

## 2021 World Class to World Best - Bringing Strategy to Life

Presenters –

Lynne Anderson – CEO, Paralympics Australia

Kate McLoughlin – General Manager, Sport, Paralympics Australia & Chef de Mission for 2020 Tokyo Paralympics & 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics

SAMANTHA LANE: I'm really pleased that for the next 45 minutes, believe it or not I have real people joining me. What a delight to have two people working in tandem in the same place to be able to talk about the things they've are navigating, how they've been navigating it, particularly in the last 12 months. These people in person, hooray, are Lynne Anderson, the Chief Executive Officer of Paralympics Australia, and Kate McLoughlin, who is the General Manager, Sport, of Paralympics Australia, and Chef de Mission of 2020 Tokyo Paralympics and the 2022 Beijing Winter Paralympics. They will be here speaking together with me about bringing strategy to life, and Lynne and Kate, just by way of background, everyone I'm sure will know some of their work, but they have successfully led the development and implementation of strategic priorities within Paralympics Australia, and the 2026 Rio Paralympic Games with aplomb. They provide these dual perspectives in bringing to light the methodology, successes and challenges of strategy implementation, and the creation of what's widely acknowledged as mob culture that galvanised the Paralympics team, the Australian Paralympic team at the Rio Olympics.

Before we get talking with them, and Lynne's already told me she may need to be, quote unquote, lassoed in, I will point us to a short warm-up video.

(Video plays)

SPEAKER: Once you pull on that uniform, that green and gold uniform, you get the spirit of the Aussie Mob. You hear it. You see it. You feel it. And you dream it in your heart. Which is protected by our country's coat of arms. Just like the kangaroo and emu, we only go forward, as we get set for Tokyo.

Now, this team's full of champions from all over the Great Southern Land. We've come from Bunbury and Bathurst, even out past Tannum Sands. We excel in the pool and the track, on the court and with the ball. Don't mess with the mob in green and gold, as we move, strong and tall. When you don these Aussie colours, your spirit is fierce and loyal and proud. And it all cranks up a notch or three when cooee calls from the crowd. For some, life has been tough. We've felt the lows, but man they're worth the highs. That's the way we train, compete, with passion tattooed in our eyes. So, if you want to be part of history, join us in our quest for the holy grail. When you're in the Aussie mob, the rest are set to fail.

So we've had another setback. What does that mean for the dream? Remember, we're Australians. Our country is young and strong and free. Our land abounds in athletic gifts, with talent rich and rare. So in history's page, let's make our Tokyo stage the place to Advance Australia Fair.

SAMANTHA LANE: Thanks to Paralympics Australia, the mob in green and gold. I tell you what, Lynne has referred to me quietly here about mascara running down the face. I have full body goosebumps from seeing that video. Congratulations to your team for producing that. We might even talk about some of the strategy behind that, and the importance of that message of, yes, things have changed, but only the date really has, in terms of our mission and the way we will go about it. But first, can I please welcome you, Lynne, a real-life person, Lynne Anderson, and Kate McLoughlin. Thank you so much for joining me

and us today. It's a treat, Lynne, to be seeing people in sport in person.

LYNNE ANDERSON: Absolutely. It's been over the last 12 months, we just put heels again and putting the make-up again. It feels really good to actually connect because we're coming into a really important time and it's important we get that message out there.

SAMANTHA LANE: As a leader of Paralympics Australia, and we are going to be navigating through this chat, strategy. We're going to focus on strategy and culture. But if you could just, between you, and I know you will be rolling together the way that you do in your workplace and the way that you do your best work in this conversation today, but would one of you just, for the purposes of really setting the real-life scene for Paralympics Australia in the last 12 months, with COVID, what has changed? How have you had to change your work practices? What has changed, even in the organisation? We've seen sport have to shelve so many in the industry and my goodness, how long is the list of challenges, but if I just put that as an opening topic, what would you be happy to share about the challenges that have faced Paralympics Australia?

