

HOW TO INCLUDE WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SPORT, RECREATION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

STRATEGIES AND GOOD PRACTICE

This document was coordinated by the Participation Division of the Australian Sports Commission. Any enquiries regarding this report should be directed to the Sport Development Group, Australian Sports Commission, PO Box 176, Belconnen, ACT 2616.

OVERVIEW

Active Australia is an initiative designed to encourage Australians to become more involved in physical activity and to improve the places in which that activity occurs. In order to present a framework within which this can occur, the Active Australia Provider Recognition Process was developed. The model is based on organisations' self-evaluation of their operations, planning for action to attain recognition, and commitment to continuously improve in the future.

Based on the Australian Quality Awards, this process incorporates seven key areas within which providers can evaluate their operation, identifying areas of good practice and opportunities for improvement. This publication, *How to Include Women and Girls in Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity: Strategies and Good Practice*, will assist organisations in addressing several of these key areas, including client focus, human resources and quality of service.

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This publication supports:

Active Women: National Policy on Women and Girls in Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity, 1999–2002, and
the *Active Australia Provider Recognition Process*.

For more information on the National Policy on Women and Girls in Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity, tel (02) 6214 1960. For more information on becoming an Active Australia Provider, tel 1800 151 000.

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INTRODUCTION

Australia is responsible for and committed to improving the lives of women in Australia and fostering a gender-inclusive culture. This policy is a clear indication of the federal government's commitment to addressing the issues affecting the involvement of all women and girls in sport, recreation and physical activity.

The National Policy on Women and Girls in Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity is outlined in two companion documents:

Active Women: National Policy on Women and Girls in Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity, 1999–2002, which provides guiding principles aimed at increasing the involvement of women and girls in sport, recreation and physical activity. It recognises that women and girls are not homogenous, and that those from many social, economic, cultural and physical backgrounds and circumstances face a variety of barriers to full participation in sport, recreation and physical activity.

(Please note that when referring to the different 'social, economic, cultural and physical backgrounds and circumstances' of women and girls, the authors of this publication intend this reference to include race, colour, language, religion, creed, sexual orientation, age, marital status, pregnancy, disability, political beliefs and social origin.)

This document, *How to Include Women and Girls in Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity: Strategies and Good Practice*, which outlines practical strategies and examples of good practice to guide actions intended to break down some of the barriers to full participation. In doing so it demonstrates how Australia can increase the number of women and girls involved in sport, recreation and physical activity, thereby working towards a position of equity.

The overriding aim of the policy is to foster a culture that encourages and supports the full involvement of all women and girls in every aspect of sport, recreation and physical activity in Australia.

To develop a more supportive culture, existing policies, products and practices must change. Strategies must be developed to ensure that all mainstream policy, planning, program development and resource development and allocation processes are fair and equitable, recognising women and girls as a core client group.

As many policies, products and practices within sport and recreation have not previously taken women's and girls' needs into consideration, there may also be a need to develop initiatives to address past discriminatory practices.

This document is intended to encourage service providers to integrate the policy's three principles, Equity and equality, Participation and well-being, and Education and information, into their strategic planning, policy, program delivery and reporting processes. In doing so, the services they provide should enable and encourage women and girls of all backgrounds and circumstances to have the opportunity to achieve their potential and participate fully in all aspects of sport, recreation and physical activity.

The policy is not the single responsibility of any one organisation or individual. Its ultimate success will rely on the commitment and actions of all organisations and individuals involved with sport, recreation and physical activity.

STRATEGIES

The following strategies are suggested as a means for both government and non-government organisations to attain equity for women and girls in sport, recreation and physical activity under each of the three key principles recognised in *Active Women: National Policy on Women and Girls in Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity, 1999–2002*. It is not an exhaustive list and the precise nature of implementation strategies will ultimately be a matter for government and non-government agencies to determine.

1. Equity and Equality

Australian women and girls, regardless of social, economic, cultural or physical backgrounds and circumstances, should have opportunities equal to those of men and boys to participate in every aspect of sport, recreation and physical activity and, when they do so, should be treated equitably.

Equity means that service providers should recognise, value and respond to differences among their clients to ensure that all clients are treated fairly. In the context of this policy it means responding to the needs of women from diverse backgrounds to address barriers to participation in all aspects of sport and physical activity.

Strategies that will help to achieve this principle include:

Government and non-government organisations

- ensuring that women are encouraged and have the opportunity to undertake leadership positions within the organisation, including in coaching, officiating, and committee membership
- ensuring that decision making is shared equally among the stakeholders to the decision
- facilitating marketing and promotion opportunities targeting female athletes and teams
- making gender assessments of current marketing and promotional campaigns
- committing an equitable amount of funding for men and women at both the elite and participation levels
- undertaking cross-cultural awareness training as a starting point for adapting existing practices and programs
- consulting with diverse groups to establish what they want from sport and physical activity
- monitoring, evaluating and reporting on participation trends by gender and cultural diversity
- ensuring that resources such as facilities, equipment, uniforms and sponsorship assistance are distributed equally to male and female participants
- encouraging government decision-making agencies to continue to collaborate on improving opportunities for the involvement of women and girls in sport and physical activity
- encouraging key government and non-government organisations at national, state and local level to collaborate in using physical and human resources effectively in the provision of sport and physical activity opportunities for women, and
- encouraging exchange programs for women and girls in sport.

Facilities

- conducting a risk assessment analysis of facilities to ensure that:
 - safety issues (such as close parking, appropriate internal and external lighting, laneways, access, and the accessibility of public telephones) have been considered
 - landscaping schemes consist only of low-level shrubs and bushes that cannot hide a potential assailant
 - shower and changing facilities cater for the privacy needs of women and girls
 - change facilities take into account women's and girls' hygiene needs, and
 - the needs of women and girls with disabilities (such as mobility, physical access, parking and access to information) are taken into consideration.

- providing culturally appropriate environments (such as ‘women-only’ times) to allow women from different backgrounds to participate
- identifying childcare needs and providing childcare options (most state departments of sport and recreation have guidelines on providing childcare at sport and recreation facilities)
- adopting a child-friendly approach
- ensuring that there are baby-changing facilities
- ensuring that only female staff are on duty for women-only sessions
- ensuring that all areas are accessible to parents with prams and to people in wheelchairs
- ensuring that the quality, number, geographic distribution and access to facilities reflects the activity needs of women and girls in the community, including those from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and those with disabilities
- designing facilities to include consideration of religious and cultural values as appropriate
- ensuring that community sport facilities are related to safe pedestrian networks, cycling and public transport routes and taxi ranks
- ensuring that each facility has attractive, light and airy social areas that are easy to keep clean
- specifying exercise machines that are a suitable size for women, including appropriate increments on weight stacks

Sports administrators and officials

- ensuring that athlete selection policies are based on equitable and appropriate criteria
- ensuring that funding and administrative support are distributed according to equitable policies
- ensuring that the training and competition needs of elite female athletes are identified and addressed specifically
- ensuring that the selection of support staff is in accordance with the sex of and supervision requirements for under-age travelling teams
- encouraging the identification and promotion of potential female support staff
- identifying and redressing limitations and barriers to selection of women as support staff to high-performance teams
- ensuring that position descriptions and selection procedures for support staff are established and implemented on the basis of equitable and appropriate processes
- ensuring that position descriptions and selection procedures for coaches are established and implemented on the basis of equitable and appropriate requirements
- identifying research needs and commissioning, conducting and/or promoting research about and for elite female athletes
- identifying issues currently limiting female access to and participation in sport at the elite level, including to coaching, management and support staff
- ensuring that competition prize money for women and girls is equal to that for men
- encouraging increased sponsorship of female athletes

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Government and non-government organisations

Women in Tennis Development Plan, Tennis Australia

Tennis Australia, in consultation with state/territory tennis associations, created the comprehensive National Women in Tennis Development Plan. The main aim of the plan is to address issues of inequality highlighted by research conducted in 1992 and 1993. This plan outlines strategies and initiatives to increase the quality and quantity of opportunities for women to participate in all aspects of tennis, including administration, coaching, officiating and, of course, playing.

