Towards ‘good’ good governance policies in sport

Lessons from Australia

Kate Corkery and Geoff Schoenberg

Introduction

Sport Australia, legally known as the Australian Sports Commission (ASC), is the Australian Government agency responsible for supporting and investing in sport in Australia. The Commission is comprised of Sport Australia and the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS). Sport Australia is responsible for supporting and investing in participation sport, physical activity, and industry growth; the AIS has responsibility for high performance sport.

In addition to Sport Australia’s sector wide vision, the organisation plays a critical role as the primary funder for most national sporting organisations (NSOs). This funding role includes both support for operations that deliver participation outcomes as well as supporting high performance athletes and teams. As Sport Australia is a government agency, the funding distributed comes from the Australian taxpayer, meaning there is an obligation to ensure this public money is being spent effectively and in accordance with acceptable public standards.

In Australia, NSOs are, for the most part, not-for-profit companies overseen by a voluntary board of directors (Shilbury 2013). This board of directors holds the ultimate responsibility for the organisation and is responsible for ensuring the organisation pursues its objects in accordance with its legal duties and responsibilities (Hoye & Doherty 2011). One of the key responsibilities of the board, therefore, is to ensure effective and efficient expenditure of taxpayer money that is invested in NSOs by Sport Australia. For this reason, Sport Australia has had a long-standing focus on the effective governance of NSOs.

In this chapter, we focus on the intersection of these three ideas: the need for effective NSOs, Sport Australia’s responsibilities as a funding body investing taxpayer money, and the importance of effective governance. More specifically, we examine how Sport Australia has attempted to facilitate the improvement of governance practices in Australian sport. We begin by providing an overview of the different strategies, documents, methods, and practices used by Sport Australia with a focus, primarily, on the period from 2012 to 2020. Following this description, we analyse the effectiveness of Sport Australia’s approach and outline how

the lessons learned from 2012 to 2019 influenced the development of the most recent strategy for influencing governance in the sector—Sport Australia’s new Governance Framework.

Sport Australia’s interest in improving sport governance is, compared to many other nations, a relatively long-term and iterative process. The nature of the Australian sport system—both its structure and culture—has been an important factor in contextualising Sport Australia’s role in improving governance. Culturally, for example, the involvement of government in sport is not only tolerated but also expected. There have been examples where the community have expected the Government to intervene. However, given Sport Australia’s long-standing efforts and experience, a critical reflection about its past and present policies could still provide valuable insight to governments and other funding bodies who are investing in governance reform process. Additionally, this practical reflection can help contextualise and inform academic studies about achieving sport organisations’ compliance with good governance standards (Geeraert 2019).

The purpose of this chapter is not a theoretical or academic analysis of the Sport Australia approach. Rather, we draw on our experiences and observations to provide a narrative and insight from a practitioner perspective. In our positions as Sport Australia staff members,¹ we played leadership roles in facilitating a sector-wide co-design process to create the new Sport Australia framework. This experience means we developed the rationale for the development of the framework and have intimate knowledge of the successes and failures of the Sport Australia approach which led to the development of a new framework. Where possible, we support our claims and reflections with documentation but have had to redact or keep private some documentation given the nature of the relationships between Sport Australia and Australian NSOs.

Background: Sport Australia and the Australian sport structure

Over time, Sport Australia has published its vision for the sport sector in the form of various strategic plans including *Australia’s Winning Edge* (Sport Australia 2012a), *Play.Sport.Australia* (Sport Australia 2015b), and, most recently, *Sport 2030* (Sport Australia 2018b). In each of these sector-wide strategic documents, Sport Australia has highlighted the importance of good governance, with the most recent strategic vision specifically observing:

The best governance systems will better position our sports for a changing world, enabling them to focus their energy, time and revenue on driving international performance, strengthening the pathways system, creating greater commercial opportunities and increasing participation rates among more Australians.

(Sport Australia 2018b, p. 3)

With its broad mandate described in *Winning Edge*, *Play.Sport.Australia*, and *Sport 2030*, Sport Australia has regularly outlined its views on the importance of sport governance. Sport Australia expects well-governed NSOs to be more likely to attract the best calibre people, as board members and executives; facilitate safe and well-developed grass roots participation and pathways; and ultimately, deliver high-performance results. In the long term, for athletes to succeed and achieve their full potential, they need their sports to succeed as organisations.

