

*Identifying best practices in sport and recreation for women
from non-English speaking backgrounds in rural and
metropolitan New South Wales*

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Executive Summary

This report details a research study undertaken by Tracy Taylor and Kristine Toohey to investigate best practice in sport and recreation provision for women from non-English speaking backgrounds in metropolitan and rural New South Wales. The research project was financially assisted under the 1997 Sport and Recreation Administration Scholarship Program administered by the Women's Sport Unit of the New South Wales Department of Sport and Recreation. The aim of the Sport and Recreation Administration Research Scholarship is to enhance the research skills of females in the sport and recreation industry and to provide detailed information for the sport and recreation industry on gender equity issues in sports administration. This report specifically addresses the latter aim and follows the format required by the Department of Sport and Recreation.

The specific aims of this study were to:

- investigate and document culturally inclusive practices in sport and recreation provision for NESB females;
- summarise culturally sensitive strategies to increase opportunities and decrease constraints to sport and recreation activities for this group; and
- disseminate to administrators from sport and non-government organisations, government departments and educational institutions the best practice examples found through the research.

The report begins with a literature review in which the major writings on women, sport and ethnicity are examined. While there is a growing body of literature on this topic, very little information exists that places the issue in an Australian context. The literature on best practice and benchmarking is also discussed in this section. The material available in this area is quite diverse and primarily relates to non-sporting organisations. However, many of the principles espoused in the general literature on best practice are applicable to sport and recreation services and these have been highlighted. It is suggested that the Macneil-Testi model of benchmarking is a useful tool to employ in determining best practice in sport and recreation.

The primary methodology employed to investigate examples of best practice in New South Wales incorporated interviews with sport providers across the state and interviews with women from non-English speaking backgrounds. The information obtained from these interviews has been used to compile a listing of successful initiatives and identify key issues with corresponding best practice responses. Below is a summary of the sixteen key issues and best practices:

♀ Issue 1: Lack of knowledge about the provider's 'community' and their needs.

Best practice

Have a clear understanding of ethnic composition of your community and communicate this information to all personnel involved in program design and implementation.

♀ Issue 2: Inappropriate scheduling of programs

Best Practice

Keep a calendar of religious holidays and cultural occasions that staff can consult when planning programs.

♀ Issue 3: Lack of female only environments

Best Practice

Develop a list of facilities that can be used as female only venues (including staff and spectators). Establish a listing of female instructors/leaders for activities.

♀ Issue 4: Lack of knowledge or empathy about cultures and their requirements.

Best Practice

Establish staff training programs and develop a set of resources that cover key aspects of cultural diversity. Liaise with appropriate bodies such as the Ethnic Affairs Commission and the Ethnic Community Council of NSW.

♀ Issue 5: Lack of programs that take into account the needs of all family members

Best Practice

Establish child care services to allow women with younger children to participate in programs. Link program offerings for women to program offerings for their children.

♀ Issue 6: Lack of knowledge and education on the benefits of physical activity

Best Practice

Develop a program of physical activity participation that incorporates education about the health, social and community benefits of physical activity.

♀ Issue 7: Reluctance of many women to join in with existing sport and recreation programs. The desire to participate within their own cultural group

Best Practice

Establish programs that are specifically designed to cater for the identified needs of the target group

♀ Issue 8: Sport participation is seen as too competitive and aggressive.

Best Practice

Program and promote sport and recreation activities that emphasise social aspects.

♀ Issue 9: A lack of information and knowledge about how to access programs with ease.

Best Practice

Ensure wider promotion of programs and services through non-traditional outlets for everyone. Distribute to places of worship, specialty shops, community centres and retirement villages with large ethnic populations.

♀ Issue 10: Lack of proficiency and lack of confidence in the use of English.

Best Practice

Identify of translators within the community and make printed information available in community languages. When a program is only available in English, staff should be aware of how to incorporate the needs of people with low confidence in speaking and/or understanding English.

♀ Issue 11: Prohibitive cost of sport and recreation programs.

Best Practice

Conduct pilot and entry level programs at minimal cost to participants as a means to initiate involvement.

♀ Issue 12: The lack of female role models within ethnic communities who can encourage others to get involved in sport and recreation activities.

Best Practice

Target girls and women that are involved in sport and recreation activities to speak at schools, women's clubs and ethnic community gatherings. When choosing images for posters and other promotional material select girls and women from culturally diverse backgrounds.

♀ Issue 13: Participation is hampered by lack of access to appropriate transportation to the venue.

Best Practice: Develop program based transportation schemes such as car-pooling, 'buddy' systems, and community buses. Chose venues that are easily accessible by public transport. Avoid programming activities at times that mitigate use of public transport due to congestion or safety concerns.

♀ Issue 14: Activities and programs that are structured so that they either formally or informally exclude participation ie by nature of their timing, venue, etc.

