

Herald Sun, March 5 2004

ACTU slams IOC over Olympic sportswear

AUSTRALIA'S peak union body today joined forces with aid organisations to demand the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and sportswear companies stop exploiting cheap labour.

The ACTU, Oxfam Community Aid Abroad and the coalition for home-based outworkers, Fairwear, said giant sportswear brands were violating the rights of millions of workers to fill shops with Olympic gear before the Athens Games.

A report titled *Play Fair at the Olympics* said the IOC had failed to take any practical action to challenge sportswear brands on the exploitative working conditions in their supply chains.

"As the leading governing body in world sport, the IOC has a moral and legal obligation to make these calls," the report said.

"To date, however, the IOC has done little apart from encourage the efforts of the World Federation for Sporting Goods Industry in this area.

"This lack of commitment seems irresponsible."

It said the Olympic movement could directly influence sportswear companies by including contractual obligations on labour standards in its licensing and marketing agreements.

"If the movement as a whole made a commitment to respect labour standards, similar to its commitments to protecting the environment, it could play an important role in achieving improvements to working conditions for the many workers who produce sportswear worldwide," the report said.

ACTU president Sharan Burrow, Oxfam CAA director Andrew Hewett and Fairwear coordinator Karrina Nolan called on Australian Olympic Committee president and IOC member John Coates to help ensure goods carrying the Olympics logo were made under decent working conditions.

"The sportswear industry is spending heavily on marketing in the run up to this year's Olympic Games which is supposed to be a showcase for fairness and human achievement," Mr Hewett said.

"But the exploitation and abuse of workers' rights endemic in the industry is violating that Olympic spirit.

"(The IOC) should ensure that the sportswear industry provides fair wages, has appropriate deadlines for suppliers and that labour standards are treated just as importantly as cost, times and quality."

Ms Burrow said women were worst affected by negative practices in the sportswear industry.

"They are often expected to work excessive and unpaid overtime," she said.

"They have to battle against discrimination and fight for a living wage, union rights and pensions."

The report said sportswear companies were forcing employees to work harder and longer to ensure merchandising was in the shops before the August 13 Olympic opening ceremony.

http://heraldsun.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,5478,8875123%255E421,00.html