

To: SNZ High Performance Governance Committee (HPGC)

From: Swimming Auckland Board (ASA)

Date: 19 August 2011



**Re: Submissions**

**Proposal for the realignment of SNZ Performance and Pathways - Staffing**

---

## **GENERAL**

The ASA recognises the value of the recommendations made in the SPARC initiated Ineson Report and is supportive of that report's recommendations and conclusions.

In light of the findings of the Ineson Report and the subsequent demand from the majority of Regions that the current SNZ Board resign, it is the ASA's view that the current SNZ Board and the individuals in charge of the SNZ organization have absolutely no mandate whatsoever to drive this restructure at this time. There is no doubt that a restructure of HP is required urgently but it is our view that it should be *parked* until after the SNZ AGM (or an SGM if that results from the process that has been initiated by the Regions), when a freshly elected board will have a mandate from stakeholders to effect such a major change. The ASA's position notwithstanding, we have the following submissions to make with regard to the proposal currently in circulation:

1. The ASA does not believe the SNZ proposal reflects a satisfactory solution to the issues raised in the Ineson Report and nor do we believe that it reflects satisfactory strategic planning for the long-term delivery of elite swimming and achievement.
2. The SNZ proposal places too much emphasis on solving the Human Resource issues of SNZ which are consequential to the findings of the report rather than seeking to find a correct solution in accordance with the best knowledge available for the delivery of elite sport programmes.

3. The SNZ proposal does not address the key failings identified in the Ineson Report, specifically:

- a. *“...there has been a failure at three critical organisational levels – Chair of SNZ’s Board (governance); the CEO (operational) and the GM Performance and Pathways (HP), [and that] the dysfunctional environment at the HP Centre has been festering for some time, it was public knowledge and little or nothing had been done to rectify it”.*

The SNZ HPGC proposal institutionalizes and reinforces the very failings which have been identified. Key to this is the proposal’s failure to address the reporting and accountability lines for HP and look outside the core HP delivery structure to address the root causes for the failure.

- b. *“SNZ’s HP structure is not appropriate for the size of its HP programme.”*

The SNZ proposal calls for the creation of two additional roles, both of which are administrative (i.e. not pool deck).

- c. *“The HP environment is dysfunctional and has to change if the swimmers are to have a chance of winning medals in London.”*

The SNZ proposal is clearly a reorganization of current roles and individuals and does nothing to create the athlete-centric environment that is recognized as being required for elite success.

4. The ASA respects the recommendations of the Athletes Federation and recognises that they have experience in the delivery of high performance sport across many codes which exceed the experience on this subject available within SNZ.

5. The Athletes Federation encompasses the NZ Swimmers Association and, in as much as it will be the swimmers who ultimately must deliver on the expectations of the stakeholders in any agreed HP programme, due

weighting has been given in this submission to the thinking of the Athletes Federation (which does align with the ASA's own thinking).

6. Research evidences the need for elite sport to be delivered with due recognition and respect to the athlete which will result in their empowerment. They (the athletes) are not commodities or products but individuals who are being asked to return world beating performances in the most challenging of environments and it is only as they are duly empowered that the extraordinary achievement expected can be achieved. Any solution adopted which fails to recognise this need for empowerment will ultimately fail.
7. The proposals offered by the ASA below reflect sentiments derived in conjunction with the athletes federation and as such are, we believe, worthy of correct consideration.
8. Final structural detail will be less important at this submission stage than the acceptance of an ideological framework. The ASA respects the capacity of key contributors to refine detail in accordance with that framework once it is agreed and adopted. That ideology needs to be:
  - a. Athlete oriented
  - b. Non-centrist
  - c. Process driven
  - d. Accountable
  - e. Strategic and directed toward long-term sustainable delivery rather than short to medium term outcome focused.

