



AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF UKRAINIAN ORGANISATIONS
СОЮЗ УКРАЇНСЬКИХ ОРГАНІЗАЦІЙ АВСТРАЛІЇ

Representing 22 Peak Ukrainian Organisations in Australia
Member of Ukrainian World Congress

24 March 2023

Mr Brad Banducci
CEO, Woolworths

Via email to: bbanducci@woolworths.com.au

Dear Mr Banducci,

On behalf of the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations, we would like to thank Woolworths for being a sponsor of the Australian Olympic Committee and for joining with our Australian athletes in upholding the three values of Olympism: excellence, friendship and respect.

The goal of the Olympic Movement is to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practiced without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play. AFUO notes that Woolworths is living these values with its strong support for Ukraine and rejection of Russia's aggression, in particular by changing the name of some products so it no longer uses the Russian spelling of Kyiv. Your company's principled position and solidarity with Ukraine is deeply appreciated.

Next week the International Olympic Committee (IOC) is expected to take a decision around whether athletes from Russia and Belarus should be permitted to compete at the Paris 2024 Olympics, possibly as 'neutral' athletes. We write to urge Woolworths, as a sponsor of the Australian Olympic Committee, to continue to uphold Olympic ideals by opposing Russian and Belarusian participation.

Russia's actions on the world stage are incompatible with the Olympic ideals. During the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Russia occupied part of Moldova. During the 2014 Winter Paralympic Games in Sochi, it captured the Ukrainian Crimea and part of Donbas. At the close of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, on February 24, with the active support of Belarus, it violated the Olympic truce and launched the brutal full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The deep-seated links between Russian athletes and the military mean it is impossible to ensure Russian athletes compete as 'neutral' athletes. At the 2022 Beijing Olympic Games, 88% of the medals won by Russia were won by sportspeople associated with the Russian army and state security agencies. At the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, 45 of Russia's 71 medals were won by athletes who were members of the Central Sports Club of the Russian Army.

The negative impact of Russia's invasion on Ukrainian sports and sportspeople has been profound. At least 220 Ukrainian athletes and coaches have died due to Russia's war on Ukraine including former Olympic youth figure skater [Dmytro Sharpar](#) and 11-year old gymnastics star, [Kateryna Diachenko](#), who was killed when her house in Mariupol was bombed. Over 340 sports facilities valued at \$250 million have been damaged or partially destroyed since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion. [Ukrainian sportspeople have said many times](#)



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it is extremely difficult for them to live, train and compete whilst Russia continues to wage war on their homeland.

While numerous sporting dreams have been devastated by Russian attacks, we think it is unacceptable that Russians or Belarusians may end up winning medals which would otherwise have been won by Ukrainian athletes. The death and disability wrought by Russia's attacks on our sportspeople mean that Ukraine is likely to field larger delegations to future Paralympic meets, rather than to future Olympics.

By exploring pathways to allow Russian and Belarusian athletes to attend the 2024 Olympic Games, the IOC and AOC are essentially looking for a way to provide a platform for Russia to legitimise its actions in Ukraine and use the success of its sportspeople to project a certain image to the world. This is exactly what Nazi Germany did.

We agree with the view of the former AOC President John Coates AC who, upon his retirement last April, supported the IOC/AOC position, noting that Russia has 'lost their right to membership of the international Olympic community. He claimed that this position would remain 'until such time as there is cause to change.' We put it to you that there is simply no cause to change, as the last 12 months have only seen a worsening of the death, destruction and displacement caused by Russia.

In February, more than 30 countries — including Australia, the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Canada and New Zealand — signed a [joint statement](#) pledging support for the IOC's current ban, which was announced shortly after Russia's brutal and genocidal war invasion commenced. We were heartened to see the Canadian Olympic Committee recently [announce](#) that, in line with Canadian government policy, they will not support the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes in international competition while the invasion is ongoing.

A decision by the IOC allow Russian and Belarusian athletes to compete would reflect poorly on the IOC and would cause concern among its sponsors who have taken principled stands against Russia's brutal, illegal invasion. We ask Woolworths to join us in urging the AOC to take a similar principled stand in solidarity with the Australian Government and with the sportspeople of Ukraine.

We look forward to staying in touch with you as this crucial decision is taken.

Yours sincerely,

Kateryna Argyrou
Co-Chair AFUO

Stefan Romaniw OAM
Co-Chair AFUO