

**Defining Physical Literacy for Application in Australia: A  
Modified Delphi Method**

Journal:	<i>Journal of Teaching in Physical Education</i>
Manuscript ID	JTPE.2018-0264.R2
Manuscript Type:	Special Issue PL 2
Keywords:	consensus, expert, physical literacy, policy, physical education, sport

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### **Defining Physical Literacy for Application in Australia: A Modified Delphi Method**

The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not reflect the views or policy position of the Australian Government or Australian Sports Commission (now ‘Sport Australia’). While the work presented here builds upon partnerships formed in the development of the Australian Sports Commission’s Physical Literacy content, this work is presented independently and does not represent the views of the original panel formed to develop the Physical Literacy content nor the views or policy positions of the Australian Sports Commission or Australian Government.

The research forming the basis of this paper was funded by the Australian Government through the Australian Sports Commission. The research, including all models, frameworks and materials associated with the Australian Definition and Draft Australian Physical Literacy Standard, was developed in collaboration with the Australian Sports Commission. All intellectual property remains the exclusive property of the Australian Sports Commission.

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**Abstract**

**Purpose.** The development of a physical literacy definition and standards framework suitable for implementation in Australia. **Method.** Modified Delphi methodology. **Results.** Consensus was established on four defining statements: *Core* – Physical literacy is lifelong holistic learning acquired and applied in movement and physical activity contexts; *Composition* – Physical literacy reflects ongoing changes integrating physical, psychological, cognitive and social capabilities; *Importance* – Physical literacy is vital in helping us lead healthy and fulfilling lives through movement and physical activity; *Aspiration* – A physically literate person is able to draw on their integrated physical, psychological, cognitive, and social capacities to support health promoting and fulfilling movement and physical activity, relative to their situation and context, throughout the lifespan. The standards framework addressed four learning domains (physical, psychological, cognitive, and social), spanning five learning configurations/levels. **Conclusion.** The development of a bespoke program for a new context has important implications for both existing and future programs.

*Keywords:* expert, consensus, physical literacy, policy, education, sport

### 18 **Defining Physical Literacy for Application in Australia: A Modified Delphi Methodology**

19 Physical literacy is a concept that has generated significant interest as a way of addressing  
20 the global problems of physical inactivity, and disengagement from physical pursuits (Shearer et  
21 al., 2018; Whitehead, Durden-Myers, & Pot, 2018). Sedentary lifestyles remain a significant  
22 problem around the world; for example, of the 56 million people who die each year, 3.2 million of  
23 those deaths (six people per minute) can be specifically attributed to physical inactivity (World  
24 Health Organization, 2014, 2015). The total economic cost of inactivity is estimated to be U.S.  
25 \$67.5 billion globally (Ding et al., 2016). Physical inactivity is a significant and pervasive threat  
26 common to many nations, undermining productivity and growth, and reducing quality of life for  
27 millions of people (Ding et al., 2016). Nonetheless, when Metcalf, Henley, and Wilkin (2012)  
28 conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of 30 children's physical activity interventions  
29 that used objective outcome measures, they found an average increase of just four minutes per day.  
30 [This does not instill great confidence in the success, to date, of those interventions that have been](#)  
31 [used in controlled trials seeking to increase children's physical activity, and may suggest that](#)  
32 [reformulation of these interventions may be necessary.](#)

33 Physical literacy was proposed (Whitehead, 2001, 2010) as a way of refocusing the existing  
34 messaging around physical activity for health, which has often involved avoiding illness and ill-  
35 health, a relatively ineffective message for physical activity interventions (Ekkekakis & Zenko,  
36 2016; Zenko, Ekkekakis, & Kavetsos, 2016). Likewise, physical literacy was asserted as a  
37 counter-argument to the view that all young people need to gain skills to succeed in sport, because  
38 only a tiny proportion of children can go on to compete at elite levels of competitive sport,  
39 meaning that such a message can be demotivating for those not able to attain this level of  
40 proficiency (Côté, Strachan, & Fraser-Thomas, 2008; Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2008). A

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41 key point emphasized by physical literacy literature is that it applies to children and adults,  
42 throughout all stages of life (Whitehead, 2001). The most prominent definition of physical  
43 literacy, as advocated by the International Physical Literacy Association (IPLA) is “the motivation,  
44 confidence, physical competence, and knowledge and understanding to value and engage in  
45 physical activity for life” (IPLA, 2017), which represents the necessary attributes and  
46 predispositions to engage in health-promoting physical activity throughout life. Hence, to many,  
47 the philosophy of physical literacy and its underpinning concepts offers a way forward in the  
48 attempt to address the global problem of insufficient physical activity (Jurbala, 2015; Lundvall,  
49 2015). Notably, Whitehead (2010) proposed that physical literacy may need to be interpreted and  
50 articulated differently in diverse cultures and countries (Sport New Zealand, 2018). Australia has  
51 its own unique history and traditions from both Indigenous cultures and subsequent colonization,  
52 as well as a unique arrangement of federal and state governments, governing bodies and regulatory  
53 agencies (Keegan, [Dudley](#), & Barnett, in press). As such, and in recognition of the need to be  
54 contextually sensitive, this research sought to develop a definition and standards framework for  
55 physical literacy that would be appropriate for Australia. Importantly, however, the development  
56 of such resources for one country may still have relevance and implications for other physical  
57 literacy initiatives around the world.

58 While the concept’s roots trace back many decades (Whitehead, 2001, 2010), researchers  
59 and practitioners in health, physical education, sporting participation, and recreational movement  
60 pursuits have embraced physical literacy as a new paradigm for understanding the roots of  
61 behaviors across diverse contexts (Jurbala, 2015; Longmuir & Tremblay, 2016; Lundvall, 2015).  
62 Researchers, policy-makers, teachers, and coaches have all engaged with programs promoting  
63 physical literacy, in many countries (e.g., Australian Sports Commission [ASC], 2017a; Spengler

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64 & Cohen, 2015). In addition to the above definition, however, physical literacy literature speaks to  
65 the physical embodiment of human existence, and the inherent physical movement that permeates  
66 all human experiences. But, this alone does not constitute a full definition (Hardman, 2008).  
67 Rather, physical literacy was proposed to invoke “a holistic engagement that encompasses physical  
68 capacities embedded in perception, experience, memory, anticipation and decision making”  
69 (Whitehead, 2001, p. 131). Hence, physical literacy refers to *both* the potential to engage with,  
70 and learn from, our physical embodiment *as well as* a configuration of this learning whereby the  
71 individual becomes sufficiently competent and predisposed to always engage in health-promoting  
72 movement pursuits. This simultaneous invocation of two meanings has led to significant debate  
73 and dissatisfaction (Cairney, Bedard, Dudley, & Kreillaars, 2016; Edwards, Bryant, Keegan,  
74 Morgan, & Jones, 2017; Hyndman & Pill, 2017; Jurbala, 2015). In fact, one significant barrier to  
75 physical literacy realizing its potential is the diverse, sometimes conflicting, definitions that  
76 different groups adopt for physical literacy (Shearer et al., 2018). This situation has been critiqued  
77 as causing confusion and conflict, and even for being too divergent from Whitehead’s ‘original’  
78 intended meaning (Hyndman & Pill, 2017; Pot, Whitehead, & Durden-Myers, 2018; Robinson,  
79 Randall, & Barrett, 2018); but of course, simply because a concept has been formulated before  
80 does not prevent other researchers from exploring and testing that formulation, or from seeking  
81 approaches that are more suitable to a specific local context (e.g., Whitehead, 2010). Recent  
82 systematic reviews (Edwards et al., 2017; Edwards, Bryant, Keegan, Morgan, & Jones, 2018) and  
83 narrative overviews (Green, Roberts, Sheehan, & Keegan, 2018; Shearer et al., 2018) have  
84 analyzed and compared the differing approaches to conceptualizing and operationalizing physical  
85 literacy. These reviews note that while adopting different approaches, most researchers and  
86 practitioners promoting physical literacy agree regarding the underpinning formulation of a holistic

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87 concept, and the importance of adopting an approach that emphasizes holistic benefits instead of  
88 separately pursuing health benefits, skill development, or competitive success. As such, this study  
89 sought to develop a definition and framework for physical literacy that was both coherent and  
90 philosophically aligned, and specifically developed to be ready-for-implementation by Australian  
91 teachers, practitioners, policy-makers, and researchers alike.

