The reality of people living with a disability is often confronting. The verse above is a stark reminder of how people with disabilities are often invisible, and somewhat exist outside our community bubble. Traditionally, the importance of including people with disabilities in sporting and recreational activities has been overlooked by ‘mainstream’ organisations. And, the services that are available can, at times, be difficult to access.

With this in mind, the Department of Sport and Recreation (DSR) in partnership with the Disability Service Commission (DSC) enlisted a consultant to collect evidence and make recommendations relating to the importance of making community sport and recreation more inclusive for people with disabilities, their families and carers.

In December 2011, a request for comment on the review was posted on the DSR website, with respondents given until February 3, 2012 to comment. The department received written submissions from 24 organisations/individuals with overwhelming support for all of the 19 recommendations. However, a number of respondents raised questions, made suggestions and sought clarity on how the recommendations might be implemented.

A draft implementation plan will be forwarded to Sport and Recreation Minister Terry Waldron by the end of April, 2012. The Department expects to receive the Minister’s response to the recommendations by June, 2012.
Guiding Principles Rationale

1. 

End-user Centred

To optimise sustainable and high quality disability sport and recreation services across WA, there also needs to be clarity about the needs and wants of the end-user.

2. 

Optimal Sector Funding

Major funding agencies need to clarify their focus within the sector to reduce overlap, and maximise the effectiveness of government investment in the sector. A collaborative approach to ongoing funding support for people with a disability, and the service providers that work with them would create increased sustainability and outcomes.

3. 

Service Provider Readiness

To maximise investment returns for funding agencies, DSR and other network partners need to identify service providers that are ‘ready’ to be invested in, and those that require added support.

4. 

Network Partnerships

The WA Disability Sport and Active Recreation Network needs to effectively engage in numerous recommendations in the report. This includes forming proactive partnerships to create a single cohesive WA network.

5. 

Open Access to Information

End-users, service providers and funders of Disability Sport and Active Recreation Services need to be able to easily and conveniently access relevant and reliable information.

6. 

Sector Support

Providers of Disability Sport and Recreation Services need access to the consultation, direction and support necessary to ensure they meet individual client and member needs.
Summary of Industry Comments on the Recommendations

1.

*End-User Centred*

The purpose of the sector is to service the needs of people who have a disability through sport and active recreation services. To do this, the focus must be the end-user and should accurately identify their needs and wants in relation to participation in sport and active recreation.

1.1 The Guiding principle for all programs and services delivered by service providers should be ‘end-user centred and end-user driven’. This approach is different to the approach most service providers currently promote, which is end-user targeted and service provider driven.

Twenty-three respondents agreed with this recommendation, however some felt they already use this approach.

“We feel all programs should have an end-user focus; however many end-users are not aware of what is possible, or how to access the programs”.

“Our organisation (sic) endorses the recommendation for services to respond to the specific needs and interests of people with disability, and for people with disability to play a key role in driving the development of services and activities”.

“Additional local engagement strategies are required to reach out to and include people who are isolated, vulnerable or in need of extra support ... these are the people who are most invisible in our communities and are most in need of inclusion”.

One respondent disagreed with the recommendation.

1.2 DSR to partner with the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) sector funding agencies, service providers and suitable WA academic institutions, to undertake ongoing research to identify the needs and wants of people who have a disability across all areas of the inclusion spectrum. Note – this research should look to build on the current ASC research project in collaboration with the University of Technology, Sydney – i.e. identifying the sporting needs of people with disability.

Twenty-two respondents agreed with this recommendation.

“We strongly agree with this recommendation provided it includes well planned and regular reviews with a much greater scope”.

2009/905/81
“Research in this area needs to take place; however the specifics of the research need to be clarified”.

“It would also be advantageous for an audit of all organisations to ascertain who does what and who they cater for”.

Two respondents disagreed with the recommendation saying;

“There is already sufficient research in this area and it would be better to collate and analyse the existing information”.

1.3 Through the use of a community engagement model such as ActiveSmart or other existing community resources (inclusion officers, LACs, etc.) there must be a clear identification of the needs and wants of people who have a disability and the development/delivery of services must be designed to best meet these needs.

For this recommendation 21 respondents agreed saying;

“We agree provided that the existing community resources are involved in the process”.

“There needs to be a focus on people with mental disabilities not just physical”.

Three respondents disagree to this recommendation. Questions were raised regarding the evidence that ActiveSmart impacted people with disabilities.

“ActiveSmart is not a proven model for people with disabilities; much more work is needed here”.

“A recommendation is needed for resources to be in alternative languages for culturally and linguistically diverse people”.

1.4 Funding is sourced to broaden the ActiveSmart project into additional communities and the learnings from the engagements with people who have a disability are shared throughout the sector.