The acceptance of the importance of good governance is fairly universal in both theory and practice. However, in its role as a distributor of public funding, Sport Australia has additional responsibilities to taxpayers. Consequently, Sport Australia went beyond stating the importance of good governance but also identified that “sports will be required to demonstrate good leadership, governance and administration as part of the annual investment and review process” (Sport Australia 2012a, p. 6) thereby using its power and authority to tie funding to a range of specific criteria including, but not limited to, governance practices. However, the federated model of Australian sport,² the independent legal status of NSOs, and practical considerations limit the extent to which Sport Australia uses its authority to withdraw or reduce funding. There are some inherent compromises due to the tension between a desire to not detrimentally affect athletes for poor administration but not invest in poorly governed organisations. This is exacerbated because many NSOs funded by Sport Australia have limited sources of funding outside of Sport Australia and would face significant challenges to their long-term viability should funding be reduced or removed.

Most NSOs who receive funding from Sport Australia operate under a federated model where eight state and territory sporting organisations (SSOs) are an NSO’s voting members (Shilbury 2013), and where eight individuals, the presidents of the SSOs cast the votes which elect and remove the Directors. As SSOs typically provide comparably a small percentage of funding to the NSO, this leads to an incongruence between the ‘ownership’ of an NSO (its members) and its funding (Sport Australia). This incongruence between ownership and funding of NSOs creates barriers for the ability for Sport Australia to enforce its mandate. For example, an NSO may attempt to change its constitution to align with Sport Australia good governance requirements. However, changes to an NSO constitution (usually) requires endorsement of at least 75% of the members, which means SSOs can block the change from being made. This leads to a situation where Sport Australia must balance its relationship with an NSO that is actively seeking to improve its governance practices while the federated model, via the SSOs, prevents this from occurring. Furthermore, any efforts by Sport Australia to enforce its mandate through a reduction in funding will often have a direct effect on athletes, making this an unappealing course of action.

Generally, Australia’s federated model means sport is over-governed, meaning funds and other resources (including time and energy) are not able to be

applied efficiently and effectively towards the growth of the sport and the athletes. Instead, they are spent on overlapping processes and layers of management and governance.

Sport Australia's approach to setting governance policy

Sport Australia released its first Sport Governance Principles in 2002—as best practice guidelines for sporting organisations to operate under—and revised these in 2007 (Sport Australia 2007). However, it was the significant revision in 2012 (Sport Australia 2012b) which made the principles a focal point of conversation about governance in the sector. These principles kick-started the contemporary conversation and practice of sport governance in Australia and serve as a fundamental reference point for the sector. Partially due to the 2012 principle, building capacity and capability in sport governance is now viewed as a sector-wide priority, and good governance considered a key enabler for successful, sustainable entities.

The increased attention to governance practices and the evolving discourse on the subject drove Sport Australia to develop a suite of governance materials aimed to complement and extend the Sports Governance Principles. The suite of documents (Governance Publications) iteratively published between 2012 and 2020 included the Sports Governance Principles (Sport Australia 2012b), Mandatory Sports Governance Principles (Sport Australia 2015a), Governance Reform in Sport—June 2016 (Sport Australia 2016a), Governance Reform in Sport: Discussion Paper (Sport Australia 2018a), Unified Behaviours—Creating Success (Sport Australia 2016c), Integrity guidelines for directors and leaders of sporting organisations (Sport Australia 2016b), as well as a set of practical tools including a board evaluation tool and a template constitution. Additionally, Sport Australia staff were allocated to provide guidance and support to NSOs on governance matters.

Of the documents listed above, the two most critical and influential were the Sports Governance Principles (SGPs) and the Mandatory Sports Governance Principles (MSGPs) as these were broader in scope compared to the narrower focus of the other documents.

The SGPs advocated strengthening structures that support good leadership and decision-making, ensuring sound and effective governance. The resource took the form of six major principles: Board composition, roles and powers (1.1–1.13); Board processes (2.1–2.6); Governance systems (3.1–3.10); Board reporting and performance (4.1–4.6); Stakeholder relationship and reporting (5.1–5.4); and Ethical and responsible decision-making (6.1–6.3). The target audience of the SGPs was ambiguous with specific references to NSOs but also references to ‘the sporting landscape’ and ‘all sporting organisations’. This caused confusion within the sector as to what organisations were subject to the SGPs. Within the sector, it was also unclear as to the extent this was a federal initiative (i.e. Sport Australia) or a collaborative approach with the State and Territory governments.

