



Submission to the National Sports Plan 2017

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About Us

The Australian Sporting Goods Association Incorporated (ASGA) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the National Sports Plan.

ASGA was formed in 1981 as the national industry association representing a broad spectrum of sporting and active lifestyle goods industry participants, including brands, manufacturers, distributors and retailers.

Members of ASGA include the world's leading sports brands and major Australian retailers. We represent over 1000 sporting and active lifestyle goods retail stores around Australia.

Sports retailers range from the very large (1,000+m²) like Rebel Sport and Sportsmart, through to franchisees like The Athletes Foot, family-owned businesses in the High Streets of regional towns and tiny golf club pro-shops. Ownership and business models include franchises, listed corporations, family-owned companies and vertically-integrated international brands.

ASGA is a leading industry voice on issues impacting the health, trade, regulation and taxation of the sporting and active lifestyle goods industries. ASGA aims to foster market growth, provide services and advocate for increased participation in sport and physical activity.

Our members have a distinct interest in advocating for and encouraging a healthy community, where sports participation and physical activity are seen as not only fun activities but a vital area of preventative health.

Context

Australia, like much of the rest of the developed world, is facing a physical inactivity crisis. Obesity has risen to record highs, with over 65 per cent of adults classified as being overweight or obese. One in five Australian adults has cardiovascular disease. Over 25 per cent of 5-17 year olds are overweight or obese.¹

Physical inactivity contributes 6.6 per cent of the overall health burden in Australia and 10 per cent of all deaths.²

To its credit, the Government has recognised this problem, releasing the [National Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines](#) in 2014 to prescribe physical activity levels for children and adults.

Unfortunately, according to the ABS, in 2011-12 only 43 per cent of adult Australians met the 'sufficiently active' threshold of 150 minutes of physical activity over five or more separate sessions per week. Only 19 per cent of Australian children and young people (5-17 years) met the physical activity recommendation of 60 minutes of moderate and vigorous physical activity (MVPA) every day.³

While the Federal Government and most states have plans to combat this physical activity crisis, more can be done and, most importantly, the efforts must be coordinated at the national level.

As such, ASGA is pleased to see this consultation on the National Sports Plan and we look forward to the final Plan being adopted by all levels of Government, sporting bodies and other stakeholders in the near future.

ASGA's submission follows the outline suggested on the consultation website. However, we are not commenting on all areas and will focus our attention on the following:

1. Participation
2. Prevention through Physical Activity
3. Governance
4. Infrastructure
5. Funding

¹ <http://www.sportforall.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Maximising-the-potential-of-Australian-Sport-CAS-15.9.14.pdf>

² Ibid.

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013). *Perspectives on Sport, 2013*, Cat. No. 4156.0.55.1 Canberra, Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Participation

According to the recent [Intergenerational Review of Australian Sport 2017](#) by the Boston Consulting Group “92% of Australian adults have an interest in sport, 11 million adults and 3 million children participate in sports each year, 8 million attend live sports events each year, and a rich network of sports clubs and competitions exist across the country that are supported by 1.8 million volunteers.”⁴

Nonetheless, participation rates are falling, particularly in organised sport. An analysis of ABS data shows a drop of 5 per cent (from 65 per cent to 60 per cent) in sport and physical recreation participation from 2011-12 to 2013-14⁵.

These figures will, if anything, likely get worse, with discouraging figures recently released by [Active Healthy Kids Australia](#) (AHKA), who suggest that Australian kids are now some of the least active in the world, graded a D minus for physical activity.⁶

Aussie kids are failing to meet the basic physical activity guidelines that lead to lifelong health and well-being. Less than 1 in 5 Australian children aged between 5 and 17 years meet the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity each day.⁷

The likely result of these, and other, trends in sports participation is that, according to the Boston Consulting Group, adult participation in sport could fall by around 15 per cent by 2036⁸.

Australia must reverse this trend. The following recommendations are designed to assist governments at all levels, National Sporting Organisations, and other stakeholders to increase sport and physical activity participation.

National Sports Plan Coordination Group

A national approach to combating physical inactivity is vital. While individual programs at the state and national level are welcome, there appears to be little coordination of, or even conversations about, the positives and negatives from each program. Local, State and Federal governments (and other stakeholders) need a forum to share intellectual property to deliver the most effective programs.

