

Sydney Rowing Club



Rowing Strategic Plan 2024

20 November 2024

Prepared for the Board of Sydney Rowing Club

Sydney Rowing Club Strategic Plan 2024

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1. Introduction

Since its establishment in 1870, Sydney Rowing Club has been a leading rowing club in Australia, consistently successful in racing, including state and national championships, and producing many athletes who have earned selection in national teams and the Australian Olympic team.

As with any sporting organisation, the club's fortunes have ebbed and flowed throughout its history. Rowing in Australia is presently in a state of flux, with changes expected in structure and funding for the high-performance development pathway system including the National Training Centres (NTC) and the national team. Parallel to this, there are clear underlying cultural and social changes within the generation of current rowers, that are affecting the development and outcomes of competitive rowing. This is felt across many other sports but is particularly relevant to Olympic sports. These changes are also evident among our membership.

Following the implementation of our 2012 Strategic Plan the club's results in competition, particularly championship racing have steadily improved, however when compared against its domestic competitor clubs this has not been outstanding and has plateaued since 2018.

The club's board of directors has recognised the need to refresh the club's rowing program to improve the outcome for our members when measured against their individual and collective aspirations and expectations, and against the financial and resources commitment made by the club to its rowing program.

During the 2023-2024 rowing season the club's board implemented a Strategic Review of our rowing operations the outcome of which is this document, Sydney Rowing Club Strategic Plan 2024.

2. Recommended Action Points from the Review

1. The club must define its direction, objectives, and ambitions and how it is will measure its success against those aspirations.
2. Consideration must be given to the typical 'member athlete journey' through the club and particularly the individual member's experience. This can then become a measure of success, itself, if they are on track to fulfill their aspirations.
3. There needs to be a full review of the coaching structure to ensure it is fit for purpose to achieve the members' and the club's objectives and ambitions and provide our coaches with clear operational parameters and performance indicators.
4. A clear and regular appraisal process against our members' and the club's short and long terms objectives for all staff members needs to be created.
5. A structured review process of the rowing programme needs to be undertaken, measuring against the metrics determined in point 1. This needs to incorporate reviews for key regattas and events, including national team selection processes. There should be:
 - Post event reviews including major regattas or selections events,
 - Annual all of program reviews,
 - Comprehensive systemic reviews every four years, in line with the Olympic cycle,

- After eight years, the next Strategic Review should commence.
6. An athlete wellbeing and feedback process needs to be introduced with feedback being gathered by the Club Captain, separate from the coaching team.
 7. Member athlete connection and representation to the board needs to be encouraged, as well as the long-term connection of member athletes to the club. This is especially important with our most successful athletes, those currently representing Australia: the more connected that athletes feel to the club, the more likely athletes will remain connected and give back.

These recommendations will be the starting point of the club's continuing strategy.

3. Strategic Plan 2024-2034

3.1. Our Vision

We aspire to have Sydney Rowing Club acknowledged as the leading rowing club in Australia; able to take our member athletes from their first strokes on the water, through every competitive stage and have them retain a lasting connection to the club.

3.2. Our Mission Statements

- To provide an environment for aspiring rowers and coxswains to enjoy success at every level on the water, in Australian domestic regattas and internationally representing Sydney Rowing Club or as members of the Australian Rowing Team or Olympic Team.
- To put those athletes that have national team ambitions in a position to achieve to the maximum of their ability.
- To achieve this while maintaining a focus on creating a 'healthy mind in a healthy body' and be a proactive force within the rowing community to better the sport.

