



Australian Government  
Australian Sports Commission



AUSTRALIAN  
INSTITUTE OF SPORT

# Review of High Performance Pathways in Australian Weightlifting

Innovation and Best Practice  
April 2007

Reviewer: Jackie Fairweather





## **Executive Summary**

As a result of ongoing issues with the operation of the sport of Weightlifting in Australia, the Australian Sports Commission initiated an extensive Governance and Management Review of the Australian Weightlifting Federation in 2003. With the sport still coming to terms with the implementation of some of the recommendations of this Review and funding suspended in April 2006, it was timely, as part of the reform agenda, to review the High Performance Structure of the sport in order to assist it in both supporting its existing athletes and coaches, and to re-build for success into the future.

Despite the turmoil within the sport and many of those interviewed for this review stating 'it is at rock bottom', there is a small band of well respected coaches and devoted athletes around the country who were able to deliver a ten medal haul at the 2006 Commonwealth Games. Given that Weightlifting in Australia is primarily a high performance sport, the fact that its high performance athletes and coaches are the strength of the organisation provides hope and a basis for the future.

The main findings and recommendations of this Review centre around finding and appointing a strong leader who should have full responsibility and accountability for creating a High Performance Program under which to unite the sport. At least for the last ten years or so there has been little if anything in the way of a formally structured and planned high performance program. Both the need and the opportunity are now there to create an entirely new vision, strategy, plan and policies. The biggest issue will be lack of resources, necessitating innovative and inclusive strategies for delivering the sport and achieving an identified vision and set of objectives for the next ten years.

The current Board and management understand the challenges ahead. They are working positively and passionately, in close cooperation with the ASC, to rebuild the governance and strategic planning of the sport. If the vision and leadership for high performance are now put in place, there is the opportunity to create a united, inclusive weightlifting community who are empowered to build the capacity of the sport, increase membership numbers and produce athletes capable of achieving at the highest level.

### **Recommendations:**

1. That the vision and objectives of AWF and the High Performance Program are redefined and articulated, with success at the highest level as the primary aim.
2. That this vision, aims and objectives should then form the basis of the Strategic Plan and athlete and coach development pathways, with a longer term objective of producing athletes with the belief, capacity and opportunity to be competitive at the highest level of international competition.

3. That as the first priority in terms of timing and funding, a High Performance Program Manager (HPPM) position be created and employed. It is essential that the appointed person have the skill set as well as the mandate and responsibility to lead and manage the program from development athletes through to highest international level athlete, including ability to:
  - rebuild relationships and trust amongst the high performance athlete and coach community
  - create and implement both short term (4 years) and longer term (10 year) plans for the high performance program, including camp and competition plans
  - Identify and manage resources to increase and develop the athlete pool
  - Manage and support National Team Coaches
  - Support, nurture and provide opportunities for athletes and coaches within the program
  - Create relationships with external partners
  - Be held accountable to measurable and published key performance indicators
  - Be the link and liaison to the high performance community through close 'hands on' involvement with athletes and coaches.
4. That the relative roles and responsibilities of the Board, the High Performance Program Manager and the High Performance Management Committee be clearly defined in writing. And the structure be such that the High Performance Program Manager reports to the Board through the CEO, and is supported by the High Performance Management Committee which is an advisory group to the Manager (including ASC representation), providing stakeholder input and specialist advice.
5. That AWF formalise the longer term (10 year) strategic direction of the sport, with an innovative and inclusive approach to prioritising scant resources (human and financial), to ensure viability and sustainability of the sport.
6. That a decentralised club-based structure be retained for the delivery of the sport. But that this be enhanced by improved national linkages through leadership, communication, inclusion and a structured, well planned camps program.
7. That the HPPM lead the development of a structured national high performance program including timely, clear and well communicated plans surrounding national teams and squads, with both criteria and benefits articulated.
8. Ensure that all plans, policies and procedures are widely and well communicated – on the AWF and state websites, through mail outs and via direct communication and consultation with the high performance community. Ensure these are clear and easy to find even for new members coming into the sport. Consider even including a depiction of the Athlete Pathway for aspiring athletes to see.

9. That selection criteria for athletes be written in line with ASC Best Practice Guidelines and contain appropriate, clear and transparent criteria for selection to Australian Teams and Squads.
10. That quantifiable standards be confirmed, communicated and applied in a consistent manner at all levels of the development pathway.
11. That the type and level of athlete incentives be carefully considered by the sport and developed within the context of the vision, objectives, priorities and resourcing of the sport. In the absence of sufficient cash for incentives, every effort needs to be made through an inclusive national high performance program to provide non-cash and intangible incentives.
12. That a selection criteria/ process for appointing of National Team Coaches be reviewed in line with ASC Best Practice Guidelines and contain appropriate, clear and transparent criteria for selection to Australian Teams and Squads.
13. That as part of the longer term plan for the sport, the HPPM drive the development and implementation of policies and programs around valuing, supporting and developing existing coaches and making the sport attractive to new coaches.
14. Using the Queensland schools program as a model, develop a model/template for a schools program that can be effectively and efficiently implemented nationally.
15. Identify innovative and good practice initiatives for delivery in a structure where respective roles, responsibilities and capacities of the National body and State bodies are clearly defined so implementation of developed models can effectively and efficiently value add to the sport as a whole.
16. Develop a public relations strategy including widely publicised strategies for positive, proactive promotion of the sport by members and a policy for dealing with negative publicity.

## **Introduction and the Review Process**

In early 2003 the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) commissioned a Governance and Management Review of the Australian Weightlifting Federation (AWF). The sport had been going through a period of declining memberships, fractionalisation within the membership, along with dissatisfaction with AWF's governance and management both from within and outside of the sport. The review was extensive and provided 26 recommendations on a wide range of governance and management issues as well as an implementation plan.

During the latter half of 2005, the AWF's governance and management reform against the 2003 review appeared to stall. As the AWF was not compliant with the terms and conditions of their Funding and Service Level Agreement with the ASC, the Commission Board formally decided to withhold funding from the AWF from April 2006. Along with concerns regarding the AWF's governance, management and financial position, there was also concern over the AWF Board's failure to effectively set and articulate the vision, direction and plans for high performance. Consequently, in early 2007 it was considered necessary to complete the whole-of-sport reform by undertaking a review of the high performance pathways in order to set the direction for athlete and coach development and pave the way to the future and the rebuilding of the sport.

This Review began in early March with approvals and preliminary discussions between the ASC and the AWF. Background information on the sport was gathered, including current strategic and high performance plans, all High Performance Program Policies, and other information provided by the ASC consultant, AWF Chief Executive Officer (CEO) as well as that taken from the AWF website. An announcement was made about the Review to the weightlifting community on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2007 including an open invitation to make a written submission. The terms of reference and project plan for the Review are at Appendix A.

