THE ELITE ATHLETE SELECTION SYSTEM
in AUSTRALIA:

Selectors’ Perceptions

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Deakin University
May, 2015
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) is acknowledged for its assistance in providing a copy of what is referred to as the ‘Morling Report’. This report was written for the AOC by The Honourable T.R. Morling, Q.C., regarding the selection of Olympic athletes. The AOC also provided a range of selection dispute statistics that have been reproduced within this thesis. Both the report and the statistics were not publicly available.

Professor David Shilbury made this journey possible. He was as generous with his assistance and support as he was demanding of quality, and I remain ever grateful for both. Encouragement from other staff at Deakin University along the way is also acknowledged, and sincerely appreciated.

Finally, my thanks also go to the twenty-one Australian sport coaches and selectors who patiently answered my questions, giving up over an hour of their precious time, because of course, this would not have been possible without them. They all did so in the belief that knowledge is information that might one day be of help to their sport.
ABSTRACT

Selection involves choosing among players or athletes to compete in specific, upcoming sport events. It should not be confused with talent identification, which considers potential to compete at some unspecified time in the future. A trend toward disputing selection decisions existed that was a concern for sport organisations. One possible cause was the selection system, which may not have professionalised at the same rate as other aspects of sport. An exploratory grounded theory study was undertaken to answer the research question: **What are selectors’ perceptions of the existing selection system?** Twenty-one volunteer and professional selectors from fifteen élite-level Australian sports were interviewed. Using the constant comparison method, responses were initially coded into a mix of predefined and emergent categories. Relationships between categories were then considered, using axial coding. The outcome was a shortlist of categories, all of which were seen to be predictors of job engagement and commitment, and thus selectors’ job performance.

The story that emerged was that of a group of highly committed, serious leisure volunteers along with a minority of paid professionals who, despite inconsistent support, leadership and communication, conflict and imbalances of power, uncertain policy and vague processes that were rarely reviewed, nevertheless assumed responsibility – with no formal training – for making selection decisions on behalf of their sport. Commitment, engagement and power had the most explanatory power in terms of selector performance. A theory of commitment and its effect on selection system performance was proposed. Selectors’ commitment at this level was so strong as to be transformative in nature, allowing selectors to overcome and even transcend selection system issues. In addition, it was found that volunteer and professional selectors were treated quite differently by their respective sport organisations and, as a result, HRM practices were recommended for the ongoing management of these ‘serious leisure’ volunteers, in consideration of equity and organisational justice.
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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM

Sport management is in transition from amateurism to professionalism. It has evolved from a traditionally volunteer-driven model to what is now most commonly a hybrid model of management, incorporating a mix of both paid staff and volunteers (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011). Historically, sport was organised by amateurs, and often in an amateur fashion. This is known as the ‘kitchen-table’ style of administration, when sport was “directed, organized, and coached by individuals in their spare time, in makeshift facilities and with continual insufficient funding” (Kikulis, Slack, & Hinings, 1992, p. 356). Sport was regarded as play, not as an industry, so it wasn’t taken too seriously, however, sport is now an industry that delivers ‘play’, and is taken very seriously.

Sport differs from other industries, most notably by the level of emotional and social investment of its stakeholders, which in turn creates certain expectations. Financial investment creates expectations too – according to recent Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) reports, sport now accounts for $8,293.8 million per annum, or 1.5% of all household expenditure in Australia, has some 111,000 employees, and attracted government funding of $2,124 million (ABS, 2002, 2011). Paradoxically, people want sport to retain its play-like features, yet they also expect sport to be run in a business-like manner.

As a result, change has necessarily occurred within individual sport organisations. Many now have at least one paid professional manager on staff, and often more, but only a very few sports can be considered to be completely professional, since most
are still reliant on volunteer personnel, to varying degrees. Sherry and Shilbury (2007) described this situation in the following statement:

a number of sports in Australia have professional athletes who are paid for on-field performance and professional sport managers and administrators who are paid for their role within the organisation. However, the majority of sport organisations in Australia remain, to this day, as membership-based, non-profit entities governed by a volunteer board of directors, including many at the highest level of professional sport, and National Sport Organisations (NSOs). (p. 415)

Chelladurai and Madella (2006) also considered co-habitation and conflict between professionals and volunteers, specifically in the elite Olympic sport environment. They described it initially as a “source of continuous tensions” (p. 23), and as “perceived expertise versus passionate but unskilled altruism” (p. 72), perpetuating the notion that volunteers are keen but inept. The latter comment suggested two things – first, that only professionals have expertise. While they observed that volunteers are “sometimes addressed as lackeys that simply perform tasks without the need or ability to think of the bigger picture” (p. 24), it was deemed inappropriate to suggest that all volunteers lack expertise, since they “may indeed be as professional as the paid professionals themselves” (Chelladurai & Madella, 2006, p. 26). Second, this comment suggested that all sport volunteers have only altruistic motives, whereas Shilbury and Kellett (2011) stated that sport volunteers should be seen as following a lifestyle choice, or a form of leisure pursuit. Aside from the issues of expertise and motivation, other sources of ‘professional versus volunteer’ conflict were said to be:

- The perception of inadequate rewards;
- The perception of higher turnover (less loyalty) of paid professionals; and
- The perception as to where decision-making power rests (Chelladurai & Madella, 2006, p. 26).
Chelladurai and Madella (2006) stated that the professionalisation of sport has led to the perception that volunteers are “no longer adequate for the new environment” (p. 73), while at the same time noting that there is no scientific evidence of an increase in performance associated with this specific transition process. They suggested that belief in the superior effectiveness of professional staff is an argument often used by supporters of remunerated professionalism to “marginalise the role of volunteers” (Chelladurai & Madella, 2006, p. 460). Rather than promoting the professional at the expense of the volunteer, there are those who believe the two can work in some sort of harmony.

Nichols (2005) also considered the professionalisation of sport, and noted the need to strike a balance between meeting the needs of the ‘stalwart’ volunteers, attracting new ones, and helping clubs respond to “external pressures for professionalism” (p. 37). In this environment, there are changing levels of influence between paid staff and volunteers, and an increasing expectation that both should conform to the same professional standards. This creates tensions, and an ongoing challenge for sport managers to manage a hybrid workforce to best effect.

One important role within sport that has traditionally been undertaken by unpaid volunteers is that of the selector. For the purposes of this study, selectors are defined as those people engaged by a sport to choose players or athletes to compete in specific individual, squad or team events. Selection involves not only making an assessment of past or present performance, but it also involves predicting the future – that is, that one person will perform better than another (Macky & Johnson, 2003). It should not be confused with talent identification, which instead involves recognising those with potential to excel at some point in the future. Selection is a challenging
and often contentious task, undertaken in a developing work environment in which a professional approach is not only desirable but is increasingly expected, from professionals and volunteers alike.

Selectors have attracted a great deal of criticism in the public domain, casting doubt on the quality of the decision, and on the system that produced it. The majority of selectors are still volunteers, so it was possible that the selection process in sport might not yet be conducted as professionally as it should be. It was difficult to know how much of the conflict was justified, and to discern where the fault lay. Often, criticism was levelled at selectors when it might have been more appropriately directed at others, such as the sport organisation, which is responsible for the policy selectors are required to implement, and/or at the athletes, who do not always meet expectations. On this basis, it was proposed to carry out an exploratory study to learn more about selectors and the selection system as a whole.

1.2 THE PROBLEM

**Change in sport.** Change is most commonly an evolutionary process that occurs over time, and so it is within the sport industry, however, there have been a number of catalysts for change that have revolutionised sport, bringing about radical change in a much shorter period of time. The 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal, Canada, were seen as a catalyst for change within Australian sport. Australia did not win a single gold medal, which was its first major international sporting failure, and radical change was called for. While Montreal is remembered as the ‘watershed moment’, in fact, the wheels of change had started turning three years prior.
In 1973, the Government commissioned Professor John Bloomfield to prepare a sports plan for Australia. His report suggested that a national institute of sport should be established, similar to those operating in European countries. Following receipt of the Bloomfield Report, the then Minister for Tourism and Recreation appointed Doctor Allan Coles to report on the feasibility of such an institute. The Coles Report was released in 1975 recommending its establishment and, as a result, the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) opened its doors in 1981 (ASC, 2002; Daly, 1991; Eggins, 2002; Shilbury & Kellett, 2011).

In a period of only eight years between 1973 and 1981, successive Labor and Liberal Governments had commissioned, received and considered two major reports, gained the necessary approvals, allocated funding, built, staffed and opened the new Institute. The Government(s) of the day had been unusually swift, clearly keen to reverse the downward trend in Australia’s international sport performance, and also unusually pro-active, given that both reports were commissioned prior to the Montreal performance debacle.

**Examination of selection policy.** Similarly, the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games can be seen as a catalyst for change to sport selection policy in this country. Shortly prior to this event, Australian athletes lodged a total of 42 appeals against selections made by 18 different sport organisations, which was by all accounts a ‘record’ number of appeals. The validity of many sports’ selection policies was tested, sometimes by way of ‘in-house’ tribunals but also externally, in a legal environment. On the face of it, the approach taken toward the selection of athletes by many Australian sport organisations had been less than professional. This was not surprising, given sport’s history of being managed mainly by volunteers up to that time. Canoeing Australia is
a prime example: this organisation confessed to having selected athletes to represent Australia at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games with no selection policy in place at the time (Kaeding, 2002).

As Nicholson and Hoye (2008) stated, “almost all significant Australian sport policies have been preceded by a review of the sport system and a set of policy recommendations” (p. 71), and this situation was no exception. As a result of the number of appeals, both the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) and the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) became involved, and took steps to ensure that all sports adopted a more professional approach to the selection of athletes. In 2001, the Australian Olympic team selection process was examined and a report prepared for the AOC by the Honourable Trevor Morling, QC. Morling was eminently qualified for conducting inquiries. He has acted as a Justice of the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory and of the Federal Court of Australia, the Chair of the Australian Electoral Commission, the Deputy President of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, he chaired a Board of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Parliament, was a Member of the International Court of Arbitration, and is perhaps best known for conducting a Royal Commission into the convictions recorded against the parents of missing baby Azaria Chamberlain. Morling’s terms of reference for this inquiry were broad, and he sought the views of national sport organisations, athletes, members of tribunals, and those involved in the nomination/selection process.

According to the Morling Report, of the 42 appeals lodged, 10 were withdrawn, 12 lodged further appeals to the international Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), while the majority were heard and dismissed by the national sport organisations’ own internal appeals tribunals (Morling, 2001). With regard to the latter, since the
selection decision and the tribunal decision came from the same organisation, it was possible that there was not sufficient distance within the organisation to allow genuinely impartial hearings, although this is difficult to judge, as detail was not readily available (Morling, 2001).

It was hard to be completely sure of the quantum of these appeals. Material that should be authoritative (since both authors are lawyers of ‘Queens Counsel’ status) cites 42 as the number of appeals (Jolson, 2004; Morling, 2001), but the number grew to 48 in the media (7.30 Report, 2000; Broughton, 2004). The media reports might have been exaggerated, however an excerpt from the AOC’s own 2000 Australian Olympic Team Report stated that there were 51 appeals (AOC, 2000c).

Morling (2001) and the AOC (2000c) did at least agree on the outcome – in total, six appeals to tribunals were successful and a further three were upheld by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), making nine successful appeals out of their respective totals of 42 or 51, for a ‘success rate’ in the range of 18-22 per cent. It was therefore accurate to state that approximately one in five Australian athletes who challenged a selection decision (that is, their non-selection) for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games were successful in having that decision overturned. While not an overwhelming percentage, it was sufficiently high to suggest that selection processes were in need of examination. The number of appeals was repeated like a mantra in pre and post-Sydney 2000 literature, and interestingly, it is the volume of appeals that caused the outcry, not their merit, since the outcome of those appeals was barely discussed and appeared to be almost irrelevant.
Before discussing this sport selection ‘catalyst’ in greater depth, it should be noted that appeals can only be made under certain circumstances, usually on points of law or issues of natural justice, where it can be shown that selectors did not follow policy. Courts and Tribunals have always been reluctant to intervene and do not overrule selection decisions just because they don’t agree with them. It should also be noted that the terms ‘nomination’ and ‘selection’ are used in this study interchangeably. In Australia, Olympic athletes are nominated by their national sport organisations to the AOC, which has the final say in selection. In practical terms however, the AOC does not have the technical knowledge across all sports to actually select athletes, and so it generally relies on the nominations submitted when confirming selection. Unless something untoward happens, nomination usually means selection.

The number of selection disputes in 2000 might have been unique, and so it was important to determine whether a trend existed. This was difficult because there was little information available – for example, details of CAS appeals were only published with the consent of interested parties, so the details of all appeals were not available for meaningful analysis. It is known that appeals from Australian athletes to the CAS (again, irrespective of outcome) numbered approximately five for Atlanta (1996), approximately 12 for Sydney (2000), and approximately 16 for Athens (2004), which suggested an upward trend.

Upon enquiry, the AOC (2013) provided statistics relating to selection-related disputes (shown mainly as nomination disputes) for the period 2000 to 2012, both inclusive, that is, for the past four Olympic campaigns. The AOC classifies selection disputes into those not qualified, those not nominated, and those not selected after
having been nominated, and they also keep count of disputes relating to selection of the ‘shadow team’, which is another term for the Olympic squad. Setting aside the AOC’s preferred categories, which in some respects are ‘splitting hairs’, the information is summarised in Table 1.1, with the number of disputes shown as a percentage of the number of athletes in the team. The resulting percentage trend is presented graphically in Figure 1.1.

<table>
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<th>Games</th>
<th>Disputes</th>
<th>Team Size</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sydney 2000</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athens 2004</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing 2008</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London 2012</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be concluded that immediately post-Sydney 2000, the number of appeals reduced substantially after the introduction of various changes, however, the upward trend has since re-established, with the percentage of disputes for London being comparable to that of Sydney. It should be noted that the number of appeals shown in Table 1.1 (upon which Figure 1.1 is based) does not indicate the rate of success of the appeals, as that information – other than for the year 2000 – was not made available.
Having established that more athletes were appealing, and a percentage of appeals were proving successful, it was necessary to consider what might be causing these symptoms. It might be, for example, that appealing selection was perhaps a uniquely Australian or host country phenomenon. Looking again at numbers of appeals only, Findlay and Corbett (2002) noted that some 25 disputes were heard in Canada prior to the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, causing them to comment that such selection disputes are “common on the eve of a major Games such as the Olympics” (p. 114). Canada set up its Sports Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (SDRCC) in 2001, in anticipation of selection appeals related to the Salt Lake City Winter Games of 2002, so the problem was not confined to Australia (ADRSportRed, 2002).

Other factors might have accounted for variance in numbers of appeals, and also confused efforts to identify clear trends. First, the likelihood of success of any appeals (and therefore the propensity to appeal) depends to some extent on the appeal
mechanisms in place, and the significance of the CAS has changed a great deal over
time. The CAS was created by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1983
and is situated in Switzerland, alongside the IOC. In its formative years, the CAS
battled for recognition and acceptance – it was regarded, by most sport organisations,
as being too close to the IOC to be truly impartial and, as a result, has taken a
substantial amount of time to make its presence felt (Kane, 2003). Many countries
instead preferred to take their own steps to manage sports dispute resolution. In the
USA, the Amateur Sports Act of 1978 directed sport disputes to the American
Arbitration Association. China introduced its own provisions for sports disputes in
1995, and the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia all set up their own dispute
resolution centres shortly afterward (Corbett, 2008; Doyle, 1999).

In 1996 the CAS opened two satellite offices, one in the USA and the other in
Australia, in anticipation of the 1996 and 2000 Games in Atlanta and Sydney,
respectively. It may be that proximity and an increased presence outside of Europe
assisted with the increasing acceptance and use of its services. Kane (2003) observed
that “the upsurge in the usage of CAS prior to the Sydney Games is not surprising”;
mainly because the Australian Olympic Team Membership Agreement (Athletes) for
the 2000 Games contained a dispute resolution clause providing that the CAS held
the exclusive jurisdiction for the resolution of all selection disputes. Jolson (2004)
confirmed that this granting of exclusivity did happen, although he differs as to its
timing – he stated that it occurred not for the 2000 Games, but “in the lead up to the
2004 Athens Olympic Games” (p. 6).
The CAS’ exclusivity as the final avenue of appeal was tested in 2000 in the case of Raguz v Sullivan (2000), a selection dispute between two Australian judo competitors, who appealed the CAS ruling to the New South Wales (NSW) Court of Appeal. This case established legal precedent. The NSW Supreme Court was found to have no jurisdiction because the agreement entered into by the athletes was deemed to be a foreign agreement, not a domestic one. The CAS was effectively found to be “immune from interference” by domestic Courts (Sturzaker & Godhard, 2001, Conclusion section, para. 2), which cemented its position as the final arbiter of sport selection disputes.

Second, to properly determine whether and to what extent this was a ‘record’ number of selection appeals, it would be necessary to consider the numbers of selection appeals made to all Courts and tribunals in all countries in prior and ensuing Olympics, however, this information was not readily available. In particular, an examination of the numbers of appeals made within host countries would have been useful, because the desire to perform ‘at home’ (or in the case of London, the ‘mother country’) is known to be highly motivating for athletes, and might have accounted for a higher than usual number of appeals.

Third, the number of appeals by Australian athletes for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games is known only as an absolute number, in much the same way that the road toll is used as a number in isolation, but it would be more meaningful if treated as a relative number (as presented in Table 1.1 and Figure 1.1). The number of appeals by Australian athletes vying for Olympic selection should be considered as a percentage of the total number of athletes nominated, or as a percentage of the contingent sent to the Games, to determine whether or not it was a genuinely troubling number.
The number of appeals (42) as a percentage of the entire Sydney Olympics athlete contingent (628) was seven per cent, a number perhaps worthy of further investigation (AOC, 2000b). Alternatively, the number of successful appeals (9) as a percentage of the total athlete contingent (628) was just over one per cent, a number that barely justifies concern.

Fourth, there is the element of the increasing importance and monetary value to athletes’ finite careers, as well as the likelihood of success with an appeal, both of which affect athletes’ propensity to appeal. According to one sports lawyer, there is a ‘flow-on’ effect, that is, the number of appeals increases each time there is a Court decision in favour of an athlete (7.30 Report, 2000). To further complicate matters, athletes are in the “unenviable position” of having to earn their living by competing under the rules of a sport organisation that is effectively a monopoly, since it has exclusive responsibility for governing a particular sport within a particular country (Findlay & Corbett, 2002, p. 112).

Finally, while the IOC and AOC have worked hard toward improving both the rules for selection and the appeals mechanism, the ASC has also played a major role in working with Australian sport to improve its approach to selection. The ASC (2007) released its ‘Getting It Right’ document in 2002 (later updated) as a guide for all sports, to improve both their attitude to and formal documentation of selection policy. It has set deadlines for compliance and in some cases has made funding contingent upon the release of appropriate selection policy.
More recent fine-tuning of the system in Australia has seen the appointment of Appeals Consultants to advise athletes contemplating a challenge to their non-selection (AAP, 2004), and the provision of a panel of lawyers to communicate the rationale behind selection decisions more clearly to athletes (AOC, 2000d). Most changes are interventions or improvements that are designed to occur increasingly earlier in the selection system, as preventative measures.

The events outlined are presented in Figure 1.2 in the form of a timeline, to show how a great deal of change was concentrated in a relatively short period of time, along with its subsequent effects. The items shown below the timeline are the various measures that occurred in the lead up to, and just beyond, the Sydney 2000 Olympics. The trend toward selection disputes post-Sydney 2000, both in terms of absolute numbers and as a percentage of team size, is shown above the timeline. As can be seen, the events surrounding the Sydney 2000 selection catalyst had the desired effect (reduction in appeals) in Athens 2004, however the trend re-established itself thereafter.

Generally, the outcome of the Sydney 2000 selection system catalyst is a series of changes designed to ‘shore up’ weaknesses in the selection system, however as Morling (2001) said:

it is inevitable that some athletes disappointed by their failure to gain nomination for selection will exercise a right of appeal, even though their prospects for success may be slim. To say this is not to be critical of the athletes concerned. It is easy to understand why the effort they have made to achieve high standards of performance in their chosen sports will motivate them to take every legitimate step to gain selection. There will always be appeals, no matter how much … processes are improved. (p. 1)
Figure 1.2: Timeline for change in the Australian selection system

- 1988: CAS formed by the AOC
- 1998: CAS office appeared in Australia
- 1993: IOC is made independent of the AOC
- 1998: CAS/NSO Selection Agreement developed
- 1997: AOC holds "selection summit" for NSOs
- 1993: CAS holds "selection summit" for NSOs
- 1998: IOC/NOC Selection Agreement developed
- 2000: CAS issues Multi-State to NSOs
- 2000: IOC/NOC Selection Agreement developed
- 2000: IOC holds "selection summit" for NSOs
- 2001: AOC holds "selection summit" for NSOs
- 2002: IOC publishes "Getting It Right" selection guidelines
- 2003: AOC appeals "selection summit" for NSOs
- 2003: AOC publishes "Getting It Right" selection guidelines
- 2004: IOC holds "selection summit" for NSOs
- 2005: AOC appeals "selection summit" for NSOs
- 2006: IOC holds "selection summit" for NSOs
- 2007: AOC appeals "selection summit" for NSOs
- 2008: IOC holds "selection summit" for NSOs
- 2009: AOC appeals "selection summit" for NSOs
- 2010: IOC holds "selection summit" for NSOs
- 2011: AOC appeals "selection summit" for NSOs
- 2012: IOC holds "selection summit" for NSOs
- 2013: AOC appeals "selection summit" for NSOs
- 2014: IOC holds "selection summit" for NSOs
While Morling (2001) was clearly philosophical about selection appeals, other lawyers that became involved in the debate were less so. Sport and Australia’s legal system have one common trait – both are adversarial – and so, in the years immediately following 2000, lawyers generated a spate of published articles on the subject of selection appeals. This material purports to be advisory, but it evokes the concept of battle – attack and defence. Sport organisations, particularly those that were subject to appeals, appeared to be ‘under attack’, as if their own athletes had become the opponent by virtue of challenging a selection decision.

In response, early changes to selection processes seem defensive, almost as if the need to prevent further appeals had become more important than selecting the best team. Despite the fact that there was a vast amount of negative media together with plenty of sport industry angst, Morling (2001) concluded that “the few troublesome and costly appeals in 2000 should not be allowed to obscure the fact that … [the] processes worked reasonably well” (p. 45).

Recent changes indicate a more considered acceptance of the right to appeal, as well as an understanding that improved communication has the capacity to overcome many issues. Future changes might include a number of Morling’s (2001) recommendations, such as the direct involvement of athletes in the selection process. This particular aspect is already enshrined in the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) procedures, which state that committees involved in the development of selection procedures must have a 20 per cent component of athlete representation (USOC, 2008).
The USOC appeared to be quite advanced in this area, since it had made funding to sports strictly conditional upon approval of their selection procedures and, in addition, had appointed an Athlete Ombudsman (USOC, 2008). The USOC was to later claim that there were no selection disputes for the 2014 Winter Olympic Games at Sochi. The Committee went on to explain however that four disputes were dealt with by the American system prior to the event, so in saying ‘no disputes’, it appears they actually meant that no disputes proceeded to the CAS. It can be concluded however that selection disputes for 2014 were both low in number for such a sizeable team and were resolved outside of CAS, suggesting that the Ombudsman appointment was useful (Benz, Yuen & Nazer, 2014).

Change affects people in organisations, and in the midst of this period of change are the selectors, the majority of whom are volunteers. In the available literature, much is said about selection from the point of view of the athletes (7.30 Report, 2000; AAP, 2004; Cohen, 1992 Holmik, 2008; Jeffery, 2000, 2003; Jory, 2008; McMahon, 2004; Sedgman, 2004; Smith, 2004; Tugwell, 2000; Turner, 2000), as well as by legal practitioners and government authorities working on behalf of sport organisations in recent years (AOC, 2000a; ASC, 2007; Broughton, 2004; Collins, 1989; Collins, 1992/93; Doyle, 1999; Healey, 2002; Horvath & Lording, 2010; Jolson, 2004; Morling, 2001; Sturzaker & Godhard, 2001; Sullivan, 2002), but the selectors’ point of view has never been heard. What is known is that there has been a period of rapid change since the year 2000; what is not known is what selectors made of that change, nor whether selection is now managed in a more professional manner.
1.3 THE RESEARCH DECISION

The problem then can be described as an apparent upward trend in sport selection disputes, with cause or causes unknown. In an exploratory study, it was appropriate to consider cause, and to think about how the cause(s) might be determined by others. Why were selection disputes on the increase? What causes them? Where to look to determine cause(s)? Who to ask? There were a number of possible causes, just as there were several sources of information, but not all of those avenues could be investigated within the parameters of this research. The process of investigation, and the choices made – in terms of likely cause(s) and information sources – are shown as a pathway diagram, at Figure 1.3.

As can be seen, there were a number of possible causes worthy of investigation, just as there were other sources that could have been approached for information, however the choices made for this particular study were to consider the sport selection system, and to do this by examining selectors’ perceptions. The first choice – to examine selection systems – was made for a number of reasons, but mainly because it was an internal factor, and one that could be adjusted if found faulty. The other possible causes, such as more people setting out to be athletes and/or more money being made available to athletes, are external factors that were much more difficult to measure and to change. It should be noted that cause may be multifactorial, since the reasons offered were not mutually exclusive. The second choice – to canvass selectors for their perceptions – was also made for a number of reasons, but principally because speaking to those who actually do the job was considered to be the most direct route to information, and also because selectors were seen as an important but overlooked group of sport workers, whose opinions had never before been sought.
Having made those decisions, the research needed some form of structure or framework to guide it, since it was heading into unexplored territory. A systems view was adopted, since such an approach focuses attention on the whole, as well as the complex relationships among its parts (Ackoff, 2000; Laszlo & Krippner, 1998). This idea then took the form of a model, (see Figure 1.8), that served several purposes. It helped to show what a sport selection system might look like and how it might function, and also served as a useful starting point with which to begin structured investigation.
1.4 SPORT SELECTION AS A SYSTEM

Selectors do not work in isolation, but were thought to be part of a system that evolved for the purpose of delivering selection decisions for sport. A system is defined variously as a set of two or more inter-related elements of any kind (Ackoff, 1974); a set of elements connected together which form a whole (Checkland, 1993); and as a set of objects, together with relationships between the objects and between their attributes, related to each other and to their environment so as to form a whole (Schoderbek, Schoderbek, & Kefalas, 1985).

Systems are made up of a number of related components that can be categorised as inputs, processes and outputs, as shown in Figure 1.4 (Checkland, 1993; Haines, 2000; Kast & Rosenzweig, 1972; Schoderbek et al., 1985). A system is more than the sum of its parts, since membership in the system alters the capacities of each element, and “relationships and processes (between parts) are key” (Ackoff, 1974; Haines, 2000, p. 31).

Figure 1.4: Diagram of a system
Systems thinking is a way of looking at things. It involves the use of a particular set of ideas to understand complexity, and can be a “valid framework for viewing the empirical world” (Checkland, 1993; Schoderbek et al., 1985, p. 34). Checkland (1993) goes on to say that

science provides us with the phrase ‘a scientific approach’, just as systems provides ‘a systems approach’. Both are meta-disciplines and both embody a particular way of regarding the world … a systems approach is recognizable in the work of many disciplines, including biology, geography, economics, anthropology, social psychology, political science … and management science … (p. 6).

Analytical thinking was a precursor to systems thinking. It entails the doctrine of reductionism, which involves pulling systems apart to analyse each component. Over time, researchers became dissatisfied with the analytical approach, because it became evident that the whole takes on distinctive properties that would be lacking if a part were removed. Systems thinking evolved as a result. It does not replace analytical thinking, it supplements it, having developed from it. It is instead based on the doctrine of expansionism, which says that all components are part of a larger whole, and which dictates that the focus of enquiry should be on the whole (Ackoff, 1974; Schoderbek et al., 1985). A problem then is not necessarily solved by taking it apart, but by seeing it as part of a larger problem.

System performance depends on how well the parts fit and work together, not merely how well each performs when considered independently, and on how it relates to its environment, the larger system of which it is a part, as well as to other systems within that environment. Intangible factors (also known as ‘soft indicators’) exist within systems, such as motivation, commitment, and morale; these were seen both as system components and as indicators of organisational health (Maani & Cavana,
Every social system contains three levels of purpose (Ackoff, 1974). These are the purpose of the system (in this case, the selection of athletes), the purpose of its parts (policy, process, decisions), and the purpose of the system of which it is a part, that is, the supra-system (the sport organisation). Given what is known about systems thinking, it was deemed useful to attempt to ‘map’ the selection system in some way, as an initial guide for the research.

The proposed selection system and what were believed to be its component parts (as indicated by the initial literature review) are depicted in a series of diagrams showing how the final model evolved (see Figures 1.5 to 1.8). What is not known or understood with any certainty is the direction or strength of the relationships between the system’s elements, whether the individual parts are discrete or overlap, and where selectors ‘fit’ within the system. As a result, the final phase of the initial model at Figure 1.8 is a mix of fact (components), and conjecture (relationships), and is best described as a tentative model, which has limited value until more is learned.

**Selection system inputs.** An examination of government, legal and sport industry publications (set out in more detail in Chapter 2) suggested that the selection system has a series of sequential inputs. The sport organisation should first frame their philosophy, that is, their over-riding aim, mission, or *raison d’être* – what they wish to achieve. This would be expressed in the form of an objective, such as to increase the numbers of people who participate in their sport, or to contribute to the nation’s health, or to win gold medals on the world stage such as at the Olympic Games, for example, or any mix of these, as they are not mutually exclusive. In the case of élite sport, the aim is usually that of selecting the ‘best athlete’ or the ‘best team’, in order to win championships or medals.
By virtue of setting a clear objective, the organisation’s stated philosophy, in turn, drives the formulation of its selection policy. If, for example, the organisation seeks to increase its participation numbers, its policy might be designed to ensure that all States are represented at national competitions irrespective of skill level, and that all clubs are represented at State competitions, in order to cast the widest net for potential participants. Equally, it might take the commonly-held view that it will seek to increase its participation numbers by using élite level success as a marketing tool. Policy is therefore driven by philosophy.

Finally, the organisation’s selection processes will be directed by its stated policy. Processes include operational detail, such as the type of selection events, the timing of those events, the venues used for selection events, eligibility rules, qualification rules, timing and method of announcements, selection methods, criteria to be applied, procedures for the appointment of selectors and for the conduct of meetings. This ‘pre-decision’ sequence of inputs is shown in the following Figure 1.5.

**Figure 1.5: Proposed model of the existing sport selection system – Input stage**
As with most system inputs, the stages set out in Figure 1.5 are ‘pre-decision’ and thus invisible to most people, since only the outputs are on view for all to see.

**Selection system outputs.** An examination of legal publications and mainstream media articles (set out in more detail in Chapter 2) suggested that the selection system also has a series of sequential outputs. Initially, a selection decision is made, which will result in either agreement or disagreement. Disagreement should be resolved by way of diversion to an appeals mechanism. Ultimately, ‘agreement’ is reached (although it is perhaps more accurate to say that there is no further disagreement), and a further or final selection decision is made, which may or may not be the same as the initial one. This sequence of outputs is shown in the following Figure 1.6.

**Figure 1.6: Proposed model of the existing sport selection system – Output stage**

The output stages as shown in Figure 1.6 are the highly visible part of the selection system. As a result of their visibility, selection decision outputs are topics for heated debate at all levels of sport, and decisions made at the élite level are often reported in the media.
The selection system in its entirety. While both selection system inputs and outputs could be determined, to some extent at least, from the available literature, nothing was known about what occurs between the two stages. Standard-form systems design dictates that there be some form of throughput, an element or process that acts to transform inputs into outputs. It was speculated, for the purposes of this model, that selectors were the most influential part of a cohort fulfilling that transformational role, thus completing the basic ‘input-throughput-output’ foundations of the selection system.

After the selection decision output, the sport outcome is the next logical stage or milestone in the system, however it should be noted that there is not necessarily a causal relationship, that is, the selection decision might influence the sport outcome, but it does not cause or fully determine it. Other factors, such as competition, venue, available talent, and tradition also influence outcome, but these elements are not subjects of interest in this study.

Following the sport outcome, the systems approach suggests that there should be a review process – as Haines (2000) stated, “feedback is a ‘crucial’ concept … [and] consists of modifying the behaviour of a system by reinserting the results of actual past performance” (p. 50). This review or feedback, in turn, feeds back into the system as an input, by either altering or validating the organisation’s existing selection philosophy, along with policy and process. The system elements conjectured – that is, throughputs and review – are shown in Figure 1.7 in ‘dashed’ format, since they are guesswork only at this stage of the study.
The system model advanced in Figure 1.7 is explained in terms of the following known (solid line) and inferred (dashed line) events and relationships:

- The sport organisation determines its philosophy (known);
- The sport organisation then devises written policy to achieve their stated philosophy (known);
- The sport organisation then devises the processes by which the policy can be achieved (known);
- Selectors ‘transform’ those system inputs – philosophy, policy and process – with available resources – personnel, funds, time, knowledge, experience – into outputs, in the form of a selection decision (inferred);
- The selection decision is accepted, allowing the sport event and its outcome to follow (known); or
- The selection decision is not accepted, so that there is an appeal and a later decision(s) which is ultimately accepted, allowing the sport event and its outcome to follow (known);
• The selection decision affects the sport outcome, as do many other factors that are not considered within this study, such as competition (known);

• There is a review carried out after the sport outcome is known, and the information arising from that review is used as an input to the system for the future (inferred). In addition;

• Agreement (or disagreement) with the selection decision(s), and the sport outcome are both likely to affect selectors’ level of engagement with their job, and correspondingly, their job performance (inferred).

The diagram speculates that the level of agreement or disagreement with the decision will affect selectors’ – particularly volunteer selectors’ – job engagement, and thus their motivation and commitment, as will the sport outcome. Volunteers are not financially rewarded, and so are motivated differently from paid employees. Instead, they seek “fulfillment of a psychological contract”, based on implied expectations (Ralston, Downward, & Lumsdon, 2004, p. 24). Nichols (2005) noted the importance of motivation and satisfaction for sport volunteers, suggesting that both might be challenged by the “increasing complexity of volunteers’ roles and tasks” (p. 33).

The model might imply the simplistic view that sport organisations applying professional practices to their inputs would be guaranteed a professional level of output, but this is not necessarily true. Selectors were seen as a crucial part of a transformation process that determines, at least in part, how this happens. Selectors were technically part of the input to the decision since they are one of the process elements (in terms of how they are appointed), however they were shown in this model as being ‘outside the square(s)’, both to highlight their role in translating or implementing procedure (transforming inputs into outputs), as well as to single them out as the visible (and perhaps most vulnerable) human component of the system. In addition, moderating variables are believed to affect the strength and/or the direction
of the proposed relationships, and two of these were added to the model. These are shown (oval-shaped) in Figure 1.8.

**Figure 1.8: Proposed model of the existing sport selection system, with moderating variables**

First, the way that the selection decision is communicated to athletes is known to affect the extent to which they agree or disagree with the decision and, in turn, whether or not they take any action. Second, the involvement of media has a significant effect beyond the recording of events. It was thought that the media might have an effect on the system at particular times, generally when there is likelihood of conflict, and thus a good story. This was likely to be where there was disagreement with the selection decision, and/or once the sport outcome became known.
The media has been known to create, alter or moderate perceptions. In this situation, it may serve to moderate perceptions of the value and extent of disagreement, and/or of the value of the sport outcome. In summary, the model at Figure 1.8 brings together both what is known and what is suspected about the sport selection system, to provide guidance and perspective for this study.

1.5 PURPOSE

The aim of this study was to expand the knowledge base of sport management by examining the sport selection process as it stands now, after a period of rapid and almost constant change. According to the literature, a problem was identified, and although its cause or causes are at times blurry, substantial change has nevertheless been implemented. At the time of writing, fourteen years and three Olympiads have passed since the selection issues of the Sydney 2000 Games. There was no evidence in the academic literature of any formal review, or of the outcome of change. It was possible that all issues have been resolved, just as it was also possible that selection system weaknesses remained.

First, selectors were likely to be the least resourced component of the selection system and, if so, this may be false economy, since it could be said that what was saved on salaries to selectors is spent later, on payments to legal advisers. Second, all forms of literature were silent with respect to any systematic review of the selection process. In some cases, selector appointments were reviewed, but with reference to sport outcomes, and given that there is no direct causal relationship between the two, this might be misdirected effort.
To try to determine what issues or weaknesses might remain in the selection system, the question asked of selectors, in this exploratory study, was - **what are selectors’ perceptions of the existing selection system?** The research was qualitative, being the method best suited to describing and interpreting a phenomenon, which in this case was the impact of change on a particular task within a developing industry. The research paradigm most appropriate for this study was interpretive, being concerned with what was meaningful to the participants interviewed, together with how things were done, in the sport management context previously outlined.

There was a need for this study for a number of reasons. It was needed to start building a body of knowledge about selectors and selection systems, and to provide both a basis and a direction for further studies. Hearing what selectors had to say about what they do added much needed balance, by providing a viewpoint other than that of athletes, lawyers and the media.

**1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

There were a number of sub-questions, perhaps better described as lines of enquiry, which set out to determine how selectors perceive the system within which they work. First, since the study was exploratory, some basic demographic information was obtained. Second, participants’ beliefs and perceptions were sought with regard to work conditions, motivations and satisfaction, to find out what it was like to be a selector. Finally, selectors were probed further to find out what the system was like, how it works, what they thought of the system, whether they felt that any weaknesses or issues exist, and what impact any such issues might have.
RQ1. Demographics – What is similar or different about this group? To obtain some background about the people whose perceptions were sought, it was first necessary to gather demographic information, to understand the nature of the participant group and see whether patterns, similarities or differences existed. Specific questions were designed to determine profile details such as age, gender, family shape and size, location, education level, household income level, and primary job.

RQ2. Beliefs and perceptions – What’s it like to be a selector? The second goal was to consider what it’s like to be a selector, to look at what concerns selectors might have, and in particular, to explore their perceptions of the role. Specific questions, designed to consider how and under what conditions selectors carry out their job, included: what are expected and actual time commitments, has this commitment changed, on what basis is the participant appointed, whether paid by any method, whether payment is perceived as appropriate, whether their position is reviewed, how long have they been a selector, why do they act as a selector, whether they enjoy the role, how they perceive the expectations placed on them, whether or not they would continue in the role, to what extent has it been of value to them personally, how important do they believe they are to their sport, whether they perceive the job to be a stressful one, to what extent they feel supported in their role, whether or not they had been involved in any major conflict and if so, whether it affected them personally.

RQ3. Professionalism of approach – What is the selection system like? The third line of enquiry sought to determine what selectors thought about the selection system, in order to gauge the extent of professionalism, whether any weaknesses or
issues exist, and what the impact of any such issues might be. Questions included: how was the person qualified to be a selector, how was the participant chosen to be a selector, whether they regarded being a selector as a job, how they approach and carry out the task, what was the extent of use of subjective and objective selection criteria, what they felt about the notion of bias, whether selectors exacted retribution on athletes (as has been alleged), how they felt about the policy they work with, whether they believed the process could be improved, what they believed the criteria for success as a selector were, to what extent participants were involved in the design of the selection policy, whether they felt equipped for the task, and whether they felt the need for any training.

1.7 THESIS STRUCTURE

The research undertaken for this thesis is presented in seven chapters. The first of these is this introduction, which outlines the background to the study, the context in which it sits, its rationale, purpose and significance. It proposes an approach, along with a model or theoretical framework, and confines the scope of the research. Chapter 2 reviews the available literature, outlining information of relevance to the subject. This is presented as a series of concepts that were reflected in the views of the participants later interviewed. It is comprised of three main types of literature – first, human resources management literature from the broader management and organisational behaviour fields; second, more specialised academic literature detailing a few studies considered relevant to an examination of the sport selection process; and third, a collection of articles from the sport industry, associated legal advice and mainstream media.
Chapter 3 sets out the method adopted for this study. It considers ontology, epistemology, and research paradigms in arriving at the preferred method, which for this research is grounded theory. A comprehensive analysis of the grounded theory method is presented, together with reasons for its selection. There was no existing theory about the sport selection process, and so the aims of this study were to explore the unknown, to generate theory and to guide future research. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present the findings obtained from the data in summary form, along with detailed discussion of same, in line with the research sub-questions. Chapter 7 offers a summary and some conclusions. Concepts identified were considered in terms of how they might relate to each other, in such a way as to generate theory. The implications of the knowledge gained were considered, the limitations of the study are revisited, and recommendations made as to directions for future research.

1.8 SUMMARY

Chapter 1 presented an introduction to the research. Background for the study included a description of change that has occurred within the sport industry, as it pertains to selection. Further, it was explained that the industry is not yet fully professionalised, but is in transition, which supplied context for the problem. The chapter explained that the specific area of interest that is the subject of this study is the system used to select athletes in sport. A model was provided to demonstrate the researcher’s initial understanding of the system, as was a timeline detailing introduced change, both of which provided additional context for the problem. Finally, the chapter explained that the effect of such change on the selection system was to be investigated in terms of the perceptions of those who work within it, that is, the selectors. The concepts shown in the model of the system were derived from the literature review, which will be outlined in more detail in Chapter 2.
Chapter 1 outlined transitional change within the sport industry, and identified the problem of professionalism within the sport selection system, particularly after a period of substantial change. The aim of this literature review was to determine what is known about selectors and the selection process. Generally speaking, little was known about selectors in sport. There was substantial sport-based anecdotal material, but virtually no scholarly research. The selection of athletes in the sport setting is not dissimilar to the selection of personnel in the broader management environment, and so a review of human resources management (HRM) literature was first carried out as a basis for this exploratory study. Certain elements of HRM were initially considered to be of relevance to the research problem. These were:

- The selection process and its associated principles of organisational justice;
- The employment relationship and the psychological contract;
- Job engagement, satisfaction, commitment, motivation and conflict in the workplace in particular, how those factors affect sport workers and volunteers, contributing to both individual and organisational performance; and
- Change management within organisations, in light of the amount and rate of change previously outlined with respect to this industry.

The examination of some aspects of HRM theory is followed by an outline of what is known about volunteers, particularly in the sport setting, since the majority of participants interviewed were volunteers. Next, a summary of the relevant research on the subject of sport selection is provided. Finally, a review of sport, legal and mainstream media publications is presented in such a way as to provide a preliminary profile and form a basis for the interview schedule. While not scholarly, this material is useful, since it reveals a little about the environment in which selectors work, and a great deal about the way they were seen in the public domain.
2.1 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT LITERATURE

Human resources management (HRM) is a set of inter-related policies for the management of an organisation’s people. Its purpose is to ensure the organisation achieves success through people, based on the premise that people are assets (Armstrong, 2006; Chelladurai, 2006). Human resources management is a strategic element. The goal for any version of HRM is to make a measurable contribution to peak organisational effectiveness. HR policies should be integrated and congruent with an organisation’s strategy, so that the organisation’s people are committed to achieving its leaders’ visions (Armstrong, 2006).

Armstrong (2006) stated that there is a distinction between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ versions of HRM. The ‘hard’ version has a focus on people as commodities or resources, to be acquired, developed and deployed to benefit the organisation, whereas the ‘soft’ version treats people as valuable assets who are a source of competitive advantage, and emphasises communication, motivation and leadership. Where people are involved, the morality of HRM has been questioned because it can be manipulative, a form of “insidious control by compliance” (Armstrong, 2006, p. 16).

This notion is considered to be of particular relevance to the sport industry. There exists a wider parallel, in that sport organisations have been subjected to what might be construed as ‘insidious control’ by other means, particularly by way of government intervention, funding and control. This view is discussed in more detail in the following section on change management.
If organisations exist to achieve ends, and if such ends can only be achieved through people, then it is natural to be concerned about the commitment and performance of people (Armstrong, 2006). The causal link between HRM and organisational performance has not been proven beyond doubt, however it is generally believed that there is a relationship between HRM practices and organisational success (Chelladurai & Madella, 2006).

Individual differences in performance contribute significantly to organisational performance, so staff selection came to be regarded as a major contributor to the effective functioning of an organisation. Early research into personnel selection focused solely on establishing the most valid predictors of future job performance (Iles & Robertson, 1995). The focus of research changed over time, as it became evident that there were two parties involved in the process – it was no longer enough to find selection methods that worked well for organisations, it was also deemed important to use methods about which candidates felt positive.

Iles and Robertson (1995) stated that “applicants do not respond passively to selection procedures, but they actively interpret their experiences (and so) … care needs to be taken about the effect that selection technology has on individual candidates” (p. 100). Applicants preferred some assessment and selection procedures to others, and they wanted to be treated sensitively and sympathetically. Understanding the way selection procedures impacted on candidates became “a question of growing practical and scientific interest” (Iles & Robertson, 1995, p. 86), and is equally relevant in terms of the impact of selection procedures on athletes in the sport setting.
2.1.1 Job engagement and job satisfaction

There is evidence that the use of HRM practices affects levels of satisfaction, motivation and commitment, which in turn affect engagement, individual performance, and organisational performance. Positive employee behaviours that influence organisational success are most likely to occur when individuals are motivated, committed, and satisfied (Armstrong, 2006).

Job satisfaction refers to the attitudes and feelings people have about their work, and appears to be based on expectations – that is, if expectations are met, employees will be satisfied. Job satisfaction is an individual variable; morale is a similar construct, but is a group variable. The degree of job satisfaction obtained by individuals depends on their own needs and expectations, and the work environment. It is affected by motivating factors, such as the quality of supervision, the existence of social relationships at work, and the degree of success individuals have in their work.

In human resources literature, job satisfaction has always been regarded as an antecedent of job performance, and as the most important piece of information about a worker, based on the enduring assumption that a happy worker is a productive worker. This long-held view may have been misguided, since the correlation between job satisfaction and job performance is not a strong one (Dalal, Baysinger, Brummel, & LeBreton, 2012; Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001). Job satisfaction may not necessarily produce high performance, but high performance may produce job satisfaction (Armstrong, 2006; Chelladurai, 2006).
Job engagement and job satisfaction are similar constructs. Both are affective states, but the former suggests with a much deeper level of involvement. Kahn (1990) posited that people use varying degrees of their selves in a role, and that “the more people draw on their selves to perform their roles … the more stirring are their performances” (p. 693). Job engagement is understood to be an active state, one that indicates a higher state of arousal in which all energies are involved, whereas job satisfaction is a more passive state, in which employees are merely satisfied, and content to uphold the status quo (Dalal et al., 2012; Inceoglu & Fleck, 2010; Kahn, 1990; Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2010; Robertson, Birch, & Cooper, 2012; Warr & Inceoglu, 2012).

Job engagement has been variously described as the investment of an individual’s complete self into a role, the harnessing of an employee’s full self in terms of physical, cognitive and emotional energies to work role performances, entailing vigour, dedication, absorption in and enthusiasm for work tasks and roles, and the use of discretionary effort (Dalal et al., 2012; Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010). Rich, Lepine and Crawford (2010) stated that engaged workers display the three elements originally outlined by Kahn (1990) – that is, they focus physical effort, are cognitively vigilant and are emotionally connected. Given that body, head and heart are involved, it is “not only about how people think, but also how they feel” (Little & Little, 2006). How selectors feel in the sport workplace is relevant to this research, since it is considered likely to affect the selection system as a whole.

The determinants of job engagement are similar to those for job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is determined by a mix of extrinsic job rewards, intrinsic job factors such as skill variety, task significance, task identity, feedback and autonomy, as well as
the employee’s own disposition (Armstrong, 2006). The Institute of Employment Studies (IES) in the U.K collected job engagement data, and published a set of engagement drivers, noting that job satisfaction had proven to be the major driver of job engagement, followed closely by feelings of value and involvement (Robinson, Perryman, & Hayday, 2004; Robinson, Hooker, & Hayday, 2007). This is shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Drivers of engagement

![Diagram showing drivers of engagement with arrows pointing to engagement: job satisfaction, feeling valued and involved, equality of opportunity, health and safety, length of service, ethnicity, communication, cooperation]

Source: IES Engagement Survey (Robinson, Hooker, & Hayday, 2007).

Job engagement is a relatively ‘new kid on the (HRM) block’ and as such, the concept is still evolving. For example, job satisfaction was believed by most to be a precursor to job engagement (Abraham, 2012) yet conversely, job engagement was also reported as a predictor of job satisfaction (Alarcon & Edwards, 2011). Dalal, Baysinger, Brummel and LeBreton (2012) concluded that job satisfaction and
employee engagement, more so than other attitudes, were important in determining employee contributions to the organisation.

Rich, Lepine and Crawford (2010) noted that established predictors of job performance such as involvement, satisfaction and motivation did not exceed engagement in terms of explaining performance. They concluded that employees who “exhibited higher levels of engagement were found to contribute to their organisations with higher levels of individual task performance and organisational citizenship behaviour” (Rich et al., 2010, p. 631). Little and Little (2006) cautioned that it might be a passing fad, but conceded that employee engagement had been shown to have a statistical relationship with productivity, profitability, retention, safety and customer satisfaction, and that such relationships did not exist for job satisfaction.

2.1.2 Motivation

Motivation is defined as “the inclination to work” (Chelladurai, 2006, p. 100). Individuals differ not only in terms of the strength of their motivation, but also on what factors motivate them. There are many established theories in the HRM literature offered to explain what motivates people. Armstrong (2006) summarised the most important motivation theories, and Table 2.1 is based upon his work. Interestingly, Chelladurai (2006) refers to these as satisfaction theories, rather than motivation theories. Presumably, this is because once the needs that motivate people are satisfied, then people are satisfied. The reverse does not apply, since what satisfies people may not motivate them. The distinctions between these concepts are not always clear.
### Table 2.1: HRM motivation theories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Theorist</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instrumentality</td>
<td>Taylor</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>People will be motivated to work if rewards and punishments are linked to performance; the concept of incentive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs</td>
<td>Maslow</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Hierarchy of needs – physiological, safety, security, esteem, self-fulfillment. Higher level needs emerge when lower level needs are satisfied. An unsatisfied need motivates behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Factor</td>
<td>Herzberg</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Identification of two types of satisfiers – intrinsic (such as achievement, recognition) and extrinsic (such as pay, conditions).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process/ Cognitive</td>
<td>Vroom, Porter &amp; Lawler</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Cognitive links established – link between effort and performance, link between performance and outcome, likelihood that reward follows effort, acknowledgement that reward must be both achievable and of value.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adams</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Equity is important to motivation, that is, how people perceive their treatment compared with others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Latham &amp; Locke</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Motivation and performance improves if people have agreed goals and receive feedback.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It is generally agreed that the following are important to motivation:

- Recognition – people are more likely to be motivated in an environment in which they are valued for what they do;
- Autonomy – the need for work that allows scope for the use of skills, and the means to achieve goals;
- Equity – the perception that fairness exists in the organisation;
- Growth – the need for opportunity for personal development;
- Reward – recognising effort with whatever rewards meet needs;
• Culture – those values and norms that exist within an organisation, or ‘how we do things around here’; and

• Leadership – the process of leading and influencing people to achieve goals; especially important when change is necessary.

Overall, motivation is multi-factorial, so that taking a simplistic approach is unlikely to be successful (Armstrong, 2006; Chelladurai, 2006). Managers can manipulate factors under their control to enhance individual motivation and thus, influence the overall level of effort (Chelladurai, 2006). The concept of autonomy is considered to be especially relevant to this study, since there has been significant change in volunteer selectors’ level of autonomy over time, as part of the transition to professionalism in sport.

