



Submission to the

*Stronger Community
Organisations Project*

from VicSport

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E XECUTIVE SUMMARY

VicSport welcomes the Department for Victorian Communities' Stronger Community Organisations Project (SCOP) as an initiative with the potential to make changes that will significantly increase the capacity of the community sport and active recreation sector.

As the peak body for sport and active recreation, VicSport represents the collective interests of Victoria's single largest community sector. With over 170 member groups, 20,000 clubs and associations, and 1.8 million participants, workers and volunteers, the community sport and active recreation sector makes a significant contribution to the social, physical, mental and economic wellbeing of our communities - a fact widely acknowledged by the Department for Victorian Communities.

While the primary role of community sport and active recreation organisations is to either directly provide, or facilitate the provision of, low-cost participation opportunities for members, the benefits accrued to both individuals and communities of this involvement reach far beyond the simple pleasure of being actively involved.

Community sport and active recreation is at the forefront of the fight against lifestyle related diseases. The World Health Organisation estimates throughout the world there are at least 1.9 million deaths among people aged 15 years and over which are directly attributable to physical inactivity. In 1991, Australia's first burden of disease study attributed 13,000 deaths per year to physical inactivity. In addition, physical inactivity was estimated to be responsible for 6.6% of the total burden of disease and injury in Australia in 2003.

In financial terms, the total costs attributable to the burden of lifestyle diseases in Australia are estimated to be \$3.7 billion annually; high costs for what are in many cases 'preventable' diseases.

In Australia we have an extensive community sport and active recreation network. Over 11 million people aged over 15 participate at least once per week in physical activity for exercise, recreation and sport. In Victoria, we have a total of 1.1 million participants over the age of 15, and 1.77 million participants aged 5-14 years engaged in sport and active recreation pursuits.

Realistically, the community sport and active recreation network is the only network capable of reaching every member of the community and providing physical activity opportunities at all levels. Conservative estimates indicate Australia would save \$8 million annually for every 1% increase in the proportion of Australians achieving a sufficient level of physical activity for health. However more needs to be done to support our vital grass-roots sports clubs and organisations if we are to make significant improvements to the health of all Australians.

For the most part the community sport and active recreation sector is made up of small, volunteer run, grass-roots clubs who struggle to make ends meet as daily running costs continue to increase.

A recent *Community Sport Counts* report indicated 75% of all Victoria's sport and active recreation organisations are voluntary in nature, and around 80 to 90% of all activity is undertaken by volunteers. Australian Bureau of Statistics data indicates with 1.14 million volunteers engaged on an ongoing basis, the sport and active recreation sector utilises the support of more volunteers than any other sector.

There is no doubt without the incredible volunteer support given freely to our sector, there would be very little in the way of affordable community accessible

participation opportunities provided within communities. There is also no doubt the significant time contribution our volunteers willingly give attests to the high esteem with which community sport and active recreation is held.

Despite the significant contribution the sector makes to community development, there are many challenges facing our grass-roots sport and active recreation clubs. Through consultation with members VicSport has identified a range of key issues which include:

- Recognition of the role of the sector as not only providers of physical activity opportunities but also providers of a wide range of community outcomes that must be addressed in all aspects of community planning.
- The sector requires essential infrastructure support in order to continue to grow. Governments, funders and community organisations themselves must work together to provide the infrastructure support required.
- Access to facilities and long-term facility management are key issues inhibiting the development of more participation opportunities. State and Local Governments must work with the sector to urgently address facility issues if we are going to achieve our ultimate aim of providing access opportunities for all.
- The administrative load on volunteers is overly burdensome and not sustainable. In addition to there being an unnecessary duplication of tasks across the sector, many of the compliance requirements small groups are faced with, while they may be relevant to large companies, are far in excess of what should reasonably be required of a small community focused organisation. Government must work with the sector to support important infrastructure initiatives to rationalise appropriate administrative tasks and develop compliance regulations more

appropriate to the business of the sector. These and many other issues are discussed in the following document.

On behalf of the community sport and active recreation sector VicSport presents this report to the SCOP secretariat and looks forward to the ongoing opportunity to contribute to this important project.



VICSPORT

VicSport is the peak body representing Victoria's sport and active recreation sector. Our Mission is to lead the sport, active recreation and associated health agendas into the future.

As an independent member based organisation, VicSport represents the needs and concerns of over 170 member groups including State Sporting Associations (SSA), Regional Sport Assemblies (RSA), Local Government Authorities (LGA), active recreation organisations, University, TAFE and school sport groups, as well as organisations representing specific sub-groups of the sector such as the Victorian Council on the Ageing, ACHPER Victoria, Aquatics and Recreation Victoria and the Australian Drug Foundation.

Through our extensive network VicSport supports over 20,000 clubs and associations, and over 1.8 million participants, workers and volunteers in the sport and active recreation sector across Victoria. The activities these organisations offer play a vital role in promoting better physical and mental health outcomes for Victorians, as well as creating vital capacity within metropolitan and regional communities.

As Victoria's Peak-Body for sport and active recreation our key roles are to:

- *Advocate:* as the "Voice for Sport", VicSport represents the interests and concerns of the sector to government, to statutory authorities and to the broader industry.
- *Inform policy development:* VicSport listens to members and uses this feedback to provide visionary strategic advice to key policy and decision makers.

- *Facilitate program delivery:* VicSport works with government, statutory authorities and key external stakeholders to develop strategies and provide support required to assist members deliver participation opportunities for all Victorians.
- *Build Members' Capacity:* VicSport supports and educates members through the provision of quality advice and consultation services and delivery of professional development opportunities.
- *Research:* through industry research and development, VicSport analyses issues, identifies trends and develops innovative strategies that play a vital role in planning for the future.

INTRODUCTION

Sport and recreation are key leisure activities in Australia and integral components of our national culture, identity and social life. In 2005, over 69% of Australians aged 15 years and over, or 11.1 million people, participated at least once per week in physical activity for exercise, recreation and sport. In addition, an estimated 7.1 million Australians (42%) aged over 15 participated 3 times per week or more, the minimum recommended for maintenance of physical health benefits. (ERASS, 2006)

Through the multi-faceted role community sport and active recreation plays in promoting better health, social inclusion and community capacity building, our sector makes a significant contribution to the economic, social and community well being of all Australians.

Victoria's Sport & Active Recreation Landscape

Melbourne has been described as the 'ultimate sports city' in terms of hosting major events. The Victorian sporting events calendar attracts participants and spectators from across Australia and overseas, adding approximately \$1.2 billion each year to the Victorian economy. (Sport and Recreation Victoria, 2007)

While elite sportspeople and major television or spectator events are at the forefront of most people's consciousness regarding sport and active recreation, millions of Australians and most Victorians are actively involved at a community level in participating, helping or supporting friends and family engage in the wide range of community sporting and active recreational pursuits that our society embraces.

The primary role of community sport and active recreation organisations is to either directly provide, or facilitate the provision of, low-cost participation

opportunities for members. Recent research conducted by VicSport (in press) suggests there are at least 840,000 SSA registered sport and active recreation organisation members across Victoria, and a total of 1.1 million participants over the age of 15, and 1.77 million participants aged 5-14 years. In total 2.87 million Victorians participate in sport and active recreation pursuits. The activities Victoria's sport and active recreation organisations offer not only play a vital role in promoting better physical and mental health outcomes for individuals, they also play a key role in building communities via the integral social capital and infrastructure they generate.

In terms of size, the majority of Victoria's sport and active recreation organisations are small community-focused organisations. In Victoria, every community sport and active recreation organisation is a Not for Profit (NFP) organisation. Funded primarily via income from membership fees with additional support coming from government grants, fundraising and sponsorship, any profits made by these groups are invested back into the organisation for further capacity building rather than distributed to members.

According to the *Community Sport Counts* report, 53% of Victorian sport and recreation organisations have an annual income of less than \$25,000 per year. An additional 22% of the sector brings in between \$25,000 to \$100,000 annually. (Sport and Recreation Victoria, 2004) Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures showed across Australia, the average sports club or team organisation is found to have 4 employees and an income of \$325,300. (ABS, 2006a)

Our Sport & Active Recreation Volunteers

In addition to being not-for-profit, community sport and active recreation organisations are for the most part small volunteer run organisations. The *Community Sport Counts* report published by Sport and Recreation Victoria indicated 75% of Victoria's sport and recreation organisations are entirely voluntary in nature. (Sport and Recreation Victoria, 2004)

It is estimated within the sport and active recreation sector, around 80 to 90% of all activity is undertaken by volunteers and approximately 40% of all volunteers across Victoria work in the sport and active recreation industry. ABS statistics released in August 2006 showed 62% of the total number of people who held recognised roles within sport and physical recreation organisations volunteered their time. (ABS, 2006a)

The Benefits of Involvement

The role the sport and active recreation sector plays in promoting better health, social inclusion and community capacity building makes it a vitally important part of Australia's broader community.

