



## **Independent Review of Swimming New Zealand's High Performance Programme**

June 2011

*“To lead people, walk beside them...  
As for the best leaders, the people do not notice their existence.  
The next best, the people honour and praise.  
The next, the people fear; and the next, the people hate...  
When the best leader’s work is done, the people say,  
‘We did it ourselves!’  
When the effective leader is finished with his work,  
the people say it happened naturally.”*

(Lao Tzu - 6<sup>th</sup> Century Chinese philosopher)

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# Independent Review of Swimming New Zealand's High Performance Programme

## Executive summary

The terms of reference for the review were to identify the barriers to Swimming New Zealand's (SNZ) High Performance (HP) swimmers and coaches delivering medal results at the 2012 London Olympic Games and beyond.

The timetable for the review was tight but attainable. Research and consultation was conducted from early March to late April.

The consultation process involved a total of 108 hours of consultation and 5 written submissions involving 86 people (group and individuals) representing a cross section of SNZ's HP community.

Confidentiality was an important factor in getting people to openly discuss issues and solutions. Each person consulted was informed that what they said would be treated in confidence and that they would not be named or placed in a position where their confidentiality might be compromised.

The Report is based on an evaluation of reports, including the 2008 Sweetenham report, SNZ's HP structure, findings from the consultation process and written submissions.

## Findings

Feedback highlighted three significant issues.

### 1. HP structure

During the consultations over two thirds (69%) questioned the need for the positions of GM Performance and Pathways *and* a Head Coach. The reason for this is because of overlap and duplication between the two positions, the small number of HP swimmers and coaches involved in the programme and the feeling that resources should be channelled to where they will make the greatest impact at London.

There was also a strong view that the current reporting lines from the GM Performance and Pathways to the Board via the CEO have not provided a sufficiently robust system of accountability and does not allow for adequate Board oversight.

The Report believes the current HP structure is not sustainable and should be changed to better reflect the size and needs of the programme.

### 2. HP Environment

When asked about the barriers to achieve success at London feedback showed a high level of concern about the environment within the HP centre. Many described it as dysfunctional and needs to be vastly improved. 91% of those interviewed attributed the poor culture at the HP Centre as a significant barrier to success at London.

This Report's own observations are that the HP environment is negative with a culture of distrust and a lack of confidence in its leadership and it is not conducive to the swimmers' training and preparation needs for London (or any other pinnacle international events). Immediate action needs to be taken by SNZ to create the right environment.

### **3. Leadership**

83% criticised the leadership of SNZ and the HP programme. Many spoke about the failure of leadership at the three critical organisational levels – Chair of SNZ’s Board (governance); the CEO (operational) and the GM Performance and Pathways (HP).

The thrust of the criticism was that the dysfunctional environment at the HP Centre had been festering for some time, it was “public knowledge” and little or nothing had been done to rectify it.

### **Conclusions**

Based on its findings the Report’s conclusions are summarised as:

- SNZ’s HP structure is not appropriate for the size of its HP programme.
- The HP environment is dysfunctional and has to change if the swimmers are to have a chance of winning medals in London.
- There is a lack of leadership at the three critical organisational levels.

***To improve the current situation the Report recommends that SNZ implement the following actions.***

- Regain the confidence of swimmers and coaches in the HP programme.
- Change the HP structure to maximise performance outcomes at London.
- Create a mechanism to improve governance oversight and accountability.
- Fill the Head Coach position (alternatively appoint an Olympic Campaign Director).
- Review and appoint the best HP pool deck coaches (i.e. those with proven track records) irrespective of location.
- Ensure full integration of the regional coaches into the HP programme.
- Ensure consistent provision of services to all HP swimmers/coaches irrespective of location.
- Ensure targeting of resources to medal prospect swimmers and their coaches.

*The feedback about structure, environment and leadership was so strong and so consistent across the broad spectrum of the HP swimming community that it cannot continue to be ignored.*

To win the confidence of swimmers, coaches and the HP swimming community it is critical that the Report’s recommendations are implemented immediately, decisively and openly.

## Recommendations

The Report makes five recommendations that are aimed at creating a HP environment that is conducive to helping the swimmers and their coaches win medals at London. In summary they are:

1. Establish a HP Advisory committee to provide the Board with governance oversight of the HP programme.
2. Review SNZ's HP structure at MISH including the position of GM Performance and Pathways.
3. Appoint a Head Coach/Olympic Campaign Director until London.
4. Ensure the best possible HP (pool deck) coaches are in place to deliver success at London.
5. Implement the Report's recommendations immediately and in a manner that is decisive and open.

The HP Advisory committee should:

- Review the coaching structure within the HP programme (i.e. number of HP coaches and their distribution around the country).
- Ensure the Head Coach position is filled with a suitable candidate.
- Assess the optimal number of HP pool deck coaches and ensure the right people are appointed to these positions.
- Establish clarity around the roles, responsibilities and reporting lines for all HP staff, particularly coaches.
- Ensure HP support is provided for non MISH swimmers in the national team and their coaches.
- Improve the HP culture by ensuring SNZ has an integrated HP programme which is focused on performance outcomes and targets its support at those swimmers with the best medal prospects and their coaches.
- Consider and advise on the issues raised in Attachment 3.
- Ensure there is strategy to identify and develop age and youth swimmers and their coaches for 2016.

Further details are contained within the Report.

# 1. Introduction

*New Zealand has not won a World Long Course Championship or an Olympic Games medal since Danyon Loader won two gold medals at the Atlanta Olympic Games in 1996.*

In February 2011 Chris Ineson from Drivingforces was contracted by SPARC to conduct a review of SNZ's HP Programme.

The consultation process was thorough. It started in early March with the SNZ's HP swimmers, coaches, support services and administration at SNZ's designated HP Centre - Millennium Institute of Sport and Health (MISH) - and concluded in late April.