One of the main issues highlighted through the research was that

the lack of women in leadership positions is not the result of an intrinsic lack of interest in tennis, but rather the result of a long history of sex role stereotyping and the effects of direct and more subtle indirect forms of discrimination.

Because of this, Tennis Australia planned 'to create activities of women's choice that are provided and administered in a fair and unbiased environment'.

For more information, tel (03) 9286 1177.

Policy on Gender Equity, Orienteering Federation of Australia Inc

The Orienteering Federation of Australia has articulated its encouraging and supportive policies and practices in a document that states 'awareness of gender equity could be raised and some overt strategies could be implemented to ensure equity extends to all aspects of the sport'. The policy makes the following suggestions:

- removing sexist language from all documentation associated with orienteering
- monitoring *The Australian Orienteer* and other promotional or coaching material to ensure that both males and females are shown equitably in all roles associated with the sport
- monitoring female participation in all aspects of the sport, including competitions, organisation, coaching and administration
- establishing reasons why female participation may be low in some areas of orienteering
- devising and implementing strategies to encourage female participation in those areas in which data indicate low female participation (such as event organisation or senior office bearers)
- ensuring that there is equal recognition given to male and female orienteers through prizes and awards
- actively encouraging gender balance on all committees
- providing childcare at all major events, and
- recognising the contributions that women and girls make to orienteering in ways other than through competition or formal offices.

For more information, tel (02) 9660 2067.

Equity Policy, Surf Life Saving Australia

Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA) developed an equity policy to promote an environment in which all individuals are 'treated with respect and dignity'. The policy provides the broad principles for dealing with issues of social justice, equal opportunity and discrimination and is to be read in conjunction with the organisation's Procedures for Dealing with Harassment. These procedures commit the organisation and its management to:

- discouraging and preventing harassment and discrimination
- investigating complaints in a sensitive, responsible and timely manner
- imposing appropriate discipline or corrective measures
- providing advice, and
- doing all that is reasonably possible to support and assist any employee or SLSA member who experiences harassment.

For more information on both the equity policy and Procedures for Dealing with Harassment, tel (02) 9597 5588.

Women's Cricket Code of Conduct, Women's Cricket Australia

Women's Cricket Australia (WCA) felt the full brunt of media exposure for the off-field activities of its players in January 1994 when claims of selection bias were raised. Following the selection controversy, a working party was established to advise on harassment issues. The working party released its report, *A Fair Go*, and all its recommendations were accepted by the WCA board. A lawyer was commissioned to draw

up a code of conduct that will provide guidelines for all those involved in women's cricket and ensure that such a selection controversy can never occur again.

For more information, tel (03) 9654 1490.

Real Adventure Women, Brisbane City Council and Private Outdoor Recreation Providers, Queensland

In 1998, on behalf of the Brisbane City Council, the Red Hill Paddington Community Centre ran the innovative Real Adventure Women (RAW) pilot program. The program was designed to create opportunities for women of all ages to participate in safe, supportive recreation within the community, with an emphasis on adventurous pursuits. The RAW program featured new activities each month based around a particular theme, such as Women on Wheels or Women on Water.

A diverse range of workshops catered for women interested in many different activities and with varying skill levels. These ranged from fishing workshops, learning to drive a boat or surfing, to motorcycling for beginners, mountain biking, rollerblading and car racing. This was a community-minded program that aimed to foster greater links in the community between participants, community groups and various organisations. The workshops were run at various locations throughout Brisbane during the week and on weekends. Activities were free or available for under \$5, and childcare was offered to those who needed it. More than 240 women took advantage of the program each month, despite almost no advertising and limited access to activities.

As a result of this pilot, the Brisbane City Council is to employ a project officer to help sporting and recreational providers include women in their activities. They will offer to market the groups' activities under the RAW banner through brochures or newspapers, and will encourage the providers to offer participants discounted rates to encourage women's involvement. Unlike the pilot program, the new arrangements require the providers to take full responsibility for bookings, administration and program delivery, and the program will now service a much wider geographical area.

For more information, tel (07) 3366 7836.

Leadership for Oceania Women in Sport Workshops, Australian Sports Commission, Womensport International, International Olympic Committee

A three-day intensive leadership workshop in Fiji (1997) aimed to provide women in the Oceania area with the opportunity to gain the skills and experience needed to take up leadership positions in sports organisations. This aim was in keeping not only with a general recognition of the need to increase opportunities for women in sport — as articulated in current international agreements such as the *Brighton Declaration* and the *Beijing Platform for Action* — but with the specific commitment of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to increase the numbers of women in national Olympic committees, international sport federations and all Olympic bodies.

WomenSport International prepared a manual that covered a range of leadership-related material based on a 'train the trainer' model. The manual contained generic material as well as specific information suited to particular cultural imperatives and mores. The workshop was conducted under the auspices of the IOC and supported by the Australian Sports Commission as part of its continuing assistance to the development of sport in the Oceania region. As a result of the workshop, the participants are hoping to establish the South Pacific Island Network for Sportswomen (SPINS).

For more information, tel (02) 6214 1960.

South African Sport Development Project, AusAID, Australian Sports Commission

The Australian Sports Commission and AusAID have joined forces to provide sport and recreational opportunities to people in South Africa and other parts of Africa. Part of the project develops South African women's general life skills through sport. As part of the project, a consultant was sent to South Africa to assist with the development of a national women-and-sport strategy for the region, sharing resources and experience between Australia and South Africa, which resulted in the development of appropriate women-and-sport strategies. Three weeks of training and experience were also provided for five South African women in both urban and rural areas of Australia, and Australian delegates were sent to the Second World Conference on Women in Sport in Namibia in 1998.

Australia will be in a position to provide assistance to other areas, such as the Commonwealth countries of southern Africa and the Caribbean, through the AusAID-funded Commonwealth 2006 Sport Development Program. The needs of women will be part of this program.

For more information, tel (02) 6214 1470.

Facilities

Putting Up a Barrier to Overcome a Barrier: Dandenong Oasis Leisure Centre, South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre, Victoria

The Dandenong Oasis Leisure Centre modified its facilities to encourage African and Asian Muslim women to participate in regular, moderate physical activity as part of a program developed in conjunction with the South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre. The program aimed to break down the barriers that prevented African and Asian women from taking part in activity, and to create links with other community groups in Dandenong. The centre also aimed to increase the usage of its facilities at underutilised times.

The program included learn-to-swim sessions that also encompassed discussions about women's health issues combined with nutrition information for a group of women who, for reasons attributed to their deep religious and cultural beliefs, are normally prevented from going to a gym or a swimming pool. In some societies, Muslim women must not be seen unveiled by adult men, so the leisure centre dropped a cotton curtain over parts of the pool so that the women could swim in absolute privacy.