Between the 20<sup>th</sup> March and 6<sup>th</sup> April, face to face and telephone interviews were conducted (by the same independent ASC Representative) with 35 stakeholders in total (Appendix B is a list of stakeholders interviewed). No written submissions were received however, being a small sport, the majority of key stakeholders including athletes, coaches, Board Members and State Executives had an opportunity to input to the review through the interview process.

On 13<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> April 2007 a two day High Performance Advisory Panel (HPAP) was conducted in Melbourne. The panel, chaired by the acting CEO of the ASC, Brent Espeland, consisted of a balanced and diverse group of 16 people from both within and outside of weightlifting (List of attendees are at Appendix

C). The aim of the HPAP was to discuss the findings of the background information and interviews to suggest strategies for the future of the high performance pathways in Australian weightlifting. The input from key high performance people from outside of weightlifting, was invaluable to the process (these included: Stuart Borrie, National Executive Director Badminton Australia; Adam Sachs, High Performance Manager Australian Volleyball Federation; and Daniel Trenton, Head Coach and Director of High Performance Tae Kwon Do Australia). Following the HPAP, all the information from the review was collated into this report, with recommendations for the future direction of the High Performance Pathways in Australian Weightlifting.

## **Overview: Current state of the sport**

The current structure of the AWF is depicted at Appendix D. The CEO is the only full time employee, with the contracted Accounts Officer role being filled by Peter Cayley who is also the Executive Director of the Victorian Weightlifting Association (the AWF office is located in the Victorian Weightlifting Association training centre). Although funding from the ASC has been suspended, interim funding of up to \$15,000 per month is being released to the AWF in order to maintain the Federation's core administrative functions. These functions include: the employment of the Chief Executive; the engagement of services for the preparation of financial accounts, and the implementation of an eight point anti-doping action plan.

ASC funding to the AWF accounts for approximately 60% of the operational budget of the sport. The other significant contributor to AWF is the Australian Commonwealth Games Association, for which Weightlifting is a significant sport contributing multiple medals and at each Commonwealth Games. Less than 2% of funds are generated by the sport itself and comes in the form of capitations, sponsorship and entry fees. If all funding is reinstated, projected total budget would be just over \$700,000.

Capitated membership of the organisation over the last 10 years, as provided by the AWF CEO, is as follows:

- 1997 – 609
- 1998 – 591
- 1999 – 744
- 2000 – 739
- 2001 – 665
- 2002-2005 – Data not available due to office flood
- 2006 – 561

Such low member numbers are limiting to the sport in many ways such as: small pool of people from which to fill leadership roles, the base from which to develop elites, ability to generate funds, finding volunteers to run the sport. Weightlifting is very much a volunteer based sport, with little if any remuneration for coaches, officials, administrators or athletes. Schools programs have reached numbers up to five times the capitated membership in the past, but resources to tap into schools have been scant in the last few years.

The core business for AWF is providing training and competition opportunities for athletes who range from entry level (schools) through to high performance international competitors as well as Masters lifters. The National Championships caters for all junior, open and masters age categories in all weight categories.



There are a small number of elite competitors described as, 'barely enough to make a full representative team' (which is 7 women and 8 men at Olympic level). Nevertheless, results at the 2006 Commonwealth Games were strong, even exceeding expectation, with Australia regaining the Trafalgar Trophy for most successful Commonwealth Weightlifting Nation (Australia has won this trophy in 1978, '82, 86, '94 and 2006). The 2006 Commonwealth Games were the first where medals were only awarded for totals (and not for each of the two types of lifts). Australia won 4 Gold, 3 Silver and 3 Bronze, as compared with 4 Gold, 2 Silver and 4 Bronze in 2002 for lift totals.

The following table shows the total representation of Australia at the annual International Weightlifting Federation Junior and Senior Weightlifting World Championships Between 2000 and 2006 (inclusive):

Event	Possible no. representations	No. Australian representations	Total No. individuals representing
Junior World Champs – Female	49	20	11
Junior World Champs – Male	56	16	9
Senior World Champs – Female	49	7	5
Senior World Champs – Male	56	12	8

At the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia fielded a full team of eight male lifters along with four female lifters. For Athens in 2004, Australia sent just one male and one female competitor.

The Current Athlete pathway is relatively clear and is generally outlined as follows:

1. Entry into the sport through schools TID (previously through the 'Clean and Jerk' competition)
2. State competitions → State Team → National Championships
3. Concurrent development though standards levels: D,C,B,A, National, Jnr Int, Snr Int, Jnr Elite, Snr Elite. Standards are used for team selection at various levels.
4. Junior National Teams (Oceania, World)
5. National teams to international events (e.g. Oceania)
6. Commonwealth Games
7. World Championships
8. Olympic Games

The High Performance Program is currently overseen by the High Performance Management Committee (HPMC) which, according to its Terms of Reference, consists of: 'three nominated or qualified Board members (one as Chair), a nominated male coach, a nominated female coach and a nominated member of the Athletes' Committee'. The HPMC has been recently formed (in the last 12 months, with two meetings held so far) and has been active in forming new policies around issues such as:

- High Performance Manager position description
- Coach and manager selection (to teams)
- Coach and manager evaluations
- Direct Athlete Support (and incentives)

The HPMC and AWF have also recently initiated a new Coach Education Program, a Coach Incentive Scheme and a new set of athlete Qualification Standards.

The ASC has recently endorsed the AWF's new coach education and training system:

- Club Weightlifting/ Sports Power Coach 1 Licence
- State Weightlifting/ Sports Power Coach 2 Licence
- National Weightlifting Coach Licence
- International Weightlifting Coach Licence

Apart from basic coach accreditation, the pathway for coach development and progression has not been clear. Very few national team coaching positions have been available and there has been no clear criteria in the past for attaining these positions.

There have been issues with positive drug tests in the sport, with a culture of performance enhancing drugs dating back to well before such practices were banned from sport. There is still a wide belief that systematic drug taking occurs in the sport internationally. As a result of doping issues in Australia (the most recent of which have mostly been due to inadvertent doping through the use of supplements), the AWF is implementing an eight point anti-doping action plan and an internal Anti-doping Disciplinary Committee is being established. A significant amount of administrative time is taken up with the implementation of the eight point plan to ensure the sport is 'clean' in Australia and that its public reputation and credibility can be restored.

A SWOT of the current high performance pathway was undertaken by both the AWF (through the HPMC) and the reviewer (derived from stakeholder consultations and information gathered in the review process). This SWOT is at Appendix E and was used in both the HPAP workshop and in the writing of the report as the basis for recommendations going forward.