It involved a total of 108 hours of consultation and 5 written submissions involving 86 people (group and individuals) representing a cross section of SNZ's HP community (Table 1) .

## ***Review objective***

The principal objective of the review was specific "..... to analyse Swimming NZ's current high performance programme with a view to *identifying whether **barriers** exist within the programme that are impeding New Zealand swimmers from achieving medal success in 2012 and beyond*" (Attachment 1 Terms of Reference).

## ***Reviewer's experience***

The reviewer's experience is based on:

- Ten years as CEO of the NZ Sports Foundation.
- Ten years as an independent business consultant.

## ***Conflict of interest***

Drivingforces has no conflict of interest with this review and/or its previous work with SNZ and SPARC.

## ***Confidentiality***

Confidentiality was an important factor in getting people to openly discuss issues and solutions. Each person consulted was informed that what they said would be treated in confidence and that they would not be named or placed in a position where their confidentiality might be compromised.

## ***Methodology***

The methodology was based on:

- A review of SNZ reports, including the 2008 Sweetenham report, 2010 Commonwealth Games debriefing report, 2011 NZAS Service Plan, various HP documents to SPARC and material from SNZ's website.

For purposes of comparison the HP plans and strategies of two medal winning Olympic sports (Bike NZ and Rowing NZ) were also considered.

- A series of consultations with a large cross section of people who are and/or were involved in SNZ's HP programme. The list of people that were consulted came from SPARC and SNZ, references from those consulted and unsolicited approaches.

### ***Process***

The consultation process began on 2 March in Wellington followed by three days (7 - 9 March) at MISH in Auckland. This was followed by an ongoing series of one on one consultation through to late April. The consultations were in person and by phone. It included swimmers who individually contacted Drivingforces following the 8 March group meeting.

Prior to the consultations a letter from Drivingforces (Attachment 2) was emailed to all members of the HP programme and to a number of people who had previously been involved in the programme.

The questions were modified to suit the person/people consulted, for example swimmers were consulted as a group and their questions related more to training and preparation needs as opposed to wider strategic and structural issues. It should be noted that after the Nationals in early April the swimmers were offered the opportunity to talk individually with the reviewer. Several took up the offer.

**Table 1 Details of the people consulted during the review**

<b>SNZ's HP community</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Individual</b>	<b>Group</b>
HP Swimmers-current/former	35	16	19
HP Coaches current/former	8	8	
NZAS	6	6	
SNZ board - current/former	5	5	
SNZ mngt/staff	5	5	
SNZ other*	5	5	
Parents	7	7	
SPARC	6	6	
Swimmers Assn	3	3	
Rowing & Bike NZ	3	3	
MISH/NZOC/IOC	3	3	
<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>19</b>

\*SCAT, team managers, selectors

### ***Interest in the review***

There was a high level of interest in the review and many people were keen to express their views. Comments were thoughtful and considered and aimed at providing solutions to improve the HP environment. The Report acknowledges the contribution of all those who participated in the review.

### ***Principal focus of the consultation process***

The consultation process focused on two critical short and longer term objectives.

1. Short term: how does SNZ achieve A Finals and medals at the London Olympic Games in July - August 2012?

2. Longer term: what improvements can be made to the HP Programme to enable SNZ to consistently achieve A Final and medal results at the World Long Course Championships and Olympic Games post London?

The reason for this approach was to:

- Ensure the discussion focused on the principal objective of SNZ producing winning performances in London and post London.
- Identify barriers inhibiting performance and the main areas that could enhance SNZ's medal prospects at London.
- Apply a step by step approach to the winning process i.e. London needs to be addressed before the Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games in 2016: a good performance in London will have flow down benefits for SNZ's programme post London.
- Assess SNZ's post London strategies as they apply to the next group of HP swimmers and their coaches.
- Assess how MISH and the regional centres can align and better integrate their programmes.

Several issues were raised that are not directly linked to the main focus of the review but are flagged in the Report for further consideration by SNZ and SPARC. They are summarised in Attachment 3.

### ***Sweetenham Report***

In 2008 SPARC funded SNZ to commission Bill Sweetenham to conduct a review of high performance swimming in New Zealand. It is not the intention of this Report to critique the Sweetenham report other than to note the following:

- It is comprehensive and addresses in detail SNZ's HP programme.
- Indications suggest it has been selectively actioned.

*Comment:* SNZ should formally forward a soft copy of the Sweetenham report to SPARC and advise SPARC's GM High Performance on progress toward implementing the report's recommendations.

- Other than select sections to certain people, the report has not been seen by many in the swimming community. The same applies to the 2010 Commonwealth Games debrief report.

*Comment:* There was keen interest in these reports and there appears to be no reason why they should not be available to everyone via SNZ's website.

- The Sweetenham report stresses the importance of HP leadership, trust, transparency and national team unity.

*Comment:* The consultation process showed that 91% of those interviewed did not believe these qualities exist in SNZ's current HP environment.

- The Sweetenham report consolidated two existing positions into one new position of National Performance Director – now known as the GM Pathways and Performance – in charge of SNZ's entire HP programme and the single point of accountability/contact with the CEO.

*Comment.* While the Performance Director position may work for some NZ sports the number of athletes in SNZ's HP programme does not justify multiple layers of HP personnel (i.e. GM Performance and Pathways, Head Coach, Senior HP Coach and HP Coach).

## 2. HP Background

### **Structure**

Currently SNZ's HP organisational structure is:

- GM Performance and Pathways– reports to SNZ's CEO who reports to SNZ's Board.
- Head Coach (currently vacant) – reports to the GM Performance and Pathways.
- Senior HP Coach and HP Coach - reports to the Head Coach.
- SNZ's Coach Development and Administration/Logistics - reports to GM Performance and Pathways.

All of the above are employed by SNZ and are based at MISH.

