

Australian Sport: The Pathway to Success The missing link between grassroots and elite sports

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There has been a lot of anticipation in the industry about if, and when, the Australian Government would respond to the Crawford Report.

The wait is over and the government response is here, integrated into the recently released report, 'Australian Sport: The Pathway to Success'. The report is supported by the Federal Budget, which has just injected \$325 million over four years into sport – the biggest increase in sport funding to date.

The report may soften some of Crawford's critics including the Australian Olympic Committee, who expressed concern following recommendations from the Review Panel, that money may have been diverted away from elite sports towards grassroots participation. Kate Ellis, Minister for Sport, proposes a shake-up of previous dialogue where the divisions between community and high level sports have been repeatedly highlighted. There is certainly a commitment to change.

Central to the report is a strong focus on developing an integrated 'whole of sport' system, based on broadening participation, strengthening sporting pathways and helping Aussies strive for success.

The report acknowledges the need for Australia to keep pace with competing nations and a range of initiatives have been proposed including:

- talent-spotting an extra 5,000 athletes
- developing up to 112 national coaches
- \$71 million on improving access to coaching and officiating training for up to 45,000 people
- \$237 million for elite sport
- \$62 million pumped into Australian Institute of Sport
- funding community education initiatives for 28 national sporting organisations.

The link between broadening participation and the health and community agenda are also given highly priority. Kate Ellis comments in the report:

“The active lifestyle that has played a significant role in establishing our nation’s identity, culture and international sporting reputation is being challenged by the demands of modern life and an increasingly sedentary lifestyle, particularly amongst our children”

There is a firm commitment to broadening participation to children and young people by embedding sport into the school curriculum in primary and secondary schools. Volunteers continue to gain recognition with a proposed National Sports Volunteer Plan to better support volunteers.

The Australian Sports Commission will take a lead role in driving through changes in the sports system. This will require collaborative work with states and territories and NSOs surrounding participation planning and high performance programs. The ASC will work with government to form a new National Sport and Active Recreation Policy Framework which will help guide sports policy across Australia.

An integrated ‘whole of sport’ approach, with a critical focus on the ‘missing link’ of sporting pathways between grassroots and elite sports requires significant planning, consultation, research and collaboration between agencies and stakeholders.

As Kate Ellis states:

“Australian sport is at a critical junction”

The report highlights an urgency in sports policy and sporting structure that will fail to materialise without a robust consideration of the training and skilling implications for the industry.

The Skills Alliance has been researching the workforce development issues surrounding the agenda for broadening participation and inclusion in particular, and we will shortly be releasing a discussion paper. We have examined many of the skilling implications that link directly with ‘Australian Sport: The Pathway to Success’. Some of the skills and training needs outlined in our discussion paper relate to:

- child protection
- inclusion and diversity
- disability and adaptive sport
- risk assessment
- marketing and designing programs for specific targeted groups
- collaborative planning and partnership work
- networking and community engagement
- data protection and information privacy
- record keeping and recording
- volunteer management
- coaching and officiating
- mentoring

Investing the time, money and effort in an appropriately skilled sports workforce, whether paid or unpaid, will inevitably provide that ‘missing link’ between community and high

performance sport. An industry that is equipped with the right skills at the right time holds the map to the pathway which points to our sporting success.

Follow the link to '*Australian Sport: The Pathway to Success*' to read more about the new vision for Australian Sport at:

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/pathway-to-success>

If you would like to comment on any of the issues relating to the report, please e-mail Fiona at policy@skillsalliance.com.au