



## Editorial

## What are the employment prospects for Australian Sport Scientists?

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The most recent unemployment figures released on April 14th show that only 4% of the labour force across Australia was unemployed in March 2022.<sup>1</sup> But what are the employment prospects for Australian Sport Scientists entering in the labour force now and in the future? No doubt the industry was disrupted over the past 2 years since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the accreditation standards set forth by Exercise Sport Science Australia (ESSA) that have been adopted by Australian Universities when training their sport science students should have ensured the development of a rigorous set of graduate skills and qualities, which in many cases can be transferrable to a variety of settings.

In this month's issue of JSAMS, we first highlight a paper by Bruce and colleagues<sup>2</sup> documenting the technical and transferrable skills needed for contemporary sport scientists, and the perceived employment opportunities both currently and in the future. A large range of technical and transferable skills were rated as important by the 117 respondents, estimated to be approximately one-fifth of sport science workforce in Australia. Applied sport scientists rated practitioner-focused technical skills with more importance, whereas those working in academia rated knowledge-based skills related to research design and methodology with a higher priority. The highest rated skill across the board by both groups was strong communications skills in both written and oral form, which clearly has strong transferability outside of the field of sport science altogether. Overall, there was modest optimism about current (now compared to 10 years go) and future (10 years from now) employment prospects for Australian sport scientists. It was reported that there is a belief that these opportunities would likely arise in non-professional sport settings, will be discipline-specific in nature, and with the recent growth performance analytics and data, this field may provide more opportunities than other areas. The greatest challenges identified for the industry include convincing organisations to fully understand the utility and value sport scientists can bring to their operations, as well as a potential over-abundance of qualified sport scientists available on the market. The latter presumably

emphasises the importance of high-quality work-integrated learning opportunities during the tertiary education of sport science.

The second paper highlighted this month reports the key outcomes of a 4-year prospective cohort observational study of injury risk of semi-professional rugby union players during competitive matches and training. With the high injury risk of collisions sports, and rugby union in particular, player welfare can be enhanced by introducing injury prevention programmes. High quality injury surveillance data are essential to optimise the safety strategies that are adopted, especially for athletes participating at levels below elite competition, as fewer resources are available. Evans et al<sup>3</sup> provide new insight into the injury incidence rate, severity, and nature for semi-professional rugby union players. The authors show that injury rates in semi-professional matches were comparable with the professional tier of the sport, but the number of injuries sustained during training, when normalised for time, were lower. Injuries were sustained predominantly during contact, but some non-contact injury risk still existed. Training injuries among backs were more severe than forwards. Upper limb injuries were most common, but lower limb injuries resulted in most playing time loss. Collectively these data can inform an evidence-based approach for strengthening injury prevention strategies for players who may be at a greater injury risk.

## References

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