In addition there are:

- Two Regional HP Coaches, one in Wellington and the other in Invercargill, both of whom are self employed swim coaches although each receives some SNZ support to assist the national squad members they coach.
- NZ Academy of Sport (NZAS) service providers who support SNZ's HP programme.

### **Programmes**

The Sweetenham report addressed SNZ's HP programme needs in considerable detail. The HP programme appears to be thorough, generally well resourced and documented.

Since being designated one of SPARC's six targeted Olympic sports in 2006 and receiving a significant increase in funding, the programme has increased the number of world ranked swimmers but has yet to produce medal results at the World Long Course Championships or the Olympic Games.

SPARC increased its funding of SNZ's HP programme on the understanding it would be in a position to genuinely contest multiple medals in London. It is now said that the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro will be when the medals are won. In the meantime the quality of the current HP programme will be tested by the results of the NZ swimmers at the World Long Course Championships in Shanghai in July 2011.

*Comment:* If the results at the World Long Course Championships are not up to the standard expected by SNZ and SPARC (as was the case with the 2010 Commonwealth Games) the HP programme should ensure it prioritises the needs of medal prospect swimmers and coaches in their lead up to London.

### **Environment**

The foundation of a world class HP environment is based on:

- Trust and mutual respect.
- Open communication and transparency (i.e. no backdoor decision making).

- Clear role definition.
- A unified team culture.
- Sufficient budget to implement the strategy.

*Comment:* Feedback showed that although everyone at MISH – swimmers, coaches, service support and administrators – are aiming for medal success at London, the training and preparation environment required to create this success does not currently exist.

### ***Leadership***

There are three clearly defined leadership areas in SNZ:

- Chair of the Board - responsible for the leadership of the governing body (Board) and ultimately SNZ. Reports to members and stakeholders.
- CEO - responsible for the management, staff and the operational functions of SNZ. Reports to the Board.
- GM Performance and Pathways - responsible for the management and the leadership of SNZ's HP programme. Reports to the CEO.

Feedback was critical of the leadership of SNZ in all three areas and their lack of accountability to the HP swimming community. The specific thrust of the criticism was that the dysfunctional environment at the HP Centre had been festering for some time, it was “public knowledge” and little or nothing had been done to rectify it.

*Comment:* The lack of confidence in the leadership of the sport is serious and SNZ's Board needs to reflect on this.

### ***Podium places***

All key international sporting events are based on one irrefutable fact – performance. For athletes it is podium places, for coaches it is the number of athletes they have coached to the podium.

In terms of SNZ's HP programme, the next two key international events are the World Long Course Championships (50m pool) in Shanghai in July 2011 and the Olympic Games in London in July 2012.

*Comment:* the Senior HP Coach record of international success at Long Course World Championships and Olympic Games (13 Long Course World Championships, 6 Olympic medals, and 3 World records) exceed that of any other swimming coach in New Zealand (even the late Duncan Laing, former coach of multiple Olympic gold medallist Danyon Loader). Given this, every effort must be made to retain him within SNZ's HP programme, at least through to the London Olympic Games.

It is noted swimmers have to qualify for the Olympics at the World Long Course Championships. The forthcoming World's are an indicator of how swimmers might perform at the London Olympic Games.

### 3. Main findings and conclusions

#### 1. Facilities

As noted in the Sweetenham report, SNZ's HP Centre at MISH has good quality facilities (pool, gym, class/meeting rooms, accommodation). Support services for swimmers and coaches are provided by NZAS and administration support is provided by SNZ staff.

**Conclusion:** there are no significant issues with the facilities, service and administration support at SNZ's HP Centre at MISH that are a barrier to success in London.

#### 2. Positions – MISH and regional

SNZ's HP Centre is based at MISH. There are six HP positions all of whom are employed full time by SNZ.

There are two self employed regional coaches with HP swimmers, one is based in Wellington and the other is in Invercargill.

**Conclusion:** Although some support services are provided to the regions the centralised structure at MISH does not have a formal regional structure. SNZ needs to integrate the regions into its service delivery structure.

#### GM Performance and Pathways

Summary of job description: this is the top HP leadership position in SNZ. It is a non pool deck function to provide a single point of contact and accountability for performance and pathways within SNZ. Basically it is a leadership, management and administration function.

The position of GM of Performance and Pathways is one of the recommendations in the 2008 Sweetenham report. It was designed to streamline SNZ's HP dual structure (HP Coaching Director and Director of Coaching) by creating a "single point of accountability".

69% of those interviewed questioned the need for the position of GM Performance and Pathways **and** the position of a Head Coach. The reasons given during the consultation are summarised as:

- The position of GM Performance and Pathways adds another layer of administration and cost to the HP programme.
- The position of GM Performance and Pathways does not make a direct contribution to the preparation and training needs of the swimmers in their lead up to London.
- The centralisation of resources at MISH under the position of GM Performance and Pathways disadvantages the regional swimmers/coaches.
- Under the present structure the reporting lines from the GM Performance and Pathways to SNZ's Board via the CEO does not provide a sufficiently robust system of accountability nor does it allow adequate Board oversight.
- The small number of swimmers/coaches does not justify the need to have a structure based on a GM Performance and Pathways **and** a Head Coach (Table 2).

Table 2 is a comparison of the number of SNZ’s HP swimmers and coaches compared to Bike NZ and Rowing NZ (both of whom are medal winning Olympic sports). It shows SNZ has the same structure as the other two sports but with far fewer athletes and coaches. The effect is SNZ has a top heavy structure relative to Bike NZ and Rowing NZ.

**Table 2. Comparison of athlete numbers and HP positions**

	HP Athletes	HP Coaches*	Head Coach*	Dir/GM Perf*
Rowing NZ	69	13	1	1
Bike NZ	69	8	1	1
Swimming NZ	19	2	1 (vacant)	1

\*Employed by the national body

Source – Rowing NZ, Bike NZ and Swimming NZ

**Conclusion:** Until the above issues are resolved the Report believes the current HP structure is not sustainable and needs to be reviewed to better reflect the size and needs of SNZ’s HP programme.

