

2014/11: Should AFL football be played on Good Friday?

What they said...

'Think about it as an increasingly secular nation, in a code which prides itself on its approach to multicultural participants, we hold the holiday of one religion as sacrosanct'

Dr Sonja Hood, explaining her support for AFL football on Good Friday

'If we're still happy to take a day off for a "religious holiday", even if it's not our religion or we have no religion, then competing with the reason for the holiday should be "out of bounds"'

Father Kevin Dillon, parish priest of St Mary's Geelong

The issue at a glance

On June 16, 2014, it was announced that the AFL Commission had decided to play AFL football on Good Friday. A range of clubs have lobbied for this addition to the fixture for many years.

Though this addition to the fixture may occur as soon as 2015, the Commission's chief executive, Gillon McLachlan, has said that there may be some logistical difficulties which would delay the first AFL Good Friday game till 2016.

Though a range of newspaper polls suggest the move is very popular with readers of the sporting pages, it has met with significant criticism from some social commentators and leaders of the Catholic and Anglican churches.

Background

(The information below is an edited version of the Wikipedia entry titled 'Public holidays in Australia'.

The full text of this entry can be accessed at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_holidays_in_Australia)

The Good Friday-specific information comes from timeanddate.com "Good Friday in Australia"

The full text can be found at <http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/australia/good-friday>)

Public holidays in Australia

Traditionally, workers were entitled to take off a public holiday with regular pay. In recent years this tradition has changed somewhat. For example, businesses that are normally open on a public holiday may request employees to work on the day, and refusal can only be denied by the employer on reasonable business grounds.

The entitlement to penalty rates was eliminated entirely in many workplaces under WorkChoices; however since the implementation of the Fair Work Act 2009 and the modern awards in 2010, most public holiday penalty rates have increased dramatically. Currently, employees are generally paid at a penalty rate - usually 2.5 times (known as "double time and a half") the base rate of pay.

Besides designating days as public holidays, some of these days are also designated as restricted trading days.

Public holidays are determined by a combination of statutes, with specific gazetting of public holidays; and industrial awards and agreements.

If a standard public holiday falls on a weekend, a substitute public holiday will sometimes be observed on the first non-weekend day (usually Monday) after the weekend, whether by virtue of the public holiday legislation or by ad hoc proclamation. If a worker is required to work on a public holiday or substituted public holiday, they will usually be entitled to be paid at a holiday penalty rate.

All states have their own public holidays in addition to national public holidays, and in some states public holidays are provided on a local basis, such as Melbourne Cup Day.

Alcohol licenses in many states prevent sale of alcohol on certain public holidays, such as Good Friday.

Good Friday in Australia

In Australia, Good Friday is the start of a four-day weekend and falls during the Easter school holidays. Many people take a short vacation around this time, often within Australia. Others take the opportunity to spend time with their family or friends.

Members of different churches mark the day in various ways. Some churches, especially Catholic churches, see Good Friday as a fast day and people only eat three small meals and, often, no meat at all. Some people substitute meat with fish. Many churches hold special services and some may hold long prayer vigils.

Traditionally, people eat hot cross buns on Good Friday. These are small, bread-like buns flavoured with spices and raisins or currants. Some modern recipes add cocoa to the dough and replace the dried fruit with chocolate chips. All hot cross buns are marked on the top with a cross. The cross is sometimes cut into the top of the bun and sometimes made with a different, paler dough. Some people eat hot cross buns just as they are and others split them in half, toast them, spread them with butter, jam or cream and eat them warm.

A lot of sporting events are held on or start on Good Friday. The Three Peaks Race in Tasmania starts in the afternoon of Good Friday. This event is three-tiered, consisting of a section to be sailed and a section to be walked or run. During the sailing sections, all members of a given team sail a set course down Tasmania's west coast. During each of the running or walking sections, two members of each team leave their boat and run or walk up and then down one of three mountains. Other well-known sporting events that start on Good Friday are the Brisbane to Gladstone yacht race, the Stawell Easter Gift, a long distance running race and the Easter Racing Carnival in Sydney.

