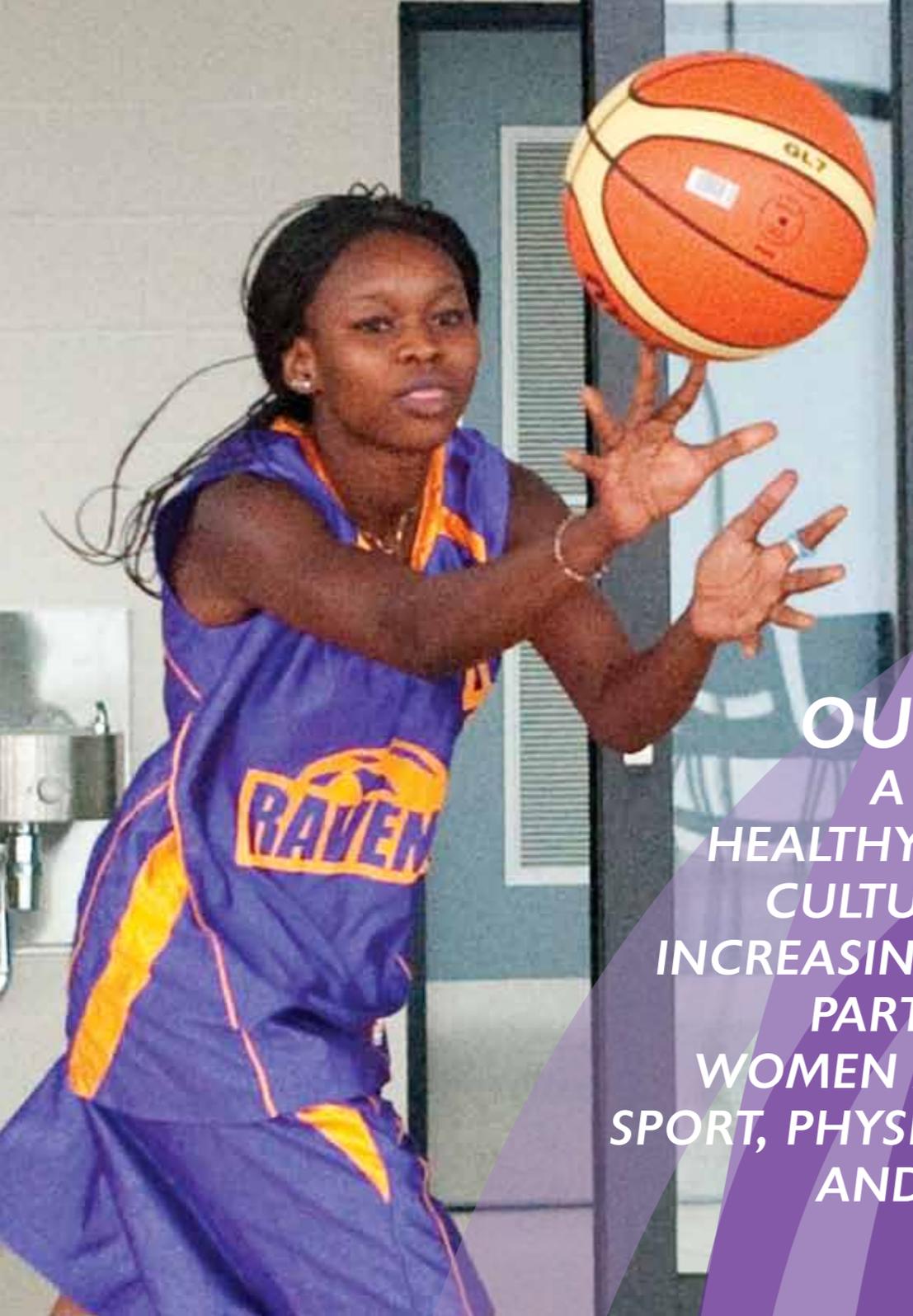


AUSTRALIAN WOMENSPORT & RECREATION ASSOCIATION

***A CHARTER
FOR ACTIVE
AUSTRALIAN
WOMEN***

awra



**OUR VISION:
A STRONG AND
HEALTHY AUSTRALIAN
CULTURE THROUGH
INCREASING THE ACTIVE
PARTICIPATION OF
WOMEN AND GIRLS IN
SPORT, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
AND RECREATION**

Anation of active women has far reaching benefits; it will help tackle health, social, equality issues - to name a few. But it's going to take a team effort to get more women and girls involved. That is why Australia needs a National Strategic Plan for Women's Sport and Active Recreation. This Charter helps to spell out this need and the likely action areas.



'...girls worldwide who play sport are more likely to attend and stay in school, more likely to finish their education, more likely to be in better health and earn higher wages during the course of their lives.'

*Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC CVO
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia and
Patron of Australian Womensport and Recreation Association*

Overarching Principles

- Sport, physical activity and recreation opportunities should be available in an equitable way to all women and girls in all regions of Australia.
- Achieving our vision will require individual and Government leadership underpinned by a concerted effort across the community including national, state and local sporting associations, women's policy groups and health organisations.

