Start Playing
Stay Playing

A plan to increase and enhance sport and active recreation opportunities for women and girls
The members of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Women and Girls in Sport and Recreation are:

- Professor Doune Macdonald (Chair) - Head of School, School of Human Movement Studies, Faculty of Health Sciences, The University of Queensland.
- Ms Natalie Cook - Director Sandstorm, and Olympian
- Dr Sue Hooper - Director of the Queensland Academy of Sport’s Centre of Excellence for Applied Sport Science Research, and Olympian
- Mr David Keating - member of the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER) board, and former President of ACHPER QLD
- Ms Sue Nisbet - General Manager of Softball Queensland.

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May 2015
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Foreword from Professor Doune Macdonald, Chair of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Women and Girls in Sport and Recreation

While the lives of Queensland’s women and girls are varied and ever-changing, their lifelong participation in sport and active recreation can bring them health, happiness, companionship and a sense of achievement.

The Queensland Government is to be congratulated for prioritising the promotion of active women and girls, and the committee has been privileged to work with the government to generate this report.

The committee is optimistic that the government and its many partners within and beyond the sport and active recreation industries will continue to prioritise change so that all women and girls, regardless of interests, abilities, responsibilities, ethnicity, socio-economic status or location can access, enjoy, lead and celebrate sport and active recreation across their lifespan.
Executive summary

This report presents the recommendations of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Women and Girls in Sport and Recreation (the committee). The report also provides a summary of the methods used by the committee and an overview of the evidence and information that informed each recommendation.

The committee was established by the Minister for National Parks, Sport and Racing on 6 March 2013. Comprising five experts in the fields of sport, recreation and physical activity, the committee was tasked with developing evidence-based recommendations to guide the government in its quest to increase and enhance women’s and girls’ lifelong participation in sport and active recreation. In undertaking this work, the committee focused on the role of the Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing (the department).

The committee undertook research and stakeholder consultation to identify current and emerging trends and issues relevant to programs and policies to improve women’s and girls’ participation in sport and active recreation. The committee reviewed population data, government and academic reports, and research papers, and facilitated two stakeholder consultation forums. This work produced the paper Start Playing, Stay Playing: A summary of the evidence and stakeholder insights into women and girls participation, which is included as appendix A to this report.

The committee’s research and stakeholder consultation underpinned the development of seven principles considered critical in the Queensland context: strengthen; regionalise; access; include; leverage; innovate; and collaborate. These principles informed the framing of the committee’s recommendations and should be incorporated into their implementation.

The committee developed nine recommendations, each supported by implementation strategies that provide further detail for the recommended course of action for the department. The recommendations and implementation strategies are grouped under the following five themes:

- Funding programs — building on opportunities presented through existing funding programs to improve women’s and girls’ participation.
- Places and spaces — physical environments that are inclusive and safe for supporting women’s and girls’ participation.
- Skills and knowledge — enriching practices and building the potential of organisations and individuals to improve women’s and girls’ participation opportunities.
- Partnerships — working with key partners to ensure a coordinated effort to improve women’s and girls’ sport and active recreation opportunities.
- Marketing — encouraging women and girls to participate through effective promotion using existing and emerging opportunities.

Figure 1 on page viii provides a visual summary of the committee’s recommendations, strategies and principles.
## Summary of Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Implementation strategies</th>
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<tr>
<td>It is recommended that the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing:</td>
<td>To implement the recommendations, the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing is to:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funding programs</td>
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</table>
| 1. Provide dedicated funding to stimulate state sport and active recreation organisations to support and expand women’s and girls’ participation. | Prioritise women’s and girls’ participation under the Queensland Sport and Recreation Industry Development Program 2014–16 through special initiative funding to support state-level sport and recreation organisations to:  
- develop and implement initiatives that focus on women’s and girls’ participation and involvement in sport and active recreation.  
  
| 2. Foster women’s and girls’ participation in sport and active recreation through the department’s Get in the Game funding programs. | Target women’s and girls’ participation under the Get in Game funding programs to:  
- increase the percentage of girls taking up Get Started vouchers to 50% of voucher recipients  
- support clubs to attract more female participants by prioritising women’s and girls’ participation under Get Going  
- assist community sport and active recreation clubs to provide facilities that support female participation through Get Playing.  
  
| Places and spaces                                                                 | Undertake the following activities to improve government places and spaces so they better provide for women’s and girls’ participation:  
- develop principles for female-friendly sport and active recreation places and spaces in consultation with Queensland women and girls  
- audit places and spaces against the female-friendly principles to help improve sport and active recreation places and spaces  
- champion and promote the adoption of the female-friendly principles across government  
- develop and implement programs to support women’s and girls’ participation at the government’s Active Recreation Centres, such as family programs and camps for women and girls from across the Queensland community  
- advocate the development of a sports facility precinct that caters for, and celebrates, female participation in sport at the community and elite level.  
  
