

28th February 2014

The Executive Officer
Family and Community Development Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002
(By email to: fcde@parliament.vic.gov.au)

Re: Inquiry into the Social Inclusion of Victorians with a Disability

To Whom It May Concern:

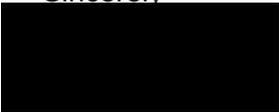
Disability Sport & Recreation is pleased to provide the following submission to the *Inquiry into the Social Inclusion of Victorians with a Disability*. In this submission, references to sport and recreation participation are for health-promotion purposes.

Disability Sport & Recreation is the health-promoting peak body for the disability sport and recreation sector in Victoria. Our mission is to provide and promote positive health outcomes for Victorians with disability through participation in sport and recreation. Our work making sport and recreation participation a real option for Victorians with disability spans 52 years.

We operate on a social model of health and a person-centred approach to participation. Sport and recreation is our tool to prevent ill-health and promote better health among Victorians with disability through risk factors which are largely preventable including social isolation.

We understand that the unifying nature of sport provides a great platform for social inclusion of Victorians with disability. Whilst many gains have been made there is still much to be done to tap into sport and recreation's full potential as a leader in social inclusion. We are keen to contribute to this collective effort, and value the opportunity to participate in this Inquiry.

Sincerely



Rob Anderson
Chief Executive Officer

Encls: 2012-2013 Disability Sport & Recreation Annual Report



Submission to Inquiry into social inclusion and Victorians with a disability

4.1 What are the barriers to meaningful social inclusion for Victorians with a disability?

Research (Shields N & Synnot A 2010) shows awareness of and access to appropriate programs is limiting participation in sport and recreation. The issue is particularly important for young people with disability as finding the right types of programs becomes harder from teenage years and as their age, disability and social factors limit their participation. Engagement in online communities is often the first step for young people with disability taking part in sport and recreation, as social, geographic and physical barriers are less relevant online. A report by Women with Disabilities Victoria and Self Advocacy Resource Unit (2012) confirms social isolation is one of the biggest challenges for people with disability and digital inclusion can reduce the impact of isolation. Digital inclusion provides people with disability a voice and power to influence the design and delivery of programs that are intended to benefit them.

Shields N & Synnot A (2010) explain that for Victorian children with disability:

- 1) Many children were not doing physical activities they say they would really like to do
- 2) Parents often don't know about local physical activity opportunities
- 3) Some physical activity providers have trouble finding enough children with disability for their programs
- 4) Partnerships between the sport and recreation sector, disability groups, local Councils and local schools are vital.

Disability Sport & Recreation conducted research into the barriers and enablers of participation of women with disability in sport and recreation in Victoria. This confirmed that there are common barriers which prevent women with disability in Victoria from engaging in physical activity programs, limiting their social inclusion through sport and recreation. Barriers include but are not limited to transportation, physical access, lack of funding and resources, poor attitude of service providers and a lack of knowledge awareness.¹

4.2 In what ways do Victorians with a disability participate in the economic, civil and social dimensions of society?

Sport has the unique ability to “transcend linguistic, cultural, and social barriers” as it is considered to be a universal language which promotes social inclusion of people with disabilities². In particular, the United Nations³ asserts that participation in sport was

¹ Higgins, L., Mok, L. and Disability Sport & Recreation, *Barriers and enablers of participation of women with disability in sport and recreation in Victoria*. Unpublished report, 2013.

² N. Tomas, *'Double Disadvantage - Barriers Facing Women With Disabilities in Accessing Employment, Education and Training Opportunities: A Discussion Paper'*, 1991, retrieved from: <http://www.wwda.org.au/double.htm>

³ United Nations, *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, United Nations, New York, 2006.



particularly beneficial for people with a disability for breaking social isolation and building self-belief.

Sport and recreation provides opportunities for social inclusion for people with disability as players, spectators, volunteers, administrators and coaches. Many Disability Sport & Recreation members take part in sport and recreation activities so they can spend time with their friends and family members without disability. Carers of people with disability connect with other people with caring responsibilities and receive informal respite through sport and recreation.