Best Practice: Work with potential participants to develop and structure programs so that they are non-exclusionary.

♀ Issue 15: Girls and women may not feel comfortable wearing certain types of clothing while playing sport.

Best Practice: Adopt flexible requirements for sports clothing and know clothing requirements of specific groups.

♀ Issue 16: An absence of groups/individuals who know how to initiate their own sport and recreation programs.

Best Practice: Empower, support and encourage groups to structure pursue their own sport and recreation involvement.

We recommend that the NSW Department of Sport and Recreation conduct a series of workshops for sporting and recreation providers throughout the state. This report and the accompanying seminar materials can be used as the framework to initiate discussion and change. While the researchers are willing to assist the Department in this subsequent phase, we recommend that NESB women also be involved from the beginning of this next process.

Acknowledgments

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Finally, we appreciate the contributions of women from non-English speaking backgrounds in assisting us to develop a more inclusive framework for sport and recreation provision. These women recognised the benefits that they and their fellow Australians have received through the efforts of the sporting providers who have instituted best practice within their organisations.

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1.0 Introduction

This report investigates the relationship between sport and recreation and the requirements of females from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB). These groups have been identified as having very different needs, values, attitudes and constraints to sport and recreation participation to their Anglo-Australian counterparts. This distinction is especially evident in case of cultures that have significant differences in the role expectations of females and males.

The research reported here investigated existing models and examples of best practice within sport and recreation in New South Wales for females from non-English speaking backgrounds in order to provide examples by which all sport and recreation providers to benchmark. It documents current practices of selected sports providers who are successfully targeting and meeting the needs of NESB women. It also provides ideas and suggestions which others may subsequently choose to incorporate into their service delivery.

2.0 Literature review

This research project articulates and builds on an earlier study that the investigators completed for the Australian Sports Commission (ASC), New South Wales Department of Sport and Recreation and ACHPER - NSW which investigated the relationships between women, sport and ethnicity within New South Wales (NSW). What emerged from this study was a commentary on the place of sport in the lives of these women (see Taylor and Toohey, 1996; Toohey and Taylor, 1997).

Research on sport and ethnic minority females within Australia is not plentiful (Taylor and Toohey, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998). This deficiency needs to be redressed as overseas studies have shown that gender and ethnic background have a significant impact on the level and type of physical activity engaged in. In Australia, females born in non-English speaking countries have the lowest participation rates in sport of any group (ABS, 1994). Programs that aim to facilitate the involvement of this population in sport and recreation within New South Wales need to be explored to better understand the effects of gender and ethnicity on physical activity. Such research will assist in the development, implementation and evaluation of effective, and culturally and religiously sensitive, sport and recreation policies and programs at local and state levels.

Although the premise that women in sport are a homogenous group has been largely discredited (Hall, 1996), studies that focus on the intersection of gender and ethnicity on sport are still few and far between. It is as if this group has been largely invisible to researchers. While diversity issues are beginning to be raised in research on women and sport, this diversity has been mainly discussed in terms of class and sexuality. Prominent academic Ann Hall (1996:43) laments “we know virtually nothing about the role of sport and leisure in the lives of girls and women from established ethnic minorities or among recent immigrants”.

The importance of establishing a larger body of work in this area is critical. As D. Margaret Costa and Sharon Guthrie (1994:250) point out “cultural heritage, belief systems, perceived ethnic body composition, religion, and political persuasion influence an athlete’s disposition to sport”. The effects of racism on sporting experiences are known to be a common experience of ethnic minority groups, and, to a certain degree, binds these groups together. Differences between and within cultural groups are also defining factors. These are important issues that need to be more fully understood to ensure proactive inclusion of ethnic diversity into the management and administration of sport within New South Wales.

In general, community perceptions of access and equity in sports for NESB females assume that this group is oppressed by ethno-cultural constraints. This stereotyping reinforces the notion of cultural deficit. It transfers the blame for non-participation to this population while concurrently diverting attention from institutionalised racism, often inherent in sports and recreation policy and delivery. One example of this is the claim that many NESB females primarily do not engage in sport and recreation activities due to their cultures' expectations regarding domesticity and femininity. Yet, these are issues that affect all women in most societies, including countries such as Australia. As evidenced in the earlier research conducted by Toohey and Taylor (1996), contrary to public perception, engagement in cultural practices and sport can often be complementary.

Best practice

To develop models of best practice in sport and recreation for NESB women in NSW it is necessary to investigate the relationship between principles of benchmarking and best

practice. *Best practice* is defined as a 'comprehensive, integrated and co-operative approach to the continuous improvement in all facets of an organisation's operation. It is the way leading edge organisations manage their operations to deliver world class standards of performance' (Graffani, 1997:12).