## Outcomes and Recommendations

### 'Vision' and future of High Performance

Due to small numbers in the sport and previous issues and instability in governance and management of the AWF, there has been a definite lack of longer term, uniting 'Vision' for the high performance program in weightlifting. Much of the planning for high performance has been done by the Board and has centred around planning for the next Commonwealth or Olympic Games and subsequently, rarely more than two years ahead. The general consensus is that there has not been a true high performance vision or program, but rather simply an international competition model.

Up until the suspension of funding there was a National Head Coach and, at times, a Junior Head Coach. The Head Coach role however, has arguably never been given adequate resources, mandate or support, and/or the skill set of the person/people filling the role has not been appropriate, to effectively fulfil the role of building a high performance program to support athlete development and optimisation of potential. The Head Coach filled the role of Head Coach at international competitions but was neither effective in creating a clear vision, nor a structure, for the high performance program or athletes.

In the absence of a National Head Coach, a High Performance Management Committee (HPMC) has recently been re-established and there is a positive feeling that this Committee is composed of the 'right (mix of) people'. With a terms of reference giving it responsibility for "...the strategic direction and evaluation of the High Performance Program...", this committee has begun to make plans and policies for the future.

There is, however, still a lack of overall vision, direction and structure of the program. There is no articulation, general understanding or buy-in of what the aim of the sport and/or the high performance program is or even who it encompasses. The current vision of the AWF, which has been the vision for some years, is: "*To promote and develop the sport of weightlifting in Australia at all levels of participation.*" There was agreement at the HPAP workshop that this vision doesn't relate to high performance, is very general and is about development and even mediocrity. This vision statement has not resulted in promoting or developing the sport nor inspiring athletes to the highest levels of performance.

With no real vision or direction of the high performance program, it was found that there is subsequently little if any belief that athletes and the program can be successful at the highest level. There are certainly two main hurdles to overcome in order to be competitive at the highest level, namely:

- the reality and perception of wide spread performance enhancing drug use internationally
- the lack of support for athletes to train full time in Australia

However there is no vision or strategy in place to try to overcome these obstacles. Subsequently young athletes coming into weightlifting have little motivation, inspiration or even opportunity to go beyond national representation at Commonwealth or Oceania Regional level. There is a very real feeling of ‘what is the point?’ of training hard in the sport.

The reality is that Weightlifting is not a recreational sport, it is a performance sport and its funding (both private and public) depends on results. Similarly attracting athletes into the sport depends on them seeing that success is possible and is facilitated and supported by the sport. Therefore unless the vision and culture changes to one of belief, backed by strategy and structured plans, that highest level success is possible, then attracting and retaining new members will become increasingly difficult.

There was much discussion and debate at the HPAP workshop as to what is realistic as the overall vision of the AWF. It was agreed that the sport should be aiming to win medals at major international events and that this should form the vision of the organisation. It was agreed that the objectives of the sport should be reviewed with this over arching vision in mind, but articulated in such a way to be meaningful and empowering for all, taking into consideration the identification of who the target market is.

**Recommendation 1.** That the vision and objectives of AWF and the High Performance Program are redefined and articulated, with success at the highest level as the primary aim.

**Recommendation 2.** That this vision, aims and objectives should then form the basis of the Strategic Plan and athlete and coach development pathways, with a longer term objective of producing athletes with the belief, capacity and opportunity to be competitive at the highest level of international competition.

## **Leadership of the High Performance Program**

Even though there is general consensus that the HPMC is the right mix of people and that their activity is a positive start for the future of the high performance program, this group does not have ultimate responsibility or accountability for the running of the high performance program. Regardless of the sport and structure, it is difficult if not impossible for a high performance *group* to effectively lead and *drive* a high performance program. And in this case the term of reference for this group do not make it clear where *ultimate responsibility lies* (the HPMC, the Board, or the CEO). There is a lack of true high performance leadership and accountability. At the moment it is the CEO who is primarily sustaining high performance.

Leadership of the high performance program has been a problematic area over the last ten or more years, largely due to lack of good communication, consultation, inclusion and information. It has not been clear whether the Board or the Head Coach lead the High Performance Program and effectively neither did. Roles and responsibilities of the Head Coach have not been well defined, nor has the position's relationship to the Board and management or to the athletes and coaches. As a result, there exists a lot of mistrust and ill feeling about the Head Coach role and its ability to value add to the athlete pathway. Taking into consideration what the role did deliver, the 2003 Review recommended that "...there should be no permanent national coaching positions, but rather National Team Coach appointments for each international competition..." (Recommendation 17). This is now the situation and a national team coach selection policy has recently been proposed by the HPMC and approved by the Board.

In order for the high performance program to move forward and succeed there is the need for a high performance leader who has the appropriate management skills and experience, as well as the mandate and resourcing to re-build relationships and trust, and create a structured and sustainable high performance program. This role must have a clear job description and lines of communication, with *full responsibility* for the high performance program and concurrent accountability against key performance indicators. Due to the size of the sport, athlete pool and resources, at least initially, this position should be responsible for the entire athlete pathway (from development through to highest international level) and should be the hands on, go to, link person who unites and drives the national high performance program.

This concept was also put forward in the 2003 Review (Recommendation 17). At the HPAP workshop it was agreed that this role was an absolute priority and should be titled the "High Performance Program Manager" (HPPM). The HPPM should then be supported by the HPMC as an advisory group, which should also include an ASC representative.

The creation of this role will compliment the CEO's ability to run the broader sport. The CEO should be responsible for management of the sport, financials, compliances, membership support, anti-doping, website and the overall day to day running and administration. The HPPM will be the specialist engaged to drive and implement a structured and enhanced high performance program for support of athletes and coaches.

**Recommendation 3.** That as the first priority in terms of timing and funding, a High Performance Program Manager (HPPM) position be created and employed. It is essential that the appointed person have the skill set as well as the mandate and responsibility to lead and manage the program from development athletes through to highest international level athlete, including ability to:

- rebuild relationships and trust amongst the high performance athlete and coach community
- create and implement both short term (4 years) and longer term (10 year) plans for the high performance program, including camp and competition plans
- Identify and manage resources to increase and develop the athlete pool
- Manage and support National Team Coaches
- Support, nurture and provide opportunities for athletes and coaches within the program
- Create relationships with external partners
- Be held accountable to measurable and published key performance indicators
- Be the link and liaison to the high performance community through close 'hands on' involvement with athletes and coaches.

**Recommendation 4.** That the relative roles and responsibilities of the Board, CEO, the High Performance Program Manager and the High Performance Management Committee be clearly defined in writing. And the structure be such that the High Performance Program Manager reports to the Board through the CEO, and is supported by the High Performance Management Committee which is an advisory group to the Manager (including ASC representation), providing stakeholder input and specialist advice.

