
*Australian Sport and the Olympics: Historical and Contemporary Issues**

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The Sydney Olympics are expected to deliver another 'golden era' equally as grand, if not more glittering, than did the Melbourne Olympics of 1956. While most other areas of Government spending were severely cut in the first Coalition budget of 1996, sport (and Olympic sport in particular) and defence were among the few areas spared. With bipartisan support for the 2000 Games, sport has attained significant status. We might predict that Australian sport will be engulfed by Olympic euphoria in 2000 and, before we are swept away by it, we should ask some difficult questions about the Games-not the least of which concern government support for the Games made on behalf of 'the people'. What is the nature and rationale of Government support. Is public policy on the Olympics compatible with the aims of Olympism. How can we justify an expensive elite sporting program alongside the tenets of the Olympic charter. What about the trickle down effect--can we expect sport from the grass roots level up to benefit as a result of the Olympics and Government spending on the Games and elite athlete programs. Should it be public policy or Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) policy to set targets for Olympic gold. While this paper focuses on government policy it will also question AOC policy. Are the current aims of the AOC compatible with Olympic goals as set out in the Olympic Charter. In attempting an analysis of the above I have found it informative to consider the history of government involvement in the Olympic movement and sport in Australia as well as the AOC's evolving attitude to the issue.

Government Support For Sport in Australia

Governments in Australia have been making policy on sport for a long time. In 1911, as the world rushed towards war in the Edwardian twilight, the Commonwealth Department of Defence, under the auspices of the Junior Cadet movement, instituted organised physical training in government schools. This situation was maintained until 1929 when the Federal government withdrew support. The end of military involvement in physical education coincided with the realisation that organised games, such as football and cricket, as well as sports like swimming and athletics had become an integral part of the school sporting scene (Kirk and Twigg, 1995, p. 21).

At the beginning of this period Australia had competed in four Olympic Games and had Olympic heroes-Edwin Flack, Fred Lane, Stan Rowley, Snowy Baker, and Frank Beaurepaire. These athletes attended the Games under their own steam with no government support. For example Rowley took five months leave from work, £40 of his own money and £100 raised by public subscription to reach

Paris in 1900 (H Gordon, 1994 p. 30). While success was feted back home in Australia, none of this had any bearing on government policy on sport. Involvement by governments was driven by concerns of national health, the perceived benefits of the games ethic (see J A Mangan, 1986) and by concerns over the physical preparedness of the youth of the nation for military combat. These concerns were of course magnified by the horrible losses suffered by the Australian forces in the great war.

Olympic councils existed in Sydney, Melbourne and Hobart by the end of 1911 (Gordon, p. 69). Australia did not have a national Olympic committee until the Australian Olympic Council was formed in January 1914 (I Jobling, OCAS, p. 35) The first approach to government by the Olympic movement in Australia took place in Melbourne in January 1912 when a deputation met Prime Minister Andrew Fisher. They asked the Prime Minister to support the travel expenses of the team on a dollar for dollar basis up to a limit of £2000. Fisher was sympathetic to the idea but cabinet over-ruled him and no government support for the team was forthcoming (Gordon, pp. 72-73). It was not until the 1924 Games in Paris that the federal government contributed to the Australian team when £3000 was pledged if the AOC raised £10 000 which it did (Gordon, p.105). This ad hoc support for the Game's teams continued until the 1970s. In 1953 the amount was £8000, £20,000 in 1956 and by 1976, \$250,000. (Gordon pp. 180, 233, 313) It is significant that this support was in the form of donations to assist the team selected by the AOC to be outfitted and travel to the games. There was no government support for a national sport infrastructure nor a concept of nurturing athletes to the elite level. "The 1950s (and 1960s) saw the Commonwealth approach sport with the same philosophy that they applied to the economy: the industrious, talented and resourceful would be rewarded, irrespective of the level of aspiration". Provision of infrastructure was a matter for state governments and local councils with the national government having no role to play (T. Armstrong, OCAS, p. 188).

