Australian Sports Commission

An introduction to its role, objectives and activities
Joining in the fun run

A sport for all ages
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Australians, we all know, are mad about sports. We are one of the world's most ardent sport-watching nations. We spend vast amounts of time, money and energy following just about every type of sport that has ever been played either at the ground itself or, increasingly over recent years, when it is shown on television.

But we are also a nation of surpassing sporting performance. For a country with a much smaller population base than many of the nations against which we have traditionally competed, we have provided a quite disproportionate share of the world's greatest sportsmen and sportswomen.

For the vast majority of Australians, sport is all about the way they live and play, about the way they express themselves either as individuals or as a community and a nation. It is as much a vehicle for fashioning and directing our national culture and identity of which we can be properly proud as it is a way of getting and staying fit, strong and healthy.

And we are beginning to get some idea of the dimensions of this phenomenon called sport, some indication of just how much it matters to the nation. For example:
- In 1983-84 registered participants in cricket, Australian rules, bowls, netball, soccer and tennis exceeded 2.5 million people.
- Total registrations of the national sports associations assisted by the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) are currently over 6 million — that's about 40% of Australians, and it doesn’t include those playing without any formal registration by a club or association.
- A study into recreational fishing — one of Australia's most popular sports — identified a $2 billion contribution to the economy.
- In the 1981 census, 6% of the population was working in the leisure industry — that is a 27% increase over the figure in the 1971 census.
We also know that sport on television is a major source of programming and represents one of the most popular types of program put to air. In 1983–84, across all television networks in Australia, including the ABC and the SBS, a total of 24% of total programming time in the peak viewing times (6 pm to 10 pm) was devoted to sport. Looking at all time slots a total of 47% of programming time was devoted to sport, Australian and overseas.

In surveys undertaken by the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, sport was regularly mentioned as one of the most important, if not the most important, television program type for a large proportion of television viewers.

Just as sport has been an integral element of the way the nation has grown and changed in the past, so will it be inextricably linked to the shape and directions of Australia’s future.

In a more technological world, in a world where there will be more leisure time and in which people live longer in a generally ageing population, there are some enduring aspirations towards which people will continue to reach. For example towards better health and greater vitality, towards the search for surpassing human, as opposed to mechanical, performance, towards more efficient and effective management to ensure greater access to available and new opportunities, towards a greater sense of personal worth and confidence in a complex, impersonal world. All of these themes for the future either have a direct impact upon sport or pose challenges to our overriding objectives for sport — to encourage more people to play and to help more people to play to increasingly higher standards of excellence.

Sport will play a vital part in the future of Australia. The Australian Sports Commission is set to make a major contribution to that future.
Australia's achievement in sport has overshadowed other areas of activity in laying the foundation of our reputation as a young, vigorous and innovative people. Indeed, there was a time during the latter part of the 19th century when cricket was considered Australia's only foreign policy. More recently, Australian athletes, both male and female, have become known the world over, giving Australia an international visibility and reputation not attained in other areas of our social, political or economic life.

We have assumed that our success as a sporting nation was almost innate and that because participation in the sport of their choice was equally available to all Australians, the cream would automatically rise to the top, producing a constant supply of internationally successful athletes.

This scenario has never been an accurate reflection of sports development, but it is less accurate now than it has ever been. Over the past two decades, those involved in sport have had to critically assess this 'laissez-faire' attitude towards sports development, and this assessment consistently has shown sport to be ill prepared to adapt to many of the changes and developments that have occurred over the past two decades.

At the international level, the diminishing success of our athletes compared to those of other countries has shown that we have not understood that high performance athletes need similar advantages and support systems given to those who achieve in other fields of human endeavour.

At the mass participation level, we have not recognised the fact that changing social and economic conditions are making it increasingly difficult for all Australians to simply go out and play sport of their choice with disregard for economic circumstances, social position or geographic location.

