

**THE COALITION OF MAJOR PROFESSIONAL AND PARTICIPATION SPORTS
INCORPORATED**

SUBMISSION TO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S NATIONAL SPORTS PLAN

31 JULY 2017



INTRODUCTION

COMPPS consists of the following organisations:

- Australian Football League (**AFL**);
- Australian Rugby Union (**ARU**);
- Cricket Australia (**CA**);
- Football Federation Australia (**FFA**);
- National Rugby League (**NRL**);
- Netball Australia (**NA**); and
- Tennis Australia (**TA**).

These sports play a huge role in developing, promoting and presenting sport in Australia from the grass roots through to the international level. They are not-for-profit bodies and are responsible for the long-term development and sustainability of their sports.

Each of these organisations is the governing body and custodian of a major professional sport in Australia. They are mass participation sports - between them, they have over 9 million participants and 16,000 clubs.

COMPPS members provide a wide range of public benefits through a self-funding business model. A large portion of the revenue of COMPPS members is devoted to enhancing, promoting and developing sport for all Australians both at national and 'grassroots' level.

Introduction – A National Sports Plan (NSP)

One of COMPPS' roles is to provide a collective response on behalf of its member sports where their interests are aligned. In this instance, each of the sports will make its own submission concerning the NSP. The purpose of this submission is to highlight some key areas where it is believed the professional sports can make a strong and positive contribution to the NSP.

We will focus on the four pillars of the NSP – Participation; Preventative Health through physical activity; Performance; and Integrity.

We seek to use this review of sport in Australia as a catalyst to enable major participation and professional sports to be a **strategic partner** for government in achieving its objectives.

Participation

Sport participation is a key area in which professional sports have the capacity and intention to make a major contribution to the NSP.

Each of the sports invests heavily in entry-level and other participation programs in school and community environments. Our member sports do this to grow the number of people who are familiar with their sports so that they become long-term players and/or fans. They also seek to identify talented players for participation at elite level.

COMPPS member investments in participation support national school curriculum. Our programs are designed to deliver student outcomes in physical and social development as well as connections in community.

An inevitable consequence of these programs is that young Australians are participating in sport – COMPPS members offer Australian families their choice of a variety of participation options.

Participation in sport has the potential to make a major contribution to the health and wellbeing of the community.

All levels of government underestimate this potential.

Sport speaks to all communities, nationalities, genders and generations. It is the “glue” that holds Australian society together. In addition to participation, our sports are supported by a network of tens of thousands of volunteers who derive important social and mental health benefits from their participation and association with sport, while making an important contribution to sport at the same time.

Sport participation programs supported by governments are not resourced to the extent they could be. They are typically addressed in an ad hoc manner and the contribution that can be made by harnessing the power of the mass participation sports as a key strategic partner has been lost in the pursuit of medals.

The COMPPS’ sports have more than 9 million participants and 16,000 clubs. The individual submissions of the sports will provide details of the type, breadth and impact of these programs. Each of the sports has capacity for more participants and will continue to invest in programs to grow their sport. With further support from governments these initiatives could be leveraged in collaboration with sports to realise significant public policy outcomes.

Recommendation:

There is an opportunity to use this existing mass participation framework as the foundation to underpin the NSP objectives that relate to engagement of schools and participation.

A well-structured and properly resourced sports participation program that uses the power of ***the professional sports as a key strategic partner with government*** should form a major plank in the outcomes of the NSP.

Prevention through physical activity

Successive governments have toyed with the possibility of using sport and physical activity as a major weapon in achieving superior outcomes in physical and mental health. Regrettably, little has been done to make this a reality. The NSP provides an opportunity for this to happen.

COMPPS members have the advantage of annual, major events that offers a platform for the promotion and debate of societal issues like the need for increased physical activity.

The extensive existing club framework and massive numbers of participants of the professional sports mean they are ideally placed to help governments achieve their policy objectives in relation to improving physical and mental health, and better communicating positive health messages to the broader community.

A key focus of these policies should be reducing childhood obesity, and increasing physical activity across the wider community. The mass participation sports have attacked declining physical activity rates by adopting programs that seek to boost levels of physical activity amongst children and adults across Australia. Participation in team sports, particularly in club and school environments, can help young people develop many important life skills such as teamwork, respect and commitment.

It is well recognised that sport has the capacity to deliver critical and far-reaching positive health outcomes. Organised sport will always provide greater outcomes for young Australians than general physical activity.

Recommendation:

The NSP is an opportunity for government to put in place policies that support mass participation sports to achieve unprecedented health and physical activity results.

This will require access to funding beyond the traditional funding sources for sport and a more meaningful strategic relationship between sports and governments where strategies and objectives are aligned.

Government has the opportunity to work with sport by supporting sport's existing framework to underpin policies and programs that aim to increase the rate of physical activity as a proven preventative health measure.

Performance

Some of the COMPPS' sports are partner sports in the Australian Winning Edge framework and value the support they receive from the ASC to complement their own significant investment in high performance sport.

The Australia's Winning Edge program has a clear funding imbalance in favour of Olympic sports over non-Olympic sports. Sports that have the greatest reach and the ability to galvanise support by Australians year-round, are not funded to the same extent as sports

that do not have that capacity. We often hear that the professional sports can look after themselves and do not need extensive government funding. That is not the case. Each sport is seeking additional funding to be able to carry out the programs that they need to do to maximise the impact of their sport.

Recommendation:

The National Sports Plan should adopt a framework in which more funding is allocated to sports that have the greatest chance of success in world competition and that have the capacity to achieve wide participation by Australians.

Integrity

This is an area of great interest and importance to the professional sports.

We are aware that a Review Panel chaired by Mr James Wood, AO, QC, is conducting a wide-ranging review of issues that relate to the integrity of Australian sport and the bodies that administer and control sport in Australia. The professional sports welcome this review.

It is intended that COMPPS will make a detailed submission to the Review Panel.

By way of preliminary comment, we submit that professional sport in Australia has an excellent record in relation to issues concerning integrity. There have been comparatively few issues and these have been dealt with effectively and efficiently.

The professional sports have invested heavily in their integrity programs and have a high level of vigilance across the breadth of their sports.

We look forward to further interaction with the Review Panel.

Sporting Infrastructure

COMPPS considers that access to quality community sporting facilities is one of the greatest barriers to growing participation and promoting physical activity through sport.

This problem is heightened in densely populated areas and where population growth projections are greatest.

The economic and social return to community far outweighs current levels of government investment in sporting infrastructure. A feature of Australian cities and our global reputation are the sporting events hosted by COMPPS members.

To cater for existing participation and accommodate future population and participation growth, COMPPS believes there is an important role for all tiers of government to develop strategic funding initiatives, in consultation with sports, to fund a contribution to the improvement and development of Australia's network of community sporting facilities.

Recommendation:

The National Sports Plan should outline how the Australian Government will lead other tiers of government to develop a commitment to improve Australia's community sporting facilities, including by establishing national sports facilities fund.

Conclusion

The NSP is an opportunity for government to put in place well structured and properly resourced policies that use the power of ***the professional sports as key strategic partners with government.***

We value the opportunity to make this submission concerning the National Sports Plan and are available to expand on any of the points raised.

Mr Malcolm Speed AO
Executive Director
The Coalition of Major Professional and Participation Sports
Suite 607
530 Little Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000