#### **Head Coach** (vacant)

Summary of job description: to provide leadership and oversight of SNZ’s overall HP coaching programme (MISH and the regions).

93% of those consulted supported the idea of appointing a Head Coach on a short term contract to London.

**Conclusion:** The Head Coach position (Olympic Campaign Director) is important in helping deliver success in London. Because it is a critical leadership role SNZ needs to give urgency to this appointment.

Note: It may be difficult to find a suitable Head Coach between now and London. If so, it is suggested that SNZ consider appointing an Olympic Campaign Director on a short term contract to London whose task would be to work with the HP coaches and coordinate support services and the HP programme.

#### **MISH Coaches**

- **Senior HP Coach**

Summary of job description: to provide leadership for members of the SNZ HP Centre (MISH) squad, provide advice, support and leadership to other coaches throughout New Zealand and manage training, competition and personal development programmes for targeted athletes at MISH and optimise their performance at pinnacle events.

**Conclusion:** The Senior HP coach is an important position in SNZ’s HP programme. As stated previously the current Senior HP Coach is an experienced international coach with a successful track record to back it.

- **HP Coach**

Summary of job description: development and management of the SNZ HP Centre; managing training, competition and personal development programme for all swimmers at the Centre on an individual basis and to optimise their performance at pinnacle events.

**Conclusion:** The HP coach was North Shore Swim Club's Senior Head Coach (2006) before being appointed to his current position in 2010.

### ***Regional coaches***

Summary of job description: a similar role as the HP coaches except these coaches are not employees of SNZ (swim coaching is their business and they cover recreational and development swimmers as well as age-group, youth and elite swimmers). They receive some support services from SNZ.

**Conclusion:** Both coaches have developed swimmers who show potential for London. They must be encouraged to be integrated into the SNZ HP programme as quickly as possible. Moreover, both coaches advised they feel disadvantaged in that neither of them believe they have access to the full range of services in their regions that are available to the MISH based swimmers/coaches. It is vital they and their swimmers have access to the same level of support as the MISH swimmers/coaches do, especially NZAS services. There are a number of overseas based swimmers who also need to be supported by the HP programme to maximise their performance potential in London.

### ***Swimmers***

There are 19 swimmers in the HP Centre programme at MISH with an additional five swimmers based outside MISH (three are based offshore and two are regionally based). As a group the swimmers were critical of the current HP environment. This was expanded on in the one on one consultation. Terms like mistrust and lack of confidence in the HP leadership at MISH were frequently cited. It was suggested their criticisms are some of the reasons why the NZ Swimmers Association was formed.

The swimmers raised a number of points about improving the swimming programme that weren't expressly related to swimming performance in London (Attachment 3).

**Conclusion:** An overarching concern raised by the swimmers was the current HP environment and its negative culture. It is evident that unless change is implemented and a positive environment is created (happy swimmers make for fast swimmers) the swimmers will continue to feel the pressure which will not help them in their preparation for the World Long Course Championships in July or at the London Olympic Games.

### ***Coach Development and Administration/Logistics support***

Both positions are located at MISH and have clearly defined job descriptions. .

**Conclusion:** There are no issues with either role that creates a barrier to success in London and no change to either of these positions is suggested.

### ***NZAS support services***

NZAS support services are of a high standard and this is acknowledged by the HP swimmers and coaches. Each service provider gave an assurance that no stone is being left unturned to deliver

quality services to them. However it is suggested that SNZ and SPARC continue to evaluate ways to improve NZAS services at MISH and the regions.

**Conclusion:** There appears to be no obvious NZAS issue that creates a barrier to success in London other than making their services equally available to all national squad swimmers/coaches irrespective of where they live and train.

### **3. Sustainability of SNZ's current HP environment**

91% of the feedback expressed concern about the current HP environment and described it as dysfunctional and that it needs to be vastly improved.

**Conclusion:** In the short and longer term the current environment is not conducive to the swimmers' training and preparation needs for London (or any other pinnacle international event). This situation is not sustainable and needs to be addressed urgently by SNZ.

### **4. Governance**

It is a well understood principle of governance that the Board is the ultimate authority responsible for the strategic direction and oversight over the organisation. This applies as much to SNZ as it does to every other National Sport Organisation (NSO). Because of the current reporting structure – GM Performance and Pathways – CEO – Board, the Report believes the Board does not have adequate oversight of the HP programme.

Of concern is that 83% of feedback was critical about the leadership of SNZ in all three areas – Board, CEO and GM Performance and Pathways. There was particular concern about the accountability of the reporting lines.

**Conclusion:** SNZ's Board has to maintain adequate oversight over the HP programme and the management of it, and to ensure processes are in place to enable this to happen. This point is addressed in the recommendations section. Implementing it will significantly improve the situation.

### **5. Management**

65% of those interviewed expressed concern about the lack of accountability in the reporting lines between the GM Performance and Pathways, the CEO and the Board. This indicates there is a structural weakness in the way the process is managed.

**Conclusion:** The reporting and accountability between the positions of GM Performance and Pathways, the CEO and Board is an important function. The reporting lines can be improved by establishing a HP Advisory committee as set out in recommendation 1.

### **6. SNZ's relationship with SPARC**

Feedback said that SNZ's relationship with its major stakeholder, SPARC is an area that can be improved.

SPARC has invested \$6m over four years (2007 – 2010) in SNZ's HP programme. This is a significant amount of money and is additional to the other support it provides to SNZ through its HP personnel, capability support team, contractors and community sport investment.