We recommend forming a small, multi-sector Group (including representatives from sport, health and education), under the ASC and COAG, to implement the outcomes and recommendations of the National Sports Plan, once it is finalised. Rather than simply handing the Plan to the relevant bodies, the ASC and their State counterparts should ensure the reforms and ideas in the Plan are implemented.

Please note this recommendation is just as important for prevention programs as it is for participation programs. The National Sports Plan has an opportunity to also be the National Physical Activity Plan and we should take that opportunity.

Sports and Recreation Participation Research

The Australian sporting and active lifestyle goods industry welcomed the launch of the first set of results from [AusPlay](#), the new sport and recreation participation survey by the Australian Sports Commission, in late 2016.

ASGA has been calling for a national sports participation survey since the old ERASS survey was discontinued in 2010, so we are very pleased to see the AusPlay research.

Results from the AusPlay survey will complement existing data and research conducted by the ASC in recent years. This research is aimed at giving sports reliable information so they can plan strategies to get more Australians participating in sport and physical activity.⁹

Only by having nationally-consistent and -accepted data can we have nationally effective programs.

⁴ ABS General Social Survey (2014)

⁵ 2011-12 and 2013-14 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Multi-Purpose Household Surveys

⁶ http://www.activehealthykidsaustralia.com.au/siteassets/documents/ahka-2016-long_form-report-card.pdf

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ [Intergenerational Review of Australian Sport 2017](#) p. 18

⁹ <https://www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au/research/smi/ausplay>

While it is early days, ASGA strongly supports continuing with the AusPlay research; allowing third parties access to the raw data, and giving third parties the opportunity to add relevant questions to the survey, to increase our understanding of specific aspects of sport and recreation participation.

Physical Education (PE) in schools

Research cited by the AHKA report showed that:

“State-based data indicate that... 27% of primary schools... report having a specialist physical education teacher who delivers physical education classes, but there was no indication of the level of qualification attained.¹⁰”

“National data indicate that 33% of primary schools... provide at least 150 minutes of physical education per week to students.¹¹”

Less than a third of Australian primary schools have a dedicated PE teacher and barely a third provide the recommended minimum of 150 minutes of PE per week. The Australian education system must do better.

On the upside, physical activity and sport help make schools happier places for students. Children who take part in sport clubs have a greater sense of belonging to the school, are happier while they attend it, and place a greater value on the learning they experience.¹²

We need to stop treating PE and informal physical activity at school as distractions from academic study and acknowledge it is a vital part of a child’s growth and education. If we are serious about combating childhood physical inactivity, students at the primary school level require dedicated PE teachers and a minimum of 150 minutes of PE and sport each week.

Physical literacy should be taught and tested, in the same way numeracy and English literacy are taught and tested.

Sporting Schools

The Sporting Schools initiative is helping 6,000 schools increase 860,000 children’s participation in sport, and to connect those children with community sport.

The Australian Sports Commission (ASC) has partnered with more than 30 national sporting organisations (NSOs) to deliver sport before, during and after school hours, via their network of aligned organisations, coaches and teachers.

The Sporting Schools initiative is vital for improving physical activity participation by primary school-aged children. It should be expanded to include every primary and secondary school in Australia, increase the teacher support component and integrate more fully with local sporting clubs – and not just the traditional big participation sports but other, smaller sports as well.

New forms of the Game

Sports clubs are having trouble attracting and retaining members. As noted by the [2013 Market Segmentation research](#) into sports club participants, Australians face both practical and perceived barriers to sports club participation, including:

- Sport delivery that focuses on competition rather than fun and enjoyment
- A lack of flexibility around the scheduling of sport in traditional sporting clubs
- Organising individuals and teams according to talent rather than retaining friendship groups¹³

People don’t have the time or inclination to make large time commitments to their sporting activities. This is particularly true of ‘destination’ sports, that can only be played/practiced at dedicated facilities, like golf.

¹⁰ Hardy, L, King, L, Espinel, P, Okely, A, and Bauman, A, *Methods of the NSW schools physical activity and nutrition survey 2010* (SPANS 2010). Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport, 2011 14(5): p. 390-396. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jsams.2011.03.003>

¹¹ Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Growing Up in Australia, Longitudinal Study of Australian Children* (LSAC), 2014: Melbourne.