Some factors do not motivate people, but can act as de-motivators. Role ambiguity has been associated with lower levels of job satisfaction, commitment and effort, and exists when people in organisations are not clear about their responsibilities. Sakires, Doherty, and Misener (2009) examined role ambiguity for both paid and volunteer sport administrators in provincial sport in Canada. They observed that voluntary organisations were “characterized by imprecise objectives”, and noted also that volunteers “often wear several hats” (p. 616). It was anticipated that uncertainty within the organisation may have intensified with the addition of paid staff, however it was found that participants had low levels of perceived role ambiguity, and that perceptions did not differ between volunteers and professionals.
A number of explanations were offered for this finding. First, perceived role ambiguity may have been low because the participants had narrow roles. Second, it may have indicated increasing levels of consensus between paid and volunteer staff, as suggested by Shilbury (2001). Third, those who couldn’t cope with role ambiguity may have already left the organisation, thus skewing the findings. Role ambiguity was associated with age and tenure, so it was recommended that sport managers take care to ensure that younger, less experienced or newly appointed workers are provided with role clarity (Sakires et al., 2009).

2.1.3 Motivation for volunteers

Much of the HRM motivation material outlined is based on the assumption that workers are paid for their efforts, so the management and motivation of volunteers presents a different challenge. As Chelladurai and Madella (2006) observed, managers lack one critical tool with which to manage volunteers – monetary inducements. As a result, they have to “resort to other means”, and the fact that volunteers and professionals are sensitive to different kinds of incentive and motivation “adds complexity” (Chelladurai & Madella, 2006, p. 25). Volunteers are in a position to choose the services they will perform and the times that they are available – they can tailor what they offer to organisations in such a way as to suit their own purposes (Chelladurai, 2006).

It is therefore necessary to identify the motivations that impel persons to volunteer, to offer the best incentive that corresponds to their motivation, including where possible, facilitation of their personal and professional development (Chelladurai & Madella, 2006). It was generally agreed that volunteers are motivated in three main ways:
• Purposive or altruistic – doing something useful to help society;
• Solidarity – wanting to make friends, be part of a group, or network;
• Material – wanting to acquire merchandise, get close to élite sportspeople, or pursue personal development (Khoo & Engelhorn, 2011; Ralston et al., 2004; Shilbury & Kellett, 2011).

While most studies about volunteer motivation examined volunteer groups that existed within particular organisations, Shye (2010) surveyed 1500 people from the general population of Israel. He remarked on the duality of the two main motivating forces – altruistic (for others) and egoistic (for self) – and found that the opportunity to develop friendships and belong to a community were the most important motivations in the sample surveyed. In concluding, Shye (2010) made some valid points about existing volunteer motivation research – that respondents tend to report motivations that make them look better (that is, altruistic motivation is preferable to egoistic motivation), and also that respondents are not always fully aware of their own motivations.

Khoo and Engelhorn (2011) surveyed 289 volunteers from a USA National Special Olympics event, and identified five factors that explained 57.4% of the variance in motivation among participants:

• Solidarity – broaden horizons, gain experience – 14%;
• Purposive – make the event a success, put something back – 17.1%;
• Commitments – skills were needed, expected to volunteer, past experience – 11%;
• External Traditions – vary regular activities, chance of a lifetime – 8.6%; and
• Family Traditions – friends/family also volunteered, or competed – 6.7%
Those reasons, while informative, fall into two main types of motivation – altruistic (benefit of others) and egoistic (benefit of self), in line with Shye’s comments (2010).

Organisations should remain flexible so as to accommodate volunteer availability, provide an appropriate style of supervision and support, and give consideration to the personnel mix, both in terms of other volunteers as well as professionals, since a high degree of conflict de-motivates people (Chelladurai & Madella, 2006). The following specific practices were recommended for the management of sport volunteers:

- Supervise, communicate and share information;
- Screen and match volunteers to jobs;
- Collect information and measure the impact of volunteers, at least annually;
- Put written policies, job descriptions and insurance coverage in place;
- Conduct regular recognition activities; and
- Provide training and development, including for professional staff who work with volunteers (Chelladurai & Madella, 2006).

Given that sport volunteers usually carry out their roles on a part-time basis, recommendations for sharing information and providing training are often problematic, and written job descriptions are scarce. While professionals are required to adapt to the organisation, for volunteers the opposite may apply, meaning that the organisation might necessarily adapt itself to the volunteer (Chelladurai & Madella, 2006). The inability to use monetary incentives to motivate volunteers has a number of consequences, since a reward system is not just a way to meet needs, it is also a reflection of the organisation’s culture and values (Chelladurai & Madella, 2006). Taylor, Darcy, Hoye and Cuskelly (2006) put it simply: “(sport) volunteers were primarily concerned with doing rewarding work … in a pleasant environment … that was able to fit (with) often tight time restrictions” (p. 123.)
In determining whether or not a person is a volunteer, Cnaan, Handy and Wadsworth (1996) argued that financial reward should not be the sole criterion. They felt that the term ‘volunteer’ was broad and used too often as “a catch-all for a wide range of non-salaried activities” (p. 365). In an effort to better define volunteerism, they placed volunteers on a continuum according to perceptions, from broad (almost everyone who works without full financial compensation) through to pure (only those who give extensively of their time and effort without recompense). They felt that definitions were often a social construct, and suggested that perceptions might be better formed by considering the ‘net cost’ to the volunteer of their effort, as opposed to the net benefit to the organisation. To assist understanding of this concept, an example was offered of a doctor who donates his time to help at a soup kitchen, as distinct from a doctor who pays someone else to help at the same soup kitchen, making the point that the ‘net cost’ to the doctor is vastly different for each of those two options, while the ‘net benefit’ to the organisation is the same (Cnaan et al., 1996).

Not only is reward different for volunteers, but also the concept of efficiency should be seen in a different light, since sport organisations are not usually driven by the profit motive. Voluntary organisations have an ability to achieve outstanding levels of trust, tending to manage with more trust than control. They are accustomed to looking for commitment from people when they do not have much in the way of monetary incentive to offer, and so are considered better at this than are profit-motivated businesses (Chelladurai & Madella, 2006).
2.1.4 Commitment

Commitment is a wider concept, defined by Chelladurai (2006) as a state of being “obligated or compelled to exert effort” (p. 284). It is not the same as motivation, since it is possible to be dissatisfied with a job while remaining committed to the organisation. A high level of commitment results in conscientiousness, loyalty and a similarly high level of effort. According to Meyer and Allen (1997), the commitment construct has three components – affective commitment (the desire to stay), continuance commitment (the need to stay) and normative commitment (an obligation to stay). Affective commitment is regarded as the only true form of commitment, as it reflects an emotional attachment and is intrinsically based (Meldrum & McCarville, 2010).

Commitment is considered important in terms of its ability to positively influence both the retention of employees as well as their performance. Commitment has been investigated in sport management literature, mainly in terms of the retention of volunteers. Various predictors of duration have been offered, such as affective commitment (Chacon, Vecina, & Davila, 2007), solidarity and satisfaction (Schlesinger, Egli, & Nagel, 2013), upholding psychological contracts (Taylor et al., 2006), adopting HRM-based management practices (Cuskelly, Taylor, Hoye, & Darcy, 2006), and the importance of intrinsic job factors in enhancing satisfaction (Dixon & Warner, 2010). It was also found to be a significant predictor of task performance for sport volunteers (Cuskelly & Boag, 2001).

Commitment from paid employees has been investigated in the broader organisational context, partly in the interests of employee retention but mainly for the purpose of optimising job performance to gain competitive advantage. It has not been
studied directly with regard to professional sport employees. This is presumably due to the unique nature of sport and its reliance on volunteers, such that professional employees in Australian sport are generally considered fortunate to have a paid position in sport, and as such their commitment is assumed. Associations have been found to exist between commitment and involved or transformational leadership styles (Doherty & Danylchuk, 1996; Kim, Magnusen, Andrew, & Stoll, 2012).

Doherty and Danylchuk (1996) found that coaches in the American college sport system were more satisfied with, and more committed to strong leadership (described as ‘involved’ leadership), and were de-motivated by ‘uninvolved’ leaders. In a study of the leisure industry in Canada, Meldrum and McCarville (2010) found that the following factors were important to commitment:

- Perceptions of fair treatment;
- Activity– carrying out challenging tasks in a supportive and trusting environment;
- Physical place; and
- Relationship with supervisor, and especially the management of critical incidents.

A major limitation of this study was that employees interviewed were students working in the industry. As such, their impressions of leadership might have been skewed by age, but were not necessarily any less valid – strong leadership tends to be valued, irrespective of age and career trajectory. Similarly, supervisory support was found to influence commitment, along with job challenge and role stress in the context of young, inexperienced interns (Dixon, Cunningham, Sagas, Turner, & Kent, 2005).
Sport volunteers have been placed in various positions on a range of continua – ‘pure or broadly defined’ (Cnaan et al., 1996); ‘casual or serious’ (Elkington & Stebbins, 2014); ‘marginal or career’ (Cuskelly & Harrington, 1997; Cuskelly, Harrington, & Stebbins, 2002); ‘peripheral or core’ (Ringuet-Riot, Cuskelly, Auld, & Zakus, 2014); and ‘dabbler or devotee’ (Stebbins, 2014). Others have suggested stages in between, such as nominee, newcomer, emotional involvement, established volunteering, and retirement (Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008). While the former casual/marginal/peripheral/dabbler volunteers play an essential role in sport, the latter serious/career/core/devotee volunteer is the most valued, since their commitment is for the longer term.

Longer term or ‘serious’ leisure volunteers are characterised by a number of dimensions (Stebbins, 1996; Elkington & Stebbins, 2014). They are driven to persevere and to find or make a career from their efforts, they expend significant energy with acquired skills and knowledge, they seek durable benefits, are seen as part of a unique ethos and/or a special social world, and identify strongly with their particular pursuit. Of these, perseverance is of key importance, since positive feelings are believed to result from conquering adversity (Stebbins, 2014). Brickman (1987) concurred with the importance of overcoming difficulty, since “commitment is what makes a person assume or continue a course of action when difficulties or positive alternatives would lead them to give it up” (p. 2).

Research on commitment for both paid employees and volunteers has, to date, assumed that turnover intention is located at the opposite end of a commitment spectrum, in which the committed volunteer is more likely to stay, and the not-so-committed volunteer is more likely to leave (Chelladurai & Madella, 2006; Cuskelly
& Boag, 2001; Doherty, 1998; Meldrum & McCarville, 2010; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Schlesinger et al., 2013). Warner, Newland and Green (2011) surveyed 316 sport and non-sport volunteers, and considered both satisfaction and motivation in terms of volunteer management. They stated that studies using scales to measure satisfaction among volunteers were of little value because it is “quite rare to find dissatisfied volunteers” (p. 394) and so they report uniformly high levels of satisfaction (p. 394). With regard to motivation, they concluded that “motives did not predict volunteers’ commitment to the organization or belief in its values” (Warner et al., 2011, p. 403)

Doherty (1998) reviewed organisation behaviour (OB) in the sport context, observing that affective outcomes of the work environment included motivation, satisfaction and commitment, as well as conflict, stress and burnout, and for groups, cohesion and conflict. Other work environment factors worthy of consideration were member empowerment, organisational change and co-operation (Doherty, 1998). Ralston, Downward and Lumsdon (2004) later observed that the most deeply involved and committed volunteers were the ones “most likely to burn out” (p. 16). Doherty (1998) further observed that most studies of OB in the sport work environment were based on questionnaires, which do not promote the collection of ‘rich’ data, and that they tend to assume that motivation is the same in the sport context as for other organisations, whereas sport has unique elements that differentiate it from other industries.

2.1.5 Organisational justice

Applicants respond best to selection procedures that are fair, and fairness in selection procedures forms part of a larger body of work in the field of organisational justice. Organisational justice is comprised of two dimensions, being *procedural* and
distributive justice. Procedural justice is conceptualised as the fairness of the selection procedure, while distributive justice is the fairness of the selection decision. Perceptions of procedural and distributive justice are likely to influence such outcomes as job satisfaction, organisational commitment and job performance. This means that if a candidate is selected, and if they feel they have been fairly treated throughout the selection process, they are more likely to be satisfied with their job, be committed to the organisation and perform well (Chelladurai, 2006; Iles & Robertson, 1995; Macky & Johnson, 2003).

Chelladurai (2006) noted the existence of a third component of organisational justice, that of interactional justice. This concept is comprised of informational justice and interpersonal justice, and refers to the type and manner of explanations of procedures and their outcomes. Individuals will evaluate what is communicated in terms of substance (informational justice), as well as how it is communicated (interpersonal justice), with an expectation that warmth, respect and concern for the individual should be demonstrated. It is generally agreed that treating applicants fairly by observing the principles of organisational justice has benefits for the organisation. Chelladurai and Madella’s (2006) observation that “selection for a world competition or the Olympic Games is typically one aspect where problems of interactional justice often come to the foreground”, is of relevance to this study (p. 33).

Gilliland (1993) contended that it was important that reactions should be considered to be a property of the selection process - having an opportunity to be heard (‘voice’), both during and after the process, allows applicants to feel some semblance of control over a process which is otherwise out of their hands. Ryan and Ployhart (2000) carried out a review of literature on applicant perceptions of selection
procedures, which encompassed Gilliland’s (1993) work, among others. Looking at the body of literature at that time, they noted the following points that were considered relevant to this study:

- That self-serving bias exists, so that often what is perceived as *fair* by applicants are procedures and outcomes that are *favourable* for the applicant – preference is a different concept to fairness;

- That perceptions of selection procedures and decisions should not be studied devoid of context; in particular, that the type of job or position sought is a factor;

- That individuals rely on cues from others when making fairness assessments;

- That some reactions are not reactions to the (selection) procedure, but are in fact reactions to being evaluated; and

- That “multiple stakeholder perspective might be useful … there are others besides applicants who are stakeholders in the selection process and their perceptions may influence … outcomes”. (p. 600)

The last point is of particular relevance to this study, since one of its aims was to capture the perceptions of a particular group that had not previously been considered. Ryan and Ployhart (2000) referred to those involved in the selection process as either applicants or others. In the context of this study, the viewpoint of the applicant is considered equivalent to the viewpoint of the athlete in sport, who effectively ‘applies’ for selection, and the viewpoint of one of the ‘others’, is that of the selector, and/or the organisation the selector represents. In so doing, the study began the construction of a ‘multiple stakeholder perspective’ of the selection process in the sport setting.

In a more recent study of fairness reactions to selection techniques, Nikolaou and Judge (2007) confirmed the shift in the focus of research toward the exploration of applicant reactions, and observed that the applicant had, by this time, come to be seen as one who had “significant power” in the selection process (p. 206). They
concorded with previous studies that perceived fairness is associated with a number of dimensions, many of them akin to what athletes desire in the sport setting—opportunities to perform, type of feedback offered, information given on the selection process, degree of honesty exhibited and lack of bias shown (Iles & Robertson, 1995; Klingner & Schuler, 2004).

In any selection situation candidates will be rejected, which has an impact. Justification for an adverse decision can reduce negative consequences, so that feedback is of key importance. While desirable in theory, feedback may not always be useful in practice. There is a risk that rejected applicants might be “further damaged by a full disclosure”, however this depends on the way in which it is communicated, since feedback may lead to a more accurate self-image or provide direction (Iles & Robertson, 1995, p. 86). Overall, it is clear that perceptions of fair treatment in selection lead to greater satisfaction, commitment, engagement and better performance, whereas perceptions of unfair treatment lead to the reverse—resentment, less than optimal performance, and even opting out entirely.

2.1.6 The employment relationship and the psychological contract

The employment relationship involves an exchange—an undertaking by the employee to provide skill and effort to the employer, along with obedience, honesty, and loyalty, in return for which the employer provides a salary or wage, safe working conditions and undertakes to act in good faith toward the employee (Armstrong, 2006). Generally, the power to dictate contractual terms rests with the employer, unless the employee is in great demand, or has power by way of collective bargaining.
Employment relationships can also be expressed as psychological contracts, which are a combination of implied beliefs held by both parties about what they expect of each other (Armstrong, 2006; Chelladurai, 2006; Guest, Conway, Briner, & Dickman, 1996). The psychological contract is not usually articulated – it is concerned with assumptions, expectations, promises and obligations, some of which change over time. According to Armstrong (2006), they “often develop in an unplanned way with unforeseen consequences” (p. 230). At the core of the psychological contract lies fairness, trust and perceptions of whether the other party delivers what was promised or expected, which in turn creates attitudes and emotions that form and govern behaviour (Armstrong, 2006). The level of commitment to the psychological contract and, therefore, its effectiveness, depends on:

- The degree to which expectations of what the organisation will provide and what they owe in return match the organisation’s expectations of what it will get and give; and
- The nature of what is to be exchanged – such as money for time at work, need satisfaction and security for hard work and loyalty, opportunities for self-actualisation and challenge in exchange for high quality creative effort.

The notion of the psychological contract is of relevance to this study, because the participants interviewed were both professional and volunteer workers, who had different psychological contracts – that is, different expectations of their employer, and different things expected of them in return. The existence of a positive psychological contract is linked to higher organisational commitment, higher satisfaction and better employment relations. Key influences are considered to be the use of progressive HR practices, together with scope for direct participation at work, job security, and working in a smaller organisation. Reinforcement practices recommended by Armstrong (2006) include:
• Emphasising the importance of involvement in the workplace;
• Providing for opportunities for training and development; and
• Minimising status differentials.

Job security and organisation size are of particular relevance in the sport industry, which is mostly reliant on government funding, so that both size and tenure depend, to a large extent, on the whim of the government of the day. Practices concerning involvement, training and status differentials (in terms of the professional/volunteer divide) were all considered to be of particular interest to this study.

2.1.7 Change management

“Resistance to change is a common feature of sport organisations” (Chelladurai & Madella, 2006, p. 103). In order to facilitate change, whether incremental or revolutionary, HRM processes should demonstrate an understanding of human behaviour and, in particular, the reasons that people resist change (Armstrong, 2006). There should also be awareness of the concept of ‘concealment’, in which organisation members appear to support change, but in fact continue to operate in the same way as before (Chelladurai & Madella, 2006).

The following is a set of guidelines for the implementation of organisational change:

• People should see the reason for change, understand why change is important, and understand how it will help;
• The first steps to change should be recognised, and requirements assessed;
• Allow participation, as people generally support what they help to create;
• Reward systems should support change, by fostering innovation;
• Acknowledge and accept that change may involve failure – establishing the need for change is easier than deciding how to implement it;
It is easier to change processes, structure and systems than to change attitudes or culture;

Organisational culture must be recognised – build a work environment that is conducive to change;

Managers implementing change should have the temperament and skills needed;

People need to be committed to change, particularly key individuals;

Plans to monitor the progress of change need to be implemented, to keep attention focused on changes made;

A means of measuring the success of change should be identified;

The need to adapt change over time should be recognised;

Be clear on what has to be achieved, and why;

Ensure that change fits the context of the organisation;

Keep it simple and don’t rush – don’t try to do too much at once;

Provide support for those affected;

Negotiate with those who resist, and co-opt the strongest opponents into the process;

Remember that the success of the change depends as much on how it is implemented, as on the quality of the concept;

Educate, communicate, involve and train (Armstrong, 2006; Chelladurai & Madella, 2006)

Sport has undergone a great deal of change, mainly due to the increasing involvement of government. Amis, Slack and Hinings (2002) stated that “most, if not all, changes are precipitated by external events” (p. 439), which was certainly true of Canadian sport. Similarities exist between the Canadian and Australian sport settings and, as a result, much of their research was considered relevant to this study.
A period of intense transition began in Canada in the 1980s, when the Federal Government decided that the nation’s entire amateur sport system required transformation, in the belief that élite performances would be improved if national sport organisations (NSOs) became more formalised, professional structures. (This is not dissimilar to the launch of the Australian Institute of Sport, as outlined in Chapter 1, and occurred around the same time). At that time, the government in the form of Sport Canada, introduced its ‘Best Ever’ program, an initiative designed to bring about “frame-breaking change” (Amis et al., 2002, p. 443). The quantum of this increase was that the original allocation of CDN$5.5 million per annum increased exponentially to CDN$24.2 million per annum in the first year (1983), and leaped again to CDN$86.0 million per annum by 1988, representing an overall increase of 1,463 per cent over that six-year period. Staff numbers in the National Sport and Recreation Centre expanded from 65 to 532 during the period 1970 to 1984.

Later, government interest began to wane, and a period of economic depression began, bringing about severe cutbacks. By 1996, seven out of 35 organisations examined in the Amis, Slack and Hinings (2002) study had their funds totally eliminated as government spending was reduced to CDN$48 million per annum, with many of Canada’s NSOs left to support themselves. This period brought about tumultuous change, and the way change was managed is of interest. Whitson (1989) also examined reasons for the dramatic expansion of Canadian sport. He observed the beginning of a change process that was to marginalise volunteers, and stated that they were “expected to realize the need for their own demise” (p. 91). Whitson (1989) believed that the professionalisation process was designed to define our understanding of professionals and volunteers in ways which “privilege the former’s kind of knowledge, and devalue the latter’s” (p. 95).
Weese (1996) set out to determine whether recreation program effectiveness was affected by transformational leadership and/or organisational culture. He found that no significant relationship existed between transformational leadership and effectiveness, which verified previous work in this field. Effectiveness was determined by a number of factors, many of which were beyond the scope of a leader, however leaders were found to be more influential in smaller, centralised organisations, confirming that context is important. He also found that a strong organisational culture affected organisational effectiveness (Weese, 1996). Transformational leadership was observed to exist by Slack and Hinings (1992), who carried out several studies within sport organisations in Canada. These organisations underwent massive change wrought by increasing government involvement and intervention. Such change has occurred in parallel in other countries, including Australia, for similar reasons and on a comparable timeframe.

Thibault, Slack and Hinings (1991) looked at six sport organisations in Canada to study the effect of introducing a professional into a group of existing volunteer staff. They looked at the effect on three specific organisational elements – specialisation (the degree to which tasks are divided), formalisation (the extent to which tasks are performed in a standardised way, and documented), and centralisation (where the locus of control existed for decision-making). They found that both specialisation and formalisation increased rapidly as a result of the introduction of a professional worker. Centralisation increased initially, but later decentralised to a lower level than had previously existed. Thibault et al. (1991) detected issues of trust and control, said to be a result of professional-volunteer relations and/or the introduction of new staff.
Shortly after, Slack and Hinings (1992) observed that the central aim of Sport Canada’s Quadrennial Planning was to speed up the processes of professionalisation and bureaucratisation, since a professional bureaucracy was seen as the structure most conducive to producing élite athletes. Interviews were conducted with the individuals responsible for implementing change, to determine which issues were relevant. Slack and Hinings (1992) considered changes in the mode of operation, the power structure, and the existence of conflict.

They observed that the discretion exercised by Sport Canada over the financial resources allocated was substantial, and noted that NSOs were involved in this change process by virtue of their almost total reliance on Sport Canada for funding. Government intervention was so all-encompassing that Sport Canada representatives were appointed to staff selection committees and thus controlled employment decisions. Despite strong institutional pressure to reduce the role of volunteers, change was resisted. In some NSOs, transformational leaders were deliberately used to effect change. Where a transformational leader created a vision that stressed the importance of volunteers, changes were accepted whereas, in others, change was resisted (Slack & Hinings, 1992).

Kikulis, Slack and Hinings (1995) set out to determine whether decision-making in amateur sport organisations in Canada had shifted from its traditionally volunteer-led style, to that of professional staff control. They did not find the expected shift in authority, but other observations are of interest. First, they noted that professional staff had greater access to information than did volunteer executives, giving them what is known as ‘information power’. The HRM literature differentiates between different types of power, as follows:
• Legitimate power – power conferred by virtue of position in the organisation;

• Reward power – power associated with the ability to give rewards;

• Coercive power – the power to punish or recommend punishment;

• Information or expert power – power resulting from specific expertise and knowledge;

• Referent power – power based on respect and personal standing;

• Elected power – power based on election to a position by others; and

• Resource power – the power to allow the use of scarce resources (Armstrong, 2006; Lashley & Lee-Ross, 2003).

Second, they noted that the “external push” by Sport Canada (toward professionalisation) was supported by an “internal pull” for the process, from both professional and some volunteer staff (Kikulis et al., 1995, p. 278). Finally, the selection of national athletes was identified as one of six critical decision topics. This particular topic remained highly centralised, with participation in these decisions strictly limited to the Board. A high level of centralisation such as this had been observed earlier, and somewhat ironically, as being similar to that found in what they referred to as the “kitchen table organisational archetype” (Kikulis, Slack & Hinings, 1992, p. 293), the very design from which sport organisations were supposed to be moving away, as part of the professionalisation process.

Amis, Slack and Hinings (2002) examined the effect of values on the change process in the sport setting, noting that while change was initiated by external events, “the outcome will be shaped by internal processes within the organisation” (p. 439). Organisations with members whose values were congruent with the prescribed changes were able to engage in the transition process, whereas those with members that opposed change entered into “superficial conformity”, ultimately reverting to
“designs consistent with their original values” (Amis et al., 2002, p. 436). This was akin to the notion of ‘concealment’ reported earlier, (Chelladurai & Madella, 2006), and shows how organisational culture can hinder the management of change.

Taylor and Ho (2005) noted the existence of similar coercive processes in Australian sport. Sport organisations were described as being under pressure to engage in globally benchmarked systems and processes across all areas, from finance to HRM. It was found that practices varied widely, but few organisations had adopted a formal HRM strategy (Taylor & Ho, 2005). This study referred specifically to the content of two government-generated policy documents as driving or, perhaps more accurately, “coercing” change (Taylor & Ho, 2005, p. 110).

First, the document ‘Shaping Up: A Review of Commonwealth Involvement in Sports in Australia in 1999’ called for general change to the way NSOs were managed (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999). Second, this was followed by ‘Backing Australia’s Sporting Ability in 2001’, which specifically advocated HRM management principles, and linked progress in achieving these goals to funding (ASC, 2001). Both tended to confirm the existence of ‘insidious control’, as suggested earlier (see Section 2.1), with respect to HRM practices.

Less than half of the respondents provided training for volunteer staff, and different HR approaches existed for professionals and volunteers. The pressure to do more, to be more accountable and to be more efficient was the main driver of change (Taylor & Ho, 2005). The issue of a lack of training for volunteers was raised, as has been noted by others (Ralston et al., 2004; Shilbury & Kellett, 2011).
2.1.8 Culture

‘Good’ culture exerts a positive influence on organisation behaviour. In order to assess the relative strength of an organisational culture, there are eight dimensions that should be considered:

- Autonomy – the perception of self-determination;
- Cohesion – the perception of togetherness;
- Trust – the perception of freedom to communicate openly;
- Resources – the perception of time demands;
- Support – the perception of the degree to which superiors tolerate individual behaviours, particularly mistakes;
- Recognition – the perception that contributions are acknowledged;
- Fairness – the perception that policies are fair and equitable; and
- Innovation – the perception that change and creativity are encouraged (Armstrong, 2006).

The effect that culture can have on an organisation’s ability to embrace or resist change has been noted, and is considered more particularly in terms of how sport organisations responded to rapid change brought about by government intervention. Chelladurai and Madella (2006) discussed the political dimension of HRM, taking the view that organisations are always “political arenas”, and that organisational structures can be better understood as a “product of internal struggles” (p. xii). They argued that it is difficult to implement rational procedures within sport organisations, particularly OSOs (Olympic sport organisations) and NSOs (national sport organisations), because the existing culture or power relations often impede their effectiveness.
Within such organisations, there is usually a distinctive organisational culture, in which many sub-cultures may co-exist (such as athletes, coaches, and referees). This has the effect of creating separate interest groups (Chelladurai & Madella, 2006). An example of this is the “culture of sacrifice” found to exist among sport coaches, which was characterised by non-traditional hours, extensive travel, interference with family activities, and multiple roles (Dixon & Warner, 2010, p. 141).

The strength of the Olympic culture was particularly evident in a study of intending repeat event volunteers by Fairley, Kellett and Green (2007). Event volunteers are usually characterised by the short term of their tenure. Some volunteer for the same event regularly, most commonly when the event is always staged in the same place. Fairley et al. (2007) studied an unusual group of repeat event volunteers who were prepared to pay to travel and volunteer repeatedly for Olympic Games in different countries. Motivating factors included the desire to be ‘part of the team’, and a belief that their expertise was needed, but what was clear was participants’ very strong identification with all things Olympic.

All of the elements of HRM literature described in this review are considered to be relevant to selectors’ perceptions of the selection process, although it is also true to say that “a feature of management practices is the way in which different management theories become fashionable or influential for a while, and then decline in favour” (Armstrong, 2006, p. 818). Some of the more recent and esoteric HRM concepts such as human capital management have been deliberately omitted from this review, since many of the ‘non-corporate’ sport organisations considered in this study have only the most basic of personnel management practices in place, and are not yet professionalised to the extent of having introduced strategic HRM practices.
Based on what is known, HRM theories and concepts are relevant to the model offered in Figure 1.8 in terms of how selectors perform their role, and how that in turn affects the system as a whole.

### 2.2 SPORT SELECTION LITERATURE

Some limited profiling of volunteers was made possible by the available literature. Sport volunteers were more likely to be male, in the age range of 35-54, employed, with post-secondary education, and volunteered for one organisation only (Chelladurai, 2006; Nicholson & Hoye, 2008). Nicholson and Hoye (2008) also observed that females tended to volunteer for altruistic reasons, and that a large proportion of volunteer hours are carried by a small proportion of volunteers. Volunteers were usually ‘time poor’ from juggling work, family and volunteer commitments, and, as a result, their assistance was described as “erratic and ephemeral, rather than ordered and enduring” (p. 201). In addition, Shilbury and Kellett (2011) found that 66 per cent of volunteers might not have had appropriate training or skills for their role.

Sport volunteers tend to fall into two groups – those that volunteer for short-term events or give assistance on a casual basis, and those that volunteer on a longer term basis (Khoo & Engelhorn, 2011; Shilbury & Kellett, 2011). The latter are referred to as “serious leisure volunteers”, who persevere and show commitment, making sport opportunities possible for others (Chelladurai, 2006; Shilbury & Kellett, 2011). Two sub-categories of ‘serious’ volunteers were identified – service volunteers, who carry out tasks such as coaching, managing teams, umpiring and scoring; and executive volunteers, who are most commonly professionals from other fields, elected to Boards and are responsible for governance (Shilbury & Kellett, 2011).
Parallels exist between the selection of personnel in the workplace and the selection of athletes in the sport setting. In the sport industry workplace, an athlete seeking selection to represent a sport is, in effect, an applicant. The sport organisation, while not an employer in the strict sense of the term, is the body that decides whether or not the athlete’s application is successful and, in that sense, sometimes has the power to make or break an athlete’s career. The selector is the sport organisation’s representative and implements their policy. In order to keep athletes satisfied, committed and performing at their best, both the selection procedure and its outcome should be perceived as fair.

Fairness in sport selections has always been an issue, in much the same way that umpiring decisions in sport have always been contentious. Stevenson (1989) examined perceptions of justice in the sport setting, in the context of selection of national teams in Canada. While his work is over 20 years old, the following comment remains relevant to this day:

The assumption that fairness and justice prevail is at the cornerstone of sport. It is presumed that the person who wins the competition is truly the best and deserving of the accolades of victory, and that those selected for teams are indeed worthy of that selection. Yet charges of bias, incompetence, and injustice are constantly raised in sport as seemingly deserving performances are denied their due while seemingly undeserving performances are awarded the victor’s wreath or the coveted place on the team. Time and time again, as the lists of athletes are announced … controversy erupts over the exclusion of certain athletes and the inclusion of others. (Stevenson, 1989, p. 371)

Stevenson (1989) examined selection by board of selectors, by national coach, and by a mix of the two. He found that each type was perceived differently, and selection by the national coach alone was seen to have the least amount of bias.
This finding may have been a little skewed, since the 29 participants of this study were all first-year players (rookies), who were young and probably held their coach in high regard at this early stage of their careers. Overall, he concluded that perceptions of fairness in the procedure led to perceptions of fairness in the outcome, and the reverse applied, so that if decisions were to be accepted with confidence, a sense of confidence must be instilled in the procedures themselves. In order to do that, Stevenson (1989) recommended establishing the competence of selectors, ensuring that criteria were perceived as objective, and reducing bias in the system.

Not long after, Neu (1993) looked at the relationship between athlete satisfaction and the team selection process, also in the Canadian context, but at the provincial level. Selection method in this study was defined as the application of formal or informal ranking, or standards. Using quantitative methods, she interviewed 209 subjects ranging in age from 11 to 38 years, from a range of 14 sports, finding that 58% of subjects were satisfied with the process, and that several variables influenced athlete satisfaction. These were performance outcome, perceived control and self-esteem. Specifically, Neu (1993) found that knowledge of selection criteria (3.5%), type of selection method (3.2%), and perceived control (13.0%) accounted for variance in athletes’ satisfaction with the selection process. In other words:

- Knowledge of selection criteria was a predictor of satisfaction with the process;
- Selection method – whether formal or informal (objective versus subjective) – influenced female satisfaction only (not that of males); and
- Perceived control (or causal attribution) was also a significant predictor – those athletes who believed the selection process to be out of their control were more satisfied, whereas those who felt they could control the process were less satisfied.
Neu (1993) concluded that developing satisfying selection procedures would result in continued commitment to sport and improved performance through increased motivation. Both Neu (1993) and Stevenson (1989) interviewed Canadian athletes from different levels, and with different constructs in mind but, essentially, both tried to determine what factors affect athletes’ perceptions of the selection process, toward improving the system for athletes. While these findings are of interest, it should be noted that Neu’s (1993) study was an unpublished Master’s thesis, that 51% of her subjects were under the age of 18 years and, further, that her 1993 study, while noting that there was very little material available on this subject, makes no reference to Stevenson’s 1989 work.

More recently, Bradbury (2007) confirmed the growth in selection disputes, and set out to consider what selection methods – in particular, procedures and criteria – were used to select athletes for teams in New Zealand sport, with a view to finding that HRM practices should be applied in athlete selection. Those HRM processes that Bradbury (2007) felt should be applied to the selection of athletes included job analysis, job description, person specification, selection, performance appraisal, and selection policy and formal feedback (post-decision).

Bradbury (2007) is herself a former athlete and national coach. She interviewed 25 coaches at regional/provincial and national level. The number and range of sports were not stated, however sports that based selection on times and scores (objective criteria) were excluded from the study. Attitude, performance and physical fitness were listed by coaches as the top three criteria for selection, after scores and rankings were excluded from the list, despite the fact that the latter two are readily measurable in objective terms, while the former is less so.
Of the 25 coaches interviewed, 19 referred to the use of ‘gut feel’ as a selection criterion, yet it did not rank in their top three criteria. ‘Gut feel’ was presented to participants as part of a list of criteria from which to choose and, as such, may require closer examination. Out of 25 coaches, 16 coaches stated that they gave clear information to athletes as to how they would be selected, with some preferring to be “deliberately unclear” (Bradbury, 2007, p. 42; Bradbury & Forsyth, 2012).

Like New Zealand, the sport industry in Australia has been slow to embrace professional management practices that are standard in other industries. Many larger sport organisations cognisant of the need for good governance do now apply HRM principles when selecting and engaging staff to work in their office environment (Department of Sport & Recreation WA, 2003), however, such principles do not yet extend to the selection of athletes to represent the sport, nor to the selection of volunteers to administer the sport.

Generally, all selection systems should be based on the principles of organisational justice, and both fairness as well as perceived fairness are considered crucial to the success of any system. Based on the available literature, it is agreed that a professionally designed and executed selection system for sport should include certain elements or ‘markers’ that determine its quality. These elements are drawn from the ASC (2007) publication ‘Getting it right: Guidelines for selection’, the recommendations of which are supported by others (Collins, 1989; Collins, 1992/93; Findlay & Corbett, 2002; Healey, 2002; Horvath & Lording, 2010; Kaeding, 2002; Morling, 2001; Sullivan, 2002), and are presented in the form of a flow chart at Figure 2.2.
Figure 2.2: Recommendations for the development of a quality selection system

Adapted from ‘Getting it right: Guidelines for selection’ (ASC, 2007).
There is a dearth of scholarly enquiry about selection in sport, between 1993 and the present day, other than Bradbury’s (2007) work. All material since that time on the subject of selections, selectors and selection policy has largely been written by, or with reference to, legal practitioners, in a somewhat reactive response to the perceived high level of Sydney 2000 selection appeals. The thrust of this material is clear – it advocates the implementation of well-documented systems that include all of the above-mentioned markers, in order to avoid legal action at all costs.

Most recently, the ASC (2011) issued an online document for the Australian Sport Information Network entitled “Selection Policies and Procedures for Sport”. The document purports to be up-to-date research, however in the main it repeats earlier advice (ASC, 2007), cites a few recent cases, and makes a great many references to information obtained from the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (SDRCC). This document states that “selection appeals are becoming more frequent”, and that “team selection accounts for a substantial portion of all sporting disputes which go to arbitration” (ASC, 2011), suggesting that little has changed.

### 2.3 OTHER LITERATURE

The following is a summary of material that is readily available in the public domain. It is not academically rigorous, being from both industry and mainstream media, but it nevertheless has some value as an indicator of public opinion, and provokes thought as to how selectors themselves might perceive this material. The content was categorised by way of common themes that emerged, and it contributes to limited selector profile information, as follows:
- Selectors have power
- Selectors implement policy
- Selectors must be above reproach
- Selectors endure criticism
- Selectors and the law
- Selectors lack training and support

The two forms of published material are then combined – that is, academic literature, together with industry and popular press publications – in the form of a Venn diagram, shown at Figure 2.3, in such a way as to form the basis of a profile, and indicate where common ground might exist.

**Figure 2.3: Initial profile of (volunteer) selectors**

![Venn diagram showing the overlap between Volunteers (Academic Literature) and Selectors (Industry Publications & Media). Volunteers are characterized by being mostly male, aged 35-54, educated, and time-poor. Selectors are characterized by implementing policy, being above reproach, widely criticized, and facing legal challenges. The overlap indicates common grounds such as having power and lacking training.]
Figure 2.3 shows the two types of information combined to provide an initial profile of selectors based on what little is known, however it has limitations. There was no academic literature available that was specific to selectors, however there was a substantial body of information about volunteers, likely to be generalisable to those selectors who were volunteers. Conversely, the industry and popular press material was specific to selectors, but was not academically rigorous and, further, it did not distinguish between volunteers and professionals. Given those limitations, the diagram shows where the two types of information overlap to suggest two common aspects that are worthy of investigation – that is, selectors have power, and lack training. It is not yet known whether these apply to both volunteer and professional selectors alike in the ‘real-world’ sport workplace setting.

2.3.1 Selectors have power

Selectors make choices and as a result, they have the capacity, by virtue of their power to choose, to cause success for or harm to athletes. Harm that can potentially be caused by selectors can be financial or psychological, and may also cause damage to careers. “Poor selection decisions can damage athletes’ careers … often, it’s just the nod of the head over who gets the contract, but it makes all the difference to their careers” (Rattue, 2002, p. B4). In the same way that candidates were seen as “unable to engage the organisation on equal terms” in the HRM literature (Iles & Robertson, 1995, p. 85), athletes seeking selection often encounter a similar imbalance of power.

There are many examples of the exercise of selectors’ power. In 2009, former Socceroos national coach and sole selector, Pim Verbeek, declared that players seeking selection should go overseas to play. This directive created a dilemma for some players, since international leagues often clash with Australia’s domestic
league in terms of timing. It effectively forced some players to choose between their
domestic club and going overseas to improve their chances of being selected to play
for their country (Gatt, 2009). Similarly, selectors directed Olympic sailing medalist
Ben Ainslie to compete in a number of trial regattas in heavy wind conditions. This
meant that he was required to put on weight while the rest of the Olympic squad
were trying to lose weight for lighter conditions elsewhere – Ainslie (2007) said that
it was “a bit of a nightmare to put on so much weight in such a short period of time”
(p. 80). Selectors have power to the extent that they can influence athletes to alter
where they live, what they look like, and potentially affect their health.

Selectors have power by virtue of their role in choosing the best athlete or team to
represent their sport. The notion of selecting the best team is a recurring theme, and
in some respects it is the ‘holy grail’ for all sports. Alexander (2000) said that
swimming’s selection policy was “a success for the administration of the sport, but
does it provide the best team?” (p. 135). Olympic swimming medalist Ian Thorpe
was also concerned to ensure that they got “the best team out there” (McDonald,
2004, p. 20) In a discussion about selection in triathlon, Australia’s National
Performance Director and selector, Bill Davoren, said much the same thing (albeit by
creating a new verb) – he stated, “our job was to pick and offer up athletes to the
Australian Olympic Committee that we believe will medal for us in Athens”
(McMahon, 2004, p. 57). Not only are selectors charged with the task of selecting the
best team, they may also have the power to influence performance at the event itself.
for Selection’, it is stated that “consideration must be given not only to how to enable
the best team to be selected, but also how the selection process enhances the
optimisation of performance at the event itself” (p. 16).
Funding of sport both by the public and private sectors is often provided under certain conditions, and selectors have power because they implement policy that may affect ongoing funding for their sport. It was reported, for example, that funding by the ASC of a $100,000 trip to Europe for the cycling track program in 1997 hinged on the finalisation of the sport’s selection policy at that time (Guinness, 1997). Chalip (1996) observed that selection is a special case of concern for input into governance, and that “sport managers have been challenged in many countries to deal with inequities as a prerequisite for government support and funding” (p. 312).

As a result of the large number of appeals of selection decisions that occurred before the 2000 Olympics, the AOC appointed two lawyers prior to the 2004 Olympics to act as appeal consultants, and sourced a further 41 volunteer lawyers to offer counsel to aggrieved athletes. AOC Chair, John Coates, referred to these as “wise and competent men … who the kids can turn to” (Masters, 2003), implying that athletes generally are young, less wise and possibly not fully competent to manage their short careers.

Further, Fish, Grove and Eklund (1999) reported a significant decrease in athletes’ identity after non-selection for State teams, concluding that athletic identity is “malleable”. This adds support to the view that athletes are young and impressionable, and perhaps not adequately equipped to deal with the imbalance of power that exists. Stevenson (1989) referred to the “emotional damage inflicted by the arbitrariness of the selection process”, concluding that “unfair selection procedures and outcomes produce bitter and disillusioned athletes” (p. 378).
The knowledge that selectors have the power to adversely affect an athlete’s career extends even further, to the belief that selectors may not only use their power but also abuse it, by exacting retribution. Many athletes believe that they will do so. “The athletes … won’t speak up because they know that any chance of Olympic selection … will disappear if they complain” (Jory, 2008, p. 15). Turner (2000) referred to the tradition of Australian sportspersons ‘copping it sweet’, noting that “whingeing about non-selection is considered ‘un-Australian’ …. [and] a public display of petulance will guarantee non-selection for the future” (p. 18).

Cohen (1992), quoting lawyer Peter Collins, sent the same message – “an athlete who does take his or her grievance to court risks being black-balled in future selection” (p. 33). Chalip (1996) summarised the situation best:

… many New Zealand athletes can tell stories about how an athlete’s criticism of selectors or team selections jeopardized or ended the athlete’s career. It is not clear whether these stories are factual or merely apocryphal. The important point is that athletes themselves believe the stories and, consequently, fear to challenge selectors or their selections. (p. 318)

It can be difficult for athletes to circumvent a particular selector whose influence might be especially far-reaching. Collins (1989) noted a particular case of conflict of interest, in which Charlie Walsh had three roles in cycling – he was the sport’s national coach, he was also a selector for the sport and, in addition, he was the personal coach of some of the candidates seeking selection. It should be noted, however, that this was some years before the 2000 spate of appeals. Changes have since been made in the sport of cycling to contain the power of selectors, and it is not known whether such dominance still exists in any other sport.
2.3.2 Selectors implement policy

Selectors are appointed to implement an organisation’s selection policy and are often blamed for the inadequacies of the policy itself, when they may not have been involved in its design – ‘shooting the messenger’, as it were. Not only are selectors required to implement policy devised by others, they can also be over-ruled by others, for any number of reasons. Selectors make recommendations for selection in a number of Australian sports but, in many cases – such as athletics, for example – the Board retains the right to reject or over-rule their recommendations.

Similarly, national sporting organisations nominate Olympic athletes to the AOC, but the AOC is not obliged to accept those nominations. Interference occurs, particularly when there is media pressure. In 2004, for example, Olympic selection for shooters changed from being based on rankings to performances at a series of trials – Australian gold medalist, Michael Diamond, failed to qualify, but the AOC stepped in to give him a second chance at selection, over-ruling the selectors and the sport’s selection policy in doing so (Australian Associated Press, 2004).

Heads of Government have also been known to interfere in the selection process. South Africa’s President, Percy Sonn, over-ruled selectors and placed a black player ahead of a white player in the national cricket team, to “redress the imbalances of the past” (Davey, 2002, p. 34). Hobson (2004) referred to this policy, known as ‘affirmative selection’ in South Africa as “apartheid in reverse”, writing that “no topic causes greater controversy than the challenge of picking a team to reflect the modern nation” (p. 89). In this example, the priority in that country’s selection policy was not to select the best team, but to select a team to promote a ‘new’ South Africa to the world.
2.3.3 Selectors must be above reproach

Selectors are expected to be people of high quality – honest, committed, knowledgeable, astute, and unbiased (Thorpe, 2008). They are expected to remain ‘in touch’ by putting in a huge commitment of time to the sport, and are often unpaid for their time. Selectors should be “temperate” that is, calm, as well as “patient … wise … prudent … (and even) … sober” says Gallagher (1998), and discussions about selection should not be held while “under the influence” (p. 3). The ASC (2007) document “Getting It Right” devotes an entire section to appointing selectors, and sets out some clear expectations – among them, that

a selector should bring all of their relevant knowledge and experience to bear in making the selection decisions. Good faith also embodies the concept of selectors acting with honesty, good intentions and a conviction as to the correctness of the decisions they make … selectors must not act under the direction or influence of any other person. (p. 13)

Further, the ASC (2007) goes on to say that “selectors are the most critical people in the selection process … (they) must also bring special skills to bear in any exercise of discretion … they should have knowledge, respect for the policy, fairness, independence, respect for persons, diligence and efficiency, integrity, accountability and transparency” (p. 43).

Alan Sullivan QC (2002) stated that selectors are “people of integrity, people of devotion who spend a large amount of their personal time for free trying to work for the good of the sport … sports can be very proud of them”. He added that selectors need to be aware of and commit to timelines (even though they may be volunteers), and they should be selected not only on the basis of their experience but also their “ability and capacity to express their viewpoint both verbally and in writing”.

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Conversely, Thorpe (2008) observed that “on almost all imaginable occasions the failure to act in good faith is due to the desire of the organisation (or selector) to achieve an extraneous purpose … (which may) extend from nepotism to animosity to cost savings” (p. 66). Overall, it is fair to say that expectations of selectors are high, and as a result, “the pool of people who have appropriate knowledge and skills to be selectors is quite small” (ASC, 2007, p. 47).

2.3.4 Selectors endure criticism

Selectors are often publicly exposed as part of their job, particularly if a decision is appealed – their identities are not hidden, and sometimes they are not well protected by their sport. The most popular target of all, Australian cricket selectors, were described as “high-profile victims” (The Guardian, 2011), who were “attacked widely in the wake of the Ashes loss” (Lalor, 2011), receiving more public criticism than their employer, Cricket Australia. This exposure reflects a widespread belief that transparency is critical to the acceptance of selection policy. Holmik (2008) said “it is important to identify the selection panel in the selection policy” (p. 25). Bradbury (2007) concurred, noting that selection procedures should explain the process, how it will work, and set out “who the selectors are” (p. 43).

Generally, a negative perception exists toward selectors. Selectors undergo a high degree of public scrutiny, being widely criticised, both by athletes and by the media. The media thrives on controversy, so any story relating to the work of selectors is usually presented in a negative light. A reasonably balanced article by Alexander (2000) about the use of different types of selection criteria nevertheless has a byline in bold, designed to attract attention, which says “often there’s little or no explanation to the athletes who miss out … after sacrificing four years, it’s ‘better
luck next time”’ (p. 135). This type of comment is inflammatory, suggesting that selectors have a flippant attitude toward what they do.

Depending on the sport, selection policy may involve a number of different approaches, with the use of panels, individuals, or a mix of both, as well as the adoption of subjective or objective criteria, or some combination of both, resulting in varying degrees of flexibility and discretion for each sport. In a media interview about selection in triathlon, Davoren contended that “some people believed that objectivity was the way to go … (whereas) … others felt that discretion was a useful addition” (McMahon, 2004, p. 56). The more subjective the criteria, the greater the discretion, and the reverse applies.

At one end of the spectrum is swimming, which, at the national level, selects on the very simple and unequivocal basis of first and second ‘past the post’, that is, winning or coming second in a qualifying event guarantees selection. Alexander (2000) seemed to think it was a good thing that swimming had “basically removed any need for selectors” (p. 134), while Smith (2004) referred to swimming’s selection policy as “intractable” (p. 19). At the other end of the spectrum are a number of sports that adopt a much more complex approach, such as sailing. This sport allows a number of opportunities to perform, and makes allowances for unforeseen circumstances, in an effort to ensure that the best athlete or team is chosen.

Where there is substantial discretion as exists in sailing, there is greater potential for conflict, and for harm to athletes. Selectors are increasingly expected to recognise the power embodied in their position and as such, they are required to have empathy for athletes. The ASC (2007) noted that “selection can be euphoric … (while) rejection
can be devastating” (p. 6). Stanimirovic (2008), Senior Performance Psychologist for the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS), listed emotions commonly reported by athletes who were not selected. They included denial, sadness, disappointment, anger, guilt, anxiety, depression and acceptance. She advised that AIS psychologists follow up with all non-selected athletes to encourage their use of counselling services. The ASC (2007) observed that “the majority of athletes will always prefer objective selection criteria – they want to know how they can ‘select themselves’ … ultimately, the decision regarding selection criteria will be a ‘trade-off’ between certainty and flexibility” (p. 29).

In making choices, selectors must interpret and apply criteria, so they are often accused of bias. Thorpe (2008) contended that selections “by their very nature are sometimes made whimsically, on a hunch or as a gamble” (p. 61). Similarly, Brian Doyle QC (1999) reviewed a number of selection decisions and concluded that “a lot of challenged selection decisions have been made on the basis of personalities”. Alexander (2000) observed that performances of athletes in hockey, water polo and soccer are not compared by times or distances, but simply by “the perceptions of selectors ... (for example) … some girls in canoeing were tested differently by the selectors by being allowed to race in the faster boat more times” (p. 133). She noted the differences between sports, in terms of their criteria for selection.

Most sports have the ability to stage one-shot, definitive trials like swimming, but others provide multiple opportunities for their athletes to qualify. The latter method allows for the athlete who is sick, injured, or doesn’t handle pressure well, and offers a degree of organisational justice, but equally, this approach may also promote unfairness and ambiguity, so that ultimately “the cold reality for athletes is that they
are at the mercy of the sporting administrators who create these rules” (Alexander, 2000, p. 135).

Cricket has long been accused of bias, particularly in awarding places in the national team to players from the State of New South Wales. Former Australian player, the late David Hookes, was known for his comment that “when they give out the baggy blue cap in New South Wales, they give you a baggy green (cap) in a brown paper bag as well, to save making two presentations” (Smith, 2011). Turner (2000) is just one of many who believe cricket selectors are biased toward certain States. He says that “the potential for arbitrary selectivity at present is illustrated by the constitution of the Australian team for the final one-day match against South Africa … it contained no fewer than six New South Welshmen …yet, where did New South Wales finish in the Pura Milk Cup (in that season)? Sixth out of six!” (p. 18). Turner’s (2000) comment failed to consider that the New South Wales State team might have finished last because so many of its players were ‘borrowed’ to play for the national team and, in that respect, it is perhaps typical of media criticism of selectors generally – sensationalism at the expense of balance.