### **Priorities for AWF and the High Performance Program**

Given current budget constraints due to the suspending of ASC funding and the probability of a very tight budget even if funding is reinstated, it is important for the AWF to determine their priorities going forward. The current situation is that there is no funding; no structured national program for athletes; uncertainty and little or no planning around future national teams; little or no support for athletes in their daily training environment; no national development or talent identification program; and no link between the national

body and the states in terms of roles and responsibilities. The positive side is that there now exists an opportunity to 'clean the slate' and re-build the sport by rectifying each of the above deficiencies, but it must be done in a prioritised order, taking into consideration the capacities of the sport.

As part of the interview process, respondents were asked where they would like to see the sport in ten years time. The common responses were as follows:

- Increased numbers in the sport
- Every state fielding a full team at nationals
- Competition within states to make each category (and age group) team
- Athletes seeing AWF as supporting and encouraging
- More people involved and active, included and contributing
- Clearly identified and articulated pathway for athletes and coaches from entry to OG
- Planned high performance program with clear consistent policies, incentives, regular camps program and high performance opportunities
- Parallel coach pathway and national development program
- Paid coaching positions (in each state...)
- Australia's increased standing at international level
- AIS (and/or centralised) program
- Increased funding – and from sources other than ASC
- Full teams to World and Olympic Games – competitive
- Improved public perception of the sport and media coverage

These responses should form the basis for the direction and priorities for the sport into the future and the focal question that should continue to be asked is: 'where are we going and how do we get there?'

The major strength of Weightlifting in Australia right now is the existing athlete and coach group, backed by a small group of passionate administrators. The clear first priority articulated during the HPAP workshop was putting structure, plans and linkages around this group and the three areas of: Development, High Performance Development, and High Performance. And in doing so, rebuild communication and trust with the coaches and athletes. The clear first priority then is finding the right person to provide clear leadership in the form of the appropriately skilled HPPM. This leadership is needed to manage resources and find innovative ways to drive the necessary changes, along with the support and expertise of the HPMC and some of their recent initiatives.

Support and encouragement of existing High Performance and High Performance Development athletes was seen as the necessary immediate focus to build towards medal outcomes. The longer term priority is to start setting the direction for recruiting athletes to the sport and building membership.

**Recommendation 5.** That AWF formalise the longer term (10 year) strategic direction of the sport, with an innovative and inclusive approach to prioritising scant resources (human and financial), to ensure viability and sustainability of the sport.

### **Delivery of the National High Performance Program.**

As outlined in the introduction, the athlete pathway in Weightlifting is relatively clear, especially in terms of stepped competition from state junior level through to Commonwealth and Oceania representation. Due to the fact that it is such a small sport in Australia, young athletes can achieve success at national level relatively quickly. For the more mature athlete, however, development to the highest levels internationally takes time and hard work and it is at these levels that the pathway in Australian Weightlifting is ill-defined or supported. In the past there has been a distinct lack of clarity and consistency around any national high performance initiatives. This has led to uncertainty, mistrust and disillusionment. Most athletes rely solely on their club, coach and daily training environment for the support and encouragement they need to continue on in the sport.

There was some discussion during the review on the merits of either one centralised program or high performance centre programs based in each state. The reality is the sport does not have the resources or opportunity to create a single centralised high performance program. Further, the current structure is such that one central program would weaken existing club programs and detract from the positive culture of strong and supportive coach-athlete-club relationships. There are barely more than a dozen high performance coaches around Australia, based in club gyms which are often dedicated weightlifting facilities. Diluting the system by centralising at a state level therefore also seems unnecessary and counter-productive, and would risk the loss of the existing training centres and facilities.

The current model of strong coach-athlete-club units is serving the sport well right now and should simply be supported with better links between them. The biggest issue is a feeling of isolation with each club essentially doing their own thing in the absence of any real national program. There is a real opportunity to create a more positive, unified culture by making the athletes and coaches feel 'part of something'. The key



again is national leadership and communication, with a structured program including more regular, well planned camps (at both junior and senior level) to bring athletes and coaches together to train and inspire each other in a concentrated, mutually beneficial environment.

**Recommendation 6:** That a decentralised club-based structure be retained for the delivery of the sport. But that this be enhanced by improved national linkages through leadership, communication, inclusion and a structured, well planned camps program.

At least in the recent past, plans, communication, level of funding, camps, monitoring of training and other athlete support leading into competitions has been inconsistent and ad hoc. Consequently athlete preparation and positive team culture leading into major international competitions has been compromised. Similarly, selection of any national squads (at various levels) has not been backed up by plans, communication and in some cases has not even been publicly acknowledged (i.e. an athlete being selected to a squad and not finding out until months later and receiving no benefits). Well planned and communicated programs are a powerful incentive for athletes to perform well. If they know well in advance what the opportunities are, what they have to do to gain them and what the benefits are surrounding them, then not only will performances improve but so will athlete retention and attractiveness of the sport to potential athletes.

Lack of structure and planning surrounding both high performance and sport development also severely hampers the sport in terms of gaining external support from both public and private sector (e.g. State Institutes and Academies of Sport, State Departments of Sport and Rec and private sponsors).

**Recommendation 7:** That the HPPM lead the development of a structured national high performance program including timely, clear and well communicated plans surrounding national teams and squads, with both criteria and benefits articulated.

**Recommendation 8:** Ensure that all plans, policies and procedures are widely and well communicated – on the AWF and state websites, through mail outs and via direct communication and consultation with the high performance community. Ensure these are clear and easy to find even for new members coming into the sport. Consider even including a depiction of the Athlete Pathway for aspiring athletes to see.

Criteria for eligibility to teams or squads has been changeable and published criteria has at times been vague and/or not adhered to. The AWF Qualifying Standards (nine levels from 'D' up to 'Senior Elite') have recently been reviewed and updated and there is general consensus that the new standards are fair and reasonable, however the application of the standards in the past has often been haphazard and meaningless, with athletes being selected for various teams and squads even if they haven't met the standards. There is a definite need for the AWF to confirm and communicate definitive standards to the athletes so that 'the bar is set' and athletes have no doubt as to what standard is required for selection and advancement in the sport. These standards form an integral part of the athlete pathway in what is an especially quantifiable sport. It is essential that they are set as tangible pillars of the pathway.

**Recommendation 9:** That selection criteria for athletes be written in line with ASC Best Practice Guidelines and contain appropriate, clear and transparent criteria for selection to Australian Teams and Squads.

**Recommendation 10:** That quantifiable standards be confirmed, communicated and applied in a consistent manner at all levels of the development pathway.