Aside from funding, SPARC has enormous resources that can be tapped into at no cost by every sport, including swimming. This is integral to SPARC's objective of helping sport to achieve results however measured (recreation, participation, winning) and should be taken advantage of.

**Conclusion:** Improving the relationship between SNZ and SPARC ought not to be difficult and processes should be put in place to ensure good relationships occur at governance, management and operational levels.

## 4 Recommendations

### *Framework of a good HP environment*

To enable swimmers and coaches to maximise their potential for London the environment should:

- Have an accountable reporting structure with absolute clarity of roles.
- Be built on a foundation of trust, mutual respect and transparency.
- Have clear performance standards and the resources to achieve them.
- Deliver the coaching and support services required by each swimmer.
- Provide quality support services to all athletes and their coaches.
- Maximise the use of scarce resources and high quality facilities.
- Move resources from the back office/management to pool deck.
- Target and prioritise support for medal potential swimmers.
- Create a single team that share ideas, resources and wins together for New Zealand.

#### **4.1 Pre London 2012**

To create this environment there are a series of steps that need to be actioned.

##### **1. Structure**

The first step is to change SNZ's HP structure and reporting lines. The recommended structure is designed to create more accountability and contestability than is the case at present.

The main points are:

- A new mechanism called the HP Advisory committee should be established to provide HP advice to the Board. It should have clear terms of reference and report directly to the SNZ Board.
- The HP Advisory committee should, in the short term, advise the Board and management of the following:
  - Reviewing the HP coaching structure (i.e. number of HP coaches and their distribution around the country).
  - Filling the Head Coach position and the optimal number of HP pool deck coaches.
  - Establishing clarity around the roles, responsibilities and reporting lines for all HP staff, particularly coaches.

- Ensuring HP support is provided for non MISH swimmers in the national team and their coaches.
  - Improving the HP culture by ensuring SNZ has an integrated HP programme which is focused on performance outcomes, and targets its support at those swimmers with the best medal prospects and their coaches.
  - Considering and advising on the issues raised in Attachment 3.
  - Ensuring there is strategy to identify and develop age and youth swimmers and their coaches for 2016.
- The Head Coach should report to the HP Advisory committee on strategy, policy and governance issues and to the CEO on operational issues.
  - The Head Coach should engage with the HP and regional swimmers and coaches about their concerns and, where required and appropriate, solutions to them.
  - The Coach Development and Administration/Logistics personnel should continue to provide support to the MISH coaches as well as the regional HP Coaches.
  - SNZ's Board should maintain oversight of its HP programme via its HP Advisory committee and CEO reports.

The HP Advisory committee is appointed by the Board. It is suggested it comprises two Board members (one of whom is an independent Board member), the Head Coach, CEO, and one or two independent people with extensive HP knowledge. The composition of the HP Advisory Committee should be reviewed after London.

### **Recommendation 1**

It is recommended that a HP Advisory committee be established to ensure clear reporting lines and greater Board oversight, accountability and contestability of SNZ's HP programme.

### ***2. Positions***

The second change is to improve and streamline the current HP structure and direct the resources saved from doing this to provide additional support services to the pool deck and the Head Coach.

#### ***General Manager Performance and Pathways***

The position of GM Performance and Pathways emerged from the 2008 Sweetenham report. Although its scope is considerable and vests single authority over the entire SNZ HP activities, it is neither a Head Coach nor pool deck coach position. It is essentially a leadership, management and administration role.

The Report believes that for reasons outlined earlier the position of GM Performance and Pathways should be reviewed.

## **Recommendation 2**

It is recommended that the position of GM Performance and Pathways be reviewed.

### ***Head Coach and HP Coaches***

The third is the position of Head Coach. Currently it is vacant and it was commented on many times during the consultation process that it needs to be filled urgently.

93% of those consulted supported the idea of filling the vacant Head Coach position on contract to London. A short term appointment was recommended by most people on the grounds that the chances of employing a world class Head Coach at this stage of the Olympic cycle is unlikely and that the best candidates will not be back on the international coaching “market” until the London Olympics are over.

It was also said that whoever takes the Head Coach role on a short term basis needs to have the right mix of experience and skills to deliver success. The appointee would need to:

- Engage with the swimmers, coaches, support services and create a positive and united team environment based around a “we can win” philosophy.
- Ensure the best medal prospects, MISH and non MISH, and their coaches are given the resources and support they require to enable them to train, prepare and succeed in London.
- Work closely with the regional HP swimmers and their coaches and bring them into the HP team.
- Continue the development of the next group of swimmers and coaches for Rio de Janeiro in 2016.

An alternative to appointing a Head Coach is to appoint an Olympic Campaign Director.

Regardless of whether it is a Head Coach or an Olympic Campaign Director, it needs to be someone who is seen as credible by the HP swimmers/coaches and the HP swimming community, someone who is capable of talking knowledgably about the needs of swimmers/coaches to the SNZ CEO and the HP Advisory committee, SPARC and NZOC and someone who can create the right training and preparation environment for the swimmers and the pool deck coaches to deliver success in London.

As a matter of urgency, SNZ needs to appoint the Head Coach/Olympic Campaign Director position.

## **Recommendation 3**

It is recommended that the HP Advisory committee immediately advise the Board and management on the appointment of a Head Coach/Olympic Campaign Director as the leader of the HP programme whose task is to create an environment that will deliver success at the London Olympic Games.

The fourth is that the opportunity should be used to review the number of HP (pool deck) coaching positions, irrespective of whether they are currently located at MISH or the regions, to ensure people with the right skills and a proven track record are in place to lead the swimmers to London.

#### **Recommendation 4**

It is recommended that the HP Advisory committee review and advise the Board and management on the appointment of the HP (pool deck) coaches through to the London Olympic Games irrespective of whether they are based at MISH or the regions.

After London all coaching positions should be reviewed to ensure the best possible coaches are in place to deliver success at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games.

