



Victorian Equal Opportunity
& Human Rights Commission

MEDIA RELEASE

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At its best, sport is a great way of keeping fit, healthy and socially connected. However, recent research highlights that sport can also be very unhealthy for gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, transgender, intersex and queer (GLBTIQ) people, many of whom have experienced discrimination and abuse in sports club environments.

Come Out To Play (2010), a survey of 307 lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender Victorians, showed that 42 per cent of respondents had experienced verbal abuse because of their sexuality while playing sport.

Similarly, a recent national survey of 3,314 young people aged between 17-21 years, found that same-sex attracted and gender questioning young people identified sport as the setting where they felt least safe. This study, *Writing Themselves in 3* also found a strong correlation between experiences of homophobic abuse and self-harm amongst young people.

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner Dr Helen Szoke said the Commission was pleased to partner with the Australian Sports Commission, Hockey Victoria and Hockey Australia on a 12-month program *Fair Go, sport!*

"Fair Go, sport!" aims to increase awareness of sexual and gender diversity in hockey and promote hockey clubs as safe, inclusive, respectful environments for all people – including GLBTIQ people," she said.

"Sport has the potential to play a vital role in bringing all elements of the community together to promote fairness and discipline, and the importance of character and teamwork.

"It has increasingly become a shaper of social norms and has a powerful influence on attitudes," Dr Szoke said.

Hockey Victoria CEO Ben Hartung said Hockey Victoria is excited to be involved in this initiative – a first for Australia – and is committed to addressing discrimination of all kinds.

"The online survey has helped to identify attitudes and perceptions of harassment and discrimination related to sexuality and gender identity in hockey," Mr Hartung said.

"Fair Go, sport!" will work with five pilot hockey clubs during the coming months to develop flexible resources and tools that engage and educate hockey participants, including administrators, managers, board members, coaches, officials, players and

spectators at the local, state and national level. All resources will be created so that they can easily be adapted to other sporting codes in the future,” he said.

Australian Sports Commission’s Integrity in Sport Director Carolyn Watts said the *Fair go, sport!* outcomes will play a significant role in informing future strategies to assist sport in ensuring, safe and welcoming environments for the GLBTIQ community.

“Those principles of equality and inclusion promoted through this program are strongly aligned to sporting principles of fairness, respect, responsibility and safety. All community sport members will benefit from the leanings through this project, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, sexuality or gender, to maximise participation of all Australians in sport,” Watts said.

For more information about *Fair Go, Sport!* visit www.fairgosport.com.au or to share a hockey story, contact Peter Gourlay on 03 9032 3420 or email Fairgosport@veohrc.vic.gov.au.