Public life

On Good Friday schools, post offices and many other organizations are closed. Stores and other retail outlets are closed. Some small or specialty stores may be open, according to local policy. There were traditionally tight restrictions on alcohol sale on Good Friday. Stores may not sell any alcoholic drinks and pubs may have restricted opening hours. However, there have been moves to relax the laws in some states.

Public transport services are often restricted or may not run at all. As many people take a short vacation at this time of year, there may be substantial congestion on major roads and airports may be very busy.

Internet information

On July 9, 2014, The Courier published a comment by Neil Bach titled 'Why football should not be played on Good Friday'

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.thecourier.com.au/story/2364990/why-football-should-not-be-played-on-good-friday/>

On July 5, 2014, News Weekly published an editorial titled 'Boycott AFL football on Good Friday!'

The full text of this comment can be accessed at <http://www.newsweekly.com.au/article.php?id=56638>

On July 3, 2014, The Geelong Advertiser published a comment by Father Kevin Dillon titled 'Why Good Friday football needs to play by the rules'.

The full text of this comment can be found at <http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/sport/afl/afl-shows-faith-in-good-friday-football/story-fnia3v71-1226957964938?nk=6dbf3742ce92c16844136c1c4e18be9d>

On June 17, 2014, The Roar published a comment by Dan Lonergan titled 'Good Friday footy is coming, but do we need it?'

The full text of this comment can be accessed at <http://www.theroar.com.au/2014/06/17/good-friday-footy-is-coming-but-do-we-need-it/>

On June 17, 2014, The Adelaide Advertiser published a news report titled 'AFL shows faith in Good Friday football'.

The report can be accessed at <http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/sport/afl/afl-shows-faith-in-good-friday-football/story-fnia3v71-1226957964938?nk=6dbf3742ce92c16844136c1c4e18be9d>

On June 17, 2014, In Daily published a comment by David Washington titled 'Only the dollar remains sacred'. The text treats commercialisation of sport and can be accessed at <http://indaily.com.au/news/2014/06/17/dollar-remains-sacred/>

On June 18, 2014, CathNews Perspectives published a comment by Denis Hart, Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne.

The comment, titled 'Say "no" to Good Friday AFL: Archbishop Hart' can be accessed at <http://cathnews.com/archives/cn-perspectives-archive/18106-say-no-to-good-friday-football-archbishop-hart>

On April 18, 2014, Perth Now published a comment by Kim Hagdorn titled 'Lord, it's time for Good Friday AFL'. The full

text of this comment can be found at <http://www.perthnow.com.au/news/opinion/lord-its-time-for-good-friday-afl/story-fnhocuug-1226888964586?nk=6dbf3742ce92c16844136c1c4e18be9d>

On April 23, 2013, The Record published a comment by Peter Rosengren titled 'Keep Good Friday a special day'

The full text of this comment can be found at <http://www.thecourier.com.au/story/2364990/why-football-should-not-be-played-on-good-friday/>

On April 17, 2014, the North Melbourne Football Club Official Website published for and against arguments regarding AFL football on Good Friday under the heading 'The Good Friday Debate'

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.nmfc.com.au/news/2014-04-17/the-good-friday-debate>

On March 29, 2013, The Canberra Times published a comment by Christopher Bantick titled 'Why it's not a sin to play footy on Good Friday'

The full text of this comment can be found at <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/comment/why-its-not-a-sin-to-play-footy-on-good-friday-20130328-2gxd7.html>

On March 17, 2011, Eureka Street published an opinion by Luke Walladge titled 'Embracing Good Friday football'

The full text of this comment can be accessed at <http://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article.aspx?aeid=25521#.U706jrEYBQ5>

Arguments in favour of AFL football being played on Good Friday

1. Those who do not wish to attend or otherwise acknowledge the ALF games on Good Friday do not have to do so. Those who support AFL games being played on Good Friday claim that such games need not interfere with religious

believers' capacity to commemorate Christ's death.