#### **SNZ MISH staff**

There is no reason to change the Coach Development and Administration/Logistics staff at MISH.

### **3. Targeting medals at the 2012 London Olympic Games**

Targeting those swimmers and their coaches who are London medal prospects is another priority. This will become more evident after the Worlds Long Course Championships in July.

#### **Swimmers**

Indications suggest that based on their current form a small group of swimmers may make an A Final in London (because of the nature of their event the open water swimmers are automatically in a Final). If the principal recommendations in this Report are implemented and the swimmers work hard enough and take responsibility for their performance, the number could increase.

Working through the details of the swimmers' individual performance plans (IPP's) and resourcing them will be an important part of the process. This has to include New Zealand's top overseas based swimmers. Every effort must be made to ensure they are on an equal footing with NZ based swimmers (MISH and regional) in terms of financial and other support that can practically be provided. No stone should be left unturned. This may mean having their coach with them at pinnacle events.

Equally important will be managing the expectations of SNZ's projected London performance of 1 medal and 5 finals (SNZ's Performance Target Update to SPARC, November 2010). If SNZ does not achieve this it is likely to impact on the level of funding from SPARC.

#### **Coaches and NZAS support services**

The same comments about the training and preparation environment for swimmers apply equally to the HP coaches. In order to help them to prepare their swimmers for London they need to receive the full range of NZAS support services. It is conceivable that the number of HP coaches requiring NZAS support may increase after the World Long Course Championships in July.

#### **Coach Development**

SNZ's Coach Development manager will work with the Head Coach on coach development and related support functions.

### **Administration and Logistics support**

SNZ has the required administration/logistics capability at MISH to support the HP programme.

#### **4. Policies on the appointment of positions**

Policies on the appointment of HP positions, selectors, international event coaches, and team managers were identified as a source of concern.

There was a strong feeling that the appointment policies can be improved. For instance, the appointment of coaches to pinnacle international events has created confusion in the past. To address this, policies for appointing coaches to events such as the Commonwealth and Olympic Games and World Championships have to be transparent, consistently applied and agreed in advance by the coaches. Changes should be openly discussed, approved and adhered to.

#### **4.2 Post London**

##### **1. Medal success beyond 2012**

The review TOR refers to medal success beyond 2012.

The first hurdle is London. If SNZ delivers to the extent set out in their SPARC Performance Target it will make it infinitely easier to secure funding for World Championships and Olympic Games beyond 2012.

This Report has made several recommendations about what can be done to help improve the road to London. The recommendations also set the stage beyond London. The challenge for SNZ is to ensure the momentum created in 2011 and 2012 continues through to 2016 and beyond.

If SNZ is to consistently achieving podium results at key international events it needs to:

- Look at what it is doing now and what it needs to do for 2016 – leadership, strategy, structure, swimmers, coaches, environment.
- Develop a 6 - 8 year strategy that identifies and develops a greater number of top swimming and coaching talent. An excellent start has been made with SPARC's Podium Pathways programme.
- Be committed to delivering sustained success, and make it a *priority* for HP funding otherwise this Report fears that over time the programme will degrade and eventually wither on the vine.
- Practice open, fair and transparent policies.

##### **2. Lessons from other sports**

###### **New Zealand**

The Report urges SNZ to evaluate the HP programmes of Bike NZ and Rowing NZ. An analysis of their programmes is beyond the scope of this review but the success of both sports at World Championship and Olympic Games ought to provide valuable lessons for SNZ.

It is interesting to note that Rowing NZ has Lake Karapiro as its HP Centre, has 3 Regional Performance Centres and employs 13 coaches. The coaching pathway is similar to SNZ's but its culture is based on a team approach, constructive dialogue and feedback.

The same applies to Bike NZ. Its coaching philosophy is simple – work as a team, share information, pass on knowledge to other coaches, be accountable and do better next time.

In terms of a holistic approach, SNZ should look at Football NZ's Whole of Football Plan and Player Development Plan. Likewise it should workshop with New Zealand's top coaches – rugby, football, rowing, cycling, sailing, triathlon and so on. There is a wealth of knowledge and experience that is available to SNZ at relatively little cost. This is not to say SNZ's HP plans and programmes are deficient, they are not, but they can be improved.

### **Overseas**

As the Sweetenham report notes it makes sense for SNZ to look closely at the sustained success of swimming in Australia. However this ought not to mean wholesale copying of what Swimming Australia does but rather analyse what they do, select the parts that are relevant to New Zealand and build on them.

For example, Australia has state (seven) and federal (AIS) HP training centres. In effect this is equivalent to a central HP system (AIS) with seven HP regions (states). New Zealand has very good facilities at MISH but its servicing of regional HP swimmers and coaches can be improved. Forcing swimmers to train at MISH is not the answer. There needs to be scope for both central and regional HP centres and for swimmers to train outside New Zealand if there is no coach in NZ qualified or credentialed to coach them.

Such a step would result in SNZ's HP programme being based on a combination of MISH *plus* regional centres where each of them is linked to the central system, are serviced by it, with swimmers and coaches involved in its programme and where the central system, under its Head Coach, can maintain a strategic overview of the HP programme across the regions, work with regional coaches to identify emerging talent and provide expertise and knowledge for the benefit of all HP coaches.

## **5 Supplementary issues**

A number of supplementary issues were raised during the consultations. They are not the prime issue but are included for future discussion and resolution by SNZ and SPARC. In brief they covered eight areas: vision; role models; emerging/established swimmers; coaches; planning; communications/transparency; governance/management and SPARC (Attachment 3).

## 6 Risks

There are risks associated with implementing this Report, however the greatest risk is to do nothing.

Unrealistic performance expectations may have been created for London. SNZ should analyse its performances at the 2011 World Championships and using that data plus the known performance improvements of its athletes in the past 12 - 18 months, determine a realistic performance target for the HP programme. It should then focus its energy and attention on at least matching that level of performance at the London Olympic Games.

