

Words into Sporting Action

A Practical Guide to Achieve Gender Equity in Your Sport and Recreational Organisation and Improve Performance.



Message from the Executive Director

The South Australian Government through the Office for Recreation and Sport (ORS) is committed to the importance of female leadership in sport and active recreation. *Words into Sporting Action* is part of the ORS commitment to fostering high quality governance in the South Australian sport and recreation sector.

Promoting the need for gender diversity within the world of sport and giving women more options and choices is vital to the sport and active recreation sector moving forward.

ORS is working conscientiously to ensure that the sport and active recreation sector eliminates barriers to women's participation in all aspects and at all levels of sport and active recreation, particularly in relation to in governance.

I am pleased to present *Words into Sporting Action: A practical guide to achieve gender equity in sport and active recreation organisations*.

Words into Sporting Action is a best practice guide based on five principles to assist sport and active recreation organisations to develop diversity and inclusion policies and practices. Evidence suggests that changes in organisational practice and culture will enable you to better engage and promote women into leadership roles.



Paul Anderson
Executive Director,
Office for Recr Sport

Preamble

The Office for Recreation and Sport is committed to raising the profile of, and acknowledging the important role that women play in all aspects, and at all levels, of sport in South Australia.

ORS will continue to commit to implementing strategies to help address the gender imbalance through our women and sport initiatives. *Words into Sporting Action* is one such initiative.

Words into Sporting Action is intended to promote the need for gender diversity within the world of sport and at giving women more options and choices within the sporting sphere.

Words into Sporting Action refers to the workforce and it is important to note this term is used to reflect both paid and volunteers positions in the sport and active recreation industry. It covers everyone including the Chief Executive Officer, the Board and Committee representatives and the people who make the competitions and events happen throughout the year.

In developing this Guide, we offer special thanks to the Premier's Council for Women, the Office for Women and those industry organisations who provided case studies.

Words into Sporting Action

Organisations with men and women represented equally at all levels of hierarchy perform better. That's a fact.

To fully seize upon future opportunities for the South Australian sport and recreation community, we must acknowledge the importance of female leadership in areas that have been traditionally male-dominated.

Women in South Australia are among the best educated in the world and there is strong evidence showing that diverse workplaces deliver tangible and real business outcomes including increased engagement and heightened levels of participation and innovation due to diverse thinking.

If South Australian sporting groups are to remain healthy and lead the competition, we need to move beyond talking about gender and how it's applied, and start taking action.

Words into Sporting Action was adapted from the original *Words into Action: A Practical Guide*, developed by the South Australian Premier's Council for Women in partnership with local industry and the Office for Women.

There are Five Key Principles (with supporting actions) for organisations to achieve equal representation of women and men in senior leadership roles. These principles are aimed at boards and executive managers who realise the need for gender equity, but who are unsure how to achieve it.

The Five Principles:

Principle 1: Commitment

Principle 2: Audit and Evaluation

Principle 3: Leadership

Principle 4: Organisational Culture, Diversity and Equity Policies

Principle 5: Recruitment and Retention

If your sport or recreational organisation wants to embed policies and strategies to promote women to leadership roles, refer to this guide when reviewing your existing practices and identify at least one action under each Principle as the start of your change process.

The Economic Case for Diversity

- Diverse workplaces deliver tangible and real business outcomes including innovation due to diverse thinking, increased employee engagement and heightened levels of workplace participation.
- Successful management of diversity is linked to improvements in organisational effectiveness, performance, profitability and revenue generation.
- There is growing evidence that companies with the highest representation of women in top management perform better financially than companies with fewer female senior executives.
- A longitudinal study of 800 Australian companies (Kulik 2011) has found senior managers in diversity conscious organisations reported higher financial performance, productivity and employee retention.
- Over the past six years, large scale companies (worth more than \$10 billion) with both women and men on their boards outperformed businesses with all-male boards by 26 per cent.

“The broad issues of respect, gender equity, support, power networks, workplace access and flexibility, recruitment and attraction practices, ongoing measurement and reporting are vital elements in understanding and addressing the parts that make up this challenging picture.”

