



INTEGRITY IN SPORT FORUM

'IN GOVERNANCE WE TRUST'



When swimming in the deep end – integrity counts

John Bertrand

Following the 2012 London Olympics, an independent review of all things Swimming Australia was conducted.

This was instigated by the Australian Sports Commission in partnership with Swimming Australia following the considered poor performance of the Australian swim team in London and various controversies which followed.

Australia demands that our swim team performs at the highest level. It is part of our Olympic sporting history, our DNA. Similar to the expectations we know are placed on the All Blacks by New Zealand.

The review was warts and all. The outcomes were extremely important and beneficial in developing the road map going forward.

The [final report](#) centred around 35 key recommendations.

Of prime focus was one of governance.

How do we conduct ourselves as to represent the sport at the highest order? What processes are in place or need be in place so the board of Swimming Australia, with appropriate checks and balances, can make the right decisions? What board composition is required to move the sport forward? Indeed, what is considered world best practice right across the board?

In my role as chairman and president of Swimming Australia since September 2013, I can now look back at all 35 recommendations and say, all recommendations have been of the highest value and all recommendations have been instigated.

So why is this important?

Because Swimming Australia represents a very important turnaround story.

Much had to be done to make the changes driven by this timely review. Within this, we had highly effective partners in the Australian Sports Commission and the Australian Institute of Sport. They were and are key.

Our starting point was our highly aspirational vision, 'world best practice in everything we do'.

Our values are built around 'trust'. From trust comes, honesty, integrity, respect, transparency.

And as a result, our developing culture is very much 'values' driven.

In this 'win at all costs' world in which too many athletes, clubs and sports now operate, the words of the inaugural inductee of the Sport Australia Hall of Fame, Sir Donald Bradman, still ring true.

The Don spoke of the qualities of an athlete, beyond skill, in which he placed great store.

"They are that a person conducts his or her self with dignity, with integrity, courage and perhaps most of all, with modesty," Sir Donald said.

"These virtues are totally compatible with pride, ambition and competitiveness.'

One can only imagine what Sir Donald would think of the recent scandals that have overtaken world football and athletics, or closer to home the AFL and NRL.

Collectively the Sport Australia Hall of Fame represents all sports and includes some of Australia's most well respected and greatest sportspeople.

Our responsibility on behalf of our members, and in fact on behalf of all Australians, is to have a voice in ensuring that trust and integrity stay top of the table and that the next generation of sports leaders and administrators understand the importance of winning, leading, playing with integrity.

As chairman of the Sport Australia Hall of Fame and Swimming Australia I'm happy to play a lead role in this endeavour.

As a high profile Olympic sport, swimming is constantly in the spotlight.

What we say and do leading up to and during the Olympic Games is always under scrutiny. Our sport is under constant pressure to perform both in the pool and out of the pool, to meet the high expectations of our nation.

We are committed to achieve the expectations Australians have of us, and the expectations we have of ourselves. And we will put our ethos to the test under the furnace like conditions of the Olympics.

There will be nowhere to hide.

John Bertrand AM is Chairman of the Sport Australia Hall of Fame and President of Swimming Australia

In partnership with the Sport Australia Hall of Fame (SAHOF), Victoria University is hosting the [second Sport Integrity Forum](#) on Monday 9 May at the Malthouse Theatre in Melbourne.