'Benchmarking is a method for continuous improvement that involves an ongoing and systematic evaluation and incorporation of external products, services and processes recognised as incorporating *best practice*' (MacNeil *et al*, 1994: 204). Its ultimate goal is to generate change by improving performance, processes, products and strategic issues. This process can be applied to any activity that adds value to a service or product. It begins with an analysis of the activities and practices with the objective of understanding them, and then identifies an external standard by which to judge them (McNair & Liberfried, 1992).

Thus the setting in place of mechanisms that lead to *best practice* within an organisation contains two key processes. Firstly, measurement and evaluation of internal performance and secondly, measurement and evaluation of the externally identified *best practice*. MacNeil *et al* (1994) believes both of these activities are equally important, however they caution that the former is often overlooked. As a result of these processes the identified *best practices* can then be copied. However, improvement and change is not derived merely from copying *best practice*, but also by understanding how *best practice* is achieved (MacNeil *et al*, 1994).

Underpinning the *best practice* process is a philosophy of seeking continuous improvement. Thus, *best practice* functions as a tool for change. MacNair and Lieberfried (1992:181) go so far as to argue that the sole reason to undertake the process is to improve an existing performance in an objective manner.

As mentioned above, *best practice* requires the examination of external practices. MacNeil *et al* (1994) report that sometimes examples of external *best practices* need to be creatively sought and identified. For example:

'Southwest Airlines turned to sports, finding ideas for flight changeover and passenger embarking and disembarking procedures amongst the pitstop techniques of NASCAR motor racing crews. Another company used the America's Cup campaign for insights into superior project management techniques.' (MacNeil *et al*, 1994:20)

Successful *best practice* needs to be a continuous activity, and, because it is evaluative, it has measurement as its fundamental basis, specifically measurement compared to the best. Thompson (1993) notes that such measurement encompasses more than qualitative measurement. It is essential to also investigate and evaluate the practices utilised to achieve the results measured; how these practices work; and how they differ between the external and internal organisations involved.

The first steps in developing models of *best practice* are introspective and involve understanding exactly what the organisation undertaking the exercise seeks to do and secondly how it assesses its own performance against *best practice* (MacNeil *et al*, 1994).

The Macneil-Testi benchmarking model seems appropriate for sport and leisure providers to use when developing *best practice* in catering for their NESB clients.

This model consists of thirteen steps:

1. Establish the strategic intent and strategic objectives of the organisation and identify critical success factors.
2. Begin educating all members of the organisation, gaining their commitment to change, and assign responsibility for implementation.
3. Analyse organisation processes and current performance and select processes for measuring success according to strategic imperatives.
4. Identify *best practice* sources and establish necessary relationships.
5. Determine and standardise data collection methods.
6. Gather data - visit partners, measure and document partner performance.
7. Analyse data to determine current performance gap and identify improvement opportunities.
8. Communicate findings to employees at all levels.
9. Establish functional goals and develop implementation plans.
10. Obtain resources and implement specifications.
11. Monitor, report and assess progress based on *best practice* goals.
12. Decalibrate benchmarks to incorporate upwards movement in *best practice*.
13. Integrate outcomes into the strategic planning process

(MacNeil *et al*, 1994: 21)

According to Watts and Thompson (1996) these steps can be considered to fall into four phases: development of an action plan; planning strategies to enable change; co-ordination of the process; and monitoring of progress.

We suggest that the most useful approach for developing *best practice* in sport and recreation services for female NESB clients would be to utilise industry practices, ie

comparisons between businesses in the same service or product market. Sport and recreation providers need not compare to a direct competitor but utilise *best practices* cited in this document from each provider as their benchmark, as each of the case studies presented offers unique experiences, but with the similarity of having women from NESB as clients. What is essential is that sport and recreation providers develop methods that allow valid comparisons between their operations and the case studies. To do this they need to identify factors critical to success i.e. the areas in which positive results will transfer to increasingly competitive practices in their organisation (Watts & Thompson, 1996).

Employment of *best practice* techniques will thus enable sport and recreation organisations within New South Wales to cut their ties to the past by replacing old values, objectives, practices and models with new customs. McNeil *et al* (1994) believe that the most significant of these gains is the resultant formation of a workplace culture that is change-orientated. They state that ‘participative, people-driven approaches . . . create an outward looking, co-operative and responsive organisation (p16).

Taking this approach further Thompson (1993:11) states this ‘can easily occur within one cultural group but real improvement comes when cross cultural comparisons are made’. As McNair & Lieberfried (1992:2) state ‘The starting point in achieving excellence is the customer’. In the case of this research the aim is to provide strategies which will lead to providing a quality service in sport and recreation to meet the needs of a specific customer group, viz women from non-English speaking backgrounds.

3.0 Statement of project aims

The aims of this study were to:

- investigate and document culturally inclusive practices in sport and recreation provision for NESB females;
- summarise culturally sensitive strategies which can increase opportunities and decrease constraints to sport and recreation activities for this group; and

- disseminate the best practice examples found through the research to administrators from sport and non-government organisations, government departments and educational institutions.

