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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **MADDEN MUST INTERVENE IN AFL'S SNUB OF ANTI-DOPING CODE**

Labor's Sports Minister Justin Madden must ensure that the Australian Football League (AFL) signs the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) accord on the use of drugs in sport before the deadline expires tomorrow.

Drugs in sport have become a serious global issue resulting in negative media coverage and sparking controversy among sporting bodies world-wide, which until now have all been operating under their own sets of rules.

WADA is seeking to introduce an internationally uniform set of rules and sanctions against drugs in sport and has developed an Anti-Doping Code, which has been accepted by most sports associations in Australia, including Rugby League, Rugby Union, the Football Federation Australia (soccer) and Athletics Australia.

The deadline to sign the code expires tomorrow but two key Australian sports associations, Cricket Australia and AFL are still holding out, expressing concerns about the inclusion of cannabis in the code and claiming that the standards were developed for Olympic athletes and can't be applied to their sport.

At a meeting in Canberra last week, Liberal and National Party Shadow Sports Ministers affirmed support for the anti-doping accord and agreed that there should be no relaxation of the code for the use of so-called recreational drugs such as cannabis.

The AFL is opposed to the use of performance enhancing drugs but is not as strongly committed to the enforcement of drug agency protocols on the use of so-called recreational drugs.

Cricket Australia has indicated they may sign the code by tomorrow because if they don't they risk losing substantial funding from the Australian Sports Commission of more than \$1 million.

The AFL stands to lose up to funding programs, including national accreditation for coaching and training and other facilities provided by the Australian Institute of Sport.

The AFL is a high profile sporting body which undergoes close media scrutiny and many of its players are viewed as role models for young boys in particular. The organisation has shown leadership in many other areas, including programs to eliminate racism in sport and to address sexual harassment and inappropriate behaviour by sports stars in public.

Justin Madden must intervene and ensure that the AFL signs the Anti-Doping Code so it can also set an example in regard to the use of drugs by sportsmen and women.

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