‘Great markers of culture’: 
The Australian sport field

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Abstract
In Creative Nation, sport is distinguished by its almost complete absence, except as a competitor for sponsorship with ‘cultural organisations’, and in brief mentions as content for SBS Radio and Aboriginal community radio stations. Sport is not mentioned at all in the 2011 National Cultural Policy Discussion Paper, but in the ensuing policy, Creative Australia, is treated, with art and religion, as one of the ‘great markers of culture’ in which, distinctively, elite professionalism, amateurism and fandom/appreciation happily co-exist. This article reflects on developments in the Australian sport field over the last two decades, highlighting the management of elite-grass roots and public–private funding tensions, and relevant parallels in the arts field. It addresses the pivotal relationship between the sport and broadcast media fields, arguing that sport, as a Bourdieusian ‘field of struggles’, is an under-appreciated domain of national cultural policy in which different forms of capital collide and converge.

Keywords
Cultural citizenship, media, policy, sport

Introduction: sport as culture
The sport field generally sits uncomfortably in relation to approaches to culture that emphasise creativity, communication, symbolic meaning and intellectual property. For example, David Throsby (2001) observes that organised sport (which by no means accounts for the whole sport field, but is the principal focus of this article) occupies ‘a somewhat ambiguous position’ regarding a ‘definition of “culture” … denoting certain activities that are undertaken by people, which have to do with the intellectual, moral and artistic aspects of human life’ (p. 5). There is seemingly a class-cultural dimension to this unease because, as Throsby states, ‘some people may still find difficulty accepting it as cultural activity, especially if it is thought that it does not embody creativity but only technical skill’ (p. 5). David Hesmondhalgh (2013), not dissimilarly, locates sport among the ‘peripheral’ cultural industries, a borderline case that cannot be included within the ‘core’
because it is not regarded as ‘based upon the industrial production and circulation of texts, and [which are] centrally reliant on the work of symbol creators’ (p. 20). By contrast, for Hesmondhalgh, sport (also called ‘Sport Industries’ here), while offering live entertainment before paying audiences like a ‘core’ cultural industry such as music, ‘is fundamentally competitive, whereas symbol making isn’t. Texts … tend to be more scripted or scored than in sports, which are essentially improvisied around a set of competitive rules’. From this perspective, sport’s cultural credentials are circumscribed by its improvisatory textuality and secondary role in symbol making – as discussed below, it is consistently positioned in a field where ‘signifying practices’ are not regarded as paramount.

The United Kingdom’s Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2001), which prefers to conceive of the ‘creative’ rather than the ‘cultural’ industries, defines them in like manner in its Creative Industries Mapping Document, as ‘those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property’ (p. 2). It takes the creative industries to include ‘advertising, architecture, the art and antiques market, crafts, design, designer fashion, film and video, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, software and computer services, television and radio’ (p. 2). This emphasis on ‘aestheticised’ intellectual property entails only recognition of ‘the close economic relationships’ between creative industries and ‘other sectors such as tourism, hospitality, museums and galleries, heritage and sport’ (p. 2), rather than acknowledging more thoroughgoing cultural relationships and synergies.

This article considers the anomalous place of sport within culture and cultural policy in Australia, especially in the period since the 1994 national cultural policy, Creative Nation, conceiving sport by means of the Bourdieusian concept of ‘field’ rather than principally as ‘practice’ or ‘industry’. Field analysis enables sport to be approached not as a static entity but, in the words of Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), as ‘a space of potential and active forces … a field of struggles aimed at preserving or transforming the configuration of these forces’ (p. 101). Bourdieu (1988: 154) conceives of a ‘space of sports’ where these struggles take place, and which ‘can be related to the social space of which it is an expression. This must be done in order to avoid the errors due to directly connecting a sport and a group, as suggested by ordinary intuition’. For Bourdieu, this ‘theoretical framework’ combines and alternates between the concepts of space and field: ‘here, the idea of the space of sports; elsewhere, the notion of a field of power’ (p. 156). But in this work and in others (notably, Bourdieu, 1984), what constitutes ‘space’ and ‘field’ and their boundaries constantly shift. As a result of this elusiveness, it is difficult to define and analyse what constitutes sport as an Australian cultural field, particularly as, since Bourdieu wrote of the ‘French space of sports’ (p. 154) several decades ago, the very notion of a national sporting field has become increasingly problematic with the intensification of transnationalisation and globalisation (Miller et al., 2001).

