

**Submission to**  
**Senate Committee – Environment, Communications,**  
**Information Technology and the Arts**  
**Senate inquiry into women in sport and recreation in Australia**

Submitted by Sport and Recreation Tasmania

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## **Executive Summary**

Sport and Recreation Tasmania (SRT) is committed to supporting all minority groups within the Tasmanian community to assist in increasing participation opportunities in sport and recreation. SRT achieves this by working collaboratively with the Australian Sports Commission, state and local government and state sporting organisations. Programs coordinated within the Tasmanian community include coaching and officiating, junior sport, disability sport education, ethics in sport, club development and indigenous sport programs.

SRT supports women in sport through the provision of funding to the peak body, Womensport and Recreation Tasmania and works in partnership with government agencies to assist Womensport and Recreation Tasmania to implement the Women Get Active Program. This Program is a state-wide initiative that aims to enhance the health and wellbeing of women and girls through physical activity. The program specifically seeks to engage women and girls who are not currently physically active and who may have experienced barriers to physical activity, such as lack of confidence, body image, concern for personal safety, costs of participation, transport issues and myths about the dangers of physical activity.

The development of the Tasmanian Physical Activity Plan 2005-2010 is also a positive step towards creating an active and healthy Tasmania.

Sport and Recreation Tasmania is continuing to address all issues in relation to women in sport and recreation. We will continue to work in partnership with the Australian Sports Commission, Women in Sport Unit, Womensport and Recreation Tasmania, state and local government and state sporting organisations in an effort to make further gains.

## **1. The health benefits of women participating in sport and recreation activities.**

Sport and Recreation Tasmania recognises the health benefits to participation. The development of the Tasmanian Physical Activity Plan identifies physical activity as a key requirement for physical and mental health.

The plan aims to:

- Encourage a whole of government and community approach to addressing physical activity levels in Tasmania
- Develop environments and policies that support physical activity
- Promote a Tasmanian culture that values physical activity and its benefits
- Coordinate planning and resources to increase levels of physical activity
- Identify target population groups and appropriate interventions, policies and programs
- Facilitate the development of a range of physical activity interventions and approaches based on research and community need

The benefits of being physically active through the plan will be promoted to all Tasmanians and will include factors for improving general health and wellbeing and quality of life.

## **2. The accessibility for women of all ages to participate in organised sport, fitness and recreation activities, with additional reference to state and federal programs.**

The Women Get Active Program is a state-wide initiative that aims to enhance the health and wellbeing of women and girls through physical activity. The program specifically seeks to engage women and girls who are not currently physically active and who may have experienced barriers to physical activity such as lack of confidence, body image, concern for personal safety, costs of participation, transport issues and myths about the dangers of physical activity.

Since the inception of the Women Get Active Program in 2004, 13 programs have been coordinated. A total of 120 participants have successfully completed the program. However, community needs are continually being addressed to support additional state-wide programs.

The 2004 Annual Report on Participation in Exercise Recreation and Sport, commissioned by the Australian Sports Commission, showed that for the four-year period ending in 2004, Tasmanian women's participation rates in organised physical activities had decreased from 41.1% to 37.2%. In contrast, men's participation rates over the same period remained steady at 44%.

The same review revealed that in Tasmania the number of organised activities for women is also lower than the national average.

The Women Get Active Program has attempted to address some of these issues. These include strategies such as a need for support networks to assist the implementation of grass roots programs that assist women to participate.

Evidence exists that a lack of resources and recognition is also a barrier to participation, as many women who take on leadership roles to assist women in sport do so on a voluntary basis and thus time and lifestyle take priority.

The Women Get Active Program has also found that barriers to participation are greater for women of lower socio-economic strata, women with a disability, indigenous women or those from a culturally and linguistically diverse background. This program is still being evaluated and results to date are anecdotal.

Additional investment must be made to research the needs of all women and to address such issues as suitable venues, child care, opportunities in remote and rural areas, school hours programs and transport, as current research is outdated.

Currently, there is little infrastructure within Tasmania to support the voluntary nature of women's participation in physical activity. Sport and Recreation Tasmania assists through support of Womensport and Recreation Tasmania and the Women Get Active Program. However, research into the retention and attrition trends of grass roots participation is lacking.

Presently in Tasmania no distinction exists at the elite level for the remuneration, recruitment, retention and attrition of elite female athletes in comparison to male athletes.

The Tasmanian Institute of Sport (TIS) offers assistance to all athletes based on performance and is not gender specific. A gap does exist in elite females between 18 and 24 years of age when comparing elite males and females in this age group. Anecdotal evidence suggests that females at 18 years of age drop out of elite sport due to lifestyle changes and lack of peer group support. Females appear to be more focused on a career than their male counterparts. Anecdotal evidence also indicates that in some sports, such as rowing and cycling, females are returning to competition at around the age of 26 years. Research is needed to investigate these trends.

### **3. Women in leadership programs.**

There is no evidence for Tasmania on the number and proportion of women in coaching, administration and officiating roles. Sport and Recreation Tasmania promotes the Australian Sports Commission's Women in Sport grant to all state sporting organisations, clubs and local government. This gives women an opportunity to apply for funding towards coaching and officiating qualifications and development programs. As this is a national program, the number of successful Tasmanian applicants is few.

Currently, the TIS does not **have** any female coaches responsible for their National Training Centre Programs. However, four women have successfully applied for support through the TIS coaching scholarship program. This has been a successful program for two Tasmanian

coaches. Ilene Carr was a successful TIS coaching scholarship recipient who has since become a Development Officer with Hockey Tasmania and a full time hockey coach. Rebecca Dick also received the scholarship and is now a state Development Officer for Basketball Tasmania.