



# Strategic Priorities for **WA Sport**

***SPORT***  
***WEST***



# Message from the Chair

**Challenge yesterday | Change today | Create tomorrow**

Sport is about people, their well-being and the communities in which we live. In Western Australia, sport plays a special role within our community by delivering a range of social, health and economic benefits that extend well beyond the playing fields, tracks, courts and pools across the state.

In recent years, the complexity of administering community sport has continued to increase, limiting many organisations ability to do much beyond keeping the organisation operating. As the needs of our communities and the ways in which they engage with sport continue to evolve at a rapid rate, it is critically important that the sector is also able to adapt to these changes.

The Strategic Priorities for WA Sport has been developed to tackle the issues and opportunities that the industry considers to be most important. This document outlines the key priorities and the practical support required from stakeholders to progress community sport in Western Australia.

I would like to acknowledge the Reference Group members who have been very generous with their time and advice in guiding the development of this document. I would also like to thank everyone who has been involved in the consultation process and provided valuable feedback and input, in particular the State Sporting Association's and their representatives.

Has there ever been a more dramatic and uncertain period in West Australian sport. With the outbreak of Covid-19 in early 2020,

the sporting landscape changed markedly during the development of this strategy. Seeing usually bustling playing fields sitting empty on a Saturday morning or the closed sign outside our pools and other sport venues, has highlighted the devastating impact that COVID has had on our sporting communities.

The development of the Strategic Priorities for WA Sport is the first of its kind in Western Australia and has been developed by the industry, for the industry. I encourage everyone involved in the coordination of community sport in Western Australia to support the document and understand the role they can play to progress the achievement of priorities.

Now more than ever, sport has a powerful opportunity to bring West Aussies together and reconnect our communities. Become a driver of change and let's work together to create the opportunities that will ignite our tomorrow.

Challenge. Change. Create.

**Michael Beros**  
*Chairperson SportWest*





# About SportWest

SportWest is the independent peak industry body for sport in Western Australia and exists to promote, strengthen and advocate for the sports community of Western Australia.

The organisation represents 129 members and over 5,000 sporting clubs involved in the conduct, administration, promotion and development of sport and related activities.

SportWest represents members in regular dialogue with the Minister for Sport and Recreation, advisers, the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, and other relevant government agencies. SportWest advocates and promotes the value of community sport through the media and with other key stakeholders and partners.

SportWest further supports its members through regular communications, training and support services, access to advisory networks, industry relevant projects and key events, including the hosting of the RAC SportWest Awards – WA's premier sport awards.

SportWest is proud to lead the development of the Priorities for WA Sport and looks forward to working closely with the industry to progress the priorities and continuing to support the sports community in Western Australia.

- ▶ **We believe that sport has the power to influence and connect people.**
- ▶ **We promote, strengthen and advocate for the sports community of Western Australia.**
- ▶ **We create, build and maintain a strong and vibrant membership through our resources and services.**

## Acknowledgements

SportWest acknowledges the valuable contribution and advice from the Reference Group.\*

**Professor Gary Martin**  
Chief Executive Officer, Australian Institute of Management

**Will Golsby**

**Megan Fardon**  
President, Croquet West

**Nick Sloan**

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Chief Marketing Officer, Seven West Media

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**Rob Thompson**  
Chief Executive Officer, SportWest

This document has been developed from the input and contribution of the sport industry in Western Australia.

SportWest would like to thank the State Sporting Associations, community groups and individuals who have contributed to the development of this Priorities for WA Sport document.

The Reference Group acknowledges the executive support of Peter Minchin in the development of this document.

*\*The Reference Group provided skills and expertise from their experiences across a range of industries. The views they expressed in developing the Strategic Priorities for WA Sport do not represent any specific organisation.*



# About Strategic Priorities for WA Sport

## Taking the Lead

SportWest has worked in partnership with the industry to identify the strategic priorities for sport in Western Australia. The intent is to guide and support the industry to address the challenges and capitalise on the opportunities within a changing landscape of sport in Western Australia. Importantly, the Strategic Priorities for WA Sport has been developed for the industry, by the industry based on the specific needs and requirements of the industry.

