

Chapter 8

Related matters

There is an enormous amount of herbs and spices that go into sports teams just because people think they are going to help.¹

Introduction

8.1 The fifth term of reference for this inquiry refers to 'related matters'. This chapter discusses:

- the need for further information about the practice of sports science;
- the use of supplements; and
- life after sport.

The need for further information about the practice of sports science

8.2 In its submission to this inquiry, the Council of Heads of Exercise, Sport and Movement Sciences (CHESMS) noted that the data on the scope of sports science in Australia is unreliable. It submitted that the committee should endeavour to obtain more data on the number of sports scientists operating in Australia and 'their pattern of employment now and into the future'.² CHESMS claimed the information is necessary before the committee can make recommendations that are 'commensurate with the scale and nature' of the practice.³

8.3 Senator Richard Di Natale has relied on Exercise & Sports Science Australia's (ESSA) estimates about the size of the profession in Australia. The Senator notes that ESSA has commissioned a sports science workforce audit in order to obtain more information about the scope of the profession,⁴ and believes that this will be useful for the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport (DRALGAS) in its consideration of their recommendations.

1 Dr Peter Larkins, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 12 June 2013, p. 70.

2 Council of Heads of Exercise, Sport and Movement Sciences, *Submission 13*, p. 3.

3 Council of Heads of Exercise, Sport and Movement Sciences, *Submission 13*, p. 3.

4 Professor David Bishop, Director, Sports Science, Exercise & Sports Science Australia, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 12 June 2013, p. 39.

The use of supplements

8.4 Several submissions focused largely, or at least in part, on doping and the use of supplements in sport and offered recommendations on how a national approach to these issues could be developed. This evidence falls outside of the terms of reference for the inquiry.

8.5 At the public hearing, however, a recurring theme was the need for supplement use to be evidence-based. Several witnesses, including medical and sports science practitioners, queried the benefit that supplements provide, or advised the committee that supplements should only be considered one tool in the arsenal of sports scientists. Professor Kevin Thompson argued that:

One thing that I think we need to really appreciate is the evidence base, and we need to talk about this a lot more in the media. We need experts coming forward to say, 'There is not the evidence base that supplements actually improve performance or that the performance improvements are worthwhile.' It is a very expensive way of living, spending money on supplements which have no evidence base and potentially might have risks as well. As I said earlier, a sports scientist should be advising an athlete about the evidence base and whether perhaps a change to training would provide better benefit than, for example, taking a supplement. There are many ways in which performance is enhanced and injuries are reduced in sport. Supplements are one part, but only one part.⁵

8.6 DRALGAS provided a paper, prepared by the Department of Health and Ageing, to the committee on the health effects of new performance- and image-enhancing drugs in sport (see Appendix 1). This paper examines what is known about the health effects of new drugs in sport.

8.7 Dr Hugh Seward, Chief Executive of the Australian Football League Medical Officers Association (AFLMOA), suggested to the committee that in the case of the Australian Football League (AFL): 'there are a large number of AFL clubs that do not participate greatly in supplements and a small number that do. There is quite a variation across that code'.⁶ He added: 'there is no role for AFL players to be guinea pigs or the subject of research to trial some of these drugs'.⁷ Dr Seward emphasised that good nutrition should be employed rather than supplements.⁸

5 Professor Kevin Thompson, Director, National Institute of Sport Studies, University of Canberra, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 12 June 2103, p. 33.

6 Dr Hugh Seward, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Football League Medical Officers Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 12 June 2013, p. 53.

7 Dr Hugh Seward, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Football League Medical Officers Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 12 June 2013, p. 53.

8 Dr Hugh Seward, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Football League Medical Officers Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 12 June 2013, p. 55.

Diet and nutrition are absolutely essential, and clubs are well placed to advise their players in the correct nutrition. Most clubs actually have kitchens and chefs available at the AFL level to provide them with that. To suggest that the answer for the budding athlete or the aspiring footballer is to take protein supplements and not to have a good diet, is absolute folly.⁹

8.8 Dr Peter Larkins told the committee:

... there are a lot of products that are being used that probably have no performance benefit but athletes are taking them, because someone said it will help them sleep better or help their muscle soreness go away. That is quite understandable for an athlete to want to get that edge but, as I said, it leads to whole pharmacopoeia of things that are out there that have got no good studies.¹⁰

AIS Supplement Group Classification System

8.9 Dr Seward indicated to the committee that the AFLMOA is involved in a review aimed at providing a list of approved supplements for use by AFL teams.¹¹

8.10 Senator Di Natale notes the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) Supplement Group Classification System and recommends that, where supplements are to be used, consideration be given by national sporting organisations, including those organisations represented by the Coalition of Major Professional and Participation Sports (COMPPS), to only permit the use of supplements classified as Group A by the AIS Sports Supplement Program.¹² These are supplements that:

- provide a useful and timely source of energy or nutrients in the athlete's diet; or
- have been shown in scientific trials to benefit performance, when used according to a specific protocol in a specific situation in sport.¹³

8.11 This approach would exclude use of supplements:

- considered for provision to AIS athletes only under a research protocol or clinical monitoring activity (Group B);

9 Dr Hugh Seward, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Football League Medical Officers Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 12 June 2013, p. 56.

