

Australian Sports Commission

# Towards Gender Equity in Sport

A Practical Guide for Sporting Organisations in Developing a  
Gender Equity Action Plan

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# Foreword



With a motto of 'Sport for all Australians', the Federal Government has made the achievement of equal opportunities for women and girls to participate fully in every aspect of the sport of their choice an important element of its broader goals.

The *Sex Discrimination Act (1984)*, outlaws discrimination on the basis of sex in a number of important areas which are relevant to sport. It has achieved a great deal in extending rights and opportunities to sportswomen. However, anti-discrimination legislation alone cannot address all of the inequities that still exist in Australian sport.

As a result a number of special programs to raise the participation and status of women and girls in sport have been initiated through the Australian Sports Commission.

It is important, though, that the impetus provided by government is reflected in the activities of all sporting organisations. As Minister for Sport, I expect national sporting organisations to include, within their overall sports development directions, a clear plan of action through which they can further advance access and equity for women and girls. A well planned strategy to achieve this will, not only result in equitable treatment of individuals, but also, promote optimum use of all available sporting, coaching and administrative talent from the broad Australian sporting community. Put simply, a gender equity plan is not an additional burden on sports but a golden opportunity for them to meet their own objectives of increasing membership and producing champions.

This booklet outlines the many considerations involved in the development and implementation of such a plan of action and presents a framework and many useful examples to aid sporting organisations in formulating their own gender equity action plan.

Achieving equity for women in sport will not be an easy process, but will involve a need to change social attitudes as well as long established practices. I am, however, determined to do all in my power to provide a special focus on the issue of women's involvement in sport and am confident that government and sporting organisations together, can play a vital role in stimulating desired change.

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# Introduction

The Australian Sports Commission is committed to encouraging policies and practices which provide equal opportunity for women and girls to participate fully in the sport of their choice. Historically women have experienced barriers to their sporting participation leaving a legacy of low participation rates of women as players, coaches, administrators and officials and very few women in decision making and leadership roles at the higher levels.

The Federal Government has expressed its opposition to discrimination in employment, education and the provision of services (including sport) by enacting the Sex Discrimination Act 1984. However, it is recognised that anti-discrimination policy, and legislation, as important as they are, have not addressed all the factors limiting women's participation in, and status within, sport. Extra or special measures are required and justified to enable women, who have for so long experienced structural and social barriers to their participation in sport, to 'catch up', so achieving a fair and equitable influence in the Australian sport arena.

Therefore, the Commission is proposing that sporting organisations include in their sport development process, a gender equity action plan incorporating special measures to achieve a more even representation of the genders across all aspects of the sport. There is a clear need to ensure that any bias which makes it difficult for any group and women in particular, to reap the benefits and rewards of playing, coaching, officiating and administering in sport, is overcome.

Some sports, which provide for adult male players or for female players only, may not readily recognise the need for such a gender equity plan, but long term benefits can be gained in promoting the involvement of both men and women in any organisation. In the overwhelming majority of cases, a well planned strategy to achieve this will not only result in equitable treatment of individuals, but has clear advantages for sporting organisations. It takes optimum advantage of all available sporting talent from the broad Australian community. Furthermore, all available skills and talents in the administration, coaching and officiating areas can be tapped. A reduction in the recruitment and training costs of administrators, coaches and officials (both paid and volunteer) may be achieved by the retention and mobilisation of both skilled women and skilled men within the organisation.

This booklet provides a model for the development of gender equity action plans by sporting organisations. The proposed plans can be likened to Affirmative Action or Equal Opportunity Plans that, for some years now, have been implemented as a government requirement to ensure that women and girls are fully catered for in the areas of employment, education and training, and which are now generally well accepted as a good management practice. For readers unfamiliar with equal opportunity issues, the Appendix provides explanations of frequently used specialist terminology. Furthermore, important concepts are illustrated with examples of practical actions throughout the text. While much of the content can relate to issues of equity for men in female dominated sports, or indeed for any nominated target group, the focus here is to achieve greater participation and improved opportunities for women and girls.