92       When it comes to deciding which approach to adopt for the promotion of physical literacy in  
93 a new setting, organizations may either simply adopt one of the approaches from another context,  
94 relatively intact, or seek to develop a local, contextually sensitive framework (cf. Whitehead,  
95 2010). On one hand, several groups have argued for the adoption of a single, agreed definition and  
96 framework, *a priori*, to avoid confusion as described by Shearer et al. (2018). On the other hand,  
97 Edwards et al. (2017, 2018) argued that such a decision would not allow for the necessary  
98 scholarly debate and conceptual development to occur, and that research demands a degree of  
99 pluralism in order for concepts to be compared and evaluated over time (Feyerabend, 1975;  
100 Lakatos, 1970). Over time, researchers who clearly articulate the specific definition and  
101 underpinning assumptions that their physical literacy program adopts would facilitate the  
102 comparison of which approaches generate which outcomes (Edwards et al., 2017, 2018). The main  
103 problem for this approach of ‘tolerating diversity’ is that, in the short term, it does not help  
104 groups/agencies seeking to make evidence-based decisions about how best to implement a large-  
105 scale (e.g., nationwide) physical literacy initiative. Without the necessary time and resources to  
106 wait for a resolution to emerge, a third option for those looking to implement physical literacy  
107 initiatives (as was the case here) would be to develop and evaluate a custom-designed, evidence-  
108 informed framework, in collaboration with key stakeholders and practitioners, with its own clearly  
109 defined assumptions and principles. This third method ensures that the resulting approach is

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110 sensitive to local cultural and practical considerations, while also offering another perspective from  
111 which to compare and evaluate existing programs, thus informing the scientific discourse  
112 (Feyerabend, 1975; Lakatos, 1970).

113 As this research was associated with a national implementation project, the resulting  
114 definition and framework had to be amenable with immediate adoption and implementation in  
115 Australian schools, community sport settings, elite sport, research, and policy-making contexts,  
116 spanning federal and state governments, and education, health, and sports departments. We set out  
117 to develop a new definition and framework for physical literacy that: (a) was aligned with current  
118 usage, expectations, and intentions for the physical literacy concept; (b) was clear, understandable,  
119 and internally consistent; (c) included defined concepts, that could be progressed and differentiated  
120 from initial learning through to high-order skills and attributes; (d) built upon the strengths of, and  
121 lessons from, current practice and existing systems worldwide; (e) was informed by programs in  
122 other countries, including Canada, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and the US; (f) was  
123 specifically sensitive and appropriate to the Australian context; (g) was aligned to schools, sporting  
124 organizations, and family contexts; and (h) was evidence-informed – that is, compatible with, and  
125 responsive to, existing research evidence (cf. Nelson & Campbell, 2017; Nevo & Slonim-Nevo,  
126 2011).

127 These considerations were addressed by deploying a Delphi methodology, drawing on the  
128 expertise of leading Australian researchers and practitioners, with the guidance of international  
129 colleagues. Our research question was simply, how do leading experts in Australia – supported by  
130 international partners – define and construe physical literacy?



132

**Method****133 Participants**

134         The Delphi method does not use a randomly sampled group, but rather experts are  
135 purposively targeted, after being identified by the research team prior to data collection (Hsu &  
136 Sandford, 2007). The selection of such experts can be problematic, as both the criteria to qualify  
137 as an expert and, in this case, the nature of the subject matter, can be poorly defined (Hsu &  
138 Sandford, 2007; Keeney, Hasson, & McKenna, 2011). Our selection process was informed by: (a)  
139 our preceding literature search (cf. Hasson, Keeney, & McKenna, 2000; Hsu & Sandford, 2007;  
140 Keeney et al., 2011); (b) geographical constraints (i.e., chiefly those working and living in  
141 Australia, with advice also sought from outside Australia for triangulation purposes); and (c)  
142 consideration of all the previously listed focus areas, including schools/education, community  
143 sport, youth sport, elite sport, health promotion, disability sport, and Indigenous sport/physical  
144 activity. Therefore, individuals were considered to be eligible to participate if they had related  
145 backgrounds and experiences concerning the target issue (cf. Pill, 1971) as well as a vested  
146 interest in promoting physical activity, physical education, sport participation, or sporting  
147 performance. We did not begin Round 1 of the study until we had agreement from the three  
148 principal investigators and the project's key stakeholder (Australian Sports Commission) that all  
149 the required backgrounds and skill-sets were contained within our panel. Delbecq, Van de Ven,  
150 and Gustafson (1975) suggested 10 to 15 panelists may be a workable panel size, to balance  
151 containing sufficiently diverse expertise against the likelihood of increased debate, and thus time  
152 impost, for the participants. Including the three principal investigators, our panel contained 18  
153 participants, as detailed in Table 1. The project was approved by the Human Research Ethics  
154 Committees of the University of Canberra (HREC16-162) and Deakin University (2016-272).

**155 Facilitation of Workshops and Surveys**

156 The face-to-face workshops were facilitated using Microsoft PowerPoint, along with  
157 stationery such as large sheets of paper, sticky notes, and board pens. On both occasions, the  
158 content of the introductory presentations was derived from the preceding literature review (ASC,  
159 2017a). Some panel members opted to be linked into the meetings via Skype teleconferencing.  
160 The online survey was administered through Qualtrics survey software, and then exported into  
161 Microsoft Excel for analysis.

**162 Design**

163 The Delphi technique is an iterative process, designed to combine expert opinion, in order  
164 to arrive at a group consensus (Hsu & Sandford, 2007; Keeney et al., 2011). The original method  
165 used a series of intensive surveys which were interspersed with controlled feedback (Dalkey &  
166 Helmer, 1963). The process was designed to develop through multiple stages, with each building  
167 upon the last, until an acceptable level of consensus was reached (Sumsion, 1998). To catalyze  
168 this process, our modification to the standard Delphi methodology was to conduct, present, and  
169 discuss a critical review of the literature on physical literacy, which we presented at a one-day  
170 workshop in Sydney as part of the first phase of the study. Likewise, the second phase of the  
171 research was initiated through a group workshop in Melbourne. Each survey round was  
172 subsequently designed in light of the responses collected, with feedback and reflections from each  
173 survey feeding into the next. There were two phases to this study to address first the definition and  
174 then the standards. Each phase used the same expert panel members and comprised three formal  
175 survey rounds and one live workshop. In subsequent survey rounds, the panel members were  
176 provided with their own anonymized responses to the previous round, as well as a summary report  
177 of that round containing the group's anonymized responses. This aspect of the Delphi

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178 methodology was designed to provide the panelists with the option of reconsidering their original  
179 response. Typically, the Delphi process continues for three rounds, or until consensus is obtained  
180 (Keeney et al., 2011). Delphi studies contain several key considerations, each of which are now  
181 introduced as applied to the current study.

182 **Consensus requirements.** Consensus is typically defined as agreement among 75% of the  
183 panel (Francis et al., 2016; Hasson et al., 2000; Hsu & Sandford, 2007). In this study, 80% was the  
184 agreed target for consensus.

185 **Questionnaire design.** Each round of survey questions, and their scoring options (e.g.,  
186 Likert scale, yes/no, agree/disagree) were discussed and agreed between the core team and the key  
187 stakeholder before being distributed. The contents of each survey round are available on request  
188 from the first author.

189 **Number of rounds.** The Delphi method requires a minimum of two rounds (three if round  
190 one is open-ended). Beyond that, the number of rounds is disputed. Walker and Selfe (1996)  
191 noted that repeated rounds may lead to fatigue by respondents and increased participant attrition.  
192 We used the face-to-face group workshops (see Procedure section) to expedite this process,  
193 identifying key tensions and issues at these workshops before feeding those key questions into the  
194 online survey rounds (cf. Butterwick, Paskevich, Lagumen, Vallevand, & Lafave, 2006; Graefe &  
195 Armstrong, 2011; Lafave, Butterwick, Murray, Freeman, & Lau, 2013; Lafave, Katz, &  
196 Butterwick, 2008).

