TABLE OF CONTENTS

Outline 1
Why should we be seeking to increase sport and other physical recreation activities? 1
Why is this relevant for local and regional communities? 2
Participation in Sport and Physical Recreation Activities 3
Why do people choose to participate in sport and physical recreation? 4
What types of sporting and physical recreation activities are the most popular? 5
What is the best way to increase participation? 5
Safe places to walk, cycle and jog 6
Sportsgrounds and Sports Complexes 8
Funding from Non-government sources 9
Tourism Benefits 10
Summing Up 11

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: OUTDOOR EXERCISE EQUIPMENT NEXT TO BIKE PATH – HOBART 7
FIGURE 2: SYNTHETIC OUTDOOR COURT – CRACE, ACT. 8
FIGURE 3: VET SIGN FOR DOG WALKING CLUB 9
FIGURE 4: PRIVATE SECTOR AND ROTARY CLUB SPONSORSHIP OF EXERCISE EQUIPMENT 10

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: PERCENTAGE OF OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE BY STATE/TERRITORY 2
TABLE 2: PARTICIPATION BY STATES AND TERRITORIES FOR AGES 15 AND OVER 3
TABLE 3: PARTICIPATION IN ORGANISED SPORT FOR CHILDREN AGED 5-14 YEARS 4
TABLE 4: ADULT SPORT AND RECREATION PARTICIPATION BY SPORT/ACTIVITY 5
Outline

This paper covers reasons for seeking to increase participation in sport and other physical recreation activities

- Health and social engagement (including as volunteers & spectators)
- Lifestyle, economic attraction and tourism opportunities.

Current trends in participation are also outlined

- By age and sex
- Capital City/ rest of State.

Reasons for participation and non-participation are discussed, as are preferences for participation in different types of activities. The implications for planning are then addressed, including:

- attraction of funding and in-kind support from different sources; and
- business case preparation and use of cost-benefit analysis to support funding applications.

Why should we be seeking to increase sport and other physical recreation activities?

There are a number of reasons.

- Participation in sport and physical recreation can help to reduce the incidence of overweight and obesity, and the associated costs to individuals, communities and governments.
- The benefits of exercise on well-being and mental health have also been well documented. For example, doctors have found that the use of exercise in treating older patients with depression was just as effective as using antidepressants.\(^1\)
- Going to watch a sporting event as a spectator is also a popular recreational activity, with 49% of men and 37% of women attending at least one such event each year. These events ranged from local competitions to professional events such as AFL or ARL games.\(^2\)
- Engagement in the community, such as participation in sporting activities or attendance at events, are important for the mental wellbeing of community members, providing people with social contacts and networks of support.
- Access to sporting and physical recreation opportunities will attract new families to regional areas, and provide reasons for others to stay.
- Tourism associated with sporting and physical recreation activities can also increase income and employment opportunities for local businesses.

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\(^1\) ABS 4156.0.55.001, Perspectives on Sport, Nov 2011, p 1
\(^2\) ABS 4156.0.55.001, Perspectives on Sport, Nov 2011, p 2.
Why is this relevant for local and regional communities?

Recent data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has indicated that 63% of Australian adults, 5 million people, are now overweight or obese. This compared to 56% of Australians who were overweight or obese in 1995. Around 28% of the current population of adult men and women in Australia are obese.

Since 1995 the proportion of adult men and women who are obese has risen across all age groups. Excess weight, especially obesity, is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease, Type 2 diabetes, some musculoskeletal conditions and some cancers.

Across all of Australia’s population, overweight is the second highest contributor to the burden of disease, and is likely to be linked to the highest contributor which is dietary risk. Smoking is the third highest.

There are some differences between States and Territories.

**TABLE 1: PERCENTAGE OF OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE BY STATE/TERRITORY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE/TERRITORY</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>66.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>65.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>64.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>64.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>62.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>62.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>61.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

People living in outer regional and remote areas of Australia, are also 15% more likely to be overweight or obese than those living in major cities.

The overall poorer health status of the more than seven million people living in rural and remote areas of Australia is well documented.