It is not possible here to elaborate in detail on Bourdieu’s concept of field as it applies to sport (for a synoptic treatment of it, see Grenfell, 2015). For the present purposes, the field of sport is conceived as the ensemble of institutions, relations, practices and meanings that is characterised by competitive, regulated physical culture. It is defined as ‘Australian’ insofar as it is materially and symbolically related to nation and to national identity. As already noted, sport’s relationship to other Australian cultural fields, such as literature, music or visual art, is itself a matter of debate and contestation. Among these fields, sport’s relationship to the media field – and especially its broadcasting component – is of particular significance. Indeed, Wenner (1998) has proposed the neologism ‘mediasport’ in recognition of the interpenetration of these cultural fields (in the Australian context, see various contributions to Media International Australia, 2015). This relationship requires close attention in the context of sport’s positioning within Australian cultural policy as it
relates, in particular, to conceptions of national culture and the hierarchisation, separation and convergence of cultural fields.

**Positioning the sport field in Australian cultural policy**

*Creative Nation* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1994), the landmark national cultural policy of the Keating Labor Government, places the sport field largely outside the sphere of the ‘cultural’ and ‘creative’, regarding it principally as a competitor for sponsorship with ‘cultural organisations’:

The Government recognises that there has been a decline of sponsorship for cultural organisations in favour of sport, a situation which is likely to be exacerbated by the forthcoming Olympic Games in Sydney in the year 2000. (p. 14)

The only other reference to sport in *Creative Nation* is as content for SBS Radio (p. 48) and Aboriginal community radio stations (p. 53). Seventeen years later (under the Rudd/Gillard Labor Government), sport is not mentioned at all in the *National Cultural Policy Discussion Paper* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011), its emphasis on ‘arts and culture’ placing sport entirely outside the frame of national cultural policy. Despite at that time sharing a common federal departmental location (Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport – with sport moving to the Department of Health after the 2013 formation of the Abbott Coalition Government), there is little by way of inter-connection between arts, culture and sport. Co-location within government departments does not necessarily erode this ‘silo’ effect. For example, the aforementioned United Kingdom’s Department for Culture, Media and Sport, which was established in 1997 out of the former Department of National Heritage by the (then new) Blair Labour government as part of ‘repositioning the United Kingdom as “cool Britannia” for trade and the intention of reasserting the country’s pre-eminence as a creative-industries powerhouse in the world’ (Cunningham, 2008: 235), had difficulties with the uneasy fit between sport and art in, for example, the Cultural Olympiad of the London 2012 Olympics (Rowe, 2008).

In the ensuing national cultural policy *Creative Australia* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013), however, sport is, along with art and religion, treated as one of the ‘great markers of culture’ (p. 32), although largely to highlight lesser levels of direct population involvement in sport and religion than in ‘arts and cultural activities’ and, importantly, to present it as a domain where elite professionalism, amateurism and fandom/appreciation happily co-exist. This approach is redolent of Raymond Williams’ (1981) well-known conceptual differentiation – although a mutable one – involving

(i) the anthropological and sociological senses of culture as a distinct ‘whole way of life’, within which, now, a distinctive ‘signifying system’ is seen not only as essential but as essentially involved in all forms of social activity, and (ii) the more specialized if also more common sense of culture as ‘artistic and intellectual activities’, though these, because of the emphasis on a general signifying system, are now much more broadly defined, to include not only the traditional arts and forms of intellectual production but also all the ‘signifying practices’ – from language through the arts and philosophy to journalism, fashion and advertising – which now constitute this complex and extended field. (p. 13)

In Williams’ schema, sport sits more comfortably in (i) than in (ii), but in *Creative Australia*, following the discursive shift from ‘culture’ to ‘creative industries’, sport is also singled out for its capacity to engage the young and the marginalised in career training. Thus, through the example of the *AFL SportsReady* (2015) programme, sport is addressed as providing a model for engaging and
supporting ‘job seekers, school leavers and at-risk students to find arts careers through on-the-job training’, with the proposed ArtsReady programme designed to ‘respond to opportunities to similarly engage with students through music, screen and other art forms and show them career pathways and skill development’ (p. 72).

