

Submission

by the **Equestrian Federation of Australia**

to the **Independent Sport Panel**

(23 October 2008)



Firstly, we would like to thank you very much for the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry on behalf of Equestrian Sport. We realise that this Inquiry is not about awarding particular levels of funding to particular sports but about finding ways to improve Australia's sporting system as a whole. No doubt other bodies have presented some of the points that we are going to make but in summary they are:

- The need for unified representation of sport to Government
- The need to streamline the system, in which the sport is managed and administered
- The need to focus the limited resources available on fewer sports.

We will make these points in the context of the Panel's brief, without necessarily offering input to each item listed in the Terms of Reference.

Before we get to the detail, however, we need to provide you with the context, from which we are coming, by giving you a brief overview of the Equestrian Federation of Australia (EFA) and Equestrian sport.

History and Sport Coverage

The EFA was established in 1951 with Branches in all States. The Northern Territory was added as a Branch in the 1980s but is about to be administered by the Queensland Branch. The EFA is recognised by the International Equestrian Federation (FEI) as the governing body of Equestrian sports in Australia, as it is by the Australian Sports Commission and the Australian Olympic Committee. The FEI sports ("Disciplines") covered are: The Olympic sports of Dressage, Eventing, Jumping and Para-Equestrian, and the non-Olympic sports of Endurance, Carriage Driving, Vaulting and Reining. (Note: The EFA will take on the high performance management of Para-Equestrian from early 2009.) There is also the (affiliated) regional discipline of Tent Pegging and the EFA Discipline of Show Horse. Most recently, Interschool Competition, which covers a number of these sports, has acquired more significance.

We need to point out, however, that the EFA does not have "control" of all horse sports, including Pony Club, although the EFA system of policies, by-laws, sport-technical and safety rules and the coaching and officiating accreditation systems are widely used by other horse sporting bodies. We are working on a Memorandum of Understanding with Pony Club.

The EFA has about 19,000 members, who take up membership directly with the Branches (not with clubs), and has about 400 clubs and associations with another 35,000 members affiliated with it. The EFA Branches are the EFA's "shareholders" and since 2004 appoint the National Board using a non-representational "skills-based" system. The National body has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Branches, which delineates each others' roles and responsibilities.

Sport Performance and Funding

Australian riders have participated in all Olympic Games since 1956 (except for Moscow 1980) and have always placed well in the Discipline of Eventing. The medal record now stands at 6 Gold medals, 3 Silver medals and 2 Bronze medals, with the most recent a Team Silver medal at the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, where the Equestrian competitions were held in Hong Kong. For the record, Australian Paralympic riders have had medal performances since the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games and scored two individual Silver medals in Hong Kong.

Equestrian achieved its best-ever overall Olympic result in 2008, with remarkable performance improvements also in Jumping and Dressage. Australian riders have had on-going success at high-level international competition, with riders winning or placing at major International events and championships in the Olympic Disciplines and also in Carriage Driving and Endurance..

Equestrian has been receiving High Performance Funding from the ASC since the mid-1990s for exclusive use on the Olympic Disciplines. The current annual contribution is around \$1.6 million, a figure that was "supplemented" with additional funding of \$1.5 million in 2008 by the Federal Government (DAFF & ASC) to enable a restoration of the Olympic preparation and competition program that had been severely affected by the outbreak of Equine Influenza in Australia.

Key Features of the Sport

These features and the sport's challenges outlined in the next section have a strong bearing on how the sport needs to approach the future and also strongly influence our thinking on the Australian sporting system.

- Equestrian sport requires a **partnership with an animal**

It might seem obvious but the involvement of an animal in the sport of Equestrian makes it stand out from all the other sports and brings with it additional challenges and opportunities. Some logistical aspects are the same as in any sport that uses large "equipment" (e.g. Sailing: large "playing fields", transportation, etc.). Because the "equipment" is a living being, however, there are added dimensions on which we will only touch:

- Emotional/social attachment (both ways), with positive **therapeutic effects** (socially and individually, both mental and physical).
- "Husbandry", Veterinary care, breeding issues, doping control
- It is one of very few sports with **total gender equality in competition**.

