



Australian
Calisthenic
Federation

2025

ACF NATIONALS REVIEW:
REPORT SUMMARY

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background

The ACF Nationals have long been a cornerstone of Australian Calisthenics, fostering camaraderie, competition, and a shared passion for the art form. However, despite their historic significance, the existing framework has struggled to meet the distinct needs of all member states. Some states face challenges in consistently fielding a full quorum of teams, revealing gaps in accessibility and participation.

To ensure the longevity and inclusivity of these events, the ACF commissioned McLaughlin Sports Consultancy (MSC) to conduct an independent review to understand community and stakeholder needs for ACF competitions, and inform the development of a refreshed ACF Nationals framework that will bring all States together in an innovative, inclusive and equitable forum.

methods

McLaughlin Sports Consultants (MSC) employed a mixed-methods approach to ensure an evidence-based review, enhancing the depth, validity, and triangulation of research findings. The four key methods used were:

Document Review (November/December 2024):

MSC examined literature on the evolving sports landscape in Australia, reviewed historical records of ACF Nationals, and analyzed current trends in Australian calisthenics competitions.

Focus Group Session (27 November 2024):

Twelve key ACF stakeholders, including Member State representatives, participated in an online focus group to assess whether Nationals should remain an ACF-managed event and to identify state-level priorities for a refreshed competition framework.

Community e-Survey (3-16 December 2024):

A community-wide e-survey, promoted through States and social media, gathered insights from 587 respondents, reflecting their experiences with ACF Nationals and their aspirations for the future of competition.

One-on-One Interviews (20-21 January 2025):

MSC conducted individual interviews with key stakeholders across all States to explore the necessity of a revitalized Nationals framework and shape its direction.



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key insights

DOCUMENT REVIEW

Evolving Sporting Trends in Australia

- Sports organisations that introduce innovative competition formats and fresh engagement strategies experience greater growth and retention. Expanding inclusive sporting experiences for all abilities is a key indicator of sustainable development. Technology continues to play a significant role in enhancing participation and accessibility.

Data & Historical Records

- ACF has limited surviving historical data, underscoring the need for structured data collection and record management to ensure long-term strategic planning.

Governance & Financial Clarity

- Roles, responsibilities, and profit-sharing arrangements between ACF and host State associations have lacked consistency and clarity, highlighting a need for formalized agreements and transparent operational frameworks.

Demand for National Events

- There is strong community appetite for national competitions, as demonstrated by the success of events such as the Pan Pacific Masters Games, Cali Unite, and Royal South Street Eisteddfod. The demand indicates an opportunity to refine and expand participation pathways.



FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS

- **Core Role & Capacity:** ACF should manage National competitions as a core function, but must balance responsibilities as an NSO to ensure sustainability.
- **Inclusive & Accessible Nationals:** A more diverse event with club teams, divisions, all-abilities participation, and state-wide involvement.
- **Professional Event Management:** Nationals should be well-planned, structured, efficiently delivered, and supported by strong communications, great venues, and professional oversight.
- **Standardisation & Affordability:** Establish consistent policies and procedures across states, ensure financial accessibility, and consider biennial Nationals to balance costs.
- **Culture of Innovation & Collaboration:** Foster ongoing improvement, strategic partnerships, and member engagement to drive growth and strengthen the sport.

key insights (continued)

COMMUNITY e-SURVEY

- **Strong Representation & Positive Feedback:** 587 respondents across all States (including Victoria) participated, with overall ratings for past events indicating moderate satisfaction, while also highlighting areas for improvement.
- **Event Comparisons & Trends:** Comparisons between Brisbane (2023), Virtual (2022), and Perth (2019) Nationals showed Perth rated slightly higher, while the Virtual format rated lower than Brisbane. However, differences in format and response rates made direct insights challenging.
- **Role of ACF in Nationals Delivery:** 76% of respondents supported ACF managing national competitions, while 20% remained unsure, reinforcing the need for clear leadership and event oversight.
- **Call for Greater Inclusivity:** The strongest response theme emphasized the need for broader participation opportunities, ensuring more competitors across diverse ability levels can take part.
- **Alignment with National Event Vision:** Findings strongly support ACF's vision for a more innovative, inclusive, and equitable National Event Program.

ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

- **Nationals Needs a Refresh:** There was 100% agreement that the event requires restructuring to better serve participants and align with evolving community needs.
- **Core Purpose of Nationals:** The event must unite the sport nationwide, support high-performance competitors, offer pathways for emerging talent, and provide an exciting participation opportunity for all levels.
- **Key Changes to Improve Accessibility & Format:** Introducing opportunities for club teams to participate as well as state teams, creating multiple divisions, and holding Nationals biennially to allow for better preparation and affordability.
- **Standardisation & Competitive Structure:** Establishing consistent policies and procedures across states, ensuring clear selection criteria, and considering heats and finals to enhance the competitive experience.
- **Roles & Responsibilities:** ACF must govern the event, ensure professional delivery, provide clear communication, and work with host states to co-manage operations while securing government and commercial partnerships.
- **Commitment to Growth & Retention:** The framework should eliminate barriers to participation, promote ongoing innovation, and ensure all stakeholders—ACF, states, clubs, coaches, and adjudicators—have a clear and structured role in making Nationals successful.



recommendations

The review presented 14 evidence-based recommendations across 8 key focus areas to guide the evolution of the ACF Nationals. These focus areas were:

1. Refreshing the Nationals Framework – Ensuring relevance, inclusivity, and alignment with community needs.
2. Clarifying Purpose – Defining Nationals’ role in uniting and developing the sport.
3. Optimized Structure & Format – Establishing a sustainable competition model.
4. Defined Roles & Responsibilities – Streamlining governance for ACF, Member States, and Participants.
5. Enhanced Event Management – Identifying resources for professional delivery.
6. Integrated Events Calendar – Aligning Nationals within a cohesive schedule.
7. Post-Review Action Plan – Implementing strategic improvements.
8. Continuous Evaluation – Establishing post-event reviews for ongoing refinement

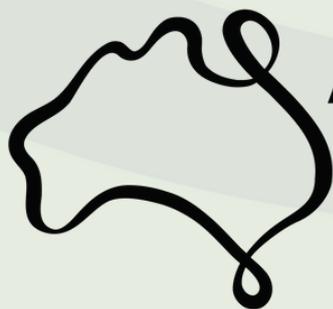
Of these, six recommendations were vital to inform a refreshed ACF Nationals framework, ensuring it meets modern standards of inclusivity, accessibility, and strategic growth.

1	Develop a Nationals Event Structure which allows State Teams, Club Teams and Individuals to participate.
2	Develop a Nationals Event Format which incorporates 2 or more Participation Streams and multiple divisions within Participation Streams.
3	Develop a Nationals Event Format which incorporates Solos, Duos, Gracefuls and Team Event offerings in all age brackets, in all Participation Streams and in all Divisions. Including AusCalibilities Event offerings also presents as an opportunity.
4	A refreshed ACF National Competition to be delivered once every 2 years, not annually.
5	ACF to work with Member Associations to co-design an ACF Nationals Guidelines, which clearly articulates the roles and responsibilities of the key elements of the event’s delivery system
6	ACF to develop, promote, implement and monitor the use of a refreshed National Event Management Guidelines resource, including other resources as required, to support the effective, safe and financially sustainable delivery of the event.

next steps

The next phase of the ACF Nationals refresh project will focus on translating the evidence-based review findings into the development of the ACF National Competitions & Events Framework (NCEF). To ensure a structured and collaborative approach, ACF will establish a terms of reference for the NCEF working party, which will be representative of ACF membership, including Member State and Advisory Board representatives. This group will use the review insights to shape the framework's structure, ensuring it aligns with community needs. Once the initial structure is developed, further consultation with key stakeholders will refine and finalize the framework. The implementation timeline will support a strategic rollout from 2026 to 2028, ensuring a well-planned, inclusive, and sustainable approach to national competitions & events.





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