**Editorial: Sad dose of reality for sports fans**

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**REVELATIONS of widespread substance misuse across a number of Australian sporting competitions will be a shock not only to sports fans but all Australians.**

We have become accustomed to stories of performance-enhancing drug use overseas. The stench of the Lance Armstrong revelations is still fresh in the nostrils of cycling fans everywhere.

In terms of Australian sport there has been nothing like the revelations made by the Australian Crime Commission yesterday.

Disturbingly, the revelations strike at the heart of why the Australian sports public is so passionate about our national pastimes. Ramifications will go far beyond the boundary fences, running tracks and sidelines.

Australians revere a fair and passionate contest, not just on the football field or the cricket oval, but also on the battlefield, in the court room, Parliament and two-up contests. We live by the code that the best man, woman or team wins.

Examples of good sportsmanship, not only great victories, are held in the highest esteem by Australian sports fans. Many rank the victory by John Landy in the 1500m at the 1956 Australian national championships as one of the greatest moments in Australian sport, some say the greatest.

Landy stopped and went back to help the stricken runner Ron Clarke, who had tripped and fallen early in the third lap of the race, but he still made up a large deficit to win.

The cultural concept of a "fair go" is no more evident than on our sporting fields and in sports administration. Unlike their overseas counterparts, Australian sports administrators have consistently resisted the undue influence of money, for example, through mechanisms such as the AFL salary cap.

But the prizes offered by giving in to temptation are great and those groups seeking to profit are sophisticated.

The fact that the tentacles of organised crime have been allowed to infiltrate sports such as the AFL, which carries the name of our nation, would send shudders through all who consider themselves fair dinkum Australians.

The infiltration of these people into our cultural institutions is not just the darkest blot on Australian sport, it is a stain on the national character.

Sadly, long into the future, some people may question the extraordinary performances of our athletes. The association of performance-enhancing drugs and athletes from the former East Germany has endured even beyond the life of that nation.

Healthy scepticism is also part of the Australian make-up.

In this case, however, the Federal Government and its various agencies have drawn a clear line in the sand.

The clean-up has begun.

The revelations have been damning but they are also generic and lacking in detail. Until more is known, nobody should jump to conclusions about individuals, teams or competitions.

Australians can still marvel at the achievements of their sporting heroes.

The spirit of John Landy's actions are still alive and well in our sports and our culture. The vast majority of Australian athletes will be vindicated over the coming months, while an extreme minority will fall and suffer righteous condemnation.