

OPENING ADDRESS

**By Dr Frank Pyke
Chairman
National Elite Sports Council**

It gives me great pleasure to welcome everyone to Sydney, our 2000 Olympic Games city, for the first International Elite Sports Forum. In particular, a special welcome is extended to the 28 delegates from 17 different countries who have come here to share their knowledge and experience with the Directors and Program Managers of the nine institutes and academies of sport throughout Australia.

We have scheduled the Forum to coincide with several Test events being held at the Olympic Games venues. These will provide delegates from overseas with an opportunity to witness first hand the site where the fierce competition for Olympic medals will be played out next year. It will also give our visitors an introduction to Sydney, one of the most cosmopolitan and beautiful cities in the world. We hope that you enjoy your stay here.

The Forum will also give us all an opportunity to evaluate the status of elite sports programs in our respective countries as we compare them to others around the world. We have invited many of you to make presentations on the topics that have been chosen for this forum. For those who are not making formal presentations there will be ample opportunity in discussion sessions to indicate what is happening in your state or country and to air your views on what is happening elsewhere. There will also be social occasions for more casual, but no less meaningful, conversations.

Above all, each of us should go away from the Forum with a better idea about the different approaches being taken in elite sport throughout the world and with a larger network of professional colleagues who are involved in this part of the sports industry.

As your hosts it would be remiss of me to not give you a brief overview of the elite sports system in Australia because I know that some of you will be visiting other parts of our country during your stay. We will ensure that you receive a warm welcome wherever you go.

Historically, after a period of great sporting success in the 1950's and 1960's, Australia did poorly in the 1970's, particularly at the 1976 Montreal Olympics. This precipitated the development of the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) which was established in 1981 in our national capital, Canberra, and funded by the Federal Government. Talented athletes from different states and territories were initially invited to Canberra to live and train. However, this required athletes to relocate from their home state which wasn't always their preference.

Hence institutes and academies of sport were established progressively in each state and territory by their respective governments. This gave athletes the option of remaining in their home state closer to their families, friends and career and education prospects.

In order of establishment, these institutions include:

South Australian Institute of Sport – SASI	Adelaide 1982
Western Australian Institute of Sport – WAIS	Perth 1984
Tasmanian Institute of Sport – TIS	Launceston 1987
Australian Capital Territory Academy of Sport – ACTAS	Canberra 1989
Victorian Institute of Sport – VIS	Melbourne 1990
Queensland Academy of Sport – QAS	Brisbane 1991
New South Wales Institute of Sport – NSWIS	Sydney 1995
Northern Territory Institute of Sport – NTIS	Darwin 1996

The Directors of the National and State and Territory Institutes and Academies of Sport comprise the National Elite Sports Council (NESC).

The national network of institutes and academies is now complete and has been the single most important factor in Australia's improved performance in international sport. Collectively, everyone involved in this network welcomes you to the Forum.