LYNNE ANDERSON: I'll start with this one. Just quite essentially we were really fortunate. We've got a really excellent board. They're very skilled expertise around sport and out of sport, and they were unanimous and united that when COVID first started to emerge, you know, their view was we go hard and go early, because they needed to protect the business. We don't have a massive coffers like many national sporting organisations, so we really needed to conserve our cash and be really focused. So, the immediate reaction was, sadly, we did lose 30% of our staff and they weren't just good operators, they were really good people, really good human beings that was a challenge we had to navigate across the staff, because everyone was hurting. We obviously cut the resources accordingly, but for us, in many ways, back in 2015, we'd had a similar crisis in that we'd had some financial troubles and so in those days, we simply focused on getting the team to Rio and conserving cash. We were actually able to pick that strategy up and pivot pretty quickly, because we've done it before, we know what to do, we can pare it back. When it came to doing our strategy for this year, and over the last 12 months it's been about Games focused, conserve cash but we added a third priority, is people. As I said before, it's really important from our mob culture to our whole PA family that we need to make sure that we are conscious of the fact that these are not easy times. It's been challenging but we felt like we had a blueprint we were able to drag it out of the archives which wasn't so long ago.

SAMANTHA LANE: We'll talk about it more organisationally. You've mentioned people, and if you don't mind and I hope it doesn't make you too self-conscious but I think it's really relevant to our audience. You individuals, you people, how have you navigated it? I will start with you Lynne before Kate. You're an experienced leader in sport, you're an experienced CEO. When everything changes in terms of we can't even touch our staff, how do you, as CEO, as an individual, have to change your practices and what did you find helped you?

LYNNE ANDERSON: Sure. I think the first thing we did, because we knew it was a tough time in shedding people, and changing the way we did business, the HR manager and myself, we had one-on-ones with every one of our staff, not just those going, those left behind and try to have this connection to understand what are you feeling personally? Because I think it's important to acknowledge that there was a picture outside of sport that were impacting our people. Moving to work from home was probably the easy part, yes, we had to get offices set up, but that was a really easy sort of move. It was more around, are you OK, is your family OK? And what do you need to stay connected? So as much as you send your HR dude out to make sure they're set up and OHS is looked after, the key thing always for us was, how are you? And we came up with various ideas, not all of them worked, tried to have the all-staffs, the drinks that you did on a Friday night. We tested a lot of things but the key thing was we just tried to keep

in touch.

SAMANTHA LANE: As a good leader you've taken that question and put this in a team context. What specifically about you, what was the biggest change for you as CEO?

LYNNE ANDERSON: The biggest change for me was a real plus. I travel an hour, hour and a half to work every day. I good three hours back. The challenge then was to make sure I didn't put those three hours into an already long day. Trying to schedule time to do a walk or my yoga were my personal challenges.

SAMANTHA LANE: Kate, how would you take that question? We've laughed about this thing that putting on actual clothes that extend beyond your waist. We've all got so used to the screen and what not. What about for you, before we move into the organisation, as a young leader in sport, what did you find hardest, hardest personally and perhaps trickiest to navigate?

KATE McCLOUGHIN: I think the thing I found the most hard personally was home-school. I cried on a daily basis and I'm pretty sure my children did too. I'm clearly not cut out to be a teacher. That was incredibly difficult to try and juggle having the kids at home and full-time job and also a full-time job in a situation that was unprecedented in terms of COVID.

Fortunately, we're out of that situation now. But I do feel like there's a better work/life balance in a way. It's a funny kind of benefit of COVID in a way, because now that we have that flexibility to work from home, I feel like I can be there for both work and home, which has been kind of nice, aside from the fact it was tricky to start with.

From an organisation perspective, my heart went out to our athletes. I think that was the hardest thing for me to see, was just the way that they were impacted so badly by not being able to get to training, and not just the training situation, but the fact that they had built up over so many years, not just four years, their entire careers, to get to the Tokyo Games. For that to be taken out from underneath them, incredibly difficult. But I was so incredibly proud to see the resilience shown not only by the athletes by the coaching staff, by the officials from every single sport to get through this. I think we're in fantastic shape going into Tokyo this year, because of that resilience that we were able to show.

SAMANTHA LANE: Let's talk about Paralympics Australia. And Lynne, I will start with you. If you could summarise for us the current key strategic priorities of PA, and when I say "current", I guess it's the new normal current, which might not have been the same if we'd sat and talked about this at World Class to World Best last year.

