

2024

ACF ANNUAL CHAIR REPORT

Introduction

Reflecting on the past year, I am filled with pride and gratitude as I present the 2024 Annual Report of the Australian Calisthenic Federation (ACF). This year has been defined by remarkable achievements and the steadfast dedication of everyone within the ACF and its broader community, whose efforts are vital to its continued success.

I extend my deepest gratitude to my fellow Board members, whose invaluable contributions have driven the ACF's progress. Jess Whalstrom, Deputy Chair and NIF Director, has shown exceptional leadership and initiative in advancing the ACF National Integrity Framework and the ACF Database project. Natalie Wallace, FAR Director, has showcased exceptional proficiency in ensuring financial accountability and mitigating risk. Additionally, she has taken on the role of acting Company Secretary while the ACF undertakes the process of recruiting a permanent appointee. Michaela Keast, Marketing Director, has been instrumental in enhancing the ACF's branding and online presence. And Megan Taylor and Josephine Chabi, as Governance Directors, have provided invaluable insights and expertise with professionalism and dedication.

A special acknowledgment goes to Tony Hall, SASC Director, whose efforts have strengthened connections with State Members through renewed engagement and care. It is with heartfelt sadness that we bid farewell to Tony as he steps down from the ACF Board. Tony's passionate advocacy and leadership were pivotal in uniting the Member States in early 2024. A highly respected member of the calisthenics community, Tony was the ideal leader to reinvigorate the SASC in 2024, and his contributions will leave a lasting legacy.

Special recognition and deep appreciation also go to Di Winterling, Director and Head of the Examiners Advisory Board, and Karen Hicks, Director and Head of the Adjudicators Advisory Board. Their remarkable dedication and tireless efforts guided the ACF through the challenging early months of 2024 with extraordinary leadership and vision. The ACF owes them a profound debt of gratitude for their resilience during this pivotal time.

Gratitude is also extended to our newest Heads of Committees, Jess Lee, leading the Coaching Advisory Board, and Di Treagus, heading the National Competitions & Events Committee. Both have embraced their roles with energy and determination, swiftly making significant contributions and demonstrating impactful leadership within their respective areas.

I wish to acknowledge Kerry Fullarton for her continued commitment to the role of ACF Member Protection Officer. Appreciation goes to Andrea Ponton, ACF Finance Officer, whose diligence and precise attention ensure the Board is well-informed about financial matters and well-prepared for future decision-making. Furthermore, sincere thanks to Anna Collins for her work in the role of ACF Technical Rules officer, in assisting to deliver an ACF Rules and Regulation review and refresh.

Special thanks to Megan Taylor for stepping into the role of National Operations Manager with remarkable courage and professionalism. Megan has tirelessly overseen ACF's operations with unwavering enthusiasm and a steadfast commitment to excellence, building a solid foundation for the organization, ensuring the seamless execution of its activities, and playing a pivotal role in fostering strong and dependable relationships within ACF Stakeholders and the community.

Finally, our sincere gratitude is extended to the Member States for their patience and steadfast support as the Board works to strengthen the organization. Together, we are building a foundation for growth and innovation that promises to elevate calisthenics across Australia and create meaningful opportunities for its community.

As we reflect on a year filled with challenges and rewards, it is evident that the ACF's success stems from the dedication and passion of its people. United by a shared vision, we have navigated adversity with resilience and laid the groundwork for an exciting and promising future.

Overview of the Year: Challenges and Achievements

The 2024 ACF Board faced an extraordinary array of challenges, beginning with the resignation of the majority of the previous Board at the 2024 AGM. This left the incoming team with minimal handover, creating a significant gap in continuity and corporate knowledge, compounded by the absence of an operational layer during a time of upheaval and uncertainty in the ACF's history. These difficulties were further intensified by reduced financial income due to CaliVic's disaffiliation and the absence of a Nationals event in 2024. Understandably, member states felt apprehensive about the ACF's future, as trust in the organisation had diminished among Stakeholders and the wider community.

Despite these formidable obstacles, the new ACF Board demonstrated remarkable determination and resilience, making significant strides to rebuild and reposition the ACF for a stronger future.

Key 2024 achievements include:

Investment and Innovation in National Programs

- The commission of the ACF National Competition & Event Framework Review through McLaughlin Sport Consultancy, resulting in actionable recommendations now being addressed by the ACF NCEF Working Party.
- The development of AusCaliCarnivale 2025 as an interim ACF competition event for the upcoming year.
- The successful delivery of the Pan Pacific Masters Competition in November 2024.

Consultation and Engagement

- The reinstatement of monthly State Advisory Standing Committee (SASC) meetings, fostering consistent dialogue.
- Hosting the ACF Stakeholder Forum in October, which included keynote speakers from the ASC Gameplan and Sports Integrity Australia, as well as a Strategic Planning Workshop facilitated by McLaughlin Sports Consultancy.
- The initiation of the CaliVic Engagement Plan, establishing agreed Terms of Reference and regular meetings every 6–8 weeks.
- The development and delivery of the inaugural ACF Annual Stakeholder Survey in January 2025.
- The launch of AusCaliPULSE, a regular ACF newsletter to strengthen community communication.
- A post Pan-Pac survey and report to gather insights and feedback.
- The creation and implementation of the ACF social media content calendar to improve online presence.

