

# Sport Policy

## OVERVIEW

Sport plays a vital role in the lives of New Zealanders. Our leading sportsmen and sportswomen contribute much of the recognition that we receive on the international stage. Yet there remains much we can do to enhance the lifestyle and attitudinal benefits that come from young New Zealanders participating in organised sport. And there is significant scope to improve the prospect of success for those who represent our country in international events.

The benefits available from having young people who are fitter and healthier as a result of playing sport are obvious. The cost reductions achievable in our health system from improving current levels of sporting participation are significant. Less visible is the improvement in attitude, spirit, and culture that come from sporting involvement, learning about teamwork, confidence, co-operation, and winning and losing.

Regular involvement in sport is habit-forming. The more we can improve participation in sport among young people, the greater the prospects that they will carry that participation, and higher levels of health and fitness, into their later lives.

Our top international sportsmen and sportswomen make a huge contribution to New Zealand's image and brand. For that reason alone they deserve high-performance support systems that enable them to overcome the disadvantages associated with our size and location. Equally important is the fact that they are role models. They play a major role in encouraging participation in sport among young people, and their international success is integral to any plan to increase sporting participation at home.

The National Party does not see sport as an area in which partisan politics should be welcomed. However, we do have some priorities that are different from those of the Labour Government. In particular, we want to see that more of the funding available through the government's sporting agency, SPARC, finds its way to the coalface of sporting participation: our clubs and schools.

## SPORT IN SCHOOLS

Schools are a unique gateway for children wanting to get involved in a sports team or club.

But there are real challenges confronting school sport. Factors like dramatically increased paperwork, a falling number of male teachers, and changing teacher attitudes to managing and coaching school sporting teams have made it more challenging for schools to deliver sport for students.

We support the requirement that schools give priority to regular physical activity for their pupils as part of the core curriculum.

But more importantly we want schools to encourage more of their pupils to take part in organised sports teams and clubs outside school hours.

Some schools are able to pay for sports co-ordinators and coaches. Others struggle to find the coaches, referees, and volunteers to support a range of teams in the school, let alone promote those teams to pupils. This creates a barrier between children and sport.

National wants that barrier to come down.

We will, over time, give schools additional resources to ensure more pupils can take part in extra-curricula organised sport.

Over recent years, the education bureaucracies have grown dramatically in size. A National Government will reduce these bureaucracies in order to shift more funding into school operations grants. Over time this will include additional funds for sport in schools.

National will:

- Give schools additional resources over time to ensure more pupils can take part in extra-curricula organised sport.
- Allow schools to use sport funding as they see fit, so long as it results in more pupils actually doing sport.

## SUPPORTING SPORTS CLUBS

New Zealand's sports clubs occupy a proud place in the history of our country. They have long-standing traditions and extensive networks in their communities. They bring together people of different ages, abilities, and walks of life.

In many sports codes and many schools, clubs are the chief mechanism by which sports teams are engaged in local competitions.

Despite this vital role, many of our sports clubs are struggling. They are beset with challenges – not just the constant need to raise funds, but the need to find coaches, administrators, and other officials required to keep sport alive.

Some clubs are able to cover funding shortfalls by leaning more heavily on their communities for help or raising subscriptions. Others simply don't have that option.

For many families, taking part in a sports club can be prohibitively expensive: football boots, netball uniforms, and transport all cost money. It can be hard to find a coach to take the team.

Too many children in our poorest communities are being excluded from sport because their parents can't afford it. These are the children who need it most. National is determined to turn that around. We can't hope to see sport thrive in this country without healthier sports clubs.

National will ensure that more of the government's sport funding makes it through to the sports clubs at the front line.

We will be flexible in our thinking about how that funding is best delivered and distributed. Our guiding priority will be to make sure the dollars spent result in a measurable increase in the number of children taking part in regular sporting activity.

In some parts of New Zealand, regional sports trusts may be a significant player in this process. We understand the important role they play, and we will be asking the trusts to buy into our central strategy of moving as much resource as possible to the places where sport is actually played.

National will:

- Ensure that more of the government's sports spending makes it through to sports clubs at the front line, and that this spending leads to a measurable increase in the number of children taking part in regular sporting activity.
- Work with regional sports trusts to move as much resource as possible to the places where sport is actually played.

## SPORTS FUNDING

National wants to bring about a significant shift in emphasis as to where government sports funding is spent.

Fighting obesity has been turned into a complex business. A lot of Labour's effort is built around highly expensive advertising and promotional programmes.

National believes that a substantial proportion of the money spent on those expensive programmes could be better spent on codes, schools, and clubs that have bats, balls, sports facilities, and gear ready to ensure more New Zealanders can take part in sport.

We will give Ministries a clear sense of priorities about how funds like this should be spent. We want more sports coaches and equipment and fewer advisers and reports.

We will look at all government programmes related to sport, regardless of which portfolio technically funds them, to ensure we get the balance right between funding promotional programmes and telling people to lead healthier lifestyles, and funding actual sports organisations with actual facilities at which sport is actually being played.

National will:

- Free up meaningful additional funding for schools and sports clubs.

## SPORT AND RECREATION NEW ZEALAND (Sparc)

Sparc is the government agency charged with promoting physical activity and supporting elite athletes.

Sparc employs around 90 staff. Relative to other government agencies, a high proportion of them are currently paid salaries over \$100,000, and the proportion paid over \$150,000 is also high.

You would hope that these people were busy putting funds directly into regional sports trusts, clubs, and national sporting bodies. But too much of the money never makes it outside the capital.

Instead, it gets spent on internal costs associated with running Sparc, and on supporting and developing programmes and social marketing campaigns.

In line with our general policy of ensuring efficient and effective back-office services in order to flow funds to the front line, a National Government will seek to re-prioritise expenditure in the vote over time.

National will:

- Require Sparc to re-prioritise its expenditure. We will seek to move funds away from social marketing, websites, and report writing, into funding sport in schools and clubs.

## HIGH PERFORMANCE SPORT

New Zealand performs creditably in international sport. But with a modest increase in resources we can do better.

The number of athletes who finished in the top 10 of their discipline at the recent Olympics suggests that if we can move our support systems up to the next level then we will measurably increase the number of podium finishes.

National regards moving the resourcing of high performance sport to the next level as a priority. In particular, we would wish to see:

- The development of a national training centre at which athletes, coaches, and other support specialists can share techniques and skills in a 'hothouse' environment.
- Satellite facilities for appropriate sports as part of a coherent facilities strategy.
- Increased support for the academies.
- Increased support for NSO high-performance coaching.
- An increase in the number of athletes able to be supported full-time or almost full-time in training.

In these uncertain economic times it is not possible to make specific new budget commitments in these areas. However, if elected, a National Government would seek to increase high performance funding in the areas listed above as new funds become available or as economies are made in existing budgets.

A review of high performance sport is under way following the recent Olympics. National will give full consideration to this review, including any appropriate recommendations for change.

National will:

- Seek to increase funding for high-performance sport as new funds become available or as economies are made in existing budgets.
- Give full consideration to the review of high performance sport, including appropriate recommendations for change.