Elizabeth Broderick, Sex Discrimination Commissioner

Principles

Principle 1: Commitment

We are committed to improve our organisation's diversity and equity

We Will

- Show genuine leadership to create and support change - everyone has a role to play in ensuring behaviours enable a supportive culture for women to participate and achieve at all levels.
- Identify the advantages of having diversified personnel within the organisation (particularly women in senior roles) and ensure the message is understood throughout.
- Develop diversity and equity policies and programs specific to our organisations and members.

Principle 2: Audit and Evaluation

In order to identify diversity and equity issues and establish proactive strategies and targets to address them

We will

- Undertake a participatory gender audit to identify issues within our organisation, including:
 - ▶ numbers and proportion of women at all levels and areas
 - ▶ male and female remuneration levels if they differ
 - ▶ attitudes of staff and senior managers towards women in different areas of the organisation
 - ▶ analysis of programs/initiatives so far undertaken (if any) aimed at improving diversity and gender equity
- Examine the performance of comparable organisations in the same or similar industries with respect to the inclusion of women at all levels and identify policies and programs that have contributed to better representation of women.

- Set targets for the number of women at all levels including senior leadership positions, and assign responsibility for achieving these targets to the CEO and senior representatives.
- Measure the performance of strategies and programs aimed at increasing female participation and the number of women in senior leadership positions. Analyse what measures were successful or unsuccessful and why.

Principle 3: Leadership

Our executive team and board will take a leadership role to ensure true cultural change

We will

- Identify the advantages of a diversified workforce (both paid and volunteer) within our organisation (particularly having women in senior roles) and ensure the message is understood.
- Adopt best practice to influence cultural change.
- Champion and acknowledge female role models and leaders in the organisation.
- Shift the focus from the 'pipeline', i.e. attracting women at low levels of employment or areas of traditional female participation, to the 'trickle-down effect' of appointing and retaining women in senior roles where the impact is far greater to the organisation.
- Encourage all leaders, men or women, to take an active role to create sustainable solutions. Create a legacy that demonstrates how men in senior roles lead by example to support opportunities for women.
- Educate senior members of the organisation on the benefits to our business in embracing gender equality and ensure those who are leading gender equity strategies are acknowledged/rewarded.



Principle 4: Organisational Culture, Diversity and Equity Policies

We will design policies and conditions that recognise the particular needs of women and other under-represented groups in our organisation.

We will

- Develop and promote flexible work/volunteer arrangements to support men and women, ensuring primary caregivers are afforded opportunities whilst maintaining a life balance.
- Encourage flexible employment which could include:
 - ▶ paid or unpaid parental leave
 - ▶ graduated return to work
 - ▶ breastfeeding breaks and facilities
 - ▶ carers leave
 - ▶ purchased leave
 - ▶ tailored work hours, compressed weeks or annualised work hours
 - ▶ flexi-time or part-time
 - ▶ job-share
 - ▶ tele-work or work from home.
- Encourage innovative approaches to support equity and diversity across the organisation.
- Recognise and celebrate progress as it is made through internal and external marketing.
- Consider nominations for formal Awards or register as an Employer of Choice for Women such as the Workplace Gender Equality Agency www.wgea.gov.au

Principle 5: Recruitment and Retention

We will increase the number of women who apply for and are appointed across our organization and provide development opportunities to our female staff.

We will

- Ensure that job advertisements are inclusive of all potential applicants and avoid stereotyping.
- Specifically engage and target qualified female candidates to apply for roles.
- Ensure interview panels are made up of at least one third of women.
- Adopt mechanisms to ensure gender pay equity for all employed staff.
- Identify, mentor and promote talented women.
- Consider shadowing and other leadership programs for women, and offer women the opportunity to work on cross-functional teams inside and outside the parent organisation.
- Encourage and support professional networks amongst employees and volunteers, including female focused networks.
- Ensure rigorous exit interviews are undertaken, to understand how women may be better supported and encouraged to participate and progress in the organisation.

“For women, as with anyone, it is a case of ‘you can’t be what you can’t see’. So the more we begin to see women working equally alongside men in traditionally male dominated industries – of which sport is certainly one – the more women will feel these careers are a valid choice.”