There are two fundamental reforms required to provide a base from which to tackle these problems:

(i) the need for a mechanism to provide direct involvement by sport itself in determining needs, priorities and strategies for action;

(ii) the need to develop alternative sources of funding for sport both to supplement existing public sector sources of funds and also to provide a measure of certainty and stability in the flow of resources.

Undertaking those two fundamental reforms provides the most effective foundation upon which to build a more cohesive, co-ordinated system throughout Australia designed to achieve the broad objectives that have already been outlined.

The Australian Sports Commission will be able to provide the necessary flexibility and autonomy to address both those major reforms, while working within a framework of stated government policies.

The Commission will be able to develop structural links between the sporting community and the decision making process as well as to operate (through the proposed Sports Aid Foundation) in the entrepreneurial and highly competitive world of private sector sponsorship and fund raising.
Before it came to office in March 1983, the Australian Labor Party published its sport and recreation policy, a central element of which was the establishment of a national sports commission to provide a focus for a more co-ordinated approach to sports development in Australia.

In September 1983, the Government appointed an interim committee to provide advice on the role, functions and structure of the proposed Commission. Between September 1983 and March 1984, the interim committee, under the chairmanship of Ted Harris, now the Commission's inaugural chairman, consulted with the sporting community at all levels and undertook research as part of its investigations. Its final report was handed to the Government in March 1984.

On Thursday, 13 September 1984, the Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, and the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Tourism, John Brown, announced the Government's intention to establish the first full Commission. Membership of the Commission was announced and the Government foreshadowed that legislation to create the Commission as a statutory authority would be introduced to the Federal Parliament as soon as possible.

Since September 1984, the ASC has been functioning as an office within the Federal Department of Sport, Recreation and Tourism. Effectively, however, it has assumed the role and functions of an independent organisation reporting, and responsible directly, to the Minister.

Legislation to establish the Commission as a Commonwealth statutory authority was introduced into Parliament on Thursday, 9 May 1985. The legislation was passed by the Senate on 31 May 1985 and the Commission was proclaimed a statutory authority on 1 July 1985.

Australia's Olympic gold-medal winning 4000 metre cycling pursuit team.
The objectives of the Australian Sports Commission reflect directly the reasons for the establishment of the Commission in the first place.

The Commission's objectives are:

- to maximise funding for sport from the private sector to supplement funds from the Commonwealth Budget;
- to provide leadership in the development of Australia's performance in international sport;
- to increase the level of participation in sport by all Australians.

It is the overriding aim of the Commission to make a significant contribution to the development of Australian sport at all levels not only as a flexible, innovative partner in the community of sport but also by providing a focus to achieve a greater degree of co-ordination within that community to ensure that available financial resources, expertise and experience are used to maximum effect.
In order to achieve its objectives, the ASC will be responsible for a range of specific functions. The Commission's functions are:

- to advise the Minister in relation to the promotion and development of sport;
- to raise money through the Australian Sports Aid Foundation for the purposes of the Commission;
- to administer and spend money from the Budget or raised by the Sports Aid Foundation, for the purposes of the Commission;
- to co-ordinate activities in Australia for the promotion and development of sport;
- to consult and cooperate with appropriate authorities of the Commonwealth, of the States and of the Territories, and with other organisations, associations and persons, on matters related to its activities;
- to initiate, encourage and facilitate research and development in relation to sport;
- to collect and distribute information, and provide advice, on matters related to its activities.

It will also be a primary task of the Commission to develop an overall strategic plan to provide the framework within which it will undertake these and other functions as it pursues its major objectives and aims.
Ted Harris  
Chairman  
Chief Executive and Managing Director of Ampol Ltd, Mr Harris was chairman of the Interim Committee which reported to the Government on the role of the proposed Australian Sports Commission.

Herb Elliott  
Deputy Chairman  
Successful businessman and former world champion athlete, a gold medallist in the 1500 m at the 1960 Olympics and never beaten over the 1500 m or mile distances in competition. Mr Elliott was also on the Interim Committee and is a former member of the Sports Advisory Council.

Bruce MacDonald  
Secretary of the Department of Sport, Recreation and Tourism and a member of the Board of Management of the Australian Institute of Sport.

