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Dr Helen Szoke  
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By email: [antiracismsecretariat@humanrights.gov.au](mailto:antiracismsecretariat@humanrights.gov.au)

Dear Dr Szoke

### **National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy Discussion Paper (March 2012)**

Netball welcomes the Australian government consulting with the community on the *importance of a culturally diverse and socially cohesive nation*, along with its pledge to develop and implement a National Anti-Racism Strategy for Australia.

The Government's commitment to build a fairer and more inclusive Australia through Australia's Human Right Framework and interrelated agenda, such as social inclusion, the People of Australia: Australia's Multi-Cultural Policy, Closing the Gap, the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children, and National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security, recognises the need to build a solid foundation that aligns with the United Nations International Human Rights Instruments to which Australia is a party. The next logical step ought to be re-opening the discussion about a Human Rights Charter for Australia<sup>1</sup>.

### **Background**

As Australia's leading female sport, netball strives to deliver fair, safe, inclusive, respectful and supportive environments for all Australians. We believe that netball offers the enjoyment of participation, a sense of belonging and life-long involvement – no matter whether that's as a player, coach, official, administrator, volunteer or fan.

Netball in Australia (Netball Australia and the State/Territory Netball Associations) are committed to leading social change, strengthening and building capacity and capability in communities and providing innovative and sustainable netball programs to empower women and girls.

Netball is ranked as the leading women's participation team sport and the top team based sport in Australia for 15 to 24 year olds. Over 1.2 million participants enjoy the game nationally and Australia has been dominant on the international stage since 1963. Netball Australia has more than 330,000 registered members; 5,000 clubs nationally; 570 Associations; and eight member organisations.

Netball Australia is committed to advancing the sport of netball internationally. Australia has an obligation, as a world leader in netball, to share our knowledge and expertise to support international harmony, enhance integrity, and build capacity within other nations.



Netball is the largest female community based sporting organisation in the world, with more than 70 nations playing and over 21 million participants world-wide. Netball can make a real difference in the lives of women and girls.

## **Context**

- Senator Kate Lundy, Minister for Sport, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister Assisting for Industry and Innovation stated that:

*Sport brings people together in meaningful and sustainable ways and helps build and maintain social cohesion. Through these sporting opportunities people learn about each other and make enduring connections. Sport has the ability to unite people through common values, physical challenges and teamwork.*

*Ideally sport is about the universal values of respect, fair play, cooperation and equality – all elements that have been crucial in building Australia’s success as a culturally diverse country. Being part of a team and working together towards a common goal highlights how common interests and challenges can break down barriers and create a welcoming environment in which all can participate<sup>2 3</sup>.*

- Australian Rules Footballer, Michael Long, championed the Indigenous cause within the Australian Football League when in 1995, he made a stand against racial abuse, following an on-field incident with another player, asserting that racism had no place in sport.

*Sport has been our greatest ally in the fight against racism and in the quest for greater Aboriginal self respect among the Australian community generally<sup>4</sup>.*

- Emine Bozkurt, the Dutch member of the European Parliament who initiated the influential European resolution to tackle racism in football noted:

*Sport is a mirror of society, with all of its shortcomings. But let us not forget that, above all, sport offers great possibilities for social inclusion<sup>5</sup>.*

- The European Union is committed to combating racism as a general objective of law and policy.

*Sports ability to bring together millions of people, regardless of their sex, colour, gender, age, nationality or religion, and thus has the potential to play an important role in creating an inclusive society. Sports activities ranging from the local to the national and international level, embracing leisure as well as competitive sport, can support the integration of migrants and persons belonging to minorities into society as whole. In other words, sport events could be an ideal platform to foster inclusion, acceptance of diversity and mutual respect while combating racism, discrimination and exclusion.<sup>6</sup>*

- While women have come far in recent decades, the reality is women have a way to go before achieving gender equality, and experience higher rates of racism, inequity and disadvantage.

*Sport is often perceived as having less relevance for women. However, the role which sport plays within women’s lives is gradually being documented.*

*Women are obviously not a homogenous group, but are divided by race and class, and as such there is not a uniform set of constraints which equally affect all women. Racism is an obvious illustration of this, adding another dimension to sexism, for ethnic minority women. The effects of racism are diverse and vary between different ethnic groups.<sup>7</sup>*

## **Comments**

By way of background, the sport of netball as a social change agent espouses many of the underlying principles that would have informed the Discussion paper. At the strategic level, and nationally, examples include:

- Developing and implementing a Member Protection Policy aimed at providing safe environments. The Policy informs people involved in netball of their legal and ethical rights and responsibilities in relation to anti-discrimination and harassment, including age; disability; family/carer responsibilities; gender identity/transgender status; homosexuality and sexual orientation; irrelevant medical record; irrelevant criminal record; political belief/activity; pregnancy and breastfeeding; race; religious belief/activity; sex or gender; social origin; trade union membership/activity.

The Member Protection Policy provides assurances that improper conduct will not be tolerated and will be dealt with. The Policy also encourages any person or group who feels that they may have been subject to improper or unlawful behaviour to come forward to discuss their concerns.

