

QUICK FACTS

The importance of protecting women's single-sex sport

- 1. In Australia and internationally, biological males who identify as women (transwomen) are competing in women's sports.** High-profile examples include American college swimmer Lia Thomas, Kiwi Olympic weightlifter Laurel Hubbard, and Australian handball and football player Hannah Mouncey.
- 2. Athletes that have passed through male puberty have life-long physiological advantages that tilt the playing field very significantly in their favour.** Research has shown that male athletes are up to 50% stronger, 30% more powerful, 40% heavier, and about 15% faster than female athletes. Testosterone suppression has minimal impact on decreasing these advantages.
- 3. Allowing male-bodied transgender athletes to compete in women's sport elevates the risk to women's safety.** World Rugby modelling has shown that males competing against women in contact sports can put female athletes at a 20–30% greater risk of being injured. There are also safety concerns around male-bodied transgender athletes being entitled to use the same changerooms as women and girls.
- 4. The inclusion of biologically male transgender athletes in women's sports means that women and girls who would otherwise have a chance to compete miss out.** This in turn can lead to lost opportunities when it comes to sponsorship, careers and more.
- 5. In 2013, the biological definitions of 'woman' and 'man' were removed from Australia's Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (SDA) and broad protections for 'gender identity' were added.** As a result, the law no longer adequately protects women's sex-based rights, because it no longer recognises 'woman' as a sex-based category.
- 6. The SDA's 'competitive sporting exemption' was never fit for purpose.** Whatever weak protections it was supposed to offer women's sports have been whittled away by subsequent interpretations, such as in the 2019 *Guidelines for the inclusion of transgender and gender diverse people in sport*. **The Guidelines – implemented by peak Australian sporting bodies – strongly recommend transgender inclusion with no consideration for how this will impact women in sport.**
- 7. The effect of the 2013 changes to the SDA, in conjunction with current interpretations, is that sporting codes and clubs who exclude males from women's sport may face legal action for discrimination.** This is because when it comes to inclusion in women's sport, it is now generally unlawful to differentiate between women, and males who identify as women.
- 8. In order to ensure fairness, safety and opportunities for women and girls in sport, protections for women's single-sex sport need to be clarified in Australian law.** This will involve reinstating the biological definitions of 'woman' and 'man' in the SDA. Everyone should have an opportunity to play sport, but we need to make sure we have a fair playing field.