The Strategic Priorities for WA Sport has been developed to achieve the following objectives:

- Define at a high level, the contribution of the industry and the positive outcomes it delivers for the broader Western Australian community.
- Identify the strategic priorities and opportunities for the industry while addressing current challenges.
- Provide a consistent platform that elevates the industry in wider Western Australian planning and investment decisions across government and non-government sectors.
- Promote growth in participation at all levels within the community for the improved health and wellbeing of all Western Australian citizens.

The Strategic Priorities for WA Sport has been developed to tackle the issues and opportunities that the industry considers to be most important. A targeted approach has been taken to identify the key priorities and the practical support required from stakeholders to progress community sport in Western Australia.

This is the first time that the industry itself has taken the lead to determine the future priorities for sport and represents the opportunity for the industry to more strongly advocate for the value of sport and the benefits it provides for the community.

## Timeframe

Strategic Priorities for WA Sport proposes an initial four year period (2020-2024) to progress the implementation of the priorities. SportWest will partner with key stakeholders including State Sporting Associations and government to regularly review and monitor progress made towards each of the priorities.



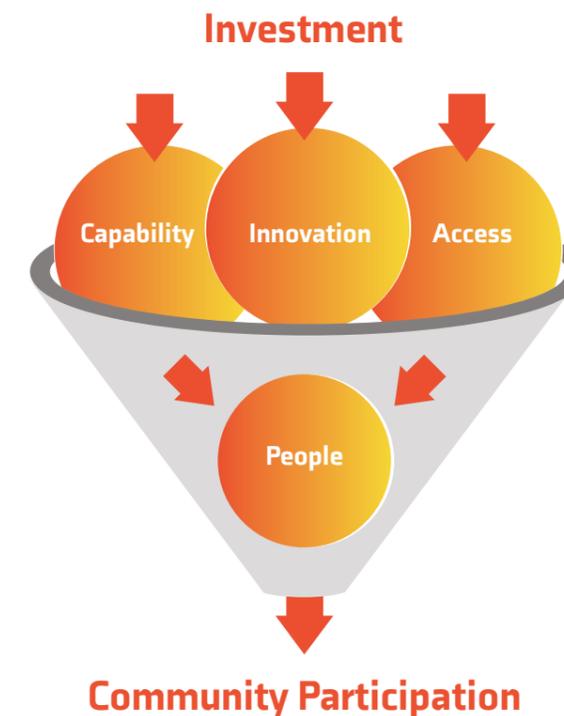
# Executive Summary

Sport is about people, their wellbeing and the communities in which we live. Sport is an essential part of the Western Australian way of life, helping to strengthen social connections, support local economies and improve health outcomes. Sport has the power to connect and bring diverse communities together while fostering pride and a sense of belonging.

Grassroots participation and the volunteers who underpin the sector are the lifeblood of community sport. As our communities change, the sport sector faces different demands and pressures to respond. It is vital that our State Sporting Associations, volunteer administrators, coaches and officials are supported to ensure a strong and vibrant community sport sector.

The industry faces a number of key challenges to which it needs to respond. Changing governance models, the cost of participation, supporting volunteers, facility provision and access and improved use of technology are key areas for the industry to address.

Supporting the people within the sector is central to addressing the key challenges faced by the industry. A series of priorities have been developed across the themes of **Capability, Access and Innovation**. Investment into sport will improve community participation and ultimately the lives of Western Australian's and their communities.



# Executive Summary cont.

## 1. Capability: Developing the people and the organisations who support the industry.

Sport is about people and it is essential that the sector supports all those people who contribute to the sector and without which community sport would not exist.

Recent governance reform attempts driven by national organisations have focused on adopting a pre-determined model which may not suit the size or complexity of their organisation. It is important the governance models for sport are 'fit for purpose'.

Demands on volunteer administrators, coaches and officials are challenging and require a coordinated approach to simplify processes, improve training and support, and utilise technology.

Sports have been committed to the growth in participation or their membership which can place additional pressures on community clubs. It is important that club volunteers are appropriately equipped to deliver a quality experience to retain members.

**Priority 1:** Individual sports need to engage at all levels of their sport to determine the governance arrangements appropriate for the size and complexity of their organisation rather than any single 'corporate governance' model.

