

Monday, 10 July 2006

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Information Technology and the Arts
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Dear Committee Secretary,

On behalf of the Confederation of Australian Sport (CAS), I would ask you to please accept this submission to the Federal Senate Inquiry into women in sport and recreation in Australia submitted by CAS on behalf of our members, the National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) of Australia. A number of National Sporting Organisations have independently submitted submissions and CAS fully supports the ideas and submissions of these organisations on this important subject.

As the peak body for sport, CAS's membership base represents Australia's National Sporting Organisations, the bodies which collectively represent over seven million Australians. Our members also include a number of other organisations associated with the sport industry. Through the promotion of participation in sport and physical activity, CAS aims:

- to improve the health and well-being of individual Australians; and
- to maximise the sport and leisure industry's contribution to the Australian economy.

CAS has over twenty years experience with political, economic, industrial and social developments in sport. It is the voice of the sport sector and plays a leading role in the development of sport in Australia.

I would like to thank the inquiry for considering the submission by CAS. At an appropriate time CAS will be able to provide expert representatives who can speak further to the matters contained within this submission, as required. We look forward to further dialogue on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Lachlan Clark
General Manager
Confederation of Australian Sport

AUSTRALIAN
SPORT
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Australasian
MastersGames
Adelaide 5-14 October 2007

Inquiry into Women in sport and recreation in Australia

Submission prepared by the



Representing National Sporting Organisations in Australia

**Prepared By
Lachlan Clark
General Manager
Confederation of Australian Sport**

Introduction

- The submission will address each term of reference for the inquiry, point by point

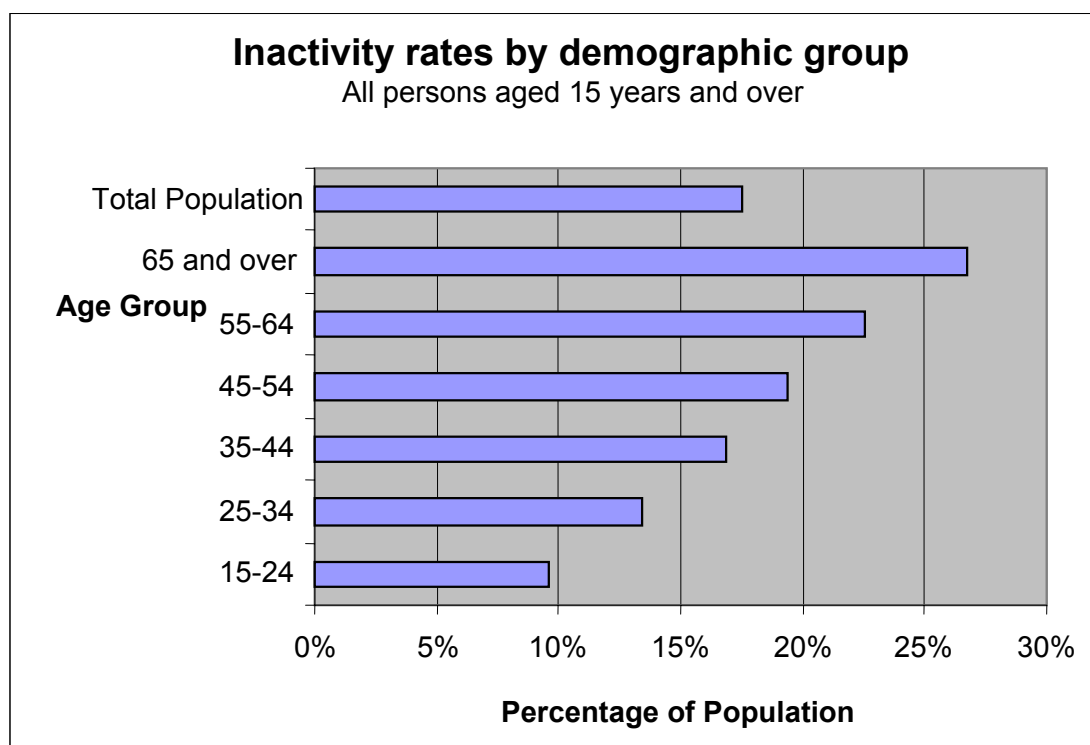
a. The health benefits of women participating in sport and recreation activities;