LYNNE ANDERSON: Not at all, and it's quite ironic. We actually have a beautiful piece of work done around what we call the Paris strategy. Because we were - this time last year we were heading into the next cycle, Tokyo would've done and dusted and we were looking at Beijing and Paris. So, we had a beautiful plan, had done a lot of work with consultants, internally through our board, presented the draft plan to the board at the April board meeting 2020. I think everyone knows that at the very last minute, we know what happened around that time and we pulled the strategy. Instead of having this beautiful expanse, where we're starting to recognise the increasing power of the Paralympic movement, which is beyond Games, there's no doubt in my mind there's beyond Games, there's an element around of the power of sport and strengthening the pathway, but importantly there's this social change impact. We were really ready to embrace that. I wish a few years earlier we'd thought about Beyond Games. Because clearly COVID has exposed the frailty of a business model that relies on essentially a Paralympic Games every two years. We accepted, we pulled back hard and early and quite simply our three priorities are certainly the Games. And when I say the Games, we want to be the best prepared everywhere, whether

that's in commercial support which has been challenging and I must give our sponsors and broadcasters 7 West Media a huge rap. Everyone of them has stood by us and said that we are here, we are here for you. I won't forget the loyalty we've shown to us. We wanted the commercial to be right across all of our areas but clearly Kate's team in the sport area and in the Games team is our focus. So everything we do is looking at the Games, whereas normally we'd be starting to look around the Games, it's all about the Games this year. Finance is clearly a worry. We have to conserve cash, there is no doubt about it. We don't have huge reserves in the bank like some of our other colleagues, our friends at Olympic Committee and Commonwealth Games do. We have to work towards that. We're a relatively newer sport. The third priority is definitely around people.

SAMANtha LANE: You've described it beautifully, even if vividly, gives us all the shivers of that moment everything changes. As CEO, when you know that that's going to mean key strategy changes too, what's the first thing that you do? Do you sit down with a big blank piece of paper by yourself and go "Right, scrap that. This, this, this", to get to your three you've just done. Do you pull together your team? What do you remember about that moment where everything changes, and you need to redesign your key strategic priorities?

LYNNE ANDERSON: Again, I will point to our board and we've been really lucky in February they basically said we think they need to consider that there may be a change. So, we started planning, doing two alternative plans. One was Games, business as usual, the other one was no Games and of course, the scenario ended up in the middle. So, we had to go back to the drawing board. The postponement meant that we had a lot of work already done. It wasn't a matter of start from scratch and pivot when the decision was made. We were ready to an extent, but we obviously had to go back and finetune the overarching view that we had, and that's where we have a fantastic senior leadership team and I work really closely. They're side by side with me in everything we do. It's not hierarchical. I'm a member of the SLT. So, we would get together as a group, say this is the view of the board, this is where we need to go as an organisation, I need you to contribute your elements there and Kate and the other seven SLT guys would come in. So, it was very much, it's a group effort and then from the SLT, they'll go down to their group. So, I'm a big believer that everyone in the business needs to be engaged whether it's for strat planning, tactical work, it has to be right up to the top, which is the board.

SAMANtha LANE: Kate, what do you remember of this time? No pressure, Lynne's sitting right next to you. (LAUGHS) in moments of crisis ,we look to our leader, we look to our leaders and Lynne's described it from her point of view at this time of great unknown, you're the general manager of sport, you don't know if there's a Paralympics in 2020. Don't know really what on earth is going on, because none of us do. What do you remember that you looked to, that you needed, and that was most effective in what you saw and what you heard at that time?

KATE McCLOUGHlin: I think what was amazing about that period, it was horrible, I'm not going to sugar coat it, it was really difficult to go through, just the uncertainty. We pride ourselves as an organisation on being best planned, best prepared, and when you can't do that, because of, you know, issues that are completely out of your control, that's really difficult. And I know that my team still struggle with that to this day, with everything, with the uncertainty around COVID and they're doing their very best in the circumstances. So around that time, I think the thing we looked to, and Lynne is an amazing leader and I think the transparency and communication was really critical in that period of time. Making sure that whilst really difficult decisions needed to be made, we were being constantly communicated with about what those decisions were and why they were being made and how we were going to try and navigate this together. So, I think that's something I can look back on now. It's still to this day something that we are taking on board given the COVID situation hasn't gone away and communication and transparency are very much the two things I feel most proud of from this organisation and how we've handled the last

12 months.

SAMANTHA LANE: I'm really interested in this notion of reimagined bar of success when it comes to strategy. Because in the last year, I mean, just personally, someone who I look to as a mentor has said to me, look, if you get one really good thing done, if anyone gets one really good thing done in 2020, 2020 has been a winner. But that's not what we're used to hearing in sport. It's not how we're used to measuring ourselves and that is challenging, along with, as Kate's described, this status of unknown. So, when you are drawing up new strategy, how do you draw that into it? Because you don't want to lower the bar in your strategic vision in this known/unknown state. You still want people to have goals, but it's all changed. So how do your measures of success change in this climate when you are redrawing strategy for an organisation?