197 **Feedback.** We presented survey comments, anonymized, to subsequent rounds of the  
198 Delphi with draft responses and reflections where required, tracing how these comments had  
199 influenced the development of redrafted statements. Comments and debates made in the live  
200 workshops were not anonymous, nor were they formally recorded, but these sessions played an

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201 important role in facilitating rapid progression of ideas, as well as establishing a constructive and  
202 collaborative tone to the process.

203 **Maintaining engagement and reliability/validity of responses.** Due to the multiple-  
204 round process, the reliability and validity of the findings may be at risk if response rates drop  
205 during the study. For example, if the consensus reflects only the opinion of those who persisted till  
206 the end. For this reason, participant motivation is critical (Hasson et al., 2000) and we addressed  
207 this by including a selection criterion of experts with a vested interest in contributing to this topic.  
208 In addition, we offered panel members the opportunity to become co-authors on any final  
209 publication generated by the study, regardless of whether they agreed with the final outcomes or  
210 not. We also set a stringent criterion of 80% consensus for the final product(s).

211 **Anonymity of panel members.** Anonymity is proposed to facilitate the provision of open  
212 and honest views, as well as facilitating the updating or changing of opinions during the process  
213 (Keeney, Hassen, & McKenna 2001). Anonymity was maintained during the survey rounds of the  
214 process, providing panelists with a reasonable chance to reflect on and respond to questions,  
215 without being influenced by knowing the identities behind other comments/inputs (Goodman,  
216 1987). Responses were tallied so that each opinion carried the same weighting and importance in  
217 the analysis (Keeney et al., 2001). Given that the panel members, all experts in related areas, were  
218 likely to know one another, anonymity could not be guaranteed. Likewise, if a panel member  
219 passionately argued a particular position in the face-to-face workshops, and made the same points,  
220 or used similar language, in the surveys, it may undermine their anonymity. Anonymity is chiefly  
221 sought in order to facilitate open and honest responses from panel members, and there is little to  
222 prevent a passionate or outspoken member of any Delphi from waiving their anonymity. In this  
223 case, the diversity of responses suggested that the mixed approach (group workshops followed by

224 anonymous surveys) facilitated a full range of perspectives from different stakeholders, as well as  
225 expediting a process that may otherwise have over-run, relative to the time-requirements of the  
226 funding organization. The use of group workshops is not unprecedented, and has been advocated  
227 as promoting a collaborative approach, and even leading to stronger outcomes (Butterwick et al.,  
228 2006; Lafave et al., 2013; Lafave et al., 2008).

229 **Modifications to the traditional Delphi Process.** The inclusion of initial and mid-point  
230 face-to-face workshops was not a component of the original Delphi method, developed by Dalkey  
231 and Helmer (1963). Rather, it was adopted from the modified Ebel procedure (Butterwick et al.,  
232 2006; Lafave et al., 2013; Lafave et al., 2008). The modified Delphi method was chosen because it  
233 encouraged expert interaction, allowing members of the panel to provide further clarification on  
234 some matters and present arguments in order to justify their viewpoints. Importantly, key  
235 decisions leading to consensus (or otherwise) were still conducted anonymously using an online  
236 survey. Studies have demonstrated that the modified Delphi method can be superior to the original  
237 Delphi method, and perceived as highly cooperative and effective (e.g., Graefe & Armstrong,  
238 2011).

### 239 **Procedure**

240 Two phases of data collection were undertaken, with the second dependent on the outcomes  
241 of the first. These two phases of the study focused on first, defining physical literacy for the  
242 Australian audience (ultimately using a series of defining statements), and second, developing an  
243 evidence-informed standards framework. For the development of key conceptual issues and the  
244 definition, information was compiled from a substantive literature review, which was completed  
245 prior to the initiation of the Delphi process (as described above). Once the initial key problems and  
246 issues were presented to the panel in the first workshop, the first round of Delphi feedback served

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247 as a foundation of current opinions, from which progress could be sought. Merely reflecting the  
248 initial disagreements or tensions between viewpoints would not have progressed the process  
249 towards consensus. Instead, debate was encouraged in the first one-day workshop, after which  
250 resolutions to key issues were developed. For example, the panel debated and discussed the  
251 tension between whether physical literacy is a process or an end-state/outcome, and whether it is  
252 simply defined by its associated concepts and behaviors (physical activity, motivation, motor  
253 competence, confidence, positive health outcomes, etc.) or is a separable concept in itself. Live,  
254 interactive discussions were *necessary* for these issues to be debated and resolved to the panel's  
255 satisfaction (i.e., >80% consensus). For the subsequent development of a standards framework,  
256 key overarching issues requiring consensus were developed, before being submitted to the expert  
257 panel for anonymous review, feedback, and consensus-seeking. Additionally, however, the panel  
258 was invited to review the wordings of specific level-descriptors and statements within the  
259 developing product, and wherever possible this feedback was implemented, either to one specific  
260 statement or considered in relation to a number of similar/related statements.

**261 Phase One and Phase Two**

262 **Phase One.** Phase one of the study, developing an evidence-informed definition of physical  
263 literacy, included six steps. The study began with a systematic review of the literature on physical  
264 literacy, and was followed by the first round of Delphi survey, the first one-day workshop, the  
265 second round of Delphi survey, the third round of Delphi survey, and finally a stakeholder  
266 consultation session.

267 The project's commissioning organization, the Australian Sports Commission, required an  
268 evidence-informed definition of physical literacy appropriate for the Australian context, and  
269 relevant to all stakeholders across education, health, community sport, and elite sport, to include

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270 parents and children. We conducted a bespoke systematic review (ASC, 2017a) of physical  
271 literacy concepts, ultimately encompassing 192 papers addressing (a) current work in physical  
272 literacy, (b) physical activity, (c) physical education, (d) motor learning and motor development,  
273 (e) motivation, (f) confidence, and self-esteem, (g) knowledge and values, and (h) pedagogical and  
274 coaching strategies. Papers were coded for evidence quality using the coding system from Phillips  
275 et al. (2001). The conclusions of this process were that: (a) existing papers on physical literacy  
276 tended to be opinion and argument-based; (b) much stronger quality evidence existed in physical  
277 activity and motor learning; (c) many other concepts related to motivation (e.g., determination,  
278 will-power, passion etc.) and confidence (e.g., self-esteem, perceived competence, self-efficacy) –  
279 which could be problematic when positioning these terms centrally within the existing definition;  
280 (d) ‘knowledge and values’ appeared to be extremely hard to define and conceptualize; (e)  
281 motivation, confidence and knowledge do not progress linearly with age/development, with  
282 significant implications for a resulting standards framework (i.e., normative/prescriptive standards  
283 would not be consistent with that evidence-base); and (f) there had been a recent movement in  
284 definitions, or published resources, towards addressing the physical, affective, cognitive, and social  
285 domains of learning.

286       Upon completion of the literature review, which represented a key project deliverable, the  
287 three principal investigators worked with the ASC stakeholders to generate a list of key concepts to  
288 be evaluated by the expert panel in the first Delphi survey. The discussion sought to ensure that all  
289 key considerations from the review were included, without overburdening the panel or creating  
290 redundancy by separately listing closely related terms. The first round of Delphi survey took place  
291 following the process of identifying the list of concepts related to physical literacy (see Table 2).  
292 Surveys were emailed to the whole eighteen-member panel, offering two weeks to respond. Each

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293 respondent was asked to indicate on a scale of 0–10 the extent to which each concept was: (a) core  
294 to physical literacy, (b) a component/construct of physical literacy, (c) an antecedent/contributor to  
295 physical literacy, (d) a consequence of physical literacy, and (e) an aspect of the underpinning  
296 philosophy. Table 2 summarizes the scores provided by experts regarding each concept that was  
297 found through the systematic literature review to be most commonly associated with physical  
298 literacy. The strong prevalence of ‘cross-loading,’ where concepts were recognised under multiple  
299 themes, necessitated opening the process for discussion and debate in order to pursue consensus.