*One in four people living in regional and rural areas is suffering from cardiovascular disease, compared with one in five people in metropolitan areas. The further a person lives from a major city, the higher is their chance of being hospitalized or dying from cardiovascular disease….. The higher rates of cardiovascular disease in rural and remote communities are the result of many compounding factors. Compared to people in metropolitan areas, people in rural and remote areas generally have lower incomes and lower levels of education and employment. They also have more difficulty accessing affordable healthy food, sporting clubs, public transport and environments conducive to walking and cycling.*

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4 ABS 4364.0, Australian Health Survey 2011-12.
6 National Rural Health Alliance Inc, Fact Sheet – Cardiovascular Disease in Rural Australia, May 2015.
The National Rural Health Alliance has identified increased investment in infrastructure as an important contributor to improved health.

Regional development has the potential to make a major contribution to improving rural health and wellbeing. Targeted infrastructure that supports healthy activities such as participation in sports, performing arts, volunteer services and social networking are seen as pivotal to preventing physical and mental health disorders.\(^7\)

A 2006 study of local government expenditure also found that there had been a shortfall of spending on the infrastructure that supports community engagement and social inclusion, such as roads, libraries, community halls, galleries, museums, swimming pools, sports fields, drainage and sea walls.\(^8\)

**Participation in Sport and Physical Recreation Activities**

During the 2011-12 year, 65% of Australians aged 15 years and over participated in physical activities for recreation, exercise or sport. Men had a slightly higher participation rate for sport and physical recreation compared to women (66% and 64% respectively), and there was a general tendency for participation rates to fall with age.

Participation rates for those living in capital cities (66%) was higher than for those living in other parts of Australia (63%).

**TABLE 2: PARTICIPATION BY STATES AND TERRITORIES FOR AGES 15 AND OVER\(^9\)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE/TERRITORY</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>65.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>66.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>61.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>62.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>66.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>69.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT (refers to mainly urban areas)</td>
<td>66.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>80.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over the 2011-12 year, information on participation by children aged 5-14 years in organized sport outside of school hours was also collected. Participation in organized sports by children in this age groups was 61.2% for capital cities and 58.5% for those living outside capital cities.

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\(^7\) National Rural Health Alliance Inc, Fact Sheet – Regional Development and Health, May 2009.

\(^8\) National Rural Health Alliance Inc, Fact Sheet – Regional Development and Health, May 2009.

\(^9\) ABS 4156.0, Sport and Recreation: A Statistical Overview.
### TABLE 3: PARTICIPATION IN ORGANISED SPORT FOR CHILDREN AGED 5-14 YEARS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE/TERRITORY</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>60.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>60.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>56.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>63.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>58.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT (refers to mainly urban areas)</td>
<td>53.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>73.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>60.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Why do people choose to participate in sport and physical recreation?

Of those who participate in sport and physical recreation:
- 33% have indicated that they do so for health and fitness;
- 21% for enjoyment;
- 16% for well-being; and
- 14% for social or family reasons.

In contrast, of those who do not participate:
- 45% indicated that they had insufficient time due to work or study;
- 18% were “not interested”; and
- 17% indicated that they had insufficient time due to family commitments.

Participation in sport and physical recreation also declines with age. For non-participants aged 55-64 years, the most commonly reported reason for non-participation was injury or illness. For those aged 65 years and over the most common reason for non-participation was given as “too old”.

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10 ABS 4156.0, Sport and Recreation: A Statistical Overview.
11 ABS Cat No. 4156.0.55.001, Perspectives on Sport, Oct 2008.
What types of sporting and physical recreation activities are the most popular?

Table 4 shows the top ten sport and recreation activities by participation rate for adults across Australia in 2013-14.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male Participation - %</th>
<th>Female Participation - %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fitness/gym</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>Walking for exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking for exercise</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>Fitness/Gym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycling/BMX</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>Swimming/diving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jogging/running</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>Jogging/running</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>Netball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming/diving</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>Cycling/ BMX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>Yoga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>Tennis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>Dancing/ballet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Rules</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>Pilates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cricket</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similar breakdowns of participation preferences are available at the State/Territory level, and it is not surprising that there are some variations reflecting climate differences, cultural and other factors.

These figures can also reflect people’s access to particular sporting and recreational facilities and opportunities. As an example, the opportunity to play tennis will be limited if there are no tennis courts that are easily accessible.

What is the best way to increase participation?

As a starting point, one way to increase participation would be to focus on the sports and activities that are most popular, and to assess the need for venues and facilities to encourage participation in these activities.

As shown in Table 4, many of the highest rating activities for both males and females are not those that require provision of traditional sportsgrounds.

