

**DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, SPORT
AND RECREATION**
Submission to the Independent Sport Panel

Summary of recommendations

Ensure Australia's continued elite sporting success

- Better prioritisation and targeting of the existing substantial investments already made by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments through the Institutes and Academies Network;
- Achieve this through a collaborative approach through the Sport and Recreation Ministers' Council where:
 - national priorities for elite athlete development services could be set;
 - centres of skill could be created and resourced across the State and Territory institutes and academies (SIS/SAS) network, with the focus on specialisation in each institute; and
 - a coordinated approach could be adopted to maximise the attraction, retention and development of coaches and specialist staff in the areas of sports science, sports medicine and strength and conditioning

Better place sport and physical activity as a key component of the Government's preventative health agenda

Responsive structures within Government

- Develop an agreed national policy framework with States and Territories to guide the delivery of community level sport in Australia, which identifies a forward action plan and key national priorities to increase participation in sport and physical activity for the next five years;
- Establish a clear separation between the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) and the Australian Sports Commission (ASC), with a clear mandate for the ASC in the area of policy implementation, research and evaluation and targeted program delivery consistent with a national policy framework priorities; and
- Extend the mandate of the agency responsible for community level sport to include all activities within the physical activity spectrum, in particular outdoor recreation;

Strong research agenda

- Develop a collaborative research agenda with the States and Territories which will identify the gaps in current knowledge about participation in sport and physical activity and establish research priorities;
- Establish a robust evaluation framework to measure the extent to which participation trends change and participation opportunities are enhanced as a result of the new strategic approach of the Commonwealth;
- Ensure the evaluation framework incorporates clearly specified performance measures, to which National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) must work so that they are accountable for delivering on the outcomes for which the Government has funded them; and that these outcomes reflect national priorities in this area;

Facilities

- Establish better coordination between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories regarding the development of national and international standard facilities, based on a collaborative and strategic approach to funding, with the establishment of shared funding priorities.
- An inherent aspect of this approach should be the intent to maximise use of existing and future facilities.

Partnerships

- Establish a cross-sectoral and inter-jurisdictional approach to coordinating all work occurring across Government regarding physical activity.

The sport and recreation industry

- Establish an overarching strategic framework against which all of industry-related activities need to be referenced.

Start early

- Broaden the investment in the early childhood and school sectors beyond the Active After-School Care Program to develop a more comprehensive and strategic approach to encouraging physical activity in children. This should include:
 - working with and supporting the Education sector to mandate physical activity in schools;
 - strengthening school-community links;
 - identifying barriers to junior participation; and
 - involving the industry in developing solutions to those barriers.

Promotion – within Government and to the broader community

- Clearly define key messages and target audiences; and
- Collaborate with States and Territories to gain commitment to incorporating key messages in any communication strategies.

Target groups

- Capitalise on the significant work which has already been done in this area (as already proposed by the Commonwealth), particularly the Senate Committee Report on Women in Sport and Recreation in Australia; and
- Objectively and fearlessly assess the success or otherwise of current approaches to encouraging sport and physical activity in Indigenous communities

Strengthen pathways from junior sport to grassroots community sport right through to elite and professional sport

Relationship between NSOs and State Sporting Organisations (SSOs)

- As part of developing clear performance requirements for NSO's, require the development of clear roles and responsibilities, linkages and governance structures, from the local through to State and National level organisations.
- Ensure this approach, and future strategic planning, recognises SSOs as the key deliverers of sport at the community level.

Assisting organisations to enhance pathways

- Establish a priority within the strategic industry framework (referred to earlier) of assisting organisations to identify the break in pathways within their own activity, and the structures, communications and support mechanisms require to address them; and
- Ensure a priority exists in the strategic research agenda to identify industry-wide trends regarding “drop-offs” from sport pathways, and the means to address them.

Volunteers

- As a key component of a strategic policy framework - continue the work currently being undertaken to develop training packages and other resources including awards programs, to support volunteers; and
- Through research, identify those sections of the population which remain largely untapped as potential volunteers.

Identify opportunities to increase and diversify the funding base for sport through corporate sponsorship, media and any recommended reforms, such as enhancing the effectiveness of the Australian Sports Foundation

- Adopt a whole-of-industry approach to identifying corporate sponsorship for community level participation.