**Priority 2:** All bodies involved in developing policies and procedures for sport, must ensure they are designed with the requirements of and impact on volunteer coaches, officials and administrators in focus.

**Priority 3:** A more balanced approach between growth and retention that enhances the participant and member experience should be adopted by sports where necessary. This will require improved support for volunteer coaches, officials and administrators to deliver an enhanced member experience.

## 2. Access: improving access to sport participation opportunities for the community.

Facilities, cost, rules and regulations all impact on access and the opportunity to participate in community sport.

Socio-economic factors and the increasing cost to deliver sport are impacting on participation and must be considered as part of any measures aimed at increasing participation in sport.

Increased investment in sport facilities is needed to address issues of inadequate supply in both outer growth corridors and areas of urban infill.

The sector needs to work closely with facility and venue owners and managers to improve policies that aid rather than restrict access to facilities and venues.

**Priority 4:** Greater investment in the supply of sport and recreation facilities in both outer metropolitan growth areas and areas of urban infill is required.

**Priority 5:** That industry and facility owners and managers collaborate to develop policies that improve accessibility, provide participation opportunities, are inclusive and sustainable.

**Priority 6:** To better manage the cost of participation, the industry needs to examine the cost for participants accessing sport as well as the cost of delivery.

**Priority 7:** Sports and other service deliverers need to collaborate better to improve access to sport in regional areas.

## 3. Innovation – growing a sport sector that embraces knowledge, collaboration, data and technology.

As the way in which the community engages in sport changes, the industry needs to be responsive if it is to remain relevant in people's lives into the future.

The Sector does not know its value in entirety nor how to appropriately reflect that value to government, private sector or the community.

Robust and accurate data on the value of the sector from an economic, health and social perspective will produce the kind of metrics which can be used at all levels of government to illustrate the true value of the sector.

While positive examples exist, the industry has not collaborated to its potential. Improved collaboration can help to address cost pressures, facility access, technology and participation trends amongst other areas.

Technology should provide the industry with improved efficiencies and reduce the administration on volunteers.

**Priority 8:** The industry needs to develop an improved approach towards data collection and an improved measure of participation in sport.

**Priority 9:** The industry needs to establish an agreed index to measure and promote the value of community sport.

**Priority 10:** The industry needs to work with other sports and other sectors more collaboratively to effectively use resources, address specific challenges, innovate and capitalise on new opportunities.

**Priority 11:** Technology that delivers efficiencies and provides improved data and decision making at an organisation and industry level is required.

# The Stats for WA

There are more than...

**500,000** participants in organised sport



**200,000** volunteers



**5,500** sporting clubs



1

Sport delivers the following benefits to the community...



Economic



Physical Health



Education



Community



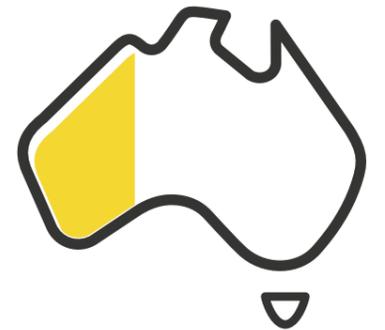
Mental Health



Social

Sport in WA delivers approximately...

**3%** of GDP



...and in economic, health and education benefits,

**\$8.6 billion**

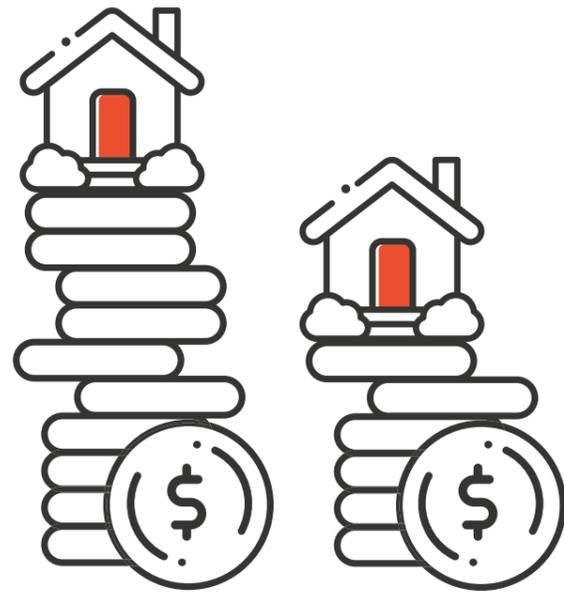
2a

Return on Investment of **\$7** for every **\$1** spent.