The national government's approach to sport during this period was purely utilitarian. While the military influence was removed from school sport in 1929 the government did not stay out of making sports policy in schools for long. Throughout the 1930s a national fitness movement grew rapidly. Tensions in Europe again moved governments to look at physical education as an essential part of maintaining a state of military preparedness in case of war. Security concerns and the national health drove the Australian Government to establish a national council for physical fitness in 1939 (Kirk & Twigg, p. 22). It was considered that the supposedly poor physical fitness of young Australians could have implications for the health of the country and in 1941 the National Fitness Act established the Commonwealth Council of National Fitness and Fitness Councils in the various States (Allcock and Mulholland, 1992: 1). While this act did not directly lead to funding of sport, it signalled a more interventionist role by governments in the area of health and fitness. Organised sport was an indirect beneficiary of this policy change. In the period 1941 to 1972 the emphasis was on funding national health and fitness--which represented grass-roots support for sport and recreation. Elite sport was left to fend for itself. Australia's top sports people were seen as benefiting from natural advantages such as climate, political stability, economic prosperity, and a healthy diet. Natural talent and determination were all that was needed, it was felt, for people to succeed. Australian natural talent, like cream, would in some automatic fashion reach the top.

In 1972 the newly elected Whitlam Labor Government placed sport more firmly on the Federal Government agenda. A ministry included sport in its title for the first time and the Department of Tourism and Recreation was set up in 1973. In the 1973-74 federal budget \$371, 210 was provided for sport and recreation (Interim Committee for the Australian Sports Commission, 1984: 20-1). However, a central objective in the sports allocation in the Whitlam years was to encourage sport at the grass-roots level. Its fundamental goal was to develop a national system of mass-participation sport based on facilities located in Australia's suburbs. In 1975 a task force recommended the setting up of a national institute of sport to focus on developing elite athletes (Armstrong, p. 189). In that year the Labor government lost office and the task force's recommendations were not implemented by the incoming Fraser coalition government. Australia sent its Olympic team to the 1976 Montreal Olympics with the expectation that 'Aussie Spirit' and talent would achieve success with minimal government assistance, enabling Australia to bring home the usual swag of medals. Montreal was a disaster. Journalists had tipped a haul of more than 30 medals (H Gordon, 1994, p 316). Golden boy Stephen Holland, having shared his training secrets with American swimmers was beaten into third in the 1500m, an event he was expected to win easily. Star sprinter Raelene Boyle was disqualified from the 200m sprint after breaking twice. Apart from Holland only the men's hockey with a silver, and bronze in equestrian and yachting came close to Olympic glory. The national misery that followed Australia's failure brought home the reality that Australians could no longer rely on traditional reserves of guts and talent to succeed. There were embarrassing silences at press conferences as athletes were forced to bear their shame in public--they had let the nation down. The failure had cost \$800,000-\$250,000 of which had been donated by the federal Government (H Gordon, p. 313). The failure of 1976 forced the Government to accept the reality that high performance sport in Australia was lagging behind the rest of the world and that it must become involved to arrest decline in an area that had always been an important part of the nation's identity. As Harry Gordon has stated it was now clear that "money

needed to be spent on coaching, overseas competition, facilities like heated pools, research and sports medicine” (H Gordon p. 319).

The first positive impact of the Montreal experience was the establishment of the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) in 1981 with the government also undertaking to underwrite the training, travel and facilities required for elite athletes to perform in world sporting contests. Greater government spending on high performance sport from the 1980s became Olympic-driven. By 1980-81 total government spending for sport and recreation had grown to \$9,053,780, of which \$1,077,780 was allocated to the new AIS. By 1981-82 the total funding grew to \$13,101,280 with the AIS now funded to the tune of \$2,738,200 (Allcock and Mulholland, 1992: 14). Throughout the 1980s funding escalated and by 1989/90 had grown to \$48,356,000 of which \$41,049,000 went to the Australian Sports Commission, which had taken over the running of the AIS (see Allcock and Mulholland, 1992:14). In 1987-88, 98 sports were given grants under the Sports Development Program, with the ‘handouts’ to Olympic sports being among the highest. The table below shows grants give to various sports in 1987-88. Olympic sports are the main beneficiaries.

