

# SARAA Statement on AFL Player Using Homophobic Slur

On the weekend Port Adelaide player, Jeremy Finlayson, used a homophobic slur against an opposition player from Essendon during a game. Jeremy informed the club at three quarter time and spoke with the victim on the field to apologise after the final siren.

Jeremy has since made a statement saying “I take full responsibility for what happened Friday night.” “The word I used is very unacceptable in the game of football. We need to stamp it out and I’m very remorseful.”

Unfortunately homophobic language in the AFL isn’t new with a coach (Alastair Clarkson) using a homophobic slur towards an opposition player during a preseason game earlier this year, and receiving only a \$20,000 fine and a suspended 2 game ban.

Studies of teenagers describe athletes regularly using homophobic language despite expressing generally positive attitudes toward gay people. In a research paper it found ‘Over half (53.6%) of the teenage player participants self-reported they had used homophobic language at least once in the previous two weeks.’<sup>1</sup>

What studies are finding is that the homophobic slurs quite often do not come with the intent to be homophobic but are seen as behavioural norms in male team sport. Unfortunately, gay and bisexual males may avoid sport because they view the use of homophobic language as expressions of homophobic attitudes by teammates and feel unsafe and unwelcome. Research has found gay youth play team sports at half the rate (32.8% vs. 67.6%) of heterosexual males. LGBTIQ+ people in team sport upon hearing slurs, often do not feel comfortable being their authentic selves.

It is understood at least one Essendon player called the slur out at the time. SARAA would like to acknowledge that Essendon Football club has held Pride games and have conducted multiple training sessions with the men’s team on the importance of LGBTIQ+ inclusion and the impacts of using homophobic language. This demonstrates that with the right training and leadership, teams and players have a better understanding of how language can impact others.

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<sup>1</sup> [Relationships between attitudes and norms with homophobic language use in male team sports](#)

It can't be said the same with Port Adelaide President David Koch, who acknowledged that the act was not acceptable, but when pushed on the punishment needing to be similar to a player making a racist comment, the President disagreed, saying it occurred 'in the heat of battle' and a 'niggle'. This completely downplays the severity of using homophobic language in what is a workplace for elite athletes and that players are looked up to by young adoring fans..

Exposure to homophobic language is a key risk factor for gay and bisexual youth experiencing depression, anxiety, alcohol or drug abuse, self-harm, and suicidality.<sup>2</sup>

SARAA strongly recommends the following steps for sporting bodies and organisations:

- Mandating training on inclusion in sport with a focus on education of the LGBTIQ+ community and the impacts of casual homophobia in all sports organisations..
- Engaging in community education videos and social media on the impacts of homophobic/transphobic slurs and the need to stamp it out.
- Ensuring there are serious repercussions for players, coaching and other administrative staff who use homophobic/transphobic language.
- Highlighting and supporting LGBTIQ+ days of significance like [IDAHOBIT](#).
- Once the above steps have been implemented, holding a pride event, celebrating and welcoming the LGBTIQ+ community to become engaged and included in sport.

The focus on education and training needs to be on changing social norms, rather than 'tackling' homophobic attitudes. [You can view a Youtube video on this here.](#)

At the community level, sporting groups like Adelaide University Sharks, Queer Sporting Alliance, Adelaide Frontrunners, Adelaide Spikers, Adelaide Happy Wanderers and Climbing QTs South Australia all support LGBTIQ+ South Australians to participate in sports.

It's this strong sense of LGBTIQ+ community in sports that keeps us fighting for a future where all LGBTIQ+ South Australians can play and watch with Pride.

See Youtube [Pride Cup: Harnessing the Power of Sport](#)

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<sup>2</sup> Russell ST, Fish JN. Mental health in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth. *Ann Rev Clin Psychol* 2016; 12(1):465–487. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev-clinpsy-021815-093153>.