



**Squash Australia Board
Squash Australia Staff
Squash Australia State and Territory Member Stakeholders**

5 July 2019

Dear Stakeholders,

SQUASH AUSTRALIA NATIONAL CONFERENCE: STRATEGIC REVIEW

Thank you for allowing me to facilitate the strategic review for the sport on 21 and 22 June. I have provided an overview of the discussions and a framework for the 'where to from here'. If all attendees are in agreement, then I can work with Squash Australia to build out the frameworks for the next round of collaborative discussions and eventual implementation.

Key Conference Outcomes

- That generally, the sport stakeholders believe that the overall direction of the strategic plan remains relevant for the sport, with some potential modifications to the mission statement and the total number of pillars.
- That the state members want to have a more collaborative approach to the decision-making process for key issues affecting the future of the sport.
- There are two key major areas that need immediate attention:
 - o Documenting roles and responsibilities across a decision-making framework.
 - o Developing a communication plan to increase efficiency and the culture of the sport.
- The sport needs to reflect on the agreed values and better display behaviours across all levels of leadership within the sport, that reflect the agreed values, in order to change the organisational culture.

Roles and Responsibilities

Confirm the roles and responsibilities at a National, State and Club level. This will require a consolidation of the discussions had at the National Conference.

Confirm a Decision-Making Framework for the sport, based on discussions had at the National Conference. To include the following:

- Working Groups: Review the structure and make-up of the working groups and review the terms of reference.

- President's Council: Review and determine the terms of reference for an enhanced President's Council.
- SqA Board feedback and review process: Review and document a process for feedback on decisions made by the SqA Board to be provided back to WG's and the Presidents' Council, including opportunities for decisions to be reviewed.

Communication Plan

Develop a Communication Plan that provides clarity and transparency to all stakeholders. The way we communicate needs to be linked back to the organisational values and have a set of tools to enhance and increase efficiency.

Culture

Organisational culture is made up of three distinct parts:

- Behaviours: These are the language and actions we use in our organisation to conduct our work. When these behaviours are not aligned to our agreed values, then there are issues arise that can lead to cultural toxicity.
- Systems and Processes: This is the structural design and frameworks of our organisation that allow work to occur.
- Symbols: These are the things that we spend time on and demonstrate what is important.

Within squash in Australia, we have had a poor and at times toxic culture. This has been due to failings in all three parts of what makes up organisational culture, as above. At the National Conference, all stakeholders agreed that this needed to change and committed to bringing about cultural change as a priority.

It was acknowledged both publicly and privately, that there are three distinct areas that need addressing:

Squash Australia Board: There are divisions within the board that mean the board is at times ineffective. This disunity is obvious to stakeholders in the sport and at times board discussions and disagreements become public knowledge. This causes a lack of trust from both staff and the state members in the board's ability to do its job in leading the sport.

The Squash Australia Board needs to have a variety of skill sets on it, and the Member States and Territories need to ensure that they are nominating potential board members who fit the requirements. The Nominations Committee should be structured in a way that it can provide a degree of independent advice to the Member States and Territories in electing a suitably qualified board.

Squash Australia Staff: There is a high turnover of staff, which leads to a loss of corporate knowledge, a high change of roles internally and an increase in workload for staff. This results in frustration from the state members as they 'deal with' refamiliarising new staff with projects and a breakdown in communication channels.

State/Territory Stakeholders: There has been an 'us and them' mentality between the States/Territories and Squash Australia. This has stemmed from a change in the focus of the national body about 10 years ago, as Squash Australia (as with other sports) became more involved in participation and governance, rather than just high performance. This was described as being like 'the absent father returning' and a strained relationship has been the result. This causes a lack of collaboration across the sport, at all levels, and results in inefficiencies in the sharing of knowledge and resources.

It was acknowledged by all stakeholders that the time for blame and defending of decisions and positions is over. We need to consider the sport as a whole, being squash in Australia. At each level of the organisation there will be root cause issues that need to be addressed. However, the cultural toxicity within the organisation can be solved by ensuring that a clear intent to build a culture of collaboration is woven into the roles and responsibilities and communication plan, as a 'way we work together'.

Where to from here?

Should all stakeholders agree that this represents a concise overview of the discussions held and agreed priorities from the National Conference, then the following actions are recommended:

- That support is provided to the Squash Australia team to address internal cultural issues in the staff cohort.
- That two working teams (made up from expertise within the sport stakeholder group) are established, to develop a Working Paper for presenting back to the State/Territory Presidents and CEOs, Squash Australia CEO and Squash Australia Board for review and feedback. Final documents should be produced for endorsement at this year's National AGM:
 - o Roles and Responsibilities paper with a decision-making framework.
 - o Communication Plan with an agreed 'way we work together' statement.
- That there are a number of key strategic issues (such as National Rankings system, AJO, AJC etc) that need further consultation and collaboration between Squash Australia and the States/Territories before the AGM. These issues should be documented, and a process of collaborative discussion be held, using any initial frameworks decided from the working groups in the interim.

Conclusion

It should be noted that this document is only a high-level overview of the discussions held at the conference. There is a lot of detail that has both been discussed and sent through to me, which should inform the next steps.

If you have any questions or comments, then please contact me on 0432 469 500 or paul@paulmead.com.au.

Regards,

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