Sport	
Athletics	174 000
Australian Football	132 000
Basketball	183 000
Cricket (mens)	150 000
Gymnastics	146 000
Hockey (mens)	157 000
Rugby League	120 000
Rugby Union	107 000
Soccer (mens)	100 000
Swimming	183 000

Source: Australian Sports Commission and Australian Institute of Sport *Commonwealth Assistance to Australian Sport 1987-1988*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra 1988, pp. 106-108.

This increased funding for sport established the conditions for even more public sport to be given when Sydney secured ‘the greatest show on earth’.

Raising the Stakes for 2000

In 1993 Sydney won the bid to host the 2000 Olympics, something which accelerated the process of government funding and reward for high-profile sports. It also added new dimensions to sports funding and new categories of sports expenditure. There was the cost of the 1993 bid itself. The official cost of the bid was \$25.2 million-although the bid benefited by the voluntary support of high-profile ambassadors such as former Australian Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam. The New South Wales Coalition Government guaranteed \$1 million and a host of major companies sponsored the bid, which was matched by \$5 million from the Federal Labor government in May 1992 (R McGeoch and G Korporaal, 1994: pp. 122-123). Then there were the substantial costs of world-class facilities chiefly at Olympic Park, which included the Main Stadium, the Aquatic Centre and the Village, and many new state-of-the-art sports venues for rowing, cycling, equestrian events, and a host of other sports disciplines. The Olympic capital budget has recently been revised upwards to \$1,914,100 (OCA, 1996: 43). This represents less than 1.55 percent of total State budget outlays. Nevertheless, the money must come from other State government programs, including hospitals, education, and policing. While some of these

expenses are met by the private sector and some returns could be gained after 2000 (from the sale of housing at the Village), most of the cost came from the public purse, largely through the reallocation of the public works budget to Olympics projects.

Part of the justification for such massive Olympic spending was that New South Wales and Australia would benefit in many ways from the Olympics. KPMG Peat Marwick (1993), which was commissioned to conduct an economic impact study for the bid, estimated that the Olympics would add \$7.3 billion to the Australian GDP in the period 1991 to 2000. While it was claimed that it would cost \$1.7 billion to stage the Games, KPMG Peat Marwick (1993) estimated that there would be an additional 1.5 million tourists visiting Sydney and 156,000 new jobs would be created, with the tourism/hospitality and construction areas being the main beneficiaries. Importantly, it has been projected that over \$2 billion would be raised in extra taxes and \$3 billion generated in tourism revenue, with the net addition to GDP for New South Wales estimated at \$4.587 billion and for Sydney \$3.560 billion (SOCOG, 1997: 48).

Since the winning of the bid, the cost of staging the Games has, as we have seen, been revised upwards to somewhere between \$3 and \$5 billion. The NSW Auditor General (Tony Harris) stated in 1997 that the State government had no idea how much the Games cost! There has been a boost for the Games organisers with a windfall US\$715 million for US TV rights purchased by NBC (which, because of SOCOG's 'hedged' exchange rate, is over a billion dollars Australian). European rights have been sold for \$US350 million, Japanese for US\$135 million and South American for US\$11 million (SOCOG, 1997: 45). But it is also evident that the NSW State government has outlaid enormous sums of public money to stage a global event. Its overall benefit to the citizenry must, therefore, be properly demonstrated.

