

5.6.06

Committee Secretary
Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology
and the Arts References Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Secretary,

Re: Inquiry into women in sport and recreation in Australia
Subject Sport - Football/Soccer

I apologise for the lateness of this communication but it was only through a chance reference by a friend that I became aware of the Inquiry as no advice of it has been passed on to the State Women's Standing Committee (SWSC) of Football Queensland.

My connection to soccer ranges through Club, Regional (Mackay and Brisbane), State, National and International levels. Although the present designation for the sport is "Football", please excuse references to "Soccer" which is the title used throughout a career which has covered 30+ years where my major contributions were through the following positions:-

Secretary - Mackay Juniors and Seniors, Brisbane Jnrs
First female soccer referee in Australia
Foundation Vice-President of the Australian Women's Soccer Assn
(later President, Tour Leader, Finance Director),
Foundation President of South Qld. Women's Soccer Assn. (later WSQ)
Foundation President of Oceania Women's Football Confederation,
Board Member of Queensland Soccer Federation (Men) (later Vice-President)
Member of Brisbane Men's Soccer Laws and Order Committee
A First Director of the restructured Football Qld.

This extensive input has been recognised through:-

Award of an Order of Australia Medal
Presentation of Life Memberships to Qld Women's, Australian Women's
and Qld. Men's Associations
Confederation of Australian Sport Award of Merit
Induction into the Football Federation of Australia Hall of Honour
Premier of Queensland's Services to Sport Award.

The development of soccer for women both nationally and statewide is outlined in the two enclosed books which may be of interest to Inquiry members.

While I do not usually make a habit of such an extensive listing of my soccer background, I feel that I have to give the Inquiry an understanding of the wide range of my involvement apart from my long-term connection with women's soccer.

Participation in soccer is divided into sectors which cater for separate competitions for senior men and junior men, women (both senior and junior) and indoor soccer together with the officiating areas of refereeing and coaching, all supported by administration and technical departments. Amalgamation between the Men's sector and previously independent Women's and Junior's sectors was concluded in 2004. Negotiations with Indoor Soccer are proceeding.

(b)i. - Number of women actively participating

Women's soccer, according to the ASC, is the fastest growing sport in Australia with participation under the auspices of Women's Soccer Queensland (WSQ) standing at 12000 (2005 census) and nationally exceeding 70000. Player's ages range from U/7 to Open and Masters. Competitions cover primary and secondary schools in addition to club, zone, state, national and international events. Brisbane has seen numbers increase from 8 teams in 1974 to the current 200 teams and this growth has been replicated throughout Australia.

(b)ii. - Characteristics of women not participating

Because of the worldwide nature of soccer, practical experience has shown that there are no identifiable characteristics which have precluded women from participating.

(b)iv. - Effectiveness of current State/Federal Grants

On a State level the effectiveness of current grants is impossible to judge given that the SWSC has not been asked by the current FQ administration to provide submissions and is not notified of the specific projects to which the Grant must be applied.

- * Until 4-5 years ago, Women's Soccer received a grant in their own right then the Government (in its wisdom) combined the individual men's and women's grants and paid the total to FQ for distribution.
- * Since then, the independent WSQ grant of \$44000 has been:
 - (1) reduced by 20% to \$35000 in line with the grant reduction,
 - (2) further reduced to \$20000 by FQ supposedly to equalise subsidies between sectors (FQ doubling their share by claiming two shares - Administration and Men - although one person filled both roles), and
 - (3) eliminated altogether - no distribution specified for any sector.

(b)vii. - Retention of athletes

It has been difficult in recent years to stage State Open Championships as the emphasis for selection to the National Open team has switched from competition-based to Academy-based. Many players do not want to meet the cost of competing at a State level if they cannot progress to a National event with its opportunity for National selection.

- * As there has not been a meeting of the National Women's Standing Committee for the past two years, there has been a hiatus in the communication and interaction between National and State levels of women's soccer. As a consequence there seems to be little movement on the development of either of the two alternatives under consideration at National level - a Women's National League and/or a National Women's Open Championship.

