

Chapter 4

Committee's view

Ethics and athlete welfare

4.1 The committee recognises the importance of ethics in sport and calls for a greater focus on ethics, particularly in professional and elite sport where the 'win at all costs' attitude may be more prevalent.

4.2 Similarly, the committee also recognises that athlete wellbeing and health must be the first consideration in any decision or recommendation made by coaches, high performance staff, sports scientists, and medical personnel.

Undefined problem

4.3 Unfortunately, the evidence that the committee has received and the commentary in the media about these issues, fail to clearly identify the nature and extent of any problems related to the practice of sports science in Australia.

4.4 It is well known that the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority (ASADA) and the Australian Crime Commission (ACC) are currently conducting wide-ranging investigations into the alleged use of drugs in Australian sport.

4.5 The committee acknowledges that revelations from these investigations have raised questions about the practice of sports science in Australia and we understand there are concerns about the conduct of some institutions and practitioners.

4.6 However, until these investigations are complete, it is impossible to ascertain the nature and extent of any problems that exist within the practice of sports science in Australia.

4.7 Until the ASADA and ACC investigations reveal the extent and nature of any problems with the practice of sports science in Australia, the committee contends that recommendations about regulation or mandatory registration of sports scientists in Australia are premature.

Lack of definition

4.8 The committee heard there is currently no accepted definition of the term 'sports scientist' or the activities in which a sports scientist is expected to be involved. This lack of definition is a significant barrier for policy-makers, as it is difficult to effectively regulate an undefined sector.

4.9 The committee contends that it is difficult to regulate an undefined sector. Until the question of definition can be resolved, any recommendations about regulation or accreditation would seem premature.

Conclusion

4.10 The committee supports moves to give greater emphasis to ethics and athlete wellbeing in Australia sport. However, until an accepted definition for sport science is developed, and ASADA and the ACC have finalised their investigations into alleged drug use in Australian sport, detailed consideration of introducing regulation or mandatory accreditation for sports scientists is premature.

Recommendation 4

4.11 The committee recommends that detailed consideration by the Australian Government of introducing new regulations for sports scientists in Australia be delayed until such time as the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority and/or the Australian Crime Commission have finalised their current investigations into the alleged use of drugs in Australian sport.