



Interdisciplinary Colloquium on Sport

The Role of *Government* in Sport
and the Power of *Sport Diplomacy*

Friday, 20 February

2026





Welcome

Thank you for joining us at the 2026 Interdisciplinary Colloquium on Sport. This year's theme will examine the dimensions and dynamics of state and non-state actors engaged in sport governance and regulation, and the power of sport diplomacy.

Established in 2010 as a roundtable initiative by Emeritus Professor Jim Corkery from the Faculty of Law and founder of the Centre for Commercial Law, the Colloquium now enters its 16th year. Over time, it has evolved into a respected forum for the presentation, discussion, and debate of contemporary sport-related research and practice. Its purpose is to facilitate the exchange of ideas and foster meaningful collaboration across jurisdictions, disciplines, and institutions.

The Colloquium provides valuable opportunities for networking, knowledge sharing, and the development of lasting professional relationships across the sport, legal, policy, and academic sectors.

The interdisciplinary nature of the event is reflected in the strong institutional support it receives from across the University, including:

- Faculty of Law
- Bond Business School
- Health Sciences and Medicine
- Faculty of Society and Design
- Centre for Commercial Law and Governance
- Centre for Professional Legal Education
- Office of Research Services
- Office of Learning and Teaching
- Microcredential Unit



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2026 PROGRAM

8.30am	Registration and Arrival Coffee Law Lounge - Faculty of Law, Level 2, Building 4
8.45am	Opening Address Case Study 2 - Faculty of Law, Level 3, Building 4
9am	Keynote Speaker Dr Stuart Murray Associate Professor of International Relations & Diplomacy - Bond University
10am	Morning Tea
10.30am	Presentation of Papers Michael Connelly Daniel Mills Lauren Soderberg Tony Yang
12.30pm	Lunch Law Lounge - Faculty of Law, Level 2, Building 4
1.30pm	Keynote Speaker Dr Michelle Gallen Chief Executive Officer - National Sports Tribunal
2.30pm	Presentation of Paper Professor Laurence Boulle
3pm	Afternoon Tea
3.20pm	Presentation of Papers John Palmer Jane Hunt
4.20pm	Panel Discussion Interdisciplinary Collaborations
4.45pm	Concluding Remarks
5pm	Conference Networking Reception Law Lounge - Faculty of Law, Level 2, Building 4



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KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

DR STUART MURRAY

Associate Professor of International Relations & Diplomacy - Bond University

To be confirmed.

DR MICHELLE GALLEN

Chief Executive Officer - National Sports Tribunal

The National Sports Tribunal (NST) was established in 2020, under the National Sports Tribunal Act 2019 (Cwth). The Tribunal operates at a national level, requiring the national sporting body to refer all matters regardless of the level at which they occur (national, state or club). This has the potential to leave a lack of accessible and independent dispute resolution mechanisms for community and state-level disputes. Sport governing bodies at this level are often volunteer-led with a lack of required resources and expertise, resulting in poorly handled processes leading to appeals.

The NST does not currently have direct jurisdiction over the majority of state organisations due to the lack of a constitutional head of power that encompasses them. A potential long-term solution is for State and Territory governments to refer their sport dispute resolution powers to the Commonwealth. This would require State and Territory legislation as well as amendments to the existing Commonwealth NST legislation.

NST CEO Dr Michelle Gallen will explore the legal and practical implications of the current situation with reference to NST jurisprudence.



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PRESENTATION OF ABSTRACTS

MICHAEL CONNELLY

Abstract title: Beyond the Rings: Building a Legacy from the Inside Out

Mega-events like the Brisbane 2032 Olympics promise a significant participation legacy for sport. However, this session argues that this legacy is endangered by a 'capability paradox': the volunteer-led grassroots organisations expected to absorb this growth are often already at operational breaking point. The promised demand-side shock of a mega-event risks overwhelming, rather than strengthening, this vital community infrastructure.

This presentation challenges the traditional 'facilities-first' view of legacy, proposing a model for building sustainable capacity from the inside out. It introduces the 'Buy-Back Principle', a practical framework for micro-professionalisation within community sport. The model demonstrates how strategic investment in targeted, part-time paid operational roles, funded through entrepreneurial revenue diversification, can 'buy back' the time of senior volunteers. This frees them from low-value administrative tasks to focus on high-value strategic work such as governance, partnership development and community engagement.

Drawing on case studies from community sport, this session provides a tangible methodology for redesigning volunteer roles and a playbook of sustainable funding models that do not increase the cost burden on members. It offers a new lens for 'capability and capacity building' and presents a clear policy recommendation for governments and governing bodies seeking to ensure the grassroots sector is a resilient and capable partner in delivering a true, generational legacy from international sporting events.

DANIEL MILLS

Abstract title: Rugby relations: Australia's best diplomatic asset in the Pacific

This presentation explores how rugby union functions as one of Australia's most effective tools of statecraft in the South Pacific, drawing on deep cultural ties and the sport's unique integration with national identity, governance, and political leadership.

