

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

6 June 2006

Dear Sir/Madam

Notification of the inquiry into women in sport and recreation in Australia was recently referred to me. While I am currently living and working in New Zealand, I have an ongoing history of study into the experiences of Australian women in recreation. Though this is predominately in women's participation in adventure based recreation I have also completed a number of studies of women's more general participation in physical recreation and leisure and felt this data may be of some use to your inquiry.

I have attached copies of two articles published in World Leisure Journal which deal with two of the terms of reference, notably under b) the accessibility for women of all ages to participate in organised sport, fitness and recreation. The first (Little, Lloyd & Kiewa, 2003\*,

51-62) describes evaluation results and programming features of a Brisbane City Council initiative (RAW - Real Adventure Women) to encourage participation in physical recreation. This overviews constraint, the women targeted, the programming model and the outcomes identified specifically regarding the features of the initiative that reduced some structural constraints such as lack of time, access and companions, and social constraints of perceived relevance and support.

The second (Little, 2005, 2-13), drawing on RAW and a New Zealand physical activity 'come and try' initiative for women, extends this foundation highlighting the motivations and benefits of these types of programmes, particularly in terms of providing a forum for positive role modelling - both for women to their daughters, and between women as they see others like them participating in physical recreation in positive and accessible ways.

I have also attached a further two articles for your consideration. While these are founded on a study specifically focused on women's participation in adventure recreation, each highlights commonly identified concerns regarding women's participation in leisure in general (b. iii). The article from the Journal of Leisure Research introduces ideas of how women can negotiate constraints they face across the life span in order to maintain some sense of connection with their adventurous selves. As you will note these range from those women who manage to prioritise their interests and therefore make time through to compromising, creating adventure in different forms and anticipating a future when they could again engage in their adventure. The final article submitted, published in the

Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning, is included as it deals with the socio-cultural perspectives and labels that are attached to adventure recreation making it more viably a male dominated area of physical recreation (c). Media presentations, social constructions of gendered roles and attributes of 'female behaviour' are all seen to limit the accessibility of these more risk taking types of pursuits and these impressions play a role in the participation even of women with recognised skills and a history of engagement in adventure based activity.

I hope these articles are of some assistance to you in your inquiry and I would welcome any questions that you may have to further our understanding of women's engagement and participation in sport, leisure and recreation in Australia. With the exception of the 2005 article in World Leisure, the sample groups in the reported studies were all Australian women and ranged in age, across the studies, from 16 to 86 at the time of the research.

\* Please note, I was unable to draw out the individual articles from World Leisure Journal so have attached the entire contents. Please refer to relevant articles throughout.

Yours Sincerely

Donna E. Little  
Senior Lecturer  
Sport and Leisure Studies  
School of Education  
The University of Waikato  
Private Bag 3105  
Hamilton, New Zealand