



Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission

Sports CONNECT research update



Identifying the sporting needs of people with disability

December 2009

Australian Sports Commission research project in
collaboration with the University of Technology, Sydney



UNIVERSITY OF
TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

Identifying barriers and benefits of including people with disability in sport and recreation

The Australian Sports Commission (ASC) in collaboration with the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) is currently conducting a research project investigating the 'barriers and benefits of including people with disability in sport and active recreation'. The aim of the project is to provide an evidenced-based position to inform government, sport and the disability sector of the factors that influence the participation of people with disability in sport and recreation.

The study is focused on two targeted populations:

- People with disability — end users of sport and active recreation opportunities (through seeking to understand the current patterns of participation and non-participation).
- Disability service providers — those people working directly with people with disability but not in sporting or disability-specific sporting organisations. This population represents a range of organisations — large and small, government and not-for-profit — that provide a wide variety of services across the disability sector spectrum.

The methodology for the study has employed a multi-pronged approach, including:

- a comprehensive literature review
- secondary data review of disability service provider forums — conducted in each state and territory capital in 2008–09 by the ASC using electronic response devices to collect quantitative data, which will be used to provide direction for the qualitative focus groups
- disability service provider focus groups — conducted in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Australian Capital Territory, South Australia and Western Australia, and supplementary in-depth phone interviews that will be conducted in the Northern Territory and Tasmania with the equivalent number of participants. The focus groups will provide qualitative data that will assist the study to gain a deeper understanding of the engagement of disability service providers with sport, their relationships with other organisations, the constraints they face and the strategies they have used to negotiate sport and active recreation participation for their clients
- online end-user survey — seeks to replicate aspects of the Participation in Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey to provide data on participation and non-participation of people with disability, the constraints they face, benefits they receive and their perceptions of sport and active recreation.

This is the first monthly update on the progress of the research, including initial findings. This update aims to prompt discussion into the constraints and benefits of including people with disability into sport and active recreation across both the disability sector and sport and active recreation sector.

Disability service provider forums

The disability service provider forums used an audience response system that allowed all participants an equal and anonymous voice throughout the sessions. The aim of each session was to record the opinions and attitudes of organisations that support people with disability, to increase the participation of people with disability in sport.

One hundred and thirty-nine representatives from 97 disability service provider organisations attended the forums, which took place in each state and territory capital.

Following is an example of one of the questions asked of participants and the resultant findings.

Question: What does sport mean to you?

- Being physically active.
- Amusement, diversion from regular routine.
- An activity capable of achieving a result requiring physical exertion and/or physical skill which, by its nature and organisation, is competitive.
- Any activity or experience that gives enjoyment or recreation.

Findings

Nearly 50 per cent of the representatives from disability service providers responded that sport is ‘any activity or experience that gives enjoyment or recreation’. This is a very broad perception of sport and may include a number of activities that are not based around physical activity.

One forum participant in New South Wales said, ‘The social value of sport is its most valuable gift’.

Additionally, if combined with the other categories ‘being physically active’ (18 per cent) and ‘amusement, diversion from regular routine’ (5 per cent), nearly 73 per cent of respondents did not feel organisation, competition and/or achieving a result were essential parts of what sport ‘is’.

‘Sport is about getting out and having fun,’ one ACT forum participant said.

Just over 27 per cent of all respondents chose the ASC’s definition of sport: ‘an activity capable of achieving a result requiring physical exertion and/or physical skill which, by its nature and organisation, is competitive’.

This presents some interesting food for thought for the sport sector, which is particularly relevant to considerations of how to market sport to the disability sector as a whole.

