



Ten ways local government can advance gender equity

Sports and recreation

The fact sheets, *Ten ways local government can advance gender equity*, are part of a resource package designed to build the capacity for local governments to consider gender equity in their planning, policy and service delivery.

Local government plays an important role in creating and supporting environments that enable community to achieve optimal health and wellbeing. Reducing gender inequity for women is a key strategy in achieving this goal, as it allows for a more just, inclusive and fair society for both women and men. The fact sheets include practical information and practice examples of ways local government can advance gender equity for women.

The ten fact sheets are:

1. Why gender matters
2. Gender analysis
3. Infrastructure
4. Land use planning and design
5. Promoting women in leadership
6. Workplaces
7. Sports and recreation
8. Access to services
9. Key concepts and definitions
10. Further resources

Local government's role in sport and recreation

Local government is responsible for a range of community sports and recreation facilities and services, particularly in relation to open space areas, parks, sports ovals and recreation centres.

Councils own and manage facilities for organised sporting events, such as sporting ovals, tennis and basketball courts and pavilions, as well as facilities for other recreational activities including community events.

Councils also manage local recreation centres, which include swimming pools, gyms and facilities for group and individual fitness programs, as well as providing onsite childcare facilities. When these spaces are safe, welcoming and inclusive, they provide opportunities for community participation and social connection.

Why is gender relevant to sport and recreation?

There are many benefits to participation in sport and recreation activities. Aside from the physical and mental health and wellbeing benefits, evidence shows that participation in sport fosters increased self-esteem, a strong sense of belonging and facilitates social inclusion and community integration.

There are still low rates of participation of women and girls in all aspects of sport. Women remain underrepresented at all levels of coaching, officiating and leadership.¹

Increasing the involvement of women and girls in sporting clubs and recreation activities also challenges gender norms and provides opportunities for women's and girl's leadership and achievement.²

Reinforcing rules of good conduct through gender equity in junior sport may well flow on to other aspects of life. Sports clubs can enforce equal numbers of women coaches and coaching assistants in their programs. Junior sporting leagues could also look at encouraging equal numbers of boys and girls in teams.³

Gender has an impact on all aspects of participation in sports and recreation activities, so it is important for local governments to consider the needs of women and girls from a planning, design, and community use perspective. Design considerations and access to sports and recreation facilities also plays a role in providing access for women and girls, as many facilities still lack the infrastructure that provides suitable access to women and girls as players, supporters, coaches, umpires and committee members. For example, change rooms that are available for a visiting female team or female umpires.

How can local government promote gender equity in sport and recreation?

In order to increase women and girls participation in sports and recreation activities, community spaces need to be safe and welcoming to all members of the community. Local government has a role to play in ensuring that sporting clubs and recreation facilities engage with a range of strategies aimed at creating inclusive sporting environments.

- Councils can promote and support the participation of women and girls as part of all sport and recreation programs and policies
- Undertake an audit of the current sports and recreation programs at council, and identify opportunities to further support programs and teams for women and girls

¹ Australian Sports Commission (2003) *Towards Better Sport: Good practices for women and girls in sport*. Australian Sports Commission.

² UN Division on the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2007) *Women 2000 and Beyond: Women, Gender, Equality and Sport*.

³ Taken from Active Women and Girls Strategy, Moreland Council, Male Sport is ruining our boys. Associate Professor John Fitzgerald, Executive Manager of VicHealth, The Age article, May 15 2009.

⁴ Moreland Active Women and Girls Strategy, Vol 4, available at: www.moreland.vic.gov.au.

- Review the current projects and policies that promote and encourage equal participation of women and girls, for example:
 - Moreland City Council's Active Women and Girls Strategy
 - Yarra City Council's Equitable Access to Sports Facilities Audit Tool
 - Fair Game Respect Matters (VicHealth Program)
 - Everybody Wins (VicHealth initiative).
- Convene an internal working group to review current work around equal participation for women and girls, and develop an organisational approach to addressing gender inequity in sports participation
- Provide gender equity training to outline how clubs can build capacity around women in governance, coaching and general participation roles
- Provide relevant infrastructure to improve venues and encourage female involvement.

Prioritising women and girls in sport activities

Moreland City Council has developed an Active Women and Girls Strategy, to 'promote a healthy lifestyle and increase the participation of sports activities in the community particularly amongst women and girls.'⁴

Council has also adopted an Affirmative Action Policy to increase participation rates of women and girls at local sports and recreation facilities.

Moreland identified that clubs needed to take a proactive approach to redressing the gender imbalance across a range of sports and recreation activities.

Each Moreland sports organisation is required to develop programs that increase the participation, health and wellbeing of women and girls through a range of initiatives. These requirements better ensure the diverse needs of women and girls are taken into account and that sports clubs prioritise the recruitment, development and retention of women and girls in leadership roles in their organisation.