- Membership and participation is largely **rural-based or peri-urban**, where the cost of keeping horses is relatively cheap.
- On the other hand, there is an increasing need to rely on “**owners**” to provide horses at the elite end of competition because of the value of good competition horses (there is an estimated \$40 million of horseflesh on AUS elite squads).
- For a gender-equal sport, **female participation** rates are extremely high and are also reflected in management and increasingly in governance representation.
- Horse sports are **family-oriented**, both for “husbandry” and for competition support. (Note changing trends in family units impacting on sport generally.)
- Participation is relatively **age-independent**: People can ride from early childhood until old age. (Note: Our oldest rider at the recent Olympic Games was 60, and it was his first Games. Also note that the changing age distribution in the general population will require a different approach from sports. Equestrian will have an advantage here.)

Current Challenges and Aims

The greatest challenge will be success at the 2012 London Olympic Games and the 2010 FEI World Equestrian Games in Kentucky, USA, in the lead-up. We were lucky to receive additional funding for our preparations for Beijing as a result of the Equine influenza outbreak and are sure that this “made the difference” to our performances. Our plans indicate that **additional funding of around \$1.3 million** is required.

Governments in many other countries (particularly Great Britain) are investing huge amounts in Equestrian and other Olympic sports, figures several multiples of what Australian sports are receiving. In the case of Great Britain, most of this money is generated through lotteries. How this will be affected by the current **world economic crisis** remains to be seen.

In addition to the impact on sport of a recession in the Australian economy, our sport is being affected by the continuing **drought**, which has also larger socio-economic consequences. While there is hope that the current drought may soon end, the evidence accumulating about increasing global warming reduced our optimism.

Apart from success at the London 2012 Olympic Games, our broad aims for the next four years are

- Growing Equestrian sport by 40 percent
- Make Australia the leading country in the Southern Hemisphere for horses and horsemanship
- Improve the level of International competition in Australia to the degree required to attract overseas participation and TV coverage

In cooperation with the ASC, we are in the process of developing our strategic plan for the 2009-2013 Quadrennium. Copies of the 2005-2009 Strategic Plan are available on request. A summary can be downloaded from our web site www.equestrian.org.au.

Terms of Reference

1. Ensure Australia's continued elite sporting success

- Identify any areas of duplication within Australia's sporting system and recommend ways to build a more efficient system.
- Examine the relationship between the Australian Sports Commission, Australian Institute of Sport, State and Territory Institutes, academies of sport and regional institutes and how this relationship could deliver better athlete pathways.
- Recommend opportunities to ensure maximum returns from talent identification programs.

We support any effort to get to a more efficient sporting system in Australia, with less duplication than appears to be happening presently. As a sport, we are a Federation that has similar challenges but we have been working hard over the last decade to introduce change and streamline our own operations. Much still needs to be done and any assistance this Inquiry and the Government measures that will follow from it can give will be appreciated. We need leadership for a more unified sporting system that is going in the same direction regardless of the region in which an activity takes place.

One Voice

Firstly, there needs to be either a new body that integrates the lead national sport agencies (ASC, AOC, APC, CAS, etc.) or renewed efforts through dialogue (annual conference or similar) and joint action to combine the views of these. Other countries have done this to an extent. We mention Germany with its new body *Germany Olympic Sport Union*, which despite its name represents Olympic and non-Olympic sports (including Football) into a united front to deal with issues that affect all sports.

One System

Australian Sport should have a system that balances the need for ONE agreed direction for all activities with the ability of "lower-level" partners (State and Regional bodies, councils, clubs) to still exercise some discretion and local inventiveness. In other words, policy and overall action plans and parameters are set at the top of the pyramid and are followed by the levels below who implement them (service delivery), but who still have enough scope for initiative and inventiveness to readily accept ownership of their work and role.