In an opinion piece published in *The Age* on June 22, 2014, Damon Young argued, 'Victorians will still be at liberty to believe in Christ's death and resurrection, and worship together in church. It just forces believers to reflect on their values. Those who need the service can, like some Jews on the Sabbath, stay away from the oval or screen. Others can watch the game and, like poet Emily Dickinson, keep the Sabbath at home.'

This point has also been made by Collingwood Club President, Eddie McGuire. In an article published in *The Age's* supplement *Real Footy*, on April 19, 2013, Mr McGuire stated, 'We live in a secular society, and I believe that if you want to have a sacrifice to commemorate the death of Jesus on the cross, well, then you do that, you don't go to the footy. But that doesn't mean that you don't have to if you're not into it, [nor do] the Muslims or the Jews or whoever else.'

Catholic priest, father Tink of St Aloysius Church, Moama, has indicated that the new arrangements present devout Christians with a choice most should be able to make appropriately.

Speaking for himself, Father Tink has stated, 'I have two religions, the first one is Catholic and the second one is Collingwood. But I will always put the Good Friday services first.'

2. There are many for whom Good Friday is merely a public holiday with no particular religious significance

Supporters of ALF games being played on Good Friday argue that Australia's is becoming an increasingly secular society, with many people having either no religious conviction or only a very superficial adherence to a particular belief system. For these people, Good Friday is merely a public holiday and they see no reason why they should not be able to enjoy the sport of their choice on that day.

North Melbourne chief executive, Carl Dilena, has stated, 'People are becoming more tolerant of playing (on Good Friday) as generations change and society becomes more multicultural.'

On June 20, 2014, *The Age* published the views of Alana Shetzer in its *Real Footy* segment. Ms Shetzer noted Australia's increasing secular and religiously diverse character. 'With the Australian census of 2011 revealing that 61.1 per cent of Australians identify as Christian - down from 63.9 per cent in 2006 - there's little doubt many people can identify with Good Friday, but there's also a sizeable proportion of the population that observes nothing particularly holy about the Easter holiday. And that's not to mention the 2.5 per cent of us who are Muslim or the 1.3 per cent Australian Hindus who may also argue that their holy days should be footy-free zones.'

In an opinion piece published on the North Melbourne Football Club's official website on April 17, 2014, Dr Sonja Hood argued that prohibiting AFL games on Good Friday in a secular, multicultural society is inappropriate. Dr Todd stated, 'Think about it - as an increasingly secular nation, in a code which prides itself on its approach to multicultural participants, we hold the holiday of one religion as sacrosanct while simultaneously fixturing other games regardless of other religious holidays (for example, Passover or Ramadan).'

3. Other sporting codes play on Good Friday

It has been argued that as other sporting codes already play on Good Friday, it is unjust to AFL supporters and unfairly restricts the commercial opportunities of the AFL clubs that this code does not.

The National Rugby League has been playing on the day since 1993, moved to two matches in 2007 and this year added another one because of the success of the Good Friday matches. The West Australian Football League began scheduling Good Friday matches in 2011. A-League Soccer staged a game between Melbourne Victory and Sydney FC at Etihad Stadium on Good Friday this year.

AFL Commission chairman, Mike Fitzpatrick, has noted the trend in sports being played on every day of the year, somewhere, and was confident Good Friday AFL games would be welcomed by football audiences.

Other holy days in the public holiday calendar are already used for some major sporting competition. The first Boxing Day cricket Test was played in 1953. Cricket has also been played on Christmas Day, most recently in 2004, when a game was played between New South Wales and Victoria.

It has also been noted that the minor leagues have been playing on Good Friday for some time. Dan Lonergan, in an opinion piece published in *The Roar* on June 17, 2014, noted, 'Country and suburban leagues schedule matches on this day every year... and have benefitted financially. Kyneton and Gisborne in the Bendigo Football League in North West Victoria is an example of having made this contest their own and have attracted excellent crowds.'

