

# Participation in sport and recreation by culturally and linguistically diverse women: Stakeholder consultation report

**Author:**

Cortis, Natasha; Muir, Kristy

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**PARTICIPATION IN SPORT AND  
RECREATION BY CULTURALLY AND  
LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE WOMEN**

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION REPORT

NATASHA CORTIS AND KRISTY MUIR

**SPRC Report 5/07**

Social Policy Research Centre  
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Publications, SPRC, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, 2052, Australia.  
Telephone: +61 (2) 9385 7800 Fax: +61 (2) 9385 7838 Email: [sprc@unsw.edu.au](mailto:sprc@unsw.edu.au)

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## **Authors**

Natasha Cortis and Kristy Muir

## **Research team**

**Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales**

Dr Kristy Muir, Research Fellow

Dr Natasha Cortis, Research Associate

Dr Pooja Sawrikar, Research Associate

## **Advisory team**

**Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales**

Professor Ilan Katz, Acting Director

**Faculty of Business, University of Technology, Sydney**

Dr Tracy Taylor, Associate Professor (School of Leisure, Sport and Tourism) and Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning)

## **Contact for follow up**

Dr Kristy Muir, Research Fellow, Social Policy Research Centre ph 02 9385 7818  
email [k.muir@unsw.edu.au](mailto:k.muir@unsw.edu.au)

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## Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ASC	Australian Sports Commission
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CO	Cultural Organisation
FACSIA	Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
IO	Industry Organisation
NSO	National Sporting Organisation
SCSO	State or Community Sporting Organisation
SGO	State Government Organisation
WO	Women's Organisation

## Executive Summary

In June 2006, the Australian Government Office for Women in the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) engaged the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) at the University of New South Wales to research how culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women participate in sport and recreation, and the factors that may limit their full involvement. The project is designed to inform the development of policies and programs to effectively support the inclusion of CALD women in sport and recreation activities in Australia in playing and in non-playing roles.

The project is being conducted in three stages: a data review and analysis; consultations with key stakeholders (the subject of this report); and focus groups with CALD women about their experiences and perceptions of sport and recreation activities (to be conducted in early 2007). This report presents the findings from the consultations, which were conducted in October 2006 as part of Stage Two. This stage involved conducting telephone interviews with representatives from 15 sporting, cultural, and women's organisations about their perspectives about CALD women's involvement in sport and recreation activities, and strategies for supporting their involvement.

Interviewee responses are influenced by a complex mix of factors including organisational culture, policies and practices, and personal attitudes, perceptions and beliefs. Overall, this research demonstrated that the perception of sport representing a "level playing field" is pervasive, and that supporting cultural diversity is not currently considered a high priority by National Sporting Organisations (NSOs).

With the exception of Indigenous Australians, NSOs tend to promote their sports to the mainstream rather than particular cultural groups and do not tend to monitor the cultural backgrounds or characteristics of participants. NSO interviewees cited resource constraints as the main reason they do not target people from particular cultural groups into their sporting programs or initiatives:

Other cultures, no, we don't specifically go out and target them. My guess is we won't in the future, because it's a resource issue (NSO6).

Interviewees (particularly those from NSOs) were optimistic that sport provides a 'level playing field', and these informants did not consider that their organisational cultures and arrangements present barriers to CALD women's participation:

There's nothing laid down in statutes that [says] you can't join in. No one can discriminate on race or language in sport. If somebody wants to play they can play. If they can afford it and want to take part they can (NSO3).

However, by mentioning affordability and interest, this interviewee (NSO3) acknowledged two potential barriers to participation – financial resources and appeal. Thus, while most interviewees from sporting organisations admitted to having little structured evidence about CALD women's participation in sport early in the interview, they went on to identify barriers that can be understood within the typology



of barriers outlined in the Stage One discussion paper (Cortis, Sawrikar and Muir, 2006):

- Socio-cultural - racial and cultural constraints and discomfort in certain social settings
- Access - lack of recreation provision, information, skills and transport
- Affective - lack of appeal and meaningfulness of certain activities
- Physiological - ability, physiological limitations, age
- Resource - time and money
- Interpersonal - such as no one to participate with

Almost all interviewees identified conflict between the dress of particular religious or cultural groups and the required dress of particular sports (a socio-cultural barrier to participation). Some sporting organisation representatives stated that dress codes could be relaxed, but others did not directly state that amending uniform requirements would overcome this barrier. Cultural organisations (COs) were aware of the need for change in this area:

The challenge for sporting organisations is to show that people can look and dress differently and it doesn't make any difference at all (CO2).

Interviewees also identified family expectations and responsibilities as barriers to CALD women's involvement in sport and recreation. Again these were more likely to be perceived as culturally based, rather than a time constraint shared by many women with children. This reflects the interaction between gender and culture as barriers to CALD women's full participation in sport. A state government organisation (SGO) representative involved in supporting CALD women through sporting programs, for example, reported that:

CALD women and young girls can be expected to help around the house - they have to take on household duties. For the more traditional ones it's more of an issue. It's a big issue for new arrivals. Most of them - Afghan women, women from Iran, Iraq, and Africa - ... run the household, [and] the girls look after their siblings (SGO2).

Limited infrastructure to tailor sporting and recreational activities to CALD women was also commonly reported as a barrier. Unlike family and dress constraints, this was reported primarily as an institutional problem (a shortage of facilities), rather than a cultural one. Interviewees described difficulties in closing off sections of sporting facilities to men (even for short periods each week) and reported infrastructure problems with showers or change rooms lacking sufficient privacy. In addition, the provision of alcohol and gambling in some sporting facilities was also noted as an institutional barrier, especially for attracting Muslim people.

Problems of access for CALD women were reported by many of the interviewees. These encompassed the infrastructure constraints listed above, along with issues such as awareness, skills, transport and communication. CALD women were perceived to

lack awareness about sport and the cultural norms of sporting organisations, including how to get involved. A women's organisation (WO) interviewee believed that CALD women:

don't know that you can walk onto a netball court and have an entitlement to have a go (WO1).

Language barriers were also seen to impede CALD women's participation in sport and recreation activities, particularly for older women and new arrivals. Stakeholders were aware of the need to involve bilingual people to non-playing roles (such as instructors, coaches and referees) to overcome this barrier, but reported difficulties identifying and recruiting these people.

There was also some awareness that sporting organisation and club cultures may be intimidating to CALD women because the community is already established:

The nature of a club is it's a community already, it's an established group that do things a certain way. So for someone to come in cold not knowing anybody, we're not going to attract many CALD women at all to sport. I think it's intimidating to come into a set culture. (NSO4)

Interviewees interpreted barriers as either obstacles within the control of sporting organisations, or those that their organisations could not control or feasibly address, and were therefore not legitimate organisational responsibilities or priorities. A representative from a national sporting organisation explained that his organisation did not have the financial resources to increase and effectively support CALD women's involvement to the extent that:

It's not an issue that's near our top priority... there is no incentive to do anything. If there was we would do something (NSO3).