LYNNE ANDERSON: I think the first thing is we've recognised really early that the key thing in many ways, yes, we have an overarching plan. The key thing is a great phrase I heard a few months back, navigation in real-time. That's what's needed. I know I've got a fantastic team here and that's a fantastic team across every level of PA. So, there's a level of saying, OK, their experience, they're skilled, they know the direction and framework we're trying to build here, but I need to listen to them. It's this ability to listen and say, OK, I think we need it to look at and that take that one on board or make a change here. For me, I think knowing that and being open to that is really important, as a leader, you can't be stuck in this mode, this is it, this is the plan, this the way we have to roll it out. The other thing I think that when I look back, the difference between 2015 when we had financial challenges and now, the one thing I think we do really well now, is recognising that when you work in sport there is always this passion factor and you always give 110% of your all when you overlay that with working for an incredible, beautiful movement called the Paralympic movement, and some of our Paralympic athletes you saw in the video earlier on, that's a double whammy in terms of passion and commitment. So, we've got to understand that we can't do it all, and even though you want to do it all. I'm really worried about burnout. But I'm also worried that we make sure we prioritise. So last year in our business planning or for this year the COVID plan has two tables. It's BOU, this is what we need to do to get Kate's team in the best prepared possible to hit Tokyo and Beijing ready for action, but then we have a list of parked projects. Even that in itself is saying this is what we do, this is what we'd like to do but only when we have the money, time and resources. That's a nice shift that's starting to come through.

SAMANTHA LANE: I'm really looking forward to getting back to this notion of burnout, because, because of the cuts that we've all experienced in our industries, it means people are doing more work, I don't have to tell anybody that. And there's this factor of if you've still got your position and role, then you feel this added responsibility to overachieve. So, there's this kind of confluence of factors but we will get back to that.

I will just prompt our audience at this time, who are no doubt taking all of this in and having their own thoughts, please get involved in this conversation. We'll have about 10 minutes at the end to put, as we did with Ellen, questions to Lynne and to Kate. You do that via [slido.com](https://slido.com), and you will enter using #wc2wb. We have screens in front of us. No pressure, but when you put a question out there, you either get a lot of thumbs up, they go to the top of the poll, and inevitably, we will be putting those out there first, but I promise I will be trying to get to as many questions as we would if we were in Canberra all together in person.

Kate, I want to turn to you picking up from Lynne there. There may be a change or there may not be. On the question of PA's culture. Has it remained the same? Have parts of the culture been amplified in the last 12 months? Have you been working on any areas of culture in particular for the organisation for this time?

KATE McCLOUGHIN: That's a good question. I feel that Lynne spoke earlier about people first, and I think that's very much something which we, from a culture perspective, it's part of our organisational culture, but it also gets transferred into our Australian Paralympic team culture as well and that's that whole notion of an athlete, a staff member, a coach is a person first, and then they are what their position is.

SAMANTHA LANE: Before you expand, can you bring that to life, either of you, both of you, people first. Again, we hear this. It's like Ellen talking about self-care. People first. Give us an example of people first. What have you done to put people first, even in the last, you know, 12 months? Just bring that to life for us if you can, that will underscore the culture that you have or that you're trying to really embed.

KATE McCLOUGHIN: A great example of this is something Lynne has implemented, and it's me time. So, we are required, we're not doing a very good job of it at times, I know, but we're required once a week to take two hours of our day to do something for ourselves. We've been told that this cannot be taking a child to a doctor's appointment or it can't be doing something that is required of you, you know, from a home perspective, or letting a plumber in or so on. It's really genuinely doing something that is for you. And it's really difficult to do when you know how much work is going on, but when you do actually stop to do it and actually take that time out and know that that's OK, and that everybody else in the organisation is trying to do the same thing, it's amazing.

SAMANTHA LANE: Where did this idea of me time come from? Had one of you seen it somewhere else? Did someone come up with the idea?

LYNNE ANDERSON: I've been in sport for a while. I love that you called me experienced, I know that's a pseudonym, but thank you.

SAMANTHA LANE: It's a compliment!