Athlete incentives is an issues that was widely discussed during this review. There were strong views (both for and against) regarding the need for Australian weightlifters to be devoted full time to training. There is no doubt that for any athlete to achieve at the highest level, devotion to every aspect of their preparation must be the major priority in their life. As a result of the stated 'lack of professionalism' of the AWF in supporting weightlifters in this country, there is very much a feeling of 'is it worthwhile?' (putting in the effort and dedication). Despite the understandable cynicism around the ability to be internationally competitive due to the proven use of performance enhancing drugs in the sport, it is thought that Australian lifters would feel more empowered to 'have a go' if there was support and incentive for them to be part of a positive structured professionally run program. Currently the feeling is that they are the 'have nots' of Australian sport. A large part of this incentive will result from the development of the structured program, plans and policies, lead by a skilled HPPM as outlined above.

Another factor that has severely affected the incentive and motivation of Australian Weightlifters has been the result of a broader trend in the early 1990's where accomplished lifters from other countries were supported to represent Australia. Significant resources were devoted to these athletes (usually based on performance levels) at the neglect of developing home grown talent. Unfortunately these athletes have left little in the way of a positive legacy for the sport in Australia. In the 2003 Governance and Management Review, Recommended 20 was "*That the activity of supporting overseas-based athletes be discontinued unless a*

*tangible legacy to the sport can be developed. It is highly inappropriate to continue funding their inward and outbound travel given the poor financial position that AWF is currently in.”* The support of such athletes is being discontinued and it is important for the future of the sport that this earlier report’s recommendation be adhered to.

The question of how to provide incentive for current Australian Weightlifters, and to what level, remains a tough one for the sport. A squad-based athlete incentive program has been developed by the HPMC and would ideally provide cash incentives to assist athletes to devote more time and energy to the sport. The reality however, is that cash resources are scarce and without a well structured and coordinated program it is difficult to implement fairly and equitably. Payment of the Direct Athlete Support allocation prior to the 2006 Commonwealth Games was fraught with inequities partly because of the lack of athlete coordination and tracking. Direct Athlete Support will again be available in the lead up to 2010, but in the mean time careful consideration must be given to ways to provide positive incentive for athletes, within the capacity and objectives of the high performance program.

**Recommendation 11.** That the type and level of athlete incentives be carefully considered by the sport and developed within the context of the vision, objectives, priorities and resourcing of the sport. In the absence of sufficient cash for incentives, every effort needs to be made through an inclusive national high performance program to provide non-cash and intangible incentives.

## **Coaching**

Although the review found that there has been a lack of coach incentives and development opportunities, there is a pool of up to a dozen knowledgeable high performance coaches spread around the country, most of whom volunteer their time selflessly for the sport and athletes while holding down full time jobs. It is generally felt within the Australian Weightlifting fraternity that there exists the quality and experience in coaching to prepare athletes for competition at the highest level. Certainly the ability of the coaches is proven by the performance of Australian weightlifters at Commonwealth and Oceania regional level – and this despite such a small athlete pool.

In the past the AWF policy was such that coaches had few if any opportunities to be selected as Australian Team coaches and gain the international experience that goes with these valued roles. This situation is changing with the abolition of the old National Head Coach and Junior Coach roles and the development of

a team coach selection policy. It is essential that conflicts of interest be managed and the process of future coach appointments is transparent and fair. It is questionable whether the newly endorsed policy whereby a pool of coaches is selected, who in turn selects the team coaches, quite achieve the desired transparency. This policy should be reviewed in line with best practice examples from other sports where independent selectors make the nominations.

In most states there exist only one or two main training venues, so although coaches admit to being quite possessive about their athletes, they feel reasonably secure in their role with the athletes. Subsequently, coaches have developed informal relationships and most share ideas with like minded coaches to develop themselves. Outside of these training venues and the small band of passionate and dedicated coaches, however, there are very few new coaches coming into the sport. Most coaches who complete the Level 1 accreditation come from other sports and do not stay with weightlifting after the course. Unless they have come from the sport and have a long involvement, there is little incentive or reason to stay.

It is important for the future of the sport that existing coaches are valued and supported and that a coach pathway is included as part of the high performance program structure and plans. The existing coaches are an invaluable resource for the sport and should be included, consulted and communicated with in order to enhance the program for the athletes, coaches and the sport as a whole. Ideally the HPPM would also lead technical direction and mentor coach development, however appointing someone with the skill to do this is secondary to that of being able to *facilitate* it along with the program management and leadership skills described above.

**Recommendation 12:** That a selection criteria/ process for appointing of National Team Coaches be reviewed in line with ASC Best Practice Guidelines and contain appropriate, clear and transparent criteria for selection to Australian Teams and Squads.

**Recommendation 13.** That as part of the longer term plan for the sport, the HPPM drive the development and implementation of policies and programs around valuing, supporting and developing existing coaches and making the sport attractive to new coaches.

## **Development and Building capacity**

In the late 1990's there was a strong national schools recruitment program, through the 'Clean and Jerk' competition, which even had a national sponsor. Since the early 2000's the program has declined with loss of sponsorship, funding, human resources and the impetus to drive it. The only state which currently has a strong schools program is Queensland. It is widely acknowledged that their program, modified and updated from the old 'Clean and Jerk' program, is very successful and would be a good model for a national program. Queensland does obtain good funding from their Department of Sport and Recreation, but it can be argued that they get this funding *because of* their high-quality development program and the resulting strength of the sport in that state.

There is an opportunity for the national body to take the lead and develop a model/template based on the Queensland schools program. There are indications that Queensland would be happy to share their information and other states would take direction if given the structure and leadership. Development of the sport should be given direction, driven and supported by the national body but with state bodies responsible for delivery and with benefit for both.

In order to re-establish the sport, those involved must pull together and find innovative ways to deliver the sport in such a way as to build value and membership numbers, despite limited resources. Collating best practice models from various states or clubs and finding ways to deliver them effectively and efficiently from state to state will make a big difference for the sport. An 'all in' cooperative approach to increase membership will strengthen competition at all levels and increase incentive and interest for all. This will raise the quality of lifters due to larger talent pool and strengthened competitive pressure. This in turn will shore up Australia's competitive dominance at Oceania and Commonwealth level which may also have a positive effect on funding as well as public interest. Increasing the numbers involved in the sport should also boost the volunteer base enhancing the quality of delivery of the sport.

Using the schools program as an example of impetus to change: a model which starts small with a few targeted schools in each state surrounding each weightlifting training centre, would result in introducing new kids to the sport. This would slowly build membership numbers and involvement of parents would increase volunteer base. The size and capacity of clubs would increase as would the possibility of establishing new centres, further increasing the capacity of the sport to support new members. The scope for innovations and tapping into other sports, other sources of funding and even more formal talent identification programs would grow with the increasing numbers and capacity of the sport. ASC led and funded talent identification programs may be a possibility into the future, but the sport needs to show both

the capacity to handle numbers of talented juniors and a clear, well structured and coordinated national pathway for them to follow.

