2. Increasing the number of Australians participating in sport

2.1 Boosting the number of Australian children participating in sport through education

Fundamental to increasing the number of Australians that participate in sport is building more opportunities for our children to participate in sport and physical activity.

Participation in sport has stalled over the last decade amongst Australian children.

During the 12 months to April 2009, 1 million children aged 5 to 14 did not participate in any organised sport outside of school hours, with a higher proportion of girls (44%) not participating in organised sports than boys (30%).

Despite there being an obvious partnership between sport and education when it comes to achieving health and educational outcomes in our children, we have seen a decline in the quality of sport and physical education being delivered in our primary and secondary schools.

As early as 1992 the Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts found that:

… physical education is being dramatically reduced throughout schools in Australia … Ironically there is no dispute about the importance of physical education, yet there is a serious problem with its delivery.3

Whilst there has previously been a national requirement for schools to provide a minimum weekly allocation of 2 hours of physical activity, the requirement did not specify the level or intensity of activity required in line with health guidelines, and did not provide any detailed information as to how ‘physical activity’ was to be delivered or met.

The Australian Government will deliver a National Sport and Education Strategy that firmly embeds quality sport and physical education in our schools and will:

- Prioritise sport and physical education in our National School Curriculum in partnership with state and territory governments. Education Ministers have agreed that the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) prioritise physical education in the development of phase three of the National Curriculum, and that the number of hours committed to physical activity in the school curriculum be maximised
- Boost teachers’ skills under the Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership to ensure high quality sport and physical education is delivered in our schools. The Australian Government will work with the states and territories and ACARA to achieve national professional standards for teachers in this area
- Provide communities with places to play on school grounds and working with schools to ensure communities can access multipurpose halls and covered learning areas funded under the Australian Government’s Building the Education Revolution.

2.2 Supporting our sporting organisations to enhance community participation and social inclusion

The Australian Government recognises the essential role that national and state sporting organisations can play in leading and growing their sports for the benefit of all community members.

Further, the Government recognises that sport can assist to build communities through social inclusion for those people who are vulnerable to social and structural disconnection.

Although national and state sporting organisations are a natural conduit for reaching out to local communities and bolstering participation in sport, a lack of resources and capacity to build pathways from the grassroots up has hampered their ability to broaden participation for the benefit of their own sport and the community.

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2 Children’s Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities, ABS, 2009
3 Physical and Sport Education, Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts, December 1992, p. xiii
A key task for sports policy makers and administrators is to address the factors, and in some cases the barriers, that prevent sports participation by people from diverse backgrounds.

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring sporting opportunities are safe, fun and inclusive for all of our community members and to supporting sport to ensure that our nation’s diversity is reflected in participation.

We will support national sporting organisations (NSOs) to expand participation at a community level by:

- Providing NSOs with additional funding to grow participation at a community level and require them to deliver improved participation outcomes as part of their funding agreements with the ASC
- Requiring NSOs to develop participation plans in partnership with their state/territory associations to support their local clubs to broaden participation
- Funding NSOs to deliver direct financial assistance to support community clubs to implement participation initiatives in line with participation plans.

The ASC will also work closely with relevant portfolio areas across Government to deliver a Social Inclusion and Sport Strategy to support the development of pathways to increase opportunities for all Australians in sport, particularly those who may be marginalised or disadvantaged.

The Strategy will focus on supporting activities and initiatives that maximise the participation of all Australians in sport regardless of their ethnicity, religion, sexuality or gender.

2.3 Supporting people with disability and athletes with disability

The achievements of Australia’s athletes with disability are something that all Australians are, and should be, proud of. However, we as a nation can do more to ensure that people with disability and our high performance athletes with disability have opportunities to participate in sport at all levels.

The Australian Government will work in partnership with community and national sporting organisations to improve opportunities for people with disability, irrespective of the disability, to participate in sport at the grassroots and high performance levels.

A proud partner of the Australian Paralympic Committee (APC) the Government is committed to supporting our high performance programs to prepare Australian athletes with disability for success at an international level, including the Paralympics.

The Australian Government will expand opportunities for people with disability to participate in sport and support our high performance athletes with disability by:

- Increasing funding and resources for talent identification for people with disability as part of our initiative to double the national talent identification network to provide talent identification and development opportunities for up to 5,000 additional young aspiring athletes
- Increasing funding for high performance programs to prepare our athletes with disability for future international competition
- Providing funding support for the broadcast of the London 2012 Paralympic Games
- Providing additional funding to NSOs and our sporting institutes to offer our top coaches packages which will make it viable to continue coaching in Australia
- Exploring measures to enhance the opportunities for people with disability in rehabilitation or treatment to access sports pathways.
2.4 Breaking down the barriers to women’s and girls’ participation in sport

Women have a vital role to play in the development of sport in Australia as participants, volunteers, athletes, and sports leaders as coaches and administrators. Yet we still see women facing barriers to participating in sport across their lifetime and an unwarranted lack of profile generally, when it comes to high performance sport.