Mike Fitzpatrick  
As captain of Carlton Australian rules team he took the club to two VFL Premierships. Mr Fitzpatrick was a Rhodes Scholar and was a member of the Interim Committee of the ASC.

Roy Masters  
A leading rugby league coach with Sydney clubs Western Suburbs and St George. Mr Masters is a school teacher and has written a number of articles on sports psychology as well as being a guest writer for the Sydney newspaper the Sun.

John Newman
President of the Karate-Do organisation and a member of the executive of the Confederation of Australian Sport.

Mark Tonelli
A successful businessman and sports commentator, Mr Tonelli was a gold medallist at the Moscow Olympics as a member of the 4 × 100 m medley relay team. He also won a gold medal at the 1974 Commonwealth Games.

Colin Hayes
A leading horse trainer in South Australia for more than thirty years, Mr Hayes has won about twenty South Australian premierships as well as training the winners of many prestigious races, including the Melbourne Cup. He administers an extensive breeding/training complex at Lindsay Park in South Australia.

Phil Coles
A leading canoeist for many years, Mr Coles represented Australia at three Olympic Games and has been an official at four others. He was team manager at the Moscow Olympics, is a member of the IOC and is Secretary-General of the Australian Olympic Federation.

Glynis Nunn
Olympic and Commonwealth Games gold medallist in the heptathlon, Ms Nunn is a physical education teacher. She is one of Australia's leading long jumpers and hurdlers.
Neale Fraser
Captain of the Australian Davis Cup team since 1970, Mr Fraser was an outstanding player, having won the Wimbledon singles title in 1960 as well as the US singles title in both 1959 and 1960. He was a Davis Cup player between 1958 and 1963.

Betty Cuthbert
A champion athlete, Ms Cuthbert won three gold medals at the 1956 Olympics and followed this with another gold medal in the 1964 Olympics. She became the first woman appointed as a trustee of the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Wendy Pritchard
A former international hockey player, Mrs Pritchard represented Western Australia for many years and played for Australia on many occasions. She took part in overseas tours with the Australian team in 1967, 1970, 1971 and 1979.

Andrew Lederer
A successful businessman, now semi-retired, Mr Lederer has been Chairman of Sydney City Soccer Club for fifteen years. He is currently team manager to the Australian National team.

Jim Yates
A leading bowls player for nineteen years, Mr Yates is a life member and former President of Moreland Bowls Club and is currently club coach at the Moonee Ponds Bowls Club. He won the Australian singles title in 1979 and the Adelaide Masters singles title in 1983 and 1984.

Margaret Pewtress
A former President of the All-Australian Netball Association, Mrs Pewtress has been involved in the administration and coaching of netball for many years. She was also an All-Australian Netball Umpire and a member of the Victorian Netball Association. She is currently a teacher at Box Hill Technical School.

General Manager:
Greg Hartung
Telephone: 68 9566
Secretary: Louise Lagana
Telephone: 68 9566
Greg Hartung was a member of the Interim Committee for the Australian Sports Commission. He has extensive experience as an author and a senior journalist. His sporting involvement includes boxing and an extensive career in rugby league and first grade rugby union in Brisbane.

The ASC's executive office is based in Canberra. The executive staff are responsible for the day-to-day management of the Commission and its programs and for the provision of policy advice across the range of the Commission's responsibilities and functions.

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Priorities

Since its establishment in September 1984, the ASC has developed a series of priorities towards which to direct its attention and resources.

These priorities do not represent a complete statement of the Commission's tasks or activities — these will of course constantly change and develop. They do provide, however, a clear indication of the immediate directions in which the Commission is moving, reflecting not only its own assessment of needs and problems within sport, but also the opinions of many within the community of sport who have identified similar concerns. They also reflect, importantly, the broad sports policy objectives of the Federal Government.
The immediate priorities of the Commission have been established as:
- children in sport
- taxation issues, especially tax averaging for sportspeople
- establishment of a sports aid foundation
- disadvantaged groups
- sports development, especially the Commission's major program of sports assistance, the Sports Development Program
- high performance athlete and coaching assistance

These priorities are being pursued primarily through the ASC's committee structure.