People with disability participate in sport and recreation less than people without disability. Statistics show sport and recreation participation rates of the general Victorian population over 15 years of age is 67.2% of males and 65% of females.⁴ These Victorian statistics mirror the national participation rates of the general population of 66.2% of males and 63.8% of females.⁵ In contrast, just 27.6% of males with disability and 20% of females with disability aged 18 years or over reported participating in sport or recreation away from home in the 12-month period prior to interview.⁶

Sport and recreation participation rates decline with age and degree of disability. Compared to people with disability aged 65 and over, 59.3% of children with disability aged 5 – 14 years participated in physical activities for sport (compared to 12.3% aged 65 and over) and 38.2% of children with disability attended a sporting event as a spectator (compared to 16.9% aged 65 and over).⁷ People with profound core activity limitation were less likely to participate in sport and recreation (8.6%) compared to people with mild core activity limitation (23.9%).⁸

4.3 What do you see as the emerging issues for Victorians with disability over the next 20 years and how these might influence their social inclusion?

Person-centred approaches and individualised funding through the NDIS will bring effective self-advocacy, individual advocacy and systemic advocacy to the forefront. Victorians with disability, as consumers of sport and recreation services, will have greater influence over how services are delivered as economic barriers to participation are reduced under the NDIS. For the first time, sport and recreation service providers will have an economic incentive to meet the sport and recreation participation needs of individuals with disability.

The gap between creating supportive environments for social inclusion through integrated planning and best practice design, for example universal design principles, will be smaller as intervention strategies, including advocacy efforts, are progressed.

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Sport and Recreation: A Statistical Overview, Australia, 4156.0, 2012, p16 <
[http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/6E28777ED2896A2BCA257AD9000E2FC5/\\$File/41560_2012.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/6E28777ED2896A2BCA257AD9000E2FC5/$File/41560_2012.pdf)>

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Sport and Recreation: A Statistical Overview, Australia, 4156.0, 2012, p16

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Sport and Recreation: A Statistical Overview, Australia, 4156.0, 2012, p23

⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Disability, Ageing and Carers Australia: Summary of Findings, 2012, Table 21

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Sport and Recreation: A Statistical Overview, Australia, 4156.0, 2012, p23



4.4 How effective have awareness campaigns been in improving social inclusion for people with a disability in Victoria?

Disability Sport & Recreation's community awareness and disability education program WheelTalk, reaches 20,000 young people in Victorian schools and tertiary institutions each year. Presenters share their personal story of disability to help reduce social barriers and improve understanding of disability. WheelTalk is an applied learning program using a wheelchair basketball activity as a way for participants to gain an insight into what it is like to have a disability. Curriculum resources are also made available to teachers to extend students' learning following the WheelTalk session. Teachers comment that the program is a great "equaliser."

Awareness campaigns promoting healthy eating and physical activity in a range of settings could unintentionally exclude Victorians with disability, compounding social isolation. Whilst social inclusion is not a specific goal of these programs, improving health outcomes is. Victorian government initiatives like Premier's Active April (formerly Premier's Active Families Challenge) claim the intention to get more Victorians more active more often, yet fail to include any links to accessible programs and support services, do not include images representing people with disability participating in activities and do not have a person with a disability as a program ambassador. These programs should be leading by example if social inclusion for Victorians with disability is to be realised.

5.2 What impact has the *Disability Act 2006 (Vic)* had on the social inclusion of people with a disability with respect to Victorian government services?

The *Victorian State Disability Plan 2013 – 2016* and *Implementation Plan 2013 and 2014* provide a framework for social inclusion through sport and recreation under Outcome 6.

A whole-of-government context could assist in reviewing the impact of the *Disability Act 2006*. This is because at least one Victorian government funded service, *Access for All Abilities*, is intended to benefit people with disability yet requires very little accountability and organisations do not need to be registered disability service providers. There are many organisations delivering sport and recreation services to Victorians with disability not bound by the *Disability Act 2006*. The basic protections of rights and interest of people with disability, and the accountability mechanisms required of service providers should apply across service sectors. Rather, sport and recreation organisations and Sport and Recreation Victoria are aligned with the "general health of the people of Victoria" purposes of the *Sport and Recreation Act 1972*.