3.3. Our Training Groups and Streams:

The club will provide resources and run the following training groups, all aligned with the SRC core goals. Within these training groups there are two streams: **Pathway athletes**, who are aspiring to row for Australia and are highlighted by Rowing Australia; **Club athletes**, who are training and racing for the club only:

1. **Junior** – incorporating identified talent through local community engagement as well as supporting talented school rowers seeking to achieve success complimentary to their school rowing program.
2. **Development** – to encourage and facilitate young men and women transitioning from school rowing to Under 21, comprising 'school leavers' and gap year athletes
3. **Senior** – the main bulk of the rowing cohort: including aspiring state level Under 21s and other athletes who from time to time may choose not to follow the high performance pathway to contend for national selection
4. **High Performance** – Our members who aspire to gain national selection in the Australian Under 23 team or the Australian Senior Rowing Team including entry to one of the National Training Centres.

Alongside the above groups, we operate the following:

5. **Masters Competitive** – Experienced competitive masters rowers who are seeking to compete in domestic, state and national regattas. Many will have a long-term connection to SRC, with a volunteer coaching team, supported as required by the employed staff.
6. **Recreational Rowing** – Experienced rowers who have retired from competitive rowing who wish to continue to enjoy rowing and their relationship with Sydney Rowing Club through non-competitive rowing. *Participation in this group by a member is subject to the approval of the Rowing Program Director and Club Captain.*
7. **Honorary Coaching** – Members who enjoy coaching and who wish to coach crews and scullers on an honorary basis within the club's programs. *Subject to Rowing Program Director or Board approval.* Sydney Rowing Club proposes to include suitably experienced club members as co-coaches for specific crews in the club's coaching team. This may include roles with the high-performance group, club senior group, Under 21 group, masters group and Junior and TID. It is assumed co-coaches will work with one particular group of member athletes and will be available for a full season or crew campaign. The club will meet the reasonable out of pocket expenses relating to their role as co-coaches.

The club's staff coaches will organise and manage the crews. The co-coach will take the crews for one or two scheduled sessions each week. Co-coaches will also work with the coach and crew on race days. This includes opportunities to coach at the club's annual camp, state and national championship regattas and from time to time on the club's team for Henley Royal Regatta or with our member athletes and crews in Australian underage teams. Performance metric: Engage at least two member co-coaches in the 2025 season.

3.4. Our Core Goals and Objectives

1. **Racing Success:** We are a competitive rowing club. This is our primary focus. Competing and winning at the highest levels possible, appropriate for each part of the rowing programme.
 - **National Championships:** Junior, Under 21, Under 23, club and masters (events to specified annually)
 - **State Championships:** Junior, Under 21, Under 23, club and masters (events to specified annually)
 - Henley Royal Regatta or another nominated international event.
 - Key domestic whole of club regattas such as the Head of The Yarra or SRC Regatta.
 - Team numbers, medal to athlete ratio/number of medalled athletes
 - For all KPIs, targets to be set annually at the start of season.
2. **National Team Selection:** Alongside our domestic competition results, we actively support athletes with national team ambitions and will endeavour to put them in the best possible position to be selected to represent Australia at age-based or senior level.

- Under 21 state team representatives
- Senior state team representatives
- Lightweight men's and women's state team
- In-house and SRC co-ordinated Under 19 national team selections
- Under 23 national team selections
- US-based Under 23 national team selections
- Senior national team selections
- NTC athlete connection
- National coach selection at all levels
- In para-rowing SRC has enjoyed success with athletes who have brought great credit to the club, to Australia and to themselves. The club will continue to support high performance and high performance pathways para-athletes as part of our high performance rowing program.
- Beach sprint rowing is an opportunity for our members and our club to be at the forefront of this new Olympic discipline. We will signpost and appropriately support members who the club coaches feel will be suitable for the sport and support a previous flat water athlete's transition and training towards the objective of high performance beach sprint competition. We are not currently operating a specific beach sprint program but will take on this challenge if an appropriate opportunity arises.
- We will regularly review our position on all aspects of the sport and consider when and how it may be appropriate for us to grow and invest in these areas.
- For all KPIs, targets to be set annually at the start of season.

3. 'Mens sana in corpore sano' (A healthy mind in a healthy body): The club motto, and a tenet of our club since its inception. We aim to use rowing to better our members both on and off the water, at the shed and in the wider world.