- * The establishment of a Women's National League will be governed by:
 - (1) the availability of the necessary finance
 - (2) the need to obtain the necessary media coverage to justify the expense,
 - (3) the professionalisation of the participants as amateurs cannot afford to compete on a weekly level over a season.

- * The re-establishment of the National Women's Open Championship would not:
 - (1) entail significant outlays or time off work for the players, and
 - (2) would have the benefit of providing national selectors with comparisons between players in match conditions rather than relying on input from Academy coaches whose prime concern is technical expertise.

(c) Media portrayal

Unfortunately, the media coverage of women's sport in capital cities is more noted for its absence than its presence. For instance, even with the increased coverage generated by the Socceroos achieving a world ranking of 42 and competing in the Men's World Cup for the first time since 1974, the Matildas (world ranking of 15 and now qualified for their 3rd World Cup in the past 12 years) hardly rated a mention in the print media. In the electronic media their curtain-raiser to the recent Australia/Greece match didn't even rate a highlights package.

- * It would be marvellous if the government could regulate to oblige media outlets to provide regular coverage but probably this is not possible without breaching the long established principle of freedom of the press. The comment usually given by editorial staff is "we publish what we believe the public wants". Presumably they believe that soccer participants do not read papers.

(d)i.- Women in leadership roles

Referees

- * Queensland exceeds the national average for top-level female referees (having at least five women with FIFA qualifications and experience) and also in female referees officiating at other levels. This has been achieved through progressive programs developed through co-operation between the two sectors - Women and Referees.

Coaches

- * There are many women throughout the State who coach women's Club and Zone teams and several have had charge of State women's teams, but there has been no mention of a woman coaching a top men's team. Many women now participate in annual coaching courses and, when qualified, work with the women and junior players (male and female) at club level. Unfortunately, there is no formal record of actual numbers as the Coaches' Standing Committee is still in the process of being formed.

Administrators

- * At Club and Zone level many women occupy administrative positions such as Secretary, Fixture Controller or Registrar, but there are few who reach (or even aspire to) the level of President or Vice-President.

(d)ii - Issues associated with women in these roles

In recent years an approach which advocates that top level administration positions should be filled by "independents" (defined as people having no prior connection to soccer) has been promoted as the ideal.

- * This interpretation denies advancement to State (and possibly National level) of experienced administrators who have worked with Clubs and Zones.
- * It says that a business can be run more efficiently by people who know nothing about the product with which they are dealing.
- * A more positive definition would be that the people elected should be those prepared to deal fairly and equitably with the entire membership to maximise the development and progress of the body concerned regardless of sector loyalties.

(d)iv. - Strategies to improve the numbers...

In Queensland neither the SWSC nor the Referees are represented on the Board (either by direct election or ex-officio appointment).

- * For the women, this has resulted in policies being promulgated without reference to, or input from, the SWSC.
 1. Guaranteed income has been restricted to State Registration Fees (about 50% of previous income)
 2. Championship Team Nomination Fees have been increased by 300% (more expense for players at Zone level)
 3. Meeting expenses previously met by WSQ have now been transferred to the Zones (more expense for players at Zone level).
 4. Age restrictions have been imposed which, through unwieldy and time-consuming compliance procedures, limit the progress of elite players and/or teams with mother/daughter player combinations
- * The composition/structure of a State Board sets the standard for subsidiaries such as Zones and Clubs who replicate the State structure.
- * Any imbalance between the sectors at the top level (State) and/or intermediate level (Zone) has the potential to generate distrust and dis-satisfaction in any sector not represented in the decision-making process.
- * In the restructure conducted by FFA, a Memorandum of Understanding (unsigned copy attached) to regulate their amalgamation was entered into by the Presidents of FQ and WSQ in a spirit of mutual goodwill.
- * Despite assurances that the 2005 Board intended to honour this MOU, the following itemisation shows that all seven (7) Principles in this MOU have been overturned since the April, 2004 AGM. This illustrates what can happen through lack of representation on a Board.

