

SENATE INQUIRY INTO WOMEN IN SPORT AND RECREATION IN AUSTRALIA  
 AUSTRALIAN RUGBY UNION SUBMISSION

The accessibility for women of all ages to participate in Rugby

Our national registration data indicates Senior Rugby for women is currently played by approximately 2000 players in seven State and Territories. Participation rates have hovered between 1300 and 2000 for the past five years, representing 1% of the national participation figure. Girls upto 12 years of age, play junior club Rugby and participate in mixed gender modified competitions. Teenage girls between the ages of 13 and 18, participate in school-based Rugby competitions.

- Number of women players

2005 Participation Figures								
Total	NSW	QLD	ACT	WA	VIC	SA	TAS	NT
1996	950	531	156	116	104	96	43	0

- Constraints preventing women from playing  
 Rugby has a low female participation rate as it is a collision sport requiring considerable levels of strength and conditioning.
- Retention and attrition trends of Community Rugby players  
 Efforts to expand women’s competitions in recent years have failed due to the transient nature of players and the high level of participation by university students, who come and go regularly. Support for female Rugby within Junior clubs is not strong enough to enable the entry of stand alone girl’s teams.
- National Team Program  
 The National Women’s Program is an ARU Community Rugby based initiative for amateur players. State and Territories support provincial representative programs and provide teams to participate in the ARU National Women’s Championship each year. From this tournament, national players are selected to represent the Wallaroos and participate in international competition.
- Opportunities and barriers for National Team players  
 Players in the National Women’s Program are able to access high-level coaching, medical and sports science support. The Wallaroos are assembled to play international matches and participate in the iRB hosted Women’s Rugby World Cup, held every four years, the next of which is in Canada in September of this year. Due to the National Women’s Program not falling within the ARU High Performance Unit members are unable to access the welfare, career and education support that is available to male professional rugby

players. In addition to training, most of the squad is studying or working full time. Due to their amateur status female rugby players do not have access to the Rugby Union Players Association (RUPA) who caters for professional athletes only.

- **Viability of a National League**

The low levels of participation and the high costs of team assemblies prevent a National League from being a viable alternative.

Women in leadership roles in Rugby

Recent research within Rugby clubs suggests that more than 18,000 volunteers support the game at Community Rugby level. Of this figure, approximately 20% of volunteers are women, a figure significantly lower than the ABS mean of 40%. Our national registration data indicates that 890 women are currently qualified coaches and/or match officials able to play leadership roles during matches. Off the field, 512 women are club registrars responsible for the required registration of their club's players each season. This represents approximately 23% of registrars nationwide.

- **Number of women in leadership roles**

2006 Participation Figures			
Total	Coaches	Match Officials	Club Registrars
1652	750 qualified (SmartRugby)		512
	250 certified (JPP & Foundation)		
	110 accredited (100 L1, L2)	30 accredited (23 L1, 7 L2)	

- **Issues associated with women in leadership roles**

Over 60% of our volunteers are former players who have gained a playing knowledge of the game; therefore only small minorities of women who volunteer have playing experience.

- **Trends and issues for women in organisational leadership roles**

Our club volunteers contribute a weekly average of 11.5 working hours and coupled with the increasing levels of bureaucratisation and liability in sport, for many women and men, the commitment is too great.

- **Strategies to improve the numbers of women in Rugby roles**

The National Women's Program supports the identification and development of women within key roles. In the Wallaroo Management Team, three of the seven positions are currently held by women.

