

2.3: CULTURAL AND SOCIETAL IMPACTS

Findings

19. That the shifting nature of Australian society, particularly demographic and lifestyle changes, are having an impact on the sports and physical activity sector and this impact will increase over time.
20. Many sporting organisations have not embraced more recreational forms of their sports, missing opportunities for membership, volunteers and revenue.
21. The changing age profile of the Australian population is not well catered for by the sporting sector, with a focus from both sporting organisations and governments on elite sport.
22. The ageing population provides opportunities for volunteerism in sport, with potential benefits to the aged, children and sporting clubs.
23. The ongoing migration of the population from regional to metropolitan centres provides challenges to both areas which are yet to be satisfactorily appreciated or addressed by sporting organisations and governments.
24. Immigration is changing the demographics of the population. New populations will require different approaches, including a shift away from more traditional Australian sports.
25. Indigenous sport programs are not well coordinated within governments or between levels of government, leading to confusion and ineffectiveness.
26. Significant amounts of government support, at all levels, for Indigenous programs is not focussed on long term capacity building.

Sport is an integral part of the Australian culture. Many of our great national icons and celebrities are sports people. A significant element of our national identity is vested in our performance on the international sporting field and sport is an integral part of local community life.

Traditionally, Australians have embraced sports that have strongly corresponded to our colonial beginnings. However, changes in lifestyle and population demographics, as well as an improved

understanding of the need to better engage Indigenous people and people with a disability, all require a rethink of sport in Australia.

Australian population trends and projections over the next two decades have significant implications for sport:

- lifestyle changes leading to a preference towards unstructured activity
- the changing age profile of the population
- the substantial migrant intake from countries that have different views and preferences in sport
- the shift in population from regional to metropolitan areas
- ongoing groups of low socio-economic status.

Sporting organisations must take into account the changing nature of society and provide sporting and physical activity options that meet the required demands of the population.

LIFESTYLE CHANGES: SHIFT TOWARDS UNSTRUCTURED ACTIVITY

Evidence shows that participation in physical activity is dominated by non-organised sport and physical recreation. Moreover, this is an increasing trend: aerobics and fitness activities were the biggest growth areas for participation between 2001 and 2008.⁴¹

The growth of time-poor two-income families leaves little time for sport. As a consequence, exercise is ‘purchased’ and ‘fitted into’ a schedule. People are moving towards activities that are able to suit lifestyle and time constraints and thus provide the most flexible options. Seven out of the ten growth areas in this time span were activities such as walking, running, cycling and aerobics/gym exercise—essentially activities that can be done on an individual basis. Apart from aerobics, in 2008, participation in the five most popular sports in Australia largely took the form of non-organised involvement.

While some traditional sports are growing, there is substantial growth in the number of people engaged in non-structured physical recreational activities—such as skateboarding, skiing, golf, cycling and more informally organised competitions such as mixed indoor cricket, netball and volleyball.⁴²

Many traditional sports organisations have had an ambivalent view of the development of ‘fast food sports’ and have failed to embrace them. As a result, many national sporting organisations (NSOs) have ignored these social developments and failed to grasp the commercial opportunities

⁴¹ Australian Government, Australian Sports Commission & Department of Health and Ageing, *Participation in Exercise, Physical Activity and Sport, Annual Report 2008*, pp. 18.

⁴² Australian Government, Australian Sports Commission & Department of Health and Ageing, *Participation in Exercise, Physical Activity and Sport, Annual Report 2008*, pp. 58.

that accompanied them. A stark example is that of fun runs: 70,000 people were interested enough in running to participate in the 2009 City to Surf, yet there are less than 20,000 members of the national body Athletics Australia. In some instances, a large portion of the recreational participation base is now 'owned' by private interests and the national sports body is not involved.

NSOs need to embrace a wider perspective of what constitutes their sports. Sport is not simply about competition pathways which eventually lead to elite performance. For NSOs, the recreational versions of their sports give promise of increased membership, increased pools of volunteers, increased commercial opportunities and there are likely to be consequent flow on effects to the elite side.

Though logical, some NSOs may find this surprisingly hard to achieve. Boards often have members on them that played the sport to the highest level and may not have the required perspective to see the larger picture of mass participation. Moreover, current government funding models encourage a focus on elite sport.

