



ANZSPED

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND
SOCIETY FOR PAEDIATRIC
ENDOCRINOLOGY AND DIABETES

In February 2025, World Athletics released the latest iteration of its regulations on eligibility for female classification, impacting some elite women athletes with innate variations of sex characteristics who were registered female at birth.

Below is the ANZSPED response submitted.

How will the new eligibility conditions impact you or the interests of athletes with whom you are affiliated?

We want to learn about both positive and negative impacts from all consultees.

The Australia and New Zealand Society for Paediatric Endocrinology and Diabetes (ANZSPED) is the leading professional body representing paediatric endocrinology in Australia. We are dedicated to maintaining high standards in clinical care, advocacy, education, research, and building relationships with stakeholders. This includes supporting young people with differences in sex development (DSD) and their families. We have serious concerns about the proposal and believe that the language in the document is discriminatory and offensive and that the proposed eligibility criteria are an overly simplistic, inaccurate and inappropriate solution to a complex issue.

Some of our key concerns include:

- The lack of clarity surrounding the definition of “androgen sensitivity” and how it will be assessed. Many individuals with variations in sex development and an XY karyotype exhibit different levels of tissue sensitivity to androgens. There is no standardised or universally accepted genomic or biochemical test to assess androgen sensitivity which makes application of this criterion essentially impossible and open to contest and appeal.
- Recommendation 2b suggests that athletes with a male biological sex should be excluded from competing in the female category unless they are completely insensitive to androgens. If the concern is about the potential advantage of higher testosterone levels for XX individuals, this recommendation fails to consider athletes with XX chromosomes who have excess androgens.
- Recommendation 3c states there is no ‘new or compelling evidence that would suggest that transgender women and androgen sensitive XY DSD athletes are biologically different to each other in relation to the design and goals of the Female Category’. This statement indicates a deep lack of understanding of these two categories of women. The physiological production of and response to androgens in transgender athletes is fundamentally different from that in XY athletes with variations in sex development. There is no clinical basis to question this and therefore ‘new evidence’ is unlikely to be forthcoming. However, combining the two for the purposes of any eligibility assessment leads to an overly simplified and inaccurate view of a complex issue that will perpetuate misunderstanding at a community level. Use of the title ‘Working Group on Gender Diverse Athletes’ implicitly infers conflation of gender diversity and differences of sex development; while the two may be present for a given individual, for the majority this is not the case.



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- The document purports that World Athletics does not judge or question gender identity, yet for women with XY DSD there is an implicit disregard of their gender identity as female, and instead “reclassify” them as not female based upon false, arbitrary testing criteria. This clearly appears to be a “judgement”.
- Privacy and support concerns: As noted in recommendation 1.c, World Athletics plans to use the female category as a vehicle to empower females within Athletics and throughout society. However, using such simplistic threshold cut-offs does not empower XY females in their pursuit of elite sporting participation.

The use of SRY gene testing via cheek swabs, genomic testing outside of a clinical setting or testosterone levels as an absolute criterion to determine eligibility is neither accurate, fair or based in physiological principals. It is instead an ethically fraught approach that is discriminatory and seeks to inappropriately combine transfemale athletes with female athletes with XY DSD who have completely different physiologies.

Are there ways to minimise or remedy the adverse impacts of the new eligibility conditions, such as approaches to addressing reasonable reliance interests or the type of support that could be offered as Athletes go through the testing and compliance processes?

Reconsider and abandon plans to further restrict the female category based on arbitrary designation of sex. The presence of Y (SRY) in and of itself does not equate to sporting / athletic advantage. Even if it did, discriminating against this advantage as opposed to other ‘acceptable’ genetically-programmed advantages is unfair.

For the preclearance requirement, which requires that World Athletics have on file both the athlete’s genetic and hormonal status, please share whether you have a preference between (a) the cheek swab and (b) a dry blood spot test. The cheek swab would provide genetic information but not hormonal status and so would require follow-up in rare cases where the athlete is SRY positive. Dry blood spot tests can provide both genetic and hormone status.

Neither are appropriate. The application of hormonal measurements / exclusion criteria has not been outlined in the document. If this testing proceeds, clinical governance and appropriate genetic counselling supports and pathways for sharing unanticipated results will need to be in place. This would be the time to separately refer an athlete to appropriate clinical services and separately seek consent to assess hormonal levels if at this point they wished to undertake this.



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What is your sense of the public's understanding of the reasons athletes are divided in competition by sex?

We appreciate that the public has an understanding that muscle mass differs and testosterone / differences in sex hormone exposure may play a role. However, there is widespread misunderstanding about the differences between transgender and DSD, and the recommendation to combine eligibility criteria for both cohorts will intensify rather than diminish this misunderstanding. The vitriol leveled at successful female boxers in Paris Olympics in traditional and social media forums gives insights into the harm that can be done as a result. We urge you to abandon this retrograde step

How can World Athletics best educate the public about its biological sex-exclusive design for the Female Category?

We don't believe the proposed 'biological sex-exclusive recommendations are scientifically sound and believe that World Athletics will have great difficulty in trying to convince others that they are either fair, justified or appropriate.

Is there anything not mentioned in Recommendation 5 that the organisation can do to support transgender and DSD Athletes?

A reconsideration of the proposed eligibility criteria, taking into much great account the physiological differences between these two cohorts, and the significant ethical and discriminatory repercussions that may result in these criteria being enacted.

Are there other athlete populations – in addition to gender diverse athletes – World Athletics should consider as it contemplates its programming?

Again the term gender diverse athletes is used to include in this document women with various forms of XY-DSD. It is inaccurate and misleading and should be revised / used only in the context of gender diversity (presumably trans for the purposes of this document)