

**Federal Inquiry
into
Women in Sport and
Recreation in Australia**

**South Australian Premier's Council for
Women**

Submission Response

June 2006

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1. INTRODUCTION

The South Australian Premier's Council for Women (PCW) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Federal Inquiry into Women in Sport and Recreation. We are an advisory body established in 2003 to advise the Premier and the Minister for the Status of Women on issues impacting on women in South Australia. Our terms of reference and a brochure about the Council form **Attachments 1 and 1a**.

Please note that the views we express in this submission are the views of this Council and not necessarily the views of the South Australian Government.

Should the Inquiry decide to hold public hearings, we would appreciate the opportunity to present at such a hearing.

The Council has a strong commitment to working with the SA Government to achieve equality for women in all aspects of life. In providing leadership to influence and shape women's policy in SA, we have focused on:

- *strategies to deal with the causes of inequalities for women*
- *and removal of barriers that prevent equal access and participation.*

We have given priority focus to:

- *supporting strategies that promote women in leadership and governance*
- *improving women's economic security and employment opportunities*
- *safety*
- *work life balance*
- *and civil and community participation.*

Our submission to this Inquiry is informed by experiences as a high level women's advisory Council together with perspectives from Council members who have played at national, international and Olympic levels of their chosen sports and also coached at the national level.

Prior to writing this submission we consulted a number of women who have been involved in sporting organisations – as coaches, players and in management - for 20 years or more, to ascertain their views.

Each of these women expressed a strong sense of frustration at the perceived lack of progress towards equality for women *in sport*. They argue that change would not be achieved without stronger action, and queried whether directions identified in previous reports had yet been actioned.

Mention was made of high quality reports previously produced that had identified specific strategies including *Towards Gender Equity in Sport* published by the Australian Sports Commission in March 1992 (see **Attachment 2**), which do not seem to have been implemented.

Another report mentioned was *Women, Sport and the Media*, prepared for the Federal Government by the Working Group on Women in Sport and produced by the Australian Sports Commission and the Office for the Status of Women in 1985.

Our comments in this submission are divided into two parts:

- The essentials in achieving equality for women, and
- Addressing the Inquiry's terms of reference.

2. THE ESSENTIALS IN ACHIEVING EQUALITY FOR WOMEN

In our experience, the following are essential in the quest to achieve equality for women:

2.1 Ensure up to date, high quality, gender disaggregated data is recorded; the adage, 'what gets counted gets done,' applies. Accurate data is an essential tool for identifying baselines, monitoring impact of policy and programs on different groups such as men and women and also for measuring progress towards equality for women.

In the absence of quality data on women in SA, in 2004 the Premier's Council for Women published the *Statistical Profile of Women in South Australia*, see **Attachment 3**. Data from a variety of sources was combined into a single document. This publication helped in identifying the quality of existing data as well as gaps in information. Inequalities become clearly evident in analysing such data.

The Council then provided initial funding for the development of an online 'one stop shop' of gender data. The online source of gender data is intended to supersede the hard copy Statistical Profile, be updated as new information becomes available and as new sources of gender data are added and be more accessible to others.

In the case of sport, data on participation rates by gender of different national, state and local level sports is already available. Despite almost all sporting groups having become generic bodies such as Swimming Australia, Basketball Australia and so on, it would be possible to record gender data, in the same way that age or other breakdowns might be recorded. Likewise breakdown of funding allocated to men and women could also be recorded. Accurate data is critical to arguing the case for equality for underrepresented groups, including women.

It has also become clear that national sporting bodies, in order to nurture greater numbers of female participants - in all levels and roles in sport eg coaching, management, officiating, playing – these programs need to be specifically targeted, produced and implemented.

In their current generic format, there seems no such attempt and no accountability in this area.

2.2 Where relevant, review governance procedures of national and state sporting bodies to include guidelines to achieve gender equity.

A review of guidelines identified in reports such as *Towards Gender Equity in Sport* published in March 1992 by the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) could be relevant for inclusion, when *The National Sporting Organisations' Governance: Principles of Best Practice of 2002* (Australian Sports Commission) is next reviewed.

A means by which the ASC could prioritise fairness and equality of access and resources for all groups, including women, could be that stipulations are tied to National Sporting Organisations' grants.

The Women in Sport Unit at the ASC is being phased out, with the intention that equality for women becomes a mainstream issue, but the weakness of this stance is that women in sport could again become a vanishing concept.

2.3 Phase-in over a 2-3 year period, the requirement for organisations applying for and receiving grant money to provide evidence of a gender equity plan, including targets and disaggregation of data.