Emotive language is commonly used with regard to both selectors and the selection process, using terms that suggest death, crime, blood or, alternatively, suggesting that the process is based on luck, such as with the rolling of dice. This is reflected in the following comments: “… do-or-die selection criteria …” (Alexander, 2000, p. 135); “… excluding Ian Thorpe from his pet event would be a crime … the lack of explanation over such decisions leaves many athletes “stricken”… athletes that … were going to lose under the appeal were on “suicide watches” (Sedgman, 2004); “… blood on the selection room floor … the hurt will run much deeper” (Jeffery,
... selectors might appear to be thrashing around ... after a wretched and chaotic season ...” (Roebuck, 2011); “… selectors will meet over the weekend to ‘cull’ players from the long list …” (Lalor, 2010, p. 41); “high-rolling Hawks throw selection dice” (Denham, 2010, p. 38); “Mitcham rolling dice for Games selection” (The Australian, 2010, p. 29); and “… age has been the key reason for throwing many a good prop on the scrapheap ... “ (Sen, 2011, p. 24).

Sometimes the criticism is intensely personal. Although dated now, athletes in Stevenson’s (1989) study saw those on the board of selectors variously as “fuddy-duddies”, “old dears”, and “old failures”, and one said that “they are all old … well, 50 or so”, seen as being “lost in the Dark Ages”, and “so traditional, it’s unbelievable” with personal appearance and age being seen as overly important: “the average of the selectors must be late 50s, 60s, so there’s a tremendous gap between (the sport) they used to play and (the sport) today” (p. 374). Such comment suggests that a form of ‘generation gap’ might have existed in 1989; it is not yet known whether that attitude is current today.

### 2.3.5 Selectors and the law

Selectors’ decisions may be legally challenged. There have always been challenges to selection decisions, legal and otherwise, but as outlined in Chapter 1, the level of appeals in recent years has been on an upward trend. In addition to everything else expected of them, selectors are expected to act in such a way as to minimise legal challenges and their associated costs. It is generally agreed that no matter what decision is made by a selector, it is unlikely to be overturned on appeal if the selector properly applies relevant policies and considers the correct criteria.
The CAS noted in *Mewing vs Swimming Australia* (2008) that “just because different conclusions could be reached as to who should be in the relay team … this did not lead to a finding that the overall needs of the team were not considered” (Horvath & Lording, 2010). Courts are reluctant to intervene against selection decisions unless selectors do not apply competent selection procedures, breach natural justice or unless bias can be proven (Broughton, 2004; Collins, 1992/93; Doyle, 1999; Healey, 2002; Horvath & Lording, 2010; Turner, 2000).

Disputes are costly in terms of time, energy, money and/or publicity to the various sports challenged (Jeffery, 2003). In the case of Forbes and Bundock vs Australian Yachting Federation (AYF) and Ors (1996), while the Court upheld the right of the AYF to select the best team, it nevertheless awarded damages to the challenging crew, principally because of the lack of clarity in the way the AYF carried out its selection policy. This was a pyrrhic victory for the AYF due to the cost involved (Ross, 1996). As stated earlier, Canoeing Australia was found to have selected athletes for the 2000 Olympic Games before their selection policy was even in place. As a result, they were forced to spend some $50,000 on legal fees for an appeal and, according to their President, Greg Kaeding (2002), these crippling costs “almost made them close their doors”.

2.3.6 Selectors lack training and support

Selectors are increasingly expected to justify their decisions and give feedback to athletes, including specific reasons, in the interests of having a fair selection procedure (Bradbury, 2007; Collins, 1992/93; Jeffery, 2003; Masters, 2003; Netball Australia, 2013. Often, they are not appropriately trained to do so, since as the ASC (2007) stated, “many of the individuals who are vested with the responsibility for making selections do not have a great deal of opportunity to train for the task” (p. 6). With specific reference to providing feedback, AOC President Coates acknowledged that “some national selectors were uneasy explaining unpopular decisions to athletes” (Masters, 2003).

Selectors are expected to give feedback to athletes and show empathy for their position, yet at the same time, they have been criticised for giving advice to athletes about what they need to do to improve their chances of selection. A number of selectors have attracted ire for advising athletes to relocate, despite the fact that modern élite sports competitors are in reality “global migrant workers” (Coakley, Hallinan, Jackson, & Mewett, 2009, p. 431). Netball’s national selectors, for example, advised player Alex Hodge to transfer to an interstate team to gain more court time and thereby gain more opportunity to demonstrate her skills. The backlash from other contenders “made headlines around the country”, and netball’s national selectors were “very disappointed over the accusations thrown at them” (Tugwell, 2002, p. 6).

While there is plenty of material devoted to easing stress for athletes, it is not clear who eases stress for selectors. There is certainly little evidence of support for selectors from their respective sport organisations in the available literature, despite
the ASC’s (2007) advice that “the role of selector may be onerous ... therefore, selectors should receive ongoing support and education” (p. 47). Overall, it can be concluded that selectors in sport carry out a contentious job in an industry that has been found wanting in terms of formal procedure. Selectors have the power to cause harm to others; they are criticised widely, their decisions may be challenged to the point that litigation may ensue, they are required to put in a great deal of time for what may well be comparatively little return, they may not be trained properly for their job, and they are expected to be paragons of virtue.

It is clear from the popular press that athletes are revered, while selectors are not. This is the same however, for others involved in the delivery of sport – including sport administrators, and umpires - so it may simply be that for Australians, criticism of umpires, selectors and sport administrators is a sport in itself. In the context of the professionalisation of sport, however, the available literature does beg a number of questions – how well is the selection process carried out? Is it approached in a professional manner? Also, given that there is not a single interview, article or study that allows their voice to be heard – how do selectors feel about all this? What issues might they identify that affect the way they do the job?
2.4 SUMMARY

Chapter 2 provided an overview of the available literature, taken from three main areas: HRM literature, sport-specific literature and industry publications, and mainstream media. Concepts were identified that may be of relevance to this study. From the HRM literature, the following concepts were considered likely to be relevant – organisational justice, the psychological contract and its associated expectations, job engagement and satisfaction, commitment and motivation, conflict, leadership, change management and culture. From the sport selection literature, athletes’ satisfaction with the process presents as a major concern, as do fairness and justice, and the elements considered necessary for a good selection system were identified. Finally, concepts that were repeatedly evident in popular media included power relationships, organisational policy, criticism, rights of appeal, training, and the requirement that selectors should be totally trustworthy and without bias.

The concepts identified in Chapter 2 will be considered again in Chapters 4 to 6, as part of the discussion of the findings of this study, in which concepts that arise from the data are compared with concepts outlined in the literature review. This thesis introduced the research problem in Chapter 1, and identified what is known in relation to the problem in Chapter 2. The following chapter – Chapter 3 – outlines the next step in the process, that of deciding on the best way to investigate the problem.
CHAPTER THREE – METHOD

The objective of this study was to look at the sport selection process through the eyes of those who carry out the task – the selectors. The research questions outlined in Chapter 1, and the literature review in Chapter 2, set the scene for the collection and analysis of relevant data needed to fill the identified information gaps. Having described in detail the area of interest and determined what is known about it in the previous two chapters, this chapter describes the method chosen as the most appropriate way to investigate the problem. It explains the reasons for selection of method, with consideration of core principles, along with advantages and disadvantages.

The evolution of the chosen method is discussed, along with its main exponents who are responsible for the existence of a number of variants in approach. Some misconceptions relating to the research method are examined, and one specific departure from standard method is explained and justified. Lengthy, in-depth interviews were used to acquire primary data toward answering the research questions. These interviews generated in excess of three hundred thousand words, and the process used in managing that quantity of data is outlined in this chapter.

3.1 RESEARCH AIMS

Given the existence of an apparent problem with the sport selection system, the general purpose of the research was to examine the level of professionalism in this particular aspect of sport management by asking selectors how they perceived the system. As there was no relevant prior research, the study was exploratory in nature. First, some basic demographic information was obtained. Second, participants’
beliefs and perceptions were sought with regard to work conditions, motivations, engagement and satisfaction, to consider what it was like to be a selector. Finally, to examine what the selection system was like, selectors were asked how the task of selection is done, what they thought of the selection system and how it might be improved.

3.2 DESIGN APPROACH

The design approach was driven by the lack of any existing relevant theory, the exploratory nature of the research questions, and the need to obtain rich data to aid in the meaningful examination of elite athlete selection systems. Researchers make certain philosophical assumptions when they undertake qualitative research, taking a stance toward the nature of reality (ontology) as well as to how knowledge is obtained (epistemology), toward the role of values (axiology), and acting in accordance with a certain set of beliefs, known as paradigms (Creswell, 2007). Multiple paradigms that are compatible can co-exist and, ideally, all assumptions are congruent.

Miles and Huberman (1994) state that at the outset, a qualitative researcher often knows something about the phenomenon being studied – enough to suspect there’s a problem, but not enough to espouse a theory. The researcher additionally has some idea about the parts of the phenomenon that are not well understood, knows where to look and how to gather information. Creswell (2007) explains the notion of the researcher as the ‘key instrument’ of a study. The key instrument researcher collects their own data, observes behaviour, interviews participants, and chooses not to rely on any established instruments, preferring to find his/her own way.
The researcher in charge of this study has a solid background in management and organisation behaviour, having spent a thirty-plus year career employed within small, medium and large companies, in a number of separate but related industries – including law, finance, and most recently, construction and property portfolio management. During that time, she has managed people, both as a line manager and a middle manager within a large organisation, and has also owned and operated an SME (small-to-medium enterprise), making her directly responsible for approximately thirty employees and contractors. The researcher is therefore able to combine years of practical experience with theory, in the form of undergraduate and post-graduate academic studies.

In terms of sport industry experience, she has presented papers at several Sport Management Association of Australia and New Zealand (SMAANZ) conferences, was engaged to undertake research arising from her studies on behalf of the Australian Football League, and is now undertaking a higher level of research in the field. Experience supports the researcher’s belief that much of what applies in one field of endeavour applies to others, however the sport industry has some unique characteristics and as such, poses a challenge. The researcher’s approach to this study is perhaps analogous to that of a real-world management consultant, in terms of her belief that the best way to report on and possibly resolve a complex problem is to listen to the actors involved. There is an understanding and appreciation that they will have different perceptions, making careful and balanced interpretation critical, as often there is no ‘right answer’.
A constructivist ontology was assumed for this study. Reality was seen as subjective for each individual interviewed, and the research intention was to rely on and report these multiple realities. This necessitated getting close to participants, to be better able to interpret their views. Qualitative researchers acknowledge that studies are affected by their own values and experiences. Locke (2001) confirmed that “researcher agency in formulating judgments cannot be eliminated” (p. 9). This is managed by maintaining an awareness of the potential for bias, as well as by reporting participants’ views in their own words wherever possible.

The research paradigm(s) for this study were constructivist and interpretive. According to Creswell (2007), the two are often combined, being concerned with what was meaningful to the participants interviewed, together with how things were done, within the sport management context. Denzin (2002) says that interpretive researchers hope to “understand their subjects better than the subjects understand themselves, to see effects and power where the subjects see only emotion and personal meaning” (p. 364). They form interpretations because they are in a position to see what participants cannot see, and have access to perspective that the participants themselves may lack.

Certain elements of other paradigms also ‘rang true’ for this study. The pragmatist concern for ‘what works’ was attractive. In addition, elements of post-modernism were of interest to this study, specifically power interests (the mix of professional versus volunteer personnel), turning points (changes to selection processes) and transition periods (the professionalising sport industry).
3.2.1 Grounded theory

The grounded theory approach is a method of analysis linked with data collection that uses systematically applied methods to generate theory (Glaser, 1992). Its most distinctive features were a commitment to discovery through direct contact with the world studied, together with a rejection of *a priori* theorising, which requires researchers to temporarily suspend any preconceived notions they may have, so that new theory may freely emerge (Locke, 2001). Theory emerges from, and is grounded in, the data. Grounded theory yields propositions and/or hypotheses, leaving testing and verification to be undertaken in subsequent studies (Glaser, 1992; Pandit, 1996).

Having determined by way of preliminary literature review that no formal theory existed for this area of enquiry, an exploratory qualitative study was undertaken. Grounded theory was chosen as the most suitable approach to answer the research question, because it is a qualitative method that seeks to generate theory where none exists (Creswell, 2007). In general terms, grounded theory is known to be suited to generating theories of social process, as well as to examination of individual and group behaviour, and it has various capacities that were applicable to this study:

- It is useful for summarising progress made toward understanding something;
- It is useful for providing direction for enquiry;
- It adapts well to capturing complexity;
- It is able to produce a multi-faceted account of organisational action in context;
- It links well to practice;
- It is useful where the objective is theory building;
- It provides a set of guidelines that offer security when delving into unknown territory;
It is suitable for an interpretive mode of enquiry;
- It allows a wide range of data; and
- It is an established and credible approach (Locke, 2001; Goulding, 2002).

In addition, grounded theory is “not static” (Annells, 1996). It is sufficiently flexible to work for various paradigms, including the constructivist and interpretive paradigms that underpinned this research. While it has traditionally been sited in a post-positivist paradigm, its position is continually evolving, so that grounded theory has also lent itself to modern, post-modern, interpretive, constructive and critical theory approaches (Annells, 1996; Locke, 2001). This is summed up by Locke (2001), who observed that “paradigm lines are not always clearly drawn” (p. 13).

Within the sport management context, Sotiriadou and Shilbury (2010) argued that the use of grounded theory is not only apt but desirable, since sports are socially constructed, and it is a method designed to explain social phenomena. They noted three conditions under which the use of grounded theory is appropriate, that is, when a research question concerns a process or system (in this case, sport selection), when there is no existing model or theory, and when the research is exploratory. All of these conditions existed for this research.

### 3.2.2 Background to the development of grounded theory

Interactionism, also known as symbolic interactionism, is one of the major theoretical perspectives in sociology. It is both a theory about human behaviour and an approach to inquiry (Annells, 1996). This perspective was initially developed in the 1960s by sociologist and economist, Max Weber, and philosopher, George Mead, and was later given its name by Herbert Blumer, a sociologist who studied with
Mead (Annells, 1996). Blumer (1969) identified the three core concepts of interactionism – meaning, language and thought. *Meaning* refers to the fact that people act or behave in a certain way towards a particular thing, because of the meaning that they have assigned to it. *Language* provides a way for humans to negotiate meaning - humans identify meaning based on the interactions they have with others, and the society around them. *Thought* is an individual’s way of modifying their interpretation of meaning (Blumer, 1969).

Interactionists focus on the subjective aspects of social life. Humans are seen as pragmatic ‘actors’, who continually adjust their behaviour to the actions of other ‘actors’, and, in doing so, construct their own social world. This focus on interaction, and on the meaning of events to the participants in those events, means that norms and values are not always stable, but are subject to adjustment as part of an ongoing interpretive process (Blumer, 1969). Symbolic interactionism is considered to be the basis of grounded theory (Annells, 1996; Goulding, 2002; Locke, 2001). It recognises that:

> the genuine mark of an empirical science is to respect the nature of its empirical world – to fit its problems, its guiding conceptions, its procedures of inquiry, its techniques of study, its concepts, and its theories to that world … (and that this should be carried out) by direct examination. (Blumer, 1969, p. 48)

Following on from this work, the research method known as grounded theory was first devised in 1967 by two sociologists, Glaser and Strauss, who later disagreed publicly about aspects of the method they had created together (Locke, 2001). Over time, Glaser had come to focus on the interpretive, contextual and emergent nature of theory development, while Strauss increasingly stressed the importance of highly complex coding techniques (Goulding, 2002).
Strauss parted company with Glaser and joined with a third party, Corbin, to write an updated version of grounded theory procedures in 1990, a publication that was angrily rebutted by Glaser in 1992 (Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As a result, there are several variants of grounded theory that reflect the focus of each exponent, known as the Glaserian method, the Straussian approach, along with a third variant known as the constructivist (or Charmaz) approach (Creswell, 2007; Dey, 1999; Weed, 2009). This third and most recent variant is an interpretation by Charmaz (2006), who studied under both Glaser and Strauss, and formalises developments in grounded theory that have occurred in the four decades since its introduction.

3.2.3 Constructivist grounded theory

The basic tenets of Charmaz’s (2006) constructivist stance are detailed as follows:

- The grounded theory process is fluid, interactive and open-ended;
- The problem informs methodological choices for data collection;
- Researchers are part of, not separate to, what they study;
- Grounded theory analysis shapes conceptual content and direction, and emerging analysis may lead to multiple methods and sites;
- Successive levels of abstraction, through comparative analysis, constitute the core of grounded theory analysis; and
- Analytic direction arises from researchers’ interactions and interpretations, and emerging analyses, not external prescriptions.

Charmaz (2006) explained where her interpretation departed from the earlier variants. First, she said that while grounded theory’s classical roots are in pragmatism and positivism, she has brought it ‘forward’ to constructivism, making it part of the interpretive tradition, with the stated aim of showing the “complexities of
particular worlds, views and actions” (p. 132). Second, she noted Glaser’s (1992) measures of quality – fit, work, relevance and modifiability – and to those she added credibility, originality, resonance and usefulness.

Third, Charmaz (2006) noted the existence of ‘abductive reasoning’, which considers all possible theoretical explanations, forms hypotheses for each explanation, checks them by examining data, and pursues the most plausible explanation. Fourth, she introduced the concept of “theoretical playfulness” (p. 71), which allows the freedom to try out ideas and see where they lead. Finally, Charmaz (2006) believed that researchers can use the tools of grounded theory, without subscribing to a prescribed theory of knowledge, nor to a view of reality.

Charmaz’s (2006) view was that theories are not discovered, they are instead constructed by the researcher, based on interactions with the field. Corbin and Strauss (2008) later supported this, observing that the ‘construction’ process occurred on a number of levels:

(We) agree with the constructivist viewpoint that concepts and theories are constructed by researchers out of stories that are constructed by research participants who are trying to explain and make sense out of their own experiences and/or lives, both to the researcher and to themselves. Out of these multiple constructions, analysts construct something that they call knowledge. (p. 4)

This study followed the Charmaz (2006) constructivist variant of grounded theory, since it aligned most closely with the constructivist paradigm for this study. Constructivism involves a reliance on participants’ views, consideration of the complexity of views, a focus on the contexts in which people live and work, and development of theory rather than use of existing theory (Creswell, 2007). These elements reflected the aims of this research.
3.2.4 Method for undertaking grounded theory

Broadly, there are four main stages in grounded theory research. First, after initial data collection, multiple data observations are assigned to categories. Incidents within each category are then compared, and naming occurs in tandem with comparing. Data reduction occurs through conceptualising these categories. Incidents and categories may reflect something that is continually present, as well as something continually absent.

Second, categories and their properties are integrated. Less time is spent comparing incidents to each other while more time is used comparing incidents to their categories. Grounded theory uses constant comparative method throughout all stages of development, comparing incidents to incidents, and incidents to categories, as well as comparing categories with what exists in the literature. In this phase, relationships between categories are considered.

The third stage involves settling on theoretical components and clarifying the story to be told. New conceptual categories can be named at any stage of the theory development process. The development of categories stops when no new dimensions are found, at which point theoretical saturation is reached. Finally, theory that emerges is written, relationships are converted into propositions, and the goodness of the theory should be evaluated (Glaser, 1992; Goulding, 2002; Locke, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It is not appropriate to evaluate grounded theory with standard measures of research quality, such as reliability and validity, because theory generated is highly context-relevant, and so cannot usually be generalised to populations.
3.2.5 Disadvantages of grounded theory

Grounded theory is complex, and can seem illogical to those who are accustomed to testing theory, rather than generating it. While suited to this study, the method has a number of disadvantages:

- Grounded theory presumes competence. Researchers require the ability to maintain analytic distance, and to have or develop theoretical sensitivity;
- The process of simultaneous data gathering and data analysis is ‘easier said than done’, as meaning is not always instantly obvious;
- Theoretical sampling means that sampling is driven by the data, so the researcher must be flexible;
- Each stage of the research is not necessarily linear; and
- The emergence of theory is not necessarily guaranteed (Glaser, 1992; Goulding, 2002; Locke, 2001).

In addition, due to debate between its various exponents, grounded theory is often misused and/or misunderstood. Charmaz (2006) observed that grounded theory has been “packed with multiple meanings … fraught by numerous misunderstandings … (and) complicated by competing versions” (p. 177). Goulding (2002) also referred to confusion caused by the number of variants, and, although noting that some elements remained constant, she referred to grounded theory as “a method in transition” (p. 46). Locke (2001) stated that researchers have at times adapted grounded theory through selection and combination – that is, combined it with case studies for a mixed methods approach, or selectively integrated elements of grounded theory within other qualitative styles. These adaptations bring a “definite eclecticism to grounded theorising” (Locke, 2001, p. 106). Dey (1999) summarised this notion of procedural variability best, when he said “there are as many methods of grounded theory as there are grounded theorists” (p. 2).
Weed (2009) carried out a review of grounded theory studies and concurred that there was a general lack of understanding, stating that few papers could genuinely “lay claim to the grounded theory label” (p. 509). In an effort to clarify what constitutes grounded theory, Weed (2009) identified eight core elements common to each approach, that are necessary conditions for grounded theory research, which are set out in Table 3.1.

The issues identified – that is, the number of variants, together with the lack of clarity in both procedure and paradigm – may explain why grounded theory has not been used widely in sport management research to date (Sotiriadou & Shilbury, 2010; Weed, 2010). Clearly, the main issue with the use of grounded theory is that it has not been static. It has continually transformed and evolved since inception, which has in turn generated confusion about what is actually involved.
Table 3.1: Eight (8) Core Elements of Grounded Theory Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iterative Process</td>
<td>Data is collected, analysed and compared with the literature repeatedly until theoretical saturation is reached</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Sampling</td>
<td>Data is sampled according to issues that emerge from analysis, with the aim being to refine and develop emerging concepts, not to increase sample size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Sensitivity</td>
<td>Researchers must start with some awareness, but without any preconceived notions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes, Memos and Concepts</td>
<td>The basic process is one in which initial coding, by whatever method, seeks to describe the phenomena, before moving to a second stage which seeks to conceptualise the phenomena, that is, moving from codes to concepts by various techniques. The process is aided by the writing of memos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant Comparison</td>
<td>This method of repeatedly comparing what is found in data, codes, concepts and literature is a way of continually checking that emerging insights are and remain grounded, toward development of theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Saturation</td>
<td>A point reached when further iterations are no longer necessary as nothing new is emerging, ensuring theoretical completeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantive Theory</td>
<td>Theory generated from a grounded theory study is not generally applicable, because it is a theory grounded in a substantive area and is usually applicable only in that context. It is possible that substantive grounded theories may be linked to create a formal grounded theory which may be more widely applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fit, work, relevance and modifiability</td>
<td>These are the appropriate measures of quality for grounded theory research. ‘Fit’ considers how closely the concepts and theory generated fit the incidents and phenomena that emerged from the data. A theory ‘works’ if it is able to explain in context the problems and processes examined. A theory is deemed ‘relevant’ if it deals with the concerns of those involved. Grounded theory is ‘modifiable’ if it is open to extension to accommodate new insights, which is important given that people and processes are considered to be in a constant state of adjustment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: adapted from (Weed, 2009)
3.2.6 Use of the literature review in grounded theory

This research closely follows the Charmaz or constructivist grounded theory method, with one deviation, being the use of the literature review in creating codes prior to the analysis of data. In research, it is usual that theory is generated deductively, after which researchers go out into the world to test their theory, however traditional grounded theory works in reverse of what is usual, going out into the world first in order to generate theory. The grounded theory purist (Glaserian) method dictates that the researcher should obtain data with no prior knowledge of the literature. For a long time, this particular tenet of grounded theory has been regarded as an imperative for all variants, however it need not be so.

Weed (2009) said that the idea that grounded theory is solely inductive is a common misconception, as it involves a mix of both inductive and deductive reasoning, so it is simply more inductive than some other methods. Locke (2001) discussed traditional grounded theory’s rejection of a priori theorising on the basis that it might obstruct the development of theory. She concluded “this does not mean, however, that researchers should embark on their studies without the general guidance provided by some sort of orienting theoretical perspective” (p. 34). Locke (2001) also noted that some researchers chose to develop “a rough working framework” (p. 102) prior to data gathering, to guard against being overwhelmed by the volume of unstructured data, as did Miles and Huberman (1994), who similarly believed that the development of key conceptual models was a good starting point. This research began with just such a “rough working framework”, in the form of the initial model of the sport selection system offered in Figure 1.8. The model was based on what was gleaned from the literature review, and was constructed to serve both as a starting point for the study and as a possible way of categorising future data.
Goulding (2002) agreed that grounded theory should start from a “tentative literature base”, and noted that the erroneous notion of entering the field first without consulting the literature is “probably responsible for many scholars’ rejection of the methodology” (p. 164). She further explained that:

grounded theorists do not rely directly on the literature to shape their ideas, since it is expected that the theory will emerge independently from the analysis. This however should not be misinterpreted as commencing from a position of total ignorance, rather the researcher should read in related areas from the start and allow the data to direct the literature to inform the emerging theory, and vice versa. (Goulding, 2002, p. 165)

Charmaz (2006) observed that Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) and Glaser’s (1992) position on the literature review was ambiguous. She stated that “the place of the literature review in grounded theory research has long been both disputed and misunderstood”, but advised that the “trick” was to use literature without “stifling creativity … (or) strangling theory” (p. 165).

Corbin and Strauss (2008) clarified their position on literature review prior to data collection, by stating that both technical and non-technical literature is useful, in different ways. Technical literature can provide initial questions, concepts, and ideas for sampling. Non-technical literature can be used as data, for making comparisons, and can act as the foundation for developing general theory. They observed that the former can hinder creativity if it is allowed to stand between the researcher and the data but, used for comparative purposes, it can assist with the identification of properties and dimensions.
Theoretical frameworks were seen as a form of technical literature, sometimes used as a guide with which to approach the research. Corbin and Strauss (2008) were very clear that exposure to various forms of literature prior to conducting research can be valuable:

Before beginning a project, a researcher can turn to the literature to formulate questions for initial observations and interviews … Familiarity with relevant literature can enhance sensitivity to subtle nuances in data … published descriptive materials can be useful to a researcher. Writings often provide illustrations of some concept or findings that include very descriptive data on a relevant topic with very little interpretation. Reading such literature is almost like reading field notes collected by another researcher for the same or another purpose. Such largely uninterpreted findings can stimulate thinking and make an analyst more sensitive to what is in his or her own data. It can also suggest questions that a researcher can ask (of the data). (p. 19)

The purpose of this traditional rejection of *a priori* knowledge was to ensure that researchers did not enter the field with preconceived ideas. Preconceived ideas by their very definition might obstruct the free flow of new ideas, and potentially also tempt researchers to ‘force’ the data to fit with their preconceived notions in order to demonstrate successful research.

Seidel and Urquhart (2013) considered the perceived threat of ‘forcing’ in the context of information systems research, and concluded that there was no empirical evidence that ‘forcing’ occurred. They found that researchers deliberately chose and even adapted grounded theory procedures as they fit, both to the phenomena being studied and with the intent of their research. They argued this was in line with the constructivist approach to grounded theory, in which both data and interpretations are the result of constructions by researchers who engaged with the field. As recently as 2013, and as grounded theory approaches its fiftieth birthday, Seidel and Urquhart (2013) said that grounded theory was (still) an evolving method.
The common misconception that grounded theorists must first collect data before reviewing literature started as a seed sown by grounded theory purists, which has since taken root and thrived due to a lack of understanding and knowledge of the evolution of the method over time. As can be seen however, there is a great deal of support for undertaking literature review prior to data collection, as long as such knowledge is used judiciously, so as not to interfere with the process. This research involved a literature review prior to data collection, for a number of reasons.

First, as outlined, the Charmaz (2006) or constructivist grounded theory method allowed it, and other proponents actively encouraged it, with adaptation of the method to suit the researcher’s needs having become common practice over time. Second, as has already been outlined in Chapter 2, there was no formal literature available for this research that had the potential to influence data analysis. Third, in practical terms in the year this research was carried out, it was thought to be both naïve and even inept to ‘go out into the field’ to ask questions with no prior knowledge of the research topic at hand.

Such an approach, if taken, would have reflected badly on both the researcher and the university represented, in the modern sport industry marketplace. It would have undoubtedly wasted the time of already time-poor participants, who are constantly being approached to assist with research by students and, in that respect, would have constituted an insult to them. If the researcher was to get close to and obtain participants’ views, particularly when seeking ‘rich’ data, it was considered incumbent on the researcher to have made some prior effort to understand the topic to prevent asking ill-informed questions of participants, and potentially offending their sensibilities.
Finally, there was no evidence to support the notion that researchers do, in fact, ‘force’ their data to match their preconceived notions. While it is accepted that researcher bias exists and is probably inevitable – that is, researchers’ values and experience affect interpretation of data – the idea that researchers might actively force research outcomes took the concept of researcher influence one step further. It may be that in 1967, when grounded theory was first devised, researchers were not as closely scrutinised as they are now by their university-based supervisors. Overall, the purist notion of beginning enquiry with a ‘clean slate’ was and is, like most ideals, impractical in the real world.

3.2.7 Departure from standard-form Charmaz (2006) constructivist grounded theory

It was established then that neither the review of the literature prior to data collection nor the preparation of a theoretical framework precluded this research from claiming its grounded theory label. Both of these steps were carried out within this research, since both have been widely condoned and even embraced, as outlined. The single departure from the Charmaz or constructivist grounded theory method previously referred to however is neither of these – it involved the construction of some codes for this research prior to the analysis of data.

While contrary to Charmaz’s (2006) constructivist grounded theory method, this one aspect of the research fits within the broader spectrum of theory-building approaches, of which grounded theory is but a part. Miles and Huberman (1994) did not advocate a single approach, rather they looked at a compilation of methods for dealing with data that would promote the development of theoretical propositions by researchers. Tesch (1990) and Jansen (2010) were satisfied that categories and codes might be
generated either before or during the study, from the researcher’s questions or propositions, or from problem areas and key concepts that were considered relevant at the outset of the study.

In a general discussion of theory-building research, Eisenhardt (2002) considered that early identification of both the research question and possible constructs was helpful. She stated that *a priori* specification of constructs could help to shape the initial design of theory-building research, noting that this practice while not common was valuable, as it provided a “firmer empirical grounding” for the emergent theory. Any such constructs were to be considered tentative however, since “no construct is guaranteed a place in the resultant theory, no matter how well it is measured” (p. 11).

As for grounded theory, all forms of theory-building research were to begin as closely as possible to the ideal of no theory under consideration, and no hypotheses to test. Though important to try, Eisenhardt (2002) concurred that it was “impossible to achieve this ideal of a clean theoretical slate”. She recommended that investigators should formulate a research problem and possibly specify some potentially important variables with reference to the literature, but “avoid thinking about specific relationships between variables and theories as much as possible, especially at the outset of the process” (p. 12).

This suggests that while the formulation of constructs, variables, categories or codes prior to data analysis is a departure from what Huberman and Miles (2002) refer to as the “prescribed formula” of grounded theory, and indeed from any of its known major variants, the practice was considered acceptable within the wider boundaries of theory building research. With regard to this research, it should first be noted that
the preconceived codes were used as a guide for lengthy, semi-structured interviews, in which participants had sufficient time and opportunity to head off in any number of non-preconceived directions.

Second, it should be understood that the preconceived categories numbered ten out of the total of twenty-seven categories that ultimately emerged, so they by no means precluded the emergence of grounded data. Third, there is no evidence that the preconceived categories that were adopted in any way prevented the emergence of theory nor forced theory within this research. On the basis that this minor departure from the constructivist grounded theory approach was reported, justified and had neither meaningful nor adverse effects, the grounded theory approach was still applicable to this research. The construction of some codes prior to data analysis will be outlined in more detail in Section 3.4 Data Analysis.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

3.3.1 Theoretical sampling

It is usual that a sample of a population is selected for any given study, however grounded theory dictates the use of theoretical sampling. Since sampling occurs until theoretical saturation is reached, the sample size is considered to be irrelevant. From a core of fifteen sports operating under twelve NSOs, 21 selector interviews were completed. Given that the problem was most evident in Olympic sports, selectors interviewed were from sports that:
• Selected competitors for either or both Olympic and Commonwealth Games;
• Had a mix of male and female competitors, from individual and/or team sports
• Were most likely to be able to provide answers to the research questions;
• Were considered likely to agree to assist with research; and
• Were identified as having varying levels of past selection process controversy.

3.3.2 Interview schedule

The method used in this study was in-depth interview, as was appropriate for collecting data on individuals’ personal histories, perspectives, and experiences, particularly when a sensitive topic was being explored. A range of sport organisations that met the criteria in Section 3.3.1 - that is, they competed at Olympic or Commonwealth Games level, with both males and female competitors, who competed either individually or in teams - were contacted by phone. Of the organisations in that range, those who agreed to assist formed the sample.

Initial contact was made most commonly (via the receptionist) with the chair of selectors, or the high performance manager, who in turn passed on the request for an interview to all selectors. This method of disseminating information had the effect of conveying approval to individual selectors to proceed if they wished to do so. Individual selectors either made contact direct or were contacted to arrange interview. Some sports contacted did not respond at all to phone calls, emails and messages left, including athletics, badminton, volleyball and basketball. Two sports that had a history of selection appeals and associated media controversy – rowing, and yachting – did respond, but declined to be involved.
The shortest interview took one hour, while the longest took one-and-a-half hours. Questions were a mix of both open and closed type to allow a wide range of questions to be put to the participant in a reasonable amount of time, and they were adjusted and refined, according to what was learned from early interviews. Interviews were semi-structured, that is, a set of questions was formulated to act as a guide and was asked of all participants, with flexibility allowed for the interviewer and the participant to digress, and for the interviewer to probe further when it was evident that more detail could be elicited. Participant responses were allowed to affect the order in which questions were posed.

The interview schedule was designed to capture basic demographic data, such as age, income and education, as a way of learning about the participants, and also as a way of ‘breaking the ice’ to get them talking. This information was a minor part of the interview, and its data was suited to presentation in a quantitative format (see Chapter 4). The interview schedule was designed at the very beginning of the research, when some things were known and/or suspected. For example, at that preliminary stage it was thought that job satisfaction and/or job engagement might be key factors affecting how selectors go about their role, but it was not known for certain, so there was much speculation in design of the interview schedule, as is appropriate for exploratory research. Much has emerged since then, both in terms of the available literature and of the data.

Further, it should be said that existing formal measures could have been used within the interview, but were not. There are, for example, a number of acceptable job satisfaction scales, as well as a few for job engagement, including a job engagement scale adapted for the sports environment (Guillen & Martinez-Alvarado, 2014),
however there were a number of reasons why these were not employed. First, the interview schedule was broad, covered a number of broad topics and was time-consuming, since all interviews exceeded one hour. The addition of questions to ensure that a formal measure was included would have made the interview so long as to be unwieldy and uncomfortable for all concerned. Second, there appears to be overlap between the satisfaction and engagement constructs, so that, at this stage, “the way engagement is typically measured may be inherently flawed” (Wefald, Mills, Smith, & Downey, 2012, p. 87). Finally, and most importantly, it was not the aim of this exploratory research to formally measure any constructs. Human research ethics approval was obtained for the research, and a copy of the interview schedule is included at Appendix A.

The same researcher carried out all interviews, to ensure consistency. They were conducted in person where possible, by Skype (or equivalent) as second preference, and by phone as a last resort, when the former two options were not available. This was to ensure that eye contact was established between interviewer and interviewee wherever possible, to assist in establishing a bond and promote authenticity. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participants could elect to remain anonymous, and confidentiality was protected. A single external transcription firm transcribed data from the interviews, which further promoted consistency. Brief notes (memos) containing broad impressions of the data were taken immediately after interviews, stored and retained for later use.
3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

This section explains the steps used to analyse the available data, which are outlined to ensure that this research can be both understood and replicated, if necessary. The importance of this section is underlined by the following statement:

Researchers who espouse different methodologies will typically use different research methods. But all researchers need to be concerned with describing their procedures (since they often leave behind) too few footprints to allow others to judge the utility of their work. (Huberman & Miles, 2002, p. xi)

Given the volume of data, analysis was undertaken in three separate stages. Stage One involved the identification of data that related to ten (10) predefined categories that were set out in the interview schedule, which had arisen by way of recurring themes encountered within the literature review. Questions were put to participants about these specified variables and answers were categorised accordingly, so, for example, responses to questions about satisfaction were initially allocated directly to the satisfaction category. These predefined categories, along with their definitions, are set out in Table 3.2.

Stage One involved a ‘first pass’ through data that focused only on the pre-conceived categories, however during the process, other categories began to emerge from the data. This necessitated a second pass through the data – Stage Two – to ignore the predefined categories and to focus on emerging themes. A further twelve (12) categories resulted from a second round of data immersion, and these are set out in Table 3.3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Definition/Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Time commitment</td>
<td>Commitment is explained as a promise to do something or carry out a duty or responsibility. In this case, the promise involved the provision of a certain amount of time to carry out a given task, and specifically related to selectors’ commitment to set aside time to carry out the selection task. The interview schedule sought to discover if there was any disparity in expectations, that is, between the amount of time selectors expected to set aside to carry out the task, compared with the actual amount of time they found was necessary to carry out the task (Merriam-Webster, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Motivation is explained as a feeling of enthusiasm or interest that makes a person determined to do something, or a reason for doing something. The interview schedule sought to find out what motivated selectors to undertake the role, as well as consider their level of motivation (Merriam-Webster, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>Satisfaction is explained as the feeling of pleasure you get when you achieve or obtain something you want, or the action of providing something that someone wants or needs. The interview schedule sought to find out whether or not selectors were satisfied, and why (Merriam-Webster, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Commitment is explained as a strong belief in something, a promise to do something, enthusiasm for something, or the feeling of responsibility for doing something. The interview schedule set out to find out whether and to what extent selectors were committed to their sport (Merriam-Webster, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support is explained as the extent to which others approve of and help with your activities, whether others help to hold or bear a weight or responsibility, or the extent to which people in an organisation assist each other and work together. The interview schedule sought to find out whether or not selectors felt supported by others in carrying out their role (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>Conflict is defined as strong disagreement between people or groups, or a situation in which it is difficult for two things to exist together or be true at the same time. The interview schedule asked whether selectors experienced conflict and, if so, to what extent, what form it took, and what effects it might have (Merriam-Webster, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Change is about something becoming or being made different, or being replaced with something, or the starting of something new. The interview schedule asked selectors if they felt change had affected their role, how change (if any) had been managed, and how it affected their role (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Basis of appointment</td>
<td>Basis means the method or system used, while appointment refers to being given a new job, especially an important one. In this instance, the interview schedule set out to examine how selectors were chosen for the role (Merriam-Webster, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Approach</td>
<td>An approach is a particular way of thinking about or dealing with something, and it is also defined as a path or road that leads to a place. The interview schedule sought to consider how selectors approach and go about the task of selection of athletes (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>System quality</td>
<td>A system is defined as a set of connected things that work together for a purpose, or a method of organising or doing things. Quality refers to how good or bad that system might be. The interview schedule asked selectors what they thought about the quality of the selection system (Merriam-Webster, 2014).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.3: First set of emergent codes (7 of 12)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Definition/Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Criticism</td>
<td>Criticism is defined as comment that expresses disapproval on the basis of perceived faults or mistakes. Survey responses that contained the term ‘criticism’ were initially coded as part of ‘conflict’, however criticism is a more specific term with a slightly different meaning. Selectors used the word repeatedly, and as a result, criticism was initially categorised separately (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Culture is a set of ideas, beliefs and ways of behaving of an organization or group of people. Culture emerged as a category worthy of consideration when certain survey responses indicated its existence (Merriam-Webster, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Geography is explained as the relative arrangement of places, and in this context refers to the location of places over a large continent with consideration to how that might be managed. While it is self-evident that distance is an issue for Australian sport, geography emerged as an important factor due to its repeated appearance in survey responses (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Leadership is strictly defined as the position of being the leader in charge with power, authority and influence, the qualities and skills of being a good leader, or the position of being more successful than anyone you are competing against. It is defined most commonly in the field of management studies as the process of influencing people to achieve a common goal (Summerfield, 2014). The concept of leadership emerged from the data not by direct language, but by inference (Merriam-Webster, 2014; Oxford Dictionaries, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Memorable comments</td>
<td>This category was added to set aside and pay tribute to the language and highly illustrative analogies that were used by selectors during the interviews. Memorable comments were coded into the category relevant to the point being made, and were simultaneously coded into this category to be recognised separately for their phraseology and their ability to communicate a particular point.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Other roles</td>
<td>This category emerged from the data, when it became evident over a number of interviews that many selectors were carrying out more than one role within their organisation, making role clarity a factor of interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Part of coaching</td>
<td>This category was unanticipated, and became a necessary addition when a number of selectors indicated that they either saw themselves or were seen by others as part of the coaching function within their sport organisation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

112
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Definition/Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Profile</td>
<td>This category was added to manage selectors’ demographic and psychographic details such as age, gender, location, income, work status, family type, and education level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Responsibility is defined as the state or job of being in charge of someone or something and of making sure that what happens is right or satisfactory. It is also explained as a duty related to a job or position, and also as the blame for something that has happened. All three of these views of responsibility apply to the data collected. This category was added when a number of comments indicated that responsibility was an important consideration for many of the selectors interviewed (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Structure of panel</td>
<td>Structure is defined as the way that parts of something are organised or arranged into a whole, or an organisation that is made up of many parts that work together. A panel is a group of people who make decisions or judgments. The structure of the panel was initially looked at as part of the ‘approach’ construct, in terms of how selections are done within sport organisations, however, each explanation about panel structure was lengthy and was, therefore, segregated for ease of data management (Merriam-Webster, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Talent identification</td>
<td>Talent is defined as a natural ability for being good at a particular activity. Identification is explained as the action of recognising something that is the subject of a search. It can also mean close emotional association, and does so in the context of this research. The talent identification process in the sport context is, therefore, about understanding what is needed to succeed at a sport, along with finding someone who is, or may be good at it. It was not known at the outset whether selectors interviewed would be involved in the identification of talent, however, it became evident that some of them do and this category was added (Merriam-Webster, 2014; Oxford Dictionaries, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Training is described as the process of training people or of being trained for a profession or activity. The interview schedule asked what training was provided for participants to assist them in carrying out their role, and this data had initially been included as part of the ‘support’ category. Potential areas for training emerged as an important factor distinct from support (Merriam-Webster, 2014).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stages Two and Three identified additional categories that emerged from the transcribed interviews. During the process of making a second pass through the data looking for data to be coded to the initial twelve emergent categories derived from Stage Two), a further five categories emerged in Stage Three which were worthy of further examination. These are set out in Table 3.4.

**Table 3.4: Second set of emergent codes (5)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Definition/Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Communication is described as the process of giving information or of making ideas and emotions known to someone, or as a system for sending information. The word communication recurred often in the words of participants explaining how their selection processes worked, and, as a result, it emerged as a category (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>Feelings are variously described as an emotional state, an opinion about something, or something you feel physically in the body. All three descriptions apply to the data. The feelings and perceptions of participants were sought via the interview schedule, and a wide range of emotional and physical descriptors were used, which warranted adding this category for closer examination (Merriam-Webster, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Power is defined in this context as the ability to influence or control what people do or think. The concept of power presented itself a number of times, justifying its addition, at least initially, as a category (Merriam-Webster, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Stakeholders</td>
<td>Stakeholders were defined as a person or organisation that has invested in a business and owns part of it. Investment in this context need not be taken literally. A wide range of stakeholders were mentioned regularly throughout the data, so it was decided to add them as a further category to make a comprehensive list and consider where they fit (Merriam-Webster, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Stress and pressure</td>
<td>Stress is described as a state of mental tension that causes a worried or nervous feeling that, in turn, prevents relaxation, usually caused by pressure at work, personal or financial problems. Pressure is described variously as attempts to persuade or force, a force pressing on something, conditions that influence the way events develop, or a worried feeling when dealing with something difficult, stressful or complicated. Responses indicating the existence of stress and pressure were initially coded to ‘conflict’, however, they were later separated, as conflict proved to be a vast category with many potential sub-categories (Merriam-Webster, 2014; Oxford Dictionaries, 2014).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data were first analysed manually by the interviewer, initially examined in blocks of text that were answers to the questions posed. The same data was then reviewed on a line-by-line basis to identify where there might be overlap with other codes. All coded text was managed using the NVivo data analysis software program, which was designed to cope with large amounts of text. This process is referred to in grounded theory as ‘open coding’.

Given that some of the codes were derived from the literature and were in place prior to collection of data, it was appropriate to acknowledge this by dividing the process of open coding for this research into two parts, that is, predefined coding and open coding. To better explain the process, the following are two examples of passages of data showing how they were coded, which was initially by text block, with the entire passage coded in reference to the question that was posed, and then secondarily coded on a line-by-line basis, which resulted in coding data of relevance to three (3) further categories.

**Passage # 1**

The following participant was asked if the selector role was stressful:

[Laughs]. It can be at times. When there's... the national coach for the last eight years has been Russian so (1) *sometimes he plays games in selection because he's got an involvement with the high performance squad as well* that he's directly coaching. I think over a period... very early on (2) *it was very stressful because he was distrustful*, he didn't know us very well and we probably didn't know him well, and [we were] (3) *not used to the European gamesmanship* that was played.

This first passage in its entirety was coded initially to “satisfaction” because the answer was given in direct response to Question No. 11 about stress, which formed part of the satisfaction block of questions in the interview schedule (refer Appendix
A). On subsequent line-by-line passes through this data, parts of the passage were variously coded to categories of (1) “power” (as a person was said to be ‘playing games’), (2) “stress and pressure” (because it was reported as being a stressful time), and (3) “culture” (because the conduct of the person referred to was deemed to be ‘European’ in nature).

**Passage # 2**

The following participant was asked if professional and volunteer personnel worked well together:

They do. But like all things, in our sport it’s a little bit unique in that the women’s program (1) goes one direction in Europe, our élite men [are] racing professional teams, and they’re separate, they really only come together for major events a week or two before, and our juniors, because being juniors, are picked, go to camps, so they spend a lot more time together. So what I’m saying, I think there can be... they work well together, but I think (2) communication can certainly be improved. And its people skills, I think, you know we are... I have... you know, I’ve (indistinct words), so (3) my name’s not going to be listed anywhere, but we have certain head coaches who (4) regularly feed me information from Europe all year on different selections …

The above passage was initially coded in full to the category “conflict” as this question formed part of the conflict group of questions, being Question No. 14 in the interview schedule (refer Appendix A). On subsequent line-by-line passes through the data, parts of this passage were also coded to (1) “geography” (because athletes and staff were clearly widespread), (2) “communication” (because it could be improved), (3) “memorable comments” (to keep in mind that this participant was clearly concerned to ensure he/she was anonymous and perhaps feared reprisal), and (4) “power” (in terms of information power, and the information he/she receives from those who have it).
Once all data had been classified in this way to its relevant categories, comparisons were then made between all incidents grouped together under each category – so for example, all incidents that were indicative of power were examined to see where there were similarities and differences within that category. This constant comparison process was carried out for all categories, and across categories. Certain responses to questions were compared with literature. For example, when data was coded to the power category, the various types of power outlined in the literature review in Chapter 2 were consulted during the process.

In addition, some responses about selection policy were compared to the relevant sport organisations’ published selection policies, almost all of which were readily available on their internet websites. This was done for clarification, most commonly to check whether the process as described verbally by the participant was reflected in the published material. Notes were made at the time these comparisons were made.

Having reached data saturation, where no new responses were being received, and having carried out a process of constant comparison during both the data collection and data analysis stages, the next stage of coding in grounded theory was reached. This is known as axial coding, in which relationships between categories were considered. The twenty-seven (27) categories fell into two (2) main groups, which aligned with research questions 2 and 3, being how selectors felt about the task of selection and how they carried out the selection task. This is shown in the code matrix at Table 3.5.
### Table 3.5: Matrix of data categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>OPEN CODES</th>
<th>AXIAL CODES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Time commitment</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Basis of appointment</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Approach</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>System quality</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Criticism</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Geography</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Memorable comments</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Other roles</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Part of coaching</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Profile</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Panel structure</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Talent ID</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Stakeholders</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Stress &amp; pressure</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some codes, such as the structure of the selection panel, affected only how selectors did their job, whereas motivation affected how selectors felt about their role primarily, and secondarily how they actually performed their role. To clarify any overlap, codes were re-classified in terms of the research question to which they responded and, in addition, some codes were condensed into related codes.

Specifically, time commitment, criticism, feelings (including those made evident by memorable comments) and stress were seen as likely dis-satisfiers and so became part of the satisfaction construct. Talent identification was a highly motivating aspect of the role and so was amalgamated with the motivation code. Training provided by organisations was included as part of the support code. Profile information was used to collect and group demographic and psychographic information only.

Approach was replaced by two categories, being selection policy and selection process, which encompassed all of the job-related codes – that is, basis of appointment, approach, geography, other roles, part of coaching, panel structure and stakeholders. System quality comment was also job-related but was held to be separate since it related to the system overall, rather than any of its individual components, as did the other codes. After categories were subsumed and/or eliminated, the final list of fourteen categories, along with the research question to which they applied, is shown in Table 3.6.
Table 3.6: Revised category list

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>How they feel (RQ2)</th>
<th>How they do (RQ3)</th>
<th>Ref</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>C5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>C5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>C5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>C5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>C5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>C5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>C5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>C5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>C5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>C5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>C6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Policy</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>C6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>C6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>System</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>C6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A journal was kept during the analysis process to document decisions made and the reasons for those decisions, as well as the categories created, revisions to categories, and observations made during the analysis process. Findings were then put aside for several weeks, and later reviewed with a ‘fresh eye’ to consider how the researcher’s own filter system may have affected the data, before any attempt was made to formalise relationships and articulate theory generated. Relationships between categories and the propositions that emerged are outlined in detail in Chapters 5 and 6, and are considered in light of the theoretical framework that was first advanced at the outset of this research, in Chapter 1.
3.5 LIMITATIONS

A number of limitations with this research should be recognised. Interviews were conducted with participants who currently acted as a selector for the nominated sports. Valuable data may also rest with persons who were selectors in the past (that is, those who were not currently selectors), however those people were not interviewed for this study. The quality of the data was also limited in other ways:

- selectors sometimes chose to limit the information they made available;
- some selectors within the group were inclined to give answers that made sure their organisation appeared to be ‘doing the right thing’ (as suggested by Shye, 2010):
- some sports that had a recent and very public history of selection decision controversy declined to participate. It is believed that they would have had much to contribute;
- some selectors were not equipped to answer some of the questions that were posed, as they simply did not have the information or the awareness of some topics that were raised.

In addition, grounded theory produces theory in context, and such theory if produced, may not age well, since it was applicable at the time and in the context described. Finally, the study was limited in terms of time and funding available to complete it.
3.6 SUMMARY

This chapter sets out the approach taken to investigate the specified research problem, as well as the specific steps throughout the process. As has been stated, no theory existed with respect to any aspects of the sport selection process. It was decided to consider the problem and generate theory by examining selectors’ perceptions of the process, and grounded theory presented itself as the most appropriate method to achieve these objectives.