4.0 Project Methodology and Sampling

A range of qualitative methods were selected to elicit information on best practice in sport and recreation. As Duda and Allison (1990) suggest, this research technique is effective in providing insight into ethnic differences in perceptions and behavioural patterns in sport and recreation activity.

The research encompassed two primary data collection techniques, interviews with sports providers in New South Wales and interviews with women from non-English speaking backgrounds.

4.1 Interviews with sport providers in New South Wales.

Participants were approached through our existing contacts with schools, sporting groups, ethno-specific community organisations, key informants and migrant resource centres. The sample included personnel from rural areas and the Sydney metropolitan area as well as all the NSW Department of Sport & Recreation Women's Sport & Recreation Scholarship Program recipients. From the above list the researchers selected organisations and/or sports managers employing best practice in the delivery of sport and recreation programs and services for NESB women. Interviews were conducted with the following organisations:

- ♀ Australian Filipino Society of the Hunter Valley
- ♀ Bankstown Migrant Resource Centre
- ♀ Bocce NSW and Australia
- ♀ Bowl Australia
- ♀ Co.As.It
- ♀ PLC Croydon
- ♀ Gentle Exercise
- ♀ Greek Older Women's Network
- ♀ Hills CHC Chinese Women's Support Group

- ♀ Let's Go Surfing
- ♀ Marrickville Council
- ♀ Mona Vale Hospital Health Promotion Unit
- ♀ Moorefield Girls High School
- ♀ Muslim Women's Association
- ♀ NSW Department of Health Physical Activity Taskforce
- ♀ NSW Department of Sport & Recreation – Illawara region
- ♀ NSW Department of Sport & Recreation – SE Metropolitan region
- ♀ Numbucca Heads Multi-Cultural Mutual Sport Association
- ♀ SHARE Health Inc Western and Southern Sydney
- ♀ Vovinam-viet Vo Dao
- ♀ Western Sydney Women's Soccer Association

Standardised check-lists were used for interviews. Interviews explored program issues related to sport and recreation for the NESB girls and women. These included aspects of access, equity, values, priorities, identity, gender, assimilation, cultural diversity, racism, religious requirements and perceived constraints to participation. From these interviews we have selected a range of exemplar programs for documentation that represent both rural and metropolitan initiatives.

4.2 Interviews with NESB women

Individual interviews were conducted with NESB females. These explored the issues highlighted by sports providers from the client's perspective. They were conducted in a private, non-threatening environment. Information collected during these interviews substantiated and validated the material provided by sport and recreation providers that were interviewed.

Participation of all interviewees in the above was strictly voluntary and subjects were fully informed about the nature of the research. The study conformed to UTS Research Ethics guidelines.

Within these interviews and focus group discussions, participants suggested a number of initiatives to improve access and reduce constraints for sport participation for women from non-English speaking backgrounds. The information collected was subjected to content analysis and coding to ascertain reliability and validity. Triangulation occurred by cross-checking the material against set criteria and existing data.

After data collection and analysis was completed the material collected was synthesised into three output modes:

- this report;
- workshop materials for sport and recreation providers; and
- an information booklet which will be made available to sporting and recreation administrators through the Department of Sport and Recreation.

5.0 Results

The following section highlights the results of this project. Indented and italicised comments are verbatim quotes from the interviews undertaken. For the reader's ease data have been categorised into relevant issues and examples/suggestions for *best practice*. While commonality of issues between ethnic groups is apparent it is acknowledged that there is also variance within and between groups. Any initiatives to increase sport and recreation participation for women from non-English speaking backgrounds must take this into account and not treat them as a homogenous population. It is imperative to consult with NESB women at all stages of planning, implementation and evaluation of sport and recreation programs.

Issue 1: Lack of knowledge about your 'community' and its needs.

It is essential to develop an understanding of the community in which any sport and recreation programs and services are provided. The 'community' may be a geographical area (eg. Hunter region) or it may comprise a captive population (e.g. high school) or specific interest area (eg. netball).

An example of this was a program for Italian women which was implemented only after extensive research. The process followed is outlined by the program co-ordinator:

I gained as much insight as I could in relation to the cultural belief values and attitudes of the community. Information was achieved by conducting an extensive literature review and informal meetings with CO.AS.IT workers.

We then developed goals and objectives of the program. At the same time we defined the literature review I went back and looked at the community in regard to cultural practices which may be an obstacle to participation, or barriers. From there I got more information from key informant interviews. We interviewed the health promotion staff, we interviewed people who gave me names of significant individuals within the communities. Visited these groups, we told them what we were going to do, how we were going to do it and basically met the people just to get a general of the acceptance of the program, get to know me, get to know the lifestyle name just to be familiar with the program. (Community worker)

In contrast to this was the situation whereby an interviewee described a display that was set up for a week in Bankstown Mall to target Muslim women as new bowlers. In hindsight, the manager identified several problems in their approach to targeting this population. For example, the staff from the centre were used at the display, after further consideration of the situation and evaluation of this strategy, the manager suggested that he should have hired Muslim women to act as the recruiters. The staff involved reported that they experienced difficulties in stopping the women for a chat, relating to the women, getting the women to understand the concept of bowling. Consequently they had little interest in participating in this sport.