## THE PROPOSAL

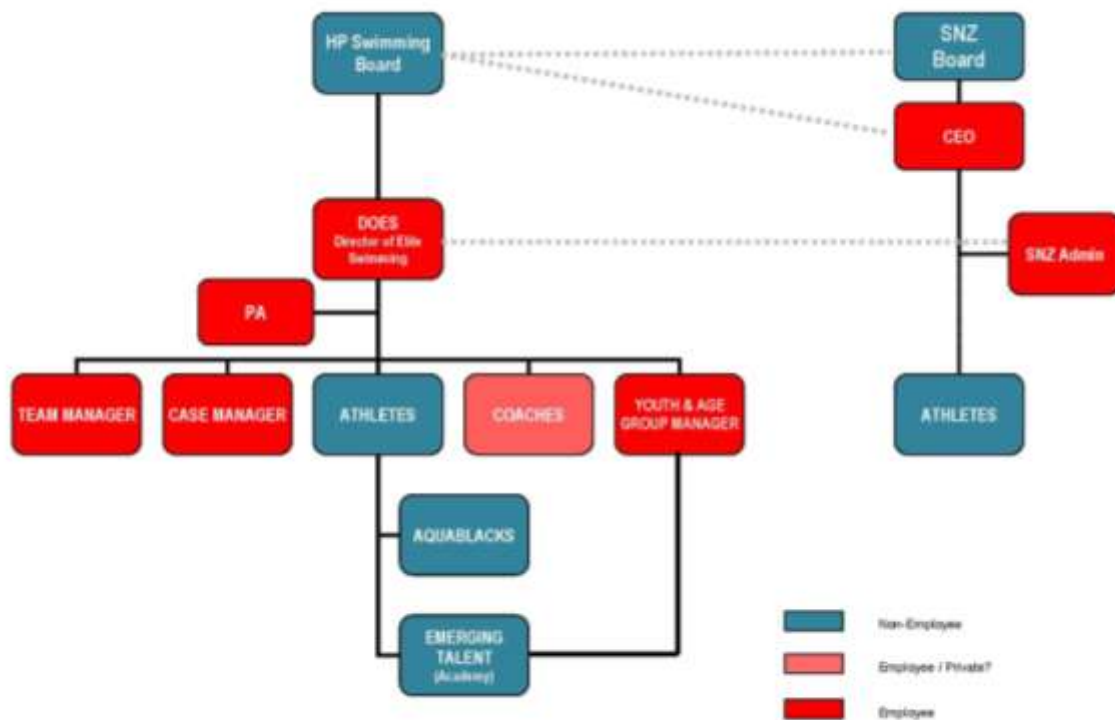
9. The first element of the proposal requires that the SNZ HP programme be “spun off” into its own, self-governed and self-contained strategic business unit or *High Performance Business Unit* (HPBU).

### Governance

10. The governance of the HPBU should be established through a Board of suitably experienced personnel and with established expertise in governance who reflect the interests and understanding of the following groups:
  - a. SNZ Board (2 positions);
  - b. Athletes Federation (1 position);
  - c. Independent appointments (2 positions); and
  - d. Coaching Community (1 position).
11. Ordinarily and ideally a non-voting role should be reserved for the CEO of Swimming New Zealand and the Chairmanship of this board should be held by the Chairman of the SNZ Board. However, we note that the Ineson Report specifically identifies both these incumbents as being critical to the failures which have occurred in the existing HP programme. Until such time as the HR issues faced by SNZ are resolved and those two personnel identified are removed from office neither can realistically be expected to contribute to the functioning of a new, effective HP programme. As such, the reservation of those positions in governance must remain in abeyance until those issues are resolved.

## Structure and staffing of the Delivery Organisation

12. The following diagram illustrates a possible proposed structure of the High Performance Business Unit and the discussion which follows describes some of the key roles.



## LEADERSHIP OF HIGH PERFORMANCE BUSINESS UNIT – THE DOES

13. It is our opinion that the leadership of HP is the key to success of any proposed HP programme. For the sake of convenience this position is referred to as 'Director of Elite Swimming (DOES).' Similar positions are held within other elite sports such as Rugby where the current equivalent role is held by a combination of Darren Shand and Don Tricker. This is a critical leadership role and does not require the person identified to have come from a swimming background, but they will have had a strong elite sport background. This candidate will be assisted by a PA and will have reporting to them a critical role of Case Manager. The function of the

Case Manager will be to liaise with every aspect of the key stakeholders working with the athlete, of which the Coach will be one.

14. In the All Black environment (which given their ongoing success is not a bad place to begin) the Case Manager reviews each athlete and their tracking against IPP's on a weekly basis with each key stakeholder in the athletes circle. The data derived then forms the basis for the DOES to hold those stakeholders (including the Coaches) accountable for tracking toward agreed IPP's.
15. The responsibility for Coach Development is a high priority function for the DOES to ensure that each coach working with targeted athletes has access to the tools required to facilitate appropriate professional development. Additionally, the DOES is responsible to ensure that emerging coaches (as with emerging athletes) are provided with suitable opportunities for professional development. A critical function of the DOES role is to ensure the accountability of coaches individually and collectively as a community as it relates to the performance of athletes and also in terms of the progression of their own professional development resulting from the resources committed to that progression.

### **Relationship of the HP programme to Athletes**

16. This process envisages that athletes will receive appropriate funding support that will allow them to establish the nature and place of their training programmes. The key to success of those individual training regimes will be based upon the ability of the Case Manager and the Director of Elite Swimming to hold the athlete and their stakeholders (coaches largely) accountable to and for the delivery of the IPP. The effectiveness of this process will be determined by the quality of data supplied by the Case Manager as a result of each weekly athlete review and the ability of the DOES to hold the stakeholders accountable for delivery. Centralised processes, such as we have seen encapsulated in the current SNZ HP programme, remove the responsibility for accountability from those charged with delivery.

