



THE HON SUSSAN LEY MP

Minister for Health
Minister for Sport

MEDIA RELEASE

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Getting Australia off the couch & playing sport

The Abbott Government has an ambitious game plan to get more Australians off the couch and participating in organised sport to help improve the health of the nation.

Minister for Health and Sport Sussan Ley today launched *Play.Sport.Australia.* – Australia’s new national strategy that outlines key priorities for improving participation in organised sport.

Ms Ley said the number of Australians playing organised sport had fallen to just a quarter in recent years, however Government research showed there were currently 4.5 million people who said they want to join a sport, but for various reasons such as time, cost and confidence had not.

Ms Ley said this was a missed opportunity and *Play.Sport.Australia.* was about government and sporting bodies working together to not only address the problem, but capitalise on the potential.

“It’s essential for the health of the nation that the Australian Government has a balanced approach to sport that focusses on grassroots participation, as well as elite results,” Ms Ley said.

“Too many Australians, young and old, are living sedentary lives and, frankly, it’s killing us.”

Ms Ley said 13,000 deaths annually in Australia are attributed to physical inactivity, while one-in-four children were now considered overweight or obese.

Ms Ley said *Play.Sport.Australia.* was as much a call to action for parents as their children.

“Essentially, we need more people up off the couch, putting down the remote and getting active.

“However, if we want our children to be active, we as adults need to set the example with action, not words. We boast about being a nation that loves our sport, so let’s show it.

“Whether it’s a competitive game of footy or a regular social bowls tournament – it doesn’t matter – you’re up, you’re active and you’re more likely to stick with it if it’s organised and structured.

“*Play.Sport.Australia.* is about ensuring we have a national focus on boosting sports participation rates and harnessing the health, social and economic benefits that follow.”

Ms Ley said the Australian Government currently spent about \$100 million a year on various initiatives building stronger grassroots sports participation.

Play.Sport.Australia will bring together existing Government programmes, as well as new initiatives, into one clear strategy under the guidance of the Australian Sports Commission to ensure they are better targeted and delivering maximum output for investment.

Play.Sport.Australia. will focus on three key areas - better research, better targeting of investment in youth programmes and strengthening Australia’s national sporting organisations.

Ms Ley said this included a new annual national sports participation survey to measure results and trends, a clearer and more-transparent funding model, and the Abbott Government’s new *Sporting Schools* programme, which officially launches later this year.

Ms Ley said *Play.Sport.Australia.* was the grassroots complement to Australia’s high performance sports strategy *Winning Edge.*

Australian Sports Commission Chair John Wylie AM said *Play.Sport.Australia.* would help sport collectively “lift its game” when it came to improving participation rates.

“At the end of the day, participation still remains the best measure of success for our sporting sector,” Mr Wylie said.

“*Play.Sport.Australia* will help give sports a game plan to become forward-thinking organisations that deliver the products Australians want and arm them with the knowledge and practical initiatives such as the *Sporting Schools* programme to help them grow.”

Mr Wylie said the evolution of shorter formats or hybrid games that were easier to learn and participate in, such as T20 cricket, AFL 9’s or FAST4 Tennis, were all good examples of innovative ways sports had acted to bolster numbers and tap-in to new markets.

The sport sector generates just under \$13 billion in annual income and employs more than 100,000 people along with 2.3 million volunteers.

Play.Sport.Australia. Game Plan highlights

- ***Sporting Schools Programme*** – rolling out the Abbott Government’s world-class junior participation program predominantly focussing on children aged five to 12. The program will give more Australian children direct access to sport before, during and after school hours and take place in up to 70 per cent

of primary schools across Australia. It will also be supported by an interactive website supporting all schools and clubs to run their own participation programmes and search for local coaches and sporting programme providers.

- ***A new annual national participation survey*** to better understand participation trends in Australia, inform policy decisions and guide sports strategy with a strong evidence base.
- ***New bi-annual national forums*** for key sport executives to discuss key participation issues and to enable information exchange with a particular focus on cross-sport collaboration.
- ***Better targeted participation investment*** to ensure government sports participation funding is prioritised in more structured and transparent ways to increase participation levels.
- ***Maintaining sport industry research and digital information sharing.***
- ***Working with sports to deliver their participation strategy.***
- ***Product development and commercial sustainability*** – working with sports to invest in targeted projects to help develop relevant products, and identify commercial opportunities, such as sponsorship, digital and broadcasting strategies, to be more financially sustainable.
- ***Facilities and infrastructure*** — encouraging sports to develop their own national facilities audits and plans to ensure growth regions are identified.
- ***National Board Register*** — enhance existing Women’s Board Register and develop a National Board Directors Register to help sports locate and identify the best people for their boards.
- ***Workforce and Coaching strategies*** to help sports train and develop workforces and officials.
- ***Play by the Rules*** — continue to support and evolve the Play by the Rules resource to help the sector to ensure a safe, fair and inclusive environment in sport and recreation.

A full version of the Australian Government’s *Play.Sport.Australia.* strategy is available at www.ausport.gov.au.

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