

New South Wales Fencing Association Strategic Plan – 2013-16

1. Overview

This Strategic Plan provides a general blueprint for the further development of the sport of fencing in NSW from 2013 to 2016.

The Strategic Plan builds on the progress made under the previous plans covering the periods 2005-08 and 2009-12. Achievements under these plans included:

- Appointment of a world-class NSW Head Coach under contract, since renewed to cover the new Olympic cycle leading to the Rio Games
- Establishment of weekly NSW squad training sessions
- Commitment to weapon equity and the introduction of epee and sabre to schools and junior State competitions
- Establishment of a regular State and National competition venue at PCYC Marrickville
- Appointments of a State Coaching Director and State Officiating Director to lead the training of coaches and referees
- Further investment in electronic scoring equipment
- Encouragement of regional club development and regular regional competitions
- Competition innovation including the development of the NSW U13 and U11 State Championships into a major event drawing entries from interstate, NZ and Asia
- Development of policies, including Child Protection and Safety
- Establishment of Friends of Fencing, a supporter group raising funds for grass-roots development
- Effective financial management leading to surpluses for the past 3 years with membership and competition entry fees held steady

The 2013-16 Plan aims to continue this progress under high-level objectives which are implemented in annual Business Plans.

This Plan takes into account existing strengths and weaknesses and the potential to further develop and strengthen fencing as a viable and successful sport.

The five key objectives set in previous plans remain valid:

- 1. Increase participation:** Increase the number of people of all ages taking up fencing as their preferred sport, with a particular focus on introducing juniors to fencing and encouraging them to choose fencing as their primary sport. Assist existing clubs to grow their membership and encourage the establishment of new fencing clubs throughout metropolitan Sydney and regional areas of NSW.
- 2. Enhance performance:** Improve the skills of fencers through structured coaching and training programs that will, in time, produce more NSW fencers capable of winning medals in

national and international competition. Maintain weekly NSWFA squad training sessions as a central venue for improving fencing skills, particularly for young fencers with promise.

3. **Strengthen finances:** Continue to strengthen the financial capacity of NSWFA through efficient management, budget control and gaining access to new sources of funding.
4. **Effective organisation:** Build the organisational capability of NSWFA to administer, develop and promote fencing as an attractive and dynamic sport. Continue to improve the infrastructure of fencing with efficiently run competitions and training events, coach and referee training courses, well maintained and upgraded equipment and a longer term goal to secure a permanent venue in Sydney.
5. **Promote fencing:** Seek to raise the profile of fencing in the media, with governments and with the sports community.

The first objective (developing a broader base of participation) and second objective (enhancing performance) are inter-dependent and mutually reinforcing. Growing the level of participation will give fencing critical mass as a sport and foster the emergence of individuals with the talent and drive to become top fencers. Their success in national and international competition will in turn set an example for younger, upcoming fencers and hopefully inspire them to succeed as well.

A focus on high performance and the achievement of good results for NSW in competition will be pursued in the context of the development of fencing in general. Not all fencers have the ambition or skill to become top rank competitors. Many will fence at club level for enjoyment, to keep fit, make friends, or just to be part of an exciting sport.

The primary task for NSWFA is to provide the opportunity for all fencers, whatever weapon they choose and to whatever level they aspire, to develop their potential and to satisfy their own ambitions within the sport.

NSWFA will seek to increase participation and enhance skills in a comprehensive approach that embraces all ages, genders and abilities.

There is ample opportunity too for non-fencers – parents, other family members, friends, retired fencers and those who simply take an interest – to become active members of the fencing community and contribute to our sport.

2. About NSWFA

NSWFA is an incorporated association subject to the NSW Associations Incorporation Act 1984 and the Rules of NSWFA Incorporated (currently under review).

It is the governing body of the sport of fencing in NSW and is affiliated with the Australian Fencing Federation (AFF) which in turn is affiliated with Federation Internationale d'Escrime (FIE).

The objectives of NSWFA are set out in the Rules:

- a) To promote and encourage the sport of fencing in New South Wales;
- b) To bring together into one Association all fencers in New South Wales;
- c) To maintain the rules of the FIE as a guideline for all competition fencing in New South Wales;
- d) To promote and control fencing competitions in New South Wales;
- e) To promote the activity of social or recreational fencing in New South Wales;
- f) To promote and regulate exhibitions, lectures, conferences and training squads, the aim of which is consistent with Rule 3.1 (a) NSWFA Rules*
- g) Such other objects as the Executive considers from time to time are conducive to attaining the objectives above

*Rule 3.1a refers to promoting and encouraging the sport of fencing in NSW

In 2009, NSWFA had 600 members. By 2012, this had grown to 800. Membership categories are Senior (18+) and Junior Affiliated, Senior and Junior Registered, Member Coach, Coach Fencer, Honorary Member/Coach and Associate Members. Affiliated Members are those who participate in State, National and International competitions. Registered Members may participate in State Schools and Novice competitions.

