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HUMAN CENTRED MODEL FOR ENHANCING ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY OF SPORTING ORGANISATIONS OPERATING WITHIN A FEDERATED GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

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Abstract – English

This project establishes an alternate approach to current methodologies applied to enhancing the organisational capacity of sports in Australia. Exploring and understanding the significant challenges faced by not-for-profit national and state sporting organisations, the project identifies key elements of organisational capacity and the connection to the perceived level of support provided to staff by their employer, which subsequently impacts on the overall performance of the organisation. The project draws on insights from the not-for-profit, for-profit and military sectors to support and leverage the motivational forces impacting on staff working in sport. It emphasizes the importance of enhanced staff support in strengthening organisational capacity through reduced turnover, retention and building of corporate knowledge. The project recommends sports consider a centralised approach of providing enabling support services to national and state-based staff, while allowing staff to maintain their day-to-day responsibilities, and reporting lines through their local environments, to enhance engagement and organisational capacity. This human-centred model offers a new approach for not-for-profit sporting organisations to overcome existing challenges and improve their overall capacity and performance, without creating the threat to autonomy and control, traditionally associated with attempts to improve the delivery of sport to a one management or unitary model.

Abstract – French

Ce projet propose une approche alternative aux méthodologies actuelles utilisées pour améliorer la capacité organisationnelle des sports en Australie. En explorant et en comprenant les défis significatifs auxquels sont confrontées les organisations sportives nationales et étatiques à but non lucratif, le projet identifie les éléments clés de la capacité organisationnelle et leur lien avec le niveau de soutien perçu par le personnel de la part de leur employeur, ce qui influe sur la performance globale de l'organisation. Le projet s'appuie sur des perspectives provenant des secteurs à but non lucratif, à but lucratif, ainsi que du secteur militaire pour soutenir et tirer parti des forces motivationnelles qui influencent le personnel travaillant dans le domaine sportif. Il met en avant l'importance d'un soutien accru au personnel pour renforcer la capacité organisationnelle en réduisant le taux de rotation, en favorisant la rétention et en construisant des connaissances institutionnelles. Le projet recommande aux sports d'envisager une approche consistant à fournir des services de soutien facilitants au niveau national pour le personnel national et étatique, tout en permettant à ce personnel de maintenir leurs responsabilités quotidiennes et leurs lignes de rapport au sein de leurs environnements locaux, afin de renforcer l'engagement et la capacité organisationnelle. Ce modèle centré sur l'humain offre une quatrième approche pour les organisations sportives à but non lucratif, leur permettant de surmonter les défis existants et d'améliorer leur capacité et performance globales, sans créer la menace pour l'autonomie et le contrôle, traditionnellement associée aux tentatives d'améliorer la prestation du sport via les modèles fédérés, unitaires ou de gestion unique.

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Introduction

The purpose of this project is to identify an alternate approach to enhancing the organisational capacity of sporting organisations, collectively at National and State level within the context of the federated Australian sporting system. To do this, the project will seek to understand:

1. the existing research relating to the challenges faced by not-for-profit sporting organisations,
2. the three current methodologies used to address these issues and the relative advantages and disadvantages of each,
3. the key elements of organisational capacity, and,
4. the importance of the human element (staff) to enhance organisational capacity.

The project will explore and develop a greater understanding of the key elements of organisational capacity and how the perceived levels of support, professional development and opportunity for staff could provide a significant contribution to addressing the challenges faced by not-for-profit sporting organisations globally without the need to transform the governance or operational structure of the sport. Ultimately, this will create a simpler, less threatening, alternate approach for sporting organisations to enhance organisational capacity within a federated governance structure when compared to the current approach which require significant structural and or governance changes. For context it is important to define the key terms used in this paper.

Key Terms

Currently within Australia there are three operating models in place, with most sports still operating under the traditional Federated Model (FM) while a few have transitioned to a One Management Model (OMM) and even fewer have moved to a Unitary Model (UM).

The Federated Model (FM) in Australian sport refers to a system where the management and decision-making responsibilities are distributed across various levels, typically from national to state and sometimes local bodies. Typically, there is a National Sporting Organisation (NSO) with up to seven (7) State Sporting Organisations (SSOs) who are the Member Organisations (MOs) of the NSO. This model allows for collaboration and representation from different regions and stakeholders within the sport. While this model can deliver a greater level of responsiveness and local adaptation it also leads to inconsistency of sport delivery and challenges associated with the duplication of roles and responsibilities which leads to tension over ownership and a lack of resourcing and support at each level.

In contrast, the Unitary Model (UM) refers to a centralized governance structure where a single governing body holds the primary authority and responsibility for managing the sport at all levels. In Australia sports who have adopted this model, have removed the SSO governance level and the NSO now deals directly with the local organisations who deliver the sport. This model provides greater consistency of approach, and efficiency of delivery, but reduces the level of local autonomy and adaptability, with decision making far removed from the point of delivery.

To provide a non-sporting but not-for-profit example, in 2017 Asthma Australia Ltd was formed, the new national organisation represents the coming together of foundations from five Australian states and Asthma Australia Inc into a Unitary Model (UM). The operating model overview has been constructed using the data each individual State Asthma foundation submitted to Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission (ACNC) in 2016 before Asthma Australia Ltd formed in 2017 and is

compared to the summary of a median national sport in Australia, with data was sourced from the Australian Sports Commission (ASC, 2019).

	Median Federated Sport	Asthma Australia Ltd
Total Revenue	$9.71 million	$9.51 million
Number of Legal Entities	9	1
Number of Directors	63	10
Number of Staff	51	47
Number of CEO/GM/EO	9	1
Number of CFO, HR and Finance Staff	4	1
Number of Strategic Plans	9	1
Consolidated Strategic Performance Reporting (Y/N)	N	Y
Number of Audited Accounts	9	1
Number of Finance Systems	9	1

In between the Federated Model (FM) and Unitary Model (UM) is the One Management Model (OMM) which is a hybrid model seeking to leverage the benefits of both the FM and UM structures. It centralises services and management structures, but leaves SSOs to operate independently, retaining their SSO Boards. It does require SSO to relinquish control over some of their day-to-day operations and decision making.

Understanding the Existing Research Relating to Organisational Structures

Independent observers would challenge the logic, associated with the duplication of human and financial resources inherent in the traditional FM of sport administration in Australia. While others will argue for the greater value of localized control of sport delivery. This governance and structural challenge has existed for decades as described by former Australian Sports Commission (ASC) Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chair and author Greg Hartung (Hartung, 2023) in his review of Australian sport policy dating back to 1939 and any analysis of the sport operating models must be considered within this broader context. The governance structure as outlined in the various constituent documents, inevitably describes a model that is controlled from below, whereby member organisations elect representatives to Board roles on their peak national governing organisations. Inevitably this has resulted in governing organisations being driven to serve the needs of the Member Organisations (MOs) through largely representative Directors, rather than being able to adhere to the constitutional objects of the organisation to which they have been elected, the NSO. Tension has and will continue to exist within this context, and there are endless examples, where governing bodies have sought to make changes in the best interest of the overall organisation, only to have their tenure ended by the voting MOs, who inevitably are focused on the needs of their own organisations, as is the obligations of MO directors, rather than the greater good of the sport. The outcome is that over time, this has created a degree of distrust between State and National organisations, which continues to survive individual personnel changes. Ironically, this mistrust survives even when the Directors are elected by their peers, with an existing knowledge base and personal relationships and, who are then voted out for the reasons outlined above, at the next opportunity by the same organisations who elected them.

Attempts have been made in Australia to change the governance and operating structures with varying degrees of success. AusCycling (AC) and Sailing Australia (SA) have demonstrated some success transitioning to a UM, while Touch Football Australia (TFA), Paddle Australia (PA) and Softball Australia (SA) and AusTriathlon (AT) have had varied success with Member Organisations (MOs) who have joined in a One Management Model (OMM) but have in some cases been unable to engage all Member Organisations. Water Polo Australia's experience of being pushed toward a UM, resulted in fractured relationships with its MOs, creating Board instability over multiple years.

These approaches require significant changes to structures, roles and responsibilities, which inevitably has required member organisations to relinquish a level of control of elements of their business to the NSO. While many initially can see the logic in a more efficient system, this process has inevitably met with resistance, from administrators, often volunteer administrators who are reluctant to relinquish control or where the value proposition is not adequately clear or substantiated. Even where there is evidence to support change, a behaviour recognised by academics as *governance rent-seeking* (McLeod et al., 2021) occurs. Governance rent-seeking describes a situation where governance structures persist despite evidence showing they have become sub-optimal due to the actions of the parties resisting any change because it would diminish the personal benefits gained from control and power they have within the existing structures. In addition, MO Directors, who ultimately through their constitutional rights would be the ones required to vote to support any change to the federated governance structure have a legal duty, as a Director to act in good faith and the best interests of the company of which they are a Director(ASIC, 2024), rather than a decision that may benefit the whole sport, but may carry risk to their own organisation.

Multiple attempts have been made to move Australian sports from the FM to a UM, however this requires significant change at many levels and requires incumbent state Boards to vote themselves out of existence as described above. For that reason, there are very few sports operating this way in Australia, the change and the number of MOs required for success make the change too complex and too risky for most.

Shilbury (2000) analyses the advantages and disadvantages of the FM and UM of sport management, which would appear to be at contrasting ends of a spectrum of operating models (Shilbury, 2000). Figure 1 below shows visually the gap between the Federated and Unitary models and includes a cursory summary of the relative advantages and disadvantages of each model.

