

Frequently Asked Questions

These Frequently Asked Questions have been prepared by the Water Polo in Australia Governance Reform Committee to answer questions that may be asked by members of our community. If you have additional questions that you would like answered in this forum for the benefit of the whole community please refer the questions to your State President.

What has led to this process?

In an increasingly competitive and challenging environment for all sports in Australia, but particularly smaller sports, water polo faces significant challenges in maintaining and enhancing its established performance profile as a successful Olympic sport, as well as generating sustainable participation growth at all levels across the sport.

Water polo's challenges include:

- growing and retaining members;
- declining trends in High Performance results, at both senior and junior levels;
- increasing dependency on funding by government, the security and levels of which funding are uncertain;
- governance demarcation with seven (7) State Sporting Organisations (SSOs) and 1 National Sporting Organisation (NSO) as well as the Australian Institute of Sport and various State Institutes of Sport involved;
- governance volatility at NSO and SSO levels with frequent changes in leadership and senior management, creating inconsistency of strategic direction, capability and capacity to implement the strategy and a lack of forward momentum;
- ongoing financial sustainability and viability of the NSO and SSOs; and
- unproductive relationships leading to inconsistent sport development approaches and uncoordinated approaches to revenue diversification.

What is the purpose of this process?

To research and design, via stakeholder engagement, a streamlined single national governance structure for water polo in Australia. This is an opportunity for all stakeholders to work together to uncover key opportunities to create a more user-centred governance structure for water polo. It is not known at this stage what structural reform should transpire.

What is the process and how long will it take?

Water polo must agree on the future governance structure for water polo in Australia within 120 days (ie by 15 August 2019).

Within 120 days, the project aims to:

- surface feedback and insights from water polo customers (i.e. players, volunteers and grassroots administrators) as to their expectations, experiences and aspirations for water polo
- identify and understand the existing governance challenges that constrain water polo
- form an evidence-driven consensus as to a customer-centric aspirational future for water polo and identify the current structure and governance issues standing in the way of that future
- co-design with key stakeholders potential governance structures for water polo
- obtain feedback on potential governance structures for water polo
- identify and obtain stakeholder agreement on an appropriate governance structure for water polo in Australia.

These aims will be achieved via stakeholder engagement, with members and stakeholders providing insights and feedback through online surveys, interviews and co-design workshops.

Implementation of the agreed structural reform is to be completed by 1 January 2020.

When will I get to have my say?

The change to the governance structure needs to be representative of the sport's needs and, accordingly, all views are significant in this process.

In early May 2019, all water polo members will be invited to complete an online survey to generate a better understanding of the participant and volunteer experience. Around the same time, in-depth interviews will be conducted with state and territory directors and executives, selected club participants and officials, to develop a better understanding of the attitudes, perceptions and behaviours of all members.

In late May 2019, representatives of clubs, associations, SSOs, the NSO and external stakeholders will be invited to participate in workshops, informed by the insights gained via survey and interview, to co-design and provide feedback on potential structure reform options.

How will I be impacted by this process?

People are water polo's greatest asset and any structural reform will be designed with the user experience at its heart. The change to structure will ensure long-term financial sustainability, viability, independence and the capacity to deliver fundamental and core services and deliverables to the users of water polo.

The change process will be focussed on ensuring continued delivery of the current, or an improved, experience.

What happens if we don't do this?

Australia has a competitive sporting marketplace with 33 Olympic sports, over 10 professional leagues and 102 recognised national sports. As participants and sponsor expectations rise, sports must ensure a more consistent and professional offering is provided. Water polo faces significant challenges in maintaining and enhancing its established performance profile as a successful Olympic sport, as well as generating sustainable participation growth at all levels across the sport.

If this process is not done, water polo is in danger of losing its way, as well as the substantial taxpayer funding it receives.

How will this project be funded and resourced?

Water polo is contributing substantial human resources and expertise via membership to the Governance Reform Committee, outlined below. Water polo organisations will provide assistance to the Reform Committee as required.

Sport Australia is funding the research and design of the new governance structure, which will include engagement of independent consultants to assist with discovery, design and consultation. In addition, Sport Australia is contributing substantial human resources in the form of the project lead and support, and Governance Reform Committee secretariat support. Should financial resources be required to implement change, Sport Australia will work with all relevant organisations to obtain relevant funds and/or to ensure a fair co-contribution.

What is the role of the Governance Reform Committee?

The committee is a non-statutory body. The role and functions of the committee are purely advisory in nature and will initially be focused on consultation in relation to, and development of, a proposed governance model for the Water Polo Australia members to consider. The Governance Reform Committee will:

- provide strategic leadership in the research and design of the future governance structure of water polo in Australia;
- guide the change management plan to overcome barriers to implementation; and
- develop a communications plan which articulates a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities in transforming the management and operations of Water Polo in Australia.

Who is on the Governance Reform Committee?

The Governance Reform Committee is comprised of:

- Water Polo State and Territory member presidents (2):
 - Peter Cleary (SA President)
 - Nick Hodges (NSW President)
- Water Polo Australia directors (2)
 - Andrew Knox
 - Susie Smith
- Water Polo athlete representative (1)
 - Nathan Thomas
- Water Polo club representatives (4)
 - Lyn Celotti (Melbourne Collegians Water Polo Club (Vic))
 - Kirsty Scafidi (Peel Water Polo Association (WA))
 - Rob Neesham (Melville (WA))
 - John Whitehouse (Tas)
- Sport Australia representative (1)
 - Kate Corkery (Director, Governance & Strategy)
- State and Territory Department of Sport and Recreation representative (1)
 - Dr Phil Hamdorf (Executive Director Sport Development, NSW Office of Sport)
- Peter Montgomery

Why were others not given the opportunity to be considered for the Committee?

It is acknowledged that there is no perfect way to construct an advisory committee. The 120 day project timeline put key emphasis on the committee being established in a timely way. A wider selection process would have taken considerable time. The state presidents, on behalf of their members, and the national directors, on behalf of the board, nominated individuals who they had jointly determined could, through consultation and engagement with the broader water polo community, provide support to the project. There was a focus on keeping representation balanced across club size, states, and gender.

The Committee is not a decision-making body. The Committee members are acutely aware that for this to be a success and any outcome to be sustainable then engagement with the entire water polo community is an imperative. All members of the committee are committed to this objective.

What is and will be the impact on funding?

During the 120 days, Sport Australia is withholding distribution of core participation funding and better aging grants, and will not provide further impact funding. High performance funding will not be impacted during this 120 days. The AIS team are working with Water Polo Australia (and a number of other sports) to review their high performance program and to ensure it is structured and operating in a way that is likely to maximise its prospects of success in Tokyo and beyond. All decisions on high performance funding in the lead up to Tokyo will be purely a function of that review process in relation to which governance is one consideration.

Sport Australia and the AIS consider a range of factors in arriving at high performance, core, impact and grant funding decisions. The quality of a sport's governance is one of those factors.

What impact will this process have on the Stingers and Sharks and their preparation for Tokyo 2020?

It is of absolute importance that there is a stable and supportive environment for the Stingers and Sharks as they prepare for the Tokyo Olympics. We are confident that this can be maintained and be given priority at the same time as governance modernisation is pursued.

How do I keep updated with the progress of the project?

Reports will be available on the Water Polo Australia website and updates to key dates, progress and completion of milestones will be communicated and publicised via Water Polo Australia social media and State and Club websites where possible.