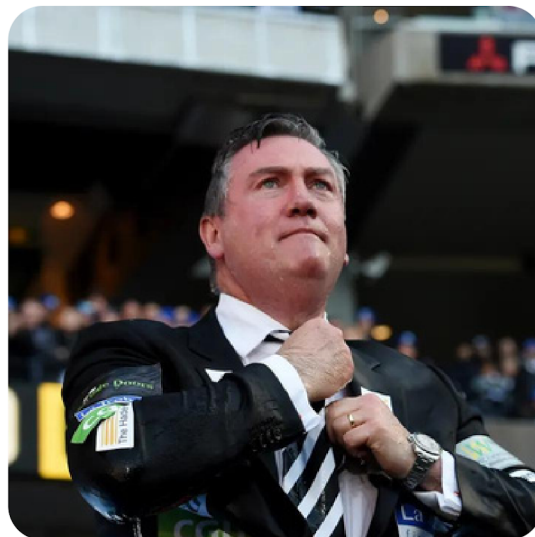


Article: Eddie McGuire is too frequently bringing shame and embarrassment to Collingwood

By Paul Daley - 4 April, 2019



Casual, unintended discrimination has the very same impact as the intentional.

Eddie is too frequently being mentioned publicly in association with the club in a way that is bringing shame and embarrassment to (I'd hope) most supporters.

Last Friday night's episode where he criticised the coin toss ahead of the Swans-Adelaide match (Cynthia Banham, a disabled air accident survivor and Swans Number One ticketholder did the honours) appalled so many people across so many clubs, including Collingwood, and the AFL which invests enormously (with obviously mixed results) in promoting diversity and tolerance.

Cynthia can speak for herself. Her silence in the face of the meltdown that followed McGuire's implied criticism (he said he did not see the footage of her coin toss and offered a prompt though qualified apology, and another, less so, later) only illustrates her dignity and courage.

Her friends (she has many in media, including myself) used their voices to condemn the Collingwood president, pondering how McGuire - who, given all of his self-made successes cannot be dismissed merely as some accidental dumb-arse - could brain fade, yet again, with such proficiency in front of an open mic.

It was a terrible thing to say. The uncharacteristic swiftness of his mea culpa (which included sinbining himself from Saturday football commentary on Fox) tells you just how much. What was he thinking? The coin toss is invariably performed by a punter associated with a charity. Why criticise it in the first place? McGuire is known, among other things, for his charity work away from the cameras and open mics.

Regardless, what he said last Friday night was immensely painful for people with disabilities (advocates have roundly condemned him on that basis and their objections can't and shouldn't be dismissed by McGuire's defenders who'd seek to downplay the incident).

But amid all of the hot angry social media takes from embarrassed and angry Collingwood supporters who otherwise admire McGuire, the incident set his enemies in the AFL and around the club chattering.

Two less ambiguous incidents – his racist 2013 likening of Indigenous Swans legend Adam Goodes to King Kong and his 2016 allusion to drowning football writer Caroline Wilson – had already brought acute embarrassment to the AFL and shame, according to many, to the Collingwood name.

Some will put it down to Eddie being spread too thinly across too many places: the club presidency, morning FM radio, a TV quiz show, numerous football commentary gigs – and family. His energy is notorious. But plenty wonder if, now in his mid-50s, lack of down-time is catching up. In the end it's something of a moot point: casual, unintended discrimination on the basis of gender, skin colour or physical capacity has the very same impact as the intentional. It's unclear if he gets that. If he did, surely it wouldn't have happened three times.

That is why many influential Collingwood supporters are fearfully pondering the obvious: when will the AFL, their beloved club and the most significant player group in years next be made to recoil at a repellent comment that is automatically associated with the Magpies? And what, then, of McGuire's long-term legacy?

If some football clubs really are like political parties (Collingwood, it's said, has historically resembled something of a hybrid of the Victorian Labor Right and Tammany Hall) patronage comes at a price. It also lacks permanence.

The big question underscoring political leadership is, of course, knowing when to go. It was Paul Keating, himself a Collingwood ticketholder for a short time, who said prime ministers were Araldited to the chair – if you wanted them gone you had to blast them out.

It may not be too much of a stretch of the metaphor to suggest that club presidencies can be a bit the same.

And as in politics, the end can disproportionately determine posterity's memory.

Adapted from: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/apr/04/eddie-mcguire-is-too-frequently-bringing-shame-and-embarrassment-to-collingwood>