INCREASED YOUTH POPULATION

Many developed nations such as the United Kingdom (UK), Germany, Japan and France will experience reduced rates of growth (and in some cases decline) in their youth and middle-aged groups over the next 20 years. By comparison Australia, though ageing, will still remain relatively youthful.

In the 20 years between 2006 to 2026, Australia is projected to add a further 835,000 children compared to 351,000 in the previous twenty years; an increase of 138 per cent on the growth experienced in the last 20 years. This will be caused by higher net migration and fertility. Further, Australia is projected to add a further 1.23 million persons aged 15 to 34 years between 2006 and 2026. This represents a 156 per cent increase on the 479,000 persons added to this age group in the 20 years to 2006.⁴³

Increases in the 15 to 34 year age group are good news for elite performance, as these are considered the peak performance years for athletes. Our small talent pool in relation to major international competitors will be expanding while others will be contracting. However, this news is to be tempered by the reality that our talent base will never be as large as those of other larger countries.⁴⁴

In participation terms this is also an opportunity. Aside from children, this group is the most likely to be participants in sport. There are opportunities for NSOs to capture more members.

⁴³ KPMG, Impact of Demographic Change: The Future of Sports Participation in Australia, August 2009, pp. 40.

⁴⁴ KPMG, Impact of Demographic Change: The Future of Sports Participation in Australia, August 2009, pp. 40.

INCREASED AGED POPULATION

Australia's population is getting older but at a slower rate to comparable western countries. Around nine per cent of our population (some two million people) is aged 70 years or older⁴⁵. This is expected to rise to 13 per cent by 2021 and to 20 per cent (around 5.7 million people) in 2051. People aged 80 years and over currently make up around four per cent of the population and this proportion is expected to increase to 10 per cent by 2051⁴⁶.

This will have a significant impact upon sport and recreational activities and where, as a nation, we focus support. With an ageing population, Australia needs to increasingly support sports and physical activities that meet the needs of older participants. Research shows that older age groups have lower levels of participation; a trend which is confirmed upon analysis of similar data in the United States of America (USA) and the UK. As such, with all other factors remaining constant, the rate of overall participation is likely to fall over the next decade or two and efforts must be made to prevent this. The levels of support given to 'life-time sports' and the provision of services and facilities that support these activities should be reviewed and lifted. Keeping older people active has very large population health benefits and sport has a critical role to play in this regard.

The growing grandparent age group (60 to 74) but slower rates of growth in the 40 to 59 age group over the next 20 years also provides opportunities for participation in volunteer capacities. Older people have been driving up levels of participation in sport. Greater life expectancy, improvements in overall health, greater affluence and a general perception of feeling younger will all be factors in driving increased involvement by older persons compared to previous generations.⁴⁷

People in the 60 to 74 year age group typically have more time on their hands and are often willing and able to contribute to communities in ways not possible during their working lives. A greater retired population than ever should be seen as an opportunity to engage these groups as a support resource for sporting activity. With freedom from the workforce comes a desire to keep busy and fill available time. Many feel the need to impose purpose or achieve something on a daily basis. This could mean contributing to community organisations and clubs. It will be in Australia's interest to harness this resource and to make use of the important skills that the 'Baby Boomers' will have to give to the community in retirement. In fact, the other trend of increasing numbers of young people over the next twenty years means that there will be increased demand for sport and structured physical activity. This increased demand will not be met unless the volunteer base to support the delivery of sport and physical opportunities also increases. Australia would appear to be in a fortunate situation of having a potential pool of volunteers in its growing numbers of

⁴⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Population by age and sex, Australian states and territories, June 2007, cat. no. 3201.0.

⁴⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Population projections, Australia: 2004–2101, cat. no. 3222.0.

⁴⁷ Long, J. Sport and the ageing population: Do older people have a place in driving up participation in sport?, Leeds: Centre for Leisure and sport research. Leeds Metropolitan University, 2004.

older Australians. The challenge will be to realise that potential by mobilising this group and add value to their own lifestyles at the same time—benefits accrue to the active aged, the children they support and the sporting clubs they assist.