The benefits of this involvement are now tangible. International research supports the social, economic and health outcomes associated with sport and recreational activity.

In its *Discussion Paper 2005-2010* (Department for Victorian Communities, 2004) the Government articulates the contribution sport and recreation makes to Victoria's health, social and economic wellbeing by making important contributions to community, the economy, creating jobs and providing opportunities for physical activity for all Victorians.

Compelling scientific evidence shows increased levels of physical activity can bring wide-ranging health benefits. These benefits extend beyond the obvious physical health outcomes and include other positive impacts relating to mental health and personal development. The sport and recreation sector is viewed as a priority area for increasing rates of physical activity in order to extract these benefits. (Jackson, Howes, Gupta, Doyle, & Waters, 2005)

Cortis et al has reproduced the following table of Potential Benefits of Sports Participation: (Cortis, Sawrikar, & Muir, 2007)

Personal benefits

Physical health
Stress management
Self-esteem
Academic performance
Sense of achievement, meaning and life satisfaction

Economic benefits

Cost-effective health prevention
Fit, productive workforce
Business growth
Reduces costs of crime
Tourism
Employment
International representation and influence

Socio-cultural benefits

Social interaction and community strengthening
Reduced antisocial behaviour and crime
Promotion of ethnic and cultural harmony
Strengthening families
Promoting community involvement, pride and empowerment
Offering access for the disabled or disadvantaged
Promotes ethical behaviour models
National cohesion

Adapted (Kay, 2003)

The contribution sport makes to the community is recognised internationally. Last year the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan addressed the world in Davos, Switzerland and articulated the multi faceted influence sport can have. He spoke of its universal values and ability to bridge social, cultural and religious

divides. He went on to describe the contribution to personal development and growth and its value to the wellbeing of whole communities and countries. (United Nations, 2006)

Of particular importance is the fact organised sport is a feature of the lives of many thousands of young people growing up in Australia. Involvement in sport and active recreation offers young people opportunities to form lasting friendships and learn social values and organisational skills that will serve them well in other areas of their lives. (VicHealth, 1999)

PARTICIPATION

In Australia, and in particular, Victoria, we have an extensive community sport and active recreation network providing physical activity opportunities for most members of the community at varying entry levels.

The Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey (ERASS) is a joint initiative of the Australian Sports Commission and the state and territory government agencies responsible for sport and recreation, and was first conducted in 2001. The most recent survey in 2005 has detailed the following results:

- In the 12 months prior to interview 11.1 million Australians aged 15 years and over participated at least once per week in physical activity for exercise, recreation and sport.
- This is a national participation rate of 69.2%.
- An estimated 4.5 million persons participated at least once per week in a physical activity for exercise, recreation and sport that was organised by a club, association, fitness centre or other type of organisation.
- This represents a participation rate of 28.4%.
- Persons living in capital cities participated slightly more in physical activity for exercise, recreation and sport three times per week or more than those living in the rest of the state (45.4% and 42.1% respectively).
- The level of participation at three times per week or more was higher for females than for males.
- Overall participation in exercise, recreation and sport three times per week or more has increased from 37.2% of the population in 2001 to 44.2% of the population in 2005.
- This represents a rise of 18.8% after taking into account natural increases in the size of the Australian population.

(ERASS, 2006)

Furthermore, in the 12 months to April 2006 an estimated 1 691 100 Australian children (63% of total) played a sport outside of school hours which had been

organised by a school, club or association. Boys usually had a significantly higher participation rate (69% for the combined ages) for organised sport compared with girls (58%).

Just under one-third (31% or 824 900) of children played two or more organised sports during the 12 month period - 37% (500 600) for boys and 25% (324 300) for girls. The participation rate has increased slightly from 59% in 2000 and increased in both males and females. (ABS, 2006b)

The sector is also a growing employer and provides many people with career opportunities. The 2001 census found 83 008 people (1.0% of all employed persons) had their main job in a sport and physical recreation occupation. This is a 21.6% increase from 1996 when 68 274 people had their main job in a sport and physical recreation occupation, and compares with an 8.7% increase for all occupations. In August 2001 there were more males (50 113 or 60.4%) than females (32 895 or 39.6%) employed in sport and physical recreation occupations. By comparison, of all employed persons, 54.8% were male and 45.2% were female. (ABS, 2007)

BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY SPORT AND ACTIVE RECREATION

The benefits of physical activity are universally accepted and a vast amount of research has accumulated on a wide range of outcomes. The benefits accrue for all segments of our population and do not discriminate between race, gender, age, disability or health.

More evidence is emerging about the social impact of sport and active recreation in addition to the physical and psychological benefits.

The community sport and active recreation sector makes a significant contribution to building stronger Victorian communities. The breadth of these benefits is outlined in the following pages of this submission.

LIFESTYLE RELATED BENEFITS

The health benefits of physical activity are universally accepted. The challenge remains to increase participation on a regular basis in order to extract the maximum benefits for individuals and for the community.

The World Health Organisation's Health Report 2002 estimated that throughout the world in 2002 there were 1.9 million deaths among people aged 15 years and over which were directly attributable to physical inactivity, and that physical inactivity contributed to 10–16% of global cases of breast, colon and rectal cancers and diabetes mellitus, and about 22% of ischemic heart disease. (World Health Organisation, 2007a)

In Australia, we are fully aware of the threat our rapidly increasing incidence rates of lifestyle related diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, overweight and obesity pose to the health of our nation. In the word's of Prime Minister Howard himself, Australia is "*struggling as a nation with the challenge of obesity*". (Howard, 2006)

Australia's first burden of disease study attributed 13 000 deaths per year to physical inactivity. (Mathers, Vos, & Stevenson, 1991) That is 36 deaths per day, or 1.5 per hour. Too many Australians are dying from conditions linked to excess weight, such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, osteoarthritis and breast, bowel and endometrial cancer.

The scope of the issue can be seen in all ages in our community. Between 1985 and 1995 the number of overweight 7–15 year olds almost doubled. The numbers of obese children has more than tripled. At the current rate, it is predicted that 65 per cent of young Australians will be overweight or obese by 2020. (Go for Your Life, 2007)

Research also indicates overweight adolescents have a 70% chance of becoming overweight adults. (US Surgeon General, 2007) In addition, follow-up studies of patients who were obese as adolescents showed a range of disturbing differences in adult outcomes such as lower education levels, lower incidence of marriage, lower household incomes and higher rates of poverty (Carr-Gregg, 2006)

In Australia in 1999–2000, 17% of men and 20% of women aged 25–64 years were classified as obese. A further 49% of men and 27% of women aged 25–64 years were classified as overweight but not obese. Between 1980 and 1999–2000 the proportion of men aged 25–64 years who were obese rose from 9% to 17%. In the same period, the obesity rate among women of that age more than doubled, from 8% to 20%. (AIHW, 2003)

Older Australians are also being caught up in the national obesity epidemic. The number of obese older Australians is now more than one in five of our senior people. This number is rapidly approaching one million. Their number has trebled over the past 20 years. (AIHW, 2004)

Being physically active can also improve mental wellbeing. Physical activity has been reported to help reduce anxiety; active people also report feeling less stressed or nervous. Physical exercise helps to counteract the withdrawal, inactivity and feelings of hopelessness that are a feature of depression as well as the duration and intensity of depressive episodes. Moods such as tension, fatigue and anger are all positively affected by exercise and exercising can improve the way people perceive their physical condition, athletic abilities and body image. (MHCA, 2005) (VicHealth, 2007)

While regular physical activity is associated with a substantially reduced risk for some, but not all mental disorders, it also seems to reduce the degree of co-morbidity. (Strohle, et al., 2007) While the evidence continues to mount supporting an association between exercise and several indicators of mental health (Adams, Moore, & Dye, 2007) physical activity has also shown to help strengthen communities. Evidence from the UK shows that even in deprived communities positive lifestyle changes such as increasing physical activity levels are associated with positive changes in mental health. (Blank, Grimsley, Goyder, Ellis, & Peters, 2007)

In financial terms, total costs attributable to the burden of lifestyle diseases are estimated to be \$3.77 billion annually. (Stephenson, Bauman, Armstrong, & Smith, 2004) The costs for each of the diseases or conditions in the study were estimated to be \$161 m for coronary heart disease (CHD), \$28 m for non-insulin dependent diabetes mellitus (NIDDM), \$16 m for colon cancer, \$101 m for stroke, \$16 m for breast cancer, and up to \$56 m for depressive disorders.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) reports that in 2003, more than 2.63 million years of 'healthy' life was lost due to the burden of disease and injury in Australia. They calculated that physical inactivity was responsible for

6.6% of the total burden of disease and injury in Australia in 2003 and 23.7% for the burden of cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

Overall, the burden from physical inactivity was shared equally between the sexes and with the exception of diabetes; most of the conditions attributable to physical inactivity were associated with high mortality. (Begg, Vos, Barker, Stevenson, Stanley, & Lopez, 2007)

Of these direct financial costs, the Federal Government is estimated to bear some \$1.4 billion. (Access Economics, 2006) It remains a dilemma for health practitioners why such a high financial and personal cost is tolerated in our community and by our governments when these illnesses and disease are clearly preventable. Funding and support of strategies aimed at improving lifestyle and reducing risk factors is clearly an eminent approach and the community based sport and recreation organisations are key players in delivering these programs. All governments will need to take a longer-term, strategic approach to preventative health strategies and incorporating sound programs at the community level is an excellent starting point.

