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1. Ensure Australia's continued elite sporting success.

The key to an efficacious high performance program is that the elements of the program concentrate on those activities at which they are best and leave other activities to those that are better able to deliver successful outcomes. For example, sports scientists collectively are highly skilled at identifying talent, developing physical and mental attributes, reducing/minimising injuries/illnesses, and recovering and recuperating from injuries and illnesses. [Eg Jana Rawlinson's return to the AIS to access its sports scientists.] Conversely sports specific coaches are best at developing sports specific skills, developing competition strategies and tactics, and implementing those strategies and tactics. I recall when I was the Firsts coach for the Combined Services (Victoria) club in the early/mid 1970s and I had pleasure of hosting for a day the Coaching Organiser, Welsh Rugby, Ray Williams, when he was visiting Melbourne with Dick Marks, his Australian counterpart. I had the opportunity of spending considerable time discussing the principles of coaching with Williams, many of which I was then able to implement successfully. He said the role of the rugby coach was to teach players Rugby, not to get them fit. He expected players to look after their own fitness, to be fit when they turned up for Rugby sessions and for the coach to concentrate on Rugby. While I did not agree entirely with him, I changed my approach to coaching in terms of having separate fitness sessions and rugby sessions, during which the focus was solely rugby drills. I found this to be more effective.

Much has changed in the past 35 years, but these days football coaches now employ a team of support staff, many of whom focus solely on the well-being and fitness of players.

Returning to the role of sports scientists, the services they perform need not be designed for single specific sports, as an athlete's physical attributes might be applicable to a number of similar sports. For example, players of three of the major football codes, Australian Football, Rugby and Rugby League require a number of similar skills, strong upper body strength, basic running skills, quick acceleration off either foot, leaping skills, etc. There should be no reason why the sports scientists could not develop a common program for all three codes. Similarly, athletes in middle distance running, triathlons, orienteering, etc have common basic needs and again a common program could be developed for them. There are probably a number of other sports that can be grouped for the purposes of developing a sports science program.

The advantage of the common program approach is that athletes in a common program might be tempted to try kindred sports.

My recommendations are:

- The national and State/Territory AS/IS should concentrate on their strengths, be managed along similar lines to tertiary institutes, and that they should develop programs, conduct talent identification sessions, and offer scholarships on the basis kindred sports, rather than sports specific. Such programs and scholarships should not be limited to Olympic and Commonwealth Games sports.
- The AS/IS host national/local sporting programs, in terms of office and communications support, etc but leave it to the relevant national sporting organisations to provide the staff and run their sport specific programs. The AS/IS should determine the national/local sporting programs on the basis of both national and local priorities, and objective criteria that focuses on the potential of the athletes likely to be in the sports program.
- The federal Government should continue to provide High Performance funding to all NSOs that send athletes to the highest of international competitions, eg Olympic and Commonwealth Games, World Championships, World Cup and meet the current ASC criteria in meeting benchmark performances. I consider the diversity of sport in Australia is a strength rather than a weaknesses.

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

The biggest mistakes the new ASC (from circa 2000) made were to:

- abolish the Participation Division, and
- dismantle the Active Australia framework

because in so doing it removed a support mechanism for national sporting organisations (NSOs).

The strength of the Participation Division was that its role was to promote increased participation and it did this through supporting those employed by NSOs with the responsibility to oversee the development of their sport. All of that support disappeared when the Participation Division was abolished.

While it is the State associations and clubs that actually provide the services, they do so within a framework provided by the NSOs and for the NSOs to be able to provide that framework they need support from the federal government.

The Active Australia framework had two advantages:

- It encouraged NSOs and subordination organisations to seek accreditation. The process of seeking accreditation required those seeking it to examine closely the way they conducted their business and to introduce a process of continuous improvement.
- Accredited organisations were encouraged to advertise their accreditation and this enabled potential participants to see which service providers were accredited.

The other mistake that the new ASC (2000) made was to abolish the methodology for determining Sport Development funding. This was an assessment methodology that covered the whole spectrum of Sport Development. It was introduced in 2001 for the quadrennium 2001-02/2004-05 and then replaced by an arbitrary method, which favoured the larger sports.

The federal government should reinstate the Participation Division, the Active Australia framework and the Sport Development funding assessment used for the quadrennium 2001-02/2004-05. Such actions would enhance Government frameworks to ensure an on-going focus on grassroots and community sport and physical activity and to increase participation rates in sport and physical activity.

There are a number of barriers to participation, including lack of time, money, ability, etc. Taking the last point, ability, first, one of the barriers is that many people who are not particularly interested in team-based sports and/or who lack the hand/eye coordination required to play many sports. Thus while the ASC seems to be trying to narrow the options available for people to use, the federal Government should be maintaining and expanding the diversity of available sports in which people can participate.

Reducing the cost to participants could be achieved through suitably-qualified NSOs receiving Sport Development funding to enable them to provide their own framework to support grass roots sport. Sports should be encouraged to stage more activities that are easy to access, have a maximum participation time of 60 minutes, with flexible participation times.

In addition to reinstating the Active Australia framework, the federal Government should consider introducing a program similar to the Life Be In It program, supported by links from any advertising campaigns to service providers, eg websites, newspaper advertisements in the form of information pages, eg Coming Events, etc.