The MSGPs were specifically targeted at Sport Australia funded NSOs. They, as the name suggests, were intended to be mandatory for the 23 NSOs most highly funded by Sport Australia although all NSOs were assessed against the criteria. The MSGP were structured in three sections: Structure of Sport (1.1–1.3); Board Composition and operation (2.1–2.11); and Sport transparency, reporting and integrity (3.1–3.7). All funded NSOs were measured against the MSGPs as part of Sport Australia's Annual Sports Performance Review³ (ASPR) process. In recognising both the contributions and limitations of the era defined by the SGPs and MSGPs, Sport Australia recognised the potential need for change, particularly given the inclusion of unified governance behaviours and contemporary, best practice governance models in the Sport Australia Sport 2030 strategic plan (Sport Australia 2018b). In addition to examining the potential for change, Sport Australia's increased attention to governance, the resources it has made available, and the prescriptions of governance practice meant a comprehensive review and assessment of the currency and efficacy of Sport Australia's sport governance materials was timely. In seeking to achieve the Sport 2030 targets, the review of the 2012–2019 period determined simply producing an updated document which refined and consolidated all current resources and documents would be insufficient. More change was needed.

In August of 2020, Sport Australia overhauled its governance policy with the release of its new Governance Framework (see [Table 8.1](#)). The framework is a new approach that links existing, updated, and new Sport Australia governance policies into one overarching structure. The framework has four primary components including: Governance Principles, Education and Resources, Evaluation and Assurance, and a structured and formalised Sport Australia Advisory service. The framework is accessible online so, rather than an extensive description, we will only include a brief summary of each component.

The revised Governance Principles include nine specific principles. Each principle follows the same structure including the principle itself, benefits of the principle, questions to promote reflection, expected behaviours and actions, recommendations, and a summary to explain key parts of the principle. The

Table 8.1 The new Sport Australia Governance Framework

Governance Principles	Educational and accessible principles for the whole sector with an increased focus on behaviours
Education and Resources	Interactive, digital and adaptable resources integrated within the Principles accompanied by an ongoing Director education strategy
Evaluation and Assurance	Outcomes-based governance standards to evaluate funded NSOs governance maturity and develop Governance Improvement Plans and enhance public reporting
Sport Australia Advisory Service	Direct advisor relationships with funded NSOs to assist implementation of Governance Improvement Plans and general governance advice

Education and Resource component provides a set of templates and tools which are directly linked to the Sport Governance Principles. The Evaluation and Assurance component is, primarily, a set of 37 outcome-based standards across the nine principles to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of governance systems and processes. Finally, the Advisory Service is a team of Sport Australia governance advisors who work directly with NSO boards and CEOs on governance matters through a formalised process.

The launch of the new framework marked a further evolution in Sport Australia's approach to governance policy. In the next section we reflect on our experience in developing and delivering the new Governance Framework. These are drawn from the conversations and observations we had throughout the design process and includes our own experience within the sector as well. These are offered with the intention to help other bodies develop effective sport governance policy.

Lessons learned

The process of change is almost as important as the output

The methods by which the significant update of the SGPs in 2012 and the MSGPs in 2015 were introduced to the sector may have produced an unintended consequence. The sector, generally, appreciates that the SGPs and MSGPs were, overall, appropriate and reflective of the needs of the sector and contained enduring components. However, the process of design and introduction was alleged by some of not being consultative of the entire sector and created a risk of setting arbitrary boundaries for a sector with a high level of complexity and variation. More specifically, the language referring to NSOs throughout the documents created the possibility of inconsistency in governance standards between NSOs and SSOs, with SSOs generally taking the view that the SGPs did not apply to them. Given the connectivity between sporting organisations, with SSOs being the members of NSOs, it was important that all organisations within a sport developed, implemented, and maintained a robust system of governance that fitted the circumstances of their sport. While some sports made progress, there was shortcomings in this regard.

