

Female Participation

Guidelines to support the participation of women and girls in sport and recreation

Being physically active creates a wide range of benefits for individuals and the communities in which they live. Sport has the power to engage people from all parts of the community, including those from diverse backgrounds, thus fostering community connection.

Individuals who participate in sport and active recreation have improved health and wellbeing outcomes, develop relationships with others, and can gain a better understanding of other groups in society. Physically active communities are inclusive, healthier and happier.

All communities have unique barriers that can restrict their member's participation in sport. These can be social, economic, cultural, religious differentiation or gender related.

Sport Australia's AusPlay survey shows Tasmanian women (aged 15 and above) have the lowest participation rate in sport and physical activity nationally and that Tasmanian female participation in sport-related activities is lower than the participation rate for Tasmanian males.

Often the barriers that prevent women participating in sport are different to the ones that inhibit men, with many of the barriers that have prevented women participating to date being social and cultural.

These guidelines have been developed to support sport and recreation organisations seeking to increase their membership by focusing on female participation ensure that they have appropriate physical and cultural environments in place in order to improve the attraction and retention of female members.

The guidelines outline four principles organisations should invest in: raising the profile, places and spaces, diversity and equality, and leadership opportunities.

The Principles

Raising the Profile

The organisation should promote and encourage participation of women and girls of all ages, in all capacities including as participants at all levels, coaches, officials, volunteers and leaders.

Organisations should consider:

- including images of women and girls participating in all capacities on the organisation's website, social media pages, and any advertising material;
- ensuring all images used, both male and female, include realistic body images, not just elite athletes and sports models;

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- promoting female role models, not just elite athletes but also everyday participants; and
- including the achievements of women and girls in the organisation's celebrations (for example, best and fairest vote counts).

Places and Spaces

It is important that participants feel safe and comfortable not just on the playing field, but also within the broader facilities provided by the organisation. Organisations should consider:

- appropriate lighting within the facility, including playing surfaces, walkways and to and from the carpark;
- using universal design principles in change rooms;
- keeping facilities clean and well maintained;
- ensuring facilities are appropriate for family use (for example, parent rooms/baby change facilities, safe areas for children to play in, provision of shade); and
- ensuring spectators feel safe watching in an environment free from physical and verbal abuse.

Diversity and Equality

In order for a sport or recreation organisation to thrive it must reflect the local community and cater to that community. Organisations should commit to increasing their diversity and equality. As such, an organisation must provide facilities, programs and services for people from all backgrounds, regardless of gender, race, ability, skill level, age, religious affiliation or sexuality. These include but are not limited to the following:

- providing gender neutral change rooms;
- reviewing codes of conduct to ensure they make it apparent discrimination or abuse will not be tolerated;
- ensuring uniforms meet, or are able to be adapted to meet, cultural needs;

- where food is available to purchase, ensuring culturally sensitive options are available;
- providing introductory days or dedicated training days exclusively for female members and prospective members;
- having a scheduling policy that encourages flexible program delivery, equal share of the peak time slots, and promotes female participation on the main ground or court;
- having a scheduling policy for games and trainings that allows partners to rotate supervision of their children; and
- ensuring any equipment provided is suitable for intended users.

Leadership Opportunities

It is important that sporting organisations have diverse representation within leadership positions, including board membership, coaches, officials and other volunteers. Having diverse leadership increases the mix of skills and perspectives an organisation has to draw on. It can also provide a greater opportunity for potential participants to relate to the organisation, resulting in increased participation. Strategies for the organisation to consider include:

- targeting, promoting and training women into coaching and officiating roles;
- targeting, promoting and training women into management/board positions;
- providing networking and development opportunities for women in leadership positions; and
- considering care giving responsibilities when scheduling times and/or attendance methods for board meetings, games and training (for example, offering the option of tele- or video-conferencing for board meetings).