

TASKFORCESUBMISSION: submission

NAME: Judy Flanagan

POSITION: Director Community Sport

ORGANISATION: Australian Sports Commission

SUBMISSION1: The Australian Sports Commission, as the Australian Government agency that manages, develops and invests in sport at all levels, recognises the valuable contribution which structured physical activity including sport can play in the prevention of illness and promotion of health within this country.

To date, much of the focus in the fight against obesity has been on food and nutrition, with insufficient attention paid to the contributions which physical activity can make in this arena. Research repeatedly shows that a physically active lifestyle is a key solution in reducing the incidence of obesity, with adherence to physical activity increasing if the activity is structured. The White Paper on Sport and White Paper on a Strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity related health issues published by the Commission of European Communities in 2007 clearly identify sport as a key player in the fight against obesity, noting that as a health-enhancing physical activity, the sport movement has a greater influence than any other social movement. However the papers further note that the recognised potential of the sport movement to foster health-enhancing physical activity often remains under-utilised and needs to be developed. The ASC supports the need for a national multi-faceted, multi-sectional approach in the development, implementation and monitoring of preventative health strategies. Key stakeholders in the physical activity arena include government across the areas of health, education and sport and recreation at the national, state and local levels as well as non government organisations involved in either delivering or influencing the delivery of physical activity at the community level. Re-igniting physical education in schools is considered paramount to a physically active nation into the future. Providing children with positive sporting experiences and teaching them about the benefits of physical activity and good nutrition is the basis for life-long health. Further, a vibrant school sport system, feeds into strong community sport with heightened interest and involvement in club level sport leading to increased physical activity levels into adulthood. A coordinated and integrated approach is critical to the efficient utilisation of available resources to ensure that appropriate physical activity opportunities are available to all Australians at the local community level. A community sport forum involving key government and non-government stakeholders in October 2008 identified an urgent need for a coordinated national plan to be developed with clear aims, objectives, roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders. The forum also confirmed a number of key themes critical to the implementation of successful physical activity initiatives at the community level. These include:

- Community engagement and ownership - Successful community physical activity and sport programs have been developed by the community to meet local needs. They build

on existing community strengths and resources, with delivery on the ground by people who know and understand their communities.

- Strategic partnerships - Long term strategic partnerships are critical for any successful program, with all parties having clearly defined roles and responsibilities and contributing to provide strategic benefit to all organisations involved.
- Long term investment and resourcing - Adequate ongoing resourcing is needed to sustain successful programs at the community level.
- Central coordination and local delivery with a focus on building both industry and community capacity - A number of successful programs benefit from a centrally coordinated structure and strategic direction, whilst retaining the flexibility to tailor program delivery to meet the needs identified within individual communities.

These themes are applicable equally across each of the key settings identified within the Obesity Technical Report - schools, the workplace and the community.

PRIVACY: yes

SUBMIT: Submit