

GNZ Steering Group Engagement Hui Q&A

Q - What do we say to people who came forward and raised an issue and went through a process only to see no real action resulting from their complaint? In some cases, a coach the complaint was about is still coaching – and the clubs involved in the complaint don't seem to have been sanctioned either?

We have heard this feedback and acknowledge this. Some people have raised concerns where no specific wrong doers identified in the Independent Review, and we have heard a degree of frustration that people felt that they've come forward and had said 'that person was a problem' and then that hadn't translated in the report.

Some complaints were then passed to an independent body to investigate, which took some time, and some of investigations have ended with a report which meant that no judicial action could be taken by GNZ. Complaints where serious misconduct has been upheld, have been referred to the judicial committee, where an independent panel make a finding and where appropriate, agree on a sentence.

What we hope we've done is move the dial so that it's a safer environment to raise concerns and that our processes are improving to ensure matters are dealt with in a timely way, with good communication to all parties.

We also want to reiterate, if there is a current safeguarding or athlete wellbeing issue, please raise it using the safesport@gymnasticsnz.com address or by contacting the [Sport and Recreation Complaints Mediation Service](#)

Q - There are still issues in the sport with high performance coaches, some of whom come from overseas and bring with them their experience of other cultures and programmes – which are not necessarily a great fit for New Zealand. But they are valued for the results they achieve. Funding in High Performance sport in New Zealand is tied to results. And this is the area where issues occur. What is being done to fix this?

There is this idea that performance and wellbeing are at opposite ends of the scale. They're actually not. Ideally, they will cross over.

We are working with coaches individually and collectively to address some of these issues, particularly around culture and coaching in New Zealand – which is a different environment. A large investment has been made in developing a Coach Development Framework, and more initiatives will be rolled out in the months and years ahead.

Q - Some of coaches have been in the sport forever and stuck in their ways. How are they going to change - are they open to change?

We have to be realistic about culture change. It's not an overnight job. We can't change without transparency and without everybody being on the same page. But you can have a point where you reach a critical mass where those voices are not the most dominant voices in the sport anymore. We have to start somewhere. The steps we're taking will start to address these issues.

We've invested a lot in coach education – and investing in younger coaches will also help. A review of the content of qualifications will ensure that the important messages that are coming through this work are covered sufficiently at all levels not just in entry level qualifications.

Q What are you expecting the findings and outcomes of the AUT review into training loads and methods? Should we expect there to be strict rules introduced around this?

The research and the findings will be shared with a community working group of clubs, athletes, coaches and club managers, in order to create a set of guidelines for the New Zealand community. Whatever position we land on, the information will be widely known. So, while there won't be a rule, there will be very strong guidelines. And everyone will know what those guidelines are. Which means they will also know if they are not being followed. Parents will easily be able to find out what good and bad looks like – and be able to make informed decisions about what is best for their children.

One piece of feedback we've had is that people want to keep doing things the way they've always done them – they just don't want any harm to occur. That's not realistic. That's why the research is being done – so we can replace making decision based on opinions with making decisions based on evidence. Another powerful factor is the experiences of harm relayed by former athletes. Those voices and their testimony is very powerful. It can't be ignored.

Q What support and systems are being put in place to help smaller clubs that haven't got many resources and who might be worried about losing a highly skilled coach if they challenge their methods?

If a club wants to make changes to its culture and the ways it operates, and they are concerned that this will be at odds with existing club culture, they should reach out to their Relationship Manager and ask for support.

The RM will work with the club to identify what they are wanting to achieve and any potential barriers, and make a plan to address these which may include tapping in to additional resources e.g., GNZ Coach Development Manager, the local Regional Sports Trust and other clubs who have worked through similar challenges.

The best outcomes come when we are able to work together pro-actively to achieve change, rather than retrospectively once there has been a complaint made.

Q How do we encourage young people to speak up if they are having a negative experience. It can be quite challenging getting kids in that 11-14 year old age bracket to say anything.

It's definitely a challenging area. Now that issues have been highlighted in the Review, we are very aware of the type of issues that can occur. So too are the clubs, coaches and parents. Education and awareness definitely play a part here.

By introducing roles within clubs like the Safeguarding Representative and by providing safeguarding training to both adult and youth coaches we are working to ensure that there are people in each club able to provide support to a young person who is speaking up about something happening to them.

Communication with our young people to ensure that they know where they can find support and reinforcement to encourage them to speak up when something doesn't feel right will be an ongoing priority.

We'd hope that young people might be able to raise their issues with a club's safeguarding officer, who they might have a strong relationship with, or at the very least their parents. But it is always going to be a challenging area.