¹² [Designed to Move: Active Schools. Page 11.](#)

¹³ [Adults: Market Segmentation for Sport Participation \(April 2013\)](#) p. 3

The National Sports Plan must acknowledge the way Australians are undertaking sport and physical activity in the modern age. The ASC should work with National Sporting Organisations to assist them in developing new forms of the game, whether that based on the amount of time required to participate, the number of players required, the level of competitiveness, or the types of facilities necessary to participate.

The ASC needs to look outside traditional sports for inspiration, to activities like [Parkrun](#), to see how they organise and use technology to facilitate participation, volunteering and competition.

RECOMMENDATIONS – Participation

1. That the Federal Government, under the auspices of the ASC and COAG, set up a coordinating Group to implement the National Sports Plan
2. That the Federal Government continue funding the AusPlay sport and recreation participation research
3. That every primary school have a dedicated Physical Education teacher
4. That every primary school student receives a minimum of 60 minutes of PE and sport each day
5. That Physical Literacy be a recognised and tested part of the school curriculum
6. That the Sporting Schools (or similar) program be expanded to include every primary and secondary school in Australia
7. That the ASC work with NSOs to deliver forms of the game more suitable to the needs of modern participants, including shorter time commitments, fewer participants, the level of competitiveness and similar issues.

Prevention

According to research conducted by the Boston Consulting Group, “Inactivity and obesity are... leading risk factors for the major causes of disease and mortality in Australia today, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke and some cancers. Moderate amounts of exercise also reduce mental health disease and depression, and have recently been shown to slow and potentially even reverse the onset of dementia.¹⁴ As a result, sport creates \$29 billion of net health benefits each year through reduced healthcare costs and early mortality.¹⁴”

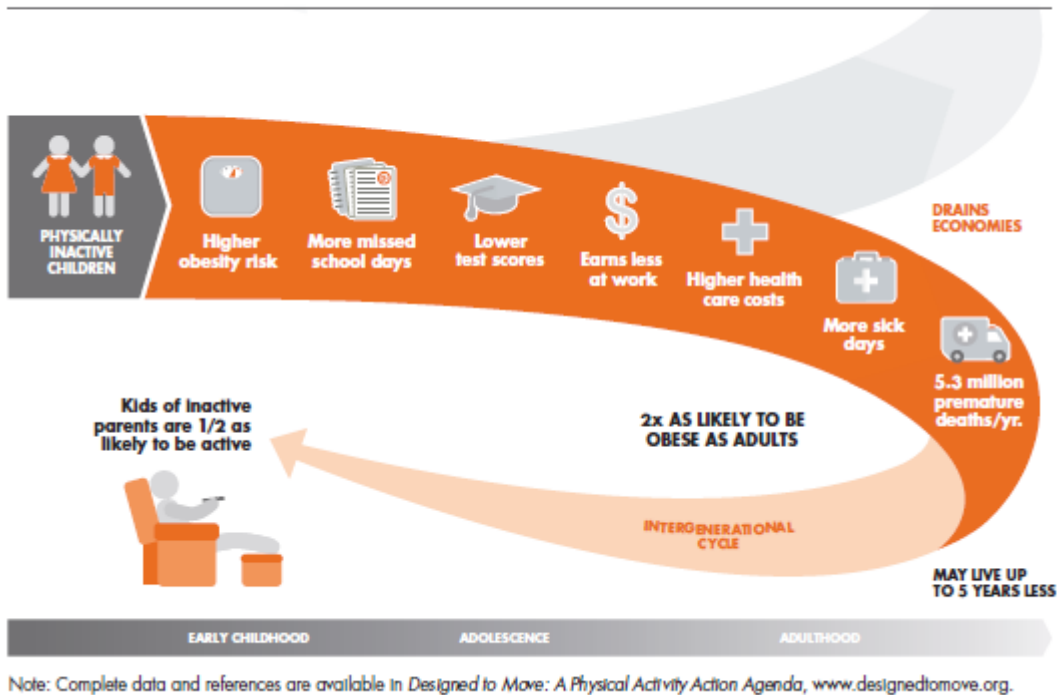
In addition, sport can reduce inter-generational disadvantage. Research shows physically inactive children have worse health, academic, wealth and social outcomes, to say nothing about their cost to societies and economies as they grow older. As shown in the figure below, today’s inactive kids become tomorrow’s inactive parents, with their children half as likely to be as physically active as their peers¹⁵.

