



15 May 2009

Senator Sarah Hanson-Young  
Email: [senator.hanson-young@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.hanson-young@aph.gov.au)

Dear Senator Hanson-Young:

### **Universal Code of Conduct for Male Athletes**

The Australian Athletes' Alliance (AAA) is the peak body of associations representing professional athletes, both male and female.

We write in response to comments in which you 1) project the disgraceful actions of a small group of athletes seven years ago to all male athletes and 2) call for government to restrict the social freedoms of male athletes through a "universal code of conduct" not applicable to the general public.

We believe that your response to the appalling incident that occurred in New Zealand seven years ago is unwarranted.

First, rape is already a crime, punishable by law, regardless of the profession or gender of the offender. To the extent that your proposal seeks to punish or prevent rape, it is unnecessary.

Second, it is discriminatory to stereotype all male athletes based on the inappropriate behaviour of a few. Had the same type of reasoning been used in connection with an ethnic minority, rather than athletes, the public would have been outraged (and rightly so). Such bigotry is wrong regardless of the group to which it is applied.

Third, in Australia, neither government nor employers should have the right to control the sexual expression of consenting adults. A code prescribing the maximum number of participants or the manner in which parties could participate would, among other things, intrude on Australia's right of privacy.

Fourth, sporting bodies already have codes of conduct that are tailored to their individual sports. Importantly, these are subject to negotiation between the athletes and the sporting bodies and form part of the employment contract in the relevant sport. The fact that the codes of conduct are violated from time to time, does not render them any less effective or valid than the many federal laws and codes that are violated from time to time.

It is understandable that you would be angry at what occurred in the New Zealand incident and want to react. We respectfully assert that your reaction may have been hasty and that you should reconsider the action you proposed.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely



**Laura Sigal**  
Executive