



SPORTS FEDERATION of QUEENSLAND Inc.

Serving Sport in Queensland

18 July 2006

The Secretary
Senate Environment, Communications, Information,
Technology and the Arts References Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600.

RE: INQUIRY INTO WOMEN IN SPORT AND RECREATION IN AUSTRALIA

Having been encouraged at last month's 2006 Australian Sports Federations Alliance Annual Meeting in Sydney to provide comment beyond the advertised closing date for the abovementioned inquiry, I make the following comments for whatever consideration is possible within the timeframe remaining before the report is finalised and referred.

Most of Australian and Queensland sport continues to be less elite, volunteer run, community based and not-for-profit, with vehicles pursuing enhanced female involvement including:

- Individual sport programs in clubs and schools, with the nature of the sports, invariably in terms of strength required, determining gender split / composition.
- Interested individuals, usually females, opting to "do something about the position of females in sport relative to males", invariably based on comparisons of media coverage, sponsorship, national leagues and the like.
- Government agencies coming from an equity perspective starting / assisting activity to redress imbalance in relation to aspects of the above.

Some causes of under representation for females are not substantially different to those confronting less resourced, less populist sports regardless of gender composition, with the degree to which children are prepared for play in and exposed to sports having a major bearing on decisions regarding sport participation.

In Queensland, significant media coverage of elite female (and male) performers who win / "go close" at national/ international level occurs.

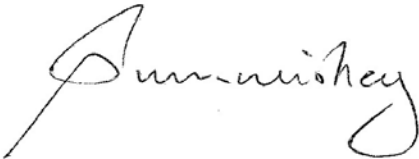
Media interests, being profit making ventures, are attuned to offering what they perceive various publics want and there is little doubt that success and sensation continue to dominate, along with some encouraging examples of astute media engagement by some lesser profile sports.

That said, some sports will continue to do better in terms of media support than others because across gender interest in some is perceived to be greater than some others regardless of similar levels of success and / or participation.

As long as support for less than elite participation is a distant second to elite support and the level of basic motor skill development attained by our young in the primary school environment continues to be less than optimal, the status quo will continue largely unchanged, in a world in which some are more equal than others regardless of gender.

As a general rule, my organisation's Boards and membership of mainly Queensland State sporting organisations have taken the view that some "seperatism" was inevitable as an approach to advancing the interests of under-represented groups if mainstream sport did not deliver desired increases in involvement for and by such groups, evidenced by the establishment of womensport groups – often self appointed – to advance women's involvement in sport.

While this satisfies some and some targeting assists, the issue remains one of engendering greater inclusiveness for under-represented groups in those who provide sport more generally and support sport and getting those under-represented better positioned to more favourably consider taking up the opportunity.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Cummiskey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'P' and a long, sweeping underline.

PETER CUMMISKEY
Executive Director