6.1 How effective are services and initiatives designed to enhance the social inclusion of Victorians with a disability?

Despite the well-published value of sport and recreation to facilitate social inclusion, there has been little change in sport and recreation participation rates by people with disability from 2003 – 2009 (ABS, 2012). More information is needed to understand the impact of Victorian government services, usually outsourced through funding programs, aimed at improving inclusion and participation amongst Victorians with disability through sport and recreation.

To the best of our knowledge, the *Access for All Abilities* program was last evaluated in



2006⁹ and there are no current or future plans for evaluation. The *Access for All Abilities* program funding was re-orientated from local government to state sporting associations in 2013. The purpose of the funding offers “grants to disability sports and community-based organisations for delivery of programs and services that support the development and provision of inclusive sport and recreation opportunities for people with a disability”.¹⁰ *Access for All Abilities* will cost a total of \$3.9 million in 2013/2014, and allocates \$2.9 million to nine regional sports assemblies over two years.¹¹ Without evaluation, the social inclusion impact of publicly funded programs and services in sport and recreation cannot be measured.

VicHealth spent \$20.4 million in 2007 - 2011 through the *Participation in Community Sport and Active Recreation* (PICSAR) program. Among the broader health promotion objectives, social inclusion was one of the program’s goals. People with disability were identified as one of four target groups intended to benefit from PICSAR. VicHealth’s evaluation confirms the social inclusion benefits sport and recreation brings to marginalised groups as whole, and identifies positive impacts to people with disability through case studies and consultation results. The social inclusion impact of PICSAR specific to Victorians with disability could not be found in the published evaluation report.¹²

VicHealth's State Sporting Association Participation Program 2011-2014 will fund 30 State Sporting Associations a total of \$10.2 million increase inclusion in sport and recreation.¹³ Disability Sport & Recreation looks forward to the release of an evaluation report to ensure future commitments are informed by the research outcomes. Disability Sport & Recreation is keen to be involved in this process (refer recommendation 4 in 7.3 below).

Disability Sport & Recreation designed, invested and trialled a person-centred service to enhance the social inclusion of people with disability through sport and recreation, known as SportRec Access. This service was trialled over an 18 month period from February 2011 - July 2012. A working group was formed following forums with Access for All Abilities providers, State Sporting Associations and Disability Service Providers in mid-2011. The results of the SportRec Access pilot program indicate that the proposed delivery model will increase inclusive opportunities for participation. Between June 2011 and July 2012, 144 Victorians utilised SportRec Access. After conducting follow-up interviews, it was determined that 40.2% of those using SportRec Access were actively participating in sport and recreation activities found through the service. This is significantly higher than the current rate of 24.5% of Victorians with disability that participate in sport and recreation.

⁹ Sport and Recreation Victoria, Evaluation of Access for All Abilities Final Report, Department for Victorian Communities, January 2006

¹⁰ Access for All Abilities grants 2013-15, Information Pack for Disability Sports and Community-based Organisations

¹¹ “More accessible sport for regional Victoria thanks to \$2.9 million from Access for All Abilities”, Premier of Victoria, 19 June 2013 < <http://www.premier.vic.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/7094-more-accessible-sport-for-regional-victoria-thanks-to-2-9-million-from-access-for-all-abilities.html> >

¹² VicHealth 2013, More than just sport. PICSAR State and Regional Grants (2007 to 2011) Program evaluation and outcomes report, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne, Australia.

¹³ “State Sporting Associations share \$10.2 million to promote inclusion”, VicHealth media release, 19 June 2011 <<http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Media-Centre/Media-Releases-by-Topic/Physical-activity/State-Sporting-Associations-share-ten-million-dollars-to-promote-inclusion.aspx> >



Without a reorientation from collective approaches to person-centered approaches to sport and recreation participation, any service or funding program can not be effective in meeting social inclusion or other public health goals.

6.3 Are there examples of good practice in advancing social inclusion and participation driven by local government and the community sector?