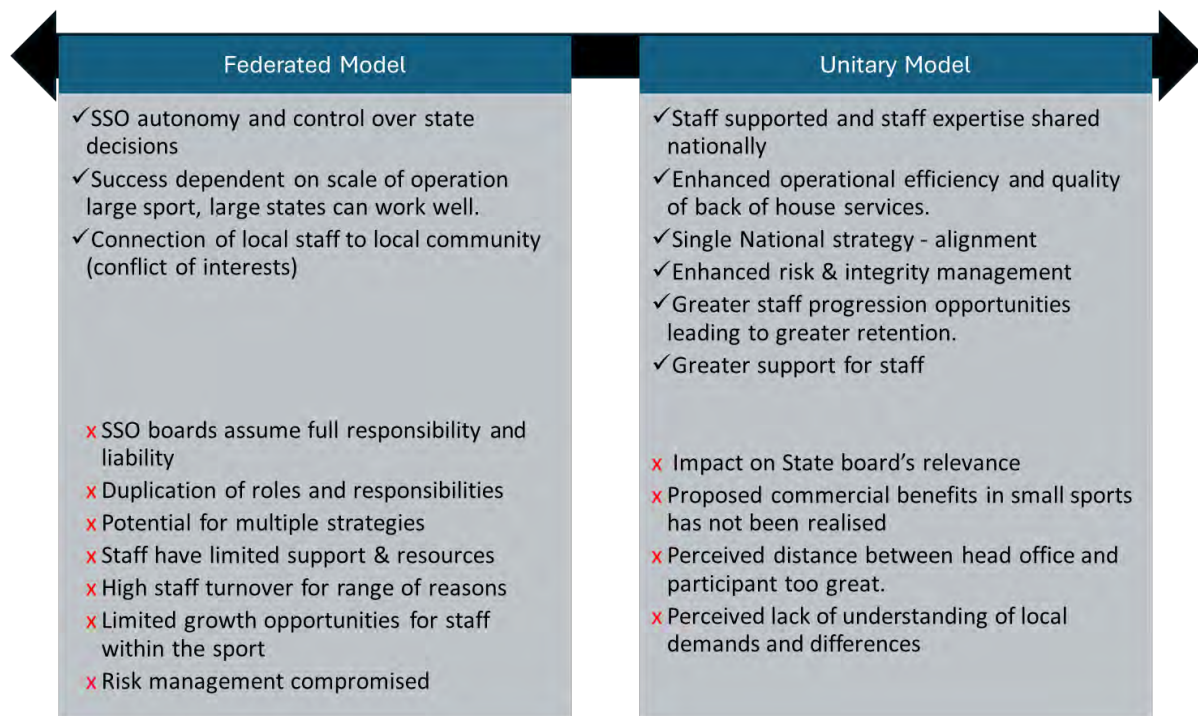| Federated Model	Unitary Model
✓ SSO autonomy and control over state decisions ✓ Success dependent on scale of operation large sport, large states can work well. ✓ Connection of local staff to local community (conflict of interests)	✓ Staff supported and staff expertise shared nationally ✓ Enhanced operational efficiency and quality of back of house services. ✓ Single National strategy - alignment ✓ Enhanced risk & integrity management ✓ Greater staff progression opportunities leading to greater retention. ✓ Greater support for staff
x SSO boards assume full responsibility and liability x Duplication of roles and responsibilities x Potential for multiple strategies x Staff have limited support & resources x High staff turnover for range of reasons x Limited growth opportunities for staff within the sport x Risk management compromised	x Impact on State board's relevance x Proposed commercial benefits in small sports has not been realised x Perceived distance between head office and participant too great. x Perceived lack of understanding of local demands and differences

Fig 1: Extreme ends of the continuum between Federated and Unitary models of governance in Australian sport

There is limited research on UMs and OMMs, given the challenges associated with moving to these models within the not-for-profit sport sector, however there are a few sports within Australia who have adopted a version of either the OMM or the UM. They are AusCycling, Sailing Australia, AusTriathlon, Touch Football Australia (TFA). TFA was a pilot program and there is some research around the scoping process (O'Boyle, 2016) and analysis one year after implementation (AusTriathlon, 2023).

Comparisons are often drawn between the operating models of shareholder based for-profit private sector and the not-for-profit sport sector, however there are some stark differences (O'Boyle, 2016). In the not-for-profit sport sector, compliance with change initiatives or management decisions cannot be mandated to employees as they can be in for-profit business. The constitutional power of the MOs mandates that significant change requires majority support from the MOs. Resistance to change in the not-for-profit environment is often connected to the emotional contracts people, who are often highly valued volunteers, have for their organisation. There appears to be an inherent sense of obligation to maintain the status quo, that volunteers feel toward the entity they have been entrusted to lead. This powerful emotional connection is a double-edged sword for sport administrators, operating within a society that is changing exponentially around them. On the one hand it drives the energy that ensures people give their time freely to support their local organisations, and on the other it creates an emotive, protective bond with the same organisation, that can at times create a narrowed focus preventing the organisation from evolving and adapting the changing environment in which it operates.

In Australia, the sporting landscape is largely driven by volunteers, with almost 3 million engaged each year delivering sport (ASC, 2023b). This then creates an additional challenge where paid administrators regularly interact with and rely on volunteers to meet the challenges being faced.

Australia has operated a federated model of government since 1901, with each State and Territory having autonomy in decision making on most major areas such as health, education, road and rail, and policing to name a few. Despite the resources and authority invested in the Australian government, there has been minimal movement toward more unitary model of government which reflects the complexity of moving away from the federated structure (Gerring et al., 2006). While there is some research to support unitary models of operation, these are focused on for-profit businesses operating across different countries, so lack relevance when compared to not-for-profit organisation across domestic borders. The absence of researched success stories, to use as evidence makes the change management process even more challenging for sport administrators.

In recent times, sports have begun to consider a hybrid or One Management Model (OMM) as outlined in Figure 2 below, which reduces the threat to State Boards and seeks to reduce some of the duplication of resources and costs. This model does still require SSOs to relinquish some control, and potentially introduces some additional costs, that are currently not incurred by the smaller SSOs.
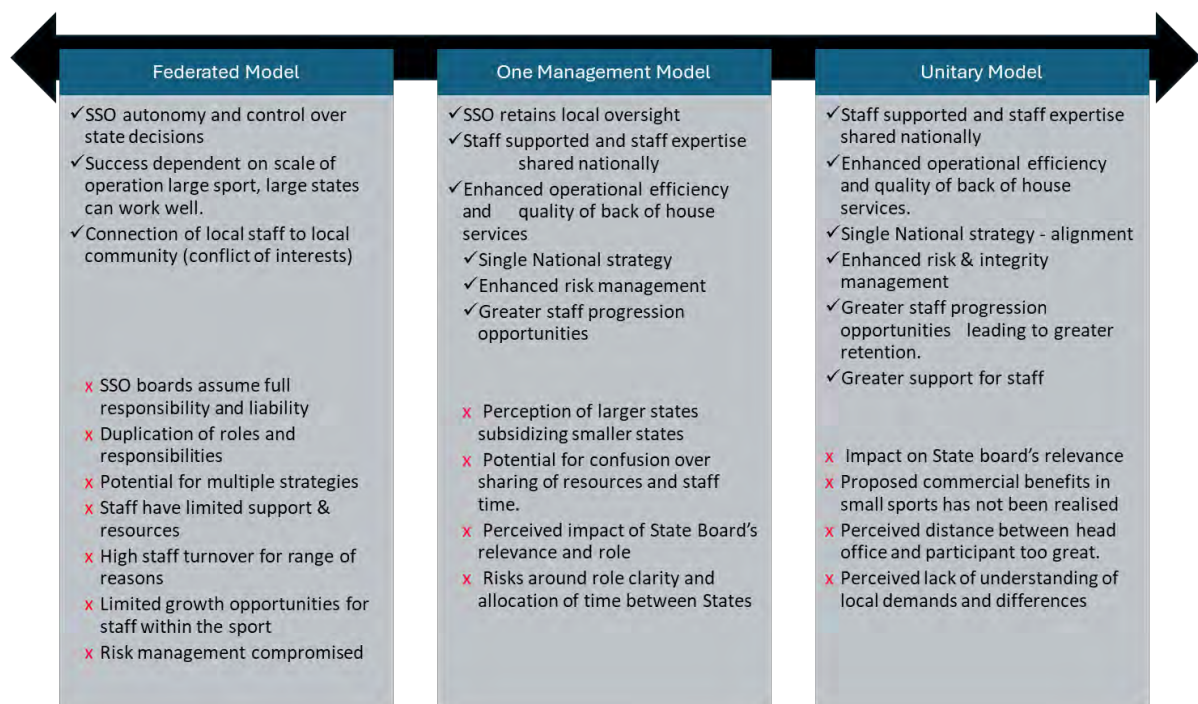

Fig 2 – Spectrum of models of governance.

Recommendation: Human Centred Model (HCM)

As mentioned in the opening paragraph, this project seeks to introduce an alternate approach, which may be viewed as less threatening and is not reliant on other structural or governance changes to occur, while addressing some of the key factors that impact on organizational capacity.

In keeping consistent with the topic of this project, the author will break with tradition, by starting with the recommendation and then providing the evidence to support it.

Throughout this paper the reader will be provided with the compelling case as to the need for sports in Australia to identify a more sustainable way of operating within the Federated model. To that end the research conducted through this project has led to the consideration of a fourth operating model,

to complement the three described above. The fourth model fits into the continuum between the Federated Model and the One Management Model.

Fig 3 – Spectrum of models of governance including the HCM

The fourth model will be known as the Human Centred Model (HCM) and focuses on the most important element of organisational capacity, being human resource capacity (Wicker & Breuer, 2013), by providing greater support and individual capability building to the staff working in sport across the country, while minimising the perceived threats to role, relevance and control of each entity within the federated structure. It seeks to leverage the motivational and high levels of dedication and enthusiasm, as evidenced in the research, which motivates people who work in the not-for-profit sector, through the provision of greater support to them to ultimately generate enhanced organisational capacity.

The HCM proposes that all staff working across a single sport fall under a single national workforce, contracted to and enabled from a human resource perspective by the NSO, while still being managed by and working day to day within the SSO. Implementation of this model may initially begin with SSO staff being seconded to the NSO but over time new staff should be engaged through a single contract with the NSO, regardless of their role being Nationally or State based. It is anticipated this model will result in minimal change to staff costs for either the NSO or the MO. It also proposes no material change in the day-to-day roles and responsibilities of each role, but all staff should be better connected and supported to undertake their role. The HCM seeks to address the items identified in the staff survey and enhance overall organisational capacity by addressing the factors that influence human resource capacity as described later in this paper.

This recommendation draws on some known benefits of the matrix management (Henson, 2012) concept as described below:

- Will allow staff to engage with expertise more easily across a larger staff cohort.
- Consistency and cost effectiveness of resources that can be shared easily across staff.
- Reduce or remove the real or perceived barriers to communication between staff across the country can be minimised, particularly between States.
- Formal and informal staff development will be enhanced, contributing to greater staff retention and engagement.

Importantly though, given it is not a traditional matrix management structure, in that staff will only have a single reporting line to their respective SSO manager, and therefore does not lead to some of the disadvantages associated with matrix management structures (Henson, 2012), which includes dual reporting and management lines, leading to key issues such as:

- Additional layers of reporting and potential confusion through competing priorities between managers.
- Duplication of resources caused by additional reporting structures.
- Reduced decision-making time frames due to the increased number of stakeholders required for consensus to be reached.

Under the HCM staff while centrally employed, would retain a single reporting line but be supported to do their job through core national enabling services provided by the NSO. The HCM will have a significantly higher level of success in sports where there is a single national strategy for the sport but could work without this.

The proposed model also seeks to leverage the changing environments around the not-for-profit sector in Australia as highlighted in the Australian Government's Department of Social Services not-for-profit blueprint paper (Group, 2023) which highlighted key changes, including:

- Growth in peer-to-peer support, or mutual aid and community activities enabled by digital platforms.
- New ways of partnering across sectors and working with governments to deliver policy and programs that serve communities.
- The rise of automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in service design and delivery, communication and fundraising.

It is proposed that a national workforce, with enhanced support for all staff will support significantly improved organisational capacity to deliver on key societal issues that impact on the sporting sector and the communities they serve, increasing the value and relevance of sport as a vehicle for social change. This in turn increasing the likelihood of enhanced government and corporate support, which in turn enhances sustainability and organisational capacity. This includes but is not limited to:

- Enhanced collaboration on the delivery of diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives both internally between staff but also externally to the community it serves. This can apply to diversity in all its forms as well the range of intersectionality that accompany that.
- Enhanced consistency and impact of integrity and child safeguarding programs into the community.
- Reduced duplication of resource, document and policy development saving a significant amount of time as well as ensuring community members are receiving timely and contemporary information across the country.
- Enhanced ability capture, analyse and utilise data to support decision making and prioritisation of resources.