Australian Womensport and Recreation Australia (AWRA) urgently advocates for:

1. Providing more opportunities for female participation at all levels of sport and active recreation.
2. Increasing female participation in leadership roles.
3. Addressing the barriers girls and women face in sport and physical activity.
4. Increasing media coverage of the activities and achievements of female athletes.



PRIORITISING FEMALE PARTICIPATION AT ALL LEVELS OF SPORT AND ACTIVE RECREATION

A recent national health survey, research shows that in the week prior to the interview over 72% of Australian women were either sedentary or had very low levels of activity. A national sporting survey also shows only 28% of women regularly participated in organised sport or activities coordinated by a club or association¹. Participation in this sense includes all levels, players, officials, coaches and administrators.

Why this is important

Health - The health benefits of regular participation in sport and physical activity for women have been widely supported by scientific evidence. Studies have shown that physical activity can significantly lower the risk for cardiovascular disease, breast cancer, reproductive cancers, stroke, hypertension, osteoporosis, non-insulin-dependent diabetes, depression and falls and fractures. It also improves the quality of breast milk, improves mental health and helps maintain a healthy weight².

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Australia has the fifth highest rate of adult obesity³ in the developed world. In 2011–12 the National Health Survey found that over 56% of adult Australian women were overweight or obese.

Social Capital – Women's participation helps build social and cohesive communities that promote inclusion. Parents are also key influencers in determining the activity levels of children and there is increasing evidence of parents as role models to positively influence the behaviour of children. Sport to self esteem increase good relationship decision and personal decisions

Community Development – Successful sporting and recreation organisations are engaging women beyond the traditional canteen and scoring duties, into other areas on field and in the boardroom. Increasing female participation in sporting arenas creates a culture of empowerment positively impacting all facets of Australian life.

Action/Solutions

1. National Sporting Organisations (NSO's) and State Sporting Associations (SSA's) to be publicly measured on their efforts to create environments for women to succeed through the implementation of a strategic plan with a gender-based framework. This would involve elements of capacity building, performance management, service delivery, and evaluation; both on the field (better changing room facilities, improved childcare arrangements, less strict uniform policies) and off the field (flexible working conditions, mentoring programs, targeted employment policies).
2. Establish a national sport facilities fund for clubs and local governments to support female amenities/facilities for sport.
3. The Federal Government must fund mass media campaigning to increase awareness of the issues around female participation in sport, particularly for teenage girls, and what can be done to increase their participation.
4. Health and Physical Education to be included as part of the national school curriculum.



2 INCREASING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

While women make up almost half the number of active participants in organised sport they hold only 23% of leadership and governance positions, and even less than that in paid senior administrator roles. While NSO's now report to the ASC on their board compositions, there are no national policies to ensure gender diversity on boards or within the structure of the organisation.

Why this is important

Extensive research shows that diverse boards make for better decision-making⁴ and more effective organisations. A female presence on boards is proven to improve board decision making, and further, with more women in leadership and decision making roles there should be a more inclusive culture across sports, to encourage and motivate others, in particular women and girls, to get involved at all levels and in all aspects.

Research has also shown that women need to see other women in leadership positions to create more opportunities for attracting women into and retaining women in leadership roles.⁵

Action/Solutions

5. Board selection processes must be improved with greater transparency in regard to advertising positions, selection criteria, time frames and accountability for gender diversity.
6. The ASC must report the progress of gender diversity of NSOs Boards and senior staffing in their Annual Report and create an incentive for NSO boards to change.
7. The ASC must tie funding to governance representation for NSOs so that by 2015 boards should include a minimum 30% of women, and by 2020 boards should be 40% of women.
8. The ASC must collect and publish data on NSO board gender diversity and senior management, coaches and officials.

9. The ASC must increase the funding available for the Sport Leadership Grants and Scholarships for Women per annum
 - a. Individual scholarship recipients must be provided with a parallel pathway support and mentoring program.
 - b. Organisational grants must be available to women's sport groups and NSO's for a three-year timeframe/project and the amount available should be raised to \$20,000.
10. Promote Hockey Australia's constitution as best practice in regard to board gender representation (must have at least 40% representation of women or men on the board).
11. Influential men to support women in sport and women to be proactive and stand for leadership positions.
12. The ASC to host an annual workshop meeting of government and non-government personnel (from state Departments of Sport and Recreation, Sports Federations, AWRA, womensport state bodies and other interested parties) on women in sport, for networking opportunities, to share success stories on increasing women's participation and continue to develop solutions to not only reduce barriers but increase opportunities and equity.

"The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practising sport, without discrimination of any kind"

International Olympic Committee Charter



3 ADDRESSING THE BARRIERS GIRLS AND WOMEN FACE IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

There are some barriers to participation that women face purely because of their gender. These barriers include:

- Lack of time
- Lack of childcare
- Lack of funding for women's sport
- Male bias
- Lack of female role models
- Lack of women in leadership roles.