300 One week after the first Delphi survey was completed and results summarized, a live one-  
301 day workshop was conducted in Sydney. The participants were presented with key conclusions,  
302 and a summary of the results from the first Delphi survey. After this presentation, debate was  
303 facilitated regarding the best ways to proceed. The panel reached initial agreement to consider  
304 several defining statements as opposed to an individual definition attempting to encompass all  
305 aspects of physical literacy. Initial wordings for three defining statements were drafted within the  
306 workshop, ready for feedback in the subsequent survey. Likewise, it was agreed to explore the  
307 potential of offering bespoke ‘tailored’ definitions to each different stakeholder group. Clear  
308 concerns were recorded that the proposed products did not heavily emphasize participation in  
309 physical activity and the avoidance of sedentary lifestyles.

310 The primary purpose of the second round of Delphi survey was to seek consensus and/or  
311 feedback on the initial proposal of defining statements. Each of the three proposed defining  
312 statements were evaluated on a five-point Likert scale anchored at ‘strongly disapprove’ versus  
313 ‘strongly approve,’ as well as open text responses for suggested revisions, clarifications, or  
314 concerns. Additionally, experts were asked to evaluate the applicability of each defining statement  
315 to different stakeholders, to include teachers, coaches, parents, policymakers, children, and



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316 researchers. Each of the three defining statements presented achieved between 62-77% agreement,  
317 and thus failed to reach consensus. Concerns were expressed that these statements did not allude  
318 to a desirable state or level for attaining health benefits, and/or participating fruitfully in society.  
319 Likewise, some respondents still questioned, 'What is wrong with the old definition?' Regarding  
320 the inclusion of both 'movement' and 'physical activity,' there were two clear arguments regarding  
321 wording choice, which indicated that different readers tended to interpret the two terms differently,  
322 depending on their standpoint. First, typically voiced by the panel's physical activity promotion  
323 experts, was the argument that 'all movement is physical activity,' but it was also noted that, for  
324 many of the panel, physical activity was associated with 'health-promoting' moderate-to-vigorous  
325 physical activity (discounting many forms of movement). In contrast, the education experts in the  
326 group typically viewed 'movement' as the most suitable term to use, but the physical activity  
327 researchers felt that this did not sufficiently emphasize health-promoting physical activity. The  
328 only resolution that was deemed acceptable to all, in order to reach consensus, was to include both  
329 terms. Furthermore, to adequately capture the difference between process versus outcome  
330 interpretations, a fourth defining statement was recommended.

331         Given the fact that the 80% consensus criterion score was not met after the second round of  
332 the Delphi survey, a third round was needed. The third-round survey included the three revised  
333 defining statements and a fourth describing the aspiration to be pursued. Once again, the  
334 respondents were given opportunity to respond to the redrafted proposal of defining statements,  
335 with open text for suggested revisions, clarifications, or concerns. Advice was sought regarding  
336 stakeholder-specific phrasings to be included in an accompanying explanatory document.  
337 Consensus was achieved in round three (>80%) regarding the four defining statements. Further, an

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338 accompanying explanatory document was viewed as a suitable way of explaining the concept to  
339 diverse user-groups.

340 As the final step of Phase One, stakeholder consultation was conducted by staff from the  
341 ASC, requesting feedback from internal and external user-groups (ASC, sport sector, education  
342 sector, community groups). Staff from the ASC were autonomous in this process and engaged a  
343 wide variety of potential stakeholders through meetings, teleconferencing, email, and in  
344 workshops. They provided feedback to the panel that user groups did not engage with the word  
345 'affective' (under 'Constitution'), and that 'psychological' should be used instead. Panel members  
346 were contacted for comment. There was no objection from panel members. Final wording was  
347 agreed (see Results).

348 **Phase Two.** Phase two of the study, developing a standards framework, included six steps.  
349 The study began with a review of curricula and standards documents, and a subsequent session to  
350 establish a framework for progression/development. Next, the second one-day workshop took  
351 place followed by the first round of Delphi survey, the second round of Delphi survey, and finally  
352 a stakeholder consultation session.

353 To begin Phase Two, the principal investigators conducted an initial sampling of curricula  
354 and standards documents, incorporating all available national curricula and standards documents  
355 already in use within Australian Education and National Sporting Organizations. Contents were  
356 extracted from the following: (a) ACARA Physical Education Curriculum; (b) Australian Early  
357 Years Curriculum; (c) The Australian General Capabilities Curriculum; (d) The New South Wales  
358 Physical Literacy Continuum; (d) Swimming Australia Standards; (e) Surf-Lifesaving Australia  
359 Standards; (f) Cycling Australia Standards; and (g) ASC Talent Pathway Documents (FTEM =  
360 Foundations-Talent-Elite-Mastery). An inductive thematic analysis of learning phases and

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361 expectations in different domains was conducted (physical, psychological, cognitive and social)  
362 maintaining a traceable audit-trail back to original documents (legacy documents containing each  
363 draft are available from first author on request). Evidence from the systematic review (Phase One)  
364 suggested that linking levels or expectations to age would be inappropriate and not reconcilable  
365 with current evidence – particularly regarding aspects of psycho-social development.

366 Following this initial sampling and inductive thematic analysis, an initial framework was  
367 created for describing progression/development that was not based on age or normative, linear  
368 progressions. In collaboration with the education experts [within the group, the System of](#)  
369 [Observed Learning Outcomes \(SOLO; Biggs & Collis, 1982\)](#) was proposed as a way of structuring  
370 the progressions within the standards. The above inductive analysis of expectations and  
371 competencies was mapped onto SOLO taxonomy learning stages. This initial draft was then  
372 prepared to be presented to the panel at the second live workshop.

373 The second live workshop, conducted in Melbourne, began by introducing the panel to the  
374 aims, key considerations and critical issues in developing the standards framework. The panel  
375 were presented with a review of the project to date, and key current issues for feedback and  
376 resolution, [including: \(a\) the contents of the standards, \(b\) specific suggested wordings, and \(c\) the](#)  
377 [arrangement of the standards into a 4x4 matrix \(four levels of progression informed by SOLO](#)  
378 [taxonomy, and four domains: physical, psychological, cognitive and social\).](#) The panel worked in  
379 groups to offer written feedback directly onto printed samples of the draft standard. As a result of  
380 these processes, the panel: (a) offered initial support for the use of the SOLO taxonomy to structure  
381 the levels/progressions within the standard; (b) offered initial support for the standard addressing  
382 all four learning domains: physical; psychological; cognitive and social; (c) recommended that  
383 descriptors are worded in the form of 'I' statements, for self-evaluation ([for example, 'I can...'](#), 'I

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384 do...’, ‘I am able to...’); (d) strongly recommended including a fifth learning level describing the  
385 initial, as yet unfulfilled, potential to learn. This recommendation was agreed as it would be more  
386 inclusive of all ages and ability-levels, as well as already being specified within the SOLO learning  
387 taxonomy.

388 Once the recommendations and feedback from the live workshop had been incorporated into  
389 a revised draft standard, a Delphi survey was initiated, seeking either consensus or further  
390 constructive feedback. Consensus was sought regarding: (a) the use of four learning domains to  
391 characterize physical literacy, (b) the use of the SOLO taxonomy to capture learning levels, (c) the  
392 labels/descriptors to use for each learning progression/level, and (d) progressions. Consensus was  
393 sought using three response choices: agree, agree with suggestions, and disagree with reason and  
394 alternative. Consensus was reached regarding the questions statements as follows: (a) ‘I agree with  
395 the use of the four learning domains as a way to structure the standards’ (89%); (b) ‘I agree with  
396 the use of the SOLO taxonomy as a way to portray the learning of physical literacy’ (94%); (c) ‘I  
397 agree with the group/label names across the top of the standards document’ (89%); and (d) ‘I agree  
398 that the levels within the standards should not have age or grades specified’ (89%).

399 While >80% consensus was achieved in this round, valid comments and suggestions were  
400 made that prompted a final round of panel feedback. Hence, in the final round of Delphi survey,  
401 suggestions from the panel were incorporated and resubmitted for feedback and consensus.  
402 Specifically, feedback was sought regarding the use of an analogy with the periodic table-of-  
403 chemical elements to create a visual model to accompany the proposed standards. Upon reviewing  
404 sample materials and a written explanation, consensus was reached using the following statement:  
405 ‘I agree with the use of a periodic table metaphor to support and explain the physical literacy  
406 standards’ (82%). Further, consensus was maintained regarding the following statements: (a) ‘I

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407 agree with the use of the four domains in the visual model for physical literacy' (82%); and (b) 'I  
408 agree with the use of the SOLO taxonomy as a way to portray the levels of each element in the  
409 visual model' (82%).

