



Promoting access, participation and equity for women and girls through sport and recreation

## Womensport NSW Showcase – August 2014

### Panel Discussion - “Gender Equity – Making it happen: Local Councils and Sporting Organisations.”

#### Summary and Recommendations

The Panel consisted of two Chief Executives of State Sporting Organisations – Cricket NSW and Rowing NSW who talked about the commitment of their sports to promoting equity, access and participation for women and girls through sport and recreation, their achievements and barriers they have faced.

Rowing NSW has almost achieved its Key Performance Indicator of a 50:50 board with a 52:48 split.

The three local government representatives were from Leichhardt, Penrith and Parramatta and each talked about why their Council is committed to promoting sport for women and girls, how they are encouraging increased participation, and planning for the future.

Leichhardt is working with other councils to plan for new indoor sports facilities; Parramatta faces a major health issue among women from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities, and Penrith is a growth area which is planning and developing new sports amenities buildings that encourage female participation.

There was a lively discussion with members of the audience raising important issues that need to be addressed.

#### Recommendations

- 1. That the proposals for best practice sports facilities and amenities buildings be pursued and grant funding be available to ensure that there is increased participation of women and girls in new and improved facilities;**
- 2. That all State Sporting Organisations set Key Performance Indicators for increasing women’s representation at senior executive level and on Boards, and**
- 3. That State Sporting Organisations aim to improve the timing of sports events for Women and Girls#, and hold Boys’ and Girls’ events at the same venue on the same day to maximise participation.**

# A recent example of poor timing of Women’s events is the Grand Finals of Central West Rugby Union:

9.10a.m. Women’s Final

12 noon Colts Final

1.30p.m. Second Grade Final

3.15p.m. First Grade Final



Promoting access, participation and equity for women and girls through sport and recreation

---

## Panel

MC Debbie Spillane introduced the Panel and asked the following questions:

**Sporting Organisations:** How are they faring with the issue of gender equity? What are some of the hurdles and triumphs?

**Local Councils:** Why their council thinks this issue is important and what difference are they making?

### **Andrew Jones, CEO of Cricket NSW**

Andrew talked about the successes that Cricket NSW has achieved in making cricket a sport equally for women and men. In particular:

- The success and prominence of the NSW Breakers, who have won 16 of the past 18 national titles, including the last 9 in a row
- The payment of elite players, which began at Cricket NSW and which now sees the top Australian players with genuine professional contracts
- The launches of T20Blast! Girls (for girls 8-12) and the Breakers Junior Cricket League (for girls 12-15) to complete the female pathway from in2Cricket to Grade Cricket

Andrew also emphasised that increasing female engagement in cricket is the No.1 priority for the game in NSW and nationally.

A key challenge now is to increase the number of senior female executives. One of the issues is that candidate pools currently skew strongly male, in line with cricket's traditional fan base. Cricket NSW is undertaking various initiatives to address this.

### **Anthony Blower CEO of Rowing NSW**

Anthony talked about the growth of women's participation in what had traditionally been a male sport undertaken in private boys schools. One of the major difficulties is getting facilities as the clubs have to be by water, which tends to be expensive real estate. Rowing NSW is working with councils and Maritime to overcome this.

He has a KPI from his Board to achieve 50:50 participation by 2016. It is currently 52:48 so almost there. The immediate past President was a woman and 30% of the Board are women.

Rowing NSW has a very strong commitment to women participating in the sport not only as athletes but also as administrators in the clubs and the SSO.

### **Erla Ronan, Group Manager Community and Cultural Services, Leichhardt Council**



Promoting access, participation and equity for women and girls through sport and recreation

**Equity and access** are foundation principles in Council's Community Strategies Plan, and vision that *Council and community will work together for a sustainable and liveable Leichhardt*".

Council has been working to develop a strategic approach to the planning and provision of recreation facilities, services and programs. Central to this approach is the need for research to confirm not only current recreation needs but also emerging trends and population changes to ensure effective planning for the future.

In this presentation I have been asked to identify some of the **hurdles**, and how Council **has met the challenge of broadening participation of women in sport**. This includes a case study of our Women Sixes comp, funded through a start-up grant from (then) NSW Sport and Recreation

**Hurdle: Social patterns and participation in sport:** Lower participation by girls in organised sport at high school - particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

**Response to meeting this challenge** : How local councils change their rules of engagement! Changing the goal posts ! Invest in understanding socialisation paters of young people in active sports eg skate boarding, athletics, teen zones, aquatic centres, rowing, sailing. Council has partnered with Centre of Indigenous Excellence to introduce Koori Games to our primary aged children...enabling us to broaden the narrative.

### **What does the data tell us?**

**A third of Leichhardt residents are involved in sporting / recreation groups and/or fitness groups.**

**Women in Sport – roughly a third of all players.**

### **Hurdles and Challenges**

There is a deficiency of open space recreation facilities in the Leichhardt local government area. The majority of sporting grounds are traditionally male orientated but recent observations highlight that this is changing, as more women participate in non-traditional female sports.

Leichhardt has 13 sporting fields.

**Hurdle:** no regional indoor facilities

Mid 2013 Council convened the Inner West Sports Forum of inner west Councils to discuss deficiencies in recreation provision and ways in which respective councils can work together to jointly address the recreational needs of our communities. Councils represented at the forums recognised that sporting club memberships across the region are growing. New sporting groups are emerging and there is greater need for improved facilities for sporting



Promoting access, participation and equity for women and girls through sport and recreation

training and competition. The baby boom across inner Sydney is contributing pressure on our existing sporting facilities. We have identified a possible site at the Rozelle Marshalling Yards as an appropriate space for the development of a joint regional sporting facility.

