



RECREATION SA'S COMMENTS

Inquiry into women in sport and recreation in Australia

Contact: Rosemary Sage
Executive Officer
Recreation SA
73 Wakefield Street
Adelaide
SA 5000

RECREATION SA

Recreation is the peak body for recreation in SA. An incorporated not for profit body established in 1999 to promote active participation in recreation in the state and provide a voice to government for the recreation industry as a whole.

Recreation SA operates within the Associations Incorporation Act and is compliant with laws in the jurisdiction of South Australia.

Recreation SA has a diverse membership base of 964 members that consist of outdoor and community recreation and fitness.

The Fitness Industry in SA has 30% of women at management level in the fitness businesses sector. 60% of the registered fitness instructors in SA are women

Our Vision: Increasing active participation in recreation.

Mission: Recreation SA will increase active participation in recreation by working in partnership with the fitness, outdoor and community recreation industries in South Australia.

Our Values & Operating Principles

Recreation SA will increase active recreation in South Australia by:

- Encouraging and promoting cooperative and collaborative ventures between the various recreation interests and activities;
- Representing the interests of the recreation industry to Government and non-Government agencies in South Australia and act as a reference and liaison body for the South Australian Government on all matters of relevance to the recreation industry;
- Providing an advocacy role on behalf of the recreation industry;
- Promoting an environmentally and economically sustainable recreation industry.

Recreation SA defines recreation as any activity that can be done as an individual and does not involve competition or winning.

Recreation SA would like to make the following comments and contribution to the Inquiry into women in sport and recreation in Australia.

Constraints/Barriers to women's participation in recreation

Time, money and child rearing activities are the top three barriers to women's participation in recreation.

Time

Demographic reports indicate there are increasing numbers of women in the full time and part time workforce. Women traditionally carry much of the household work and child rearing burden, thus need to make special effort to make time to participate in recreation activities. Therefore many of the recreation activities women become involved with are family orientated such as picnicking, camping, bushwalking, cycling, fishing, 4 wheel driving, surfing and sailing or as a support to their children's choice of sporting/ recreational activity.

Money

The cost of involvement in a recreation activity for many women is prohibitive. If there is a uniform or equipment to purchase as well as the cost to join the club and weekly participation costs, it could put the activity out of reach of the average family. If the women are part of a single income family there may not be sufficient disposable income to allow participation in any form activity other than no cost activities such as walking.

There is much documentation (Carol Gilligan) about women putting their social and recreational needs after the rest of the family and the lack of aggression in the choice of women's recreation activities.

Teenage women do tend to identify socialising with friends as their number 1 recreational activity. They hang out and listen to music or just talk in malls, shopping centres or cafes. There has been no research into whether this phenomena is due to lack of money or wanting to be seen.

Older women participate in passive activities such as crafts, bowls or joining senior citizen clubs for socialising.

If the activity is perceived as being "too hard" to participate in with lots of red tape or rules and regulations the interest wanes.

The financial commitment for elite women's participation is significant. To participate at higher levels such as Netball, the national netball association provides little financial support yet the commitment for training and games way from home is really high. All players either work full- time OR study. All annual leave is taken up by trips away and time off for national training camps etc.

Child rearing

The cost of child care is an additional cost to women who wish to be active and participate in either a recreation or sporting activity. The fitness industry has recognised child rearing is a barrier to participation and 70% of fitness centres have developed on site crèche and/or child minding facilities. These facilities are highly valued and used to a maximum during the day time. Working women report disappointment that crèches are not open in evenings for women who work during the day and want to keep fit.

For women who want to participate in recreation activities at elite level that might take them away from home, worry about their children and their work commitments when they should be focused on the activity.

Childcare also impacts on older women (grandmothers) who provide care on a regular basis for their grand children while their parents are at work.

Media

Media is still dominated by men's sport and horse racing. Unless there is a good looking female such as Tatiana performing very little media is given to athletics.

