

25th August 2020

Attention: Mark Robinson
C/- NZRU

Dear Mark

Re: World Rugby Draft Transgender Policy Document

We are a group of New Zealanders passionate about preserving biology-based eligibility standards for participation in female sports. We understand that the World Rugby Council will be voting on whether to accept their draft transgender policy document this November, but that the NZRU will need to submit feedback very soon.

Given it is acknowledged in the report that there is at least a 20-30% greater risk of injury when a female player is tackled by someone who has gone through male puberty, and the latest science which shows that trans women retain “significant” physical advantages over biological women, even after they take medication to lower their testosterone, it is our hope that you will support the implementation of this policy. As the World Rugby working group acknowledged, the current rules which allow trans women to play women’s rugby if they simply lower their testosterone levels for at least 12 months (which is in line with the International Olympic Committee’s guidelines) are “not fit for the purpose”. We believe if World Rugby adopt their draft trans eligibility policy, it will help restore the balance across women’s sports more generally, which the poor process adopted by the IOC has embedded since 2015.

We fully understand that this is a highly contested area, and that it will be easy for moderate voices to be drowned out and intimidated. We would suggest that you are cautious with how you treat any surveys of female players as women are under immense pressure to simply comply with the demands from activists, despite the risk to their own wellbeing. They have a very real fear of being publicly named and shamed and being labelled transphobic. And there is good reason for this fear, given OutSports (a LGBT+ sports news website) recently published the names of 300+ female NCAA athletes who had signed a confidential letter to NCAA Sports, which was then leaked.

We fully understand the desire to be inclusive of diversity, but believe both the NZRU and World Rugby have a real opportunity here to lead by example in doing just that. As we all know, there’s no exclusion for trans women from male divisions, and in fact their presence in male sports would be hugely beneficial in helping men become more accepting of the diversity within their own sex – as trans women are still biological males. Imagine if Rugby celebrated trans women players in the men’s game, just as American Samoan Football did with Jaiyah Saelua (born John Saelua), an international football player who was the first openly transgender player to play in a men’s FIFA World Cup qualifier. NZRU and World Rugby would be seen as world leaders in not only transgender policy development, but in male rugby players being fully inclusive of diversity.

Save Women’s Sport NZ are part of an international coalition of women’s organizations, athletes, and supporters of women in sport who assert that natal male athletes should not compete in female sports.

We hope that NZRU will support World Rugby in implementing the well-researched and consulted on proposal they've developed, not only for your elite game, but for all levels of Rugby in New Zealand. And for Rugby to lead by example by helping your male players become more accepting of, and celebrating, the diversity of their sex.

Kind regards