



Peter Ryan

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TO decriminalise or legalise presently illicit drugs would be a leap towards disaster. A wealth of experience has contributed to the *Australia21* report, and the Victorian Government welcomes the focus it brings to promoting better health outcomes in the war against drugs, but to surrender in the face of untested proposals is simply dangerous and irresponsible. Law enforcement plays a central role in stamping out illicit drugs and the harm they bring to our community. Victorians expect the Government to do everything possible to fight the curse of the drug trade, which is the lifeblood of organised crime gangs. It is likely that without law

enforcement efforts, drug-related activity would be even more prevalent in today's society. The Victorian Government is concentrating as much effort and resources as it can to support the intensive work Victoria Police undertakes on this front, including bringing 1700 more police online by 2014. Recently, I launched the Serious Crime and Organised Crime State Conference 2012 in Melbourne, attended by police from interstate and overseas, which focused largely on co-ordinated efforts to stamp out the illegal drug trade. The Government recognises the importance of helping those in our community caught up in the terrible nightmare of drug addiction but to assume this type of activity can somehow be controlled through a legalised commercially operated drug market is a fiction. In conjunction with the strong role of law enforcement is the need to resource diversion and treatment programs for those with a drug dependence.

There is also clear evidence of the health problems associated with illicit drug use, such as the increasing evidence about the potential for cannabis use to have very adverse physical, psychological and social outcomes, particularly for those who first use at an early age. It has been 15 years since Victoria last had a plan to tackle drugs in our community. The Government is in the process of developing a whole-of-government alcohol and drug strategy to decrease the rates of alcohol and other drug abuse in Victoria, reduce the harm that alcohol and drug abuse cause in the community, and increase access to treatment. In addition, the Government is investing \$188 million in new funding for prevention and treatment services for those with drug and alcohol addiction. The Victorian Government will continue to campaign against the use of drugs in every respect. **Peter Ryan is the Minister for Police and Emergency Services**

Live export cruelty a blot on the nation

AUSTRALIA is a proud and beautiful country. The people are warm, progressive, well educated and known across the globe for their outstanding hospitality. Sadly, the world was shocked when we became aware of the horrific circumstances that Australia's live export industry was willing to subject animals to in order to provide them to the Middle East, South-East Asia and North Africa. Images of Australian cattle being eye-gouged, kicked, whipped and tortured created an outpouring of rage across the globe. The vision the world had of Australia as an ethical and forward-thinking nation changed in that moment. We were stunned to learn that, despite years of evidence documenting the cruel treatment of Australian animals throughout the Middle East, the live export industry has retained the unconditional support of successive federal governments. Moreover, this support was in direct conflict with the views of the vast majority of Australians, who were appalled by their country's participation in this trade. Australia's willingness to sell animals to countries that fail to comply with international animal welfare guidelines

Chris DeRose



LIVE EXPORTS

has actively undermined the work to encourage animal welfare improvements in those countries. How can an industry that has been responsible for the suffering and deaths of countless millions of animals maintain government support and be allowed to continue? Providing animals to countries where there are no laws to protect them from cruelty is simply further evidence of the immoral nature of this industry and the failure of the Australian Government to listen to its people. Every decent person across the world applauded the action taken by the Gillard Government to suspend the trade to Indonesia, as well as the tabling of legislation to ban live exports. It was taken for granted that a vote in the Australian Parliament to end the trade would be unanimous. We were therefore appalled to learn that both main political parties refused to support this legislation, despite overwhelming support from the Australian community. The questions need to be asked: why do the operators of an industry that brings such shame on Australia and is responsible for such suffering have a stranglehold over Australia's decision-makers? How can so few counter the opinions of so many? Some things are just wrong and no amount of profit, no amount of excuses, will make them right. Present initiatives by the Gillard Government to regulate this trade are all too little, too late, and they are not working. Animals Australia recently released footage of the continued brutality, even after the new framework to protect animal welfare was put in place. Despite promises from the Minister for Agriculture, Joe Ludwig, the Gillard Government has not made any progress in preventing Australia's animals from being tortured. The only way to repair the damage done is for the trade to be banned and, through doing so, to finally send the right message to importing nations: animals and their welfare matter.

To all of you united in opposition to this cruel trade, be heartened by the fact the international animal welfare community and all who are compassionate worldwide are with you. Our message is: do not give up. We will throw our weight and support behind your efforts until your Government recognises its responsibility to ban this cruel and immoral trade in living beings: a trade that brings great shame not only on Australia but on humanity itself. **Chris DeRose is the president and founder of Last Chance for Animals, a US international animal rights organisation**



makes life better

club members and supporters. In recognition of this, the AFL keeps changing the rules in an attempt to give every team the chance of success over time. But even the AFL cannot quarantine that outcome, which falls back to the administration of the individual clubs. Increasing financial subsidies from the AFL to the weaker clubs is no substitute for good and successful management within each club. That is not to say weaker clubs cannot transform themselves. It is not that long ago that Collingwood, Geelong and Hawthorn were in diabolical circumstances; today they are successful on and off the field. And success tends to breed success. But it is the social importance of the clubs within the AFL and society that is the most enduring feature of

the sport so many of us embrace. This weekend is Easter and, just as we continue to demonstrate the healthiness of our love for football, as a community we will again demonstrate our generosity to the Good Friday Appeal for the Royal Children's Hospital. A children's hospital as good as any in the world. **A**s parents we never know when we will need to draw on all the goodness contained within the hospital. But as sure as night follows day, we know we will. The institution has just been refreshed with a new facility, which like its predecessor will be supported by this paper and the media as we all again come together to support a hospital that exists for our children. On a separate note, it appears the AFL has softened its stance on Matt

Rendell. If so, that would be appropriate. But it begs the question why the AFL decided to make Rendell's private comments public, six weeks after he made them. The AFL expressed outrage and ensured Rendell "resigned" from the Adelaide Crows. Rendell's name and reputation were dragged through the mud. The AFL could have handled this issue in-house, privately, without the pain it caused by making the issue public. The AFL ought to reinstate Rendell in a meaningful job and should also apologise to him and his family for the manner in which they handled the matter. It will be interesting to see if the AFL is big enough to admit to its own mistakes. **Jeff Kennett is former president of the Hawks**