<p>Department of Local Government, Sport and Recreation RESPONSE TO INDEPENDENT REVIEW PANEL</p>
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Ensure Australia's continued elite sporting success

Australia has undoubtedly enjoyed a prolonged period of international success at the elite level. In the aftermath of the Beijing Olympics however, there have been a number of calls for significant increases in funding for elite athlete development services if Australia is to remain competitive in the international arena and match the investments that have been made in elite sport in the United Kingdom and China. Providing more funding for elite athlete development is not necessarily the solution and can be difficult to justify given competing Government priorities and the relatively small group of beneficiaries of the investment.

An alternative to ensure that Australia continues to produce internationally competitive sporting talent would be to adopt a more integrated approach to the current system – namely better prioritisation and targeting of the existing substantial investments already made by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments through the Institutes and Academies network.

This could be achieved through a collaborative approach through the Sport and Recreation Ministers Council where:

- national priorities for elite athlete development services could be set;
- centres of skill could be created and resourced across the State and Territory institutes and academies (SIS/SAS) network, with the focus on specialisation in each institute;
- a coordinated approach could be adopted to maximise the attraction, retention and development of coaches and specialist staff in the areas of sports science, sports medicine and strength and conditioning

The Queensland Academy of Sport will be providing further comments on elite athlete development opportunities in a separate submission.

Better place sport and physical activity as a key component of the Government's preventative health approach

Responsive structures within Government

The Department applauds the position taken by the Rudd Government to recognise and position sport as part of the preventative health agenda. This recognises the significant contribution which can be made by sport to public policy outcomes, including emotional, physical and community well being.

This recognition of the inherent public policy value of encouraging participation in sport and physical activity provides an important opportunity to develop a strategic approach to the delivery of community level sport in Australia, which has been lacking to date. Despite delivering a range of programs, the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) does not appear to have had a clear strategic framework to guide its involvement in the development of community level sport. This has resulted in a

haphazard and/or non-existent link to the development and delivery of programs and services in the State and Territories, with no clear forward program by which States and Territories could develop their priorities within a broader national policy context.

A critical factor in this has been the interconnectedness of the ASC and the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS). This has led to a perception over many years that the work of the ASC has been primarily focussed on developing potential athlete talent to further the objectives of the AIS. The Department considers that there needs to be a clearer separation between the work of the AIS and the residual functions of the ASC, or of whichever body will be responsible for any national policy framework for encouraging participation in sport and physical activity.

Indeed, if it is accepted that the non-AIS functions of the ASC should be principally focussed on national policy settings, research, funding and advice to National Sport Organisations – then it is considered the ASC should exist independently of the AIS, which has a quite specific task focussed on a small niche within the entire sport and physical activity environment. The functions and strategic direction of the ASC and its areas of responsibility should be well-defined - with a particular emphasis on positioning sport as part of the broader preventative health agenda.

This leads to a broader question of whether there should be a separate entity responsible for sport alone.

Sport always has, and always should be, an important focus for funding by the Commonwealth Government. However there has previously been no meaningful demonstration of how sport links and contributes to national policy priorities. Any decisions on policy development and future structural reform around sport should consider whether it is feasible any longer, in the Commonwealth Government context, for sport to exist solely for sport's sake alone. This is a particularly important question to ask in a tight fiscal environment – and also in an environment where organised sport is one of an increasingly diverse number of participation activities being chosen by Australians.

The Department considers the new Commonwealth Government has already articulated and presented sport as a distinct yet important component of the physical activity “continuum” linked to its preventative health agenda. This continuum should also recognise the increasing demand by Australians for less structured activities, including outdoor recreation opportunities in particular. The Department recognises however, that the Commonwealth does not have the institutional levers to improve outdoor recreation opportunities – such as land management responsibilities. That said, the Commonwealth can broaden its consideration of the physical activity continuum in national policy settings which seek to promote more active living as a meaningful preventative health measure.

This approach is increasingly being taken up by States and Territories (eg the Queensland Government's *Find Your 30* campaign to encourage physical activity; and the Eat Well Be Active Taskforce initiatives) and is, to a certain extent, reflected in the placement by the Rudd Government of sport within the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing (the Commonwealth Department).