It has been suggested we would save \$8 million annually for every 1% increase in the proportion of Australians achieving a sufficient level of physical activity for health. (Stephenson, Bauman, Armstrong, & Smith, 2004)

The health benefits of regular physical activity are many. At least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity per day is enough to realise many of these positive effects, and the more physical activity engaged in, the greater the benefits accrued.

Proven benefits of regular physical activity include:

- reduced risk of premature death and reduced risk of dying from heart disease or stroke, which are responsible for one-third of all deaths
- reduced risk of developing heart disease or colon cancer by up to 50%

- reduced risk of developing type II diabetes by 50%
- helps to prevent / reduce hypertension, which affects one-fifth of the world's adult population
- helps to prevent / reduce osteoporosis, reducing the risk of hip fracture by up to 50% in women
- reduced risk of developing lower back pain
- promotes psychological wellbeing, reduces stress, anxiety and feelings of depression and loneliness
- helps prevent or control risky behaviours, especially among children and young people, like tobacco, alcohol or other substance use, unhealthy diet or violence
- helps control weight and lower the risk of becoming obese by 50% compared to people with sedentary lifestyles
- helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints and makes people with chronic, disabling conditions improve their stamina
- can help in the management of painful conditions, like back pain or knee pain

(World Health Organisation, 2007b)

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Much has been written about the contribution sport and active recreation pursuits make to the social fabric of communities. Social capital refers to the networks of trust, solidarity and reciprocity that exist in a well functioning community. (Putnam, 2000)

In a report on Social Capital and Social Wellbeing, the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicated participation in community sport and active recreation helps to develop the community networks and bonds important for social cohesion. Participation in culture and leisure activities also provides individuals with a sense of belonging, support and social interaction. Some studies suggest a potential link between participation in sport and recreation and a reduction in crime and other anti-social activities. In addition, in both suburban and rural areas, sport,

recreation and cultural activities provide a strong community focal point. (ABS, 2002)

A recent report from the London School of Economics – Centre for Civil Society described the positive contribution sport makes to the success of democracy through the creation of voluntary associations and strengthening communities which has long been recognised in the United States by academic scholars and political figures alike. (Daly, 2005)

The Report goes on to describe an analysis of data from the British Household Panel Survey which revealed people tend to be more involved in a range of leisure activities (including, participating in and watching sport, going to the cinema and/or theatre, eating out or going for a drink) in accordance with the number/range of associations with which they are involved. In other words increases in social capital, as measured by the volume of associational membership, are indeed related to more extensive and more frequent involvement in the whole range of leisure, cultural, public and even domestic activities.

Research in the United Kingdom showed very strong correlations between a nation's level of sports membership and the levels of social trust and wellbeing.

This shows those countries with higher levels of membership in sports groups among their citizens also have higher levels of social trust. Individuals who are involved in sports organisations, both as members and as participants, are slightly more likely to vote, contact a politician and sign a petition than both non-members and the average citizen. Membership of and participation in sports groups also display strong correlations with higher levels of social trust and trust in institutions, and with life satisfaction.

The report concludes that as the links between participation in sport and social and political trust and levels of social engagement are so strong, sport can be a useful tool in building stronger community networks. (Delaney & Keaney, 2005)

Sport and recreation activities are also well recognised as being vital elements of rural community structure. For many regional communities, local sporting events provide a rare opportunity for locals to gather, or in the case of larger events against regional rivals, for neighbouring townships to interact. These gatherings are about people and communities coming together; to play, to talk and to share stories. (Driscoll & Wood, 1999)

We are often reminded of the role that sport played in building the strong social cohesion in urban working class communities. It was this social cohesion that sustained social capital and helped communities cope with the Depression of the 1930's. (Scott, 2000)

DEVELOPING COMMUNITIES

Community-based sporting organisations provide the structures for addressing many of the social issues facing Australia. Issues such as racial vilification, equity, diversity, access for people with a disability, Indigenous Australians, new arrivals, cultural and linguistically diverse populations, older aged participants and young people for example are all being addressed by community clubs, organisations and associations in a positive manner.

Community sport and active recreation provides many opportunities for members of our society to meet, interact, develop and grow. Young people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and indigenous Australians face additional challenges in their developmental pathway that makes them vulnerable to social and structural disconnection. In these cases

sport and recreation can provide an increased range of opportunities to connect with the community. (Department for Victorian Communities, 2004)

These issues are explored in more detail below.

Indigenous Australians

Although the overall participation rate in physical activity among our indigenous population is less than half that of the non-indigenous population (National Centre for Culture and Recreation Statistics, 2004), sport and recreation has been described as an integral part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life and serves as an opportunity for cultural survival and revival. (ATSIC, 1995)

The ATSIC report to Government outlines the range of benefits sport and recreation programs offer indigenous communities. These include; a very significant and positive-contribution to long-term health; a cost effective method to help combat substance abuse, cardiac disease, diabetes and obesity; a considerable impact on mental health disorders; and an effective element in diversionary schemes for youth. ATSIC also point out sport often provides the first opportunity for shared experiences between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians and for recognition of indigenous achievement.

Women

According to the 2006 Senate enquiry into Women in Sport (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006), recent epidemiological research published between 2000 and 2003 indicates a strengthening evidence base supporting the protective benefits of physical activity on the general health of women, older adults and special populations. For women's health in particular, there is a growing body of evidence linking the positive effects of exercise with breast cancer prevention, while new evidence is emerging to support the role of physical activity in promoting mental health and preventing falls. The report to the Senate enquiry concluded participation in recreational and sporting activities is a practical and

efficient way to increase physical activity levels, thereby maximising the health and social dividends to the community.

Anecdotal evidence provided by VicSport members indicates in addition to the benefits of simply being physically fit, major motivators for women's participation in sport were the social interaction and human contact these participation opportunities provided. In many cases feedback indicated the mental health benefits derived from this interaction were at least as important, if not more important than the physical benefits themselves.

The Victorian Ladies Bowl's Association (VLBA), for example, indicated social interaction was the primary reason women participated in their sport. In fact the social interaction these ladies were exposed to via their sport was for many, particularly those in older age groups, the only social interaction they experienced on an ongoing basis. For these ladies the networks of contacts and the opportunity to be involved with others was an experience considered vital to their general wellbeing.

One interesting anomaly raised by the VLBA was the drop off in participation rates amongst older ladies with the arrival of grand children. Evidence suggests many adult women often undergo the most physically active phase of their life when they have children under five. At this time women find they are often working reduced hours or not working at all in order to balance family commitments and as such have more disposable time for recreation. One of the key issues raised in any context –work or sporting – when discussing children, is access to child care. Given the drop off rate amongst older ladies this is a consideration which needs to be extended beyond the immediate family only.

In the context of the VLBA experience we must be cognisant of the impact lack of access to appropriate and affordable child care resources has not only on parents, but on the extended family as well.

The sport and recreation sector has a great challenge to address participation rates in many groups and evidence presented to the Senate committee showed that high rates of participation and rapid growth amongst women members occurs where there is convenience, flexibility, child care, and non-competitive activities.

Much is being done at the club, association, local government, national and international level to address physical activity participation rates among women. A number of strategies to combat the problem of equity of access for females have been successfully implemented. As an example, one Victorian local government, as part of their policy to provide facilities appropriate for female use, developed a facility exclusively for women's sport in their locality to cater for a range of sports such as soccer, cricket, football and touch football. This facility was known for its superior quality of the fields with many men's clubs wanting to make use of the facility.

This same council has kept to its policy of providing female accessible facilities at all their centres, and in one case when new clubrooms were being built at a facility owned by this council, they were built to cater for both male and female members despite the fact the facility was currently being used by men's teams only. In this case the Council's policy of ensuring equal access has paved the way for potential female use of this facility in the future.

An alternative option used with some success has been the offering of an entry fee concession to clubs with women's teams participating in local competition. Offering such a concession promotes awareness of the need to encourage clubs to make women's sport a priority. Once a strong women's presence at the club has been established and the value of broader access for all is realised, these concessions could be removed without detriment to women's access.