In designing the new framework, Sport Australia deliberately took a more consultative and collaborative approach. This included partnering with state government sport agencies and key sector stakeholders in three distinct phases of co-design. Phase one was a series of face-to-face workshops in every state and territory (153 individuals from 52 sports). Phase two was a series of online jams⁴ which engaged over 300 individuals from more than 70 sports. Phase three included three design labs structured to provide deep dives into specific content areas with a diverse selection of experts and stakeholders.

The co-design process was invaluable in the way in which it harnessed the extensive experience, competence, and unique variations of the Australian sport

sector. The output, the new Governance Framework, was the result of countless contributions incorporating national, state, and local experiences across more than seventy sports. This process of co-design inclusivity created two marked positives. The first outcome was an evolved framework which was accessible, educational and fit-for-purpose as determined by the end user. By being involved at each stage, the sector was critical in shaping the content and language to reflect the needs and views of the sector. The second outcome was a shared sense of ownership. Members of the sector identified their contributions in the final product, there was trust in the process, and they have, thus far, become advocates for the framework.

The approach to compliance should be focused on outcomes and development

The previous approach of the MSGPs and the ASPR created a culture in some NSOs of implementing governance practices for compliance rather than for improved governance outcomes. Our consultation with the sector during the development of the evolved framework identified that NSOs, despite the intention of Sport Australia, perceived the MSGPs and ASPR as an annual box-ticking activity, binary in nature, and simply a compliance requirement. These perceptions were grounded in a level of praxis.

As staff members at Sport Australia, we witnessed several NSOs who scored at the highest end of the measurement scale experience significant governance crises. For example, one non-Olympic sport scored above 95% on its ASPR for governance, but, in practice, there have been constant detrimental governance issues that are challenging to measure because as they predominantly relate to issues of culture and behaviour. This includes six director changes in less than four years, an incumbent chair standing for re-election being removed from the board, calls from member organisations for special general meetings to change the constitution without consulting the NSO, special working groups established to address the issues, and clearly fractured relationships between key parties.

While this particular case is an extreme example of the disconnect between the assessed compliance with the MSGPs and governance in practice, it was, in our opinion, reflective of an overall issue. What particularly translates from this case to other NSOs is the inability of the MSGP assessment to capture the relationships between member organisations (usually the SSOs) and an NSO. These relationships are, in many ways, fundamental to good governance in the federated model of Australian sport.

In addition to the validity of the MSGPs as a measuring tool, it is also worth understanding the Sport Australia approach to implementing the MSGPs. In practice, the MSGPs were mandatory to report to, and governance was a factor when determining public funding, however, it was only one factor considered alongside many others. Additionally, detailed reporting was kept confidential between Sport Australia and NSOs with a public document “Sports Tally”

produced (now no longer available) which provided more surface level insight on NSO governance performance.

The theory behind Sport Australia's introduction of the MSGPs and the corresponding reporting was to force NSOs to adopt structures, policies, and practices which, generally, are associated with good governance. In general, the approach was successful in achieving structural change. However, this approach did not account for issues such as behaviours and group dynamics which are increasingly shown to be important factors in effective governance (Schoenberg, Cuskelly, & Auld 2016, 2020).

First, the nature of the MSGPs was output focused. To illustrate this, we highlight MSGP 2.2—*A nominations committee that nominates directors for vacancies upon which the members vote*. In assessing compliance with this requirement, measurement focused on whether there was a nominations committee or not; there was no evaluation of the effectiveness of the nomination committee. While most funded NSOs did introduce a nominations committee as a result of the MSGPs, the approach to compliance meant it is unclear as to whether these committees have had any impact. Anecdotally, there are several examples of voters rejecting the recommendations of a nominations committee.

Second, reporting compliance with the MSGPs could be completed by an executive with the board having no input or oversight. For example, in a few NSOs, the board was not even aware of the process or the reporting being completed making it difficult for the board to contemplate meaningful change. With the report being completed by a small group (i.e. Chair and CEO) without board discussion, there was limited awareness of potential areas for improvement. Furthermore, Sport Australia kept the detailed reporting private. This means there was limited accountability or transparency to NSO members or other key stakeholders on whether an NSO was meeting the Sport Australia requirements.

The feedback from the co-design process guided a shift in the Sport Australia approach to compliance and measurement. The previous measurement approach, through MSGPs and the ASPR, effectively became compliance for compliance sake whereas the new approach is focused on using compliance as a tool for improving governance. This new approach is underpinned by the new Sport Governance Standards.