A small fee was levied on the women for these sessions so that when government funding ceased, the participants would not find it so difficult to pay the regular admission fee. The program has since evolved beyond the 'safety net' of government funding and has become an integral, viable component of the centre's aquatic programs. The centre has gone on to develop ethnospecific programs for Spanish adults and Polish women's senior citizens' groups and is working on other programs for the Chinese, Vietnamese, Croatian and Yugoslavian members of the local community. The Dandenong Oasis Leisure Centre won the 1998 Active Australia Innovation Award.

For more information, contact the centre on tel (03) 9791 2200 or the South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre on tel (03) 9706 8933.

Women-only Gyms: Fernwood Fitness Centres, Australia

Fernwood Fitness Centres are part of a nationwide chain of 24 gyms, all following the same layout and principles. The centres are upstairs, protecting the privacy of those women or girls who might be working on specialist equipment that exercises the inner and outer thighs or that causes extreme breast movement.

The centres take a holistic approach to women's exercise, providing massage and beauty services, as well as the full range of fitness services. Creches are provided five days a week at low cost. Change rooms are large and contain completely private shower cubicles, a mirrored corner with hairdryers and cotton wool, an ironing board, large clean lockers, as well as a spa and sauna.

The chain started modestly in 1990 when Victorian Di Williams issued a questionnaire to the members of her central Victorian gym. Based on their answers and on various requests made throughout the year, Williams developed a manifesto that today makes up the corporate guidelines of the chain. Those guidelines are reviewed and updated using much the same methods as those employed originally. Williams says the customers will always dictate how the chain evolves.

For more information, tel (03) 5441 5115.

Facilities Guidelines, Women and Sport Unit, New South Wales Department of Sport and Recreation

Women's participation in sport, recreation and physical activity is influenced by the environment in which that activity takes place. The New South Wales Department of Sport and Recreation has developed guidelines for service providers to ensure women's needs are addressed in the planning, design and modification of facilities. These guidelines complement relevant government legislative requirements regarding the safety and design of sport and recreation facilities.

The guidelines provide practical advice and guidance for service providers who are assessing, designing or modifying facilities to ensure that women have a safe and appropriate participation environment that incorporates their needs, values and aspirations.

For more information, tel (02) 9923 4251.

Sports administrators and officials

St George Summer Fun Triathlon and Childcare Service, Triathlon Australia

The St George Summer Fun Triathlon series was an initiative of Triathlon Australia to increase participation in triathlon during the 1997–98 season. The series of five races was staged in conjunction with the 1998 St George National Triathlon Tour and the St George Triathlon Grand Prix, which catered for both the age-group and elite triathletes.

Each Summer Fun race included a modified and achievable course comprising a 250-metre swim, 10-kilometre cycle and 2.5-kilometre run that was aimed at anyone with an interest in triathlon and a desire to participate either individually or as part of a team. Free childcare was available for the duration of the races and for all entrants and organisers of the race. The service was provided to encourage families or single parents to participate without the worry of having to find someone to look after their children, which might prevent them from entering. A childcare tent was supplied by Triathlon Australia and erected close to amenities at each race site. A qualified childcare worker was employed in each state and was required to bring along activities and toys to entertain the children, whose ages ranged from one to 10 years. A total of 43 children were cared for during the series, including 18 at the Australian Triathlon Championships in Mooloolaba, Queensland.

For more information, tel (02) 6285 4802.

Women in High-Performance Sport Grants, New South Wales Institute of Sport

The New South Wales Institute of Sport has developed a grants program specifically to increase employment opportunities for women in high-performance sport. The institute is allocating \$100 000 each year from 1996–97 to 2000–01 to fund two grants to employ female coaches and to promote career development for women in high-performance sport.

Sports Coaching Grants provide \$75 000 annually, on a dollar-for-dollar basis, to support up to three full-time coaching positions for women in existing institute programs for a minimum of two years. Career Development Grants allocate \$25 000 each year to provide single career development opportunities for women working in a range of areas (such as sport science, coaching or sport psychology) with existing institute squad programs.

For more information, tel (02) 9763 0222.

Australian Championship Circuit, Western Australia Surfriders' Association (WASRA)

This association has taken the initiative to support, encourage and increase the participation of women in surfing by incorporating several programs. Through the peak body, elite women's training camps have been organised that involve both senior female surfers and junior surfers. A manual has been developed for these elite athletes that includes topics ranging from contraception, cellulite and body image, to dealing with the media and athletes as role models. The manual has been designed to emphasise the physical differences between male and female surfers, the social issues faced by female athletes, and the effects of training on the body.

For more information, tel (08) 9448 0004.

Junior Girls Cricket Squad, Illawarra Academy of Sport, New South Wales

The Illawarra Academy of Sport introduced a junior female cricket development squad in 1996. It was the first of its kind in Australia and was developed because organisers felt talented junior girls were leaving the sport prematurely owing to the lack of a formal women's competition in the Illawarra region. In setting up the squad, the academy identified a number of potential elite-level cricketers playing in the school system, in indoor cricket sides and in male competitions.

Since its development, the program has gone from strength to strength: the squad has travelled overseas and international teams have visited Illawarra to compete. The squad has also been given the opportunity to hone its skills domestically with the development of the annual BHP Challenge Cup, a series between the state under-17 side and the Illawarra squad.

Apart from skills training and high-level competition opportunities, the squad's program includes sport science testing, musculoskeletal screening, nutrition, sport psychology, strength and conditioning and injury prevention sessions, as well as personal development opportunities, such as public speaking, media skills, level 1 cricket coaching and umpiring accreditations.

For more information, tel (02) 4926 4892.

2. Participation and Well-being

Participation in sport, recreation and physical activity at all levels should contribute to the complete physical, mental and social well-being of women and girls.

Strategies that will help to achieve this principle include:

Health

- ensuring that sport organisations are provided with health information in accessible formats
- ensuring that health providers are aware of the range of sport and physical activity options available to their clients

- encouraging cooperation between health and sporting organisations
- ensuring that coaches, officials and administrators are aware of women's health issues
- providing information on lifecycle changes (such as pregnancy and menopause) and how they affect involvement in sport
- increasing emphasis on the health benefits of physical activity
- ensuring that accessible information on eating disorders and body image is available to female participants
- advertising the availability of information for women

Participation environment

- providing non-traditional sports and physical activities (such as belly dancing) to encourage greater participation by women and girls, including those from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds
- experimenting with different sports and lengths of seasons
- encouraging and supporting women and girls to conduct their own competitions
- providing competitions that focus on the fun and social aspects of sports participation
- providing an environment that encourages women and girls to take up sports or activities that they've undertaken in the past (winning back the drop-outs)
- developing programs that cater to the different needs and abilities of women and girls
- adopting and implementing organisation-specific anti-harassment policies and procedures
- appointing and training a harassment contact officer
- ensuring that coaches and other personnel operate within an agreed code of conduct
- allowing women and girls to wear whatever clothes they find most comfortable, rather than insisting upon strict dress codes — this is particularly important for women from certain ethnic minorities or with low incomes

