

Friday 14 August, 2020

**Ms Kirsty Coventry**

Chair International Olympic Committee Athletes' Commission  
Route de Vidy 9, 1007 Lausanne, Switzerland

Dear Kirsty,

On behalf the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) Athletes' Commission, it's my pleasure to provide you feedback as you have requested on the issue of athlete protest and self-expression during Games time as well as to provide an update on what we are working on locally to address the global non-discrimination discussion.

The AOC Athletes' Commission undertook a comprehensive survey in response to the IOC Athletes' Commission initiative to explore the different ways of how athletes can express their support for the principles enshrined in the Olympic Charter.

The AOC Athletes' Commission sent a total of twenty-three (23) questions to all Australian Olympians and Tokyo 2020 aspirants, seeking their views on Rule 50.2 and how these views relate to the Olympic Charter regarding non-discrimination as well as athlete rights to freedom of expression, as outlined in the Athletes Rights and Responsibilities Declaration.

In total, we received 496 responses from athletes who competed from the 1950s, through to the current cohort of athletes who hope to compete in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games in 2021.

The respondents were equally split between male and female and as you would expect, represented a diversity of views. However, there were clear trends.

What is evident is that athlete views around freedom of expression have changed over time with contemporary athletes more likely to view the Olympic Games as a platform to express their views.

Significantly though, the majority believe that protest on the field of play would detract from performance and athlete experience. This was not the view of every athlete of course and it is important to consider the support and guidance that can be provided to those that hold the opposing view, particularly when it comes to issues that are close to them personally.

Based on this survey, we have made a number of recommendations that we wish to be considered alongside submissions from other NOC Athlete Commissions.

Can I also take this opportunity to advise you of initiatives the AOC Athletes' Commission is undertaking so that the Olympic Movement in Australia can influence positive change in fighting discrimination.

We are working closely with the AOC's Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) on an Olympian forum – "Walk With Us" – to be held later in 2020 with the aim of creating awareness and education to inform Olympians on Aboriginal and Torres Strait cultures and experience in Australia."

The IAC comprises predominantly Indigenous Olympians whose role it is to advise on Indigenous matters. In 2015, the AOC amended its Constitution *'to recognise the heritage, culture and contribution of our nation's first people, and to give practical support to the issue of Indigenous reconciliation through sport'*.

Beginning with the forum, we believe that Australian Olympians of all backgrounds can become better educated on issues relating to our Indigenous history and informed on what the Black Lives Matter movement means in the Australian context. We hope that this will result in a group of role models that can work together with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Olympians to push for change through sport.

Through community programs, mentoring initiatives and other measures to promote education on Australia's Indigenous history, we believe Olympians can make a difference.

There have been 52 proud Indigenous Olympians in Australia's long history at the Olympic Games. The AOC Athletes' Commission will be drawing on their stories and experience as we take these initiatives forward.

Finally, can I thank you and the IOC Athletes' Commission for the leadership you have shown in ensuring that the athlete voice is heard on the very significant issues that confront the global sports community.

I trust the feedback from Australian athletes will assist your ongoing deliberations.

Yours in sport,



**Steve Hooker**

Chair

Australian Olympic Committee Athletes' Commission