In order to develop a reasonable and realistic set of proposals, a draft document outlining the Commission's concept of gender equity planning in sport was released for comment early in 1991. Among submissions received, there was some concern expressed regarding government interference in the matters of sport and seemingly unnecessary paperwork and bureaucratic demands, however, the large majority of opinion supported the need for sports to take systematic steps to ensure access and equity for women and the important leadership role that the Commission should play in this function.

This booklet is based upon the general approach outlined in the draft document with modifications to accommodate the feedback received.

The Australian Sports Commission does not wish to dictate a particular set of specific actions to any sporting organisation but takes the view that a gender equity action plan should be developed through wide consultation across the sport and with the Commission and other agencies, be specifically tailored to suit the sport and have impact throughout the sport at national, state, regional and grass roots levels.

The Commission will provide leadership by working with sports to develop and implement gender equity action plans as a part of their overall sport development planning process. A number of sports will be selected in the first instance and special support will be provided at a national and state level for the development and early implementation of a gender equity plan. While all sports are already expected to be fair and equitable in their operations, the concept of introducing special measures will be progressively extended to more sports over the next three years. After a three year phasing in stage, all sporting organisations will be expected to be able to indicate, via their gender equity action plan, the particular steps that they are taking to improve women's access to opportunities and status within their organisation.

As is detailed in the text, a crucial aspect of a sports gender equity plan will be the setting of goals and targets, which will be identified through a consultation process involving the sport and Commission officers. These will necessarily be sport specific, relating to the current circumstances of the sport, and will vary vastly in nature from sport to sport. The effectiveness of a sport in achieving their own goals and targets will, however, be reviewed by the Commission on a yearly basis and will be a criterion for funding.



# Rationale – The Need For Action

The National Policy and Plan for Women in Sport was formulated in 1987 by the Australian Sports Commission in response to recommendations made in a report, 'Women, Sport and the Media', from the Working Group on Women in Sport, established by the Federal Government to investigate bias in sport. The Commission recognised the need for special measures and established within its own structure, the Women's Sport Promotion Unit, now known as the Women and Sport Unit, to advise and aid the Commission in the implementation of its policy.

Much has been achieved within Commission programs, sporting organisations, by State and Territory Government agencies and within the community at large. However, opportunities for women to take advantage of all that sport has to offer are still limited by various factors.

This is clearly evidenced by the disproportionate representation of women at all levels within sport in Australia as expanded below.

- Females represent only about 23% of all registered sporting participants. Only about 5% of adult Australian females compared with twice the percentage of males, take sufficient regular exercise to have a beneficial training effect on the heart and lungs.
- Participation of young women and teenage girls is particularly low in many sports.
- Women are significantly under-represented in coaching, especially at the elite levels and levels of highest accreditation. Only 9% of all level III accredited coaches are women and in 1991 only 11% of national team coaches were women.
- Women are significantly under-represented in administration, especially at the higher levels of decision making. In 1991, approximately 18% of national executive director positions were held by women and only 11% of national presidents were women.
- Women are largely absent from the executive boards of various organisations which determine, to a great extent developments in Australian sport, eg first woman appointed to Australian Olympic Committee Executive Board in early 1991.
- Female athletes experience fewer opportunities to compete, especially at the national and international levels.
- Women's sporting events and women's sporting achievements often receive little public recognition.
- Women's sport and events for women still struggle to attract corporate sponsorship and the earning capacities of Australian sportswomen are far lower on average than those of sportsmen, regardless of their performance and world ranking.

These are all indicators of inequity in the sport system. Many factors contribute to this situation and it would be simplistic to assume that sporting organisations alone can fully redress these imbalances. However, national and state sporting organisations, being in many cases the sole sanctioning body for their particular sport, must accept the responsibility to initiate and actively promote the change process, especially with regard to their own activities.

The low participation rates of women in sporting organisations and the paucity of women in leadership positions in sport is not the result of any intrinsic lack of interest in sport, but rather the result of a long history of sex role stereotyping and the effects of direct and more subtle indirect and systemic forms of discrimination (see Appendix). What remains are rules, policies, and practices, which may appear to be neutral or to treat everyone equally, but may in fact disadvantage one group's access to opportunity. There is no reason to believe that change for the better will occur if everybody continues to observe the status quo. Indeed a major factor in the continuation of these systemic barriers experienced by women has been the failure of parties to take special measures to bring about change.