Financial limitations were identified as constraints on promoting, increasing and sustaining the participation of CALD women in sport. Yet, interviewees provided numerous examples of policies and practices that could help facilitate CALD women's involvement in sport and recreation.

In terms of their expectations about what would help engage CALD women, interviewees firstly highlighted the importance of enabling these women to become involved in sport without confronting dominant cultures of sporting clubs. Secondly, partnership relationships between sporting and cultural organisations were seen as particularly important to program success, especially to supplement the skills and expertise of sport and recreation providers with community contacts and specialised experience with cultural groups.

Thirdly, providing and promoting culturally appropriate and child friendly facilities were identified as important. Interviewees perceived a need for privacy to be guaranteed at least at certain times each week. Fourthly, interviewees highlighted a need to adapt sporting cultures and organisations, by ensuring coaches and program co-ordinators are from similar backgrounds to participants and that, internally, sporting organisations implement diversity policies:

The organisation needs to value diversity in membership, be welcoming and non-discriminatory and non-racist. Sure, not all of their existing members will have these values but certainly the leadership of the organisation and overall culture needs to be right. (SGO2)

Fifthly, interviewees identified education and marketing strategies as ways to engage CALD women, to show the sporting achievements of women from diverse backgrounds, and the range of ways to be involved. Finally, interviewees lacked awareness about what other organisations are doing to involve CALD women. This suggests a need to develop networks between organisations so they can share their experience of promoting cultural diversity.

The findings from these consultations will inform the third and final stage of the project, in which the research team will conduct focus groups with CALD women in metropolitan and regional Australia during early 2007. Findings from focus groups with women who participate in sport and recreation activities (and those who do not) will allow further exploration of the themes raised by these stakeholders, and will inform policies and programs to help CALD women participate more equally in sport and recreation.

## **1 Introduction**

In June 2006, the Australian Government Office for Women in the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) engaged the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) at the University of New South Wales to research how culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women participate in sport and recreation, and the factors that may limit their full involvement. The project is designed to inform the development of policies and programs to effectively support the inclusion of CALD women in sport and recreation activities, as players and in non-playing roles.

The project is being conducted in three stages: a data review and analysis (completed in August 2006); consultations with key stakeholders (the subject of this report); and focus groups with CALD women about their experiences and perceptions of sport and recreation activities (to be conducted in early 2007).

### **1.1 Findings from Stage One**

The first stage resulted in the review and analysis reported in the Discussion Paper titled 'Participation in sport and recreation by culturally and linguistically diverse women' (Cortis et al., 2006). The Discussion Paper outlined available statistical data pertaining to cultural diversity and sport in Australia. Secondly, it reviewed Australian and international research about the factors that facilitate and constrain CALD women's participation in sport and recreation. Thirdly, using publicly available information, it highlighted the main features of policies and programs that promote CALD women's inclusion in sport and recreation activities.

The statistical data show how women born in countries outside Australia and the other main English speaking countries are less likely to participate in organised sport than other women (ABS, 2005). However, when unorganised sport is included, participation rates increase (ABS, 2003). The data also show that women from North Africa and the Middle East are significantly less likely to participate in sport or physical activity than their male counterparts, and less likely to be involved than women born elsewhere. Women not proficient in English are also less likely to participate than women proficient in English, and their male counterparts (Cortis et al., 2006).

The literature review about the factors affecting CALD women's participation highlighted socio-cultural constraints (such as culturally based restrictions and feelings of discomfort in certain social settings); access constraints (for example, lack of recreation provision, information, skills and transport); affective constraints (that is, lack of appeal and meaningfulness of certain activities); physiological constraints (physical problems and age); resource constraints (such as time and money); and interpersonal constraints (for example, limited social contacts with whom to participate) (Cortis et al. 2006).

The Discussion Paper also outlines how policies and programs currently promote the inclusion of CALD women by providing information and promoting activities; developing sport and recreation organisations; establishing peer support and peer education initiatives; establishing activities, training and competitions for CALD women; and, at a management level, setting standards and establishing strategic

frameworks to promote CALD women in sport. However, initiatives in Australia tend to be small and short term and few have been rigorously evaluated, leaving knowledge gaps about what constitutes best practice in reducing barriers and supporting the participation of different CALD groups (Cortis et al. 2006).

## **1.2 Aims of Stage Two**

Stage Two, the subject of this report, builds on the material contained in the Discussion Paper. Stage Two involved fifteen telephone interviews with key stakeholders in sporting, women's and cultural organisations. This stage of the research aimed to explore issues arising from the data analysis and literature review with key stakeholders from sporting and cultural organisations; and inform the themes and issues to explore in focus groups with CALD women.

The findings reveal stakeholders' perceptions about CALD women's participation in sport and recreation activities and organisations, and their views about what strategies could be employed to better support CALD women in this area of social and cultural life. In doing so, the findings contribute to the evidence base about the barriers faced by CALD women in sport and recreation.

## **1.3 Stage Three**

The findings detailed in the remainder of this report will inform the third and final stage of the project, in which the Social Policy Research Centre will conduct focus groups with CALD women in metropolitan and regional Australia in early 2007. Findings from this report, coupled with those from Stage One, will inform the cultural groups recruited for the focus groups, the locations for recruiting and conducting focus groups and the themes and issues that will be discussed. Focus group participants will include women who participate in sport and recreation activities and those who do not. They will identify both the barriers to CALD women's participation and strategies for overcoming them and inform policies and programs that might enhance the inclusion of CALD women in sport and recreation.

## **2 Stage Two: Stakeholder Consultation Methodology**

### **2.1 Sampling of organisations**

The research team invited representatives from 33 sporting, women's and cultural organisations to participate in stakeholder interviews for Stage Two of the study, which were conducted in October 2006. The research aimed to capture the diversity of organisational perspectives on CALD women's participation in sport. As such, the sample was designed to include informants from a mix of organisation types, including organised team and individual sports, and organisations involved at the grassroots through to the elite levels of sport, with the largest group of interviewees being from NSOs. The interviewees act as case studies and do not represent all sporting, cultural or women's organisations.

The responses of national sporting organisations are critical to the study because of their peak body status, and because their policies and governance requirements shape sporting structures and practices at the state and community levels. To capture other stakeholders' perspectives, the sample also included interviewees from state and community sporting organisations, as well as government, industry, cultural and women's organisations. Organisations were identified through a search of the Australian Sports Commission's online Australian Sports Directory, and a comprehensive internet search.

The identities of the interviewees and organisations that participated in the research are confidential. As such, the responses contained in this report are not linked to any identifying information (such as names, locations, or the sports that interviewees were involved with). The report instead identifies interviewees by the type of organisation they represented. Table 1 (below) sets out the organisations that were approached, and those who agreed to take part by organisation type.

