

Australian State Sports Federations Alliance

ASSFA is comprised of the State and Territory Sports Federations.

The Australian State Sports Federations Alliance (ASSFA) is made up of the sports industry peak bodies from the six states and the ACT. Collectively, ASSFA represents 630 State Sport and Recreation Associations and other organisations who are involved in the Sport and Recreation Industry as well as a number of corporate members that have direct links to community sport and active recreation. Through this extensive network of members in each jurisdiction, ASSFA has links to 6.3 million Australians involved in organised physical activity.

The Alliance collaborates on key issues, recommends and promotes strategies for change on issues affecting Community Sport from a national perspective. Mid 2008 ASSFA met in Hobart and from this agreed on the following requirements facing community sport;

- **Reduce Costs and Identify Sources of Funding-** Investigate ways to reduce the costs that sport and active recreation clubs must pass on to participants to simply survive. Such costs include hire fees, travel, local venue charges, and insurance premiums. Also identify sources of funding that will facilitate the development and growth of community sport.
- **Facility Development & Refurbishment-** A strategic plan to ensure that any new community facility built in Australia genuinely meets the needs of the community in which it is placed. Additionally, a long term plan for the ongoing refurbishment of existing community facilities to ensure that they are accessible for all, now and into the future.
- **Support for Volunteers-** Invest in the capacity of sport and active recreation organisations to support our people in the delivery of community sport and active recreation by the provision of low cost training/education and decreasing the administrative and regulatory burden.

Australian Sports Federations Contacts

ACTSport	Gavin Macdonald	02 6247 0260	gavin@actsport.com.au
NSW Sports Federation	Debbie Kemp	02 8116 9740	debbie.kemp@sportnsw.com.au
Sport SA	Jan Sutherland	08 8353 7755	ceo@sportsa.org.au
Queensland Sports Federation	Peter Cummiskey	07 3369 8955	peter.sfq@bigpond.com
TasSport	Mark West (President)		mark.west@oamps.com.au
VicSport	Anthony Bowd	03 9926 1372	anthonyb@vicsport.asn.au
WA Sports Federation	Rob Thompson	08 9387 8100	RobThompson@wasportsfed.asn.au



1. Reduce Costs and Identify Sources of Funding

1.1 Charitable Status for Community Sport

Despite the vital role these organisations play in supporting and developing communities, under current tax ruling, community sport organisations are not eligible to apply for tax deductibility status. This ineligibility has significant negative impact on Not For Profit (NFP) sport organisations in a range of ways.

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

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

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

Recommendation 1.1. Amend the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 to either allow bona-fide NFP community sport organisations to apply for tax deductible status or alternatively to allow for community sport and recreation club membership fees to be tax deductible would make a significant contribution to supporting this sector and the vital role it plays in community development.

1.2 Align Sports Funding with Health Outcomes

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

Recommendation 1.2. Align the funding criteria and outcomes for Community Sport more appropriately with Preventative Health and Well Being outcomes to facilitate greater impact to the wider community and ensure that programs are being developed accordingly.

1.3 National Community Benefit Lottery Fund

Recommendation 1.3. Initiate a comprehensive study to determine the feasibility of establishing a national community-benefit lottery to fund community sport and active recreation.

2. Facility Development & Refurbishment

An ongoing program of capital investment in sport and recreation facilities is desperately required to respond to the following drivers:

- Existing gaps in sport and recreational venues needs including complying with building regulations;
- Increased population levels, and changing demographics;
- Increased community expectations and standards; and
- The cyclical renewal and/or replacement of existing sport and recreational venues.

2.1 National Facility Plan

We propose that the exact level of annual budget allocation should be determined through a national audit of all sporting and recreational facilities by state and regional governments in conjunction with sport. Concurrently hierarchical capital investment plans need to be developed by state, territory and local governments to determine the projected capital investment funding requirements for improved, replacement and new facilities at the respective levels of participation i.e. local, regional, national and international.

As part of the audit, uniform condition standards/benchmarking must be set for local, regional, national, and international sport and recreation facilities. These standards must be set on the basis of advice from peak sport and recreation organizations such as ASSFA as well as the Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport (SCORS).

Advice about the condition auditing methodology should be sought from the Australian Procurement and Construction Council (APCC) and the Australian Local Government Association and any other government or non government authorities to ensure it is in line with current technologies. We believe this is consistent with the approach being taken by Infrastructure Australia for its project to audit Australia's economic infrastructure.

The condition audit should be jointly funded by the Governments. Commonwealth funding should also be provided for regular subsequent audits that should be undertaken not more than five years apart.

This overall approach to long term capital planning is also consistent with the models now being adopted by some states to develop 10-20 state wide capital investment plans.

Recommendation 2.1. Conduct a national audit of all sporting and recreational facilities by state and regional governments in conjunction with sport, with subsequent audits undertaken not more than 5 years apart.

2.2 Facility Access

Reliance on private providers will limit access for community groups who are unable to afford high access fees charged by private providers. Government needs to both recognise and assist in the facilitation of roles played by the various stakeholders working at varying levels of government in targeting Community Sport.

Recommendation 2.2. Government to work with the community sector via the peak bodies at the State and Territory level to address issues associated with facility availability, development, maintenance and access.

3. Support of Volunteers

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

A common aim of these organisations is to engender a dynamic sport and recreation environment that enables all Australians to experience and enjoy involvement in community sport and active recreation to the extent of their abilities and interests and, for increasing numbers, to perform consistently and successfully at the highest competitive levels.

The major goal is to either directly provide, or facilitate the provision of, low-cost participation opportunities for the community. However, the benefits accrued to both individuals and communities of this involvement reach far beyond the simple pleasure of being actively involved.

Numerous studies have examined the impact of participation in sport and active recreation at the community level and specifically on the association between sport and social inclusion. These studies support the fact that participation in sport and active recreation activity also:

- Increases levels of social cohesion in the community;
- Diverts youth from anti-social behaviour including crime;
- Improves an individual's mood and self esteem; and
- Promotes positive social values and assists in the development of life skills.

Involvement in community sport connects families and builds vibrant communities. Increasing participation requires strong local clubs and associations, which in turn are built on the hard work of volunteers, whether they are coaches, officials, administrators, or many other smaller roles that are integral to the fabric of community based clubs.

Active parents provide positive role models for children for engaging in community sport and active recreation. As importantly, the parents who are involved in their children's involvement through coaching, umpiring and other volunteering send a powerful message about the importance they place on sharing and valuing the efforts and interests of their children and their community.

The primary challenges preventing parents and other members of the community from volunteering are;

- Moderating time constraints;
- Reducing government compliance requirements;
- Reducing liability and exposure to risk; and
- Reducing costs to organisations and volunteers

3.1 Government Compliance Restrictions

Recommendation 3.1. Government review the regulatory burden on small community organisations and make appropriate legislative and structural changes in cases where regulatory requirements are overly onerous. Government also needs to be cognisant of the impact seemingly unrelated pieces of legislation have on a sector as far reaching as that of community sport. Government should continue to make efforts to engage peak representative bodies at the outset of legislative review and development.

3.2 Strong and vibrant state level peak representative bodies

Strong peak organisations at the State level are the key to effective liaison between government, other funding agencies and the sector. To fully realise their potential, the vital role that effective peak bodies play needs to be appropriately recognised and supported by government and related funding agencies.

Recommendation 3.2. Peak agencies be appropriately funded to ensure they have the resources required to effectively fill their primary purpose of creating stronger more vibrant community sectors.

Summary of Recommendations

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