

**ACT Academy of Sport
Submission to Independent Sport Panel**

Terms of Reference:

1) Ensure Australia's continued elite sporting success

Issue 1: National Leadership

There is no clearly defined measure or stated national objective with regard to sporting success. With no clear targets it is not possible to develop and implement the necessary plans or to determine necessary levels of resourcing for implementation purposes. For example, stating a national objective to achieve top 5 standing as a nation at the Olympic Games requires a very different level of resourcing to achieving a top 10 status. Similarly being a top 5 Olympic nation requires a very different approach to being a top 5 or top 10 nation annually in individual sports contested at the Olympic and Commonwealth Games.

Our planning and funding approaches tend to be based around the Olympic / Paralympic cycle and do not readily permit long term strategic planning to ensure a sustainable level of success.

Recommendation:

- A clearly stated national objective must be established. This objective should be measurable and in keeping with our sporting culture.
- A defined number of sports that can contribute to this national success must be determined. The national network of national, state and regional Institutes and Academies of Sport in association with the respective National Sporting Organisations then need to commit to fully support the athlete pathways for these targeted sports.
- A long term national plan for athlete development and sport must be developed. This should have a 12 to 16 year outlook as evidence shows it takes between 7 and 10 years of development for a talented athlete from entry into a formal elite system to delivering an Olympic or World Championship medal.

Issue 2: Duplication within Australia's sporting system

The AIS and State Institute / Academy (SIS/SAS) network provides options for athletes and or coaches that needs to be retained. Whilst this means multiple providers the daily training environment of our elite athletes cannot be provided in one location or through one facility.

Simply put, athletes need options in order to obtain the best possible fit for their coaching, sporting, social, educational and cultural needs. This is especially important for the senior elite athletes who are critical to retain within the system.

However this network is not adequately resourced or sufficiently extensive to support the current elite athlete cohort supported by the AIS/SIS/SAS network or the layer of talented athletes that underpin the AIS/SIS/SAS scholarship holder. This network is also challenged at times with

jurisdictional boundaries that can restrict the opportunity for one member of the network to provide support to an athlete from outside their state / territory / region.

Recommendation:

- Extend and expand the formal network to also include the Regional Academies of Sport linked to relevant SIS/SAS so that more opportunities are available to identify and support our talented athletes.
- Establish national agreements that recognise the need for a national approach to the developmental pathway of an athlete.
- Consolidate national funding sources to ensure athletes are supported in the best environment for them.

Issue 3: Relationship between Australian Sports Commission, Australian Institute of Sport, State and Territory Institutes, academies of sport and regional institutes and how this relationship could deliver better athlete pathways.

There is no clarity as to the overarching “leader” of our high performance system. There is discord between the ASC, AIS, SIS /SAS and NSO. The key driver in determining the national pathway for an athlete must be the NSO, with the AIS and SIS/SAS (as well as Regional Academies of Sport) having a clear and complementary role within this national sport pathway.

Many NSO’s however do not have the quality of high performance leadership necessary to effectively develop and implement their national pathways plans. In addition, many national pathways plans are developed and negotiated by NSO’s to cater for each of the AIS / SIS / SAS needs in order to secure their respective support. A better approach would see plans based on a whole of country cooperative where each of the AIS / SIS / SAS have a clear and complementary role within a national pathways plan.

Recommendation:

- Establish high performance director positions for the targeted sports as a condition of ASC funding.
- Establish a mechanism at the COAG level to provide for an overarching treaty, agreement or agency that clearly establishes the national leadership structure for Australian Sport. This mechanism should also secure and coordinate ongoing national (federal and state) financial support and clarify the roles and responsibilities for the ASC, AIS and each State and Territory Institute.

Issue 4: Coaching as a critical success factor for Australian sport and to maximize return from talent identification and talent development

Central to the success of any athlete or team is the coach. Yet the coaching profession could be regarded as more of a 'cottage industry' rather than a proper professional career pathway.

A critical success factor in developing young athletes to become part of Australia's international success is the quality and quantity of coaching they receive at ALL levels of the athlete development pathway. It is not sufficient to rely upon very highly qualified coaches at the elite end of the pathway.

Recommendation:

- Examine the most appropriate structure and resource requirement to reinvigorate the focus on coaching previously maintained through the Australian Coaching Council which held mandated responsibility to develop coaching as both a volunteer and professional practice.
- Ensure that the mandate is restricted to coaching. Whilst not admonishing the need for development of officials, the current arrangements within the Sport Education section of Australian Sports Commission diminish the critical role of coaching.
- Establish a national pool of funds specifically to allow for the employment and retention of coaches at both elite and developmental levels.

Issue 5: Maximise returns from Talent Identification programs

The current National Talent Identification (NTID) Program, whilst successful against some measures, does not acknowledge or support existing talent in the traditional sport pathway; does not align with the current elite athlete programs, and in many cases is not aligned with the NSO or SSO pathways and programs.

The NTID program does not pay significant attention to the systemic development needs of athletes. The major focus is to hot house, talent transfer or fast track athletes not formally engaged in elite sport programs.

This does not recognise that a significantly greater return on investment could be obtained by a more comprehensive resourcing of the developmental athlete already engaged in the system.

The NTID program appears to focus entirely on the identification of the potential elite athlete but does not provide a mechanism or structure to then develop the talented athlete.

Recommendation:

- Maintain current initiatives but ensure they are fully aligned and integrated with the current network through NSO, SSO and State and Regional Academies of Sport.
- Establish a network of National Talent Development Centres in regional and metropolitan Australia that operate under the overall direction of the respective SIS/SAS. These Centres should:
 - Identify talent across a range of sports;
 - Support the generic athletic development of talented younger athletes (11 – 15years); and
 - Prepare younger athletes more appropriately for progression into a talented sport program.

The benefits of such a system would be proper support for athletes at a critical phase of their athletic development, facilitating progression into a more formal elite sport development program with a significant advancement of their athletic qualities. The elite sport program can then build upon this platform to develop the athletes' sport qualities.