**Table 1: Interview participants by organisation type**

	Invitations sent	Interviews conducted
National sporting organisations (NSO)	14	6
State & community sporting organisations (SCSO)	4	2
Industry organisation (IO)	1	1
Cultural organisations (CO)	7	2
State government organisations (SGO)	2	2
Women's organisations (WO)	5	2

### **2.2 Interview methodology**

Invitations were sent to representatives from 33 organisations. Representatives of the first 15 organisations to respond were then invited to consent to participate in the study, as required by the University of New South Wales Human Ethics Committee, and to nominate a convenient time to undertake the telephone interview. The research plan included interviewing 12 stakeholders, but as a result of high levels of interest, this was increased to 15 and ensured a larger range of perspectives were captured.

Interviews took between 20 and 60 minutes and were conducted by telephone from the University of New South Wales. Extensive notes were taken throughout each interview. These notes were later analysed thematically to identify the range of issues raised by interviewees, and any common views and experiences. The issues that emerged from the interviews with NSO representatives were compared with other stakeholders, and the overall themes were compared with those emerging from the literature review, reported in the Discussion Paper (Cortis et al., 2006). In this report, any information that could identify interviewees or their organisations has been removed or changed to protect the confidentiality of respondents.

### **2.3 Interviewee roles and organisations**

The largest group of interviewees in the study were from national sporting organisations. These organisations were targeted for the study because of their peak status. Representatives from the organisations who participated in the study had responsibilities that included managing the governance systems of member state and territory associations, policy and program development, managing elite levels of the sport, and running national and international sporting events. Because of their influence over national, state and community sporting networks, NSOs can play a key role in shaping organisational practices and the participation patterns of CALD women and other under-represented groups.

The people interviewed from the six NSOs held a range of positions, including sport development, operations, research, membership, community sport, and women in sport. While interviewees performed a mix of roles in their organisation, their main responsibilities were for retaining existing members and expanding the national membership base, and for encouraging the participation of particular groups (such as women, Indigenous people or older people) as players, coaches and umpires through specific programs or initiatives.

Interviewees representing state and community sporting organisations, women's organisations, state government organisations and the industry organisation largely held executive or project officer positions, and interviewees from the cultural organisations were community leaders. While the cultural organisations had a general focus on CALD populations in their social or geographic communities, the women's and state government organisations in the study were involved in some way in engaging women, or particular groups of women, in sport and other physical activities.

### **3 Consultation Findings**

#### **3.1 Monitoring cultural diversity in sport: stakeholders' perspectives**

The NSO interviewees admitted to having limited information about CALD women's patterns of participation in their sport. Of course, it is difficult, if not impossible, to fully capture information about sporting and recreation participants, given that approximately half of those taking part in sport or physical activities do so outside of formal organisations (ABS, 2003). Yet even within formal structures, little is known about CALD women's participation because data about ethnicity is not collected.

NSO interviewees explained that demographic information about participants is collected through their state or community sporting organisations, but most data collections include information on members' gender, age and location. None of the NSOs consulted systematically collect data that enables them to monitor the cultural and linguistic diversity of people involved in their sport. Largely, interviewees at the national level did not see the cultural background of participants to be relevant to their operations. As one interviewee described,

It's not something you ask on their membership forms. It's not really relevant and we haven't bothered to collect it (NSO6).

Another national sporting organisation representative argued that collecting data about CALD status may be seen as discriminatory:

We don't count that. We don't know. We count males and females. Counting that would be one extra thing. It's hard to collect any information and it might be seen as discriminatory to put people into pockets like that (NSO3).

While this interviewee justified not collecting cultural and linguistic background in routine data collections on the basis that this was non-discriminatory, not collecting this information makes it difficult to observe and address disparities between Australian women born in English speaking countries and others. Collecting information about particular social groups is necessary to monitor patterns of participation, inform policies and practice and identify target groups. Data collection on gender is routine, for example, because disparities between men and women are known and accepted. However, as the views of these stakeholders reflect, national sporting organisations are yet to adopt similar practices of data collection, monitoring, policy development and planning with respect to cultural and linguistic diversity.

Because NSOs did not collect data to help understand the cultural diversity of sporting participants, they drew on observation, anecdotal evidence or 'gut feelings' about patterns of participation amongst different cultural groups. Consequently, basic generalisations were made across all sporting events. One NSO interview for example commented that 'there are limited numbers from other backgrounds' participating at the elite level of Australian sport, for example 'in Olympic sports the (Australian) teams are dominated by people from Anglo-Saxon backgrounds' (NSO6).



The limited evidence NSOs have about cultural diversity in their sport reflects and reinforces their focus on promoting sport universally rather than to particular groups. One interviewee articulated the mainstream focus, which was common in NSOs:

Across the board for our sport we try to promote it as a whole and not target individual groups ... We encourage participation from all backgrounds, as participants, officials and administrators. (NSO5)

Interviewees from state and community sports organisations, women's organisations and government organisations had more developed information about the cultural diversity of those participating in their activities. This is unsurprising, as these organisations deliver (or work in partnerships to deliver) programs to CALD women, giving them a better understanding of client demographics. Respondents from cultural organisations were aware of opportunities for CALD women to participate in activities in their communities (and barriers to their participation), but as their organisations were not specifically concerned with sport, they did not directly monitor this.

The disparity in understanding the cultural diversity of sporting participants between the national, state and community levels of sport suggests that the experiences of those engaged at the community level may not be feeding up to the state and national levels. Routinely collecting information about cultural diversity throughout the sporting organisation will help national and state organisations to obtain the information necessary to effectively address patterns of participation amongst CALD populations.

### **3.2 Strategies in place in interviewee organisations**

According to the six interviewees, none of the NSOs consulted had concrete national strategies in place to promote the involvement of CALD women. However, some said the state levels of their organisation had developed and implemented such strategies, or that they expected strategies to be in place at the state level. Indeed, NSOs did not see CALD women's participation in sport to be a current priority:

In terms of being a key focus area, it's not now. [Targeted] groups may have been involved in grassroots community programs in states. ... It is an opportunity for the future. (NSO2)

Resource limitations were commonly cited by NSO representatives as a reason for not developing and implementing strategies to target particular groups. Interviewees explained that the only group specifically targeted were Indigenous Australians:

Other than the Indigenous community ... we don't specifically go out and target them [other cultures]. My guess is we won't in the future, because it's a resource issue.... You're struggling to keep your head above water on the day-to-day issues (NSO6).

Indeed, the availability of specific funding was a reason interviewees gave for treating Indigenous populations separately in policy and program development. A lack of funding to target CALD groups partly caused NSOs to conceptualise that apart from Indigenous groups 'everyone else is mainstream' (NSO3). This interviewee assumed that existing strategies aiming to increase participation in the mainstream population

would be enough to support CALD populations to participate. Although not intentional, such a universal approach may reinforce the exclusion of some women from CALD backgrounds.

The state and community sporting organisations, as well as the women's and government organisations in the study, more actively promoted the participation of CALD women in sport and recreation. These interviewees were involved in local sporting activities for multicultural women (including swimming programs), advocating for appropriate arrangements and facilities for CALD women to participate, providing training for participants and coaches and promoting cross cultural awareness in sporting organisations. These organisations explained that they did not see their efforts as sufficient to meet levels of community need, but like the NSOs, cited a lack of funding as a reason for not expanding their programs. A women's organisation (WO2), for example, translated one of their activity programs into community languages to encourage access for CALD women, but this interviewee explained that this was extremely costly for small organisations on a regular basis.