**Hurdle:** No Netball Courts but 580 players based in the Leichhardt LGA. Training and competition is outside of the LGA. The most popular women's sports are played on concrete... the most popular men's sports are played on acres of grass!!

**Response to meeting this challenge:** Council investigating a preferred location for a minimum of three netball courts within the Leichhardt LGA plus support facilities. Council also installing netball hoops in 26 parks to encourage netball participation with young people.

We are keen to explore surface treatments that provide shock absorbent surfaces to support injury prevention. Why not invest in technologies re netball surfaces?

**Hurdle: lack of sporting facilities:**

**Response to meeting this challenge:** Partnerships with Local Schools for access to open space (Leichhardt Secondary School)

Innovation - Where deficiencies exist look outside the square- Development of Multipurpose courts (Conversion from stand alone tennis or basketball courts to 6 aside futsal, netball, basketball and tennis).

### **Case Study: Building community capacity and enhancing Governance**

The Balmain district junior league, which covers most for the Sydney metro area, and operates over 300 teams, and over 300 players, is headed up by Operations Manager Jenny Webster . Liza Sheaper is president of Soccer, with 7 clubs.

Council's Playing Pitch partnership, the initiative of our inhouse Team, brings together the Summer and Winter codes in a round-table discussion. It first started as a male-only club meeting, and our team of Aaron Callaghan and Mandy Smith... is growing with women participating, now Jenny comes with 3 other rugby league administrators. Now every local rugby league club has a woman running it!!

This wellspring of talent at local level can be tapped into in the major sporting organisations, with a mentoring and development program.

Council has launched its Women In Leichhardt Leadership program within the Council, and a key event annually will be a networking breakfast bringing women leaders from sport, arts, culture, business, recreation and the ngo sector to network and learn from each other. Women in Leichhardt Leadership will support Women in Sport!

**The critical part played by local government in women in sport is**



**Promoting access, participation and equity for women and girls through sport and recreation**

---

- We know about community development, we know that sport is as much about the resources, the framework, the governance, the safety and the equal access to the public domain, and equal access to the funding sources, as it is about health and wellbeing, fun, participation, teamwork and individual benefits..

Local government is the best agent for change and opportunity – we aim to ensure that the public domain is not the preserve of the elite – that public resources are genuinely available for participation.

**Chris Brown, Recreation Facilities and Program Officer, Penrith City Council**

Chris explained that the current population of Penrith is 190,000 and it is expected to grow by another 30,000 over the next 20 years, so the Council is building new facilities, and is keen to ensure they are best practice and inclusive for all communities. Including delivering 2 new sports ground facilities that are going to be able to cater for both women and men's competition at the one venue, with the inclusion of 4 change room areas with operable walls to allow them to be adaptable, these are currently in design stage, and will be built over the next 12-24 months.

There is an increasing demand for and participation in women's sport. Rugby League has 2 divisions for girls aged 12 – 18, as well as a number of ladies teams. There are 3 Penrith Ladies' Cricket teams and Women's AFL is continuing to grow. At St Clair Leisure Centre they are continually developing new programs for women and girls including a Basketball NSW program called Pink Ball which is a program specifically designed for girls aged 5-12 years of age. They are also introducing a ladies indoor futsal competition for the upcoming summer season.

**Greg Radford City Culture, Tourism and Recreation Manager, Parramatta City Council**

Greg talked about the population of Parramatta being highly diverse with 58% from a Non English Speaking Background, and often from cultures that do not encourage women's sport. Parramatta's obesity levels are the highest in Western Sydney.

The Council runs a very extensive School Holiday Program including specific programs for girls linked with clubs, and has worked with Womensport NSW on activities and come and try programs. The Council will be holding a Girls in Sport breakfast with Womensport NSW in November 2014.

As Parramatta is an established area though, there is no room for growth and new facilities. Clubs that use the facilities feel ownership of them which can be inflexible, and the Council is developing a Parramatta Recreation Plan to unlock venues, and increase ground utilisation by running competitions at different times.

**Discussion**

**Jane Fleming**



Promoting access, participation and equity for women and girls through sport and recreation

---

Jane said that she has two boys but knows many people with children of different genders who have to take them off in different directions at the weekend to play sport because of girls' and boys' sport being held at different venues. It would be much better for social mixing for the sports to be played at the same venues to improve social mixing between the participants of both genders, and that sports should include time to socialise as this fosters a sense of community.

### **Cathy Gorman-Brown from the NSW Office of Sport**

Cathy explained that research has shown that girls need to play sport separately from boys particularly at entry level as exposure to mixed groups retards their sporting development and confidence as they tend to stand back and let the boys lead.

**Jane** explained she did not mean that boys and girls should play in the same team, but at the same venues to socialise after the game.

### **Debbie Spillane**

Debbie recounted about how she had been invited to a 2020 match by Cricket NSW alongside a number of other journalists, and it was not until they got there that they found out that earlier a Women's 2020 game had been played that they were not invited to, and that the spectators that attended that game had to leave the venue and then come back in again if they wanted to watch the men's game. There was also a long delay between the two games.

### **Andrew Jones**

Andrew resolved to follow up Debbie's comments but noted that cricket is the only sport to put its female national team regularly on free-to-air television and Fox Sports.

### **Councillor Leo Kelly Blacktown City Council**

Leo explained that Blacktown has the largest population of any local government area with a population of 330,000 which is growing. He said that it was a pity that the Ministers had left as it is important for them to hear about the pressures on local government from the lack of funding because of 2 years of rate pegging and councils are still expected to provide sporting facilities for a growing population and need more funding and support from the NSW government.

Blacktown as Sport City needs more women administrators.