Leadership and decision making

- examining recruitment procedures to ensure they provide equal opportunities, are accessible and are non-discriminatory (wording advertisements to encourage women to apply, ensuring a gender balance on selection panels and ensuring gender-neutral questions)
- promoting the structures, career pathways and opportunities available in administration, coaching and officiating for women and girls (from club level through to international level)
- acknowledging individual achievements and the contributions of women (for example, at meetings, with general feedback and certificates of recognition, by profiles in newsletters, magazines and other organisation publications, in media releases or by having them speak at seminars)
- providing an inclusive, safe and flexible work environment (one that encourages and values individual contributions, is accepting of individual differences, provides good open communications, makes reasonable time demands and provides childcare)
- providing a mentoring and/or apprenticeship program for women administrators, coaches and officials
- encouraging and actively targeting women to take on decision-making roles on administration, coaching or officiating committees
- ensuring that the organisation strategically plans and provides financial and human resources to develop female coaches and officials
- encouraging and supporting women whenever possible to apply for senior positions
- utilising the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs's Select Register, which provides the names of Australians from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds suitable for appointment to boards, advisory committees and government bodies
- promoting leadership, management and planning skills that incorporate the capacity to implement sporting policy standards, and
- making use of assistance that can be obtained from the Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women when considering potential board appointees.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Health

The Active Girls' Health and Fitness Pocket Book, Womensport West, Western Australia

Womensport West is a West Australian women's sport foundation that is dedicated to increasing the opportunities for women of all ages and abilities to participate in sport and physical activity. Its activities include programs and publications, research and education. In its latest venture the organisation created a publication called *The Active Girls' Health and Fitness Pocket Book*. As the title suggests, it is a comprehensive pocket-sized publication containing tips and facts that dismiss the multitude of fads and fallacies surrounding everything from diet and exercise to the 'body perfect' and smoking.

For more information on the pocket book or on Womensport West's other activities, tel (08) 9387 9776.

The Body Image Kit, Deakin University and Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Victoria

The Body Image Kit: A Look at how we Think About our Bodies, Ourselves and the Food We Eat was produced as part of the public information work of the Body Image and Eating Behaviours Project, which is funded by the Victoria Health Promotion Fund. The resource provides women with information and self-help exercises to minimise the occurrence of eating disorders. The kit draws on the benefits of both healthy eating and physical activity to improve self-esteem and physical health.

For more information, contact the Food and Nutrition Program on tel (03) 9660 6800.

HEALTHlink, ACT

HEALTHlink is a quarterly journal that provides up-to-date information on health promotion issues within the ACT region. It aims to facilitate the exchange of information between health practitioners. 'Exercise and Women', by Lisa Williams (1(2), 1997) is a good example of the type of article that can be found in this publication. This article describes the relationship between women and physical exercise, illustrating potential barriers to exercise, and highlighting the 'ideal body shape' myth, while suggesting easy ways for women and girls to incorporate exercise into their daily routines. *HEALTHlink* provides not only comprehensive articles, but also easy, fun and practical solutions to the issues presented.

For more information, tel (02) 6249 1642.

Ausdance Young Women's Dance Project, Ausdance, the Arthritis Foundation of Victoria

Young women aged between 15 and 24 from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances — including Kooris, women with disabilities, young mothers and homeless women — took part in this dance program through nine different projects in both metropolitan and regional areas in Victoria. Each project was run by a different community-based organisation and focused on a particular issue, ranging from health and sexuality to body image. The Arthritis Foundation also promoted health messages, including safe dance practices and the importance of exercise in the prevention of osteoporosis. Up to 200 women took part in the eight-week dance program, which incorporated the creative side of dance as well as the health and fitness aspects.

For more information, contact Ausdance on tel (03) 9686 0099.

Participation culture

Come and Try Weekend, Northern Territory Women in Sport and Recreation

The Northern Territory Women in Sport and Recreation (WISAR) has been holding successful territory-wide 'come and try' weekends on one weekend each year since 1994. In 1998, the Galiwinku community organised and ran WISAR activities in conjunction with World No Tobacco Day. They felt it was appropriate in their community to do this and to promote the health aspects of sports participation. There were three main events run for women: softball, races around the oval and a walk around the community. As the Recreation Officer for the community was away for the weekend and the community took over the organisation of the event, its success was judged as even more significant.

For more information, tel (08) 8982 2338.

Women's Jogalong, ACT Cross Country Club

On the first Sunday of each month up to 150 women and girls go to Deek's Forest Park in Stromlo Forest to walk, jog or run a three or six-kilometre course over the forest trails. Unique in Australia and internationally, the Jogalong has grown from humble beginnings with around 10 participants in 1974 to an event that now boasts a regular clientele, incentives for participation and improvements, free childcare, barrel draws and a 'kids mini-jog'. All of this is provided at low cost, and in an informal environment that emphasises enjoyment and a holistic approach to exercise and health.

The event contributes significantly towards encouraging women who may not normally participate in physical activities to 'have a go', and it improves participants' self-esteem because in this event all can be winners. Prizes are offered for the greatest improvement on handicap and the greatest improvement over the year. Prizes emphasise sun protection, good exercise and sound nutrition.

For more information, tel (02) 6288 9060 (ah).

Wisemove, Womensport and Recreation SA, South Australia

Womensport and Recreation SA developed the Wisemove program to enhance self-esteem and health through physical activity. The program is designed to cater for the large group of women who are not currently active and who therefore do not receive the physical, social and psychological benefits of active recreation. Womensport and Recreation SA realised that many women either suffer from a lack of confidence or have had bad experiences with exercise in the past. These and other constraints that may severely limit their participation were addressed by the program.

Wisemove is a gentle recreation program that encourages participants to set goals and enjoy being active. It provides support and information over a 10-week period, and participants meet as a group each week to walk and talk. Each session consists of a talk or educational component — where information is provided on issues such as motivation, goal setting and body comfort — followed by some gentle exercise or physical activity. All of this has been documented in the Wisemove resource.

For further information on Wisemove, contact the South Australian Department of Recreation and Sport (08) 8416 6608.

Big T-Shirt Classes, Fitness Australia

In a number of Fitness Australia-affiliated fitness centres around the country, Big T-Shirt exercise classes are proving extremely popular. The classes were introduced to break away from the stereotype of an aerobics classroom filled with slim women in tight-fitting leotards. Women participating in these gentle exercise classes are encouraged to wear comfortable attire that allows them to move to music. By creating a comfortable environment in which they can exercise, the classes allow the women to gain confidence in their 'ability to exercise', and while many are content to continue with the classes, some have chosen to move into their centre's mainstream aerobics and other classes.

For more information, tel (03) 9653 4551.

Body Pump Classes, Fitness Australia

While not exclusive to Fitness Australia-affiliated centres, Body Pump classes have helped this organisation change the culture of many of its centres. Body Pump is an aerobics class in which participants use weights to tone and strengthen muscles. The organisation had been looking for a means to increase the interest of women in working with weights and on strength activities, which research has found can help decrease the incidence and severity of osteoporosis. It found that the environment of the weights room and the 'individual' nature of weight training in its purest form was unattractive to most of its female members.

These members had long been comfortable in the social environment of the aerobics room, so the centres introduced weights into their aerobics classes. The program has led to a huge increase in participation in aerobics classes and has prompted some women to take the step into the weights room on their own.

For more information, tel (03) 9653 4551.

Mental Health Sports Promotion and Access Project, Leisure Focus, Victoria

In 1997, a central Victorian organisation established a netball team for women with a history of mental illness. Leisure Focus is a community-managed group that promotes and facilitates the participation of people with disabilities in recreational and social activities. Leisure Focus helped develop the team as part of a larger mental health-sports promotion and access project, which was based on the premise that participation in sport and recreation plays an important and effective role in the rehabilitation and community integration of people with psychiatric disabilities and illness.

The team, which named itself 'The Funtimes', was made up of women who were no longer taking part in any regular recreational activity, in some cases owing to regular hospital admission as part of their health problem. As a result of the project, one netball participant has gained enough extra confidence to move from supervised accommodation to live independently, and both she and other team members continue to enjoy their regular games.

