TASSIE SHIELD STARS DO IT AGAIN: BACK PAGE

Blazing passions amid cool fashions

BY RAEO WALTH and SUE BAILEY

ANTI-SMOKING protesters disrupted a Hobart Cup fashion parade in Elizabeth Mall yesterday, around the wrath of Liberal MHA Michael Hodgman for the second time in as many days.

While Tasmanian Green MHA Gerry Bates was on their side, Mr. Hodgman said last night: "The neo-fascist anti-smoking lobby is now behaving like a bunch of lunies and fruitcakes. "Australia is still a free country and it is an affront to freedom of speech that these patters are endeavouring to prevent the promotion of the Hobart Cup which Benson and Hedges has been sponsoring for over 20 years."

Only a day earlier, Mr. Hodgman attacked the anti-smoking lobby, branding their tactics akin to Hitler's treatment of the Jews.

Yesterday's small group of protesters carried a banner which read "smokers are dying to bring the race".

They held it in front of a mobile stage set up in the mall for the fashion parade.

Another protest, dressed in a skeleton suit, banged a drum and held up anti-smoking placards.

But their protest, which prompted some members of the public to offer them cigarettes, was stopped by police after Tasmanian Racing Club secretary Colin Bellchamber made an official complaint.

Senior Sergeant Bevan Howell told the protesters they were acting illegally.

"You cannot protest in the mall without a permit from the Hobart City Council," he said. "And if you don't leave, you will be breaking the council by-law.

"You can go to Franklins Square, walk past the hospital and the police station but you simply can't protest here without a permit."

The protesters said they had taken action because Benson and Hedges was sponsoring the Hobart Cup.

Dr. Bates called on the Hobart City Council to immediately remove the gold street banners it had allowed to be flown around the city to promote the Cup.

"By allowing Benson and Hedges advertising space around the city, the council is effectively allowing this tobacco company to escape the legal restrictions which have seen tobacco ads outlawed from the TV, magazines and newspapers," Dr. Bates said.

"It is not acceptable for a municipal council to do this,"

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