Recent research conducted for the Australian Government found that just 9% of sports news reporting is related to women’s sport, while men’s sport makes up 81% of coverage. Figures also show that women’s representation on national sporting organisation boards is very poor, with just 25% of board memberships filled by women.

In relation to participation of Australian girls in sport we know that almost half of girls aged 5 to 14 do not participate in sport outside of school hours.

The Australian Government’s National Body Image Advisory Group has also highlighted the barriers for women’s and girls’ participation in sport, specifically calling on the ASC to engage in the development and dissemination of body image messages to sporting organisations.

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About Time! Women in Sport and Active Recreation in Australia, the report produced by the Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Reference Committee, outlined a range of recommendations aimed at broadening participation of women in sport.

In response to this inquiry we have invested in a range of important initiatives that have supported women in sport since coming to government. However, we recognise that more must be done to bring women’s sport to its rightful place in this country. The Australian Government will further support women’s sport by:

• Providing additional funding and resources to improve the media coverage of Australian women’s sport
• Establishing a new ‘women in sport register’ to connect sport with potential female board and administration candidates, grow the number of women on Australia’s sporting boards and to help promote inclusive cultures that support women in sport
• Establishing Women in Sport Awards to recognise exemplary initiatives which provide special support for women’s and girls’ participation in sport, whether as players, coaches, administrators or officials
• Requesting the ASC work with national sporting organisations and other key bodies such as the Butterfly Foundation to develop strategies to tackle body image issues which affect women’s participation in sport, especially amongst girls.

2.5 Breaking down the barriers to Indigenous participation in sport

Research indicates that between 2001 and 2005 there has been a shift towards lower levels of physical activity by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There has also been an increase in the proportion of sedentary behaviour amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged 15 years and over during this period from 37% to 47%.

Yet we know that sport and active recreation can help close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians’ life expectancy by providing a practical tool for Indigenous communities to achieve positive outcomes in areas such as physical wellbeing and mental health, education and social participation.

The Australian Government recognises the power of sport in achieving positive results for Indigenous Australians both on and off the sporting field. We will:

• Include specific measures aimed at identifying talented Indigenous Australians, as part of the initiative to double the national talent identification network to provide talent identification and development opportunities for up to 5,000 additional young aspiring athletes
• Fund the expansion of talent scouts and talent identification programs particularly in regional Australia, which will boost the numbers of Indigenous juniors entering the development pathway.

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* Data reported on www.womenonboards.org.au, from administrative data supplied by the Australian Sports Commission, and supplemented by Women on Boards.
* Children’s Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities, ABS, 2009, p. 8
* Sport and Recreation: A Statistical Overview, ABS, 2009
2.6 Building places to play

In 2007-08, the Australian Government invested almost $167 million to deliver 140 sport and recreation infrastructure projects across Australia. This funding provided much needed local facility redevelopment to sporting grounds, including projects such as new change rooms, bike paths and field lighting.

In addition, the Government provided over $1 billion through the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program (RLCIP), from which over $300 million was provided to support community sport and local clubs, the biggest single investment in sporting infrastructure in this nation’s history.

Under the Building the Education Revolution (BER) the Government is providing $16.2 billion to provide world-class educational facilities, through new infrastructure and refurbishments, to Australian schools including sport facilities.

The Australian Sports Foundation (ASF) provides for tax-deductible corporate and community donations towards specific community sporting projects when they are registered with the Foundation, and encourages donations from individuals in the community. The effectiveness of the ASF will be reviewed to determine the best structure, governance and strategy required to deliver consistent and better coordinated funds to the sporting sector.

3. Strengthening sporting pathways

3.1 Supporting our volunteers and community coaches and officials

According to the ABS report on Volunteers in Sport (2006), over 1.7 million adult Australians volunteered their time to enable community sport to operate at an estimated input value to our economy of around $4 billion.8

Our volunteers support almost every part of the sporting pathway in roles as diverse as coaches, officials, team managers, administrators, and board and committee members, with many filling multiple roles.

Coaches and officials are also critical to ensuring a strong development pathway, one that supports our future champions’ progress from the grassroots through to high performance sport with the skills and confidence they need to achieve success.

The Australian Government will support sport volunteers and our community coaches and officials by:

- Providing additional coaching and officiating training opportunities for up to 45,000 community coaches and officials and subsidising the costs associated with training for 5,000 new community coaches and officials
- Providing funding support to NSOs to deliver coaching and officiating education programs, especially in regional areas
- Providing funding and resources to support mentoring to community coaches and officials
- Introducing a National Sports Volunteer award program – to reward volunteers and promote their contribution to sport and the wider community
- Providing additional funding to targeted national sporting organisations to enable them to employ development staff where required to drive volunteer programs and initiatives through their sport at a grassroots level
- Delivering a National Sport Volunteer Strategy to better engage, support, train and recognise our sport volunteers. The Strategy will support and contribute to the Government’s National Volunteering Strategy currently being developed in the leadup to 2011, the 10th anniversary of the United Nations International Year of Volunteering.

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8 Volunteers in Sport, Australia, 2006, ABS
9 The economic contribution of sport to Australia, Frontier Economics, Nov 2009