Elizabeth Broderick, Sex Discrimination Commissioner

CASE STUDY

Melody Cooper, The first woman to head coach a men's Australian Hockey League team

Melody Cooper has broken new ground in many aspects of her sporting life. First as a player, winning a Metro Men's Premiership for Seacliff Hockey Club, while also continuing to play and coach in women's teams. New Zealand born, Cooper fought hard to represent her country, eventually playing at the London Olympics for the Black Sticks. She then set her sights on coaching, taking charge of a Premier League Team before becoming the first woman to head coach an AHL men's team.

"Post Olympics I was seeking a new challenge and saw coaching as the new adventure. The Adelaide Hockey Club needed someone to direct their Men's program which had lost its way and I put my hand up. The club backed me in from day one and I could see the culture required some work. We spent the first few weeks setting expectations with key focus points for each week. The group lacked structure and hadn't been exposed to high intensity training sessions which I knew how to deliver.

"The belief within the team grew during my first year as coach. In my time as head coach we finished third and then won the Premiership for the first time in 12 years and won it again the following year. I joined the State program as support for another coach but he opted not to put his hand up in 2014 so I jumped at the opportunity and shared it with trusted coach, Mark Victory. I led the overall planning of the program and developed and ran our offence. This was a rebuilding year where we made a number of significant changes. The key one being supporting and developing local athletes instead of getting interstate imports to compete. Our strategy certainly helped the culture and filtered through to our local competition. Previous coaches had been quite intimidating, meaning players feared making mistakes. As a result performances were extremely inconsistent.

"I think the fact I competed in the men's local league for a number of years played a big part in me being able to transition to the coaching role. That helped bridge the gap and the guys respected me as a player and the leadership I showed.

"Adelaide Hockey Club & Hockey SA have both been very supportive of me and have helped me achieve my coaching aspirations. They have opened doors to enable this to happen via SASI, Hockey Australia & connecting me with other coaches who've assisted me in developing my coaching skills. I have never felt disadvantaged because I was a woman. Knowing that hockey boards and key administrators are supportive is encouraging for other female coaches should they wish to put their hand up to coach a Men's program in the future. "It seems I've had a positive influence on the men I've coached as some of the players have performed at their best over the last two years, but I think this is because my coaching style has suited the way they play, rather than because I'm a woman."

A Note from Hockey SA CEO Andrew Ellis

"Melody has made a substantial contribution to hockey in this state culminating in her appointment as the men's co-head coach for the Southern Hotshots AHL team as well as being named Hockey SA's Coach of the Year in 2014. She is well respected across the men's program and a great role model for younger females to look up to. "Hockey is played equally by men and women and Hockey SA has a good track record of gender diversity in key roles within the organisation. Our staff group is split almost equally between male and female and four of our six Board members are female, including the Chair. In recognising the importance of gender diversity, our Members approved a new Constitution last year that requires a minimum one third of each gender on the Board."

CASE STUDY

SA Aquatic and Leisure Centre and YMCA

The management of the SA Aquatic & Leisure Centre (SAALC) by YMCA services a significant cross-section of the Adelaide community with the common denominator being people. The Centre represents a large investment of State Government funds into a wonderful sporting asset. With well over 1 million visits every year from people of differing backgrounds, genders, races and creeds, embracing diversity in all of its forms is a must do, allowing YMCA to meet their own ideals and the vision of the State Government for the Centre.

The SAALC aims to provide exceptional services to the community and as part of that, they have focused on gender diversity within their own organisation and for their customers. They are dedicated to supporting staff around their family commitments which means flexibility when it comes to having children, nursing loved ones and the practicalities of managing school drop-offs and pick-ups.

The Management team uses a continuous improvement process initiated by a desire for fundamental change and the need to work together with a shared vision which has resulted in better gender empowerment. Staff wanted a more humanistic 'multiplier culture' that made their tasks easier, happier and more connected. This led to open conversations that have developed the management team, by embracing strengths and improving weaknesses and both genders are now equally represented within the team. This has seen better business results, communication objectives have been met and it's led to a healthier work environment.

Having great female leaders within the SAALC management team has meant greater emotional intelligence, a culture that embraces different viewpoints and a broader skill base to better deal with issues and opportunities. These women have fostered belief in emotional intelligence, active listening and individual support to achieve the needs of the business.

