

Brown rules out ban on tobacco link with sport

By SUE COOK

THE federal Minister for Sport, Recreation and Tourism, Mr Brown, yesterday defended his stance on tobacco sponsorship of sport before 500 health, education and fitness professionals at a conference in Sydney.

Mr Brown said he wanted to stress his contempt for cigarette smoking — "if there is one product in 1984 which I detest, it is cigarettes" — but would not be party to a "witch-hunt" to ban tobacco companies from sponsoring sport.

He could see no harm in cigarette brand names being displayed at sporting events and did not intend to "join the hallelujah chorus that deplores tobacco sponsorship".

He was replying to criticism from the National Heart Foundation of a statement he made in Parliament supporting tobacco sponsorship of sport.

The director of the foundation, Dr Robert Hodge, said his organisation was certainly in favor of sport but believed smoking reduced performance and therefore was the antithesis of what sportsmen were aiming for.

"I applaud the fact that cigarette advertising no longer takes place on television," Mr Brown told the 15th biennial conference of the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER) at the University of NSW.

"I think it is very important because certainly the advertisements we see of glamorous

women and glamorous people floating around Monte Carlo do have an effect on inducing people to smoke.

"But whether the name Rothmans stuck on the fence of a sports ground alongside National Mutual and McDonalds makes people rush out and buy a packet of cigarettes and start smoking is a very doubtful premise."

Tobacco companies contributed \$13 million to sport, and the Federal Government received \$800 million from excise duty on cigarettes.

"While we are receiving this money it would be very hypocritical to tell the companies that their product is too dangerous to advertise," Mr Brown said.

"I am not in the position of being a spokesman for tobacco companies. However, while the present position pertains I am not going to be party to a witch-hunt to ban cigarette advertising at sporting events."

Mr Brown told the Confederation of Australian Sport's annual meeting in Melbourne in December that cigarette companies should be allowed to sponsor sport.

At the meeting the confederation rejected a motion from ACHPER calling on the confederation to dissociate itself from cigarette sponsorship.

The Australian Ice Hockey Federation yesterday warned backers of a new national league not to accept tobacco sponsorship, or face expulsion from the federation.