2b

# The Stats for WA cont.

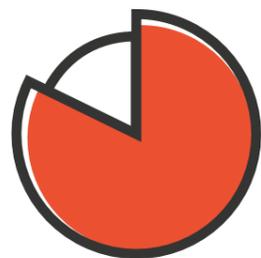


Households with higher incomes are more likely than households with lower incomes to meet

**Australia's Physical Activity guidelines**

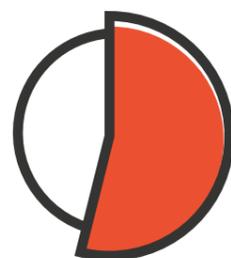


Children in **metropolitan Perth** have higher **participation rates** in sport and physical activity than in **regional and remote WA.** 



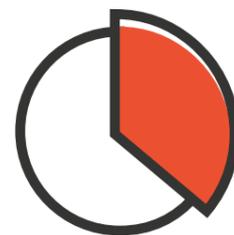
**82%**

of WA adults participate at least once per week.



**54%**

of WA children participate at least once per week.



**35.8%**

of people in WA meet Australia's Physical Activity guidelines.

3

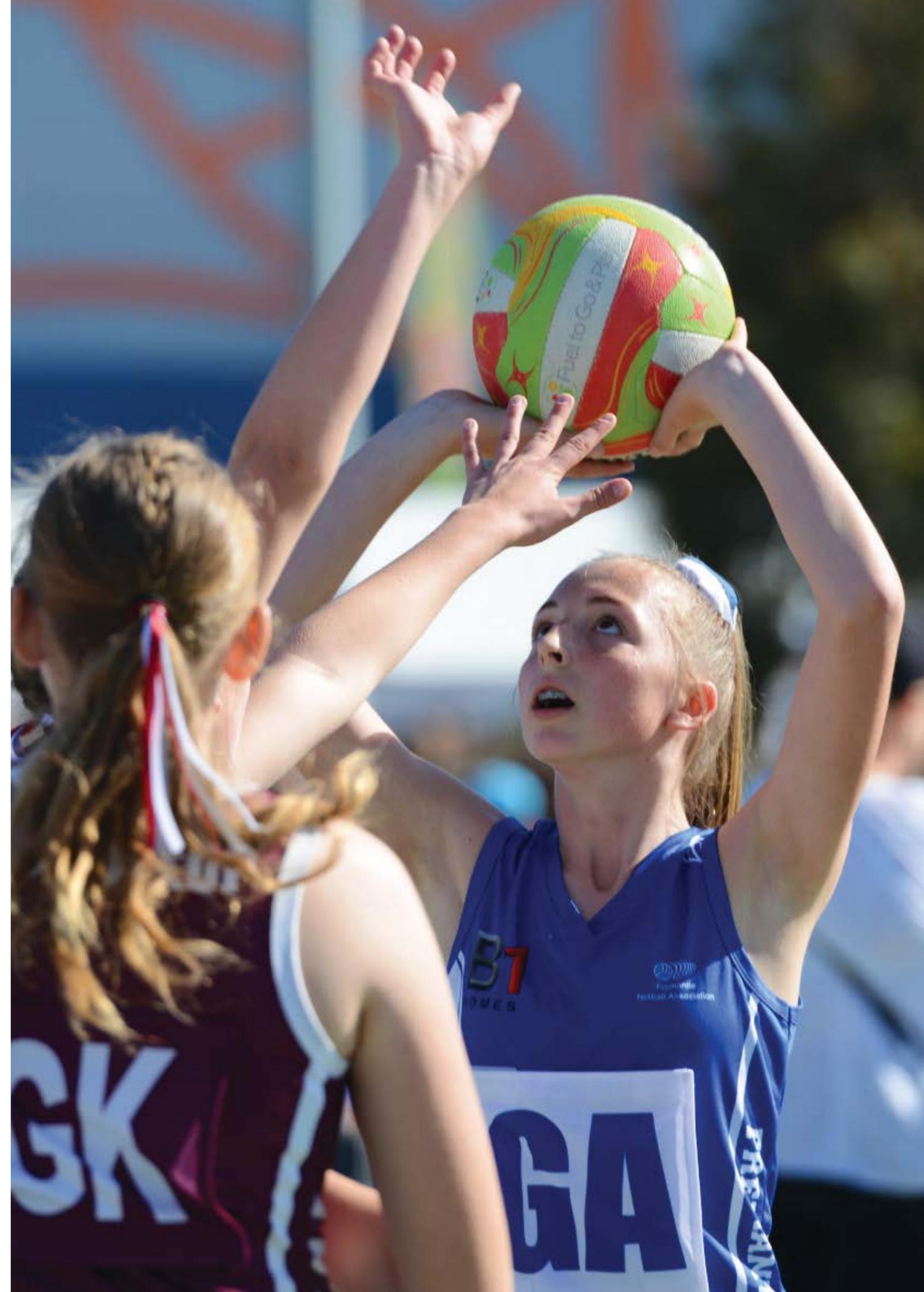


1. Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (2017), 2016/17 State Sporting Association Annual Census. 2a. <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3101.0> 2b. Intergenerational Review of Australian Sport 2017, Boston Consulting Group (2017) 3. AusPlay, 2019 WA Data Tables, ASC (2020)

# Key Industry Challenges

The consultation process with the industry sought feedback on what were the most important opportunities and issues that the industry was facing. These findings were collated into seven key challenges that the industry considered as the most pressing to be addressed.

- 1** Governance models which are not fit-for-purpose are adversely impacting community sports.
- 2** The increasing costs of participation are an unacceptable obstacle to the community's access to sport.
- 3** The industry does not have an agreed index to measure and promote the value of community sport.
- 4** The inadequacy of provision and access to suitable facilities and venues is limiting participation in community sport.
- 5** There is a lack of collaboration within the industry and with other sectors to address issues and opportunities the industry faces.
- 6** The utilisation of technology across the community sport sector is not as effective as it should be.
- 7** The complexity and demands of administering community sport places a burden on key volunteers including coaches, officials and administrators.



# Strategic Theme 1: Capability

Developing the people and the organisations who support the industry.

## Related Key Challenges

**Challenge 1:** Governance models which are not fit-for-purpose are adversely impacting community sports.

**Challenge 7:** The complexity and demands of administering community sport places a burden on key volunteering roles including coaches, officials and administrators.

Whether it is participants, volunteers, employees, or the broader community – sport is about people. It is therefore imperative that the people and the organisations who are the basis of the industry are supported.