The focus on gender diversity has also extended to the services SAALC offers its patrons in family change rooms, breast feeding areas and through developing programs targeting Pre and Post Natal women and war veteran's wives.

A Note from SAALC General Manager Andrew Luscombe

"Embracing Gender Diversity means that organisations can unlock the power within both staff and patrons. This strength creates belonging and connection – once someone belongs, they become more interested in building the relationships that contribute to strong communities.

"Gender diversity brings different viewpoints to the table. It can aid your service, product or view of how something will be used. To respect, understand and embrace these differences allows people to access the emotional intelligence of business and gain more than a transactional relationship with their clients. Once people are engaged, much can be achieved. In a recreation business that includes swim teaching, health and wellness, that personal connection, effective communication and a feeling of belonging are critical."



“Adelaide Hockey Club & Hockey SA have both been very supportive of me and helping me achieve my coaching aspirations, regardless of me being a woman. They have opened doors for me to enable this to happen via SASI, Hockey Australia & connecting me with other coaches to help develop my skills as a coach. Having their support is encouraging for other female coaches should they want to ever put their hand up to coach a men's program in the future.**”**

Melody Cooper, First Woman to coach a State Men's Hockey Team

CASE STUDY

Athletics South Australia

Athletics SA is a not for profit, community focused organisation offering athletics activities across the spectrum , from recreational participants right through to elite competition. They cover regular track and field meets in the summer and road running, cross country running, and race walking during the winter. As a state member association of Athletics Australia , they work closely with other member associations around Australia, while operating under a club structure system. Adam Bishop took the helm of Athletics SA in 2008 after being critical of its administration and wanting to make a positive difference.

Diversity and inclusiveness is an important element of Athletics SA's charter and they pride themselves on offering competition and recreational opportunities for all. This inclusiveness and flexibility extends to all aspects of their business.

Having a fairly complex set of finances including the food and beverage operations at SA Athletics Stadium, the need for a dedicated bookkeeper was compelling. So after losing a full-time staffer who had been managing most key functions including finances to illness, Athletics SA sought an alternate structure, bringing in the part time bookkeeper they needed.

The main benefit of this change, was rather than have one person working across both administration and finance in a full time role, they were then able to target skilled individuals for each role. Moving the finance position to a standalone part-time role also opened up an opportunity to those with a preference for part-time work, including skilled and experienced mums.

Their CEO Adam Bishop called on his professional networks to find someone suitable. In the end the individual selected was well matched for the role. She was a mum who was looking to return to the workforce in a part-time capacity, so the role was perfect for her. She was a CPA and so by being flexible in their working arrangements, they were able to recruit a highly qualified and skilled worker whom they otherwise may not have been able to afford.

A Note from Athletics SA CEO Adam Bishop

"Diversity is important for balance and also ensuring different perspectives are considered in organisational decision making. One challenge we have at Athletics SA (at the time of writing) is the interesting dynamic between a predominantly male board and a predominantly female paid work force. I really started thinking about the business impact of this dynamic at the gender diversity conference I attended through the Office of Recreation and Sport.

"We haven't quite got the gender balance right in terms of board and staff composition, but we're working on this!"

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CASE STUDY

Rugby SA

We met Stephen Ludlam and heard how inclusivity has served him well in the business arena. He has shown us how flexibility and inclusiveness can be important in achieving business growth and in encouraging those who may not traditionally consider themselves as perfect for a role. Ludlam has also extended his inclusive mindset to sporting organisations that he has been involved with, chiefly within the traditional male bastion of rugby union with stunning results.

"I have been involved in rugby for 50 years as a player, coach and an administrator. I was not always the best player, but included everybody in training, the game, and the life of the club and was always elected Captain. "I took over as Chairman of SA Rugby Ltd. in July 2014, following on from Wally Bell. Wally had put together a board of ex-South Australian players and most of them were significant business leaders. He had put in place a great governance and a professional approach to the running of the business of rugby in SA and we had one female board member and a good but small women's game.

"This was a great achievement but nothing astonishing, except for the complete lack of any gender bias. We treated everybody with equal respect and I have to say I was somewhat surprised as I had not seen it in my 50 years of rugby. Over the last six months we have realigned the strategy of Rugby SA, designed a new organisation structure and in doing so, recognised we needed some additional skills on the Board. We determined that we needed somebody with marketing, communication and branding skills."