Buying Success in 2000

Partly because of this huge expenditure, the Federal and NSW governments and the Australian Olympic Committee have decided that it is essential that the Games be truly successful in terms that the public can understand-large numbers of gold medals won by Australian competitors. Perhaps losing sight of the core tenets of Olympism-the notion of taking part in the event rather than winning-a new system was put in place in an attempt to 'buy' Olympic success in 2000. A unique feature of this new system was that funds would be allocated for medal winning, and that a target of 60 medals (including 20 gold) should be set and that funds should be tied to medal prospects in individual sports. The scheme became known as the Olympic Athlete Program (OAP).

From 1994 to 2000, \$135 million will be spent by the Federal government to achieve these targets. A much smaller amount of funding has also been available for Paralympic programs. The sports budget (direct and indirect) has been increased spectacularly for elite Olympic-related sports with medal prospects. According to the ASC (1996: 1):

The OAP focuses on developing, implementing and refining high performance training, competition programs and sports science support for each of the sports likely to be on the Sydney 2000 Olympics Program. Activities are athlete centred, coach driven and performance based. As Table 2 indicates, in 1995-96 OAP funding amounted to \$23 million:

Table 2: Olympic Athlete Program Funding 1995/96

	\$A
International Competition	6,186,812
Elite Coaching	3,049,700
National Sports Program (training camps)	2,276,208
Intensive Training Centres	2,100,157
Sports Science/Sports Medicine support:	1,953,729
Direct Athlete Support	1,738,500

High performance Management	1,174,000
Athlete Development	1,119,500
Sports equipment	230,050
Other Support Activities including:	
Athlete career and education Support	
Talent identification, Sports research, Information Services	1,396,626
Russian exchange program	1,101,055
Paralympics	950,000
Total (Including AIS national support)	23,000,000

Source: Australian Sports Commission *Annual Report* (1996)

These statistics pose a number of questions. While 'successful' medal-winning sports have been rewarded with extra funds, what about Olympic sports with limited medal prospects. While the OAP and an earlier Keating Labor Government initiative, 'Maintain the Momentum' (MTM) remain intact, several sports had funding to their management structures cut. Non-Olympic sports have had to shoulder some of this burden-in terms of administrative cuts-of increased Olympic funding. The following table illustrates cuts to some less high-profile sports.

Sport	1995/96 Funding \$A	1996/97 Funding \$A
Aust. Aviation Confederation	80,000	40,000
Aero Clubs	5,000	3,750
Field Archery	16,000	13,000
Balloonning	22,000	17,500
Billiards & Snooker	27,500	23,250
Bobsleigh	8,000	8,000
Curling	25,000	25,000
Darts	19,000	16,000
Fencing	32,000	16,000
Fishing	77,000	57,000
Gliding	93,000	55,500
Handball	66,000	62,000
Hang Gliding	33,500	23,500
Ice Hockey	62,000	50,000

Korfball	21,000	18,250
Marching	20,500	18,400
Parachuting	98,000	72,000
Sporting Shooters	21,000	18,250
Synchronised Swimming	35,800	33,300
Trampolining	52,400	45,150
Tug-of-War	6,000	4,500
Underwater	81,000	54,000

Source: ASC Press Release, 12 September 1996

The following umbrella sporting groups and bodies had their 1995-96 allocations substantially reduced-in some instances by 50 per cent (and held static in one case)-in 1996-97. It is quite clear from these figures that support for school sport, for instance, has been sacrificed for Olympic success.

Table 4: Federal Funding to Sport Organisations

Organisation	95-96 Funding \$A	96-97 Funding
Confederation of Aust. Sport	100,000	50,000
Aust. Schools Sport Council	40,000	20,000
Aust. Society of Sports Admin	75,000	37,500
ACHPER	25,000	25,000
Sports Medicine Australia	193,000	77,500

Source: ASC Press Release, 12 September 1996

Some groups, such as Sports Medicine Australia, may recoup some of these losses by involvement in a range of Australian Sports Commission programs, such as training and development of athletes, coaches and officials, as well as funding to offset costs for international competition. School associations cannot benefit from any similar association with high performance athletics. A number of other team sports have had their budgets cut - presumably to cover the cost of the Olympic 'blowout'.