## 7 Implementing the Report's recommendations

### ***Strategy***

This Report requests that SPARC:

- Provides HR support to SNZ to ensure proper processes are put in place to review the HP structure and to implement the recommendations in the Report.
- Works with SNZ on how the Report is presented to the HP swimming community and the media.

### ***Timeframe***

*The test of good leadership is the ability to act quickly, decisively and openly.*

This Report must not be allowed to linger. For the good of the swimmers preparing for London in 2012 immediate action needs to be taken.

### **Recommendation 5**

It is recommended that the Report's recommendations be implemented immediately, decisively and openly.

Moreover, there is high expectation by the HP swimming community that the review and action arising from the Report will take the sport forward. There is an equal expectation that the Report will be available to them.

## **Conclusion *The destiny of HP swimming is in its own hands***

*“The solutions to our current issues are available. It will come from using our available resources to better educate and lead our coaches and swimmers to international standards. That leadership must have credibility, runs on the board and the desire to provide resources and communication effectively and openly throughout NZ through camps, tours and successful campaigns abroad. We must have standards that are fair, openly discussed and that help build the fellowship that swimming as a sport should bring to everyone. The Millennium Institute could be our most treasured resource but not by doing business the way it is currently done. Perhaps the funding from SPARC should be suspended until such time we have in place the structure, leadership, direction and culture required to make significant inroads to the podium results we are capable of.”* From one of the people consulted in the review.

## Attachment 1: Review Terms of Reference



### Terms of Reference

#### Independent Review of Swimming NZ's High Performance Programme

##### Background

Swimming was confirmed as a Targeted sport by SPARC in 2006 with the intended outcome of swimmers winning medals at the Olympic Games in 2012 and beyond.

SPARC has invested \$6M of high performance funding into Swimming NZ between 01 January 2007 and 31 December 2010. During that period swimming has not won a medal at either the world championships (long course) or Olympic Games.

SPARC funded a review of Swimming NZ's high performance programme in 2008 by Bill Sweetenham (former Australian national coach and Performance Director British Swimming). The Sweetenham review provided recommendations on how the high performance programme should operate to deliver success in 2012.

Swimming's lack of medal success combined with objective performance data and a critical review of its high performance programme following the Delhi Commonwealth Games has lead SPARC to commission a further review of Swimming NZ's high performance programme.

##### Purpose of the review

The purpose of the review is to analyse Swimming NZ's current high performance programme with a view to identifying whether barriers exist within the programme that are impeding New Zealand swimmers from achieving medal success in 2012 and beyond.

##### Outcome of the review

The review will identify barriers to success in Swimming NZ's high performance programme, and provide recommendations around changes that need to be implemented to enhance the probability of medal success in 2012 and beyond.

The report will be submitted to SPARC's High Performance Board and Swimming NZ's Board. SPARC's expectation is that the recommendations contained within the review will be implemented by Swimming NZ as a condition of ongoing funding. The report will assist the High Performance Board to determine an appropriate level of high performance investment in Swimming NZ beyond July 2011.

The final report will include commentary on, but not be limited to;

- a. Implementation of the Sweetenham review recommendations,
- b. Leadership of Swimming NZ's high performance programme,
- c. Swimming NZ high performance programme culture,
- d. High performance coaching structure,
- e. Barriers to medal success on the world stage,

- f. Daily training environment for national squad members,
- g. Support for national squad athletes and coaches (centralised/decentralised),
- h. Stakeholder support for Swimming NZ's high performance strategy,
- i. International comparisons (e.g. Australian, Canadian and UK models), and
- j. Feedback gained throughout the consultation process.

## **Review process**

Consultation will be undertaken with the following stakeholders:

- SNZ Board members (Chair and Deputy Chair)
- SNZ Chief Executive Officer
- SNZ senior management (GM level)
- SNZ employed coaches
- Coaches of athletes in the national squad not based in Auckland
- National squad swimmers
- Recently retired (post 2008) board members and national squad members
- Former HP personnel (staff and coaches)
- Emerging talent
- SNZ Selectors
- Swim Coaches and Teachers (SCAT)
- SPARC HP personnel
- NZAS service providers working with Swimming NZ's high performance programme
- NZOC Games Team Management
- Other interested parties identified during review (e.g. concerned clubs, parents of young athletes)

Information will be collected via face to face and phone interviews (e.g. offshore based swimmers).

## **Critical information**

The review will take into consideration;

- a. The 2008 Sweetenham review,
- b. Swimming NZ's 2009-2012 high performance plan,
- c. Swimming NZ's high performance structure, roles and responsibilities,
- d. Performance culture within the SNZ high performance programme,
- e. High performance programme daily training environment,
- f. Swimming NZ's 2010 Commonwealth Games debrief,
- g. Objective performance data, and
- h. Feedback received throughout the consultation process.

## **Reviewer**

The review will be conducted by Chris Ineson (Director Driving Forces) with support from SPARC as required.

## **Timeframe**

Consultation will take place between 1 March and 30 March 2011 with the final report provided to SPARC by 30 April 2011.

## Attachment 2: Pre consultation letter



### **Independent Review of Swimming NZ's High Performance (HP) Programme**

I have been contracted by SPARC to conduct an independent review of Swimming NZ's HP Programme. The review's Terms of Reference (TOR) have been circulated but in the event you have mislaid it, a copy is attached for your information.

As you will see in the TOR I will be consulting a large number of people – swimmers, coaches, selectors, board, management and administrators, a representative group of those who have retired post 2008 as well as those from SPARC and NZAS.

The review will be conducted over two months -1 March – 30 April. This involves the consultation process and the report writing. It is tight but manageable. Your cooperation in enabling me to achieve this in the timeframe is appreciated.