It is proposed the benefits to the MOs with the smallest workforce, will be greater than for those MOs with a higher level of existing organisational capacity. The ability to raise the standard of the lowest performers, will raise the standard of delivery across the sport, creating enhanced perception of the sport as well as the view of the sport as a place to desired place of employment.

The diagram below, which does have some similarities to matrix management as highlighted earlier provides a visual summary of the proposed model with key points relating to the image described below:

- The example below is based on a traditional FM with an NSO and seven SSOs (MOs).
- The HCM can operate regardless of whether the sport has a single whole of sport strategy or if each organisation has its own strategy. Noting, that a single whole of sport strategy would enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the proposed approach.
- The NSO staff are supported by the same enabling services listed and while not ideal, staff across states, may never meet or work together, but could still be supported by this model.

- The impact of the variation in staff size in the SSOs is reduced through the consistent human resource support provided.
- The image below also reflects the approximate staff numbers in each organisation currently, to highlight the disparity between SSOs. This is a common issue across sports in Australia.
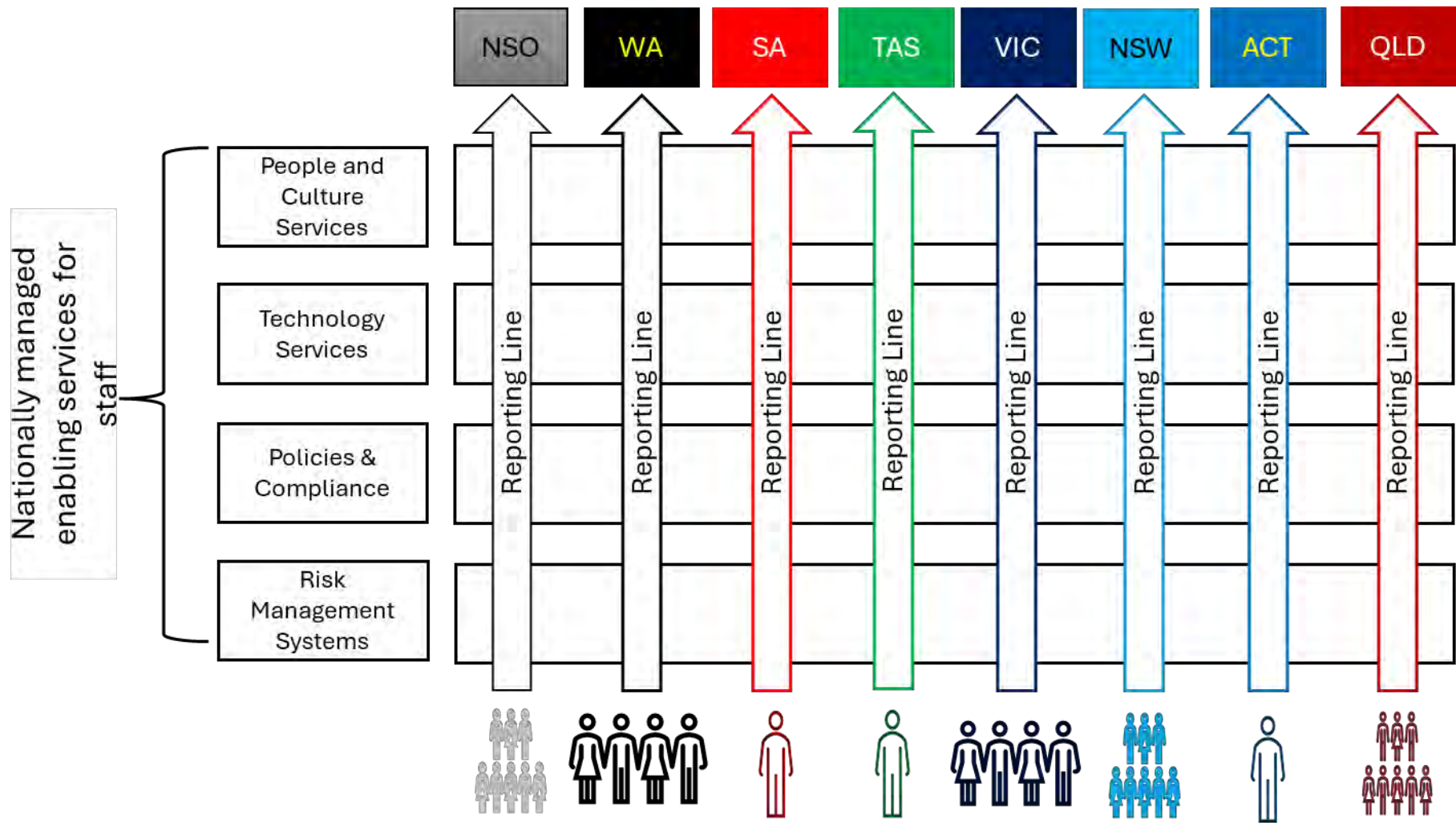
Fig 4: Diagram of the HCM structure, whereby staff are aligned to each MO (SSOs in this example) but supported through shared enabling services focussed on people and culture aspects.

It is important to highlight some of the factors in this model that differentiate it from the other models on the continuum below. It takes lessons from previous attempts to enhance national operating capacity.

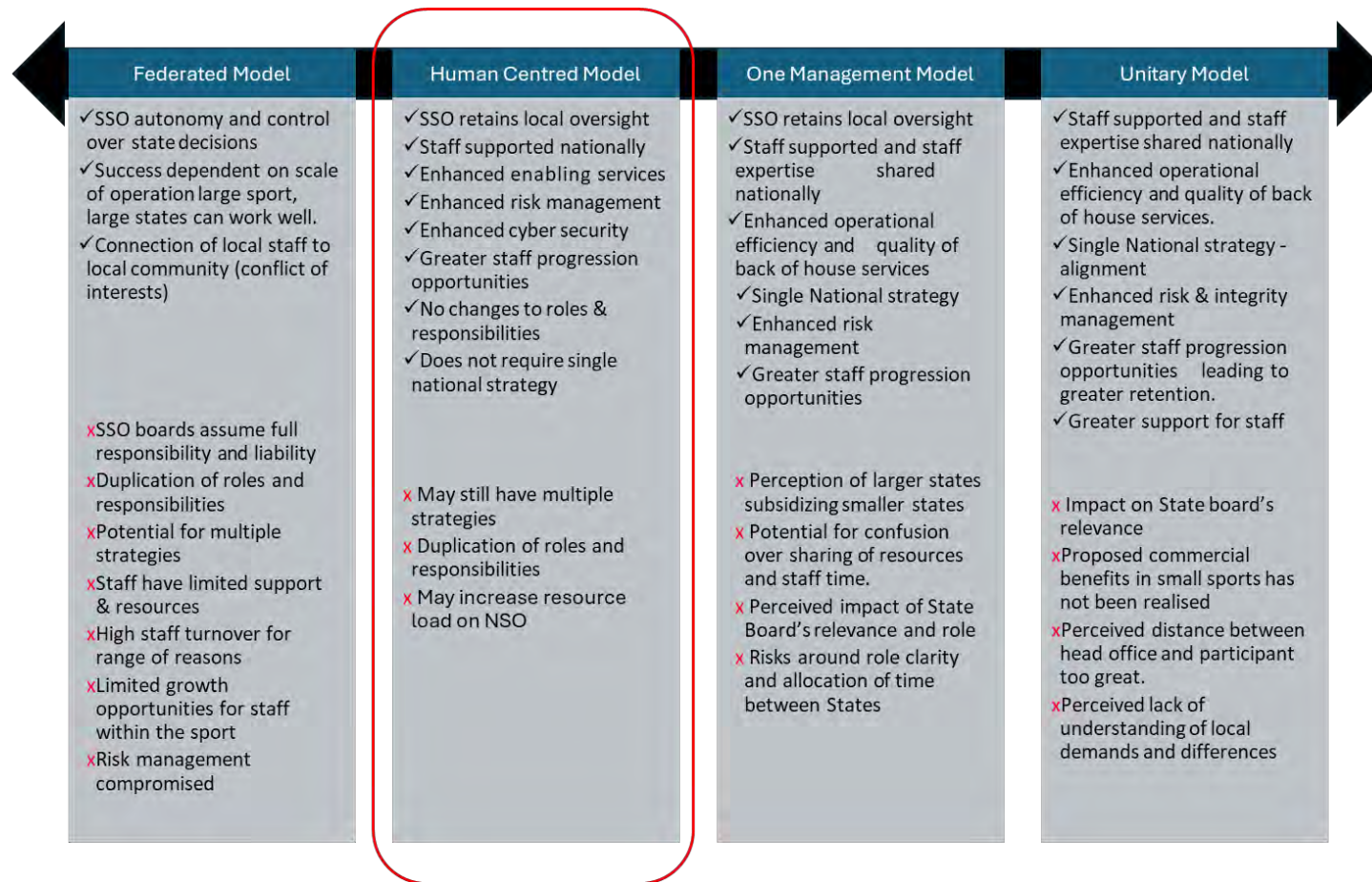| Federated Model	Human Centred Model	One Management Model	Unitary Model
✓SSO autonomy and control over state decisions ✓Success dependent on scale of operation large sport, large states can work well. ✓Connection of local staff to local community (conflict of interests)	✓SSO retains local oversight ✓Staff supported nationally ✓Enhanced enabling services ✓Enhanced risk management ✓Enhanced cyber security ✓Greater staff progression opportunities ✓No changes to roles & responsibilities ✓Does not require single national strategy	✓SSO retains local oversight ✓Staff supported and staff expertise shared nationally ✓Enhanced operational efficiency and quality of back of house services ✓Single National strategy ✓Enhanced risk management ✓Greater staff progression opportunities	✓Staff supported and staff expertise shared nationally ✓Enhanced operational efficiency and quality of back of house services. ✓Single National strategy - alignment ✓Enhanced risk & integrity management ✓Greater staff progression opportunities leading to greater retention. ✓Greater support for staff
xSSO boards assume full responsibility and liability xDuplication of roles and responsibilities xPotential for multiple strategies xStaff have limited support & resources xHigh staff turnover for range of reasons xLimited growth opportunities for staff within the sport xRisk management compromised	x May still have multiple strategies x Duplication of roles and responsibilities x May increase resource load on NSO	x Perception of larger states subsidizing smaller states x Potential for confusion over sharing of resources and staff time. x Perceived impact of State Board's relevance and role x Risks around role clarity and allocation of time between States	x Impact on State board's relevance xProposed commercial benefits in small sports has not been realised xPerceived distance between head office and participant too great. xPerceived lack of understanding of local demands and differences

Fig 5: Operating Model Spectrum including the Human Centred Model

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Based on the research around the key influences of organisational capacity (Wicker & Breuer, 2013), the analysis of the NSO and SSOs of Water Polo in Australia as well as water polo staff surveys assessing the perceived level of support provided by these organisations to staff, the table below outlines the practical implementation of this HCM. Detailed analysis of the literature review and research is provided later in the paper. Sporting organisations may choose to implement one or more of these enabling services at a time or adopt them all in one move.