Best practice

- ◆ Ensure that you have a clear understanding of composition of your community and communicate this information to all personnel involved in program design and implementation.
- ◆ Regularly update this information via formal sources (eg. ABS Census data, community surveys) and informal means (e.g. conversations with community members). Some of this information can be gathered from your local migrant resource centre or your local council.
- ◆ Once you know the groups you have within your area then you can tap into those organisations that represent or attract those groups. Specific steps include:

- Initiate Community consultations and phone contact with various groups and important individuals.
- Plan a strategy before you meet the ethnic group, know the questions to ask and the issues to raise with them.
- Work with the community organisations right from the beginning so they've got a sense of ownership.
- Identify and utilise people within a group that are the key players and gatekeepers within that community
- Know and understand your client group, eg what their needs are, not just in terms of personnel, but also the appropriate venues, specific participation constraints, public transport, cost, etc.
- Speak to other workers within allied fields to gain information (eg. health promotion workers)
- Share successful strategies

Issue 2: Inappropriate scheduling of programs

The issue of inappropriate programming was raised in several interviews:

Every time there was a religious holiday no one turned up. So you can't just have an exercise class or sport without looking at the whole culture and integrate the whole of the family and their religious values. (NESB health worker)

You've also got to take into account prayer times (Recreation service provider).

The centre recognises that there are different ... groups which do not like to occupy the centre at the same time due to political allegiances. High levels of customer service are also expected (Bowling Centre manager).

Best Practices

- ◆ Keep a calendar of all religious holidays and cultural occasions so that staff can consult it when planning programs.
- ◆ Be aware of potential user conflicts between groups and schedule to avoid these situations.

Issue 3: Lack of female only environments

One prominent program requirement advocated by several of the interviewees concerned the provision of female only sport and recreation opportunities. This is articulated in the following statements:

The special requirements of the Muslim women's group were for an environment closed to men and a female instructor who could speak Arabic. The pool booking had not allowed for extra time (and privacy) needed for the women to change before and after the class.' (Sports administrator)

First of all that most of us are interested in sport the uniform has to be proper, we have to be covered from head to toe. The only parts that we show is the face. There also can't be contact between anybody. Problem with a lot of sport is there's a lot of body contact where as a lot of Muslim women don't even shake hands with men. Also language we don't feel comfortable around certain language (Muslim woman).

Best Practices

- ◆ Develop a list of facilities that can be utilised without males present, as either staff or spectators.
- ◆ Establish a listing of female instructors/leaders for activities.

Issue 4: Lack of knowledge or empathy about the culture and its requirements.

You've got to be aware of the requirements for Muslim women. Clothing which is covering from head to toe, which sounds really terrible but is very practical. Have empathy for them so you have a feeling of what they feel and want they want. Don't go in there feeling sorry for them (Sport provider)

Once you know what is appropriate and the fact about all of these issues it breaks down all the barriers, breaks down all the misconceptions and myths (Recreation provider).

You've got different kinds of cultural practices that they adhere to that needs to be taken into account (Recreation provider).

Best Practice

- ◆ Establish staff training programs and a set of resources that cover key aspects of cultural diversity.

Issue 5: When planning programs family considerations are rarely taken into account

Many women from NESB place a high priority on choosing sport and recreation activities that involve other members of their family. Also, as the primary carer of children, many women need to have their childcare and domestic responsibilities taken into account when programs are designed. The quotes below highlight some of the concerns that surround this issue.

Childcare. . . plenty of bus service, plenty of childcare, plenty of play for children, it would make it much more acceptable to people.
(Croatian woman)

With Asian women, women tend to come into sports more because of the children. For example, you might have women who organise a tennis class for the children and never know how to play tennis and never know how to play tennis.’ (Chinese woman)

They aren’t able to attend the training sessions. It might be a problem with distance as well. During the night to train they just can’t due to their own family commitments .(Sport provider)

The proportion going to women’ sport isn’t a high priority in the family budget and generally women are in control of the budget, the family budget, and so they would rather sacrifice their own leisure time and put it into another particular area because they are in control of that. (Recreation provider)

Support from husband/family is vital. (Sport provider)

To try and go through the husbands either they would not permit their wife to bowl or they said that their wife had too many domestic duties to try and fit bowling in. (sport centre manager)

Best Practice

- ◆ Establish childcare services to allow women with younger children to participate in programs.
- ◆ Link program offerings for women to program offerings for their children and/or their partners.
- ◆ Educate male members of the community about the benefits of physical activity for women as well as men.