In the next 10 to 20 years there is projected to be declining growth in persons aged 35 to 49; as parents, this group has traditionally been a strong source of volunteers. Compounding this is the likelihood that more and more families will require dual incomes, and as such parents will be increasingly time-poor. With a decreasing pool of volunteers from traditional sources, retired people potentially provide a valuable resource to fill the support roles critical to sustaining grass roots sport involvement.

Achieving greater sporting and community engagement from retired people should be considered a win-win scenario for Australia. The benefit of a valued and experienced support group is obvious to Australia's sporting programs, however engagement in a worthwhile cause will also provide a valuable way for 'Baby Boomers' to stay connected with society at a time in life when there is a risk of isolation. This risk is particularly high among males who frequently have been working all their lives and are ill-equipped to build new social connections once work is over.

SHIFT FROM REGIONAL TO METROPOLITAN AREAS

Community-based physical activity programs have the potential to make positive impacts on participants as well as the communities in which they live.⁴⁸ Social benefits to promoting sporting involvement include improved self-esteem, greater community identity, increased community cohesion and support among players and non-players.

Sporting clubs, events and programs provide places and opportunities to meet and to encourage greater respect for people and property. This is of particular importance to rural communities where sport is seen as an important way of keeping in contact with others, and also a means of welcoming newcomers to the area. Residents in regional areas view sport and recreation as crucial to the viability and sustainability of the communities. Sport is seen as a primary source of social interaction for the community as well as a social leveller across barriers of age, length of residence and economic status, among other things.⁴⁹ Sport creates opportunities for social involvement, leadership, role models, positive peer groups, social bonding, improved self-esteem and a healthy lifestyle, which lead to safer communities and lower levels of crime, particularly in areas of disadvantage.⁵⁰

48 Chau J, *Physical Activities and Building Stronger Communities*, NSW Centre for Physical Activity and Health, 2007.

49 Townsend M; Moore J; Mahoney M, *Playing their part: the role of physical activity and sport in sustaining the health and well being of small rural communities*, *Rural and remote health* 2002, 2(1):109.

50 Sport England, *Sport Playing Its Part—the contribution of sport to building safe, strong and sustainable communities*, 2005: www.sportengland.org.

Despite the importance of sport to rural communities, involvement in sport in rural communities across the board from players, spectators and officials is declining. This is a result of the population shift away from rural areas, compounded further by an ageing population and an exodus of young people to larger urban centres.

This is an alarming development. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare publication *Australia's Health 2008*⁵¹ those who live in rural and remote areas generally have poorer health than those residing in major cities. This is reflected in levels of mortality, disease and health risk factors. In 2004–05, Australians residing in rural and remote areas were slightly more likely to be overweight or obese than those living in major cities and were more likely to report sedentary lifestyles.⁵² Encouraging more active lifestyles for those residing in rural and remote areas is a high priority and sport, with its well documented social and health benefits, has a critical role to play.

Population movements will mean increased demand and strains on city based facilities and potentially under-utilised facilities in rural areas. There is and will be in the future, increased demands on local councils in areas of rapid growth for recreation and sports facilities and the question of what to do with under-utilised facilities in rural towns. Any programs on sporting infrastructure need to take into account this trend.

There may be a role for larger metropolitan sporting organisations or clubs to assist in regional sport. Programs that 'twin' city clubs with remote clubs may be valuable in fostering participation and excellence in sport in regional areas. Major football codes are working in this space. Many National Rugby League (NRL) and Australian Football League (AFL) clubs play matches and do pre-season clinics in regional centres. There would appear to be little impediment, aside from resources, why other sports and clubs could not do so as well.

IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION⁵³

Today, around 25 per cent of persons living in Australia were born overseas. In some areas such as Sydney and Melbourne the percentage is higher. That number will increase further over the coming decades. The source of migrant intake is also shifting from Europe towards Asia and the Middle East.⁵⁴

Ethnic minorities and people born in non-English speaking countries have been identified as more likely to have lower participation rates in sport and physical activity.⁵⁵

51 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Australia's health 2008*, Canberra, 2008.

52 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Australia's health 2008*, Canberra, 2008.

53 KPMG, *Impact of Demographic Change: The Future of Sports Participation in Australia*, August 2009, pp. 33.

54 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Migration, Australia 2006–07*, cat. no. 3412.0.