## Coaching Roles

17. The need for SNZ/HP appointed coaches will be dictated by athlete choice. Conceivably it may be possible when athletes establish their IPP's that there will be no role for a SNZ employed coach – it is conceivable (perhaps not likely) that each athlete may have their programme delivered externally without the need for a SNZ employed coach at all. It is envisaged that while being possible, the above (no SNZ appointed HP Coach) is unlikely in the short term. This leads to the likelihood, in the interim at least, that the HP Programme will also act as a delivery agent in addition to their prime function of establishing athlete-team accountability.
18. Such a position would be 'cost neutral' as it would be anticipated that a SNZ employed HP coach will be accountable to the DOES in the same way as other HP athlete coaches are accountable and that coaching and training fees per athlete will recover on the employment costs if required. This process will in our opinion be the subject of detailed planning once the framework for delivery has been agreed and established. Regardless, this methodology will ensure a greater 'bang for bucks' in terms of value to the athlete than a centralized, overhead heavy function such as has been proposed in the document preceding this submission.

## The role of Coach as 'Facilitator'

19. The true definition of 'coaching' (according to its etymological source in the Hungarian language, deriving from the word '*koche*' meaning a large carriage) is more appropriately translated into the broader term of 'facilitator'. In this regard it is not too dissimilar to the Maori term '*waka*', which in its narrower sense means canoe, yet in its truer interpretation is '*a means of transport from one place to another*'. While the emphasis in this document is with the athlete, because we recognise that this 'journey' to high performance is ultimately the athlete's journey, this document also seeks to recognise that an athlete does not accomplish that journey in isolation. Thus many examples of great sporting achievement are

evidenced by such strong coach/athlete partnerships, and more particularly in partnerships where the coach is truly one of a 'facilitator'. To consider Snell without Lydiard, Loader without Laing, or Phelps without Bowman, would be to deny the critical reality of the role of the facilitator.

### **Youth and Age Group Management**

20. This document also recognises the importance of junior development and sees the value of seamless integration between the horizontal layers of Junior/Age Group & Youth progression. In contemplating the more detailed functions of this role under the title of Youth and Age Group Management, there is the recognition that ultimately this function may exceed the capacity of a single person. Detail associated with delivery is not the purpose of this submission and further detailed planning would establish the boundaries for delivery of 'coach' development through the ascending layers of Junior, Age Group and Youth development. To ignore continuing professional development at the lower layers will strangle the life blood of continuing athlete progression. Healthy core skill development in the younger ages leads to progression into early talent identification and ultimately through academy style development into a High Performance environment.
21. This role is intended to assist coaches nationally in the identification of emerging talent and the establishment of appropriate IPP's and Stakeholder plans to integrate these emerging talents into the HP environment. Amongst other things, this role will work with National and Regional events planning 'staff' to ensure that competition programmes are aligned with, amongst other requirements, the needs of developing athletes.

### **Campaign Manager**

22. Experience in other sports confirms the value of having an established professional manager available for ongoing campaigns. The management of logistics associated with sports touring is vital to the success of any

campaign and cannot be left to a new applicant being rewarded for outstanding service to the sport in the past. Given that swimming campaigns are generally limited to a single pinnacle event annually it is likely that the Campaign Manager will develop expertise for this role by working in co-operation with other sports' elite touring campaigns as well.

23. The Ineson Report identified the possible need for a London 2012 Campaign Manager. With less than 360 days left to the start of the London Olympics and a structural framework not even agreed, the window for this has now well and truly closed. It is our view that the focus should now be directed to ensuring that an early appointment is made of a capable Logistics Manager who will be able to carry the logistics function through London and beyond. It is the ASA's view that the failure to seize the time window envisaged by Ineson on this subject represents a gross failure which would be compounded by any expectation that a London Campaign Manager can realistically make a major difference to performance, when with less than a year to go before athletes compete, a recruitment process has not even begun. We are confident that this will not have been what Ineson envisaged when recommending the function in April/May when his report was prepared. We must now look to integrating this important function into the long-term solution framework rather than contemplating a short term fix for London.

## **CONCLUSION**

24. With the experience of the recent past resonating we would urge SNZ to strongly consider the following key points:
- a. Do not allow the current short-term requirements to resolve HR issues to dictate a long term strategy.
  - b. To learn from and adopt best practice as evidenced by NZ's other high achieving sports.

- c. To adopt a more athlete-centric philosophy with the intent of providing genuine empowerment to the athletes. In this regard the NZ Athletes Federation has vastly more experience in dealing with successful elite athletes than any other organisation in New Zealand. We would urge that strong weight be given to the recommendations which emerge from that group.
- d. To ensure that the conflicts identified by Ineson are eliminated immediately from the athletes environment.
- e. To adopt a process-orientated HP environment. We teach our athletes early to focus on processes rather than outcomes. Too much of our thinking as a sport has been dictated by outcomes over which our athletes do not have control. This in turn creates conflicts which undermine serious elite performance.

The logo for Swimming Auckland features a stylized blue wave graphic above the word "Swimming" in a large, bold, blue sans-serif font. Below "Swimming" is the word "AUCKLAND" in a smaller, blue, all-caps sans-serif font.

**Swimming**  
AUCKLAND