| 3. Lead, with other Queensland Government departments, the implementation of strategies to support women’s and girls’ participation at government-owned sport and active recreation places and spaces. | Undertake actions to improve non-government places and spaces:  
- develop and promote a self-assessment process for organisations to help them adopt and implement the female-friendly sport and active recreation principles  
- endorse organisations that adopt the female-friendly sport and active recreation principles and allow them to use the government’s brand for women’s and girls’ participation (see recommendation 9) to promote their programs.  
  
| 4. Promote female-friendly sport and active recreation places and spaces owned and/or managed by clubs, local governments and other sport and recreation providers. |  

## Summary of Recommendations

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<tr>
<td><strong>Skills and knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Support improvements to industry, community and individual skills, knowledge and practices by implementing initiatives that:</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Build capability to increase and enhance sport and recreation participation opportunities for women and girls by improving industry, community and individual skills, knowledge and practices.</td>
<td>• improve the ability of organisations to deliver positive and inclusive participation opportunities for women and girls by developing and facilitating training opportunities (workshops, conferences and online learning products, including social media tools)</td>
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<td>• educate and encourage women and girls to participate in sport and active recreation by creating and promoting a vibrant, engaging and prominent departmental web portal</td>
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<td>• acknowledge individual skills through recognition and reward strategies for female achievers in sport and active recreation</td>
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<td>• provide networking and development opportunities for leaders of women’s and girls’ sport and active recreation.</td>
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<td><strong>Partnerships</strong></td>
<td>Capitalise on opportunities to:</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Drive female participation by working collaboratively with national, state and local organisations that contribute to, and influence, sport and recreation participation opportunities.</td>
<td>• collaborate with organisations on initiatives to improve women’s and girls’ participation</td>
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<td>• partner with the Commonwealth Government and the Queensland Department of Health on initiatives that link sport and active recreation to women’s and girls’ health initiatives</td>
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<td>• partner more proactively with local government as a key provider of active recreation opportunities.</td>
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<td><strong>Engage with the Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE) to support opportunities and participation in sport and active recreation in the school system.</strong></td>
<td>Partner with the DETE to:</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>• identify and develop appropriate support mechanisms to enhance delivery of the health and physical education (HPE) curriculum</td>
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<td>• facilitate and encourage teachers and school coaches to develop their skills and confidence to deliver sport and active recreation participation opportunities</td>
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<td>• strengthen links between schools and community sport and active recreation providers to coordinate and optimise programs and resources.</td>
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<td><strong>Marketing</strong></td>
<td>Establish an advisory committee for a two-year period to:</td>
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<td>8. Establish an advisory committee on women and girls in sport and active recreation to provide advice on the implementation of these recommendations.</td>
<td>• oversee and drive the implementation of recommendations to increase and enhance women’s and girls’ participation in sport and active recreation</td>
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<td>• monitor progress and provide expert advice on implementation issues.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Develop a brand and implement an integrated marketing and communications strategy to encourage women’s and girls’ participation in sport and active recreation.</td>
<td>Develop a marketing strategy to:</td>
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<td>• identify effective ways to promote women’s and girls’ participation in sport and active recreation</td>
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<td>• build on the opportunities presented by social media and other online initiatives</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• identify and promote options to leverage participation outcomes for women and girls, including the Commonwealth Games and other major events in Queensland</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• identify and act on opportunities to promote role models and leaders to inspire women and girls to participate in sport and active recreation.</td>
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Figure 1: Summary of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Women and Girls in Sport and Recreation's Recommendations and Principles
1. Introduction

Participation in sport and active recreation is important to leading a healthy life due to the myriad of physical, psychological and social benefits an active lifestyle provides. However, in 2013, many Queensland women and girls are still missing out on the benefits of participation.

Recognising the importance of participation in sport and active recreation to women’s and girls’ lives, the Minister for National Parks, Sport and Racing established the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Women and Girls in Sport and Recreation (the committee) on 6 March 2013.

The committee was tasked with developing recommendations to increase and enhance women’s and girls’ participation in sport and active recreation, focusing on the role of the Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing (the department). This report presents the recommendations of the committee for the Minister’s consideration.
1.1 It’s time to be proactive about women’s and girls’ participation in sport and active recreation

Participation in sport and active recreation has physical, psychological and social benefits for women and girls. Regular participation in physical activity:

- prevents a number of illnesses such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, osteoporosis, high blood pressure, obesity and some cancers such as breast and colon cancer\(^1\)

- is associated with improved psychological health and with lower levels of stress, anxiety and depression in women, and increased self-esteem and confidence in both women and girls\(^2\)\(^3\)

- may contribute to women’s and girls’ sense of inclusion and may support the development of community cohesion, identity and pride when participation experiences are positive and appeal to all in the community\(^4\)\(^5\)

- is positively associated with girls’ and women’s academic aspirations and achievement\(^6\)\(^7\)

- is correlated with positive sexual health attitudes and behaviours, such as later onset of sexual activity and greater use of contraception.\(^8\)

To make the most of these benefits, it is important that as many women and girls as possible regularly participate in and enjoy sport and active recreation.