"Now here is the next 'surprising' thing because for a bunch of well-connected business men - all with colleagues we knew with those skills - our short list was one male and two females. Why? We wanted the best in SA, not in SA Rugby but in the entire State. We would choose the best candidate, and that is what we did, with the appointment of our second female Director on December 1, 2014.

"This individual did not lack confidence, had done all her research and blew the selection panel away. This is her first board appointment and she will be a role model for many wishing to follow her.

"The Board of SA Rugby is also a role model for diversity and inclusion and my guess is that it's partly driven by 'political correctness' and partly driven by a sense of what is right and ensuring we are giving everyone a 'fair go' . We also see the revenue advantage of inclusion and innovation in our sports experiences, brought about by presuming everyone should have a chance to play or volunteer. "I will always return to the belief my family instilled with me, which is 'You are no better than anybody else, but nobody is better than you' ."

A note from Lachlan Clark, CEO SA Rugby

"Diversity is extremely important for rugby and it prides itself as being an inclusive sport and is a game for all frames. Furthermore, rugby is played in 120 countries around the world and our community is extremely multicultural.

"With respect to gender diversity, rugby is an Olympic and Commonwealth Games sport for both genders in 7s, and the Rugby World Cup is contested for both men and women in the 15s form of the game. South Australia has a thriving women's rugby community which in 2013 produced 10 Australian Representative Squad members in 7s and 15s.



“When I left ASC, an employee thanked me for persevering with her and for the opportunity. She knows she has moved across a barrier - one of her own making - and she knows she is being successful. She will help others break the barrier.**”**

Steve Ludlam, Former CEO of ASC and Chairman of Rugby SA

CASE STUDY

Bowls SA

The single gender pennant competition structure has been in place since the inception of the two bowling associations – the Royal SA Bowling Association looking after the needs of men in 1900 and the SA Women’s Bowling Association establish in 1930. At the time it was felt that single gender competitions adequately met the needs of all bowlers, especially considering women of those eras were rarely in paid work.

Historical and societal changes during WWII meant women started returning to the workforce after having children and were no longer available to play in their traditional mid-week competition. This was initially addressed by conducting a women’s triples pennant on Saturdays alongside the men’s fours pennant, but it was only moderately successful.

The issue of women being restricted to single gender contests first arose in 2007 when Bowls SA was legally challenged by a woman who wanted to play against men as she believed this would provide her with a greater level of competition. She took the matter to the Equal Opportunity Commission and they granted two exemptions to allow the sport to continue single gender competitions, provided Bowls SA progressed towards an open one.

In doing that, it was discovered that both men and women were very protective of their single gender matches citing different bowling styles, conversational subjects and the desire to have time out with their own sex. To this day, there are still men and women who want to safeguard this side of the sport by only playing in single gender competitions however, the many benefits of open bowls cannot be ignored.

With many regional clubs struggling to field women’s competitions, the option for women to play in an open competition on Saturdays has seen them stay in the sport and in many instances, has meant clubs have survived. In metropolitan Adelaide the introduction of open bowls on Saturdays was adopted with overall support, and elite women players became the first to take up the opportunity of being selected for the new format on Saturdays.

The change to Open Bowls has seen the breaking down of existing segregation within clubs and the opportunity now exists for a husband and wife to compete in the same competition, on the same day if they share similar playing abilities. It has also offered a lifeline to many regional clubs by having their highest competition available to both men and women on a Saturday. With younger players coming into the sport, gender diversity is more and more important as these generations have grown up in an equal opportunity environment and expect nothing less.

Single gender pennant bowls is still being conducted in the metropolitan area and regions, however Bowls SA directs that Open Bowls must be the primary competition and are proud they have managed such big changes within their sport to ensure everyone now has access to the highest level of competition.



Helpful References and Resources

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Some extra reading

Business centric:

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“It will always be a case of achieving a critical mass. Men in male dominated industries, including sport, have a critical role to play in shaping this future. After all, research clearly shows that gender diverse workplaces achieve the best results.”

Elizabeth Broderick, Sex Discrimination Commissioner

