

Submission to inform Australia's new International Development Policy

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission relating to the Australian Government's new International Development Policy. This submission was prepared by Dr Sarah Kelly OAM and Dr Stuart Murray from Sports Diplomacy Alliance.

It tackles the key questions via three specific themes that could be used to improve Australia's new International Development Policy: Sport for Development (SfD), Sports Diplomacy (SD) and Mega Sporting Events (MSEs).

Strategically harnessing sport as a tool for development and diplomacy helps build effective relationships at both the community and the elite level, amplifies positive values such as trust, integrity, and partnerships, and fosters a 'whole-of-region' approach to traditional and human security challenges. Mining then applying the best theory and practice from around the world, SfD and SD are proven methods that generate measurable policy, health, and development outcomes. The series of MSEs Australia will host from the 2023 Women's World Cup to the 2032 Brisbane Summer Olympic Games offer powerful vehicles to scale up the impact of any SfD and SD initiatives – before, during and after (legacy), and on a truly local, national, and international scale.

Q1: What key trends or challenges will shape Australia's engagement in our region and globally over the next five to 10 years? What risks and opportunities does this present for Australia's development assistance?

The mixing of classical security problems with 'new' human security issues such climate refuges make the current international relations system unique, unpredictable, and volatile. Ideological battles for hearts and minds are driving what some in the media refer to as a "New Cold War."¹ Great Power contests for regional and global hegemony are back, as are General Wars (Russia/Ukraine), expanding military budgets, and autocratic dictatorships. This old security agenda is compounded by a raft of new human security issues ranging from gender inequality, religious oppression, environmental degradation, to digital crime and identity theft.

¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/03/15/how-to-avoid-new-cold-war/>



Yet, and to borrow from Churchill on the formation of the United Nations after World War II, Australia should not let this “good crisis go to waste.” Just as the structure, power dynamic, or nature of conflict are changing, so too are the needs, values and interests of people and nations. This changing landscape offers the Australian Government an epochal chance to think differently on how international policies are formulated, delivered, and – frankly - sold to national, regional, and international publics. Strategically harnessing sport for development, human security or diplomacy goals presents one such opportunity. Not only is sport part of our cultural DNA (for First Nations, and subsequent arrivals), Australian academics, diplomats and sports ‘people’ also lead the world in innovative ways to use sport for policy impact.

To stand out, our new International Development policy should embody new, different, and effective ideas. An authentic approach to creating foreign policy, development, and aid could be considered; programs and ideas that speak to all foreign publics – the elite as well as the community.

SfD, for example, could provide the new policy with a decades-old evidence, theory, and research base. Practically, SfD offers many benefits such as individual development, health promotion and disease prevention, gender equality, social integration, peacebuilding or conflict prevention/resolution and post-disaster/trauma assistance. SfD has also proven its worth to the Sustainable Development Goals. The work that Oliver Duffield and The Commonwealth Secretariat have done on mapping sport to seven of the seventeen SDGs could prove instructive.² SfD is highly effective and can be easily woven into the new Development policy.

SfD also leads to Sports Diplomacy (SD). Where SfD focusses on youth, community and development outcomes, Sports Diplomacy focusses on adults (elite, sporty and diplomatic), the international community, and foreign policy outcomes. SD was born from SfD and is yet another strength that the new Policy should play too.

The earliest evidence on sport being used for truce, conflict resolution or – simply – to celebrate the movement of the body, belongs to the First Australian’s and not the Egyptians, Greeks, or Mesoamericans. Modern Australian scholars, diplomats and others carry on this

² [Global sport policy and the sustainable development goals | sportanddev.org](https://sportanddev.org)



long tradition, and created the world's first SD strategies (in 2015, and again in 2019). Indeed, one of *Sports Diplomacy 2030* four pillars is devoted to SfD, to use sport to “strengthen communities in the Indo-Pacific and Beyond.” The same might be said of the Office of The Pacific’s *PacificAus Sports* program, which seamlessly merges and produces both development with diplomacy outcomes. Such remarkable programs, stories and successes could be told better. Academic research on the relationship between SfD and SD is catching up to its practice. The work of Sports Diplomacy Alliance’s latest recruit, Dr. Simon Rofe, explains this new wave of theory and practice linking SD to SfD.³

Q2: What development capabilities will Australia need to respond to these challenges?