- Advocating “Play By The Rules”<sup>8</sup> - a unique partnership between the Australian Sports Commission, the Australian Human Rights Commission, all State and Territory sport and recreation and anti-discrimination agencies and the NSW Commission for Children and Young People.

“Play By The Rules” provides information and online learning for community sport and recreation on how to prevent and deal with discrimination, harassment and child abuse: and develop inclusive and welcoming environments for participation.

- Supporting the Gillard Government’s The People of Australia – Australia’s Multicultural Policy, including involvement in Harmony Day, appointing a One Netball Ambassador and developing strategies to enhance opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds.
- Developing a Corporate Social Responsibility Framework, Respect & Responsibility Framework, and Racial and Religious Vilification Framework.
- As part of the Australian Government’s Gender Equality for Women Community Action Grants Stream, delivering Expect Respect Education aimed at young people aged 12 – 24; delivering Social marketing and peer education in partnership with the David Wirrpanda Foundation targeting Indigenous school-aged girls; and developing a “NO to Violence” module in Netball Australia’s coaching framework.
- Commending the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their children.

- Helping to “Close the Gap” by developing a Netball Reconciliation Action Plan and partnering with community organisations to empower women and girls with the aim of helping girls stay at school, go on to further education, get a job and improve their quality of life.

The National Netball Indigenous Advisory Group provides advice to Netball Australia management on matters relating to the promotion and development of the game of netball for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as part of Netball Australia’s strategic priority of making netball an inclusive sport.

- Working to deliver greater equality between women and men through facilitating aspirational leadership, providing opportunities for board directorships and senior executive management positions, increasing opportunities in coaching, officiating and administration, introducing contemporary employment practices, providing minimum terms of employment for elite netballers, and raising the profile of women’s sport.
- Helping Australia to continue playing a leading role in the delivery of sport for development opportunities (sport as a tool for social, economic, health and educational development), through in-country partnerships in the Oceania, Pacific, Asian, Caribbean and African regions.
- Giving much needed support to our paid staff and volunteers by developing a Work Force Planning and Development Strategy. This is critical as sport is one of the areas that attract the highest volunteering rates.
- Training and skilling our paid staff and volunteers through enhanced on-line learning platforms and resources; especially for coaches and administrators who are key influencers for our youth.

At the State/Territory member organisation level examples include:

- Implementation of multicultural schools program aimed at increasing the participation of netball amongst the multicultural community and creating a more culturally equitable and diverse sport. Netball Victoria, supported by VicHealth<sup>9</sup>, employ two staff members to deliver specifically targeted Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities programs and build inclusion capacity at local associations and clubs (Melbourne Vixens Friendly School Program).
- Netball Victoria recognised the need for staff to understand and address the barriers that Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities face when participating in sport. Cultural Awareness Training was introduced for the management team and staff across all areas of their business. Further, five Netball Victoria staff have participated in the ‘Creating Healthier Sporting Environments’ 2 day short course, hosted by Vic Health.
- Netball Victoria declared their commitment to the principles of equal opportunity and treatment through the signing of the Victorian Multicultural Commission’s Community Accord. The Community Accord acknowledges the principles and commitments which are outlined in the Multicultural Victoria Act (2004). These include the need for respect amongst all ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic communities and the rejection of all forms of racial and religious vilification, violence, harassment and unlawful discrimination. Netball Victoria is committed to these universal values and recognises the need for increased netball opportunities within the culturally and linguistically

diverse community and the impact that sport and recreation can play in harnessing social inclusion and civic capital.

- With funding and support from Netball Australia, Healthway, the Department for Sport and Recreation and Nyoongar Sports, Netball Western Australia has established an Indigenous Netball Program, focused on community engagement, skill development and talent identification. The program creates exposure for the sport of netball within Indigenous communities, creates player pathways into mainstream competitions, academies and programs, develops further opportunities for talent identification and offers development support for Indigenous athletes, and up-skills and develops coaches and umpires in Indigenous communities.

## **Observations**

Racism in sport, like in society, can affect all sports, at all different levels, impacting players, coaches, officials and fans on and off the court/field, as well as in the media.

To design a policy and actions to successfully tackle racism, many partners need to be involved, from law enforcement agencies, governments (Federal, State/Territory and Local) and non-government organisations, including sporting organisations and multi-cultural groups.

In terms of the sporting environment, there needs to be a balance between the Legislative framework and the practical tasks of information, awareness, education and on-going learning. The key is to change culture through sustainable behavioural change, rather than starting with a disciplinary framework. The enhancement of the Australian Sports Commission imposing the adoption of a Member Protection Policy to secure funding is that there are significant resources to help sports implement programs and resources, such as “Play By The Rules” and the “Essence of Australian Sport”<sup>10</sup>.

