

President's Report for 2008-2009

It is my great pleasure to present to the meeting the Annual Report for the Australian Womensport and Recreation Association Inc (AWRA).

The last year has been a very successful and worthwhile year for AWRA with two project highlights - the successful completion of the national leadership project and the start of the *The Catalyst Project*, our national media project – the appointment of the Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia, Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC, as a our Patron, and the development of our new Strategic Plan 2008 -2012.

With Julie Sarll as the facilitator, AWRA conducted a strategic planning day in Melbourne last December. The Board updated our vision and mission statements and developed a new Strategic Plan 2008 -2012 with Key Result Areas (KRAs) for:

1. Research, Innovation and Issue management.
2. Communication.
3. Business development.

Reporting against our Strategic Plan/ Operational Plan, we have achieved about half of the strategies for KRA 1 so far:

Research, Innovation and Issue management:

The production of quality, innovative research and reports that are evidence based and related to current needs and issues.

We have monitored government sport policy development and contributed as a stakeholder to Australian Sport Commission forums and to the Crawford Review (in a submission and at public forums). While doing this AWRA has lobbied for a national sport policy. We also lodged a submission into the Senate Inquiry into Digital Sports Media.

AWRA conducted a major project this year, successfully developing a national sport leadership training project that delivered 11 workshops to 135 participants in Queensland, NSW, ACT, Victoria and WA, working with the Womensport Queensland, Womensport and Recreation NSW, ACTsport, Vicsport and Womensport West. Henny Oldenhove (Canberra) was the successful Expression of Interest tenderer and did a wonderful job developing the workshop format, the workshop materials, the ten leadership fact sheets (available on our website) and presenting the workshops. Julie Sarll was hired to produce the independent Evaluation Report for the Office for Women, which showed that client satisfaction with the workshop content was very high and that the majority rated the presenter as “excellent” or “very good”.

A legacy of this project has been the development of a proposal for other sport/local government agencies to use our leadership workshop format and materials, at a cost to

the hiring group (listed on our website). We need to market this initiative to rural and regional Australia but so far we have lacked the resources to do this.

Much time and effort has also gone into developing another leadership training module for our website. Axelis Company (Brisbane), was again the contractor for the newest web module, Mentoring. So we have five modules, Introduction to Governance for Not for Profit Sporting Organisations, Readiness for Boards, Risk Management, Effective Board Meetings and Mentoring on our website. For a time AWRA was charging \$16.50 a download for these but with little uptake the Board decided to make these free and since then the downloads have much increased as tabled below.

Number of hits for the Web Modules:

Committee Readiness for Sports Organisations	366
Effective Board Meeting Procedure	360
Implementing a Successful Mentoring Program	385
Introduction to Good Governance - Sport & Recreation	296
Risk Assessment Learning Module	272
Total	1679

The Board developed an Equality Policy which is on our website and is a very suitable template for other sports organisations to adapt and implement. We are currently considering a position statement on female participation relevant to the Caster Semanya saga, to have ready when the IAAF official report is due next month.

KRA 2 Communication:

A high profile brand through the recognition of AWRA as a valuable source of information and the voice for women and girls in sport, physical activity and recreation.

We have been successful with some of our strategies here. AWRA's website is functioning more efficiently, with more frequent updating, new material is being added regularly, (particularly to the 'News Articles' page over the past few months), and emails are sent to our database to alert members when significant additions are made to the website. Iain Toohey (Sydney) has been contracted, after a six month trial period, as AWRA's webmaster and is doing a very commendable job.

Calls for help and information are regularly coming to AWRA through our website response form: ranging from financial assistance for national sports teams, grants, media, jobs, research, etc.

Our enews has been named *The AWRA Advocate* and I continue as the Editor with an assistant in Anne Jackson (Sydney) who replied to an email to establish an enews sub-committee. Anne proof reads and makes suggestions on headings, etc, so many thanks Anne for your valuable contribution. We have continued with bi-monthly production of *The AWRA Advocate*.

The send list has increased from 242 to 294 since February. There has been an average readership of 63.4 opens per send, with the size of the send averaging 261.6 addresses. This is an average open rate of 24%.

Open rates throughout the year have ranged from 20% to 29%. The highest rate being in February at 29% (72/242) and the lowest being August, with 20% (54/265). The most opens for a send was September with 75. The page links clicked are rather evenly spread, with the 'Thumbs down to' page usually the most popular. The next most clicked are usually the 'Congratulations to' and 'Thumbs Up to' pages.

Current issues are raised in the enews but we have yet to create an issues site on our website.

A new membership brochure was started in June and 2000 were printed in September, courtesy of Paragon Printers (Canberra) who sponsored the whole production and delivery to our office. Many thanks to Mel Dalglish and his company for this wonderful support! The brochure reads well, looks very smart and is working well, as membership is growing.

In 2008 AWRA produced some media releases in relation to the Channel 9 Footy Show fracas. We have added more media releases from other organisations to our website.