It is acknowledged that participation in sport and active recreation is important for men and boys, and that the gender-specific issues that influence men’s and boys’ participation in sport and active recreation are an area worthy of attention. However, the committee has considered evidence showing that females in Queensland are less likely to participate in sport and active recreation than are males. As outlined in appendix A, the rate of participation in sport and active recreation is 4.8% lower for Queensland women (aged 15 years and over) compared with Queensland men; the participation rates are 59.5% and 64.3%, respectively.\(^9\) The difference in participation rates is more pronounced between girls and boys (14 years and younger): participation rates of 49.4% for girls and 63.2% for boys.\(^10\) These figures indicate that action is required to improve equity in participation and outcomes.

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\(^10\) Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012b). Children’s Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities, Australia, April 2012 (cat. no. 4901.0).
1.2 The committee and its role

The committee comprises five experts in the fields of sport, recreation and physical activity with experience in elite competition, academia, research and sports administration.

Professor Doune Macdonald, Head of The University of Queensland’s School of Human Movement Studies is the chair of the committee. Professor Macdonald is supported by four other committee members:

- Ms Natalie Cook — five time beach volleyball Olympian
- Dr Sue Hooper — Director of the Queensland Academy of Sport’s Centre of Excellence for Applied Sport Science Research and Olympian
- Mr David Keating — member of the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACPER) board, and former President of ACHPER QLD
- Ms Sue Nisbet — General Manager of Softball Queensland.

The committee’s priority was to develop evidence-based recommendations for consideration by the Minister for National Parks, Sport and Racing that focus on ways to increase women’s and girls’ participation in sport and active recreation and to encourage lifelong participation. More specifically, the committee was tasked with:

- identifying the needs and current and emerging trends in relation to women's and girls’ participation and developing actions in response to these needs and trends
- identifying strategies to reduce barriers and build on assets for women’s and girls’ participation by focusing on education, club support and increasing access to active recreation activities.

1.3 Method: Developing evidence-based recommendations

To develop evidence-based recommendations, the committee identified and considered current and emerging trends and issues relevant to programs and policies to improve women’s and girls’ participation in sport and active recreation. The committee:

- analysed population information on women's and girls' participation from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Queensland Health
- reviewed government reports and academic literature relevant to women’s and girls’ participation in sport and active recreation, with a focus on identifying the motivating factors to participation, the barriers to and enablers of participation, the transition points within the lifecycle when women's and girls’ participation starts to decline, and evaluating programs within Australia and overseas to improve women and girls' participation
- facilitated two consultation forums with Queensland sport and active recreation stakeholders in Brisbane and Townsville on 15 May 2013 on the topic of women's and girls’ participation.

The key issues and trends identified by the committee are outlined at table one on page 12. A more detailed presentation of the key issues and trends is provided in appendix A within the report Start Playing, Stay Playing: A summary of the evidence and stakeholder insights into women and girls participation.

The work undertaken by the committee led to the formation of nine recommendations for consideration by the Minister. The key issues and trends also informed the committee's development of principles considered important in the Queensland context.
Women and girls in Queensland are generally less likely to participate in sport and active recreation than are men and boys.

Females belonging to specific community groups have particularly low rates of participation in sport and active recreation. These groups include: young women (18–44 years of age), women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, disabled women, girls from single-parent families, women and girls from low socio-economic status backgrounds, women and girls from rural areas, older women (65 and over), and women with young children.

**Findings from the review of government and academic literature include:**

- Life transitions when women or girls are likely to stop participating in sport include adolescence, young adulthood, early motherhood and old age.
- Women and girls are more likely to engage in non-organised forms of sport and active recreation than in organised or club-based activities.
- Dance was identified as a popular physical activity for girls, with a participation rate similar to that of popular sports such as swimming and diving and netball.
- Fun is an important motivator for girls' participation; however, body image becomes a motivator as girls transition to adolescence.
- Programs to improve participation should focus on overcoming the barriers to participation experienced by women and girls.

**Insights from the stakeholder forums include:**

- Stakeholders identified that strategies to attract women and girls to participate should:
  - allow for flexible participation opportunities
  - help women and girls feel comfortable participating
  - highlight and consider the social aspects of participation
  - provide a broad range of activities
  - promote role models and effectively market to women and girls
  - support women’s roles on boards, and committees, and as volunteers
  - partner effectively with other organisations in delivering opportunities
  - address the costs of participation
  - address barriers associated with distance and isolation in regional and rural areas.

- Cultural and societal attitudes provide a barrier to women’s and girls’ participation and should be addressed by:
  - overcoming gender stereotypes and unhelpful attitudes to women’s and girls’ participation
  - sport and recreation organisations recognising the issues affecting women’s and girls’ participation and providing better support
  - focusing on families and schools as vehicles for cultural and societal change
  - sport and recreation organisations making an effort to be culturally aware and inclusive
  - addressing the funding inequity for women’s and girls’ activities
  - reducing the cost of sport and recreation.