For more information, tel (03) 5441 1655.

Safercise-Geelong, City of Greater Geelong, Victoria

Safercise-Geelong was initiated in May 1998 after a string of attacks and offences (physical and sexual) were committed against women who were jogging or walking alone for exercise in the city and central suburbs of Geelong. A concerned local woman wrote to the local newspapers, community and government organisations, including the City of Greater Geelong, seeking a solution. The Victorian police invited contact from women who were interested in being linked with others in the area to exercise, and a forum was held with representatives from the City of Greater Geelong, Victorian police, the Manifold Heights Church of Christ and Neighbourhood Watch. A working committee was then established, including both women who had made contact with the police and people from the supporting organisations.

The Safercise-Geelong Steering Committee was formed and an official launch conducted to promote an early morning fitness circuit in central Geelong. The City of Greater Geelong stepped in to improve the lighting and establish exercise stations on an existing fitness track within Kardinia Park. Volunteers from the church now operate drink stations along the fitness track two or three times a week and more than 50 women now use the track. The database of those who have registered their interest in exercising has also been used to put neighbourhood women in contact with one another. These women, who live near each other, have also formed their own informal walking groups.

For more information, tel (03) 5227 0759.

Active Australia Girls in Sport Program, City of Whittlesea, Melbourne Sports Network, Education Victoria (School Sport Unit)

The City of Whittlesea is committed to improving access to sport and recreation opportunities for women and girls in the region. In doing so its council found that there were two major barriers limiting young women's participation in sport and recreation: girls felt inadequate about their athletic ability, and they were not aware of appropriate role models in either school or the wider community.

The council, which is part of the Active Australia Local Government Network, used its Active Australia links to draw together a working party consisting of representatives from the Melbourne Sports Network and Education Victoria. That group decided on a two-part approach to address these barriers. The first part saw the development and running of school clinics in the non-traditional sports of cricket, futsal, golf, Australian rules football, table tennis and bocce. These were chosen because they were the least likely to have been tried by the girls before and because each had strong community clubs in the area. Years 7 and 8 girls were targeted at five schools, which made appropriate timetabling arrangements to allow the girls to take part in a girls-only block of sport.

Phase two of the project involved linking those girls who had developed a taste for these sports with clubs in the region. This was done through another series of clinics run by local clubs over a long weekend, and marketed through school newsletters and local media. More than 500 girls in the region have been involved in these clinics. Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology students are following the program's progress and researching the findings.

For more information, contact the City of Whittlesea on tel (03) 9217 2370, Melbourne Sports Network on tel (03) 9689 4044 or Education Victoria on tel (03) 9690 9340.

Leadership and decision making

Diversity and Inclusion Program, Mobil Oil Australia

Mobil Oil is just one of a growing number of companies in Australia who have recognised the economic benefits and competitive edge offered by Australia's culturally diverse workplace. A team put together to make recommendations on how to improve fuel distribution happened to be very diverse in terms of backgrounds and gender.

What we ended up with was a productivity improvement of 25 per cent and a reduction in capital equipment. At the time diversity wasn't on our agenda. These results indicated what could be done with the creative input of people from all parts of the organisation, who also happened to be people of different genders and ethnic and educational backgrounds.

The outcomes Mobil Oil Australia has targeted fall into two groups: increased productivity through greater input from all segments of the workplace; and better representation of Mobil's customer base within its workplace, with the aim of increasing knowledge of its customers and improving customer service. In terms of recruitment and development, Mobil's objective is to mirror the diversity of the community within its workforce and within management. A Diversity and Inclusion Program was proposed and accepted by the board of directors of Mobil in 1996. Part of the program encourages more female employees, and those from non-English speaking backgrounds, to apply for and fill middle and senior management positions. Strategies that helped to achieve these goals include networking, mentoring programs and internal communication of diversity and inclusion concepts.

For more information, tel (03) 92523683.

ACT Coaching Centre, Womensport and Recreation ACT, ACT Bureau of Sport and Recreation

The ACT Coaching Centre provides an annual Margaret Timpson Sports Coaching Scholarship, worth up to \$1000, for female coaches. The aim of the scholarship is to provide opportunities for female coaches in the ACT to develop their knowledge and coaching skills so that they can coach effectively at a higher level. The scholarship offers the opportunity for a female coach to further her career via:

- assistance with attaining a higher qualification in coaching
- assistance with approved education expenses (for example, the costs of seminars, workshops and conferences)
- attachment to an ACT representative or Academy of Sport team as an apprentice coach, and
- any other assistance that is deemed appropriate.

For more information, contact Womensport and Recreation ACT, tel (02) 6257 2156.

Sports Administration Scholarships for Women in Sport, New South Wales Department of Sport and Recreation, Women's Sport Unit

The New South Wales Department of Sport and Recreation, Women's Sport Unit, provides a sports administration scholarship program annually. The aim of the program is to encourage women to become sport and recreation administrators, enhance their skills and seek out opportunities to be selected on boards and committees. The scholarship program was developed to address the under-representation of women in paid sports administration positions in New South Wales. The scholarship program includes 15 executive development scholarships; three international travel scholarships; two research scholarships; and one international travel fellowship.

For more information, contact the New South Wales Women's Sport Unit on tel (02) 9923 4202.

Heart Health Active Achievers Campaign, Womensport and Recreation Victoria

Womensport and Recreation Victoria developed the Heart Health Active Achievers campaign that aimed to encourage girls between the ages of 14 and 18 to consider a career in sport and recreation. The campaign uses the latest technology to telecast an interactive television program to schools. Students telephone or fax the studio during the live-to-air broadcasts to discuss issues raised. The television program profiles women working in sports journalism, psychology, promotion and education, among others. Career opportunities and profiles of women in the industry are also publicised through a magazine aimed at female students, *Wisard*. In 1996 the organisation won a Prime Ministerial Women in Sport Award for its efforts.

For more information, tel (03) 9329 4646.

Fit to Lead, Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER)

Fit to Lead is a curriculum-based health and physical education program for teenage girls that aims to increase participation in physical activity, develop leadership skills and develop critical consumer skills. Students participate in a range of negotiated physical activities, examine issues related to physical activity and women and investigate community opportunities to be physically active. A key strategy is to develop communication, decision-making, cooperation and problem-solving skills through collaborative group work. The program incorporates opportunities for self-reflection, research, group tasks and evaluation, together with practical leadership experiences.

For more information, contact ACHPER on tel (08) 8340 3388.

SmokeFree Indigenous Women in Action, ACT Bureau of Sport and Recreation, Koori Sports Unit, Womensport and Recreation ACT

In 1998 15 young Koori women from years 7 to 12 embarked on a sports leadership program over two half-days to learn essential life skills, such as organisation, leadership and group communication, as well as to build self-confidence and self-esteem. On the third day these new leaders conducted a sports expo day, involving a number of different activities, for 60 primary school Koori girls to consolidate their new skills. The activities ranged from netball and soccer to traditional games.

For more information, contact the Koori Sports Unit on tel (02) 6207 2059.

Coaching Pathways, Soccer Tasmania

In 1998 the Tasmanian Women's Soccer Federation and Soccer Tasmania amalgamated and, as a result, a women's council was formed to run women's soccer in the state. The council recognised the lack of opportunities for women and the lack of qualified women coaches working at levels above primary school. It also recognised the discomfort many women felt with expressing themselves in mainstream coaching courses.