Enabling Service	Inclusions

Human Resource Support *(often referred to as People and Culture)*	1. NSO to coordinate recruitment processes in conjunction with the SSO*
	   a. Includes development of job description in standardized format to meet all legislative and DEI requirements*
	   b. Management of shortlisting and interview process, with interview panel to include SSO representative*
	   c. Background and referee checks as well as National Integrity Framework requirements related to screening questions*
	   d. Onboarding, performance management and offboarding processes as required*
	2. Workplace complaints management (where appropriate) *
	3. Individual and group professional development and performance management in consultation with SSO*
	4. Sport wide succession planning*
	5. Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)*
	6. Payroll and remuneration alignment across all NSO and SSO roles.
	7. Consistent performance management practices.
	8. Alignment of staff key performance indicators and performance plans.
	9. Whole of sport staff culture development programs and management*
	10. Senior staff (current State CEOs) to become members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) of the NSO, ensuring greater input and awareness of matters impacting the whole sport.
	11. Members of the SLT presented with opportunities to engage with the NSO Board, external stakeholders such as the Australian Sports Commission (ASC), Australian Olympic Committee (AOC), Paralympics Australia (PA), Commonwealth Games Australia (CGA), Sport Integrity Australia (SIA), National Sports Tribunal (NST) providing exposure and learning opportunities which may also assist in future career opportunities.
	12. Being part of a larger organisation, provides greater opportunities for career progression, or secondment opportunities into different areas (laterally) or progression through management ranks. This is in addition to the greater visibility all staff will have to others, enhancing the chances of internal staff movement.
	13. All staff entitlements, existing and future transferred to and managed by the NSO. All existing balances of annual and long service leave transferred in net neutral transactions.
	14. Culturally there is likely to be significant advantages in having all staff on one team, removing any "us" and "them" mentality, be that NSO to SSO or between SSOs.

Technology Services	1. Management of the Single Operating Environment (SOE) (e.g. Windows) *
	2. Technology support*
	    a. Distribution, set up and management of hardware and software.
	    b. Cyber security management and training
	    c. Asset life cycle management
	    d. Help desk support.
	3. Single domain (Microsoft 365), email handles, file sharing, video conferencing platform*
	4. Access to cloud-based applications (apps) with capacity to scale up and down based on need*

Policies and Compliance	1. Management and implementation of standardised suited of policies and procedures to ensure all organisations are compliant with State and Federal legislative requirements. Related to workplace relations, staff conditions and key staff related policies such as, but not limited to:
	    a. Parental Leave*
	    b. Leave
	    c. Travel*
	    d. Social Media*
	    e. Workplace health and safety
	    f. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion *

Risk Management Systems	1. Development and management of a risk management framework for the sport *, including, but not limited to:
	    a. Risk appetite statement * – noting each SSO Board can set their own risk appetite statement for matters within their control.
	    b. Risk assessment matrix * – noting most risks for the sport will be consistent across NSO and SSO.
	    c. Risk management processes *.
	2. Specific support and consistent education to all staff across key relevant risk areas such as, but not limited to:
	    a. Critical incident management*
	    b. Workplace health and safety
	    c. Strategic risks to the organisation*
	    d. Financial risks including budget management and fraud control*
	    e. Compliance and legal risks*

* *Indicates not currently in place or available to staff in most SSOs*

Further to the summary points included above, the HCM addresses the following issues which have created issues when sports have attempted to move toward OMM or UM.

Financial

- The proposed model does not significantly increase costs to either the NSO or the SSO, as the staff on costs remain the same. It is expected there may be a small increase in cost of supporting staff, shared across all to support staff but with an associated return on investment through greater retention and staff capacity. Based on the water polo example, there are some core staff support services that re not currently provided which may require some additional shared investment to reach a minimal and a legislated level of staff support being provided to all staff. Again, it is expected that these costs are offset by a reduction in regrettable turnover (recruitment costs, loss of corporate knowledge and loss of project downtime) of staff at all levels.
- Under this model the NSO would invoice the SSO for the salary and on-costs of their respective staff who would then be paid by the NSO at existing rates.
- Attempts to move toward a OMM or UM model in the past have been based on the potential for greater commercial revenue through access to an aggregated national database. Given the limited commercial value of most NSO's in Australia, and ongoing challenging financial conditions, which is not part of this proposal.
- Some SSOs are currently paying for core services such as technology domains, which can be consolidated into one system. At best there will be a cost saving to SSOs and at worst these costs will remain the same but be supported by the NSO.
- The NSO will absorb some risk around the provision of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) however there are cost effective ways to implement an EAP which can be explored to identify the most appropriate solution.
- The model does not propose shared financial management and so SSO's retain full financial decision making regards their own resource allocation, however the technical aspects of financial control are managed centrally (bookkeeping, financial statements etc)

Roles and Responsibilities

- The UM and in some cases the OMM where the NSO has sought to deliver shared services centrally, have been accompanied by the need for SSOs to relinquish control of their financial management, competition management, pathway or participation programs where there is strong level of ownership or local nuance required for delivery. The HCM model, while leveraging some common services, leaves the SSO, in charge of their own finances and core sport delivery functions but provides their staff with greater support and enhanced environment to do those roles.

The HCM is the recommended outcome of this project, and the following sections will take the reader through the process and evidence that supports the introduction of the HCM as an alternate fourth model.

Challenges Facing Sport

Research relating to the challenges facing not-for-profit sport in Australia identifies that organisations have to deal with heterogeneous and contradictory stakeholder requirements (Phillips, 2014), (Winand et al., 2013) challenges relating to government funding obligations ((Dowling & Smith, 2016) (Grix & Carmichael, 2012), political priorities and agendas ((De Bosscher & van Bottenburg, 2010) (Hanstad &

Skille, 2010), expectations of an increasingly professional workforce (Dowling, 2014) (Taylor et al., 2015) and implementation of new business and governance practices (Phillips, 2014). There is also a level of interstitial complexity (Toubiana et al., 2017) with several conflictive interests from affiliated members with incompatible interests. On top of this, in sport there is the ongoing balancing act required between delivering high performance outcomes for which the majority of funding is allocated and delivering the participation based agenda, expected by member organisations (Hartung, 2023; Pedras, 2020).

Scanning globally, this information is consistent with literature assessing organisations across Canada, Belgium, Germany and the UK. Globally, research indicates that not-for-profit sporting organisations face similar challenges to keep up with the rapidly changing environment in which they operate. The most common challenges are decreasing participation numbers (Wicker & Breuer, 2013), increasing expectations from existing members and society, increasing challenges in recruiting, members, coaches, volunteers,   maintaining adequate financial resources to deliver on the organisation's mission and decreasing funding (Wicker, 2011), (Breuer, 2007; Gumulka et al., 2005) (Lasby, 2007) in (Wicker, 2011). The author's own experience as a CEO of a National Sporting Organisation (NSO), observes the increasing pressure from government agencies to enhance management and organisational systems, along with the increased compliance requirements on child safeguarding and integrity, following several public enquiries and royal commissions (Wright, 2017). In Australia changing community demographics and an increased focus in diversity, equity and inclusion is placing further pressure on all levels of sport to ensure sport engagement reflects the broader society demographics and expectations. Furthermore, sport is increasingly being promoted as a key social impact vehicle to influence improved behaviour around gendered domestic violence and harassment and multi-cultural integration. This is a role that sport should embrace; however, it does add further load to already stretched staff and volunteers.

Leadership Turnover

Symbolic of the challenges faced by not-for-profit sporting organisations is the increasingly short tenure of NSO CEOs who, as the principal leader hold the greatest corporate knowledge, and whose departure often leads to the greatest changes in organisations. Analysis conducted by the author based on Greg Blood's documented history of Australian sport CEO's (Blood, 2024), indicates the average tenure of NSO CEOs has dropped significantly each decade since 1982 reflecting the increasingly difficult operating environment at the NSO level.

Average CEO Tenure by Start Year
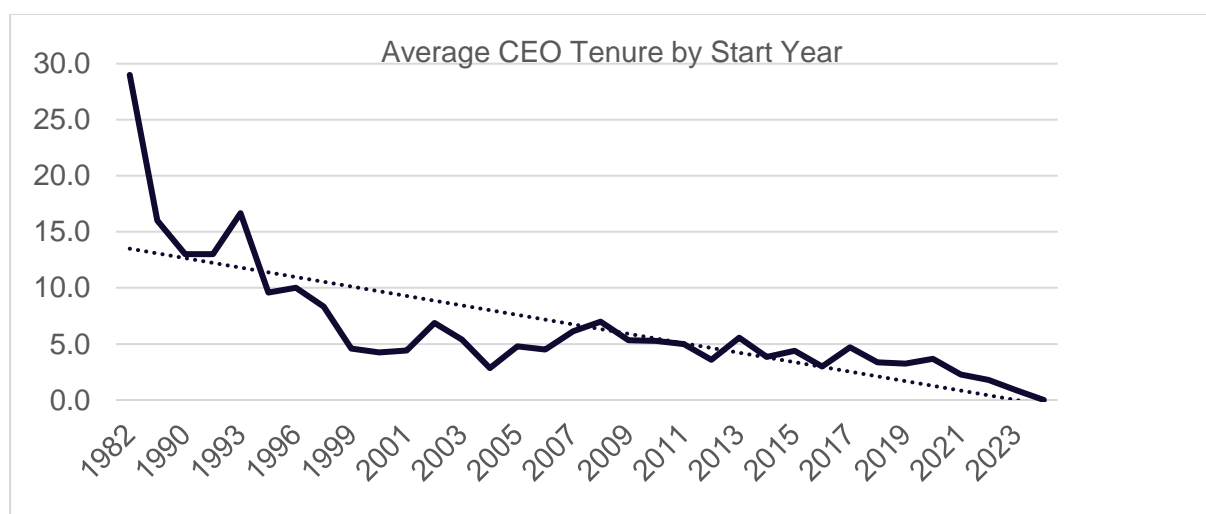
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Fig 6: NSO CEO Tenure in Australian sport 1982 to 2024

Source: Blood, 2024

Acknowledging Figure 6 above does include incumbent CEO's. The incumbent CEOs (n41) average tenure is 3.2 years. When adjusted to remove two outliers (tenures of 22 and 11 years) the average of incumbent CEOs drops to 2.54 years which is consistent with the data above and would result in a leveling of the graph between 2021 and 2023, rather than the drop to zero.