- Several organisations have a role in increasing and improving women’s and girls’ participation, including state and federal government agencies, schools, local government, corporate organisations, peak sport and recreation bodies (e.g., QSport, Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation), national and state sport and recreation organisations, universities and training organisations, not-for-profit sport and recreation clubs, other community organisations, commercial organisations that provide or support participation and the media.
2. Principles

The following principles were derived from research, the demographics of Queensland and the committee’s aspirations for broad and positive change. Together they provide both a checklist and signposts for the recommendations and strategies, and their implementation:

Strengthen
There is existing capacity in the community and among groups and individuals that can be built on to increase and enhance sport and active recreation participation opportunities for women and girls. This strong foundation of individual, group and community assets provides the basis for generating improvements in sport and active recreation participation opportunities and outcomes.

Regionalise
Queensland has many people living in regional, rural and remote areas. It is important that regional differences are considered so that all women and girls can make the most of sport and active recreation opportunities, regardless of where they live.

Access
Historically, women and girls have experienced complex barriers to their participation in sport, recreation and physical activity. These barriers should be addressed by focusing on enablers to improve the accessibility of sport and active recreation participation to women and girls.

Include
Women and girls come from a variety of backgrounds and identify with different communities with varying needs, interests and expectations. This diversity within the Queensland community requires a focus on delivering better outcomes for all women and girls, particularly those who do not currently enjoy a physically active life.

Leverage
Opportunities to develop, support, promote and celebrate women’s and girls’ participation exist in many forms and in many contexts. A strategic approach to improving participation involves building on what is currently delivered within and across the community, with the aim of maximising opportunities and achieving system-wide improvements.

Innovate
Little change in participation rates will be achieved if the sport and recreation sector continues to deliver the same experiences to women and girls. Real increases and enhancements to women’s and girls’ participation can be achieved by embracing and adopting creative new approaches to support involvement in current and emerging sport and active recreation opportunities.

Collaborate
A number of organisations contribute to, and influence, women’s and girls’ participation. Broad-reaching and sustainable improvements to women’s and girls’ participation are best achieved by organisations working together to implement community-wide improvements.
3. Recommendations

The committee has developed nine recommendations for consideration by the Minister. Implementation strategies underpin each recommendation and provide further detail on the committee’s recommended course of action for the department. The recommendations are grouped under the following five themes:

- Funding programs — building on opportunities presented through existing funding programs to target improvements to women's and girls' participation
- Places and spaces — physical environments that are inclusive and safe to support women's and girls’ participation
- Skills and knowledge — enriching practices and building the potential of organisations and individuals to improve women’s and girls’ participation opportunities
- Partnerships — working with key partners to ensure a coordinated effort to improve women’s and girls’ sport and active recreation opportunities
- Marketing — encouraging women and girls to participate through effective promotion using existing and emerging opportunities.

Although the recommendations are numbered from 1 to 9, the committee advises that each recommendation is of equal priority. The recommendations should be viewed as part of a package, with each recommendation playing an important role in achieving the aim of increasing and improving women’s and girls’ participation in sport and active recreation.

The recommendations are focused on the role of the department and how it should work with other government and industry stakeholders to increase and enhance opportunities for women’s and girls’ participation. The committee has consulted with the department in the formation of these recommendations.
3.1 Funding programs

Background

The focus of this theme is targeting improvements to women’s and girls’ participation by building on opportunities presented through existing funding programs administered by the department.

One of the key ways the department supports the provision of sport and active recreation participation opportunities is through its funding programs. Primarily, the department administers funding programs that support not-for-profit community organisations to support the delivery of sport and recreation activities at the local grassroots level. The recommendations made under this theme are about better targeting women’s and girls’ participation under current programs rather than providing new or discrete funding programs. Current key funding programs administered by the department include the Queensland Sport and Recreation Industry Development (QSRID) program 2014–2016 and the Get in Game funding series, which includes the programs Get Started, Get Playing and Get Going programs. Through these programs there are opportunities to prioritise funding to increase and enhance women’s and girls’ participation.

There is evidence that prioritising funding to improve participation outcomes for targeted populations, such as women and girls, can improve participation outcomes. The report in appendix A summarises the Active England and Community Sport Initiative programs managed by Sport England, which prioritised funding to improve participation in target populations, including women and girls. Evaluations of these funding programs found that these were successful in increasing women’s and girls’ participation in sport and active recreation.

During the committee’s stakeholder consultation forums, it was suggested that the department should drive improvements in women’s and girls’ participation by targeting and prioritising funding. Stakeholders advised that, in their experience, targeted and prioritised funding had increased and enhanced participation opportunities for women and girls. Stakeholders also held the view that a funding inequity exists, favouring sport over active recreation and resulting in poorer participation opportunities for women and girls. Stakeholders advised that activities popular with women, such as walking for recreation, going to the gym and dancing, received less funding than organised sport activities.