410 With both a set of defining statements, as well as a standards framework and visual model, a  
411 large practitioner workshop was held in Melbourne, with attendees from all the listed stakeholder  
412 groups comprising over 50 participants. In a day-long workshop arranged and facilitated by ASC  
413 staff, the draft project outcomes were presented to stakeholders from community and elite sport  
414 and education sectors. Groups were arranged according to user-group, with researchers, educators,  
415 community sport, elite sport, and policymakers typically seated together in their respective groups.  
416 Each group provided feedback on worked up samples of the standards documents, along with the  
417 opportunity for further feedback to be provided electronically during and following the workshop.  
418 ASC staff collated and reviewed the stakeholder feedback, which was used to inform wording  
419 [updates and clarifications](#) to the Standard. Feedback highlighted perceived tensions between the  
420 standard and the contexts in which it will operate, including: alignment with existing frameworks  
421 (e.g., curriculum); linear versus non-linear progression; and questions over who has a role in  
422 determining what/how/when young people learn. It was recommended [that the standard prioritize](#)  
423 local end-users (e.g., coaches, teachers, parents) to support progression from theory to practice. As  
424 the final products were developed from academic outputs into branded materials and resources,  
425 additional consultation was undertaken by the ASC with relevant stakeholders. These inputs  
426 helped to emphasize the alignment with existing frameworks and to provide appropriate advice  
427 regarding implementation issues (e.g., expectations for delivery, non-linear progressions, etc.).

428

429

## Results

430 Through processes detailed in the Procedure section, the panel reached consensus that it  
431 would require four defining statements to adequately introduce the concept of physical literacy to a  
432 new audience, while also taking the opportunity to clarify key aspects of the definition. Note also  
433 that the need for new wording was identified by end-users, and thus the stakeholder, and this  
434 requirement informed the very framing of the study. Informed by a bespoke systematic review of  
435 current published papers regarding physical literacy and, importantly, related concepts such as  
436 motor development, physical activity participation, [motivation, and confidence ASC, 2017a](#)), the  
437 panel members were active and critical participants in a debate-and-refinement process that led to  
438 the following four defining statements:

- 439 •*Core*: Physical literacy is lifelong holistic learning acquired and applied in movement and  
440 physical activity contexts.
- 441 •*Constitution*: Physical literacy reflects ongoing changes integrating physical, psychological,  
442 cognitive and social capabilities.
- 443 •*Importance*: Physical literacy is vital in helping us lead healthy and fulfilling lives through  
444 movement and physical activity.
- 445 •*Aspiration*: A physically literate person is able to draw on their integrated physical,  
446 psychological, cognitive, and social capacities to support health-promoting and fulfilling  
447 movement and physical activity—relative to their situation and context—throughout their  
448 lifespan.

449 It was necessary to achieve consensus regarding the definition, or defining statements, prior  
450 to developing a standards framework for understanding physical literacy. As well as reviewing the  
451 specific wordings that were proposed in several drafts of the physical literacy standard, the panel

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452 were required to reach consensus regarding: (a) the use of the four learning domains, suggested in  
453 the defining statements, as a way to structure the standards (89% consensus); (b) the learning  
454 model/framework to be used (SOLO taxonomy; Biggs, 1989; Biggs & Collis, 1982; Dudley, 2015)  
455 as a way to articulate the structure and progression of learning within physical literacy (94%  
456 consensus); (c) the group/label names, adapted from the SOLO taxonomy, that were to be used as  
457 level descriptors in the standards document (89% consensus); and (d) that the levels within the  
458 standards should not have age or grades specified (89% consensus).

459 To structure the learning progression, acknowledging it would be important to offer non-  
460 prescriptive and non-linear developmental pathways, the group drew on Biggs' SOLO taxonomy  
461 (Biggs & Collis, 1982; Biggs & Tang, 2011). In this approach, the unfulfilled capability to learn is  
462 represented by a dot (*pre-structural*), whereas initial accumulations of experience varying only in  
463 small degrees are represented first by a line (*uni-structural* – one area/topic/skill), and then several  
464 parallel lines (*multi-structural* – several areas/topics/skills). While those lines are, of course,  
465 linear, there are important additional aspects of learning. For example, when different learnings  
466 become connected and compared/mapped, the translation of ideas between them takes place  
467 through metaphor, analogy, and ultimately a deeper understanding of the structure of a skill or task  
468 (*relational*). Further, there is a level of learning where these rich and connected mental models can  
469 be abstracted and used creatively to solve new, novel, and interesting problems that do not follow  
470 naturally from what was learned in the more 'linear' stage (*extended abstract*). A final Delphi  
471 step, in response to feedback from the panel and stakeholders, led to the establishment of a range  
472 of 'elements'—analogous to chemical elements in the periodic table—with which interested  
473 participants could 'build' the profiles of movements and activities they wish to engage in. Further

474 details of how this might inform a subsequent measurement/assessment approach is presented by  
475 Barnett and colleagues within this issue (see Barnett et al., 2019).

#### 476 **Discussion**

477 This paper set out to establish how leading experts in Australia defined and construed  
478 physical literacy, by using a modified Delphi methodology. These modifications were enacted  
479 with a view to generating a product that was specifically suitable for adoption and implementation  
480 by Australian teachers, coaches, parents, children, policy-makers, and researchers alike. To  
481 address these challenges, the panel converged on a consensus that avoided ‘forcing’ a simple single  
482 definition, and instead resulted in four defining statements. Within these four defining statements,  
483 the panel reached consensus that physical literacy is composed of integrated developments and  
484 adaptations spanning four learning domains: physical, psychological, **cognitive**, and social. Hence,  
485 this important decision led to the proposal of a standards framework for physical literacy that drew  
486 upon all four of these learning domains. Likewise, a set of guidelines was prepared (see Barnett et  
487 al., 2019) to clarify the extremely diverse and non-linear approaches to assessment that are  
488 facilitated by the expert panel’s consensus exercise. That paper specifically emphasized that  
489 approaches to evaluation should not seek normative benchmarks, interpersonal comparisons, or  
490 narrow foci on exclusively physical, motor, or fitness criteria. Perhaps the most notable reflection  
491 on this process is that developing a definition and standards framework for one context (Australia)  
492 generates important new perspectives and insights regarding existing, established approaches.

493 The defining statements developed through this expert consensus exercise are notably  
494 different in their wording from existing definitions at the time of publication, although it is  
495 important to emphasize that several groups had sought to clarify that physical literacy comprises  
496 integrated development spanning multiple learning domains, including the International Physical



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497 Literacy Association (IPLA, 2017). While the IPLA specified physical, affective, and cognitive  
498 domains, excluding the social, Mandigo, Francis, Lodewyk, and Lopez (2012) included these three  
499 plus a social domain. Sport New Zealand (2018) went further, suggesting a spiritual dimension to  
500 physical literacy. Likewise, all groups have emphasized that one's development in these domains  
501 is 'entwined,' 'co-dependent,' 'integrated,' and/or 'holistic.' Ultimately, the expert panel reached  
502 the consensus that using wording based on selected, quite Westernized (cf. Evans, 2014; Ward &  
503 Quennerstedt, 2015; Williams, 2018), concepts from this wide range of developmental domains—  
504 motivation, confidence, competence and knowledge—may be misleading, and potentially  
505 inappropriate, not least when considering aspects of Australia's Indigenous and immigrant  
506 cultures. Likewise, the live debates in workshops gradually grew to recognize that while there are  
507 already thriving literatures in motor control, physical activity, motivation, and confidence, physical  
508 literacy needed to be defined as more than simply the sum of those parts. While those literatures  
509 are relevant and helpful for researching and guiding implementation within physical literacy, other  
510 important concepts can be overlooked by focusing too narrowly on the four concepts typically  
511 named in the definition of physical literacy. Likewise, important connections between concepts,  
512 and emergent properties of systems, could be obfuscated by such a wording. Hence, while  
513 different isn't always better (cf. Roberts, 2012), we contend that the four defining statements  
514 developed by this expert panel may be both more appropriate for conveying the intended meaning  
515 of physical literacy, as well as more readily adopted and integrated in the current practices of  
516 teachers, coaches, health practitioners, parents, children, and policy-makers.