Figure 4 below highlights the number of NSO CEO appointments made per decade and reinforces the high turnover, resulting in lack of stability and loss of corporate knowledge. Based on current appointment rates, it is projected that the 2020-2029 decade will see 96.4 CEOs appointed across the 41 sports captured in this research. It should also be noted, this data is provided on the eve of the end of another Olympic cycle, a time which usually sees heightened CEO and staff changes, which may elevate the projections.
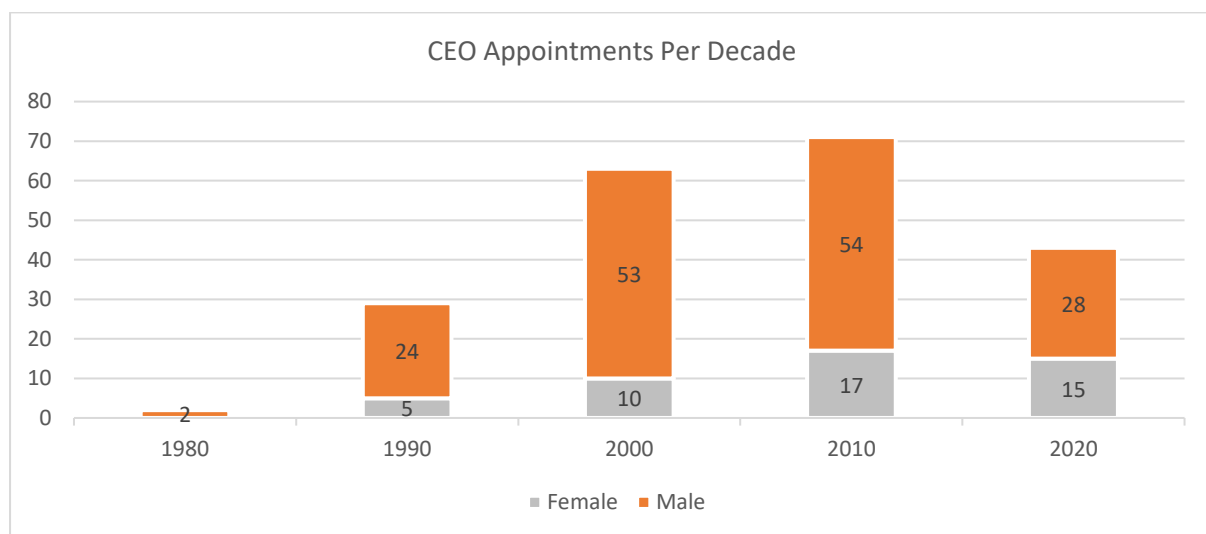

Fig 7: NSO CEO appointments by decade.

While not empirically analysed, anecdotally the turnover of SSO CEO's is higher than at NSO level, as they are wedged between the demands of the NSO in the federated model and their own members locally, and invariably have even less financial or human resources than the NSO CEO at their disposal to support their work.   The following figures relating to the SSO leader position, in the period from 2019 to 2024 across Water Polo's SSOs, alone paint a concerning picture, 16 CEOs across 6 SSOs in 4 years.

- Water Polo Queensland: 2 CEOs
- Water Polo New South Wales: 3 CEOs
- Water Polo ACT: 1 General Manager
- Water Polo Victoria: 2 CEOs
- Water Polo South Australia: 2 General Managers
- Water Polo Western Australia: 6 GMs/CEOs
- Water Polo Tasmania: Does not have a full-time staff member.

There is a lack of empirical data to support staff turnover at SSO level, however again, anecdotally it is worse than SSO CEO turnover, so the need to provide greater support to the people working in sport across the system is compelling.

Timing and Context

As described earlier there is a growing need for support being expressed by member organisations across the federated sporting structure. Historically, these organisations have guarded their independence and autonomy fiercely and any suggestions that created a perceived or real threat to their autonomy have been resisted. The pace, volume and scale of challenges faced by these organisations has reached a tipping point, creating a greater appetite for change.

In addition, to the sector wide challenges described earlier, four unprecedented factors have occurred in the Australian system, creating an opportune environment for a change in thinking.

1. The impact of the COVID 19 pandemic which has seen a rise in collaboration across sports and within sports, greater acceptance of remote working and enhanced capacity for services to be provided remotely.
2. The development for the first time in Australian history, of two major strategies that have been co-designed by and incorporate all stakeholders, across three levels of government and across all sports. These are the Australia's 2032+ High Performance Strategy – **Win Well**, and Australia's Sport Participation Strategy – **Play Well**.
3. Brisbane, Australia will host the 2032 Olympic Games, which has created *a 'unifying light on the hill'* for Australian sport, as demonstrated through the development of the two strategies mentioned in point 2 and the record investment into Australian high performance sport announced on June 30, 2024. (Wells, 2024)
4. The Federal Government's launch of the Measuring What Matters Statement (Australian Government, 2023) which includes several measures that the sporting sector can play a lead role in delivering.

This project seeks to leverage the growing demand for a solution with the contextual conditions described above to enhance organisational capacity, by focusing on the support provided to staff at both an NSO and SSO. The HCM differs from the current approach which focusses on operational, structural or governance changes which have presented significant challenges for those organisations who have attempted to change in the past.

Dimensions of Organisational Capacity

In seeking to enhance organisational capacity, it was important to understand what it is and how it can be assessed. While assessing the organisation's competition performance on the field, pool, track, court (or equivalent) is often used to assess an organisation's overall performance, this is a blunt instrument and does not provide insights into the broader organisational capacity. A more nuanced approach is required, to evaluate the processes that underpins and supports the organisations operations.

Organisational Capacity is defined as the ability of the organization to acquire and align the resources necessary to fulfill its mission by (Eisinger, 2002). There are several other variations of the definition, but the common thread is the link between the capacity of the organisations and its vision and mission. The ability to assess and subsequently track changes in organisational capacity therefore becomes fundamental when considering any change to operating models.

In later work a second term known as *organisational ambition* was introduced by Balduck et al (Balduck, 2014) and defined as the intentions or aspirations to develop, grow, and improve the sports club and to seek resources necessary to achieve the aspired mission.

When used collectively, these two dimensions create a mechanism to assess the gap between organisation's *ambition* and their *capacity* to deliver on that ambition. The NSOs and SSOs in Australia are regularly seeking assistance to address this gap. If this gap did not exist, there would be minimal appetite for change, and regardless of the logic for change, any such initiatives are unlikely to succeed unless individuals and subsequently organisations are motivated to change.

Organisational capability is an additional term, used in this context. Unfortunately, c*apacity* and *capability* are often used interchangeably but they are quite different concepts. Capability is defined as the processes and organizational routines to deploy resources (Eisenhardt, 2000). Unlike capacity, capability is not linked to the mission.

Wicker and Breuer built on the work of Hall et al (Hall, 2003) regarding organisational capacity, and adapted that model to suit a sports setting (Wicker & Breuer, 2013). Through this work, five key dimensions of organisational capacity were identified.

1. **Human Resources Capacity** is defined as the ability to deploy human capital within an organization. It also includes the competencies, knowledge, attitudes, motivation, and behaviors of individuals in the organization. Human resources are the key dimension, as they have a direct, enabling impact on all other capacities.
2. **Financial Capacity** is defined as the ability to develop and deploy financial capital to achieve a vision and mission.
3. **Relationships and Network Capacity** is defined as the ability to draw on relationships with other organisations or institutions.
4. **Infrastructure and Process Capacity** is defined as the ability to deploy or rely on infrastructure, processes, and organisational culture.
5. **Planning and Development** is described as the organisations' ability to develop strategic plans, program plans and policies.

The proposed HCM is predicated on the research of Wicker and Breuer who identified human resource capacity as the most critical element of organisational capacity (Wicker & Breuer, 2013). The HCM is therefore based on the hypothesis that by providing greater support to staff across the NSO and SSOs, the overall organizational capacity of the whole sport can be enhanced without the need to change the governance structures or domains of control at each level.

Analysis of the changes in military decision-making structures provided further support for the importance of human capacity for system effectiveness. In a highly complex environment, despite decades of analysis and multiple movements across the spectrum from highly centralized to decentralized control, driven in part by changes in the quality, quantity and speed of access to information via technology, it remains clear in the military context that the effectiveness of the system, will ultimately remain dependent on the people within the system who interpret information and make decisions based on that information, regardless of their distance from the point of delivery or authority. The depth of relationships among individuals and organisations, along with the intellect and credibility of personnel will determine the effectiveness of the system (McInnes, 2018). It is proposed the intellect and credibility of the personnel is directly related to the ability of an

organisation to recruit, develop and retain staff further reinforcing the value of staff as the most important element in building organisational capacity as described by Wicker and Breuer and which forms the basis for the HCM (Ibid).

The Australia's sector co-designed and owned Sport Participation Strategy – Play Well (ASC, 2023c) further reinforced the importance of the role of staff in the sports sector. Through the development process which included national workshops in each state and almost 7,000 survey responses from across all levels of sport, *Empowering People and Organisations* emerged as a strategic priority area as highlighted in the extract below:

EMPOWERING PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS

Activities and initiatives related to the priority areas will be supported by the following.

Term	Definition
Priority area overview	Building the capability of people and organisations to meet the needs of everyone involved in sport.
Ambition statement	Our ambition is to facilitate the growth of people and organisations to create a safe and inclusive sport ecosystem that meets current needs and is able to adapt to future requirements. The sport sector will be characterised by sustainable organisations, individuals who understand participant needs and create environments where everyone is safe and feels valued.
Narrative	To deliver on our participation ambitions, we need to empower our workforce (paid and unpaid) and sporting organisations. We need a capable workforce that fosters inclusivity, embraces diversity and helps bring out the best in people in safe and positive environments. This environment will encourage personal growth and development, supported by leaders who understand the need for sport to keep pace with societal changes. Secondly, we require sporting organisations with the capability to deliver safe and welcoming environments while balancing financial and environmental sustainability.
Priority area objectives	• Create a capable workforce by developing people, resources and leveraging technology. • Strengthen the operational effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of sporting organisations. • Foster an Australian sport workforce that is reflective of our community. • Cultivate an attractive, supportive and safe environment that encourages growth, collaboration and rewarding experiences for everyone working in sport.

Fig 8: Strategic Priority Area from the ASC's Play Well Sport Participation strategy. Source: Extract from Australia's Sport Participation Strategy – Play Well (ASC, 2023c)

Staff Perceptions of Support

It was identified in the literature review, there are significant differences between the for profit and not-for-profit sector and equally the military sector described earlier. These differences also apply to staff management practises. People who work in and volunteer in sporting organisations, can readily

be linked to the philosophy of "for the mission, not the money" (Parkes & Langford, 2006). While it is argued the significant differences between the sectors mean practices from for-profit staff management cannot be adapted to the not-for-profit sector (Bower, 1983) others suggest there is much to be learnt from the practices applied in the for-profit sector (Myers & Sacks, 2003). For-profit organisations have adapted such practices to survive the challenges of increased competition, reduced funding, increased stakeholder accountability, which are all very similar challenges to those facing not-for-profit sporting organisations (Courtney, 2002; Drucker, 2012). The proposed move to a nationally supported workforce, provides the opportunity to explore the adoption of appropriate for-profit staff management practices to the not-for-profit sport sector.