Issue 6: Lack of education about the benefits of physical activity

I think the difficulty I have with this group is that they don't know why they are doing the exercise. They have no goals. They have no interest. They go maybe 'cause someone is telling them to go. They can go for the escape from the home or have a break from the husband. They have not idea for the health. (NESB fitness leader)

Unless women understand the benefits of physical activity and value it, they have little incentive to participate or, if they start, maintain a program. (NESB recreation worker)

We need to teach the women to understand why they need to be fit. It is hard to do. Need to talk about nutrition as well. Everyone think they have to go to gym. We need to teach kids. We need to promote to the community. Women don't know lots of ways. They need to know where they can go. Where are the facilities. They need to have power themselves to go. (NESB fitness leader)

Educating the younger males as well, to see that their sisters can too be involved with sports. (Sport provider)

We wanted to create awareness and educate the target group on the importance of safe exercise with a qualified instructor and educate on the economics of health benefits. (Recreation provider).

Best Practice

- ◆ Develop a program of physical activity participation that incorporates education about the health, social and community benefits of physical activity.

Issue 7: Many women are reluctant to join in with existing sport and recreation programs. They prefer to participate within their own cultural group

Sport and recreation services are usually only offered as open programs which do not cater for specific ethnic groups. For many women from NESB these generic programs are not attractive.

Chinese and Korean communities are only interested in playing (bowling) in their own groups. (Sport centre manager)

The NESB females from the general community prefer women's only groups and female instructors "We've just started off a womens' committee, meeting specially the needs of women and we are hoping to work towards fulfilling some of the strategies and the kind of problems we have" (Sport provider).

Best Practice

- ◆ Establish some programs that are specifically designed to cater for the identified needs of the target group (e.g. Italian women's exercise group).

Issue 8: Prohibitive cost of sport and recreation programs.

Sport and recreation programs are often not priorities items in the family budget therefore, any costs that are associated with participation become barriers to participation.

Issue of funding and a commitment from the community to pay. That's a big issue with NESB populations. (NESB health worker)

It is a matter of the charge, they can't afford it, they are pensioners, renting. (Arabic woman)

Best Practice

- ◆ Design pilot and entry level programs at minimal cost to initiate involvement.

Issue 9: Sport participation is seen as too competitive and aggressive.

Most women interviewed stressed the importance of the social dimension of sport and recreation participation.

If they want to be more active they are more likely to chose more like a Chinese background way. They tend to chose the program they're more familiar with or less rough (Chinese woman)

"There has to be a social aspect to it." (Croatian woman)

"Maybe if sport was more slow paced, not fast paced. Like bowling, ten pin bowling, would be good. Or tennis would be a good game." (Italian woman)

Best Practice

- ◆ Program and promote sport and recreation activities that emphasise their social aspects.

Issue 10: A lack of information and knowledge about how to easily access programs.

A sense of frustration about existing sport and recreation offerings was evident in many of the interviews. This stemmed from not knowing who to

speaking with in the first instance when trying to get involved in programs and from getting little encouragement to pursue any recreation interests.

If they can be encouraged, women will do more sport. Like some Vietnamese women I know, when I tell them I go dancing and swimming, they were really interested. They just need a little push. If they got company, they more likely to come. (Chinese/Vietnamese woman)

You have to say get their church or their women's group or whatever and get to that group and explain to them and encourage them to encourage the women . . . Like with the Marinites (a Catholic Lebanese group) there is a women's group and they have started organising bus trips and they are encouraging mothers (like my mother) to get out and feel free to go without the husband and children and they are the groups you have to target- the church groups or the women's groups in the different cultures. (Lebanese woman)

No one organise the place, no leaders. So they like to go but they don't know where to go, how to get involved, to get sport. . . They don't know anything about the rules, if someone explain and organise' (Vietnamese woman)

Because I've promoted it through the Muslim Women's Association my role has mainly been to let them know of the upcoming date, the lesson time and they've promoted it from there. (Sport provider)

Best Practices

- ◆ Identify your target group members and speak to key informants from those groups to determine the best locations and methods to use (eg. church meetings).
- ◆ Promotion of programs and services through non-traditional outlets which are accessible to women from NESB such as the places outlined below
- ◆ Distribution of material to places of worship, popular GP's surgeries, most specialised shops, community centres and retirement villages with large ethnic populations.

Initiatives that have worked for other sport and recreation providers include:

- Create a visual display in the library.
- Design a series of programmes for talkback ethnic radio.
- Place short information notices in ethnic newspapers.
- Seek out a popular service provider within the community and drop some flyers there.
- Visit community groups, as person to person contact makes a difference.

Issue 11: Lack of proficiency and lack of confidence in the use of English.

