate.

1.6 Senator Edwards rejects the suggestion that police have no role in maintaining "particular modes of behaviour or speech on the basis that it does not accord with a particular set of values". Of course many offences are enshrined in law on the basis that they offend certain community values and it is the role of police to enforce such laws.

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