### **3.3 Perceived barriers to CALD women's participation**

Interviewees suggested a range of barriers that CALD women might face in sport and recreation activities. They identified personal, cultural and institutional barriers, such as CALD women's perceived lack of awareness about sport and sporting organisations, tension between cultural and sporting dress requirements, language difficulties and family responsibilities, provision of culturally appropriate sporting facilities and the cultures of sporting organisations. Their statements reflected a complex mix of organisational cultures, policies and practices, as well as their own personal attitudes, perceptions and beliefs.

#### **A level playing field?**

All interviewees identified at least some barriers that CALD women may experience in participating in sport. However, some NSO interviewees expressed a strong belief that any impediments to CALD women's participation would not arise from sporting organisations or the governance of sport. These interviewees were optimistic and believed and actively reinforced the cliché that sport is a 'level playing field'. One NSO interview argued, 'There's nothing laid down in statutes that [says] you can't join in. No one can discriminate on race or language in sport' (NSO3). Similarly, another NSO representative stated, 'The way sports operate I don't see any issues at all. I don't see impediments' (NSO6). A women's organisation interviewee agreed, 'There is equity and fair play that filters through from national sporting organisations' (WO1).

These perceptions are widely held in Australia. Kell (2000:10-11) in his book, *Good Sports: Australian sport and the myth of a fair go*, argued that many Australians believe sport is 'the great leveller' and that 'race doesn't matter on the sports field'. Yet his research has shown that throughout Australian history and in contemporary times, 'sport in Australia has always been a source of divisiveness and a site of exclusion', especially around race and ethnicity. The prevailing perception of sport being an institution of 'a fair go' perhaps reinforces some stakeholder's belief that barriers are primarily cultural problems, not founded in sporting organisations or practices. At the same time, beliefs of sport as a level playing field absolve

organisational responsibility for intervening to support the participation of particular groups. As one interviewee argued, 'It's the cultures that cause barriers not the sport itself' (NSO6).

However, some interviewees were aware that discrimination and racism, whether direct or overt, exists within some sporting organisations. One interviewee explained that 'sport is a microcosm of society' and therefore racism is a factor:

Racism [is a barrier], whether it's perceived or actual ... is not an uncommon thing. It's more when you're dealing with club administrators who are not experienced or who haven't previously had multicultural people in their club you get racist attitudes; it's about a lack of understanding and ignorance I think. I believe it can also happen between the players themselves. ... It may not be overt, [but] it may be exclusionary (SGO2).

Another described how particular groups of CALD women may face barriers of a discriminatory or racist nature in the current policy context:

I suppose Muslim women given the last few years of issues probably would be a bit more vulnerable; they've received a bit more undue attention that would make participating in things ... a little bit harder (NSO1).

The general opinion among interviewees was that discrimination was indirect and that social and institutional forces could exclude CALD women from sport and recreation. These findings reflect the results from other studies (eg Taylor, 2002; Taylor, 2004). Taylor found that CALD women themselves tend not to feel they were directly discriminated against, but instead faced a series of barriers deriving from personal, cultural and institutional practices. The current perceptions of CALD women, and how these perceptions compare with stakeholders, will be further examined during Stage Three of this research.

In addition to the possibility of indirect discrimination, the stakeholders identified a set of factors that may lower CALD women's propensity to participate, or hamper their access to sport and recreation activities. Even stakeholders who believed sport to be an institution of 'a fair go for all' recognised barriers CALD women may experience. Collectively, these barriers fitted within the typology of barriers outlined in the Stage One discussion paper (Cortis et al, 2006):

- Socio-cultural - racial and cultural constraints and discomfort in certain social settings
- Access - lack of recreation provision, information, skills and transport
- Affective - lack of appeal and meaningfulness of certain activities
- Physiological - ability, physiological limitations, age
- Resource - time and money
- Interpersonal - such as no one to participate with

Of course, stakeholders did not necessarily use these categories to explain the barriers CALD women are likely to face. However, those they identified can be interpreted within these categories.

### **Socio-cultural barriers**

#### *Dress*

The issue of dress arose repeatedly in the interviews, perhaps because it is a visible and tangible dimension of cultural difference that is easily identifiable to sporting organisations, and has attracted recent media attention (especially with respect to swimming). The emergence of dress as a theme in the consultations reflects findings in other studies that highlight the importance of flexible dress requirements (especially for Muslim women) to CALD women's participation in sport (eg Keogh, 2002).

The majority of interviewees believed that sporting organisations should address this barrier by adapting standards. A NSO interviewee, for example, pointed out, 'we should have a dress code that would enable them to play [the sport] and keep their religious beliefs' (NSO1). Another NSO interviewee explained that:

[*The sport*] has rules and regulations that create barriers, like dress codes and dress regulations. They would drive away minority groups.... [*The sport*] is governed by a value system, the rules are in place to protect and promote values. At the same time too, they can be traditional and restrictive and create a barrier to entry. There needs to be a relaxation of dress regulations and that might encourage some migrant communities [to participate] (NSO2)

A representative from a state government organisation gave examples of sports where 'flexible dress codes' have already been introduced. This interviewee believed that

A lot of those issues are more about the sports coming to the party than the girls. 98% of the time there could be policy put into making dress codes flexible. I think its good for girls generally, not just CALD girls. (SGO2)

A persistent theme was that Muslim women who adhere to culturally sanctioned standards of modesty and veiling in their dress may not be able to participate in competition sport as a result of uniform requirements. As a representative of a national sporting organisation concluded, 'There's the competition uniform. They [Muslim women] can't wear it' (NSO5).

Cultural organisations (COs) were aware of the need to educate sporting organisations so dress codes are relaxed: 'The challenge for sporting organisations is to show that people can look and dress differently and it doesn't make any difference at all' (CO2). Education around dress was perceived as important not only for sporting bodies, but also potential CALD women participants. One interviewee explained that some CALD women may not know what to wear when they perform certain sports or recreational activities, or may not have (or be able to afford) the clothing required. This could be particularly problematic in regard to water sports:

Some of the women said they would turn up in the sari or hijab and might be expecting to get in the water like that - that's what they do at home. But here you have to wear polyester or whatever those fabrics are. So women don't have clothing to get in the pool. (SGO1)

Importantly, while interviewees tended to discuss the dress requirements of Muslim women who wear the hijab, some also pointed out that more relaxed dress regulations might help to encourage the participation of other CALD women and women in general. Indeed, it will be interesting to explore this issue in more detail with CALD women in Stage Three of this project, to establish how CALD women *themselves* experience sporting dress requirements, and whether they feel this presents an obstacle to participating, and if so, in what ways.