Physical inactivity is now regarded as one of the biggest health issues facing Australians. Inactivity contributes to the burden of disease, morbidity and mortality in Australia translating to an estimated 8,000 deaths per year and costs the Australian health system over \$400 million annually.¹

The Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey (ERASS) 2003 states that a total of 2.7 million Australians aged 15 years and over did not participate in any form of sport or physical activity in the 12 months prior to interview. This equates to 17.5% of the total population. The study, which is a joint initiative between the Australian Sports Commission and State and Territory Departments of Sport and Recreation, also shows that physical inactivity amongst mature aged Australians aged 45 years and over is higher than that of the average population. Historically, activity levels decline in relation to age.

There is increasing evidence that inactivity is influenced by gender.² In fact, the 1999 National Physical Activity Survey (updated 2001) reported that women were 20% less likely to achieve sufficient physical activity than men.

Figure 1



Source: Participation in Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey 2003 Annual Report

¹ Bauman A, Bellew B, Vita P, Brown W, Owen N. Getting Australia active: towards better practice for the promotion of physical activity. [Summary]. National Public Health Partnership. Melbourne, Australia, March 2002

² Women and physical activity, Women's Health Outcomes Framework, Newsletter 4, January 2002

Evidence suggests that a more active population would not only aid in the prevention of cardiovascular disease and some cancers, diabetes and injury prevention but may also contribute to reduced body fat and improved mental health.

Lack of physical activity is a risk factor for breast cancer. According to The Cancer Council, studies have shown that that 11% of postmenopausal breast cancer is due to physical inactivity. These studies also showed that increasing activity can reduce the estimated risk of breast cancer by 20-40% (IARC, 2002).

The diabetes epidemic is another example of a major health problem that is 'driven by lifestyle factors, particularly the dramatic increase in obesity, poor diet and physical inactivity. Diabetes is already costing taxpayers over \$3 billion annually, a figure which is expected to increase exponentially over time. A recent study of 34,257 post menopausal women showed that those who engaged in moderate exercise were less likely to develop diabetes and those who exercised frequently had half the risk of diabetes as the least active.

Osteoporosis remains a major health issue for women in Australia. Half of all women over 60 years of age (compared to a third of all men) will have a fracture due to osteoporosis. Physical activity and exercise is key to keeping bones strong, preventing falls and fractures and helping bodies recover faster after a fracture.

With this in mind it is the position of CAS that the benefits of investing in participation of both men and women for the Australian Government may provide significant relief to the Federal Health Budget. CAS believes that the magnitude of the problem and costs to the Government running into the billions of dollars requires both a coordinated state and federal effort and a significant investment. The recent Councils of Australian Government announcement of the Australian Better Health Initiative identifies \$500 Million over the next four years however there seems to be no coordinated plan as to how the results could be obtained or how to evaluate the success of the initiative.

CAS believes there are two important areas where participation should be dramatically increased:

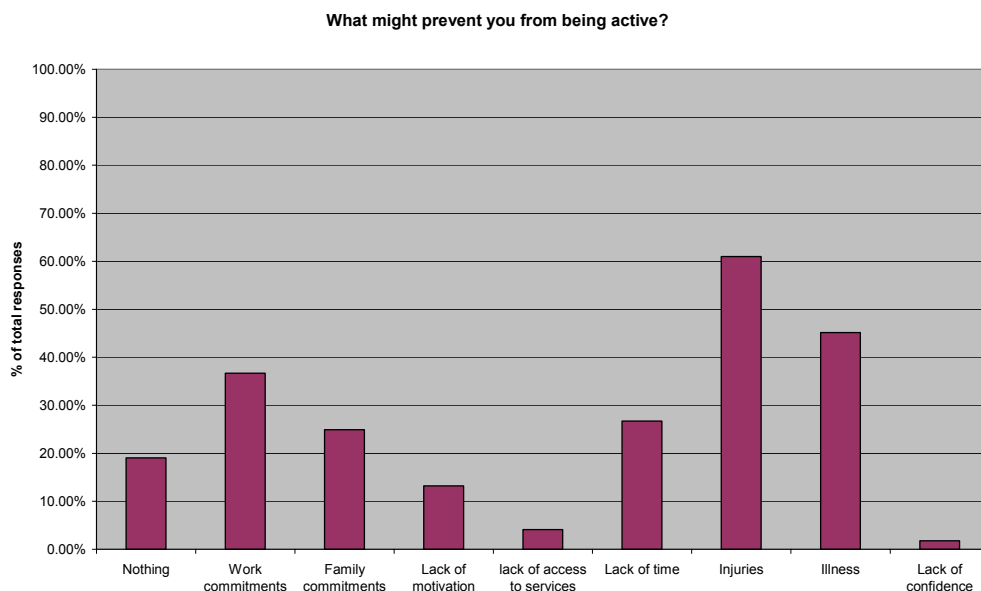
1. National programs to ensure Australians of school age are participating in sport and recreation such as
 - a. after school sports programs,
 - b. Physical Education as part of the school curriculum; and
 - c. grass roots sporting organisations