- Gender equality in allocation of funds needs to be listed in the guidelines for the Australian Institute of Sport and State Sports Institutes' for funding allocation for all levels of sport ie school, community, state and national.
- Within each National Sporting Organisation, all data needs to be recorded, disaggregated by gender, age and cultural background including Aboriginality.
- Disaggregated data breakdown is essential in identifying who benefits from current funding programs.
- This data breakdown needs to be recorded regardless of the generic naming of the sporting body eg Tennis Australia.
- A gender equity plan needs to include access and participation for girls and women of all ages, all cultural groups, all levels of skill, at all levels of participation, all levels of leadership with access to all funding opportunities.
- Refer also to the US experience of legislative change through Title 1X (see Attachment 6 and Council's response to the inquiry's term of reference b1V).

2.4 Compile and publicise a summary document of the statistics and analysis of data of men and women at all levels of sport with particular reference to the disproportionate representation of women, using the following parameters:

- **Participation:** levels of boys and girls and men and women for all sports as well as specific sports.
- **Coaching:** proportions of men and women in coaching positions. In particular the gender difference in the attainment of levels 1,2,3 accreditation certificates.

- **Senior management and leadership:** proportions of men and women in senior management and leadership positions.
- **Remuneration:** remuneration levels of male and female athletes, coaches and those in senior leadership positions.
- **Government funding:** overview of funding allocation by gender.
- **Sponsorship funding:** examination of sources and amounts of funding by business and corporate sponsorship – by gender.
- **Media:** gender inequities in amount of media space and time dedicated to women's sports.

2.5 Based on the evidence, identify priorities and set targets and timelines to achieve change.

Without targets and identified timelines progress cannot be accelerated. It clearly needs to be.

2.6 Use positive language and a positive stance in advocating for equality.

Advocating a positive case for change is more successful than taking a victims' stance.

That children be given equal opportunities regardless of their gender, is a position that is generally acceptable to most people. Promoting a message that delivers fairness to sons and daughters may be better received than one that more directly challenges the status quo, eg how resources are allocated to male or female sporting bodies.

This can also be directly linked to the health of our future generations. Physical activity and participation in recreation and sport has clearly been earmarked by governments as important in improving overall health and self esteem; (see Council's response to the Inquiry's terms of reference 3a).

This emphasis on equal gender participation can be filtered down to all clubs through National Sporting Organisations via the above-mentioned approaches.

Identify and highlight the added value that women's contributions can bring to sporting endeavours at all levels. For example in the case of women in leadership positions or on boards and committees, well credentialed research¹ has identified that mixed gender boards improve governance and higher rates of overall profit (return on equity and return to shareholders) over single gender male boards.

In some male dominated sports, the presence of skilled women on boards, may also act as the first seed in changing the demonstrated culture within that sport, towards the respect for and inclusivity of women.

¹ see response in Section 3 Addressing the Inquiry's terms of reference d)ii

2.7 The importance of perseverance.

'The squeaky wheel does eventually get the oil.'

2.8 Identify and seek the support of high level champions for the cause and identify partners.

Our State Premier has been an important ally to women in South Australia through including targets in our South Australian Strategic Plan to achieve 50% representation of women on State Government Boards and Committees by 2006 and of chairs by 2008. While we are still working towards reaching these targets, significant progress has been achieved towards the targets as outlined in our response in Section 3, (Addressing the Inquiry's terms of reference dii).

In this case, the achievement of these outcomes will be dependent on one individual or a small group, making the compelling case to all levels of government. This might be a member of the Senate Inquiry Committee or the Federal Minister for Sport or the Australian Sports Commission management.

2.9 Work with other bodies such as State and National women's offices to promote women in leadership and governance roles at all levels and to fill skill gap areas.

There has been a tendency to do away with specialist bodies in favour of expecting generic sporting bodies to take up gender specific issues, but this has not always occurred. For example, we understand that the Australian Sports Commission's *National Policy on Women and Girls in Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity* which expired in 2002 has not yet been updated and needs to be updated.

3. ADDRESSING THE INQUIRY'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

We note that the Inquiry's terms of reference have focused on four key areas; health, participation, portrayal of women in the media and women in leadership. A number of the terms of reference focus on issues pertaining to national leagues, competitions and elite levels of sport. While not wishing to detract from these areas, other key areas also require attention:

- Identifying what works in increasing participation levels of girls and young women in sport and other physical activities. The early intervention approach of building activity into life patterns from an early age is valuable in setting the pathways for later life.
- Identifying ways to increase activity levels in females of all ages, (not just in competitive sport) that accommodate their work life issues, match women's ways, including how women choose to socialise.
- Improving women's safety in sport, particularly the prevention of assault and harassment with men's sporting bodies and events.
- Working closely with young people through schools to establish attitudes of respect and fairness and equality between boys and girls, men and women, in general classroom activities, but also in sport

focused programs such as Primary School Amateur Sports Associations. This work would build on School Sports Australia's General Policies and Guidelines gender equity policy as stated: "*School Sports Australia vigorously pursues a policy of equal opportunity for both genders in accordance with state/territory Education Department guidelines*"²

Increasing the levels of activity for women will work best if it focuses on the positive of what sport and activity can offer rather than on "the should." In recognising the benefits of sport and activity for girls and women of all ages, we believe the following are important elements in programs:

- Creating a sense of joie de vivre; fun and enjoyment in participation and activity
- Enhancing socialisation and community connectedness
- Building self esteem and character
- Allowing choice
- Creating skills to achieve life balance
- Focusing on enhancing all aspects of health: physical and mental health and wellbeing
- Recognising the diversity of women and girls
- Allowing women to self pace
- Minimize restrictions on sporting uniforms to avoid body image issues, and
- Providing opportunities for participation rather than necessarily competition.

a. the health benefits of women participating in sport and recreation activities;

A comprehensive overview of the health benefits of participating in sport and physical activity can be found in a Canadian document "*On the Move Increasing Participation of Girls and Women in Recreational Sport and Physical Activity*"³ (see **Attachment 4**).

In addressing this term of reference we have used the WHO definition of health "*Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity*"⁴.

A number of Australian initiatives have identified the health benefits of participation in regular activities for various conditions and we have grouped these under the relevant headings.

² P2 School Sports Australia General Policy and Guidelines <http://www.schoolsport.edu.au/policies.htm>

³ P11 -12 Dealing with the Issues Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity

⁴ World Health Organisation (WHO) definition of health. Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organization as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York, 19-22 June, 1946; signed on 22 July 1946 by the representatives of 61 States (Official Records of the World Health Organization, no. 2, p. 100) and entered into force on 7 April 1948

1) Depression and anxiety

Beyondblue⁵, the national mental health initiative to tackle depression states the key facts on its website:

- *“Physical activity can be effective in the prevention and management of depression and anxiety.*
- *Research shows that regular physical activity leads to a 17-28% reduced risk of developing depression in men (20-year follow up study). People who did not take part in physical activity were more likely to have depressive symptoms compared with people who exercised regularly.*
- *Regular aerobic and strength training activities of light or moderate intensity can lead up to a 50% reduction in symptoms of depression and anxiety, especially for women and older people.*
- *In older people, exercise has been found to be just as beneficial as antidepressant medication or social contact in the treatment of depression.*
- *The cycle of depression can be broken by doing pleasurable activities, including keeping fit (riding a bike, jogging, playing football or going for a 20 minute walk)”.*

Women’s Health in Queensland states that *“Exercise reduces the symptoms of stress, depression and anxiety. When you exercise the level of chemicals generated by stress, such as adrenaline, are lowered, resulting in a tranquilising effect. At the same time the body’s production of chemicals which elevate mood are increased. Exercise can also contribute to a more positive body image and improved self esteem. For someone suffering from depression or anxiety, exercise can promote interaction with other people, reducing feelings of isolation”*⁶.

2) Cardiovascular health

*“Exercise has a positive effect on a number of risk factors for cardiovascular disease, including high blood pressure, high body mass index (BMI) and blood cholesterol levels”*⁷.

The National Heart Foundation of Australia has identified that an increasingly inactive lifestyle and unhealthy eating habits are two of the key issues that need to be tackled. The Foundation states that

- *Cardiovascular disease (heart, stroke and blood vessel disease) is the leading cause of death and disability in Australia, claiming the lives of 50,294 people in 2002.*

⁵ Beyondblue The National Depression Initiative Exercise and Depression Key Facts
www.beyondblue.org.au

⁶ “Women and Exercise” <http://www.womhealth.org.au/healthjourney/exercise.htm> Women’s Health Queensland (WHQW) a not for profit incorporated association, funded by the State and Federal Governments, with funding administered by Queensland Health.

⁷ “Women and Exercise” Women’s Health Queensland (WHQW) a not for profit incorporated association, funded by the State and Federal Governments, with funding administered by Queensland Health. <http://www.womhealth.org.au/healthjourney/exercise.htm>

- *38% of all deaths and around 3.67 million Australians are affected by cardiovascular disease. In addition,*
- *1.10 million Australians are disabled long-term by cardiovascular disease.*

To address this problem, the Foundation has developed the *Walk of Life – for all walks of life campaign to educate all Australians about the importance of walking and healthy eating to prevent unhealthy weight gain and to improve cardiovascular health*⁸.

The message from the Heart Foundation is to encourage people to enjoy at least 30 minutes of moderate – *intensity physical activity on most if not all days of the week*⁹.

3) Osteoporosis

The International Osteoporosis Foundation states in its report "Move it or Lose it"¹⁰ released in October 2005 that: "Exercise can help reduce the risk of osteoporosis¹¹ and related fractures."

Some highlights of the "Move it or Lose it" report¹² include:

- *One study in Finland shows that the most physically active young girls gain about 40% more bone mass than the least active girls of the same age. Similar, but less dramatic, results were recorded for boys in a United States survey.*
- *Exercise also helps balance and prevents falls – this is important because every year, some two out of five people over 65 will fall at least once. Falls are a leading cause of fracture.*
- *Weight bearing and high impact exercise (dancing, walking, jogging, sports, strength training) is required to stimulate bone formation".*

4) Pregnancy

Physical activity has impact on pregnancy and on prevention of pregnancy.