517 Further to the discussed changes in wording, a decision was reached by the panel to converge  
518 on a series of defining statements, outlining: (a) the core of physical literacy – focused on the  
519 inherent potential of all humans to learn through physical interaction with the environment; (b) its

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520 constitution, based on integrated development spanning the four learning domains of physical,  
521 psychological, cognitive, and social; (c) its importance, in that physical literacy helps a person to  
522 learn more about the world, become more capable and ultimately pursue a range of fulfilling  
523 activities, as well as the known benefits to health associated with physical activity; and finally (d)  
524 the aspiration – describing a configuration, or possibly configurations, of this learning that  
525 becomes self-perpetuating, such that the individual persists with physical activity and movement  
526 pursuits, and/or re-engages following interruptions such as injury, or significant life-events.  
527 Clearly, literature regarding physical literacy attempts to outline all of these, sometimes within the  
528 definition (e.g., “...to take responsibility engagement in physical activities for life;” IPLA, 2017),  
529 and sometimes in the accompanying text. Following a series of engaging discussions, the panel  
530 **members** were ultimately satisfied that four transparent and clear statements were more  
531 informative and accessible than attempting to convey all these points at once, in a single statement.  
532 Further, attempting to convey the core, inherent potential of all humans to learn through physical  
533 movement in the same sentence as alluding to the importance of frequent engagement in physical  
534 activity for health was viewed as a potential source of tension and contradictions. Two thought-  
535 experiments were helpful in this regard, both of which were to illustrate conceptual ‘double-  
536 dissociations’ between physical literacy and (a) meeting the physical activity guidelines, and (b)  
537 achieving good motor competence in a given skill or range of skills. Regarding frequent physical  
538 activity, the panel were persuaded that someone who is highly disposed to engage in physical  
539 activity and movement pursuits, but temporarily prevented by injury (for example), might  
540 demonstrate a more adaptive form of physical literacy than someone who simply sits on an  
541 exercise bike at the same intensity for the prescribed 30 minutes every day, without ever seeking to  
542 improve or adapt. Thus, physical literacy could be conceptually distinguished from physical

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543 activity. Likewise, a person who has become highly skilled in several motor competencies, but as  
544 a result of disengaging and unenjoyable training experiences, may demonstrate a less adaptive  
545 profile of physical literacy than someone who struggles to display co-ordination in kicking,  
546 throwing and catching, but who enjoys engaging in physical activity and finds it fun/rewarding.  
547 Hence, motor competence could again be theoretically distinguished from physical literacy,  
548 allowing the panel to resolve queries as to whether physical literacy was one-and-the-same with (a)  
549 physical activity, and (b) motor competence. [The expert panel was satisfied that the](#)  
550 [concepts/behaviors were highly](#) related, but not the same. Overall, while operating ‘in the shadow’  
551 of pre-existing and popular definition wordings, we present these amendments as potential  
552 progressions and improvements to how we define physical literacy, particularly with an emphasis  
553 on presenting stakeholders with accessible concepts that are less likely to meet resistance when  
554 being implemented by such a wide spectrum of ‘end users’ ([ASC 2017b](#); [Kristen, Ivarsson, Parker,](#)  
555 [& Ziegert, 2015](#); [Macdonald, Abbott, Lisahunter, Hay, & McCuaig, 2014](#)).

556 In addition to the above work on conceptual clarity, which was required to pursue consensus  
557 on a definition or defining statements, the group sought to develop a standards framework to  
558 support implementation in a variety of settings, including schools, community sport, elite sport,  
559 policy-making, research, adult exercise and health settings, and even aged-care. To pursue such a  
560 framework, the facilitators conducted a thematic content analysis of existing models and theories  
561 for physical education, sport development and physical activity participation. Once a wide range  
562 of potential level-descriptors had been amassed, it was necessary to articulate the way such  
563 competencies develop/progress – which was problematic once the original, foundational literature  
564 review established that physical literacy should not be considered a ‘linear’ trajectory, or  
565 articulated using normative expectations (e.g., age-based descriptors). Given the preponderance of

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566 existing approaches and frameworks that use age as the key determinant of expectations, ranging  
567 from school curricula to the Long Term Athlete Development model (Balyi, Cardinal, Higgs,  
568 Norris, & Way, 2006), the panel spent significant time and effort negotiating this issue.  
569 Ultimately, the education specialists within the group suggested (and debated) the potential of  
570 Biggs' (1989) SOLO taxonomy to structure the learning progression or 'journey,' on a range from  
571 holding the potential to learn, to accruing practice in a narrow skill-set, before several such  
572 learning structures become relatable and comparable, ready to be abstracted and applied in new,  
573 diverse, and integrated ways. Under this approach, one may characterize their own current profile,  
574 or configuration, of physical literacy as anything from simply holding unrealized potential, to a  
575 thriving and richly interconnected suite of physical activity and movement pursuits. Under this  
576 approach, there is no 'failure' or 'illiteracy,' which is compatible with the intentions behind  
577 physical literacy thinking (cf. Whitehead, 2001, 2010). Likewise, it was suitably clear that  
578 comparing individuals can be problematic, as two learners may be achieving superficially similar  
579 profiles, but in entirely different contexts (e.g., in water, on grass, or by climbing mountains).

580       The outcomes of this study carry many important implications for research, theory, and  
581 practice, as well as the important linkages between these often-segregated considerations. It is  
582 informative to reflect on the importance of conceptual clarity when presenting a novel concept to  
583 audiences who may be hearing it for the first time. The 'implementation-ready' emphasis of the  
584 current research forced the panel to reflect on this critical issue, and overall there was agreement  
585 that seeking to over-simplify into a single statement defining physical literacy held the potential to  
586 mislead and disillusion new audiences, and that parsimony should be pursued in the form of clear,  
587 transparent statements addressing physical literacy's core, composition, importance, and aspiration.  
588 Ultimately, as discussed elsewhere at length, simplicity/parsimony is a highly subjective

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589 judgement, and not a reliable guide to validity (Baker, 2003; Sober, 1996). The panel in the  
590 present study reflected on previous approaches before agreeing on a viewpoint of ‘transparency-as-  
591 parsimony,’ as opposed to ‘brevity-as-parsimony.’ The issue of parsimony and conceptual clarity  
592 permeates all of science, from pure research to implementation projects, and two contrasting  
593 approaches to parsimony described above generate notably different solutions.

594 For researchers, the current findings carry an important implication; approaches to  
595 measurement which depend on linear modelling, averages and simplistic inter-personal/inter-group  
596 comparisons can all be highly problematic in relation to a holistic, complex concept such as  
597 physical literacy. The standards framework put forward by this expert panel attempted to  
598 emphasize unique and individual profiles that can be characterized at an abstract level (using the  
599 SOLO taxonomy), but which are extremely difficult to directly compare and contrast between  
600 individuals. Notably, statistical analysis techniques and modelling approaches do exist for  
601 analyzing non-linear data, and the assumptions of simple linear scales do not necessarily need to be  
602 applied to data in order to meaningfully interpret, model, and test theories (Ivancevic, Jain,  
603 Pattison, & Hariz, 2009; Rattan & Hsieh, 2005). Measuring multiple constructs, frequently over a  
604 prolonged time frame, especially with a view to identifying underlying emergent/latent variables, is  
605 still quantitative but might be viewed as characterizing and modelling, rather than the commonly  
606 conceived one-off ‘measurement.’ In fact, given that physical literacy, in the approach offered  
607 here, is most closely associated with learning, then this characterizing of (non-linear, complex)  
608 changes over time is a much more appropriate way of viewing measurement with respect to  
609 physical literacy. Under the framework proposed in this paper, learning curves, rates-of-change,  
610 and conditions facilitating change/learning, would all be more useful concepts than simply setting  
611 up pre-to-post measures of isolated individual variables, averaged across large groups. Hence, as

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612 noted earlier, considering how physical literacy may be best applied to a new context may also  
613 generate useful insights and reflections regarding existing, established programs.