Table 5: Funding cuts to Team Sports

Sport	95-96 Funding \$A	96-97 Funding \$A
Australian Football	250,000	37,500
Men's Cricket	647,000	20,000
Motor Sports	85,000	30,000
Motor Cycling	130,000	30,000
Rugby League	270,000	42,500
Rugby Union	643,000	45,000
Men's Soccer	1,608 400	40,000
Tennis	1,348,400	30,000
Aust. Uni. Sport Federation	15,000	27,500

Source: ASC Press Release, 12 September 1996.

While 'successful' medal-winning sports have been rewarded with extra funds, what of Olympic sports with limited medal prospects. And the prospects of non-Olympic sports up to and beyond 2000. Have they become the poor relations of Australian sport. Has the promotion of elite sport been at the expense of mass participation, with a consequent reduction in support for 'grass roots' sport. The Olympic-driven sports program appears to be skewing Australian sport in a marked fashion, with the superb Sydney facilities purchased at the (public) expense of non-metropolitan regions and states.

Current government policy has been clearly articulated in the ASC strategic plan for 1998-2001. "The Commonwealth Government has committed significant financial resources to the 2000 Olympic Games, for infrastructure development and organisation and, through the Commission, for Athlete preparation. The Commission obviously has a strong interest in ensuring Australian athletes perform to their full potential at the 2000 Olympics. This does not mean that non-Olympic sports will be ignored-the Commission will ensure its wide range of program support is maintained." (ASC, 1998, p. 2). This statement is backed up by recognition that "sport has a unique place in Australia's national identity and social infrastructure. It is a major preoccupation for much of the Australian community yet no compulsion is involved". (ASC 1998, p. 2). The government has also recognised that sport has become an important part of the economy. Success or failure in 2000 can affect this resource. Benefits identified are:

- the provision of paid employment opportunities for more than 115 000 people
- \$9.3 billion in sales of goods and services
- 2.2 per cent contribution to GDP

In addition the government claims that if an extra ten percent of the Australian population undertook regular, moderate, and effective exercise an estimated \$A500 million could be saved from the health budget each year (ASC 1998, p. 3). The stated mission of the Commission, and therefore of the government, is "to enrich the lives of all Australians through sport." This will be achieved by:

- developing and maintaining an effective national sports infrastructure
- improved participation in quality sports activities by Australians
- excellence in sports performance by Australians

(ASC Strategic Plan, 1998, p. 6)

The AOC

The Olympic Charter sets out the role of National Olympic Committees (NOC). Article 2.1 section 31 of the charter charges the NOCs with propagating, “the fundamental principles of Olympism at national level within the framework of sports activity and otherwise contribute, among other things, to the diffusion of Olympism in the teaching programs of physical education and sport in schools and university establishments.” Article 2.2 of this section also states the NOCs have ... “the mission of protecting the Olympic movement in their respective countries” they must “ensure the development of high performance sport as well as sport for all” (Olympic Charter, 1995, pp. 47-48). The AOC in 1998 sees its role as being responsible for the Olympic movement in Australia, and for organising the funding of the Australian team. The key drivers, as it sees it are:

- to protect and develop the Olympic franchise
 - increase revenue generation
 - develop the Olympic team
- (C. Phillips, Australian Olympic Academy, 1997 p. 15)

At the core of the AOC’s activities is developing athletes for elite competition and the planning, organisation and operation of Australia’s Olympic team (Phillips 1997 p. 17). The AOC has committed itself to winning 60 medals in 2000. Anything less will be perceived as failure no matter how well run or financially beneficial the Games are. The AOC business model concerns itself with the value of the Olympic franchise, and the raising of funds to invest in the team which increases the value of the franchise and so on. There seems little room in the AOC’s strategy for concern with sport at the grass roots level or for Olympic education. On the surface this would seem to be at variance with government policy as articulated by the ASC and its mission as defined by the Olympic Charter. The AOC and the ASC are focused on success in 2000. National pride is on the line and no one would deny that the government and the AOC would suffer a public backlash if the fullest use of resources for a successful effort in 2000 were not employed. Clearly the future direction of sport in Australia is linked closely to Olympic success and the Olympics are the key policy driver for the peak bodies governing sport.

