



5 October 2021

Mr J Johnson  
CEO  
Football Australia  
Locked Bag A4071  
SYDNEY SOUTH NSW 1235

Dear James

We write with reference to reports from the USA and Canada regarding sexual misconduct by coaches towards professional and semi-professional women players, as well as the tweet published by Lisa De Vanna in response to an American player's tweet about the US issues.

In case you're not aware of these matters, here are some references for you:

- US: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-10-02/nwsl-calls-off-weekend-games-after-allegations-against-coach/100509298>
- Canada: <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2021/oct/03/the-paul-riley-scandal-must-be-answered-with-accountability-from-the-top-down>
- De Vanna: <https://twitter.com/lisadevanna11/status/1443946940937297920?s=20>

As you know, you and I spoke about these issues in February 2020.

James, 20 months later, the time has well and truly come for an independent external inquiry into these matters so Football Australia is on top of it and not caught out by it.

This is why Women in Football is writing to you today.

If sexual misconduct and abuse of position has been happening in national team squads such as the USA and Canada, it is possible it is happening, or has happened, here also.

Many people in Australian football are aware of reports over the years of relationships that some male coaches have had with some Matildas. If any of these reports are true, this raises potentially the same issues identified in the US and Canada examples.

In relation to Lisa De Vanna's statement, if true, it raises issues not only of the same inappropriate conduct and abuse of position, but potentially also criminal behaviour in respect of "*Players protecting senior players who abuse younger players.*"

These are serious allegations from Lisa De Vanna, James. They are not being made by 'anonymous people' but a player with a 20-year professional career with 150 Matildas caps.

They cannot, and should not, be ignored – and nor should they be examined in isolation of issues that are happening elsewhere, such as the USA and Canada.

We, therefore, urge you to establish an independent external inquiry into the culture of women's football in Australia to ensure that the environment is safe and happy for all girls and women playing the game.

It is important that such an inquiry is truly independent also – not like the review into national teams that was convened by your predecessor as a result of the Stajcic sacking, and not like the FIFA inquiry headed by Michael Garcia, with proper whistleblower protection in place and respected.

With Australia co-hosting the 2023 World Cup, we believe the stakes are too high not to deal with this issue and not to take the lead. Now.

Yours sincerely



Bonita Mersiades  
President  
on behalf of the Executive Committee  
**Women in Football Australia Inc.**

- Victoria Morton, Secretary
- Robert Juric, Treasurer
- A/Professor Jorge Knijnik
- Louise Taffa

copy to:

- Chris Nikou
- Mark Bresciano
- Joseph Carrozzi
- Amy Duggan
- Robyn Fitz Roy
- Heather Garriock
- Stefan Kamasz
- Catriona Noble
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