#### *Family responsibilities and family expectations*

Many interviewees also identified family expectations and responsibilities as barriers to CALD women's involvement in sport and recreation. These barriers were largely perceived to have a cultural dimension, rather than to be a time constraint shared by women with children in general. Further, young CALD women without children were also seen to contribute more of their time and energy to family activities than their Anglo counterparts. A state government organisation (SGO) representative involved in a sporting program for CALD women, for example, reported that:

CALD women and young girls can be expected to help around the house - they have to take on household duties. For the more traditional ones it's more of an issue. It's a big issue for new arrivals. Most of them - Afghan women, women from Iran, Iraq, and Africa - ... run the household, [and] the girls look after their siblings (SGO2).

There were some interviewees who recognised family life, family responsibilities and a lack of childcare (especially in country areas), as hindering women from participating in sport and recreation, regardless of their cultural background. As one NSO interview commented:

[For women under 35] relationships, work and family take precedence ..., especially if people are having families.... the barriers are not just for migrant women. That's a barrier for everyone (NSO2).

Other respondents had more sophisticated understandings of the family responsibilities of women and girls from CALD backgrounds. A community sporting organisation body with members from CALD backgrounds reported:

Some have families that don't believe the girls should play sport. Some have their first commitment to meeting family needs, such as cooking at home or cleaning (SCSO2).

Indeed, it was the expectations of family members, restrictions from fathers, and a lack of childcare that cultural organisation interviewees identified to impede CALD

women's participation (CO1 and 2). Some also believed that particular sporting activities which were popular in Australia, such as water sports, were not always condoned or encouraged in CALD families (SGO1). Similarly, a respondent from a cultural organisation (CO1) explained that parents would not encourage sports that involved or risked girls being unsupervised, exposed to alcohol, or mixing with males (CO1). Further, family influences were believed to arise from some first generation migrant parents prioritising other aspects of life, besides leisure activities:

The barriers are they are concerned about the children. Migrants, especially those from Asian countries migrated for the sake of the children, to get a better education for them (SCSO1).

This was perceived to cause parents to emphasise family activities other than their own (or their children's) sport participation. The interviewee observed that CALD women tended to stop attending sport at two critical points: in their final year of schooling or while studying at university, and when they had children themselves: 'CALD women, like other women drop out when they have kids. Asians drop out earlier when the family emphasises studying' (SCSO1).

A NSO interviewee also identified that CALD women may abandon sport earlier than other women:

Quite often you see that children from Middle Eastern countries will participate. Then they're on the sidelines from a certain age....  
....We also find that with the Indigenous programs, when the girls develop and become aware of their own bodies, they stop (NSO5).

One interviewee involved in running a program for CALD women shared particular insight into the impact of family life on these women's patterns of participation. CALD women, for example, were perceived to marry earlier and to have larger families and fewer social supports, causing them to experience greater family barriers to their leisure pursuits than others. This interviewee explained that different fertility patterns across cultural groups meant there was a lopsided geographic spread of women's sporting teams across cities. The interviewee observed that the wealthier and less culturally diverse areas of cities tend to have more women's teams, while the culturally diverse areas could support few women's teams, if any. As a result, female players in the culturally diverse areas could feel frustrated about the quality of local sport competitions, as they did not have the variety of teams to play against as those in the wealthier areas (SGO1).

In general, issues of family responsibilities and family expectations raised by these stakeholders reinforce findings in other Australian and international studies, that family responsibilities may shape women's access to sport and their sporting preferences, and that family expectations may facilitate participation in activities with others who share the same cultural, linguistic and religious background (Taylor and Toohey, 2002, Walseth and Fasting, 2004).

### *Fitting in*

Discomfort in certain social situations has been identified as a socio-cultural barrier to participating in sporting organisations and clubs (Tsai and Coleman, 1999).

Interviewees also perceived this as a potential problem, recognising that some clubs had a strong established culture, which made it difficult for people to fit in. As one NSO interviewee explained:

It's the clubs. The nature of a club is it's a community already; it's an established group that do things a certain way. So for someone to come in cold not knowing anybody [it could be difficult], we're not going to attract many CALD women at all to sport. I think it's intimidating to come into a set culture... Some clubs, the member type clubs would be very much like that - a stuffy, traditional, conservative type environment. (NSO4)

Such a traditional environment may present challenges for a new member to feel included and experience a sense of belonging. For women from CALD backgrounds, cultural, language and other issues may further compound these challenges. Indeed, another interviewee similarly reported that 'a lot of time' people of CALD backgrounds have 'a degree of discomfort with initial contact with a club. ... [And] they don't always have the confidence to engage' (NSO2).

The culture at all levels of a sporting organisation, not just that of 'street-level' sporting clubs, was believed to present barriers to CALD women's participation. When asked how CALD women would fit into their organisation (as a worker or official), an NSO interviewee responded:

I'll be honest. It would be difficult ... [This sport] has such a strong Anglo Saxon background. It's incredible. I would think the [sport] community is a good community but it would be difficult. ... It's not a culturally diverse sport (NSO6).

The lack of diversity among sporting organisations was further reinforced by another interviewee (SCSO1), who identified that sporting associations may not have effective links with CALD groups. This interviewee observed that migrants tended to participate in sport along cultural lines, and that cultural groups were not affiliated with regional or state associations (a point also made by NSO3). As such, these regional or state associations were seen to have difficulty including CALD groups in larger sporting tournaments or other formal events (SCSO1). The absence of cultural diversity in organised sport, as this interviewee suggests, reflects the higher levels of CALD people participating in non-organised sport and recreation (ABS, 2003). What is unknown, and will be further explored in the focus groups, is whether this trend is partly a consequence of CALD women's own feelings of exclusion or not fitting into sporting club cultures.

### **Access barriers**

Barriers to accessing sport and recreation were identified by a number of the interviewees. These encompassed access to information and awareness of sporting organisations and recreational activities, as well as language, transportation, skill and infrastructure constraints.

### *Awareness about sport and sporting organisations*

Interviewees identified that CALD women may lack awareness about sport and the cultural norms of sporting organisations, such as how to get involved in a sporting club and what participating involves. One interviewee, for example, perceived that migrant women who did not go to school in Australia may not be aware of the sports available: 'They don't know that you can walk into a netball court and have an entitlement to have a go' (WO1).

This perceived lack of awareness was seen to impede CALD women from becoming involved in sport in the first place: 'If there's not awareness of what's in the community [people cannot participate]; it's knowing how to engage in the setting and what the community has to offer' (NSO2). As well as seeing a lack of information about sport as a barrier to becoming involved, interviewees identified that CALD women may have unclear expectations about the responsibilities of participating in sport, which would present barriers to their ongoing involvement. A state government organisation representative, who has been involved in supporting CALD women in sport, found that women who had recently arrived in Australia had:

A lack of experience of sport generally and lack of experience of instructed sport. New arrivals girls' issues are about understanding sporting systems - like that you need to be on time, and attend training, those kinds of things (SGO2)

Another respondent similarly found that CALD women may not understand the responsibilities of being a player, such as turning up on time for training (SCS02). This could raise difficulties for CALD women themselves and for sporting organisations. Unstable attendance patterns amongst players could, for example, make it difficult for sporting providers to plan activities around the numbers of participants (SCS02). However, this respondent felt that the onus falls to sporting organisations to better cater for cultural difference: 'These women may not have had rigid restrictions or had to worry about time in the past, so they need some leeway' (SCS02). Education and marketing strategies, which explain the responsibilities of sport participants, are likely to help overcome this barrier.