In determining future priorities in positioning sport and physical activity as part of a broader (and nationally agreed) preventative health agenda, the Department considers there are a number of other critical issues that warrant consideration:

1. Research

New participation trends, choices and impacts on participation, and the increasing knowledge of the benefits of sport and physical activity, must inevitably shape the delivery of programs and services if they are to meet community needs. These factors present all levels of Government with new opportunities to develop activities and programs that are interesting, relevant, accessible, flexible and have the capacity to adapt to changes in demand.

However in order to achieve this and effectively enhance opportunities for participation in sport and physical activity – consistent and reliable information must be available.

It is recognised at all levels of Government that the evidence base for sport and physical activity is often inconsistent, unreliable or non-existent. The Commonwealth could clearly take a leadership role in developing a collaborative research agenda with the States and Territories which will identify the gaps in current knowledge about participation in sport and physical activity, and establish research priorities. These should include:

- addressing methodological issues which result in differing interpretations of participation statistics and trends;
- more clearly defining the social and economic benefits of sport and recreation; and
- better understanding the motivations that underpin participation in sport and recreation.

In addition to developing a focussed research agenda, priority should be placed on establishing a robust evaluation framework to measure the extent to which participation trends are monitored and participation opportunities are enhanced as a result of implementing a new national policy framework. This should include assisting National level organisations to work to clearly specified performance measures so that they are accountable for delivering on the outcomes for which Government has funded them; and that these outcomes reflect national priorities in this area. If these performance measures can be agreed through a collaborative process involving the States and Territories, then these priorities can be reflected in negotiated funding arrangements between the States/Territories and their State level sporting organisations – thus ensuring there is cohesion and certainty in driving a higher performing sports system.

2. Facilities

It is widely recognised that one of the greatest barriers to participation in physical activity is lack of facilities. By maintaining and increasing the supply, quality and diversity of spaces and facilities for sport and physical activity, Australians will be provided with a core foundation from which participation opportunities emerge.

A proactive, integrated and informed approach needs to be taken to decision-making by State and Federal Governments in relation to the planning, provision and sustainability of facilities for sport and physical activity.

To date there has been no coordination of this nature, resulting in an ad hoc approach by the Commonwealth in its funding decisions, which has not reflected State needs and priorities or those of communities. It has also led to potential negative impacts on the viability of existing and proposed facilities in the States and Territories.

The approach to facilities development between the Commonwealth and States and Territories should be based on a collaborative and strategic partnership to funding, with the establishment of shared funding priorities; and a stronger policy framework for facility planning. True funding partnerships will lead to better facilities, greater usage and more active communities. The partnership model should encompass:

- needs based facilities planning;
- comprehensive feasibility assessments;
- implementation of sound asset management policies and plans; and
- improved integration with State and Territory based funding programs.

Significant benefits would also be gained from a fair, collaborative and evidentiary based approach to Commonwealth investment in national and international standard facilities. Such investments should be based on a planned approach which reflects consideration of the best locations nationally for key sporting infrastructure which is capable of attracting and hosting major national and international events. Such an approach would assist long term facility planning in terms of matching investment with the types of events States and Territories could expect to secure in the future.

An inherent aspect of a strategic and collaborative approach should be the intent to maximise use of existing and future facilities so they are able to meet the participation needs of Australians now and in the future. Extensive work has already been undertaken by a number of the States and Territories in this regard (eg the Memorandum of Understanding between the Department and the Department of Education, Training and the Arts to support the development of community use sport facilities on school grounds). The Commonwealth should capitalise on this by working with States and Territories to encourage long term planning, exploitation of synergies and coordination of needs for efficient, sensible and sustainable use of existing and future resources.

3. Partnerships – General

There is strong national and international evidence to support the need for a comprehensive, integrated, bi-lateral approach to encouraging greater participation in physical activity. Collaboration between the sport and recreation sectors, the health sector and other key sectors such as education, urban planning, transport and local government are critical in developing a comprehensive approach to addressing physical inactivity across the population.

The Standing Committee for Recreation and Sport (SCORS), and the National Sport and Recreation Development Council (NSRDC) have, for many years, raised this

cross-sectoral approach as key to achieving outcomes in sport and physical activity (and also as a significant opportunity to highlight to other sectors the contribution which sport can make to the development of broader social and economic policy).

