

May 1, 2008

Third WADA Symposium on Investigatory Powers of ADOs

Presenter: The Hon Kate Ellis MP, Minister for Sport

Location: Sydney, Australia

Description: On February 27, 2008, WADA organized a Media Symposium at the Olympic Museum in Lausanne, Switzerland. On this occasion, WADA representatives updated journalists about the Agency's work and mission, as well as advances and challenges in the fight against doping.

Speech:

I take great pleasure in welcoming participants from all around the world to beautiful Sydney today.

We are delighted to see you here and honoured to host this symposium – the third in a series that focuses on increasing the capacity of the international anti-doping movement to identify and confirm anti doping rule violations in sport through non-analytical investigations.

It is ironic that this symposium is being held a few hundred metres away from the scene of Marion Jones' greatest triumphs. As we know the Marion Jones case illustrates the potential worth of non-analytical investigations in catching drug cheats.

As your first and second symposiums confirmed, doping in sport is becoming more sophisticated, fuelling a need to go beyond traditional methods of individual testing and laboratory analysis. Serious violations such as use, possession and trafficking need to be pursued through investigations.

Effective anti-doping systems need to extend beyond the simplistic approach of catching an athlete with a substance in their system to the more subtle, complex and effective strategy of information-gathering to prove use, possession and trafficking.

If we can put effective investigation arrangements in place, no longer do we have to rely on proving that a banned substance is in a person's body.

If we can prove it is in their pocket, that they gave it to someone or they administered it to someone, then that will be sufficient to impose a sanction.

Doping in sport receives massive media coverage in this country. While our sporting achievements are a source of national and local pride, doping violates the integrity of sport by undermining the spirit of competition and fair play. There is a community expectation that Australian athletes compete without the assistance of drugs or doping methods. I am sure it is no different in your countries.

We have learnt a lot about doping and how to combat it in the 18 years or so since the Australian Government introduced legislation to establish an agency to lead the fight against doping in this country.

As you may have picked up, we here in Australia are pretty proud of ASADA – and while we are delighted to share what we have learnt, it is also clearly important that we learn from the experiences in other countries which have also made very significant advances.

I am sure your discussions over the next couple of days will highlight the importance of information sharing between anti-doping authorities, substance control agencies and law enforcement agencies. These are critical features of effective anti-doping activities for all countries.

However, it is also critical that we continue to build our international relationships, and information sharing through forums such as this one. These dialogues are vital if we are to meet the challenges ahead.

Congratulations to WADA for having the vision to identify this important issue and the drive and energy to follow it through.

The Australian Government invests around \$13 million a year to protect the integrity of Australian sport.

Last year (2006-2007) the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority opened 90 cases and conducted around 7000 tests.

Testing remains an important component of Australia's anti-doping strategy, and we make full use of the latest technologies in our testing program.

I am pleased to report that Australia has all the necessary equipment, training and procedures in place to make full use of the new test for human growth hormone.

On the investigations front, ASADA also used its new information-sharing powers to work cooperatively with state police and an international WADA-accredited laboratory to investigate the sport of weightlifting.

So far this year, ASADA has opened 56 new investigations, nine as a result of information provided via a hotline and twelve as referrals from other agencies. Seventy-three investigations have now been closed.

Some 25 per cent of the doping cases now dealt with by Australia's anti-doping authorities result from investigations

It would have been more difficult to establish an organisation to undertake this important work without the worldwide anti-doping movement. This includes the influence that WADA is bringing to bear on the sporting movement and governments to develop and improve the capacity of their anti-doping systems to investigate breaches of the World Anti Doping Code through means other than testing.

We recognise that government organisations and sporting bodies will adopt different processes for undertaking investigations. This reinforces the importance of supporting efforts to promote greater international co-operation in this area.

As I said before, we need to learn from you. The Australian Government will look to take the outcomes from these and future discussions to see how Australia's processes for investigating doping violations can be refined to achieve better results.

The task of this symposium is to keep the momentum going. We can do this by working towards the development of protocols for information sharing. Our efforts can also be strengthened by discussing proposals for best investigative practice that will be the foundation for future anti-doping efforts.

The battle is clearly ongoing; and the importance of the task before this symposium can be measured by the high level expertise gathered here today.

If the serious issues before you are not addressed satisfactorily, there is potential for the appeal and credibility of international sport to suffer and for drug supply chains to prosper.

For all these reasons, I wish you every success with your work and assure you that Australia will continue to do all we can to support international anti-doping efforts.