2. Supporting programs and organisations to ensure that Australians continue participating throughout their adult life. For instance, CAS under its charter of "Sport for All" conducts the biennial Australian Masters Games, Australia's largest multisport event with over 10,000 people over the age of 30 participating in over 50 sport and recreation activities. Our survey information from the Games show event after event, that people continue their participation in sport and recreation for the social interaction and the camaraderie that comes with being involved. This affects not only the physical health of older Australians but also mental health benefits.

With the participation of women in sport and recreation at a significantly lesser level than in the male population, programs and funding should be targeted to ensure that this imbalance is rectified.

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;

CAS believes that the accessibility for women of all ages to participate in sport and recreation activities is related to the barriers that exist to participation. Ernst & Young, who conducted the Economic Impact Study of the 9th Australian Masters Games, found the following in relation to what might prevent people from being active.



The respondents from the survey showed that behind injuries and illness the next most common reasons that prevent people from being active are:

- Lack of time
- Work commitments
- Family commitments.

These three factors are very relevant to women’s accessibility to sport and recreation. Related to all three of these above points are factors such as access to child care or crèche facilities at venues. Innovative programs that address these factors will increase participation by women in sport and recreational activities.

There are numerous state and federal programs in place that have been operating at the margin but given the significant challenges faced by Australia at the prospect of an ageing, increasingly obese population, major incentives must be put in place to stem an avalanche of health costs that will burden society. The funding programs are disproportionately small considering the upward spiralling state and federal health budgets.

Federal sports funding through the ASC is targeted around Olympic and Commonwealth Games success in the majority. At the moment the ASC spends approximately 70% of funds on elite sport and 30% of funds on participation, primarily through the After School Sports Program. While the importance of results to the nation is important and must be maintained, the flow on effect of increasing funding for participation programs will have to elite sport in both men and women will help secure our nation’s sporting success while developing a healthier, more cohesive society.

There are three further points that affect the accessibility for women, young girls and teenage girls to take part in sport and recreational activities. They are:

1. Lack of targeted messages to young girls and teenage girls specifically, to engage in sport – young women are significantly affected by social messages that deter them from playing sport. In our society, sport is considered to play an important role in the process of turning boys into men, and is hence a significant form of male socialisation. According to the report 'Why Don't Girls Play Sport (revised November 2001), if boys do not play sport their masculinity may be questioned. On the other hand, a female's sexuality may be questioned if she does play sport – particularly if she has chosen to play a so-called "male" sport. Girls receive the message from an early age that boys play sport and girls watch. This can be seen in the attitude of society to females playing football. While clubs and schools allow them to play until the end of primary school, once they reach high school they are told it is no longer 'safe' to play. Young women need to be encouraged to engage in any and all sports and the community needs to be encouraged to change their perception regarding what sports are appropriate for females to participate in.
2. The absence of female role models in sport. The lack of coverage that women athletes are given by the media. The lack of opportunity for female sporting role models to communicate strong messages because they don't have the same funding as male sports and they don't have the same level of public media outlets to communicate their messages
3. There is not the same incentive for women athletes to aspire to become national representatives – they are not regarded as heroes, they are not well funded, they do not get media coverage, they have few support mechanisms at the national level.

c. The portrayal of women's sport in the media

Sports coverage in Australia is dominated by a handful of sports which are mostly male endeavours.