The final steps that the federal Government need to take is to put more emphasis on ‘bums off seats’ (participants) rather than ‘bums on seats’ (spectators) sports, and put as much funding into ‘sports for life’ sports as they do in supporting ‘entertainment’ sports.

My recommendations are:

- The federal Government should reinstate the Participation Division, the Active Australia framework and create a promotional program along with the lines of the Life Be In It program with links from potential participants to service providers.
- The federal Government should reinstate a transparent means of determining the NSOs to receive funding and the amounts they should receive, based on an objective assessment similar to the one used by the ASC for the quadrennium 2001-02/2004-05.

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

There is significant capacity in the system to ensure optimal and efficient delivery of the athlete and coach pathway in most sports, but delivery is often impeded through poor organisational structures. The lack of one peak body covering the a sport through the various stages of development is a weakness in the pathway of some sports. Without wishing to be critical of Athletics, the lack of one peak body covering its sport is a disadvantage for its participants. There is a number of organisations: Little Athletics, Athletics Australia, Veterans Athletics, etc and not always a lot of cooperation between the bodies at all levels. There are also a number of offshoot organisations. Masters swimming is also not connected to Swimming Australia. There are other sports that have similar problems, while there are many that oversee their sport from cradle to grave, with Orienteering being one of the latter. The development of sport would be more effective if all the activities were overseen by one peak body.

While masters sport is not directly in the pathway from junior to elite sport, it is important for athletes to have a sporting life after performing at the elite level. Moreover, if people stay in a sport at the masters level they are more likely to retain their fitness and well-being and contribute to development of emerging athletes through being, coaches, officials, administrators, etc. It is far better to have them still participating, rather than being non-participatory members of a ‘blazer’ brigade. One of the most effective means by support and recognition could be provided for the coaches, officials, umpires, administrators and other volunteers would be to assist sports to have paid officers who could provide the administrative framework within which the voluntary coaches, officials, umpires, etc can operate.

My main experience with multi-sports competitions has been the World Games (the elite international competition below the Olympic Games) and the Masters Games (World and Australian), but I have watched the Olympic and Commonwealth Games on television. My observations are that there is lot of wasted expenditure on razzamatazz and a lot profiteering; all of which inflate the cost, which in the case of the Masters Games is borne by the participants. In the case of the Olympic and Commonwealth Games, it is often the taxpayers and donors. I was amazed to hear that the Australian team members at the 2008 Beijing Games would receive around 120 items of clothing. The performance by Australians at multi-sports competition could be strengthened if there was more emphasis on the sporting aspects of the competition and less on razzamatazz.

My recommendations are:

- Sports be encouraged to create a single peak bodies for their sports.
- The federal Government should support NSOs through providing funding for paid officers who would relief volunteers of onerous tasks.

4. Maintain Australia's cutting edge approach to sports science, research and technology.

While I have had some exposure to the ACT Academy of Sport, I am not qualified to comment on the cross-fertilisation of information between the AIS and the State/Territory AS/IS; however, I consider it is imperative that there be open and unfettered sharing of information, and that systems are in place to ensure the sharing of information is done regularly and effectively.

Furthermore, there is not much use in having cutting edge sports scientists if the technology is not embraced and used by sports coaches. I have heard a few coaches speaking critically of sports science. The AIS and the State/Territory AS/IS need to do more to convince sports coaches the merits of using sports science.

In terms of anti-doping strategies, education programs need to start at an early age so that promising young athletes are well aware of the regime in which they will have operate should they become an elite athlete.

5. 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.

During a recent ACTSport survey of local peak sporting bodies over 42 per cent Strongly Agreed that 'Sporting and recreation not-for-profit organisations should have access to Charitable Status for tax relief and benefits', and a further 30 per cent Slightly Agreed; 15 percent were Neutral and 12 percent did not agree (33 responses to this question). While I do not necessarily agree with the majority I consider that there could be changes to the tax system that would benefit sport.

The change I would to see would be for sporting organisations to be able to raise funds through the Australian Sports Foundation and use them for general operating costs. Currently, donations through the ASF can only be used for specific projects and cannot be used to pay for general operating costs, eg salaries, insurance, rent, etc. To avoid people rorting the system there would need to be check and balances in place but having worked with the ASF for a number of years I don't that as an insurmountable problem.

Turning to the media, for minor sports, it is a bit of a 'chicken and egg' situation. They cannot get media coverage because the media says there is no interest, and there is not likely to be much interest until there is media coverage. I have been able to demonstrate that where one is able to find friendly media, the profile of a sport can be raised, but more often than not, the media is biased towards the big sports and that is what they cover. Apart from the federal Government improving the profile of NSOs of the minor sports through indicating that they are recognised by the ASC, thus giving them the status of 'real' sports, I don't see much more than it can do to improve the media status of the minor sports, and hence the opportunity to raise additional funds through sponsorships. However, there might be means, like the opportunities that have existed from time to time for funding films, for corporations to receive additional tax benefits through sponsorship of not-for-profit sports participation programs. For example, sponsorship the payment of a schools sport development officer and the associated costs.

My recommendations are:

- The federal Government should review the taxation laws with a view to permitting not-for-profit sports to use donations through the ASF to pay general operating costs and for business to obtain exceptional tax benefits through supporting the sport development activities of not-for-profit sports.
- The federal Government should note the benefits of minor sports being 'recognised by the ASC' and promote all recognised sports to the media and sponsors.