Other innovative and/or 'best practice' ideas in the sport also must be identified and developed for the greater good. There are coaches, clubs and states who are successfully implementing initiatives such as:

- Knowledge and use of sport science / medicine
- Tapping into other sports – adding value to gain benefits and possibly talented athletes
- 'Selling' weightlifting as a sport and specific skill set upon which others are based
- Targeting athletes from culture backgrounds where weightlifting is highly regarded
- Positive promotion of the sport in local media

Harnessing these and other initiatives and knowledge and modelling them for broader use is a logical and necessary step in re-building and growing the sport. It also creates a culture where people are empowered and feel valued for their contribution and involvement in weightlifting.

Of course roles and responsibilities must be clearly defined, with regard given to capacities of various bodies, in order for effective and efficient delivery of models.

**Recommendation 14.** Using the Queensland schools program as a model, develop a model/template for a schools program that can be effectively and efficiently implemented nationally.

**Recommendation 15.** Identify innovative and good practice initiatives for delivery in a structure where respective roles, responsibilities and capacities of the National body and State bodies are clearly defined so implementation of developed models can effectively and efficiently value add to the sport as a whole.

### **Changing the public image**

The public image of the sport of weightlifting was a major concern throughout this review. An image of drug taking internationally and historically exacerbates any hint of drug misuse here in Australia. The Australian Weightlifting community often has little or no control over the negative publicity. There is also a

lot of miss-information in the community regarding weightlifting and its effects on the musculo-skeletal system and development of young lifters.

In the absence of the resources for a publicity campaign to change the image of the sport, or even for a media liaison person, the AWF and its members have to find ways to be proactive and even innovative about changing public perception. Development of a public relations strategy including a policy for handling negative publicity is essential. A policy for all members for promoting the sport should also be formulated. This could include positive promotion and education through the schools program, teaching athletes and coaches how to be proactive with local media, and gathering of research facts to refute common misconceptions (for use on the website and where ever opportunities present themselves).

**Recommendation 16.** Develop a public relations strategy including widely publicised strategies for positive, proactive promotion of the sport by members and a policy for dealing with negative publicity.

## APPENDIX A

# REVIEW OF HIGH PERFORMANCE PATHWAYS IN AUSTRALIAN WEIGHTLIFTING

*This review is being conducted by the Australian Sports Commission in conjunction with Australian Weightlifting Federation.*

### AIM OF THE REVIEW:

To evaluate the effectiveness of:

- the elite development pathways of Weightlifting in Australia
- national competitions
- national team preparation programs
- the aims and roles and contributions of all the various stakeholders and organisations
- best use of resources across the national system
- both athlete and coach development and how they inter-relate
- the various parts of the program structure nationally and how well they integrate to make up the whole and support the strategic plan of Weightlifting Australia.

To develop recommendations for optimal use of resources and maximising opportunities for competitors and coaches in Australian Weightlifting to achieve international success into the future.

### THE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THIS REVIEW ARE TO:

- Assess the current pathways of elite athlete and coach development in Weightlifting in Australia including the structures, systems and long term planning.
- Identify the current *views of “high performance”*, as well as the *aims* and *roles* of the various stake holders in the athlete development pathways:
  - State bodies and State Institutes of Sport
  - The Australian Weightlifting Federation
  - Australian Weightlifting Federation High Performance Management Committee
  - Any other relevant stakeholders, including the Australian Olympic Committee and Australian Commonwealth Games Association.
- Examine the contribution of each of the above organisations to both athlete and coach development pathways; determine how they inter-relate, assess the resources (human, financial, facilities and infrastructure) that exist across the system nationally for Weightlifting in Australia; and make recommendations for future best use of resources, taking into account the capacity of the Australian Weightlifting Federation.
- Seek input from players and coaches and other stakeholders on the effectiveness of the current structure.
- Examine links between the fitness industry and strength and conditioning training.
- Assess the effectiveness and adequacy of talent identification programs and athlete support mechanisms to enhance the elite pathway, including athlete development.
- Identify any gaps in the system and assess the best way to address the issues.



- Convene a High Performance workshop, including representatives from the various BA stakeholders as well as relevant experts from sport in Australia or internationally, to examine, discuss, debate key issues and make recommendations for the future.
- Produce a report on the review and High Performance workshop with recommendations for the structure of the High Performance Pathways of Weightlifting for the future, including:
  - athlete pathways
  - coach pathways
  - competitions
  - national team preparation programs
  - resourcing structures
  - role definitions, and
  - communication and integration of the various organisations and stakeholders.

#### **INPUT AND SUBMISSIONS:**

Stakeholders, athletes, coaches and interested individuals are invited to contribute to the review by making written submissions addressing the aims and terms of reference (above).

The reviewer also intends to meet with key stakeholders and conduct interviews either in person or by phone. The reviewer may also contact individuals who have made written submissions for clarification or expansion of the information provided.

The consultation phase of the review is due to be completed by 9 April 2007.

Please contact the Project Manager (Reviewer), as per the details below, with your submissions as well as with any questions or comments:

**Jackie Fairweather**  
Senior Sports Consultant  
High Performance Improvement  
Australian Sports Commission

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## **APPENDIX A (cont.)**

### **PROJECT PLAN**

The methodology will be primarily based on consultation with key stakeholders to identify current practices and the preferred means of delivering the sport. Where appropriate, best practice principles and practices will be used as points of reference in defining why particular means of delivery are preferred.

Gap analysis will focus on comparing “what is” (the current arrangements for the delivery of the sport) with “what ought to be” (how the sport should be delivered).

Public notification of the review will be given on the AWF and ASC websites, giving details of the terms of reference and information about having an input to the review.

Face-to-face and telephone meetings will be held with representatives of key stakeholders. Written submissions will be invited from key stakeholders.

A ‘High Performance Advisory Panel’ (HPAP) workshop will be convened, including selected representatives from the various AWF stakeholders as well as relevant experts from sport in Australia, to examine, discuss, debate key issues and make recommendations for the future.

### **TIME-LINE**

Late February 2007: Approval of Terms of Reference and Project Plan;  
March 2007: Commencement of review – collection of background info and prep for interviews;  
26 March 2007: Begin interviews;  
9 April 2007: Completion of Interviews;  
13-14 April 2007: High Performance Advisory Panel workshop;  
11 May 2007: Completion and review of draft report by AWF;  
18 May 2007: Completion and review of final report by AWF;  
7 June 2007: Final endorsement of review findings by ASC Board

### **MANAGEMENT OF REVIEW**

#### **Steering Committee**

A Steering Committee will oversee the management of the review.