The sport field, then, is still largely positioned by federal cultural policy in Australia as outside its principal concerns with aesthetic objects, practices, practitioners and organisations, but it is instructive that, in the period between Creative Nation and Creative Australia, sport was enlisted to exemplify an unashamed celebration of excellence (in seeking to manage the tension between the elite and the grass roots in the sphere of art), a pragmatic reconciliation of public–private funding tensions, and a promising pointer to ways of promoting social inclusion and economic capital accumulation through skills development, engaged learning and workforce preparation. As a peripheral object of national cultural policy, sport has emerged as an organisational exemplar for other spheres of culture. But its capacity to do so is recognised as founded on its collective affective appeal as a ‘great marker of culture’ in Australia that requires a range of national cultural policy considerations.

**Sport and mediated national culture**

In contrast to aesthetically oriented conceptions of culture, sport is much to the fore in broader national cultural typifications of Australia. For example, the visa applicant information book, Life in Australia (Commonwealth of Australia, 2007), and the document assisting applicants with the citizenship test, Australian Citizenship: Our Common Bond (Commonwealth of Australia, 2014), place considerable emphasis on sport, which figures strongly as a national identity marker in the latter as part of the case for Australian federation:

> People wanted to unite the colonies to form a single Australian nation for a number of reasons … Australia’s national identity was beginning to form. Sporting teams were representing Australia internationally and a unique Australian culture was developing in popular songs, poems, stories and art. (p. 23)

The section on ‘Australia’s Identity’, in fact, opens with ‘Sport and Recreation’, declaring that ‘We are proud of our reputation as a nation of “good sports” … Throughout our history, sport has both characterised the Australian people and united us’ (p. 43). Similarly, the discussion of the ‘Importance of Sport’ in the Commonwealth of Australia’s (2008) Directions Paper, Australian Sport: Emerging Challenges, New Directions (produced under the Rudd administration), states,

> Sport is integral to Australia’s way of life, our view of ourselves and how we are viewed by the rest of the world. It helps build the social cohesion that binds families, communities, regions and the nation. No other facet of our culture has the capacity to bring together so many different streams of Australian life in mutual joy and celebration … Sport is important for more than just reasons of national pride, or even as a way of building a fitter, more vibrant nation. Sport reaches across our society in ways which are not always apparent, and involves even those who profess no love of sport. (p. 1)

This societal reach is especially conspicuous where the sport and media fields intersect, particularly regarding television. Sport is officially held to be so important to Australian national culture that its most important events are protected for free-to-air television by the world’s most stringent anti-siphoning regime (Rowe, 2014). These ‘events of national importance and cultural significance’ under the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 (as amended) are, in terms of regular programming, all sports events. This link between national culture and the sport and media fields is
emphasised in the (Rudd/Gillard Labor) Federal Government’s Sport on Television: A Review of the Anti-Siphoning Scheme in the Contemporary Digital Environment, which declares that ‘[t]he popularity and prominence of sports broadcasting can be seen as a natural extension of the place of sport in Australian society and culture’ (Australian Government, 2010b: 9).

The anti-siphoning regime was canvassed in Creative Nation at a time when subscription television was yet to be broadcast in Australia (first occurring on Australia Day 1995). Notably, its principal concern is with the regulatory challenges posed by the ‘rapid globalisation of broadcasting, particularly through satellite television which will in the next few years extend throughout Australia’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 1994: 51). Globalisation is addressed here in terms of the erosion of nation-state control over broadcasting and the need ‘to protect the televising of major events at the commencement of subscription cable, satellite and MDS [Multipoint Distribution Systems] television delivery’ (p. 51), although it was not clarified that the only regular major events to be protected would be of a sporting nature. However, it is not potentially increased foreign control of Australian television that is most at issue in terms of anti-siphoning protection, but the reduction of access to major sport events for the general population through Australian-owned subscription broadcasters gaining exclusive access to them.