"Teenage female athletes are less than half as likely to get pregnant as female non athletes (5% and 11% respectively), are more likely to report that they had never had sexual intercourse than female non athletes (54% and 41% respectively), and are more likely to experience their first sexual intercourse later in adolescence than non female

⁸ <http://www.heartfoundation.com.au/index.cfm?page=19>

⁹ Overweight and Obesity in Australia Information from the Heart Foundation www.heartfoundation.com.au/

¹⁰ "Move it or Lose It Invest in your Bones" www.osteofound.org/publications/pdf/move-it-or-lose-it.pdf

¹¹ "Osteoporosis, in which the bones become fragile and break easily, is one of the world's most devastating and common chronic diseases. It strikes one in three women over 50 worldwide (more than breast cancer)" www.osteofound.org/publications/pdf/move-it-or-lose-it.pdf

¹² Exercise Vital to Build Strong Bones, Media Release from International Osteoporosis Foundation October 20, 2005¹² as detailed in <http://www.jeanhailes.org.au/>

athletes (the Women's Sports Foundation Report: Sport and Teen Pregnancy May 1998)¹³

“Participating in exercise when pregnant can help women reduce some of the symptoms that women experience during pregnancy such as sleeping difficulties, constipation, fatigue and backache. Maintaining a reasonable level of fitness during pregnancy can also help women cope with the demands of a new baby”¹⁴.

5) Obesity

Australia has increasingly high levels of obesity including in children. The Australian National Heart Foundation's key message to achieving and maintaining a healthy weight is to combine healthy eating *with regular physical activity*.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has identified that

- *In 1999-2000 7.42 million Australians (60% of those aged 25 years and over) were overweight.*
- *Of these about 2.5 Million (21% of those aged 25 years and over) were obese¹⁵.*
- *In 1995, 20% of boys and girls aged 2-18 years were overweight or obese¹⁶.*

- 6) Other research demonstrates that Type 2 diabetes¹⁷ and some forms of cancers¹⁸ are directly linked to levels of physical activity.

b. the accessibility for women of all ages to participate in organised sport, fitness and recreation activities, with additional reference to state and federal programs, including;

Research identifies many factors that reduce women's available leisure time and influences their ability to participate in sporting activities, and we have listed these under specific headings:

Increasing numbers of women are in the workforce

- The traditional pattern of sole male breadwinner with female carer at home now describes only a minority of families, since more

¹³ As reported by Lopiano D “Equity in Women's Sports – A Health and Fairness Perspective” www.womenssportsfoundation.org

¹⁴ “Women and Exercise” <http://www.womhealth.org.au/healthjourney/exercise.htm>

¹⁵ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2004 Heart, stroke and vascular diseases – Australia 2004 AIHW Cat No CVD 27 Canberra AIHW and National Heart Foundation of Australia (Cardiovascular Disease Series No 22)

¹⁶ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2004 Heart, stroke and vascular diseases – Australia 2004 AIHW Cat No CVD 27 Canberra AIHW and National Heart Foundation of Australia (Cardiovascular Disease Series No 22)

¹⁷ “Women and Exercise” <http://www.womhealth.org.au/healthjourney/exercise.htm>

¹⁸ US National Institute of Health National cancer Institute www.cancer.au

women are now in the workforce (51.8% 1990 to 54.5% 2001¹⁹), including women with family responsibilities, but with less earnings than men;

- Patterns of work are changing with employees working longer hours, without overtime payment.

Time and work life pressures

- More employees feel stressed by conflicting priorities of work and family and pressured by time²⁰;
- More than half of Australian couples with dependent children, always or often feel pressed for time;²¹
- There is greater stress on relationships within families as parents take separate holidays to ensure one parent is home to care for the children during school holidays, resulting in less opportunity to holiday or recreate together and less quality time spent as a family unit;
- More time spent by employees in travel to and from work due to urban sprawl.

Women are carrying the load of caring and domestic roles

- *According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, females account for 70% of the primary carers' population²²*
- *In 2003, "over two-thirds (70%) of families used mothers' working arrangements to care for children, and a third (33%) used fathers' working arrangements. This suggests that even when both parents are working, women still tend to be the primary givers of care, and are more likely than their partners to organise their work around child care responsibilities,"²³*
- *Women in Australia are also the primary carers of parents;²⁴*
- *Women also carry more of the load of domestic and household responsibilities than men and do so in addition to working. "Domestic activities accounted for the largest proportion of household work (an average of 191 minutes per day devoted to these activities by women and an average of 124 minutes by men)²⁵;*

¹⁹ ABS Australian Social Trends 2001Work: National Survey Tables

²⁰ ABS Time Use survey 1997 Cat No 4153.0

²¹ p3 OECD Report 2004 "Babies and Bosses: Recommendations to Help Families Balance Work and Family Life"

²² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2003 Australia's Welfare 2003 The 6th biennial welfare report of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Canberra AIHW Cat No AUS 41, p90

²³ ABS Australian Social Trends Family and Community - Family functioning: Balancing family and work.