Sports data base
One of the key functions to be undertaken by the Commission is the collection, analysis and dissemination of information and data about sport in Australia.

We have already embarked on a major program of sports data collection as the first step in a long-term program to obtain a clearer picture of the size, scope and nature of sport in this country. The database will be able to provide answers to such questions as how many people play sport and how many sports facilities there are in Australia and how accessible they are, how much sport as an industry contributes to the nation's economic growth and how many jobs it creates.

The information gathered will be widely circulated throughout the community so that people can gain a better understanding of this exciting, but still largely elusive, phenomenon called sport.

Strategic planning
The Commission has already started discussions with national sporting associations about the need to place specific assistance requests in the context of long-term development plans.

Based on those plans, and using a number of other key inputs, the Commission itself is committed to the development of a strategic plan as a mechanism by which to set directions and targets for the future, to monitor progress towards them and to evaluate performance at regular intervals. That plan, as a process and as a product, will provide an invaluable mechanism for continuing consultation and discussion within the community of sport.
Programs
When it was established the Commission assumed responsibility for a number of programs that had been administered up to then by the Federal Department of Sport, Recreation and Tourism.

Although they are discrete programs, they are all funded under the ‘umbrella’ of the Sports Development Program, which also in its own right provides substantial assistance direct to national sporting associations.

Sports Development Program
The Program provides financial assistance to national sporting associations under the following major headings:
- Employment of full- or part-time national directors
- Administrative support staff
- Basic administrative grants
- Employment of full- or part-time national coaching directors
- Coaching projects
- Travel to international competition overseas
- Hosting of international competition in Australia
- Attendance at international meetings
- Development projects, especially for children.

Sports Talent Encouragement Plan
The Plan provides direct financial assistance to world ranked Australian individual athletes and teams and to athletes demonstrating a capacity to achieve world rankings.

The assistance contributes towards the costs of training and competition. The Plan replaces the previous National Athlete Award Scheme.

Sports Science Research Program
The Commission provides funds under the innovative Sports Science Research Program which enables national organisations to utilise tertiary institutions to carry out research related to their sport. Closely related to this is the employment of a Sports Research Co-ordinator who assists sports in obtaining information and research for the development of their sport. This position is funded by the ASC.

Drugs in Sport
The Commission provides funding for a national program on drugs in sport. The Committee responsible for the program looks at matters of policy, education, control and research. The Committee is serviced by a full-time co-ordinator who, together with the research coordinator and the coaching development officer is located in ASC offices at the Australian Institute of Sport.

Australian Coaching Council
The Commission funds the position of Coaching Development Officer responsible for the National Coaching Accreditation Scheme and for the development of resource materials. The position reports directly to the Coaching Council, which is serviced by the Commission.

Women, Sport and the Media
Funds were provided to a Working Group established to examine a range of issues related to women and sport.

It has already become evident in the short time since the ASC was established that consultation is a cornerstone of its operation.

The Federal Government has made it clear on many occasions that the Commission must base its activities on a firm basis of thorough and regular consultation with the sporting community.

Consultation actually happens in a number of different ways, for example:

- Commissioners and the Commission's executive staff are in regular contact with executives from sporting associations and organisations on the whole range of issues affecting their operation and development.
- That contact is often formalised through the exchange of letters and advice on specific issues of concern.
- The ASC provides a report to all sporting organisations after each meeting, detailing the issues discussed and any major decisions taken.
- The ASC's committees have the power to 'co-opt' anyone from the sporting community to assist in their work, and that power has already been used to great effect in a number of committees.

As we develop and become more firmly established, we shall also be developing a range of structural opportunities for consultation and discussion, for example through conferences, seminars and workshops. These will provide additional opportunities for sport and the Commission to talk directly to each other, to exchange ideas and information and to gain a better understanding of each other's priorities and aspirations.