The role of the steering committee will be to:

- Approve the project plan;
- Review the outcome of stakeholder consultation; and
- Approve the final report.

The membership comprises:

Brent Espeland, Director, Sport Performance and Development, ASC (chair);

Matthew Curtain, CEO AWF

David Crocker, Sport Consultant, ASC

Jackie Fairweather, Project Manager, ASC

## APPENDIX B

### List of Stakeholders Interviewed

1. Bob Kershaw (ASC)
2. Luke Borroggine (NSW, Coach)
3. Miles Wydall (QLD, Coach)
4. Damon Kelly (QLD, Athlete)
5. Michael Keelan (QLD, Director and HPMC member)
6. Deborah Lovely & Amanda Phillips (QLD, athletes)
7. Ian Moir & Debra Keelan (QLD CEO and President)
8. Ben Turner (QLD athlete)
9. Angela Wydall (QLD, coach and HPMC member)
10. Matthew Curtain (VIC, AWF CEO)
11. Peter Cayley (VIC, VWA Executive Director)
12. Anthony Dove (VIC, Coach)
13. Simon Heffernan (VIC, athlete)
14. Jacquie White (VIC, athlete and HPMC member)
15. Seen Lee (VIC, athlete)
16. Robert Kabbas (VIC, coach, former CEO and athlete)
17. Sam Coffa (VIC, AWF President)
18. Damian Brown (VIC, former athlete)
19. Perry Crosswhite (CEO of the Australian Commonwealth Games Association)
20. Lyn Jones (ACT, Coach, Director and HPMC member)
21. Jay Waller (WA, coach)
22. Dean & Deb Pascoe (SA state body reps)
23. Tony O'Malley (TAS president)
24. Bob Pavone (WA, Director)
25. Jack Walls (WA, coach, WA secretary)
26. Robert Mitchell (NSW president and coach)
27. Greg Hobl (QLD, coach)
28. George Hardiman (ACT president and AWF Director)
29. Steve Tikkanen (NSW, coach)
30. Natasha Barker (NSW, former athlete)
31. Andrew Forrest (NT president and coach)
32. Martin Leach (VIC coach, former CEO)
33. Ralph Cashman (NSW, Director and HPMC Chair)