¹⁴ [Intergenerational Review of Australian Sport 2017](#) p. 7

¹⁵ *Designed to Move: A Physical Activity Action Agenda*

fig 4 THE COMPOUNDING COSTS OF PHYSICAL INACTIVITY OVER A LIFETIME

Physical inactivity perpetuates a deadly cycle that begins to take hold very early in life.



This is all well-known research. There are numerous governments, sporting organisations and private groups all playing a role in using sport and physical activity to prevent adverse health outcomes. The biggest issue seems to be a lack of coordination between these bodies/programs and the ‘doubling-up’ of resources.

ASGA believes Australia is in an excellent position to both use existing Australian programs (see, for example, the New South Wales [Make Healthy Normal](#) campaign) and to leverage successful international programs.

Creating Active Cities

Research from around the world has shown cities that encourage physical activity have better health and economic outcomes for their residents.¹⁶ For example, consistent stair use can be linked to a 12 to 20 percent reduction in all-cause mortality, including reductions in cardiovascular disease.¹⁷ Other studies have found that redeveloping business areas to promote mixed use and walkability increased employment by 300 percent.¹⁸

ASGA is concerned the Government’s [Smart Cities Plan](#) does not adequately address the vital importance of designing and managing cities to be more pro-movement.

As noted in the *Designed to Move* resource [Designed to Move: Active Cities](#):

“From a city planning standpoint, the evidence presents a strong case to design cities to be more active. In some instances, that can simply be a matter of making the most of existing space – opening up school grounds for public use, for example. Other solutions will involve more substantial changes to urban design and public policy...

Put simply, the research shows active cities are healthier, wealthier, safer, greener and more cohesive. Not surprisingly, the people who live in them are happier.”¹⁹

While significant detail can be found on the *Designed to Move* website and the various reports it contains, the infographic below summarises the research:

¹⁶ [Designed to Move: Active Cities. Page 8.](#)

¹⁷ Meyer, P., Kayser, B., & Mach, F. (2009.) *Stair Use for Cardiovascular Disease Prevention*. *European Journal of Cardiovascular Prevention & Rehabilitation*, 16(2 suppl), S17-S18.

¹⁸ Lawlor, E. (2013.) *The Pedestrian Pound: The Business Case for Better Streets & Places*. United Kingdom: Living Streets & Just Economics Report.

¹⁹ [Designed to Move: Active Cities. Page 8.](#)



Designed to Move: Active Cities. Figure 2, Page 9.

ASGA supports the four Calls to Action as described in the *Designed to Move: Active Cities* report. These Calls to Action implore governments to put movement first when designing, building and using city infrastructure by:

1. *Prioritising physical activity as a solution* – Build physical activity into master plans, administrative actions and incentives.²⁰
2. *Make existing resources active resources* – Look at existing resources for low-cost, high-gain interventions, like abandoned space and after-hours access to facilities.²¹
3. *Design for people to be active* – Cities should be built for people, not just cars. Rethink how you measure where, why and how people move.²²
4. *Build a legacy of movement* – Create changes that will live beyond the current administration, such as infrastructure and policies.²³

The National Sports Plan has a role to play in influencing other government policies and programs. For example, the Government's Smart Cities Plan is a great step in focusing on the future needs of Australian cities. The Cities Reference Group is an ideal body to consider how all levels of government, the community and private sector can work together to improve Australian cities. ASGA considers the *Designed to Move: Active Cities* report a vital addition to the knowledge base of the Cities Reference Group.

ASGA recommends using the National Sports Plan to influence the Cities Reference Group and other stakeholders to incorporate the four Calls to Action in any discussions and planning about future Australian cities.

National Physical Activity Campaign

Australia, with our long-term advertising around issues like seat-belt wearing, the road-toll and workplace safety, is a leader in using national advertising campaigns to change public behaviour. One such campaign was 'Life. Be in it', which

²⁰ [Designed to Move: Active Cities. Page 19.](#)

²¹ [Designed to Move: Active Cities. Page 28.](#)

²² [Designed to Move: Active Cities. Page 31.](#)

²³ [Designed to Move: Active Cities. Page 34.](#)

raised awareness, involvement and motivation to change patterns of behaviour through advertising, public relations and publicity materials in the 1970s and 80s.

“The 'Life. Be in it.' programme was being constantly monitored and development of new phases relied on sound research. Attitudinal studies were undertaken at regular intervals throughout the campaign. The impact of the programme not only achieved an extremely high level of awareness of leisure activities, but also increased people's involvement in them.”²⁴

The National Sports Plan should recommend running a similar, long-term advertising campaign. Not 'Life.Be in it', but something suitable for modern audiences.

