

Response to
"A New Administrative Structure For Sports Development"
- a personal view

I hereby express my views in response to the Legislative Council Brief on a "A New Administrative Structure For Sports Development" (File Ref: HAB/CS/CR 6/8/90). Whilst I am the former President of the Hong Kong Triathlon Association (HKTriA) and continue to work in the capacity of Chairperson of its Selection Committee, these views do not necessarily reflect those of the HKTriA.

I have no objection in principle to the dissolution of the Hong Kong Sports Development Board (SDB) and the establishment of the Sports Commission (SC), whereby the responsibilities of the SDB will be transferred to the Sports Commission, for policy making, a reconstituted Hong Kong Sports Institute (SI), for Elite Sports development, and to the Leisure & Cultural Services Department (LCSD), for funding allocation to the National Sports Associations (NSAs). Nevertheless, I do have some concerns relating to the transition. I also feel the need to strenuously object to the specific proposals regarding the reconstitution of the SI.

I am alarmed that the proposal to incorporate the SI and to make it available for public use, with the responsibility for the management of its facilities being shared with the LCSD, did not form part of the public consultation exercise. I also feel that it is inappropriate to make such fundamental policy changes with respect to Elite Sports development, prior to the setting up of the relevant Committee of the Sports Commission. I would urge the Government to allow the SI to operate as an independent statutory body until policy relating to the future role and structure of the SI to be determined by the Elite Sports Committee of the Sports Commission (ESC). With this in mind I suggest that the ESC be set up as soon as possible, rather than waiting until the dissolution of the SDB. It is my view that the SI should remain as a statutory body, rather being incorporated, and that its facilities should be dedicated to the development of Elite Sports. Otherwise, there will inevitably be a detrimental impact on the development of athletes capable of achieving success internationally at Elite level.

I have a number of other concerns about the proposals, of which I would like to take this opportunity to highlight three. First, I am concerned that there could be squabbling over resources and in-fighting between the three Committees of the Sports Commission. I would welcome clarification on how this is to be avoided and how to ensure that the Committees work towards mutually beneficial goals. Second, I am concerned about the short timeframe for transition. Historically, this is the time of year that plans are prepared (both by the NSAs and the SI Elite Sports) for the next financial year. Direction is urgently required on how budget submissions for next year should be handled. Needless to say, inadequate forward planning will have an adverse effect. Third, it should be recognised that the staff of the SDB are sports professionals. It would be a great shame if any worthwhile expertise were to be lost as a result of dissolution of the SDB. I would ask the Government to consider this when employing the workforce required for the Secretariat to the SC.

In summary, I would urge the Government to hold back on its proposals regarding the reconstitution of the SI, until the appropriate policy-making body has been set up and had time to consider its merits. I would also welcome feedback regarding my other major concerns.

Andrew Patrick

29th July 2003.