Recreations and sports lacking media coverage are women's basketball, soccer, cricket, gymnastics, aerobics and water polo

Women's sport and recreation get little publicity in the print media unless it is reporting disagreements and or injuries. Netball is the most participated sport in Australia; however there is little media coverage in the papers and on TV. Gaining large sponsorship deals is difficult. The National Netball League Comp is televised - however only 2 games are shown per week!

Participation rates of women

Fitness

Recreation SA recently conducted an active research project and the number of women (63%) actively engaged as community fitness leaders is higher than men (37%). In fitness centres and gyms 75% of employees are women. They hold positions as fitness instructors, membership officers, receptionists or personal trainers.

The fitness industry has 60% - 40% membership base with women in the higher numbers. The percentage may change by 1 or 2% but overall remain fairly static.

Women have the monopoly in the various group activities such as step, pump, cardio and aerobics as they have the rhythm and co ordination that men do not possess.

Spin or RPM (group cycling) has equal gender breakdown with women participating in higher numbers in day time sessions. Fewer women do weights.

There is a growth in female only gym's such as Fernwood, Curves and Healthy Inspirations. Many women feel uncomfortable exercising in a mixed environment, especially those from other cultures. The type of clothing often worn is skimpy

Outdoor

Female participation rates in outdoor activities are lower in the adventurous or extreme recreation activities but higher in the softer/ environmental activities.

This is rapidly changing with increasing numbers of women participating as well as taking up leadership roles in the outdoors. This relates back to schools commencing outdoor activity groups with girls to build their confidence. School aged girls are more gung ho and wanting to experience more adventurous outdoor activities such as abseiling, high ropes and rock climbing. It is reported that females have better co ordination and focus on technical matters than school aged males.

Women tend to be involved in environmental activities in larger numbers than men such as bushwalking, orienteering, trekking, scuba, snorkelling, wild life swims. Women have different reasons for participation; it usually involves greater enjoyment in the journey. Being outside, experiencing the beauty of the vistas rather than reaching the destination in the best possible time.

Women's roles have changed in the outdoors; women no longer want to be chief cook and bottle washer for the whole camp but rather part of a shared/ group responsibility. Socialising as a group becomes the primary activity rather than the canoeing or 4 wheel driving.

Women are interested in trying new activities in holiday mode such as snorkelling, scuba, canoeing and rock climbing etc. There is also a growing participation in continuum activities or being involved with softer activities that can grow into extreme activities and also serve multiple purposes such as adventure holidays.

Cycling, rock climbing and abseiling are growing in popularity with women as are canoe/ kayaking. Continuum activities such as employing a personal trainer to gain fitness for walking in a national park, building up to trekking the Milford Track, then maybe a trek to Everest base camp over a 5 year period is very common activity for women.

Women are highly represented in pony club, trail bike, mountain bike riding. It is likely that their children are involved in the activity and extend the club activity to go in groups to places they consider are or feel safe.

Women are able to cope with a lack of structure and amenities as well as being very comfortable with highly structured activities.

Community/ Indoor Recreation

Women are highly represented in local and indoor activities such as scouts, guides, swim classes, indoor cricket, netball, basketball and craft activities in recreation centres. Community activities participation rates are reported to be 80% females - 20% males.

Walking/ running has very high participation rates for women, it can be done at any time any where. For women who are conscious of safety or it is a perceived issue there are mall walks whereby women (some with prams) walk around the familiar territories such as outside and inside of shopping malls and local linear parks. Familiar sights in the suburbs are young mum's running with their babies in three wheeled prams.

Increasing numbers of women are involved in triathlons and compete at various level. They suggest it allows them to train in three quite different areas and many have maintained involvement since school.

Areas in lower socio-economic areas report lower numbers of women participating in sport and recreation. The cost of involvement prohibits meaningful participation.

