



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AUSTRALIAN LGBTI SPORTING INCLUSION BODY WELCOMES DECISION TAKEN BY RUGBY AUSTRALIA AND NSW RUGBY UNION

Pride in Sport commends Rugby Australia and NSW Rugby Union for the decisive action taken in the wake of homophobic and transphobic comments made by rugby player Israel Folau.

On 10 April 2019, Mr Folau – one of the most recognisable and visible sporting figures in Australia – posted homophobic and transphobic comments and memes on social media that were demeaning, vitriolic and unacceptable.

On 11 April 2019, Rugby Australia Chief Executive Raelene Castle and NSW Rugby Union CEO Andrew Hore issued a statement indicating their intention to terminate Mr Folau's contract.

Pride in Sport is the national not-for-profit program that supports Australian sporting organisations and clubs in all aspects of LGBTI inclusion. Spearheaded by ACON, Australia's leading LGBTI health organisation, Pride in Sport is the publisher of the annual benchmarking index of LGBTI inclusivity in sport.

Andrew Purchas, Vice-President of ACON and Co-founder of the Pride in Sport Index, said: "We commend Rugby Australia and NSW Rugby Union for their leadership and courage in taking a strong stand against homophobia and transphobia, and reaffirming their commitment to diversity and inclusion.

"This unprecedented course of action sends a strong message of what will and will not be tolerated in rugby – and they've made it clear that homophobia and transphobia has no place in the sport, whether on or off the field.

"The words and actions of athletes and sporting figures have far-reaching consequences. Homophobic and transphobic remarks create division, take away people's dignity and can contribute to people feeling excluded, anxious and inferior.

"We encourage all sporting bodies to follow the lead of Rugby Australia and NSW Rugby Union, and take a stand against homophobic and transphobic discrimination when it occurs, regardless of an individual's social or professional stature within that sport," Mr Purchas said.

Pride in Sport Program Manager Beau Newell said there has been tremendous progress in Australian sport when it comes to LGBTI inclusivity. But incidents such as this reminds us of the importance of the need to continue fostering diversity and inclusion across all sporting codes.

"Pride in Sport is supporting sporting organisations and clubs across the country in helping make Australian sport more inclusive – including rugby," Mr Newell said. "Sport isn't about who or what you are – it's about camaraderie, team work and fair play.

"We thank Rugby Australia and NSW Rugby Union for this decisive action, their bravery and leadership. We look forward to continuing to work with them around inclusion at all levels of the sport," Mr Newell said.

For more information about Pride in Sport, visit www.prideinsport.com.au

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