- Athlete feedback and satisfaction survey
- Staff feedback and satisfaction survey
- Athlete and staff culture survey
- Athlete retention rates
- Athlete volunteer hours
- Transition from athlete to member rates.

4. Support the sport: We aim to use our respected position within the rowing community to maintain rowing's relevance in the future, as well as actively improve the rowing and racing experience for our members.

- Attend Rowing Australia, Rowing NSW and other meetings and forums regarding the future of our sport.
- Engage with working groups around events, calendars and initiatives to invigorate rowing.
- Meet with other leading clubs in NSW to increase competition and participation across all areas.
- Actively seek external input into how other nations or sports have futureproofed their sport.

Core Goals

Racing success	National team selection	'Mens sana in corpore sano'	Support the sport
We will prepare our athletes to succeed at both domestic and overseas regattas by:	We will put athletes in the best possible position to be selected for Australian teams by:	We will help our members become the best possible version of themselves for life by:	We will help improve the sport for future rowers in NSW and Australia by:

Objectives

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engaging the best possible coaches in an appropriate coaching team structure 2. Creating a suitable athlete training group structure 3. Recruiting effectively throughout the season 4. Ensuring every athlete has a clear understanding of their 'athlete journey'. 5. Regularly reviewing athlete progress and ensuring personal and team goals are aligned. 6. Maintaining a high-quality fleet 7. Providing the best possible off water support 8. Organising and communicating effectively with all athletes 9. Maintaining internal communication between all coaches, training groups and other stakeholders 10. Ensuring the training environment is the best it can be to support an athlete and the club's ambitions 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensuring athletes have suitable training plans, goals and a clear strategy for their season. 2. Providing coaches of the highest calibre to support high performance athletes. 3. Fully engaging with Rowing Australia's pathway and selection process 4. Prioritising and supporting SRC's athletes at all RA events, meetings and trials. 5. Maintaining a strong connection with all SRC overseas athletes and supporting them through the selection process 6. Creating a high-performance training environment on and off the water 7. Using and maximising the support provided by NSWIS. 8. Maintaining a performance focussed culture, that sets the standard for other parts of the club to aspire towards 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Treating all with equal respect and expecting all to do the same in return. 2. Understanding that every athlete, coach and board member are role models for future generations of rowers. 3. Holding each other accountable for our actions, successes and failures 4. Creating a culture of support and guidance both within the coaching and athlete teams 5. Respecting the value that all parts of the rowing programme bring to the club. 6. Encouraging athletes to use the discipline needed to be successful at sport as a blueprint to being successful at life. 7. Respecting, on and off the water, other clubs, athletes, states and officials 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Actively engaging with RA and RNSW as needed 2. Maintaining positive relations with all stakeholders, at every level that SRC operates 3. Working with the other HP clubs in NSW to foster a positive rivalry that benefits SRC athletes. 4. Engaging regularly with other clubs, bodies and organisations nationwide to consider options to help our sport
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3.5. Our Action Plan and Performance Measures

Racing success

We will prepare our athletes to succeed at both domestic and overseas regattas by:

Objective:	Action:	Performance Measure:
1. Engaging the best possible coaches in an appropriate coaching team structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Put in place an updated coaching and management structure and fill positions with a mix of existing coaches and new hires. ii. Employ a suitable 'Performance Manager' to manage and lead the coaching team. iii. Provide clear JDs for each coach, so their role within the team is understood, both by the coach and their colleagues, and the athletes themselves iv. Create a robust appraisal system for all staff coaches, with suitable individual KPIs. v. Use the appraisal system to ensure the best possible people are in the correct roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Publish a new coaching structure. ii. Employ a PM iii. Specify roles and responsibilities for each employed position. iv. Identify coaching team KPIs and individual KPIs, and calendar appraisal dates. v. Use KPI success and other feedback to assess suitability of position holder
2. Creating a suitable athlete training group structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Using the above coaching roles, structure athlete training groups according to goals and ability ii. Manage athlete groups appropriately to maintain a competitive training environment. iii. Ensure that athletes know who their main point of contact is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Publish training groups and criteria. ii. Regularly review performance of athletes within groups to confirm inclusion. iii. Communicate to each athlete who their 'go to' coach is
3. Recruiting effectively throughout the season	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Maintain positive and strong relations with all feeder NSW schools. ii. Establish relationships with out of state schools and clubs. iii. Continue to promote gap year options for strong overseas athletes. iv. Ensure that 'passive' recruitment (marketing, social media etc) is used effectively, as well as 'active' (coach to coach relationship building, open days etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Aim to connect every coach with several schools. ii. Aim to travel interstate to talk to coaches and athletes at other leading programmes. iii. Advertise gap year opportunities and maintain relations with clubs, schools and universities in NZ, the UK, US and elsewhere. iv. Monitor our social media presence and exposure
4. Ensuring every athlete has a clear understanding of their 'athlete journey'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Create a 'roadmap' for an athlete, from joining SRC, to Olympic success, and every option between ii. Use this as a starting point for goal setting. iii. Link the training groups to an athlete's journey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Create and publish the 'roadmap'. ii. Build set goal setting structures around roadmap.
5. Regularly reviewing athlete	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Have regular team meetings, as well as individual catch ups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Create a data base, with entries for each athlete. ii. Have regular athlete meetings

<p>progress and ensuring personal and team goals are aligned</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. Document an athlete's goals and ambitions and hold them accountable to their targets. iii. Communicate in advance, how individual and team goals link, or if they don't how that will be managed 	
<p>6. Maintaining a high-quality fleet</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Continue capital investment, to bring whole fleet to a competitive standard. ii. Once at that standard, enact an annual asset turn over plan, to maintain fleet at the highest possible level. iii. Establish a regular maintenance plan and associated budget. iv. Create a 'opportunity' fund, to be maintained to take advantage of, out of turnover purchase opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Create asset turn over plan. ii. Establish annual equipment budget
<p>7. Providing the best possible off water support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Establish partnerships with local sports medicine providers: physiotherapy, medicine, psychology. ii. Use a strength and conditioning coach or consultant to work with the rowing coaches to provide suitable S+C coaching and programming. iii. Engage with NSWIS to support our scholarship athletes and align with in house support. iv. Ensure land training programme is suitable and aligned with water training, periodisation and competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Prepare lists of SS/SM providers ii. Track athlete off water development and injury rate
<p>8. Organising and communicating effectively with all athletes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Maintain key open lines of communication for squad wide broadcast. ii. Organise, plan and distribute the season calendar in advance. iii. Publish annual overview of periodisation, including key season peaks and tests. iv. Distribute weekly/fortnightly granular squad programme, individualised as required. v. Structure regular team/squad meetings. vi. Structure regular individual athlete goal setting meetings and check ins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Show clear communication methods. ii. Display and distribute all information in advance of season start. iii. Ensure a clear communication method for programming and other information distribution. iv. Schedule regular team meetings.
<p>9. Maintaining internal communication between all coaches, training groups and other stakeholders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Hold regular full coaching team meetings to plan the coming training period, event or camp. ii. Ensure that all training groups can report to the board. iii. Senior coaches to meet with key board members in advance of major points in the season 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Have weekly start of week meetings. ii. Lead coaches to prepare team reports to be included in monthly report.