Supporters of the new development argue that an embargo on AFL games being played on Good Friday was out of step with international precedents. Peter Gordon, president of the Western Bulldogs, has noted that there are deeply religious regions of Italy where soccer is played on Good Friday, and that NFL games are scheduled in America's Bible belt.

4. Having AFL Football played on Good Friday would add to the enjoyment of the public holiday for many people

Numerous supporters of AFL football being played on Good Friday have commented on the boredom of the day without the opportunity to observe the code of their choice.

In an opinion piece published in the *Real Footy* supplement in *The Age* on April 10, 2012, Simon White argued, 'If I'd been a rugby league fan, I could have been most of the way through a blockbuster double-header.

If I'd been a rugby union aficionado, I might have been tuning in to the Western Force's clash with the Chiefs.

If it had taken my fancy, I may have been counting down to Swansea taking on Newcastle in the English Premier League.

Instead, I was twiddling my thumbs...'

In an article published on April 6, 2012, Adam Jones noted, 'We're a bunch of bored channel surfers on Good Friday. Primetime is a wasteland if you're not into league or charity, and a good bit of night footy would almost certainly rate through the roof.'

In an article published in One Week at a Time on May 2, 2014, Greg Gibson also commented on the tedium of the traditional Australian Good Friday. 'I think it is about time that footy was on Good Friday. It has, historically, been the worst day and night of TV for the year. Even footy the way it is played in 2014 would help alleviate the pain.'

The AFL has stressed that it would ensure that the games played on Good Friday would offer high entertainment value. AFL chief executive, Dillon McLachlan, has stated that clubs seeking a place in this new fixture will need to play 'fun football' to give them the best chance of coming under consideration to play on Good Friday.

Mr McLachlan has further stated, 'People want to see a good game and I think where the clubs sit on the ladder and what people view the contest is going to be like is as important as the two teams themselves.'

Speaking directly to contending clubs, Mr McLachlan advised, 'If you play competitive, fun football, people watch and you'll get the good (time) slots. It's as simple as that.'

5. AFL games played on Good Friday could be associated with Christian beliefs and part of the proceeds used to support charitable causes

It has been suggested that one way to reduce the purely commercial element of playing AFL football on Good Friday would be to use some of the proceeds from the day to assist one or more charitable causes. It is argued that such an initiative may make Good Friday AFL football less potentially offensive to Christians.

In an article published in The Canberra Times on March 29, 2013, Christopher Bantick, a columnist for The Melbourne Anglican, has stated, 'It is true that if a Good Friday football match was played with the specific intention of raising money as part of the now-traditional Good Friday Children's Hospital Appeal, then Victorians would most likely dig deeper than usual. It would be a win-win. The Children's Hospital would be a direct beneficiary, the AFL would have a well-patronised blockbuster where no other matches were played, and Melbourne would have an alternative public entertainment...'

The possibility of conducting ALF games in a manner that is sensitive to the significance of Good Friday has been suggested by Luke Walladge in an opinion piece published in Eureka Street on March 17, 2011.

Mr Walladge has stated, 'Good Friday football would not be a case of simply playing a normal, garden-variety match. The day could be used to promote the Church's mission and give a public face and voice to Easter's true meaning. And just like on Anzac Day, the excitement and interest generated would be immense.'

Mr Walladge went on to further suggest, 'Collectors taking donations for the Good Friday Appeal could be positioned outside the ground. The match could be preceded by several moments' silence, or dimmed house lights and candles or glowtubes. A nominated church leader could offer a prayer of thanks and protection.'

Catholic Father Bob Maguire, who is not opposed to AFL football being played on Good Friday, believes that it should be possible to accommodate both religious believers and those who wish to see an AFL football game.

Father Maguire has stated, 'They will go bananas if it's at 3pm because that was the time He was tied to a cross on a hill outside Jerusalem. Let the Catholics go to church first and then maybe have a pop-up mass at the football.'