There is a further set of philosophical questions to be raised. These concern whether a new Australian sports agenda has been carefully developed or if policy is being driven by a crude, short-term calculation of Olympic success in 2000. The setting of priorities for Australian sport should be established by means of public debate about the changing benchmarks of Australian sport, rather than policy being made ‘on the run’ by particular groups in response to the rush for a truly ‘golden’ Games.

Olympic Agendas

There has been all too little debate on the purpose and rationale behind the new financial order in Australian sport, and its long-term costs and benefits. Broader aims beyond a big medal haul at Sydney 2000 and the role of the Olympic athlete in society have been given scant consideration. There has been a vague reliance on the proposition that elite performance can be expected to have a ‘trickle down’ effect to encourage non-elite performers, so justifying Olympic and overall sports expenditure. It seems that the medal-rich Olympic sports, such as swimming, cycling, and rowing, have the potential to get richer at the expense of up-and-coming sports such as gymnastics and winter sports, which might deliver improved rankings but few medals. So the policy appears to favour big and established sports at the expense of minor or fringe sports.

There is a rationale for even the current pragmatic Olympic funding policies which could be further articulated. Current policy might be said to represent an attempt to introduce a performance-based system, to reward sports which are well organised, and which achieve better results. Four relatively minor sports—archery, boxing, shooting, and triathlon—have been admitted to the AIS and, as a result, received increased athlete funding as a result of this policy. Archery, which had only some 2,000 registered participants in 1997, is a case in point. The archery team was targeted to finish eighth at Atlanta in 1996 but achieved a fourth and, as a result, its status has been enhanced. Perhaps, therefore, Olympic models have become too dominant, so that too many sports are trying to squeeze themselves into the Olympic mould and see the Games as a kind of sporting ‘holy grail’.

During October 1997, Tim Gavel of ABC radio’s *Grandstand* program reported on ten non-Olympic sports which were putting themselves through various ‘hoops’ in the hope of becoming an accredited (medal-winning) Olympic sport. These included dancesport (formerly ballroom dancing), fly fishing, ten pin bowling, darts, surfing, lacrosse, ultra

marathon, karate, competitive aerobics, billiards, and snooker. Competition to become part of the Olympics is particularly fierce and complicated and requires a redirection of a sport's resources. Since the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has set an upper limit on the number of athletes and officials (approximately 10,000 and 5,000 respectively), a new sport can only gain access by 'cannibalising' an existing sport. To become an accredited Olympic sport is a complicated process. First, to achieve recognition as an Olympic sport in principle, a sport has to gain IOC accreditation. The next step is to gain the status of a program sport, which needs to be achieved at least seven years before an Olympics is held to provide the opportunity to become a medal sport. Then, it is necessary to persuade the country in question to agree to add the particular new sport to its program. Once a sport has achieved Olympic medal status, there is a need to maintain its position, given that a lot of other sports are jockeying to become part of the program.

Dancesport has a well-developed program to gain full Olympic status by 2008. It gained provisional recognition by the IOC in 1995 and is hopeful of becoming a program sport by 2001. Because many of the public do not regard dancesport as legitimate, it has engaged IMG to improve its image. To gain full Olympic status requires considerable commitment of resources and a long-term timetable. Darts, which also suffers because of its association with pot-bellied men in smoke-filled rooms, is also attempting to improve its image to gain Olympic status. Other sports, such as ten pin bowling and ultra (120 km) marathon, are attempting to improve their chances by using the Commonwealth Games as a stepping stone to the Olympics. The first sport will be part of the 1998 Games and the second hopes to gain access to the program in 2002. Some sports, such as surfing, have to develop ingenious methods to achieve Olympic accreditation. There is no surf in many Olympic cities, such as Atlanta and Athens, which makes the Olympic 'push' problematic, leading to a compromise suggestion of using wave pools (which would result in a major change to the sport's 'outdoor' image).

