

Starving for *Glory*?

As we head towards the Olympics in Sydney 2000, let's not forget the right of our young athletes to a normal healthy childhood

DCI supports the inquiry being conducted by Melbourne sports law expert Hayden Opie into *allegations* of abuse levelled at the Australian Institute of Sports Gymnasts Program headed by coach Ju Ping Tian. It has been alleged that the food given to girls does not provide adequately for their energy outputs. They practise up to 40 hours per week and some starve themselves to stay small. This can delay developments and menstruation and may have long term consequences such as eating disorders. There is very rigid discipline and severe punishments such as sitting in saunas fully clothed. There are difficulties especially for very young girls in living away from home.

Are we prepared to sacrifice these young children for the sake of a few moments of golden glory?

Should a similar inquiry be held into the Royal Australian Ballet Company? Many people in Canberra were shocked at the "dangerously thin" state of some of the female dancers. A quote from a *letter to the Editor* states

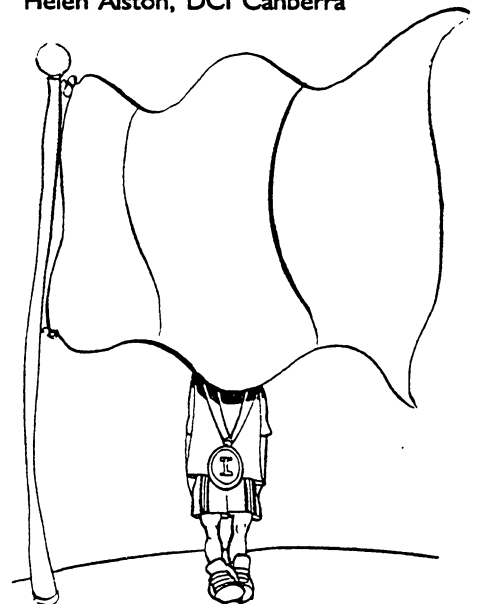
"What chance so the young girls in ballet school have? They are presented with role models who possess the "ideal body for dance" (a nonsense in itself). Sadly, for the vast majority this "ideal body" can only be achieved with diet and exercise practices which at best lead to poor health and at worst kill.

No matter how well ballet teachers promote healthy practices in

their schools (and qualified teachers have this knowledge), as long as the peak performance company in the country promotes the skeletal image of the ballerina, young girls in ballet schools will be in danger

Canberra Times, 11 May 1995

Helen Alston, DCI Canberra



Beat The Bully

Following DCI-Canberra's successful workshop "Countering Bullying" held on 5 September 1994, the ACT department of Education has

set up a Safe Schools Task Force. It will develop broad policy on making schools safe and productive for children and teachers.

DCI member, Barbara Matthews, has been appointed to the task force which will provide a draft policy by 30 June 1995.

More good news! Richardson Primary School has won an Australian Violence Prevention Award for its anti-bullying pro-

gramme. Elizabeth Cox, Principal, has designed a programme which empowers the children themselves.

Teachers on playground duty make a note of bullying incidents and children are given the opportunity to face the bully with the teacher.

The bully then has to make a form of restitution. Children are asked "What would you like the bully to do? Sometimes, says Elizabeth Cox, the child says "I would like her/him to play with me and be friends."

Lado Shay