# The Essence of a Gender Equity Action Plan

Sporting organisations are well versed with the process of planning for development. The Commission and most state government agencies now request three or four year sport development plans as a criterion for funding. The majority of sports have realised the benefits of careful and systematic planning in order to ensure efficient and progressive management of their sport. It is proposed that the development and implementation of a Gender Equity Action Plan become an integral part of every sport's overall development planning process. It is generally accepted in industry and business that the achievement of equal opportunity for all groups makes good common sense and is one aspect of sound management practice and there is every reason to adopt the same philosophy in sport.

There are several essential elements that make up a sound gender equity action plan. These elements fall into a natural order but it is envisaged that the implementation of a gender equity plan, once developed, would be an on-going process involving continual evaluation, monitoring and redevelopment. Nevertheless the elements in the process can be grouped into four key stages characterised by:

## **Stage 1 — Commitment and Consultation Stage**

- the public statement of the sporting organisation's commitment to the development and implementation of an action plan to achieve gender equity within the sport. It is important that the commitment of the executive levels of the sport is strongly stated;
- the establishment of a structural mechanism for the implementation of the plan;
- consultation with all parties, including member organisations, administrators, coaches, athletes, officials, major sponsors and interested persons;

## **Stage 2 — Information Gathering and Policy Development Stage**

- a statistical analysis of the participation and status of women in all aspects of the sport;
- a review of all policies and practices, including those relating to appointments to positions, selection, competition provision and scheduling, coaching, refereeing and education courses, in regard to their impact on women. Special attention would be paid to areas where the statistical analysis indicated a low representation of women and girls or a concentration of women in lower status aspects of the organisation;

## **Stage 3 — Development and Implementation of Special Measures Stage**

- the setting of realistic goals and targets to achieve desirable changes in the statistical profile of women in the sport;
- development of special measure strategies and programs to achieve short-term goals and targets set, along with the development of long-term training strategies for women. The focus here is to remedy the under-representation of women in specific areas and to eliminate discriminatory practice (whether direct or indirect and unintentional), as disclosed by the information gathering stage;

## **Stage 4 — Monitoring and Evaluation Stage**

- measurement of the outcomes of the identified special measures and programs against the goals and targets set; and
- evaluation of the components of the overall plan, constant update of the statistical analysis of women in the sport and setting new goals and targets in light of progress made.



# **D**eveloping a Gender Equity Action Plan—Some of the Options

The key elements of a sound gender equity action plan are outlined above. For each of these key elements, examples of action that may be taken by a sport in developing and implementing a gender equity action plan are provided.

There is clearly a need for national sporting organisations to take the lead in the development of the sport's gender equity action plan and so the text is pitched accordingly. However, in order for a national plan to have any effect at grass roots, the input, commitment and contributions of state associations will be crucial. Implementation of many aspects of the plan will necessarily occur at state and regional level. The national plan should provide an umbrella under which state associations may develop their own plans, being more specific to their situation. Most of the model actions outlined can easily be adapted for state and regional focus.

## **Stage 1** Commitment and Consultation

This stage of the planning process may involve:

- ▶ acceptance of a clear goal or mission statement by the sport's management at national, state and regional levels;

***Example** 'The mission of the Australian Space Walkers Association and its state affiliates is to guarantee Australian women and girls access to a complete range of participation, training and competition opportunities and to assure equity in all aspects of the sport including the provision of rewards and incentives, coaching, refereeing, officiating and administration.'*

- ▶ the assignment of the responsibility for the sport's gender equity program to a senior position within the sport's management and the establishment of a structural mechanism for the development of the plan;

***Example** 'The Australian Space Walkers Association has created the position of Vice-President Equity, to ensure that equity issues are identified and considered at executive meetings. The Vice-President Equity will work with the Development Officer and a gender equity sub-committee to implement the ASWA Gender Equity Action Plan. The gender equity sub-committee will include representation from among coaches, officials, athletes and participants and will constitute at least 50% women. The sub-committee will be responsible to the Executive and will have a mandate to develop, implement and to monitor equity policies and programs.'*