LYNNE ANDERSON: It's cool. I know that people burn out. I go back to my days at Canterbury Bulldogs. At the end of the first year, I got sick with pleurisy, half my staff went down, because you work non-stop and you work every weekend with major games. It didn't take me long to realise that this staff absolutely puts in the hours. For me it's about not counting hours because you just do three times what we should but I found one I was walking The Esplanade at Cronulla. I missed the traffic, I had a really nice coffee got to work and I was firing. And it was just like, I have to encourage this. I know that people won't do it all the time, but I had a real win a few weeks ago when Kate McLoughlin rings me and tells me she's doing me time and walking and I thought, yep, there it is!

SAMANTHA LANE: What do you do for me time?

LYNNE ANDERSON: I love my yoga and I love walking. If I can grab some of that and take time out and not feel guilty about it. Working from home, I'm trying to do the routine in the morning or the afternoon.

SAMANTHA LANE: And it's totally acceptable in your culture to say "Hey, I'm in me time." You might actually text that. I'm on me time for the next whatever ...

LYNNE ANDERSON: We haven't got there yet but I initially asked for some photos to come in to prove they were doing it and got some really cool ones.

SAMANTHA LANE: Excellent. What do you do in me time, Kate?

KATE McCLOUGHIN: I either go for a run or play tennis with some retired neighbours who keep asking me to play. Finally, I can say yes, I can be there at 7.30 on a Friday morning and still get into the office.

LYNNE ANDERSON: Can you beat the retired neighbours? No, just kidding.

KATE McCLOUGHIN: I try my best!

SAMANTHA LANE: You've touched on it, that you can implement it with the best or speak about it with the best intentions. Not always easy to do yourself. How are you keeping each other, not to mention your organisation, accountable? I mean, I know we're drilling down into one part, but it's super important. How are you keeping tabs on your staff, on your team? Are they doing, are they really doing me time? Or do they just know that they should be or that they could be?

KATE McCLOUGHIN: It depends on the time of the week and depending on what we're dealing with at the time. I think sometimes I'll remind them more around, have you taken some me time? If things are getting a bit stressful. I think we need to probably, as leaders, be better at it. I think sometimes we forget that we do have it. I must admit that the day that I rang you, Lynne, I probably hadn't had me time in weeks so I think it's really important that when we have meetings, we constantly remind them that this is available to you. Because it's very easy to slip into old habits and get caught up in work. And I know that my team do above and beyond the hours that they are required to do. So, it's never an issue.

LYNNE ANDERSON: It's really just a marker. It's another thing that says, hang on, we want to look after you. So we accept everyone's not going to do it as religion, but the important thing is to know that it is there, we're reminding them as SLTs to actually look after yourself and that's in essence what it is.

SAMANTHA LANE: Has the redrawing of strategic priorities or, you know, change of emphasis, has the culture evolution in the last 12 months at PA changed what your mission, what your strategic priorities are for, hopefully, the 2021 Paralympics?

LYNNE ANDERSON: Not for me. It's just strengthened it, I think. I've been super proud of how my senior leadership team have grown through COVID, without a doubt. Like they're all incredibly talented to begin with and had the level of empathy and whatever, and I saw a great example of it a few weeks ago, when we had the rogue unnamed source saying that the Games were off. SLT just swang into action, almost before I did, basically had it all organised, this is what we do, got in touch with athletes all the stakeholders. I remember stepping back and thinking, wow that's because of COVID where they have assumed another layer of responsibility and been proactive about it.

SAMANTHA LANE: You arrived in 2015. How has PA evolved, where has it grown most in those six years?

LYNNE ANDERSON: The thing I'm probably proudest of watching, it's been a roller-coaster from one financial challenges to gradually building up then having to go round down to regroup. I'm really proud of most is our profile. Paralympics Australia, I believe, is on the map now. Our athletes are being talked about, we've got household names, Kurt Fearnley, Dylan Alcotts, that are being talked about as elite Australian athletes. For me, that's really something special.

SAMANTHA LANE: How has Kate specifically advanced some of this?

LYNNE ANDERSON: The work she does with the team is fantastic and allowing them to be their best. Our communications team beside her is allowing opportunities. That video is a classic example, that we are getting it out there. 7 West Media our partners use that as their announcement to say the date of the

Games has been changed, such the quality and standard of it that it went to free-to-air, mainstream TV. If the team is doing as good as they are, then it's up to us get the message out.