614         With respect to applied practice, one important implication of the defining statements and  
615 standards framework put forward by this research is that any practitioner's *current practice* can be  
616 readily encoded, *as it is*, into the visual model provided. The core of our proposed definition for  
617 physical literacy is learning, which more fundamentally means any and all adaptations a person  
618 experiences in relation to being physically embodied. Hence, anybody can engage with the *core*  
619 defining statement, without needing to worry about achieving a level that is sufficient for health, or  
620 even being concerned about whether what they currently do is 'right.' In fact, only the 'aspiration'  
621 defining statement describes a configuration (or potential configurations) that may require  
622 significant work and development/learning to attain. Likewise, the standards framework that has  
623 been generated spans the full range from merely holding potential, through to engaging in rich and  
624 diverse, fulfilling movement experiences.

625         Further, the resulting standards framework makes a point of including four domains of  
626 learning, physical, psychological, cognitive, and social, and progressing through the 'levels'  
627 requires increasing integration of learning between these areas. Hence, as well as allowing any  
628 interested party to encode their own, or another learner's physical literacy, regardless of current  
629 level, the framework also offers immediate guidance on how to progress in relation to their current  
630 stage/phase. In this respect, the products of this Delphi study are presented as highly accessible,  
631 inclusive, engaging, and supportive of participation and engagement. Importantly, once a person  
632 understands which SOLO stage they are currently demonstrating in a particular skill or area, the  
633 next step is also clarified. For example, the first step of learning any skill is to accumulate  
634 experience and understand the basics, that is, how force and speed parameters might change in a

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635 throwing or kicking movement. From there, the second stage might involve changing the context  
636 or type of skill by small degrees so that a suite of relatable skill-sets is constructed (i.e., a series of  
637 parallel lines); for example, staying with throwing and kicking, using different sized objects,  
638 different surfaces, and using instruments such as rackets and bats may be appropriate progressions.  
639 Once several ‘parallel’ learning structures have been accumulated, then a learner needs to be  
640 encouraged to compare, contrast, relate, and transfer information between them, and this is a  
641 difficult set of skills in themselves, as well as depending on the accumulation of experiences first.  
642 Finally, once a learner becomes adept at relating and catalyzing learning between similar (but  
643 perhaps, over time, increasingly diverse) skills, then they should be encouraged to transfer and  
644 adapt this understanding into new, novel, and challenging environments. The skill of using  
645 existing capabilities to solve new and unfamiliar challenges is important, and yet relatively rare  
646 compared to those that have preceded in the learning history.

**647 Limitations**

648 This study contained several limitations, not least that the topic area to which we sought to  
649 bring clarity had developed several tensions, obfuscations and, *despite noble intentions*, some  
650 philosophical language that appeared to be discouraging the adoption and implementation of  
651 physical literacy (Hyndman & Pill, 2017). Consensus from a Delphi process should not be taken  
652 to mean that a ‘correct’ answer has necessarily been found, but rather that experts have been  
653 engaged in seeking a convergence of opinion and state-of-the-art knowledge (Hsu & Sandford,  
654 2007; Keeney et al., 2011). The products emerging from such a consensus should then be tested  
655 and evaluated with a view to establishing their validity and applied utility, as well as being  
656 constantly reviewed in relation to evolving best practice. While Delphi methodology has been  
657 criticized for forcing consensus, and potentially not allowing panelists to elaborate on their views

658 (Goodman, 1987; Keeney et al., 2011; Pill, 1971), small modifications to the original approach  
659 (e.g., the group workshops, stakeholder engagement and co-authorship model introduced in this  
660 study) can still facilitate these important inputs and influences (Keeney et al., 2001). The products  
661 developed during this process are presented as holding the potential to at least reduce the  
662 inconsistencies and tensions in the physical literacy literature, both for application within Australia  
663 but also with potential implications for other contexts, but that is not to say that these issues are  
664 resolved once and for all. There remains scope to assess whether the solutions offered in this paper  
665 transfer into other cultures and contexts, or whether they simply add another voice to a crowded  
666 debate. As noted previously, it remains impossible to conclusively demonstrate that an ideal panel  
667 has been convened, or that additional insight may have been gained by adding new members.  
668 Nonetheless, the feedback from panel members, stakeholders, and end-users has been reassuring  
669 that there is significant added value in the new wording choices and standards framework  
670 developed. We also recognize that using a visual model with apparent stages and levels to  
671 represent the physical literacy may predispose people to viewing development as linear and  
672 normative. With the agreement of the key stakeholders, wording choices within the level-  
673 descriptors and accompanying explanatory text (as well as a visual model based on an analogy to  
674 the periodic table of elements; see Figures 1 and 2) were used to were used to prevent/minimize  
675 such preconceptions from surviving anything beyond a cursory glance at the documents.

#### 676 **Conclusion**

677 Overall, the task of defining and offering a framework for physical literacy has been, and  
678 may continue to be, a challenging one for researchers and practitioners around the world. The  
679 process followed in Australia for resolving these issues, as well as the products generated, are  
680 presented here as transparently as possible, for review and consideration by a wider audience. We



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681 hope that other interested parties, even if they choose to adopt another wording or approach, may  
682 benefit from reflecting on the issues faced, and solutions generated, by this project. The most  
683 important take-home messages from this study were that: (a) it may be helpful to distinguish  
684 between two defining statements of physical literacy – the potential held by all humans versus the  
685 aspiration to reach a stage where one’s physical literacy is self-perpetuating and health-promoting;  
686 (b) it is possible to conceptualize a holistic, highly integrated concept such as physical literacy, but  
687 that many currently favored measurement approaches can undermine this process; (c) a standards  
688 framework based on the SOLO taxonomy of learning was beneficial for characterizing physical  
689 literacy informing measurement/assessment, and guiding activity planning according to learner  
690 profiles; and (d) it can be beneficial to work closely with stakeholders and commissioning bodies  
691 with an emphasis on end-user engagement and utilization. The emphasis of this study was to not  
692 simply to create a ‘correct’ formulation, but rather to create a coherent, aligned solution from  
693 definition and conceptualization through to products and materials, to promote adoption and  
694 engagement. Overall, therefore, the emphasis of this study on creating a contextually sensitive  
695 approach for Australia, as well as the emphasis on implementation and stakeholder engagement,  
696 has generated both the product described herein, and important reflections and insights for future  
697 programs seeking to promote physical literacy.

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## DEFINING PHYSICAL LITERACY

870 Table 1

871 *Summary of Panel Members*

Characteristic	Descriptors	N	
Sex	Female	8	
	Male	11	
Age (years)	Average	40.4	
	Range	30–72	
Location	Australia	15	
	United Kingdom	8	
Area of Expertise (panel self-nominated)	Pedagogy (PE and Coaching)	7	
	Physical Education	6	
	Physical Activity (and/or Sedentary Behavior)	5	
	Children and Youth Sport (Participation, Benefits)	5	
	Assessment and Measurement	5	
	Preventive Medicine and/or Public Health Promotion	4	
	Motivation	4	
	Motor Development and Skill Acquisition	3	
	Physical self-perceptions	3	
	Elite Sports and High Performance	3	
	Physiotherapy / Occupational Therapy	2	
	Talent Pathway (Talent Identification and Development)	2	
	Curriculum Design	2	
	Australian Indigenous Perspectives	1	
	Career Length (years)	Sum	364
		Average	20.3
Range		5–43	
Number of publications (NB: several panel members were not academics, and so did not publish papers)	Sum	1398	
	Average (of those who publish)	77.6	
	Range	0–268	

872 *Note.* One panel member recused themselves from further involvement during Phase 1.