Arguments against AFL football being played on Good Friday

1. A major sporting contest is out of keeping with the religious significance of the day

The Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, Denis Hart, argues that a major sporting contest is out of keeping with the religious significance of Good Friday. The Archbishop has stated, 'A public holiday is a privileged and powerful mark of respect which honours all that the death of Christ signifies: sacrifice, faithfulness and the giving of self in love. It is a way to focus on these values, as an important part of our Australian culture.'

Archbishop Hart has explained further, 'From our awakening to the end of the day, it is the day Christians remember that Jesus Christ suffered and died for us so that we might know and enjoy the love of God for all eternity. It provides a window into values that are not controlled by consumerism, money-making or busy-ness.'

In an opinion piece published in The Record on April 23, 2013, Peter Rosengren, now the editor of the Catholic Weekly, stated, 'To insist on Good Friday's solemn nature is not to try and impose some alien morality or perspective on those who do not believe but to recognise and respect the very origin of our culture and our society...'

Critics of the AFL move argue that it is inconsistent to do anything on that day which competes with the primary purpose for which the public holiday exists.

Father Kevin Dillon, the Catholic parish priest of St Mary's in Geelong, has stated, 'The public holiday on Good Friday originates in a long tradition of honouring the death of Jesus Christ. It provides the opportunity, while not compelling anyone, for people to attend services being held in recognition of that event...'

If we're still happy to take a day off for a "religious holiday", even if it's not our religion or we have no religion, then competing with the reason for the holiday should be "out of bounds".'

Peter Rosengren has made the point more strongly, arguing that if Good Friday is not primarily about religious observance there should be no holiday at all.

Mr Rosengren has stated, 'Paradoxically, if Good Friday, established in part to permit Christians to participate in the solemn commemoration of Christ's passion and death, became only a public holiday there would be no reason to keep it.'

The question has also been raised about the appropriateness of potentially forcing players who are devout Christians to play football games when their beliefs dictate they should be attending religious observances.

In March, 2013, North Melbourne captain Andrew Swallow indicated that despite his club's long-standing support for Good Friday games, as a practising Christian he is opposed to the move.

Swallow stated, 'If I was to take the club line I would say yes, but personally I would prefer not to.'

2. A large majority of Australians still profess a religious belief

Though it has declined over the course of the last fifty years, religious (and specifically Christian) belief persists within the Australian community and is adhered to by a clear majority.

As part of the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes in 2009, 1,718 people across Australian communities were asked about their belief in some key religious concepts, including God, heaven, hell, life after death and religious miracles. 71% of Australians claimed to believe in God, while almost half the population continues to believe in heaven and life after death.

Critics of Good Friday AFL games note that those who attend Christian services are at least as numerous as those who attend AFL matches.

Adelaide's Anglican Archbishop, Jeffrey Driver, has stated, 'The place of faith and the church in Australian society is often played down in these debates as if not many people go to church, and yet still around 20 per cent of Australians have an active church connection...

Let's not forget that something like six million Australians are still church goers, which is multiples of the number who are footy goers.'

Similarly, the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, Denis Hart, in an opinion piece published in The Herald Sun on June 23, 2014, observed, 'Remember that while up to 100,000 people can attend a game at the MCG, more than 148,800 Catholics attend weekly Mass in the Archdiocese of Melbourne alone. The number of other Christians attending services is also significant.'

3. It deprives individuals and families of one of the few days in the year not given over to commercial activity and professional sporting contests

It has been argued that in addition to the religious significance of the day, Good Friday is a unique opportunity to temporarily withdraw from the demands and distractions of consumerism and enjoy time alone or with family.

The Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, Denis Hart, has stated that playing AFL games on Good Friday 'would take away that time and space which is not only needed by Christians but desired by all people to reflect and ponder on key issues about what it means to be human.