Each of the 37 new standards contains four measures which are tied to outcomes rather than outputs. This process has built on the “implemented, adopting, or not implemented” scale of the previous process by developing measures which provide increased description and detail about the different outcomes available within each standard. These measures provide more nuance in the evaluation of governance by examining what the outcomes of governance practices have been. In the new approach, simply having a nominations committee would not be sufficient as the top score requires the nominees put forward by the nominations committee to be elected to the board.

Furthermore, Sport Australia has integrated transparency and accountability into the compliance process. The new approach requires NSOs to publish an annual governance statement outlining their performance against the standards along with commentary (i.e. “if not, why not”) against any deviation or lack of achievement of the standards. This report is to be made available to both Sport Australia and an NSO’s members. Sport Australia expects that, by requiring NSOs to report to members, the board will be more involved and understanding of the process.

This new approach to compliance reflects the commentary from the sector that the MSGPs did not acknowledge that, due to different factors, organisations have different needs and certain governance practices may fit one organisation but not another. Using the standards as an organisational governance evaluation tool, Sport Australia will be able to identify, advise, support, resource, and educate partners and, in turn, work with the NSOs, State Government Agencies for Sport and their SSOs and Clubs for a whole-of-sector approach to continually improve governance systems and processes.

Policy needs to be complemented with support

Sport Australia, from 2012 to before the launch of the new framework in August 2020, provided effective leadership in the ‘what’ and the ‘why’ of good governance, but provided limited public information on the ‘how’. The language and approach of the pre-framework materials (e.g. SGPs) was often very technical and not accessible to directors without a governance background. Boards and executives of sport organisations drafted policy and processes in accordance with the principles but, without an understanding of the purpose or use of these policies, they were not referred to or used by the organisations (e.g. boards have a Board Charter to ensure compliance, but the directors do not discuss, refer to, or update it). Thus, whilst the policies and systems previously mandated by Sport Australia are predominantly in place at national and state level, NSOs have not achieved the intended outcomes.

Throughout the process of developing the new framework, the sector was unified and consistent in its demand for resources that are accessible, educative, and practical. Two components of the new framework—Education and Resources and the Advisory Service—were designed specifically with this in mind. The Education and Resources component provides a set of templates and tools which are tied to specific principles to help organisations. Additionally, there is a ‘Governance 101’ section at the start of the principles which introduces governance and key terminology to help new directors—often passionate volunteers within a sport, but with limited governance background—understand their role and expectations.

The Advisory Service will consist of Sport Australia continuing to invest in direct relationships with sports to support governance improvement plans over

three phases. The intention is to continue to provide specialist internal capability to work closely with Boards and CEOs to improve their governance practices, to provide directors with the soft skills and general knowledge they need to get up and running, and to facilitate connections to assist directors in learning from their peers. This service will be tailored to each NSO and is focused on implementation and the 'how' of good governance.

The service is, partially, modelled on previous success Sport Australia had achieved supporting NSOs through bespoke projects. Sport Australia had identified a range of concerns about the administration of an Olympic sport in Australia particularly in the areas of governance, finance, legal, strategy and member protection. Following a comprehensive review led by Sport Australia, a list of over 20 recommendations was made to enhance the sport in Australia which effectively outlined the blueprint for its future success. Over the past five years, this sport has undergone a significant transformation and is now operating as a highly effective and capable NSO which is delivering outstanding outcomes both on and off the field-of-play. Within this case, Sport Australia played a significant role during this process, providing support, guidance, and resourcing to allow the sport to achieve substantial reforms in its operation.

Disaggregated policy is confusing—Provide a 'one-stop shop'

Prior to the release of the framework, governance policy regarding Australian sport was disaggregated and occasionally inconsistent. Sport Australia had produced numerous publications on the topic, but it was unclear as to how these all related and what to do in the case of contradictions. In addition to Sport Australia, each state government had their own approach to governance along with industry bodies producing governance guidance and advice as well. This created a confusing landscape for directors and executives to navigate.