In Elizabeth Vale in SA an older area with lower income rates and high unemployment recently opened an outdoor fitness playground. It has been a huge success. It consists of a range of fitness

equipment usually found in gyms and fitness centres. The usage has been over whelming with 20 – 30 people using the facility at any given time during the day or early evening. The users are mostly middle aged over weight women. This usage extrapolates out to indicate that women will be active and participate if there is no cost or little expectation of having to be part of the “lycra set”.

Pathways into recreation from school

The diversity and availability of sport and recreation activities on offer at school has increased markedly in the last 10 years. Research conducted in SA through ORS indicated that students willingly chose new and different recreation activities above the more traditional sport such as football, netball and soccer. The chosen activities ranged from table tennis to surfing, sailing, canoeing and rock climbing/ abseiling.

Although schools have outdoor education and physical education as courses, it seems when they leave school there is a significant drop off in participation.

The transition from school does not provide easy access to clubs etc, especially for young people whose parents do not engage in the activity and are looking on their own.

Clubs and state sporting bodies could have a greater involvement in school sport and help to run competitions, provide coaches etc. However, funding is an issue to pay staff as most clubs are staffed by volunteers. By joining a school team run by a club, many school leavers will have a continuous pathway in the sport and be involved with a club. Many schools have difficulty finding coaches and subsequently do not enter as many teams as they could in school sport.

In many schools there are teams yacht racing in dingy's. Participants are 50 -50 male/female from schools in coastal areas with ready access to sailing clubs. Girls are represented in lower numbers in schools in suburban and rural areas. Interestingly female yachtspersons are also increasing in numbers in local yacht races as well as off shore racing such as the Sydney Hobart Yacht race and even at the Volvo around the world race.

Funding for Recreation

Commonwealth and state funding is directed towards sport and elite sport rather than recreational activities. Recreation has far greater participation rates than sport yet the majority of the funding remains with elite sport.

While the funding for coaching and umpire programs are to be applauded, it would be advantageous if similar funding could be made available for the myriad of volunteers that support recreation activities who are not called coaches and umpires. Support crew such as leaders, instructors and safety crew are required to fund their own training and skill development. Much money is spent on the administration of sporting programs with a lower percentage spent on actually getting women to participate.

Would we get more women competing at higher levels if there were more prize money? Netballers put in a lot of effort but get paid around \$2000/season. We probably lose some good players who

would rather concentrate on a career rather than give a lot of time to a sport that cannot support them.

Retention

Retention may have something to do with clothing – look at the outfits elite women wear! For example Beach Volleyball. Young women may choose a different sport if they think the uniform is revealing!! Some do not want to play Basketball because at the time the uniform included knickers and they felt uncomfortable.

The numbers of girls participating in regular activity drops off after school years and the interest in the opposite sex grows. Girls find it harder to make choices about continued involvement in individual activity unless it is something the group becomes involved in through peer pressure.

Women in Sport and Recreation Administration

There has been a program developed in SA called “Women on Boards” to increase women’s participation in management committees and Boards. It has been a bonus and increased participation levels in some areas. While women are now on management committees in larger numbers and making progress in business administration, more money is required to enhance the female members media, marketing and sponsorship skills. Maybe by increasing their business savvy ness we can increase their media coverage and income!

Summary

In summary the key issues confronting women in recreation and sport is about the lack of funding and recognition given to **recreation** as a legitimate form of physical activity.

Millions of dollars are spent by the government and sponsors promoting elite sport and supporting the sporting pathways yet fewer people are involved in sport in Australia than recreation.

Recreation is under valued as a form of physical activity yet some activities are far more strenuous than sport.

A key issue is how girls and women maintain participation levels through the various age and lifestyle changes. The three barriers are time, money and child rearing activities.

As mentioned the largest change in participation levels is in the increasing number of women involved in extreme or adventure outdoor activities such as high ropes, abseiling, rock climbing and remote area trekking or bushwalking and offshore sailing.