In that sense, keeping Good Friday as a public holiday free from obligations or distractions is a symbolic acknowledgment of our need for time and space to enrich our lives with reflection, depth, and quietness.'

In response to the claim that individuals who wish to retain the special character of the day may still do so, those who want Good Friday set aside argue this cannot be done. The more commercial intrusions there are into a day traditionally exempt from them, the more the day's is undermined.

Those who take this view argue that Western society offers few occasions free from commercial demands. People are working longer hours; both parents in families typically have jobs outside the home; retail outlets open for most of the day on most days of the year. There is a 24 hour news cycle and constant media intrusion, including the reporting of televised sporting contests. In this context, there are those who promote the spiritual and psychological value of having time when these pressures are minimised.

In an opinion piece published in The Courier on June 20, 2014, Neil Bach stressed, 'The general health of Australians [is important]. We are under enough pressure without this deeply symbolic public holiday being chopped up. The immense benefit of a public holiday being a "complete" holiday outweighs the benefit of a football match.'

Archbishop Hart has similarly stated, 'There are so few days we share as a community during which families and friends can spend time together, without the pressure to work or to go to the shops. It is a day with a character of its own, out of the ordinary weekly routine. There is great value in preserving that difference.'

The same point has been made by Adelaide's Anglican Archbishop, Jeffrey Driver, who has stated, 'In every society we need the capacity to have days of reflection and days set aside from the hurly burly of life.'

4. Good Friday AFL football games represent corporate greed

It has been argued that Australian Rules football is predominantly a commercial enterprise and that its aim in attempting to play games on Good Friday is simply to extend its profits.

Critics claim that the competition is already profitable enough not to need to play games on the one free public holiday in the ALF season.

Bishop Philip Huggins, of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, has stated, 'The AFL has chosen to preference another money-making opportunity over respect for cultural traditions and sensitivities, continuing the grinding banality of product marketing.'

In an opinion piece published in The Courier on June 20, 2014, Neil Bach condemned 'the commercial greed of the AFL. It is behaving like a toddler who is offered a cupcake but would rather take one already in the hand of another child.'

In an opinion piece published in In Daily, The Adelaide Independent News, on June 17, 2014, David Washington stated, 'Of course, there is no pressing requirement to hold an AFL match on the most sacred and solemn day on the Christian calendar. It's just an opportunity to manufacture a new "blockbuster" match, to create revenue, and build the strength of selected clubs.

The AFL...is looking after its own interests. It cares not for the sensibilities of Christian churches or players only the

growth of its own power, influence and revenue.'

Collingwood president, Eddie McGuire, has openly stressed the primacy of high profits for the Good Friday AFL fixture. McGuire has stated, 'If we are going to use Good Friday, this is about getting more ratings to sell the TV rights for more money down the track. If we're going to do that, then we'd better put a big show on.'

5. AFL football is played on all other public holidays during the football season

Critics of the decision to play AFL Football on Good Friday argue that it is not as though supporters do not already have an adequate opportunity to enjoy their preferred sport.

As the current AFL Chairman, Mike Fitzpatrick, has noted, 'AFL matches are scheduled on every other public holiday during the season.' Mr Fitzpatrick offered this observation in support of games being played on Good Friday also; however, critics have noted that the already abundant opportunities to view or attend AFL games should mean that there is no need to play a further game (or games) on Good Friday.

The fact that there is no imperative to play AFL Football on Good Friday was made clear by Patrick Smith, senior sports commentator for The Australian, in an opinion piece published on April 19, 2014. Mr Smith stated, 'For the rest who might enjoy Good Friday football, it is not an article of faith but just another opportunity to go to the footy. Cheers, and pass us another can.'

It has also been observed that the Easter holiday period already has a large number of AFL games scheduled. Dan Lonergan, in an opinion piece published in The Roar on June 17, 2014, noted, 'The Easter weekend is a packed enough as it is, with matches on Thursday night, Saturday, Sunday and Easter Monday.