I have not sought a meeting with the Minister for Sport and Youth, Kate Ellis MP, as I have been able to talk with her at two or three sports functions over the year. AWRA did write to the Minister reminding her of the implementation of the recommendations from the Senate Inquiry into Women's Sport and Recreation in Australia 2006.

In May three of us (Heather Reid, Henny Oldenhove and I) had a very pleasant meeting with our Patron at her office in Canberra. As a follow-up to this, every 3 months AWRA forwards her a list of forthcoming national women's sport events that she could attend.

AWRA established a presence at the IAPESGW World Congress in July at Stellenbosch University, South Africa, where Dr Imke Fischer and I presented a paper and a poster on behalf of AWRA. Both were very well received. These are to be found on our website along with a report of the congress. Similarly, abstracts for a paper and a poster have been lodged with the International Women's Group (IWG) for their world conference next May in Sydney.

The AWRA poster from the IAPESGW Congress was given to each of our state partners for the leadership project, as a token of our appreciation for their cooperation and support.

This year we have also produced for the first time AWRA postcards which have been given out at workshops and meetings and used as a way of promoting our brand and profile.

KRA 3: Business development:

A governance framework with business operations fully supporting the objects of AWRA.

Our secretary Jennifer Riatti, has put names beside our annual action plan and has followed this up with telephone calls to Directors.

Membership numbers have increased: Individual Members – 270
Organisation Members – 6 and Media Contacts – 33 (not actually members, but a mailing list which we use).

Strategic partnerships have increased by delivering our projects through state organisations, as with the leadership project, and likewise with the Mentoring module, where our partners were Athletics Australia, Basketball Australia and Bowls Australia.

It is very pleasing to again note that our financials are in order and that we have more money in the bank than at any other time. However, this is mostly grant money from the Office for Women (OfW) but until we need to pay contractors and/or the state bodies, it is earning interest on term deposits, so it is making some money for AWRA.

AWRA acquitted its OfW grant for the leadership project 30 September 2009, with an extension of time from 30 June, because of the delayed Grafton leadership workshop (floods). A big thank you to our very efficient Treasurer Nicolle Rantanen (Adelaide) and Auditor Sue Page. (Adelaide) for their work on this and for the ongoing attention to our financial matters.

AWRA was successful with a \$110,000 (incl GST) grant from the Office for Women to implement *The Catalyst Project*, to increase and improve media coverage of women's sport, to deliver media training workshops and networking opportunities around Australia and to improve our media resources on our website. The successful tenderer to project manage this, through an Expression of Interest, was Mediaways (Judy Goldman, Sydney). This project is based around traditional media and social networking media so we look forward to some new and exciting initiatives out of this.

AWRA was also successful with a Volunteer Small Equipment Grant of \$2,500 (from the Federal Government) to cover petrol costs for our volunteers. We have applied for this grant again for the current financial year.

AWRA did not apply for a women's sport leadership grant from the Australian Sports Commission as we did meet their new criteria of being a national sporting association. This issue has been pursued by correspondence and it is hoped that AWRA's work will be recognised with some other source of funding from the ASC.

AWRA maintains international contacts, particularly with the International Association for Physical Education and Sport for Girls and Women (IAPESGW) as I am one of two Vice Presidents and Dr Imke Fischer is the Australian country representative. AWRA has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with IWG in relation to working collaboratively as partner organisations. In regard to the 2010 IWG World Conference in Sydney, AWRA has maintained contact with the secretariat and offered its assistance and ongoing support. We have also developed a closer relationship with CAAWS (Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport) and they have made available their excellent resources for our website. We have added a total of 38 resource sheets from CAAWS which cover a range of topics including Homophobia, Transgender Issues, and Women 55-70.

While there is always a sense we could do a lot more (if we had the resources), AWRA has done a great deal since its inception in July 2005. All projects have been successfully completed, the organisational infrastructure is almost complete (still need a Risk Management Plan), the website is in place, excellent free resources are available on the website and we readily respond to calls for assistance. Through the hiring of various contractors to implement our projects and the donated time and hard work of the Board (volunteers) we should feel very proud of what we have achieved together.

Helen Nicholls (Adelaide) resigned during the year and the casual vacancy was filled by Nicole Dunn (Echuca). Many thanks to Heather Reid (Deputy Chair, Canberra) for her wise counsel, also Jennifer Riatti (Secretary, Perth) and Board members Dr Imke Fischer (Sydney), Sue Scudds (Perth) and Professor Kristine Toohey (Gold Coast). Communication is not easy at times, because of time differences across Australia and email has its limitations. However, Board meetings have been conducted by quarterly teleconferences and emails go back and forth weekly and often daily!

I would like to thank each Board member for their valuable contributions to AWRA and for their support. Our members are grateful for what you do and I look forward to another successful year ahead.

Janice Crosswhite OAM
President