10 Dr Peter Larkins, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 12 June 2013, p. 70.

11 Dr Hugh Seward, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Football League Medical Officers Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 12 June 2013, p. 58.

12 Australian Sports Commission, *AIS Sports Science/Sports Medicine Best Practice Principles*, May 2013, p. 11.

13 Australian Sports Commission, *AIS Sports Science/Sports Medicine Best Practice Principles*, May 2013, p. 11.

- which have little proof of beneficial effects and which are not provided to AIS athletes (Group C);
- which should not be used by AIS athletes (Group D); and
- which fall outside of these categories.

8.12 Evidence of use of supplements outside those in Group A should result in penalties, including suspensions, delisting or banning for players and moves to instigate disciplinary proceedings by the accreditation body for sports scientists. By only permitting use of supplements which have proven efficacy, this approach recognises the need to protect athlete health and welfare and the integrity of sport.

Recommendation 12

8.13 Senator Di Natale recommends that where supplements are used within national sporting organisations, those organisations consider encouraging only the use of supplements classified as Group A in the Australian Institute of Sport Sports Supplement Program.

Central registers of supplements

8.14 At the public hearing the committee raised the concept of central registers of supplements used by clubs. Mr Malcolm Speed, Executive Director at COMPPS, confirmed that reporting on supplement use is a feature of the AIS Principles and so registers within clubs can be expected where they do not exist already.¹⁴ The committee asked whether further consideration might be given to central registers of supplement programs within codes. Mr Speed advised that:

I think it is under discussion with some of the codes. In any event, I am happy to take it back, test it and suggest it, and to see whether they are in fact doing it and, if not, whether they are prepared to do it. I think it is a good suggestion.¹⁵

8.15 Senator Di Natale is of the view that establishing central registers of supplements in use by teams/clubs and making this information publicly available would promote a level playing field and discourage behaviour that might seek to push legal or ethical boundaries.

Recommendation 13

8.16 Senator Di Natale recommends that national sporting organisations consider:

14 Mr Malcolm Speed, Executive Director, Coalition of Major Professional and Participation Sports, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 12 June 2013, p. 18.

15 Mr Malcolm Speed, Executive Director, Coalition of Major Professional and Participation Sports, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 12 June 2013, p. 18.

- **implementing central registers of supplements in use by teams/clubs; and**
- **making this information publicly available.**

8.17 This information would be highly useful for the independent advisory group recommended by Senator Di Natale in chapter 6 of this report (see recommendation 8), and would promote transparency.

Life after sport

8.18 Dr Seward, Chief Executive of the AFLMOA, spoke of concern:

... within the AFL and certainly from the AFL Players Association that there is insufficient allocation of time to live a real life, to prepare yourself for the life after football, to undertake a university course or an apprenticeship—to try and schedule time and restrict time for those players so that they can in fact do that.¹⁶

8.19 The idea that there is too much 'football training and not enough life training',¹⁷ is of concern to the committee. Mr Matthew Finnis, Director of the Australian Athletes' Alliance (AAA), told the committee that 'the balance around an athlete's life is a significant one' for the AAA.¹⁸ He said:

We read about a number of the negative situations, but I believe that players who have a career in the AFL come out in general as young men who are more mature by virtue of the experience and the people they meet. Hopefully they have also got a start in a career beyond football. The earlier we can convince them of the importance of that, the more successful that transition will be. But it is a challenge, because these young men come in to the game and they have been focussing on that career since they were six years old, many of them. Their focus is on the next contract and the one after that.¹⁹

8.20 Mr Finnis also argued that a broader sense of identity for athletes beyond just their athletic identity is very important to developing the capability to question and challenge cultures which they are exposed to.²⁰ He said that:

16 Dr Hugh Seward, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Football League Medical Officers Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 12 June 2013, p. 54.

17 Dr Hugh Seward, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Football League Medical Officers Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 12 June 2013, p. 54.

18 Mr Matthew Finnis, Director, Australian Athletes' Alliance, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 12 June 2013, p. 67.

19 Mr Matthew Finnis, Director, Australian Athletes' Alliance, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 12 June 2013, p. 64.

20 Mr Matthew Finnis, Director, Australian Athletes' Alliance, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 12 June 2013, p. 63.

... one of our challenges is to ensure that players have a deeper understanding of what loyalty means, and when loyalty is owed, and perhaps when loyalty has been breached. It is going to be important when encouraging people to speak up to ensure that their loyalty is not just to their club and their prospects of winning but to the game. That loyalty to the game has a longer term than any short-term focus on winning. This is a long-term play in terms of changing this kind of culture. I think we have all received a wake-up call as to what is required.²¹

21 Mr Matthew Finnis, Director, Australian Athletes' Alliance, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 12 June 2013, p. 65.