A number of Victorian local governments have also introduced the use of service agreements to allow them to be more assertive in the allocation of fields for use by women's teams. This has been achieved by including clauses in Service Agreements, which stipulate that minority groups must occupy a certain percentage of use of the facility.

At the international level, in 1998 seventy-four countries were represented at the 2nd World Conference on Women and Sport held in Namibia. Their communiqué called for action throughout the world to further the development of equal opportunities for girls and women to participate fully in sport in its broadest sense. This call reflected an overwhelming desire on the part of all delegates to seek greater co-operation and co-ordination between the many agencies and organisations responsible for women's issues and recognised and stressed the importance that sport can and should play in the advancement of girls and women. (IWG, 1998)

New Australians

The Australian community is one of the most diverse in the world. With continued growth it has been acknowledged in order for migration to be successful in both policy and practice, the settlement policy for migrants need to provide opportunities to not only adjust to Australian life but for migrants to become active and vital participants in the community. Opportunities for newly arrived young people to participate in social and recreational activities with their peers are therefore critically important. (Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues, 2005)

Sporting activities have been recognised as a vehicle through which migrant and refugee young people can rebuild supportive relationships and a sense of identity in their new country. (VicHealth, 1999)

Despite the proven benefits however, migrants are still underrepresented in measures of participation in sport and recreational activities. The ABS report

variation in participation rates among different migrant groups, ranging from 67.4% in people born in North-West Europe to just 31.2% in those who listed their country of birth as North Africa and the Middle East. Females from those countries had a participation rate of less than 20%. (ABS, 2006c) The ABS does report however these rates are reflected in nearly all other measures of social and community activities.

Walking, swimming and aerobics/fitness were the most popular activities across all the migrant groups regardless of country of birth. This reinforces research in the United Kingdom which indicates activities such as swimming and walking are particularly good at attracting less privileged groups. This suggests these activities in particular may be useful for targeted programs aimed at increasing participation rates amongst priority groups. (Delaney & Keaney, 2005)

Young Australians

Clubs and sporting groups, along with religious communities help to support school and family relationships and are a positive influence on young people. It is in these environments where our youth meet and associate with the most important people in their lives: parents, siblings, friends, coaches, teachers, and mentors. It is suggested it is in these places young people learn what is expected of them and what to expect from others, especially adults. In short, this is where young people learn powerful lessons, both good and bad, about the role of the individual in society. (Saguaro Seminar, 2001)

By enabling young people to be part of a team and to participate in activities that are key parts of the Australian culture and ethos, sport can help young people to feel a sense of belonging. Sporting activities can also contribute to mental health and wellbeing by enhancing young people's physical health and skills, thereby building their sense of self esteem and control.

A review of the role sport and physical activity plays in crime prevention concluded sport and physical activity can combine with other interventions to reduce crime in particular groups and communities. It appears sport and physical activity can reduce crime by providing accessible, appropriate activities in a supportive social context. (Cameron & MacDougall, 2000)

The authors also noted elite sporting bodies can be involved in programs directly aimed at particular crimes or communities. This issue has been taken up by Crime Prevention Victoria, which has identified sport and recreation activities as important parts of the developmental programs that divert people, in particular young people, away from crime. (Department for Victorian Communities, 2004)

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHICS

Further analysis of Australian data has shown it is possible to define a number of socio-demographic characteristics of non-participants in sport and recreation. This could help form the basis for defining target groups to assist the development of targeted policies and programs aimed at increasing participation in sport and physical recreation.

Data indicates under-represented groups include:

- those with poor proficiency in English;
- those with below average self-assessed health status;
- younger females, aged 25 - 44
- those aged over 45, whether male or female;
- those who have little social contact or access to transport; and
- those with characteristics associated with lower socio-economic status.

(Stratton, Conn, Liaw, & Conolly, 2005)

As pressures mount on our rural areas, especially those associated with climate change, sport and active recreation will continue to make significant social, economic, cultural and environmental contributions to the life of rural communities. Driscoll and Wood noted the following key contributions sport and active recreation makes to rural communities:

Social capital development

Creation of community hubs

Health improvement and promotion

Cultural values

Economic development and town survival

Community safety

Creating role models

Community control and investment

Junior sports development

Local innovation

Community identity and local pride

(Driscoll & Wood, 1999)

Environmental and physical development

The beneficial outcomes of participation in sport and recreation are also closely related to the design of communities and neighbourhoods. An American study indicated persons living in walkable, mixed-use neighbourhoods have higher levels of social capital compared to those living in car-oriented suburbs. Respondents living in walkable neighbourhoods were more likely to know their neighbours, participate politically, trust others, and be socially engaged. (Leydon, 2003)

Sport and active recreation activities create hubs for social gathering, communication and interaction in a predominately creative and supportive environment. This is particularly important for regional and remote communities. (Driscoll & Wood, 1999)

A review of the literature showed children's participation in physical activity is positively associated with publicly provided recreational infrastructure (access to recreational facilities and schools) and transport infrastructure (presence of footpaths and controlled intersections, access to destinations and public transportation). At the same time, transport infrastructure (number of roads to cross and traffic density/speed) and local conditions (crime, area deprivation) are negatively associated with children's participation in physical activity. (Davison & Lawson, 2006)

VOLUNTEERS

Sport and active recreational pursuits encourage involvement through the entire life cycle in a range of ways, be it active participation, passive involvement through spectating, or involvement through formal and informal volunteer networks. Volunteering may be seen as an expression of reciprocity or potentially as a direct outcome of social capital. The act of volunteering demonstrates a balance between an individual's self interest and the public interest. (ABS, 2002)

The *Community Sport Counts* report (Sport and Recreation Victoria, 2004) indicated 75% of Victoria's sport and recreation organisations are voluntary in nature. It is estimated within the sport and active recreation sector, around 80 to 90% of all activity is undertaken by volunteers and approximately 40% of all volunteers across Victoria work in the sport and active recreation industry.

ABS statistics released in August of 2006 showed 62% of the total number of people who held recognised roles within sport and physical recreation organisations volunteered their time. (ABS, 2006a)

Of all people who volunteer in all sectors across Australia, more volunteer in the sport and recreation sector than in any other sector. A report on Australia's Sports Volunteers indicates that 1.14 million people volunteer in the sport and recreation sector on a regular basis. This figure is greater than the combined education, training and youth sector (1.02 million), community and welfare sector (970 000) or the health sector (297 000). (National Centre for Culture and Recreation Statistics, 2005).

It is important to note this figure does not include volunteers for one off events such as Olympics, Paralympics and Commonwealth Games which attract large numbers of volunteers in their own right. By way of example, the Sydney Olympic Games attracted 74,000 volunteers for this one off event. Consultation with our

members showed a large number of the volunteers in Sydney and of the 13 500 volunteers for the recent Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games came from the sport and recreation sector, especially the thousands of technical officials.

A Victorian report considered the economic value of Victorian volunteers and although acknowledging the difficulty in calculating a figure, the authors estimated the value of indirect or formal volunteering through organisations in Victoria was worth about \$4.3 billion in 2000 and about \$1 billion of that was in sport and recreational organisations. (Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2002)

In 2000, as part of the ABS Voluntary Work Survey, Victorian volunteers were asked a series of questions about the reasons they volunteered. The findings confirm people volunteer for many reasons and often for more than one reason. According to the frequency of reasons cited, Victorians are motivated by altruistic and self interest motivations.

The top five reasons Victorians gave for volunteering were:

1. To help others/community (altruistic)
2. For personal satisfaction (self interest)
3. To do something worthwhile (altruistic)
4. For personal/family involvement (self interest); and
5. To have social contact with others (self interest).

(Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2002)

These reasons can all be considered meritorious and clearly add to the strength of Victorian communities.

A report from Victoria's Department of Human Services (DHS) which reviewed available data including the Victorian Community Services Directory Survey (2001) reported there to be 10 019 sporting clubs, 497 craft clubs, 755 hobby clubs and 620 recreational groups. Over one third of Victorians (34.6 per cent) or

nearly 400 000 Victorians were volunteers for sport or recreational clubs in 2000 and they contributed about 41 million hours to sports and recreation clubs in 2000. This was an increase from 32 million hours in 1995. (Soupourmas & Ironmonger, 2002)

Sports-focused organisations attract a higher proportion of male than female volunteers with males feeling more motivated to work for voluntary organisations that aim to help the community at large or young people. (FaCSIA, 2006)

Sport and recreation also offers an opportunity for members of the community, and especially family members to make important social contributions by volunteering their time, expertise and labour to assist with organised sport and recreation activities. This contribution was most recently monitored by the 2002 Australian General Social Survey.

