

ALP split over cigarette cash

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The NSW Labor Party's sport and recreation committee has decided, against the trend of Government policy in NSW and other States, to oppose any ban on tobacco and alcohol sponsorship of sporting groups.

The fact that the committee completed its report last Friday at a meeting of the Rothman's National Sports Foundation had nothing to do with this decision, according to those who attended.

Others are not so sure. Mr John Murray, the State MP for Drummoine, who is a committee member, said yesterday he had not attended the meeting because "I would have felt compromised."

The Rothmans Foundation provided its boardroom and laid on a supper for five of the nine committee members who did turn up. There was no charge for the facilities or the refreshments.

Those attending were the committee chairman, Mr John Newman; an official with the Federated Clerks' Union, Sue Judd; the committee's secretary, Mr Digby Young, of the Australian Workers' Union; Mr Ray Burnage and Sue Tracy.

The foundation's executive director, Mr Alan Davidson, the former Test cricketer, said Mr Newman had asked for the use of the room at the foundation's offices in the St Martin's Tower in the City.

"Our facilities are available to

any sports people," Mr Davidson said. "I haven't the faintest idea what they talked about.

"It doesn't make any difference to us as long as they are associated with sport."

The foundation's aim was to encourage and improve sport and it was not involved in sponsorship. "We are autonomous from the parent company," Mr Davidson said.

Sue Judd said yesterday Mr Newman's intention in holding the meeting at the foundation had been to "broaden the awareness of some of the committee members about involvement in sports." The committee had met previously at other venues associated with sport.

"We had a bit of a chat with Alan Davidson and he outlined what he did and how the foundation came into being," she said.

Asked if she felt compromised by the Rothmans' connection with the committee's work, she said: "Of course not."

Not all of the committee members smoked and "we didn't get packets of fags to take home, if that is what you are suggesting."

The report says sporting groups should continue to accept financial support through advertising and sponsorship until Federal and State Governments are willing to provide sufficient funding to fill the gap that a ban would leave.

In contrast, the report of the party's health committee, also decided last week, recommends a phasing-out of tobacco advertising.