

Inquiry into Women in Sport and Recreation in Australia

submission prepared by



representing Orienteering throughout Australia

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As the peak body representing Orienteering in the Australia, Orienteering Australia Inc represents the views of the more than 12,000 people who participate in Orienteering and related activities throughout Australia. Orienteering Australia is a federation of seven State and Territory associations, and some of those Associations and members of those Associations might submit separate submissions. This submission is a collective view on a larger scale of the situation with an emphasis on the national picture.

The terms of reference of this inquiry are quite lengthy and detailed so for the purpose of preparing this submission the terms of reference have been broken down into five broad sections:

1. Health benefits of women participating in Orienteering
2. Grass Roots participation
3. Elite participation
4. Media Coverage
5. Women in Leadership

Before addressing the terms of reference, Orienteering Australia wishes to make the point that Orienteering is and has always been a 'gender equity' sport, thus many of the issues relating women's participation in other sports are not always relevant to Orienteering. The more frustrating factor for Orienteering and similar sports is that when some programs aimed at improving the lot of women in sport are developed the 'gender equity' sports are sometimes overlooked. This can impact adversely on women in such sports. Another disadvantaging factor for 'gender equity' sports is most are not Olympic and Commonwealth Games sports and thus do not receive the same recognition and funding as OCG sports do.

A rare aspect of Orienteering that is starting to occur in Golf is that women are permitted to compete in men's classes, but of course men cannot compete in women's classes. Not many women participate in individual men's races, but they often compete in men's relay teams and in fact this has even happened in a World Cup race when injuries and illnesses prevented Australia from fielding a complete men's team so a woman became the third team member.

As is highlighted in the body of the submission, Orienteering Australia would like to see further research at a national level into the incidence of stress fractures suffered by young elite female long distance runners, especially in regards to preventative measures.

Health Benefits

Orienteering Australia considers that the health benefits of women participating in sport and recreation activities is well known and will be addressed in detail in many other submissions, so it does not propose to repeat what others will say. However, it wishes to make the point that as a sport and recreation, Orienteering is an ideal sport for women, in that it exercises both the mind and body and that being an individual sport, women can participate at a level that suits their individual preferences.

Grass Roots Participation

The statistics relating to memberships and registered orienteers, and levels of participation are set out in Appendixes A and B respectively. While the number of registered orienteers is only around 7,500 the number of people participating in orienteering and related activities is estimated to be in the order of 12,000, but it could be higher. Under current arrangements

people do not have to be members or even registered orienteers to participate: their details just have to be recorded on the day. That is one of the attractions of the sport, but it has the disadvantage from a management perspective that there are gaps in participation data. Steps are being taken to address this through the development of a national participation database.

The data in the Appendixes indicates:

- Females make up around 43% of **memberships**, with the average breakdown (over five years) within females being: under 21 – 32%, 21 to 34 – 13%, and 35 and over – 55%. The percentage of females is relatively the same in each of the age categories, which indicates that there is little difference in recruitment and drop out rates between the sexes
- Females are around 40% of **participants**, with the breakdown within females being about the same as for memberships,

While other sports might note a drop in participation by females at various age levels, this does not occur in orienteering until much later, say around 65-70, when some women become concerned about falling and breaking bones. However, there are still women competing in their 70s. Men tend to continue competing until they are well into their 80s.

One factor that Orienteering shares with sports such as long distance running and triathlon is young females, ie in their late teens, suffer stress fractures in their lower legs. Remedial training programs help most to recover and return to the sport, but some never return. A lot of work has been undertaken by the ACT Academy of Sport in assisting young females who have suffered such injuries. Further research at a national level into this phenomenon, especially in regards to preventative measures would be beneficial.

The factors constraining participation by women are generally the same as for men, eg transportation to events, aversion to physical activity, aversion to participating in the bush, the lack of amenities at many events, etc. The growth of convenient recreational forms of Orienteering, eg Street Orienteering in Melbourne has tended to ameliorate the adverse aspects of lack of transportation and aversion to participating in the bush. Encouraging participation through power walking rather than running is also proving to have a positive impact on participation by those with an aversion to running.

From time to time State and Territory associations conduct coaching clinics specifically for women and girls. These are popular, and are especially useful for new orienteers. A key strategy employed by coaches of teenage women is to link them with slightly older young women as mentors and role models. This has helped many to improve their skills and encouraged them to stay in the sport. Most of the young women in Orienteering are comfortable with their sport. If they leave the sport it is often because they have too many competing interests or because they have a high study load at university, etc. Motherhood can also impact on participation during the early years of children, but a remarkable number of families take their young children to events, with both parents sharing the child minding, thus enabling each to participate individually, or sometimes they participate as a group.

Elite Participation

Women elite athletes receive the same benefits and encouragement as men, in all respects, and this year Orienteering Australia achieved a long term goal of having co-coaches, one male, one female, for the Australian team to contest the World Championships. Orienteering Australia has wanted to do this for some time, but it had not been able to find a woman with the requisite qualifications who was prepared to undertake the task.

