

Australian Senate Accused By AOC President Of Failure To Support Battle Against Doping

The Australian Senate has been accused by Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) President [John Coates](#) of a lack of support in the battle to tackle doping in sport in the country.

Coates, speaking at the AOC Annual General Meeting in Sydney, said the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority ([ASADA](#)) has its “hands tied behind its back” after an ASADA Amendment Bill in 2013 was rejected by the Senate. This bill was aimed at introducing coercive powers, whereby athletes would have been required to attend interviews for answering questions, produce documents, and provide information regarding doping even if that may result in self-incrimination. ASADA introduced its own changes to the Australian Olympic Committee Anti-Doping By-Law in May 2013 despite the Bill being turned down by the Senate to include similar powers.

Coates told representatives from his member Olympic sports that unfortunately the Government lacked the numbers in the Senate to pass this aspect of the amending Bill and we are left with an Act that excuses individuals from answering questions or giving information if the answer or the information might tend to incriminate them. Coates went on to remark that when it comes to investigating most of the nine anti-doping rule violations which are not based on the presence of a prohibited substance in an athlete’s sample, ASADA has been largely left with its hands tied behind its back and also commented that what our elected representatives in Canberra would or could not do for ASADA, we have done for them.

The 65-year-old Coates also said the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) Code is applied to all sports. The AOC Chief said it is just plain wrong to say, as he has read, that the WADA Code was not designed for team sports and added these commentators forget that the highly professional team sports of football, ice hockey, basketball and volleyball and the other team sports of handball, rugby sevens, hockey and water polo, which have always been bound by the Code at both the international and national levels, are Olympic sports.

Coe's comments come despite the Australian Senate passing a Bill in June 2013 that gave more powers to the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority so that it can speed up doping investigations. The legislation allows ASADA to demand phone records, medical prescriptions of suspect athletes and other parties, text messages, and other documents with fines of up to \$5,100 (£3,060/\$4,700/€3,600) to those who do not comply with the requests. Victorian Greens politician Richard Di Natale told the chamber after passing the bill that ultimately we do accept the argument that ASADA needs further powers to expand its investigations into doping.

After the legislation was passed, Sports Minister Kate Lundy said doping has no place in sport and it is incumbent on the Government to provide ASADA with the right tools to investigate allegations of doping. At that time, Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) President John Coates welcomed the passing of the bill and remarked Australia, with this legislation and the new powers it provides ASADA, remains at the forefront of the fight against [doping in sport](#).