The ABS summarised the DHS report in detail and provided the following observations:

- The sport volunteer rate for males is almost two thirds higher than that for females
- Australians aged from 35 to 49 had higher rates of sport volunteering than did either younger or older persons
- In all states and territories the sport volunteer rate was lower for the capital city (9.9%) than it was for the balance of the state (23.9%)
- Perhaps not surprisingly, persons who (during the previous twelve months) had either participated in organised sporting activities or attended sporting events, were much more likely to have been sport volunteers, and

- Persons who were part of couple families with dependent children were more likely to have been sport volunteers than persons who were part of other family types.

(National Centre for Culture and Recreation Statistics, 2005)

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

The sport, activity and recreation sector is an expanding field contributing to the Victorian community in many social and economic ways. The key ABS report on Sports and Physical Recreation Services (ABS, 2006a) showed at the end of June 2005, there were 9 256 businesses/organisations operating in Australia whose main activity was the provision of sports and physical recreation services. Twenty seven percent of those organisations were operating in Victoria.

The income generated by these organisations in 2004-05 was \$8 820.5m. They incurred expenses of \$8 416.5m. Their single greatest expenditure was on labour costs which accounted for \$2 464.5m, or just over 29%. The total industry value added by sports and physical recreation services was \$2 349.6m, which is the equivalent of 0.3% of Australia's gross domestic product for 2004-05.

At the end of June 2005, total employment in sports and physical recreation services in Victoria was approximately 27 558 which was 27% of the national total of 111 519 persons. In addition, there were 181 832 volunteers in Australia during the month of June 2005.

The report showed between 2000-01 and 2004-05, the sectors income increased by 11.7% per annum (from \$5 490.9m to \$8 552.3m) while expenditure grew at the slightly lower rate of 9.9% per annum (from \$5 632.8m to \$8 206.6m).

Employment increased by 3.1% per annum, from 98 267 persons at the end of June 2001 to 111 201 persons at the end of June 2005.

The report highlighted an emerging issue which the sector has been concerned about for some time. Expenses related to the rent, leasing and hiring of sports venues, facilities and equipment recorded the highest growth rate of all selected expenses, rising by 16.2% per annum (from \$159.6m to \$290.9m). (ABS, 2006a)

S COP DISCUSSION PAPER QUESTIONS

1. What are your views about the major influences and trends that will impact on sport and active recreation community organisations and the sector over the next ten years?

- **Recognition** - The vital role the sport and active recreation sector plays in promoting healthy and vibrant communities needs to be better understood and more widely recognised by governments. As has been demonstrated in this submission, sport and active recreation plays a much broader role than just providing physical activity opportunities. It weaves the social fabric on which our communities are built, promotes health and wellbeing, reduces the economic impact of lifestyle related diseases (which alone demand significant proportions of the State and Federal health budgets), provides employment opportunities, and is a vehicle by which major events can be delivered. The vast majority of benefits are derived from community-based sport and recreation; however this part of the sector receives the least amount of funding. Community sport and active recreation requires greater recognition and support from all levels of government.
- **Infrastructure** – Despite the significant benefits the community sport and active recreation sector gives to individuals and the community, there is relatively little basic 'infrastructure' assistance and support provided by government to grass-roots organisations to assist with the provision of services. Community sport and active recreation organisations are being asked to provide many outcomes in addition to traditional physical activity opportunities. These include programs, policies and training in areas such as racial vilification, obesity, drug use, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) populations, new arrivals, and indigenous issues. The sector is one of the few that can provide widespread access to

target groups and deliver long-term benefits on a broad scale and with successful outcomes. To achieve these outcomes however, the sector requires essential infrastructure in a range of areas including:

- Governance education and innovation
 - Strategic planning support
 - Grant application and acquittal support services
 - Volunteer education
 - Rationalisation of 'back-end' administrative tasks
 - Streamlining of regulatory requirements (further information around this issue is contained in VicSport's submission to the State Service Authority Not for Profit Sector Review).
- o **Volunteers** –Volunteer recruitment and retention is still one of the major issues affecting growth at the community level. The sport and active recreation sector is the largest user of volunteers of any sector in Australia. Research indicates 80 –90% of all work undertaken in the sport and active recreation sector is done by volunteer labour. Volunteers are without doubt a vital element in the ongoing delivery of physical activity opportunities. If we are to maintain our volunteer base, we must provide the education, training, and workplace support these people require and, more importantly, deserve. In recent times, as the legal and business requirements being placed on organisations has increased, the roles and responsibilities of volunteers have changed significantly. For a range of reasons however, there has been little or no formalised education of our volunteers to assist them to deal specifically with these increased demands. As a result, and through no fault of the volunteer or the organisation itself, we are now seeing many clubs facing extreme difficulties in meeting the challenges these new requirements present. Right across the sector, groups have indicated their volunteers need to be

given more educational support to help them cope with increasing governance and administrative demands. A number of key areas have been identified as areas where significant education and support at the grass-roots level is required. These areas include:

- Governance skills amongst board members
- Strategic, financial and business planning support
- Understanding of compliance requirements
- Administration support
- IT skills, particularly at the community club level
- Development of position descriptions
- Sharing of administrative burdens where possible.

Ongoing pressure to retain and attract adequate numbers of volunteers is having an impact on the ability of the sector to deliver desired outcomes. Recent evidence suggests volunteering levels are decreasing. A number of reasons for this decline have been identified. They include;

- People are becoming more time poor as they work longer and less structured hours
- Compliance requirements are increasing, meaning roles and responsibilities are becoming more complex. This creates barriers for people wishing to volunteer, especially those older persons who in many cases have been the 'traditional' generation of volunteers
- Difficulty in attracting and engaging younger people with more 'self-interest' attitudes.

Community sport and active recreation organisations rely heavily on volunteers. Any reduction in volunteer contribution will have a significant impact as the services and benefits provided by them are lost to the community. This will place increased financial pressures on community organisations which will be reflected in access fees. Inevitably, if we do

not provide the educational and motivational support our volunteers require to become, and stay involved, we will be left with one of two options; organisations will be forced to fold, or the government will be required to fund the shortfall through the introduction of paid staff positions.

- o **Compliance** – The increasing complexity of compliance and administration requirements, both legal and regulatory, is overly burdensome relative to the size of most organisations. Volunteer administrators have neither the skills nor the time to deal with the increasing compliance load which inevitably diverts time and funds away from core activities.

Being a sector made up primarily of small community focused clubs and organisations whose administrative duties are for the most part carried out by volunteers; the burden created by compliance requirements has an impact at all levels. It is understood accountability and transparency are vital elements of good governance. All community sport and active recreation organisations, regardless of size, are encouraged to comply with required legislated requirements. It is equally important for government to realise the reporting regulations required must be appropriate for the size and type of organisation.

Many of the current regulatory requirements were developed for large-scale commercial businesses rather than small NFP organisations. As such, these compliance requirements are not only unnecessarily onerous for NFP organisations, they create a significant administrative burden for staff and volunteers. Obviously the more time volunteers must devote to

administrative business, the less time available to direct to their core business of creating physical activity opportunities for all.

VicSport welcomes the Government's review of NFP regulation and the objective to reduce the regulatory burden by 25% over the next 5 years. Further information around compliance issues can be found in VicSport's submission to the State Service Authority Not for Profit Sector Review.

It should be noted however regardless of any changes made to compliance requirements in the future, the community sport and active recreation sector will still require vital infrastructure support to help to alleviate the burden on small organisations while maintaining reporting integrity and member confidence.

- o **Facilities** - Access to appropriate facilities for participants is already an issue, and, as participation rates continue to grow, will be increasingly problematic in the next 10 years. The general lack of community facilities available and the declining condition of many existing community facilities is making it difficult for groups to genuinely increase participation opportunities. Additionally many Local Governments now state that sporting facilities are being 100% utilised, resulting in sporting groups being turned away or limits being placed on the number of teams within a club. This, combined with the lack of open space in urban and sub-urban areas for new facilities, and legislated changes to the Planning and Environment Act 1987 (Victoria Planning Provisions, Clause 56) which allows developers to create large waterways and count them as sport and recreation areas, are working against the push to promote health through more active participation.

The benefits of physical activity, as described in this submission, can only be delivered through active participation. If the genuine desire is to get

more Victorian's active, we must have adequate numbers of appropriate facilities available for community use.

- o **Costs** - Increasing expenses associated with lease and hire fees, insurance, travel costs, administration, compliance and registration for example, has many impacts on access to appropriate sport and recreation services. The reality is the costs of providing safe physical activities are increasing; and they are being driven upward by a range of factors beyond the control of the community clubs themselves.

Community sport and active recreation clubs are primarily small not-for-profit volunteer run organisations. These clubs do not set high fees to cover player payments or engage in large-scale promotional campaigns. Community clubs simply set their participation fees at a minimum required to cover basic operating overheads, equipment needs and associated administration costs such as hire fees and insurance premiums. The bottom line is community clubs and associations simply cannot cut costs of delivery without compromising service quality.