In order to justify this decision, background to the development of grounded theory was provided, and various research paradigms were considered. Reasons were provided to explain the suitability of grounded theory for this study. Issues with and departures from the method were identified and examined. The role of the literature review, as undertaken in Chapter 2 of this thesis, was considered. In addition, methods for data sampling, collection and analysis were detailed in this chapter, and the limitations resulting from those decisions were noted. The results of data analysis are set out in the following chapters, being Chapters 4, 5 and 6.
4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the research was to determine selectors’ perceptions of the existing sport selection system. This goal was achieved by way of three (3) sub-questions, being:

- RQ1. What are the selectors like? This sub-question sought to understand the participant group and to see whether patterns, similarities or differences existed;
- RQ2. What is it like to be a selector? This sub-question sought to understand how they felt about the role; and
- RQ3. What is the selection system like? This sub-question sought to understand how selectors actually carried out the role, what they thought about the system and whether they perceived any weaknesses within the system.

This chapter responds to Research Question One (RQ1). It describes the demographic characteristics of the selectors that were interviewed, so the nature of both the individuals and the group as a whole can be understood.

4.2 SELECTOR CHARACTERISTICS

There were twenty-one (21) selectors who consented to be interviewed. They were from 12 sports, namely lawn bowls, triathlon, softball, cycling, shooting, gymnastics (men’s, women’s, trampoline and aerobics), diving, netball, archery, table tennis, squash and hockey. They selected athletes for teams or events ranging from Under 17 national development squads through to selection for individual and team events at the Commonwealth and Olympic Games. Five (5) of the selectors were professional selectors, in that they hold a full-time paid sport role within their sport that includes selection as one of its tasks, and the remaining sixteen (16) were volunteer selectors, the majority of whom were employed on a full-time basis.
elsewhere, that is, not employed with their sport organisation. Demographic characteristics are set out in detail in the following set of Figures 4.1 – 4.6, and are tabulated for the group in Table 4.1.

4.2.1 Age and sex

Figure 4.1 shows the distribution of age of those interviewed.

Figure 4.1: Age distribution of selectors

All selectors surveyed were aged over 36. The majority was aged between 56 and 65 years. There were thirteen (13) male (62%) and eight (8) female participants (38%).
4.2.2 Location

The selectors interviewed were from various States of Australia, as can be seen in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: Selectors by home State

The majority of participants (76%) were from what are known as the ‘Eastern States’ (Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria), which are the most populous States of Australia. Queensland was slightly over-represented, while Western Australia was under-represented, however, overall there was a mix of participants from all mainland States. The island State of Tasmania was not represented.
4.2.3 Education

Selectors were asked about their level of education in terms of four (4) categories – secondary (high school or technical college) or tertiary (university undergraduate or post-graduate). The findings are shown in Figure 4.3.

**Figure 4.3: Education level of selectors**

There were no TAFE (technical) school students, so TAFE and high school were amalgamated to become a single category representing secondary education. The majority of selectors (12) had completed secondary education (57%), while the remainder (9) had completed tertiary education (43%).

4.2.4 Employment status

Selectors were asked about their employment, and the findings are summarised in the following Table 4.1.
### Table 4.1: Selectors’ employment information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-retired</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed on full-time basis</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time sport professionals</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed in sport/rely on sport industry for income</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated fields – main income not from sport industry</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not employed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed business owner/operators</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time sport workers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time sport workers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public servants/teachers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other private sector employees</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall, the majority of selectors interviewed were full-time employees who acted as volunteers and/or part-time contractors for their respective sports. Only five (5) of the sixteen (16) full-time employees were employed on a full-time basis by their sport, as coaches, high performance staff or technical directors. Most of the employment categories listed in Table 4.1 provided flexibility in working hours, allowing the selectors time away from their usual job to be involved with their sport. For example, teachers have ample annual leave available to them for other leisure pursuits, public servants can generally work flexible hours, professionals have a high degree of value so can generally alter their working hours to suit their own interests, sport industry workers (particularly part-timers and contract workers) expect to work flexible hours, and retired persons have more time to contribute.

4.2.5 Income level

Selectors were not asked directly about their personal income levels, but were asked about their household income levels. This information is shown in Figure 4.4. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data states that the median gross household annual income for Australians at the time of writing was $74,984 per annum, while the average (mean) was $96,044 (ABS, 2013). The former is said to be a better indicator of what is common, while the latter can be inflated or skewed by a few high income earners. With 62 per cent of the group above the median Australian household income, selectors interviewed can be described as coming from households with relatively high levels of income. The ABS report notes that households with different life-cycle stages tend to have different income levels, and that average incomes were higher for households with non-dependent children. This is consistent with the age of this group of selectors (refer Fig. 4.1).
4.2.6 Involvement

With other sports. Selectors were asked whether they had acted as selectors for any other sport. The majority had not. Interestingly, some perceived “other sport” to mean assisting with selection at Club and/or State level for their sport, in other words, they chose to distinguish between levels of organisation within one sport, rather than between different sports, as the lower levels seemed like ‘different worlds’ to them. Two selectors had been involved with one other sport (that is, not their main sport) but to a much lesser extent, that is, they had not carried out the selection task at an elite level for their secondary sport. It seemed likely that the selectors’ focus on their particular sport was so all-consuming that it did not allow co-existence with another sport.
In sport via family. Participants were from a range of family types. Most selectors interviewed were from either the ‘standard’ family type, that is, two partners with children (8), or from ‘empty-nester’ families, that is, two partners with children no longer living at home (8). The remainder was from single parent families (2) or were themselves ‘children’ living at home with their parents (3).

Twelve (12) selectors had family members that either had been or were still involved in their sport (57%), while nine (9) had never had a family member involved in their sport (43%). This is shown in more detail Table 4.2, which gives more information on the nature of the involvement of others. Six participants reported becoming involved by others that went before them (parents, siblings and children), a further six involved others that came after them (partners and children), and the remaining nine said that no members of their family were involved.

Interestingly, the family involvement responses appeared to be mutually exclusive, that is, no one reported that they had become involved because of their parents and had also in turn got their own children involved. This may be an outcome of the phrasing of the interview schedule and requires further investigation.

In sport via own sport background. Selectors were asked about their own level of sporting achievement. This information is shown in the following Figure 4.5. Overall, fifty-seven per cent of selectors had reached a high level of sporting achievement (State level, or above), while forty-three per cent had not.
The nature of participants’ family involvement and their respective levels of sport achievement are shown in more detail in Table 4.2. This table shows (from L to R): whether the participant was a professional or a volunteer (P or V), whether they had family involved in their sport, (if so) which members, whether those members were still involved in the sport, and what level the selector had reached. For simplification, this was filtered into two categories only – elite (being State level or above) and participant (below State level).

The last two columns show in which direction the family involvement went – that is, some were caused to become involved by family members, while others caused the involvement of their family members. Professional or volunteer status appeared to be irrelevant, and it seems on the face of it that family involvement tended to perpetuate further family involvement.
Table 4.2: Details of involvement and achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prof/Vol</th>
<th>Family Inv</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Still?</th>
<th>Own Level</th>
<th>Follower (upward)</th>
<th>Leader (downward)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Parents &amp; siblings</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Elite</td>
<td>Involved via parents &amp; sibling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Elite</td>
<td>Involved via parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Elite</td>
<td>Involved via parents</td>
<td>Involved own children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Elite</td>
<td>Involved via parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Elite</td>
<td>Involved via parents</td>
<td>Involved own children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Partner &amp; children</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Elite</td>
<td>Involved via parents</td>
<td>Involved own children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Elite</td>
<td>Involved own husband</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Involved via children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Involved via children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Involved via brother</td>
<td>Involved own children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P Yes, V Yes refer to Professors and Volunteers respectively.
Of the group of twelve who reported family involvement, sixty-seven per cent had performed at an elite level (State or above) in their sport, while of the group of nine who reported no family involvement, forty-four per cent had reached the same level. Of those who reached the elite level, only three (25%) reported family involvement in the prior generation. The information in Table 4.2 was condensed into a cross-tabulation of involvement and achievement, to see if any link could be established between the two factors. No conclusions could be reached from a sample of this size, but Tables 4.2 and 4.3 indicate that the nature of the group is both mixed and balanced, in terms of the sport involvement and achievement questions.

### Table 4.3: Cross-tab of involvement and achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Family Inv.</th>
<th>No Family Inv.</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4.2.7 Experience

Selectors were also asked how long they had been acting as a selector for their sport. There was a range of experience within the sample group, as shown in Figure 4.6. The number of years in the selectors’ role ranged from one (1) year to sixteen (16) years, with a combined total of one hundred and twenty-three (123) years in the role across all participants, averaging out at 5.8 years. As shown in Figure 4.6, selectors’ level of experience was divided into four categories.
Twenty-nine per cent (29%) had less than 2 years’ experience in the role. A further twenty-four per cent (24%) reported between three (3) and five (5) years’ experience, nineteen per cent (19%) had been a selector for between six (6) and eight (8) years, and the remaining twenty-nine (29%) had been in the role for more than nine (9) years. In summary, fifty-three per cent of the selectors interviewed had up to five (5) years’ experience, while the remaining 47% had more than five (5) years’ experience. The majority of participants (72%) had held the role for three (3) years or more, which means they had experienced selection for at least one Olympic Games/World Cup/Commonwealth Games cycle. Overall, it was a balanced group in terms of participants’ level of experience in the role.
4.2.8 Comparison with other sport volunteers

Some of the information derived from this sample was consistent with descriptions of Australian sport volunteers (Nicholson & Hoye, 2008; Taylor et al., 2006):

- Australian sport volunteers have a relatively high rate of employment;
- Australian sport volunteers have high levels of education and labour force status;
- Australian sport volunteers were more likely to be male;
- Sport volunteers generally tended to be adults in the age range 35-54; and
- Many sport volunteers became involved through the involvement of their children.

Nicholson and Hoye’s (2008) examination of sport volunteers is useful for broad comparison purposes, noting that it was largely based on ABS data from 2003. This group differed in some ways:

- Many of the selectors in this sample had become involved due to the involvement of family members, that is, parents, siblings or children (57%), however, the influence of parents and siblings was more prevalent than that of children, since as can be seen, a number of participants were prior élite athletes within their sport;
- According to Nicholson and Hoye (2008), sport volunteers tended to volunteer for more than one organisation, however, in this sample, the majority of selectors interviewed had only ever been involved at this level with one sport organisation; and
- Nicholson and Hoye (2008) also noted that years of volunteering were usually less than six, whereas 43% of selectors in this sample had more than six years’ experience in the role.

Sport volunteers in the U.K. were described as most commonly male, in the age group 35-59 years (more young people volunteered, but the older people in that age range gave up more of their time), with higher income and education levels, with employment, home ownership (or tenure), and children. This is consistent with Australian results as outlined, with some subtle differences. English sport volunteers were also defined by their ethnicity (most commonly Caucasian/white), for having
children over the age of five (under that age, children proved to be a barrier to volunteering), having more than one car in the household (mobility), and they often reported a level of dissatisfaction with the provision of local sport (Taylor, Panagouleas & Nichols, 2012). Similarly in Canada, sport volunteers were usually male, aged 35-44, university graduates, employed with higher incomes, married and with children (Doherty, 2005). The majority of older sport industry volunteers in Canada were found to have been involved as previous athletes (Hamm-Kerwin, Misener & Doherty, 2009).

In non-Commonwealth contexts, Schlesinger, Egli and Nagel (2012), and later Schlesinger and Nagel (2013) described Swiss sport volunteers as usually male, middle-aged, holding several positions within the club and yet having been a volunteer for less than five years. In the context of an event based in Florida in the USA, Strigas and Jackson (2003) reported that sport volunteers were more commonly female, single or divorced and with an average age of 40 years. They too tended to be fully employed, with high incomes, and were usually Caucasian. Information on sport volunteerism in the U.S.A. is scant, and centres on sport volunteers who give short term assistance at major events. The sport system is different, and there is not the same level of reliance on volunteers as exists in Commonwealth countries.

4.2.9 Identification of participants

Each participant was given a unique identifier to help place them and their views (quoted throughout Chapters 5 and 6) in context within the research. It is a unique alphanumeric code, made up of the letter P or V, denoting professional or volunteer status, followed by the number of years that person has been in his/her current
selector role, followed by M or F denoting gender. “P2M” for example, is a professional male sport employee who has been a selector for 2 years, while “V10F” is a female sport volunteer who has been a selector for 10 years. Where duplication existed (that is, where there were two participants with the same characteristics such as “V2F”), these were set apart by the addition of a lower case letter, resulting in V2Fa, and V2Fb.

The columns in the table, from left to right, are as follows:

1. GRP: Allocates each participant to a particular sub-group according to the strength and nature of their commitment to their sport (the meaning of these groups is outlined in more detail in Chapter 7, at Section 7.4.1);

2. ID: Unique code for each participant, as outlined;

3. INDIV/TEAM: Whether the sport is an individual or a team sport;

4. SELECT: The level of selections being made by each participant. Most selectors are selecting for national teams, some select only development squads, and some do both;

5. P/V: Whether the selector is a professional or a volunteer;

6. GENDER: Denotes the participant’s gender;

7. AGE: The person’s age (range), in line with the age ranges in the interview schedule;

8. SEL YRS: The number of years in current selector role (rounded up to nearest whole year);

9. LVL SPORT ACH: Each participant’s own level of sport achievement;

10. EDUC: Level of education – “Sec” = secondary level education, “UU” = university under-graduate, and “UP” = university post-graduate;

11. INC: Household income level range, in line with the interview schedule groupings;

12. JOB: Each participant’s job;

13. EMPL BY SPT: Whether the participant is employed by sport (not necessarily by their own sport) – with “yes” for full-time sport employees, “no” for those not employed by sport, and “P/T” for those employed by sport on a part-time (or contract) basis.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Grp</th>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Ind/Team</th>
<th>Select</th>
<th>P/V</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sel Yrs</th>
<th>Lvl Sport Ach</th>
<th>Educ</th>
<th>Inc</th>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>Nat coach</td>
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<td>Vol</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Vol</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>Vol</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>46-55</td>
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<td>&gt;100K</td>
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<td>Both</td>
<td>Vol</td>
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<td>Vol</td>
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<td>Sec</td>
<td>&lt;50K</td>
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</table>
The name of each sport was not included in the table so that participants could remain anonymous. With respect to Column 4, the dividing line between team and individual sports, at least for this study, was not as clear-cut as might be expected. Only four sports could be easily defined as being either a team or an individual sport. Softball, netball and hockey are clearly team sports, while triathlon is an individual sport. All other sports on the list select both individual and teams for certain events, including, for example, diving, which selects pairs to compete as a team.

In addition, selectors often use the inclusive term ‘team’ to refer to a group of individuals selected for a given event, such as the Olympics – selectors for both shooting and archery talk about selecting their Olympic team, even though some members of that team may actually be competing as individuals. Gymnasts compete both as individuals and as part of a team. In the words of one participant:

   to give you an example, we want the team results, but in our last … Olympic Games, (name deleted) got injured and couldn’t do (sport deleted) … but it was really important to have (name deleted) there because she was the chance of getting an individual medal. So then we had to build a team around that … so (you can’t say) she’s not an all rounder, we’re not taking her … she will contribute to the team, but not as an all rounder … our focus is a team, but then as I say we’ve got athletes like (name deleted) who we’re also looking at individual results for as well … so you’ve got a balance” (P16F).

The ASC (2002) agrees that “… the expression ‘team sports’ contains grey areas. For instance, is a relay a ‘team sport’, or a combination of individual performances? Is a three-day equestrian team a ‘team’ as such, or a collection of individual riders whose combined scores produce a collective result?” (p. 6). Given that even the ASC struggles with this definition, it was omitted from the identifier.
With respect to the group as a whole, there were two important sub-groups worthy of mention, since it could be argued that findings for the entire group (n=21) might be affected by their existence. First, there were four representatives from the umbrella group of Gymnastics Australia, however each represents a separate discipline – that is, trampoline, men’s, women’s, and aerobic gymnastics. These sub-groups were similar in terms of their administrative structure, but they also have differences, and operated as separate and distinct sports under the banner of Gymnastics Australia. Aerobic gymnastics, for example, is not an Olympic sport, so it is funded and treated differently to the other gymnastic sports. For the purposes of this study, these participants were regarded and reported as representatives of separate sports.

Second, it should be noted that there were four representatives from one sport, being Bowls Australia. These participants accounted for nineteen per cent of the group (n=21), which is substantial, however they added depth to the quality of information gathered, rather than detracting from it, because the entire selection team could be examined. The sub-group consisted of two selectors who were relatively new to the task, and two who had been doing it for some years.

To provide context, it should be said that there was in fact a ‘coup’ of sorts within this sport, with two relative newcomers joining the two existing selectors on the four person panel. The two longer term selectors had been on the panel when some very contentious selection decisions were made. Both ‘newcomers’ were former international-level competitors, and as such, they held substantial referent power.
Importantly however, the two experienced panel members were retained after the change of regime, and all four panel members have worked closely as a team to improve their methods. It was of value to this study to have had access to all four members of one selection panel, and instructive to observe how they operated, communicated and dealt with each other.

While there were two sub-groups, as outlined, that accounted for thirty-eight per cent of participants, allowance was made for the possibility that findings might be skewed by their existence. In addition, the remaining sixty-two per cent of participants represent a range of other sports, and provided sufficient balance for this exploratory research. In Table 4.4, it can be seen that five selectors are classified as professional, being five participants who held a full-time, paid job within their sport. All five were coded as professionals (first letter of their identifier being ‘P’), and their coding remained consistent throughout, however there were two types of sport professionals within that group.

With respect to Column 1 of Table 4.4, this sample of 21 selectors were divided into five distinct types, characterised by a mix of characteristics, such as career trajectory, personal motivations, sport industry experience and degree of commitment or attachment to their sport, all of which were discussed either directly or indirectly during the interviews. These broad ‘participant types’ are set out in Table 4.5.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Properties</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ‘Genuine’ Professionals (P2Mb, P6M, P14M) | - Established career in sport as a paid professional  
- Had changed sports and/or countries to pursue that career, and so reported a substantial detachment or upheaval at a point in their career  
- Love of sport co-exists with some level of detachment | 3   |
| ‘Transient’ Professionals (P2Ma, P16F) | - Employed on first paid job in sport  
- In that role by virtue of passion for the sport  
- May progress to further professional roles, or equally as likely to return to volunteer status in future | 2   |
| ‘Professional Volunteers’ (V2Fa, V3Mb, V4F, V4M, V8M, V11M, V14M, V18F) | - Professional in terms of their approach to any or all volunteer roles  
- May be paid for some part-time roles, or not paid at all, but payment was largely irrelevant  
- Very attached to the sport but brought a professional level of calm and reason to their role  
- Devoted an appropriate and measured amount of time to the role | 8   |
| ‘Free’ Volunteers (V1M, V6M, V5M) | - All former élite athletes at the highest level  
- ‘Well connected’ as a result of former élite success. They hold the ‘ear’ of others in power, and so their opinions were sought  
- Volunteer only while it suits them to do so, not beholden to anyone  
- Professional in approach in some but not all aspects  
- Stay involved for personal enjoyment and gratification | 3   |
| ‘Sport Tragic’ Volunteers (V1F, V2Fb, V3Ma, V7F, V10F) | - Any professionalism comes from direction rather than from within  
- Unpaid  
- Highly attached and emotional, attributed more to their sport than was perhaps reasonable  
- Devoted more hours than necessary | 5   |

21
The participant groups outlined in Table 4.5 can be considered in positions along a continuum of attachment, ranging from very attached to slightly detached, signifying not just their level of commitment to the organisation but also their ability to maintain personal distance and perspective, so as not to be completely subsumed by the organisation. The proposed groups re-organised in this way reflect the strength of the bond between the organisation and the individual selector. The numbers of selectors falling into these groups were approximately normally distributed, as shown in Figure 4.7.

**Figure 4.7: Attachment continuum, and distribution**

The group referred to as ‘genuine professionals’ were those paid professionals who had established careers in sport. Having been attached to more than one organisation and/or one country during their working lives, they appeared to have the greatest level of detachment - they were committed to their organisation, but were also able to walk away and move onto another if need be, having done so before. With only three members in this group, the genuine professionals comprised fourteen per cent of the participant group.
The next most detached group – free volunteers – was comprised of former élite athletes who retained links with their sport organisations, but only while it suited them to do so. They still loved their sport but having perhaps ‘given their all’ in the past, they seemed in some respects to be spent, prepared to retain a link with elite level sport but giving less of themselves now than before. The individuals in this group were quite clear about their ability to detach themselves from their sport if conditions were not to their liking. As one participant explained:

I have other priorities as well … I mean when I played, I gave it absolutely everything I had, now I’ve got three young children … who are needy, as you would expect, and the other thing is that I … like to try and have a bit of balance … when I do something I become fully committed, and I just can’t do that with a family” (V2Fa).

The group in the middle was called ‘professional volunteers’ and referred to those unpaid volunteers who were comparable with paid professionals in terms of both their demeanour and approach to their role. These participants were relatively dispassionate and able to speak with a healthy level of perspective about their sport, having somehow managed to separate their roles in sport from their love of the sport. These professional volunteers made up thirty-eight per cent of the group, but when added to both the genuine and the transient professionals, it can be said that sixty-two per cent of the group exhibited a professional attitude.

On the continuum toward attachment, the next group was called ‘transient professionals’. These people had only recently become a paid sport professional, but had done so by virtue of their love of the sport, and were not necessarily dedicated to establishing a long-term career in sport. They were as likely to return to volunteerism after they completed their current paid role, as they were to seek another paid role.
For example, one person in this group had become a professional but had applied for that job to ‘right’ what he saw as the ‘wrongs’ of a previous administration, so in other words, these people were technically paid professionals but still carried the flame for their sport too strongly to be grouped with the genuine professionals.

Finally, at the highly attached end of the continuum were the ‘sport tragic’ type volunteers, who had given much of their lives to their sport and continued to do so, commonly putting in many more hours than necessary. Having maintained a strong bond with their NSO throughout their lives, they reported that their level of commitment had not changed, decreased or waned but had only ever increased over time. “Resistance to change generally arises as a consequence of the personal investment that people make in organisations” (Amis et al., 2002, p. 439), so it was expected that this group might have held values that were not congruent with those of their respective NSOs, however ‘sport trolics’ at this élite level indicated their support for almost any change introduced by their sport organisation.

4.3 SUMMARY

Participants interviewed can be described as a balanced group of twenty-one (21) people, ranging in age from thirty-six (36) to seventy (70) years of age, and from all over mainland Australia. Thirteen (13) were male and eight (8) were female, and the majority of the group’s household income was in excess of $100,000.00 per annum. Approximately half of the group was educated to secondary level, while the other half was tertiary educated and, similarly, about half of the group was comprised of former élite athletes, while the other half was not.
Nine (9) of the selectors interviewed were employed within the sport industry, working in various full- and part-time capacities for the sport for which they selected. A further nine (9) were employed in other industries, and three (3) were not currently employed. There was a good range in terms of experience within the selector role.

In general terms, the group of selectors interviewed consisted mostly of persons ‘middle-aged’ and older, predominantly male, well-educated, with relatively high incomes and, as such, it had characteristics in common with all other volunteer groups described, both in this country and internationally. When considering differences, it should be noted that the selectors interviewed for this study were not all volunteers. In addition, the other data cited was based on a cross-section of all types of sport volunteers – serious, casual, project or event-based, and systematic volunteers (as defined by Shilbury & Kellett, 2011) – whereas this sample of selectors was limited to those serious volunteers who select for sports at the élite level.

Participants were each given a unique identifier code within this chapter, so that their comments, cited throughout Chapters 5 and 6, could be attributed with some context. The main difference between participants was whether they were of professional or volunteer status, however these two very basic definitions - paid or unpaid - were not sufficiently descriptive. As a result, five sub-groups of selectors were proposed and explained in terms of a continuum of attachment and/or commitment to their organisation.
5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter responds to Research Question Two (RQ2), by describing what it was like to be a selector. Selectors were asked a number of questions about their perceived levels of commitment, motivation, satisfaction, importance and support, as well as how they were affected by factors such as culture, conflict, stress and change. These questions were designed to elicit selectors’ perceptions about their role.

There were many variables that might have affected how selectors felt about their role and, in turn, how they performed the role, but not all of them could be considered within the scope of this exploratory research. A short list of fourteen variables was set out in Table 3.5. As previously outlined, some were preconceived from prior literature, while other categories emerged from data collected. The final fourteen variables fell into two main groups, being personal characteristics (relating to the person), and job characteristics (relating to the job). This was appropriate since the former responded to Research Question Two, and the latter helped to answer Research Question Three.

A third group – common characteristics – included those characteristics that could be considered as common to both groups, and a fourth group – selector characteristics – provided straightforward profile data. These groups of characteristics are shown in Figure 5.1 in terms of how they relate to the research questions:
Personal characteristics shown in Figure 5.1 included motivation, satisfaction and commitment, while job characteristics included (selection) policy, process and system. The remaining eight characteristics – support, culture, conflict, communication, change, power, responsibility and leadership – were common to both job and personal characteristics. Communication, for example, affected both how selectors felt about the role as well as how they did the job, so it could be considered as either or both a job characteristic and a personal characteristic. The eight common characteristics were thought to primarily affect the person, and to affect the job in a secondary way.

A total of eleven variables (three personal and eight common) were considered in this chapter, that is, because they related primarily to Research Question Two. These variables addressed the question of what it was like to be a selector, while the
remaining three factors – selection policy, process and the system as a whole – related more directly to how selectors carried out their work. The latter are dealt with in Chapter 6, in the context of Research Question Three.

It should be said that this delineation between variables is somewhat arbitrary and artificial, because they are in many ways inter-related. While they were ‘classified’ and separated for the purposes of research structure, the variables were in fact intertwined and not readily separable. In a milestone book about systems thinking, Checkland (1993) described a similar approach:

I have a clear memory of a school science lesson … when the chemistry master put into my astonished mind the idea that Nature did not consist of physics, chemistry and biology: these were arbitrary divisions, man-made, merely a convenient way of carving up the task of investigating Nature’s mysteries. (p. 4)

The inter-related nature of the variables and the research questions to which they relate is shown in Figure 5.2 as a cycle. The literature focuses on job satisfaction and/or its close relative, engagement, as predictors of job performance, but it does not suggest that they are intertwined. Both are believed to affect job performance in a positive way, that is, the more satisfied and/or engaged a worker feels, the better will be his/her performance on the job. In turn, job performance affects job satisfaction and/or engagement, that is, the better the level of performance on the job, the more likely a worker will feel, or continue to feel, satisfied and even engaged. The two form a cycle, as shown in Figure 5.2. This cycle is not dissimilar to Doherty’s (1998) model for managing human resources, which contains a two-way arrow indicating the “reciprocal impact of organisational effectiveness on the affective and behavioural outcomes at the individual and group level” (p. 6).
5.2 PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

5.2.1 Motivation

Selectors were asked a range of questions about their motivations, including what their reasons were for both getting and staying involved, whether or not they enjoyed the role and whether they intended to continue, whether they felt important, and how it was of value (if at all) to them personally. For some, motivations changed over time, as has been reported by others (Cuskelly et al., 2002). For example, one selector stated that family was his initial motivation for getting involved, but now, ten years later he was motivated to continue by friendships he had established over that period of time (V14M). The length of time each participant had been a selector and the reasons given for doing it were tabulated to see if any relationship existed, however there was no apparent link.
A wide range of motivations was given for being a selector, most of which was in line with previous work on the motivations of Australian sport volunteers (Cuskelly, 2008; Cuskelly & Harrington, 1997). Using 2003 ABS data for sport volunteers, Cuskelly (2008) reported that the most frequent reasons for volunteering were family links (43%), personal satisfaction (42%), helping others (38%), doing something worthwhile (22%) and social contact (20%). The reasons that selectors in this sample gave for being involved included family history or family members’ involvement in the sport, ‘putting something back’, being involved with winning and, in particular, connecting or staying in touch with élite sport. This group was different to groups previously studied in that it was made up of both volunteers and professionals and, for the latter, the selection task was part of their overall role.

Cuskelly and Harrington (1997) categorised sport volunteers into four groups, which were: ‘obligeers’ (those who felt obliged to give something back), role dependees (those involved through family connection), altruistic leisure careerists (those who wanted to help others), and self-interested leisure careerists (those who wanted to help themselves). All of these groups were evident in this sample of selectors, and some individuals were qualified to be in more than one of the groups.

Other more specific motivations included a desire to right the wrongs of previous selectors, variety from the ‘day job’, some former élite-level participants wanted to ‘stay in touch’ and a few were close friends with the coach. There were also some quite singular cases. One person was intellectually interested in prediction from a purely scientific point of view, and had done a great deal of work based on statistical probabilities to determine how to select candidates based on the way competitions were structured. Another selector with specialised skills felt it was appropriate to
make his particular skill set available to his sport. The majority had one motivation in common, which was their love for their particular sport.

**Motivation in terms of value.** Participants were asked if the selectors’ role was ‘of value’ to them personally, which was another question about motivation phrased differently. The wording was more direct in terms of asking specifically what benefits they received (‘what’s in it for you?’), and was designed to minimise any social desirability bias, in which participants tend to report motivations that make them look better (Shye, 2010). In addition, Shye (2010) noted that responding volunteers are often not fully aware of their own motivations, which was another valid reason for asking the same question in another way. All were unanimously affirmative and more expansive, happy to detail the value they perceived in the role.

Responses repeated those in Table 5.1 – giving back and/or helping young people, making a contribution, being part of something and/or keeping connections alive, being involved in winning and being proved right, but more tangible benefits were also added to the list of motivations, such as travel, friendships, and lifelong learning. The latter specifically involved learning to deal with new challenges, keeping active and remaining useful, learning new skills, gathering and disseminating knowledge (particularly from overseas), and learning about self – for example, one participant felt that having to work in a male-dominated field had ‘made her stronger’ (V10F). Also listed were two management functions – leading and controlling – that is, learning how to manage a wide variety of people, influencing others toward achievement, and for coaches in particular, feeling that they had some control (over the sport outcome) was important.
These responses were in line with what has been observed in earlier surveys about volunteer motivation. They can be loosely categorised as ongoing learning, being involved, ‘putting back’ or repaying a debt to a sport that they felt had given them a great deal, and developing young or new players. It was not explicitly stated, but clearly many selectors sought to succeed vicariously through athletes – as one said, “if someone wins a gold medal, and you think, I was one of the ones that wanted that person in there, it’s pretty great, its nearly as good as doing it yourself” (V1M).

They also reflect the more general work of early motivation researchers detailed in Table 2.1. Early theorists believed that motivation was driven by needs; in particular, Maslow (1958) noted the existence of higher-order needs such as esteem and self-fulfillment, while Herzberg et al. (1959) considered the differences between intrinsic and extrinsic needs. One participant said that he spent many hours more than necessary carrying out research on competitions because it was important to him to do the job to the best of his ability (V3M). In doing more than was necessary and more than was asked of him, he was in effect meeting his own needs.

There was little apparent difference between the professional employees and the volunteers in terms of their motivations. As outlined in Table 4.5, five of the 21 participants were classified as professional sport employees because they were paid, full-time sport employees, however, two of those were more like volunteers in nature. One (P16F) had always been a volunteer for her sport with occasional paid part-time roles but, by virtue of a re-allocation of duties, had just become a paid employee in the year of interview. She was to retain that paid role for a one-year period and then intended to hand over to someone else, so that one year of being a full-time employee was more like an anomaly in an otherwise volunteer career. The
other (P2Ma) was a paid professional who came from the ranks of his sport and had applied for the job as head coach because he had been unhappy with the way his sport was administered. Both, therefore, had a particular devotion to their sport beyond that of true sport professionals, and retained more of a volunteer mindset.

The three remaining ‘genuine professionals’ could perhaps be characterised or distinguished from the others by the fact that they had a wider perspective – they were akin to “self-interested leisure careerists” as defined by Cuskelly and Harrington (1997). One had left his own country to coach first in Canada and later in Australia (P14M), while another had left his country to move directly to Australia (P2Mb). The third had worked in three sports in three countries, one of which was Australia (P6M). All three had set aside something significant - their country - to pursue their sport careers.

In doing so, and perhaps by virtue of physical distance, they seemed to have gained a level of personal distance or detachment that set them aside from the volunteers. Generally, professionals were less idealistic than the volunteers, being more aware of what can realistically be achieved, and showed an understanding and acceptance of limitations during their interviews. For example, “you can only plan success in sport to a limited degree … I can only provide recommendations in the end” (P2Mb); “I deal with the reality of human beings” (P14M); and “I’m realistic enough to know you’re going to get beat at times” (P2Ma).
Types of motivation. Attempts have been made to classify motivations in order to better understand what motivates volunteers. While consensus has not been reached, two types of motivations have been common to all attempts – egoistic, defined as doing an act for oneself, and altruistic, which is doing an act for others (Khoo & Engelhorn, 2011; Musick & Wilson, 2008; Nichols, 2005; Park, Troisi, & Maner, 2011; Ralston et al., 2004). The responses from this survey were classified accordingly, as shown in Table 5.1.

The range of egoistic motivations was narrower for the genuine professionals in the group, who cited their main motivations as the chance to influence and be part of sporting success, love of the sport, part of their role and/or a desire to try to control sport outcomes. Volunteers are often seen as being altruistic in the belief that they give freely of their time, however it involves a leisure choice in which volunteers themselves benefit from the experience (Stebbins, 2014; Shilbury & Kellett, 2011).

The distinction between the two types of motivation is therefore not always clear, since –“motives to volunteer … have been found to be related to issues of some personal gain, in partnership with more altruistic reasons” (Shilbury & Kellett, 2011, p. 62). One participant explained how this position worked for her, in terms of personal gain:

… I actually like the elite end, and … if you coach at the elite end in your own State the time commitment is massive, and I don’t have that time, and I don’t want to give that time. However I can keep connected with the elite end by being in this role, without having to have that major commitment … it’s given me the opportunity to articulate my views and my thoughts, … because when you’re a player, you’re very much in a vacuum of just playing, and it’s … just about yourself (V2Fa).

As can be seen, the majority of motives cited in this sample for both professionals and volunteers alike are egoistic, and the list of altruistic motives is much shorter.
Table 5.1: Selectors’ motivations - egoistic or altruistic?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Egoistic (for Self)</th>
<th>Altruistic (for Others)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stay in touch / keeps you connected to the elite end, especially when in remote location (V2Fa, V4M, V6M) / able to say you’ve been at that level (V3M) / part of the national effort, close friend of coach (V5M)</td>
<td>Contribute / put something back / help young people / long family history / someone has to do it / someone did it for me (V7F, V2Fb, V6M, V4M, V3Ma)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like the conversation and debate; opportunity to articulate my views / have a say (P6M) / listen and learn from others (V2Fa) / being proved right (V6M)</td>
<td>Chance to improve the sport / right wrongs (P2Ma)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Win / get the side to perform (V3Ma, V1M) / chance to influence (P14M) / success P6M / be part of the athlete process (V4F)</td>
<td>Sports need good advice, sensible to put skills to use, it’s ‘appropriate’ to help when you’re involved and have expertise (V3M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s nearly as good as doing it yourself (V3Ma) / it’s a different way to compete (P14M)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passion (V6M, P16F) / where my friends are (P16F, V10F) variety from other job (V18M TGYM) it’s my life (V10F)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have had a career out of it / been good at it (P16F) / personal satisfaction (P16F, V3M)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect / importance, people know who I am (V4F, V18F, V3Ma, V7F, V4M, V11M) / title (V1F)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buzz in your life / keeps you active / something to do (V10F, V5M, V7F) intellectual interest / ongoing learning (V11M, V3Ma, P16F, V4F, P2Ma, V8M)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel (V18F, V14M) make and keep friends, social networks, camaraderie (V8M, V10F)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love of the sport / highly committed to the sport / big family history (V6M, V10F, V1M, V18F, V14M, V4F, V2Fa, V5M)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved as coach / part of overall role (professionals) / opportunity to control outcomes (P2Mb, V2Fa, V14M WGYM) selection as coaching tool or KPI (P2Mb, V1F, P14M, P6M)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The notion of ‘putting back’ has always been perceived as altruistic, but if examined more closely, it may not be so. ‘Putting back’ suggests the repayment of a debt, which might be done more to satisfy conscience rather than through any genuine desire to help others. In a study of older sport volunteers, Hamm-Kerwin et al. (2009) reported that a key factor in the decision to volunteer was that participants had a “perceived obligation to give back to an activity/organisation from which they have personally benefited” (p. 676). Similarly, an older selector in this group said: “I played all this time and I represented (Australia) for twelve years and someone did it for me … (so I do it) to give back to my sport what I got out of it, to repay” (V7F).

If, on that basis, the notion of giving back is excluded from the list of altruistic motives in Table 5.1, only two ‘outliers’ remain. The first of these was the coach who said that his motivation for applying for the job was to rectify what he saw as some terrible selection decisions in the past, which had occurred at great cost to his sport (P2Ma). Certainly he was the only paid professional with an altruistic motive, although it could be argued that his desire to control outcomes is egoistic.

The other was the selector who had specialist professional (legal) skills and he believed it appropriate to make those skills available to his sport (V3M). In addition, he was the ‘patron’ of his sport, a quaint term from a bygone era signifying that the sport benefits in some way from his involvement. Both of these two cases were unusually altruistic.
5.2.2 Talent identification

The concept of talent identification is also debatably altruistic. Several participants reported that finding young talent and seeing them succeed gave them pleasure, one in particular referring to that pleasure as a ‘buzz’ or an ‘adrenaline rush’ (V7F). This suggests that participants are not doing this solely for the sake of the emerging talent nor for the sport organisation, as might appear at first glance.

Athlete selection and talent identification are often mistakenly seen as identical tasks. At the outset of this research, selectors were defined as people engaged by a sport to choose players or athletes to compete in specific events. Selecting athletes from a pool of qualified and available athletes for specific squads, competitions or events is a different task to talent identification. Talent identification is defined as “the process of recognizing current participants with the potential to excel in a particular sport” (Vaeyens, Lenoir, Williams, & Philippaerts, 2008).

The essential differences are time and specificity. Selectors choosing an athlete, team or squad are choosing from an available pool of already qualified people at a given point in time, for a particular upcoming competition or event. Talent identification involves discovering an as yet undiscovered individual athlete or player with the potential to join the selection pool at some time in the future, in order to be eligible for selection for some as yet unspecified future event. It most commonly involves locating younger players who have little or no proven performance record to date, but who have potential. Internationally, particularly in Eastern-bloc countries, talent identification has involved choosing very young children by their physical traits – such as height, strength or body shape – and training them for many years for the purpose of achieving future sporting glory.
Given that these are distinctly different although perhaps inter-related tasks, selectors were asked whether they felt that their selector role included any responsibility for talent identification. Three selectors in the group selected for young development teams, at Under 17, Under 19, and Under 21 levels, so their focus was clearly on talent identification and development for senior teams. Other selectors, who were appointed to select from senior athletes only, chose to ‘keep an eye out’ for upcoming talent too, some of them spending long hours each day of their own time monitoring the results of minor local competitions in search of new talent. In doing so, and in the absence of any formal job description, they expended many extra hours, and also risked duplicating someone else’s role.

In the main, selectors got involved with talent identification whether or not they were instructed to do so because they enjoyed it, as the following comments indicated:

- For younger teams, it’s about identifying potential, and there are huge philosophical discussions around how to identify potential (V2Fa). It’s satisfying to see the progression of players. I enjoy the process of identifying and seeing improvement in players … sometimes you pick on potential in the younger teams (V4F)

- I put the names of domestic athletes forward (for selection by international teams) … It comes back to a bit of personal pride, but two of the athletes I pinpointed fourteen months ago have signed professional contracts this year (V4M)

- It’s research, we need to find out what makes the ideal (athlete) … you’re always looking for something special, for the next Tiger Woods or Roger Federer (P2Ma). I just love watching and nurturing the juniors (V7F)

- I like to think I can be a bit of a mentor … it’s good when you get proved sort of right (V6M)
It was clearly a matter of personal pride and satisfaction to have been able to assist with identifying talent, as if the person able to predict the next big thing had some special mystical skill. This is despite the view of Green (2005), who said that “effective systems for training, motivating and supporting athletes are better predictors of success than are any measures intended to identify talent” (p. 235).

Participants from netball, squash and softball were involved in the selection of junior or development squads, but the latter sport said little about talent identification. The cycling selector took on a talent ID role in terms of identifying upcoming domestic talent that could potentially make it at the ultimate ‘coalface’ of cycling, the European teams. Most of his cohort spent all of their time in Europe, and thus were not always aware of what was going on ‘down under’, due to distance. Three of the four selectors from lawn bowls were very focused on development of youth, in large part because their sport is strongly associated with aged players, at times to its detriment. The other pertinent comment came from a former Olympian, who liked to think of himself as both a mentor and a good judge of potential.

5.2.3 Satisfaction

Selectors were asked if they enjoyed the role, a question that they appeared to find surprising, as if considering their role in terms of enjoyment was a new or foreign concept. Eighteen (18) participants said they enjoyed the role, while three (3) did not. Those who said they did not enjoy the role were two professional coaches (P2Ma, P2Mb), who felt that involvement in selection was necessary to try to control the outcome of the coaching program for which they were responsible, making it more of a necessary task than an enjoyable one. The other participant who reported lack of enjoyment said it was due to frustration, caused by interference from others, and/or by limited resources (V1F).
Selectors were asked if they found the role satisfying. Nineteen (19) of twenty-one participants (90%) responded in the affirmative. There were two exceptions – one participant was dissatisfied with all aspects of her position for various reasons (V1F), while the other found selection dissatisfying due to the poor quality of the available pool of talent from which to select (P2Mb). One person noted that selection was satisfying in some respects yet ‘destroying’ in others (P6M), and another was satisfied with the role when the team was winning (V1M).

Selectors were also asked if they were satisfied, and in addition, they were asked to rate their level of satisfaction on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being ‘highly satisfied’ and 1 being ‘highly dissatisfied’. The mean was 3.88, the median and mode both 4.00, which indicated that the participants were satisfied in the role. Comment was invited, and ranged from what they found satisfying to what was dissatisfying, with reference made to being both at various times. Comments about satisfaction generally reflected the motivations expressed previously, including the feeling of personal reward, assisting players to progress, having input to teams that represent Australia, being able to influence the sport’s direction, the pleasure of attending sport events, and the pride in selecting well.

There were a number of important and sometimes surprising comments made about satisfaction. One participant would make the “bad news” phone calls to unsuccessful contenders first, and save the best until last, finding it extremely rewarding to be able to deliver the good news – “I try and mix it up, you know, make a good call at the end to cheer me up” (P2Ma). Another participant was personally very satisfied to note that (in respect of the approaching Olympic Games), there’d been no appeals for the first time, since this had been a concern for his sport (V11M).
A third (professional) participant showed an understanding of how involvement of any kind can be satisfying, by saying that “it’d be no different to peeling oranges … (the satisfying part is) you’ve actually played a role” (P6M). And finally, one selector expressed her satisfaction in terms of what the role had done for her – “I know this isn’t going to sound right, but since my husband passed away suddenly, it’s been a godsend for me because it’s made me have an interest, and it’s made me do things … I’ve had to go to events or I’ve had meetings or I’ve had to do phone hook-ups, or whatever … it’s been a saving grace for me” (V10F). Satisfaction came in many forms.

Some selectors were aware of both ends of the satisfaction spectrum:

- I get immense pleasure out of it when they succeed; I also do get frustrated (P2MA)
- It’s very satisfying when they win … it’s harder if they lose because it puts more pressure on us as selectors (V1M)
- Most of the time it’s good, but it can be frustrating when the majority wins over the minority (P14M)

**Dissatisfaction.** Dissatisfaction was also evident. It was expressed with the availability and/or allocation of resources, particularly funds. Volunteer selectors reported that they took leave without pay, used long service leave, and/or used their own annual leave to attend events, and some used their own funds for airfares and/or accommodation (V2Fa, V10F, V3Ma, V2Fb):

- Sometimes you have to share a room when you want your own private space (V5M)
- I’m lucky – it costs me an airfare, but not always accommodation. It can cost me $1,200 or so just to go away for a few days for an event, well, there’s only so many of those you can afford to do (V10F)
There was also dissatisfaction with the amount of time involved. One selector observed “there’s so much time wasted in travel, and flights don’t always hook up” (V8M). The time issue meant that another participant accepted a lesser role, because “I don’t want (the sport) to be my life anymore, but that means limited opportunities” (V2Fa). One selector said what others would not or did not say, that “there should be some remuneration for time spent” (V4M). Professionals did not bear costs personally, as volunteers did, but were affected in other ways by a lack of funding – “I feel so bad sitting there doing these rankings. I could install a (ranking) system straight away, but it’s a funding issue” (P2Mb).

Some selectors expressed dissatisfaction with the process of having to inform athletes who weren’t selected. The professional coaches were usually the ones charged with the task of delivering news, while the volunteers were instead required to refrain from commenting:

- It’s like …telling someone they have cancer (P6M)
- It’s a sick feeling (P2Ma)
- I was a bit upset because we couldn’t tell them the reasons why (V10F)
- There’s no right of reply. We feel it (the pain) as much as the players do (V3Ma)

Others were dissatisfied that their performance was not reviewed. “It would be nice to hear at the end of a term whether you’ve satisfied everything that they wanted. We should have performance reviews but we don’t” (V4F). “There’s a lack of feedback about whether you’re doing a good job” (V2Fa). This was particularly evident in netball. This may be because both netball volunteers were younger people with solid careers outside sport, and were accustomed to measurement and review in their full-time jobs.
There was dissatisfaction related to stakeholders and other parties:

- When others (for example, board members) express their own opinions it can be completely dissatisfying (P6M)
- The ASC is frustrating; – 0.1% of our membership takes up 95% of the Board time, which is stupid (V11M), and
- We get parents complaining, (sometimes obnoxious) parents (V10F, P16F).

Overall, there was a wide-ranging list of dissatisfying factors, including parents, stress, frustration, interference, losing, athletes not performing to expectations, feedback, and a general lack of rewards and resources. In general, factors that satisfied selectors were related to the personal growth and development available within the role (intrinsic factors), and factors that dissatisfied them related to conditions, compensation, supervision, and work practices (extrinsic factors). In the HRM literature, this finding aligns with Herzberg et al.’s (1959) two-factor model of satisfiers and dis-satisfiers (Armstrong, 2006; Perkins & Arvinen-Muondo, 2013).

Many of these comments were not made in direct response to questions about satisfaction, which were placed early in the interview and followed on from questions about motivation. Motivating factors were positive in nature, and so selectors were still in a positive frame of mind when the satisfaction questions began. Comments that clearly related to satisfaction (and its opposite number, dissatisfaction) were made later in the interview, as it progressed through other topics. As the conversation flowed, selectors became more comfortable and began to trust that their opinion counted, and comments indicating their satisfaction (or otherwise) were made. For example, the penultimate section of the interview schedule included a question about performance review, and it was at this time that some participants expressed dissatisfaction with that particular aspect of the role.
5.2.4 Time commitment

One of the suspected dis-satisfiers was the amount of time that selectors put in to their role. Time commitment is one element of satisfaction, and is also part of any psychological contract, because expectations are involved. If selectors were required to put in an amount of time that was more than anticipated, they were likely to be dissatisfied. Opinion was sought from selectors as to whether they had developed or were given any expectation of what amount of time would be required to fulfil the role, whether they found a difference existed between the expected time commitment and the actual time commitment required, (and if so, whether more or less was required), whether their time commitment had changed over time in the position, and how they felt about the expectations placed on them by their respective sport organisations. These findings are presented in Table 5.2.

The findings set out in Table 5.2 mean that sixteen of the 21 selectors stated that they had some sort of expectation at the outset of the amount of time that might be required to fulfil the role as selector, that is, seventy-six per cent of the group had time commitment expectations. Of those 16 that had some expectation about time commitment, only five found the actual requirement to be different to what they had expected. So, 31 per cent of the above 76 per cent, or 24 per cent of the group overall found the actual time commitment different to what they’d expected. Confusingly, five selectors stated they had no initial time commitment expectations, yet three of these then said that they found the actual time commitment to be different to what they’d expected. This suggested that they did have some idea of what might be required but perhaps weren’t able to articulate that in answer to the earlier question.
Table 5.2: Selectors’ perceptions of time commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID #</th>
<th>Expectation</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Diff How</th>
<th>Changed</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V2Fa</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Limited and manageable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3Ma</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>OK, no problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P16F</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>OK, no issue with it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4F</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>OK with it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6M</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Part of role, expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4M</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Very comfortable with it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2Ma</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Sport means long hours. Accepting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V5M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Quite comfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V7F</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Quite happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1F</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Limited, not allowed to do more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2Fb</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>No problem, but unclear guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V8M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>OK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1M</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Feels good, relaxed about it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2Mb</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Reasonable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V11M</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Comfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3M</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>No problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V6M</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Not onerous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V10F</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Fine, do it for love of sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P14M</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Likes high expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V18F</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Absolutely fine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V14M</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Sometimes frustrated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the eight participants who felt that there was a difference between expected and actual time commitment (including those who had no expectation initially), six felt that more time was required than they had expected, and two felt there was less. The two that said their time commitment was less than initially expected were both male volunteers from men’s and trampoline gymnastics, who felt they had benefitted from the introduction of the use of DVD recordings of trial performances. The six participants that said the time commitment was more than they expected also said that they had no problem with this.
When asked if they felt that the time commitment had changed over time, twelve selectors, or 57 per cent of the group, felt that it had not changed much, while the remaining nine participants (43%) were conscious of an ever-increasing time commitment. The two remaining selectors from gymnastics disciplines also used DVDs to review performance, however they tended to use the time ‘saved’ to replay the DVDs over and over to be able to do a better job, so for them the time benefit was lost while the benefit of certainty was gained. Only one of the nine found that change to be a problem, and overall, all 21 selectors appeared to be comfortable with the amount of time they were committing to the role and had no issue with the expectations. Time commitment was not found to be a dissatisfying factor.

It was thought that the unpaid volunteers in the group might have had an issue with the required time commitment, however the question proved relevant to some of the paid professional sport employees within the group. At least two of the five commented that they worked very long hours (P2Ma, P2Mb). One mentioned that sixteen hour days were common, and both said their salary bore little relationship to the number of hours they worked. In this respect there was a common element between volunteers and professionals, since both were in a sense donating their time. All of the professionals accepted the selection role as an integral part of their job and stated that the task accounted for between 15-40 per cent of their work time, depending on timing in their usual competition cycle (for example, the requirement is low at the start of an Olympiad, and higher toward the end of one).

Comments ranged from one end of the spectrum, that is “it was explained to me exactly what was involved” (V18F) and “I knew what I was getting into” (V14M), to the other end, of “when I first started, I didn’t realise” (V8M). Commitment for some
was low: “about an hour per week, if I averaged it out” (V8M), or “should be able to be dealt with in (a total of) fifteen hours (V11M) through to an average of between 25-40 hours per month (V14M), with some people putting in very long hours. One said he was “away from home ninety-nine days in the last year” (V3Ma), while another watched “forty-seven matches in a one week interstate tournament” (V2Fb), so there was no hard and fast rule in terms of the time demands made.

It was clear that some selectors monitored and regulated the amount of time they expended on the task, while others spent an inordinate amount of time trying to make sure they missed nothing. The latter types fell into the group of ‘sport tragics’ in Table 4.5. They wore the amount of time they put in as a ‘badge of honour’, and appeared to have lost sight of what might be considered reasonable. For example, the selector who watched forty-seven games in a week did not complain, rather she seemed more proud than concerned about this feat of endurance.