²⁴ Austen S and Birch ER Family Responsibilities and Women's Working Lives Discussion paper No 1/02 Curtin University of Technology Feb 2002

²⁵ ABS Australia Now Australian Social Trends 2001 Work - Unpaid Work: Time spent on unpaid household work

- There are less traditional sources of unpaid carers available (previously women);
- Smaller families, resulting in more pressure on fewer individuals to care for family members;
- Greater mobility of families resulting in less access to support from extended family members;
- Many carers are known to experience poor physical health, stress, social isolation, loss and grief.

Strategies therefore are needed to support women to maintain their activity levels that can work within and respect the impact of these issues in women's lives. For example it may be necessary to look at strategies for population groups such as employees. It may be more effective to create incentives for large employers to sponsor work based physical activities rather than focus on strategies to encourage individual women's participation, or out of 9am to 5pm hours participation.

A reference worth reviewing that includes recommendations and best practice examples to address barriers for women and girls is "*Making Women and Girls More Active A Good Practice Guide*" Womensports Foundation UK (see **Attachment 5**).

It is interesting to note that while one would expect that juggling work life issues would increase stress levels on women, interim research findings are surprising. A report released in 2001 of a longitudinal Australian study²⁶ into the health of 40,000 women identifies that young women (aged 18-23) are experiencing higher levels of stress than their mothers and grandmothers. This stress is identified as high levels of anxiety - over jobs, education, career and finances. Strategies to reduce stress such as meditation, increasing physical activity, and other life balance initiatives may be particularly important to this generation.

With the Federal Government's introduction of voluntary student unionism it will be important to review the impact on women's sport at university level, with the removal of student union funding to such groups. The Council has been contacted by young student athletes who have competed successfully at Olympic level, regarding their concerns about this de-funding and its impact on female students. This concern relates to the impact on female students' participation in sport at the tertiary level, as well as on the development and support of elite level female athletes to train and compete.

²⁶ A book titled "Women's Health Australia: What do we know? What do we need to know?", and launched at the 4th Australian Women's Health Conference in Adelaide in February 2001, detailed the first five years of the first, and largest, longitudinal study into women's health undertaken in Australia²⁶. The 20-year study, funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health, involves 40,000 Australian women in and will follow them over the next 15 years. A research team includes 20 investigators from a broad range of disciplines, including sociology, epidemiology, psychology, anthropology, medicine, nutrition, demography and statistics. The study addresses a vast array of health issues, from women's experiences with GPs to reproduction and gynaecology, smoking, dieting, body image, fatigue, leisure activities, family responsibilities, workplace stress, care-giving, domestic violence and widowhood

i. the number of women actively participating in organised sport, fitness and recreation activities;

A position paper prepared by the National Physical Activity Program Committee, National Heart Foundation of Australia, April 2001²⁷ stated that *“there has been no consistent approach to the monitoring of population physical activity in Australia. Slight increases in participation in exercise for sport, recreation or fitness were reported between 1989-90 and 1995, chiefly among people aged 35-54 years. However, data from recent national surveys suggest that the proportion of the population doing sufficient activity for health benefit declined from 62% in 1997 to 57% in 1999.*

Several reports have indicated higher Body Mass Index values in children since the Australian Health and Fitness Survey of 1985, which included fitness and health measures of Australian children aged 7-15 years. In childhood, habitual physical activity decreases with age and most studies show girls to be less active than boys, from an early age.

Three sources of data have some relevance in this debate.

a) The results of the National Physical Activity Survey conducted in 1999²⁸ which identified:

- *Many female respondents (aged 18-75) were not meeting the daily physical activity requirements.*
- *Almost 15% of women reported no physical activity during the previous week, with a further 31.5% not achieving ‘sufficient time’ (defined as 150 minutes of physical activity a week).*
- *Women were less likely than men to participate in sufficient physical activity (53.8% compared to 59.6%) and vigorous activity on at least five occasions during the previous week (6.4 compared to 11.1%).*

b) *ABS Participation in Sport and Physical Activities Survey 2002*²⁹ provides data on participation levels for both genders and by organised and non organised sport and physical activities.

c) *Participation in Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey (ERASS) 2004*³⁰.

²⁷ Research referred to in a position paper prepared by the National Physical Activity Program Committee, National Heart Foundation of Australia, April 2001.

²⁸ As reported at <http://www.womhealth.org.au/healthjourney/exercise.htm> Women’s Health Queensland (WHQW), a not for profit incorporated association, funded by the State and Federal Governments, with funding administered by Queensland Health.