A number of consequences for sport and recreation participation may arise for clients when English is not their first language. Some of these were detailed in the interviews:

Because the instructors use quick English she could not catch up with what the instructor wanted to convey. She was very awkward which caused her some embarrassment (Vietnamese woman)

Everyone speaking English makes it difficult at first. Sometimes they come up to you and tell you what to do but you don't understand what they're saying. It's hard even if they show you. (Lebanese woman)

I cannot talk to them and explain safety. I cannot talk to them and explain health issues and that was the frustration I was meeting up. . . . We have got to be able to speak the language and also understand the culture that these people are coming from. (Recreation provider)

Fitness Leaders having to be accredited is an obstacle to getting fitness leaders, especially NESB leaders because there is a lot of content to get through and there's a very limited time to get through it and the language problems can be a problem. But it's not just the language. Sometime's it's the background of the person. There's a need to have a background in physiology and that's often not the case (Recreation provider).

"They like to be taught in their own groups, require extra assistance because of their lack of familiarity with the ocean and because they have difficulty with English. Due to the language issue instruction take more time and the groups needs to be smaller." (Sport provider)

Best Practices

- ◆ All necessary documentation for enrolment or registration should be made available in key community languages
- ◆ Printing language specific fliers.
- ◆ Language specific child-care for children who speak languages other than English
- ◆ Translate of all the rules of the game into the appropriate language.
- ◆ Translate Of all Board minutes in meetings.
- ◆ Recruitment of staff that speak community languages
- ◆ Identification of female translators within the community
- ◆ Printed information made available in community languages. If the program is only available in English, staff should be aware of how to incorporate the needs of people with low confidence in speaking and/or understanding English.

Issue 12: The lack of female role models within ethnic communities who can encourage others to get involved in sport and recreation activities.

If the woman doesn't have any role model or active parents, it's less likely they will enjoy sports. (Chinese woman)

What works best is having someone from within the community actually achieving success. Then they become an idol, then others want to follow in their footsteps. (Croatian woman)

Role models – swimming in Auburn for Muslim women. This started almost a year ago and we heard about it. My friends and I thought it this really happening. We had been deprived for so long. Its local and not that close to people in the Greenacre and Lakemba areas but there are a lot of women in the Auburn so they think it's close. A lot of women want to get out there and do something. Swimming is fun, and when it's fun you don't feel you need to be encouraged to do a sport. It was a need basically (Muslim woman)

Best Practices

- ◆ Target NESB girls and women that are involved in sport and recreation activities to speak at schools, women's clubs and ethnic community gatherings.
- ◆ When choosing images for posters and other promotional material select girls and women that can be identified as being from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Issue 13: Participation is hampered by lack of access to appropriate transportation to the venue.

Women can't travel at night time by themselves on public transport and we must always ensure that we've got car pools to take young girls home. And we've got to be careful at training sessions. We've got to monitor who's coming there as well. The coaches have to and particularly some of the women are very protected in the family and so we've got to monitor who they are associating with . . . (Sports administrator for NESB women)

Public transport is sometimes difficult for women too with families (Community worker)

Transport is a big problem in the country. No general support is offered to women to play sport (Filipino woman).

Best Practices:

- ◆ Develop program based transportation schemes such as car-pooling, 'buddy' systems, and community buses.
- ◆ Chose venues that are easily accessible by public transport.
- ◆ Avoid programming activities at times that mitigate use of public transport due to traffic congestion or safety (night) concerns.

Issue 14: Activities and programs are structured so they either formally or informally exclude participation.

We started doing exercise to music but it didn't really click until we used Greek music. Then they wanted to move. Then we employed a Greek dance instructor for the group. Now they practise regularly and perform in costume. It's beautiful.
(Greek woman)

In encouraging women . . . to work with developing strategies for the association we've got a women's disciplinary committee and we thought that. . . many of the rules that men play in soccer were a bit too harsh particularly for women who are just starting out. . . . We've got a three minute rest time that can be asked [for]. . . . we've also put in a green card. . . which is a midway card between a yellow card and a red card. Now if a woman gets a red card she'll be off the field all day and we don't have that many women who are in the team. (Sports administrator for NESB women)

Reconfiguring the changerooms. Initially there were only open showers and women wanted their own privacy (Sport provider)

Knowing where to access enclosed venues There's no point going in and then saying 'I want to run this for you' and finding there's no where you can actually go. It doesn't take much to provide certain facilities. The facilities are already there. It's knowing what it is that needs to be done and it be comes part and parcel of the organisation (Sport provider)

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Best Practices:

- ◆ Work with potential participants to develop and structure programs so that they are non-exclusionary.

- ◆ Choose activities that the women are familiar with.

Issue 15: Girls and women may be embarrassed wearing certain types of clothing while playing sport.