***Example** 'The Australian Gumboot Throwers Federation is pleased to announce the establishment of the position of Equity Advisor, to ensure that gender equity issues are brought to the attention of the Executive Director and Executive meetings. The Equity Advisor will chair a six member equity advisory council with the specific responsibility for the development of a gender equity plan. The council will also advise the Executive on matters of equity brought by members before the Council.'*

- ▶ recruitment or nomination of an appropriate person to take on the responsibility of chairing an equity committee and/or coordinating the development and implementation of the sport's gender equity action plan;

***Example** Nominations are called for the position of Women's Development Officer with the Australian Mountain Runners Association. The position will be responsible to the Executive for the development and implementation of the Association's Gender Equity Action Plan. The person sought should possess:*

- *good communication skills,*
- *a knowledge of equity issues,*
- *an understanding of the needs of women and girls within the sport, and*
- *management and coordination skills.*

- ▶ the assignment of appropriate financial and people resources to the gender equity planning process;
- ▶ clear definition of the process of endorsement of the gender equity plan as an integral part of the sport's overall development plan by the sport membership, possibly at the Annual General Meeting and the determination of a suitable and effective mechanism for regular reporting to the Annual General Meeting on progress;
- ▶ publicity to all members of the sport's commitment to gender equity planning; and

***Example** Letter of endorsement from the Executive Director or President published in the national and other newsletters.*

*To all members:*

*The Australian Space Walkers Association and its state affiliates are proud to announce that we are developing a gender equity action plan to ensure Australian women and girls access to a complete range of participation, training and competition opportunities and to assure equity in all aspects of the sport including the provision of rewards and incentives, coaching, refereeing, officiating and administration.*

*The implementation of a gender equity action plan will benefit our sport by:*  
*treating all our members fairly and equally,*

- *creating an atmosphere which is inclusive of women and girls within our sport,*
- *increasing our membership numbers and so bringing increased revenue and talent into our organisation and increasing our chances of producing champions,*
- *enabling the organisation to fully access the talents of all existing members, and*
- *giving us visibility as a model sport organisation committed to equity.*

*The program will involve collecting information and assessing it specifically by gender, consulting widely within the organisation on equity issues, changing existing policies and practices which may adversely impact on women and the establishment of new special measure programs that will move us closer to an equity position. The executive committee has appointed a Vice-President Equity and has allocated appropriate time and resources to the gender equity planning task.*

- ▶ the collation of information on services or benefits provided to men and women;

**Example** Examine at national, state and regional levels if there are any differences in men's and women's entitlements with regard to:

- access to facilities for competition and training,
- scheduling of competition,
- competition events available and opportunities to compete at state, national and international events,
- selection criteria,
- quality of coaching and officiating,
- trophies, prizes and incentives,
- support provided to representative teams (e.g. travel and accommodation subsidy, provision of uniforms, player allowances or appearance fees), and
- personnel allocated to representative teams or development squads.

- ▶ the collection of attitudinal and longitudinal information about men and women in the organisation;

**Example** A survey is conducted over a number of years to investigate any gender differences in:

- the retention of athletes and the length of time in the sport,
- the movement from participation, to development and to elite levels,
- the move from volunteer or support to management roles,
- the development of coaches and officials from beginner to elite level, and
- aspirations to take on leadership roles.

- ▶ careful analysis of gender differences in the information collected (including that collected through the consultation phase), in order to get a clear picture of equity, or inequity, within the sport;
- ▶ a review of policies, procedures and programs and the elimination of those which cause barriers to women's involvement. Possible hidden biases and disadvantages caused by particular policies and practices may be revealed through member's submissions or via consultation workshops etc; and
- ▶ formulation of broad policies, procedures and practices which will support gender equity principles. At a later stage more specific policies and procedures may be developed to address particular targets relating to areas of inequity indicated by the information gathering exercise.