Necessarily, intervention of this kind favoured free-to-air over subscription broadcasters. It is unsurprising, then, that ever since the anti-siphoning list was framed, it has come under pressure to be reduced and abolished, according to pay broadcasters and peak sport bodies, on the grounds of undue intervention in the media sport marketplace, or in light of imminent technological obsolescence in view of the development of global digital media technologies that are held to render national control over legacy and new media sport platforms as both futile and overly restrictive. The acute political sensitivity of the regime, caused by concerns that key Australian sports events that have historically been freely accessed would be placed behind a paywall, has thwarted major changes to them. Under the Howard Coalition Government, successive Communication Ministers, Richard Alston, Daryl Williams and Helen Coonan, considered changes to the list ranging from considerable reduction to complete abolition, but those actually implemented were modest additions, deletions and measures to encourage listed events actually to be broadcast (Jolly, 2010). Policy caution over protecting television sport has predominated, even where prime consideration has been given to communication and media technology innovation. For example, the Convergence Review: Final Report (Australian Government, 2012) commissioned by the Rudd/Gillard Government, while it supported and foreshadowed reforms to the list, reaffirmed the principle of free television access to key sports:

The Review supports access to important sporting events. The underlying public policy objective that the public have free access to key sports is still relevant. With each revision of the list since it was established in 1994, the number of listed events has been reduced. The Review considers that the size of the list should continue to be reduced.

Future technology and business models may allow a large proportion of the Australian population to watch live sport for free at the point of access on platforms other than free-to-air television and future reductions in the anti-siphoning rules should be considered against these developments. (Australian Government, 2012: 35)

After the aforementioned Labor Government’s Sport on Television: A Review of the Anti-Siphoning Scheme in the Contemporary Digital Environment, a bill including the introduction of a (UK-style) smaller two-tier list, ‘use it or lose it’ and ‘must-offer’ provisions, and extension to new media providers (Jolly, 2012), was proposed but not enacted after extensive delays and reference
to parliamentary committees. The most recent round of consultations by the former Minister for Communications (now Prime Minister), Malcolm Turnbull, characteristically revealed sharp differences between sports, free-to-air and subscription television providers over the size and composition of the list, and political nervousness over upsetting the large Australian sports viewing constituency (Davidson, 2015). The power dynamics at the intersection of the media and sport fields are here clearly revealed.

The current version of the anti-siphoning list, which covers over 1300 events, reveals some anomalies in constituting the nation and cultural citizenship in sporting terms. It contains large international multi-sport and single events (such as the Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, World Cups in men’s association football, cricket and rugby union), and major local events (including the Melbourne Cup horse race, Australian Open tennis and the men’s grand finals in rugby league and Australian rules football). But, it does not include the local A-League in association football, Super 15 rugby union or the national netball championships, while covering the Wimbledon (UK) and US Open tennis tournaments, the English Football Association Cup final (soccer) and US Masters golf (Australian Government, 2010a).

The constitution of the anti-siphoning list, therefore, reveals some of the limitations of claims surrounding an unproblematic, integral link to national culture through sport and television that can be readily translated into the defence of associated cultural citizenship rights (Miller, 2007). Sport may be one of the ‘great markers of culture’ according to Creative Australia, and ‘integral to Australia’s way of life’ for the Australian government. But, the sport field has been shaped both by the peculiarities of the Australian context (e.g. the prominence of the internationally distinctive colonial-era adaptive code of Australian rules football – Hess et al., 2008) and by transnational/global developments (as represented by the chequered history of the ‘world game’ of soccer in the country – Hallinan and Hughson, 2010). It also displays – and reproduces – power differentials in selecting which sports and events are deemed worthy of regulatory broadcast protection, including privileging some that are not only held outside Australia, but may have no Australian participants. The substantial over-representation of men’s sport on the anti-siphoning list, as well as its legacy of colonialism (Adair and Vamplew, 1997; Cashman, 2010), similarly traces the historically inherited contours of power of the sport field. Also, as Wenner et al. (2014) have noted in the US context (but also applicable to Australia), in the domain of cultural citizenship there is an uneasy relationship between consumer choices and citizen rights. Sport is not merely a ‘public good’ but is also enmeshed in a range of commodity relations involving equipment and sportswear supply, broadcasting rights, sponsorship, advertising, merchandising, event amenity provision and management, athlete and other sport personnel remuneration and so on. It is also put to various symbolic and ideological uses by both state and civil society interests (Hughson et al., 2005). These broader questions about the Australian sport field have been posed in various reports and policy submissions that directly address the field.

