

AUSTRALIAN WOMENSPORT AND RECREATION ASSOCIATION INC

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Gold and silver to the women and bronze for the men!

The recent Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games were a bonanza for women athletes in many ways but also showed that women in the sports industry are still lagging men in the areas of leadership and officials.

The very good news is that for the first time in the history of the Commonwealth Games Australian women won more medals overall than the men, 118 to 103 and they did this with 11 less competitors in the Australian team. *So Australian women won 15 more medals than the men with 11 less competitors.*

Further, the Australian women won 46 gold medals compared to 38 for the men (total 84), they also won more silver medals, 41 compared to 28 (total 69), but the men won more bronze medals, 37 compared to 31 (total 68).

And because of the outstanding results of the Australian women the media coverage for women was great. Instead of having to search newspaper columns for stories on women's sport, there were days when women actually featured on the front and back pages and even lead the nightly television news coverage. Now we wait to 2008 for the Beijing Olympics for this to happen again!

One of the equality shortcomings of the Games in regard to team officials is that the Australian team had 130 male officials compared to 50 women. A closer look at this figure shows that the big difference is in the area of coaching, with 68 male coaches to 15 female coaches. Another large difference is in the area of Section Heads for sports, with 15 male Section Heads and 7 female (gymnastics, basketball, hockey, netball, shooting, synchronised swimming and triathlon). And four of these teams are female only teams so it would be expected that they have a female team leader.

There are a number of possible options for the sport and recreation industry to embrace to improve the roles and involvement of women in sport leadership. The Melbourne 2006 Games have again shown that systemic change and action is required, as increasing the participation of women in all facets of sport and recreation benefits the organisation involved, the community and the individual. The responsibility rest with the sports, the industry as a whole and governments and not just women.

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