

Cricket Australia tries to corner image market

Cricket Australia (CA), the governing body of one of Australia's favourite sports, is trying to force all photographers and agencies to sign a new contract before they enter the cricket grounds.

In the latest version of the contract put forward by Cricket Australia on Friday, only Cricket Australia may authorise the sale of images to book publishers.

The Australian Publishers Association and the International Publishers Association have immediately written to key representatives of Australia's new Labour federal government to express their concerns. The letter has also been signed by the News Media Coalition, a group of newspaper publishers and other parties interested in press freedom.

The letter, which was addressed to Australia's deputy Prime Minister, the Attorney General and three ministers, includes the following:

"We wish to raise with you urgently a matter of considerable public interest . . .

"What is at issue is proper balance between a sporting organisation's legitimate commercial concerns and the needs of the public in being able to access objective, informative and topical information, both written and pictorial . . .

"Of particular concern is a ban on editorial material created at CA events being used in books, of any nature or content, unless approved by Cricket Australia. They also reserve the right to charge fees to approved books. Such measures amount to censorship of editorial products. As well as raising this serious issue, such restrictions would deny the cricket-loving public in and out of Australia a fair opportunity to share in the fullest possible knowledge and understanding of the game in Australia and Australian cricket's standing in foreign lands.

"We are writing to you to seek your support safeguarding the legacy of publishers' right to inform and urge you to use your good offices to bring common-sense to this issue."

Adds IPA Secretary General Jens Bammel: "This issue has been a battle ground between the media and sports associations for quite some time. This time a blatant attack has been made directly on the book publishing industry, a small but significant media sector with great importance to the real sports aficionados.

At stake is not just the commercial viability of publishers wishing to publish novel and different perspectives on the sport in question. This is the manifest attempt of a quasi-monopolist to curtail freedom of expression and freedom to publish and on the views and images that the officials do not approve. The international publishing community will support the Australian Publishers Association in its important fight for publisher freedom and against bullying and censorship."

For copies of the full letter and further information, contact Jens Bammel, Secretary General, IPA, 3, avenue de Miremont, Ch-1206, Geneva, Switzerland, tel: +41 22 346 3018, dir: +41 22 830 1082, fax: +41 22 347 5717, e-mail: , ,

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