**Example** General policy developed to support gender equity principles may relate to:

- the use of non-sexist language and visuals in all publications and advertisements and communications,
- codes of behaviour for athletes, coaches and officials,
- reporting procedures, disciplinary actions and appeals procedures which are to apply in cases of sexual harassment,
- provision of equal prize money, recognition and allowances to men and women, and
- the establishment of an equal opportunity complaints tribunal to deal with the concerns of members relating to discriminatory or inequitable treatment within the sport.

Of course, with the development of new policies comes the need to educate the sport membership to achieve appropriate change in attitudes and behaviour.

### Stage 3 Development and Implementation of Special Measures

Having assessed the sport from a gender equity perspective, the changes needed within the organisation are readily determined along with the basis for any special measures to be introduced to ensure fair treatment. It needs to be understood that the introduction of special measures to increase the representation of women is a justifiable way to accelerate the impact of newly introduced gender equity policies and to redress the effects of past systemic barriers to the full participation of women and girls. Special measures are directed specifically towards girls and women and are often limited in duration. Training sessions on leadership development for women, a girls' skills program and a women's leadership recruitment and training fund are examples of such measures.

This stage is characterised by:

- identification of clear short term goals and specific targets to counter any established and undesirable patterns indicated by the statistical analysis and review of policies and procedures. These goals and targets are identified as part of the sport's forward planning process and will necessarily be specific to the particular circumstances of the sport concerned;

*Example* A sporting organisation's goal is to increase the number of females on its executive board of management. In order to set a realistic target in this regard, the sporting organisation assesses the expected number of women which should ideally be involved by a projected date based on:

- the number of expected vacancies within the designated period;
- the number of women available who, given special training if necessary and encouragement, would have acceptable qualifications; and
- the application of non-discriminatory procedures in the nomination and appointment process including the valuing as relevant of a wide range of experiences, such as that gained through voluntary work or through running a household.

- development and implementation of appropriate strategies by which to meet the goals and specific targets identified; and

*Example* A sporting organisation adopts a goal of increased representation of women in formal leadership positions. At present there are no females on the executive board and only two out of five committees include female members. Specific targets and strategies are identified as follows.

#### Targets

- To achieve representation of both genders of all committees within one year;
- To achieve a specific percentage appropriate to the sport of women on the executive board within two years (the appropriate percentage being determined as outlined in the previous example);

#### Policy Development Strategies

- Amend the organisation's by-laws to require representation of both men and women on all committees;

- Limit lengths of tenure of office, the number of times a person can be re-elected and the holding of multiple offices to allow women to advance into these positions;
- Adopt a policy of wording calls for nomination and the advertisement of positions in a way which would encourage women to aspire to such leadership positions;
- Adopt a policy of appointing a woman when male and female candidates are equally qualified for the position and women are under-represented in the organisation;
- Adopt a childcare subsidy policy to support women who would find it difficult to participate fully because of their family commitments and limited financial means;
- Apply equal opportunity and the merit principles to the recruitment of staff and selection for positions;
- Include women on all selection panels;
- Provide childcare at all seminars, workshops and meetings;

#### *Special Measure Strategies*

- Use the organisation's newsletter and other publications to publicise the statistics relating to women in decision making positions within the sport, the commitment of the sport to equal opportunity and the benefits to the sport of encouraging women into leadership positions;
- Organise leadership training seminars to prepare potential female candidates for executive positions;
- Establish a nominating committee to encourage particular women to stand for election as leaders in the organisation;
- Establish a women in leadership network to provide women with mentoring opportunities and to assist them in developing personal career plans within the sport;
- Conduct a workshop program to raise the awareness of women and others of the importance of their involvement at the decision making levels and also of the rewards available within the sport;

**Example** A sporting organisation adopts a goal of increased numbers of women in coaching and officiating positions, especially at the higher levels of accreditation. Specific targets and strategies are identified as follows.

#### *Target*

- To increase the number of active women coaches and women officials throughout all levels of accreditation by 20% in one year.