If we are to maintain, or preferably increase current participation levels by offering more opportunities to those people not currently engaged, without compromising standards, more must be done to help alleviate costs to ensure additional barriers to participation are not being created, especially for those from lower socio-economic groups or families with less disposable income.

- o **Consumers** – With generational transitions come changes in the ways consumers want their sport and recreation opportunities presented. People prefer more flexibility in their access options and time commitments as longer hours are being worked.

For generations X & Y, who have very different consumer demands to older people, the traditional sport structures are not appealing. In rural towns, populations are declining as people leave the area for a range of reasons, thereby decreasing the available participation pool. As the 'norm' for the family unit has moved toward more dual income or single parent family structures, and the general population ages, the capacity to be involved in sport and, in particular, to get children involved is impacted.

Dealing with the additional challenges these pressures create is in many cases beyond the small community organisation that lacks the strategic capacity and foresight to anticipate trends and make structural changes accordingly. Higher order research and strategic support is required to help these organisations understand and overcome the obstacles these changes present.

- o **Competition** – There is no doubt competition for both funding dollars and participants has increased dramatically in the last decade. Recent realignments in government policy away from providing support for 'core' activities toward project focused initiatives has placed significant strain on many smaller organisations. In addition, there is increasing competition for time and disposable income both within the sport and active recreation sector, as well as from other forms of passive entertainment such as the Internet and computer games. The sport and recreation sector needs support to proactively respond to these challenges and remain relevant in a time of increased competition.
- o **Privatisation** – The opening of competitive funding grants to organisations outside of traditional sport and recreation providers has opened the door for more private providers. While these 'turnstile' providers may have the

capacity to run programs for large numbers of participants, there is no doubt such programs fail in their ability to promote many of the integral benefits involvement in a 'club' environment provides, such as social connectedness, integration, communication and community building. The increasing involvement of the private sector in the provision of community sport and active recreation organisations is placing further pressure on the availability of funds to community organisations. While private providers do have a place in service provision, it is essential their increasing involvement is not at the expense of the grass-roots clubs who create the social fabric on which communities are built.

2. What do these kinds of trends and influences mean for the future contributions and activities, roles and focus of community organisations?

- **Reduced participation** - If the issues outlined above are not appropriately addressed in a systematic and coordinated way, there will be an ongoing erosion of the already limited core infrastructure supporting the community sport and active recreation sector. Further pressure on the sector will put the operational viability of many small grass-roots organisations at risk, as well as increasing the barriers already prohibiting entry for new community based organisations.

Ultimately, the cumulative impact of failing to address these issues will be decreased access to sport and active recreation opportunities. This in turn will reduce the positive outcomes of physical activity on Victorian's, and Victorian communities.

- **Capacity** – Access to facilities is the key to increasing participation rates. If we are not prepared to take a strategic approach to facility development and maintenance we cannot hope to achieve the ultimate goal of seeing every Victorian engaged in minimum levels of physical activity required to promote better health outcomes. A commitment from government agencies, both at the state and local government level to work with the sport and active recreation sector to develop appropriate facility development plans is essential to ensure the sector can contribute its maximal potential in creating healthier individuals and communities.
- **Volunteers** – Across the NFP sector we urgently require assistance to provide our volunteers with the educational support they need to meet the ever increasing demands being placed on them. As noted previously, the vast majority of work done to provide participation access opportunities across Victoria is done by volunteers. The reality is that we will continue to see high attrition rates due to the unrealistic time and

administrative demands being placed on our volunteers, as a result we will lose many of the small organisations contributing so significantly to community development. In the absence of volunteer support alternative options for provision of participation opportunities will need to be found, options that will without doubt come at a cost to the consumer.

- **Collaboration** – A significant proportion of the administrative workload organisations face could be alleviated through collaboration and a strategic approach to rationalisation. In particular, generic ‘back-end’ administrative tasks, such as payroll, could be shared across the sector. With support from government, groups need to start working collaboratively to rationalise administrative duties where possible. In addition, groups need to accept a future where the sharing of facilities and venues that offer a mix of activities and other community support services is the norm if they are to survive in a more competitive environment.
- **Resources** –Currently funding agencies are placing an increased pressure on the community sport and active recreation sector to deliver a broader range of community outcomes, such as health promotion and inclusion programs for targeted populations. While the community sport and active recreation sector is the only sector capable of providing these outcomes at any broad base level, it is not possible to effectively achieve delivery without the provision of the necessary resources and infrastructure support required.
- **Consumers** – The community sport and active recreation sector needs to look to the future and more actively engage their consumers, potential markets and the broader community to ensure existing opportunities remain relevant and new opportunities meet consumers needs and

expectations. Organisations will need to think outside their 'traditional' boundaries and look to provide alternative service offerings to attract new participants in order to remain relevant and viable in the long term.

3. Will these changes lead to different ways of doing things, and new relationships between community organisations, business, governments and communities more broadly?

It is recognised community sport and active recreation organisations need to change their thinking and service delivery models to continue to provide efficient and effective services, in what is a more competitive and consumer driven market. In addition to the traditional market forces, there is an increased pressure on organisations to cater for new target populations. While it is agreed by all it is essential accessible options are offered to these target groups, it must also be acknowledged these groups are typically less easily accessed, and require significantly more resource allocation per head than does the general population.

While it is reasonable to note the current structure and delivery of services by community sport and active recreation organisations does not currently meet the broader needs of all target groups, in order to deliver their services in a more effective manner the following issues will need to be comprehensively addressed:

- **Encouragement** – Traditionally, there is inherent resistance in community groups to change until it becomes an issue of 'do or die'. The threat of survival is often a great catalyst for change, however it is rarely the most efficient and productive way to evolve, and is certainly not the preferred option. With very limited resources and an ongoing struggle to simply make ends meet, it is often beyond the capacity of NFP organisations to look to the future and generate change. Government must work with peak bodies and organisations to provide the necessary support to encourage change and innovation required to meet the needs of the future rather than waiting for the questions of relevance and viability to arise.

- o **Support** - A severe lack of support resources makes change difficult in the current environment. Government will need to invest in the right infrastructure support to help create a positive environment for change. This support will assist organisations be more cognisant and attuned to the needs of stakeholders, including consumers, government and other funding partners, and be certain that services provided meet these needs. Without vital support more private and commercial providers will step in and the community sector will eventually cease to exist.
- o **Coordination** – Successfully meeting changing consumer demands will require better strategic planning at all levels and more coordination and liaison between State and Local Government, peak bodies and the community sport and recreation organisations themselves. Via a higher level coordinated strategic approach, synergies and areas where resources can be shared, such as training and education, can be identified and taken advantage of.

Undertaking a coordinated strategic approach will also allow for the development of relevant new relationships with government agencies and organisations within the business sector- who should be involved in the support of community development.

4. What would be the main features of vibrant and strong community organisations in ten years and what does this mean for the major parts of the community sector?

- **Consumer driven** – Organisations will need to be relevant, modern and up-to-date. The primary focus must be for the organisation to meet the needs of their constituents. This may mean some organisations will be required to change their traditional thinking away from merely being there to 'exist' in their own right, to being there to meet the needs of the consumer. This will require flexibility and a willingness to respond to the needs of consumers and the broader community, and an ability to provide options that cross the generational divide. Ultimately the groups who survive will be those who are cognisant of these issues and take appropriate steps to address them. It is unlikely any organisation that remains rigid and unwilling to change will be operating in 10 years time.
- **Community building** – Sport and active recreation organisations will be focussed not only on the service delivery model, but also on the health and community building benefits of the services they provide. This will require a multi-targeted and multi focused approach to delivering outcomes.
- **Sharing infrastructure** – Organisations will need to be prepared to share infrastructure such as club facilities, technology, market intelligence, purchasing economies of scale and the like. This will be achieved by bringing together a range of stakeholders, State Sporting Associations, local government authorities and local businesses to provide a wider range of stimulating and attractive activities for the community. Communities should consider the development of multi-use facilities or a multi-use sports precinct that provides a range of services, such as a café,

bar or childcare centre for example, and is a social hub rather than just a sport venue as the preferred option for the future.

- **Collaborative partnerships** – Organisations will rely on industry or peak bodies, with the support of government and relevant businesses, to rationalise overhead costs and administrative burdens. This may take the form of aggregate purchasing power in consumable items, holding of sector wide insurance schemes, provision of back-end services such as payroll and accounting or provision of pro-bono support as required.
- **Improved governance** – Improving current governance structures and practices across the sector is a key to future success. With increased infrastructure support, organisations will be able to improve their governance processes, in particular the areas of board composition, strategic, business and financial planning, and risk management. Improving governance processes will promote greater confidence amongst both consumers and funders as better long term strategic planning realises greater returns on deliverables. To achieve this goal, the sector will require vital infrastructure support from government as previously mentioned, if we are to avoid commensurate increases in the costs of participation.