### *Language*

Language barriers were widely seen as an access issue, affecting both players and non-players. Language was perceived to be a particular impediment for new arrivals and for older women's sport and recreation participation, as these women were seen as more likely to speak languages other than English than younger women (WO2).

Stakeholders were aware of the need to involve bilingual women in non-playing roles, such as instructors, coaches and referees - to overcome this barrier, but reported difficulties in identifying and recruiting these people. For example, a state government organisation representative reported that a program developed to engage CALD women in sport 'had to turn girls away because they didn't have a [culturally appropriate] coach and manager' (SGO1).

In part, this barrier relates to the cultural diversity and capacity of the sport and recreation paid and voluntary workforce. One interviewee, for example, found it



difficult to find bilingual women to instruct physical activity groups in community languages, but had also heard that CALD women instructors found it difficult to find work in the sporting industry (WO2).

Language barriers also relate to the resources available to sport and recreation organisations. Those attempting to engage CALD women in sport and recreation activities found they lacked funds to translate promotional materials such as activity programs, which needed to be regularly updated. One interviewee pointed out it can be difficult to provide translated materials for new arrivals because of the expense:

For the new arrivals, they'll have no money, no language, no communication, no transport, and they don't understand culturally the ways things work ... Emerging communities are the hardest to work with. ... We can't translate. Well we can but it's very expensive (SGO1).

Other Australian evidence supports these stakeholders' perceptions that language presents a barrier to the involvement of CALD women in sport. Analysis by the ABS (2006) found that women born outside the main English speaking countries and who were not proficient in spoken English had lower rates of participation than those born in the same group of countries but who were not proficient in spoken English (34.7 per cent compared to 49.8 per cent).

#### *Access to appropriate infrastructure*

Limited infrastructure to tailor sporting and recreational activities to CALD women was also commonly reported as a barrier. This was seen primarily as an institutional problem - that is, a shortage of facilities - rather than a cultural one. Interviewees reported difficulties in closing off sections of sporting facilities to men (even for short periods each week) and infrastructure problems with showers or change rooms lacking sufficient privacy.

Interviewees highlighted a lack of available sport and recreation facilities that cater for CALD women and are easily accessed by public transport. This issue arose repeatedly with respect to swimming facilities. An interviewee from a cultural organisation explained the requirements for Muslim women:

Women need to be encouraged to know where the facilities are and if they accommodate their needs. Swimming must be in a closed pool or a closed section of the pool. The showers or change rooms must be right. Muslims can't be nude in front of each other, they can't change in front of each other so showers and change rooms must have doors or curtains so that no-one is completely exposed - even for men (CO1).

This interviewee also explained that some CALD populations would also consider sport and recreation facilities offering alcohol or gambling on the premises as inappropriate (CO1).

While the cultural organisations could identify what was required, sporting organisations emphasised a shortage of venues that comply with the privacy

requirements. As a result, women in a multicultural area of a major city had only small windows of opportunity (in one case 2 hours per week) in which to use culturally appropriate facilities, such as female-only swimming pools (WO2).

One barrier to providing access to appropriate sporting facilities may be the reluctance of local governments to offer private time to women, given that this could be unpopular in the wider community and presented as controversial in the media:

Councils don't want to make politically unpopular decisions by blocking off access (eg to ensure privacy) or having women's only time (SGO1)

Facilities were especially restricted in certain geographic areas. One interviewee identified a lack of facilities for a small sport that is popular with migrant communities, and cited a case in which the facility available to this sporting group was reallocated to a more popular (but less ethnically diverse) sport (SCSO1). A shortage of facilities could cause clubs to prioritise time available for skilled and established players rather than new members who had a low skill base (and who required the attention of more experienced members) (SCSO1). Whether these practices are more widespread requires future research.

Overall, national sporting organisation interviewees largely placed the onus on community based sport and recreation managers and providers to ensure facilities were culturally appropriate. However, one NSO expressed the opposite view, perceiving that barriers to using facilities arise from the cultures themselves, and not from exclusionary organisations and institutions. When asked about what barriers there might be to CALD women's participation, this interviewee framed cultural requirements not as barriers but as 'difficulties' for sporting organisations. Apart from this dissenting view, other studies have also found that facility design and management present barriers to the participation of CALD women (Kay, 2003).

### **Organisational barriers: sport organisations' capacity and willingness**

The interviews revealed that barriers to CALD women's participation are tied to an organisation's capacity and willingness to target, recruit and support CALD women. Some interviewees argued that limited organisational capacity - financial and other resources - meant that their organisations were unlikely to target and engage CALD women in the future.

A national sporting organisation representative explained, for example, that their organisation did not have the financial resources to increase and effectively support CALD women's involvement and therefore 'It's not an issue that's near our top priority... there is no incentive to do anything. If there was we would do something' (NSO3). Another NSO interviewee explained that it is more cost effective to market the sport to those already likely to participate:

The problem is I can go to a private school and get kids who don't play and convince them to play for \$100 per kid. If I wanted to find a CALD female it would cost me more, I'd have to see 100 times more kids to get one. There's limited resources and pressure to grow participation. It costs more money to recruit CALD, disabled,

Indigenous groups. It takes more time. There's less return. I might have to see a thousand to get 10 in (NSO4).

This sentiment of 'no return' was also reflected in another NSO interviewee's comment, 'We just target [people from] Indigenous [backgrounds] because of the funding' (NSO6).

It is important to recognise that these views were expressed by only three employees of national sporting organisations and may not be widespread in the sporting community. Yet, the attitude that there is 'no return' for organisations to engage CALD women, requires further exploration and interpretation. Interestingly, these perspectives were held by those responsible for expanding the national membership base of sporting organisations, and for encouraging the participation of particular groups (such as women, Indigenous people or older people) as players, coaches and umpires through specific programs or initiatives. Their comments reflect the commercial imperative driving sporting organisations, that 'return' is commonly considered in terms of dollars spent and received, rather than membership diversity or representation, or the benefits of cultural diversity for sporting organisations. Engaging more CALD women in sporting organisations, for example, could provide an untapped resource of bilingual volunteer coaches, referees and administration assistants. Despite the above views, stakeholders provided numerous examples of policies and practices to help facilitate CALD women's involvement in sport and recreation.