²⁹ ABS Participation in Sport and Physical Activities Survey 2002 (4177.0)

³⁰ Participation in Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey (ERASS) 2004

ii. characteristics of women not participating in organised sport, fitness and recreation activities (including, for example, socio-economic strata, age, women with a disability, Indigenous or Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) women);

ABS 2002 data³¹ indicates age variations for female participants as follows:

18-24 years	75.3 %
25-34 years	63.0 %
35-44 years	59.2 %
45-54 years	53.2 %
55-64 years	60.0 %
65 and over	38.6 %

ERASS 2004³² Female participation rates by age grouping are:

18-24 years	91.7 %
25-34 years	83.0 %
35-44 years	84.2 %
45-54 years	79.4 %
55-64 years	81.2 %
65 and over	68.7 %

Both ABS and ERASS data indicate that national participation levels are lower for women in the known disadvantaged groups:

- Born in countries where English is not the main language;
- Unemployed or not in the labour force; and
- Belonging to a one-parent family.

ABS data on Aboriginal communities indicates that in 2005, Indigenous men were more likely to participate in a sport or physical activity than Indigenous women (52% compared to 36%)³³.

iii. constraints, including strategies to overcome the constraints that may prevent these women from participating;

We are not aware of Australian research on barriers to participation, but the known barriers for CALD groups coupled with constraints for women would apply. Strategies such as language and cultural supports, skill development, access to transport to sporting venues and the availability of high quality, affordable, accessible, on site child care would assist.

iv. the effectiveness of current state and federal grant programs that encourage women to participate;

The Council notes the reported impact in the US, following the introduction of the 1972 *Education Amendments Act* Title 1X. There are lessons for Australia within this legislation, namely in tying grants to

³¹ ABS Participation in Sport and Physical Activities Survey 2002³¹

³² Participation in Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey (ERASS) 2004

³³ Social and Sporting Activities of ATSI Community Functioning ABS social trends 4102 – 0 2005

reflect numbers of males and females in the relevant institution's population. The legislation prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender in educational programs and activities in all secondary and postsecondary educational institutions that receive federal funds.

Title 1X has three equal opportunity program requirements:

- addressing participation opportunities that must match proportions in the overall enrolment figures;
- scholarship dollars must be allocated according to sporting participation levels for men and women; and
- other sporting program benefits such as provision of the equipment facilities, recruitment and other criteria must be equitable.

While the legislation could be improved with penalties for non compliance and increased monitoring, there have been some positive outcomes for women in high school and college institutions, and an article by Donna Lopiano *Equity in Women's Sports – a Health and Fairness Perspective* – (see **Attachment 6**), provides some useful insights for consideration in the Australian context.

v. *the retention and attrition trends of grass roots participation, including comparisons with male athletes at a similar level;*

The Council does not have access to this information.

vi. *the remuneration, recruitment, retention and attrition of elite female athletes, including comparisons with elite male athletes;*

While Council has only anecdotal evidence of the discrepancies in all areas between high profile sports men and women, the issue of inequities between male and female earnings is an ongoing one for women. Women earn less than men and this applies in all areas of employment.

In relation to graduates, Women's Health Victoria's *Gender Advocacy framework*³⁴ reports that "*on average men's earnings are more than 25% higher than women's (comparison across all age groups of graduates' total weekly earnings)*".

In her speech to the Women and Sport forum in 2003, Pru Goward the Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner illustrated the differences in male and female earnings for athletes, particularly at the international level³⁵. The Commissioner used very little Australian data in her comments on earnings, which raises the question as to the availability

³⁴ P4 Gender Impact assessment Financial Security Women's Health Victoria's Gender Advocacy framework Gender Impact assessment Financial Security, reference to the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (2004) Australian Vocational Education and training statistics; Student Outcomes Survey 2003 Data tables

³⁵ The Current Playing Field 1991 – 2002 20 May 2003 Women and Sport Forum Sydney Speech by Pru Goward, the Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner HREOC

and accessibility of Australian data on earnings, and the gender disaggregation of such data.

At the beginning of this submission the Council identified the case for disaggregation of data by gender. When applied to each of the areas of remuneration, recruitment, retention and attrition current baselines will be identified, against which progress towards equality can be measured.

vii. retention of athletes competing in senior and open age state and national sporting competitions, with possible strategies to retain female competitors in elite and sub-elite competition;

The starkest discrepancy in this area is with male and female athletes at a national or international level – at a point when they begin a family. In most, if not all cases, a male athlete continues his career unimpeded after a child is born into the family. A female athlete, on the other hand, either retires or continues on, but with enormous stresses of juggling child care and training and competition commitments. The numbers of women that this affects is growing, as the average age of athletes competing at the highest level generally increases.

A perfect example of this contrast is the Australian cricket team, versus individual female athletes such as Olympic basketballer Rachael Sporn, Australian netballer Peta Scholz and many others. The cricketers continue, well supported, with both family and career while the females struggle enormously with both. Scholz retired because of a lack of support and understanding, while Sporn struggled through one of the most difficult two years of her life, juggling both, to achieve her goal of representing Australia at her third Olympics. While both women have spoken publicly about the difficulty of these experiences, they have also given the Council permission to refer to their experiences in this submission.

