

HOW THE ADDY SAW THE WEEK



MY SAY ON SATURDAY

EVE FISHER ON FOLAU'S CASE AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

IF there is one good thing to come out of the Israel Folau saga, it's an opportunity to stop and think about the moral dilemmas being thrown at us. And there are many.

The first, obvious one is free speech. Folau's tweet that got him sacked from Rugby Australia was paraphrased out of the Bible, so technically he did nothing wrong except show himself to be a bigot.

He thinks gay people (among others, including unmarried folk having sex) are sinners and will go to hell unless they repent. He didn't break any hate speech laws. He merely repeated what was said in the Good Book.

There are 2.4 billion Christians following this Bible and most acknowledge that some of the dated bits — say, about slavery and keeping women with oxen — should simply be ignored. It's not hard.

Unless you're Folau and you believe it *all*. Are we to judge his personal interpretation? Probably not. As much as we'd like to.

Folau is formerly a Mormon but now a Pentecostal Christian who

believes connection with God must be experiential, not just accessed through ritual or thinking. They also love a good miracle, like ScoMo winning the federal election. He's a Pentecostal too.

They take the Bible VERY literally. Which, until someone rewrites the thing, is their legal and spiritual right to do. You can't ban the Bible. Just like you can't ban stupid people from espousing their views in the public domain. It's called free speech. And it's in the Declaration of Human Rights.

It was St Paul who took the aggressive stand against homosexuality in the Bible and, as Pru Goward pointed out in *The Age*, "no one is thinking of banning him".

That's dilemma No.1. Can you pick and choose what is acceptable in the Bible and impart that expectation on others? I think not.

But Folau WAS banned. Not because he broke any laws. Because he contravened Rugby Australia's social media policy in the \$4 million contract he signed. If he didn't read the fine print then he's the fool.

Now he screams about the right to

religious freedom and expression, and is taking RA to FairWork.

That's dilemma No.2. What is mightier, the contract pen or the religious freedom sword? Surely a contract overrides contradicting notions? Contracts are worthless if you don't stick to the rules.

Folau decided to fight the sacking and figured he'd crowdfund his legal costs. By the time it was paused on Thursday, he had raised \$2 million thanks to the help of the Australian Christian Lobby, who not only donated \$100,000 but hosted the fundraiser on its website after GoFundMe shut down the original cash grab.

The first campaign was closed not long after the outrage reached fever pitch with GoFundMe, bowing to progressive groupthink pressure, saying it contravened one of their policies. Cue all manner of silly pages popping up to alternately mock Folau for his greed and GoFundMe for its weakness and political correctness.

As journalist Francis Leach said on Twitter this week: "The angrier we get, the louder we lecture, the more

entrenched in their convictions those opposing us become. Winning the battle of ideas requires listening and persuasion, not simply shouting and condemnation."

Dilemma No.3. Should we keep our protests quiet in cases like this to deprive such awful behaviour of oxygen? Absolutely. All publicity is good publicity, as Folau can now attest.

Yesterday he was in negotiations with Rugby Australia for a settlement but those talks collapsed. Now it's off to court. With his religious money. From the Christians who adore taking a sanctimonious standpoint. They love a bit of suffering and sacrifice.

As the religious Right seeks to use its perceived victimisation to maintain its stranglehold and conservatism over Australian politics, and society in general, we are left on the sidelines wondering how things could have been done differently.

Folau's case has snowballed to such an extreme that once it's all over and the snowball melts we will be left with a sad, sticky mess that oozes into the collective psyche of the Australian people and stays there.

Geelong Advertiser EDITORIAL More lives in jeopardy as heroin use rises

IT'S heartbreaking to learn about the number of Geelong lives lost in recent years to heroin overdoses.

According to data from the state Coroners Court, 38 people have died from the drug in the City of Greater Geelong in the past five years.

In 2012, the average was one fatal heroin overdose each month.

Geelong's Acting Superintendent of police Trevor Cornwill confirmed to the *Geelong Advertiser* this week that use of the opioid was rising across Australia.

The fight against this trend is being waged on two key battlefronts: firstly limiting access to the drug by catching and prosecuting those who deal it, and secondly stopping those who become addicted to the drug from going too far and overdosing.

When it comes to harm minimisation, Barwon Health is doing impressive work.

Steve Moylan, the director of the health provider's mental health, drug and alcohol service, said up to 145 lives had been saved in Geelong in the past two years, largely by the opioid blocker naloxone. Substitute pharmaceutical methadone also helps.

Providing clean syringes to users also prevents other serious health issues that arise from the prevalence of this insidious drug.

While harm minimisation policies will always attract some criticism from those with hard-line anti-drugs views, the lifesaving benefits should not be ignored. More people would die and more illicit drug users would be clogging up our health system were it not for the efforts of Associate Professor Moylan and his colleagues.

Less contentious are the efforts of Acting Supt Cornwill and other law enforcers to limit the supply of heroin and other drugs onto the streets.

On this front, the Australian Federal Police had a win this week when their Border Force officers executed their first major international drug bust at Avalon Airport.

They arrested a Malaysian man allegedly trying to smuggle 700g of heroin into the country.

It would not have been a pretty picture when the officers searched the man. Thirteen of the 18 black pellets of heroin he was allegedly carrying were found inside his body after he was taken to a hospital, the AFP said.

That's how this drug often finds its way into this country. Users might want to consider that grisly fact before they next shoot up.

ONLINE POLL

Yesterday's question: Does Israel Folau deserve to have public donations made to his legal fight?



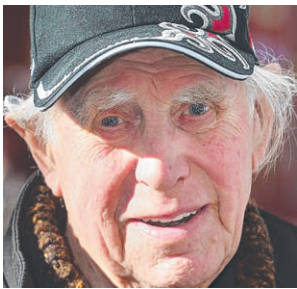
AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS?



Nick: "I think it's very good. Children need to focus on school and not get sucked in by all the technology."



Kylie: "I don't think it's good, I want to be able to call my daughter when she is at school."



George: "I think it's good. They shouldn't have a phone in the class, I would never allow my kids a phone in the class."



Tahlie: "It's probably bad. If there's an emergency and the schools have to call your parents, they use private numbers and the parents might not pick up."



Montanna: "Phones aren't an issue if you don't use it when you shouldn't. Some record fights but not everyone does that and it's not fair for the rest of us."