Keeping older Australians active

As noted in the Intergenerational Review of Australian Sport 2017 “Over the next 20 years, Australians will become older, more time-poor and more ethnically diverse – all with consequences for the sports landscape. For example, by 2036 there will be one-third more Australians over the age of 65. Currently only 27% of Australians over 65 participate in sports related activities. If this large and growing cohort of older Australians is to remain healthy for longer, there will need to be an expansion of sport and physical activity products tailored to the needs of an older population.”²⁵

A report by the Australian Golf Industry Council into the health benefits of golf noted that:

“For older people, physical activity can improve muscle strength, general fitness and contribute to a reduction in fracture risk. Adding to the physical benefits, being physically active also delays the onset or slows the progression of certain dementias, reduces depression, manages anxiety, generates up to five years more of disability-free life and increases rates of living independently.

Being physically active also confers social benefits, providing an essential source of social interaction, shared interests, sense of community and place within groups, and builds self-esteem and confidence at an individual level. Moreover, participants in sport are more likely to have greater levels of generalised trust in people, feel safe while at home or walking at night and have higher levels of connectedness and physical and mental health than those involved with other types of organisations.”²⁶

The National Sports Plan must recognise older Australians as an important cohort that requires encouragement to become more physically active. Funding should be provided to NSOs and stakeholders working in the aged care sector for physical activity programs that target older Australians, including developing new forms of the game suitable for older people.

RECOMMENDATIONS – Prevention

1. That the National Sports Plan recommends the Smart Cities Plan and the Cities Reference Group incorporate the four Calls to Action, as outlined in the *Designed to Move: Active Cities* report as part of the cities planning process
2. That the Federal Government runs a nation-wide, multi-year advertising and PR campaign to encourage Australians to be more active
3. That the ASC works with NSOs, aged care providers and other stakeholders to ensure older Australians can and are encouraged to be more physically active.

²⁴ [A Brief History of 'Life. Be in it' \(Web archived copy\)](#)

²⁵ [Intergenerational Review of Australian Sport 2017](#) p. 13

²⁶ [Increasing the Participation of Older Australians in Golf](#), Australian Golf Industry Council (2012) p. 7

Governance

Following the Buchanan Review into Athletics Australia in 2015, the Australian Sports Commission responded to the Review's final report and said:

"The Report makes clear that meaningful reform and improvement in Australian athletics cannot occur without structural change in the sport, a position with which the ASC is in complete agreement...

Change and improvement will only occur... if all stakeholders in the sport put aside historical differences and work together towards the "ONESPORT" goal laid down in the report and for the common good of Australian athletics.

The key theme of the Report – ONESPORT – is overwhelmingly endorsed by the ASC as critical to a thriving sport into the future. This means all key stakeholders in the sport putting the common interest ahead of sectional interest - the peak national body Athletics Australia (AA), Australian Little Athletics, AA's member associations, coaches associations, athlete representatives and other bodies. Change cannot be achieved by AA alone."²⁷

ASGA believes these sentiments apply just as easily to the majority of National Sporting Organisations in Australia, particularly those with 'federal' governance structures, as opposed to 'single management' structures.

As noted in the Boston Consulting Group's Intergenerational Review "The Australian sports landscape is complex for a nation our size – it is a fragmented network of public and private sector, and not-for-profit organisations and individual contributors working towards a diverse set of goals. This lack of alignment ensures that a proportion of the \$12 billion spent in the sector each year is used less effectively than it could be, given duplication and the costs of coordination, and a large number of sub-scale organisations."²⁸

The National Sports Plan will give Australia a shared vision of how sport and physical activity should be governed, funded and managed in Australia. For such a vision to be achieved, changes will need to be made to make our sporting bodies more effective.

Improving NSO governance

Federal governance structures for sport have generally developed historically (grown from the 'bottom -> up') and present some very real benefits, including often being more democratic than 'top-down' models and potentially encouraging a wider cohort of volunteers and engagement from club members and participants.

However, in the modern day they also represent very real challenges for sports to modernise and adapt to changing participant trends. Federal structures, and those with different 'branches' of the sport, can encourage a tendency towards silo-like behaviour and empire-building.