Measures to combat racism (and other inappropriate forms of behavior) in the sport industry have included the following initiatives in some sports:

- Acknowledging and mainstreaming the fight against racism.
- Adopting and publicising firm and unequivocal policies.
- Clauses in rules and regulations valid at all levels of the sport to enable action to be taken either during or after the match on participants, including players, coaches and spectators, who act inappropriately.
- Contractual obligations and/or registration obligations to uphold principles such as fairness, respect, responsibility and safety.
- CCTV and similar devices to monitor large crowd behaviour.
- Banning slogans, statements, clothing, gestures and the like that could incite inappropriate behavior.
- Imposing conditions of sale or entry to venues to uphold the spirit of sport.
- Subsidising costs to participate for disadvantaged and marginalised groups.
- Identifying barriers to equal participation.
- Promotion and implementation of diversity programs.

- Monitoring incidents and improving processes to deal with complaints.
- Increased media representation of minority groups.
- Providing training and development opportunities for volunteers.
- Mandating cross-cultural training courses through coach/umpire/management training, starting with “Play By the Rules” and then enhanced cross-cultural awareness training.
- Flexibility in policies and operations to be more inclusive, for example, uniforms, competition game times (could clash with religious days or ceremonies), signs up in club canteens about food offered i.e., Halal food.
- Translating resources to overcome language barriers.
- Promoting the experiences of elite athletes to encourage greater understanding and friendship between people of different backgrounds.

Future initiatives <sup>11</sup> could include:

- Providing leadership to the sport and active recreation system through the National Sport and Active Recreation Policy Framework <sup>12</sup> agreed by all governments in June 2011. The Framework provides a guide for the development and alignment of policies, strategies and programs by governments within their own jurisdictions in pursuit of a system that delivers: increased participation; success in international competition; strong national sporting competition; and contributes to whole of government objectives including improved health and education outcomes (including sport in schools and higher education institutions), enhanced social inclusion and community development
- The Australian Sports Commission taking a greater leadership role, utilising the “Essence of Australian Sport” as the framework, to proactively help the sport industry to reaffirm and implement “a fair go for all” into their daily activities, processes and policies.
- Development of education materials tailored to sport (complements and/or enhances “Play By The Rules”).
- Development of education programs specifically targeted at rural, regional and remote areas focusing on practical ways of resolving barriers to participation.
- A tool kit to explain different cultures and what needs to happen on the ground to engage communities.
- A national website/blog for all sporting organisations to share information, with a focus on best practice, funding or programs, clearing house and a Q and A section so sports can ask questions for example, how do you phrase your registration form to find out which ethnic communities are getting involved in your sport.
- Information about the ethnic breakdown of local communities to better target resources.
- Establishing a National Charter for inclusive sport (perhaps link with the National Sport and Active Recreation Policy Framework).
- Creating a national ‘tick’ of approval for local clubs or NSOs who engage with their local community and promote social inclusion of multicultural youth.
- Focusing on emerging mediums of racism – using social media and digital media / technology to (1) positively combat racism, (2) detect racism, and (3) promote inclusive practices and cultural change.

- Re-enforcing strong governance and management leadership at all levels of the sport which publically and through their own actions reaffirms Australia is a multi-cultural nation.
- Challenging the perceptions, and increasing knowledge about persons from Culturally Diverse Communities, refugees, migrants and newly arrived persons.

Netball appreciates the opportunity to provide comment and looks forward to ongoing involvement.

If you require further information, please contact me on phone (03) 8621 8600, or email [infonet@netball.asn.au](mailto:infonet@netball.asn.au).

Yours sincerely

Nadine Cohen  
Head of Strategy & Government Liaison

10 May 2012

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#### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.humanrightsconsultation.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Sport, Race and Ethnicity: Building a Global Understanding Conference, 30 November 2008, Sydney, <http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/parlsec/media/speeches/2008/lf081130.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Minister Lundy and the former Minister for Sport, Senator the Hon. Mark Arbib, hosted a Joint Sports and Settlement Services Roundtable in September 2011

<sup>4</sup> AFL Footballer, Michael Long, <http://www.thelongwalk.com.au/About/Our-Story>

<sup>5</sup> <http://unescoeducation.blogspot.com.au/2008/11/combating-racism-with-sports.html>

<sup>6</sup> Racism, ethnic discrimination and exclusion of migrants and minorities in sport: A comparative overview of the situation in the European Union, October 2010, [http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/Report-racism-sport\\_EN.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/Report-racism-sport_EN.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Sport, Racism and Ethnicity, Edited by Grant Jarvie, 1991

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.playbytherules.net.au/>

<sup>9</sup> Everybody Wins – Welcome, involve and value everyone in Sport, VicHealth

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.ausport.gov.au/about/essence\\_of\\_sport](http://www.ausport.gov.au/about/essence_of_sport)

<sup>11</sup> Minister Lundy and the former Minister for Sport, Senator the Hon. Mark Arbib, hosted a Joint Sports and Settlement Services Roundtable in September 2011. Some of these actions came up at this meeting

<sup>12</sup>

[http://www.ausport.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/467563/National\\_Sport\\_and\\_Active\\_Recreation\\_Policy\\_Framework.pdf](http://www.ausport.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/467563/National_Sport_and_Active_Recreation_Policy_Framework.pdf)