Respondents generally felt that the recommendation to use ActiveSmart was unconditional; however it was intended as an example only. Despite this, 22 respondents agree with the recommendation.
“Getting the funding down to the community grass roots level is very important”.

“Funding should also include recreation not just sport”.

“The recommendation should put aside funds for all effective programmes, not just one”.

Two respondents disagree with this recommendation and believe that:

“The review should have focused on a ‘less regional’ area”.

“This should have been done under government agency direction”.

2.

Optimal Sector Funding

If a coordinated approach to funding Disability Sport and Recreation services was established there could be a reduction in the number of agencies funding the same project. With a more cohesive funding approach there would be greater sustainability and increased positive outcomes.

2.1 The Fair Play Strategy Group to work collaboratively with other major funding agencies such as Lotterywest and Healthway to clarify their focus within the sector to reduce overlap and maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of WA government investment in the sector.

All respondents agree with this recommendation. An overwhelming number of respondents share the opinion that there is an obvious overlap in funding and a need for a more collaborative approach.

“Service providers should be notified of this funding clarification”.

“Any way of making sure the funds available to this sector are used more efficiently can only benefit the end-user”.

“We support a collaborative approach; however we would like to see DSR play the main role in funding sport for all Western Australians”.

“This recommendation should be extended to also identify service gaps”.
2.2 DSR to review its current model used to fund major WA disability sport and recreation organisations. The new funding model would see DSR ‘purchasing’ consultancy and support services from disability sport and recreation organisations, to improve the readiness of other sport and recreation service providers (e.g. SSAs, RSA, clubs, etc.) to more effectively deliver services which meet the identified needs and wants of people who have a disability.

This recommendation was met with uncertainty regarding its intent, with the majority of respondents requesting clarification. Despite the uncertainty surrounding this recommendation, 21 respondents agree. Three disagree.

“A focus on ‘readiness’ assessment can create more exclusion than inclusion”.

“More explanation is needed on the type of services expected, and at what level”.

“Need to ensure that associations and clubs have the personnel and resources along with the funding to be able to deliver effective programs”.

“A concern is that funding could become the driver for partnerships, rather than a genuine desire for them”.

“Two issues are being addressed in the recommendation making the focus unclear”.

2.3 Funding and support is offered by relevant agencies to assist the major disability sport and recreation organisations review and where necessary adjust their current business model in the light of this review and change in the landscape of disability sport and active recreation that has occurred over the last decade.

All 24 respondents agree with this recommendation with many suggesting that organisations would need support to implement any changes.

“Changing the business model is one thing, but organisations would still require support in order to implement any updates”.

“All disability sport and recreation organisations need to reassess their relevance”.

“Organisations should question whether they are still relevant, particularly if there are other organisations with a greater capacity, better governance structures and are better suited to deliver improved services to the end-user”.
“It would be useful to have a central agency for service providers to easily establish what funds are available and for what purpose”.

2.4 In line with the recommendation made within the Guiding Principle Area 1 (End-User Focus) above, a proportion of funding allocated by each major funding agency should be allocated at a community or individual level. This approach could allow the end-user to drive the required services rather than agencies developing ‘programs’ which they hope will meet the needs of the end-user.

Twenty-two respondents agree with this recommendation, one disagreed while another one was unsure.

“Funds are needed to overcome barriers in participation for the individual”.

“How will the service providers be aware of who gets funding and what they require from the associations and clubs”?

“Carers for mental disability would have to be the ‘end-user’ and make decisions – do they get any funding”?

“Clarity is needed regarding the carers capacity to apply for funding for the end-user”.

“The whole model needs to be developed in consultation with the end user”.

2.5 All major funding agencies (i.e. DSR, DSC, Lotterywest and Healthway) to work collaboratively to develop a single funding performance monitoring and evaluation tool/system which allows all agencies to more accurately assess the impact of their funding on the sector.

Twenty-three respondents agree with this recommendation; however suggestions have been made regarding evaluation. Only one respondent disagreed.

“We agree in principle; however this process would also need to capture the qualitative experiences as well rather than just participation numbers”.

“A simpler application form is required, possibly standardised for all funding agencies or a generic form”.

“This tool should be used by the total industry not just the sector”.

“If more paper work is required it could take up precious volunteer time”.
“Funding organisations should be required to demonstrate their capacity to uphold the substantive equality principles”.

2.6 Input to and support of the ActiveSmart project is increased/enhanced through (greater) collaboration between government agencies. The resultant increase in resource and support to the project will enable greater engagement with people who have a disability to gauge their interests in/needs from sport and active recreation and where possible, develop the capacity of community based service providers to meet these needs.

Twenty-one respondents agree with this recommendation; however many sought evidence regarding the Active Smart model’s success with people with disabilities. Three respondents disagree.