Gaining Olympic recognition may represent a new form of sporting globalism which may have its positive aspects. Lacrosse is a former Olympic sport which is attempting to regain admission to the Olympic program. To do so, it has to develop a greater international dimension (and, in particular, to ensure that the sport is played on the African continent). Given that so few sports can gain the ultimate Olympic accolade, we must question whether it is desirable that so many of the resources of individual sports—phone calls, lobbying and other redirection of resources—be devoted to such an elusive goal. The organisers of ten pin bowling reported that they made strenuous efforts to get IOC members to a major tournament (including offering fares and accommodation). However, they were only able to 'snare' one IOC member from Venezuela (Gavel, 1997).

Sports which don't want to travel along the Olympic path—such as Australian football or netball—are left in a difficult position by such desperate moves by other sports to gain Olympic recognition. By opting not to join the global Olympic race, they may suffer from not attracting the attention of the IOC decision-makers. Indeed, the desirability of the Olympics having such power to decide the hierarchy of world sport is dubious, as are the bases of their decisions. The lack of openness and transparency in the system of Olympic recognition creates worrying opportunities for corruption. This emphasis on a small number of favoured sports also distracts attention from other important components of the Olympic movement, such as that which involve athletes who are not 'able bodied' and the cultural aspects of the program.

The Paralympics

The Paralympics and the Cultural Olympiad tend to be the poor relations of the Olympics, both in terms of resources and the public interest. There has been some attempt to elevate the Paralympics in 2000 and to provide a more coordinated structure between the Olympics and the Paralympics. The immediate interest of the Sydney Paralympics Organising Committee (SPOC) has, obviously, focused on making the Games a success in order to ensure that there is public interest. But is uncertain whether the overall profile of disabled athletes will be raised, and if there will be continuing support for the Paralympics beyond 2000 rather than a one-off gesture when the world is watching.

The initial response by the Sydney public to the Paralympics has been mixed—indeed, poor. While there appears to be general reservoir of public goodwill towards the Paralympics, a fund-raising concert featuring major bands held at Parramatta park in October 1997 drew about 250 people instead of the expected 30,000. This poor attendance alerted the organisers to the general lack of public awareness of the Paralympics. They are anxious to avoid a repetition of their position at the Atlanta Olympics, where they were seen as an unwanted appendage by the organisers and which saw much of the Games infrastructure dismantled in the short time between the events Olympics and the Paralympics.

There is a determination in Sydney that the Paralympians will be treated equally with Olympians and SPOC and the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) are working closely together to this effect. The New South Wales and Federal governments have each committed \$25 million to the staging of the Paralympics. SOCOG staff are responsible for delivering many of the services such as venue management, security, and transport management to both events. They are also partly responsible for marketing the Paralympics, an area where a good deal of effort is

required. Educating the public as to their significance and extent will be the key to a successful Paralympic Games. They will attract 4,000 athletes, 2,000 coaches and officials and 1,000 technical officials from 125 countries, World-wide coverage will be provided by over 2000 visiting media personnel, and there are 18 sports on the program of which 14 are Olympic sports (see SPOC, 1997: 1). The Paralympics, it can be seen, represent a major sports event in their own right. This has been recognised by several major Australian companies, who have agreed to become sponsors or providers. Two thirds of the Paralympic Games budget had been funded by August 1998. SPOC Chief Executive Officer, Lois Apply stated ...'One of the legacies we want to leave as an Olympic committee is a strong relationship with the business community so they will continue to support athletes long after 2000' (SPOC Press Release, 18 August 1998).