The Disability Sport & Recreation Festival is a good example of utilising partnerships to support inclusion through person-centered approaches to sport and recreation. City of Melbourne has supported the annual Disability Sport & Recreation Festival celebrating International Day of People with Disability since it commenced in 2010. It is a free public event using sport and recreation as a tool to highlight the importance of living a healthy lifestyle, equity, inclusion and opportunities for participation in the community by people with disability. The Festival attracts 20,000 visitors, 35 exhibitors from community, disability and sporting organisations and offers a range of come and try activities. Disability Sport & Recreation's evaluation results show 44% of people with disability sign up to a sport or recreation program at the Festival.

Disability Sport & Recreation's governance structure embeds inclusion. As part of our commitment to equity, membership to Disability Sport & Recreation is free. Only members who identify as having a disability can vote on constitutional matters. Disability Sport & Recreation established an Advisory Panel in September 2013, with delegates from a cross-section of the disability sport and recreation sector. The primary role of the Advisory Panel is to provide guidance and accurate and timely recommendations to the Board on specific issues and for any other informal purposes from time to time. These issues may be nominated by the Board or identified independently by the Advisory Panel.

Disability Sport & Recreation, with support from The Alfred Felton Bequest and Collie Foundation, have commenced a youth engagement strategy called Score! The project is a consumer-driven, multi-platform application to make it easier for young Victorians with disability to take part in sport and recreation. Score! gives voice and power to young Victorians with disability to influence what, when and how sport and recreation programs are delivered so that their participation needs are best met. A supply and demand map will facilitate evidence-based decision-making and service delivery partnerships. The consumer-driven ratings will drive an accreditation program and capacity building.

The 7-a-side football development program, run by Northcote City FC (NCFC) in partnership with Disability Sport & Recreation is a good example of advancing social inclusion and participation through sport and recreation. 7-a-side football is a modified version of soccer, designed for participants with cerebral palsy, acquired brain injury or those who have experienced stroke. NCFC is the only football club in Victoria offering 7-a-side football. Although a specialist disability program, it is fully integrated into the club's structure, providing people with disability access to regular games, specialised coaching, club uniforms, invitations to club social events, including the end of year NCFC presentation night. The entire NCFC community supports the program, organising fundraisers and exhibition games for participants. The 7-a-side football development program at NCFC demonstrates the impact that a positive attitude by coaches and administrators can have. The coaches are respectful to each individual's level of ability, working one on one with players, assisting with their skill development. They demonstrate high levels of patience and understanding of coaching people with disability, creating an inclusive environment. Family members and friends of participants are encouraged to attend the program, forming a support network. Each season, coaches



organise a game between participants and their families and friends. The program could be used as a model for social inclusion in all sporting codes.

7.3 In what way could collaboration between government departments, organisations, services and the community sector be improved to enhance social inclusion for people with disability?

Most importantly, people with disability and their carers need to be involved in these decisions so that the services provided meet the needs identified by the intended beneficiaries.

Disability Sport & Recreation understand that partnerships to increase participation are vital and is keen to work with all levels of government, community sector, people with disability and their carers, sport and recreation organisations, case workers and health professionals to achieve this goal. Recommendations include:

1. Basic information on programs funded through *Access for All Abilities* (for example name of funded organisation, amount and purpose of funding) should be proactively communicated and published;
2. *Access for All Abilities* program should be formally, externally evaluated to measure the social inclusion impacts to people with disability and their carers, including the effectiveness of the \$400,000 investment on a “First-Point-Of-Call-Service”;
3. Organisational funding for sport and recreation services should be clearly linked to the Victorian State Disability Plan and outcomes reported accordingly;
4. As the peak body for the disability sport and recreation sector in Victoria, Disability Sport & Recreation should be consulted on all sport and recreation funding decisions intended to benefit Victorians with disability;
5. It should be easier for service providers to share information about sport and recreation programs to disability support planners, carers and other support people so that Victorians with disability are routinely asked if they would like to take part in sport and recreation activities;
6. Funded organisations should have common reporting frameworks and greater accountability;
7. Person-centred approaches are needed in all sport and recreation services regardless of the setting or who is delivering the service and meet the objectives and accountability requirements outlined in the *Disability Act 2006*; and
8. Awareness campaigns promoting social inclusion should include positive images and experiences of people with disability, be peer-lead and directed at people with disability who are not currently engaged.