### **3.4 Perceptions about strategies to support CALD women in sport and recreation**

Interviewees interpreted barriers as either obstacles within the control of sporting organisations, or those that their organisations could not control or feasibly address. A minority of NSO respondents did not believe that sporting organisations needed to actively change themselves or sporting institutions to support CALD women, instead placing the onus on individuals to fit in:

They can compete. There are no physical differences between people. Provided that they're prepared to fit in and do whatever they need to do in terms of training they'll fit in. They'll be made to feel welcome at the highest level (NSO3)

The need for CALD women to assimilate into established sporting cultures was a minority view and contradicted other interviewees' recognition that changes within sporting organisations, that are adaptive to cultural diversity, are critical to the inclusion of CALD women:

We need to understand their cultural needs and adapt our sport. If we want the sport to grow we need to get an understanding of what is holding them back, and how we can help (NSO5).

Stakeholders at all levels identified a range of ways to support CALD women in sport and recreation. One national organisation has 'traditionally' not 'done anything' to support the participation of CALD women, but has started to provide support for 'campaigning and promotional activities to attract people [from CALD

backgrounds]’. The organisation intends to work ‘with clubs and coaches to make sure the cultural issues are considered’ once people are recruited (NSO4).

### **Addressing socio-cultural barriers**

As Section 4.2 discusses, socio-cultural barriers include constraints such as uniforms, family responsibilities and discomfort in certain social settings. Most interviewees were aware of the need for sporting organisations to relax dress codes. The provision of childcare and transport were options considered to assist women and girls from CALD backgrounds to overcome family constraints. Interviewees, however, were most forthcoming in suggesting how sporting organisations can assist CALD women to feel like they belong in local sports teams and clubs.

Sporting organisations suggested piloting programs that were designed to involve CALD women without requiring these women to confront or engage with dominant sporting cultures. One interviewee envisaged that:

We’d pilot a program on Wednesday afternoons when it was just those women. So they wouldn’t have to mix with normal members of the clubs. They could have their own social introduction day that could run once a day or once a month. We’d given them an introduction to the game, then they could take on the level of involvement that they wanted (NSO1).

Another interviewee suggested a proactive targeting strategy ‘to get [CALD women] to come in [to sporting clubs] rather than relying on them to walk in off the street’. Without such a strategy, this interviewee believed the ‘reputations’ of the local clubs - ‘of being old and stale and intimidating to walk in the door’ - would prevent CALD women from participating (NSO1).

Interviewees generally supported the idea that sporting organisations should attempt to engage CALD women in culturally segregated activities, at least initially, to assist in providing a safe, comfortable pathway to mainstream participation:

There’s the debate about whether you should segregate them or try to get them into mainstream competitions. With [another sport] we’ve found that initially, especially for the first generation you have to provide the taste of sport within their own cultural group. It’s less threatening, they get a taste and see they can participate, and then you can try to link them into other areas ... I don’t advocate long term segregation at all. But as a first involvement, I think it’s less threatening, helps build confidence then you can link them in (NSO4).

Another interviewee pointed out that while segregation was an appropriate strategy in the short term and for beginners, the intention would be to eventually link CALD women into mainstream participation (SGO2). The benefits of segregated activities have been recognised in the literature, not only in regard to engagement, but also to enable the expression and maintenance of cultural identity (Taylor and Toohey, 2002).

Interviewees recognised that segregated activities would only provide a pathway into mainstream sporting teams and clubs if sporting organisation cultures were suitably

adapted to be more socially inclusive. Workforce development within sporting organisations, such as cross-cultural training for staff, was seen as important. This reflects findings from other studies (CCEH, 2006). One interviewee believed training should extend beyond sporting organisations' employees, volunteers and members to also include staff who manage and work at venues, as well as contracted instructors (WO2).

Recruiting female and culturally diverse coaches and referees was also seen as critical to engaging CALD women as players (NSO5), with one interviewee identifying that free training could be provided to community members to become instructors (SGO2):

It is very powerful and effective to have coaches, mentors and program coordinators who come from a similar background as the participants can identify with and who understand the participants. Plus it is the added benefit of getting more people from diverse backgrounds involved in sport. (SGO2)

Another interviewee reported that by using female coaches and referees in a sporting program involving Muslim women from Middle Eastern countries, the organisation had provided 'a safe' and 'positive environment'. Consequently, the women participating 'didn't feel intimidated; they felt supported' (SCSO2).

Organisational cultures within sport and recreation organisations were also perceived to require reform, with internal diversity policies seen as a necessary underpinning for broader strategies to engage CALD women:

Perhaps ultimately, the level of success of a program is directly correlated to the organisational culture of the sport and recreation organisation who is delivering the program. The organisation needs to value diversity in membership, be welcoming and non-discriminatory and non-racist. Sure, not all of their existing members will have these values but certainly the leadership of the organisation and overall culture needs to be right (SGO2).

Interestingly however, no NSO interviewees identified that their organisations had a cultural diversity policy. Although such standards or frameworks exist, that NSO interviewees neglected to identify them as a potential factor shaping their organisations suggests diversity policies or frameworks may be poorly implemented, if at all.

### **Improving access**

The most significant barriers hindering access to CALD women's participation in sport and recreation were seen to be limited awareness of sporting organisations, communication barriers and culturally inappropriate infrastructure. The factors interviewees suggested would facilitate CALD women's participation addressed these areas.

### *Education and marketing*

Interviewees identified that promoting the benefits of sport, and portraying sport as culturally inclusive was an important strategy for engaging CALD women in sport and recreation activities. Suggested avenues for education and sports promotion included cultural organisations such as Migrant Resource Centres or religious establishments, schools and community organisations, local and community newspapers and radio, and niche websites.

Education and marketing campaigns were seen as an opportunity to inform CALD women about positive examples of inclusion. A cultural organisation representative suggested that these campaigns should be ‘highlighting the involvement or achievement of Muslim women in sport in Australia [to] show they were able to keep values and dress’ (CO1).

NSOs suggested that sport marketers educate potential participants about what sport involves and how to become involved in either a playing or non-playing role (NSO1, NSO6, NSO5). One NSO believed this should incorporate ‘a showcase of what [sports] have to offer’ (NSO2). A cultural organisation advised that for such marketing to be effective, the advertisements would require a commitment from sporting organisations to address the needs and sensitivities of particular groups, such as ‘that there is no wine or alcohol consumption or gambling on the premises, [and] that the change rooms will have certain arrangements’ (CO1). While all NSOs supported education campaigns, one did not wish for advertisements specifically targeting women from CALD backgrounds. This interviewee returned to an earlier argument about the importance of a ‘mainstream’ approach.

### *Language*

As Section 4.3 outlines, sporting organisations were acutely aware of language barriers and the need for translators for written material and bilingual administrative officers, coaches, managers and referees. Interviewees reported that while such strategies were easy to identify, they were difficult to implement because of funding limitations and problems locating and recruiting translators and culturally and linguistically appropriate non-players to fulfil coaching and other roles.

### *Developing appropriate facilities*

Culturally appropriate sport and recreation facilities were seen as important for engaging CALD women. Primarily, interviewees identified the importance of facilities that ensured privacy, especially pools and gyms, and those which allowed children to attend with their mothers. The need for services run by women in female-only facilities (whether permanently or at certain times each week) arose repeatedly. A representative from a state government organisation that provides a sporting program for CALD women advised that the program required ‘all female instructors, modest dress (no bikinis), curtains covering the outside windows, [and] all female attendees’ (SGO2). One interviewee expressed concern that such strategies could be seen as discriminatory and might be unpopular or misunderstood in the wider community (IO).