The play of policy

Creative Nation may not have attended very closely to the Australian sport field, but several national and state inquiries and ensuing policies have sought to influence the nature and direction of the field. These policy deliberations have taken place at a time of considerable challenge and change (see, for example, Stewart et al., 2004). For example, in 1995, only a year after the national cultural policy was released, the last major (officially) amateur sport, rugby union, turned professional in the same year that the rival rugby league code was engaged in the so-called Super League War, with the multinational media company News Corporation (now NewsCorp Australia) at the heart of both upheavals. Combined subscription and free-to-air television sport broadcast rights for
both, along with online and mobile rights, have risen sharply in response to television’s need for premium sport content (Rowe, 2014). Since 1994, Australia has hosted (sometimes co-hosted and city-based) several sport mega events, including the Olympic Games (2000), IRU Rugby World Cup (2003), Commonwealth Games (2006), AFC Asian Cup (2015) and ICC World Cup (2015), with a key justification for each being the enhancement of sport participation and so health, of tourism and other economic activity and of national cohesion and morale. Each event has required a significant investment of public funding, generating debates over whether public resources would be better devoted (including more profitably) outside the Australian sporting system, the adequacy of the level of sport funding to meet performance goals and the distribution of public and private sports funding with regard to elite and grass-roots forms.

A series of policies and reports has addressed these issues, including Active Australia: A National Participation Framework (1997); Shaping Up: A Review of Commonwealth Involvement in Sport and Recreation in Australia (1999); Backing Australia’s Sporting Ability: A More Active Australia (2001); Building Australian Communities through Sport (2004); The Future of Australian Sport: Megatrends Shaping the Sports Sector over Coming Decades (Hajkowicz et al., 2013); and, most recently, Play.Sport.Australia (2015).

Of particular note is the controversial Australian Government Independent Sport Panel’s The Future of Sport in Australia (widely known as the Crawford Report after its Chair, the Melbourne businessman David Crawford) (Australian Government Independent Sport Panel, 2009), which stimulated intense debate over the proposed re-allocation of funding from elite Olympic sport to community sport. Established by the Rudd Government, among the Panel’s five ‘headline’ Terms of Reference are to ‘Ensure Australia’s continued elite sporting success’ (1), ‘Better place sport and physical activity as a key component of the Government’s preventative health approach’ (2) and ‘Maintain Australia’s cutting edge approach to sports science, research and technology’ (4) (pp. 151–152).

It can be immediately observed that some recommendations arising from these Terms of Reference are likely to be in conflict, or, at the very least, unrelated. For example, supporting elite sport performance may not have a positive impact on preventative health, while sport science devoted to high-performance sport may have little relevance or benefit for those engaged in social or casual sport. In the sport field, there is also an emphasis on sport organisations and practitioners rather than sport audiences, as is clarified by the approach taken to the anti-siphoning legislation discussed earlier. According to the Panel,

It is argued that anti-siphoning [sic] legislation ultimately limits the earning potential of the NSOs [National Sporting Organisations] and holds back the quantity and quality of sports coverage on television … The Panel suggests that the Australian Government investigates the relaxation of current anti-siphoning [sic] legislation. (Australian Government Independent Sport Panel, 2009: 136)

In this ‘field of struggles’, there is no demonstrable interest in the anti-siphoning list’s maintenance of access to televised sports ‘events of national importance and cultural significance’ for the citizenry at large. Instead, the Panel objects to the capacity to limit broadcast rights earnings for large sport organisations, as well as to the amount and quality of televised sports coverage. The potential loss of premium sport to a free-to-air television presence is seen as problematic, primarily if the reduced cultural visibility of sport negatively affects participation and income, and there is no questioning of the concentration of broadcast coverage on a narrow range of (mainly male) sports and the consequently skewed distribution of sports rights revenue. Similarly, the Panel’s discussion of the impact of digital media (p. 136) is mainly focused on copyright infringement, and, again, on the profitability of sport organisations. But, with regard to funding for elite (especially Olympic) as
opposed to grass-roots sports, a case is made to redirect resources from the former to the latter, while the routine justification of major sports as stimulators of participation is rejected in ‘Defining Our National Sports Vision’. Thus, ‘the setting of ambitious targets for Australia’s elite sporting success’ is supported, but only in response to ‘a re-assessment of funding priorities in light of policy objectives’. It is argued that the ‘funding imbalance between Olympic and non-Olympic sports should be questioned. More emphasis should be given to sports that are popular with many Australians’, while ‘the quantum of spending needs to be more rigorously assessed’, including the calculation of ‘the “costs of medals”’. The Crawford Report goes on to state,

