



Sport SA Discussion paper/ Media release in response to the Federal Sport Minister's release of the first National Sports Plan.

The release, by the Federal Sports Minister, Bridget McKenzie, of the nation's first ever sport plan – Sport 2030, is a welcome development for the sports industry and for sport more broadly.

This follows the Minister's earlier policy release - that sport should be compulsory in all schools. It would be fair to say the plan is short on detail and even shorter on funding commitment and as we know, the devil is in the detail.

It would be easy to criticise the Federal Government for this shortcoming and dismiss the plan as another in a long line of dust gathering political strategies. That's one way to look at it. Another way may be to use it as an opportunity to fill in the blanks, to be around the table to help plan the detail and in doing so position South Australia to once again be a leading light for sport. After all, as the Minister points out, *we shouldn't fall into the trap of thinking that government can fix problems on their own...*the government (federal and state) certainly has a role to play, a big role but so does the sports industry itself and as the leader for sport in South Australia, so does Sport SA.

If nothing else, the plan provides a platform for South Australia to critically examine its place, its investment and its commitment to sport in the local and national context.

The Sport 2030 plan outlines an ambitious strategy for sport built around four key pillars – participation, performance, integrity and strengthening the sports industry. Each of these pillars provides a sound rationale, logic and vision for why an investment in sport can have enormous benefits for the community; economically, for

improved health and education outcomes and improved social outcomes. Ultimately, Minister McKenzie surmises *it's about the power of sport to change lives and communities.*

Each of the pillars warrants further discussion individually but of course they are interdependent and intertwined.

Participation – As the Minister outlines, over 14 million Australian's participate in some form of sport annually and importantly over 1.8 million Australian's volunteer in sport. Whilst these numbers are impressive, we also know that sports participation has been declining. The 2017 sports participation data from Roy Morgan Research demonstrates that just one in five Australians now regularly play competitive sports, down from 27 percent in 2001.

Source: Roy Morgan Single Source Australia. Base: Australians aged 14+, January to December 2001 (sample = 26,198) and January to December 2016 (sample = 14,330).

There are many reasons for this decline; lack of quality fundamental movement skills being taught in our early childhood and primary school settings (a key determining factor in maintaining sports participation in later life) lack of access to sporting facilities in the community, increasing participant and club membership fees, to name just a few.

And yet we know that sport and physical activity participation has so many benefits in terms of our social connectivity, health and an increasing body of research that links sports participation to improved academic outcomes. (See: *Physical activity and performance at school: a systematic review of the literature including a methodological quality assessment.*

Singh A1, Uijtdewilligen L, Twisk JW, van Mechelen W, Chinapaw MJ.)

For these reasons Sport SA welcomes the Federal Minister's investment in this area and looks forward to working with the government to progress this agenda.

Improving **Performance** and achieving sporting excellence builds on Australia's reputation as a sporting nation and a nation of proud sporting moments in history, moments that live on in our hearts and minds long after their achievement. Elite sport and elite athletes provide an economic and social benefit to the state and

the nation and provide role models for our young athletes to look up to and aspire to be like. They are also local heroes for those (young and old) who's love of sport at the grass roots or spectator level is inspired by their favourite sport and athletes. South Australia has the second highest rate of sports attendance of all states with 49% of South Australians aged 15 years or older attending a sporting event each year. This includes our significant sporting events such as the Tour Down Under, Adelaide 500, Three Day Event and swimming championships.

Whilst it is acknowledged that relatively few will reach the elite level, investing in improving achievement to allow our elite athletes to perform at the highest possible level nationally and internationally is an investment that clearly provides benefit beyond the elite team and/or athletes.

This investment also provides an opportunity for South Australia to once again position itself as a centre for sporting excellence through investment in our own first class facilities and coaches, returning us to an era where we developed the very first Sports Institute (SASI) the results of which yielded three out the four gold medals at the 1984 Olympic Games (Glynis Nunn, Dean Lukin and Mike Turtur) and when national sporting academies such as the national cricket academy were based in South Australia.

A focus on **Integrity** in sport in an era where illegal wagering, global match 'fixing', doping and club cultures based on poker machine and alcohol revenue are the norm, is a sensible focus.

Much like the debates of the late eighties and early nineties that led to the phasing out of tobacco sponsorship of sport, is it time to consider the role of gambling and alcohol sponsorship and advertising in sport? Is it time to examine how sport benefits from operating from a position of integrity? South Australia has taken a hard line on gambling advertising during televised sport during children's viewing hours. We are well placed to be a part of this important discussion going forward.

Strengthening Australia's Sports **Industry** is a very welcome pillar to the National strategy. As the Federal Minister outlined in her press club launch of the new strategy, *sport is about challenging unfair stereotypes (be they gender, ability or race). Sport is about including, inspiring, invigorating and creating pride.* Sport teaches

the value of persistence, hard work, teamwork, learning through success **and** failure and resilience. It is the sports industry that can deliver these skills, in our schools, our communities and our local and state sporting clubs. These skills are critical in the current South Australian context and the sports industry needs to be a critical part of the dialogue to strengthen the industry and thus strengthen these skills in our community.

South Australia has the unenviable reputation of leading the nation in the number of children living in out of home care, with Aboriginal children highly over-represented in the child protection system. NAPLAN outcomes and International comparative testing in educational achievement demonstrate that South Australia is not achieving at the levels of previous generations and achievement continues to decline. Domestic violence is disturbingly high and youth crime and incarceration are trending upwards. Bullying and violence in our schools, as evidence by recent concerning multiple stabbings, continues to increase. Drug and alcohol abuse, particularly amphetamines, is on the rise and the consequences of this abuse are having a devastating impact on families. Disability discrimination and low rates of disability employment are marginalising those in our community living with a disability and race, religious, gender and sexual discrimination pervade.

These are complex social issues and sport does not hold all of the solutions, but sport must be part of the solution. One entity or one government department cannot solve these issues alone; it is often in the collective power that complex issues can be resolved. The South Australian sports industry is a collective of willing partners, with Sport SA as the leading entity for sport in our state. Sport and Sport SA must be part of the conversation and must step up as an industry to play a part in helping to develop solutions.

To commence this conversation Sport SA will work with our members and partners to gather their collective views on what is required to truly position sport in South Australia as an effective vehicle for economic, health, education and social change. A range of evidenced based policy proposals that clearly outline the benefits of investment will then be put to the Minister for Sport (and other relevant Minister's) in response to the Federal Minister's National Plan and school sport policy

Sport SA looks forward to working with the state and federal Minister to develop the much-needed detail to make this strategy a genuine game changer not just for sport and sports participation but more importantly for community and society more broadly. An investment in sport is critical to ensure *the sports sector is strong, viable, contemporary and inclusive with high quality successful organisations.*