It is desirable for organisers to document the philosophical basis for Paralympic sport and its potential benefit to the Olympic movement as a whole. The Paralympics provide the Olympics with a unique opportunity to extend their role by taking on another client group, thereby extending the appeal of the Games to those who may feel excluded by a singular emphasis on elite, able-bodied athletes. There is also the opportunity to demonstrate the utility of the Olympics by documenting that elite Paralympic sport is beneficial to disabled athletes and disabled people in general. It is important to develop greater public knowledge and understanding of Paralympic sport as a serious athletic endeavour. For example, the Paralympic world record of 10.72 seconds for the 100 metres, held by Nigeria's Ajibola Adoye, is less than a second outside Donovan Bailey's Olympic record (set in Atlanta) of 9.84s! A successful Paralympics in Sydney -in terms of both sport and public exposure-will be important in securing the continuation of significant funding for disabled athletes. If the payment of mere lip service to the needs of the disabled is avoided, then the Paralympics can be expected to have a favourable effect on government policy towards disabled athletes and the disabled in general. This will be one of the key indicators of the social, cultural, and political success of Sydney 2000. To date however the Federal government has been reluctant to increase funding to the Australian Paralympic team. Team management is facing the prospect of taking part in a home games with a smaller team than they sent to Atlanta in 1996.

Conclusion: Measuring Success in and beyond 2000

How will success be measured in 2000. It is undesirable that it be confined to medal achievement or a crude assessment of money spent versus medals achieved. Wider and more longlasting indicators of success require adequate measures to assess such factors as the use of Olympic facilities after the Games, the benefit to other sports from the state-of-the art facilities at Homebush, the maintenance of the expensive equestrian centre or the velodrome at Bankstown, and the level of sports-related tourism. There is a need to articulate a broader definition of 'success', to look beyond medal achievement to other signs of benefit, such as improved world rankings and the achievement of personal 'bests'. Adrian McGregor (1996: 20) has suggested that after the Sydney Games, athletes who did not win a medal be honoured in a public ceremony for making finals or achieving personal bests. His suggestion has received praise from many in a position to implement it. I share his concern that the first week of the Games could be spoiled by the perceived failure of athletes through unrealistic expectations having been raised by zealous sports administrators, coaches, and commentators. It will be important for team morale and for the ethos of Olympism in Australia that such 'failure' does not lead to massive media vilification of the team. Memories of the exaggerated negative headlines the swim team earned after week one of Atlanta are still fresh in the mind.

Australian sport has undoubtedly benefited by hitching its wagon to the Olympic star. But is this a short-term benefit only. It may have simply postponed the budget axe for four years. Many sports officials fear that the Olympic-led sports boom from the years 1996 to 2000 will be followed by an Olympic-led sports hangover and a descent from 'boom' to 'bust'. If the Olympic dream is to produce anything other than nostalgia, it must translate into something tangible beyond 2000. It is likely that Australia will enjoy a golden Games in 2000 and that 60 medals will be achieved, partly because of government funding, but also because athletes are performing at home before their own crowd.

But in 2001 and onwards sporting money will still need to be found and distributed, for example to fund the Olympic effort in Athens 2004. Will the rich and successful sports in 2000 be rewarded and the unsuccessful ones penalised. There are some tasks which must be set in the name of equity: first, policies put in place for sports beyond 2000 given the likely cuts to the sports budget; second, the development of a new plan for Olympic athletes for 2004 and beyond; and, third, greater consideration given to non-elite sport and non-Olympic sport. Finally, it is crucial to develop a carefully articulated and more philosophically informed sports policy in Australia that will underpin its sport when the 2000 Olympics euphoria has evaporated.

* Some of the material has appeared previously in Cashman R. & Hughes A., (1997), Sydney 2000: Cargo Cult of Australian Sport? in Rowe D, & Lawrence G. *Tourism, Leisure, Sport: Critical Perspectives*, pp. 216-226, Sydney, Hodder Education.

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