

THE INDUSTRY VIEW: AUSTRALIA'S OPPORTUNITY THROUGH SPORT



The impact of sport can be transformative. It can change the way a young person thinks about their future, it can drive better health outcomes for those vulnerable to disease, it can fill people who live on the margins of their communities with new-found confidence and strength, and it can give isolated sports fans a much-needed sense of belonging.

But sport can also drive transformation on a larger scale by creating opportunities for employment, supporting social inclusion, driving economic growth, and fostering national pride.

Australia's 'sports diplomacy' strategy recognises that our nation can have a positive impact on the future stability and prosperity of our region through sport. With many decades of sporting excellence behind us, we can share our skills, experiences and opportunities with our neighbours to foster the growth of a thriving Asia-Pacific sports community, and to strengthen our social, political and economic ties, to the benefit of us all.

In 2020, *Sport Exchange Australia* commissioned quantitative and qualitative research with sport-sector professionals across Australia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Tonga and Vanuatu. The aim was to get their insights into how sport is shaping our communities now, and how we can work together to drive a better future for all of us through sport

This is what we learned.



HOW THE WORLD SEES AUSTRALIA THROUGH SPORT



When it comes to sport, Australia is seen as a leader in the Asia-Pacific region, and is respected and well regarded by its neighbours.

In unprompted responses, those surveyed and interviewed across Asia and the Pacific typically described Australia's approach to sport as 'passionate', 'competitive', 'hard-working', 'professional' and 'dedicated'.

Among Pacific respondents, Australia was seen as providing its athletes with top-quality training and support. Australia was also regarded as having excellent capabilities in sport science, sporting infrastructure and sports technology.

Respondents endorsed the idea that Australia actively promotes the inclusion of women and girls, and people with disabilities. They also agreed strongly that Australia is making positive contributions to sporting programs in other countries.

89%

agree that Australia is a leader
in sport in the Asia-Pacific region

65%

strongly agree that Australia
provides opportunity in sport for
people with disabilities

70%

strongly agree that Australia
provides athletes with top-quality
training and support

PRIDE, PASSION AND PURPOSE IN AUSTRALIAN SPORT



Respondents from the Australian sports sector have a strong understanding of how sport helps Australia connect with the world.

Of those surveyed, 84 percent agreed that sport has a role to play in promoting Australia. Similarly, 84 percent agreed that Australia can make a positive difference in the world through sport.

The Australian sports sector endorses the idea that sharing our skills and expertise with regional sporting communities delivers benefits to Australia, but it also identified a key concern around providing adequate support for local sport.

The Australian sports sector is a passionate workforce and its members tend to be lifelong sports fans. The statement 'I'm proud to represent Australia to the world' had the strongest endorsement of all attitudinal statements tested (51% strongly agree, 31% agree). Additionally, a total of 84% of sports sector respondents said they feel proud when Australia provides support to other countries when they need it (45% strongly agree, 39% agree).



84%

of Australian sports sector respondents agreed that sport has a role to play in promoting Australia

"It makes me happy that we live in a country that wants to get people together from different nationalities – and what better way than through sport."

84%

of Australian sports sector respondents agreed that Australia can make a positive difference in the world through sport

MAKING A DIFFERENCE THROUGH SPORTS DIPLOMACY



Among those interviewed from the Australian sports sector, sports diplomacy is commonly identified with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and seen as a tool for finding common ground with other nations, and for working together across the globe to achieve common goals. The Australian sports sector recognises the strategic value of sports diplomacy, and tends to describe it in terms of outcomes.

Those interviewed from the Pacific sports sector, are more likely to describe sports diplomacy in terms of experiences. Sports diplomacy was typically associated with aid, establishing relationships, delivering social messages, supporting social change, and engaging with communities.

Though there are slight differences in how they talk about sports diplomacy, the Australian sports sector and the Pacific sports sector both acknowledge the need for nations to engage with each other as equals, maintaining a two-way dialogue, investing in opportunities for collaboration and co-development, and respecting local cultures and ways of working.

"In many ways, cricket can be a bit of a common language. It's almost an icebreaker, really, for nations."



"It is a great Trojan horse for a whole heap of social change initiatives – like gender equality and disability inclusion – that meet resistance in so many other sectors and industries. That's why I'm a huge believer in sports diplomacy and sport for development."

"Using sport as a vehicle to unite and engage the community."

KEY POINTS

When Australia engages with the world through sport, it's not just our on-field performance that gets noticed. This *Sport Exchange Australia* research shows that the world sees our capabilities in sport science, infrastructure and technology, and our commitment to women's sport and sport for people with disability. **We should take up the opportunity to talk more broadly about what we can achieve through sport.**



The *Sport Exchange Australia* research confirms that Australia is seen as a leader when it comes to sport. As leaders, we have influence and opportunity. **How will we use them?**

People in the Australian sports sector believe we can make a positive difference through sport, and celebrate their own role in representing Australia to the world. **The Australian sports sector is the natural home of Australian sports diplomacy.**

METHODOLOGY

On behalf of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and GHD, The Friday Collective was commissioned to undertake research to test the assumption of sport's significant influence in the Pacific and to understand whether or not the delivery of high-profile sporting activities can impact on or alter how Australia is regarded in the region.

The Friday Collective undertook research fieldwork between July and August 2020, taking a quantitative and qualitative approach to gathering feedback:

- In-depth video interviews were conducted providing qualitative insights into the views and opinions of the sporting sector across the Pacific and Australia.
- Online surveys captured the insights and opinions of the public, sports sector and government in the Pacific and Australia.

IMAGE CREDITS

Cover: Netball Australia: Pages 3, 5, 6, 8: Joseph Mayers; Page 4, 7, 9: Brendan Hertal; Page 7: Netball Australia; Page 10-11: Netball Australia, Aaron Kearney, ABC International Development, and AusAID

The ready-made 'sports diplomats' of the Australian sports sector deserve acknowledgement and support. **We can and should recognise the sports diplomacy element of every sporting engagement, and share our experiences and success stories with others in the sector.**



In both Australia and the Pacific, people working in sport are aware of the need to avoid the paternalistic mistakes of the past, and to enter into working relationships respectfully and collaboratively. **Australians engaging with the world through sport today are pioneering the processes and the culture that will define Australian sports diplomacy for years to come.**