

Elite Athlete Program

Apprenticeship and traineeship conditions are being amended to allow elite athletes to more easily access vocational education and training while still competing in their chosen sport.

Overview

Player Services at the West Coast Eagles approached the Department of Training and Workforce Development (DTWD) in August 2019 to discuss the need to improve access to education and training for elite athletes, preparing them for a life after sport. The intention was to facilitate a smoother transition from their current work, providing direction, purpose and a future career as well as addressing their medium to long term welfare.

Some elite athletes were already involved in higher education at universities through flexible learning arrangements that accommodated the busy training and playing schedules however there was also a need to make vocational education and training (VET) options like traineeships and apprenticeships available. Similar VET arrangements have existed in Queensland since 2018 and New South Wales since 2014.

Issue & Risks

The challenges of training, preparation and competition for Western Australia's elite athletes over a period of years can leave athletes ill-equipped to pursue another career as they step back from competitive sport. They already have skills that make them highly attractive as employees: good situational awareness and processing speed, the ability to read others and set goals, decision-making, self-discipline and personal motivation. If their career transition is not well managed, these skills and the investment in developing them risk being lost from the workforce. Managing a successful transition can reduce that risk.

Athletes at the West Coast Eagles nominated a list of twenty three apprenticeship and two traineeship qualifications they wished to pursue while still competing, however the minimum part-time hours requirements were too high. Training delivery was currently not flexible enough to accommodate the demands of a sporting career while athletes attempted to study and complete course work requirements. Two apprenticeships, for Chef and Pâtissier, fall within FutureNow's remit.

FutureNow Activity

DTWD committed to complete the establishment and variation of apprenticeships process (EVAC) in consultation with the relevant Training Councils, applying to the State Training Board to reduce minimum part-time hours for the nominated qualifications. Similar delivery conditions are already in place for secondary school students, a precedent that has acceptance from industry and been proven to work.

FutureNow contributed to the to the EVAC process by:

- Assisting with and attending a meeting facilitated by DTWD to develop eligibility criteria to determine a sportsperson's 'elite athlete' status and the relevant endorsement arrangements. This has now been detailed in DTWD's advice to the State Training Board.

- Consulting with stakeholders about minimum part-time hours for the following apprenticeships:
 - o Chef - SIT30816 Certificate III in Commercial Cookery
 - o Pâtissier - SIT31016 Certificate III in Patisserie

Next steps

The EVAC, including industry consultation feedback through the Training Councils, has been prepared by DTWD and was submitted to the State Training Board on 20 January.

It is expected that similar conditions and a similar process would be applied in future to a wider range of qualifications if requested by elite athletes from other clubs and sports that meet the program's eligibility criteria. FutureNow looks forward to providing further support for an extension of the program should this be the case.