In addition to the amount of governance material produced within the Australian sport sector, it was not always clear how to manage the different contexts of each organisation. The sport industry has undergone, in a significant way for some sports and still at the starting gate for other sports, a transition from volunteer-driven amateur sport to professionally managed and delivered sport supported by volunteers. The pressure of mandatory requirements for associations, SSOs, and some NSOs was seen to paralyse the effectiveness of the Board as policy requirements become overwhelming and disaggregated.

Overall, there was a sector desire for the principles to be tailored or adapted for all sport organisations regardless of size, location, or maturity in order to create consistency within sports and across sports. This required the consolidation of existing materials into a new set of principles would provide a single resource for the sector.

From the Sport Australia perspective, this is now in-place. Previously, templates and tools were available in different places on the Sport Australia website and state government websites. These tools are now found on the same page as

the principle to which they are aligned, on a single landing page for the Sport Australia Governance Framework.

The co-design process, described earlier, helped to develop the framework in a way that accounted for the needs of most Australian sport organisations—at least the national and state bodies. At the time of writing, it is too early to know whether Sport Australia's Governance Framework will become the 'one-stop shop' and replace the materials produced by other key partners, however early indications and interest from the sector indicate this may well be the result. At the very least, Sport Australia has been able to produce singular place for all its policy and guidance on sport governance.

Change through policy is attainable

Perhaps the most important lesson is that government policy and actions can create change. For all the challenges Sport Australia has had embedding good governance outcomes underpinned by the SGPs and MSGPs throughout this chapter, the SGPs and MSGPs have objectively shifted process and policy in the sector with respect to good governance. This was primarily connected to compliance and funding, but it also created much stronger 'peer pressure' for NSOs to be governed well as they started to compare (and be compared). There was a shift in the culture of Australian sport towards the notion that good governance was important, and it should be given priority. The evolution further leverages the social persuasion (Geeraert 2019) with expectation of public reporting of governance outcomes.

As evidence of the effectiveness of the MSGPs, Sport Australia undertook formal assessments against them in 2016 and 2018 as a part of the ASPR process. The ASPR, within a governance context, captured the MSGPs: structure for sport, board composition and operation. The ASPR process required a NSO to submit a self-evaluation to Sport Australia indicating their compliance/non-compliance with the MSGPs. Despite the identified challenges there was improvement against all Mandatory Standards between 2016 and 2018 except for gender balance (MSGP 2.6). Despite the validity of the MSGPs as an effective measuring tool for good governance being questionable, NSOs began adopting good governance practices that had not currently been in place.

Overall, the work of Sport Australia in the 2012–2020 period created change. Rightly or wrongly, government agencies and their policies on governance can lead to meaningful change in the sector.

Discussion and conclusion

The learning described above, while subjective, provide insight for the effectiveness of the Sport Australia approach to sport governance policy. In considering and contextualising the reflections above, there are a few high-level themes which may be generalisable to other contexts.

Policy cannot be separated from context. Within Australia, the effectiveness of Sport Australia policy is affected by the historic organisational model for sport in Australia. The traditional federated structure of most Australian sports means that most NSOs are controlled by SSOs (members) who provide a very small share of an NSO's funding. The bulk of NSO funding comes from Sport Australia. Given Sport Australia's reluctance to withdraw or reduce funding to NSOs, due to the fear of negatively affecting athletes, SSOs can act in ways to maintain, consolidate, or increase their control of the NSO which can conflict with Sport Australia policy. In Australia, the most recent framework was deliberately co-designed with partners to help ensure the policy meets the needs of the sector demonstrating an understanding of the complications which arise from tensions between government policy and federated sport governing bodies.

Policy does lead to change. While evaluating an organisation on compliance with the MSGPs provided limited insight into the effectiveness of governance, the evaluation process revealed that, across the sector, the MSGPs did produce change in governance practices. These changes varied in significance but included change in legal structures and changes to organisation's constitutions; indicative of the impact the MSGPs had on structural changes. These changes shift the question from 'can governance policy create change' to 'how can governance policy create impactful change'—an evolution which is captured in the policy growth as Sport Australia has moved from disaggregated policies and support services to a singular framework which explicitly links the components together.

Developing and optimising good governance policy takes time. Sport Australia has been producing and refining governance guidelines of some form for over fifteen years. The iteration is not done in isolation, it is a product of the context of the sector and collaboration with other key partners in the sector. The new framework represents a consolidation of all experiences and feedback of the participants in the sector who are accountable and responsible for good governance. To achieve the recent framework required collaborative iteration of policy and socialisation of Sport Australia's facilitative leadership in the sector over time. Broadly, the complexity and the maturity of the recent framework demonstrate how governance policy has advanced within Australian sport through comparison with the policy which came before.