As a result a women-only level-one soccer course was organised and the seven major southern-based clubs were required to send four participants per club to the course. Those four participants had to be either active players or players who had retired at the end of the previous season. A total of 26 participants, attended with 18 completing the course.

The coaching course was held over three sessions with an emphasis on understanding the functions of the organisation and setting achievable goals. The majority of the 18 then attended a development clinic for junior girls, and with the help of Soccer Tasmania development staff, were able to put their new skills to the test. As a result of this successful course, the clubs has instigated a new league for 1999 — an under-16 girls competition with women who attended the original course coaching all of the participating teams. In addition, Soccer Tasmania aims to conduct advanced coaching sessions and create pathways for more women to become senior coaches within the league.

For more information, tel (03) 6273 3299.

Women's Participation Workshop Leaders, Sport and Recreation Victoria

In an effort to educate women on the benefits of being active, Sport and Recreation Victoria developed the idea of a 10-week series of workshops aimed at enhancing the self-esteem and health of women through physical activity. The workshops were to include sessions on motivation, personal safety, stress management, goal setting and self-esteem, and involve participants in some moderate physical activity.

The organisation realised that workshop leaders would have to be trained specially to deliver these workshops, since it did not have the personnel resources to cover the whole state. Sport and Recreation Victoria then established a network of course organisers to coordinate the delivery of community workshops. Course organisers included people from local government, neighbourhood houses, recreation and disability organisations, regional sports assemblies and other interested organisations.

All course organisers were provided with an information kit including guidelines, course leader register and other resources to assist them with arranging the workshops. Fifty course leaders have now been trained to deliver the workshops to women and girls in communities throughout the state.

For more information, tel (03) 9666 4244.

3. EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

So that they will be encouraged to take part, women and girls, and the community as a whole, must be fully informed and educated about the opportunities, advantages and risks associated with female participation in sport, recreation and physical activity.

‘Schools have a particular responsibility because they are the only organisations that can ensure the provision of sport for the majority of young Australians’

(National Junior Sport Policy: A Framework for Developing Junior Sport in Australia, 1994)

Strategies that will help to achieve this principle include:

School opportunities

- encouraging non-competitive activities
- ensuring that girls and boys have the same opportunities to develop a wide range of fundamental sports skills and to participate in a number of sports before specialising in one sport or position in a team
- allowing students to choose between coeducational or single-sex classes for physical education
- adopting a single-sex competition philosophy until such time as there is substantial research evidence to suggest that girls will not be disadvantaged in mixed-sex contests (single-sex sporting competition encourages maximum participation and guarantees all children a ‘fair go’)
- recognising and catering for groups with special needs
- providing equal encouragement to girls and boys to participate, acquire skills and develop confidence
- being consistent in handling the behaviour problems of both girls and boys and not using gender-based assumptions as punishment (such as labelling a boy ‘sissy’ or a girl ‘tomboy’)
- scheduling classes, practices, games and recreational gym time equally between girls and boys
- distributing leadership and demonstrator roles among all students
- encouraging more coaching role models from different groups, especially women
- considering school and sport uniform policies that incorporate loose, comfortable and yet fashionable clothing (encouraging students to design and choose their own physical education clothing) and accommodating other cultural traditions
- allowing sufficient time at the beginning and end of physical education classes for students to change and freshen up
- ensuring that women in sport issues are included as part of the physical education and sport education curricula
- providing adequately private shower and change facilities for girls
- ensuring an equal balance of male and female physical education teachers and physical education heads of department
- providing physical education specialist teachers in primary schools
- being sensitive to cultural differences that can affect the sports participation of girls from non-English-speaking backgrounds
- experimenting with different sports, lengths of physical education and sport education lessons and seasons
- modifying rules and inventing games that encourage the fun and social aspects of sport
- providing coaching and activity programs for less skilled girls entering high school
- developing structured programs that accommodate a culturally diverse range of sports, as appropriate
- providing health education to physical education and sport education teachers
- providing and fostering an interest and involvement in schemes that train girls to coach younger children in sport, which will have the dual benefits of widening the choices available to younger children and improving the competence of older girls

Education, training and development

- ensuring that training provided for all teachers through in-service and pre-service courses covers the particular needs of women and girls in physical and sport education, including the needs of culturally diverse women and girls
- establishing a role model register of potential presenters at education courses within a specific sport or state, including high-profile migrant and indigenous women
- considering the appropriateness, safety and accessibility of the venue for courses (for example, lighting levels)
- considering course materials and resources in terms of suitability for women (is gender-neutral terminology used, do photographs and graphics include both sexes in active roles, are the materials and resources available in accessible or alternative formats, and are the materials and resources available in the community relevant to the languages of the target group?)
- considering the English literacy level of the targeted group when developing educational materials
- ensuring that course presenters are receptive to, and suitable for teaching women (they must, for example, use appropriate language, and actively support and depict women in active roles)
- conducting women-only courses if required

Information, resources and research

- ensuring that both sexes are considered in a meaningful way in research proposals and that statistical data includes a breakdown of personnel by sex (where this is relevant and possible)
- ensuring that research grants are accessible to both male and female researchers
- actively encouraging female students and academics to undertake gender-specific sport and physical activity research
- encouraging more women to become researchers in sport
- encouraging the establishment of research norms and standards based on male and female participants
- ensuring that information is provided on what is available for women and girls
- ensuring that information is provided in accessible or alternative formats
- ensuring that information is disseminated and made available to major women's and girls' organisations and groups
- encouraging information sharing and the dissemination of available resource directories
- encouraging the monitoring and evaluation of programs to ensure that clients are effectively targeted

Recognition and portrayal

- encouraging the coordinators of tertiary media studies and journalism courses to introduce women's and girls' sport and related issues as part of the curriculum
- informing the media and writing material about the quantity and quality of coverage of women's and girls' sport
- providing positive feedback to the media where appropriate
- developing a one-page profile on every member of a national team within your sport, including the coaches or individual top-ranked players
- using technology, such as facsimiles, email, Internet, computer disks and telephone, to get information to the media immediately
- identifying and marketing key female personalities
- encouraging awareness and understanding of the sport, recreation and physical activities of women and girls of diverse cultures, and
- encouraging the development and use of a register of suitable sportswomen and girls available to participate in media activities.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES

School opportunities

Modified Basketball, Goroke P-12 College, Victoria

Goroke P-12 College is a small, isolated school in a farming community in central western Victoria, which battles to field teams of any sex in most sports. Sporting options are limited, so the school has developed a modified lunchtime basketball competition to encourage female students to play.

Special measures allow only girls in the basketball key, make substitution compulsory, give double points for each player's first goals for the game, and require no set uniform. Students are also encouraged to become involved in umpiring, scoring, timekeeping, arranging teams and draws, and producing a newsletter.

Since the competition began in 1991, the number of girls participating in it has increased by more than 30 per cent. The number of boys participating has also risen by more than 10 per cent. Teachers and some parents also began playing with and against the students. The girls are now so enthusiastic that a team travels 70 kilometres to Horsham every week to play in the under-18 competition.

For more information, tel (03) 5386 1024.

Freeing-up the Curriculum, Newton Moore Senior High School, Bunbury, Western Australia

In 1997 extensive research tracking Newton Moore Senior High School students' progress in health and physical education showed a significant decline in girls' participation between year 8 and year 10. Acting on this information, the school council endorsed and funded a 'Girls' Physical Activity Outcomes' proposal. The proposal included research, planning and program implementation. The distribution of a needs analysis survey, combined with a focus-group test of girls considered to be high achievers, under achievers and 'conscientious objectors', and other research data, helped the school draw up a list of issues that it felt it could deal with.