A rest on Good Friday makes sense...as well as celebrating numerous religious festivities and embracing the hospital appeal...'

In an article published in The Guardian on June 17, 2014, Russell Jackson asked, 'Are we honestly so boring and bored that we can't occupy ourselves for a single day of holidays without a football match?'

Further implications

The predominant argument used to support the playing of ALF football and other sporting events on Good Friday is that the day no longer holds sufficient significance for a majority of Australians to have it given over exclusively to religious observance and reflection.

Some social commentators have noted that if that is the case, the question should not be, 'Do we play football, open shops or otherwise continue normal activities on Good Friday?' The question should rather be, 'Do we continue to observe the Good Friday holiday at all?'

This point has been discussed at length by Bazza Lencko in an opinion piece published in The Roar on April 8, 2012. An extract from Mr Lencko's argument follows.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.theroar.com.au/2012/04/08/afl-makes-good-decision-on-good-friday-football/>

'Diverse as we are, Australia currently identifies as a Christian nation. Good Friday does not hold significance in most non-Christian cultures thus they do not have a Good Friday public holiday.

In Australia it is a holiday because as a nation we recognise the significance of the day, even if individual residents may not. If we schedule a game during the day on Good Friday, we are asking people to attend that game instead of the events the day is held sacred for. If we cease to revere the day for its religious significance, we remove the very reason for the holiday.

The only acceptable way would be to schedule the game at night. It would allow time to attend religious events, for those who so choose. However, if the argument for a Good Friday game is based on increasing numbers of people not observing the day, we are catering for a crowd who do not acknowledge the day whilst allowing respect for those who do. If those who do are truly in the minority, then the public holiday becomes redundant.

When we reach this point, scheduling a Friday night match on Good Friday is no different from any other Friday. When attendances and revenue dropped for the Royal Melbourne Show, the public holiday was removed. Those in regional Victoria and other states do not receive the Melbourne Cup holiday because even if they support it, they do not attend in high numbers regularly. Yet enough people support and participate in the day's main event to justify the holiday.

The debate for a Good Friday game therefore is not about whether a game should be scheduled but whether the day itself still holds enough reverence to enough people that a public holiday is justified. If attendances for Good Friday services drop to insignificant rates, perhaps it would be justifiable to eliminate the public holiday. Like less popular religions in Australia, people could use an annual leave day to observe the religious significance of Good Friday while the remainder of Australians could work as normal and wander over to the MCG for the routine 7pm night game.

To challenge the reverence of the day is to challenge the need for the day itself...'

Newspaper items used in the compilation of this issue outline

H/SUN, June 19, 2014, page 26, comment by Shaun Carney, 'Footy has to find its way back'. (Online version has a different title)

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/opinion/footys-in-a-slump-and-thats-a-bad-thing-for-us-all/story-fni0ffsx-1226959114957>

H/SUN, June 18, 2014, page 22, editorial, 'Keep Friday good for kids'.

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/opinion/keep-friday-good-for-children/story-fni0ffsx-1226957939590>

AGE, June 17, 2014, page 2, news item by Nick Toscano, 'Holy day not good for football, say church leaders'. (with cartoon)

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/holy-day-matches-not-good-for-football-say-religious-leaders-20140616-zs9to.html>

H/SUN, June 26, 2014, page 50, comment by Eddie McGuire, 'If footy's heartland breaks, soccer wins'.

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/opinion/soccer-will-win-if-we-ignore-footys-heartland/story-fni0ffsx-1226966873474>

H/SUN, June 23, 2014, page 21, comment by Denis Hart, 'I love footy but Good Friday is a day to cherish'.

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/opinion/i-love-footy-but-good-friday-is-a-day-to-cherish/story-fni0ffsx-1226963015731>

AGE, June 22, 2014, page 22, comments in question and answer form by Young and Stark, 'Religion v the sport blockbuster'.

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/religion-versus-sport-explaining-afl-games-on-good-friday-20140621-3a11d.html>