10. Ensuring the training environment is the best it can be to support an athlete and the club's ambitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Regularly seek feedback from athletes to guide improvements. ii. Work with athlete leadership group to 'check the pulse' of the training groups. iii. Look externally at how other clubs are operating and ensure that internal best practice is maintained and constantly improved. iv. Perform wash up meetings post major events and post season, to ensure we are ahead of the curve for the coming year or event. v. Measure coaching team and athlete performance against agreed annual KPIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Create athlete leadership group. ii. Have structured feedback processes. iii. Regularly seek external knowledge iv. Give coaches feedback and appraise against set KPIs
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National team selection

We will put athletes in the best possible position to be selected for Australian teams by:

Objective:	Action:	Performance Measure:
1. Ensuring athletes have suitable training plans, goals and a clear strategy for their season	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Meet with athletes who have declared their intention to trial and create a performance plan for the season. ii. Highlight key targets on an off the water and minimum standards required to be successful. iii. Create a training programme which is suitable for the ambitions and individualised as appropriate. iv. Create a regular (formal or informal) check in plan. v. Create a 'reality check' point in the season to determine if an athlete should withdraw their nomination or not 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Publish list of trialling athletes ii. Record goals and plans for nominated athletes. iii. Record athletes' performance.
2. Providing coaches of the highest calibre to support high performance athletes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Employ a suitable men's and women's lead coach whose primary focus is on developing pathway athletes for the Rowing Australia pathway. They will be the key point of contact for those athletes and for RA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Have quality coaches in position
3. Providing appropriate support services for our high-performance athletes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Engage Strength and conditioning, biomechanics, physiology and dietary support professionals to guide our HP athletes through their personal development pathway. 	
4. Fully engaging with Rowing Australia's pathway and selection process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Ensure all athletes are fully aware of key dates for nominations and tests and all that is expected of them to engage with RA. ii. Provide RA with all necessary information about an athlete as required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Engage with RA ii. Communicate with our athletes' key dates and points from meetings

	iii. Actively communicate with RA pathway coaches to show them our commitment to the process	
5. Prioritising and supporting SRC's athletes at all RA events, meetings and trials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Actively participate in all selection events and requirements, pushing our athletes' case as appropriate ii. Partake in all regular RA meetings and report on content, if appropriate to other coaches or board members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Have representatives at all events and actively support our goals and athletes.
6. Maintaining a strong connection with all SRC overseas athletes and supporting them through the selection process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Communicate regularly with all US (and otherwise) based athletes and ensure they feel part of SRC. ii. Ensure that RA are up to date with all SRC supported athletes and performance details. iii. Provide support when back in Australia and invite on camps, as appropriate. iv. Provide coaching or medical advice, as appropriate, to supplement their university support. v. Ensure that all have a 'return' plan, if they have ambitions post university. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Prepare and maintain list of all US based SRC athletes (and athletes to target post-graduation) ii. Actively communicate with all US based athletes
7. Creating a high-performance training environment on and off the water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Build on our club training environment, making it suitable to produce high performance results setting them up for national team training. ii. Ensure that a competitive but supportive environment is maintained, that allows our athletes to perform. iii. Make use of SIRC and Nepean to improve on water training. iv. Use the above to maintain performance levels, through regular testing and use this information to guide programming and selection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Compare our environment to those of the NTCs and other HP rowing programmes, as well as other high-performance sports. ii. Seek feedback from athletes. iii. Track our crew and individual performances
8. Using and maximising the support provided by NSWIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Maintain strong relations with NSWIS lead and practitioners. ii. Support our athletes' cases for scholarship support. iii. Actively engage with the support as coaches and encourage athletes to take advantage of all support provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Regularly meet with NSWIS leads and ensure SRC is seen as a valued partner
9. Maintaining a performance focussed culture, that sets the standard for other parts of the club to aspire towards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Coaches and athletes 'dot the i's and cross the t's' with all their planning and training. ii. Be seen to be leaders within the club, both training and lifestyle, setting the standard for younger generations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Seek feedback from new club members about what drew them to SRC and what they feel about the culture of the club

'Mens sana in corpore sano'

We will help our members become the best possible version of themselves for life by:

Objective:	Action:	Performance Measure:
1. Treating all others within the club with equal respect and expecting all to do the same in return	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Maintaining respect between individual athletes, coaches and other members ii. Treat each athlete group with respect and equality. iii. Maintain a safe and respectful working environment between the coaches, board and other staff members. iv. Ensure that there is no prejudice within SRC based on any aspect of a person. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Seek regular feedback from the athlete body and coaching team about the culture of the club. ii. Track and manage any concerns.
2. Understanding that athletes, coaches and board members are role models for future generations of rowers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Ensure that everyone understands their role in nurturing the next generation of athletes at the club and continuing the club culture. ii. Ensure any person of authority uses their power for good within the club environment. iii. Using the idea of 'making people want to pull for you in a race' and applying it outside of the boat. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Seek feedback that this is the case
3. Holding each other accountable for our actions, successes and failures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Applaud those who put their head above the parapet, not put them down. ii. Support confidence and help rebuild from failure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Gauge whether there is a supportive performance culture using feedback
4. Creating a culture of support and guidance both within the coaching and athlete teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Create a culture where no one feels that they can't ask for help. ii. Ensure that help, advice and guidance is freely given by those that seek it. iii. Create a safe path for those that might need help, but don't feel comfortable to ask, separate from the coaching team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Gauge whether athletes are training in fear or are willing to ask for help
5. Respecting the value that all parts of the rowing programme bring to the club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. All parts of the club feel like they belong and are supported, regardless of attribute. ii. No matter how small, all those that pull on an SRC zootie, feel that they are respected and valued by the wider club. iii. Celebrating and communicating success across all levels of the club 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Gauge whether all parts of the club feel valued. ii. Measure how balanced communication about club and team success is.
6. Encouraging athletes to use the discipline needed to be successful at sport as a blueprint for being successful in life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Coaches and other club leaders to live the values that SRC holds true become role models for the athletes. ii. Talk to athletes about how they structure their training and create allegories to daily life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Track athlete situations, outside of rowing: i.e. working, studying and how they are doing.
7. Respecting, on and off the water, other clubs, athletes, states and officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Treat all other clubs and officials with respect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Seek casual feedback as to how the club is viewed from external parties

Support the sport

We will help improve the sport for future rowers in NSW and Australia by:

Objective:	Action:	Performance Measure:
1. Actively engaging with RA and RNSW as needed	i. Ensure SRC and its interests are represented at all RA, RNSW or independent meetings about the future of the sport	i. Track attendance and impact of SRC representatives
2. Maintaining positive relations with all stakeholders, at every level where SRC operates	i. Maintain connections at all levels with stakeholders of the sport. ii. Ensure that SRC is in a strong position to be vocal about the future of the sport, especially in areas that might affect the daily business of the club.	i. Consider how positively decisions made by stakeholders affect SRC's rowing program. ii. Consider how our influence is taken on board by key external decision makers
3. Working with the other HP clubs in NSW to foster a positive rivalry that benefits SRC athletes	i. Engage with other NSW clubs to provide suitable training or racing opportunities for our leading athletes, as required. ii. Maintain positive rivalries with clubs, to encourage long term competition. iii. Maintain positive connections, so that, if necessary, trialling combinations at all levels can easily be created. iv. Work with the other NSW clubs, for the benefit of NSW rowing, (and rowing in Australia generally), to continue NSW's dominance in the Interstate Regatta.	i. Track whether it is a two-way street regarding communication, i.e. do other coaches and clubs come to us for competition and support, as much as we go to them.
4. Engaging regularly with other clubs, bodies and organisations nationwide to consider options to help our sport	i. Actively work with other leading clubs to consider proposals to invigorate the sport, beyond the 'traditional' racing calendar ii. Seek to futureproof our sport, regardless of Olympic inclusion	i. Be active with looking outside of our sport for ideas and examples of how to better support our sport.

3.6. The Rowing Program Management Structure

(A target for future planning)