Many of these activities, particularly walking, cycling and jogging, instead rely on suitable and safe paths and environments.

The relatively high participation rate for swimming, also suggests the need to ensure suitable and accessible pools are available, preferably for year round use.

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12 ABS Cat. No. 41770, Participation in Sport and Physical Recreation, Australia, 2013-14
There is also a high participation in fitness/gym activities by both sexes, and a high participation rate for females in yoga, dancing and pilates.

- Venues and facilities for these activities are often provided by private and community sector operators.

Some community halls and activity centres can be used for a range of sporting and physical recreation facilities, as well as for other cultural, educational and social events.

There may also be opportunities to use school halls for activities such as volleyball, table tennis, pilates or yoga.

**Safe places to walk, cycle and jog**

The provision of safe places and routes for walking, cycling and jogging (among the most popular forms of exercise) can have many benefits. As well as being used for exercise, these facilities can also encourage active travel to work and school, reduce the need for parking spaces and generate environmental benefits.

A substantial amount of work has been done on how to deliver better paths for cycling and walking. Suitable arrangements for the location, design and lighting of such paths are also included as part of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) guidelines.

Outdoor exercise equipment and drinking fountains in public places can also encourage physical activity. The following photographs show examples of outdoor exercise equipment and synthetic courts that are accessible for informal use.
FIGURE 1: OUTDOOR EXERCISE EQUIPMENT NEXT TO BIKE PATH – HOBART
The provision of places and spaces that can be used flexibly for informal exercise can also help to overcome the reason why some people say they are too “time poor” to exercise.

Paths for bike riding and outdoor spaces that can be used for family activities, can provide opportunities for exercise without the need for participants to incur significant costs, or to commit to a schedule for team sports.

**Sportsgrounds and Sports Complexes**

Provision by governments of sporting facilities for traditional team sports such as all football codes, cricket, netball and basketball, will continue to be important for adult participation, as well as for junior sports.

Identifying sources of capital funding for the construction of these sporting facilities can, however, be a challenge for local governments and sporting groups. Often there is a need to seek at least a portion of funding from State and Federal Government programs.

Applications for capital grants will need to be backed up by business cases and cost-benefit analysis. In seeking support for these applications it is important to be able to document the potential health, community engagement and economic benefits accruing. There are a range of methodologies that can be used for this purpose.
In seeking to fund capital works, it is also important to be able to identify how recurrent funds to maintain and operate sports grounds and complexes will be generated.

In areas of water shortage, the use of synthetic surfaces may be justified.

Multi-purpose use of sporting facilities, including for arts activities and private functions, can also assist in raising funds to meet recurrent costs.

**Funding from Non-government sources**

As noted above, some private, community sector or philanthropic organisations may be in a position to contribute to capital and recurrent costs of sport and physical recreation facilities. These can include significant capital contributions, or relatively small scale “in kind” contributions. Examples are shown in the following photographs.

**FIGURE 3: VET SIGN FOR DOG WALKING CLUB**
Tourism Benefits

Regional towns with an adequate supply of accommodation for visitors (which may include campgrounds) can also benefit from tourism associated with sporting events. Attracting these events will often also rely on access to facilities and the support of local volunteers.

- As an example, every second year Alice Springs is the venue for Masters Games. In 2014, these Games attracted 3800 competitors, who participated in 32 different sports. In 2016 the Alice Springs Masters Games will celebrate its 30th anniversary.

Even relatively small communities can benefit from sporting tourism, with activities such as mountain bike events, orienteering, fun runs and junior competitions attracting participants and supporters, who may stay in the area for several days.

There are various ways in which the economic benefits of sport-related tourism can be measured. This can be particularly useful if support from sponsors or governments is being sought.
Summing Up

There are a wide range of reasons why regional communities should plan to increase participation in sport and physical development.

As recommended by the Heart Foundation, a comprehensive approach is needed. Measures to achieve this include:

- planners, policy makers and decision-makers all considering the broader community impacts of increased physical activity, and being actively involved in physical activity coalitions and collaborations;
- ensuring that the physical and social environment supports physical activity;
- providing funding and support in an equitable way that enables broad participation in physical activity; and
- ensuring that a range of convenient and enjoyable options for physical activities are available, accessible and affordable.\(^\text{13}\)

\(^{13}\) Promoting physical activity – ten recommendations from the Heart Foundation, May 2001.
Planning to Increase Participation in Sport and Physical Recreation