RECOMMENDATION 1: QUEENSLAND SPORT AND RECREATION INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The department to provide dedicated funding to stimulate state sport and active recreation organisations to support and expand women’s and girls’ participation.

Implementation strategies

The department to prioritise women’s and girls’ participation under the QSRID 2014-2016 program through special initiative funding to support state-level sport and recreation organisations to develop and implement initiatives that focus on women’s and girls’ participation and involvement in sport and active recreation.
**Further information: Recommendation 1**
The QSRID program provides funding to state-level sport and active recreation organisations to support their offering of activities, programs, services and events. Prioritising women’s and girls’ participation through the program would aim to influence the service delivery priorities of state-level sport and active recreation organisations to increase and improve activities for women and girls provided by both the state-level organisations and their affiliated clubs.

**RECOMMENDATION 2: GET IN THE GAME**

The department to foster women’s and girls’ participation in sport and active recreation through the department’s Get in the Game funding programs.

*Implementation strategies*
The department to target women’s and girls’ participation under the Get in Game funding programs in order to:

- increase the proportion of girls taking up Get Started vouchers to 50% of voucher recipients
- support clubs in attracting more female participants by prioritising women’s and girls’ participation under Get Going
- assist community sport and recreation clubs to provide facilities that support female participation through Get Playing.

**Further information: Recommendation 2**

*Get in the Game* is the Queensland Government’s headline initiative to support participation in grassroots sport and active recreation, with a budget of $47.8 million over three years from 2012/13 to 2014/15. As outlined in the points below, there is the opportunity to target women’s and girls’ participation through the three *Get in the Game* programs.
**Get Started**

- Through the *Get Started* program, children who cannot afford to, or would otherwise benefit from, joining a sport and active recreation club are eligible to apply for a voucher of up to $150 to help pay for club membership and/or participation fees.
- Information from a sample of voucher recipients suggests that more boys than girls received vouchers in round one of the program.
- To increase girls’ participation, it is recommended that 50% of *Get Started* vouchers should be provided to girls and that the department should implement strategies to reach the 50% target.

**Get Going**

- The aim of the *Get Going* is to support not-for-profit local and regional sport, recreation and community organisations with projects intended to increase membership; this is an opportune program to drive increases in women’s and girls’ participation.
- Initiatives to support female participation funded through the program should be evidence-based and aim to address the barriers to women’s and girls’ participation.

**Get Playing**

- The *Get Playing* program helps local and regional not-for-profit sport, recreation and community organisations develop or upgrade facilities to support participation in sport and active recreation.
- Because research has identified that poor access to suitable facilities is a barrier to women’s and girls’ participation, the committee proposes that the *Get Playing* program prioritise projects that support female involvement in sport and active recreation.
- The female-friendly principles for sport and recreation places and spaces (see recommendation 3) could guide the prioritisation of funding under this program and could be used to guide the assessment of funding applications.
3.2 Places and spaces

Background

The focus of this theme is ensuring that sport and active recreation places and spaces are inclusive and safe to support women’s and girls’ participation.

This theme is about the physical environments where people participate in sport or active recreation, including:

- dedicated purpose-built facilities such as sports fields, indoor or outdoor courts, gyms and indoor rock-climbing centres
- open spaces, for example community parks, beaches, national parks, and trails.

As outlined in appendix A, one barrier to women’s and girls’ participation is the lack of available, or poor access to, places and spaces to participate in sport and active recreation. Although the lack of suitable facilities is identified as a barrier to participation for women and girls, evidence suggests that the availability of safe, comfortable and culturally appropriate facilities enables women and girls to participate in sport and active recreation.

Queensland sport and active recreation stakeholders identified that appropriate and quality places and spaces would encourage more women and girls to participate and improve participation experiences. Stakeholders in Townsville noted that the lack of suitable facilities in regional and remote areas was exacerbated by distances between towns and lack of transport options.

Sport and active recreation places and spaces are managed by a number of organisations including Queensland Government agencies, local governments, not-for-profit clubs, associations, community groups and businesses. The committee has developed recommendations that focus on improving both government and non-government places and spaces.

Image: © Netball Queensland
RECOMMENDATION 3: QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT PLACES AND SPACES

The department lead, with other Queensland Government departments, the implementation of strategies to support women’s and girls’ participation at government owned sport and active recreation places and spaces.

Implementation strategies
The department to undertake the following activities to improve government places and spaces so they better provide for women’s and girls’ participation:

- develop principles for female-friendly sport and active recreation places and spaces in consultation with Queensland women and girls
- audit places and spaces against the female-friendly principles to help improve sport and active recreation places and spaces
- champion and promote the adoption of the female-friendly principles across government
- develop and implement programs to support women’s and girls’ participation at the Government’s Active Recreation Centres, such as family programs and camps for women and girls from across the Queensland community
- advocate the development of a sports facility precinct that caters for and celebrates female participation in sport at the community and elite level.

Further information: Recommendation 3

The committee has identified the following areas of intervention to improve women's and girls’ participation at Queensland Government managed places and spaces: ensure that places and spaces are female-friendly; programs that support women's and girls’ participation at the department’s facilities; and a new facility celebrating female sporting achievements.