#### *Policy Development Strategies*

- Adopt a policy of reserving a fixed percentage of places in coaching and refereeing courses for women;
- Review instructional and promotional materials to ensure that they reflect an active role for women in coaching and officiating in the sport;
- Review the accreditation course structure and qualification criteria to ensure that the needs of women are accommodated and that women presenters are included among training personnel;
- Adopt equal opportunity principles to the appointment of coaches and referees;

### Special Measure Strategies

- Conduct women's officiating and coaching accreditation courses, identifying and inviting particular women to take part;
- Establish a buddy, mentor or apprentice system for novice coaches and referees with already accredited coaches and officials (both male and female);
- Provide childcare or childcare subsidies for mothers of young children who are willing to coach and/or officiate;
- Establish time sharing or job sharing arrangements where appropriate for women with limited time to commit to coaching;
- Establish a women's professional development program whereby women are appointed in an apprentice capacity, to assist an experienced coach or referee appointed to travel with representative teams;
- Provide incentives to encourage mothers of young competitors and elite female athletes recently retired from serious competition, to take a basic coaching or refereeing accreditation course;

- the commitment of the whole sporting organisation in the implementation of the planned strategies. Special measure programs are more readily accepted and supported if all parties feel that they have an element of ownership but that they are not 'going it alone'.

**Example** Ways to encourage the involvement and acceptance of all parties may include:

- regular communication of the sport's goals, targets and activities in newsletters and other publications;
- the incorporation of issues with particular relevance to women in all training and planning workshops;
- regular meetings of the committee responsible for the development and implementation of the plan;
- institutionalisation of the plan in the day to day activities and procedures of the sport; and
- regular consultation with women in the organisation and representatives from among athletes, coaches, administrators and officials.

## Stage 4 Monitoring and Evaluation

Regular monitoring of progress against the targets and timelines set is an important aspect of any planning process and is best conducted internally by the officers responsible for the implementation of the plan. However a fuller evaluation process should take place on an annual basis and may include both an internal and external review. The setting of goals and targets facilitates this process, as the organisation can easily ascertain whether particular policy developments and programs have satisfied expectations.

If a program's goals and targets have been met, the next program needs to build on this success and set further goals and targets as appropriate. If a program's goals have not been met, then the sport needs to determine the reasons for this and revise its strategies in the light of this new information.

The monitoring and evaluation process should incorporate:

- ▶ determination of the evaluation methods, tools and possible limitations;

**Example** Some options include:

- surveys of members,
- submissions from members,
- reports from program organisers and state and regional bodies, and
- participation statistics etc.

- ▶ clarification of the intent, goals and targets of the original plan and their level of acceptance by the membership;

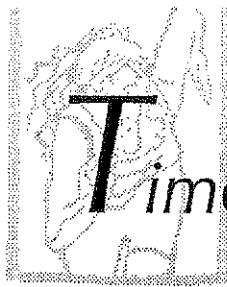
**Example** The level of acceptance of the plan within the sport's membership and therefore its likely effectiveness might be evaluated through a membership survey of a call for submissions.

- ▶ collection of consistent data on activities conducted;
- ▶ update on the statistical analysis of women's participation in all aspects of the sport;
- ▶ analysis of data collected to identify trends, limitations and recurrent themes;
- ▶ determination of whether the original program targets have been met;
- ▶ determination of changes, updates and revisions to proposed strategies in order to address those goals yet to be reached; and

**Example** One of a sport's targets specified that 20% of the new candidates to qualify for level II coaching accreditation in a specified year would be women. Although the sport introduced a special recruitment, personal development and leadership training program for women, to motivate them to satisfy the theory components of the accreditation requirements, the organisation realised that the target had been unrealistic and had not been achieved due to a lack of women with the level of practical coaching experience required within the accreditation criteria. This reassessment of the situation led to the introduction of special apprentice coaching programs and coaching experience placements in order to build up a pool of experienced women who would then be in a position to satisfy the criteria for higher levels of coaching accreditation in future years. In addition, a careful review of the accreditation criteria, and in particular the specification of the required practical coaching experience, led to the adoption of a more flexible approach to determining what constituted acceptable practical experience, enabling more coaches to satisfy the requirements while still maintaining standards.

- ▶ review by an objective person or group external to the sport in order to provide an outside view of the effectiveness of the plan in addressing important gender equity issues.