5. What should be the main roles of community organisations, governments, and business in the medium-long term to achieve robust community organisations in the future?

Community organisations

- At the micro level organisations must be consumer driven and ensure they are providing relevant services to their consumers. Organisations should be focussed on outcomes and deliverables and not only on internal measures of success.
- At the macro level sport and active recreation organisations must be cognisant of the important role they play in contributing to the development of communities and in strengthening community focused outcomes.
- Through their peak organisations work more closely with government to ensure more relevant and effective funding support is provided, and services are delivered within a framework that maximises benefits for the consumer, the provider, and funding partners.
- Recognising the vital role volunteers play within their organisation and the broader sector. This includes supporting appropriate strategies to recruit, train, retain and reward volunteers for their efforts.

Government

- Work with the sector via the peak body to address issues associated with facility availability, development, maintenance and access. Reliance on private providers will limit access for community groups who are unable to afford high access fees charged by private providers.
- Work with the sector via the peak body to provide the vital infrastructure required to support the ongoing development of the community sport and active recreation sector. Governance support, strategic and

operational planning, financial management, education services, information technology and training support for volunteers are key areas where government supported infrastructure innovation is required.

- Government should adequately support relevant member-focused peak bodies who act as the information and feedback conduit between the sector and government. Peak organisations are in the prime position to enable sector development and these organisations should be financially and actively supported to ensure the ongoing growth and development of the sector as a whole.
- Government should work with peak bodies and the sector to encourage the rationalisation and/or realignment of services and/or agencies in areas where duplication prevents effective service delivery and representation.
- Government must review the regulatory burden on small community organisations and make appropriate legislative and structural changes in cases where regulatory requirements are overly onerous. Government must also be cognisant of the impact seemingly unrelated pieces of legislation have on a sector as far reaching as that of the community sport and active recreation sector. Government should make efforts to engage peak representative bodies at the outset of legislative review and development.
- Government has a key role to play in supporting innovation, research and evaluation. Governments will need to be prepared to work with the sector to encourage the creation of innovative ideas and research that aims to increase participation rates at all levels including targeted markets. In addition, government must be prepared to invest in these initiatives to ensure they meet with success.

- Invest in preventative health programs. Participation in physical activities is a key for the prevention of the majority of lifestyle related illnesses and diseases in our community. It has been suggested we would save \$8 million annually for every 1% increase in the proportion of Australians achieving a sufficient level of physical activity for health.

Business

- Strong communities build strong businesses. Sport and active recreation organisations are the cornerstones of strong communities. Business has a role to play in supporting grass-roots organisations in their local community through sponsorship, advertising or in-kind support. By assisting in building stronger community clubs, businesses will benefit from the returns of a stronger community overall.
- Business must be encouraged to invest in broader community sport and active recreation development projects with positive community outcomes as part of their policies regarding corporate social responsibilities.
- Business must be encouraged to support the aggregated purchasing power of community organisations. This will require a coordinated effort from peak bodies and their members to develop purchasing solutions and economies of scale for suppliers.
- Support innovative projects in local communities. This is particularly important for new initiatives for under-represented target groups.

6. In considering these roles, what specific strategies or approaches are required in the following areas:

a) Workforce and leadership development – how can organisations attract and retain skilled and qualified staff both paid and volunteers?

- It will continue to be difficult to recruit and retain highly skilled people within the NFP sector as wages are often low in comparison to the business sector and private enterprise. In addition, the relatively small size of most community sport and active recreation organisations means progression to allow people to move beyond entry level jobs, particularly older people, is difficult. In an effort to expand their knowledge and experiences talented individuals often move outside the community sector to areas where more growth opportunities present themselves.
- To help forestall the inevitable leakage of talent from the community sector greater infrastructure support that will ensure adequate training and education is provided to workers is required. In addition to keeping skilled people in the sector, this will also help to build and strengthen the base capacity of an organisation.
- Organisations will need to support volunteers to a greater degree. Volunteers must be acknowledged as the valuable resource they are, and not simply a ready labour force. There must be clear development opportunities and supportive environments created to ensure volunteer time and effort is recognised and appreciated. Clearly defined job descriptions and relevant training that is appropriately accredited will help in supporting volunteers.
- More appropriate training and education for the sector is required. This includes a review of both the professional development opportunities

available to those already working in the sector, along with a review of TAFE and university courses currently on offer.

- Provide resources to support volunteers and club officials with administration and governance requirements.
- A reduction in the regulatory burden will help to attract and retain skilled staff and volunteers who are otherwise time-poor.
- Support an overhaul of current governance practices and the introduction of independent skilled members onto boards and committees to ensure organisations have appropriately focused long-term strategies.

b) Organisational governance – what standards and models of governance will be needed to meet public expectations of accountability, and contribute to strong community organisations?

- **Standardise structures** - Currently there are a range of governance structures via which community NFP organisations can operate, including incorporated associations, cooperatives, companies limited by guarantee, proprietary companies and trusts. The creation of a single specified NFP organisational structure with a single set of reporting requirements would assist organisations in understanding and meeting their compliance requirements, and also help assure government and stakeholders of appropriate accountability and transparency.
- **Review of sector governance models** - One of the broader concerns raised by the sport and active recreation sector is the limitations of current models of governance used across the sector.

Typically, the sport and active recreation sector uses the federated model of governance, which is limited in its capacity to encourage best governance practice, while at the same time considering the best interests of the sport organisation itself. It has been recommended by Victoria's State Sport Associations that VicSport, as the peak organisation for the sector, complete research to develop an improved governance model that would lead to improved governance practices.

While a significant amount of research and development would be required to ensure this structure best suits the needs of the sector, it is envisaged such a model would most likely borrow from contemporary governance models from the corporate sector that include limits on representational interests, terms of appointment, number of directors/committee members and quotas for independent directors.

- **Financial reporting** - While it is important to ensure financial accounts are kept at an appropriate industry standard, the commercial based accounting standards that currently apply equally to the NFP and business sectors are unnecessarily onerous and costly for the majority of NFP organisations. It is recommended consideration be given to the introduction of accounting standards that are more appropriate to the NFP sector, in particular smaller incorporated associations. If necessary a sliding scale of requirements based on financial turnover and/or asset management could be introduced.
- **Auditing requirements** - The unnecessarily onerous auditing requirements placed on relatively small NFP organisations are one of the single biggest drains on limited financial resources. It is recommended a full review of auditing requirements for NFP organisations be conducted with a view to implementing a range of requirements that more accurately reflect the

financial auditing responsibilities of the NFP sector based on size and structure of organisations.

- **Pro-bono support** –The decision to exclude sport and active recreation groups from tax-exempt status means many vital pro-bono support options in the legal, governance and finance areas available to other groups are not as accessible to the sport and active recreation community. It is recommended resources be made available to develop pro-bono support schemes for those NFP sport and active recreation organisations in genuine need of support.
- **Plain English guidelines** - One of the most common frustrations identified by NFP sport and active recreation groups is the difficulty they have in accessing easily understood information which clearly and concisely outlines their compliance duties. One simple way to help small NFP organisations better understand and manage their compliance requirements would be to provide an easily accessible ‘plain English’ guide to compliance responsibilities under various NFP governance structures. In addition, providing resources to allow peak body organisations such as VicSport to offer appropriate educational support services for members would assist both members and government alike in their efforts to ensure full compliance with regulations and contractual requirements.
- **Streamlining of government grants** - Currently there is little, if any, standardisation of funding and grants programs across government departments. The huge variations in application processes and reporting requirements makes it unnecessarily difficult for NFP groups, with limited administrative resources, to successfully compete for government grants.

- **Strategic, financial and business planning support** – Despite being the mainstays of successful organisations, the general lack of resources available to NFP organisations often means business and financial planning is compromised as more pressing daily operational matters take precedence. Educational and direct assistance support is required at the community level to promote the visionary strategic, financial and business planning platforms required to ensure organisations remain viable in the long term.

c) Organisational sustainability – what business and financial planning are needed to ensure sustainability and to attract resources from all sectors including philanthropy?

- **Longer-term funding grants** – Currently many funding options are offered only on a yearly or ad-hoc one-off basis. In what is a conundrum for the NFP sector, many grant programs require groups to demonstrate program sustainability in the longer term, however the funding required to create such sustainability is usually limited to a 12 month period.

It is recommended funding programs are offered on at least a triennial basis with appropriate reviews built in to allow for more robust planning and development of sustainable programs.

- **DGR status for philanthropic support** - Despite the vital role these organisations play in supporting and developing communities, under current tax ruling, community sport and active recreation organisations are not eligible to apply for tax deductibility status. This ineligibility has significant negative impact on NFP sport and active recreation organisations in a range of ways.