It's only opened one night a week and when you go there you find at that time there's so much happiness among the women because they are able to dress as they want to. They sort of jump around, they're not good swimmers. But even things like paddling around I now it's good for you and I feel so much better afterwards. There are a lot of women but you don't have a lot of space. (Muslim woman)

Yes, clothing, it's not like a normal program where you can wear a swimsuit it's pretty much like T-shirts and bike pants so they're partly clothed in the pool. Also there are religious considerations in timing of the year. These are probably the major things. (Lebanese woman)

The school uniform needs to be adapted. You've got local competitions as well where there are requirements of dress so the girls can't compete. (Muslim woman)

In primary school it hasn't been much of a problem. There's been no requirement on the dress. They go onto high school and you've got to wear those short little dresses, it's against our practices. They can't wear that so they opt out. They pretend they can't run, they pretend they can't play softball they do all those things. It becomes a chain reaction. They don't participate in sporting activities so they don't participate in academic arenas either.

Best Practices:

- ◆ Adopt flexible requirements for clothing to be worn when participating in organised sport and recreation activities.
- ◆ Establish dress requirements in the planning phase in consultation with participants.

Issue 16: An absence of NESB groups/individuals who know how to initiate their own sport and recreation programs and obtain funding.

We gained support from the Department of Sport and Recreation. The Department of Health assisted us with ideas, things to think about and the council, we lobbied with the council and at last today we've got our own sport fields. Women can't travel at night time by themselves on public transport and we must always ensure that we've got car pools. We've got to monitor who's coming there as well. We've got to make sure that the families know why the women are coming, that they are not coming just as an excuse to socialise as well. (NESB sport provider)

They have to seek corporate sponsorship.. We've been trying to tell the women to go out there and try and get support, because we know the outfits are expensive and that they can be damaged easily and yes they've gone out and got some pretty good sponsors. (Sport provider)

Best Practices:

- ◆ Empower, support and encourage groups to structure pursue their own sport and recreation involvement (provision of seeding funds, partner programs, etc).
- ◆ Initiate sport and recreation programs which provide NESB women with knowledge of how to obtain funding from a variety of government and non-government sources.

6.0 Discussion

This study has highlighted a number of sport and recreation programs in New South Wales that have demonstrated best practices for women from non-English speaking backgrounds. They have successfully met the cultural practices and requirements of the women involved. Unfortunately, such programs and services in the sport and recreation industry are still scarce in New South Wales, especially outside major metropolitan cities. While resource constraints (eg budgets, staff, facilities, etc.) may account for some of this inadequacy, its main cause appears to be a lack of understanding about the needs of these women and inappropriate methods to facilitate their participation

Women only sessions, outreach workers of the same sex/origin/religion and the employment of leisure/sport centre staff from non-English speaking backgrounds have been some of the most successful strategies suggested for increasing the participation of ethnic females we encountered during this study. The women clearly want segregated programs. *'We want to speak to women who understand us. . . . You can't meet if you cannot speak to each other. Speech is a problem'* (Italian woman). The ability to be able to communicate with the instructor in their first language was a major consideration in enabling them to enjoy their sporting and recreation experiences.

The research undertaken for this study clearly indicated the need for the introduction of more ethnic-specific and women-only programs. A large number of women commented that they did not feel comfortable in integrated (cultural and gender) activities.

In New South Wales NESB women still face many barriers to sport and recreation participation that their Anglo-Australian counterparts. Sport and recreation providers must learn to recognise the different needs and requirements of all their potential clients. Many of the barriers encountered by NESB women are removable all of the issues detailed in this study should be approached through positive strategies and innovative programs. Underlying this call for change should be a model that assumes *the first stage in the process towards best practice in sport and recreation for NESB women involves consultation with women from the target group(s)*.

7.0 Recommendations

To address the requirements of NESB females, sport and recreation providers must develop organisational culture, policies and practices that are open, supportive and flexible. This involves putting into place inclusive *best practices* that pervade all dimensions of service development and implementation, from employment practices to program design, provision and ultimately evaluation. *Best practices* that are inclusive of cultural diversity are many and varied and have been identified in the sixteen issues and resultant best practices that are outlined in the previous sections.

The implementation of these best practices will depend on the awareness and commitment of sport and recreation providers and the involvement of NESB women. The key is for providers and participants to work together to address the issue under representation of NESB women in sport and recreation.

To best achieve this we recommend that the NSW Department of Sport and Recreation conduct a series of workshops for sporting and recreation providers throughout the state. This report and the accompanying seminar materials can be used as the framework to initiate discussion and change. While the researchers are willing to assist the Department in this

subsequent phase, we recommend that NESB women also be involved from the beginning of this next process.

This research has been designed and structured to have practical outcomes. It is now the responsibility of relevant government and non-government bodies to inform and educate other providers

As one sport and recreation provider interviewed said:

Sport's for everyone, sport's for all, for all ages, all abilities, and for all cultural backgrounds. And I think it's time that sporting facilities and sporting programs were developed and expanded for all people. And that includes people from a different cultural background.

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