Dealing with sensitive issues in sport

Discrimination, harassment, child abuse and other inappropriate behaviour will be the central topics for sport and recreation organisations at a summit being organised in Darwin early next year, Minister for Sport and Recreation John Ah Kit said today.

The Members Protection Policy Summit – being organised by the Office of Sport and Recreation – will examine what procedures and protocols Northern Territory sporting bodies have in place to deal with inappropriate behaviour by athletes, coaches, volunteers, spectators and others involved in sport.

"Those organisations that do have strategies in place will be able to talk about how effective their rules are, and encourage all sporting bodies to adopt a code for all members to follow.

"The Office of Sport and Recreation encourages sport and recreation organisations to implement such policies as they ensure the organisation is meeting legislation in relation to discrimination and child protection laws, not only in the Northern Territory but if they travel to other states of Australia where laws may differ."

The summit will be held on 5 February 2004 with guest presenter at the summit being Ms Debbie Simms, Manager of the Ethics in Sport Unit at the Australian Sports Commission.

Other speakers will come from representatives from National Sporting Organisations, who will be invited to present their Member Protection Policies at the summit.

Chief Executives, Directors and Executive Officers from the Northern Territory peak sport and recreation organisations will be invited to attend the one-day workshop.

The Northern Territory Government launched the Play by the Rules initiative in February 2003, a promotional campaign to reduce incidents of discrimination, harassment and abuse in sporting clubs and organisations.

The campaign has increased the awareness of individuals that harassment, discrimination and abuse are unacceptable. As a result, the incidence of reporting has increased. It has also identified that NT sporting clubs need more concrete procedures to deal with issues of inappropriate behaviour.

"These member protection policies assist sport and recreation organisations to be prepared when someone in their sport comes forward with a complaint," Minister Ah Kit said.

"Every sport should adopt procedures as part of their risk management policy that incorporates legal requirements under the anti-discrimination legislation, by suggesting disciplinary action and providing codes of behaviour for all roles within sport."