Obviously, the primary impact lies in the inability of community sport and active recreation organisations to directly attract valuable philanthropic dollars which could provide significant assistance to NFP organisations. In addition however, there are a number of other less obvious impacts. By way of example, like any other organisation, NFP sport and active recreation clubs and associations require legal, financial and governance assistance on a range of matters. Like other NFP groups, these organisations have very limited financial resources and as such do not have funding available to pay for the professional assistance required.

In recognition of the support NFP groups require some excellent pro-bono programs, such as *Good Company*, have been developed to provide much needed support for NFP groups. Unfortunately, most of these programs require the organisation to have charitable status to receive support, thereby excluding access for NFP sport and active recreation organisations. It is speculated this is a result of a misconception groups who are not eligible for charitable status are for-profit groups, rather than any direct desire to specifically exclude sport and active recreation groups. Notwithstanding this, it still remains the current tax system does not encourage philanthropic dollars to be raised for community sport and active recreation.

The recommendation to amend the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 to either allow bona-fide NFP community sport and recreation organisations to apply for tax deductible status or alternatively to allow for community sport and recreation club membership fees to be tax deductible would make a significant contribution to supporting this sector and the vital role it plays in community development.

In 2002 the UK Government changed legislation to allow tax-deductible status to 'community amateur sports clubs' and clubs that promote 'healthy sport'. Feedback indicates this change has had a genuinely positive effect on increasing support given to these organisations by both the philanthropic sector as well as individuals.

If we are to see a genuine increase in access to philanthropic dollars by community sport and recreation organisations, which is supported by the Victorian Government's 'A Fairer Victoria' policy platform (Victorian Government, June 2006), as a first step it is vital the current tax legislation is amended.

- **Business and financial planning support** - In order to instil the confidence that attracts investment from government and the private sector, community sport and active recreation organisations need support to develop long term business and financial plans. Many groups, in particular small community clubs, do not have paid staff with the necessary skills to develop these complex programs, nor the financial resources to engage relevant professionals to do this work. This creates a cycle of limitation for these groups. Educational programs and pro-bono assistance will be required if we are to see better long-term planning across the sector.
- **A clearly defined charter, mission and future direction** – Many small community organisations, in their struggle to simply meet their day-to-day operational requirements with limited resources, focus on short term deliverables at the expense of higher order thinking. However, if organisations are to achieve sustainability it is vital they have a clear vision and longer-term targets to strive for.
- **Engage with other sectors** – There is no doubt the sport and active recreation sector needs to become more business oriented if it is to

remain competitive. By seeking out links with the business sector we can learn from their processes and by utilising their intellectual scope, can improve business and financial planning capacities.

d) Quality and effectiveness – how can organisations achieve high standards and efficiencies and continue to develop innovative responses to emerging community issues?

- **Administrative tasks** - Back of office operations and related processes need to be streamlined in an effort to reduce overhead burdens. Ideally, this will best be achieved by government assisting relevant peak bodies and industry groups to develop relevant tools and resources.
- **Dare to be different** – across the sector we need to continually scan the environment to identify trends and emerging community issues that will impact on the future. Relevant research and innovation needs to be supported by funders to encourage change and growth. Ongoing investment in traditional approaches will continue to deliver traditional outcomes.
- **Remain relevant** – providers at the community level, particularly those relying strongly on government support, need to genuinely assess the services they offer with a view to determining if they realistically meet the wants and needs of consumers. Groups must be willing to engage in open and frank review of services, and be prepared to make appropriate changes if they are to remain relevant, and in turn ensure they are worthy of ongoing support.
- **Consultation** - Groups must be prepared to actively engage with members, stakeholders and target markets to ensure their services meet

consumer demands. Regular consultation processes should be incorporated into the normal operations of organisations.

- o **Risk Management** - Community organisations must be further educated around risk management and evaluation issues. Currently few community sport and active recreation organisations have the robust risk management frameworks in place required to fully assess the impact of issues, with a view to effectively determining if a particular risk should be ignored, embraced or actively controlled.
- o **Evaluation** - Organisations must be open to evaluation and review of program delivery. Such a process should not be approached with an attitude of 'organisation rationalisation', but rather with a view to ensuring the promotion of best practice and an ethos of working together with funding partners to achieve improved outcomes for all.

e) Assets and infrastructure – what measures will maximize the use and better planning of future and existing assets and infrastructure?

- o **A State wide facility audit** – A facility audit across Victoria, including a review of the current state of repair and future maintenance requirements is urgently required to make a realistic assessment of what facilities are available now and are going to be required in the future. A strategic plan for future development, which may include rationalisation of existing facilities as well as development of new ones, is required to ensure the needs of all members of the community are met.
- o **Facility Planning** – In order to continue to deliver positive outcomes to Victorian communities, we require a sector wide approach to facility planning. Government at both the state and local level needs to work

together with the sector to take a 'big picture' approach to facility development and planning that is based on the collective needs of the community, rather than on the ad-hoc individual project development approach currently undertaken. This will assist in promoting equitable allocation across the sector and ensure facility development is not focused on those groups that have stronger voices or more resources.

- o **Creation of multi use facilities** - Promoting the joint use of resources and sharing of overhead costs are vital to the development of social infrastructure. In regional areas in particular, consideration must be given to the development of community hubs that offer a range of resources and encourage people to come together and meet.
- o **Peak Organisations** - Government must support peak bodies and the sector in the development of vital infrastructure support. As discussed previously, support is required to promote better governance practices, grant application and acquittal capacity, rationalisation of administrative overheads, decreased insurances costs, and the understanding and use of information technology.

f) Collaboration – what measures would assist organisations to collaborate within the sector and with governments?

- o **Forums for discussion** – Regular forums offer stakeholders important opportunities to come together to share information and knowledge. To be effective these discussions must be appropriately facilitated and participants must be confident the issues voiced at such discussions will be heard without fear of retribution.

Peak organisations will play a key role in this process. With strong links to members, peak bodies can facilitate open and frank discussion and

provide feedback to government and other funding agencies in the form of issues and recommendations.

- **Strong and vibrant peak representative bodies** – Strong peak organisations are the key to effective liaison between government, other funding agencies and the sector. To fully realise their potential, the vital role effective peaks play must be recognised by government and related funding agencies at all levels. Peak agencies should be appropriately funded to ensure they have the resources required to effectively fill their primary purpose of creating stronger more vibrant community sectors.
- **Collaboration** – Collaboration between the sector and funding agencies is required to ensure relevant input from all stakeholders is included in front end planning. Too often funding initiatives and grants programs fail to realise their full potential because the boundaries placed around them are self-limiting. Valuable information and vision can be assessed by working more closely with the sector in the early stages of development of relevant programs.
- **Relationships** – Interactions between funders and service providers must be structured to ensure a “Win-Win” outcome. If both the funder and fundee feel they gain from an initiative they are more likely to invest time and effort in seeing it succeed.
- **Broader access** - Work with government to promote access to target areas traditionally seen as outside the sector. For the sport and active recreation sector in particular this includes access to the business, philanthropic, health, education and industry development sectors.

SUMMARY

As the peak body for sport and active recreation, VicSport represents thousands of dedicated organisations and individuals who work tirelessly to provide opportunities for Victorians to be active through organised sport and active recreation programs.

As clearly demonstrated in this submission, the benefits of participation in sport and active recreation activities go well beyond the promotion of better physical health outcomes for the individual. Sport and active recreation participation plays a key role in developing community infrastructure, building stronger communities and promoting economic wellbeing in communities. For the individual the physical, mental and social health benefits of being actively engaged and socially connected are invaluable.

The extensive number of grass-roots organisations providing services and the vast numbers of individuals involved in a participatory or assistance role makes the community sport and active recreation sector the single largest collective group within the not-for-profit sector. Through our networks the sport and active recreation sector contacts all segments of our population. As such, community sport and active recreation organisations are uniquely placed to strengthen Victorian communities.

Despite the significant role it plays in developing and strengthening communities, the organisations that make up the community sport and active recreation sector are required to operate on shoestring budgets and rely on volunteer labour to provide vital participation opportunities. While the volunteers who run these small not-for-profit organisations give their time freely and willingly for the greater good, in today's rapidly changing climate, where compliance pressures and costs are continually increasing in a 'time poor' environment, reliance on this model of service delivery is not sustainable in the long term.

There is no doubt much more can be done at all levels of government to better support the sport and recreation sector. In turn, members of the sector must also accept they need to undergo a range of fundamental changes in the way their services are delivered to the community if they are to remain relevant and ensure delivery of the best outcomes possible for all Victorians.

By working together with a strategic vision for the future, governments, funding agencies, peak bodies and the grass-roots organisations that make up the sector can deliver more effective and efficient outcomes in the years ahead.

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