It is the assertion of CAS that while the media is sales driven (i.e. by readers, viewers and listeners) no amount of regulation by Government will affect people's taste and interest in sport. Furthermore, CAS believes that the Australian Sporting public is savvy and does not discriminate when it comes to sporting excellence. This can be seen by the media interest generated by some of our great Australian female athletes. For instance, the profile of Athletics is not nearly as high as some of the male football codes but the profile and coverage of the likes of Cathy Freeman or Jana Pittman would have to be classed as extremely high. Government can continue to invest in programs and events that highlight the performance of women such as the CAS Australian Sport Awards to help shine a media spotlight on these successes to the public but it is unlikely that regulation will affect people's taste in sport and as such the coverage of women's sport. The implementation of Government quotas on women's sport coverage would bring a strong reaction in the media and may not achieve the required outcome as commercial media outlets will still be required to focus on women's sport that is commercially viable.

Added to this complication is the fact that the media is extremely concentrated and often has a significant stake in sport in Australia. For instance NewsCorp is the owner of Foxtel and a significant investor in NRL and AFL to which they have a vested interest for their own commercial returns. Alternative media may assist women's sports and minor sports gain an

increase in coverage. This is particularly true of the use of the internet as an alternative media source. Sporting Organisations access to information technology services may be a way to level the playing field somewhat.

The media and therefore the public and the Government place a high value on the success of the nation in medal counts at Olympic and Commonwealth Games. This affects funding decisions of high performance programs, women's leagues and a whole range of other outcomes for sporting organisations. If the measure of the success of the sporting system in this country was to also include the state of health and happiness of the nation through sport via a marked increase in funding for all levels of sport in this nation, this may result in minor sports and women's sports securing more participation and therefore more interest by those participating in the elite end in their chosen sports. This would in turn result in the interest by the media. An example of this is the recent test matches between Australia and New Zealand in Netball that attracted 10,000 to 14,000 spectators to each match, in the main made up of families of young netball fans and players. Increased participation translates to increased interest by the population and therefore more interest by the media in covering the sport.

Other programs that may result in the increased exposure of women's sport in the media may be through:

1. Increasing the media skill and expertise of female athletes through programs run as part of ASC or AIS camps
2. Increased investment in National Sporting Organisations such that media liaison officers can be appointed and the decrease in reliance of women's and minor sports on volunteer management of their sport

d. Women in leadership roles in sport, including;

There are an increasing number of women involved in the leadership of sport in this country but there can be no question that women are still under represented in key leadership roles throughout the sport sector. This includes the administration and development of sport, coaching, officiating and also in sports media. There are three points that CAS believe are important with respect to career and leadership opportunities for women in sport.

1. There are fewer career opportunities for women to stay engaged in sport – eg coaching positions often go to men before they will go to a woman.
2. Women need to have targeted support to be able to become a national coach or manager, given they usually carry the major responsibility for family commitments. Childcare needs to be available to successful female athletes. Training regimes need to be flexible for women sporting figures who have childcare responsibilities. These need to be available without penalty to the women athletes – this is not something that men typically have to deal with in the same way.
3. Women need to be publicly acknowledged and respected for their achievements in sport. Sporting organisations, governments and major corporates need to concentrate on providing greater employment opportunities for females over the coming years in order to create a better balance of recognition between men and women. The media should be required to devote media space/ time to the achievements of women for the same reason.

There are various programs in place throughout Australia to assist women in achieving excellence in the sporting industry. The effectiveness of these programs in changing the

landscape over time has not been evaluated. This must be done to ascertain whether it is worthwhile investing in these programs as a long term initiative.

The current issues that face all women in the workplace such as managing family and a career, access to affordable child care and flexible work environments are also faced by sporting organisations. Compared to the corporate sector, most sporting organisations are comparatively poorly resourced and as such cultural change will inevitably lag behind what is occurring in the corporate sector.

It is important that women be appointed on merit and not solely because of their gender. However in appointing successful and talented women to leadership roles, the government, the ASC and sporting agencies themselves must provide the facilities that support those women in their job. As primary child carers, women have different support requirements in their employment.

If sporting organisations are assisted with the resources available to them to support women in leadership roles, and concomitantly encouraged to create flexible workplaces, CAS is certain that the number and influence of women in leaderships will dramatically increase over time.