These included:

- identifying students' needs and interests
- de-emphasising competition for students at risk
- providing activities that are fun and have a social component
- providing activities with low entry-level skill requirements
- providing non-traditional activities
- reducing the opportunities for girls to be observed by boys
- providing links with community sport so that girls have an easier transition to community activities
- ensuring uniforms make all girls feel comfortable
- providing curriculum time for body-image education, and
- celebrating the successes of girls at all levels of activity.

As a result, the school has implemented a 'freeing-up the curriculum program', in which girls have greater choice in activities. The school also encourages students to help plan their class unit of physical education, to learn fundamental skills and play a season of competition in the same team, and to take responsibility for all aspects of the competition.

Other successful programs include the 'meet you in the middle' program, actively involving players and officials from sporting groups in students' physical education lessons, and 'psychology of involvement', where students participate in a seven-week course that focuses on material related to exercise values, goal setting, assertiveness and reward.

The school has also tackled the issue of body image by providing more privacy in changing rooms and removing athletics from the compulsory physical education program, among other strategies. Anecdotal evidence now shows there are very few girls in the target group who don't participate in physical activity. In 1998 the school won the Active Australia Education Award for its work in this area.

For more information, contact the school on tel (08) 9795 8777.

Be Active School and Community, Cannington Senior High School, Western Australia

Cannington Senior High School has taken a proactive approach to addressing the issue of declining female participation rates in physical education. The school regularly surveys students to help with programming, and results from the most recent survey prompted the physical education department to form a student Be Active School and Community (BASC) committee. The role of this committee is to deal with the limited physical activity rates of female students at school in general, and in physical education classes specifically.

The student BASC committee comprises both female students with a strong history of participation and those who are known to avoid participation at all costs, and the committee has successfully promoted the need to be active at lunchtimes through poster displays and daily newsletter items. The physical education program has been restructured to reflect some of the strategies suggested by the student committee.

As a result of these changes, the rate of participation in physical activity of girls both in and out of physical education classes at school has significantly increased. Among the strategies recommended to achieve this are:

- providing more options/scope for choice in physical education
- providing single-sex classes
- minimising the chances of failure in front of peers by adjusting the program/teaching and style/games/activities
- providing more time for girls to get changed at the end of lessons, and
- providing more opportunities for girls to use the gym and physical education equipment at lunchtime.

For more information, tel (08) 9264 4556.

Education, training and development

Developing Female Coaches, Females in Training (FIT), ACT

Based in the ACT, FIT is a group in which women of all abilities can enjoy safe, non-competitive training in a supportive atmosphere. One of the group's primary aims is to encourage and develop female coaches. All sessions are coached by women or girls. A subsidy is provided to members who wish to undertake National Coaching Accreditation Scheme accreditation. A coaching policy ensures that coaches have a support network with whom to confer if necessary, and access to group sessions in which to practise their skills. Regular coach development sessions are undertaken. Accredited coaches are encouraged to extend their accreditation to higher levels or additional disciplines.

For more information, tel (02) 6282 5470 (ah) or (02) 6281 1819 (bh).

New South Wales Gender Issues and Physical Activity Project

The Gender Issues and Physical Activity (GIPA) Project was a joint initiative of the New South Wales Department of Sport and Recreation (DSR) and the New South Wales Department of Education and Training (DET) for 1998. The GIPA project has two components: Gender Issues and Personal Development, Health and Education, a professional development program for New South Wales teachers and sport development officers; and Active Girls, which features events conducted at targeted locations across New South Wales, and coordinated by DSR offices.

The aim of the project was to increase the proportion of high school girls who show positive attitudes toward, and engage in physical activity, and specifically to:

- increase understanding of how society affects people's ideas about gender, and about the role that teachers and others play in reinforcing or challenging narrow notions of gender
- increase the range of strategies available to teachers and others to address the issue
- facilitate access for girls to community sport and recreation activities, and
- provide an opportunity for girls to meet sportswomen and other active women as role models.

The University of Wollongong is conducting a research study to evaluate the effectiveness of the GIPA project and document examples of school-based initiatives that address this issue. Funds have also been made available to individual schools, through the School Sport 2000 Foundation, to support them in implementing relevant changes.

For further information, contact the New South Wales Department of Sport and Recreation Women's Unit on tel (02) 9923 4202.

Information, resources and research

Body Composition, Metabolic and Related Hormonal Responses of Post-menopausal Women to Varied Strength Training, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University, Victoria

It is generally accepted that ageing is associated with changes to a person's body composition, metabolism and fitness. These include body fat gains, loss of lean tissue, decreased bone density, reduced mobility, decreased strength and endurance, increased incidence of bone fracture and many others. In women many of these unwanted changes are thought to be accelerated by menopause and the consequent reduction in oestrogen production.

Researchers at this university set out to determine whether some of these changes could be slowed down or even reversed by regular strength training, and how training load, age and number of years since menopause influenced these changes. The researchers concluded that the strength training performed by the post-menopausal women in the study reversed many of the age or menopause-related deleterious changes to body composition, potential for bone fracture and reductions in strength and balance. They also concluded that regular strength training can make a valuable contribution to the health and well-being of older women.

For more information, contact the RMIT Department of Human Biology and Movement Science on tel 03) 9925 7607.

Research Scholarship Program, New South Wales Department of Sport and Recreation

The 1998 Women's Sport and Recreation Research Scholarship Program was established to develop the skills and knowledge of sport and recreation administrators in the area of gender equity. Two scholarships valued at up to \$10 000 each are awarded to female sport and recreation researchers within New South Wales. The objectives of the program are to enhance the research skills of women in the sport and recreation industry, and provide detailed information for the sport and recreation industry on gender equity issues in industry administration.

An International Research Fellowship Program was also established to provide an opportunity to research international best practice strategies addressing key issues relating to women in sport and recreation, for possible implementation within New South Wales. One scholarship valued up to \$15 000 is awarded to a female sport and recreation administrator within New South Wales.

Women from diverse cultural backgrounds, rural women and women with a disability are particularly under-represented in leadership positions within sport and recreation administration, and are encouraged to apply for the scholarships.

For more information, contact the New South Wales Department of Sport and Recreation, Women's Unit on tel (02) 9923 4202.

Characteristics and Motives of Women's Leisure Time, Griffith University School of Leisure Studies, Queensland

Griffith University is conducting continuing research into the characteristics of and motives involved in women's leisure time. A recent study as part of the wider project found that competence in sports and hobbies significantly improved women's self-esteem and self-image. The study, by Griffith University lecturer Jackie Kiewa, found that 65 per cent of women who became competent in outdoor activities or hobbies were happy with their bodies.

More than 200 Australian and New Zealander women between the ages of 20 and 60, involved in activities such as rock climbing, kayaking, bushwalking and scuba diving, took part in the research. Researchers said the results indicated that women who became good at these activities tended to focus more on the activity and less on their appearance. They said that, when questioned about the relationship between their activities and their bodies, the women in the study fell into three groups: those most concerned with fitness and athleticism, those most concerned with body shape, and those most concerned with a sense of well-being.

For more information, tel (07) 3875 5663.