Sporting organisations have some similar characteristics to for-profit businesses in the service industry, existing, but not exclusively, to serve the needs of their members (customers), be those members individuals or organisations. On that basis, like many not-for-profit organisations they are judged by the performance of their staff (Pynes, 2008), and their ability to meet the needs of the members they interact with (Emerson & Harvey, 1996). The not-for-profit sector however faces significant challenges in attracting and retaining quality staff due to limited resources to reward and motivate staff (Ban et al., 2003). In a resource constrained environment, the ability to provide training and development, progression opportunities, good leadership, strategic and values alignment, effective selection and recruitment practices and the ability for staff to see the positive impact of their work are critical (Ban et al., 2003; Letts et al., 1999; Pynes, 2008). The changes described in the HCM for the operating model would seek to address several of the challenges faced by SSO staff, through greater support, professional development opportunities, career progression opportunities, access to resources and a reduction in duplication of effort.

Development of the Model

In 2023, Water Polo Australia (WPA), the NSO for water polo in Australia, responded to calls from its MOs for support in dealing with the challenges they faced. An expression of interest was conducted, calling for people from across the MO's to be part of a working group to find solutions to the concerns raised. A working group was formed which comprised Presidents, Directors, and Executives from the MO's along with senior executives from WPA. Through online workshops, the following key challenges were identified by the group.

1. Increasing financial cost of operation, coupled with reducing or limited revenue sources,
2. Increasing time and financial cost of compliance, regulation and complaint management,
3. Increasing expectation from members across a range of elements from competition and performance program delivery to meeting demand to address social issues, and
4. Increasing challenges of finding and retaining capable paid and unpaid workforce, competing with better resourced sports and an increasingly time poor society.

The initial intent of the working group was to co-design an enhanced operating model on the basis of the One Management Model described above, but with the working group defining the areas that would be centralised and those that would remain locally managed. The working group was making good progress and there was in principle support for a number of changes to be made. However, when it reached the point of discussing where there was likely to be some additional costs to the SSO for centralised services or relinquishing control of aspects like referee coordination or competition structures, there was resistance and the process ground to a halt. This process mirrored a number of sports who had attempted the move toward a OMM or UM previously, reinforcing the need for an alternate approach. Members of this group however, did participate in the data collection process

relating to organisational capacity and perceptions of staff support, contributing to the overall outcome of this research.

Based on these challenges, which are consistent with the challenges identified in the literature review, it is incumbent on not-for-profit sporting organisations to review how they deliver the administration of sport to ensure the model is fit for purpose. When Australia was federated in 1901, the States were provided with the autonomy to self-govern and the sporting system in Australia replicated this model and for decades through the 20th century was largely effective (Shilbury, 2000). Noting the challenges listed earlier, it is timely to review this operating model to ensure organisations can deliver against their own missions in within the environment in which they are operating today.

In order to progress development of the model and to complement the existing literature there was a need to gather data for analysis that related specifically to a sport within the Australian sporting context.

The purpose of the data collection and analysis was to identify two key baseline measures and to identify the relationship between those two measures. The measures are:

1. organisational capacity, and
2. staff perceptions of support from the organisation (employer)

The data collection process was designed to establish a baseline assessment of organisational capacity and staff perceptions of support, which can be used to compare if the HCM does impact on organisational capacity and staff perceptions of support.

The data analysis methodology will allow organisations wishing to adopt the HCM to analyse the two measures pre and post implementation. Importantly, the data collection and analysis process are not designed or intended to compare one organisation, or staff group to another. The comparison is from the baseline across the whole sport and to compare to subsequent annual reviews. For organisations seeking to adopt this HCM, it is recommended that where accurate data is available staff turnover figures are included in the pre and post implementation analysis.

Organisational Capacity Assessment

Water polo was used as the test case sport to establish an organisational capacity baseline. Each SSO CEO or equivalent was invited to complete an online self-assessment using a 4-point scale ranging from *Not in Place (1)* to *Excelling (4*. It should be noted however that due the self-assessed nature of this assessment there are challenges with re-test validity in future, if personnel have changed. The question set spans five (5) key functional areas of organisational capacity relevant to a not-for-profit organisation and aligned to the purpose of this project. The functional areas assessed are adapted from ASC's Game Plan system (ASC, 2023a) for the purpose of this research and largely align with the elements described earlier in this paper (Wicker & Breuer, 2013).

1. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Safeguarding
2. Finance systems, literacy and management.
3. Sport Governance
4. Participation
5. People and Culture

There are a range of obligations within each of these functional areas, that the 116-question set explored.

There is a notable exception in the baseline analysis which relates to the quantification of costs associated with SSOs in delivering the functional areas. The rationale for not including this measure in the analysis is multi-factorial.

1. The broad range of organisational capacity between the seven MOs in the water polo system is large making comparisons very challenging, combined with the fact that MOs with limited human and financial resources, simply do not undertake some or all elements of the core functional areas listed above, or
2. Some aspects of the functional areas are provided pro or low bono, by a community member so there is no to minimal cost involved, but there is a lack of consistency, continuity and accountability associated with this method, or
3. The function is being undertaken as part of a broader role, often by someone who has minimal expertise in that area, and therefore it is either pushed to the bottom of the priority list or takes significantly longer and is completed at lower quality due to the lack of specialist expertise. This makes a like for like quantitative analysis with a revised model impossible to do meaningfully and with validity.

It is anticipated that where the same tasks are currently being undertaken at SSO level and at NSO level, there will be efficiencies gained through a national operating model, however the sample size in this case would be very small and lack validity.

Staff Engagement Survey

The second data set gathered was to evaluate current and recent water polo staff's perceived level of support received from their SSO. The literature review highlighted the challenges in the not-for-profit sector with respect to attracting and retaining quality staff due to limited resources to reward and motivate staff (Ban et al., 2003), the ability to provide training and development, progression opportunities, good leadership, strategic and values alignment, effective selection and recruitment practices and the ability for staff to see the positive impact of their work are critical (Ban et al., 2003; Letts et al., 1999; Pynes, 2008). It was therefore important to develop an understanding of this within the Australian sporting landscape and identify the link between the perceived level of support for staff in water polo and the organisational capacity to provide human resource support. In order to do this, current and former staff (back to 2019) of water polo's SSOs were assessed on a 5-point Likert Scale, designed to assess staff in the key areas mentioned above, in relation to their roles with the MO. The question set can be found at Appendix B.

Results and Data Analysis

The results of the organisational capacity assessment highlighted organisations were currently performing better in the areas of:
- Governance (Mean=72%, SD=12%),
- Participation (Mean=72%, SD=2%) and
- Financial Systems (Mean=69%, SD=4%).

It is noted that these areas either have significant national support from the NSO and from the Australian Sports Commission through the Sports Governance Standards (ASC, 2024b) and the National Participation Strategy – Play Well (ASC, 2023c) or there are regulatory requirements (finance).

The areas of lowest organisational capacity were:
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and Safeguarding (Mean=60%, SD=11%) and
- People and Culture (Mean=54%, SD=17%).

With respect to DEI and Safeguarding results, these were slightly lower than expected given the national focus on these two areas, but under further consideration, while there is a national approach and all organisations at SSO and NSO level must adopt the National Integrity Framework (ASC, 2024a) SSOs face a resourcing challenge to ensure this framework is actually delivered at community level. There is no national approach to People and Culture as this currently remains the domain of each SSO. The results of the staff survey in relation to perceived aligned with the limited organisational capacity in the People and Culture area, which supports the premise of the recommend HCM.
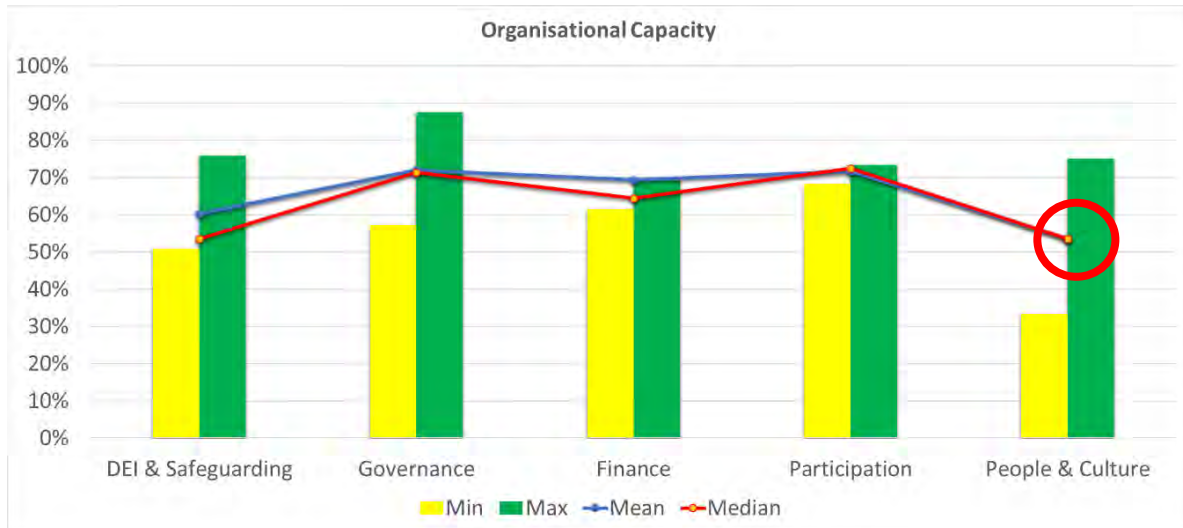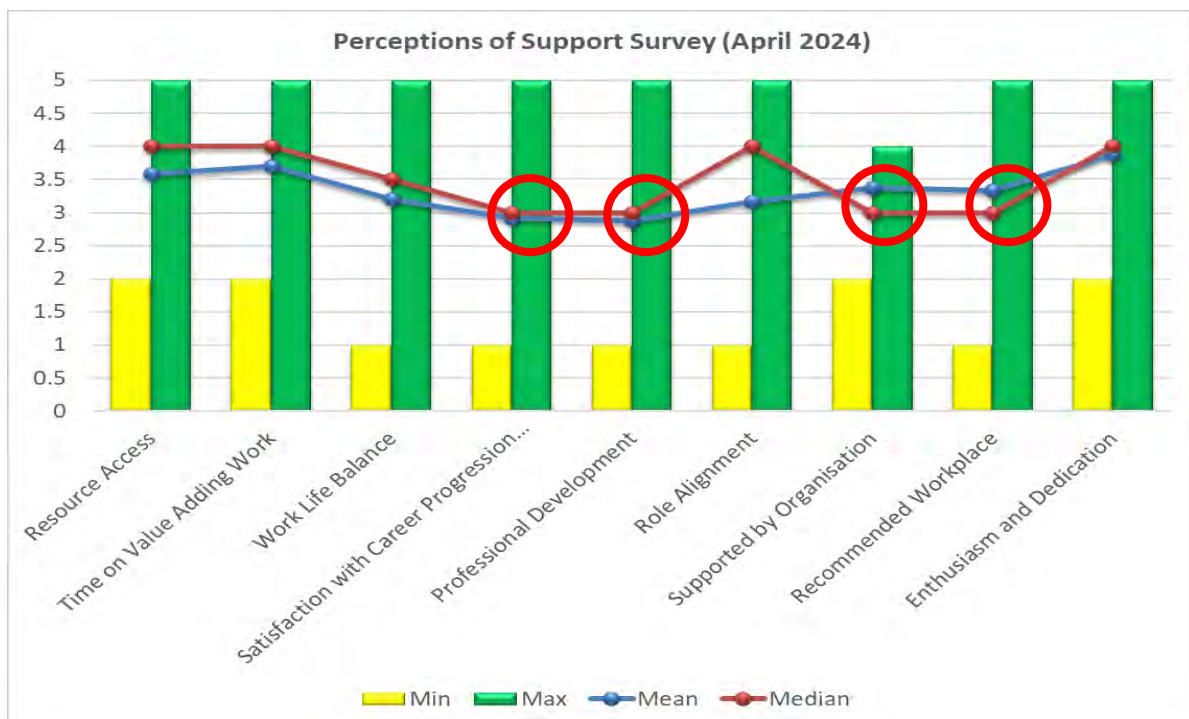

Fig 9: Organisation Capability

Fig. 10: Survey of past and present staff who have worked at national or state level in Water Polo between 2019 and 2024.