Authentic, impactful, and innovative development policy should first be built from a global, best practice review of the literature, academic and research base. This means engaging and involving universities, academics, and students from all over the world. The same might be said for best practice, and it is important that Australia’s new policy is informed only after gather, collating and comparing our approach to the best, and the worst, in the world. A thriving beltway between epistemic and ontological communities, between universities and ministries, academics, and diplomats, is vital.

Other partnerships with commercial firms eager for CSR and ESG gains is also recommended, and, in the themes we have chosen to address, sports people, clubs, and businesses. Many of these ‘actors’ have unique skills, networks, and capabilities, and are passionate about ‘making a difference’ to less-fortunate communities.

How, also, does Australia expand its success in SfD and SD? In Team Up, for example, Australia has created a world-class, impactful, and admired SfD program; one that was a legacy from the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. The more recent, 2019, *PacificAus Sports* program is of a similar nature. The challenge for the Australia government is how to model, export, and scale up such programs, particularly in key strategic, democratic nations such as Timor Leste, Indonesia and India.

Ways to measure success (and/or failure) are also important and, in the case of SfD and SD, it is important to invest in mid-term and end of program reviews. Ways to include, educate and

³ Simon Rofe, J. (2021). Sport Diplomacy and Sport for Development SfD: A Discourse of Challenges and Opportunity. *Journal of Global Sport Management*, 1-16.



showcase to foreign publics what the policy is trying to achieve, how, and why are also important. The Australian SfD and SD programs mentioned so far are world-class, positive, and successful, yet they are not well known outside of those directly involved. A well-thought out digital and print communications strategy is fundamental to any envisaged success.

Q3: How can Australia best utilise its national strengths to enhance the impact of our development program and address multidimensional vulnerabilities?

We found it interesting that in the Scope of the Submission process that sport was not listed as one of Australia's strengths. To repeat, sport is woven into the Australian DNA. It is more than culture, it is different from art, music, and gastronomy, for example, and deserves singular attention. It is a source of pride that, if respectfully harnessed, can generate massive influence, branding and soft power gains.

Whether thinking of our record at the Summer Olympic Games, our range of current World Champion teams and athletes, and our incredible cultural sporting history, Australia is a disproportionately large sporting power. Such power is embodied and represented in some of the best coaching, knowledge, and facilities in the world. The same might be said of our ability to bid for, win, and host MSEs, and to use that ability for development and diplomatic outcomes. Peter Horton study of the "Australian Olympic Army's" involvement in the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympic Games suggests a good model.⁴ Once more, such knowledge constitutes an asset that can be traded with countries eager to bid for, host and win MSEs (India and Indonesia spring to mind). SfD, SD and Legacy – should be woven into all MSEs strategies.

Q4: How should the new policy reflect the Government's commitments to build stronger and more meaningful partnerships in our region, founded on mutual trust and respect and shared values of fairness and equality?

The power, flair and influence that First Nations sport generates is often overlooked and overshadowed by its larger, commercial, and mainstream national cousin. As noted, it was some of the 500 or so Indigenous Australia clan groups and not the Greeks that first purposefully used sport as a way to avoid conflict, engage in diplomacy, and foster trust,

⁴ Horton, Peter. "Sport as public diplomacy and public disquiet: Australia's ambivalent embrace of the Beijing Olympics." *The international journal of the history of sport* 25.7 (2008): 851-875.



respect and integrity. Good partnerships, therefore, should begin with the First Nation, their sporting knowledge, talents, and ambassadors. We recommend that sport, SfD, SD and MSEs are considered in the creation of the First Nations Foreign Policy and, in turn, this unique perspective informs the new International Development policy.

When it comes to relationship building, sport promotes trust, respect, teamwork discipline and many other good qualities. It also has remarkable diplomatic qualities to build stronger relationships with strategic partners in the Indo-Pacific. As SDA noted in the 2018 British Council Publication *Towards a Welsh Sports Diplomacy Strategy*, international policies built around sport offer several benefits:

- Such programs are low-risk, low-cost and – often – high profile.
- Informal relationships instigated through sport often lead to formal, long-term relationships.
- International sporting exchanges build familiarity, favourability and trust, amplifying a nation’s culture and values to broad overseas public audiences as well as governments.
- SfD and SD programs generates public interest in international affairs at home and abroad.
- Such programs affixed to MSEs are powerful vessels through which to build regional relationships, with officials keen to attend events (which also create large audiences for public diplomacy campaigns).
- Such programs create sustainable partnerships between governments, national and international sports organisations, and encourages mutually reciprocal, win-win policy outcomes.
- Many sports people are “diplomats in tracksuits.” They represent their country on the pitch. Why not off it too (to be ambassadors for their country, building trust and representing Australian culture, society and values – laying the foundations for effective development programs, for example)?