SAMANTHA LANE: On that notion. The team and culture, do you feel that you inherited a culture? Have you tried to put your imprint on it? Just talk us through how you've assessed and then acted.

KATE McCLOUGHIN: I think when I first became Chef for Rio, I'd already experienced the London Games. I think there was an amazing camaraderie and culture within the Australian Paralympic movement already. The problem was that the organisation, in the past, hadn't always had the resources to be able to look after those that had gone before. So, the alumni felt potentially abandoned and hadn't been looked after, and I think it was really important for us to look at the new athletes coming through, given the progress that the movement has made, and really show to them, look, the movement is where it is today because of those that have gone before you. And that this is bigger than just you, this is something which is about the entire Australian Paralympic family, and to really find that sense of connection between the past and the future athletes. So I don't think I inherited a bad culture at all. I think it was a culture that hadn't been developed and hadn't been allowed to grow. And I think the difficulty we have is we have 19 teams who essentially come together every four years to create one team, and we expect everybody to come together and form this amazing team, when they had no connection to each other necessarily.

So that was the challenge, how can we make sure that they feel a part of the Australian Paralympic family when they're not necessarily coming across each other in the intervening years?

SAMANTHA LANE: What's the first step to doing that, to making that connection? Is it getting on the phone? Is it asking questions? Or is it shutting off to a whole lot of different voices and forming your own views?

KATE McCLOUGHIN: It's listening to the athletes. And I think for a long time we weren't necessarily listening to the athlete voice. Once we were able to identify athlete leaders, and Danni Di Toro was the person who I explored this in the very first instance with. She's the one we first discussed the whole concept of the mob, way back pre-Rio. Once you've brought one or two athletes on board who are key leaders in their cohort, then you bring everybody. And it was just this amazing we did mob meetings, we had state-based meetings where we'd explain what our culture needed to be or we wanted it to look like, and look, we really feel like it's come to the fore, particularly during COVID so we had a great culture in Rio. This camaraderie and legacy and recognising the past and looking to the future together. And I think in COVID, even though those athletes haven't been able to come together and talk, the fact that they have those connections in the first place has actually helped them get through this really difficult time.

SAMANTHA LANE: When you've felt you've needed to shift something in the culture as it exists, how do you effectively do that, one without upsetting people, although sometimes people do need to be upset, let's face it. How do you do it in a way that is, I suppose, positive and ultimately achieving what you see as a better scenario, without too much friction? How have you found shifting things is best done?

KATE McCLOUGHIN: I think listening. So, I think the thing that we had to do was to face up to some hard truths about what had been done in the past or had not been addressed in the past, and that's really uncomfortable to do, to start with. It's really uncomfortable. But listening to those that had, you know, issues around the way that we were dealt with as a Paralympian in the past, the fact that they gave all their years as an athlete to the Australian Paralympic movement to be cast aside as soon as they retire that was difficult to hear, but at the same time, if we hadn't listened to that then we wouldn't have got them on board for the future. But now we know that the athletes coming forward, they know no

different and they know they will be looked after.

SAMANTHA LANE: Lynne, once you've made that shift, and you're establishing or really cultivating an enhanced culture, how do you keep that in your view most successfully consistent? How do you bottle it?

LYNNE ANDERSON: The main thing, we make ourselves available to listen. When I first started and became aware that there were some challenges I would put out an open invitation, meet with anyone, have coffee, tell me your story and say, look, I get it, I've come from a background in sport where it was always player-centric, athlete-centric and that athlete didn't just mean current, that meant those that have gone before and leaving a better way forward. Their message for me through Kate is not only consistent, but also open. So, you know, athletes know they can pick up the phone and say this is my problem, so we've really opened the doors at PA I suppose to everybody.

SAMANTHA LANE: That paints a picture to me of non-hierarchical, I mean, of course, a CEO, there is an executive, there is a board but I feel listening to that, that it's kind of non-hierarchical. Is that fair?

LYNNE ANDERSON: In terms of that, yeah absolutely. We need to respect the athletes by listening to them at the first.

SAMANTHA LANE: So there's not this divide between people who are running the sport, who haven't got any idea, and we're just actually out there slogging our guts out, winning the gold medals. I mean, everyone's slogging their guts out.