Five participants either stated or hinted that their own personalities were a little obsessive and/or perfectionist in nature, and suggested that it was this type of person who often accepted this type of role - “and I can’t help myself. I’m one of those people that go, well, it needs to be done” (V2Fb), - so they were quite self-aware. As one observed, “some of it is self-made”, meaning that he chose to work more hours than he was required to, or needed to, to fulfil the role (V3Ma). Another participant confirmed that she was similarly driven: “my nature is that I would have got involved in something else, and been just as involved in it. I’ve got that nature, yeah” (P16F). Still another said: “you know, I would always like a little bit of involvement … at the end of this, I most probably will still be involved … just judging, going to State competitions, etc” (V18F).
Many were so dedicated that they wanted to make sure they had looked at every available statistic and result, so they made sure they were as well informed as they could possibly be. Selectors typically spent a lot of time away from home, used their own leave, their own car, and often paid for accommodation. They generally ‘gave everything’ to the role, and it was not easy to draw them out on the subject, as they steadfastly refused to complain. It was also true that selectors unanimously loved their sport, so it is possible that emotion clouded rational judgment in respect of the time committed. Participants often mentioned that they held other roles – for example, one selector worked at a tournament as a team manager in addition to her role as a selector, because she “was there anyway” (V7F). This is examined in more detail in Chapter 6 in the section about ‘Other Roles’.

The difficulty in having elite athletes serviced by volunteer selectors was raised by one professional selector, who said “at the élite end there’s some urgency to things – everyone knows volunteers have a life, jobs, families, so it’s not easy to satisfy the demands of the professional athlete with monthly meetings” (P6M). This was supported by a volunteer selector who said “it was difficult to hold a volunteer accountable to a task because you know it’s their spare time. Sometimes management forget we’re volunteers” (V14M).

Overall, the notion that there might be a substantial gap between expected and actual time commitment in this group of selectors was not proven. Most had some idea of what they were getting into, because they had been involved in their sport for years, usually in other roles such as coach, competitor, or referee. Many were simply unable to accurately quantify how much time they actually spent in the role – they
either didn’t feel it necessary to keep count, and/or they found it hard to separate the selector role from other roles they may have had within the sport organisation.

A number of factors might explain why the time commitment required did not appear to adversely affect satisfaction. Questions regarding time commitment were posed early in the interview schedule, and there was initial reticence to say anything that might be construed as negative about their respective NSOs. The majority had been through at least one Olympic Games/World Cup/Commonwealth Games cycle, and so, they had experienced periods of very high demand on their time. Another possibility is that over half of the group had previously competed at élite levels, and they were perhaps used to putting in many hours of hard work in an effort to get results. This may explain why participants were generally quite relaxed about the time commitment, even when it was more than they’d expected, because they were culturally accustomed to working in the demanding environment of elite sport.

**Criticism.** Sixteen selectors (76%) felt that people were generally critical of selectors, while five did not feel this to be true. Four selectors admitted ruefully that they had themselves been critical of selectors at times, and almost without exception the Australian cricket team selectors were mentioned, as the most widely and visibly criticised of all selectors in this country. Selectors were asked if they were conscious of criticism and whether it affected their work. Reaction was mixed. Nine (46%) selectors said that they were not conscious of it and that it did not affect their work. A further eight (38%) selectors said that they were conscious of criticism, but that it did not affect their work. Only two (10%) selectors responded that they were aware of criticism and that it did affect their work, while the remaining 10% (2 persons) of selectors did not respond.
Most appeared to deal with criticism on the basis that it was ill-informed, and by
drawing closely together as an insular group, referring to their critics as ‘outsiders’. 
Workplace divisions have been reported as common in a number of distinct 
occupational cultures, particularly those granted power and authority to carry out 
certain tasks, such as police officers, teachers, and firefighters, and perhaps most 
relevantly, sport umpires (Kellett & Shilbury, 2007; Lucas & Kline, 2008; Schein, 
2004; Thurnell-Read & Parker, 2008; Wilder & Allen, 1974). These workplace 
subcultures have a strong sense of community, and socialise new members to accept 
their often unpopular status.

This was confirmed in the sport setting by Kellett and Shilbury (2007), who said that 
it is “not uncommon for those groups who find themselves unpopular to find solace 
in their own ‘in-group’” (p. 225). They observed that umpires are taught (by other 
umpires) to re-frame abuse in such a way as to render it innocuous, just as selectors 
re-frame criticism of their work as being ‘ill-informed’ or from ‘outsiders’. For 
example – “there was criticism with our Olympic team this year … and four years 
ago as well – I think that’s the nature of people who know half the information and 
think they can do it better … they always think they can do a better job. The criticism 
on the message boards tends to blame the national coach all the time” (P16F). The 
following comment is similarly dismissive: “I’m sure there’s people from outside 
who would have issues with the fact that the coach is also an employee of the sport in 
another role”, said as if the opinion of ‘outsiders’ had no merit (V4F).
Imposed silence. The concept of having no ‘right of reply’ (to criticism) was raised by a number of selectors as something that was particularly stressful, because it rendered them unable to defend themselves. “You might be one who has supported this person and then they have a go at you for not being picked and you’ve got no right of reply … once you come out of a selectors’ meeting … your lips are sealed, it’s as simple as that” (V3Ma); “sometimes we have to keep our mouth shut” (V10F); and “there’s only a certain amount that goes on in selection meetings that you can disclose (P16F).

Role of the media. The majority (67%) answered that they were not conscious of the media when making selection decisions, while (29%) said that they were, and one person (4%) did not answer. It had been suggested that the media might have an effect as the most vocal of all critics, however their influence, if any, was only felt around the time of each Olympics. This is because for the great majority of their airtime and print space, the Australian media concerns itself mainly with corporate sports. Those selectors who were conscious of the media referred mainly to social media – blogs and the like – as the section of the media most likely to be critical of their decisions. Overall, selectors shrugged the media off as having little or no effect.

Stress. “There’s stress all over the place in the job, especially when they’re competing” (P16F). Stress was considered likely to cause dissatisfaction. Following on from questions about satisfaction, selectors were asked if they found their role to be a stressful role, given that almost all of them found it hard to disappoint contenders. Reaction to this question was mixed. Eleven (52%) selectors said they found it to be stressful, nine (43%) selectors did not find it stressful, and one person was undecided. Some people clearly managed stress better than others. They did not
tend to take their selection dilemmas home, nor allow the role to intrude on their private lives. This may be related to the number of years they had been doing the job, that is, the longer they were in the role, the better they became at managing job-related stress.

Comments from those who did not find the role stressful suggest that they had managed to distance themselves from the human side of selection, and perhaps developed a tougher edge, whereas those who did find the role stressful confirmed that, in general, they felt a personal sense of responsibility, and had less (perhaps insufficient) distance between themselves and contenders. The two contrasting types of responses are set out in Table 5.3.

As can be seen, the contrasts are marked. There are those who lose sleep and those who feel that there are no issues providing selection criteria are followed, just as there are those who regard contenders as their flock, versus those who are not ‘emotionally connected’ at all. Themes that appeared in response to the questions about stress, as shown in Table 5.3, were that:

- the relationship between selectors and contending athletes is (for some) akin to that of parent-child (P6M, P2Ma);
- there is a lot at stake – often referred to as “lives”, and “futures” (V4F, V4M), and
- the responsibility affects some selectors to the point where it affects their sleep (V3Ma, V7F, P6M).
Table 5.3: Selectors’ views on stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selectors with some apparent distance</th>
<th>Selectors with little or no distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are no issues (if we) follow the criteria (V18F, V11M, V3M). They accept it when they don’t make it (V11M)</td>
<td>It’s sometimes disappointing when people don’t perform as expected, as ‘it’s on our shoulders’. We feel it as much as the players do. I struggle to sleep sometimes. They’re not only people we are selecting, they’re people we know personally, it’s pretty tough (V3Ma). It’s the people we leave out who we feel desperately for (V7F). It can be hard on a personal level because you know the players and the coach (P16F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m not emotionally connected to these people (V2Fa)</td>
<td>You treat them as your kids. Some are fairly fragile people and you worry about them. We’re a fairly tight-knit family. (P2Ma). It’s like being a parent and your kids are fighting … so it’s stressful but it should be simple (P6M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I give people bad news every day (V3M)</td>
<td>Eliminating people is stressful (V5M). It is stressful, you’re playing with kids’ futures, no, their happiness and what they see as really important (V4F). We’re critiqued very closely. We’re dealing with people’s lives. (V4M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We had one or two players who thought it was their God-given right to be in the team (V10F)</td>
<td>You know it’s going to be heartbreaking for those other ones you don’t select, so it’s hard on a personal level (P16F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No I don’t think it’s a stressful role, but I’m sure I make it stressful, to myself only (V2Fb)</td>
<td>I do lose sleep. Nothing rewarding is easy, but I’ve learned to deal with it better (P6M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you get selected you are rewarded financially, personally and with sponsorship, and by your family and peers – to take that away because of restricted numbers is really difficult … I definitely lose sleep over it … I can take it home and kick the cat and smash the dog and tell my wife she’s a … (P6M)</td>
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5.2.5 Commitment

**Scope of commitment.** Twenty out of 21 (95%) participants responded that they felt committed to their sport. When asked how long they’d felt committed to their sport, responses ranged from 13 years to ‘whole of life’. This question was not limited to their time as a selector, but referred to their involvement in that sport in any capacity - “I first took a team away in 1996, but before then I drove buses and did whatever, whatever they needed me to do” (V8M). The total number of years, excluding the ‘all of life’ answer and including the years of involvement in the sport from the one selector who did not feel committed was 600 years across 20 selectors, an average of 30 years’ involvement for each individual. Participants were asked to rate their level of commitment on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all committed, and 5 being highly committed. The average across all 21 participants was 4.6, with 17 participants (81%) rating their commitment level as 5, making 5 - highly committed - both the median and the mode.

**Reasons for commitment.** Selectors were asked why they were committed to their sport. All selectors indicated both the strength and duration of their commitment. Responses suggested that, as for motivation, selectors did not necessarily understand or were unable to clearly explain why they felt committed. This may be because volunteers, particularly those who have been with the sport organisation for a long time tend not to reflect continuously about why they do what they do, as service often becomes habitual (Schlesinger et al., 2012). Partial commitment did not seem to be an option – as one participant said, “it wouldn’t matter which sport, you’re either in or you’re out, you cannot be in this position if you’re not (committed) (P6M).
This group is involved in elite sport, and so participants were conscious that they were in some way acting for their country. This was true of two Australian professionals who felt responsible for their sport’s international reputation:

- (I’m committed) to those who are endeavouring to be the best in the world (P6M)
- My head’s on the chopping block … it sounds a bit cliché, but I don’t want to let the country down (P2Ma).

The same sentiment was not expressed by the three remaining professional selectors. One of these was from a sport that has only ever improved its position on the world stage in recent years (women’s gymnastics) and so she had no reason to be concerned, and the remaining two were career coaches originally from other countries. Others were also highly committed, but were prepared to concede that it wasn’t always easy to remain so. Nichols (2005) coined the term ‘sport stalwarts’ when he observed that a few people do a lot of the work in sport organisations, as have others, such as Shilbury and Kellett (2011). The existence of these ‘stalwarts’ can be seen in the following responses:

- You may get frustrated that things aren’t being done how you want them done, but you remain committed (P16F)
- Commitment goes up and down a bit with frustration (different boards, different CEOs, especially the ASC) (V11M)
- Not many people put their hand up for roles like I’m doing at the moment (V8M)
- I think half the time that other people just don’t even want to do it, so you just keep doing it. As you get into it even more, you’re emotional … you get a bit closer to all the divers … and you feel a bit more connected (V6M)
- I think we have to die before we get off, the ones who grizzle the most never put their hands up … if we want to go to anything major, we have to fork … we pay our own way, so … nobody really wants to put their hand up (V10F)
- I originally planned to do it for 2 cycles but then no-one else wanted to do the job (V18F)
Most of this commentary was from longer-term volunteers, many of whom were aware that there were few people willing to take their place. The gymnastics volunteers in particular were technical directors and/or qualified judges with a vast amount of highly specialised knowledge, making them hard to replace. The notable exception to the ‘hard to replace’ rule were the netball volunteers who both reported competition for volunteer roles (V2Fa, V4F). Netball has substantial corporate sponsorship, is well funded, popular and is on the verge of being a fully-fledged corporate sport, which may explain why there was competition for volunteer roles. Netball aside however, it was usually just a few people who do the bulk of the work in sport organisations. This may change in the future. There was a hint of things to come in the following comments:

- I don’t want it (the sport) to be my life anymore … I have other priorities as well … when I played I gave it absolutely everything I had … but I don’t want to miss my own kids’ sport or not see my husband … so my opportunities are quite limited (V2Fa)

- It’s difficult to attract highly professional people and retain them if the pay doesn’t remunerate them well … in the future, the ‘Gen Y’ culture – that is, the ‘what’s in it for me?’ attitude could be a problem (V14M)

Finding that those working as a selector at the élite level of sport were almost unanimously highly committed was not surprising. It seemed logical to suspect that there might be a link between the length of time selectors had been involved with their respective sport organisations and their level of commitment, however the literature on this was not definitive, ranging from ‘positive influence’ (Schlesinger et al., 2012) to ‘not strongly predictive’ (Cuskelley, McIntyre, & Boag, 1998). The latter did, however, note that organisational commitment was complex and affected by many factors – for example, commitment was found to be associated with higher budgets.
This factor was relevant for these selectors, since all were involved with élite level sport, where generally there was at least some government funding available. In addition, volunteers in higher positions were found to be significantly more committed than those in lower positions, a factor which also applied to this group (Cuskelly et al., 1998).

**Constancy of commitment.** Selectors were asked whether their level of commitment had changed over time. It was expected that their level of commitment may have reflected standard life phases – for example, it might have decreased when they bought their first home, or when children were born – however, the majority reported that it had either stayed the same throughout, or that it had increased over time. In summary, the majority reported being highly committed, with an unwavering level of commitment over time. Even those who were planning to start to withdraw (toward retirement) said that they still intended to continue in some lesser role.

All selectors had established deep and abiding lifelong connections to their chosen sport, in many cases when they had not even played the sport. As stated earlier, some were aware that they have a role that no-one else would take on. Once a state of affective commitment is reached, it appears almost unshakeable, being affected neither by personal life events nor by the frustrations of the role. Job engagement has been said to reinforce commitment (Vecina, Chacon, Sueiro, & Barron, 2011), and so participants’ expected level of engagement with the role may have accounted for, or at least contributed to, their ongoing high level of commitment.
5.3 COMMON CHARACTERISTICS

5.3.1 Support

A number of questions were asked with regard to the level of support participants felt they received from their respective sport organisations. This line of questioning focused on parts of the role that were considered most likely to be difficult and, thus, where selectors might need support, in situations such as coping with criticism and conflict, handling the media, and conducting selection discussions with athletes. The overwhelming majority (95%) felt that they were part of their organisation. Eighteen (86%) selectors felt they were supported in their role, while two felt that they both were and were not, depending on circumstances, and the remaining participant did not feel at all supported.

**Tangible support.** Support as a concept was not defined for the selectors, they were instead left to apply their own definition of what support meant for them. Some immediately thought and responded in terms of tangible (financial) support:

- We need to get paid more. I pay for my grandparents to fly here to be with my kids for a week, so that’s what my honorarium is spent on. I’m happy to do that but others might not be and it might stop them from doing it, so they need to consider that (V2Fa)
- Work conditions are fairly rudimentary (V14M)
- I’m not here to rock the boat … you don’t get paid for your evening meal but … it’s no big deal (V3Ma). I’d be more committed if I got paid more … if they were going to give me $50,000 a year to be a selector, I could do a better job, definitely (V1M)

**Intangible support.** Others seemed to envisage support as assistance for their own self-esteem, informational support, expressed in terms of good communication, or emotional support, such as the notion of ‘sticking together’. Opinion was divided, and so sport organisations were seen as inconsistent in terms of the support they
offered. Some selectors were unequivocal about the support they received. “They’re inclusive, I’m kept in the loop” (V2Fa). “Most times they do the right thing” (V3Ma). “In the whole sport, there’s really the support networks of people, you don’t lose that” (P16F). “I feel that I’m part of a team that’s there to put the best team out on the paddock to play” (V1M). “Everybody (is) on the same page, and you can see everybody, any second, every day” (P14M).

**Lack of support.** The following comments indicated issues with support:

- Despite reporting that she was ‘kept in the loop’, (V2Fa) she was also “only one of a million people”, so she seemed ambivalent about organisational support. She qualified this further, by saying “I don’t feel unsupported, but I think that a lot of the support is left up to you individually” (V2Fa)

- I do feel I’m a cog in the organisation. Supported? It can vary. If we get it right, everyone wants to pat us on the back and support us, and when we get it wrong, we don’t have too many associates. The support level is reasonable, I think it can be better. Sometimes certain people in our organisation haven’t backed the selectors, they’ve felt the need to … give their own view, so at certain times I’ve felt disheartened that some prominent people have not backed us as they should (V4M)

- Both softball volunteers had issues with organisational support. “There has been occasions (when selection decisions are over-ridden … (and) it’s not kept internal unfortunately … it does cause a bit of problems, to tell you the truth” (V1F). “The CEO is (supportive), but sometimes he runs hot and cold” (V2Fb)

- Board members can interfere with the process. There’s great support from a number of individuals but also micromanagement from other individuals, so it just depends on the issue, the day, the people. If you were supported every day, it would be just too easy … you are bound by a superior being called a board which is made up of volunteers … who have their own opinions of whether they should be selectors (P6M)

- Sometimes the board members have some pretty big egos … and if the team is not succeeding … (they’ll) say “why are we not winning? … they’re supplying what they think are all the necessary resources and whatever else, so the team should be winning” (P2Ma).
As can be seen, some selectors, both professional and volunteer alike, found the level of organisational support to be inconsistent, or problematic, but the psychological contract that existed for each group was different. If volunteers felt a lack of support, there were few consequences, while professionals were aware that a lack of support could mean the loss their job at any time. In particular, the professional selectors were attuned to the tensions that sometimes exist between volunteer board members and professional staff (P6M, P2Ma).

While the level of organisational support for the selectors was the thrust of this group of questions, another aspect of support emerged, which was the support offered to athletes by selectors. “You can’t just write him/her off” was an expression used more than once in respect of an athlete experiencing some form of difficulty, such as being out of form, injured, or having personal issues (V7F, V4M). Overall, the majority of selectors said that they felt supported, but there were some situations in which they did not, so support may be best described as inconsistent. Support in terms of funding was a definite issue.

**Support via training.** The discussion regarding support led into questions regarding training. Selectors were asked if they received any training for their role, whether they might want or need any form of training and, if they did, whether their request for training would be supported. No selectors received any form of formal training for the selector role. Asked if they felt the need for training in any areas, a majority of selectors (86%) responded in the negative.
In terms of organisational support, nine selectors felt that training would be made available to them if they asked for assistance, while another nine felt that training opportunities either would not be available to them, or weren’t sure, and three did not respond. Most selectors initially struggled with the concept, almost as if it had not occurred to them prior to the question being asked. Some comments were:

- I think we do presume that people know how (to do things). I’ve learned almost everything I’ve done, except coaching and judging … on the run (P16F)

- (I learned by) trial and error (V10F)

- There’s no one for you to shadow … … so that’s when I said to the girl from the seniors “how do you do it?” I rang her up and said, “what do you do?” said ‘cause this is just ridiculous … I don’t have a great deal of opportunity to train for the task … (rely on) commonsense and experience (V2Fb)

- I haven’t been given any feedback to say that I’m woeful or that I’m fantastic, so I just assume that the selection panel ensures that people … in the role have got some idea. There is a selectors’ course that is just being developed now. I personally didn’t get a lot out of it (V2Fa)

- There are courses like (for the) management of people, and things like that. It’s a fantastic thing to learn but actually having to do it is quite different. It’d be like all the armed forces – you know they train to kill, but actually killing somebody would be a far different thing than anything they’ve done in training (P6M)

- Training for selectors would be number 36 on a ‘to do’ list (P2Mb)

As can be seen, some volunteers have at times felt lost without guidance, while professionals tended to be a bit dismissive of the need for training. It was clear that assumptions about abilities were being made. Engelberg, Skinner, and Kakus (2011) found that commitment could be fostered by providing volunteers with both opportunities and support to undertake training. Once they’d had a few moments to consider the notion of training, selectors began to make tentative suggestions. They felt that training would be useful in the following areas:
• Selectors need to be up to date with what’s happening in the sport and what the coaches want (V5M)

• How to word things, how you speak to people and give constructive feedback (V4F)

• How to be assertive in selection meetings, that is, to not defer to others (P2Ma)

• How to assess players, when they’re playing (V7F)

• Usage of a specialist database for recording of statistics and assessment (P2Mb)

• What other sports do for selection/how they go about it (V1M)

• The legal aspects of selection (V14M), and

• How to handle media, and negotiate conflict. “I’m just saying, (that) certainly media training would be beneficial. I think, when I say conflict negotiation, I think we can be better skilled, as I said again we’re volunteers that get put into a role with no official training of dealing with situations of conflict negotiation, I think there’s certain areas we can benefit from (training)” (V4M).

These suggestions were made as the realisation appeared to dawn on participants during the interview that they had, in fact, been doing a difficult job with no training, however they may also have been made to please the researcher, as if an answer was expected. Only one selector reported the existence of a training course for selectors within her sport that was in its infancy, having only just been written. It was in a testing phase at the time interviews were conducted.

Selectors that were most open to the idea of training were the group from the sport of bowls, who wanted to know how to get a better balance of input at meetings, how to assess players, and what other sports were doing. This was due to a new regime being in place, that is, a recently appointed coach/leader who had expressed a genuine desire for all involved to learn, improve and maximise their abilities.
Support for the hardest task of all. Only seven of the 21 (33%) selectors were required to explain selection decisions to athletes as part of their role, being four professionals (P16F, P6M, P2Ma, P2Mb) and three volunteers (V4F, V4M, V1F). There was only one professional excluded from the former sub-group, and this may have been due to cultural differences and/or language difficulties (P14M). Two of the three volunteers who were required to, or allowed to communicate selection decisions were selectors for young development squads (V1F, V4F). The latter was backed to some extent by her sport’s resilience training program, which was designed to assist athletes in dealing with rejection. The remaining volunteer selector dealt with most domestic issues on behalf of his sport, since many personnel were based overseas of necessity. The majority of those charged with the task of communicating the selection decision to athletes then were professional sport employees, so that in general, the volunteer selectors were protected from, or perhaps excluded from this part of the selection task. The professionals confirmed that they did attend training courses as part of their job, but that there was no training applicable to this particular task.

Some of the more graphic comments with regard to explaining decisions to athletes were previously outlined in Section 5.2.3, on dissatisfaction – the task was said by one selector to evoke a ‘sick’ feeling of dread (P2Ma), and in a memorable turn of phrase, another selector likened it to having to tell someone they had cancer (P6M). There was in reality a continuum of opinions of this task, which ranged from the positively disposed, who took the view that education and information was helpful, to those in the middle who avoided or were directed to avoid confrontation, to those at the opposite end who simply found it difficult if not an impossible task. This is shown (for both professional and volunteer selectors) in Table 5.4.
Table 5.4: Communicating the selection decision – Selectors’ views

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positively disposed</th>
<th>Conflict avoiders</th>
<th>Negatively disposed</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We try to personalise the process, so that each kid’s got a reason for either being selected or not selected (P16F)</td>
<td>At selection night, I’ve jumped on a plane and gone home… don’t want to be there, just in case (V6M)</td>
<td>We sit down beforehand and we talk about what we’re going to say, so we don’t just go ‘hell for leather’… It’s quite confronting, no matter what you say you’re not going to actually make it better… Some people, you can give them feedback and they’ll come away with a completely different understanding of what you’ve said anyway, and there’s nothing you can do about that (V4F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We’re trying to communicate to the community the philosophy behind any of the policies we put out (V8M)</td>
<td>We sit together as a group, and the minute it’s announced, we get on a plane and go back to our States – so you know, we’re sort of untouchable (V2Fa)</td>
<td>No-one ever whinges for being selected – it’s always the ones left out (V4M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We’re actually quite… protected is not the right word, but we don’t get confronted… we don’t ever get into that situation (V4F)</td>
<td></td>
<td>There’s always someone who’s going to miss out, so it’s a very delicate subject… I was given the task of telling someone they weren’t selected. I think it was a learning experience that you have, experience teaches you far more than a degree. It was like drawing blood. But, you know, how much experience do you want of drawing blood? (P6M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m one of those people in hiding, so to speak. The media don’t know me (V5M)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t let one person do it on their own is probably the bottom line (P16F).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen, conveying the selection decision was regarded as difficult, and there was little or no support for this onerous task. Interestingly, most participants expressed a high level of dread even though they weren’t actually required to directly explain decisions to athletes. It seemed that being involved as part of the panel that made the decision that was ultimately conveyed to an athlete by someone else was still stressful, albeit indirectly so. Perhaps the last word should go to this selector, who said that “being a selector is a shit job, there’s never going to be the right decision, there’s always someone going to see a negative… there’s always going to be someone opinionated …” (V1M).

The pain involved might be attributable to a higher than optimal level of attachment to the athletes involved, since many of the participants had likened the selector-athlete relationship to that of a parent-child relationship. It also explained the popularity of ‘self-selection’, which sets out clear requirements so that much of the responsibility for selection is transferred back to the athlete.

5.3.2 Conflict

Professionals and volunteers. All selectors were asked if they felt that professionals and volunteers worked well together in their sport. Nineteen of 21 (90%) selectors felt that they generally did work well together, however one professional selector said “we have volunteers … (but) if we had our choice, it’d be all professionals” (P6M). Generally however, most were philosophical about any differences between volunteers and professionals and downplayed them, as shown in the following comments. One volunteer said: “(there are) a few little hitches, or hiccups … but we manage to overcome them (V3Ma), while a professional said: “I think, on the whole, the two sides work very well together” (P16F).
Participants were disinclined to accept the professional-volunteer divide as the cause of conflict, and suggested alternatives, such as simple clashes between individual personalities. Others felt that any such divide was about people who were either ‘from their sport’, or ‘not from their sport’. The latter was directed at professional sport managers and paid administrative staff: “we’ve had a number of CEOs come and go and it ‘does my head in’, because “you never know who has what role” (V2Fb). Still others indicated that a lack of role clarity caused conflict: “we had conflict when the Board did not understand their role clearly and they began to play the role of selectors” (P6M). One participant described the gradual professionalisation of her sport as follows:

… our whole sport’s in a bit of a, well I suppose a learning phase, in that the program managers, the people in our office, the paid staff, are actually taking over a lot of – well taking over is probably the wrong words – but anyway, they’re doing a lot of the things that the volunteer technical committees were doing, purely a time factor, and you really can’t make volunteers accountable for a lot of the things, you know it’s the paid staff who are really the accountable ones. So I think … some sports are very comfortable with where it’s at, some of the sports it’s just they’re evolving (P16F).

**Conflict arising from selection decisions.** Selectors were asked if they’d been involved in any conflict as a result of a selection decision and, if so, whether or not it had affected them personally. Those who reported several such experiences were asked to choose one incident and relate that story only. Sixty-two per cent said that they had experienced conflict ‘on the job’, as a result of a selection decision. Some of those who had not experienced conflict in their current role had nevertheless experienced it previously, often at State level. The conflicts reported were most commonly appeals against selection decisions, some of which were handled internally via tribunals, and some of which proceeded externally, to the CAS.
Table 5.5 sets out participant responses to questions about conflict. As stated, there was almost no conflict reported between professionals and volunteers. Only one participant was undecided, and one did not give a clear response due to language difficulties (prof/vol column). The table also shows whether or not participants had experienced conflict as a result of a selection decision (sel dec column), whether they were affected by that conflict (effect column), and in what way (outcome column).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Prof/Vol</th>
<th>Sel Dec</th>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V2Fa</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3Ma</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P16F</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Defensive, on edge, lost sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4F</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Frightened the hell out of me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Got the shits over it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2Ma</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Toughened up, part of learning curve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V5M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V7F</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1F</td>
<td>Y/N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Frustrated, bitter, demotivated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2Fb</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V8M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Temporary effect only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Determined it won't happen again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2Mb</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>I felt sorry that it happened, bad for atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V11M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V6M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V10F</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Upset and disappointed, unable to explain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P14M</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V18F</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Uncomfortable for a while</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V14M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Liaison position turns over a lot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples of the types of selection decision conflict experienced were reported as follows:

- One selector observed that it was usually the associates of athletes that protested their exclusion – I had to tell one athlete who’d been selected that he’d been withdrawn by the AOC … his father rang and said he’s going to kill me … it frightened the hell out of me … since that day, the athlete committed suicide due to the pressures associated with his life (P6M);

- “With the Olympic Games … I say everyone gets desperate, everyone wants to represent their country at the highest, so they’ll do desperate measures”. This participant was involved in conflict because a contending athlete went to the media with his version of the facts, to get sympathy and perhaps influence the selection panel. The same selector also observed that other appeals had come about due to a conflict of interest when selectors also coached, a practice that has since ceased in that sport (V4M);

- One athlete that had been selected for an overseas competition reportedly “went haywire” and had to be sent home, which made the selection panel feel responsible for their apparent error of judgment (P2Ma). A different selector for the same sport left someone out of a Commonwealth Games team that everyone else thought should be in the team, and suffered subtle abuse as a consequence (V7F);

- One selector was over-ruled by the high performance manager because she’d made a decision based on outdated statistics. This was probably necessary and appropriate action, but she perceived the situation as one of conflict (V2Fb);

- On one occasion, two athletes that had been omitted from a team had refused to play for Australia again and refused to talk to the coaches, using private coaches instead. One of these two athletes later went overseas and competed for another country, creating angst and embarrassment for the selectors involved (V10F); and

- A number of participants said they had received threats and abuse over time (P6M, V4M, V8M MGYM, V1M, P16F).

**Effects of conflict.** Over fifty per cent of those who reported being involved in conflict as a result of a selection decision said that it affected them. As shown in Table 5.5, participants variously described those effects as toughening up, getting the ‘shits’, feeling bitter, sorry, upset, disappointed, uncomfortable, defensive and even being frightened.
Notably, there was no conflict reported relating to the operation of the selection panel itself. The majority said that selection decisions made by panels either rarely or never came to a vote. One selector explained, “we come to a consensus when we disagree … we talk sensibly and we sort of work it out” (V3Ma). Conflict was otherwise prevalent. There was apparent conflict between boards and selectors, between selectors and athletes, between State and national sport organisations, as well as between selectors and athletes’ associates – that is, their coaches, managers, and parents.

Most sport organisations had implemented a policy of silence from the selection panel, and this removal of any right of reply was a real issue for selectors. Having to justify decisions was regarded as a tedious and stressful task, so it seemed that they did not necessarily have a strong desire to respond to criticism, but it seemed that they resented the right to do so being forcibly taken away from them. The media did not really trouble this group, however the effect of conflict within the immediate sport community was important.

5.3.3 Change

Selectors were questioned about change, specifically whether there had been much change, what had driven it, and whether their sport managed change well. Most felt that there had been substantial change, and went on to list items they considered significant. Change was identified in Chapter 5 (see Figure 5.1) as a common characteristic, that is, a characteristic that was considered common to both the person and the job. According to participants, change had affected the role more than it had affected them personally, and for this reason change – expressed in terms of both policy and procedure – is dealt with in more detail in Chapter 6.
Most selectors were unable to easily define what had driven change. Some believed that it was the ASC who had pushed change (V11M), while others (professionals) felt that they themselves had introduced change (P2Ma, P2Mb). In terms of a broader view, some participants felt it was the changing market for athletes and their ever-increasing ability to earn income that meant there was more at stake and thus a greater likelihood of selection disputes (V4M, P6M), and others believed changes in their backyard were a reflection of global change, particularly a need to be the best and strive for perfection (V18F, P14M). The majority, however, struggled to answer the question, as decisions with respect to change were being made at the strategic level within the respective sport organisations, often in consultation with stakeholders.

**Management of change.** Selectors were asked whether their respective sport organisations managed change well, which was a question not only about change but also about leadership. There was a spectrum of responses. One selector felt that it was managed poorly (V1F), while another felt that her organisation was a leader in introducing change, because (for example) it had introduced “resilience type activities to teach the kids to bounce back, because (they) thought it was a huge issue” (V4F). This was a clear attempt to manage and take responsibility for the aftermath of the selection process. In the middle of those two extremes, the majority felt their organisations managed change well.

One observed that constantly changing board members and a corresponding lack of clarity in roles affected how well change was managed, in particular, that some at board level tended to take on the role of selector (P6M). Others commented that bureaucracy sometimes stifles change, with one wanting his administration to
sometimes “get out of the way” (P2Ma), and with another noting that “the administration is always just one step behind what’s happening” (V5M). One selector stated that things were “evolving” within her sport, but that there were “not enough professionals” to properly facilitate change (V2Fb). Another felt that her organisation was a leader of change, and was able to give examples in support of her statement (V4F). The most balanced response came from a participant who said that his organisation did not have an “aversion to change” but that it did not manage change well, usually due to a lack of planning and poor communication (V14M). There was no indication that any individual leaders or organisations were seen as transformational leaders in terms of how they implemented change.

The quality of responses suggested that only about six (28%) of the participants were sufficiently informed to answer this question. Volunteers in particular were not only information-poor but they were also time-poor, so many had neither the time nor the information to consider strategic matters. They did not think much beyond what they actually do and in that sense, they were similar to ‘line managers’. Line managers are those who operate at the lowest level of the management hierarchy. They typically carry out work that makes a direct contribution to production, so their focus is usually on the ‘here and now’ (Schermerhorn, 2009; Wilkinson, 2010).

Selectors were generally very accepting and even supportive of the changes that had been introduced during their time in the role. This could be because they understood and agreed with the rationale for change, but it seemed to be more of the latter (agreement) and less of the former (understanding). It may be that their commitment and loyalty to the sport organisation was such that in their eyes, it could do no wrong, and/or it may be that for some participants, this and allied roles had
consumed their life to the point where alternative choices were no longer possible. Certainly, an element of fear had been introduced by change managers as part of ‘selling’ them on the need for change – all participants were very clear that there were negative consequences (such as legal action, costs and the additional work needed to justify their actions) for not following newly introduced procedures.

In summary, selectors were asked about change and in the ensuing discussion, they confirmed there had been substantial change in the form of ever-increasing formalisation of the selection system. Participants detailed a great many changes, including organisational philosophy, selection policy, selection criteria, improved communication, the use of discretion, the application of a more objective approach, the existence of appeal mechanisms, some consideration of organisational justice as it affected athletes’ rights, and improved record-keeping. There were no stated issues with the amount or rate of change, and the consensus was that change had been managed quite well by most sport organisations. Participants’ responses suggested a pre-occupation with the mechanics of change with little or no awareness of the corresponding change that had occurred within their operational culture over time.

5.3.4 Responsibility

Another topic that emerged from the interviews was that of responsibility. It became clear that the selectors felt a tremendous sense of responsibility that came with the role, both toward athletes affected by their decisions, which was ‘micro’ in nature, and toward the sport in general, which was a more macro view. Almost all selectors mentioned it during and/or throughout their interview, with nine of the group feeling responsibility very strongly (V3Ma, P2Ma, V7F, V8M, P2Mb, V2Fb, V5M, V10F, V18F). One participant said of athletes: “we feel responsible if someone gets injured
within the program, you can’t just chuck them out, you’ve got to rehabilitate them” (V5M). Another selector talked about the responsibility he felt toward the sport: “if the team doesn’t win, it comes back to the selectors” (V3Ma), while another was aware that she needed to take special care in dealing with athletes in her sport because they were “developing young girls” (P16F).

Some perhaps felt the brunt of too much responsibility – references made to treating athletes as ‘your kids’, ‘feeling desperately’ for them, and believing that the sport has made a ‘better life’ for them might be seen by some as being above and beyond the call of selector duty. Much of what was said about responsibility emanated from the sports of bowls and softball, both of which had recent infusions of ‘new blood’ on their selection panels. Professional coach/selectors in particular felt responsible not only for selections, but for the entire program. One of these, classified in Table 4.5 as a ‘transient professional’, felt responsibility keenly, as is evident in the following statements:

It’s turned into a tougher job than what I first expected … the selections themselves, I always knew that would be tough, but that is one of the hardest times … and knowing people quite intimately, as you do, to ring up and say ‘(name deleted) … I think being a selector, there’s a wide range of emotions you go through at different times, sorry, it’s not your time, this time’ is horrible. Sleepless nights … it’s quite disturbing really … some of them really are just like your kids, so yeah you worry about them …if they’ve got issues going on … it really becomes a tight knit family at times, especially when you’re touring … and you know a lot about them, I mean, a lot of personal stuff, health-wise, personally and all that so … I find it a job of great responsibility” (P2Ma).

This supported his classification as a transient professional, because the high level of involvement (or complete absence of any detachment) indicated by his comments suggested that he might suffer ‘burnout’ from exposure to so much perceived responsibility.
Succession. Selectors’ strong sense of responsibility meant that they were also concerned about who would replace them when they eventually moved on. Several mentioned succession planning during the interview. Some, who had been doing the job for many years, were clearly planning how they would hand over to the next generation. One selector said “there’s people that I’ve made sure that, you know, have got the experience and the knowledge to be able to … continue it on”. (V18F). Others similarly said “we always talk succession planning … after eight years at that top level … it’s time for somebody else (V14M), and “16 years is long enough to have been in the role, I need to hand it over to someone else, for them to take the sport in whatever direction (P16F).

One professional coach/selector was certainly in favour of regular turnover of selectors on the panel: “you should probably review the selection panel and keep a constant fluctuation in the selectors, not have (the same ones) in place for a long time. Just to re-freshen it up, that’s what I think would be good” (P2Mb). Approximately one-third of the group expressed an awareness that things change and that ‘new blood’ was necessary to prevent complacency, and to keep up the process of improvement and change in sport. As one participant explained, “sometimes when people come up with new ideas I think, ‘oh, we’re fine how we’re doing it’, and (I know) that’s not a good attitude … there should be a change of guard” (P16F). Another concurred: “next year, I’ve already spoken the to the head coach and said that I think that it’s not very healthy for the sport to have the same selectors for seven years, I believe there should be a change of guard” (V5M). This awareness of the need for planned succession was further evidence of the sense of responsibility selectors felt toward their role and to their sport.
5.3.5 Culture

Culture is cultivated behaviour, often described as ‘the way we do things around here’, and consists of a set of beliefs, values, norms, attitudes, hierarchies, and concepts acquired by a group of people. It is a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. Culture establishes clear boundaries for those within, best described by Colyer (2000) in the Australian sport context as a “specialized form of social control process that tends to bind organizational members” (p. 323). The existence of a strong culture or cultures is a factor affecting both how selectors perform the task, and how they feel about it. There were some very strong cultural elements evident in the responses from this group. Selectors were not asked directly about culture in any context, however the following comments were made during interviews that indicated the existence of both a strong organisational culture, along with the influence of some elements of Australian culture. The following comments were extracted from answers to unrelated questions, and have been loosely classified as follows:

Copping it Sweet. ‘Cop it sweet’ is an Australian slang term that means to take what’s coming to you, because Australians generally cannot abide ‘whingers’ (those who complain). This cultural element was evident in the general unease that most selectors felt toward selection disputes and appeals. To appeal a selection decision is to complain, a practice that is culturally discouraged (refer Section 6.6.5, Appeals). This belief is reflected in many selectors’ comments, but is best encapsulated by the following:
They (those who appeal) don’t do a lot for the wellbeing of the team (V3Ma);

There’s no point in making a big hullabaloo about it … I probably think they’re a bit of a princess (V4F), and (from the same sport);

Having missed selection once or twice, you know it’s absolutely devastating … but (the athlete is helped by the support network) to see it in the best way possible, and you keep persisting and go again, as opposed to making a major drama about it and appealing … and it actually doesn’t do you any favours, because … the netball world is too small, and if you upset people, even if it’s been unfair, then … you’ve just got to deal with it (V2Fa)

Federalism. Federalism is a system of government that has a group of members (States or provinces) and a central governing authority. It is often characterised by the formation of factions, and infighting between them. This is evident throughout all levels of sport in Australia, which has a long history of discord between State and national sport organisations (Shilbury & Kellett, 2011; Shilbury, Ferkins, & Smythe, 2013). This culture can be seen in the following comments:

- Staff were supporting some but not others. There were favourites … there used to be a lot of animosity but I think now it’s more united … some state selectors are receptive, but others are not. It’s a work in progress, and it’s more about egos than anything. We’ve selected (national) athletes who did not make their State squads, so we’ve literally had to ignore the State selectors (P2Ma)

- Why would the States work well together? (V3M)

- West Australia are always complaining that nobody goes there (V10F)

Traditionalism. Traditionalism places a constant emphasis on the value of tradition, often at the expense of progress in any form, which can impede success. The desire to cling to tradition for no good reason is usually illogical, and is most commonly reflected in the protest that is made when someone suggests change, “but we’ve always done it this way”. Tensions between volunteer boards and professional sport managers were observed by Colyer (2000), who said that volunteers in that environment were seen to be “holding back development” (p. 335). The following
comments indicate the existence of a traditionalist culture in some sport organisations:

- I come from the private sector, where if you decide that you’re going to do something, you act on it, you do it and that’s it. With this, there’s a lot of fingers in the pie. Things get slowed down … (sometimes I feel like) I’m being stifled … let me run with it and get out of the way (P2M)

- The head selector, the chairman of selectors is always the national coach, that’s never changed (V7F)

- They tend to be traditionalists on the board (V1F)

- I’m not interested in the men’s side of it … to me it’s not the same game. And it was never around when I grew up (V2Fb). The same person later said that she told the coach to “move into the 20th century”. Similarly, “what boys netball does is not part of (our) program, I don’t think … they’re not members” (V4F)

- (The method of rankings is) stone age (P2Mb)

- There were family dynasties that pretty much ran the sport so there were families who had huge power, people with 30 years of involvement, who were sitting members of the international body … we’re just about rid of the old guard now (V8M)

Knocking the Boss. ‘Knocking’ is another Australian slang term that means to criticise or find fault with others, particularly successful people colloquially known as ‘tall poppies’ (Dunstan, 1992). ‘Knocking’ the boss is a more specific version of this pastime that targets those in charge in the workplace. It is considered culturally acceptable to criticise the boss, since many workers like to think they can do the job better than the boss, and many also like to think the boss does very little, while the underlings do all the ‘real’ work for him. Comments such as the following suggest that these cultural mores apply within some sport organisations, and suggest that ‘knocking the boss’ is a common occurrence by professional sport employees speaking of Board members:
When the previous chair of selectors didn’t like a person, I’d call it retribution, there was certainly a vindictive train of thought behind their reasoning … (so) sometimes you’ve got to massage egos … we have a President who will watch games on TV and ring me up to say (athlete’s name deleted) is terrible. This is from a guy who plays at a low level within his own club and this is the guy who’s going to make the decision on your next review (P2Ma)

We have a superior being called a Board … (those on the sport’s Board) are all individuals who think they know a lot (P6M).

**You Have to Have Been There.** The belief that ‘you have to have been there’ is endemic within the sport industry. It dictates that you have to have competed at a certain level to be able to coach, select or even understand what happens at that level – that is, you have to have competed at an Olympics to be able to coach Olympic athletes, and you have to have played for Australia to be able to select players to play for Australia. Like many cultural beliefs, it is not necessarily logical but is strongly held, and rarely if ever challenged. Its existence is seen in the following comments made by selectors during interviews:

- I think you have to have ‘walked the walk’ to know, to understand what it’s like out there … greens are different in every part of the world … those five Presidents didn’t have a clue what it was like out there, had no idea. Not one of them put a bowl down so they could see what we were up against (V7F)
- I really believe this … I know that this is what’s necessary, because I’ve lived it (V2Fa)
- All the guys, the three coaches plus myself have all played in Olympics and so we know, in different eras, what the pressure of that is (V5M)

The term ‘out there’ was used quite commonly, as if the sporting competition occurred in some sort of war zone. This is unsurprising, since sport has a history of being allied with and likened to war (Coakley et al., 2009). Some participants said that their sports required them to have competed at a certain level to be able to apply for a selector role (V4F, V7F, V2Fb), so in other words, international players were required as selectors for international squads, and State players were qualified to
coach development squads, with occasional exceptions made for persons with vast experience, or for State selectors. Given that almost half of the participants had not performed at an elite level in their sport, the “you have to have been there” rule was not yet a hard and fast one.

**Sport is a Panacea for All Ills.** There are many who feel strongly that everything about sport is good and happily accept all sport-related propaganda. According to this belief, sport keeps people healthy, sport improves behaviour, sport keeps troublesome kids ‘off the streets’, sport teaches values such as a strong work ethic and promotes teamwork, and sport can even bring warring countries together, making sport a panacea for all evil (Coakley et al., 2009). It overlooks many of the issues associated with sport, such as deviant behaviour and gender imbalances and is thus a one-sided view.

Many interviewed unsurprisingly held the former view, none more so than one selector, who had come to believe that social responsibility was intertwined with her role. In general, “If we can bring them through and make a better person out of them, and they are a better person for their experiences in our sport, it’s worth it”, and of a specific athlete: “if she doesn’t make it … at least (our sport) has tried to make a better life for her” (V7F).

**International Identity.** Australia is known for having a long-term ‘cultural cringe’. This is an inferiority complex of sorts that causes Australians to dismiss their own culture as inferior to the cultures of other countries, and which makes it critically important to perform well overseas, to prove the nation’s value (Dunstan, 1992; Feather, 1993). This has manifested itself mainly in war, the arts and in sport. Without exception, selectors interviewed were involved in élite level, international
sport, and were very clearly attuned to this cultural concept. The following words of one selector expressed the general view: “it’s important for Australia’s reputation internationally to be seen as producing quality athletes” (V18F).

All Hail the Coach. Much of any athlete or team’s success is ascribed, rightly or wrongly, to the coach. Coaches are revered in Australia, as they are in many other countries, as if they have some supernatural power to ensure that their athlete or team wins. Everyone loves a winner in sport and when the athlete or team is not winning, the coach is usually blamed for the lack of success, despite the fact that he/she rarely has much control over the outcome. The selectors interviewed considered themselves part of each sport’s high performance function, and they all saw the coach as the most vital component of high performance. Selectors clearly believed in the power of the coach:

- Some other countries are far more successful … they have no selection criteria, the head coach picks the team, as easy as that, and I think that’s fair (P2Mb)

- Some coaches don’t cope with being questioned and it’s easier for them to just get rid of the player, if they’re not your high profile player, as someone can easily take their place … really, whatever the head coach says goes (V1F)

- I think the understanding always is the head coach, given a few exceptions, in the end gets the team they want … (V6M). There’s no good putting someone there that the coach doesn’t want there, because that’s not going to work (V7F)

- Get to the end of the season, we haven’t done well, we’re sacking the coach (V3M)

Gender. As the saying goes, ‘boys will be boys’ – they have historically had more freedom to play, and so sport in Australia remains (at this stage) a male-dominated activity. Women have traditionally been involved in support roles in sport, such as tending the canteen and washing the uniforms (Coakley et al., 2009). Selectors’ comments confirmed that gender stereotypes still exist:
Sometimes it’s really male dominated. I’m the only female on the junior advisory committee in my State – 7 men and 1 woman – you know how hard that is sometimes? The same participant later said, of selection methods: “we watch behaviour off court – are they behaving like idiots or are they sitting there like ladies?” (V10F)

Most selectors from the States are elderly women, they know everything, they know best (V7F).

Notably, both of the above critics of women were women, as is often the case, and they were older women. The group of participants also included younger women who were resistant to welcoming male netball and softball players, as outlined earlier (see Section 5.3.5 Culture – Traditionalism). Gender stereotypes within the group appeared only in the comments of women, so it may be more apt to say that for gender issues, ‘girls will be girls’.

The various cultural beliefs outlined affected the way selectors felt about their role, and the way they carried it out. Specifically, they revered the coach, along with anyone who had competed at the highest level because they’d ‘been there’, they tended to discourage dissent and individualism from athletes, some resisted change, and all believed unstintingly in the value of sport.

5.3.6 Communication

Communication emerged from the discourse as an important factor influencing the quality of the system. It should be noted that no direct questions were put to selectors about communication, however remarks were made in response to other questions, and collated in a category as a body of comment. They have been classified as being indicative of either good or poor communication.
Many comments suggested that communication was good, feedback had improved, and that there was ample opportunity to talk about things. Positive comments about communication tended to fall into two main groups, being internal communication, related to being a member of a selection panel (selectors talking to other selectors), and external communication, which is selectors disseminating information to others (generally athletes, coaches, and States). Equally, there were comments about poor communication, stating that it could certainly be improved, that it was at times inconsistent, changing quickly from really good to pretty poor, and that where organisational change wasn’t managed well it was due to communication. While the positive comments about communication were confined largely to selectors and their immediate community, the negative comments were more widespread, suggesting that when there was a communication problem, it was more widely dispersed throughout the entire organisation. These comments are set out in Table 5.6.

Comments suggesting poor internal communication were about dialogue between selectors and how they dealt with each other. More discussion, more assertiveness, and more face-to-face meetings were considered desirable. The indicators of poor external communication included over-reliance on the written word, that is, emails, spreadsheets and websites as methods of information dispersal. Such methods are impersonal, they rely on the reader being able to understand the language and terms used, and they involve no feedback.
Table 5.6: Selectors’ perceptions of communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERNAL COMMUNICATION: SELECTORS WITH SELECTORS</th>
<th>EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION: SELECTORS WITH OTHERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• We sit down beforehand and talk about what we’re going to say … (I) have an ongoing conversation with the others all the time (V4F)</td>
<td>• We know all these people well, so that opens up the communication channels nicely (P2Ma)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We do have debate, which is good … I do try and share just about everything with them that I can (P2Ma)</td>
<td>• We give each State feedback about positions … try to steer away from feedback about specific players (V4F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I’m allowed to say whatever I want at the meetings (V5M)</td>
<td>• We got them together and had a bit of a ‘mind session’ with athletes and coaches alike (V4M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A lot more communication (has been) implemented by the head coach. He just makes sure that we’re in the loop, all the time. We’re always texting each other, always in contact and communicating, on a weekly basis (V3Ma)</td>
<td>• We’ve been very conscious of trying to communicate to the community the philosophy behind the policies … we publish the policies and people know what they’ve got to do ahead of time (V8M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We do a lot of phone hook-ups and emails (V6M)</td>
<td>• When it comes to picking a tea out of that squad, the group itself has been asked how they want the message delivered (V5M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They tend to use Skype frequently to remain in constant communication (V14M)</td>
<td>• Selectors all get on with squad players, they communicate, we’re working as one (V1M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I think if you’ve got the same views it’s pointless (V1F)</td>
<td>• The Board creates policy and the policy goes on the website and that’s explained to the athletes in words of one syllable by a high performance manager (V11M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We give each State feedback about positions … try to steer away from feedback about specific players (V4F)</td>
<td>• I gave people a half-hour briefing about the process. My expectation of the selectors, and my expectation of the coaches, and what we would be looking for. The time spent briefing people was very valuable (V3M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We got them together and had a bit of a ‘mind session’ with athletes and coaches alike (V4M)</td>
<td>• One of the approaches we use, and I’m not sure if all the gym sports will do it, is after a selection trial we’ll invite any of the high performance coaches that have had athletes competing into a room and share the results with them, we’ll allow the coaches just to have a say about selection (V14M)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 5.6: Selectors’ perceptions of communication (cont).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Communication: Selectors with Selectors</th>
<th>External Communication: Selectors with Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• We need more discussions, not just via phone hookup (V4M)</td>
<td>• The program manager explained to a parent via email “this is the reason that your daughter wasn’t selected for the team” (V8M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I’d like one of them to be a bit stronger in selection debates (P2Ma)</td>
<td>• We publish an expanding spreadsheet of all of the athletes’ performances at domestic and international level … if they won’t train or have a poor attitude, there’ll be an exchange of emails directed to that (V3M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They interviewed me, I got the job, you’re going to Perth, here’s your flight ticket, (there was) no more communication, that was it … (the coach) keeps it all in his head (V2Fa)</td>
<td>• It can be downloaded from the international body website as well as from ours, so it’s readily available to them (V18F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tele-conferencing with the Russian coach isn’t the best, we’d much rather face-to-face with him (V8M)</td>
<td>• When you see the selection criteria, they don’t understand, then okay, that’s the thing we didn’t do well (P14M)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feedback is critical to finding out if the message sent was received and understood. Simply putting a spreadsheet up on a website may not inform as expected, since not everyone can follow spreadsheet information with ease. Advising a parent of a selection by email is not ideal, since the words used may easily be misconstrued – better perhaps to explain in person, check that the parent understood the message, and then follow up the message with an email to reinforce it. Some gymnastics codes reported that their program of having personal meetings with coaches about selection criteria and decisions had proved successful in having the message accepted within the community (V18F, P16F).