- Principle 1 - One major disadvantage is through FINANCE where, without consultation, previous income has been halved and expenditure amended to the detriment of women's programs.
- Principle 2 - The State CEO now instructs the Women's Administrator on matters of governance rather than just overseeing management. A major problem on the appointment of a new Women's Administrator was averted when the SWSC Chair insisted on advertising the position instead of accepting the CEO's recommendation which involved an increase of \$5000 in the SWSC wages budget and an applicant who was the CEO's partner (this relationship not revealed to SWSC Chair).
- Principle 3 - see comments on Principle 1
- Principle 4 - see comments on Principle 1
- Principle 5 - see comments on Principle 1
- Principle 6 - SWSC has managed to retain the right to appoint State Team Officials but budget requirements (such as separate 20-seater buses for each team) have been ignored.
- Principle 7 - If there have been discussions relating to the development of a Business Plan for FQ, then the SWSC has not been involved.

Recommendation

To ensure a balanced approach to conducting a multi-gender sport, the Inquiry should give serious consideration to the introduction of legislation which provides guarantees that each gender/sector (with particular reference to women in sport) be represented at all levels of administration.

I would be happy to appear before the Inquiry to answer any questions and to enlarge on any of the concerns listed in this submission.

Thanking you,



ELAINE WATSON O.A.M.
25 Statesman Crescent, SUNNYBANK HILLS 4109
Phone/Fax: (07) 3273 5850

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

This Agreement between Soccer Queensland Ltd (SQ) and Women's Soccer Queensland Inc (WSQ) establishes the principles to be observed with regard to the Queensland Women's Standing Committee (QWSC) assuming the responsibilities and operations of WSQ following the implementation of the SQ Constitution adopted on 22 February, 2004.

Soccer Qld. Ltd recognises the following:

- The long-standing successful organisation and management by WSQ which has contributed to soccer for women become the fastest growing sport in Australia.
- The co-operation of WSQ in developing structural arrangements for an equitable unification of soccer administration in Queensland.

Principles

1. That women in soccer will not be materially disadvantaged in any way through the transfer of the responsibilities and operations of WSQ to the QWSC.
2. That the appointment of the QWSC Executive Officer be approved by the QWSC with the Appointee being responsible to -
 - (a) the State CEO in matters relating to management, and
 - (b) the Chair of the QWSC in matters relating to governance
3. That funding directed to the QWSC from income derived from statutory sources such as QWSC Administration Fees and Sports Injury Insurance surplus (senior and junior), NRF Rebates (currently junior only), is to be calculated on the total number of women players in those categories registered with SQ.
4. That the funding directed to the QWSC from income derived from any sponsorship programs (such as the Marketing Scheme) which are wholly or partially based on the participation of women players is to be calculated according to a formula which recognises the total number of women players (senior and junior) in relation to the total player base registered with SQ.
5. That the funding directed to the QWSC from the Queensland Government Grant is to be the subject of open discussions between the SQ Board and representatives of its Standing Committees.
6. That the formulation and conduct of development programs for women such as State Championships and specialised coaching clinics, together with the selection of State Teams, the appointment of State Team Officials (coaches/managers/trainers etc), and the preparation of the relevant budgets, are the responsibility of the QWSC and its Executive Officer.
7. That the QWSC is to be represented in all discussions relating to the development of a Business Plan for SQ.

In agreeing to these Principles, SQ and WSQ acknowledge that the QWSC will assume the responsibilities and operations previously undertaken by WSQ so that the participation of women in all aspects of a single integrated soccer administration will continue the growth achieved under the auspices of WSQ.

.....
Geoff Foster,
President SQ (Date).....

.....
Lyn Ketter.,
President WSQ (Date).....