There are also many other barriers to participation that apply to women that are not gender specific, but reflect wider geographic, socio economic and cultural issues. Multiple barriers can make the decision to be active and involved even more difficult.

Why this is important

Australian Sport, a pathway to success [2010]; a report for the Federal Government identified a critical component for Australian sport was 'Breaking down the barriers to women's and girls' participation in sport.' Almost fifty percent of girls aged 5 to 14 do not participate in sport outside of school hours, which means the opportunity to engage them during this critical time of establishing life-long habits is being lost. ⁶

"When we talk about women in sport, we often raise the same issues as when we talk about women in the workplace: pay equity; women in leadership positions; discrimination on the grounds of sex; the celebration of a male ideal and the marginalisation of women as the physically weaker and the caring sex. [...] we should not lose sight of the power of sport to act as a catalyst for challenging gender stereotypes and violence against women, and as an important vehicle to achieve gender equality."

*Elizabeth Broderick,
Sex Discrimination Commissioner (2010)*

Action/Solutions

13. Federal Government must fund more research into what attracts girls and women to sport to enable the sports to develop their product to attract more women to participate.
14. Improve accountability of NSO's efforts to increase female participation, through the development of a score card demonstrating resource ratios between men and women's sport (media, funding, promotion, branding)
15. As in the UK, the Federal Government must fund initiatives to demonstrate to potential commercial sponsors the untapped advantages and opportunities for their brands to associate with women and girls sports.
16. Increase the number of Ambassador programs using sportswomen to increase the number of female sport and active recreation role models and to promote their use as speakers and media commentators.



4 INCREASING MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF FEMALE ATHLETES

The entrenched tradition of reporting male sport, and the associated idolisation of male athletes makes it hard for women's sport to get equal or even fair representation in the traditional areas of free-to-air TV, radio and newspapers.

Why this is important

Balancing gender representation in sport media is about strengthening Australia.

Better media reporting of women's sport increases the market power of female athletes, thus increasing their commercial opportunities. The more we see women's sport in the media, the more role models we see for young girls to live healthier, happier lives through their active participation in sport, leading to a stronger, healthier Australia.

Providing opportunities for online and social media will also boost the coverage of female athletes. Internet television, Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus and other new forms are changing the way sports fans follow and interact with their sports and their sport stars. Women's sport and athletes need to be proactive and innovative in this new media landscape.

Action/Solutions

17. Acknowledge and reward media outlets that provide good media coverage for women's and non-traditional (male and female) sport. This will help grow the number of sporting spectators from its current base and provide sporting organisations with the opportunity to increase their fan base (and corresponding revenue streams).
18. Support and develop non-traditional media coverage as key streams for promoting women's sport to ensure the trend towards online and self broadcasting opportunities are entrenched as women's sport avenues.
19. Provision of more and better media training and support for female athletes to self-promote and become strong public figures.
20. A bi-annual survey of media coverage, replicating the ASC's January 2008-July 2009 surveys and analysis in 'Towards a Level Playing Field, Sport and Gender in Australian Media'.

A stronger, healthier Australia

More women and girls participating in sport and activity

More positive role models for young girls

*Increase market power
of female athletes*

*More women in
sport media*

WHAT YOU CAN DO

If you also have a vision for a stronger and healthier Australia through the active participation of women and girls in sport, physical activity and active recreation, please take action by:

- 1 Joining AWRA as a member – visit www.australianwomensport.com.au*
- 2 Getting involved in the leadership of your sports club or association*
- 3 Contact your local members of parliament and let them know how you feel*
- 4 Follow women's sport on online media outlets*
- 5 Offer your sport media outlet some great stories about women and girls in sport*
- 6 Follow us on twitter*

Donations

Make a philanthropic donation to AWRA to help us deliver on this Charter

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Australian Womensport and Recreation Association

Address: PO Box 887, Panton Hill VIC 3759
Phone: 03 9719 7553
Email: crosswhite@bigpond.com
Website: www.australianwomensport.com.au
Twitter: [@auswomensport](https://twitter.com/auswomensport)
Blog: auswomensport.wordpress.com

ABN 606 258 03567

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Commonwealth of Australia, (2006) National Centre for Culture and Recreation Statistics; Womens participation in sport and physical activities

² Australian Bureau of Statistics, Commonwealth of Australia, (2006). National Centre for Culture and Recreation Statistics; Womens participation in sport and physical activities: p1.. (retrieved from http://www.ausport.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/276937/ABS-womens_participation_sport_physical_activity.pdf)

³ ABS National Health Survey: Summary of Results, May 2009, Cat. No. 4364

⁴ Does the Gender of Directors Matter? Miriam Schwartz-Zic, December 4 2012

⁵ Bain & Company and Chief Executive Women, Creating a positive cycle: Critical steps to achieving gender parity in Australia, February 2013

⁶ Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities, ABS, 2009, p. 8