KATE McCLOUGHIN: Yeah, and we often refer to athletes, whenever we're about to make a pretty big decision, we'll say, have we spoken to the athlete commission? Have we spoken to the leadership, to make sure there's consensus and we're doing the right thing for the athletes. Ultimately, none of us would have a job if there weren't athletes.

SAMANTHA LANE: Yes. Please put your questions to us on [slido.com](#). You will be able to use a hashtag, WC2WB. We're drawing to the pointy end with Lynne and Kate so please pose any questions that are burning for you and they're very open to anything that you would like to ask. I know that. And we are clearly focusing on culture, and strategy.

I heard you say before, and I don't know if you've got some magic potion, but I know if you did, everyone would want it. And it is about being put on the map. So, when Lynne you said PA is really now on the map, it has an identity, it is known. Now, of course, that is so advanced by the likes of Kurt Fearnley, Dylan Alcott, who you mentioned. So we need stars to put ourselves on the map, achievements, what not. It's not just that, though. What else has PA done, because it has done it just so, so formidably, actually.

LYNNE ANDERSON: Thank you. I think for me, there has been one line in the sand, a marker that absolutely took us to another level. I give great credit to our broadcast partner, 7 West Media. That was our Commonwealth Games team in Gold Coast where para athletes were side by side with their elite able bodied partners and being seen in prime time. For me, Kurt Fearnley in many ways dominated those games. With his magical ability to straight after have a microphone thrust in his face and say everything right, no script needed. I recognise that that was a potential gigantic step change for us, and I think together with my GM of stakeholder engagement, we spent the next probably two months on the road, talking to governments at every layer, saying, here we are, you've seen what our athletes can do. That's always been there, they just haven't had that spotlight, they haven't had that opportunity to tell the rest of Australia. From that we know, Aussies love them.

SAMANTHA LANE: Absolute gold. How did that happen? We all saw it, we all loved it, we all re-tweeted it and re-watched it. How did it actually happen? Can you give us the back story because clearly that's that step-change moment or line in the sand that you describe.

LYNNE ANDERSON: I put it down to Channel 7 putting us on prime time. We had swimmers, athletes, were getting prime-time Australian TV, 7pm. That's the greatest audience, then the word just spreads around from there.

SAMANTHA LANE: As simple and as complicated as that!

LYNNE ANDERSON: I was about to say, a lot of hard work with my comms guys, making sure we had the likes of Jim Wilson at Channel 7 at the time and Joh Griggs was amazing. They promoted the conversation and promoted our wonderful people. I will back our athletes every time. You put them on screen, they're intelligent, eloquent, informed beyond just our sport. They're great assets for us.

SAMANTHA LANE: I want to throw to the floor. Thank you, slide. Adam Woolnaugh: Lynne, what are some of your experiences between Paralympic HP system and wellbeing for staff and athletes, and your experience working in rugby league? I will get that right, Adam. Hello, thank you for the question.

LYNNE ANDERSON: Thank you, Adam, there's a few landmines there! Essentially the Paralympic high performance system isn't even close to the rugby league system in terms of our support networks that are available to us but we're catching up. There's a lot of education that the rugby league system does but a lot of it doesn't get through as well. I think I'm learning from things that we got there, both good and bad. The AIS, so thank you Adam, and certainly Kate's team, are developing some really cool athlete wellbeing things that we need to take on board and I love that you're mentioning staff, because it isn't just our athletes. Our staff need to be part of that equation. So we are learning and building in the Paralympic and the Olympic worlds I think in terms of looking after our staff and people. But without the resources that some of those other sports have.

SAMANTHA LANE: I love this question from Georgina Kovacs-Mueller. Has the listening, learning culture developed within the athlete cohort? Do you think, because we've heard you talk about it internally, I guess, as your administration, as the leadership group in that respect. Do you think athletes can reach out to each other as openly as you've described has been built within Paralympics Australia?

KATE McCLOUGHIN: I certainly think that has changed in a big way. I think soon after the Rio 2016 Games and we created that type of culture, we did put an athlete wellbeing and engagement officer on, and that's Danni Di Toro, our team captain in Rio and will be our team captain in Tokyo and having her there, I've noticed when athletes don't feel they can contact us directly necessarily, we certainly get a lot of feedback through Danni, and not only do we have Danni but we also have the athlete commission that we reinstated in 2017. We have a number of athletes on that, in addition to 17 leaders in each sport. All of whom feel that they are able to take questions from athletes. I do feel like there's this really open conversation. There's an ability for athletes to really get their point across, get their concerns across and get things dealt with in a much better way than perhaps has happened in the past.