There is much work to be done in this area, with quality child care being accessible and funded – and in changing the culture of understanding the requirements of female athletes who also choose parenthood.

viii. opportunities and barriers for national team members and competitors in international competition;

Positive steps have been made in this area for competitors who are at a high international ranking. They receive equitable support. However, we are aware that obtaining sponsorship is a major issue for women who are competing at national and international competitions in their attempts to reach those levels of support. This of course, is most often linked to their profile, which in turn is linked to media coverage.

ix. the financial status, success and viability of women's national league competitions, including strategies to improve these factors;

The Women's National Basketball League, the National Netball League and the Women's Hockey Leagues represent sports where our women's national teams hold world rankings of - one, two or three. This means that players in this league are well and truly world class, if not, in some cases the very best in the world.

However, this does not translate to public recognition and therefore financial support, because of a lack of media attention and profiling. Many sporting bodies have noted a significant drop in sponsorship support because much of what was previously available has notably been funnelled into the two AFL teams in Adelaide. This is commonly experienced in Adelaide. For example, AAMI sponsored the Adelaide Thunderbirds for many years in the National Netball League. AAMI then chose to put its naming rights onto Football Park and withdrew its sponsorship.

This is a very high profile example, but this has happened at many different levels of sponsorship as well.

Hockey has had to retract and condense its national league to a 10-14 day national carnival because of the lack of funds. And even then, the Council believes the players have to fund their own participation.

The financial viability of leagues is very much dependent upon the public visibility of the sport and its competitors – via the media.

c. the portrayal of women's sport in the media, including:

i. the role of the government to regulate and review the coverage of women's sport in the media (print, radio and electronic);

This is possibly the most important element of this Inquiry. This presents an opportunity for women to rise in their level of recognition and support. It provides the opportunity for young girls to have role models and to be inspired by the outstanding female athletes of their time.

As has been previously established, it is the key to many elements of support for women in sport – sponsorship, funding, public acknowledgement, self esteem, cultural support. It gives them the opportunity to feel that their activity and accomplishments are equally important to their male peers.

It may be possible for the Government to regulate licences of media outlets to require them to establish a minimum benchmark of media coverage on women in sport. This has successfully been achieved in relation to benchmarks of Australian content in television broadcasting.

ii. the influence of pay television on the coverage of women in sport;

The Council does not have the information to comment on this issue.

iii. the promotion and publicity of women's National League competitions;

The ABC currently gives continued coverage to the women's national leagues in both netball and basketball. This is a fantastic opportunity to improve the profile of the game and its athletes. The ABC could improve the level of exposure given to this coverage by cross-promoting the programs during high-ratings time slots.

Greater exposure helps to create role models for young girls, with a continuing ripple effect in participation.

In the case of netball, basketball and hockey, the players are all at a world class level, with the national teams in these sports currently being ranked 1-3 in the world. However, it has been demonstrated that this fact alone is not sufficient to attract a greater audience. How a program is packaged and promoted and funded often determines its popularity.

Sporting panels, discussions, celebrities, humour, music, all seem to be part of a packaged sports program that works in our country, but none of these resources are put into women's sports programs.

This is a very realistic and achievable outcome for the ABC or commercial station but is not currently prioritised or funded. High visibility such as this directly impacts on the following factors – financial status and success of the leagues.

However, it is important to understand that the cycle of commercial television stations protecting their investments – thereby making it prohibitive for other sports to get recognition, eg Channel Seven have just paid a very high fee for the TV rights to the AFL season for the coming 3-5 years. Therefore it will not be in their interest to go ahead and promote another competing sport such as soccer or basketball. Commercial stations are heavily locked into their own investments – unless dictated to by government regulations.

iv. the financial status and success of women's national leagues;

(See comments in section ciii).

v. strategies to improve the amount and quality of media coverage for women's sport;

The ongoing issue of the sexualisation of women in sport remains a problem. There has been a trend with a number of female athletes posing for calendars to increase the attention on their sports, as well as their own profile. The outcomes of such marketing is questionable and

likely only encourages the trivialisation of women in sport and draws attention to bodies rather than skill, and further alienates women who do not have the 'perfect body' shape. Further, it creates an image that women's bodies are 'fair game', and this is in conflict with other messages around preventing harassment against women and protecting women from sexual assault in sport.

However, the major penetration that this Inquiry could achieve is around the regulation of media corporations in Australia to have a baseline requirement around women's sport coverage.

A high-profile survey by The News journalist, Helen Menzies, in 1980 of all major daily newspapers in all Australian capital cities for a period of one month, showed that average coverage of women's sport was two percent of all sport coverage.

Almost a quarter of a century later, our preliminary and brief examination of the same content, appears to be around 5-6 percent, without any formal work being done on this yet.

