



July 25, 2006

Dr Ian Holland
Secretary
References Committee
Australian Senate
Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra
ACT 2600

Dear Dr Holland,

RE: Inquiry into Women in Sport and Recreation in Australia

Thank you for the opportunity of forwarding a submission to your Inquiry, which for the AFL is timely, given our current initiatives to increase female participation in Australian Football.

Historically Australian football has with other football codes generally been seen as a predominantly male sport. While this remains so at the professional level, we believe there is a huge opportunity for our sport to establish a large nationwide female participation base and substantially contribute to the Government's objectives of increasing the number of girls and women actively playing sport.

Australian Football is highly attractive to women and girls. The AFL has the highest attendance of any Australian major sporting competition with 6,283,788 spectators attending the 176 matches played in the 2005 season. Of these 40 per cent were female and 33 per cent of the 506,509 total AFL and AFL Club membership were also female.

This is a female supporter base that can not be matched by any other sport. The AFL's Strategic Plan 2004 – 2006 has focused on realising the potential of this enormous base to rapidly develop female participation through the following initiatives;

- The establishment of a National Women's Advisory Committee to provide advice, innovative strategies and initiatives to further grow female participation
- A Women's and Girls Strategic Plan 2006-2008 has been drafted and disseminated to all State football bodies
- Affiliation of all Women's leagues with their respective State football bodies
- Promoting participation of girls in the highly acclaimed AFL Auskick introductory program
- Introduction of specific girls youth competitions in Victoria and Queensland
- Establishment of a new version of Australian Football "AFL Recreational Football" with modified rules suitable to both single sex and mixed competition
- Recruitment of female umpires throughout all grades of competition.
- AFL sponsorship of the annual senior Women's National Championship
- Development of Youth Girls secondary school football competitions in States and Territories

Australian Football League



AFL House 140 Harbour Esplanade Docklands Victoria 3008 Telephone 613 9643 1999 Facsimile 613 96431872
All correspondence to GPO Box 1449N Melbourne Victoria 3001 [Australia www.afl.com.au](http://www.afl.com.au) ABN 97 489 912 318

From an historically small base the total female participation in Australian Football competitions and programs of six weeks or more, has over the past three years grown rapidly to 38,000 – 7 per cent of the total participation of 540,000.

Through our current programs and strategic planning we confidently estimate this to grow to 10 % of our forecasted 678,000 participants by 2010. There is however further considerable potential for a direct partnership between the Australian Government through the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) and the AFL – along the lines of ASC's recent Targeted Sports Program which could significantly accelerate this growth.

The Targeted Sports Program resulted in national AFL Auskick registrations growing from 80,074 (2000) to 123, 427 (2003). We are confident that with similar assistance through the ASC and based on its unique female supporter base, the AFL could attract 30,000 new female participants over a similar period. It is unlikely that any other sport could offer this rapid realisation of the Government's objective.

Please find attached for you information the following:

- AFL Women's and Girls Strategic Plan 2006-2008
- 2005 Women's and Girls Participation in Australian Football
- Parents Guide to NAB AFL Auskick
- AFL Recreational Football Rule Book and Promotional Materials

We would be pleased to attend a hearing of your Committee to elaborate on the unique potential the AFL has to assist the Government in realising its objective for a rapid increase in female sports participation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Andrew Demetriou
Chief Executive Officer