55 KPMG, *Impact of Demographic Change: The Future of Sports Participation in Australia*, August 2009, pp. 33.

There are a number of other potential barriers to migrant participation associated with cultural differences. Although language is perhaps the most significant barrier, migrants often prioritise earning a living and caring for their family during the process of settlement and may not have the time for social or leisure activities. Barriers also include the availability of culturally appropriate community programs. Considerations include the issue of mixed groupings in exercise classes, swimming pools and the presence of male instructors/life guards as barriers to female migrant participation in particular. Migrants may also have cultural preferences for spending leisure with family rather than in a public setting, and as such non-participation in sport and physical activity is part of a broader issue associated with non-involvement in the community at large.

Social background, gender and disability all have a strong influence on the nature of children's early experiences. There is strong evidence to show that the scope and quality of early experiences of sport is determined by children's social backgrounds, particularly in terms of social class and ethnicity. Children from white middle-class backgrounds dominate club sport, which is due in part to the cultural traditions but also the fact that participation requires adequate disposable income to pay for fees, equipment, transport and flexibility of parent work hours.⁵⁶

The sporting community needs to consider the impact that this demographic shift will have. Firstly, it is more difficult to engage new migrants in sport at all. First generation migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds show low levels of participation. Secondly, their sporting preferences are unlikely to reflect traditional Australian sporting preferences. The projected mix of immigrants are likely to be more interested in sports such as badminton, table tennis and soccer, which have stronger participation rates in Asia, in particular.

There are great challenges here for social inclusion and great opportunities for sport to contribute at a local community level. To meet its potential to contribute to health and social inclusion and to take advantage of increased populations in these demographics, the sport sector needs to actively work to meet the needs of migrant groups and to a much larger extent than it has done to date.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

Socio-economic status is a weak and inconsistent indicator of participation in physical activity. However, there is some information, and some anecdotal evidence, which suggests a direct correlation between family incomes and participation in organised sport/physical activity.

Overall, 63.5 per cent of children aged 5 to 14 participate in organised sport. Participation rates for children between 5 and 14 years of age are substantially lower if the children come from one

⁵⁶ Kirk, D, 'Sport and Early Learning Experience' in *Sport England (Ed) Driving Up Participation: The Challenge for Sport*, Sport England, London, 2004.

parent families (55.6 per cent) and marginally higher for those with couples as parents (65.4 per cent). Moreover, the number of sports a child plays declines with decreasing socio-economic status.⁵⁷

The link between lower income families and low participation in sporting activities is a matter of increasing concern. The Children and Sport report⁵⁸, found a strong correlation between participation and family income. The study determined that parents of junior sport participants were predominantly in white-collar occupations. In particular, the data suggested that the direct and indirect costs favour children from high-income families with a flexible daily routine, or those having one parent at home full-time or part-time to provide transport and other means of practical support. The authors of a similar study cited in the research concluded: 'There can be no question, on the basis of the findings of this study, that there remain substantial socio-economic barriers to children's participation in club and representative sport'.

Addressing the issues of socio-economic disadvantage is discussed later in this part.

INDIGENOUS SPORT

The 'Closing the Gap' speech by the Prime Minister, the Hon. Kevin Rudd, to the Australian Parliament on 26 February 2009 highlighted the need for partnerships across all sectors of the Australian community to help close the gap in Indigenous outcomes including in health, sport and physical activity. The recently released Productivity Commission *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* report noted:

'Taking part in sport, arts or community group activities can foster self-esteem, social interaction and the development of skills and teamwork. Early participation in these activities can lead to stronger bodies, the prevention of chronic diseases and improved learning and academic performance. Reductions in substance misuse, self-harm and crime may also result. Indigenous people's participation in artistic and cultural activities helps to reinforce and preserve living culture, and can also provide a profitable source of employment.'

The Panel consulted widely with Indigenous stakeholder groups, including organisations that deliver sport and physical recreation services to Indigenous communities. These organisations are concerned that Indigenous people are less likely to be physically active and that this has a direct impact on the health of Indigenous Australians. Indigenous people (21 per cent) were less likely

⁵⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities*, Australia, 2006, cat. no. 4901.0.