There should be one system of sport institutes (no differences in naming, either) under the leadership of the AIS, all encouraging a similar approach for NSOs and SSOs.

All this should be possible to achieve through agreement and some financial arm-twisting from Canberra. It is amazing to see wide-ranging agreements in the European Community affecting more than 20 NATIONS with many more

CULTURES and yet have so much division, lack of alignment and duplication (= waste of resources in a relatively small and homogenous country like Australia).

More Focused Distribution of Available Funds

While there is agreement that increased funding is necessary to ensure Australia's continued success at international level, the distribution of available moneys available for the elite end needs to be streamlined, particularly in the absence of an increase in funding available. This should lead to a "bigger bang for the bucks". Note: The EFA has been reducing its elite squads for the same reason because it realised that a relatively small amount of funding spread over a large number of athletes does not make the "difference" that we are looking for.

Northern Hemisphere Competition Issues for Equestrian

One particular aspect of maintaining elite competitiveness in all sports is participation in international competition in the Northern Hemisphere. In the case of Equestrian, this means that in addition to human athletes, their "equipment" (= horses) needs to be transported as well. Horse transport is very expensive, and import and export costs are compounded by quarantine requirements and frequently the inability to maintain the horses' competition fitness during quarantine periods due to lack of facilities.

We know that increased quarantine requirements imposed following the outbreak of Equine Influenza and its subsequent eradication will make the import and export of horses for competition purposes even more expensive. We understand that there is a full risk analysis underway and hope that its results will moderate the seemingly excessive requirements currently in place.

2. **Better place sport and physical activity as a key component of the Government's preventative health approach**

- Examine Government frameworks to ensure an on-going focus on grassroots and community sport and physical activity.
- Examine Government programs to increase participation rates in sport and physical activity, including analysis of existing programs.
- Identify and recommend opportunities to break down barriers to participation at junior, adult and senior ages with a view to making it simpler and easier for Australians to participate in the sport or physical activity of their choice, including for women, the disabled and Indigenous people.
- Recommend strategies to increase the effectiveness of the promotion of sport by the Federal Government to better communicate positive health and activity messages to the broader community.

There is a difference between programs that aim to increase participation in sport and increase physical activity.

The ASC Active After-Schools Community (AASC) program targets and promotes physical activity within primary schools rather than long term participation and involvement in community based sport. The Federal Government contributes large sums to the AASC program with few tangible outcomes on the increase in community sport participation.

There is no evidence that the children involved in the AASC program have become involved in community based sport as a result of their participation in the program. Quite the opposite! In the recent "Community Case Study - Vasse" commissioned by the ASC there is clear evidence that in the evidence gathering, parents feel that community sport can and possibly should be delivered at the school or within its facilities rather than participating in community sport.

There is potential to re-direct part of this funding towards NSOs for National participation in community sport initiatives as well as continuing to provide the AASC physical activity options in a modified format.

Through the combined funding of State Sport & Recreation departments and the ASC, NSOs and SSOs target increasing participation in both community clubs and Primary and Secondary Schools. Having Federal Government support in promoting the benefits of both rather than focusing on one or the other will communicate positive health messages to the community rather than a section of this.

The ASC also offers a 'Women in Sport Leadership' grant for individuals and organisations. This grant contributes approx \$400,000 annually. Several NSOs are predominantly female-based, with female participation, females in coaching and managing roles and a high percentage of female volunteers. This grant could be utilised towards funding a National Volunteering program for all sports, male and female.

3. **Strengthen pathways from junior sport to grassroots community sport right through to elite and professional sport**

- Examine the capacity of the system to ensure optimal and efficient delivery of the athlete and coach pathway for any given sport.
- Recommend the most effective support and recognition for the coaches, officials, umpires, administrators and volunteers who keep our community clubs alive.
- Examine how relationships between the Commonwealth Government and National Sporting Organisations, State Sporting Organisations and Australia's peak representative bodies at key multi-sports competitions may be strengthened to deliver better performance outcomes.

