



Chair and Committee members

Thank you for the opportunity to submit an opening statement supporting my first attendance before the Committee as the CEO ASADA.

Sport is a centrepiece of Australian society. It is an integral part of our national identity, and it helps define our culture. But perhaps most importantly, sport provides a vehicle to a healthier and more harmonious society. Protecting the integrity of sport, and the health of those that take part, is at the heart of ASADA's role and I am privileged to serve in this role.

By way of background, I joined ASADA on September 25, just one month ago, and in doing so, I left my role as Assistant Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police. In my thirty years of service, I held roles in National Security, Organised Crime and International portfolios and was the Executive Champion for mental health.

At various times throughout my career at the AFP, I was fortunate enough to also spend time coaching in the National Rugby League, competing as a Canberra Raiders junior and later in the Canberra Cup, as well as in an administrative role as the Manager of the Canberra Raiders. Over many years I also designed and delivered various welfare, education and mentoring programs for athletes.

My time in sport as an athlete, coach and administrator, combined with my knowledge of organised crime networks, international liaison and joint task force modelling afford me a unique perspective on ASADA's core business. These experiences have led me to the belief that clean sport can only be achieved through closer engagement and partnership with sporting bodies and through a greater understanding of the pressures faced by the athletes.

It is deeply disturbing knowing that young athletes are considering putting dangerous drugs in their bodies for sport, and yet we cannot deny that this is a serious problem for Australian sport and for our athletes' health.

We know this because more than 170 Australian athletes across 20 sports have been sanctioned for doping in the past four years. That's almost one athlete every week.

We know some sports are higher risk than others, but preliminary analysis of data collected over the last 20 years shows that doping is not confined to certain sports, or to certain levels. The data shows us that doping is a potential threat across all sports, and at all levels – from grassroots to elite to masters.

Doping is also a means to physical image enhancement and make no mistake, the substances involved are not safe, and in a lot of cases not tested, for Australians to be putting in their bodies. The impact on personal health and subsequently the Australian health system are yet to be fully realised.

Whether it be an athlete, parent or an observer, Australians have the right to know sport is clean, the playing field is level and that the environment is hostile toward facilitators and criminal elements. Many sporting codes have policies, integrity units and tribunals. Many don't. Major sports have access to highly qualified and experienced professionals to represent their interests. Many don't. Many simply do not have the funding to establish integrity responses and rely on government for coordination and support.

Society will always demand transparency and independence in investigation and review processes and structures. Since all athletes are equal under the World Anti-Doping Code, regardless of the sport they play, a nationally consistent approach based on collaboration between sport and government, is paramount. Likewise, enhanced intelligence capability and legislative powers are critical in repelling sophisticated and organised attacks on the integrity of Australia.

In this context, my vision for ASADA is focused on three key areas.

The first is to enhance our intelligence capacity.

I may say it time and time again in future, but blood and urine tests are only a small component of the work we do. It is important to note that, of ten possible anti-doping violations, only two can be proven through a positive test.

Right now, almost a quarter of athletes serving suspensions in Australia were sanctioned for offences proven by means other than testing.

Our investigation and intelligence functions are the only way for ASADA to pursue the eight other violations. Trafficking, possession, tampering and complicity are key elements of many cases and enhanced partnerships are critical to deterrence and detection.

My policing experience will ensure a targeted focus on facilitators of doping, both nationally and internationally, in partnership with federal agencies such as the ATO, ABF and AFP and state and territory police. This will assist in deterring cheats and making the ability to access illicit doping substances harder.

My second priority is enhanced engagement and collaboration strategies. I have commenced planning for a series of ASADA led forums with sports administrators, athletes, coaches, teachers and media to ensure a greater understanding of the issues relevant to doping. Through this engagement, I plan to ensure that ASADA becomes an integral part of the Australian sporting landscape. From government to sporting administrators, to athletes, to medical practitioners, to the community.... we are all responsible for ensuring a clean, safe sporting culture in Australia.

The third, and perhaps most important focus for me, will be enhanced education, welfare and awareness.

I want every athlete to be aware of the immense health risk that comes with taking foreign substances - the effects that these substances have on their kidneys, their livers, their brains. I want them to know that any choice to dope hurts their reputation, their career, their sport, their teammates, their families. I want every athlete to remain on the back pages of the paper, not the front.

I want to make sure that they know they can approach ASADA if they think something isn't right, or if they feel like there is no other choice than to dope. An effective ASADA does more than catch cheats. An effective ASADA works with athletes, and with sports, to prevent doping ever occurring in the first place.

Before I conclude, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the fact that I have joined the agency in the wake of the biggest cases in Australia's anti-doping history. There has never been a greater opportunity to address issues of sporting integrity in Australia in partnership with sporting codes.

Outcomes of ASADA forums will be considered, along with any changes led by government, including recommendations of the Wood review, as they relate to the operational capability of ASADA.

I will build on the work of my predecessor and maintain our trajectory towards a stronger, more sophisticated ASADA.

It is important that we do because an Australia without a strong anti-doping organisation is one that has no confidence in the results of the sports we love. It is an Australia whose sporting culture is based on lies and deceit. But most importantly, it is an Australia that is dangerous for all athletes, at all levels.

So as CEO, I will act in the interests of athletes who want to compete fairly. I will act in the interest of Australians who want assurance that the best person has won. I will act in the interest of parents, who put their children into sport with the expectation that they will grow in confidence, be healthier, fitter, stronger members of society.

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