These, and many other, benefits are further amplified if the government or country has a strong sporting brand, presence, and capacity. Australia has a bedrock of sporting talent, culture, and facilities the world envies and admires. The celebrated American author Bill



Bryson captures this point, noting that there has “never... been a more sporting nation...it is a wonder in such a vigorous and active society that there is anyone left to form an audience.”⁵

Q5: What lessons from Australia's past development efforts should inform the policy? What is Australia seen to be doing comparatively well?

The first lesson should be to – bluntly – “shut up and listen” to the foreign publics (elite and community) in the Indo-Pacific the policy intends to target.⁶ The new policy – or at least the consultation process – should consider, incorporate and continue to employ Indo-Pacific people, voices, perspectives, and ideas throughout its lifetime. Each country in the Pacific, for example, has unique needs, history, cultures, and so on. The same might be said of the patchwork of countries that make up Southeast Asia.

As it stands, so much large-to-middle power development, aid, and diplomacy is ‘done to’ smaller nations. That’s the trouble with anachronisms like soft and hard power that belong to the 20th Century (sardonically, “like it or loathe it, by carrots or sticks, by coercion or fluffy bunnies, you will be attracted to us!”). Dated, tired, and overtly western, neo-colonial and neo-liberal theories like soft power and practices are best avoided. Striving for influence over power, listening as opposed to speaking, and building plural state and non-state partnerships and networks linked at home and abroad are the way forward. Good international relations, and good policies - development, diplomacy, or aid - should focus not on countries’ different positions, national interests and what each wants but on areas, interests, needs and fears common to both.

More practically, ensure that the new policy is informed by a desktop or literature review of the best international theory and case studies. The same might be said of best practice. In terms of development, SfD, and MSEs, what worked well for countries like Australia, and how might we adapt it? Effective, twenty-first century policy should also be built on effective digital data, networks, and mapping. Who, for example, is ‘talking about’ Australian Aid and Development? Where? How many, and so on? Which demographic? Such data can be generated from, for example, working with the supercomputers at the Edinburgh Futures Institute.

⁵ Cited in Tony Ward, *Sport in Australian National Identity: Kicking Goals* (Oxon: Routledge)

⁶ <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/resetting-australia-s-relationship-pacific-three-ideas>



Q6: How should the performance and delivery systems be designed to promote transparency and accountability, as well as effectiveness and learning in Australia's development assistance?

Flying the sport flag once again, if DFAT is looking for world-class case studies, research, and ideas on how to design performance and delivery systems imbued with transparency and accountability, our sports people, teams, and institutions lead the world in these areas. Accountability and integrity in sport, development and diplomacy is a huge, growing, and global challenge that impacts Australia, the Indo-Pacific and beyond. A good, first step would be to engage with national and state sports organisations, learn what they do, and adapt it to the International Development Policy (particularly the SfD and SD 'bits').

Q7: How should the new policy address the role of ODA and non-ODA in supporting the development of our regional partners?

In terms of ODA and non-ODA, all the above should be proselytised, studied, and refined into a range of education tools that engage, inform, and educate youth and students in the Indo-Pacific Region. Esoteric knowledge and networks are often required to access and understand Australia's altruism when it comes to helping others. Why such good, positive news is not accessible via YouTube, or a quick Google search is difficult to fathom. The same might be said of research, education and the generation of good knowledge, teaching resources and data sets. Making sure the policy and the program works is one thing. Ensuring that the recipients, partners, and others know about it is another. Offering them tools, lessons, and access, as well as ways to participate, learn and grow, should be woven into any future policy.

Conclusion

Thank you once again for the opportunity to comment on the new International Development Policy. Please note that SDA is in a unique position to advise on the unique interplay between SfD, SD and MSEs. A working group formed of GHD, OFS, DFAT and SDA might be a way to figure out the sporty bit of the new Policy. We remain, as ever, at your disposal.