**Feedback.** Selectors commented often about a lack of feedback, whether about their role, about how selected athletes performed, or between State and national organisations:

- I haven’t been given any feedback to say that I’m woeful (V2Fa).
- It would be good to get some written feedback about how those players that we selected, how they performed … when you’re a volunteer you kind of really need that feedback (V2Fa). They never come back to us (V1F)
- We’ve got to open the communication chain up, to get feedback from State and District selectors (P2Ma)

**Organisation-wide communication.** There were hints that communication throughout sport organisations could be improved:

- We have a position of national program manager … so they’re kind of a conduit, if you like, between (the sport) and the volunteers, and that position unfortunately has tended to turnover fairly rapidly … I meet with (the) Board once a year … it’s a two-way communication (V14M)
- I have a bit of an idea of what’s going on (within the organisation) (V2Fa)
- I’m not close to the CEO, don’t see him very often (V7F)
Given that selectors were not directly questioned about communication, the subject came up a great deal, and was probably an omission on the part of the researcher, since communication impacts both on how selectors feel about their role, as well as how they do it. In summary, it can be said that communication was mentioned many times, so it was clearly important. The majority of comments made about communication were positive, however there were also enough negative comments made to conclude that it was sometimes a problem. The importance of good communication seemed to be understood by all participants.

5.3.7 Power

Importance. Selectors were asked if they were important to their sport, to get a sense of how they saw their own value to the organisation, and of whether they felt at all powerful. It was apparent that all selectors were uncomfortable faced with the notion of their own importance. The majority baulked at saying they were important, choosing to hedge, and respond instead by saying that the role was important. Thirteen responded that they were important to their sport (V2Fa, V3Ma, P16F, V4F, V4M, P2Ma, V5M, V7F, V2Fb, V1M, V11M, P14M, V18F), but were at pains to qualify and explain their answers.

Most commonly, participants responded that the role was important rather than the person, as if assessing their own value was somehow culturally wrong. Of the thirteen who said they were important, one selector felt he was important because he also carried out other administrative tasks for the sport (V3Ma); one felt he was important in the sense that he made decisions that affect athletes’ careers (V4M); one was confident in the knowledge that he had a world-wide reputation for his knowledge of his sport (V11M); another felt that she was perhaps not important so
much as respected (V4F); and one regarded himself as important not as a selector but as a ‘Hall-of-Famer’ for his sport (V5M). Two did not give a clear answer (P6M, P2Mb). The remaining six felt they were not important – two were self-deprecating (V8M, V6M), one felt she was being treated as quite unimportant, (V1F) and the remaining three were so uncomfortable with the concept of their own importance that they could not be drawn further on the subject (V3M, V8M, V10F)

**Types of power.** Selectors were not directly asked about the concept of power, but a number of comments suggesting power issues were extracted from the discourse. These have been categorised in line with the known types of organisational power, as outlined in Chapter 2 (Armstrong, 2006; Lashley & Lee-Ross, 2003; Schermerhorn, 2009), and are set out in Table 5.7. Professional selectors were clearly in touch with those in ‘position power’, however volunteer selectors reported to the coach and/or the high performance manager, and so they were at least one step further removed from the organisation’s leaders. The professional sport managers and coaches in this group could be likened to a layer of middle management in the usual organisational context, that is, not at the top, but with access to the top.
Table 5.7: Selectors’ references to power

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF POWER</th>
<th>EVIDENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Legitimate or position power**       | **There’s a superior being called a board (P6M)**  
| (Power attained by position)           | **I can’t tell you, because that comes from above … really, whatever the head coach says goes … the high performance manager wanted a particular player in the squad (V1F)**  
|                                        | **I’m surprised they’ve allowed her to be interviewed (V2Fb, referring to V1F)**  
|                                        | **I keep all the trouble away from the selectors … then we meet and make selections … after that I take all the blame or all the kudos, whatever … I can only provide recommendations … the board has to approve it (P2Mb)**  
|                                        | **It does come from what the Minister wants, but they seem to alternate between gold medals and participation for the masses (V11M)**  
|                                        | **I’m respected within the sport (V4F); I’m known, the kids know who I am (V4M); once there’s a selector around they freeze (V2Fb)**  
|                                        | **We have a player in our (national) squad who wasn’t picked by the States (P2Ma)**  
| **Coercive power**                     | **I’ve instructed them to use this method but they’ve elected not to (V1F)**  
| (Power by threat or force)             | **If you fall foul of your State coordinator then you mightn’t get the role even though you’re a very good judge (V8M)**  
|                                        | **It won’t happen while I’m there, that’s for sure (V1M)**  
| **Expert or information power**        | **Hockey started the sports coding. A hockey player did that … (switching positions) we almost invented that (V5M)**  
| (Power by having knowledge or information) | **When I first took this position on, there was no database. We started it, (he) and I (V7F)**  
|                                        | **The structure of the competition tells me what I need to have as a potential winner. I would have a world reputation of understanding the technology (V11M)**  
|                                        | **I check out details on people (V3Ma)**  
|                                        | **He (the coach) keeps it all in his head (V2Fb)**  
|                                        | **I currently play so I see these players more often … I know the whole … team so I’ve got all that information … I know who can perform and who can’t (V1M)**  
|                                        | **I was the one travelling internationally, getting the knowledge and experience and bringing it back to Australia (V18F)**  
| **Connection power**                   | **(As a) three-time Olympian and quasi-advisor to the coach, I’m his confidante. I’ll attend meetings sometimes when I feel like it. When (he) is the coach, I’m allowed to say whatever I want in the meetings … I guess they see me as important (V5M)**  
| (Power by acquaintance with a powerful person) | **I just got along well with the head coach (V2Fb)**  
|                                        | **There were family dynasties that pretty much ran the sport, there was a family in each State who had huge power. I’m sure that the selections were built around those people with the power (V8M)**  
|                                        | **Once I finished (competing) it was a bit too heavy on the board (with members of my family), so I chose to be a selector (V6M)**  
| **Referent or personal power**         | **When (the coach) asks a question of most people, they defer to him (V5M)**  
| (Power by virtue of charisma or integrity) | **Sometimes the assistant coach can be a bit persuasive when he wants someone in (V7F)**  
| **Reward or punishment power**         | **It’s easier to get rid of the player if they’re not your high profile player (V1F)**  
| (Power by offering or withholding rewards) | **Can’t step out of line, don’t do anything wrong or you’ll find yourself at the gallows just about … we didn’t select him because we felt he was only going to be a destructive influence on the team … everybody was going down the left road and he wanted to go down the right road (V10F)**  

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The main thing that participants had to say about their leaders, or those in ‘position power’, were about the number of times they turned over – which was anywhere between 1-2 years (V2Fb), and no change for thirty years (V6M). As one despairing selector observed: “the chairperson for our selection policy changed three times in less than two years” (P6M). There was also comment about the effect of having professional management answer to a board comprised of volunteers (P2Ma, P6M), suggesting that those who appeared to hold a position of power sometimes felt they did not.

Positive comment about those with positions of power came from those organisations with stability in management, that is, where the same people had been in charge for many years (V6M, P16F, V14M). Where leaders were stable and known, selectors were more likely to be positive about their efforts. The various gymnastic sports stood out in particular for the longevity and stability of their ‘middle management’ level of Technical Director/selectors (P16F, V8M, V14M, V18F).
5.4 SUMMARY

To summarise the findings reported in this chapter and thereby answer Research Question Two, selectors felt satisfied, motivated, supported, and committed in relation to their role. Selectors were asked about the HRM constructs of satisfaction, motivation and commitment, because these terms had been in existence for a great many years and were widely understood. They were not asked directly about job engagement, because it is a highly specific and relatively new HRM term that would not be familiar to them, however participants gave all indications of being highly engaged with their role – that is, they were dedicated, vigorous and absorbed, rather than being merely satisfied with it.

Participants had no issues with the amount of time they committed to the role. They were very experienced and therefore quite confident, but found it difficult to acknowledge their own importance. The amount of time they committed to the role despite inadequate payment was not a major issue for them. They enjoyed the role, and derived value from it for themselves in other ways, such as friendship, travel, keeping in touch with élite sport, and feeling like they’re making an important contribution to their chosen sport.

Selectors were aware of criticism, had at times been involved in varying levels of conflict, and often felt quite stressed about what they were doing, which manifested itself most commonly in loss of sleep. Selectors felt a strong sense of responsibility in all directions, as if they were to some extent responsible for the success and the future of the sport. This sense of responsibility extended as far as succession planning, with selectors showing concern for finding their own replacement.
Selectors had undergone and coped with quite a lot of change during their time in the role. They expressed a number of feelings, many of which were negative, but despite that, selectors described themselves as highly committed, and reported that their commitment levels had stayed constant or increased over time. Undesirable aspects of the role were acknowledged but (in the main) accepted with equanimity, being offset by a high level of affective commitment born of emotional attachment to the sport. Selectors answered Research Question Two by providing substantial insight into what it is like to be a selector.

Selectors interviewed felt positive about their role. They were highly committed and engaged and, thus, likely to be performing their role at a consistently high level. Consequently, the transformation process carried out by selectors within the proposed systems model (converting inputs to outputs), contains a substantial amount of effort, goodwill and positive intent. The tools used by selectors – policy and process – will also affect outcomes, and are considered in more detail in Chapter 6.

There were few differences between the two sub-groups – that is, between professional and volunteer selectors. The level of commitment selectors felt toward their organisation and the level of support they felt from it in return were affected by the existence of different psychological contracts, specifically, the existence of payment for services rendered. The most substantial difference was found to exist in power. Professional selectors had more power than their volunteer counterparts, by virtue of their position, as well as by being closer to the seat of power, and having better access to information. This is a finding of some importance, and is dealt with in more detail in Chapters 6 and 7.
6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter responds to Research Question Three (RQ3), which asked what the selection system was like, according to selectors. A system in its entirety is often different to - most commonly greater than - the sum of its parts, and so the selection system is considered in two ways in this chapter. Reductionism involves looking at individual components, such as the method for appointment of selectors or the way meetings are conducted, while expansionism means looking at the system as a whole.

The ‘ideal’ system and its components were set out in Chapter 2 (see Figure 2.2). The individual points in Figure 2.2 represent advice provided to NSOs by the ASC and others, mainly legal advisers. It is therefore derived from sport selection industry literature, with consideration given also to matters of organisational justice (refer Chapter 1 Section 2.1.5). The contents of Figure 2.2 provide the theoretical component which is used throughout this chapter as a basis for comparison with what was found to happen in practice. First, participants reported a great many changes they had seen occur in the way that selection is now approached and carried out. Next, selectors’ perceptions of the system are considered, allowing comparisons to be made between what was reported and what was considered ideal.

6.2 CHANGE

Changes observed by participants were classified and grouped to avoid duplication – for example, more than one participant mentioned the need to be transparent. Reported changes were categorised into ‘policy’, that is, how the organisation approached the task of selection in general terms, and ‘process’, which sets out in
more detail how things were to be done. This is in line with the inputs section of the systems model, as shown in Figure 6.1, and is also in line with the selection system development stages detailed in Figure 2.2. Changes were then compared to the ASC’s (2007) recommendations for the development of selection policy, as set out in Chapter 2, at Figure 2.2, so that implementation of recommended change could be seen, and theory compared with ‘real-world’ practice. The results of this comparison are set out in Table 6.1.

**Figure 6.1: Selection system inputs**

To assist understanding of Table 6.1, it should first be understood that Figure 2.2 listed nine points under its ‘Policy Development’ phase. These were numbered 1-9 for use within the table. Similarly, Figure 2.2 listed a further nine points under its ‘Process Development’ phase, which were also numbered 1-9 in the same way. For clarification, Figure 2.2 also listed eight points under each of the ‘Appeal Process Development’ and the ‘Review of Process’ phases, however none of these appear in Table 6.1. The first four columns (L-R) of Table 6.1 refer to the contents of Figure 2.2 – Column 1 is the Figure number, Column 2 is the relevant stage, Column 3 is the point number listed within that stage, and Column 4 is a brief description of the
ASC’s (2007) recommendation contained in that particular point. Column 5 in Table 6.1 is the change(s) described by selectors during interviews, aligned with the relevant ASC recommendation in Figure 2.2, and Column 6 lists at least one participant, sometimes more, who reported the change. By this method, a look at Figure 2.2 will show (for example) that point number 4 under ‘Policy Development’ was the recommendation to have qualified people draft documentation, and Table 6.1 shows that two participants from two sports reported having used a lawyer to assist in drafting their written policy.

Table 6.1 shows that almost all of the ASC’s (2007) policy and process development recommendations had been implemented by the sport organisations represented, and was regarded by participants as change. It also informs that participants had little to contribute with respect to the remaining two stages of development shown in Figure 2.2, being appeal and review processes.

Important short- to medium-term changes included the drive to apply objective measures to the assessment of athletes, as well as the goal of improving communication with (feedback to) athletes. The most significant long-term change was the introduction of a culture of transparency to selection. Changes to the selection sub-culture within sport organisations were evident in many of the changes listed – the accountability to win medals (and thus justify government funding), the care taken with documentation, the heavy emphasis on benchmarks, performance standards and objective criteria to aid selection (disapproval of ‘gut feel’), consultation and feedback, independence and debate, many of which are the polar opposite of the former ‘family dynasty’ methods. The changes listed detail the gradual adoption of professional practices in the realm of sport selection.
Table 6.1: Changes to policy and process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fig</th>
<th>Dev. Stage</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Determine philosophy</td>
<td>Increased ASC involvement, influence of HP program (V3Mb, V4F, V7F, V1M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Consult stakeholders</td>
<td>Athlete input now important (V4M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Quality documentation</td>
<td>Policy documentation more detailed - philosophy, policy, criteria, written, published, has discretion (V4M, P2Ma, V11M, P6M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>4, 9</td>
<td>Quality documentation</td>
<td>External consultants review policy to check drafting, more litigation, more defensive (P2Ma, V11M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Determine criteria</td>
<td>Increasing focus on core competencies &amp; skills (V2Fa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Determine criteria</td>
<td>Global comparisons &amp; international benchmarks now used (V8M, V14M, V10F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Determine criteria</td>
<td>Trend to objectivity. Black &amp; white criteria promoting self-selection (V3Ma, P16F, P14M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Determine criteria</td>
<td>More preparation, more statistical information, development of customised statistics programs, mix of measures (V2Fb, V3Ma, V1M, V11M, P14M, V14M, V5M, V4F, V4M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Determine criteria</td>
<td>Performance standards used to manage expectations (V4M, V6M, P14M, V18F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Determine criteria</td>
<td>Criteria seen as a tool for the coach (P2Mb, P14M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>8, 9</td>
<td>Declare criteria/explain</td>
<td>Increased emphasis on feedback - type &amp; how given. Feedback as a panel, and to private coaches (V4F, P16F, V8M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Declare criteria/explain</td>
<td>Culture of transparency now (P2Ma, V2Fb, V8M, V4M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Select selectors</td>
<td>Coaches &amp; family dynasties used to control selection. Independent selectors now introduced (V6M, P16F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Educate selectors</td>
<td>Criteria adopted for selection of selectors. No longer mates for jobs. Preference for former national representatives (V1M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Select selectors</td>
<td>Mens &amp; womens used to be separate, now amalgamated. Athletes have to do more &amp; selectors have to know more (V10F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Meetings procedure</td>
<td>Debate now encouraged at selection meetings (V7F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Meetings procedure</td>
<td>More structured record-keeping, minutes &amp; records of meetings; now 'squeaky-clean' at top level (V2Fa, V10F, P16F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Meetings procedure</td>
<td>Use of selection panels to reduce power &amp; bias is now commonplace (all participants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Assessment method</td>
<td>More attendances by more selectors to see more players at more events (V2Fb, V7F, V10F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Assessment method</td>
<td>Manipulation of the system is now harder, mandatory events now common (V11M, V6M)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Extenuating circumstances</td>
<td>More athletes competing in overseas leagues, and allowances now made for that (P6M, V4M, V5M)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.3 SELECTION SYSTEMS: BY COMPONENT PARTS

6.3.1 Policy

A number of elements of a good quality selection system were detailed in Chapter 2 as part of the literature review (see Figure 2.2). With this information, comparisons could be made between what was seen as an ‘ideal’ selection system, and what selection systems looked like in reality, as perceived by participants. In the development of selection policy, it was deemed important to take time to plan development, and to first consider what the organisation’s overarching philosophy might be, along with the specific goals needed to achieve it. NSOs were further advised to consult with stakeholders, and then, having taken time to both plan and listen, they should be in a position to allow for all possible contingencies such as eligibility issues (common with so many athletes changing their country of origin), and compliance with bylaws. In case of error, it was advisable to include a power to amend the policy should something unforeseen arise. The next most important step was to determine appropriate selection criteria, such to be as objective as possible, and if any discretion was to be allowed then this had to be properly explained to all involved. Finally, NSOs were cautioned to enlist qualified people to draft policy, to ensure that it fulfils all legal obligations, especially those related to the provision of natural justice.

During the discussion, selectors alluded to those theoretical system elements that they felt were in common practice in their respective organisations. According to participants, most of this advice had been incorporated into the development of the systems with which they operated. They were not asked specifically to comment on each item due to time constraints, however some aspects were touched on during the interview, and some are outlined in Table 6.1 which details change.
Only four selectors interviewed were involved in discussions that determined selection philosophy (P6M, P2Ma, V11M, V3M), since this was most commonly carried out at the strategic level by the respective sports’ governing Board. Philosophy is commonly referred to in the literature as having a single objective, however most participants understood their sport’s philosophy to contain dual objectives. These were to win medals, while at the same time avoiding any formal challenges to selection decisions. The latter objective came about in response to the ‘selection catalyst’ of the 2000 Olympics outlined in Chapter 1, in which the number of disputes reached a level that was uncomfortably high for Australian sport.

The majority of selectors (90%) reported there was a written selection policy in place. One or two sports attempted to ‘get by’ with a generic policy to cover all of its various teams or events, but most had taken the trouble to devise a separate policy for each. The majority (81%) of selectors believed their policy was clear, easy to explain and understand, and showed a clear pathway for the athletes toward what they wanted to achieve, while the remaining four (19%) selectors responded in the negative. Of these, one selector said that she did not know, and appeared to have only glanced at the policy (V2Fa); two from the same sport said they did not have a clear policy because they didn’t have a policy at all (V1F, V2Fb), and another one said that his policy was not clear, because the rankings used within it were, in his view, highly subjective (P2Mb).

Sport organisations are obliged to ensure that the principles of natural justice are adhered to when developing policy (see Fig 2.2), and in particular, they should demonstrate the application of both informational and interpersonal justice toward athletes (See section 2.1.5). In short, they have a duty to act fairly, so that all
involved can have confidence in the system. To be fair, selection policy has to be understood by all who use it, and appropriate communication aids understanding (ASC, 2007). As stated earlier, some selectors reported that they received the policy via email - it was not explained to them, and they were simply instructed to read it, with no follow up as to whether they did read it, and understand it (V3Ma, V4F, V2Fa, V6M, V1M, V10F). One sport also reported advising athletes of selection decisions via email, which could be seen as compromising interpersonal justice if the method was not embraced.

Most sports had selection policies that were published and available for inspection on the internet, and tended to congratulate themselves that they had a policy that was open, transparent and readily available for anyone to read, however these policies were not as easy to understand as selectors reported. In most cases, detailed knowledge of the sport was assumed, and was critical to understanding the policies. (Archery Australia, 2014; Australian International Shooting Limited, 2014; Bowls Australia, 2014; Cycling Australia, 2014; Diving Australia, 2014; Gymnastics Australia, 2014; Hockey Australia, 2014; Netball Australia, 2014; Softball Australia, 2014; Squash Australia, 2013; Table Tennis Australia, 2014; Triathlon, 2014). For one sport, the website had been updated, but the selection policy published on the site had not been updated since 1996 (Squash Australia, 2013). Other policies had been available at the time of writing, but were later relocated within the site, rendering them impossible to find, and/or they may have been removed entirely (Diving Australia, 2014; Netball Australia, 2014).
A barometer of the fairness of a system is its level of acceptance, by selectors, athletes and the sport community. Rules need to be transparent and consistent for all involved. One selector said of the selection policy, “I’ve read it … you take on board what you think is appropriate, and sort the ‘wheat from the chaff’ … you do it the way you see it, I mean, there’s no ‘hard and fast’ rule” (V3Ma). This comment suggested that this particular selector adopted those parts of the policy that he felt were relevant, which is of concern.

Selectors were previously likened to line managers in terms of their tendency to think in a limited way about the short term, and line managers tend to regard procedure as an impediment to production, or a necessary evil. They do not fully understand policy, and in some cases may try to avoid it, such that their actions do not reflect the policy as it was devised (Wilkinson, 2010). It was possible that this selector, in choosing to ‘take on board’ what he felt was appropriate, circumvented his organisation’s policy.

**Stakeholders.** Good policy development involves consultation with stakeholders (see Fig 2.2). During interviews, selectors identified a vast number of stakeholders and agencies that affected, or were affected by what selectors do, and which warranted consideration in the formulation of both philosophy and policy. Stakeholders were defined as those significant others who should be considered in any organisation’s decision-making process. The list is lengthy, making it challenging to meet the needs of all involved:
Sport organisations had made an effort to be consultative internally with its own selectors, since 95 per cent of participants had been asked for input to their selection system. Most commonly, the professional head coach/selector and/or chair was first to review the policy, and he/she later dispersed it to individual volunteer selectors for their comment. The one person who had not been asked for input was a selector for one of the better resourced sport organisations which had someone specifically dedicated to this area of operations (V4F).

**Criteria.** The policy development phase also requires that criteria be determined, declared and explained in advance, and that such criteria should be as objective as possible (see Fig 2.2). Participants reported that criteria existed in all policies, with some seen as better than others. Some criteria were being constantly revised in line
with international benchmarks, however many were unclear and difficult to determine. A number of sports listed vague criteria, such as ‘skill, ‘potential’, ‘mental aspects’ (defined as having a ‘high-achiever mindset’), leaving it unclear as to how any of these might be accurately measured.

One stakeholder with a major impact on the operations of NSOs was the ASC. Most sports were encouraged to (or had been under pressure from) the ASC to ensure that selection criteria contained in their selection policy were as objective as is possible, in order to reduce the likelihood of any dispute. This was seen as a difficult thing to achieve in many sports. Some performances were indisputably objective, such as a ‘bulls-eye’ in archery, perfect shooting or the fastest time in a triathlon. Other sports, however, used numbers to assist with selection, in various forms such as rankings (e.g., racquet sports), or judges’ scores (e.g., gymnastics). Over time and with constant use, these numbers had come to be accepted as objective measures, as if some form of science was used in their derivation, whereas they were numbers that represented an opinion of performance.

Participants were probed to find out what their understanding of the term objectivity was, and were then asked to what extent objective and subjective selection criteria were used in their sport, in percentage terms (where the first number was the perceived level of objectivity, and the second number was the perceived level of subjectivity). Since these concepts cannot be easily quantified, selectors were effectively asked to put a number value on their own perceptions, to show how they saw the level of objectivity, and its opposite number subjectivity, within their respective sports’ selection criteria. Eighteen of the 21 selectors gave an estimate, while three did not. The findings are shown in Figure 6.2.
The median (mid-point) of all responses was a split of 66 per cent usage of objective measures of assessment, versus 34 per cent usage of subjective measures and, similarly, the mean (average) was 64 per cent objective, 36 per cent subjective, however, some extreme outliers affected these measures (softball and archery). The most relevant measure of this response was considered to be the mode, being the most commonly given response, which was 80 per cent objective, and 20 per cent subjective. Overall, participants generally believed that the criteria used for the selection of athletes in their respective sports were fundamentally objective, or as objective as could be achieved. Some estimates were given with qualifying comments, as follows:
• 40/60 – you have to understand the aim of the shot to be able to (understand it as a statistic), that is, you have to be able to read the game (P2Ma);

• 50/50 – we are still very subjective, but 99% of the time your feelings are supported by statistics (V4F);

• 60/40 – it’s as objective as we can get it (V4M); you’ve got to allow ‘gut feeling’, say, for someone who hasn’t performed well on a given day – there’s discretion available V8M);

• 75/25 – 75% of form, and 25% on such things as the ability to play under pressure or fit, your capacity as a citizen (V3Ma);

• 80/20 – there are goals, and there are goals shot under pressure. There are statistics on turnovers too, but they don’t show who did the hard work in front of you … there were a few criteria around leadership that I think were a bit ‘dodgy’ (V2Fa); we let the players do it (prepare their own statistics) or we use outside people, as a safety valve (V5M); rankings are subjective. I feel so bad sitting there doing these rankings (P2Mb);

• 100/0 – they get the score, or they don’t (V11M).

Interestingly, some selectors - all of whom were interviewed separately - were in close agreement in terms of their estimates, while others differed more substantially. The two representatives from netball, for example, said ‘50/50’ and ‘80/20’ respectively, yet there was little difference in the junior squads they were involved with (V4F, V2Fa). The four participants from bowls estimated ‘75/25’, ‘40/60’, ‘40/60’, and ‘50/50’ respectively (V3Ma, P2Ma, V7F, V1M), so that three of the group were very close with their estimates. It can be seen that perceptions differ.

Most selectors took the view that they knew their sport, and that objective measurement was not always possible. As one selector put it, “quite often you use the objective to support your subjective. We subjectively rank them on objective criteria, but we’re experienced, so we don’t get it wrong often” (V4F).
Similarly, another selector felt that opinion was only subjective if you had no knowledge of the sport. He explained, “it’d be more subjective if you didn’t know our sport – you bring your own experience to make judgments” (V5M). Both seemed to be arguing that objectivity was an inevitable outcome of knowledge and experience. If all performances could be objectively ranked, then there would be no further need for selectors.

Some selectors felt it was appropriate to be subjective in the assessment of athlete performance, in certain circumstances. One cited the example of the athlete who was “brilliant, but he’s destroying the team, so we lose because everybody is downhearted, so why would you pick him?” (V5M) Another selector observed, “benchmarks are subjective in some ways – some years we’ll have a crop who blitz the scores, and some years we’ll have no-one” (V6M). Those who seemed to be pleading the case for subjectivity included one selector who said, “sometimes all you do is have feelings about things. I would know in my mind that she ticks all those boxes without me formally doing it” (V4F).

These ‘feelings’ are often referred to as ‘gut feel’ or ‘gut instinct’, a term that was used unprompted by three selectors during their respective interviews (V8M, V2Fa, P2Ma), and which supported Bradbury and Forsyth’s (2012) assertion that ‘gut feel’ is a practice commonly used in the assessment of athlete performance. Some participants were keen to legitimate the use of at least some subjective criteria, but in a general sense the push toward the use of objective criteria was understood and accepted as a necessity.
Bias. Good policy development, along with the duty to be fair, demands that efforts are made to eliminate (or at least reduce) bias. Selectors were asked to comment on whether they thought bias existed. Some sports dealt with the issue of State preferences by having people declare their potential conflict or abstain from voting on athletes from their own State (V2Fa) while, conversely, others sought the advice of a person who was from the same State as the athlete in question (V10F), on the basis that his specialist knowledge of the athlete might help.

There were instances of selectors who had privately coached athletes and who therefore had a conflict of interest – most sports eventually banned the practice (V4M, V6M, V14M), but some allowed it to continue. One sport changed their structure so that the national coach did not personally coach any athletes (P16F). They instead placed the athletes with private coaches, leaving the national coach to travel around and observe those programs without directly coaching anyone.

Selection panels were devised some years ago in an attempt to reduce bias by putting power in the hands of several people instead of one person. Despite this, there was evidence of bias on selection panels (refer to the following section on Process: Selection Panels). As previously explained, many participants actively saw themselves as support for the coach and/or for the high performance program, and given that the coach would likely lose his job if the team does not perform, they tended to go along with what the coach wanted in selection terms (V7F, V3Ma, V10F, V4F). Incidences of bias and/or conflicts of interest were reflected in the following comments from selectors:
• I think we all have (had favourites), haven’t we? If they don’t fit in, well you know, of course they might think it’s retribution but they brought it on themselves (V3Ma);

• Bias is poorly managed. Two of the three selectors on the panel share the same house … I’ve seen retribution in my sport in the last three years. Players are better educated and more inclined to question coaches, and coaches get rid of the ones who push (V1F);

• We got criticism because our head coach was aligned with a team, so we put another (member) on the panel who was aligned with a different team, to counteract (V4M);

• (The State of) Western Australia always complains about being left out V10F); I’m already getting calls from athletes in Perth saying it’s not fair (V18F)

• Coaches do have their favourites and are blinkered … we try and address that by having judges from various programs involved, just to try and minimise the bias … and also … judges … that have exhibited characteristics of non bias … you try and balance the bias out (V14M); and

• One participant seemed resigned to it, when she said: “at the end of the day, there is a level of personal bias anyway. And that is sport” (V2Fa).

With respect to the elements of policy development outlined in Figure 2.2, participants reported some minor errors and omissions – for example, some sports had neglected to include within their policy a right to amend it. Generally however, most aspects of policy development had been considered and implemented by most sports.

6.3.2 Process

Once policy has been developed and is in place, processes need to be devised in order to ensure that the organisation’s stated philosophy and policy is achieved. Development of process and/or procedures, along with the development of an appeal process, feature as the second and third steps respectively in Figure 2.2. These process elements contain the ‘nuts and bolts’ of how selection is to be carried out. They detail methods used, such as the selection, appointment and training of both selectors and associated support staff, the way meetings are held, how
announcements are made, which venues are used, how extenuating circumstances are to be dealt with, and how appeals are conducted. The ASC (2007) also recommended that NSOs devise formal ‘Codes’ to cover general conduct, and conflict of interest. Participants felt that most of the elements of process development had been adopted, however this was not always reflected in the published material. The appointment of selectors – that is, their selection, support and training - is an area of operations that had been previously described as inconsistent and non-existent, respectively.

**Basis of Appointment.** The rationale for the development of good policy and process was to deliver good sport outcomes while at the same time ensuring the principles of organisational justice were upheld. Of particular interest was how selectors were not only selected and appointed, but also how they were managed, on an ongoing basis. Participants were asked a number of questions about how they were appointed to the role, which led to examination of related areas such as rewards, work conditions, performance reviews, and role clarity. It was at this point that the sport selection literature, (specifically, the elements of an ‘ideal’ selection system described in Figure 2.2) became linked with the HRM literature (as outlined in Chapter 2), because once selected and appointed, selectors became part of the organisation’s human resources.

The participant group consisted of former élite-level athletes (10), those with a coaching, technical director, or judging background (7), and the remaining four were recreational level competitors who had managed State teams and squads, or been involved as a referee or judge. The majority had experience as a coach and held coaching accreditation, and felt that this was probably the most important factor in their selection. Some selectors applied to advertised positions through a formal
application process, in which they were required to supply a résumé setting out their qualifications and experience (V4F, V2Fb). Others were invited to apply for the position by contacts in the sport (friends, former team members, board members, and coaches), following which their appointment was ratified by the board, or by the national coach (V1M, V5M). Coach/selectors in the group were appointed by a more formal and rigorous application process (P2Ma, P2Mb, P6M).

In some instances, the impression of a formal appointment process was given. One participant reported being asked interview questions that were barely relevant to the role. She was able to get ‘inside information’ as to how best to answer the questions, and was duly successful (V2Fb). Overall, some effort had been made to formalise the process of appointing selectors, but there were still instances of ‘off-the-record chats’ and recruiting of friends, as indicated by the following comments:

- I didn’t have to go through their formal application process for the first time, but I did for the second time. It’s not just mates for the job … you’ve got to meet certain criteria … I’ve no doubt there’s an element (of bias) still, but … it’s reduced (V2Fa)

- I was very lucky to get an opportunity … I think it’s quite competitive, (as) a lot of people want to be selectors. I think they’ve made the criteria pretty difficult … it does mean that there are some people (who) would like to be selectors that just can’t be (V4F)

- It’s starting to tighten up now. It used to be “I’ll scratch your back, if you’ll scratch mine”, delegates, all this sort of thing. They are going a lot more professional these days, which is good … (and then, conversely) I recently recruited a good friend of mine who is a former gold medalist … he gives me great confidence because we see the game similarly (P2Ma)

- They put out the nomination form and they ask for a brief résumé listing experience, qualifications, but there’s no real job description as such … it’s probably more relaxed in that generally the AIS will ask me if I’m re-nominating and interested… I don’t know officially but I believe the board speaks to the high performance manager and sometimes the coaches to ask their thoughts … the chairman has an ‘off the record’ chat, but nothing really official (V4M).
Many selectors were invited to apply because they were known. Those invited to apply met often flexible criteria, but there was a suggestion of lingering cronyism. Some sports insisted that selectors had to be former international competitors, fuelled by a belief that only former elite athletes would know how to select other elite athletes. (This was evidence of the ‘you have to have been there’ culture, referred to in Chapter 5, Section 5.3.5, on Culture). Alternatively, as one selector explained, “no, you don’t have to be (a former national player), but … they’re in that group of people that commit their life to netball” (V2Fa). Sometimes, however, the criterion for the appointment of a selector was anyone willing to do the job.

Terms of appointment for the volunteer selectors ranged from one year through to four years (an Olympiad), with the most common term of appointment being for two years. This was because sports were geared to work within Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games and World Championship cycles that are spaced two years apart. Those selectors that were coaches or technical directors held the selector position on an ongoing basis, for as long as they held the primary professional role.

**Selector – role or job?** In order to consider the nature of the psychological contract between selectors and their respective sport organisations, participants were asked if they regarded being a selector as a job. They were not given a definition of what a job is, but were left to decide if they saw it as a job on their own terms. Thirteen (62%) selectors felt that the selector position was a job, however five of these responses were from full-time professionals in the sport who saw the selector role as a job because it was part of their job. Those who responded in the affirmative and who were not professionals (V2Fa, V3Ma, V4M, V7F, V2Fb, V8M, V10F, V18F) felt compelled to explain their rationale, as set out in Table 6.2.
Table 6.2: Role or job? Selectors’ perceptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes, it’s a job</th>
<th>No, it’s not a job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It’s like a job, because it has processes and protocols that you need to follow (V2Fa)</td>
<td>I attack it like a job, but I don’t see it as one (V4F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I treat it as a job (V3Ma)</td>
<td>It’s a position, not a job (V1M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a lot of time and preparation required but I don’t see it as a burden like a job can be (V4M)</td>
<td>It’s a task that I carry out professionally (V3M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, because I’m responsible for the careers of athletes (V18F)</td>
<td>I approach it like a job, but it’s not the same as my job (V14M)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Setting aside coaches and technical directors (since selection forms part of their job), responses were divided evenly, with eight saying ‘yes’ and eight saying ‘no’. A further three out of the eight who felt the role was a job were retired persons, so after adjusting for retired persons (who had no other job) and full-time professional sport employees, five selectors who had a job saw the selector role as a job (24% of the group), while eight selectors who had a job did not see the selector role as a job (38% of the group). Opinion was therefore divided. Interestingly, there was disagreement within sports again – the two netball volunteers did not agree on whether selection is a job, and two bowls volunteers also differed (although one of these is retired).

Payment. Selectors were asked if the payment they received was appropriate. Payment was defined as anything paid to them or for them to assist them in carrying out their role, including payments for airfares, accommodation, meals, home-based office costs, and honorarium payments. Selectors were not provided with a definition of ‘appropriate’, but were left to decide for themselves if they felt that what they received was appropriate.
Overall, the group was divided on this question. Nine (43%) selectors felt that payment was appropriate “for a volunteer”, and that it covered costs. One of these said that it was appropriate for him, but maybe not for others (V5M), and another two (of the group of nine) were grateful for what they received, as they believed the sport could not afford to do more (V10F, V18F). Two participants were unsure – “yes, it was sufficient” but “no, it could be more” (V1M), and “yes, it was appropriate for an unpaid position”, but “no, it was not appropriate in terms of the time commitment” (V4F). Two preferred not to say whether appropriate or otherwise (V3M, P14M), while the remaining eight felt that payment was not appropriate (V3Ma, P16F, P6M, V4M, P2Ma, V1F, P2Mb, V14M). In summary then, the count was nine for, eight against, two sitting ‘on the fence’ and two who abstained. The group of eight who felt that payment was inappropriate (that is, insufficient) included four out of five professional participants.

For the volunteers, this was a straightforward question, because most received a basic honorarium to cover some of their costs. For the professionals, the question was more complex. Firstly, their salary was for their entire job, only a part of which was the selection task, and they found it hard to separate the two. This means that when they responded that the payment they received was not enough, they meant that they were not paid enough for all of what they do, not just for the selection component of their work. To further complicate matters, three of the four professionals who said payment was insufficient were not only speaking for themselves but they also spoke for the volunteers with whom they shared the selection task – P2Ma for example felt that he wasn’t paid enough for his coach/selector role, and also indicated that his team of three volunteer selectors weren’t paid enough for the hours they spent on the task.
Those who felt that payment was inappropriate felt quite strongly that the time expended should be taken into account, but perhaps the most strongly held and slightly radical view expressed was this one: “I believe that the panel of selectors for this position should be contracted to that and not be volunteers … you will need to look at professional people doing a professional job and being rewarded professionally … if you want to be the best in the world” (P6M). One participant held an outlier view, in saying that he had never asked for payment for his time, because he felt that his sport was a “small fraternity”. His comment was redolent of the old amateur sport ethos, when payment for involvement in sport was frowned upon, further supported by his view that more athletes should be prepared to ‘self-fund’ (V3M). This was an older participant with a high income, and so payment held no importance for him - his view of volunteering was a very traditional one.

**Work conditions.** Selectors said their work conditions were okay, satisfactory, rudimentary or good. Many qualified their ‘okay’ rating by saying that conditions were okay ‘for a volunteer’. Two selectors were prepared to say that their work conditions were not okay. One, a former international-level representative, regularly took a week of annual leave and used the honorarium payment to pay for relatives to fly in to mind her children while she attended a selection event. The same person worked elsewhere on a contract basis, and so she also earned no income during that week. She felt that having to go to these lengths might deter others from undertaking the role, and thus reduce the pool of those who might want to be a selector (V2Fa). The other - a triple Olympian - not satisfied with working conditions was aged in excess of 60 years and when attending training camps, was expected to share rooms with others involved with the team. At his age, he did not wish to continue doing so (V5M).
Other issues with basic work conditions were inferred during interviews, or were deduced by omission. For example, participants acknowledged stress, pressure and conflict in Chapter 5, yet neither stress management training nor counseling services were made available by NSO’s. Hours worked by participants without breaks were well in excess of the provisions of any industrial Award. The sport workplace is not always a safe one, and so at times, participants’ personal safety was compromised while carrying out their role. It is not known (but worthy of further investigation) whether NSO’s workers’ compensation insurance policies extended to cover volunteers who might be hurt while attending events on behalf of the sport organisation.

In addition, selectors employed elsewhere commonly used their own annual or long service leave to attend events (V4F, V8M), and one selector reported having to take put her own accident and injury insurance for the sport workplace (V1F). In general, this highly committed group of people accepted most work conditions without complaint. That acceptance (or resignation) may be linked to the confusion among participants as to whether or not a volunteer role should be regarded as a job. Participants were possibly confused about this, because their sport organisations were equally confused. When should a volunteer role be regarded as a job? To summarise, these selectors, many of whom were qualified coaches, were appointed to their positions in an improving, but nevertheless relaxed fashion. Some felt that rewards were no longer appropriate in terms of the demands made and the time committed. It was clear that while sport organisations expect a professional approach from these volunteer selectors, they do not reciprocate by dealing with them in a professional manner. In particular, where there was no monetary reward in place, HRM practices that were standard elsewhere were rarely if ever applied.
Performance review. Participants were asked if their performance was formally reviewed. The only personnel whose performance was formally reviewed were the full-time employed professionals, being the coaches and technical directors interviewed. They had been provided with formal job descriptions setting out their role and duties, together with a set of key performance indicators (KPIs), and their performance was subject to formal annual reviews. The selector part of their role was not subject to review for its own sake. This is consistent with Engelberg et al.’s (2011) observation that “it is not common practice to provide an assessment of individual volunteer performance” (p. 120). Hoye (2007) notes that in order for this to happen, organisations would need to develop appropriate and adequate performance criteria, as well as adequate and fair processes.

None of the volunteers had been provided with a job description or KPIs, nor were they subject to a formal review of performance. One selector said, “if I’m re-appointed, then obviously they’re happy with my work” (V4F), and another said, “if there’s no appeals, they’re happy” (V18F). It seemed that they only discovered how they were performing when the time came to re-apply for the position, and then only by deductive reasoning – in the absence of any feedback, re-appointment was taken to mean satisfactory work performance. Some said it was possible that their performance might be reviewed, but that they hadn’t been told about it (V10F, V7F). Another said that he didn’t need to be told he was doing a good job, that he’d keep doing it as long as he enjoyed it (V6M).
The basis for any such review was also unknown. The majority believed that if their performance was to be reviewed, it would be considered in terms of the athletes’ performance, in other words, if there was a successful sport outcome, then the selectors’ performance would be viewed in a positive light, as evidenced by this participant:

The team either wins or it doesn’t win, and if we don’t, the team doesn’t win, it comes back to the selectors … just because they don’t win, it doesn’t mean that we’ve picked the wrong ones, but that’s how I’m pretty sure it is, that’s how they would assess me. (V7F).

**Role clarity.** Participants were asked to describe their perception of the role, in terms of its relationship with the coaching function. It was evident at the first interview that the selector interviewed felt his role was, at least in part, to support the coach within the organisation (V3Ma). This notion had not been anticipated, and did not form part of the original interview schedule, but it was explored further in the first interview and included for subsequent interviews.

As a result, all selectors were asked if they saw themselves as ‘part of coaching’, because this was seen to affect how they viewed their procedural responsibilities. The majority saw themselves as part of, and thus support for the coaching function, or part of the high performance department, or both. A lesser number felt that they were independent of both coaching and high performance. This latter group believed their role was to balance the panel, and to question the coach’s preferences more closely, in other words, to ‘keep him honest’. Selectors therefore fell into two main groups, as shown in Table 6.3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Those who felt their role was to support the coach:</th>
<th>Those who did not feel their role was to support the coach:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You have to take a lot of notice of the coach because, at the end of the day, he’s the one that has to put the side together and mold them into a unit … and I think that’s reciprocal, he stands up for us and gives us credit (V3Ma). Well, we’re trying to support the coach, aren’t we, the three selectors? I want (him) to succeed as the coach (V1M). It’s all driven by the coach, and he is the head selector … at the end of the day, it’s the coach’s philosophy you have to work with. There’s no good putting someone there that the coach doesn’t want there, because that’s not going to work (V7F). And from the coach: I see them (the volunteer selectors) in the high performance section, I wouldn’t see them fitting in the coaching section, no (P2Ma)</td>
<td>I think the head coach needs to have some control over what he sees but I certainly question anything I disagree with … I feel, as an independent, I can add views … sometimes coaches can be blinkered … no, I don’t believe I’m there to serve the coach … probably there hasn’t been people on the panel willing to question him (V4M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selectors are there to help the coach, they’re part of the high performance manager’s part in my opinion, and the national head coach’s role (P2Mb)</td>
<td>I see a lot of my role is that’s what she wants … then it’s my role to actually question her, so that I’m comfortable, and then I can go out and defend any decisions that are made …(P16F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think I’m part of coaching, I always coach on a camp, I don’t sit on the bench … there’s a bit of an overlap, I’m coaching the level below (V4F)</td>
<td>There (are) three votes – we definitely respect the coach’s decisions and where he sees things, but if we don’t agree with things, we’ll let him know (V6M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I do (feel part of coaching), because a selector has to work well with coaches (V18F)</td>
<td>We’re probably there to guide the coach (V10F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think the understanding always is the head coach, given a few exceptions, in the end gets the team they want in the sense for their game plan (V5M)</td>
<td>Where there are borderline decisions we would take advice from the coach – we would ask what his reasoning was and then say, “okay, we’ll support you in this instance” (V8M)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the end of the day, it’s his team, so if he really wants it, he’s the one that’s got to take the fall not us on that. But … he needs to have some sort of backup if there is any repercussion as to an appeal or something like that … he rang (me) about a few players, but pretty much we were on the money for what he wanted (V2Fb). At this point in time, the national senior coach drives just about everything (V1F)
There was also a small group of ‘quasi-coaches’, being those selectors who seemed
to think they were the coach, or who aspired to be the coach (V4F, V2Fa, V10F,
V1M), and who were almost solely from team-based sports. They said things like
“(there’s a) sense of achievement if you can get the side to perform (V3Ma), and “it
gives me great confidence to know that I’ve been able to build a team that’s been a
winning team … I’m a coach as well, so I mix the two together to a degree (V1M).

Overwhelmingly, selectors regarded themselves as part of coaching, with a few
exceptions who believed they were there to keep the coach’s power in check (V4M,
V6M, V5M). This finding was not anticipated. It was expected that selectors would
be required to keep a distance from all influences, so as to be able to make a
balanced decision in good faith and with a clear mind.

Other roles. Selectors were affected not only by their overlap with coaching, but
also with a raft of other roles. It became evident at the first interview that selectors
served in many other ways, and as a result, all selectors were asked if they currently
or had previously held other roles within the sport organisation. This is consistent
with the findings of others, such as Shilbury and Kellett (2011), who observed that
more than a third of sport volunteers fulfilled two or more roles in their respective
sport organisations.

In the same way that selectors experienced difficulty in separating their selector
duties from that of coaching, it also seemed that selectors carrying out one or more
‘other roles’ struggled with role clarity. Selectors either previously or currently held
a wide range of roles. The following list is necessarily long, to show the wide range
of other roles undertaken, previously and/or conjointly:
• I coach at one of the private schools. They like you to be currently coaching. I’m on the South Australian State Board as well (V2Fa);

• We’ve combined the two roles of technical director and program manager, and part of that role is to be on the selection committee for all national teams (P16F);

• I’m a selector for the Under 21s and I coach the level below, the Under 19s (V4F);

• The board decided that every chairperson of every committee has to be a board member (P6M)

• Our selectors’ roles are volunteers. I’m subcontracted to (the sport) in other areas, as a team manager … I was and still am a New South Wales State selector (V4M);

• I would be looking to this other selector, who is a previous Commonwealth Games gold medalist, to act in a coaching capacity at the world championships. Get them water, coach them, whatever’s necessary (P2Ma, speaking of V1M);

• My main job is as a coach of 20 year olds … (but also) development manager in my State or assistant coach of the national team (V5M)

• I was at a competition last week as a selector and I was the Team Manager as well. It was a one-off thing, I was going to be there anyway (V7F);

• I’m the head coach of the Australian Under 17 boys team which puts me in the selector role as well (V1F)

• I’m a selector for the Under 19s and I’m also an open selector. No one has asked me about the dual role (V2Fb);

• Prior to being technical director I was national judging coordinator and, by virtue of that position, a selector as well (V8M);

• I’m the high performance manager and national head coach … because funding was cut and so the two roles were merged into one, and also chairman of selectors (P2Mb)

• I’m a board member … (and) chairman of the high performance committee, which is also our selection committee. Aside from that I was the coach for the Olympic team this year (V11M)

• I was a member of a previous appeal panel, I’m patron of the State association and patron of my club, and I’ve been a member of the State team as a competitor in the past … we don’t have enough qualified people at international level (V3M);

• I am a former Olympian, now a selector and before that, I was doing the announcing at the venue (V6M).
Overall, the ‘80/20 rule’ applied to this group – that is, a small percentage of people (20%) were doing the bulk (80%) of the work, as has been found in ABS statistics and in studies of community-level sport volunteers (Cuskelley, 2008; Lasby & Sperling, 2007; Nichols, 2005; Shilbury & Kellett, 2011). There were not enough people to fill all the roles and it was common practice for volunteers to have more than one role. The wearing of “many hats” can lead to confusion and lack of clarity in roles (Sakires et al., 2009).

**Methods used.** The development of procedures and processes (see Fig 2.2) – that is, devising procedures for meetings, selection trials, announcements, and methods of assessment, is the process of formalising how the selection task is actually done, so that it can be recorded, is systematic, and can be both replicated and justified, as necessary. Participants advised that their sports had a calendar of events relevant to selection, and that a roster of sorts was usually devised to ensure that all such events were attended by at least one selector, as far as possible, given budget and time constraints. Event attendance was deemed critical to the selection task, because statistics in isolation were not regarded as appropriate for decision-making. As one selector explained: “there are goals, and there are goals shot under pressure. There are statistics on turnovers too, but they don’t show who did the hard work” (V4F). Others agreed: “our sport results don’t tell you everything, because they don’t tell you if they had a fall at the halfway mark, or a puncture” (V4M), and “I look ‘off the ball’ and see what happens … whereas statistics show what’s happening ‘on the ball’” (V5M). Selectors said they looked for other clues that can’t be seen in statistics and results, such as behaviour, body language, weather conditions, pressure, level of competition, and team support. In most cases, the head coach/selector attended all events, however the volunteer selectors were not able to attend every
event due to budget constraints. In these situations, the latter were forced to rely on information provided by the former.

By individual selectors. Selectors reported a wide range of assessment methods used in the information-gathering stage. These included watching matches or performances live at designated venues, making own free-form notes or completing standardised forms, sending results to other selectors, rating or ranking players on skills, competencies or performances, analysing statistics, reviewing domestic and international competition results via the internet, meeting with other selectors for discussions, using a computer program to look at team combinations based on individuals’ scores, and trying to see as many matches as possible – that is, spreading the selector resource as far as possible.