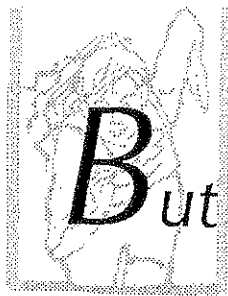


## *T*ime Frames

Clearly, achieving full access and equity for women in any sport will not be a task that can be achieved overnight. The development of an effective plan and its implementation is a long-term project involving continual consultation, information gathering, monitoring and evaluation. It is important that targets are set with a clear time-frame, but it must be realised that to achieve attitudinal and behavioural changes that a commitment over a number of years is necessary.

It would not be unreasonable for the initial consultation stage and the establishment of mechanisms for information and data collection to be the major focus in the first year of a sport's gender equity planning. Well meaning equity programs put in place before the issues are well understood, and before areas of greatest need are clearly identified through wide consultation and the statistical analysis of participation rates, may not have effective results.

However, when goals and targets have been identified and strategies for action have been identified, setting clear time-frames for the implementation of those strategies is crucial. The internal monitoring and evaluation process and the external review process must ensure that progress is in fact being made and that the sport maintains a sincere commitment to its gender equity plan.



## But What About?

Doesn't this idea of implementing a Gender Equity Action Plan mean implementing a process of positive or reverse discrimination?

What is being proposed is neither positive nor reverse discrimination.

Positive discrimination usually involves the application of a quota system, that is for example, a fixed percentage (of women) would be appointed, say as representative team coaches, regardless of the numbers of suitably qualified women available. What is proposed here is that opportunities should be provided to all on the basis of merit and not be denied to a particular group as a result of misconceptions, traditional and inflexible views of appropriate qualifications or expectations based on stereotypical thinking. A previous example illustrates how reasonable female representation targets, which take into account the number of acceptably qualified women available, or the number of women with the potential to become qualified with appropriate training, can be established by a sporting organisation and reflecting the particular circumstances of the sport. This is a quite different concept to that of quotas, which are set by outside authorities to apply in all cases regardless of particular circumstances.

Reverse discrimination involves deliberately treating individuals or groups of one sex more favourably than people of the other. Favoured treatment of women is not a component of the proposed gender equity action plans, but a recognition of the fact that the removal of any barriers and traditions which deter the full participation of women is necessary and just, is certainly crucial to the proposed process. Special measures are justified on the grounds that the usual system disadvantages women and a 'leveller' is required to give women a reasonable chance in the system.

Isn't the whole issue of gender equity totally irrelevant to many sports, in particular all the single sex sports?

Whether a sport has male only or female only players, it must be recognised that it is unacceptable under the Sex Discrimination Act for an organisation to exclude persons of the opposite sex from activities like coaching, administration and officiating. Therefore the principles of equal opportunity for all are relevant to all sports.

Of course, it makes very good business sense for a sport to maximise the human resources available and to recruit its coaches, administrators, officials, referees and volunteer supporters from 100% of the population, rather than to limit its selection to only half the talent pool.

The proposed gender equity action plans require setting of goals and targets. What is the difference between goals and targets and quotas?

Quotas:

- are fixed percentages which must be reached regardless of the particular circumstances of the situation and the standards and availability of qualified candidates;
- are imposed on an organisation from outside;

- can result in apparent favoured treatment of the group identified; and
- can, in the long run, disadvantage the group they are intended to support.

Goals and targets:

- are realistic and achievable aims the organisation sets itself, given its particular circumstances, and after gathering information on participation rates, practices, policies and procedures;
- are developed through consultation with interested parties within the organisation;
- are a way of expressing confidence in the positive strategies identified and the expectation that the desired numerical outcomes will be achieved by them; and
- are a useful way for an organisation to measure whether gender equity progress is being made.



# Appendix

## DEFINITIONS OF IMPORTANT CONCEPTS

Many terms are used to describe various concepts associated with disadvantage experienced by individuals and groups. Much of the controversy which often surrounds the issue of sex discrimination and gender equity is based on ill-founded assumptions concerning the meaning of such terms. Many of the commonly used terms are defined below. Not all of these terms are used extensively in the text, nevertheless it is useful that athletes, coaches, administrators and others involved in sport have a clear understanding of them.