The consultation process will involve group sessions as well as one on one sessions. In the case of the group sessions everyone involved in them will also have the opportunity to talk to me individually either by phone or in person.

All discussions will be confidential. No names will be mentioned in the report.

At the sessions I will touch briefly on the TOR, process, methodology and report writing.

The objective of the sessions is essentially twofold:

1. Short term: how do we achieve A Finals and medals at the London Olympic Games in 16 or so months from now?
2. Longer term: what improvements can be made to the HP Programme to enable us to achieve A Final and medal results at the next series of World Long Course Championships and the 2016 and 2020 Olympic Games?

The initial stage of the consultation process is to identify the big picture issues. This will form the platform that will enable me to drill down into the details.

It is likely other issues will be raised at the sessions. It is important we identify what they are and the extent of the impact of them on the HP Programme and on the swimmers, coaches, support personnel.

It is equally important that we find answers and solutions to the issues raised. I will be looking to each of you to help me with this. Individually and collectively you all have a vast amount of experience and knowledge about the sport. Our collective challenge is to channel this into a report with clear actions that will achieve the short term and the longer term objectives.

I look forward to working with you on this project.

## Attachment 3: Summary of supplementary issues raised.

### ***Vision***

- Can SNZ's vision for the sport be improved and made more exciting, more aspirational and more personal i.e. targeted at "me" as an individual (swimmer or coach or parent or official or volunteer) to get "my" buy – in?

### ***Role models***

- Does the sport have role models, if so where are they and how are they used?

### ***Emerging and established swimmers***

- Are HP swimmers into a "lifestyle" mode with an "entitlement" mentality, are they training to the level of their top international counterparts and do they feel accountable for their performance?
- Should swimmers in the HP programme who have been there for a long time and with no sign of improving be dropped from the programme?
- As part of growing the base and breadth of swimming should provision be made to take those swimmers who are on the road of making the A team on tour to Australia as a national team to gain international experience?
- Should the same principle be applied to the Commonwealth Games – i.e. use the Games as a second tier event to bring swimmers through, similar to what Australia does?
- Why do swimmers feel they are treated as commodities, feel left out of the communications loop and that decisions are made without consulting them?
- Should swimmers be consulted about options such as trading off training camps and pre nationals against more international competition (with more intense racing)?
- Why do swimmers feel they cannot talk to SNZ management, who then becomes the voice for swimmers (swimmers association)?
- Why do NZ athletes prefer local coaches rather than overseas ones – is it due to cultural differences or because they see the overseas coaches as "temporary" i.e. not here for the long haul with no ongoing commitment to NZ?
- Why shouldn't the coaches of top swimmers automatically be allowed to be with their swimmers at key international meets?
- Can the motivation of swimmers be maintained when they feel there is a lack of consistency and favouritism in matters like team and coach selection, behaviour of certain swimmers?
- Why is SNZ not professional in the way it treats swimmers i.e. as top athletes, and ensure matters like accommodation, food and transport at regional meets are managed properly?
- What is SNZ's strategy toward improving club coaching standards and the qualifications of club coaches?
- Why try to impose a team spirit (and so stress the swimmers) when the HP coaches and SNZ environment is currently not conducive to it?
- Where is the leadership among the swimmers, why are so many of them negative, why is a blame culture tolerated?

- Why don't the swimmers put something back into their sport e.g. run training session for club/regional swimmers?

### **Coaches**

- The current MISH HP coaches are basically distance coaches: does SNZ plan to employ a HP sprint coach?
- What is the reason for the big turnover of HP coaches?
- Should there be a minimum "apprenticeship" period for coaches before they are eligible to coach national teams?
- Why does MISH run a "two sizes fit all" programme compared with other leading swimming nations with multiple programmes?
- What is done to allow NZ coaches to gain "podium" experience?

### **Planning**

- What long term planning is being done to map out the future direction and the resource needs of the sport?
- Is succession planning in place for all key HP roles including administrators, selectors, team managers, support service?
- Does the current carding system take into account the post London/next generation swimmers/coaches?

### **Communications and transparency**

- Should minutes of Board meeting be available to members (e.g. via SNZ's web site)?
- What is being done to improve the effectiveness of SNZ's communications, does it conduct surveys of members and stakeholders?
- Should greater use be made of contemporary e – technology to communicate to swimmers?
- What is being done to improve the communication skills of management (SNZ and HP)?
- How can SNZ and HP management be more transparent in its decision making?

### **Governance and management**

- Is it possible to conduct reviews such as this review as soon as significant issues appear rather than let them drift?
- Does the Board maintain adequate oversight of the HP programme?
- What are the skills required of the CEO in the future?
- Are best practice standards being applied at every level of the sport and how is international benchmarking used to assess the quality of the HP programmes?
- How is the performance and training needs of key personnel – SNZ management and HP – assessed?

- Given this has been done several times before, what is happening to improve the sport's regional delivery infrastructure?
- Where does Water Safety fit and is it a distraction for the Board and management?
- To win medals requires the best people in the right job: is the Board confident SNZ has the best people at governance, management/administration and HP levels?
- If there are changes to SNZ's HP programme how will the Board manage and monitor the process?
- Why has SNZ allowed the club scene to be dominated by a few clubs (to the detriment of others?)
- What is the status of the Sweetenham report, when will it be made available to the swimming community, what are its recommendations and how many have been implemented?

### **SPARC**

- Why doesn't SPARC provide the same level of support e.g. PM scholarships and PEGS to overseas HP swimmers as they do to NZ based ones and should the current policy be reviewed?
- Can the same be applied for SNZ's Head Coach to travel overseas to "check out" the progress, training and competition programme of SNZ's overseas based HP swimmers?
- Is there a mechanism in SPARC that can offer advice to individual athletes about securing sponsorships, contracts and the like?

**This report was compiled by Chris Ineson of Driving*forces***

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