

## Player Welfare Industry in Australia 2006



School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management



Ms Sonia Francis  
27<sup>th</sup> September 2006



School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management



## Presentation Overview

- > Profile – School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management.
- > Player Welfare in Professional Sporting Leagues in Australia.
- > Current Issues.
- > Emerging Trends.
- > Future Development.



School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management



## Profile

- > La Trobe University's main campus is located in the northern part of the city of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. The student population is 25,000.
- > The School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management is celebrating its 10th year.
- > It offers undergraduate degrees and postgraduate degrees (by research) in tourism management, tourism and hospitality management, and, sport and leisure management.
- > The sport and leisure management degree provides graduates with the ability to work in government and private sporting, event and leisure organisations.
- > Graduates are well regarded by Industry.



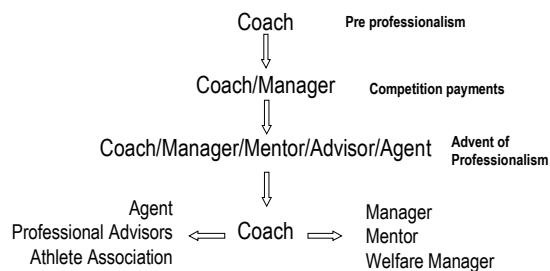
School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management



## Player Welfare in Professional Sporting Leagues in Australia.

- > There are many sports in Australia where athletes are remunerated on a part-time or full-time basis to compete.
- > There are five major sporting leagues in Australia (**Cricket, Soccer, Rugby League, Rugby Union and Australian Football League - AFL**) where athletes are remunerated full-time.
- > >1600 fulltime professional athletes competing in these leagues.
- > From 1998 onwards professional sporting leagues via their respective Collective Bargaining Agreements were able to better service the welfare needs of their athletes.

## Origins



School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management



## Origins

- 1974 – The Women's Sports Foundation – USA
- 1985 – Canadian Olympic Athlete Career Centre
- 1985 – US Olympic Education Center
- 1987 – NBPA - PACE – USA
- 1990s- Programmes started to be recognised
- 1995 - AIS/ACE – Australia
- 1997 – UKNCF – UK
- 1998 – Dedicated sport specific athlete programmes in Australia & New Zealand

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management



### Industry Characteristics

- > Evolving Industry.
- > Is there an "ideal" programme?
- > Professional Sporting Leagues in Australasia are at different stages of the player welfare lifecycle.
- > Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) and Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) have played a significant role in the development of the player welfare industry.


LA TROBE UNIVERSITY School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management



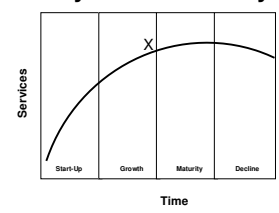
### Industry Statistics

- > >\$5m (2006) invested in player welfare by professional sporting leagues in Australasia.
- > Approx. 100 -150 individuals in dedicated player welfare roles in Australasia. Typically coming from one or more of the following career backgrounds: Elite Athlete, Coaching, Secondary/Tertiary Education Sector, HR Management, Counselling or Psychology.
- > >250 independent businesses/individuals derive an income from servicing the industry.


LA TROBE UNIVERSITY School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management



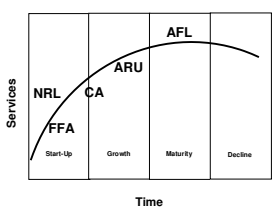
### Player Welfare Lifecycle



LA TROBE UNIVERSITY School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management



AFL – Australian Football League  
 ARU – Australian Rugby Union  
 CA – Cricket Australia  
 FFA – Football Federation of Australia  
 NRL – National Rugby League



LA TROBE UNIVERSITY School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management



### 2006 Landscape

The programme delivery varies between sporting leagues:

- Centralised
- Decentralised
- Hybrid Approach

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management

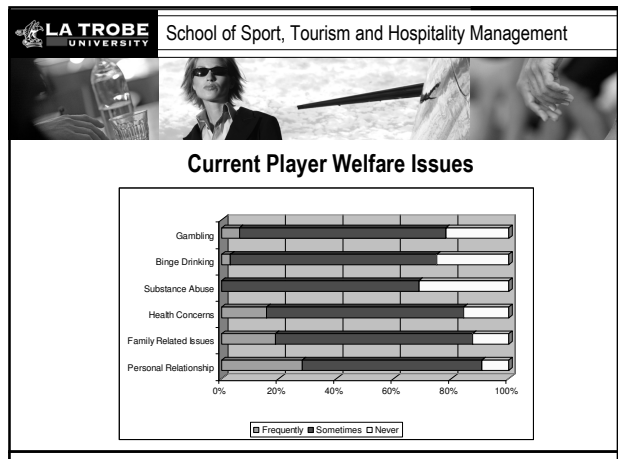
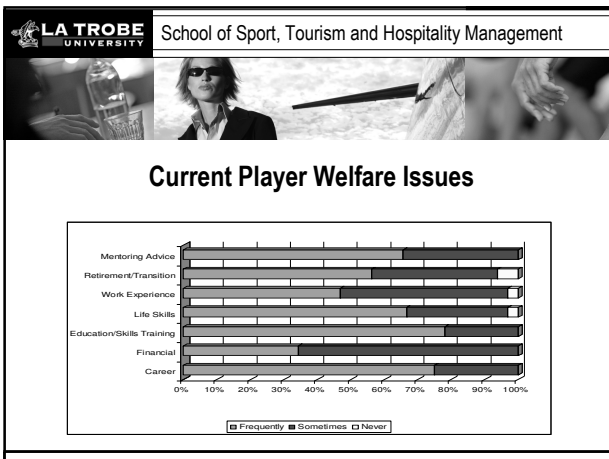


### Player Welfare Industry Pilot Research

- > 5 major sporting codes in Australasia (Cricket, Soccer, Rugby League, Rugby Union and AFL)
- > Sample – player welfare managers working with teams that play in major competition of the code (NRL, SANZAR – S14, Pura Cup, A-League, AFL).
- > Survey Instrument – On-line survey
- > Response rate - 73%
- > Usable surveys – 65%
- > Data Analysis – Customised online analysis software

Research funded by Sports Knowledge Australia. [www.sportedu.org](http://www.sportedu.org)





- LA TROBE UNIVERSITY School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management
- ### Emerging Trends/Issues
- > Culture (society, sporting code, club/franchise).
  - > Buy-in of the player welfare function at club/franchise level.
  - > Elevation of elite sports people in Australia to hero status (No.1).
  - > Increased media and public scrutiny of professional athletes.
  - > Acceptance of mental issues (depression).
  - > Emergence of the first fulltime professional athletes reaching retirement.
  - > Intensifying physical nature of some sports and the subsequent physical and mental consequences.
  - > Addressing the welfare concerns of past players (athletes).

- LA TROBE UNIVERSITY School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management
- ### Future Development Needs
- > Better understanding of what it means to be a professional athlete.
  - > Increased awareness of mental illness issues and how to address them.
  - > Standardization of terminology.
  - > Industry remuneration benchmarking exercise.
  - > Industry Best Practice.
  - > Upskilling of player welfare managers.

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management

*Becoming a professional athlete is a mental and physical journey often punctuated by obstacles along the way.*

*How these obstacles are dealt with is the true test of professionalism.*

*The challenge for the athlete is the approach.*

*The challenge for the organisation is the duty of care in the welfare of the athlete.*

Francis, 2006