## 34. APPENDIX C

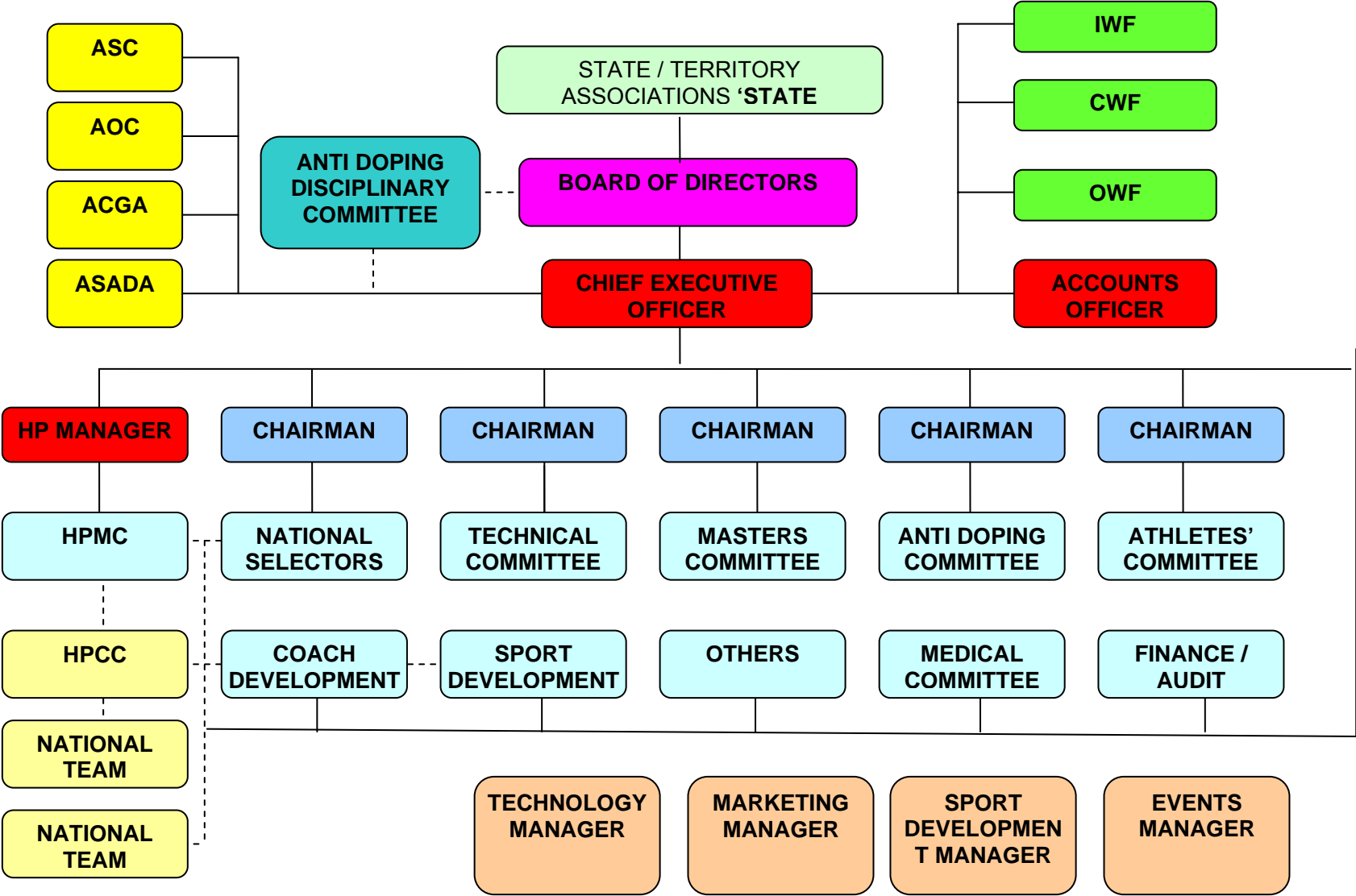
### HIGH PERFORMANCE ADVISORY PANEL

#### MELBOURNE AIRPORT HILTON

13-14 April, 2006

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Brent Espeland</b> (Chair)                  | - | Acting CEO of the Australian Sports Commission  |
| <b>Jackie Fairweather</b><br>(Project Manager) | - | ASC Senior Sports Consultant for High Performance Improvement; Former AIS Triathlon Head Coach; Former Professional Triathlete and elite marathon runner. |
| <b>David Crocker</b>                           | - | ASC Senior Sports Consultant; Former CEO NZ Basketball  |
| <b>Stuart Borrie</b>                           | - | National Executive Director, Badminton Australia  |
| <b>Adam Sachs</b>                              | - | High Performance Manager, Australian Volleyball Federation  |
| <b>Daniel Trenton</b>                          | - | Head Coach and Director of High Performance, Tae Kwon Do Australia  |
| <b>Sam Coffa</b>                               | - | President Australian Weightlifting Federation   |
| <b>Matthew Curtain</b>                         | - | Australian Weightlifting Federation Chief Executive Officer   |
| <b>Ralph Cashman</b>                           | - | Director AWF; Chair of High Performance Management Committee  |
| <b>Michael Keelan</b>                          | - | Director AWF; Member of High Performance Management Committee   |
| <b>Lyn Jones</b>                               | - | Director AWF; Member of High Performance Management Committee<br>Former Head Coach of AWF and of USA Weightlifting  |
| <b>Jacquie White</b>                           | - | Current athlete; Member of High Performance Management Committee  |
| <b>Ian Moir</b>                                | - | Director AWF; Executive Director Qld Weightlifting Association  |
| <b>Jay Waller</b>                              | - | High Performance Coach; and...  |
| <b>Steve Tikkanen</b>                          | - | High Performance Coach; Former National Team Assistant Coach  |
| <b>Robert Kabbas</b>                           | - | High Performance Coach; Olympic Silver Medallist; Former AWF CEO  |

**APPENDIX C**  
**Current Australian Weightlifting Federation Structure**



## APPENDIX D

### SWOT Analysis

Australian Weightlifting Federation

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Success of the Commonwealth Games &amp; Oceania teams</li> <li>• Reasonable reward system in place</li> <li>• Full teams to Commonwealth Games</li> <li>• Excellent Coaching Education Program</li> <li>• High standard Volunteer Coaching group</li> <li>• Strong influence at IF Coaching level</li> <li>• Several quality U-18 athletes emerging</li> <li>• Several Junior athletes already identified</li> <li>• Queensland model to recruit new talent</li> <li>• ASADA testing – at no cost to the AWF</li> <li>• AJCGS development funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Australia as Commonwealth &amp; Oceania powerhouse</li> <li>• Maximize places in Olympic Team</li> <li>• Provision of “real time” qualification standards</li> <li>• Increase inclusion of developing coaches on international coaching assignments</li> <li>• Increase opportunity for personal coaches to be involved with camps &amp; teams</li> <li>• Progress in use of weightlifting in other sports</li> <li>• Education of local and developing coaches in talent development</li> <li>• National Squad system for U-16 &amp; U-18 athletes</li> <li>• Formation of Sports Science Committee</li> <li>• Linking into Institute &amp; University programs</li> <li>• Education of current coaches as to advantages</li> <li>• Formation of AWF Medical committee</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No continuous world – class event in Australia</li> <li>• Infrequent opportunity to compete internationally in relevant events</li> <li>• Infrequent opportunity for team training camps at all levels</li> <li>• No real opportunity to train fulltime i.e. Resident Program</li> <li>• Isolated geographical location of AUS</li> <li>• No identified Coaching pathway</li> <li>• Little financial reward for volunteer coaches</li> <li>• Too few U-18 lifters of ability</li> <li>• No aggressive national program to identify talent</li> <li>• Poor understanding by many of our coaches of advantages of S/Sc. &amp; Tech</li> <li>• Poor numbers of participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrequent out-of-competition testing by WADA of rival nations</li> <li>• Doping in Australia</li> <li>• ASC – Suspension of Funding</li> <li>• No professional career path for weightlifting coaches</li> <li>• Publicity of Doping problems has adverse effect on coach recruitment</li> <li>• Small opportunity for Olympic &amp; other prestigious assignments</li> <li>• Reluctance of schools to get involved</li> <li>• Aggressive recruitment from other sports</li> <li>• Time consuming task to inform ASADA of athlete whereabouts</li> </ul>

## SWOT Analysis

Australian Sports Commission - Reviewer

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passionate high performance coaches (volunteer).</li> <li>• Current HPMC – right mix of people, good ideas and policies.</li> <li>• Increased communication and structure through the CEO.</li> <li>• Several good dedicated lifting venues around the country.</li> <li>• Good results at Commonwealth Games.</li> <li>• Small numbers so chance of success is high for young lifters.</li> <li>• Current elites are a small but ‘connected’ group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a new ‘can do’ culture, leaving the past behind – opportunity for good leadership to build relationships and communication to bring everyone together and enable them to feel part of something (positive)</li> <li>• Attracting kids through targeted schools program (following QLD lead and model).</li> <li>• Create a 10-15 year plan to grow the sport</li> <li>• Clean slate to create a structured, planned HP program</li> <li>• Creating incentives and opportunities for athletes</li> <li>• Improve public perception (and decreased misconception)</li> <li>• Create a pathway (and incentives) for coaches</li> <li>• Increased understanding and use of SSSM</li> <li>• Tapping into other sports (weightlifting as a base sport)</li> <li>• Tapping into Australian cultural diversity to attract athletes</li> <li>• Other TID programs...</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of national High Performance leadership, coordination and communication.</li> <li>• Lack of resources.</li> <li>• Small athlete pool; Plus small pool of volunteers (including coaches).</li> <li>• Only one or two strong states.</li> <li>• Lack of SIS/SAS support.</li> <li>• Lack of structure or planning (short and long term). Lack of innovation.</li> <li>• Limited vision and lack of elite, professional, ‘can do’ culture.</li> <li>• Athletes need to work (not supported to train full time).</li> <li>• Poorly defined national pathway and lack of motivation at ‘elite’ end to keep striving for higher levels – “what’s the point?”</li> <li>• Fractionalisation of the Weightlifting community – many don’t feel included, respected, or listed to. Lack of trust. Lack of accountability.</li> <li>• Defensive and reactive decision making.</li> <li>• Negative perceptions around the “Head Coach” role.</li> <li>• Poor public and media perception.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of (or decline in) public funding.</li> <li>• Inability to generate alternate funding sources.</li> <li>• Inability to attract participants and volunteers to the sport.</li> <li>• Further drug issues and negative publicity.</li> <li>• Further loss of good people working within the sport.</li> <li>• Increasing strength of competition in the Oceania region.</li> <li>• Loss of ability to send athletes to World Champs and Olympic Games (nothing for athletes to aim for).</li> <li>• Failure to find, nurture and develop ‘home grown’ talent</li> </ul>