Commonly, each selector had an individual method or approach to research. The following is one selector’s detailed explanation of how she carries out the task:

I watch matches and I identify and focus on what I’m looking for, so I might say that this quarter I’m going to look at the defence end … I watch, I make notes on where I see are their strengths and weaknesses … then there’s discussion. You have to balance the discussion with your own views, because it’s really important that you form your own view so that you can argue without being influenced too easily, but you don’t want to be not influenced as well, you want to be able to hear what other people are saying but you still want to feel, like, strong about your own thoughts. Then on day 3 or 4 you start breaking it up and forming a squad but there’s also invitees to include, which are not part of the squad but they’re people that the States pay for to go to this selection … So, after selecting players for (certain positions), then you look at the spread … are we covering all the States … so, if we haven’t got anyone from (a particular State) we need to have a closer look … we’ll have another look at players from that State, and that’s where the debate starts with the other selectors … I really think that a lot of it is subjective. You bring on your own experiences to make a judgment … if you’re coaching players all the time you’re in a much better position to comment … I’m really careful about what I say about (my State) … that’s why they have three people from different States (on the selection panel) as well (2Fa).
These comments raised a number of issues. First, they confirmed the existence of negotiations between selectors, which go on as they endeavour to reach agreement on their respective choices, and which ideally require selectors to be able to hold firm on their opinions during such debate. Second, there were political nuances, as can be seen in the efforts expended by this sport to ensure no States were offended.

The ‘invitees’ referred to in this passage suggested the existence of an unofficial ‘affirmative action’ policy designed to ensure that those States weaker in this sport were made to feel included. Athletes from States that had no players in the squad were considered a second time to try to ensure there was an appropriate ‘spread’ of State representation, that is, no apparent favouritism. If selection policy is driven by selection philosophy, then presumably the philosophy for this sport was to choose the best team that could be selected from the greatest number of Australian States, however this was not reflected in the organisation’s published policy document.

Another selector outlined her method, as follows:

We give feedback to the States so that we get the right players – can’t identify them if they’re not there … we went to the States and gave them that criteria. It’s quite political. You change your perspective as a selector because you watch every kid, every game. Sometimes we pick on potential because performance levels fluctuate in the younger age groups. We look at stats. We look at combinations. It’s subjective. We look at the type of player that will succeed against (main rival deleted). We have lots of stats. We watch how they cope with different styles of play. We take videotapes and we have a sport scientist that does coding. Sometimes you just have feelings about things … we’re at that level now that pretty much always 99% of the time your feelings are supported by statistics. We have criteria and we rank the players positionally … we all do it individually and then we come together (V4F).

It should be noted that both of the previous two selectors quoted were from the same sport, but selected for different age level teams. At the younger age level (U17), the
selection philosophy seemed to be to choose the best team from the most States, while at the higher age level (U21), as the athletes drew closer to international-level competition, the philosophy seemed to alter, with the emphasis shifting to the team comprised of the players with the most potential to be able to beat the sport’s main international rival. Neither of these objectives were reflected in the organisation’s published policy document, however it should be noted the publicly available policy document was quite generic. It attempted to cover a wide range of teams with a ‘blanket’ style philosophy of providing the best opportunity for national team success in international competition.

A third selector described what he does:

You have to go to the events that you’re allocated … (we) make up player profiles, and we’ve all got opinions, when it’s all said and done, the art of selection is an opinion too … If other selectors say theirs should be in and yours should be out, well, then you weigh it all up and come to a consensus … You learn to assess people (so) you’ve got to be a bit of a psychologist yourself. You’ve still got to be an individual (as) you do get ‘yes men’ on panels. You have to take a lot of notice of the coach. You talk to people and you take on board what is appropriate. At the top, they stand out. We now watch all State events … we’re pretty switched on with the top 200. We have an assessment form, and the coach might say please do a form on x player and watch him for x. There is a written policy. I suppose 75% would be on form, and 25% on ability to handle pressure or fit into the side (V3Ma).

These comments suggested that the top athletes tend to select themselves by virtue of being far better than lesser athletes. They also confirm the existence of negotiation and deference on selection panels, along with a degree of subservience to the coach. This selector reported the use of a standardised form for completion, with consideration of objective measures (such as recent form), yet at the same time stated that selection was an opinion.
All selectors interviewed said that they learned by trial and error while ‘on the job’, having never been shown by anyone how to do their job. As a result, there were no standardised methods. Some selectors watch but make no notes, keeping only mental notes, while others use a form they have designed for their own purposes, which is not necessarily used by all of the selectors on their panel. Some sit with other selectors, while others prefer to sit apart to concentrate. Almost without exception, selectors did their own assessments individually, and then got together with the other selectors to ‘compare notes’. This could be considered advantageous, in terms of diversity (one selector may pick up on what another does not) or it may be ineffective, due to a lack of standardisation (because they are not all looking at the same things).

There appeared to be an almost total reliance on the individual selectors to look at all of those aspects of the performance that should be looked at, with little structure in place to ensure that they did so. The various approaches to selection outlined can perhaps be summarised by one participant who said that when it comes to selections, “different individuals bring different things to the table” (V14M). This may be contradictory to the provision of natural justice to athletes, because the objective is to decide on methods of assessment that can be declared in advance to athletes, giving them the time and information they need to plan their respective campaigns.

**By various sports.** In most sports, selectors first selected a squad, variously called a squad, a long team or a shadow team, and these squads then went on to selection camps, trials or events to begin a process of elimination, toward selecting the final athlete or team. In addition to the range of methods adopted by individual selectors to gather and record information about contenders, each sport had developed its own way of doing things, some of which are described, as follows:
Many Olympic sports were guided by international benchmarking. International scores were often the first level the athletes were required to achieve to be considered for selection. If they could not reach those benchmarks, they were judged unable to be internationally competitive, and so were not selected (P16F, P14M, P6M). This was referred to by many as ‘self-selection’ and applied to a number of sports, such as diving and gymnastics.

Several sports took DVD footage and coded it, so that each athlete’s performance could be examined at a convenient time, and repeatedly, if necessary (P16F, V14M). This reduced the cost of travel and allowed resources to be used for other priorities. One sport allowed players to code their own DVD performances (V5M). Team sports such as netball and hockey rated players by position— one sport had a Job Description for each position and these were prioritised (V4F). One sport set aside one position in the team for ‘coach’s choice’ (V5M).

Performance in one particular sport was affected by weather conditions. They had a ‘score hurdle’ that the athlete had to pass twice, and they could do that in whichever State they wished. As a result, some athletes travelled to another State for better conditions to help them to reach the score hurdles. Subjective measures were only considered if there were “some personal habits or attributes that troubled you” (V3M).

Several sports operated with both domestic and international ranking systems, that is, with two separate sets of statistics to consider and compare (V10F, V3M). Another sport had a ranking system based on a collection of match results with the best and worst results taken out and the remaining total divided by the number of events, in line with the sport’s global ranking method. While this sounded objective, there was no scientific method used to arrive at the rankings—they were based entirely on selectors’ opinions of what the player did, where they did it and how hard it was to succeed in context. As the coach said, “we’ve got the Flintstones’ stats program at the moment” (P2Mb).

One sport had a ‘three-pronged’ selection method—the first part was to meet basic requirements for eligibility, the second part guaranteed automatic selection if a nominated event was won, and the third part was a discretionary element which allowed selectors freedom to consider anything they deemed relevant (P14M).

One sport used highly sophisticated statistical modelling to calculate (using mathematical probabilities) which athletes were most likely to succeed, and then selected accordingly. The probabilities were based on the way the various Olympic and international events were structured (in terms of number of opportunities to score, number of opponents, number of rounds in the competition). This method had proven to be highly accurate in predictive capability, but highly unpopular with athletes. This sport had previously allowed a subjective element into selection one year, but it proved to be “too annoying”, so at the time of interview, there was no discretion allowed (V11M).
The concept of self-selection was common to quite a few sports. A number of selectors reported that their sport had a clearly defined group of athletes at the very top of the list that do self-select, in that they were so far ahead of the others in the pool that there was no disputing their claim to selection (P6M, V11M, P2Mb, V10F, P14M). It was generally agreed that the selections usually at issue were the athletes further down the list, those who were close but not quite good enough, because there was a substantial gap between ‘the best and the rest’. As one participant explained:

… selection is quite a simple thing in real terms. Those who perform get selected. The selection issues are all around those who … don’t achieve the objectives and there’s more of those than the ones who step up and do it (P6M).

The list of methods outlined is not exhaustive, nor does it make any judgment as to validity. It demonstrates that selectors reported both a range of methods individually used by them, as well as a range of selection methods adopted by the various sports, both of which have evolved over time to meet respective needs.

**Selection panels.** The development of procedures and processes (see Fig 2.2) requires that a procedure be devised for selection meetings, as part of a well-planned and equitable approach to selection. All sports interviewed had a selection panel of some type in place. The most common structure was a three-member panel, made up of the sport’s head coach acting as chair of selectors, together with two volunteer selectors. These three are commonly supervised by the sport’s ex-officio high performance manager, assistant coach or program manager, that is, a full-time professional who does not have a vote on the panel and who was charged with the task of ensuring that selection criteria were followed. There were some minor variations on that theme.
The titles of the various panel members varied – for example, one panel was made up of the Premier League Coach, AIS National Coach and one volunteer (3); another was comprised of the National Coach, U21 Coach and U19 Coach (3); and still another included the Technical Director, National Coach and National Judging Coordinator (3). The focus of each panel differed from sport to sport also. Some panels had a heavier coaching influence, whereas others had removed coaches from the process entirely. One sport had even named its volunteer selectors ‘independent’, to make it clear that they were appointed specifically to be independent of the influence of any particular person or faction (V14M). In all, selectors in the group interviewed were members of 12 x three-member panels, eight x four-member panels, and one x five-member panel.

Most panels required a unanimous vote, while one or two accepted a majority vote. One panel had grown to five to make allowance for the fact that many of that sport’s athletes had begun to compete in Europe, and people were needed to watch performances both domestically and internationally (V4M). All panels contained a mix of people from various States, who communicated with each other by phone, Skype and email, as well as at selection events.

The decision to have selection panels in place was part of an effort by sport organisations to be more professional in their approach (more people involved theoretically equals less opportunity for bias), however, what was not known is whether each vote on a panel was equal, or whether there was any capacity to influence the vote.
One coach expressed the view that he could influence the rest of the panel at will (P14M), while another felt that the volunteer selectors tended to defer to him too much (P2Ma), when what he wanted from them was more debate. One selector observed that everyone deferred to his sport’s coach, who was known as a very strong character (V5M). Others however, felt very strongly that it was their responsibility to question the coach – as one selector said, “I certainly question anything I disagree with” (V4M).

This is a little at odds with previous comments that reported an almost total absence of conflict on selection panels, with decisions rarely put to a vote and almost always made by consensus (see Section 5.3.2, Conflict). The majority of professional coaches said they valued having the volunteer selectors on the panel.

This range of views suggested that while a panel was a good concept in theory, in practice the actual value of each vote needed further examination. As stated, the three-member selection panel was the type most commonly encountered in this sample, and its most common form was with the head or national coach as chair of the panel, with two volunteer selectors, and either the high performance manager or the assistant coach in attendance on an *ex officio* basis (to ensure selection criteria were properly applied). The two variants of this basic panel are conceptualised, showing the theoretical relationships between and among panel members, in Figures 6.3 and 6.4.
In the panel formation depicted in Figure 6.3, it is theoretically true that there are three voting members, that each member of the panel is on an equal hierarchical footing in the organisation (that is, they work ‘side-by-side’, and no one member is required to report to any other member), each panel member has the same information available to them, the person with the dual role of chairing the meetings and voting has no additional power or influence by virtue of his dual role, and each member has an equal vote on any selection decision. In this model, the sport’s high performance manager is in attendance at selection meetings and has input to the panel only for the purposes of ensuring that selection policy and criteria are adhered to. No Board member involvement is intended.
Similarly, in the panel formation shown in Figure 6.4, the same members apply as for Figure 6.3, except that the assistant coach is in attendance instead of the high performance manager. He/she plays the same role as the latter, ensuring that selection policy and criteria are adhered to. Theoretical assumptions are the same as listed for Figure 6.3. Relationships between and among panel members however are affected by certain ‘real-world’ power dynamics, and so they operate differently in practice to that which was theorised when the panels were initially devised. The likely alternatives are reflected in Figures 6.5 and 6.6.
In the alternative panel formation shown at Figure 6.5, there are three voting members, however all members consider that the volunteer selectors are either part of the coaching function and/or part of the overall high performance function, and for this reason, they are shown as reporting to the coach. The coach and/or the high performance manager originally appointed the volunteer members to their positions, and as a result, the latter tend to see the former as their organisational superiors. Each member of the panel is therefore not on an equal hierarchical footing in the organisation in real terms. Each panel member is not guaranteed to have the same information available to them, as the full-time professional employees (coach and high performance manager) have information power and, in some cases, may be selective about what is made available to the part-time volunteer selector panel members.
Further, the person with the dual role of chairing the meetings and voting has additional power by virtue of his/her role as chair, since the person chairing a meeting is in a position to steer the course of the meeting and thus influence, to some extent, its outcome. Each panel member’s vote is theoretically equal, however such equality applies only where volunteer selectors are able to assert themselves with, and/or where their opinion is welcomed and valued by, their superiors.

In this alternative ‘real-world’ model, the sport’s high performance manager is in attendance at selection meetings and is theoretically required to limit his input to matters of selection policy, however in practice, he/she will sometimes join the discussion and voice his opinion on matters outside of policy, because he/she has a vested interest in the success of the selected athlete or team. On some occasions, board members (not shown) may also choose to voice an opinion.

**Figure 6.6: Three-member sport selection panel with assistant coach as ex officio member - alternative form**
Similarly, in the alternative panel formation shown at Figure 6.6, the non-voting role instead rests with the assistant coach. He/she is involved in coaching athletes, will have preferences and may sometimes join the discussion to promote his/her preferred athletes. The assistant coach already reports to the head coach and so may feel obliged to support his superior where there is dissent. On occasions, board members (not shown) may also choose to voice an opinion.

As can be seen, what is intended to happen in selection meetings (in terms of selectors’ freedom to act as they wish) and what actually does happen at selection meetings may well be different, due to the power relationships between the various panel members as outlined. This is supported by the comments made by participants, in particular, that volunteer selectors tended to defer to those seen as their superiors in organisational terms, that assistant coaches and high performance managers sometimes do try to exert influence (V4M, V7F), and that the professional/coach selectors were aware of that tendency.

Finally, recommended policies in the sport selection literature (see Figure 2.2), such as the Code of Conduct and the Conflict of Interest policies were not found to exist. Most sports had a Code of Conduct policy in place that governed only the athletes’ conduct, not that of the sports organisation, and only one sport put their method for dealing with conflict of interest in writing in its policy. In addition, there was little in the way of any procedures provided for meetings and announcements. Most announcements were promised ‘soon after’ the decision was made, with no commitment to firm dates, and there were no procedures for the timing or conduct of meetings. Generally, detailed processes were in evidence but were in need of some attention.
6.3.3 Appeals

Appeal process development (see also Figure 2.2) should ideally involve a number of sequential steps. First, it is necessary to decide what grounds for appeal will be acceptable, and make them clear to all involved. Second, a tribunal process has to be designed, including the number of levels, how it is convened, and who may be members. The ASC (2007) also recommend the policy goes so far as to deliberately deny access to domestic Courts, in an apparent effort to formalise precedent law (see Chapter 2, Raguz v Sullivan). Next, it is necessary to decide on procedures – time limits, fees, application format, hearing dates, whether representation will be allowed - and ensure principles of natural justice are upheld throughout all such decisions. Tribunal members should be selected and appointed, the appeal procedures should be included within the selection policy document, and the finalised procedure must be made available and accessible to all athletes.

According to participants, most of the elements of appeal process development were in place, and a check of published policies confirmed that this was so. Most policies contained clear grounds for appeal, set out applicable time limits, were published and readily available. The method of appointment of tribunal members was imprecise, and there was practical difficulty in finding sufficient numbers of qualified people to serve who were not already selectors. Most procedures stated that one member had to be a lawyer but were otherwise non-specific, so it seemed that perhaps a lawyer who specialised in the preparation of Wills would suffice. Many stated that the lawyer had to be appointed along with a board member and/or persons with some years’ expertise in the sport, which again could be almost anyone, but they did at least exclude the original selectors from being on the tribunal.
Two sports elected to keep the appeals procedure separate from the main policy document, while the rest had included it. Only one policy clearly excluded the State court, while all others stated that the CAS was the next avenue of appeal after the Tribunal, which likely had the same effect. One sport stated that its internal Tribunal was the sole avenue of appeal, in an apparent attempt to exclude appeals from going on to the CAS. If challenged, it is unlikely this clause would be upheld.

Selectors were asked what they thought about selection appeals. Some had experience of appeals, while others did not. A minority took the view that athletes have every right to appeal, and are entitled to organisational or natural justice. As one participant said, “they have the right. An appeal means that at least one person thinks you haven’t done your job properly” (V14M). The majority was slightly defensive about selection appeals:

- It’s a costly and time-consuming process that any sport organisation would try to avoid. That they’d prefer not to have (V18F). They don’t do a lot for the wellbeing of the team (V3Ma)
- Our system is better because an individual athlete cannot appeal generally against his/her omission but he/she is required to nominate and appeal specifically against another player. This eliminates frivolous appeals (V4M)
- It would be, more times than not, fairly difficult for the athlete to beat the decision (P2Ma)
- They’ve always got the right but if our processes are right then there shouldn’t be any grounds (V11M)
- Most times the athletes have got a good understanding of whether or not they’re good enough to be selected or whether they’re on the cusp of being selected or … are living in the land of hope … it’s the people surrounding them who don’t deal with it well – coach, parents, brother, lawyer, manager, partners … they get emotional and that brings in aggression and concern (P6M)
- I think that’s pretty insulated if … we said that our decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into, because everyone’s entitled to … if they’re not happy with something, you’ve got to have an appeals process, don’t you? (V10F). You’ve got to have a process, you can’t just shut the door (V6M).
Some selectors tended to discourage and, in some cases, even work to actively circumvent the appeals process. As one selector said, “disruptive team members don’t work … we have to find technical reasons for excluding them, in case of appeal” (V10F). This means that while appeal policy documentation may have enshrined the principles of natural justice, in practice those principles were sometimes impeded by the pervading organisational culture (see also Section 5.3.5, Culture).

Several participants commented on the future of selection appeals, stating that they felt the upward trend would continue. One selector noted that overseas professional leagues had formed, which meant that if athletes did not make it into the Australian squad then their price (on the developing overseas market) would go down, and, as a result, more appeals could be expected in the future (V5M). Another selector said, “you know people are more likely to appeal now than they were in the past … there’s so much at stake now … (V4M)”.

6.3.4 Review

The final component of a quality system was that of system review (see Figure 2.2). Review should involve a comparison of outcomes to the original philosophy, and a further check that specific objectives were achieved, preferably with feedback from all interested persons. It should also consider whether criteria were appropriate, and were followed, with no evidence of bias, interference or influence. Finally, the review stage should determine whether or not all decisions made were reasonable and made in good faith, and that the process remained transparent and consistent throughout.
Participants had little to say about review of any kind, either of their own performance, or of the selection process itself, and there was nothing published in any of the policies about any form of review. All selectors had been asked for their input to the design of the policy at the outset and, in doing so, some might have reviewed the design of the previous policy, but review of any aspects of the selection system was not found to exist in any of the organisations as a regular, formalised practice. A few selectors were aware that sports usually conduct a general review after an Olympic Games, however little else was known. One said:

there has never been a review of the selection (panel) and if we went wrong. (Name deleted) and I knew where we went wrong and that would be between us. I don’t think we’d be able to say that aloud anyway … to protect some of the players who weren’t chosen and some of the players who were. That review goes on within our group, the four selectors, but I have never seen a review from (the relevant NSO) with the four selectors meeting and saying “what happened? … we picked a couple of players that shouldn’t have been there, that’s all. It’s not the process; the process was OK or good (V5M).

Some selectors thought that their performance might be assessed, but they couldn’t be certain. All believed that their performance would be assessed in terms of whether the athletes succeeded, which may not be appropriate. Coaches and selectors may be able to partially influence the sport outcome, but there were other factors at play, not the least of which is the available competition on the day of the event. As can be seen, some of the elements of a quality system were found to be in existence, some were not, and others existed but were of questionable value. No one sport had ‘everything covered’, and the most notable omission is any form of review. These findings are presented in more detail in Table 6.4.
Table 6.4: Selection system quality elements for each sport

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<tr>
<th>POLICY</th>
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Table 6.4: Selection system quality elements for each sport (cont.)

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6.4 SELECTION SYSTEMS: AS A WHOLE

Selectors were asked a series of four questions to ascertain what they thought about their selection system as a whole, that is, the expansionist view. These questions were: What do you think about it? How do you feel about it? How well is it managed, and what’s good about it? These questions were at times interspersed with others to mask the fact that the questions were very similar, but were proposed in a number of ways to elicit response.

6.4.1 Thoughts

Selectors were asked what they thought about the selection system. Comment ranged from a few who were not so impressed (softball, table tennis), to the majority in the middle of the range who were generally satisfied with their system, back to a smaller number that were very impressed (diving, gymnastics and cycling), as shown in Table 6.5. Most participants were satisfied with the way the system worked, but felt there was room for improvement.

6.4.2 Feelings

Selectors were asked how they felt about the policy they worked with, on the basis that what they thought about the system might differ to how they felt about it. The range of responses is depicted in Figure 6.6, the majority of which were quite positive, and so the overall response to this question was similar to that shown in Table 6.5. Participants were consistent in reporting more above the line (of satisfaction) than below it.
## Table 6.5: Selection system – Selectors’ opinions

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<tr>
<th>Not Impressed</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Very Impressed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There’s room for improvement (P2Mb)</td>
<td>It’s okay. It’s as good as it can be / as good as we can get / as good as it’s been (V2Fa, V3Ma, P16F, V5M, V7F, V1M, V11M)</td>
<td>Good. It’s tight, and we follow it pretty well (V6M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s non-existent, so it needs to be devised and implemented. Criteria are questionable (V1F, V2Fb)</td>
<td>It’s okay, I don’t have a problem / too many problems with it (V10F)</td>
<td>It’s healthy, consistently fair and strong (P14M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have flaws, but it’s improving all the time. People might miss out at one level but be picked up later at another level, so in the long term, not many are missed (V4F)</td>
<td>Pretty good / very good, works well / works extremely well (V14M, V18F)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s excellent, the process is rock solid, but the people who interpret and play roles in the system are not (P6M)</td>
<td></td>
<td>It’s pretty good, structured and easy to follow at the élite level … I don’t say it’s flawless, it’s certainly an improvement (V4M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s all good, maybe 6 out of 10, needs tweaking as there’s too much subjectivity (P2Ma)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Big improvement on six years ago (V8M)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only as good as the next appeal, I’m satisfied with the (London) selection process (V3M)</td>
<td></td>
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6.4.3 Management

Selectors were asked how well they felt their sport managed selection. Two-thirds of participants (66%) felt that their sport managed selection well, which meant that one-third (34%) felt it was not managed well. From the former group, one selector felt that it was managed well because the team of selectors worked together well (V3Ma). From the latter group, one said it was not managed well due to role confusion, specifically, that board members who were there to ratify selections did not always limit themselves to that task (P6M).

Another felt that decisions were consistent, but support for those making the decisions was less consistent and at times unhelpful (V4M). Some others observed that everyone who wants to play for Australia has to come through the State system and, due to that limitation, the selection process had to be regarded as an ongoing ‘work in progress’ (P2Ma, V4F, V18F).

Most participants understood this question to be about the quality of management, rather than the more specific quality of management of the selection system. That being the case, they (volunteer selectors in particular) often had little to do with management, and so they generally did not have enough information to be confident in answering the question. Selectors gave the impression that the system was good because a lot of change had been introduced, and because it was better than it had been before.
6.4.4 Positives

The first three of these questions – that is, what do you think about it, how do you feel about it and how well is it managed - made selectors think long and hard, and to some extent, they prevaricated. This may be for a number of reasons. It is possible that they didn’t understand the questions, and/or that they weren’t equipped to answer them. It is also possible that they were a little confused by the similarity in the questions, finding it hard to distinguish between “what do you think” as opposed to “how do you feel”. It may be that they didn’t want to be seen to be critical of their management. In addition, the interview had reached about an hour in length at the time of posing these questions, so they may simply have become weary of it.
For whatever reason(s), selectors were reticent about saying anything that might be controversial, with some going so far as to check with the interviewer that data would remain confidential. The final question of the series however elicited a different and quite immediate response. When asked what was good about the system, selectors were able to respond to this ‘third person’ style question much more definitively and promptly. The question demanded they focus on those aspects of the system that were good, thus, they were not required to dwell on what, if anything, was bad. Answers to this question commonly described selection systems as open, transparent, clear, honest, accountable and fair. Some detailed responses follow:

- It has stood up to appeal well. They could have left it with all coaches on there (the panel) and all ‘yes’ men, but they’ve taken steps to have independents on it (V4M)

- There’s a clear philosophy for each event, we’re close to being able to provide a clear path with targets and goals (to athletes), it’s fairly solid and we’re a good team (P2Ma)

- It’s published and people know what they have to do ahead of time / they (the athletes) know what they have to do – it’s all spelled out (V6M)

- Self-selection – there are sufficient recordable and repeatable opportunities to compete placed before the selectors (V3M). Everything’s on paper, athletes can self-select because standards are clear (P14M)

- Decisions are confined to selection criteria – if it is followed, there’s no problem (V11M)

- The policy assists the process rather than hindering it. The policy is standardised across the sport. The involvement of the high performance manager is good as an objective outsider / liaison person, they add value (V14M); and

- One selector pointed out the obvious – that is, that a system is only as good as the people who work within it: “the system is strong, it’s just people who are pathetic sometimes” (P6M).
As can be seen, the responses to the “what’s good?” question were quite emphatic in terms of how positive they were. The phrasing of the question suggested that it was not seeking their opinion as much as it was seeking accepted fact. The most common themes were that of transparency, clarity and the concept of self-selection by the athletes.

6.4.5 Negatives

Selectors were asked two consecutive and similar questions in order to identify any perceived system issues – that is, whether they thought there were any weaknesses in the selection system, and whether they had concerns about any aspects of it. Weaknesses and concerns tended to overlap, so that selectors’ responses blended into a monologue outlining all that they felt was problematic. Their responses were categorised as follows:

Communication and teamwork. Selectors noted difficulties in how they worked with, and/or communicated with other in their organisations:

- Feedback on selections, in particular, how selected players performed at subsequent events was deemed to be either non-existent or inappropriate. One selector recalled that she ran into a coach who in passing said, “that player you put in there, she was hopeless” (V4F). She found this style of feedback unhelpful;

- Communication difficulties between coaches and selectors were exacerbated when coaches were from other countries, resulting in both language and cultural differences – one selector, for example, said that they had to deal with a Russian coach in person in order to be sure of what he was saying (V8M);

- Teamwork was another concern, often adversely affected by a lack of role clarity. Some selectors felt that the terms of reference should be black and white, with Board members and selectors’ roles clarified so that there was no overlap (V4M). Most commonly, teamwork with the States was difficult. As one explained, “who actually gets sent for selection is up to the States and local associations, that’s where I think some of our issues occur,” (V4F). Another agreed, “Victorian selectors want to see ten Victorians in the team. Everyone that wants to play for Australia has to come through the State system” (P2Ma).
Selection methods. Selectors commented about particular methods that they felt were a weakness or of concern in their respective sport organisations. Some of the concerns listed included subjectivity, procedures, player combinations within teams and weather. In context, the latter was sometimes used by athletes to their advantage – for example, bowlers preferred to compete in Queensland for better quality venues, archers would travel to compete where there was the least wind, all of which tended to increase their chances of selection. Participants commented as follows:

- Getting a good combination (of athletes/players) in a team was an ongoing challenge (P16F);
- Subjectivity exists, so that often coaches and selectors “see different things” (V5M). We can “look at the same things, and I can see grey and they can see black, and some can see white” (V2Fb);
- Procedures were not developed, not documented, non-existent, other than ‘in the coach’s head’, with no standardisation and a “resistance to corporatisation” (V2Fb);
- Some athletes were seen as being a bit “too close” to coaching, and that there should be a “broader gap” between the two (V3Ma);
- Weather often means that people do not always compete on equal terms (V11M);
- Rankings should not be done by selectors, and should only be part of the selection system overall (P2Mb).

Limited resources. Distance and logistics were seen as a weakness. All participants had a distinct preference to see live sport performances, rather than rely on reports from others. A recurring problem mentioned by many volunteers was not being able to attend all fixtures and events due to budget constraints. Failure to attend all events, meant the possibility of missing some players from lower levels and remote areas, that is, not capturing all available talent in the pool (V4F, V7F, P16F). Time was listed as a concern. There was substantial pre-trial analysis but insufficient post-trial selection debate due to time constraints, in particular, because non-professionals have to fly home to their other jobs (V8M, V4F).
Funding for athletes was also considered to be a weakness. One selector was
disappointed that self-funded athletes were disappearing, noting that there’s not “an
endless bucket of money” in the sport (V3M). Another said that funding for players
was an issue, wondering how they can be “at their best” when concerned about
money (V1M). Selectors were therefore concerned to ensure that they not only had
the widest available talent pool, but that they also had the resources to be able to look
at all comers.

**Athletes’ rights and welfare.** Sports were inconsistent with matters of athlete
welfare, in respect of selection. One sport provided resilience training for athletes, to
help them deal with failure and rejection (V4F), and another reported engaging a
psychologist to assist an athlete with a social problem (V7F). At the same time
however, athletes were still being made to sign selection agreements agreeing to
terms that were unlikely to hold up in Court (V3M), and in other instances, were not
being given sufficient time to prepare themselves for competition, due to reliance on
international benchmarks (P16F).

**Geography and distance.** Selectors were not asked to comment about the challenges
of distance, however it was a recurrent theme in the dialogue, and was clearly both a
weakness and a complicating factor, according to participants:

- Communication is made more critical by distance. Selectors meet in a given State
  or in Canberra for a selection trial and all rush to get the plane out, so they don’t
  always talk afterward. There is also the cost of attending events all around the
country, for selectors, officials and athletes. The use of technology, such as Skype
  and DVDs, has become increasingly important in managing the tyranny of
distance;
• There are territorial issues between State and national sport organisations, so that in one sport, an athlete was selected for the national team who had not been considered good enough by his State (V1M). Players in rural areas were mentioned as often not being able to compete, or more particularly, not being able to afford to compete (V7F);

• There are now various leagues and competitions and teams emerging overseas with more Australian sports people making a living overseas, meaning that there is now a need to have people available to monitor performances both domestically and overseas (V4M, V5M, P6M). Cycling for example has its Australian Institute of Sport headquarters in Adelaide, its head office in Sydney, its selection panel Chair is based in Adelaide, its head coaches are based overseas for at least half of the year, one of its independent selectors is also based in Europe and the other remains in Australia (V4M);

• It was also mentioned that weather conditions changed for some sports due to geography, which in turn, meant that each individual performance was not as equal as it might appear (V11M, P2Ma). This was another reason that selectors wanted to be able to attend all events, rather than just a few, so they would be able to identify anomalies caused by geography and weather conditions.

In summary, most selectors felt that their selection system was good but, at the same time, they were able to identify a wide range of weaknesses and concerns.

6.5 SUMMARY

To summarise the findings reported in this chapter and thereby answer Research Question Three, selectors answered a wide range of questions about what their respective selection systems were like, and in so doing, gave clues as to the existing level of professionalism. Sport industry recommendations for the development of a selection system – in terms of policy, process, appeals and review – were used as a basis for comparison, so that ‘ideal’ could be contrasted with ‘actual’, as reported by participants.
Almost all participants reported widespread adoption of recommendations, such as written selection policies, the use of objective criteria and decisions made by panels, however in practice, these did not always work exactly as intended. Policies and criteria were sometimes generic and/or vague, while selection panels tended to function according to group dynamics, that is, votes were not always equal. Methods used varied between sports. This is appropriate given that they differ in nature, however, methods also differed between selectors for the same sport as there was no standardisation. Selectors had learned what they knew while ‘on-the-job’ - none of the participants had been taught how to perform the role, and so each tended to devise his/her own method.

All selectors had been asked for input to the design of selection policy. Selectors said they felt that their policy was quite good, and they also felt that selection was well managed by their respective organisations. Most selectors were aware of the existence of the right to appeal. Many were unfamiliar with the mechanics of that process, and some subtly discouraged use of the right. There was no evidence of selection system review. The main weaknesses identified by participants were communication, subjectivity in assessment, and a lack of resources.

Investigation of selection process included consideration of the way that selectors were appointed, and this in turn led to an examination of the way they were managed, in HRM terms. The group was evenly divided as to whether they saw the selector role as a job, and also as to whether they were satisfied with what was on offer. This suggested that sport may be close to reaching a ‘cross-roads’ in expectations, in terms of continuing to ask people to do an increasingly professional and demanding job, for little in return.
Work conditions were generally seen by participants as satisfactory, but more than expected said that payment was insufficient. The way that selectors were appointed to the role had improved, with many now required to formally apply and submit their qualifications for selection by others, however sports are often small communities with limited numbers of people available and qualified to do the job.

As a result, known persons were often asked to apply, and so the application practice was, at times, a formality. Some basic workplace rights were infringed, and reviews of performance for volunteers were non-existent. In HRM terms, volunteers were treated very much as the ‘poor cousin’ to their professional selector counterparts.

Overall, selectors answered Research Question Three by providing substantial insight into what the selection system was like, in terms of their own perceptions. With regard to the systems model introduced in Chapter 1, later revised in Chapter 5, it was concluded that selectors were committed and engaged and, thus, positively disposed toward the system transformation process, however the findings in Chapter 6 suggest that they did not always have the tools needed to properly carry out the job.
CHAPTER 7 – SUMMARY and IMPLICATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This study set out to examine the Australian sport selection system in the context of an upward trend of appeals against selection decisions. The level of selection disputes was seen as a symptom, its cause yet to be determined. It may have been true to say that all such appeals were simply ‘sour grapes’ on the part of athletes who were not selected, however a proportion of appeals were successful, which suggested that a problem might exist. In order to consider this problem, the research question posed for this study was – what are selectors’ perceptions of the existing selection system?

A research pathway was outlined in Chapter 1 (see Figure 1.3) to show why this approach was taken, and how the research goal was to be achieved. As shown in Figure 1.3, there were several causes worthy of investigation, just as there were other sources that could have been approached for information, however, the choice was made to consider the selection system, and to do so by examining selectors’ perceptions. These research choices were made for a number of reasons, but chiefly because selection is an internal system, one that could be adjusted by NSOs if found wanting. Other possible causes, such as more people setting out to have athletic careers, more money being made available to athletes, and increased ease of appealing decisions, were external factors that would prove more difficult to measure and change. To complicate matters, cause may have been multi-factorial, since the reasons offered were not mutually exclusive.
The second research choice – to canvass selectors for their perceptions – was made because selectors were an important but overlooked group of sport workers whose views had never before been sought. Speaking to those who actually do the job was seen as the most direct route to information, and would also constitute the beginning of a multi-stakeholder perspective. Constructivist grounded theory was chosen as the most suitable approach, based on its ability to capture rich data and generate theory where none exists.

Having made those decisions, the research needed some form of structure or framework to guide it, since it was heading into unexplored territory. A systems view was adopted, which meant that selectors were viewed as part of a system that existed to deliver selection decisions for sport. Structurally, a system is a divisible whole, meaning that its individual parts – inputs, throughputs and outputs – can be examined separately, as they were in this study. Functionally however, a system is an indivisible whole, because the whole is said to be greater than just the sum of its parts, and so the system in its entirety was also considered.

Selection as a system was conceptualised in the form of a model (see Figure 1.8). This helped to show what a sport selection system might look like and how it might function, and served as a useful starting point with which to begin a structured investigation. Relationships between system components are of key importance and explain why two plus two can sometimes equal five within a system, since performance depends on how well the component parts fit and work together. Indicators of organisational health such as commitment, job satisfaction, job engagement, motivation and culture were believed to contribute to the overall sport selection system as a whole, by affecting a number of its parts.
7.2 REVIEW OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In answer to RQ1, as set out in Chapter 4, it was found that the participants interviewed were a well-educated and middle-aged cohort, with slightly more males than females in the group. Most selectors earned relatively high incomes, and were employed on a full-time basis elsewhere, that is, by organisations other than their particular NSO. Being both full-time employees and part-time sport volunteers, they demonstrated an ability to juggle priorities, to make time in their busy lives to work for their sport. Professional and volunteer selectors were rewarded differently, but members of both sub-groups felt they were not adequately rewarded for their efforts.

The majority of selectors in the group were volunteers, and all but a few were experienced in the selector role. About half of the participants interviewed were former élite players, some of whom had been introduced to the sport via parents and siblings. In summary, the selectors interviewed were by no means a group of altruistic fools. They were experienced, intelligent, educated, astute and committed people – among them, a judge, a school principal, some teachers, some private business owners, a financial controller and an engineer – who gave carefully considered responses.

In answer to RQ2, as set out in Chapter 5, selectors generally felt satisfied, motivated, supported, and committed in relation to their role. The amount of time committed to the role was not an issue, and despite being in a position that gave them power over others, selectors played down their own importance. This suggested selflessness, in that the sport organisation was seen as more important than the individuals within it, however selectors were not altruistically motivated. They enjoyed the role, and derived value from it in mainly intangible ways. They were
aware of criticism, and many had experienced some quite serious conflict, resulting from decisions in which they had been involved. As a result, selectors often reported stress with respect to their role, which most commonly manifested itself in disturbed sleep.

All participants had undergone a substantial amount of change within their respective sport organisations in a relatively short period of time. This was reported in terms of changes to the way selection was undertaken, rather than changes in organisational culture, yet both had clearly occurred. In summary, it can be said that despite the obvious negatives – not only change, but also conflict, stress and a substantial time commitment – selectors barely wavered, remaining highly engaged with the role and dedicated throughout. Members of this group were not only astute, but also very highly committed.

In answer to RQ3, as set out in Chapter 6, participants reported that many of the recommendations for improvement to selection policy and procedures set out in Chapter 2 (see Figure 2.2) had been implemented – such as written policy, procedures, and selection panels – all of which was outlined in Chapter 6. Selectors had seen and experienced substantial change within their sports, to a point where they now felt their respective selection systems could be assessed as ‘good’, albeit with further improvement needed. These recommendations dealt with (among other things) the selection and appointment of selectors, but not with their ongoing management. The literature relevant to the management of selectors (as outlined in Chapter 2) focused heavily on short term, casual volunteers as well as on the retention of volunteers, neither of which was particularly relevant to this participant group, which was comprised of mainly ‘serious leisure’ elite sport volunteers and
just a few sport professionals. HRM practices that are commonplace in mainstream industry were in evidence for the professionals, but were not adopted for any of the volunteer selectors. Both sub-groups were doing the same selection task, but the former were doing a paid job, while the latter were carrying out an unpaid role. The difference between job or role was a matter of semantics.

The use of a constructivist grounded theory approach to the research encompassed some preconceived ideas, and also allowed certain themes and characteristics to emerge from the data. The main weaknesses selectors identified in their respective selection systems were poor communication, use of subjective criteria and a lack of resources. Communication and criteria matters can be addressed within the organisation by way of adequate training, whereas the lack of resources is an external, industry-related issue.

Other flaws identified by virtue of their omission were inequalities of HRM, disparities of power (particularly within the selection panel structure), and a lack of overt selection system review. The deficiencies in HRM practices and associated power imbalances are problems related to the treatment of volunteers by NSOs, while the absence of formal review says something about organisational understanding of, or commitment to, professionalism. This final chapter considers the findings outlined in earlier chapters, and how they fit into a ‘bigger picture’.

7.3 SUITABILITY OF THE SYSTEMS MODEL

It was proposed at the outset of the research that selection could be seen as a social system of inter-related parts, processes and people, and a model portraying selection as an open system was offered in Chapter 1 (see Figure 1.8) as a theoretical
framework to guide the research. Open systems import and export material from and to the environment, and are self-correcting. Closed systems have several distinguishing characteristics, one of which is an inability to use feedback (Schoderbek et al., 1985). While participants confirmed that most of the individual components shown forming the model were accurate, the data indicated that selection did not always operate as an open system, as was originally anticipated.

Sport organisations decided their selection philosophy, and went on to formulate written policy and detail processes, as shown. This information was then provided to selectors who interpreted it and transformed those inputs into a selection decision output. After the sport event and its outcome, it was anticipated that some form of review would be undertaken, as is usual with open systems (see Figure 1.4). Review would typically involve an examination of what had happened, which could be used to validate or re-shape the existing inputs as the system revolved. For example, a sport organisation might find that its policy neglected to stipulate a procedure for the conduct of meetings and as a result, they were not held in a timely manner, causing a deadline to be missed. If a review was conducted, this issue would be observed, discussed, and acknowledged as an issue, providing valuable information so that the existing input (process) could be adjusted before the next system cycle.

An appropriate analogy from a different industry would be that of medical practitioners conducting post-operative reviews. This is a practice that is routinely carried out to locate errors, learn from them and see what improvements might be made. While an open system is good in theory, such scrutiny is often unwelcome in practice, particularly when there has been an unsuccessful outcome. As a result, the
element of review, which is vital in an open system, was not given the attention it deserves, in this particular sport setting.

According to selectors, there was little evidence of the review process, and in this there was an apparent professional/volunteer divide. Professional coach selectors reported that their NSOs usually conducted an overall review of the sport outcome after a particular event, but selection was not specifically reviewed as a sub-system of the organisation (P2Ma, P4M TRI). As a result, these ‘reviews’ sometimes glanced at selection in simplistic terms only, limited to an examination of whether the right athletes had been chosen, judged in the main by medals won. They were conducted at Board level and the professional coaches were involved, because they were usually required to submit their own coaching report to the Board with respect to the event. The objective for this group was to win, so if the team or athletes had been successful, the review tended to have little depth. Conversely, if unsuccessful, then the level of scrutiny should have increased, but there was no evidence of this.

The AOC is a supra-system that carries out a review of all aspects of its operations, including those within its sub-systems (NSOs), after each Olympic Games. As such, the AOC examines selection regularly, but it does so mainly in terms of the announcement of decisions and any appeals of those decisions (AOC, 2000c), relying to some extent on the volume of selection disputes as an indicator of selection quality. Its interest in selection appears to be entangled with its public image – that is, how does the AOC look when announcements are made (positive press), and how does it look when athletes appeal (negative press)? The only evidence of selection system review was therefore at NSO Board level or above. Conduct (if any) was covert, and the focus was on outcome rather than system.
Volunteer selectors were therefore unaware whether any review of selection was ever undertaken, by anyone, at any time. One pro-active sport reported that its selection panel conducted its own review, again couched in terms of event success. Setting that particular sport aside, about half of this group, being the volunteer selectors from eight out of 15 sports, was unaware of the conduct of any review of selection. The selection system for these volunteer selectors was therefore a closed system, more accurately described as an internal process with an endpoint, rather than an ongoing open system linked to its environment. It stopped after the sport outcome, with no feedback loop importing information from the external environment back into the system for its next iteration. This view is presented as an amended (closed) selection system model, in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1: Selection as a closed system – No evidence of review
Overall, four sports (just over a quarter of all sports represented in this study), reported limited evidence of system review, while the remaining three-quarters reported none. It can be concluded that review does exist in some situations as a system element, but it is inconsistent at best, with skewed focus and problematic access. Any information emanating from the review process is kept very much ‘behind closed doors’, which supports the view expressed in Chapter 1 that sport organisations have become defensive about selection since the appeals ‘catalyst’ of Sydney 2000. It was more accurate then to further amend the model with a dashed line between the elements of sport outcome and inputs (see Figure 7.2), to show that review existed in a very minor form, but its relationships with other elements of the model were not well documented in the data and could only be inferred at this stage.

Figure 7.2: Selection system - Review component inferred
It was possible that the remaining eleven sports did carry out some form of review, but that volunteer selectors were not aware of this. This may be another example of ‘information power’ in the hands of the coach or the Board, since some (V2Fb, V4M, V10F) reported that they did not always have all the information they needed (or felt they needed).

The apparent lack of review may have been due to a lack of knowledge in the NSOs, particularly among those responsible for writing policy and procedures, or it may have reflected a lack of genuine commitment toward formalising and professionalising the selection system or, indeed, some combination of both. Given what is known about parallel government involvement with Sport Canada (see Chapter 2), it was possible that ‘lip service’ was being paid to professionalisation of this particular aspect of operations, as if sport organisations had implemented policy and processes only because the requirement to do so was imposed upon them, rather than because they recognised the need. This was referred to in Chapter 2 as ‘superficial conformity’ (Amis et al., 2002), referring to an intention to follow instructions to guarantee funding and/or avoid litigation, but with no genuine desire or commitment to embrace the concept.

The model was further revised from its original version by removal of the media as a likely moderating variable, since participants reported no effects caused by the media. Only the five professional coaches within the group dealt directly with the media, in their capacity as head coach and/or chair of the selection panel, while volunteers had little or no interaction with the media. Both sub-groups reported that they did not moderate their behaviour in any way as a consequence of media coverage. The AOC as the umbrella organisation for all NSOs was perhaps most
affected by the media, so it is not necessarily accurate to state that the media was not a moderating variable within the proposed selection system, but that it was not so for the group interviewed.

7.4 SYSTEM PERCEPTIONS – CONSTRUCTED VIEWS

The research described an astute group of people who were engaged in a responsible role and highly committed to their sport organisation, working as part of a selection system that they felt worked well. Their perceptions about what it was like to be a selector (in terms of personal and common characteristics) were accepted as read, because they described their own feelings. Perceptions about the selection system (in terms of job and common characteristics) were also useful but worthy of closer scrutiny, because their overall ‘system is good’ expansionist view was sometimes at odds with the reductionist facts and stories they presented about the system’s individual components. Participants stated that their system was good, but then they also reported that (for example) communication was poor, and/or criteria were not always objective, and/or that they usually supported the coach. Change should theoretically result in improvement, and because there had been a great deal of change, they deduced that their systems were now ‘good’.

7.4.1 Equality of actors

Volunteer selectors were treated very differently to professional coach selectors by their respective NSOs. Professional selectors were treated as ‘human resources’ of the organisation. They were provided with letters of offer, position descriptions, organisation hierarchy diagrams, set objectives and key performance indicators (KPIs) in respect of their role, and their work performance in relation to those
documents was regularly reviewed. These procedures were adopted for professional employees in relation to the main part of their role, which was most commonly coaching, while the selection task was a lesser part of that role. Professional coach selectors estimated that they spent between 15 and 40 per cent of their time on selection and selection-related tasks, depending on timing within the competition cycle.

In contrast, there were no HRM processes of any form in place to ensure that volunteer selectors were professionally managed. Seventy-six per cent of the group interviewed consisted of unpaid volunteer selectors. They were not provided with letters of offer, job descriptions, formal objectives nor performance parameters. They did not appear on organisation hierarchy diagrams, which were reserved for paid staff only. A very small number had their names listed on the Selection Committee on the NSO’s website, but most did not. No volunteer selectors acted as chair of the panel, nor were they required to report to the Board on selection activities. All volunteers reported that their performance in the selector role was not reviewed, that is, they received no feedback in respect of their efforts. There was therefore no reciprocity in terms of the level of professionalism that was expected from selectors by sport organisations, and the professionalism directed toward them by sport organisations. NSOs should consider that strategic reciprocity has been found to be clearly and positively related to the engagement of volunteers (Manatschal & Freitag, 2014).

About half of the group interviewed felt that the selector role was a job, while the other half did not, but whether a job or a role, a psychological contract existed involving expectations on both sides, and there were work conditions involved.
These were disadvantageous to volunteer selectors, who commonly used annual or long service leave earned from their other jobs, paid their own accommodation, and in one extreme case, even carried the cost of their own insurance. In addition, they put in long hours, bore a great deal of responsibility and expended substantial effort, but received little or no feedback about their performance.

Selectors, coaches, and high performance personnel were part of a cohort of people who transform inputs into outputs in the selection system. They were in a position to influence sport outcomes, but were unable to guarantee them due to other factors outside their control. This made it difficult to assess their effectiveness. It was inappropriate to rate a selector’s performance solely in terms of whether the athlete or team he/she chose won their event, yet selectors fully expected to be judged on this one criterion, in the same somewhat cut-throat way that (they felt) the work performance of coaches was judged – that is, ‘living or dying’ by the sport result (P2Mb, P2Ma).

The issues of power and training were identified as potentially important characteristics in an initial profile of selectors offered in Chapter 2 (see Figure 2.3), and were confirmed as such by participants. It transpired however that while selectors were seen as having power, in practice, some had more power than others. Rail (1988) said that information is a source of power in complex sport organisations. She defined power as a form of exchange in which the terms favour one of the parties involved, while adding “neither party is totally defenseless” (p. 45). Information is one form of power, and access to information for volunteer selectors was less than optimal. The only conduits between volunteer selectors and
the organisation were the coach or the high performance manager, both of whom were better informed.

Selectors understood the organisation’s published goal was to win, by selecting the best athlete or team. As selection disputes became increasingly more common and, correspondingly, NSOs became increasingly defensive, they had come to understand that there was a second underlying objective, to avoid selection disputes. It was a tricky task to juggle dual (and sometimes competing) objectives with, in most cases, limited and/or second-hand information, and in all cases, no training.

Training was the one area in which the professionals and volunteers were treated the same, since neither group had been provided with any form of job training. There are two types of knowledge needed to perform well – *declarative knowledge* – knowing what to do, and *procedural knowledge* – knowing how to do it. In addition, training has an important secondary function as it serves to let the employee or volunteer know they are important to the organisation (Dixon et al., 2005). No selectors received any formal training of either type, that is, they were not told what to do, and they were not shown how to do it. This ensured they were self-taught, and that there was no standardisation. Selectors were in most cases handed a written selection policy to read, and were then left to their own devices to work out how to undertake the role, based on their interpretation of the policy document. Only one selector reported that a training course in development for selectors had recently been devised for her sport. For all others, no such course existed.
In HR terms, the volunteer selector was clearly the ‘poor cousin’ to the professional selector. NSO resources were directed only toward professional staff, with volunteer labour being customarily excluded. Policies and practices that facilitated satisfaction and development for serious volunteers were not found to exist at this élite level, just as they were not found at club level for any type of volunteer (Taylor et al., 2006).

It has been suggested that imposing higher standards of volunteer management might have a negative impact, and/or that treating sport volunteers as a human resource tended to “overlook the complexity of relationships” (Cuskelly et al., 2006, p. 158). This ‘let’s not over-complicate it’ rationale might be apt for community/club level sport, and/or for casual volunteers who assist sporadically with events, but it is not fitting for sport’s ‘serious’ volunteers, defined as those who make sport possible for others (Shilbury & Kellett, 2011), and those coaches, officials and administrators (and selectors) for whom the role has become an ‘unpaid career’ over time (Engelberg et al., 2011). In particular, the group interviewed work within the much better resourced élite-level NSOs, who supply a sport product on behalf of Australia, and as such, resources should be allocated for their management.

Despite the obvious differences, professional and volunteer selectors alike were expected to adopt the same professional approach to their work, and to sit on the same selection panel to vote as ‘equals’. One of the glaring omissions in selectors’ accounts of how decisions were reached was that of disagreement on selection panels, with most participants claiming that there was none. The selection panel system was devised to dilute the influence of any one individual, but in practice it rarely did so. In order to ensure the integrity of the panel structure, all members needed to present as equals but, in fact, selectors carrying out the same tasks were
treated quite differently, depending on whether they were of professional or volunteer status. The coach controlled information flow to members of the panel, chaired most selection meetings, decided which selector was attending which selection trials, and was seen as the one shouldering the most responsibility. This meant that in practical terms, selectors did not always have equal votes in panel situations.

Volunteer selectors saw their role on the panel in one of two ways: most were generally very keen to support their coach and give him/her the team he/she wanted, while a very few others took the opposing view, that it was their duty to question the coach and ensure his/her preferences were justified. The majority of volunteer selectors were uncomfortable with exercising their vote in any way other than in support of the coach, given their ‘poor cousin’ status. They reported that they always managed to ‘talk it out’ and negotiate agreement, so much so that decisions rarely went to a vote. Under these circumstances, it can be understood why volunteer selectors tended to defer to a greater power, while at the same time making it appear that the need to vote was redundant.