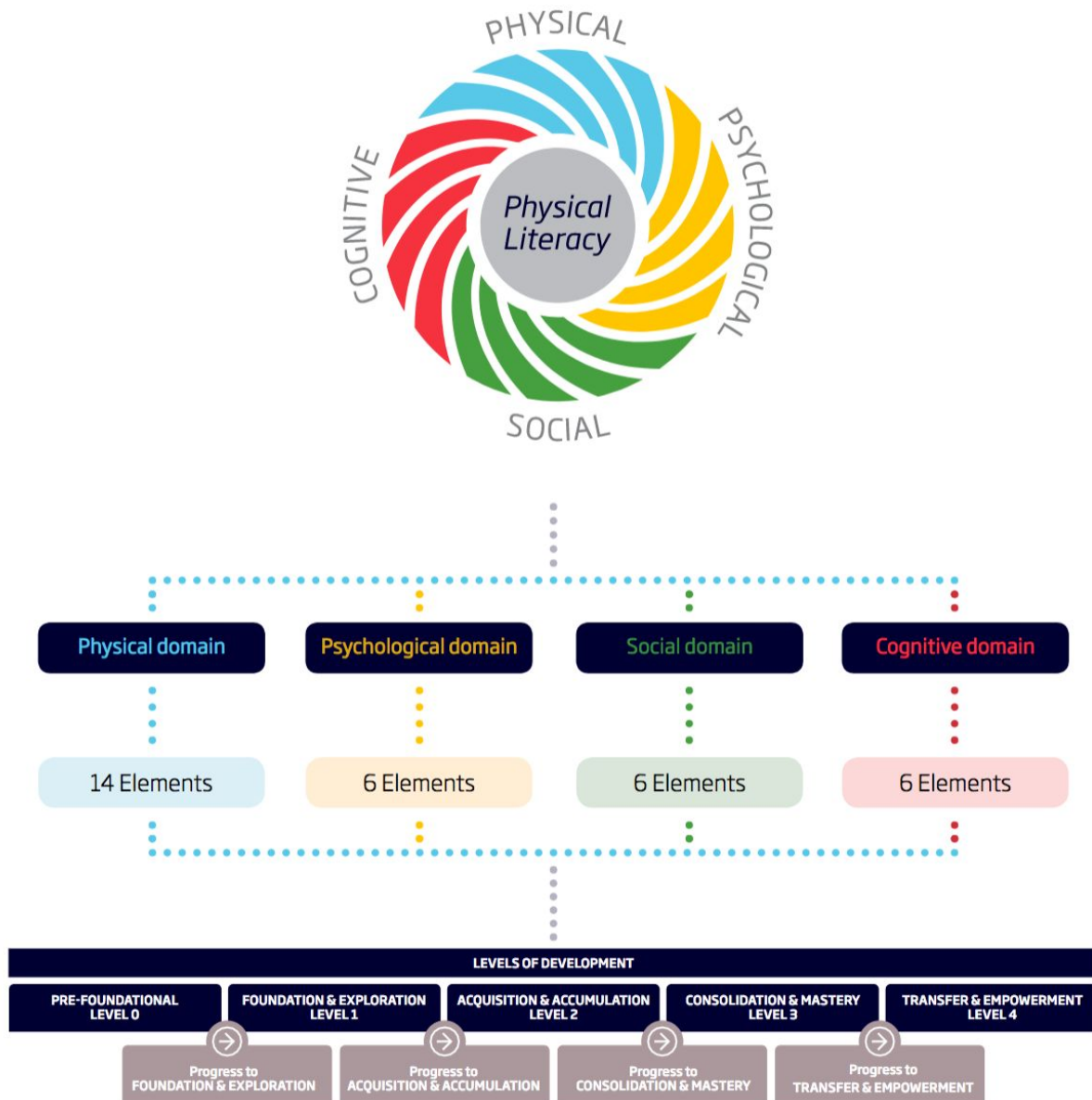
## DEFINING PHYSICAL LITERACY

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873 Table 2

874 *Summary of the Panel's Initial Ratings of the Strength of Relationship Between Concepts and*  
 875 *Aspects of Physical Literacy. NB: Only means  $\geq 5$  are shown.*

Concept	Core	Construct	Antecedent	Consequence	Philosophy
Competence	7.8	8.2	5.7	5.4	
Confidence	7.60	8.00	6.50	6.00	
Occurring across whole lifespan	7.50	5.80		6.00	
Human Movement	6.80	5.80			
Motivation towards PA	6.70	7.00	6.70	7.30	
Physical Movement	6.40	6.50	6.70	7.90	
Inclusive	6.2				6.5
Lifelong disposition to PA	6.10			7.00	
Holistic	6.1				7.2
Knowledge and Attitudes	5.80	7.00	6.60	6.90	
Whole person	5.80				7.10
Perceptions of Physical Competence	5.40	7.50	6.60	5.90	
Learning	5.30			5.10	
Integrated	5.2				5.9
Physical fitness		7.00	5.40	8.30	
Physical self-perceptions		6.90	5.60	7.20	
FMS		6.30	5.40	7.30	
Physical Education			6.50		
Pedagogy			5.90		
Occurring in Childhood and adolescence			4.90		
Sport participation				8.50	
Meeting PA guidelines				8.30	
Health Outcomes				7.80	
Health Behaviors				7.60	
Meeting SB guidelines				7.30	
Mental Health				6.70	
Sporting Success				5.70	
Embodied					6.50
Existentialism					5.60
Phenomenology					5.60

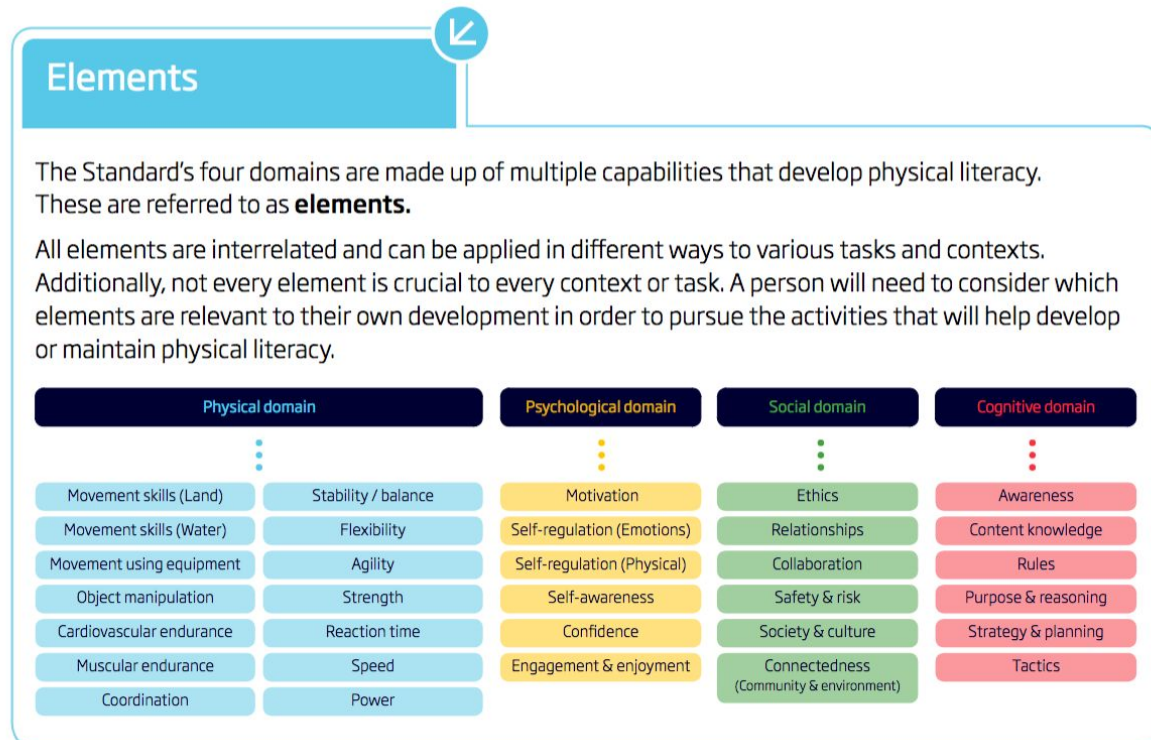


877

878 *Figure 1.* The resulting standards framework that was reviewed and agreed by the expert  
 879 panel, deemed to be a suitable “implementation-ready” framework to be recommended for  
 880 adoption by the stakeholders.

881

882



883

884 *Figure 2.* The resulting physical literacy “elements” that were reviewed and agreed by the  
 885 expert panel and adopted by the stakeholder.

886