In terms of the number of members of each sex selected for teams, the number is always equal for the World Junior Championships, and generally the same for the World Championships and World Mountain Bike Orienteering Championships, but at the senior level it is not always possible. For example, for this year's WMTBOC only one woman nominated. There were many and varied reasons for other women not nominating, with the level of training required being very demanding and the cost for all team members being very high, being the main ones. Sometimes there might be an extra man in the team for the World Championships because the physical demands on the men is much higher, especially in the long distance final in which the winning time for women is around 70 minutes and for men around 100 minutes. If the weather is hot, the long distance final can flatten all three male competitors and leave the men's team without three fit competitors for the relay. However, in all other respects, women are treated on the same basis as men. In the National League, the men and women compete separately for points but then their points are aggregated to determine a State's team points. Thus it is important for States to have both strong men's and strong women's teams.

By way of an example of gender equity, the Athlete of the Year medal is for both sexes. The inaugural medal, for 2004, was presented to a man and for 2005, to a woman.

Media Coverage

Women are always treated equally in Orienteering Australia's official magazine, *The Australian Orienteer*. If there is any inequality of reporting, it would be on an edition by edition basis, with priority being given to the top achievers, irrespective of their sex, during the reporting period.

In terms of the reporting of results and stories to the media by orienteering liaison officers, a similar approach is taken to that followed by *The Australian Orienteer*. The real problem in regard to media coverage of female orienteers is that Orienteering is not a major sport and thus does not receive much coverage of any activities. The situation is not likely to change unless Orienteering can attract a major benefactor. The advent of pay television has done nothing to improve the lot of minor sports and if anything it has just increased the coverage of major sports.

Women in Leadership Roles in Sport

While Orienteering Australia does not have current data on the membership of State/Territory association boards/committees, there is generally a good representation by women on such Boards and it is not unusual for one or two presidents to be women. Currently only one, Tasmania, has a female president. South Australia had one for a number of years until this year; she is now a Director on the Board of Orienteering Australia and chairs the IT Committee. The President of Orienteering Australia in the late 1990s was a woman. Of the 22 members of the Orienteering Australia Council, around one third is usually women. Women are encouraged to take on decision making roles and the lower representation by women in such positions is simply because they choose not to nominate.

The statistics relating to accredited officials and coaches, set out in Appendix C, indicate:

- Around 23% of **accredited officials** are female. The low percentage involvement of females as accredited officials is due mainly to the nature of the work undertaken by accredited officials, which are event controllers. It requires a lot of working alone in remote areas, which is not attractive to females given the risks associated with being a lone female in remote bush areas. In regard to other activities relating to the staging of orienteering events, the percentage of females is around 40%.
- Around 40% of **accredited coaches** are female and a majority of State development officers are women.

Appendix A

Memberships and Registered Orienteers - All states											
		2001		2002		2003		2004		2005	
Total of Full Memberships											
Family & Groups (incl Schools)		754		817		844		782		814	
Individual adult		684		714		780		789		843	
Individual junior		87		73		99		88		101	
Total		1525		1604		1723		1659		1758	
Average Persons per m'ship		2.4		2.3		2.1		2.2		2.0	
Number of Registered Orienteers											
Male	- Junior	543	<i>296</i>	563	<i>741</i>	655	<i>1463</i>	622	<i>1696</i>	620	<i>1784</i>
	- Senior	210	<i>58</i>	208	<i>47</i>	202	<i>63</i>	220	<i>68</i>	223	<i>98</i>
	- Masters	1137	<i>125</i>	1173	<i>173</i>	1208	<i>121</i>	1177	<i>273</i>	1210	<i>221</i>
	- Total	1890	<i>479</i>	1944	<i>961</i>	2065	<i>1647</i>	2019	<i>2037</i>	2053	<i>2103</i>
Female	- Junior	467	<i>170</i>	470	<i>574</i>	522	<i>996</i>	491	<i>1495</i>	467	<i>1529</i>
	- Senior	158	<i>20</i>	167	<i>38</i>	187	<i>50</i>	208	<i>54</i>	196	<i>60</i>
	- Masters	810	<i>100</i>	846	<i>142</i>	880	<i>109</i>	850	<i>224</i>	871	<i>202</i>
	- Total	1435	<i>290</i>	1483	<i>754</i>	1589	<i>1155</i>	1549	<i>1773</i>	1534	<i>1791</i>
Both	- Junior	1010	<i>466</i>	1033	<i>1315</i>	1177	<i>2459</i>	1113	<i>3191</i>	1087	<i>3313</i>
	- Senior	368	<i>78</i>	375	<i>85</i>	389	<i>113</i>	428	<i>122</i>	419	<i>158</i>
	- Masters	1947	<i>225</i>	2019	<i>315</i>	2088	<i>230</i>	2027	<i>497</i>	2081	<i>423</i>
	- Total	3325	<i>769</i>	3427	<i>1715</i>	3654	<i>2802</i>	3568	<i>3810</i>	3587	<i>3894</i>
Total incl Associate members etc.		4094		5142		6456		7378		7481	
Members Percentage by Age Category											
Male	- Junior	29%		29%		32%		31%		30%	
	- Senior	11%		11%		10%		11%		11%	
	- Masters	60%		60%		58%		58%		59%	
Female	- Junior	33%		32%		33%		32%		30%	
	- Senior	11%		11%		12%		13%		13%	
	- Masters	56%		57%		55%		55%		57%	
Both	- Junior	30%		30%		32%		31%		30%	
	- Senior	11%		11%		11%		12%		12%	
	- Masters	59%		59%		57%		57%		58%	
Percentage by Sex											
Junior	- Male	54%		55%		56%		56%		57%	
	- Female	46%		45%		44%		44%		43%	
Senior	- Male	57%		55%		52%		51%		53%	
	- Female	43%		45%		48%		49%		47%	
Masters	- Male	58%		58%		58%		58%		58%	
	- Female	42%		42%		42%		42%		42%	
All ages	- Male	57%		57%		57%		57%		57%	
	- Female	43%		43%		43%		43%		43%	
Associate members (or equivalent) are shown in italics and are not included in totals, except for where indicated in bold											
From 2002 - Most States started to incl all members covered by Group memberships											