Ensuring that places and spaces are female-friendly
The committee recommends that the department demonstrate leadership by ensuring that the places and spaces it manages demonstrate best practice in relation to gender inclusiveness. The department should also strongly encourage and advocate that other Queensland Government agencies support gender inclusiveness at places and spaces that they manage. The committee identified that a benchmark or standard is required to articulate clearly what makes a facility female-friendly. Therefore, it is recommended that the department develop principles for female-friendly places and spaces. These principles should be based on evidence and should be developed in consultation with women and girls.

Programs to support women’s and girls’ participation at the department’s facilities
The Active Recreation Centres operated by the department at Tallebudgera, Currimundi and Lake Tinaroo provide a unique opportunity for the department to improve active recreation opportunities for women and girls. It is recommended that the department develop programs specifically for women and girls at these centres. Programs could focus on providing opportunities for those women and girls who are known to experience significant barriers to participation such as women and girls from rural communities, from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island backgrounds.
A new facility celebrating female sporting achievements
Stadiums Queensland operates nine major government-owned sports facilities including Suncorp Stadium, the Brisbane Cricket Ground (the Gabba), and 1300 Smiles Stadium in Townsville. Although women can participate at these facilities, they are well known and celebrated for being the home of successful Queensland male football teams. The committee considers that there is no major sports facility in Queensland that is celebrated as the home of a female sports team. To promote female sport in Queensland, it is recommended that the department advocate for the development of a sports facility that celebrates female achievements and participation in sport. Such a facility would not be for exclusive female use but should provide for, and celebrate, female sport at the elite and community level.
**RECOMMENDATION 4: NON-GOVERNMENT PLACES AND SPACES**

The department to promote female-friendly sport and active recreation places and spaces owned and/or managed by clubs, local governments and other sport and recreation providers.

*Implementation strategies*

The department to:

- develop and promote a self-assessment process for organisations to help them adopt and implement the female-friendly sport and active recreation principles
- endorse organisations that adopt the female-friendly sport and active recreation principles and allow them to use the government’s brand for women’s and girls’ participation (see recommendation 9) to promote their programs.

**Further information: Recommendation 4**

The vast majority of sport and active recreation places and spaces are managed by local governments, and sport, recreation and community organisations and business. To encourage non-government organisations to improve their facilities, it is recommended that the department develop a self-assessment process for organisations to help them adopt and implement the department’s principles for female-friendly sport and recreation places and spaces (to be developed, see Recommendation 3). The self-assessment process should aim to support stakeholders, particularly those that rely on volunteers, to improve their facilities to better cater for women’s and girls’ participation.

Recommendation 9 provides that a brand be developed to tie together the department’s promotion of women’s and girls’ sport and active recreation. To support non-government facility managers further, it is recommended that the department endorse those organisations that adopt the principles and allow them to use the government’s brand for women’s and girls’ participation for their promotion. As well as helping organisations self-promote, supporting the marketing of non-government female-friendly places and spaces in this manner will better enable individual women and girls to find suitable facilities.

The department could also influence the uptake of the female-friendly principles by non-government facility managers by using these principles to assess funding applications received under the *Get Playing* program (see Recommendation 2).
3.3 Skills and knowledge

**Background**

This theme is about building skills and knowledge, enriching practices and building the potential of both organisations and individuals to improve women’s and girls’ participation opportunities.

Investigations undertaken by the committee identified that community programs and health and physical education classes do not always cater well to women and girls (for further information see appendix A). This suggests that there is a need to improve the skills and knowledge of organisations, teachers, coaches and officials to provide better opportunities to women and girls. Queensland sport and active recreation stakeholders also held the view that improving industry capacity by increasing the understanding of factors influencing women’s and girls’ participation would lead to improved outcomes for female participation.

As part of this theme, it is also suggested that improving the skills and knowledge of individuals will increase participation. This is supported by a review of the literature that identified that women and girls do not participate in sport and active recreation because of a lack of confidence and motivation (for further information, see appendix A). This suggests that actions to build women's and girls' confidence and motivation through skill and knowledge development may lead to increased participation.
RECOMMENDATION 5: BUILDING INDUSTRY, COMMUNITY AND INDIVIDUAL SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES

The department to build capacity to enhance sport and recreation participation opportunities for women and girls by improving industry, community and individual skills, knowledge and practices.

Implementation strategies
The department to support improvements to industry, community, and individual skills, knowledge and practices by implementing initiatives that:

- improve the ability of organisations to deliver positive and inclusive participation opportunities for women and girls by developing and facilitating training opportunities (e.g., workshops, conferences and online learning products, including social media tools)
- educate and encourage women and girls to participate in sport and active recreation by creating and promoting a vibrant, engaging and prominent departmental web portal
- acknowledge individual skills through recognition and reward strategies for female achievers in sport and active recreation
- provide networking and development opportunities for leaders of women’s and girls’ sport and active recreation.