The governance performance of organisations has been an area of heightened focus in recent years. Governance reform initiatives often driven nationally from a top-down approach have tended to focus on structural elements and adopting a pre-determined model which may not suit the size and complexity of their organisation. While good governance is an essential feature of well run organisations, it is important that sports adopt governance models which are 'fit for purpose' and do not overly burden or distract from an organisations ability to deliver on its primary purpose and meet the needs of its members and the communities for which they exist.

It is well documented that volunteers are the lifeblood of the community sport sector and that without volunteers, sport at the grassroots level simply would not exist in its current form. Volunteering in sport can be challenging and places a burden on those who give up their time to support the more than 5,000 community clubs across

Western Australia. More needs to be done to understand how volunteers across key roles including coaches, officials and administrators can be better supported so they continue to contribute to their communities. By taking a coordinated approach, sport can reduce the burden on volunteers by simplifying processes, improve training and support, and better utilise technology.

Over the last decade, sports have taken a more market focussed approach to their product offerings with a variety of new participation programs having been introduced. While these programs have provided some sports with significant growth in new participants and members, challenges around retaining these new participants have also presented. This is in part due to changes in the way participants and particularly juniors sample a variety of sports, as well as the support available for community clubs to retain these members. The pursuit of growth is sometimes at the expense of support to retain existing members. It is important that the drivers of investment decisions appropriately balance the need to support the capacity of club volunteers to deliver a quality experience for members and keep them engaged for a longer term.

## Priorities

**Priority 1:** Individual sports need to engage at all levels of their sport to determine the governance arrangements appropriate for the size and complexity of their organisation rather than any single 'corporate governance' model.