These members are generally also members of 23 affiliated fencing clubs located in metropolitan Sydney and other parts of NSW.

3. Governance

The affairs of NSWFA are managed by an Executive of seven elected members in the positions of President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and three Ordinary Committee Members. Executive members hold office for a period of two years. Nominations for vacant positions are called before each Annual General Meeting.

The Executive is given powers and responsibility under section 17 of the Rules to control and manage the affairs of the Association subject to the NSW law, the Rules of the Association and resolutions of general meetings of members.

The Rules require members of the Executive and Delegates from each affiliated Club to meet four times a year as the Committee of the Association.

4. Commissions

As provided for in the NSWFA Rules, Commissions are given responsibility to manage important aspects of the sport. Members of NSWFA are invited to nominate to serve on Commissions.

5. Opportunities and risks

Like any organisation, NSWFA is presented with opportunities that can be pursued and risks that must be managed.

Strengths	Weaknesses
An Olympic sport that caters for both genders and nearly all ages	A minority sport in Australia with a low public/media profile
A good foothold in secondary schools, with potential for expansion, and a strong schools competition	A relatively expensive sport for participants considering the cost of imported weapons and protective clothing, club membership, coaching fees, competition entry and travel
Experienced and dedicated coaches and volunteers who handle administration, competition management and refereeing.	A relatively small membership base – 800 registered fencers in NSW.
A world class Head Coach and experienced coaches at State, Club and Schools dedicated to advancing NSW fencing particularly at junior level	Distance from the leading fencing countries and limited opportunities for high level international competition with associated travel costs
Members (and parents) with a passion for fencing who are prepared to contribute voluntarily and generously to the management and development of	Largely dependent on volunteers to manage the sport

the sport	
Opportunities	Threats/Risks
Increase participation through transition of school fencers, retention of senior fencers and recruitment of mature/veteran fencers	Safety of competitors and spectators at club and State fencing events
Develop new relationships and enhance existing links with other fencing communities in the Asian time zone	Reputation risk to fencing through the actions of fencers/coaches
	Financial mismanagement

6. Making it happen

The Plan embraces five objectives under which specific programs/projects will be further developed:

1. Increase participation
2. Enhance performance
3. Strengthen finances
4. Effective organisation
5. Promote fencing

6.1 Increase participation

a. Schools

Schools are the breeding grounds for young fencers entering the sport. Many school fencers go on to join clubs and take part in state and national competitions. Fencing already has a strong foothold in some schools who send their students to compete in the NSW Schools Individual Championships & Schools Teams Championships in terms 3 and 4. There is potential to introduce fencing to more schools, particularly in the metropolitan and larger regional areas. Challenges include:

- Persuading schools that fencing should be offered alongside more traditional sports
- Availability of coaches
- Availability of clothing and equipment

This Plan sets a goal of introducing fencing to three new schools each year. NSWFA will contact the head of sports at targeted schools and discuss with them the prospects for introducing fencing to their school and practical issues, including training facilities, availability of coaches, clothing & equipment and support from teachers and parents. Demonstration events may be organised at schools.

Young accredited coaches will be encouraged to introduce fencing to schools and NSWFA has a limited stock of training equipment for this purpose.

Expansion of the number of schools offering fencing as a sport will lead to increased participation in the annual schools competitions, greater entries to NSWFA competitions, the discovery of talented young fencers and opportunities for professional coaches to attract new students.

b. Club development

Clubs are the backbone of fencing, providing introductory courses for beginners, on-going coaching as fencers develop and venues for regular training sessions. Some 23 fencing clubs are distributed through the metropolitan areas of Sydney and in regional areas of NSW

though there are large gaps in coverage. Good progress has been made in recent years in revitalising fencing in regional areas, particularly in Newcastle and Wagga Wagga. NSWFA will continue to place importance on supporting regional fencing.

c. Mature fencers – novice and experienced

Fencing is a sport suitable for men and women of all ages, with veterans fencing into their 70's.