⁵⁸ Tim Olds PhD, Jim Dollman PhD, Kate Ridley, Kobie Boshoff PhD, Sue Hartshorne, Simon Kennaugh University of South Australia, Australian Government, Australian Sports Commission, Children and Sport—the full report, A report prepared for the Australian Sports Commission, a research report by the University of South Australia, 2004.

than non-Indigenous people (31 per cent) to engage in moderate or high levels of exercise, in non-remote areas in 2004–05.⁵⁹ Themes that emerged from discussions with consulted organisations support the Productivity Commission findings. Organisations observed that sport and physical recreation is the key vehicle for the delivery of essential health and social messages to Indigenous Australians and that sport has a positive impact on Indigenous Australians.⁶⁰

All levels of government are involved in the delivery of sport and recreation services to Indigenous Australians. Collectively across Australian Government and state and territory government agencies, approximately \$44.896 million has been committed to sport and recreation activities and programs for Indigenous Australians in 2008–09. Of this, approximately \$29.828 million is broken up across five Australian Government agencies and approximately \$15.068 million comes from 10 state or territory government agencies.

The general view of all stakeholders is that a combination of limited funding, a duplication of activities, limited strategic direction and limited understanding of the Australian sports industry has resulted in an inefficient, fragmented and under-resourced approach. The situation is worsened by no national strategic policy framework and long term commitment to underpin sport and recreation service delivery.

Feedback from a number of bodies, including the Australian Government, state and territory government agencies, schools and grassroots Indigenous and non-Indigenous community organisations, indicated there is a lack of co-ordination around sport and recreation programs/activities/resources. This is limiting the positive long-term impact sport can have on Indigenous Australians, particularly youth at risk. Stakeholders called for a longer-term, more strategic approach to sport and recreation delivery for Indigenous populations.

Stakeholders at the Panel's public forums outlined concerns that a significant proportion of current Australian Government funding goes towards administration, or recurrent costs associated with running sport and recreation organisations and staff, as opposed to actually delivering programs/resources. Concerns were raised that this funding is committed through an annual application-based grant process. This process has historically supported one-off, short-term activities that serve to limit the development of genuine community capacity and undermine the potential for sustainable community-run sport programs.

⁵⁹ Australian Government, Productivity Commission, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Key Indicators 2009 Overview*, Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, table 10A.1.1, pp. 52.

⁶⁰ Colin Tatz, *Aborigines: Sport, Violence and Survival*, 1994.

A rationalised, targeted approach to sport and recreation service delivery is urgently needed to ensure that Indigenous Australians are receiving the best possible opportunities to participate in quality sport and recreation programs. There should also be opportunities to develop the necessary capacity within communities to run their own sport programs in the future. Such a rationalised approach will significantly contribute to achieving 'Closing the Gap' outcomes.

A consolidated agency will have the greatest impact on addressing the issues of fragmentation and ineffectiveness. The Australian Government must consider which agency is best placed to deliver sport and recreation outcomes for Indigenous Australians. An existing organisation with Indigenous sport and recreation programs/activities and the knowledge and expertise to facilitate the development of a national strategic policy framework and to measure outcomes, is preferable.

The complexities in delivering sport and physical activity to people in rural and remote areas are clear. Submissions to the Panel from government and sporting organisations involved in the delivery of sport to these areas supported long standing existing perceptions that rural and remote areas have poorer sport and recreation facilities,⁶¹ services, expectations and outcomes than the rest of the nation.

Furthermore, governments face significant additional cost in delivering sport and recreation services to rural, remote and Indigenous communities, costs not faced by government in delivering services to metropolitan Australia. The message from all stakeholders is the Australian Government must take into account such complexities when funding, negotiating and dealing with deliverers of services to rural, remote and Indigenous communities.

Through consultations it is clear to the Panel there are a variety of organisations that are delivering quality sport and physical activity outcomes to Indigenous Australians by funding local sporting organisations. The Panel is particularly supportive of those organisations that are not only seeking to fund local Indigenous sporting organisations but that are involved in building the capacity of these local sporting organisations. Indigenous stakeholders contend that by building the ability of local sporting organisations to apply for and administer grant money (getting the structures set up), they are building the capacity to deliver meaningful sport and physical activity outcomes. This is a compelling argument.

⁶¹ Australian Government, Productivity Commission, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Key Indicators 2009 Overview*, Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, section 10.1.