Industry Recognition

- The recipient of the APRA Music Award for Licensee of the Year in 2024, reflecting the ACF's excellence in compliance and innovation.
- A scholarship award to attend the ASC Women in Sports Leadership program to Megan Taylor, ACF's National Operations Manager.
- Updating and Integrating Technical Products and Programs
- The initiation of monthly Head of Committees (HOC) Forum Meetings to enhance collaboration and integration of programs.
- The inaugural ACF Technical Program Congress in December.
- An updated ACF Skills videos through the Examiners Advisory Board (EAB).
- The modernisation of Cadet and Level 1 coaching courses through a dual-delivery models (face-to-face and online) initiated by the Coaching Advisory Board (CAB).
- A streamlined Adjudicator Cadet Course to enhance training and accessibility.
- A major review and refresh of the ACF Rules & Regulations, ensuring relevance and clarity.

Strategic Progress

- The ACF has made notable strategic progress in its mission to strengthen and advance calisthenics in Australia and meet its new vision of “More People, More Ways...Calisthenics Everywhere”.
- Key among these advancements are:
- The commissioning of the Elevate 28! strategic plan through McLaughlin Sport Consultancy, charting a comprehensive vision for 2025–2028.
- The development of a corresponding and robust Elevate 28! action plan, designed to guide operational implementation effectively and ensure the strategy's success.
- Significant improvements to the ACF website, including the creation of a currency plan to keep content relevant and enhance the organization's visibility, trust, and brand recognition within the community.
- Strategic work with the Eisteddfod organizations that facilitate calisthenics competitions, focusing particularly on those catering to both ACF and CaliVic participants. The ACF has provided governance and oversight to support these organizations in delivering competitions aligned with ACF guidelines and regulations, fostering consistency and quality in competitive events.

Governance Achievements of the ACF

- The ACF has demonstrated a strong commitment to strengthening governance and developing policies that foster organizational excellence and integrity.
- Key governance achievements for 2024 include:
- The establishment of the ACF Nominations Committee that has ensured a systematic approach to board composition and succession planning, supported by the maintenance of the ACF Board Skill Matrix.
- The formation of the ACF Diversity & Inclusion Committee to provide crucial leadership, advocacy, coordination, and guidance to advance accessibility and inclusivity within the ACF structure, products, and programs.
- The implementation of the ACF Game Plan and Organisation Enhancement Plan, recognized with a commendable governance score of 21/25 by ASC Playwell in September 2024.
- Collaboration with ASC Gameplan to customize the platform for use by ACF Member States and clubs, promoting better alignment and support across the organization.
- Significant progress in policy development and updates to strengthen operational frameworks. The ACF revised the National Integrity Framework, conducted a comprehensive update of the Safeguarding Children & Young People Policy, and commissioned the development of the Inclusion Framework & Policy.
- The development of the ACF Governance & Organisational Plan, Task Register with an accompanying RACI matrix.
- The commencement of a thorough review of the ACF Constitution, which is currently in progress.

- Initiation of a comprehensive Governance Documentation Update Project, addressing 154 documents identified in a gap analysis. To date, 50% have been completed, with 35% of the remaining documents currently in progress.
- The development of an ACF Annual Board Planner that has brought structure and organization to the Board's activities, including a robust schedule for policy reviews and updates.
- The implementation of a governance progress monitoring process through the ASC Governance Scorecard, ensuring accountability and progress tracking across all initiatives.

Operational Progress: Advancing ACF's Priorities

The ACF has significantly strengthened its operational capacity, with key achievements including:

- 75% of the initial ACF 12-Month Priority List (developed in April 2024) successfully achieved by September 2024, with the remaining goals integrated into the Elevate 28! strategic plan.
- The appointment of Megan Taylor as ACF National Operations Manager in October 2024, bolstering organizational leadership.
- Recruitment and onboarding of an Admin Support Officer to enhance operational efficiency.
- Continuation of the contract with the ACF Finance Officer, ensuring expert oversight of financial matters and stability.

Strengthening Financial Resilience & Stability

During the October ACF Stakeholder Forum, Natalie Wallace, ACF Director of FAR, emphasized the urgency of addressing the significant financial challenges that face the ACF, through the diversification of income opportunities to secure the organisation's financial integrity and sustainability. In response, a comprehensive audit of previous financial management, coupled with budgetary forecasting and stakeholder engagement, was undertaken by Natalie with the support of ACF Finance Officer Andrea Ponton.

Looking ahead, the Elevate 28! strategic plan provides a clear roadmap to bolster ACF's financial health over the next three years through the development and implementation of the ACF Financial Strategy, Participation Strategy, National Competition & Event Framework, and the alignment of ACF Technical Programs with the ASC Coach and Officials Development Framework. These efforts collectively aim to ensure the organization's long-term financial stability and growth.

Building Momentum for a Promising 2025

As we move forward into 2025, I am filled with optimism and excitement for the opportunities that lie ahead. The rollout of the ACF Participation Strategy and National Competition & Event Framework will be pivotal in driving engagement and innovation within the sport. The implementation of the ACF RevSport database promises to enhance our operational efficiency and connectivity. July will see the much-anticipated AusCaliCarnivale 2025, an event set to bring our community together in celebration of calisthenics. Later in October, the innovative Australian Masters SDTG competition, which includes a trial of Solo & Duo Club Swinging and Rod Exercise items, will provide another platform for showcasing the exceptional talent and spirit of our participants. These initiatives represent bold steps towards our vision of “More people, more ways, calisthenics everywhere.”

As we reflect on the resilience, progress, and achievements of the past year, it is clear that the strength of the ACF lies in its people—the dedicated Board members, staff, volunteers, and Stakeholders who continue to champion our mission. Together, we have overcome challenges and laid a solid foundation for the future. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our journey so far. With renewed momentum and a shared commitment, we look ahead to a year of growth, opportunity, and success. The future of calisthenics in Australia is bright, and together, we will continue to achieve remarkable things.

Kerry Sargent

ACF Chair