

Rugby League Cooperation On Doping Urged by WADA

John Fahey, the head of the World Anti-Doping Agency has urged the [National Rugby League](#) to stop stonewalling in the doping scandal that has engulfed two of the leading sports of the country.

In February this year, an Australian Crime Commission report revealed dozens of players in the Australian Football League and the National Rugby League might have used illegal supplements.

The project, code named [Project Aperio](#), was a 12-month ACC investigation, supported by ASADA and the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), which examined four key issues: new generation Performance and Image Enhancing Drugs (PIEDs) that were previously considered to be only used by elite athletes and are now widely available, the involvement of organized criminal identities and groups in the distribution of new generation PIEDs, the use of WADA prohibited substances by professional athletes in Australia, and current threats to the integrity of professional sport in Australia. The report revealed peptides and hormones, despite being prohibited substances in professional sport, are being used by professional athletes in Australia, facilitated by sports scientists, high-performance coaches and sports staff. Widespread use of these substances has been identified, or is suspected by the ACC, in a number of professional sporting codes in the country. It was also found that the level of use of illicit drugs within some sporting codes is considered to be significantly higher than is recorded in official statistics.

Doping authorities cannot rely on that background for any potential action against the athletes, the WADA chief said and pointed to the success of the lengthy investigations of the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency that the eventual confession by Lance Armstrong that he had doped while winning the Tour de France.

Cronulla Sharks forward Wade Graham was the first player interviewed by the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Agency as it investigates the possible use of banned drugs by the NRL club in 2011. However, the two sides soon realized they were far apart on key issues, and ASADA called an early end to the interview. Players, under their NRL contracts, are obliged to give ASADA "reasonable assistance," and that appears to be the main point of difference between Sharks players and the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Agency, along with fears that answers could be self-incriminating.

The AFL, the Melbourne-based organizers for Australian Rules football, had been more proactive, Fahey said while continuing his attack on rugby league administrators in an interview. Fahey said there has been "a profound silence" from the rugby league. There was the possibility of reductions

in penalties for athletes who provide substantial assistance and testimony in doping investigations, Fahey added.

A few weeks earlier, Australia's sports minister Kate Lundy she was concerned about not being able to provide names and details from the crime commission report. The sports minister was an important figure at the Canberra news conference that outlined the widespread use of prohibited substances including peptides, hormones and illicit drugs, and the infiltration of organized criminal groups in the distribution of performance enhancing drugs. Lundy said she feels frustrated at the time because she knew that it would take some time before authorities would be in a position to finalize their investigations and their progress would depend on a lot of cooperation from all parties involved.