As strategic competition accelerates, Pacific sports diplomacy is shifting rapidly. China is driving significant investments in stadiums, facilities, and partnerships with national rugby bodies, while the United States is expanding its footprint through new sports diplomacy funding streams launched under the Trump administration. A growing field of external actors now recognises what Australia has long leveraged: sport, especially rugby, opens doors that traditional diplomacy cannot.

Australia's leadership in Pacific sports diplomacy rests on long-standing, trusted sporting relationships forged through decades of genuine people-to-people engagement. But these foundations no longer guarantee influence. As Pacific sport faces mounting financial pressures, external actors offering substantial funding will increasingly shape decisions. Without a meaningful uplift in support and investment, Australia risks losing its position as the region's preferred and most effective sporting partner.



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PRESENTATION OF ABSTRACTS

LAUREN SODERBERG

Abstract title: Can Coach Development programs within Hybridised sport for development / performance sport organisations simultaneously improve gender equality and performance outcomes - Vanuatu Case Study

This research project examines whether targeted coaching programs within hybridised Sport for Development (SFD) and high-performance (HP) systems can improve gender equality and performance outcomes in Vanuatu. Using Vanuatu Cricket as a case study, the project will be implemented across two area councils on Tanna Island. Funded through the DFAT Team Up Play for Equity program, the project is delivered by two female-led organisations: the Vanuatu Cricket Association and Progressive Coaches.

The intervention integrates gender-equality education, respectful-relationships training, women's leadership and capability building, and a male-advocacy component to strengthen social cohesion and reduce violence against women and girls. A mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative focus groups and participant interviews, will assess changes in attitudes, behaviours, and coaching practice. Based on the research this study aims to generate evidence-based coaching models that address systemic sociocultural barriers while enhancing both coach and participant performance within the Vanuatu Cricket system.

TONY YANG

Abstract title: Governing Sport Diplomatically via Chinese Lenses that Strategise the Confucianism-embedded Soft Power. Exploring Sports Governance Imperatives and Sports Diplomacy Implications through Intercultural (and Transcultural) Paradigms

The current study advances a sports-oriented framework in which sport is strategically governed in a more diplomatic manner, with sports policies potentially being facilitated through Chinese lenses of soft power. Building on Murray's (2018) conceptual framework of Sports Diplomacy and Dellios' (2013) Confucianism-related theorisation within Chinese diplomatic ideation, this paper contextualises sports-embedded engagement, dialogue, and exchange. These occasions feature a diversity of sport-oriented scenarios, including competitive mega-events as an unofficial platform for state-led reconciliation, elite athletes' ambassadorial roles as "diplomats in tracksuits", integration of the nationwide Brisbane Olympics agenda into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade-initiated Sports Diplomacy Strategy 2032+.

The notable sports diplomacy practices and strategies are academically justifiable by ancient Chinese philosophies dating back 2,500 years, which continue to play a significant role in both modern sports and diplomacy today. The findings and recommendations, relevant to sport industrial implementation and scholarly work, can be qualitatively extracted into credible soft power wisdom, with an empirical emphasis on ethical standards and social responsibility. The highlighted integrity essentially aligns with how sport is leveraged throughout both sporadic grassroots communities in a sovereign state and the entire civilisation across human history. Jointly, with an interdisciplinary effort across multiple lenses that are either cross-cultural or transnational, sports diplomacy ultimately becomes a decisive lever and an impactful governing catalyst for domestic, regional, and continental engagement. Overall, the constructive role of sports diplomacy currently contributes to the world amid a contested geopolitical landscape, which is intensified by ideological turbulence and realism-framed opportunistic challenges



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PRESENTATION OF ABSTRACTS

PROF LAURENCE BOULLE

Abstract title: African Australians in Sport: Achievements and Accountability

The current century has witnessed an exponential increase in sporting engagements by African Australians. This has entailed both high achievements in selected sports and significant discrimination and disadvantage.

After warming up on some topical trivia questions, and the broader context of the African presence in Australia, the presentation deals with three aspects of contemporary African involvements in Australian, and international, sport:

1. Sports governance, domestic and international;
2. Discrimination, regulation and accountability;
3. Dispute resolution in sporting conflicts.

The presentation draws from the presenter's larger work, *Australia's African Australians*, (African World Books, Perth, 2026 (forthcoming)).

JOHN PALMER

Abstract title: Para Sports and Government Policy

It could examine the role of government policy in the governance integration of para sport, and whether government mandates for inclusion are matched by capability building in NSO's. It could question if the policy intent is being met with genuine governance integration, or if it is creating a compliance burden without cultural change.

DR JANE HUNT

Abstract title: Is gender equity really just a numbers game? Olympic sport governance experiences and gender equity targets.

To be confirmed.