Analysing the staff perceptions of support survey reveals some key insights and connections back to the organisational capacity results. The elements with the highest performance were:

- *Resource Access*: mean 4 (SD=0.83, minimum of 2, maximum of 5)
- *Time on Value Adding Work*: mean 4 (SD=1.04, minimum of 2, maximum of 5)
- *Enthusiasm and Dedication*: mean 4 (SD=0.80, minimum of 2, maximum of 5)

The lowest performing elements from lowest to highest were:
- *Professional Development*: Mean 2.88 (SD=1.15, minimum of 1, maximum of 5)
- *Satisfaction with Career*: Mean 2.92 (SD=1.06, minimum of 1, maximum of 5)
- *Recommended Workplace*: Mean 3 (SD=0.87, minimum of 1, maximum of 5)

In terms of absolute ratings, the mean lowest performing elements are not terrible low, sitting between a rating of 2 and 3 out of 5 and only 1 to 2 ratings lower that the better performing areas. There are some factors that contribute to these results that need to be considered. The range of organisational size in terms of employees across each SSO ranges from 0.4 FTE to 12 FTE, with five of the seven SSO's being below 4 FTE. The level of support provided by the larger SSO's is better and they also have more past and present employees, so they skew the responses higher. The minimum ratings become important in this analysis because one of the roles of the NSO is to ensure the sport is vibrant across the entire country, not just in select pockets. To enhance the organisational capacity across the sport, it is critical to raise those at the lower end first.

These findings are consistent with the key challenges faced in attracting and retaining staff by those in the not-for-profit sector such as limited resources to reward and motivate staff (Ban et al., 2003), the ability to provide training and development, progression opportunities (Ban et al., 2003; Letts et al., 1999; Pynes, 2008).

Analysis of the data also revealed a significant range between SSOs, further highlighting the challenges faced. This supports the notion that while some SSO's can offer appropriate support to staff, some cannot, which comprises the delivery of the sport across the country.

Despite the lack of perceived support provided as demonstrated in the analysis above, staff working in water polo still retain a high level of enthusiasm and dedication to their roles as highlighted in Fig.7. It is also proposed that through greater support the regrettable staff turnover[1] could be reduced, providing greater stability and retention of corporate knowledge, which will lead to enhanced organisational capacity and the delivery of better outcomes for participants. See Appendix B for descriptions of each element in the staff survey.

In support of the proposed HCM, evidence was also drawn from AusTriathlon who have adopted a *One Management Model* (OMM), which is one of the approaches on the continuum highlighted in Fig 1, with four of the seven SSOs operating within that model. In AusTriathlon's year 1 review of the One Management model the results from the "People" aspect of new model (AusTriathlon, 2023), are consistent with the proposed benefits of the human centred approach:
- Eighty-two percent staff retention rate.
- Thirteen percent increase in staff satisfaction.
- Increased celebration and sharing of positive events across the whole sport.
- State staff elevated into National roles providing career development opportunities.
- Increased professional development opportunities across all staff.

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[1] Regrettable Staff Turnover defined as high performing staff leave for reasons within the organisation's control.

Proposed Implementation Plan

The following table provides the core elements of an implementation plan, that a sport could adapt to suit their own context and timeframes. It is expected that each sport who chose to adopt this model will develop a more detailed implementation plan suitable to the sports time frames and capacity.

Priority	Recommendation	Action	Lead	Resources	Est. Duration	Critical success factors
1	Understand the desire for change.	1. NSO CEO & President to engage SSOs to establish if there is a desire to explore a better operating model.	NSO CEO & President	Time Travel expenses if face to face or conduct online	1 month	1. Critical that SSO CEOs and Presidents are open to a further conversation around an enhanced operating model.
2	Engage independent consultant to facilitate	1. Consultant to conduct deep dive individual discussions with each SSO CEO & President to fully understand the challenges faced. 2. Collate report of the key challenges facing sport.	NSO CEO & Consultant	Consultant Engagement contract Travel and support	3 months	1. Deep understanding of each SSO. 2. SSOs feel heard and their opinion valued. 3. Summary report collated and key themes identified.
3	Present report & discuss	3. Problem statement defined - Report collectively presented back to group of all SSO CEOs & Presidents and the NSO CEO & President 4. Preliminary brain-storming to solve problem	NSO CEO & Consultant	Report Travel – All Time – All Venue & Catering	1 month	4. Shared understanding of the challenges faced across the sport. 5. Turn minds collectively toward problem solving.
4	Consider options	5. HCM presented as low risk, low-cost option as 1 of 4 approaches	NSO CEO & Consultant	Time	1 month	6. Establish and agreed goal, without yet the plan to get there. 7. Identify appropriate KPI's to evaluate the impact and timeframes for review
5	Assume HCM is selected	6. Identify the enabling services SSOs are	NSO CEO	Expansion of NSO enabling services	1 month	8. Selection options from the 4 key areas presented in Recommendation.

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				comfortable to engage with in phased approach. 7. Establish workforce map.				9. Understand the national workforce, current roles, alignment and existing conditions.
6	Workforce mapping	8. Map all roles and requirements for all staff to transition to HCM.	NSO CEO with SSO CEO (individually)	Time Seek HR advice (legal)	1 month in parallel with below	10. Understand which may be secondments, which may be complete shift. 11. Understand leave and entitlements implications, form agreement on case-by-case basis.
7	Risk Assessment	9. Develop collective risk assessment nuanced to the sport and existing structures	NSO CEO & Consultant	Time Legal advice	1 month in parallel with above	12. All CEO's and Presidents are comfortable that risks have been surfaced and mitigation plans are implemented.
8	Enabling Services	10. Cost delivery of enabling services, and share cost projections with NSO and SSOs	NSO CEO	Expansion of NSO enabling services		13. Identify financial impact on all parties. 14. Navigate challenges that arise based on cost. Find an agreed solution.
9	Clarify ways of working	11. Workshop with all staff and CEOs to define ways of working	All staff	Time – 1-2 days Travel for face to face for all staff		15. All CEOs and Staff are clear on implications for HCM, reporting lines and support points.
10	Commencement date	12. Identify commencement dates for staff to transition to NSO support. This may vary from state to state	NSO CEO with each SSO CEO	Nil	2 weeks	16. Each SSO clear on commencement date (as are SSO Staff). 17. Communicate plan to all CEOs.
11	Staff Induction	13. Deliver thorough induction to SSO staff as they transition to NSO employ	NSO CEO	Material costs Deliver online	1 month	18. All staff have clarity and understanding of the available services and support
12	Review #1	14. Midyear review after 6 months	NSO & SSO CEOs with relevant staff	Time Online	6 months	19. Evaluate progress, and seek feedback from key stakeholders, including staff. 20. Adjust as required

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13	Review #2	15. Full-year review after 12 months	NSO & SSO CEOs with relevant staff	Time Online	12 months	21. Evaluate progress, and seek feedback from key stakeholders, including staff. 22. Adjust as required

Conclusion

In conclusion, the challenges faced by not-for-profit sporting organizations underscore the urgent need for innovative strategies to ensure sustainability. Historically, efforts to improve operational models through significant structural or governance restructuring have often encountered substantial resistance within federated structures, primarily due to the significant changes required and the perceived loss of autonomy or control by member organizations (MOs).

This project builds on existing research and provides additional evidence in the following areas:

- A comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by not-for-profit sporting organizations operating within a federated governance model.
- An evaluation of current methodologies employed to address these challenges, including their relative advantages and disadvantages.
- An analysis of the priority elements of organizational capacity.
- An exploration of the critical role of human resources (staff) in organizational effectiveness.

Existing research clearly indicates that the challenges confronting not-for-profits are widespread and persistent. Additionally, it highlights the pivotal role of human resource capacity in building organizational capacity, a concept recognized not only in the not-for-profit sector but also in the military. The research conducted in this project revealed diminished organizational capacity relating to the provision of effective human resource support. This finding is corroborated by data from staff across water polo in Australia, who reported lower ratings on key measures of employer support relating to career progression, professional development and workplace support.

The combination of existing research and the findings from this project advocate for a human-centred model to enhancing organizational capacity. By prioritizing the development and support of staff, through centralised delivery of enabling services to staff, organizations can improve staff retention, enhance organizational knowledge, and boost overall performance, all while maintaining the autonomy of the MOs.

Notably, this approach offers flexibility and practical applicability without imposing significant financial burdens or the complexities associated with matrix management. It represents a viable pathway for organizations seeking to adapt and thrive in a dynamic environment.

Looking forward future research should focus on practical implementation strategies and the long-term impacts of enhanced staff support on organizational capacity and effectiveness. By continuing to refine human-centred methodologies, not-for-profit sporting organizations can navigate current challenges effectively and position themselves for sustained success.

Ultimately, embracing this holistic, human-centred model has the potential to empower organizations to overcome existing obstacles, foster a culture of innovation and collaboration, and achieve enduring excellence in their operations and mission delivery.