In general, interviewees identified that having facilities or equipment available for casual use by individuals or informal groups was important to raising levels of participation in culturally diverse communities:

The benefit of [the sport] is that it's designed for that type of participation ... you don't have to be a member of a club, you don't have to be in a full competition. ... It has facilities for casual hire. So there's a chance to get significant participation in a non-threatening way. (NSO4)

Informal participation and the use of equipment or facilities on a casual, informal basis was thus seen as a potential strategy for engaging participants who may find a club or competitive environment threatening. However, this should be recognised as a strategy that risks maintaining the exclusion of CALD participants from mainstream structures, and reducing opportunities for skill development and public recognition through participation in competitive sport.

### **Confronting organisational barriers: capacity and willingness**

Interviewees, especially those in NSOs, believed that targeted funding was essential to develop and implement programs to engage CALD women and ensure that sport was affordable for these women to access. As an interviewee explained: 'We're restricted with funding, so to run a nationwide program we'd need substantial funding and staff' (NSO5).

Two other NSO interviewees stated that programs currently in place to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were a direct result of funding and direction from the ASC:

We're involved with Indigenous sport ... because that's the one the ASC is pushing like crazy. We can get assistance and funding. ... We would [offer programs for CALD women], if they [ASC] said, 'It's time to get Pakistanis or Asians involved' (NSO6).

The other NSO representative explained a similar process:

We have programs in place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We go out and encourage them to play. There are financial benefits to do that - government benefits. There's money in place to get coaches. No doubt if there was money in similar programs it would be the same thing. Money buys anything ... If there was an offer of money to coach [CALD] women, they'll find coaches to do it and would generate enough coaches and competitions (NSO3)

NSOs believed they would have the capacity to support CALD women in sport if they received targeted resources.

### *Knowledge development and attitudinal change*

Financial incentives may substantially increase sporting organisations' willingness to target, recruit and support CALD women's participation. Attitudinal change, however, may also be important. Some sporting organisations could benefit from

education and marketing campaigns around the benefits of engaging people from CALD backgrounds in sport and recreation. There are also some gaps around interviewee's knowledge of how to engage CALD women, what other organisations are doing and what works well and what does not.

Overwhelmingly, interviewees were not aware of what other organisations were doing to involve CALD women. Some were aware of programs for Indigenous populations, but not for other CALD groups. Some suggested that apart from the Australian Sports Commission, they would approach NSOs to find out what sports were doing to support CALD women. However, if the NSO interviewees are indicative of the national sporting organisations throughout Australia, these organisations may not have any strategies in place to support CALD women. At the state and community level, organisations tend to have a more thorough overview.

Overall, interviewee responses suggest the need for more effective information networks through which to share and disseminate experiences, and to disseminate information about what has worked (or not worked) in different sport and recreation contexts. These networks should extend beyond the sporting sector.

### **Partnerships and community involvement**

In terms of developing, organising and delivering strategies to engage CALD women in sport and recreation activities, interviewees emphasised the importance of partnership relationships between sporting organisations and cultural, community and government organisations, and the involvement of community members themselves. Indeed, sporting organisations may benefit from information about the practicalities of making and sustaining links with other organisations (SCSO2), and the practicalities of developing trust in communities given the large investment that engaging CALD women generally requires (SGO1).

Government interviewees tended to have more sophisticated understandings of the dimensions of successful partnerships and community involvement, with one identifying:

This concept is probably the most important component to success as sport and recreation providers know how to provide a service but may have little understanding about things such as cultural issues and promotional avenues/key contacts to reach the target group. It is a matter of partnering with organisations whose purpose and desired outcomes can be achieved to some degree by supporting the sport and rec program. ...Win-wins are vital. Additionally, the groups that work with the women on a regular basis have the trust of the women and add credence to the program (SGO2)

This interviewee went on to suggest that funding should be provided 'to CALD organisations' that have partnerships with sport and recreation providers (SGO2). However, partnerships and community involvement were not seen to remove the onus on sporting organisations to lead initiatives and drive programs conceived within communities (SGO2).



### **3.5 Next steps**

The findings from this report will inform Stage Three of the research. Themes and issues that have arisen from the stakeholder consultations will be explored in the focus groups with CALD women who participate in sport and recreation and those who do not. The perceptions, practices, experiences and attitudes of these stakeholders will be compared and contrasted with the experiences, behaviours and perceptions of CALD women.

Many of the issues that have emerged in these consultations will be discussed in the focus groups. These include CALD women's awareness of opportunities to participate in sport and recreation; their experiences and perceptions regarding dress codes and regulations; the importance of culturally appropriate non-players to support participation; their perceptions and experiences of access to sport and recreation (such as language and access to appropriate facilities); the impact of family on participation; and feelings of belonging and/or exclusion in sporting institutions.

### **3.6 Summary**

Overall, this report builds on the material contained in the Discussion Paper (Cortis, et al. 2006). The interviews demonstrate the ways that key stakeholders in sporting, women's and cultural organisations perceive the barriers to CALD women's participation in sport and recreation activities, and strategies for overcoming them. It is important to recognise however, that while the responses of these interviewees reflect perceptions present amongst those working in the sporting community, their responses are also tied up with personal attitudes, perceptions and beliefs, and may not be nationally representative.

Notwithstanding, these stakeholders' perspectives highlight a complex range of personal, cultural and institutional barriers to CALD women's participation, which are outlined in Section 4.3. Largely, these barriers, such as language, dress and culturally inappropriate sporting facilities, also arise in other studies. In terms of what participants perceive would help support CALD women, targeted funding and partnership relationships emerged as strong themes. Other important findings are that interviewees were largely unaware of what other organisations were doing to support CALD women in sport. Developing the sector's capacity to share and disseminate evidence of good practice on the issue is essential to enhancing the capacity of organisations to effectively support the involvement of CALD women in sport.

Interviews with NSOs show particular issues pertaining to this level of the sporting sector. Indeed, monitoring the cultural backgrounds of participants and targeting specific groups appeared to be antithetical to current practices that promote sport to the mainstream. Some NSOs were strongly optimistic about the capacity of sport to provide a 'level playing field', and some did not perceive that their organisational cultures and arrangements would contribute to low rates of participation amongst CALD women. Moreover, none described having cultural diversity frameworks or strategies in place that guided their activities and those of member organisations. Given the commercial imperative and resource pressures of NSOs and some the prevailing attitudes of its representatives, providing special purpose funding to target CALD women (perhaps in partnership with cultural organisations) coupled with an education campaign, is likely to effectively raise awareness of cultural diversity

across the sector and give rise to specific policies and programs in sporting organisations.

The issues that emerged during the stakeholder consultations, and outlined in this report, will be triangulated with further data to be collected through focus group discussions with CALD women. This will help to more fully determine the barriers to CALD women's participation and strategies for overcoming them.

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