### Roles

- SportWest will continue to advocate to government and through Community Sport Australia that sports be empowered to determine governance arrangements suitable to their organisation.
- DLGSC to continue to work with Sport Australia and through the Sport and Recreation Ministers' Council for policy settings to reflect the independence and autonomy of State Sporting Associations in determining appropriate governance arrangements.

**Priority 2:** All bodies involved in developing policies and procedures for sport, must ensure they are designed with the requirements of and impact on volunteer coaches, officials and administrators in focus.

### Roles

- SportWest to lead industry engagement with government to ensure new policy settings are practical and do not overly burden the industries volunteers.
- State Sporting Associations need to design policies and procedures with the needs of volunteers in mind.
- Government at all levels to engage with SportWest and the sector in policy development.

**Priority 3:** A more balanced approach between growth and retention that enhances the participant and member experience should be adopted by sports where necessary. This will require improved support for volunteer coaches, officials and administrators to deliver an enhanced member experience.

### Roles

- SportWest to facilitate discussions with the sector and government to consider the balance between growth and retention and the extent to which growth drives funding and investment decisions.
- State Sporting Associations to consider their own circumstances and the balance between growth and retention driving decision making and allocation of resources in their sport. Organisations should also consider improved support for volunteers to assist deliver enhanced services to members such as administration, coaching and officiating services.
- SportWest, industry and government to work together in considering the extent to which participation growth drives funding decisions.

# Strategic Theme 2: Access

Improving access to sport participation opportunities for the community.

## Related Key Challenges

**Challenge 2:** The increasing costs of participation are impeding the communities access to sport.

**Challenge 4:** The undersupply of and barriers to accessing suitable facilities and venues is limiting participation in community sport.

The level of participation in sport is largely determined by the extent to which the community has access to opportunities. Facilities, cost, rules and regulations all impact on the opportunity to participate in sport.

For an increasing segment of the community, cost is becoming a barrier to participation in sport. Initiatives such as KidSport have been welcomed by the industry as it directly addresses a significant barrier to participation for many Western Australian families. While individual socio-economic circumstances and the cost for participants to access sport are an issue, the rising cost to deliver sport is a further factor that needs to be considered. Issues such as rising insurance premiums, and increasingly risk adverse compliance requirements are some of the factors that are increasing the costs of delivery for sport and should be reviewed.

One of the greatest challenges facing the sector is access to the appropriate number and quality of facilities. The current investment in community sport infrastructure is inadequate and does not provide sufficient funding to meet the future facility and venue needs for community sport. Sport participation is being impacted by issues of supply and access to

facilities in both outer metropolitan growth corridors and areas of urban infill. Increased female participation across a number of sports has further highlighted issues of inadequate supply and suitability of facilities.

Access to facilities and venues is also impacted by restrictive policies adopted by facility owners and managers. Issues accessing facilities exist across schools, local community infrastructure, and the natural environment such as trails as well as waterways for aquatic based sports. There is an urgent need for stakeholders and facility owners and managers to work together to improve accessibility and increase participation opportunities that are inclusive and sustainable.

Regional areas present their own unique set of challenges, not least of which is the challenge of distance and limited resources. The opportunity for sports to work more collaboratively to share resources to deliver solutions as well as partnering with other service deliverers needs to be at the forefront of sports approach to servicing members in regional areas.

## Priorities

**Priority 4:** Greater investment in the supply of sport and recreation facilities in both outer metropolitan growth areas and areas of urban infill is required.

### Roles

- SportWest will support the sector to work with all tiers of government to determine future facility needs and will advocate for increased investment in sporting facility infrastructure.
- State Sporting Associations to be pro-active in identifying future facility requirements and engaging all levels of government as to their future needs.
- Government to engage and consult with the sector on facility needs at the commencement of planning processes. Increased investment in sporting facility infrastructure is also required.

**Priority 5:** That industry and facility owners and managers collaborate to develop policies that improve accessibility, provide participation opportunities, are inclusive and sustainable.