Appendix A: Organisational Capacity Question Set

DEI and Safeguarding

1. Is your organisation affiliated to your national body?
2. Has your national sport organisation (NSO) adopted the Sport Integrity Australia National Integrity Framework or have integrity policies which comply with Sport Integrity Australia standards?
3. Does your organisation have and make available your sports current Safeguarding policies?
4. Does your organisation make the national safeguarding policies available to all members?
5. Does your organisation have a child safeguarding commitment statement that is publicly promoted?
6. Does your organisation have processes in place to communicate changes to safeguarding policy/ procedures to all staff/ volunteers/ members?
7. Does your organisation have resources available for all members that support the implementation, promotion, and education of your national safeguarding policies?
8. Do your organisation position holders model and champion a childsafe culture at all levels, from the top down and the bottom up?
9. Does your organisation have Child Safeguarding and Member Protection as a standing item/s at Executive committee meetings?
10. Does your organisation have a safeguarding champion/lead officer?
11. Does your organisation follow all the recruitment and screening requirements (including advertising, interviews and referee checks) in accordance with the national child safeguarding policy to ensure staff and volunteers are suitable to work / volunteer with Children?
12. Does your organisation adhere to the requirements of your state or territory Working with Children Check (or equivalent) legislation?
13. Does your organisation have a secure register for recording WWCC (or equivalent) data which is monitored regularly?
14. Has your organisation kept the legally required records of your WWCC verifications?
15. Does your organisation provide an induction for all new position holders on their responsibilities and obligations under the Child Safeguarding and Member Protection policies, including record keeping, information sharing and reporting obligations?
16. Does you organisation provide ongoing training and education to all position holders on their obligations under the Child Safeguarding and Member Protection policies?
17. Does your organisation provide training or information to volunteers on how to recognise indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children?
18. Does your organisation provide education materials to children and their families about their right to feel safe and be safe both in the physical and online environments?
19. Does your organisation ensure complaints are taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly through the appropriate policies?
20. Does your organisation provide appropriate information and support to all members, including children and their families, on how to make a complaint if they feel unsafe and/ or report a concern?
21. Does your organisation seek children's and young people's views and encourage participation in decision-making in relation to the organisations' operations?

22. Does your organisation have processes in place to seek regular feedback from members, children and their families about your organisation's safeguarding policies and practices?
23. Does your organisation ensure families participate in decisions affecting their child/ children?
24. Does your organisation provide a welcoming environment that embraces all children and members, regardless of their abilities, sex, gender identity, or social, economic or cultural background?
25. Does your organisation ensure a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are respected and valued?
26. Does your organisation actively support and facilitate participation and inclusion within it by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, members and their families?
27. Does your organisation have a childsafe risk management plan (CSRMP) which focusses on preventing, identifying, and mitigating risks to children?
28. Is your organisation's online environment used in accordance with the Child Safeguarding Policy and child safe practices?
29. Does your organisation complete an annual self-audit of compliance against the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations or relevant state legislation requirements?

Governance

1. Does your organisation refer to a set of rules to guide meetings, structures and processes?
2. When was the last time your organisation reviewed these rules?
3. When was the last time your organisation reviewed these constitutions?
4. Does your organisation have any by-laws, policies and/or set of rules, separate to your constitution?
5. When was the last time your organisation reviewed its by-laws, policies and/or set of rules?
6. Does your organisation's Board have a composition of more than 50% representation of one gender?
7. Does the composition of your organisation's Board reflect the local community?
8. Does your organisation have a succession plan strategy to attract and recruit people onto its Board?
9. Does your organisation have in place a formal handover procedure to support incoming Board members into their roles?
10. Should a situation arise, how confident does your organisation feel in applying the relevant policies?
11. Are these policies current and publicly available?
12. Are all your board/management Board positions filled?
13. Does your organisation have documented terms of office for your board/management Board to allow for existing members to be re-elected or new members to be elected at regular intervals?
14. Is your board/management Board staggered (i.e. made up of Board members with different terms of office) to mitigate Board positions being vacant?

Financial

15. Does your organisation have an identified Board member appointed in the role of Treasurer?
16. Does your organisation have an identified Board member with financial management experience to stand in for the appointed Treasurer if required?

17. Does your organisation provide a financial briefing to incoming Board members outlining their financial responsibilities?
18. Does your organisation produce a yearly budget?
19. Is this budget approved by your organisation's Board?
20. Does this budget include a cash flow budget by month?
21. Does the budget align to the organisation's Strategic Plan?
22. Does your Board monitor progress against the budget to inform decision-making?
23. Does your organisation use an accounting package to record financial transactions?
24. Does your organisation share financial information with its members?
25. Does your organisation meet its financial statutory reporting requirements?
26. Does your organisation actively seek financial support from sources outside of membership fees?
27. Please provide details of 'other' sources not listed
28. Does your organisation actively generate and secure financial support from sources outside of membership fees?
29. Please provide details of 'other' sources not listed
30. If you exclude membership fees, does your organisation receive revenue from diverse sources?
31. What frequency of financial reporting is provided to the organisation Board members at meetings?
32. It is best practice for a organisation Board to receive a suite of financial reports. What financial reports are provided to the organisation Board?
33. Does your organisation have documented financial controls to reduce the risk of financial errors, mismanagement and/or fraud?

Participation

1. How often does your organisation undertake formal and informal monitoring, evaluation and review of your participation plan priorities?
2. Does your plan include any reference to participant experience?
3. Do you have a strategy for the recruitment of new participants?
4. Is your recruitment strategy targeted for different age groups or segments?
5. Is a specific member of your organisation workforce responsible for the recruitment of new participants?
6. Do you have a strategy for the retention of existing participants?
7. Is your retention strategy targeted for different age groups or segments?
8. Is a specific member of your organisation workforce responsible for the retention of existing participants?
9. Does your organisation have a welcoming procedure or induction for new participants/families?
10. Does your organisation have a participant-first philosophy?
11. Does your organisation offer opportunities for different levels or types of participation?
12. Do you feel your organisation is welcoming for and actively involves the people around the participant (e.g. partners, family) in the organisation experience?
13. Does your organisation encourage coaches and volunteers to deliver sessions that are fun for all participants as well as develop physical skills?

14. Does your organisation provide equal and fair access to facilities, coaches and training across all ages, grades and ability levels?
15. Does your organisation receive feedback directly from participants about what they do and don't like about their current experience in order to improve your operations?
16. How often did you have to reschedule, postpone or adjust an event or activity due to extreme weather in the last season?
17. Does your organisation offer flexible payment options, to reduce any socio-economic barriers to playing?
18. Does your organisation offer different membership models (e.g. social, platinum, half yearly memberships)?
19. "Does your organisation offer pathway opportunities for players, coaches and officials, and volunteers?
    a. Entry level programs
    b. Social / Informal events
    c. Competitive programs
    d. Masters
    e. Seniors
    f. Juniors
    g. Male
    h. Female
    i. Non-Binary
    j. Athlete Development programs / Pathways/ Talent Id programs
    k. Coach/ Official development programs

People and Culture

1. Does your organisation have documented roles and job descriptions for Board members?
2. Is a member of your Board responsible for inducting and supporting new Board & non-Board members in their roles?
3. Do the roles and responsibilities of your Board and non-Board members provide the function and support to achieve your strategic objectives?
4. Does your organisation recruit individuals with specific skills and experience to suit a vacant role?
5. Does your organisation have a process to capture, evaluate and provide ongoing feedback to individuals carrying out roles within the organisation?
6. Does your organisation provide upskilling and/or professional development opportunities for people within your organisation?
7. Does your organisation have a process to monitor and ensure that all members of your workforce meet the minimum education and training standards for their role?
8. Does your organisation have initiatives to recognise and reward its workforce?
9. Does your organisation have written position descriptions in place for all employed staff?

Appendix B: Staff Perceptions of Support Survey Definitions

Chart Heading	Survey Question Asked of Respondents
Enthusiasm and Dedication	Rate your overall engagement with your role where engagement is defined as the combined level of enthusiasm and dedication felt toward your job.
Supported by Organisation	How supported are (or were) you by your organisation to do your role?
Resource Access	I have (or had) access to the resources I needed to undertake my role successfully
Time on Value Adding Work	On average, approximately how much of your time per week is/was spent on dealing with issues or problems that could have been prevented? This is often referred to as putting out "bushfires" and for example, may include member complaints, problems that could have been prevented with better communication or planning, or squabbling between personalities.
Work life balance	I have (or had) a suitable work life balance while working in state/national water polo organisation.
Satisfaction with career progression opportunities	Rate your satisfaction levels with the opportunities for career progression in your organisation? For example, from your current role can you see another role within the same organisation, that you would apply for if it became vacant, or do you have discussions with your manager where future roles are discussed?
Professional Development	Rate your satisfaction with the professional development opportunities provided by your organisation? For example, were you provided opportunities or supported to undertake learning or development opportunities related to your role?
Role Alignment	Rate the alignment of your actual role to your expectations of the role when you applied for it or what your position description describes
Recommend Workplace	I would recommend my organisation as a great place to work.

Water Polo Current and Former Staff Engagement Survey

Q1. How supported are (or were) you by your organisation to do your role?

Answer Choices	Responses		
Very well supported	0.00%	0	
Well supported	38.71%	12	
Somewhat supported	41.94%	13	
Limited support	19.35%	6	
Very limited support	0.00%	0	

Q2. I have (or had) access to the resources I needed to undertake my role successfully

Answer Choices	Responses		
Strongly agree	6.45%	2	
Agree	51.61%	16	
Neutral	25.81%	8	
Disagree	16.13%	5	
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0	

Q3. On average, approximately how much of your time per week is/was spent on dealing with issues or problems that could have been prevented? This is often referred to as putting out "bushfires" and for example, may include member complaints, problems that could have been prevented with better communication or planning, or squabbling between personalities.

Answer Choices	Responses		
More than 80% of an average week in season	3.23%	1	
Between 60 and 79% of an average week in season	19.35%	6	
Between 40 and 59% of an average week in season	19.35%	6	
Between 20 and 39% of an average week in season	35.48%	11	
Less than 20% of an average week in season	22.58%	7	

Q4. I have (or had) a suitable work life balance while working in state/national water polo organisation.

Answer Choices	Responses		
Strongly agree	9.68%	3	
Agree	38.71%	12	
Neutral	16.13%	5	
Disagree	25.81%	8	
Strongly disagree	9.68%	3	

Q5. Rate your satisfaction levels with the opportunities for career progression in your organisation? For example, from your current role can you see another role within the same organisation, that you would apply for if it became vacant, or do you have discussions with your manager where future roles are discussed?

Answer Choices	Responses		
Very high satisfaction	3.23%	1	
High satisfaction	22.58%	7	
Neutral	38.71%	12	
Low satisfaction	29.03%	9	
Very low satisfaction	6.45%	2	

Q6. Rate your satisfaction with the professional development opportunities provided by your organisation? For example, were you provided opportunities or supported to undertake learning or development opportunities related to your role?

Answer Choices	Responses		
Very high satisfaction	3.23%	1	
High satisfaction	25.81%	8	
Neutral	38.71%	12	
Low satisfaction	19.35%	6	
Very low satisfaction	12.90%	4	

Q7. Rate the alignment of your actual role to your expectations of the role when you applied for it or what your position description describes.

Answer Choices	Responses		
Very aligned to expectations	6.45%	2	
Mostly aligned to expectations	48.39%	15	
Neutral	6.45%	2	
Mostly misaligned to expectations	22.58%	7	
Very misaligned to expectations	16.13%	5	

Q8. Rate your overall engagement with your role where engagement is defined as the combined level of enthusiasm and dedication felt toward your job.

Answer Choices	Responses		
Very high engagement	19.35%	6	
High engagement	54.84%	17	
Some engagement	19.35%	6	
Low engagement	3.23%	1	
Very low engagement	3.23%	1	

Q9. I would recommend my organisation as a great place to work.

Answer Choices	Responses		
Strongly agree	3.23%	1	
Agree	35.48%	11	
Neutral	35.48%	11	
Disagree	19.35%	6	
Strongly disagree	6.45%	2	

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