NSWFA will try to entice former fencers back into the sport and inspire novices of any age to try fencing. Clubs will be encouraged to contact former members and invite them to return to fencing, either to fence actively, assist with training or contribute to the organisation of the sport. Opportunities will be sought to align fencing with government and other health and fitness programs.

d. Competition

NSWFA has 800 registered fencers, however only a minority of them compete regularly in NSWFA competitions. Working with clubs, NSWFA will conduct a campaign to encourage more fencers to enter competitions, including regional competitions (e.g. Newcastle/Central Coast).

e. Parental participation

Parents provide a natural resource for the sport given their level of dedication (in time and money) to their children's involvement in fencing. Parents can be encouraged to take up fencing themselves or invited to take an active interest in managing the sport and raising funds. A targeted communication will be developed appealing to parents to engage actively with fencing.

f. Permanent facility

Participation would be assisted with exclusive access to a permanent fencing facility. This would provide an exclusive venue for competitions, squad training, coaching sessions and club activities. NSWFA will continue to actively seek opportunities to establish a permanent facility, recognising that this will require substantial funding, ideally with government support.

6.2 Enhance performance

a. Coaching

Coaching is the key ingredient in developing competent junior fencers who wish to continue to make fencing their sport, as well as being vital to continuous improvement of the skills of senior fencers.

NSWFA is fortunate to have the services of a group of experienced and dedicated coaches who nurture junior fencers, encourage them to take up competitive fencing and who continuously improve the skills of senior fencers.

A priority for NSWFA is to enhance coaching and fencing performance. Initiatives to date include the appointment in January 2009 of a Head Coach with international experience supported by Assistant National Coaches and State coaches who conduct structured weekly squad training sessions for men and women in three weapons. These squad training sessions also provide a venue for NSW members of the Australian Fencing Team and Australian Fencing Squad to meet their training obligations.

NSWFA will continue to include all three weapons in its training program.

The Head Coach works in conjunction with the State Coaching Director to manage the training and accreditation of coaches in accordance with the requirements of the Australian Sports Commission and the Australian Fencing Federation. The Head Coach also works with the State Officiating Director to train referees to competitive standard.

The duties of the Head Coach are:

1. Generally, to advise and assist NSWFA to develop programs and take initiatives to advance the development of fencing at all levels and increase participation.
2. To oversee the development of high performance fencing in NSW with the objective of producing high quality national and international fencers.
3. To work with clubs and schools, to concentrate on the early development of young fencers and their introduction to contemporary fencing philosophy and technique.
4. To run NSWFA Squads for selected fencers in foil, epee and sabre weekly throughout the fencing season in pursuit of 2 above.
5. To continually assess and select squad members on a monthly basis.
6. To plan and oversee training camps available to any NSW fencer to be held at times requested by the Executive.
7. To act as Team Manager and Coach for NSWFA teams competing in the Cadet, Junior and Open National Championships.
8. To lead the development of coaching in NSW with the objective of enhancing coaching techniques and to bring on new coaches.
9. To run a specific number of coaching courses and clinics throughout the year in pursuit of 8 above.
10. In conjunction with the NSWFA Coaching Director, address issues of coaching practice and policy in NSWFA and affiliated clubs.
11. In conjunction with the NSWFA Officiating Director, address referee development to provide sufficient trained referees to meet the needs of State and national competitions
12. To provide a quarterly report to inform, via the website, NSWFA members on the activities of the Head Coach and other news on the development of fencing.

(b) International experience

While NSW and Australia generally, produces individual fencers capable of competing at international level, Australia is a comparatively lowly-ranked fencing nation. Australian fencing has not achieved the success in world or regional fencing that many other Australian sports have been able to sustain. Part of the reason may lie in the fact that Australia is insulated from the fencing powerhouses of Europe, North America and, increasingly, Asia through distance, time and cost. As a result, Australian fencers and coaches are not exposed regularly to high-level, professional fencing. NSWFA will continue to seek opportunities to build on existing links with fencing organisations in Asia to enable more young NSW fencers to compete in international tournaments and to train with leading Asian fencing schools.

7. Strengthen finances

7.1 Effective budget management

Progress has been made in more effective financial management including budgeting, efficient revenue collection and expense control with the result that NSWFA remains profitable. These efforts will continue with the objective of maintaining NSWFA in profit and building up significant reserves for investment in capital items, including pistes, scoring equipment and hire gear. In the longer term, surplus funds may be able to be used to secure a permanent venue.

7.2 Access to Government funding

While NSWFA receives some benefit from the NSW Government, the regular development grant is less than 5% of the annual turnover of the Association. Ideally higher levels of government funding should be provided. NSWFA will continue to review all possible sources of government funding and ensure that applications are made in a timely manner for any available funds.

