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Beware the Anti-Nanny State Police

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eat crap, drink too much, gambled half my life away. Swear like buggery, love rare steak and play punk rock to my kids. Once I threw a church cross off a cliff. Been called many things. A real Bogan.

But now, it seems, I am in fact a wowser.

Yes, the Anti-Nanny State Police are out in force. And they have charged people like me with wowserism and, come on, likened us to eugenicists involved in some supposed "Green" conspiracy.

It's all because people like me are happy for governments to protect the vulnerable by discouraging harmful, anti-social behaviours.

The Anti-Nanny State Police here and overseas are running advertisements and political campaigns to try to derail controls over gambling, tobacco, alcohol, the internet, swearing in public and the sexualisation of children. Some in the ANSP even say live cattle exports is a Nanny State issue.

But here's the rub.

I own a business, make my own decisions, run my life my way and hate being told what to do.

Guess what.

It's not about ME.

It's about the others who don't have my age, money, influence, education, self-control or access to information to protect themselves.

It's been said by plenty of non-Bogans that a nation's greatness is measured by how it treats its weakest members.

To be a caring society, we must be able to feel outside ourselves enough to say: "What if I were experiencing that?"

Where is the empathy, let alone the ethics, in extracting taxes and community grants from clubs/pubs that lure people into gambling addiction that will ruin the lives of family members?

Where is the empathy in marketing tobacco to encourage the vulnerable into a life of addiction to a product that will wreck their health and finances, if not kill them too young?

Where is the empathy in pushing unhealthy food on to parents and children who can't afford healthier alternatives or don't know what to look for to find them? In allowing drunks to trash themselves with more alcohol, lash out at innocent bystanders and leave society to pay the costs? In letting online perverts prey on the gullible?

By rejecting "Nanny State" protections, the ANSP assert their own rights at the expense of those who cannot assert theirs.

The ANSP just feeds the vested political, financial and personal interests of those who profit from misery.

And in the ANSP world, it's every man for himself – even if you're a child, disabled, elderly, uneducated, ill-equipped to protect yourself.

Because with the ANSP, it's all about ME and bugger the rest.

It's so much about ME with the ANSP that when it suits them they will happily support "Nanny State" measures such as dictating how Aborigines spend their welfare, criminalising marijuana, bolstering law and order. If we want a more cohesive community, even John Stuart Mill wrote in 1859 that "the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others".

And there can be none of the "slippery slope" of which the ANSP complains as long as reasoned debate – not labelling people "wowsers" – determines how we should protect the vulnerable.

The criteria are clear: will the intervention work; do benefits outweigh costs; is it a mere inconvenience or more; are there unintended consequences; and will it help the vulnerable make better decisions?

On that basis:

The Gillard government deserves praise for measures on problem gambling, sports betting and plain packaging for tobacco.

Live beef cattle exports should resume when we know the animals will be treated humanely.

Governments are right to limit hours of alcohol service and punish alcohol-linked violence.

More information and honesty in food labelling/packaging will reduce the costs of obesity.

Limiting the sexualisation of children and protecting them online makes sense, although the omnipresent internet might undermine British Prime Minister David Cameron's planned crackdowns.

Marijuana should remain illegal because of its mental/physical health dangers.

The Victorian plan to stop swearing in public seems unwarranted; education is better.

Everyone is entitled to an opinion and plenty will disagree with mine.

But it's not about ME. It's about protecting the vulnerable.

When the Anti-Nanny State Police see that, we'll get a more caring society.

Such is life . . .

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