ASGA encourages the ASC to work with all sports to move towards single management models that "guarantee the alignment of all tiers of the sport around the strategy, programs and products, major commercial arrangements, and culture and that are supported by effective governance models. This will allow sports to be managed end-to-end – from the elite stars to grassroots participants – whether from a sponsorship, program or pathway perspective. It will also facilitate sports' ability to respond quickly to threats and opportunities, create greater operational scale, and increase their attractiveness to sponsors."²⁹

Supporting Clubs

As important as it is to ensure that National Sporting Organisations are operating effectively, much can be done to improve the professionalism and sustainability of individual clubs.

It is estimated that there are over 70,000 sports clubs currently operating across Australia—many being small not-for-profit organisations run by a wide variety of volunteers from differing backgrounds.³⁰

²⁷ [ASC Response to the 2015 Independent Review of Athletics in Australia One Sport – the Future Course](#)

²⁸ [Intergenerational Review of Australian Sport 2017](#) p. 27

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 28

³⁰ [Sports Club Development, Clearinghouse for Sport](#). Retrieved 28/07/2017

The National Sports Plan should have a national commitment and road-map to improving the capabilities of these clubs in a number of distinct areas:

1. Administrative and volunteer management
2. Funding
3. Sourcing and procurement
4. Sustainability
5. Marketing
6. Governance and decision-making.

ASGA supports the ASC and NSOs to direct funding towards technological solutions that can assist sports clubs to more effectively administer themselves and manage staff and volunteers. We recommend developing closer ties with the [Australian Sports Technologies Network](#) to facilitate these outcomes.

It is also worth investigating how Australian programs like [Good Sports](#) can encourage clubs to adopt revenue streams that don't rely on alcohol sales. In a similar vein, the New Zealand [LiteClub program](#) could be adopted nationally to encourage sports clubs to become more sustainable and spend less on energy costs.

Integrating non-traditional sports and physical activity opportunities

Australia has traditionally viewed sport through an organised, club-based lens, with funding coming through governments to NSOs/SSOs and down to regions and then clubs, or up from club membership dues to the national organising bodies. It's also a system that relies on volunteers.

Traditional sports clubs remain a foundation of sport in Australia and this should be encouraged. However, the atomisation of society, lack of time for participants and online organising tools and communities has seen the development of different sports and physical activity opportunities that have not been formally recognised or supported.

The National Sports Plan provides Australia with an opportunity to rethink how we view and support sport and other activities. Private physical activity providers, like Parkrun and Tough Mudder, and community-based groups that are not traditional sports, such as the small but growing Historical European Martial Arts (HEMA) community, should be integrated into the Plan, with assistance given to those organisations that require it.

RECOMMENDATIONS – Governance

1. That all NSOs move to a 'single management model' of governance
 2. That the ASC and other stakeholders develop a program that can be rolled out to all sporting clubs to improve their efficiency
 3. That the National Sports Plan recognise non-traditional sports and physical activities and work with organisers to attract new participants and become more efficient
 4. That the ASC and NSOs develop closer ties with the Australian Sports Technologies Network.
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Infrastructure

Sporting infrastructure in Australia ranges from the amazing to the woeful, with world-class facilities like the MCG sitting in close proximity to under-funded and under-utilised school sports grounds and local parks.

An estimated \$1.5 billion of public funds was spent on sports facilities in 2015, with much of this funding going to high performance and professional facilities that do little to encourage participation.³¹

Much like the rest of the sports sector, facilities and infrastructure are managed at a range of different levels, including local, state and federal government funding; school-based facilities and grounds; private, for-profit facilities; and re-purposed spaces that are being used for sport/physical activity even though they haven't been designed for that purpose.

The National Sports Plan needs an accurate census of all sporting infrastructure in Australia and a way to prioritise and coordinate infrastructure spending. We also need to open up facilities that are not currently being used to public benefit.

Sporting infrastructure audit

The National Sports Plan should include a determination to conduct an audit of all sporting and physical activity facilities in Australia, including those not traditionally associated with sports (for example, a church hall that is used by a small martial arts club or yoga studio), or which have been repurposed for a physical activity, such as a Tough Mudder paddock or a warehouse used for [Archery Tag](#).

This audit should, where possible, identify needs for improvements to those facilities and, combined with participation data, identify gaps where more facilities are required or where current facilities need to be upgraded.

The audit could include both a formal process for government funded and school sports facilities and parks, and an informal 'crowd-sourced' component for private and non-traditional/re-purposed facilities.