7.3 Corporate and member sponsorship

NSWFA has been able to attract limited commercial sponsorship for NSW and national events sourced from people involved with fencing. Significant corporate sponsorship remains elusive. NSWFA will continue to seek corporate sponsorship, recognising that the best chance of success probably rests with mid-sized companies that can align their products and services with the values and attributes of fencing.

7.4 Merchandising

NSWFA makes a useful income from the sale of t-shirts, track suits etc at competitions and to members.

7.5 Affinity marketing

NSWFA will continue to actively seek opportunities to provide benefits to members and the association in partnership with service providers. Affinity marketing opportunities will be considered if they:

- Provide a benefit to NSWFA members
- Yield a financial return to NSWFA
- Are not overtly commercial
- Do not compromise the privacy of members

7.6 Grass-roots fundraising

Grass-roots fundraising can make a useful contribution to NSWFA finances. However, these activities require a lot of effort by individual Executive members for a modest return. Going forward, NSWFA may run raffles in conjunction with major fencing events and other fundraising projects will be considered if they provide a good return for effort.

7.7 Friends of Fencing (NSW)

Friends of Fencing (NSW) is a supporter group comprising members of the fencing community who wish to make a substantial financial contribution to the sport. Money contributed directly to FoF will be used for fencing development projects determined by members of FoF in consultation with the Executive. Their intention is that there should be a strong focus on junior fencing. FoF income, spending and assets is separately identified in the NSWFA financial accounts.

7.8 Australian Sports Foundation

The Australian Sports Foundation is the Designated Gift Recipient for sporting associations and is the vehicle by which tax deductible donations can be made to NSWFA and to Friends of Fencing (NSW). In 2011, NSWFA made five grants of \$1,000 each to schools and clubs to develop their fencing resources.

8. Effective organisation

8.1 Communication with members

The key means of communication with members will continue to be via the monthly NSWFA Newsletter and the NSWFA website. NSWFA will strive to keep both channels of communication informative, timely, relevant and comprehensive. NSWFA will encourage members to make suggestions or raise matters of interest and concern with the Executive.

8.2 Governance

The NSWFA Rules (constitution) are currently under review to ensure compliance with the *NSW Associations Incorporation Act*, based on a template for a model constitution recommended by Communities NSW – Sport & Recreation. As part of this process, NSWFA will review the existing Code of Conduct, ensure that the relationship between the FIE Rules, the Association's Rules and the Code is clear, and consider whether a Disciplinary Commission should be established.

9. Raise profile

9.1 Active media strategy

NSWFA has achieved limited success in attracting media coverage. Competition results are now routinely published in the major newspapers and some television coverage has been gained, notably on SBS TV. NSWFA accepts that as a minority sport, fencing will not command the media attention given to professional sports with a large supporter base. Therefore, NSWFA will seek 'niche' media opportunities to promote fencing as an attractive alternative sport through, for example, profiling fencing in lifestyle magazines and other specialist media.

9.2 Enhance Government relations

NSWFA's relationships with the NSW Government, specifically Communities NSW - Sport & Recreation are critical in terms of financial and other support for fencing. The NSWFA Executive will maintain effective working relationships with the Minister for Sport and Recreation, Ministerial advisers and senior officials in Sport and Recreation to ensure they are aware of the activities and needs of NSWFA. This includes inviting the Minister and other VIP guests to NSW hosted fencing competitions.

9.3 Build relations with other sports

NSWFA will seek to develop and maintain good relations with other NSW sports via membership of the NSW Sports Federation and through bilateral contacts. NSWFA will be alert to synergies between fencing and other sports, particularly with regard to administration, facilities and fundraising initiatives.

10. Risk Management

Risk	Management/Mitigation
1. Safety of competitors and spectators at club and State competitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain comprehensive insurance via the AFF covering professional liability, accident cover and travel insurance • Publish a Safety Policy and appoint a Safety Officer • Publish operational safety rules for NSWFA competitions
2. Reputation risk to fencing due to the actions of fencers/coaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adherence to and application of the FIE Rules for Competitions and the NSWFA Code of Conduct
3. Member Protection Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorse the AFF Member Protection Policy • Develop a NSWFA Member Protection Policy • Publish a Child Protection Policy • Appoint Child Protection Officers • Ensure coaches and comply with NSW Working with Children requirements
4. Financial mismanagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auditing of NSWFA accounts

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial updates at each meeting of the NSWFA Executive and Committee• Dual cheque signing authorities• Use online registration to minimise cash collected at NSWFA competitions• Financial records open to inspection by NSWFA members on request (as per the NSWFA Rules)
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