**Social Justice** is the notion that, within a democratic society, opportunities of any sort offered by that society should be as widely available as possible, and not denied to any person or group on the grounds of for example sex, ethnicity, age, socio-economic status or disability.

**Equal Opportunity** means that people are treated as individuals and provided with access to opportunity on the basis of their skills, talents and qualifications and are not disadvantaged nor denied access on the grounds of for example their sex, ethnicity or disability. Moreover, it is accepted that in order for opportunities provided to be equal, in many instances the implementation of Special Measures to make up for the effects of past disadvantage is required. Such Special Measures are in fact exemptions built into Equal Opportunity and Sex Discrimination legislation.

**Access** means an equal opportunity to secure the services (including advice), entitlements and benefits provided by an organisation or program and that such services, entitlements and benefits should cater for the diversity in nature and presentation of various needs within the community. The outcome is that the access of any particular group to a service, entitlement or benefit will ultimately reflect the representation of that group within the population.

**Equity** is the process of allocating resources and entitlements, including power, fairly and without discrimination and also redressing any identified undesirable or inequitable balance by taking special measures.

**Gender Equity** is the process of allocating resources and entitlements, including power, fairly to both males and females and without any discrimination on the basis of sex but while also redressing any identified undesirable or inequitable balance in the benefits available to males and females.

**Affirmative Action** is a way of systematically dismantling barriers which have directly or indirectly discriminated against women or other groups. It is a planned approach of ensuring that policies and practices provide fair and equal treatment and equal opportunity by outcome for people. Affirmative Action is a term covering a wide range of programs which an organisation can undertake to remove discriminatory practices. These programs can range from a review of practices to ensure that they do not discriminate against women, to introducing special measures to encourage women to participate more fully in some aspect of the organisation's activities.

**Special Measures or Specific Measures** are a particular initiative taken by an organisation to redress any imbalances and in response to identified areas of need when those imbalances and areas of need are an outcome of past discrimination.

**Affirmative Action Plans and Equal Opportunity Plans** outline an organisation's plans to adopt a systematic approach to the provision of equal opportunity to all people. Such plans normally incorporate:

- a consultation process,
- a research process,
- a review of practices and policies,
- development of programs to promote equal opportunity,
- realistic goals and targets, and
- a monitoring and evaluation process.

**Discrimination** is the denial of opportunity resulting from the application of assumptions that a particular characteristic, like sex, defines behaviour and other attributes.

**Direct Discrimination** includes any decision or action which specifically excludes any person or group of people from a benefit or opportunity or significantly reduces their chances of obtaining it, because a personal characteristic irrelevant to the situation (and this characteristic may be sex) is applied as a barrier.

***Example** The placement of male referees only, for top level men's games on the grounds that the male players would not take kindly to being disciplined by female referees.*

**Indirect Discrimination** occurs when bias is incorporated into rules, policies and practices. Rules and policies may appear to be neutral or to treat everyone equally, but may in fact disadvantage one group's access to opportunity. These kinds of rules and practices are frequently not recognised as discriminatory by those who perpetuate them nor even by those affected.

***Example** An organisation rules that to qualify for its highest level of coaching accreditation a candidate must, along with various other requirements, have been selected as a state coach on three occasions. Without ensuring that the selection process for state coaches in every state association is fair and unbiased, such a ruling could indirectly discriminate against women or other groups.*

**Systemic Discrimination** is that discrimination which stems from the interaction of actions, decisions, rules, policies and practices, which affect groups of people in a systematic way. As the name implies, this type of discrimination is not dealt out by an individual, but rather is tied up in the rules and regulations within the system. It cannot readily be identified by the examination of individual experiences, but is revealed by differential patterns of participation in certain activities or differential access to certain benefits or services.

***Example** The practice of an organisation or event promoter offering a larger prize money pool for a men's event compared with that provided for an equivalent women's event is often justified with subjective arguments about the so-called entertainment value or spectator appeal. This is an indication of the inherent discriminatory climate which has become an accepted and unconscious part of the system.*