It is our suggestion that the Senate Inquiry commissions a similar study in order to establish a regulation benchmark requirement for all major daily newspapers in Australia.

It is also important to investigate new ways of dealing with the media, particularly to incorporate new technologies. The following strategies could be considered for further investigation:

- Using non mainstream forms of media to get the message across through email networks, multimedia, online updates
- Reviewing the course content of media schools to identify if there is any coverage of gender related issues and if not, to address this
- Raising awareness of inequities for women in sport by developing partnerships with media schools and sponsoring trainee journalists through work placements in female sporting bodies, sponsoring awards for journalists who fairly cover women in sport, and
- Media training for women in sporting organisations.

***d. women in leadership roles in sport, including;
i. the number and proportion of women in coaching, administrative and officiating roles;***

The Council does not have access to this information, but recognises that women will be underrepresented in all spheres of influence, as occurs in other levels of leadership and governance. The strategies and approaches outlined in preceding responses, to encourage women in leadership roles, are relevant here.

ii. the issues associated with women in leadership roles in both elite and grass-roots activities;

Given that women form approximately 50% of the population, it is only reasonable that they be represented proportionately in all leadership positions. In our experience, equity on boards is achievable when 50% targets of women on boards are set with identified timelines. South Australia's Strategic Plan has targets to appoint 50% women as chairs on State Government boards and committees by 2006 and of chairs by 2008³⁶. When the plan was launched in March 2004, there were 32% of women on boards. The target has helped achieve 40% of women on boards as at June 2006. Legislation approved by the SA Parliament in 2005 through the State Acts Interpretation (Gender Balance Amendment Act 2005) also requires private organisations to consider gender balance in their board appointments.

A common reason that is given for not appointing women in leadership positions is that women with these skills are not available. However this argument is not based on evidence, since women have these skills and experience, but not necessarily the recognition or the networks to achieve appointments. It is therefore essential for sporting bodies to work with state and national Offices for Women, to establish Directories of women who have the required skills for board appointments. These Directories already exist in some states including South Australia, where we currently have 280 women on our Premier's Women's Directory. There is also a national Women on Boards directory.

It is also necessary to train women who have the potential for board appointment but who require some additional governance training and this training is already on offer in a number of states. To ensure equity in access to this training, sponsorship for community women is essential.

While work life issues limit the time many women have available for leadership positions, women can be encouraged to take up these positions through reimbursement of child care and out of pocket expenses incurred in board work. Mentoring programs also assist women to develop networks of women in senior roles.

In mounting the case for equal participation of women in leadership positions, the researched benefits need to be highlighted that women add value in such positions. Mixed gender boards achieve improved governance and higher rates of overall profit (return on equity and return to shareholders), over single gender male boards, as illustrated by the following research:

- Australian study conducted by the Delta Outlooks Research Group in December 2003 and January 2004³⁷ showed that Companies which made more than \$5M in profit had 45% women on their Boards.

³⁶ P47 South Australia's Strategic Plan Creating Opportunity March 2004 Government of South Australia

³⁷ Women on Boards Network Inc Australia

- The Conference Board of Canada in 2002 found that appointing women to leadership positions improves governance credentials.
 - Research tracked the financial well being of firms with two or more women on boards to see where they stood six years later.
 - The Conference Board of Canada also found that company boards with women were much more likely than those with all male boards, to be leaders - when ranked by revenue and profit.
- A US study³⁸ found that the companies with the highest representation of women on their top management teams experienced better financial performance than companies with the lowest representation.

iii. trends and issues for women in organisational leadership roles;
(See comments in section dii).

iv. strategies to improve the numbers of women in coaching, administration and technical roles;

- Since there are increasing numbers of men coaching women's sports, guidelines to increase the percentage of women coaching women's sport may be beneficial.
- Training and mentoring opportunities are needed.
- Adequate remuneration for coaching will attract women to apply.

4. ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1	<i>Terms of Reference (2005), Premier's Council for Women</i>
Attachment 1a	<i>Premier's Council for Women – Brochure</i>
Attachment 2	<i>Towards Gender Equity in Sport (March 1992), Australian Sports Commission</i>
Attachment 3	<i>Statistical Profile of Women in South Australia (2004), Premier's Council for Women</i>
Attachment 4	<i>On the Move Increasing Participation of Girls and Women in Recreational Sport and Physical Activity</i> ³⁹ Canada
Attachment 5	<i>Making Women and Girls More Active A Good Practice Guide</i> Womensports Foundation UK
Attachment 6	<i>Equity in Women's Sports – a Health and Fairness Perspective</i> , article by Donna Lopiano

³⁸ Catalyst The Bottom Line Connecting Corporate Performance and Gender Diversity NY 2004

³⁹ P11 -12 "Dealing with the Issues" Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity

We thank you for the opportunity to make comment on these important issues.

Submitted by
Ms Suzanne Roux, Chair
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Ms Danielle Grant Cross, Member

On behalf of the SA Premier's Council for Women
30 June 2006

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