There is already solid evidence of the benefits of a collaborative approach, from the work of Physical Activity Taskforces around Australia. Queensland has provided an excellent example of how an innovative collaborative approach can achieve positive outcomes around active and healthy lifestyles through its *Eat Well Be Active* Taskforce - coordinating health, education, sport and recreation and transport agencies to deliver over \$30 million in initiatives in the last two years alone to encourage participation in physical activity and healthy eating choices.

To date there has been limited input from the Commonwealth towards achieving a nationally agreed and cross sector approach in this important area of public policy. An unfortunate example of where the previous Government progressed a unilateral response in this area was the development of a limited social marketing campaign to encourage greater participation in physical activity (the campaign focussed around a bouncing red chair). It was clear this campaign was developed with limited consultation with other sectors and no input from the States and Territories who have extensive expertise in developing and delivering their own social marketing campaigns. In these instances, the result is often one of missed opportunities to provide a coordinated message to Australians on an important social issue, when full collaboration could have resulted in a more powerful campaign which maximised buying power and impact.

With a clear national policy framework in place, new opportunities will arise for collaboration and the recognition of the contribution which can be made by each sector to encouraging physical activity. The Department considers it critical that the Commonwealth take a leadership role in facilitating the dialogue within its own agencies and facilitating cross-sectoral and inter-jurisdictional collaboration.

3. The sport and recreation industry

The sport and recreation industry (the industry) is a major deliverer of sport and recreation opportunities to communities. Building the organisational capacity and skills of industry participants is critical if the industry is to flourish, if essential knowledge and experience is to be retained, and participation is to grow. Building the responsiveness of the industry will provide one of the major foundations for enabling more Australians to participate in sport and recreation.

Through research and consultation, the Commonwealth should establish an industry-wide approach which proactively identifies issues impacting upon or emerging for sport and recreation. This approach should create an overarching framework against which all of the Commonwealth's industry-related activities need to be referenced.

Such an approach might incorporate:

- assisting National Level Organisations (NLOs) to develop their programs reflective of national policy priorities (eg. positioning and promoting their activities in the context of the healthy lifestyles agenda);

- supporting organisations (including through the work of the robust research agenda referred to earlier in this paper) to reflect changing participation choices eg the trend away from structured to unstructured sport;
- developing a set of performance measures which link to a framework of key Government priorities – to which organisations must be held accountable in order to receive Government funding ;
- rewarding best practice and innovation with a targeted funding or rewards-based program;
- facilitating an industry-wide approach to addressing the recognised barriers to participation in sport (eg. the cost to families of participating in junior sport);

4. Start early

There is wide recognition of the need to start as early as possible in influencing Australians on the importance of lifelong participation in sport and recreation. Not only are the early childhood years important to setting lifestyle patterns - research also shows the early years are a crucial time in laying the foundations for children's physical competence. The critical period for mastering fundamental movement skills, the building blocks to all sports, is between the ages of 2 and 7 years of age.

Given this, it is important that the early childhood and school sectors are key components of any national policy framework for encouraging sport and physical activity. This should reflect a coordinated approach from Governments to promoting lifestyle activity to early childhood professionals and teachers – helping them teach young people to learn how to set activity goals that are meaningful and attainable, helping them maintain an active lifestyle rather than emphasising “physical fitness” (which does not resonate with many people); and ensuring that physical competence is not approached with solely a sport participation emphasis.

To date, the efforts of the Commonwealth in this context have focussed primarily on the *Active After-School Communities Program*, with limited funding applied to other elements of the early childhood and school sectors. While the evaluations of the *Active After-School Communities Program* have been encouraging, the Department considers it important to avoid “putting all the eggs in one basket”. This can be overcome by adopting a strategic approach to encouraging physical activity across the years from an early age.