Further information: Recommendation 5

The department aims to build the capacity of organisations and leaders within organisations to provide participation opportunities and to support individuals to engage in sport and active recreation through the provision of community programs, workshops, and physical activity resources. These initiatives can be built upon with the aim of increasing and enhancing women’s and girls’ participation in sport and active recreation.

The department can deliver skill and knowledge-building initiatives throughout Queensland on the Internet. However, the committee recommends that some development opportunities be delivered on a face-to-face basis to provide important networking opportunity for the sport and active recreation sector.

Image: © Sporting Images Redcliffe
3.4 Partnerships

**Background**

This theme is about the department working with its partners, emphasising that increases and improvements in women’s and girls’ participation will require the coordinated effort of many organisations that support or provide sport and active recreation participation opportunities for women and girls.

A number of organisations in the government, commercial and not-for-profit sector play important roles in the provision of sport and active recreation participation opportunities, including:

- the Commonwealth Government and the Queensland Government, which provide leadership through policy and strategy development and funding to support participation outcomes
- local government, which provides and plans the provision of places and spaces for participation, and funds and delivers programs
- schools, which provide participation opportunities through health and physical education classes, within-school and inter-school sport competitions, and less formalised modes such as play and active transport
- national and state level sport and active recreation organisations, which support clubs and associations to deliver community participation opportunities at the regional and local level
- sport and recreation industry peak bodies, which provide support, leadership and strategic direction to the sport and recreation industry
- sport and recreation industry service organisations, which provide services to enhance the development of sport and recreation
- clubs and associations, which provide direct participation opportunities at the local and regional level
- businesses which provide participation opportunities for many activities (e.g. gym/fitness, squash, golf, indoor rock climbing, adventure activities) and/or support participation (e.g. sell sportswear).

Many organisations and sectors are involved in both the support and provision of sport and active recreation participation opportunities. Thus, it is recognised that no single organisation or sector can by itself achieve broad sustainable improvement and enhancements to women’s and girls’ participation.

The summary of the outcomes of the consultation in appendix A shows that Queensland sport and active recreation stakeholders acknowledge the importance of the department working with other organisations to achieve community-wide increases in and enhancement of women’s and girls’ participation opportunities. Evaluations of initiatives that were successful in improving women’s and girls’ participation, such as Sport England’s *Active England* and walking group programs implemented in Australia, highlight the importance of partnerships in delivering sustainable participation opportunities.
**RECOMMENDATION 6: SECTOR-WIDE PARTNERSHIPS**

The department to drive female participation by working collaboratively with national, state and local organisations that contribute to, and influence, sport and recreation participation opportunities.

*Implementation strategies*

The department to capitalise on opportunities to:
- collaborate with other organisations on initiatives to improve women’s and girls’ participation
- partner with the Commonwealth Government and the Queensland Department of Health on initiatives that link sport and active recreation to women’s and girls’ health initiatives
- partner more proactively with local government as a key provider of active recreation opportunities.
Further information: Recommendation 6

The department is already active in supporting not-for-profit sport and active recreation associations and clubs through funding and providing advice and capacity-building workshops and programs. The committee has identified that there are significant opportunities for the department to more actively partner with the Commonwealth Government and the Queensland Department of Health. In particular, in the committee’s view, there are opportunities for the department to encourage sport and active recreation participation through health promotion initiatives. It was also identified that there is an opportunity for the department to partner more effectively with local government to improve active recreation opportunities for women and girls.

Other partnership opportunities identified by the committee include the department:

- linking women and girls to programs offered by other organisations such as the Commonwealth Government Sport Leadership Grants and Scholarships for Women
- working in partnership with state sport organisations to promote Queensland Academy of Sport (QAS) athletes (particularly in the lead up to the Commonwealth Games)
- providing sponsorship to organisations for programs and initiatives that aim to increase and enhance women’s and girls’ participation
- partnering with the tertiary sector to identify and implement improvements to the initial teacher education of all teachers so that they can provide better participation experiences to girls
- partnering with the tertiary sector to improve participation opportunities for university students.

Recommendation 7: Partnership with Education Queensland

The department to engage with the Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE) to support opportunities and participation in sport and active recreation in the school system.

Implementation strategies

The department to:

- identify and develop appropriate support mechanisms to enhance delivery of the HPE curriculum
- facilitate and encourage teachers and school coaches to develop their skills and confidence to deliver sport and active recreation participation opportunities
- strengthen links between schools and community sport and active recreation providers to coordinate and optimise programs and resources.

Further information: Recommendation 7

The committee feels strongly about the importance of physical activity in the school setting and has therefore recommended that the department actively engage with DETE to improve sport and active participation in the school system. As outlined by the review of the literature presented in appendix A, girls’ participation in sport and active recreation is strongly influenced by the school setting. In addition, girls’ experience of physical activity throughout schooling can shape behaviours and attitudes about physical activity and thus influence lifelong participation in sport and active recreation.