Importantly, the Panel can find no evidence that high profile sporting events like the Olympics (or Wimbledon or the Australian Football League (AFL) Grand Final) have a material influence on sports participation. So if sports are to be funded in part to encourage wide participation, some priority should be given to those sports played throughout the country and even more so to those that engage their participants through their lifetimes. (Australian Government Independent Sport Panel, 2009: 7)

In this sporting ‘field of struggles’, various parallels with other cultural fields, such as visual art and literature, can be discerned. Disputation over what constitutes excellence, questioning the division of resources between the elite and the popular and interrogating the claims of the benefit of ‘flagship’ enterprises and so on are common across cultural fields. Bourdieu’s (1978, 1984) analysis of the cultural capital accruing to different sports, according to Warde (2006), pays ‘considerable attention to sport as one of several mundane activities which reflect, in just the same way as would engagement with the arts, holdings of economic and cultural capital and thus help to constitute symbolically distinguished lifestyles’ (p. 108). But, in sport, inevitably in its international mode, the nation is necessarily to the fore. Hence, the suggestion by the Independent Sport Panel that funding for Olympic sport might be reduced, and the resources redirected towards popular participation, provoked deep organisational opposition, with Australian Olympic Committee President John Coates, for example, arguing that ‘“It seems un-Australian to me to settle for something second best … This funding is vitally important to the nation”’ (AAP, 2009). The Rudd Government’s cautious response, Australian Sport: The Pathway to Success, in the light of powerful lobbying and vigorous Olympic advocacy through the media, was ‘to boost funding to both community and high performance sport’, seeking to reform the Australian sporting system ‘backed by a record $1.2 billion in Australian Government funding’ over 4 years, including ‘the biggest single funding injection ($195.2 million) to Australian sport in our nation’s history’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010: 1–2). Economic capital derived from the state, in this instance, was seemingly expended here to contain the elite versus grass-roots tension that Creative Australia argued is managed more comfortably in sport than in the arts. Thus, the Australian sport field, as Bourdieu has anticipated, is by no means exempt from the disputation over cultural capital evident in other cultural fields.

**Conclusion: field specificity and convergence**

In this article, it has been argued that the sport field is an under-appreciated domain of national cultural policy. In successive Australian cultural policies (1994 and 2013), it has been ignored, ‘anthropologically’ diffused or rhetorically deployed to offer a potential model for how the arts might manage training practitioners and the debilitating split between excellence and participation. But, as noted, the sport field is riven with struggles that resemble those in other cultural fields. Its close connection to the idea of nation, and ready deployment as a symbol of national cultural identity, has seen a deep convergence of the sport and media (notably broadcasting) fields that brings into play
cultural citizenship, the constitution of citizen-consumers and the political economy of mediated performance. When sport television policy is viewed in the context of anti-siphoning provisions that intervene in the media sport marketplace in the name of common culture, it is apparent that, despite the acknowledged pressures of transnationalisation and globalisation, the nation still exerts significant cultural sovereignty over media technologies and their pleasures.

In the wider sport field, the impulse to shape national culture – and its persistent dilemmas – is no less evident while, despite the frequent positioning of sport as competitive physical rather than signifying practice, it is beset with many of the same problems of national system integration, elite versus popular division and rhetorical over-reach. For example, the following passage from Australian Sport: The Pathway to Success could, with some judicious word substitution, conveniently fit into policy documents from the cultural fields most conventionally associated with textual and performative creativity:

> A new whole-of-sport approach is essential to boost sporting participation and enhance sporting pathways for the benefit of health and productivity while also contributing to and sustaining our international success. Fundamental to this new approach is moving away from the divisive community versus elite sport debates of the past and developing a collaborative, efficient and integrated national sports system focused both on growing participation for the benefit of our community as well as the high performance system. (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010: 1)

Despite these parallels – and, in some case, convergences – sport and other fields retain elements of specificity and distinctiveness. Sport, for example, has no equivalent of the music or art studio where the finished text is usually completed ‘out of sight’. Its reliance on improvisation and outcome uncertainty is greater than that of most performance art, while the centrality of competition is not matched by literary and visual art prizes. But, these cultural fields, in turn, differ in various respects from each other – for example, over the mass purchase of texts as opposed to the gallery experience. It is to be hoped, therefore, that, should there be another national cultural policy, sport will not again be placed alongside religion as a ‘great marker of culture’ in order to leave the field of culture to the arts.

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