

Friday, 16 June 2006

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 Committee Secretary

Firstly thank you for the opportunity to feed the thoughts of rural Victorians into such an inquiry. We have sourced opinion from individuals, groups, local associations and interested persons on this matter and have put together a brief but we feel relevant response to the parameters of the inquiry.

Firstly the Wimmera Regional Sports Assembly (WRSA) is one of nine Regional Sports Assembly providers who cover regional Victoria. We receive funding from Sport and Recreation Victoria (State Government Department) and have been a part of the rural framework that supports local sport and recreational clubs since the early 1980's. Our charter is to

1. Strengthen the capacity of grassroots sport and recreation organisations to operate in a robust fashion and deliver quality opportunities for participation,
2. To increase the quality and availability of information about local sport and recreation issues, infrastructure and opportunities,
3. To enhance networks between grassroots sport and recreation organisations and other key stakeholders in the community to ensure that sport and recreation services address local community needs and issues and
4. To increase opportunities for the activities of state-wide organisations to be delivered at a local level.

Regional Sports Assemblies also receive funding from the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation to work with inactive populations (women, older adults, youth – aged 12 to 25, Koori and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) who have the lowest health outcomes and encourage them (by creating partnerships with Health agencies, community clubs, local government, schools etc) to become physically active.

Specifically then, women are one of the marginalised groups and we offer the following in response to the terms of reference.

Reasons why females are less likely to continue on in sport and recreation post puberty

First experiences with sport shape future involvement. A survey done by the *WRSA in secondary schools indicates:

* WRSA Youth in Action Survey 2005 Paul Goudie 0353 824599

- Girls were interested in sport but could not get into teams due to a lack of ability
- Girls who came from a family of participants were more likely to be involved in sport and continue this for longer
- In school sport, the main focus is on competition meaning those with lesser ability are excluded/or feel excluded and give up
- Body image/peer pressure meant that girls who felt they 'did not fit the mould' self excluded from sport
- There are not the numbers of girls participating in the upper teen age groups meaning that representation at higher sporting levels was often denied them
- More numbers can participate in male dominated sports (football V netball)
- Survey showed more girls than boys not 'into sport' or 'don't like it'. In the main, the reason for non participation from girls was the competitive nature and issue of the 'body image' needed to be involved in the sport (eg. lycra suits for netball).
- Girls preferred the recreational physical activity as compared to the competitive.

In the general community, comments from women sighted the following reasons as to why women were under represented in local sporting teams/as players, coaches and officials:

- The paid part time work they are involved in was on weekends when the majority of sport is played
- They follow sports participation for their family (partner or off spring) rather than for themselves
- Their full time work meant weekends were for house duties rather than recreational activities
- Limited budgets meant they reduced or discarded their own participation in favour of their partner/off spring participating.
- Limited budgets and high fuel costs also contributed to the above
- They had child care responsibilities if their partner was participating
- Cost of child care if a woman wants to participate
- Lack of child care facilities
- Lack of time and money to pursue coaching or officiating qualifications

The image of women in sport and recreation portrayed in media generated a number of responses from the general public:

- The decision of the ABC to remove Anne Sergeant from netball commentary was perceived as a reflection of her 'age'
- Lack of coverage of women's sport on television – example netball (one hour only) being shown on a Saturday afternoon when most participants are out playing
- Issue raised about the government perhaps 'regulating' the coverage of women's sport (making coverage equal to male coverage) and the public then getting used to this. This would then give females the opportunity to really identify with 'role models' and to pursue the sport themselves.
- Money drives the coverage. Female athletes and the Australian Women's Soccer team promoted themselves as 'pin up' girls for calendars to not only raise money for their sports participation but also to raise the awareness of

their achievements. They had not received the 'free' media coverage of their similarly placed male counterparts.

- Sponsorship equals coverage. Female participants at the highest level in their sport (netball) had to almost resort to a strike to have an increase in their minimal fee for playing.

We ask you to consider these points during the inquiry.

Yours in Sport

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