Sporting infrastructure agency

Based on the sporting infrastructure audit mentioned above, a priority list for upgrading sports facilities should be developed, based on evidence of need for both current and estimated future participation levels.

Funding for those priority projects should then be assigned at a national level, with projects actually managed at the state and local level as required.

This role should be undertaken by a national sporting infrastructure agency or similar, with the responsibility and remit to work with states and local governments on planning guidelines, urban master plans and the like. It could also play a coordinating role in co-locating sports facilities into multi-sport hubs that incorporate private, school and public facilities.

The benefits from more coordinated infrastructure investment are significant. For every percentage point efficiency in sport infrastructure spending, \$15 million of savings can be reinvested back into high performance and participation programs.³²

Community Access to School Sport Facilities

According to research and recommendations by [Healthy Active by Design](#), shared use of sport and recreation facilities are important places for regular physical activity, social interaction and the development of a sense of community. It is also cost effective to provide social and community infrastructure through integrated facilities, shared use of facilities and multiple uses of space.³³

This can benefit adults, just as much as children, but an emerging body of evidence is illustrating those children and adolescents with access to existing school recreational facilities outside of regular school hours are more likely to be active.³⁴

Unfortunately, some schools either do not share their recreational facilities or limit the types of shared use and facilities that are available to the public during non-school hours, citing concerns about liability, insurance, safety, cost, staffing

³¹ [Intergenerational Review of Australian Sport 2017](#) p. 34

³² Ibid.

³³ <http://www.healthyactivebydesign.com.au/design-features/shared-facilities>

³⁴ Active Living Research. *Active Living Research: Promoting Physical Activity through Shared Use of School and Community Recreational Resources*. San Diego: 2012.

and maintenance. While these concerns may be legitimate, it seems shortsighted for the Government to support schools that refuse to provide access to their facilities, given the obvious benefits to the wider community.

Joint use agreements can address the perceived barriers to sharing recreational facilities and programs, between schools and the community. These agreements should address issues such as liability, maintenance, vandalism, crime and other safety issues and scheduling and conditions of use.³⁵

ASGA recommends any schools that receive Federal Government funding be required to open their facilities to community use.

RECOMMENDATIONS – Infrastructure

1. That the National Sports Plan include a commitment to a sporting infrastructure audit
2. That a national ‘sporting infrastructure agency’ be set up to prioritise and allocate funding to sporting infrastructure planning
2. That any schools that receive Federal Government funding be required to open their facilities to community use.

Funding

The Crawford Report into the *Future of Sport in Australia*, noted “There is a strong case for increased Australian Government funding of sport. Given the importance of sport to the nation and its potential to contribute to improving health and community outcomes, the Australian Government’s identified direct sport budget does not appear large at present (at around \$200 million per year).”³⁶

While the Crawford Report is now dated, it remains true there is a strong case for increased funding in sport.

The Report also noted the discrepancy between funding for sports participation and funding for elite sport. It gave a strong recommendation to look closely at whether Australia receives more benefit from its citizens participating in sport, compared to the small number of elite athletes competing at international events like the Olympics.

“If more money is to be injected into the system then we must give serious consideration to where that money is spent. If we are truly interested in a preventative health agenda through sport, then much of it may be better spent on lifetime participants than almost all on a small group of elite athletes who will perform at that level for just a few years.”³⁷

ASGA would like to see the National Sports Plan include a commitment to increase funding for sports participation.

The question then becomes, how do we fund sport and invest more in sport, while not impacting too heavily on government budgets?

A national lottery

ASGA is opposed to gambling and does not support a national lottery. However, it seems clear that the idea of a national lottery is gaining favour with decision-makers and the general public.

³⁵ http://activelivingresearch.org/sites/default/files/ALR_Brief_SharedUse_April2012.pdf

³⁶ [The Future of Sport in Australia](#) (The Crawford Report) p. 46

³⁷ Ibid. p. 8

If a national lottery is adopted, we strongly encourage the National Sports Plan to allocate all the funds recouped by the lottery to participation programs and preventative health measures.

In particular, programs targeting children, older people, disadvantaged communities, CALD and migrant communities, Aboriginal communities and people with a disability should be prioritised.

