

Attached please find a response from the Women's Sport Foundation of WA (Inc.) to the Inquiry into women in sport and recreation in Australia (Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Committee).

Jennifer Riatti
President
Womensport West
Women's Sport Foundation of WA (Inc.)
PO Box 57
Claremont 6910
Western Australia

a. Health benefits

There is a large body of peer-reviewed research which has been widely published over the last ten plus years clearly showing the significant health benefits for people of all ages, including women, of participating in organised sport and recreation. This body of work has been published in highly reputable international journals all over the world and Womensport West is sure that the Inquiry will be directed to these significant and comprehensive research findings.

b. Accessibility for women of all ages

There are also significant data available, which highlight participation rates. These data show the significant drop in participation rates of adolescent girls. Also these data show the significant shortfall in participation rates of women from lower socio-economic groups, less well educated women, indigenous women and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. In addition, women of 45+ years of age have lower participation rates. Also, there is a significant impact when multiple factors come into play and this causes a multiplier effect. Little research has been done in this area to determine the impact of these multiple factors and the level of disadvantage which results from this multiplier effect.

Lack of participation by women has been known for a significant period of time. The barriers have been clearly identified both at the resource level as well as the strategic and policy level but there has not been any long term, well-resourced, strategic, national and state partnership to make significant inroads into the core barriers to participation. There have been a lot of "Have a Go" days, which have gone and went but the core barriers of cost, childcare, equity and equality, non-gender friendly environments, male dominated structures etc remain.

c. Portrayal of women's sport in the media

High media profile sports are still those that are male dominated. Achieving balance in coverage and recognition of achievements of female athletes remains a challenge. However, there are now a number of female journalists working in both the print and TV media outlets and this over time should progress the amount and portrayal of women's sport in the media. Appointment of female sports editors will also have a positive impact on this issue.

We have moved beyond having to have female surfers photographed in their bikinis but far too often, for example, photos of women tennis players are not often promoting their athletic ability but rather their capacity to sell a paper. In addition there is inadequate coverage of women in a range of roles and diverse opportunities for women of all ages and ethnicities to become involved in sport.

d. **Women in leadership roles in sport**

This is perhaps the area where women remain most significantly disadvantaged and where we could make the biggest difference in the shortest time. The vast majority, of elite and grass roots; coaches, managers, support staff, organizing committees, referees, boards etc are men. There are few clear development opportunities and pathways for women. At the recent World Conference on Women and Sport in Kumamoto, Japan 10-14 May, **105 sports were represented and 100 out of the 105 representatives were men.** Why is this still happening?

e. **Eleven Steps Forward**

Given adequate resourcing and a genuine long-term commitment to advancing equity through wide ranging inclusive practices the following strategies would make a difference.

- 1. Engage with and learn from the vast body of national and international research including Australian Research Council(ARC) funded work and Australian Sports Commission reports.**
- 2. Make a significant 4-year funding commitment to the issue independent of ASC funding.**
- 3. Develop a long- term strategic framework that all states and territories could use as a blueprint with targets that will advance equity. Require annual reporting against these targets and rewards for models of best practice.**
- 4. Tie all future funding to the ASC and the Departments of Sport and Recreation(DSR) to achieving those targets.**
- 5. Employ more women on merit in the senior positions at the ASC and let them become a source of good practice and a role model for the sport and recreation industry,sporting associations and organisations at all levels.**
- 6. Run an equity measure over all funding and policy decisions to ensure that we start to see some changes across entrenched inequalities. Promote and reward cross-sector actions and networks**
- 7. Look overseas and see if there have been any significant interventions in this area over the last 10-15 years. Implement those interventions in Australia.**
- 8. Be serious about expenditure and evaluation in this area and stop expending funds on strategies that have made little difference in the past or strategies that we have no idea whether they are actually making a difference.**
- 9. Start, within the school system, to address some of these issues.**
- 10. Be so determined that in 2011 progress will have been made and we will be preparing to rewrite the 11 point plan because the issues confronting us will be vastly different.**

11. Establish a National Taskforce to implement the Inquiry Recommendations.

Finally, marginalisation does not always only apply to women. Addressing these issues may also address corresponding issues for all classes, all abilities and all ethnicities within Australia.