### Roles

- SportWest will advocate for improved access to facilities that increases participation opportunities.
- State Sporting Associations to collaborate with other sports to coordinate improved access to facilities including multi-sport venues.
- Government at all levels to consider ways in which barriers to sporting organisations accessing facilities and venues can be reduced or removed.

**Priority 6:** To better manage the cost of participation, the industry needs to examine the cost for participants accessing sport as well as the cost of delivery.

### Roles

- SportWest will support the sector to identify and address increasing costs of delivery through possible cross sector collaboration and efficiency improvements. SportWest will also advocate for improved support for community members where cost is a barrier to participation.
- State Sporting Associations to collaborate with SportWest and across the sector to identify areas where rising costs of delivery can be limited and efficiencies realised.
- Government to work with SportWest and the sector on opportunities that improve participant access to sport.

**Priority 7:** Sports and other service deliverers need to collaborate better to improve access to sport in regional areas.

### Roles

- SportWest will help facilitate opportunities for collaboration across sport that improve access in regional areas.
- State Sporting Associations to pro-actively engage and collaborate with other organisations on opportunities that improve access to sport in regional areas.

# Strategic Theme 3: Innovation

Growing a sport sector that embraces knowledge, collaboration, data and technology.

## Related Key Challenges

**Challenge 3:** The industry does not have an agreed index to measure the value of community sport.

**Challenge 5:** There is a lack of collaboration across sports and with other sectors to address issues and opportunities the industry faces.

**Challenge 6:** The utilisation of technology across the community sport sector is not as effective as it should be.

As the way in which the community engages in sport changes, the industry needs to be responsive if it is to remain relevant in people's lives into the future.

The sport industry is recognised as providing a range of economic, health, social and community benefits, however has struggled to quantify this value and provide a compelling case to both government and the commercial sector as to why investment in sport is a good investment.

Robust and accurate data as to the impact of the sector will produce the kind of metrics which can be used at all levels of government to illustrate the true value of community sport.

As an industry that is challenged for resources against an ever increasing set of demands from members and stakeholders, new and more efficient ways of doing things need to be explored. There are positive examples of innovative ideas, initiatives and programs originating from Western Australian State Sporting Association's and clubs, and the

opportunity exists for the industry to work more collaboratively to progress the sector as a whole. The sport industry also needs to look at other sectors and ways in which sport can partner with the tertiary sector, commercial sport and recreation providers and private institutions in order to innovate and capitalise on new opportunities.

The industry also needs to consider the way in which it uses technology. Technology that improves the capture of data to improve decision making at both the organisation and the industry level needs to be pursued. Improving communications, member management and competition management while improving efficiencies and reducing the administration on volunteers must also be a priority for the industry.

## Priorities

**Priority 8:** The industry needs to develop an improved approach towards data collection and an improved measure of participation in sport.

### Roles

- SportWest and State Sporting Associations to collaborate in developing an agreed data collection model and measure of participation in sport.
- DLGSC to assist and support the sector in refining the data collection process and the measurement of participation in sport.

**Priority 9:** The industry needs to establish an agreed index to measure and promote the value of community sport.

### Roles

- SportWest and DLGSC to partner in bringing together key stakeholders to investigate the development of an index to measure the value of community sport.
- State Sporting Associations to work and collaborate with SportWest to develop in developing an agreed index that can measure the value of community sport.
- DLGSC to support the sector in developing and implementing an index to measure the value of community sport.

**Priority 10:** The industry needs to work with other sports and other sectors more collaboratively to effectively use resources, address specific challenges, innovate and capitalise on new opportunities.

### Roles

- SportWest will foster networks and opportunities that bring together the sector to work collaboratively. Where appropriate, SportWest will also assist identify opportunities that exist in other sectors that can benefit the sport sector.
- State Sporting Associations will be proactive and identify opportunities to collaborate with other organisations that can improve effectiveness and deliver new opportunities.

**Priority 11:** Technology that delivers efficiencies and provides improved data and decision making at an organisation and industry level is required.

### Roles

- SportWest will facilitate the sharing of good practice of the use of technology and coordinate improved sharing of data amongst the industry.
- State Sporting Associations should adopt technology solutions that improve efficiency for both the organisation and end user including volunteers. Technology should also provide improved quality of data collection and analysis to improve organisational decision making capabilities.

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For further information, please contact:

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