Australian Sports Foundation

The [Australian Sports Foundation](#) works with Australian sports clubs, individual athletes and sporting organisations, large and small, to help raise money for Australian sport, having raised over \$300 million in the last 30 years. In the 2015/16 financial year, sporting clubs and organisations raised almost \$32 million through the Foundation.³⁸

This is an excellent program and should be supported more broadly. It allows individuals and businesses to make tax-deductible gift donations to sports people and sporting clubs and could play a much larger role in fundraising for grassroots sports, reducing the reliance on government funding.

ASGA recommends providing more funds and a national awareness campaign (targeted at both club administrators and club participants) about the role of the ASF and the benefits to both clubs and donors of its DGR status.

Reducing financial barriers to participation

Financial barriers to sports participation was a strong and common theme throughout the Crawford Report review process. The cost of fees, insurance, equipment and uniforms are all posing a barrier to growing the participation base.³⁹

This hasn't changed in the years since the Crawford report was published. Indeed, if anything, things have gotten worse. As noted in the [Adults: Market Segmentation for Sport Participation \(April 2013\)](#) report, costs, both purely financial and in relation to perceptions of 'value for money', are major barriers to people joining sports clubs.⁴⁰

There are a number of voucher programs, tax incentives and rebates across Australia and internationally that provide incentives for people to participate in sport and join sports clubs. These can range from simple Government vouchers that help families pay club registration fees; reduced health insurance premiums for provable levels of exercise; tax incentives for the purchase of sporting uniforms and equipment and the like.

ASGA strongly supports these types of programs and recommends the National Sports Plan include a commitment to further research these types of programs to determine which are the most effective at driving participation and adopt the most effective at a national level.

Fringe Benefits Tax

ASGA supports [FITnotFBT](#), the campaign by Fitness Australia to extend the FBT exemption to small businesses that want to subsidise off-site fitness services for their employees.

At the moment, an employer who can provide fitness training services on their business premises qualifies for a Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) exemption. However, if a small business, which doesn't have the space on-site, wants to provide precisely the same service in the local gym or park they can't access an FBT exemption.

Small and medium businesses account for 99 per cent⁴¹ of business and 70 per cent of the jobs in Australia. The vast majority will never be able to provide on-site fitness facilities.

Deloitte estimates the short-term cost to the Federal budget of extending the FBT exemption to SMEs would be less than \$70 million per annum but some of this would be immediately recouped by increased income tax from fitness centres and fitness instructors that would flow from the move.⁴²

³⁸ <https://asf.org.au/about/who-we-are/>

³⁹ [The Future of Sport in Australia](#) (The Crawford Report) p. 49

⁴⁰ [Adults: Market Segmentation for Sport Participation \(April 2013\)](#) p. 6

⁴¹ Media Release, The Hon Bruce Billson MP, Minister for Small Business "Small business key to G20's growth target", 17 July 2014.

⁴² <http://fitness.org.au/articles/fitnotfbt-toolkit-for-businesses/579>

Extending the FBT exemption to small and medium enterprises that want to encourage their staff to access external fitness providers is a simple and inexpensive way of encouraging more Australians to participate in a healthy and physically active lifestyle.

It also provides the same exemptions to small and medium enterprises that are currently available to larger companies that have the resources to offer such services in-house.

RECOMMENDATIONS – Funding

1. That the Government does not adopt a National Lottery for sports funding
 2. That, if such a lottery is adopted, all proceeds go to sport and physical activity participation programs
 3. That the ASC runs a national awareness campaign about the role of the Australian Sports Foundation
 4. That the Government extend the FBT exemption so small and medium enterprises can offer an FBT-exempt subsidy to their employees to access off-site fitness services
 5. That the National Sports Plan include funding for further research into the effectiveness of vouchers, rebates and other incentives to grow sports participation
 6. That the Federal Government adopt any such vouchers, rebates or other incentives that are proven to be effective
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Conclusion

The Australian sporting and active lifestyle goods sector has a vested interest in promoting a healthy and active community. As shown above, physically active Australians not only improve their own health through sport and exercise, they also improve their communities and contribute to the economy through increased spending and lower health costs.

This would see holistic outcomes of better health and well-being from the child / youth stage of life, right through adult working life and into retirement, creating a far healthier and more productive Australian society.

ASGA welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the National Sports Plan. We look forward to working with the Australian Sports Commission, the Government and other stakeholders to implement the plan.

Our members thank the Commission and the Minister for the opportunity to be involved in this consultation and I would be pleased to discuss this submission further, at your convenience.

ENDS