

8 February 2011

**SENATOR THE HON MARK ARBIB**

Minister for Indigenous Employment and Economic Development,  
Minister for Sport,  
Minister for Social Housing and Homelessness  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

**SUBJECT: ACTIVE AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM – FUNDING AND DELIVERY OPTIONS**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

COMPPS welcomes the invitation by The Minister in seeking advice from the major organised national sport participation bodies on the future funding and delivery model options for the Federal Government's Active After-School Program (AASC). This briefing paper has been prepared following consultation with the Heads of Departments responsible for participation development and growth from the respective COMPPS National Sporting Organisations (NSOs).

As you are aware, COMPPS consists of AFL, ARU, CA, FFA, NRL, NA and TA.

## **1. KEY ISSUES**

- **1.1 Delivery of Program Objectives:** Fundamentally, COMPPS is highly supportive of the principles of the AASC program and working with the Australian Government and ASC to deliver its objectives to Australian communities. However, it is the view of the COMPPS members that the AASC Program in its current form is a sub-optimal vehicle to target physically inactive children and build sustainable local community involvement in organised sport. Overall, there is an absence of reliable independent research to evidence that the program is achieving its objective, particularly with regard to whether inactive children are being reached and being converted into regular sport participants.
- **1.2 Inefficient Delivery Model:** The substantial program budget of \$43.5 million reaches just 190,000 children and only 25% of the nation's primary schools. Excessive administrative overheads and onerous compliance arrangements of the AASC has resulted in less than half (\$20.1m) of overall funding reaching sites (schools and after-school care centres) in 2009.
- **1.3 Misalignment with Sport:** AASC sport programs are selected (by schools or providers) without consultation and regard to the targeted participation growth strategies and priorities of national, state or local sport stakeholders. NSOs and local clubs cannot prepare to accommodate

demand for or capitalise on AASC linkages if they are generally absent from the communication and planning by and between the ASC, schools and providers.

- **1.4 Compromise of Quality Assurance and Experience:** The current accreditation arrangements for AASC providers (instructors) are conducted independent of the NSOs by the ASC. The COMPPS NSOs have considerable concern about the overall lack of control and quality assurance of their sports being delivered by non-NSO accredited/recognised providers. This presents compromise to the participant experience, preferred game format, and the reputation and image of their respective sports.

## 2. CURRENT SITUATION

The AASC program was introduced in 2004, principally in response to the rising incidence of obesity in the general population, and in particular amongst Australian children. The Australian Sports Commission received \$90 million in funding over three years to establish the program, which was first extended for three years in April 2007 with \$124.4 million in additional funding, and one additional year (2011) funding of \$43.5 million.

At the directive of the then Government, the AASC was implemented by the ASC in a very short-timeframe and consequently with limited consultation with NSOs on program design and roll out or regard to current initiatives, priorities or preferences of the various sporting bodies. The approach was inflexible and particularly problematic for the major sporting codes already operating well-developed junior recruitment strategies and programs. As a result, genuine stakeholder buy-in to the AASC was not realised and the opportunity to leverage the capacity, reach and expertise of the major sporting codes was reduced.

More recently, aspects of the AASC program and collaboration by and between the ASC and the NSOs have incrementally improved. However, the program is still regarded by sport as sub-optimal in delivery outcomes and value for the Government's significant investment. The aims of the AASC program are generally supported by COMPPS; the problem resides with the execution. The key areas of concern with the current delivery and funding model include:

### 2.1 The After-Hours Timeslot

- The current after-school delivery significantly reduces the probability of reaching the priority-targeted group of inactive children.
- The delivery of age-appropriate and quality sport experiences is diminished in the current timeslot due to the large diversity of age groups that the provider often has to cater for in a single group.
- The timeslot generally presents difficulties for local club administrators to get involved, however this aspect is considered less problematic in regional and rural areas.

## **2.2 Return on Investment**

- The indicative costs of NSO programs delivered by employees and volunteers typically range between \$1-4 per session, per participant.
- In 2010, the annual average cost of approximately \$228 per AASC participant is substantially higher than typical per session delivery costs of the COMPPS national junior and schools recruitment programs. By way of comparison, the Australian Rugby League reaches 1.2 million school children participants per annum with 65 full-time staff, 200 part-time volunteers on a program budget of \$4 million.
- The excessive administration and compliance costs (in part identified by the ANAO in its review of the program in 2008/09) and the quantum of ASC staff in non-program delivery roles diminishes the ability for the program funding to reach and impact the intended participants.

## **2.3 Failure to Link AASC and Local Community Sporting Clubs**

The current arrangements for AASC sport program selection by a school or provider, and the subsequent linking into local community sporting clubs is not optimised or aligned with the targeted participation growth strategies of the respective sports.

- National, state and local sporting organisations often have no involvement or prior knowledge of their sport being delivered via AASC at a local school. While the theoretical ability of the AASC to cultivate 'club ready prospects' is legitimate, in practice this does not appear to be working as intended. For example, there may be no local club capacity or infrastructure to cater for increased demand as a result of an AASC sport program. Alternatively, the timing of the AASC offering does not lend itself to the typical seasonal recruitment of many of the major participation sports – thus demand from new participants may evaporate.