Women in Sport Project, City of Banyule, Victoria

In 1998 the City of Banyule set out to identify sporting opportunities available to women and girls within the city, together with barriers to their participation. The study looked at sport quite specifically and separately from recreation or physical activity. Among other things, the report aimed to collect data on the diversity and participation of women within the City of Banyule, compare the participation with state or national levels, identify barriers, recommend actions in redressing those barriers and develop a women's sport policy for the city.

The project's researchers reviewed current literature, analysed Banyule's demographic data, consulted with a sample of young women from local secondary schools, surveyed local sporting clubs to obtain data on membership by sex and trends in this area, and held a Women's Sports Forum to identify issues, and create strategies to deal with them. The resulting report then made recommendations that included:

- that the city council indicates the importance of women's participation in sport by developing a women-in-sport reference committee
- that the council recognises the role played by local sporting clubs in the community and supports them by giving substantial information on the range and contact details of local sporting clubs to local householders
- that the council provides annual financial support to identified clubs towards the cost of accrediting women's sports coaches, particularly female coaches, by increasing the scope of its Women's Sport and Recreation Grants Program;
- that the City of Banyule reduces the seasonal team charges for new female sporting teams for the first three years to nil in the first year, 20 per cent in the second year and 50 per cent in the third year, to assist them through the establishment phase, and
- that the council develops a five-year sport and recreation strategy that details participation rates in sport and physical recreation activity. This strategy should describe residents' current sporting participation, including its location and frequency, and identify perceived barriers to participation.

For more information, tel (03) 9457 9932.

Recognition and portrayal

‘SportsWoman’, Sportsworld Network, SBS (Special Broadcasting Service) Television, Australia

‘SportsWoman’ is a television program that is produced by the Sportsworld Network and is currently screened in over 20 countries worldwide. These include Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, France and French-speaking Europe, Spain, Portugal, the countries of Latin America and the Middle East, many Pacific islands, Thailand and Vietnam. ‘SportsWoman’ is also seen across most of Africa.

The program was created to satisfy the growing market for sports shows that specifically cater for women. The aim of the show is to provide results, news, health information, profiles on sportswomen and, sometimes, the unusual, all of which is wrapped up in a package designed to encourage women to ‘have a go’ for themselves.

SBS Television plays a significant role in the production of the show and has chosen to program it at prime time in the evenings. By providing role models that can be judged on their own merits, and not just by comparing them with men’s sports, SBS believes that it will attract more women to participate in sport.

For more information, tel (03) 9820 3200.

Working with the Media Workshops, ACT Womensport and Recreation

These workshops were based on the recommendations outlined in Dr Murray Phillips’s study of media representation of women in sport, *An Illusory Image: A Report on the Media Coverage and Portrayal of Women’s Sport in Australia 1996*. The first workshop was held over four sessions spread over eight weeks. Each session concentrated on a specific area that could provide sport and recreational organisations with the skills to obtain media coverage and promote their sport. Participants were also requested to record their media successes over the next eight weeks in a workbook.

Session one was designed to educate participants on newsworthiness, structures of news organisations, media conferences, establishing links with the media, and writing media releases. Participants worked in smaller groups discussing practical ways of implementing the *Illusory Image* recommendations, and the strategies developed formed part of a workbook. At the second session, local media representatives discussed their needs and met sporting representatives.

The third session covered hands-on training in writing media releases, conducting media conferences and maintaining media relations. A journalist and public relations consultant, and a cameraman ‘interviewed’ participants, who then analysed the results. Participants were also given air time on a local radio station later in the week to test their new skills. In the final session, they were given the opportunity to report on how well they established media contacts and obtained coverage of their sport during that week.

For more information, tel (02) 6257 2156.

‘The Sports Factor’, ABC Radio National, Australia

‘The Sports Factor’ is a radio program that debates and celebrates the cultural significance of sport and steers away from presenting the run-of-the-mill statistics or results of current sporting games and matches. The program provides intelligent reasons for the non-sporting or marginal sporting public to think about how the mainstream culture of sport affects their everyday life. Early in the show’s life, the producer discovered that only 1 per cent of total broadcast time on radio in Australia is dedicated to women’s sport and related issues, so ‘The Sports Factor’ endeavours to balance the scales. It achieves this by not only presenting items on women’s sport and related issues, but also by using female presenters and guests as often as possible.

Examples of the topics the show has featured include:

- selling women's sport
- gender, sexualities and sport
- sport, sex, ritual and tradition
- quota systems in sport
- girl power — profiles of women at the top of their sports
- sexual abuse of athletes by their coaches
- the first woman to be the director of an Australian Football League (AFL) Club and to sit on the AFL tribunal
- women's basketball leagues in the United States
- pregnancy and sport
- whether men and women can understand more about each other through playing team sports, and
- how super-model exercise videos are linking a beauty ideal with health and fitness.

For more information, tel (03) 9626 1643.

Servicing Sponsorships through Television, Women's Hockey Australia

In the mid-1990s Women's Hockey Australia (WHA) decided that to service its major sponsor, Telstra, and to gain a wider exposure for the sport, women's hockey needed to be receiving more television coverage. The organisation took on the task of searching for and securing a television production company to record events. It realised that radio and print were both also important media, but believed that if one medium appeared to consider a sport important enough to cover, then this might attract the attention of other media.

The first step the WHA took was to determine which events it wanted televised, and it chose the Four Nations tournaments and national league matches. The WHA then approached several reputable production companies that had been recommended to the organisation or used by other sports. Each company was asked to develop a proposal for the budget available, and then WHA selected a production team based on the services offered.

The resulting production consisted of recorded games, interviews with players, and the distribution of videotape as a whole package to television networks, in addition to supplying networks with video news releases for daily news broadcasts. By doing this, WHA supplied television networks with video footage so that they didn't have to find extra crews to cover an event. The organisation feels that the resulting initial coverage of women's hockey had a dramatic effect on the profile of the sport and has given players more experience in dealing with the medium.

For more information, tel (02) 9690 2099.

World Women's Softball Championships' Australian Team Media Guide, Softball Australia

For the 1998 World Softball Championships, Softball Australia wanted to attract as much media coverage as possible for the Australian team. The organisation realised that a comprehensive media guide on the team and individual members should be developed to assist in reaching that goal. It employed a commercial television reporter to coordinate compilation of the media guide and used the services of a university media student to write profiles of team members, giving her access to team members and organising, where possible, for her to travel with the team.

The result was a media guide that outlined the team's recent history at international level, profiled players by age, birthplace, positions, playing number, number of games, batting average, Australian representation, and by asking them to answer some more lighthearted questions, such as their greatest fears, favourite moments in Australian sport and what they would be doing if they weren't playing softball. Each individual profile also included a written history of the player's career and interesting angles on her personality,

special skills or career highlights. An action photograph accompanied the profiles, each of which was introduced by a highlighted paragraph that was designed to act as a 'teaser' to encourage people to read on.

The guide included profiles of the coaches, contact details, and listed the support staff. The information was put together by a graphic designer, but costs were kept to a minimum by using a colour front cover with excellent use of black and white shading inside the document. Reaction to the guide from the media was positive, with many media representatives saying the guide had made it far easier for them to write feature articles on the team and on individual players.

For more information, tel (03) 9729 5200.

CONCLUSION

The strategies and good practices outlined in this document are by no means exhaustive. They are intended as thought provokers and to acknowledge those who have taken responsibility for moving the world of sport in a more equitable direction.

It is important that existing initiatives continue and be developed further, and that new initiatives be established where action has not yet occurred. If this occurs, all of us will be winners — the lives of women and girls will be enriched, organisations will increase the number and diversity of their participant bases, and the community as a whole will be healthier.