Extract from Orienteering Australia Strategic Plan 2006 – 2009: Key Results for Participation

<i>KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS</i>	Actual 2003	Actual 2004	Plan 2005	Actual 2005	Plan 2006	Plan 2007	Plan 2008	Plan 2009
→ Participation data bases implemented in States	-	-	Sched	-		Sched		
→ Total no of registered members by age category	6,456	7,378	7,000	7,481	7,000	7,200	7,500	7,500
• junior	3,636	4,304	4,000	4,400	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000
• senior/masters	2,820	3,074	3,000	3,081	3,000	3,200	3,500	3,500
→ Total no of registered members by sex	6,456	7,378	7,000	7,481	7,000	7,200	7,500	7,500
• males	3,712	4,056	4,000	4,156	4,000	4,150	4,350	4,350
• females	2,744	3,322	3,000	3,325	3,000	3,050	3,150	3,150
→ Events conducted by States (event days)								
• International events	2	3	-	-	-	8	-	3
• National events incl State Championships	28	28	30	30	30	30	30	30
• State events	933	963	920	965	920	920	920	920
→ Total (days)	963	994	950	995	950	958	950	950
→ Participation in those events by category of event:								
• International events	1,430	522				2,000		
• National events incl State Championships	6,906	10,363	10,000	10,790	10,500	10,500	10,500	10,500
• State events	72,424	74,155	75,000	71,473	75,500	77,500	79,500	79,500
→ Total	80,760	85,040	85,000	82,263	86,000	90,000	90,000	90,000
→ Participation in those events by age group (percentage):								
• junior	32%	31%	32%	31%	32%	32%	33%	33%
• senior	13%	13%	16%	13%	16%	16%	16%	16%
• masters	55%	56%	52%	56%	52%	52%	51%	51%
→ Participation in those events by sex (percentage):								
• male	60%	61%	60%	59%	59%	59%	59%	58%
• female	40%	39%	40%	41%	41%	41%	41%	42%

Appendix C

Accredited Officials and Coaches						
		2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Accredited Officials						
Level 1	- men	68	67	16	53	49
NOAS fm 2003	- women	23	21	6	19	23
	- total	91	88	22	72	72
Level 2						
Level 2	- men	117	115	117	45	84
NOAS fm 2003	- women	27	28	30	14	21
	- total	144	143	147	59	105
Level 3						
Level 3	- men	20	21	19	19	26
NOAS fm 2005	- women	3	3	3	3	6
	- total	23	24	22	22	32
Level IOF						
Level IOF	- men	41	8	12	12	10
IOF accredited	- women	9	2	2	2	2
	- total	50	10	14	14	12
All levels						
All levels	- men	246	211	164	129	169
	- women	62	54	41	38	52
	- total	308	265	205	167	221
% women		20%	20%	20%	23%	24%
Accredited Coaches						
Level 1						
Level 1	- men	65	74	90	93	82
	- women	60	61	65	54	50
	- total	125	135	155	147	132
Level 2						
Level 2	- men	20	23	27	27	25
	- women	9	11	14	13	8
	- total	29	34	41	40	33
Level 3						
Level 3	- men	3	3	2	3	3
	- women	3	3	3	3	3
	- total	6	6	5	6	6
All levels						
All levels	- men	88	100	119	123	110
	- women	72	75	82	70	61
	- total	160	175	201	193	171
% women		45%	43%	41%	36%	36%