## **2.4 Quality Control of Programs**

- AASC providers/community coaches of AASC funded programs are required to complete a generic five module ASC Community Coach Training Program and the satisfactory completion of a national criminal history police check/working with children check. The majority of COMPPS NSOs have now invested in the development of AASC specific program resources for use by AASC providers. However, AASC providers are not required to participate in NSO foundation coaching courses, which have been specifically designed for the AASC program.

## **3. OPTIONS**

It is essential that allocation of funding for the AASC be maintained at and above current levels beyond 2011. Sport provides the Australian Government with the most effective vehicle to advance the objectives of the current program (which has improved since its inception), however it is not

optimal. The preferred option of the COMPPS NSOs for the future funding and delivery model of the AASC comprises a combination of strategies:

### **3.1 Bridge the School and After-School Hours Gap**

To successfully target inactive children, age appropriate sport and physical activity experiences must be offered, at least in part, during school hours. The extension of the AASC offering in the last 2 hours of the school day combined with the current after hours programming would significantly increase the probability of reaching the targeted participants, while simultaneously satisfying the after-school care requirements of working parents who rely on this service. This concept could be further expanded to include AASC school-based competitions to be conducted over a number of weeks, organised by sport in cooperation with relevant education authorities.

- The school hours session would place a greater emphasis on quality of experience with the additional benefit of building teacher involvement and confidence in the delivery of sport.
- The COMPPS NSOs would operate as a collective in the AASC funded school hours timeslot to provide schools with a streamlined ‘one-stop shop’ of seasonal, age appropriate, high quality sport participation offerings delivered by NSO accredited coaches/providers. Program delivery would be aligned to the individual targeted growth strategies of the NSOs in partnership with state and local sporting clubs.
- There is substantial benefit having the NSO’s and their local member clubs directly involved in the AASC program delivery. This arrangement would significantly improve the probability of sustainable participation in organised physical activities offered through local sporting clubs outside of school hours.

### **3.2 Workforce Development and Scalability**

- All providers/coaches delivering AASC funded programs would be required to complete the COMPPS NSOs coach foundation courses as a prerequisite to delivering the sport. This will ensure improved quality control of program delivery and the participant experience. The COMPPS NSOs can provide efficient and integrated multi-sport delivery of the foundation coaching courses.
- Targeted expansion of NSO accredited AASC providers/coaches, particularly drawing upon the university workforce pool of students with relevant tertiary study interests. Increasing the supply of NSO accredited providers/coaches has the additional benefit of building capacity, scale and quality of coaches to community club and privately delivered sport participation offerings.

### **3.3 Leverage the AASC with the Government’s Building the Education Revolution (BER)**

- The Australian Government’s \$42 billion BER investment in the nation’s schools infrastructure is providing significant benefit for both education and to some extent sport

delivery outcomes. COMPPS agrees with the recommendation of the Independent Sport Panel Report that the Australian Government should consider the repair, upgrade and development of sport and recreation facilities as a component of the BER initiative. This would be highly complementary to the AASC program.

- There are considerable financial benefits for local government, schools and local sporting clubs to develop shared-use of amenities at schools. Place is a considerable enabler for AASC and community sporting clubs and convenience is a strong factor for parents and participants. Combining these collective needs into sport delivery at quality, school-based venues would be highly efficient and effective. Despite efforts by State Departments of Education to promote shared community sport use of school facilities, the existing infrastructure remains under-utilised and heavily impeded by legal complexities with risk and liability. There is an opportunity for the Federal Government to provide leadership for the states and territories to streamline and enable the shared use of school facilities for sport by the community.

### **3.4 Cost Reduction through Streamlining Administration**

- The ANAO's 2008/09 review of the AASC program recommended that less resource intensive acquittal processes be introduced. For example, a risk-based approach to acquittals that requires the testing of only a sample of grants annually, rather than the confirmation of all 3162 grants twice per year.

## **4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION**

Fundamentally, COMPPS is highly supportive of the principles of the AASC program and working with the Australian Government and ASC to deliver its objectives to Australian communities. However, it is the strong preference of the COMPPS NSOs that they and their member organisations and clubs be permitted more influence on what, when, where and by whom their sport is delivered within the context of AASC funding and activities.

The combination of strategies proposed will deliver:

- An increased probability of successfully reaching inactive children and converting into sustained participation in physical activities;
- A more efficient and streamlined AASC delivery model, which will ensure a better return on investment and improved program reach to targeted participants for the Government;
- A higher quality and age-appropriate physical activity experience for participants; and
- Alignment of strategic growth strategies and priorities for organized sport and physical activities by and between NSOs, State and Local sporting organisations and Federal and State Governments.

Stronger engagement with sport and simplifying sports link to education will significantly improve the desired program outcomes of the AASC and the Australian Government's return on investment in the program. It is recommended that:

**Following the Minister's Office internal review and analysis of the AASC program, that the Minister authorises COMPPS in consultation with the Australian Sport Commission, to develop and provide analysis of the feasibility and potential benefits of an alternative COMPPS/NSO-driven AASC delivery and funding model.**

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