The committee has identified the following key areas of collaboration between the department and DETE:

- Supporting the HPE curriculum — HPE provides the opportunity for children to both participate in sport and active recreation and learn about the importance of physical activity as part of a healthy life. Therefore, the department and DETE should work together to optimise the effectiveness of the HPE curriculum.

- Supporting teachers and school coaches — teachers play an important role in encouraging children’s participation and experience of physical activity as coaches and role models.
Therefore teachers should be supported to develop their skills and improve their knowledge to allow them to provide sport and active recreation participation opportunities that attract and retain girls’ engagement.

- **School community sport and recreation links** — to encourage and support community participation, schools should partner with community sport and active recreation providers to provide pathways and connections to community/club-based participation. Sport and recreation places and spaces at schools could also be made more accessible for use by community organisations.
RECOMMENDATION 8: IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT

The department to establish an advisory committee on women and girls in sport and active recreation to provide advice on the implementation of these recommendations.

Implementation strategies

The department to establish an advisory committee for a two-year period to oversee and drive the implementation of recommendations to increase and enhance women's and girls' participation in sport and active recreation. The committee's role will be to monitor implementation progress and to provide expert advice on implementation issues.

Further information: Recommendation 8

The committee considers that leadership is required to drive the implementation of the recommendations outlined within this report. This leadership would be provided by a committee comprising experts in the sport and active recreation fields. The committee would provide inspiration, drive and assistance to the department and others across the sport and active recreation sector to deliver the recommendations and achieve outcomes. This external panel of experts would oversee and provide advice on the implementation of these recommendations in partnership with the department. The department should provide secretariat support to this committee.
3.5 Marketing

**Background**

This focus of this theme is marketing and promoting sport and active recreation to inspire and support women’s and girls’ participation.

The committee considers that integrated marketing and communication is essential to the implementation of the recommendations within this report. The committee is not suggesting that the Queensland Government invest in a broad and expensive marketing campaign because there is little evidence that these campaigns improve physical activity levels. Rather, the committee advises that the department build on participation opportunities that exist in the community by raising awareness and promoting opportunities among women and girls.

Queensland sport and recreation stakeholders advised the committee that, in their experience, effective targeted marketing had been successful in increasing women’s and girls’ participation in activities and their awareness of participation options. Stakeholders also advised that they believed there was a perception in the community that the sport and recreation sector in Australia was not inclusive. To address this perception, stakeholders suggested that sport and recreation clubs should promote themselves better throughout the community. The review of the literature presented in appendix A also identified that to increase women’s and girls’ participation, policies and programs should instil a sense of inclusion and belonging by increasing the number of media images and examples of ethnic minority women taking part in sporting activities.

**Recommendation 9: Marketing Opportunities to Inspire Participation**

The department to develop a brand and implement an integrated marketing and communications strategy to encourage women’s and girls’ participation in sport and active recreation.

*Implementation strategies*

The department to develop a marketing strategy to:

- identify effective ways of promoting women’s and girls’ participation in sport and active recreation
- build on the opportunities presented by social media and other online initiatives
- identify and promote options to leverage participation outcomes for women and girls, including the Commonwealth Games and other major events in Queensland
- identify and act on opportunities to promote role models and leaders to inspire women and girls to participate in sport and active recreation.
Further information: Recommendation 9

The committee advises that a marketing strategy should be developed that:

- includes the development of a strong identifiable brand to tie together and promote initiatives to improve and promote women’s and girls’ participation in sport and active recreation
- focuses on social media and Internet opportunities that are linked cohesively with participation opportunities
- identifies ways to leverage opportunities arising from the 2018 Commonwealth Games
- identifies ways that role models can promote opportunities for women’s and girls’ participation.

In relation to role models, evidence suggests that elite athletes may not be the most effective role models for all women and girls’, particularly for those who do not participate. As outlined in appendix A, including role models that girls and women relate to is more likely to produce positive physical activity outcomes. Different role models may appeal to women and girls of different ages and from different backgrounds.
4. Conclusion

The committee firmly advocates that participation in sport and active recreation is important for women and girls because of its strong link to physical, psychological and social benefits. The department has a significant leadership role in providing and enhancing female sport and active recreation within the Queensland community. This report provides evidence-based recommendations and implementation strategies outlining the actions the department should undertake to increase and encourage lifelong participation amongst women and girls. The report presents a way forward for the department to lead achievable, community-wide improvements.

The recommendations and implementation strategies outlined within this report were developed in response to identified needs of women and girls, and trends in their participation, with the view to reducing barriers to participation by building on existing community and individual assets and strengths. Each recommendation and implementation strategy was informed by:

- trends identified within population data
- issues identified through a review of the literature on women’s and girls’ participation in sport and active recreation and
- ideas and insights generated through consultation forums.

The course of action outlined by the report relies on the commitment to improve and enhance the delivery and coordination of policy, programs and initiatives to help all women and girls across Queensland become involved in sport and active recreation — whomever they are, whatever their ability and wherever they live.