SAMANTHA LANE: So, we're talking a lot about this open conversation, the can have a coffee any time with the CEO, as long as it's not clashing with me time.

(LAUGHTER)

LYNNE ANDERSON: What is me time?! No.

SAMANTHA LANE: This picture you're painting is wonderful. What it does open an organisation and leadership team up to is conflict. Things that you don't want to hear, in theory. Things that you don't want to see, in theory, and I can see Lynne's already shaking her head going "I want to see and hear everything. I don't care what it is I've seen it all, heard it all in sport, in life." But it points to Dr Kristen Dunn's question. Thank you so much. It's wonderful. "Listening can lead to uncomfortable conversations and conflict," and you have both talked about listening. Conflict can be healthy. How is conflict managed within the PA culture? Super question!

LYNNE ANDERSON: I agree, conflict is healthy. If we don't know about conflict, it's going to bubble away and blow up on us all. So I think it all comes back to just (a) we want to know what the issues are, because you don't always have that visibility. So put the issues on the table and then we work together, trying to resolve them and you can't always come up with a resolution. I said earlier we've got a lot of parked projects of things we want to do. You may not be able to resolve straightaway but we absolutely must hear about it, without a doubt and we must listen and respond to it. That's the other thing. Once you put it out there, whether you do research or open conversations person to person, if you listen and do nothing about it, that's worse than not knowing about the issue in the first place.

SAMANTHA LANE: Kate, what's your response to that question and perhaps some lived examples of how you've navigated conflict and those things that we sort of don't want but we sort of do.

KATE McCLOUGHIN: It's great to hear particularly from the athlete cohort about what we need to do better and what we're doing wrong. There's also transparency, being really transparent with our athlete cohort and with our co-workers means that sometimes people might be conflicted because they don't understand the back story, and trying to be really clear with an athlete or with a co-worker about exactly why a decision has been made, I think that's really important in explaining, you know, why they might not be very happy with a response within the work environment, and I know within the athlete cohort, we regularly say to them "We're here to represent you and make decisions in your best interests. Sometimes we're not going to agree with you." Because there are things that are bigger than from an organisation or a governance perspective that we can't get around but we hear you and we want to try and fix whatever the problems are.

SAMANTHA LANE: Thank you so much for those questions. If you missed the start of this session, it will be available to view on this platform post event. Thank you to Lynne and Kate for giving us that permission to have it up here forevermore. Just lastly, we're coming to a close, and thank you for the delegates who have put the questions and more to come later today. I love - we all love the mob. It's like this moment Lynne was describing on Channel 7 where there's just a step change. No turning back. The mob strikes me as this, you know, idea that you've got that everyone understands. It's powerful, it works on video, it works when you say it. How did you come up with it?

LYNNE ANDERSON: When I first came into this business, I remember thinking, I've seen what Canterbury did in the 70s to 90s. It was all built around a family culture. I have to talk to Kate. At the same time I read James Kerr's Legacy book about the All Blacks. To me they're the same thing where you put the athletes at the centre, be humble, be family. Build each other up. I said to Kate one day I have this great idea about what I'd like to help bring the culture into the place. She said no, I have an idea. And she told me about the mob idea. And I said You got it. I didn't need to do any more.

KATE McCLOUGHIN: It was a discussion with Danni Di Toro and Tim Matthews in a cafe in Brunswick about how we can try to bring the family together and make sure people feel like they belong to

something bigger than themselves, that long after they finish their athlete career that they'll feel like they can always come back to that group of people who cares and knows where they've come from and appreciates them and that's where it came from. It was a conversation and then from there it just exploded and it worked so well in Rio and I'm just so delighted that it continues to be such a big factor in our success as we head towards Tokyo this year.

SAMANTHA LANE: Two words, so powerful. Thank you so much for your insights today. Not a conversation we would've predicted a year ago. But really, treasured gems in there. I think the me time, the mob, listening, the non-hierarchical for want of a better term organisation that you're building and continuing to cultivate, not thinking that you've got it made. Lynne and Kate, wish you all the best. Thank you so much for coming in.

We now have 10 minutes, so get up, make that cuppa, stretch your legs, have some me time. But it's only 10 minutes, it's not two hours. We will be back here with our next session very soon and stay connected and hope you're very much enjoying this 2021 World Class to World Best.