For example, SCORS and NSRDC, along with the States and Territories have for many years, been attempting to influence education agencies to mandate physical activity in schools. This has had limited success in other jurisdictions, although in Queensland the Government has now mandated, from the start of 2009, that all school students participate in 30 minutes of physical activity a day. One of the limiting factors for implementation (in addition to arguments about meeting these requirements in an already crowded curriculum) has been the documented lack of skill and confidence by teachers in how to incorporate physical activity into their daily classroom schedule. In Queensland, the Department is addressing this issue directly with its *Get Active Queensland Children and Young People* suite of resources, which provides workshops and other resources to upskill carers and teachers in encouraging children to be more active.

It seems clear that the opportunities to encourage physical activity in this context - in terms of the sheer number of children involved - are far greater than those afforded by the after-school care audience, and would likely generate a better return on the investment made. The Department considers this should be a key focus for the Commonwealth, as part of a more comprehensive approach to encouraging physical activity in children. Importantly, such an approach would provide the basis for a strong and mutually beneficial working relationship with the Education sector (referred to earlier as an important goal).

This would also provide opportunities to strengthen the school-clubs-communities links, which the Department considers are critical in any forward planning by the industry.

The Department has also already referred in this paper to the need to have the industry involved in finding solutions to generic barriers to participation (eg taking a whole-of-industry approach to matters such as the cost of participating in junior sport). This is a complex policy area which will not be solved by simple solutions such as tax rebates for participation costs.

5. Promotion – within Government and to broader community

Central to encouraging greater participation in sport and physical activity is:

- (i) an understanding of the motivations which underpin participation;
- (ii) knowledge of the barriers which inhibit participation;
- (iii) clearer definition of the social and economic benefits of sport and recreation;
- (iv) consistent and reliable data on participation rates across a range of ages and demographic groups; and
- (v) reliable evaluation data on participation rates as a result of specific interventions.

Such knowledge would be of significant assistance in crafting key messages around sport and recreation – to Government and non-Government stakeholders, and to the broader community and in identifying target audiences for those messages.

Again, the importance of collaborative working relationships between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories cannot be overstated. It is imperative that all agree on the key messages, and that these are reiterated in all communication strategies. This paper has referred earlier to the social marketing campaigns being developed at Federal and state levels to encourage physical activity. As already pointed out, this has proven to be another example of a missed opportunity to communicate a consistent message to all Australians about the benefits of being active.

6. Target groups

The Department supports the intent of the Commonwealth to address target groups such as seniors, women, people with disabilities and Indigenous people. In particular the Department agrees with the statements contained within the discussion paper *Australian Sport: emerging challenges, new directions* (the Discussion Paper), which refers to the need to capitalise on the significant work which has already been done in

a number of these areas, but which has not been progressed – such as the Senate Committee Report on Women in Sport and Recreation in Australia.

In addition, the Department considers it critical for the Commonwealth to work with the States and Territories to objectively and fearlessly assess the success of current approaches to encouraging sport and physical activity in Indigenous communities. The Department has recently completed such an assessment of its own services, and as a result has developed a fundamentally different service delivery model which leverages extensively on the expertise, resources and commitment of the Queensland Police Citizens Youth Welfare Association (PCYC), to provide sport and recreation opportunities in Indigenous communities.. Through this new model 34.5 community sport and recreation officers will be employed by PCYC to deliver local community based sport and recreation programs and activities.

Strengthen pathways from junior sport to grassroots community sport right through to elite and professional sport

1. Relationship between NSOs and SSOs

The current arrangements for funding of NSOs are not advantageous for developing community sport and recreation. This has in part been due to an over-emphasis on using Government funding (by the NSOs, or passed on to the SSOs from the NSOs) to achieve gold medals - in itself a short-sighted view of how gold medals can be achieved, since it fails to recognise the importance of investing in grassroots participation as a means of starting Australians on the pathway to gold medal performance. However, importantly, there has also been limited recognition of the fact that is only SSOs, and regional and local level organisations, which can truly make an impact on participation at the community level.

The Department fully supports the clearly stated intent of the Commonwealth to make grassroots participation a priority, and assumes this will be reflected in any future funding and policy models for NSO's. The Department considers that any future funding models for NSOs should specify clearly defined roles and responsibilities, linkages and governance structures, from the local through to the State and National levels - to enable organisations to deliver their services effectively and to allow people with the talent, interest and/or ability to participate at whatever level they may wish.

This will not only ensure a place for community participation and a better defined pathway in a number of sports. It will also help to eliminate the overlap which often occurs in the provision of services by SSOs and NSOs.

