

# **A minute's silence is fine but when it comes to violence against women, being quiet isn't enough**

May 13 2024, by Catherine Ordway and Ginger Gorman

---



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Sport has a role to play in creating a culture of respect, yet women in sport are often seen as "less than" on almost every measure: salaries,

sponsorship, broadcasting, leadership, access, media, coaching, officiating, uniforms and support.

Research shows 3 out of 4 Australian men are gender equality supporters, but [very few \(17%\) prioritize](#) taking any action.

As Australia grapples with a "[national crisis](#)" of violence against [women](#), what can men in sport do to help?

## What does the research tell us?

Rigid gender norms [can play a part](#) in fueling male violence against women and children. And sport is an arena, excuse the pun, where [rigid gender norms flourish](#).

When it comes to sport and gendered violence, a special level of toxic attack and misogyny is reserved for women [who "dare" to play](#), watch and [work in sport](#), and this is [particularly heightened](#) for women of color and/or presumed to be from the LGBTQI+ community, whether identifying or not.

Sport also regularly promotes alcohol and gambling, with [evident](#) impacts on women and children—whenever there are big sporting events, violence against women by spectators increases.

Players, coaches, [commentators](#) and officials repeatedly avoid sanctions, or get a slap on the wrist, and go on to secure leadership roles in sport, sometimes despite allegations of serious gender-based offenses.

The message this sends to younger players and fans is that misogyny is acceptable and that "heroes" are beyond reproach. [This green-lights sexism](#), and completely undermines any messages around equality.

Tracey Gaudry has held a trifecta of roles relevant to this discussion. Not only was she previously a former champion cyclist, and former CEO of Hawthorn Football Club, she has also been Respect Victoria's CEO.

Back in 2020 [she nailed the confluence of issues](#):

"Gender inequality is a driver of violence against women and it can start out small. Because sport comes from a male-dominant origin, those things build up over time and become a natural part of the sporting system and an assumed part."

## **What are sports codes and teams doing?**

Professional sport organizations and clubs have been trying to address abusive behavior towards women for decades. Both [the AFL](#) and [NRL](#) began developing respect and responsibility programs and policies 20 years ago, yet the abuse, and the headlines, continue—against both women in the game, and at home.

There are also opportunities for clubs to take action even if their governing bodies don't. Semi-professional rugby league club the Redfern All Blacks, for example, are showing leadership: players who are alleged to be perpetrators [are banned from playing](#) until they're prepared to talk about it openly, and prove they are committed to changing their behavior.

Education is also vital.

At the elite level, most codes are trying to educate those within their sports—the NRL's Voice Against Violence program, led by Our Watch, [is the same organization the AFL has recently partnered with](#).

The NRL also implements [the "Change the Story" framework](#) in

partnership with ANROWS and VicHealth, which includes [a zero tolerance education program](#) for juniors transitioning into seniors.

## What more should be done?

The [AFL's recent minute silence gesture](#) to support women affected by violence does not go far enough.

Men, especially those in leadership positions, can take action by actively dishonoring the men who have abused women.

Some of the men we celebrate around the country for their service as players, presidents, life members and coaches have been abusive towards women and children.

Recently, the AFL demanded Wayne Carey—who has a long history of domestic violence allegations and assault convictions—[be denied his NSW Hall of Fame Legend status](#). The next step is to see Carey struck off his club and AFL honor rolls.

The same treatment should apply to other convicted abusers such as [Jarrod Hayne](#) and [Ben Cousins](#)—the list goes on.

To take a stand on violence against women, award winners who have been convicted for, or admitted to, abuse against women should be explicitly called out with an asterisk next to their names—"dishonored for abuse against women."

And current and future awards must be ineligible to abusers. Serious crimes should mean a life ban for all roles in sport.

If there is a criminal conviction, or an admission of disrespectful behavior (abuse, sexism, racism, ableism or homophobia), then action

must immediately be taken to strip them of their privileges.

## **What about the gray area of allegations?**

One tricky challenge for sport organizations is how to deal with allegations that don't result in criminal convictions.

The legal system has [systematically failed to protect women](#) from sexual predators, so we can't rely solely on a conviction to act.

In 2019, the NRL introduced a discretionary ["no fault, stand down" rule](#) for players charged with serious criminal offenses, and/or offenses involving women and children. Under this rule, players must stand down from matches until the matter is resolved.

All sports should, as a baseline starting point, be following suit.

## **Where to from here?**

It's time sport organizations and fans acknowledged two things can be true: good, even great, athletes, coaches or administrators can be bad humans.

Sporting codes need a zero-tolerance approach for abuse of women which should apply to fans, players, coaches, umpires, referees and administrators.

All codes should strongly consider implementing the "no fault, stand down" rule similar to the NRL. Perpetrators should not be allowed back into high-profile roles. Supporters must also be held to account—[if fans can be banned for racism](#), they can be banned for sexism.

At all levels and across all sports, we must send the message from the ground up: misogyny is unacceptable and the consequence for your bad behavior is that you are no longer welcome.

This article is republished from [The Conversation](#) under a Creative Commons license. Read the [original article](#).

Provided by The Conversation

Citation: A minute's silence is fine but when it comes to violence against women, being quiet isn't enough (2024, May 13) retrieved 4 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-05-minute-silence-fine-violence-women.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.