Coach training and accreditation is the responsibility of the NSO in conjunction with the SSOs and their employees / volunteers. While there is potential to utilise cross-promotion in conducting the training, this is only achievable in select sports.

There is also a strong need for the promotion of officials training, rather than ensuring there is a strong capacity to deliver coaches and athlete pathways!

It is the responsibility of the NSO & SSO to ensure clubs / associations are not only viable but are also sustainable in the long term. The training, support and recognition of those involved lies with the club / association. The development of appropriate resources for the training of the club / association administrators should be the combined responsibility shared equally between the NSO and SSO, with facilitation by the ASC.

An ASC National rating scale for clubs and associations (evidenced in various sports, e.g. Gymnastics, Netball) would strengthen these clubs and associations and would also ensure best practice models, effective administration, volunteer training etc for community based sport.

An improved on-line training resource for club / event administrators would also ensure effective management within clubs / associations for their members (volunteers, coaches, officials, athletes etc). It would also ensure clubs have a responsibility to provide a service to their members.

NSOs rely on increasing participation through SSO staff and programs. There are several examples of sports that have differing objectives at NSO and SSO level in the development of athletes, coaches, officials and volunteers. This is not new, nor is it acceptable. The reasoning for the differing objectives can in part be attributed to the different funding outcomes between Federal and State Government organisations.

To date there have been two sports who have attempted to develop their sport into a "unitary model" whereby the State operates through and as representatives of the NSO. Both of these sports have yet to achieve the desired outcome.

The same issues, from a NSO perspective, can be equally applied to the Federal Government/Australian Sports Commission and the State Sport and Recreation bodies. There needs to be a streamlined approach and a shared responsibility between Federal and State Government in how they assist sports in achieving better performance outcomes.

4. Maintain Australia's cutting edge approach to sports science, research and technology

- Examine the capacity of the system to ensure provision of cutting edge technology, innovation, sport science, sports medicine, applied research to underpin sport performance and development, including ways to maintain Australia's position as leaders in anti-doping.
- Examine the current partnerships in place within these fields and recommend any potential partnerships.

5. Identify opportunities to increase and diversify the funding base for sport through corporate sponsorship, media and any recommended reforms, such as enhancing the effectiveness of the Australian Sports Foundation.

To encourage a more shared approach to funding of sport between Government and the private sector, we should investigate the introduction of incentives such as tax advantages that may encourage private funding to Olympic sports that only receive a meagre portion of the sponsorship in sport (see below). Media could also be encouraged to support sport, particularly through advertising campaigns by sports targeting grassroots participation and involvement with tax incentives.

In 2006, there were approximately \$2 billion of sponsorship and television rights attributable to sport in Australia. A recent ASC survey of Olympic sports revealed a total sponsorship figure of just over \$13 million, of which approximately half is value-in-kind or product. The vast majority of sponsorship, including television rights, for sport goes to the four football codes, cricket, tennis and golf. Apart from these professional sports, very few other Australian sports enjoy free-to-air TV coverage and most have to pay for any coverage they get (usually delayed highlights), making sponsorship hard to sell.

Similarly, we need to look at offering tax advantages as a countermeasure to offset the amount of money being offered to our top coaches and support staff, currently being enticed to work for other nations, and keep them in Australia. A lot of money and effort has usually been expended in getting them to their level. The cost of replacing them, sometimes with lower level or less-experienced overseas coaches is neither desirable nor economical.

Finally, the Australian Sports Commission should be encouraged to raise the level of training and other support it can offer to NSOs and their affiliated bodies in marketing and sponsorship activities.

In closing, we need to point out the economic importance to Australia of the horse sector (and not just the Racing sector). Maintaining a healthy Equestrian sport does not only improve Australian sport's competitiveness on the world stage, but brings with it a range of social and economic benefits.