2. Assisting organisations to enhance pathways

Each sport or recreation activity will have its own needs and requirements regarding the provision of pathways. The nature and adequacy of existing systems and structures to support the provision of pathways, and the extent of the pathways that are currently available, are fragmented for many sport and recreation organisations.

It is the Department's experience that many sport and recreation organisations do not currently have the capacity to effectively reform the pathways within their activity, nor to implement solutions. The Department considers it critical that any non-financial support provided to the industry by the Commonwealth should prioritise the identification and implementation of the structures, communications and support mechanisms that are needed to enhance pathways from the community to elite levels of participation.

This process can be greatly assisted by the research agenda referred to previously in this paper, which could identify whole-of-industry trends in "drop-off" of participation. It is noted that Sport England has recently conducted research which verifies that the most significant drop-off rate to be at age 16 years, and has reshaped its program priorities accordingly.

One specific action which has been undertaken in Queensland in addressing governance structure to maximise pathways has been the drive towards amalgamations in some sports. Conditions of funding have been established to accelerate amalgamations in areas such as Little Athletics/Athletics and Swimming/Masters Swimming. The Department has provided full support to all organisations involved with one-off grants and significant client management assistance. Although similar amalgamations have been mooted elsewhere in Australia for a number of years, the Department considers it is timely for a more aggressive approach to be applied by Governments. This will ensure that services to sport and recreation activities are streamlined and resources maximised for the ultimate benefit of participants.

3. Volunteers

Volunteers are clearly the lifeblood of the sport and recreation industry. However they are now operating in a more complex environment than they did even ten years ago, with higher levels of community expectation in areas such as risk management, public liability, inclusive practices, child protection and preventing harassment.

There has been much work done by state and federal jurisdictions to develop training packages and other resources to support volunteers in this new environment. Excellent recognition programs have also been developed, including the recent establishment by the Queensland Minister for Sport of a Ministerial Sport and Recreation Award, celebrated annually in National Volunteers week. This will be followed up by regional and local awards programs.

The Department considers any national policy framework must recognise and support the work of volunteers as a priority – given they are the lifeblood of the sport and recreation industry. Declining rates of volunteerism will (and in some cases, already has had) adversely impact on sport and recreation organisations and their ability to deliver participation opportunities.

However the Department considers that broader work should also be done to identify, through research, the motivations of specific sectors of the population (eg the baby-boomers), which are largely still untapped as potential volunteers. Given that this generational profile is generic to volunteering, and does not just apply to sport and

recreation, the Department's proposal would provide an opportunity for sport and recreation to partner with other sectors to address broader policy issues.

Identify opportunities to increase and diversify the funding base for sport through corporate sponsorship, media and any recommended reforms, such as enhancing the effectiveness of the Australian Sports Foundation

Funding of community participation in sport primarily occurs at club level, with assistance available through the State Government (in Queensland) for facilities development and some program delivery. There are a small number of national companies (eg. Woolworths and MacDonalDs) have taken the initiative to provide funding and sponsorship support for local level clubs. However to date there has been limited leadership shown by Governments to encourage the funding of community level participation by the private sector. This scenario exists against a strong background in our country of funding for elite sport and elite sportspeople.

The Department considers it timely for the Commonwealth to work with the States and Territories to develop innovative approaches to engaging with the private sector to identify mutually beneficial opportunities for private companies to sponsor community participation. Underpinning these approaches should be the assumption that a large number of companies now seek to be accountable to their shareholders and employees on the grounds of corporate social responsibility, and to appeal to potential customers on the same basis.

New measures could include:

- (i) establish a database of potential private sector sponsors whose profiles link with delivery of goods and services in local communities (such as banks and supermarket chains);
- (ii) matching these sponsors to industry organisations;
- (iii) "pitching" to private companies on the benefits of sponsoring community participation;
- (iv) better understanding the needs of the private sector in providing sponsorships (eg. research conducted by Sport England indicated that a number of companies currently sponsoring sports at the elite level were keen to "balance out" this commitment by also sponsoring at the community level); and
- (v) developing policy to guide the industry on philosophical issues such as allowing fast food companies to sponsor physical activity initiatives.