Perhaps most critically when considering the role of policy in contributing to effective governance is the purpose of governance itself. Governance exists on behalf of stakeholders to ensure an organisation delivers on its objects. Thus, within sport, governance is a key means to facilitating safe and sustainable participation and performance in sport. If government policy starts focusing on governance for governance sake through a purely compliance focused lens, sport organisations may struggle to deliver the primary purpose of the organisation. Within Australia, the transition from a compliance-focused MSGP reporting program to an outcome-focused set of standards should support organisations in meeting their goals.

In conclusion, in reflecting on our involvement in the Australian sport sector and our roles at Sport Australia, we identified some clear lessons on designing and implementing sport governance policy. These include: the importance of the change process, centring compliance on outcomes and development, complementing policy with support and education, and ensuring policy is consistent and easily accessible. There is no single way to achieve improved governance but inducing and guiding the meaningful implementation of good governance is more arduous than simply a government agency stating what principles should apply. A combination of co-designed clear accountabilities that are adjusted and iterated as lessons are learned as well as education and evaluation applied consistently and with discipline over time will create meaningful improvement.

Notes

1. Ms Corkery is still, as of writing, an employee of Sport Australia. Dr Schoenberg left Sport Australia prior to involvement with this chapter.
2. In the Australian context the clubs or individual members are the voting members of the state sporting organisations and the state sporting organisations are the voting members of the national sporting organisation.
3. The ASPR process covers more than just governance and is part of how Sport Australia ensures accountability for NSOs receiving public funding.
4. Online jams used a combination of video conferencing and live polling to allow people to see and interact with real-time responses (e.g. up vote or down vote) from colleagues all around the country to questions put forward by the Sport Australia team.

References

- Geeraert, A 2019, 'The limits and opportunities of self-regulation: Achieving international sport federations' compliance with good governance standards', *European Sport Management Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 4, pp. 520–38. doi:[10.1080/16184742.2018.1549577](https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2018.1549577)
- Hoye, R & Doherty, A 2011, 'Nonprofit sport board performance: A review and directions for future research', *Journal of Sport Management*, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 272–85. doi:[10.1123/jsm.25.3.272](https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.25.3.272)
- Schoenberg, G, Cuskelly, G & Auld, C 2016, 'The role of intragroup dynamics in non-profit governance models: A systematic quantitative literature review'. *Managing Sport and Leisure*, vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 1–22. doi:[10.1080/23750472.2016.1169212](https://doi.org/10.1080/23750472.2016.1169212)
- Schoenberg, G, Cuskelly, G & Auld, C 2020, 'Examining individual board member behaviors in nonprofit sport governing bodies.' *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*. Advance online publication. doi:[10.1177/0899764020948613](https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764020948613)
- Shilbury, D 2013, 'Australia', in I O'Boyle & T Bradbury (eds), *Sport Governance: International Case Studies*, Routledge, New York, pp. 37–53. doi:[10.4324/9780203408773-12](https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203408773-12)
- Sport Australia 2007, *Governance Principles: A Good Practice Guide for Sporting Organisations*, Sport Australia, Canberra.
- Sport Australia 2012a, *Australia's Winning Edge*, Sport Australia, Canberra.
- Sport Australia 2012b, *Sports Governance Principles*, Sport Australia, Canberra.
- Sport Australia 2015a, *Mandatory Sports Governance Principles*, Sport Australia, Canberra.

Sport Australia 2015b, *Play.Sport.Australia*, Sport Australia, Canberra.

Sport Australia 2016a, *Governance Reform in Sport*, Sport Australia, Canberra.

Sport Australia 2016b, *Integrity Guidelines for Directors and Leaders of Sporting Organisations*, Sport Australia, Canberra.

Sport Australia 2016c, *Unified Behaviours: Creating Success*, Sport Australia, Canberra.

Sport Australia 2018a, *Governance Reform in Sport: Discussion Paper*, Sport Australia, Canberra.

Sport Australia 2018b, *Sport 2030*, Sport Australia, Canberra.