Volunteer selectors were highly coach-oriented. They were often qualified coaches, and most commonly saw themselves as support for the coach, and/or as part of the high performance function in the organisation. Selectors and coaches shared the same objective, that is, to win. Part of the coach’s agenda was to ensure that the people he/she believes will deliver success, and thus guarantee his/her ongoing employment, were selected. In order to have control over the selection process, the coach would naturally try to influence – consciously or otherwise – other selectors involved, most of whom empathised with his/her position.
It seemed logical then to consider whether selection might need to be isolated as a separate function in NSOs, distinct from the coaching, and high performance functions. While the idea has merit if only to further reduce the coach’s power in selection matters, it is a very ‘tall order’ for two reasons. First, there are already too few doing too much, resulting in volunteers carrying out other roles because appropriately qualified and willing people are in short supply. Second, the suggestion that selectors should become divorced from the organisation’s coaching function goes against the very thing that volunteer selectors crave – involvement and belonging – that is, being part of the team charged with the task of winning medals.

7.4.2 Actors’ perceptions

Given the various participant types offered, four out of five groups and thus the vast majority of participants (86%), were of volunteer typology. Answers to the system quality questions depended on who was answering, since research participants were ‘actors’, trying to explain and make sense of their own experiences and construct a response based on what they knew. Of interest was why participants felt their system was good despite its many reported weaknesses. There were a number of possible reasons for this. First, some participants were not really able to make meaningful comment about the overall operations of a national sport organisation. Selectors’ positions, particularly those of volunteer selectors, equated to line managers’ in the organisation, so they tended to look inward rather than outward, being focused on getting a job done. Second, none of the participants had ever received any training, so they could only respond in terms of what they knew, much of which was self-taught and non-standard across the group. Finally, and most significantly, selectors had strong bonds with their respective organisations, which may have coloured their outlook and affected the construction of their views.
The bond or attachment that volunteers form with their organisations has been observed in other studies, both in the context of general (longer-term) volunteering and within sport. The organisation is said to be a focal point for the strengthening of group ties. Being a member is important, as it provides an overall sense of belonging and identification, a concept which Hustinx and Handy (2009) called ‘attachment’.

The “extent of embedding in a relatively closed community”, along with tenure are the most likely generators of strong organisational attachments (Engelberg et al., 2011; Hustinx & Handy, 2009, p. 218).

Commitment for volunteers may involve both an attachment to a role and also to an organisation, since volunteers identify with the values and goals of an organisation, not just with the work they undertake (Hustinx & Handy, 2009; Engelberg, et al., 2011). Attachment certainly existed within this group. It may have affected perceptions and thus it may also explain, at least in part, the ‘good, yet not good’ disparity. To examine this further, selectors’ perceptions were compared with those system elements – indicators of system ‘goodness’ – that were outlined in Chapter 2 (see Figure 2.2). Specific problems identified were as follows:

- Selectors had received no training. In addition, there was no training available to give them. Only one organisation had attempted to detail what was required;
- There were issues with policy. Commitment to written policy was inconsistent. In some cases, policy appeared to be in place to appease stakeholders, rather than in response to a recognised need. In addition, policy was often generic, bland and hard to understand. Implementation and communication of policy was not always well done;
- There was ambivalence about objective and subjective criteria, and some confusion about which was which. Criteria were increasingly more objective, but were still sometimes vague and difficult to apply;
- Processes were not standardised. In particular, the selection panel structure indicated imbalances of power, and there was a lack of familiarity with appeal processes and tribunals. Cultural resistance to selection appeals was evident, which also applied to keeping the necessary documentation to properly deal with appeals.
In terms of the recommendations contained in Figure 2.2, it can be concluded that all organisations did some of those things, but no one organisation did all of those things. Selectors understood the existence of a dual objective – that is, to select the best athlete or team (the explicit objective) as well as to avoid disputes (the implicit objective), and given that most of the time they managed to achieve both, they felt that generally it was all working well. The term ‘good’ was often used by selectors as a relative term, that is, they tended to first respond using the word ‘good’, but then they would go on to clarify their assessment by explaining that the system was better than it had been previously. From a systems viewpoint, their comments suggested that the whole was perceived as being greater than the sum of its parts.

7.5 A THEORY OF COMMITMENT and SELECTION SYSTEM OUTPUT

Theory explains how things work and why, explaining what the relevant variables are, and how they are related. According to Doherty (2013), components of good theory address the questions of ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’, along with ‘who’, ‘where’ and ‘when’. There were two parts to the ‘what’ question for this research. What was examined? The area of interest for this research was the selection system as it currently operated for Australian élite sport, in the medium-term aftermath of a record number of selection disputes generated by the Sydney 2000 Olympics.

What might the problem be? It was thought that the level of concern surrounding selection disputes was worthy of investigation, to consider whether the suspected problem was a genuine problem. The number of selection disputes as a whole, irrespective of merit, was of concern to NSOs due to their associated costs, along with the potential to damage reputations and jeopardise funding. Hundreds of selection decisions were made by Australian sport for its 2000 Olympic team of 628
athletes. Of these, 51 decisions were officially challenged, and nine of those challenges were successful. The number nine was small in terms of the total number of decisions made, but interestingly, the number 51 attracted a great deal of attention. The AOC, ASC and NSOs went ‘on the back foot’, approaching what they saw as a problem, at least initially, in a highly defensive way.

The 2000 selection catalyst might have been unique, however, a trend toward disputing selection decisions was found to exist. In fact, there were rumblings about selection disputes in the literature as far back as 1989, and the trend was still evident in 2012. On that basis, concern was apparently justified, so it was appropriate to then ask why? There will always be appeals, but why does the problem persist, and why is there an upward trend? There were a number of possible causes, one of which was that the Australian selection system was heavily reliant on volunteers and perhaps, as a result, it lacked professionalism. Other causes were equally possible and perhaps contributory, but were necessarily excluded from this research.

‘How’ was the selection system examined? Where might the answers be found? Who to ask? In answer to these questions, the effectiveness of the Australian élite sport selection system was considered in terms of the perceptions of selectors. When? Selectors were interviewed in 2012, shortly after completion of an Olympiad selection cycle, and commencing the selection cycle for upcoming 2014 Commonwealth Games and World Cup events.
In seeking answers to these questions, the story that emerged was that of a group of highly committed, serious leisure volunteers along with a minority of paid professionals who, despite inconsistent support, leadership and communication from their respective NSOs, conflict and its associated effects, a sizeable time commitment, imbalances of power, and inconsistent processes that were rarely (if ever) reviewed, nevertheless accepted change with equanimity and assumed responsibility – with no formal training – for making selection decisions on behalf of their sport. A reductionist line of questioning revealed some major issues with elements of the selection system, while an expansionist approach elicited a generally positive response to the system as a whole.

How could the selection system have weaknesses and yet be seen as strong? Which was the more accurate perception? What effect did selectors have on system quality, or system performance? The part of the selection system that was the least visible, and yet possibly the most important, was the transformation process. This is the part in which selectors act as ‘throughputs’, working to transform system inputs (philosophy, policy, process and review) into system outputs (selection decisions). What do they do? How do they do it? Do they do it well? How does what they do affect the operation of the system as a whole? What can the variables of interest tell us about how they perform?
Grounded theory method often involves the use of matrices and relational diagrams to assist in abstracting the data so that what is important might emerge. Table 7.1 is a broad-form matrix that sets out all of the variables from this research in both columns and rows, to see what associations might emerge. The likely associations are shown as grey cells within the matrix, while the white cells denote that there are no expected relationships.

The variables in Table 7.1 were derived from Figure 5.1 in Chapter 5, which sets out twenty-two variables that were chosen prior to collection of data, or that emerged from the data. There were eight selector characteristics or variables (age, gender, income, education, location, employment, experience and sport achievement), along with three personal variables (motivation, satisfaction, commitment) and finally, a further eight common characteristics, which could have been classified as either personal or job-related (support, conflict, change, responsibility, culture, communication, power and leadership).

The engagement construct referred to in the HRM literature is closely related to motivation, satisfaction and commitment, and is perhaps best described as an extension of the satisfaction construct. While it did not form part of the interview schedule, engagement was added as the twenty-third variable of interest within the matrix because it was a more appropriate descriptor for this group. All variables were believed to combine to ultimately affect selectors’ performance, however Figure 5.1 is simplistic, because the way the variables are arranged suggests they are all of equal weight in terms of their ability to explain and predict performance, which is unlikely, hence the need to consider the data in different ways.
Many associations were evident from the matrix in Table 7.1. Some of these derived from the literature, such as satisfaction affects motivation (see Chapter 2), while others emerged from the data. More than one participant reported, for example, that location affected their motivation and satisfaction, in terms of the ease of carrying out the role. This in turn was likely to affect engagement with, commitment to, and performance of the selector role. One selector in particular observed that all selection trials were carried out in Canberra, despite the fact that no selectors lived there, necessitating travel, along with extra time and cost (V14M). In this example, location was a dis-satisfier (and was thus associated with the satisfaction variable) because for some, constant travel lost its gloss over time and became a de-motivating factor (V7F, V8M).

In addition, location was associated with the power variable because, if a selector does not reside in the State that is home to the NSO (its base of power), they often have less information available to them, and thus less power. This problem was closely related to communication, and was reported in the data (V2Fa, V10F). For the reasons outlined, motivation, satisfaction and engagement are shown as being associated with (affected by) location, while commitment was believed to be independent of location. Commitment contains the important element of perseverance, which tended to negate a range of factors that might otherwise have had an effect – those who said they were dissatisfied with travel to certain locations continued to travel, because they were committed to doing so.
Table 7.1: Matrix of variables showing (qualitative) associations

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<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Education</th>
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Table 7.1 is extremely broad, given that it involves all identified variables, but it marks the beginning of efforts to extract core categories, which is one of the features of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). There are detailed methods for doing so with quantitative studies, but the same cannot be said for qualitative data. The qualitative researcher has “relatively few guidelines for directing this aspect of research” (Knafl & Webster, 1988, p. 195), and as a consequence, “the truth claims underlying such work are uncertain” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 20). Miles (1979) said that

the most serious and central difficulty in the use of qualitative data is that methods of analysis are not well formulated … (so that) the analyst faced with a bank of qualitative data has very few guidelines for protection against self-delusion, let alone the presentation of unreliable or invalid conclusions to scientific audiences… (p. 591).

Miles (1979) went on to describe the analysis of qualitative data as a “mysterious, half-formulated art”, and he sought to determine how the analysis of qualitative data might be carried out “in ways that deserve the name of science” (p. 601). Thirty-four years later, the analysis of qualitative data is still described as an art rather than a science. Doherty (2013) said that

… generating new theory is an artistic struggle that involves deliberating about the most relevant concepts and their interrelationships, and why … the artist does not necessarily have data to support her or his contentions (yet) and must rely on seemingly sound and even flawless explanations for the proposed relationships … this is not an easy endeavour, and may explain why there is less theorizing and more borrowing in sport management (p. 10).

Knafl and Webster (1988) described data management tasks as reductionist (making data manageable), and data analysis tasks as constructionist (rebuilding, and extracting the meaning from data). Similarly, Jansen (2010) explained that coding of data may occur in either a downward direction (differentiation), or it may be upward (synthesis). Descriptive research carries out data management and data analysis
tasks sequentially, whereas grounded theory involves doing both tasks simultaneously. Synthesis of data involves the identification of core categories, which in this case were those considered most likely to explain variance in performance. Categories or variables reflect different levels of conceptualization (Knafl & Webster, 1988). Some, such as ‘policy’ and ‘process’ (job characteristics) were highly descriptive, while others, such as ‘commitment’ and ‘power’ (personal and common characteristics) were more abstract.

In their efforts to explain how qualitative data can be analysed, Knafl and Webster (1988) offered a table which they call a ‘conceptual cross-clarification for major coding categories’, but did not explain in detail how categories came to be ‘major’. A physical count of the number of times a coded item appears could be performed, in order to justify its inclusion and thus satisfy the requirements of science, but at that point qualitative data is being used quantitatively, and some of its richness is lost. A degree of researcher interpretation of data therefore seems inevitable.

Core categories for this group were believed to be those personal characteristics listed in Figure 5.1, that is, motivation, satisfaction, and commitment, as well as job engagement. This was based on both the literature and the data, particularly what participants said during interviews about commitment. Job and common characteristics (also outlined in Figure 5.1) affected performance, but not to the same extent. These personal characteristics were used to head up four columns in Table 7.2 to create a more refined matrix of variables, as part of the process of data synthesis. The rows in Table 7.2 are comprised of the original twenty-three variables of interest (see Table 7.1).
This approach was as similar to the cross-tabulation of categories used by Knafl and Webster (1988) as could be achieved with the limited detail provided, and being based on qualitative data, it may be seen as art borrowing from science. Each cell within the second stage matrix was examined for likely associations. As for Table 7.1, associations between variables are shown in Table 7.2 as grey cells, and where there are no anticipated relationships, the cells are shown as white.

**Table 7.2: Influential factors: Proposed associations between variables**

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Associations shown in Table 7.2 were further ‘mapped’ to show expected relationships between them, in Figure 7.3. According to the data, commitment operated independently of many of the variables, which is to say that it did not depend on, and remained unaffected by, changes in the other variables of interest. Participants reported that their level of commitment was not affected by the organisation-based issues of power, conflict, change, leadership and communication. Commitment was unrelated to a selector’s level of education, and was relatively untouched by whatever policy, process, or system that was in place at the time.

Demographics – age, income, experience and location – affected selectors’ levels of commitment – in that they were older, and experienced, with independent means, and so better placed to commit themselves and their time. Gender was relevant only in terms of the way a person committed, and what motivated them, but did not affect the extent of commitment. Employment affected the amount of time that could be committed, while the level of sporting achievement meant participants were not only motivated and socialised toward the sport, but were also knowledgeable about it. Responsibility, culture and support affected commitment to a point, but once completely committed, their effect diminished. A selector did not have to be motivated, satisfied or engaged to be committed and, in turn, perform.
Figure 7.3: Selectors' job performance: Proposed relationships between variables
In a comparable study of serious, long-term volunteers, Engelberg et al. (2011) found a significant link existed between affective organisational commitment and performance, which led them to conclude that commitment was a predictor of perceived volunteer performance for those in specific roles. The main difference between that sample and this one was the context – youth sport versus elite sport. Similarly, commitment was considered to be an important factor in determining performance for this group. First, every participant bar one said they were highly committed (the one who was not highly committed was in fact disgruntled with every topic covered in the interview), and second, commitment in this group could be seen to be operating (in most cases) independently of the other variables. It was therefore interpreted as the variable that had the most power in terms of explaining performance, the quality of the transformation process and its contribution to the selection system as a whole, because commitment at the level expressed seemed impervious to any form of assault.

As outlined in Chapter 2, commitment has two distinct but related functions – to tie a person to an organisation, and to improve their output while working for that organisation, in both cases to optimise organisational effectiveness. The former function is of little relevance to this research, since the concepts of retention and turnover did not apply to this group. None of them intended to go anywhere, other than to ultimately retire. Turnover intentions are an example of where generalised management theory does not apply well to the sport management context, because even if there had been some intention to leave, these elite-level selectors were, in effect, working for a monopoly. Selectors with highly specialised knowledge of hockey are unlikely to become dissatisfied and transfer their affections to basketball.
Turnover intention can therefore be seen as a separate construct for these serious élite-level volunteers, because it was not found to exist at the opposite end of their particular commitment continuum. This group of volunteers therefore differed to all other types of sport and non-sport volunteers that have been studied to date, as well as to sport employees, and to employees generally, in mainstream industry. They were well and truly bonded, attached, committed and devoted to their respective NSOs, presumably because they were at the top of the sport pyramid, undertaking an important role in government-funded élite sport.

The latter function however was extremely relevant, since commitment has been found to predict career volunteers’ performance of their individual roles. The level of commitment in this group was believed to affect individual performance to the extent that it became transformative in nature, that is, allowing individuals to compensate for identified system concerns such as lack of standardisation, inadequate training, and an absence of meaningful review. Many participants reported that even if dissatisfied, demotivated and disengaged, they remained committed to the task at hand, and to their NSO, and so it seemed that commitment was so strong as to enable individuals to transcend system-based or organisational issues.

The idea that highly committed people can persevere to overcome problems is not entirely fanciful. People have an inherent capacity to add something intangible that cannot be quantified by examining individual system components (Maani & Cavana, 2007; Tomlinson, 1993). Indeed, Tomlinson (1993) considered serious leisure to be part of a ‘culture of commitment’, and a sphere of significant human expression. He cautioned against “reductionist interpretations” of human activity, for fear that creative human dimensions – such as commitment – might be underestimated.
(Tomlinson, 1993, p. 9). Taking an expansionist view then, the commitment level of this group of selectors – professional and volunteers alike – when added to the mix may have had the capacity to ‘balance the scales’, so that less than satisfactory inputs were transformed by the commitment of selectors into acceptable output. This notion arises from researcher interpretation of the data, and is conceptualised in Figure 7.4.

**Figure 7.4: Effect of selectors’ performance on system output**

How is commitment, and to a lesser extent, engagement, transformative? Both factors positively affect performance, in a way that is conducive to change for the sake of optimisation and improvement. Why is commitment believed to have more explanatory power than all other variables examined? The commitment construct includes elements of loyalty, resolve and perseverance; it goes beyond involvement, is analogous to attachment, and is even at times akin to devotion.
If ‘theoretical playfulness’ was employed, (as advocated by Charmaz, 2006), commitment, its various elements and all of its close relatives might be conceptualised as ‘the care factor’, an intangible thing that comes from people and which makes the most difference to the performance of systems, and organisations.

Attachment theory says that attachments are formed that may be neither good nor reciprocal (Bretherton, 1992). Certainly it can be said that much was expected of these volunteer selectors from their NSOs, while the reverse did not apply. But more than that, the commitment construct includes not only resolve but also perseverance, while engagement has more associated dependent variables and can therefore wax and wane more easily. The intention to persevere is the most germane to this research, because theory suggests that a committed volunteer will continue to do things despite almost any hardship, and the data from this group confirms that they will. The key to the importance of commitment is that obstacles exist, but they are bypassed or overcome with persistence, perseverance and resolve.

Based on both theory and data, commitment was therefore considered to be a strong predictor of job performance, simply because it does not falter. Committed selectors in this group persevered and overcame selection system issues by communicating, cajoling, resolving, worrying, putting in time, accepting change, ignoring inconsistencies and changes of leadership, working as a team, and finding their own ways of doing things, in the absence of training. If matrices, maps and diagrams based on interpretation of qualitative data are seen by some as art rather than science, then the following passages of raw data are provided in further support of the contention.
Example no. 1:

It was all on my own bat once again. So there’s still no guidelines. So then I thought, well I’m going to start having a read on the internet of how people select ... so I just had a read of that. And then went and met the other girls (selectors) and said what do you do? And they go, oh, we just kind of keep score. And I’m like, can I ask why you keep score when we have official scorers and we can just go and get their information? Oh (they said) ‘cause it helps us to remember the game. I said why don’t we just write down what (happens) ... so now we’ve implemented a different way of looking at the game ... instead of us scoring, they score, we just put what pitchers and how (they performed) ‘cause it’s an aspect that you’ve got to look at, (how they) do things and just looking at it from fresh eyes ... there’s no real rule how you observe, there’s no guidelines. ... I don’t like to sit next to another selector ‘cause you tend to talk, and then we start to get the same ideas. I like to be a couple of people away ... but then we can come together with not the same views, ‘cause I think if you’ve got the same views, it’s pointless... so tomorrow when I get there, we will have a meeting and I will be asking questions as to what type of plays he (the coach) wants us to look at. (When I first started) I needed to get my head round some of the players to familiarize myself when they started throwing names at me (that I didn’t know) because I’ve just been down with the kids at club level, so I went to the World Series in Canada, which gave me a better insight to the players. We’ve given it some guidelines, self-implemented guidelines ... the old selector that was there for ... nearly a whole term of a century, sat there and scored. Now I went to Perth in January ... I watched 47 games of softball, and I came home and I went there’s no way that that woman could have done justice to our sport. There’s no way. So that’s when I said to the girl from the seniors, how do you do it? I rang her up and said what do you do? I said ‘cause this is just ridiculous ... it was just full on ... I had to have the day off the next day, I couldn’t go into work ... games went late, it was like I got up at 3.30, it was 1 o’clock in the morning by the time I got to bed in my normal (work) day ... (that tournament) was in December, and at the end (of it) ... the coach is not appointed, there is no coach. They have to re-apply, because that tournament is finished. His (the coach’s) mind is on other things, so the girl (other selector) and I are just sitting there going well let’s just wing it and let’s just do what we want to do, let’s make our own criteria, me from being a player and her from just being a coach ... and then when the coach got appointed, we said look, this is what we’ve done, I have notes, stats, whatever you want ... (and) we were ‘on the money’ for what he wanted (V2Fb).

This volunteer selector in this example was clearly trying hard to transform some very poor inputs into acceptable output. She almost single-handedly developed her own method of dealing with selection, in the absence of any guidelines and during a
period in which no coach had been appointed for the sport. Rightly or wrongly, she
paid her own way to watch the premier international event for her sport, she used her
own video cameras (two of them) to film games for review, she juggled a full-time
job selling electrical goods with this demanding part-time role, she consulted both
the internet and significant others to try to learn how to carry out the role, she
developed her own criteria, and she was clearly very keen to have some formalised
selection process in place. Given what she had to work with, this participant’s level
of commitment to the role was regarded as transformative.

The following passage – example no. 2 - is from a similarly committed but this time
professional coach/selector:

… the previous albeit part-time national coaches were also the chair of
selectors, so frankly, with my history and passion for the game, I
didn’t like some of the stuff that was going on, so when the job was up
for grabs, I put my hand up, applied, and … got the gig … there were
a couple of selections for India, which I horribly disagreed with and I
felt they were based on personalities … and those results showed from
India … one in particular was disgusting, it was based personally.
There was no evidential proof to back that up, but (I knew) the inner
workings of it all … I was quite disgusted with it … I felt that certain
things we could certainly improve upon. We’re talking culture,
environments, values, all that sort of stuff … the fact that I would be a
selector, as coach, was part of the motivation … I felt that the
selection criteria were grey or dull or not complete … wrongful
decisions had been made and I was out to rectify them … I went for
the job to have a say and I’ve still got that say, so that’s important to
me … I want our players to be well looked after and well managed …
on and off the green … I want career opportunities for them outside of
the game … and I want them to stand on the podiums at benchmark
events. … There’s disappointment at times, and a whole range of
emotions … (but) I’d say my commitment is no greater than what it is
now, even when I was a player, and … I first played for Australia in
the mid 1990’s … yeah, never been stronger than what it is now …
Sure you wake up some days and think, god I’m tired, I could stay in
bed, but we all have that, but that doesn’t mean you’re not committed
to it (P2Ma).
As can be seen, the professional coach/selector in example number two was also highly committed to transforming a less than perfect selection system. Both examples support the contention that committed people have the capacity to transform. Interestingly, examples 1 and 2 were from relative newcomers to selection (V2Fb, P2Ma), and both were from non-Olympic sports.

It might be concluded that only those selectors new to their position (sport tragic, transient professional) and/or those involved in sports that aspire to be Olympic were trying to, or needed to be, transformative. Perhaps a ‘transformation curve’ exists, which involves a great deal of effort in the early years to transform system inputs and which then tapers off as the need to transform lessens over time. Such a commitment/transformation curve might conceivably be associated with aspirations, since the fifteen sports involved in the study are part of an Olympic hierarchy of sorts.

There were well established sports at the top of the elite tree (shooting, cycling, men’s and women’s gymnastics, hockey, diving), sports dropped from the Olympics but later reinstated (archery, 1972), sports recently added (triathlon, 2000; table tennis, 1988; trampoline gymnastics, 2000), sports that are officially ‘recognised’ but not yet included (netball, squash), sports dropped from the Olympic program and not yet reinstated (softball), traditional Commonwealth Games sports (lawn bowls, netball, squash), and sports that are none of the above, having transitioned from the private sector to amalgamation with a NSO (aerobic gymnastics).
This notion is worthy of further investigation, however commitment to transform was also evident in longer-term selectors from Olympic sports. A third participant had developed a proven method based on statistical outcomes, which he had to explain to Board members and significant stakeholders to convince them that his theory is sound. Having implemented change, he was in the process of transforming the sport’s selection methods, and dealing with the issue of acceptance.

Example no. 3:

The structure of the major competition tells me what I need to have as a potential winner. It absolutely tells me who to choose, but the athletes don’t necessarily like that … what the statistics show is that there’s a very strong correlation between the final place after the one-on-one matches and the ranking … it tells me that you need to choose people who are going to be able to get into that top 16 … the winner always comes from someone in the top four teams, and you only get a team into the top four if you (are) ranked in about that top 16, because it stands out profoundly to the statistician that you must have (athletes) in that group … the (athletes) think that if we can win enough of those (one-on-one matches) then we’re going to win anyway. Well, the statistics don’t show that. Statistics show that they might win one but they never win six. So that as a selector it’s blatantly obvious what you do, but part of the task is convincing the mass (of athletes) that that’s how it works (V11M).

This particular selector is a qualified engineer, has recently completed a PhD related to the aerodynamics of his sport, works in a full-time job as a senior engineer for a government department, and has a global reputation for technical knowledge about his sport. He has clearly worked hard to transform the way selection is done within his sport, using an advanced theory based on mathematical probabilities, which despite its accuracy has met with some resistance. The three examples given demonstrate the level of motivation, engagement and commitment of participants, as well as their involvement in transformation.
There are other examples of transformational change – such as change by virtue of time in the position (V10F, V7F), change by exposure to a different culture (P14M, P2Mb), and change by way of shift from private to government control (V18F). Where initially it was expected that selection system change might have been driven by transformational NSO leaders, it can be seen that the selectors themselves planned, implemented and monitored change, a task that requires great commitment.

These findings are, as shown, grounded in the data, however it is timely to recall that researchers’ values and experience affect interpretation of data. Of the three commitment/transformation examples cited, one interview was carried out in the privacy of the professional participant’s NSO office, while the other two volunteers invited the researcher into their own homes. Two of the three were due to fly interstate the following day. The efforts all three expended in creating time and physical space for interviews under difficult circumstances was further proof of their level of commitment, and the lengthy face-to-face interviews established trust, respect and a level of intimacy that undoubtedly affected analysis. Certainly participants earned the respect and gratitude of the researcher, however the current quality of their output was not measured other than in terms of their own perceptions. It is not yet known whether the trend in selection disputes has changed course since last measured in 2012.

Based on the interpretation of data, the selection system model was modified for the final time to reflect the importance of selector commitment, and to a lesser extent engagement, as shown in Figure 7.5. The ‘throughput’ section, which signifies what selectors do in terms of converting inputs to outputs, has been expanded to show that commitment and engagement are factors that are believed to influence the
transformation process. As expected, engagement was to some extent dependent on
the level of agreement (or disagreement) with selectors’ decisions, as it was also
affected by the sport outcome and was, in turn, a predictor of role performance.
Commitment was not directly affected by any agreement or disagreement with the
selection decision, since participants confirmed that they had on many occasions
persisted throughout conflict related to selection decisions. There were other
influential factors, such as power and training, but these were believed to be of lesser
import. Future studies may be able to test these hypotheses and measure the extent of
influence of all explanatory variables.

**Figure 7.5: Revised selection system model showing major factors
affecting the transformation process**
Taken at face value, the power of commitment and its theorised ability to optimise performance by overcoming system deficiencies might imply that NSOs simply need to push volunteers through the various phases of commitment to the endpoint of the continuum where they are fully committed, attached and devoted, as are the participants in this group. At that point, they not only have the demonstrated intention and capacity to transform, but they also have no intention of leaving, which is the ‘holy grail’ of sport volunteer retention. There are proponents of this ‘push’ approach – Chelladurai and Madella (2006), for example, recommended that “occasional involvement should be turned into enduring commitment” (p. 49).

This objective is designed to benefit one rather than both parties involved, and as such, has risky overtones. It could be likened to the pathway to drug addiction, in that the objective of the dealer is to ‘get them hooked’ to serve the purposes of the dealer and promote a master-servant relationship. In sport, the notion of creating fully committed volunteer labour from partly committed or even casual volunteer labour is not unlike the marketing goal of converting a sometime supporter to one who ultimately buys a season ticket. It is opportunist and, potentially fails to overlook the lack of reciprocity in the serious leisure volunteer/NSO relationship that has been previously outlined.

NSOs with such a goal in mind should consider that this research is situated in a context now that may not always apply. Commitment for this group was found to operate independently of satisfaction, confirming the existence of a ‘culture of sacrifice’ for selectors similar to that found in coaches (Dixon & Warner, 2010), but, over time, the meaning of sacrifice will change, as it has already. Once it meant giving up a human life to appease the gods; now sacrifice can be as trivial as a day
without internet connectivity and, in the future, its meaning will be different again, according to the perceptions of the actors involved. There is unlikely to be an endless supply of potentially serious volunteers of which to take advantage, and the failure on the part of NSOs to reciprocate – in terms of attachment, support, reward, and expectations of professionalism – cannot continue indefinitely.

7.6 IMPLICATIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

Sport organisations have been under pressure to adopt professional management systems and processes, “across all functional areas from finance to HRM” (Taylor & Ho, 2005, p. 110). There seems to be some confusion about what that might actually involve, and what might be a suitable approach. While HRM systems have demonstrated a capacity to positively influence organisational performance, the link has been described as tenuous, such that the ability to predict the effectiveness of any single HRM procedure is still subject to debate (Taylor et al., 2006).

Volunteer management practices in the sport environment have been more organic than formal to date, and in adopting HRM practices, there is concern that over-bureaucratisation or corporatisation of the volunteer experience “may not necessarily fit comfortably” (Cuskelley et al., 2006; Taylor et al., 2006). Just as there are those who are concerned about the introduction of formalised HRM practices, there are others who strongly advocate them (Bradbury, 2007; Chelladurai & Madella, 2006). It is probably most accurate to say that there is no such thing as a “one size fits all model” (Taylor et al., 2006, p. 144).
Setting aside the debatable effect of HRM practices on performance, NSOs should institute the same HRM practices for their serious volunteers as are already in place for their paid professionals, for reasons of organisational justice and equity. In doing so, serious volunteers would be managed in the same way that their professional counterparts are, with all the attendant HRM rituals, in preparation for a future in which increasingly fewer people are prepared to fully commit. The interactionist view is that humans are actors who adjust their behaviour to the actions of others. That being the case, the continuing demands placed on serious volunteers to act professionally, while not being treated professionally, is likely to contribute to a decline in their numbers. This is already evident with other types of volunteers in other levels of sport (Nichols, 2005; Warner et al., 2011), and may be an “early sign of a looming crisis” (Taylor et al., 2006, p. 144).

Specifically, serious volunteers should be treated in the short term as unpaid career employees, who may, in the long term, need to become paid employees, or at the very least, paid contractors. Irrespective of payment, their contribution should always be treated with respect and reciprocity. As a minimum, funds should be made available to assist long-term volunteers who have difficulties, such as with paying for child care, for accommodation, and/or reimbursing for use of annual and long service leave earned in other jobs. At present, organisational injustices are evident.

Further, volunteer selectors and professional coaches alike can be expected to perform effectively, and should be appropriately managed to ensure that they do so, but their performance should not be evaluated solely in terms of the sport outcome, as there are too many other factors at play. Selectors should understand the purpose of the policy, and the purpose behind each process set out in the policy. This should
be communicated with care, so that they embrace the objectives of the policy. Selectors need training that is specifically designed to address the issues they face – conflict, stress, attachment to NSOs and athletes, assertiveness, power dynamics, communication, standardisation of methods, use of objective criteria, organisational justice, and culture. Commitment to professionalism, and professionalising – indeed, commitment to any form of change – has to come from the top down in organisations, and it may be that NSO Boards need to give this more serious consideration. If volunteers are required to be ‘serious’, as they clearly are, then NSOs should be serious too.

To achieve this, sport organisations may need to adopt a more creative approach to the use of their limited resources – for example, an industry-wide training package could be developed for selectors, with all sports contributing to and sharing the cost of its design and delivery. Other than sport-specific criteria, much of the required training would be generic. Webinars have been recommended as a cheap method of training within the sport industry context, and mentoring has been suggested as an effective and practical approach to reducing power differentials (Tiell & Dixon, 2008). The latter practice has not yet been commonly embraced in Australia, perhaps for no good reason other than cultural differences. Both methods would be effective for, and relevant to, this group.

At this time, it would be too much to expect that volunteers, particularly long-term volunteers such as selectors, be paid (at least in part) for their time, skill and effort, but sport organisations may need to accept this as inevitable in the longer term, and begin preparing for it, as it becomes increasingly difficult to attract skilled ‘serious leisure’ volunteers.
Recommendations at this very early (exploratory) stage of enquiry are as follows:

- Selection can and should be regarded and undertaken as a fully-fledged open system, with a formal review input introduced. Its findings should be communicated and made readily accessible. NSOs would benefit not only from systematic and formal review but also from the introduction of a culture of review, in which questioning practices is actively encouraged by leaders;

- Selectors should be treated as part of the organisation’s valuable human resources. They should be provided with a job description, and some performance parameters, against which their performance is measured, and reviewed from time to time, with feedback given. The selection committee and all of its members should be included as part of any organisation hierarchy diagram. Volunteer selectors should be asked to regard the role, as far as possible, as a job, albeit an unpaid one at this time, and consideration be given by NSOs to budgeting for the staged introduction of payment over time. The rationale for this approach is that of justice and equity;

- The power imbalance between volunteer and professional selectors needs to be addressed. There is no apparent ‘divide’ in terms of their willingness to work together, and any notion that they are at loggerheads simply by virtue of being paid versus not being paid is these days a cliché. Volunteer and professional selectors are to be commended for having overcome their differences and for sharing responsibilities and workloads to the extent that they have. The differences that exist are structural and relate specifically to an imbalance of power, differences in perceived value to the organisation, and availability of information. Overcoming such differences will require active management of “overt and subtle prejudice and discrimination … (and would be greatly assisted, for example) by ensuring all literature and promotional material is non-discriminatory”, as advocated by Taylor et al., 2006 (p. 144). This would mean, for example, publishing selectors on website organisation structures, showing them as being part of NSO personnel;

- Selectors’ perceptions of the selection system should be measured on a regular basis and used as part of ongoing review; and

- A training package should be devised and delivered to selectors as a matter of priority.
7.7 FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings in this research are a starting point only. A lot of ideas have been mooted, and all need to be examined in more detail. These ideas are not necessarily generalisable, because this study is context-specific. A number of issues were identified on which more detailed studies could usefully be undertaken, including (but not limited to) the following three areas:

7.7.1 Sport selection system perspective

- What factors cause selection disputes, and to what extent?
- Does the selection decision affect the sport outcome and, if so, to what extent?
- What are the characteristics of the ‘ideal’ sport selection system?
- Does a lack of professionalism in selection systems cause selection disputes and, if so, to what extent?
- What differences exist in selection disputes for individual and team selections in various sports?
- What objective criteria can be identified and used to assist selection decisions in different sports?
- How can objective criteria be applied to the selection process for team sports, in which combinations of athletes are important?
- Is there value in the use of subjective criteria and ‘gut feel’ as an aid to selection in sport?
- What is an ideal mix of objective and subjective selection criteria for different sports?
- How can selection methods be standardised within and across sports?
- What should a selectors’ training package contain? Is it possible for such a package to be shared, at least in part, across a number of sports?
- What is the effect of Olympic aspirations on elite sports’ selection systems?
7.7.2 Sport volunteer perspective

- What effect does the behaviour of individual panel members and the dynamics of the group have on selection panel outcomes? What is the optimum design for selection panels?

- How can professionals and volunteers, with the same level of specialist knowledge carrying out the same role, be made more equal?

- Is succession planning appropriate for serious leisure volunteers? How can the knowledge of existing service volunteers be passed on to others?

- The commitment/turnover continuum – is there a point at which volunteers do not turnover? If so, when and how is that point reached? How independent a variable is commitment for volunteers?

7.7.3 HRM perspective

- What impact does culture have on selectors’ beliefs and attitudes?

- Should HRM processes be implemented for serious leisure volunteers?

- Is it appropriate to formally assess the performance of all sport personnel, including volunteers? What are appropriate assessment measures for ‘serious’ volunteers, such as selectors?

- What is the future in sport for serious leisure volunteers, such as selectors? Is there a decline in numbers for this particular group? If so, why? Where can replacements be found? How can replacements be attracted and retained?

- Can organisational commitment be transformative? Is job engagement transformative? To what extent? Do some sports have a more transformational culture than others?
7.8 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This research was exploratory, because there was limited prior research on this topic. The main research question, along with its several sub-questions as set out in Chapter 1, has been answered. A group of selectors provided their perceptions about the selection system that operated within their respective sports, and this information was presented for discussion. Selectors’ characteristics – including income, education, age, gender and experience – were described. What it was like to be a selector and, in particular, their feelings about their role were detailed, along with their perceptions of the strengths, weaknesses, and professionalism of the selection system. A theoretical framework suggesting the existence of a selection system was proposed, confirmed as applicable and later revised (see Figure 7.11) to reflect selectors’ perceptions and the variables that were believed to explain performance.

The research has not proved that a lack of professionalism within NSO selection systems caused a high level of, or an increase in, selection disputes, nor has it proved that selection systems in place directly caused any disputes at all, as this was not its aim. Its aim was to explore, and to consider selection in élite level, non-corporate sport through the eyes of selectors themselves.

It is timely, having considered what selectors had to say about selection, to reflect on the words of The Honourable Trevor Morling QC (2001), who, after conducting his review of selection, said that “the few troublesome and costly appeals in 2000 should not be allowed to obscure the fact that … the (selection) processes worked reasonably well” (p. 45). His reasoned words suggested, at that time, that any backlash targeting selection systems might have been overly defensive, a bit of a ‘storm in a teacup’.
Thirteen years later, the AOC’s (former) Director of Sport, who counts selection as part of her brief, offered another perspective. Ms De Jong (now the AOC’s Chief Executive Officer) confirmed that the year 2000 had been a ‘watershed’ for selection disputes in Australian sport, as contended by this research. She went on to say that sport “went too far” in 2004 to correct selection issues, but that the pendulum swung back in 2008 to a more balanced position, so that in her view “[we] are ‘streets ahead’ of other countries” in terms of the way selection of athletes is undertaken” (De Jong, 2013). That may be so, but despite a temporary dip, the percentage of selection disputes in 2012 is approximately the same as it was in 2000. Perhaps sport has simply become inured to the phenomenon and is now less ‘touchy’ about it.

Such thoughts and comments should perhaps be considered in light of the pool of Australian athletes that is available for selection. It is possible, for example, that the system worked reasonably well in 2001 and continued to work well in 2013 because Australia was, and still is, a small country, with a small population and correspondingly few athletes. The best tend to select themselves, so that selection issues tend to exist only for those borderline athletes who are good rather than great, and who are less certain of selection. If, however, Australia’s population doubled and there was a larger pool of contenders competing for the same number of opportunities to perform, the professionalism of the system might be tested, given what has been reported by selectors in the context of this research. Certainly, despite Morling’s reassurance and De Jong’s satisfaction, there is justification for aspiring to be better.
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Davey, C. (2002, April). This is not a game. South Africa’s selection policies might not look black and white, but this country has good reason to mix sport and politics. *Inside Sport, 123*, 34-35.


Forbes & Bundock v Australian Yachting Federation Inc & Ors (1996) No 1467/96 Supreme Court of NSW.


Table Tennis Australia. (2014). *Table Tennis Australia: National selection criteria September 2013*. Table Tennis Australia, retrieved on January 13th, 2014 from http://tabletennis.org.au/About/Governance


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<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1. PSYCHOGRAPHIC INFORMATION</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1. AGE:</strong> What is your age group?</td>
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<td>Between 18-25</td>
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<td>Between 26-35</td>
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<td>Between 36-45</td>
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<td>Between 46-55</td>
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<td>More than 65</td>
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<td>Prefer not to say</td>
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<td><strong>2. GENDER:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>3. LOCATION:</strong> In which suburb/town do you live? <em>(postcode, if known)</em></td>
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<td><strong>4. FAMILY DESCRIPTION:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• How many members are there in your immediate family?</td>
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<td>• What is the ‘shape’ of your family? <em>(e.g. 2 parents, 3 children / 2 partners, no children / other)</em></td>
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<td>• What is your position in the family?</td>
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<td><strong>5. FAMILY LINK:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Have family members been involved in your sport at any time? Yes / No</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Are they still involved? Yes / No. If so, in what capacity?</td>
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<td><strong>6. EDUCATION:</strong> What is your highest level of education?</td>
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<tr>
<td>High School / Secondary College</td>
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<td>TAFE / Technical College</td>
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<td><strong>7. PRIMARY JOB:</strong></td>
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<td>• What is your primary job &amp; job title?</td>
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<td>• In what industry is your primary job?</td>
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<td><strong>8. HOUSEHOLD INCOME:</strong></td>
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<td>• What is your household income level?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Less than $50,000 p.a.</td>
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<td>Between $50,000 and $75,000 p.a.</td>
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<td>Between $75,000 and $100,000 p.a.</td>
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<td>More than $100,000 p.a.</td>
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### RQ2. BELIEFS & PERCEPTIONS – What’s It Like to be a Selector?

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<td><strong>9. TIME COMMITMENT:</strong></td>
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<td>What is the expected time commitment?</td>
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<td>What is the actual time commitment – on average, how many hours per week do you put in?</td>
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<td>Is there a big difference between the two?</td>
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<td>Has this changed over time?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How do you feel about the expectations placed on you?</td>
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<td><strong>10. MOTIVATION:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>How long have you been a selector?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have you been a selector for any other sport? If yes, which one?</td>
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<td>Why did you initially get involved as a selector?</td>
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<td>Why do you do it now?</td>
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<td>What do you get out of it?</td>
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<td>Do you enjoy the role? Why?</td>
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<td>How important are you to your sport?</td>
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<td>Will you continue in the role?</td>
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<td>To what extent has it been of value to you personally?</td>
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<td><strong>11. SATISFACTION:</strong></td>
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<td>Is it a satisfying role?</td>
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<td>Are you satisfied?</td>
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<td>On a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is ‘highly satisfied’ and 1 is ‘highly dissatisfied’ – how satisfied are you?</td>
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<td>Is it a stressful role?</td>
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<td>Do you feel stressed?</td>
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<td><strong>12. COMMITMENT:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you feel committed to your sport?</td>
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<td>How long have you been committed to this sport?</td>
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<tr>
<td>On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is ‘not at all committed’ and 5 is ‘highly committed’ – how committed are you?</td>
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<td>Why do you feel committed?</td>
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<td>Has your level of commitment changed over time?</td>
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<td><strong>13. SUPPORT:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you feel that you’re part of the organisation?</td>
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<td>To what extent do you feel supported in your role?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you feel that people are critical of selectors generally?</td>
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<td>If so, are you conscious of it? Does it affect what you do?</td>
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<td>Are you conscious of the media when making decisions?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How do you feel about explaining selection decisions to athletes?</td>
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<td>Do you feel the need for any training in any areas?</td>
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<td>Are you given the opportunity to undertake such training?</td>
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</table>
### RQ2. BELIEFS & PERCEPTIONS – What’s It Like to be a Selector? (cont.)

#### 14. CONFLICT:
- Do professional staff and volunteers work well together in your sport?
- Have you ever been involved in any conflict as a result of a selection decision that you’ve been involved in?
- If so, what happened?
- Has it affected you personally? How?

#### 15. CHANGE:
- Has there been much change in the way selections are carried out in the time you’ve been involved?
- If yes, what do you think has driven change?
- How well does your sport organisation manage change?

### RQ3. PROFESSIONALISM – What is the Selection System Like?

#### 16. BASIS OF APPOINTMENT:
- How are you qualified to be a selector?
- On what basis are you appointed?
- Is your position ongoing, or for a set term?
- Do you see it as a job?
- Is the payment you receive appropriate?
- Is your performance reviewed? If yes, is this done in a formal way?
- What do you think generally about your work conditions?

#### 17. APPROACH:
- How do you approach and carry out the task?
- Is selection policy written?
- Is it clear & easy to follow?
- Is it easy to explain to others?
- Was the policy clearly explained to you?
- To what extent are objective selection criteria used in your sport?
- To what extent are subjective selection criteria used in your sport?
- How is bias managed? What do you do about it?
- Apart from bias, it has also been said that selectors have been known to exact retribution on athletes – what do you think about that?

#### 18. SYSTEM QUALITY:
- What do you think about the selection system?
- How well does your sport manage selection?
- How do you feel about the policy you work with?
- Do you have, or have you had any involvement with the design of policy?
- What do you think about appeals?
- In your opinion, what is good about the system?
- Do you think there are any weaknesses or issues within the system?
- Are you concerned about any aspects of the system? Please elaborate
- Do you believe the process could be improved? How?
28 May 2012

Dear Sandra & David

BL-EC 21-12 Selectors’ Perceptions of the Australian Sport Selection System

Thank you for submitting the above project for consideration by the Faculty Human Ethics Advisory Group (HEAG). The HEAG recognised that the project complies with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans (2007) and has approved it. You may commence the project upon receipt of this communication.

The approval period is for three years. It is your responsibility to contact the Faculty HEAG immediately should any of the following occur:

- Serious or unexpected adverse effects on the participants
- Any proposed changes in the protocol, including extensions of time
- Any changes to the research team or changes to contact details
- Any events which might affect the continuing ethical acceptability of the project
- The project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

You will be required to submit an annual report giving details of the progress of your research. Failure to do so may result in the termination of the project. Once the project is completed, you will be required to submit a final report informing the HEAG of its completion.

Please ensure that the Deakin logo is on the Plain Language Statement and Consent Forms. You should also ensure that the project ID is inserted in the complaints clause on the Plain Language Statement, and be reminded that the project number must always be quoted in any communication with the HEAG to avoid delays. All communication should be directed to katrina.fleming@deakin.edu.au

The Faculty HEAG and/or Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) may need to audit this project as part of the requirements for monitoring set out in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans (2007).

If you have any queries in the future, please do not hesitate to contact me.

We wish you well with your research.

Kind regards,

Katrina Fleming
HEAG Secretariat
Faculty of Business and Law
TO: Participant Selector

**PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT**

**Date:** 18/5/12

**Full Project Title:** Selectors’ Perceptions of the Australian Sport Selection System

**Principal Researcher:** Professor D. Shilbury

**Student Researcher:** S. Hillas

The following information is provided to help you to make an informed decision about participating in this Research Study. Please read this Plain Language Statement, and if satisfied, please sign the following Consent Form.

**What is the Research about?**

The aim of the project is to find out what selectors think and feel - about their role, and the system within which they operate. First, the study aims to find out some basic information about selectors, such as age, education, etc. Second, the study asks selectors’ opinions about various aspects of their work, such as motivation, commitment, satisfaction, conflict, support and change. Finally, the study asks selectors for their views about the way the selection system works within their sport.

**How is the Research done?**

The research project involves interviews with approximately 24 selectors. These interviews will be recorded, and then transcribed into printed format ‘word-for-word’, that is, what is said by the interviewee will not be changed by the interviewer at any stage. The interviews in printed format will then be used to identify common themes, and to generate a theory (or theories) about the selection system in Australian sport. This information will be the first known work in the sport management field about selectors, and so will form the basis for future research.

**What do I Have to Do if I Choose to Participate in the Research?**

Selectors who wish to participate will be asked to undergo a face-to-face one-on-one confidential interview of approximately 1.5 hours’ duration, at a time and place which is convenient for you. All interviews will be face to face – interstate participants will be interviewed either in person if possible, or alternatively via Skype or equivalent.

**Am I placed at Risk by this Research?**

Participants’ views will be treated confidentially. Names will not be disclosed in the research publication, so there is minimal risk of identification and recrimination for any views expressed.

**Are any Services Provided for me if I am Adversely Affected by the Research?**

No adverse effects are anticipated from this research.
How Do I Benefit?
Participants may benefit in the medium to long term by improvements that may come about in their workplace as a result of recommendations arising from this study. It is expected that benefits will be limited to Australian sport organisations and university sport management programs. There are no payments to participants for this research.

How will my Privacy and Confidentiality be Protected?
Privacy is of the utmost importance, and will be protected at all times. Each participant will have their name replaced by a code, and all material is kept in locked premises and/or on the University’s secure server. Confidentiality will be protected by adherence to the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research. Participants are treated as anonymous in any publication of results. No identifiable comments will be published without the consent of the participant.

Are the Research Results Published and Widely Available? Can I get a Copy?
Research results will be published in the form of a thesis that is presented to Deakin University. This will be made available to other university students to read, both in printed form and online. Condensed results may also be printed in academic journals. Research participants who indicate that they wish to access the results will be provided with information on how to do so.

How will the Research be Monitored?
The research will be supervised, on a monthly basis, by the Principal Researcher. The Principal Researcher is a staff member of Deakin University, and is trained to observe the University’s Human Research Ethics Guidelines.

How is this Research Funded?
The research is 100% funded by the Student Researcher.

Does Anyone Involved have a Financial Interest that should be Declared?
There are no financial interests to be declared for this research.

Can I Change my Mind and Withdraw my Consent to Participate?
Participants may withdraw from this study at any time. It will be possible to withdraw their data upon withdrawal.

How Can I Contact the Researcher?
Ms Sandra Hillas can be contacted at any time via email – shillasw@deakin.edu.au - or by mobile phone 0417 821 533.

How do I Make a Complaint?
If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, then you may contact: The Manager, Research Integrity, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood Victoria 3125, Telephone: 9251 7129, Facsimile: 9244 6581; research-ethics@deakin.edu.au Please quote project number [2012-XXX].
TO: Participant Selector

CONSENT FORM

Date: 18/5/12
Full Project Title: Selectors’ Perceptions of the Australian Sport Selection System
Reference Number: 2012-BL-EC 21-12

I have read, and I understand the attached Plain Language Statement.
I freely agree to participate in this project according to the conditions in the Plain Language Statement.
I have been given a copy of the Plain Language Statement and Consent Form to keep.
The researcher has agreed not to reveal my identity and personal details, including where information about this project is published, or presented in any public form.
I also consent to having my interview audiotaped, so that it can be transcribed into print after the interview.
My preferred method of contact is via:
Email / Mobile Phone / Mail (please provide details)

…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…..

Participant’s Name (printed)

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

Signature ……………………………………………………… Date
…………………………

Please return this form to:
Ms Sandra Hillas, Student Researcher
via email – shillasw@deakin.edu.au
via fax 03 9480 1093
or to PO Box 8124, Preston 3072

Thank you for your assistance.
TO: Participant Selector

WITHDRAWAL OF CONSENT FORM

(To be used for participants who wish to withdraw from the project)

Date:

Full Project Title: Selectors’ Perceptions of the Australian Sport Selection System

Reference Number: 2012-BL-EC 21-12

I hereby wish to WITHDRAW my consent to participate in the above research project and understand that such withdrawal WILL NOT jeopardise my relationship with Deakin University.

Participant’s Name (printed) ……………………………………………………………

Signature ………………………………………………………………………………… Date …………………

Please mail or fax this form to:

Ms Sandra Hillas, Student Researcher
via email – shillasw@deakin.edu.au
via fax 03 9480 1093
or to PO Box 8124, Preston 3072

Thank you for your assistance.