“There is support to further resources for developing service-providers; however this may not be the Active Smart programme but a multitude of other programmes”.

“How will this program work for people who require specialised equipment to participate when this is not currently available at local community level”?

“Service providers who receive what appear to be very large amounts of money need to be made more accountable as to how and where that money is spent”.

3.

Service Provider Readiness

A system of identifying the readiness of sport and recreation service providers needs to be developed to effectively cater for the end-user. The system should focus on the delivery of high quality inclusive activities/services aligned with the core purpose of the organisation.

3.1 All major funding agencies (i.e. DSR, DSC, Lotterywest and Healthway) to work collaboratively to identify the core competency areas which would allow them to accurately identify ‘Ready Service Providers’ i.e. service providers with the necessary capacity, competence and commitment in place allowing funding agencies to effectively prioritise their investment in sport and active recreation for people who have a disability.
Twenty respondents agree with this recommendation; however there were three who disagree while one was unsure.

“Most organisations should demonstrate these core competencies as part of sound governance, whether or not they include people with disability”.

“We support an empowerment model where areas of sustainability are funded along with targeted areas of weakness to aid improvement”.

“We do not support a model where those with the ‘best’ programmes receive most of the funds due to their ability to already deliver”.

“If specialised help is required, such as modification of equipment or activities, it should be made available”.

3.2 Building on recommendation 3.1 – major funding agencies to work together to develop and implement a service provider Readiness Assessment Tool (RAT). This tool should preferably be an interactive on-line tool and would fulfil the following functions:

- Assess the readiness of service providers to receive specific funding and support.
- Identify areas of service provider capacity development need (i.e. where service providers are assessed as not currently ready to undertake effective program delivery activities and be funded appropriately, the profile tool should identify the areas in which they need to improve, if they wish to).
- Link ‘ready’ and ‘non-ready’ service providers to suitable capacity building support (e.g. resources, other funding programs, training, program best practice examples etc).

Nineteen respondents agree with recommendation 3.2, two disagree while three remain unsure.

“If a sport simply says they will have a go and is provided some confidence building support then a great deal can be achieved. As a sector we can be guilty of over-thinking solutions”.

“There needs to be assurances that this tool is not too onerous on SSA’s as it may prevent certain organisations attempting to be inclusive, despite their desire to be”.

“An alternative title to ‘Readiness Assessment Tool’ could be considered, such as ‘Guidelines to Inclusion’”.
“We support a model where service provider weakness is assessed and resources are put into those areas for improvement”.

4.

Network Partnerships

The broader WA sport and active recreation network (i.e. disability and mainstream) to engage in various forms of collaboration such as; integrated research, planning, program funding, program delivery and systems review. For this to be effective partnerships will need to be improved and/or formed and will need to be driven by open, cross agency/whole of network leadership.

4.1 The membership of and terms of reference for the Fair Play Network are reviewed and if necessary redefined to reflect the core values and priority areas of the Fair Play document (Strategic framework for inclusive sport and recreation), particularly relating to facilitating increased collaboration within the sector (e.g. service provider strategic planning, research, etc.).

Twenty-two respondents agree with recommendation 4.1, two disagree.

“‘We give in principle support for the concept of the Fair Play Network being evolved. In the current form the group has limited value’.

“We need clear distinctions between the roles of each organisation if there is to be a genuine collaborative discussion on the ‘best outcomes’ for the community”.

4.2 The Fair play Network becomes a Disability Sport and Recreation Resource and Think Tank that develops innovative and contemporary approaches, suggestions and support to issues facing the sector.

This recommendation saw 20 respondents agree, three were opposed, while one was unsure.

“Instead of proposing one approach we suggest identifying and enhancing other local approaches, which are currently in place to achieve collaboration”.

“The Fair Play Network should include people with disabilities in the Think Tank”.

“We support this recommendation if there is more involvement from peak bodies”.

2009/905/81
4.3 Collaborative community network hubs comprising LGAs, LACs, Regional Sporting Associations, Sport and Recreation Clubs, Disability Organisations and other relevant stakeholders who are working within communities, are established (i.e. brought together/linked) to enhance community collaboration relating to the provision of sport and recreation services to people who have a disability. The collaborative community network hubs should be supported by the Fair Play Network with and coordinated by the LGA or other appropriate agency.

Twenty-three respondents agreed with recommendation 4.3, while one disagreed.

“We support this recommendation provided peak bodies are involved in the regional hubs”.

“The limited amount of time available for volunteers to be involved in the hubs needs to be considered”.

“Perhaps some end-users should be included in this network”.

5.

Open Access to Information

A streamlined single-point of access is needed allowing interested parties to simply and quickly access information about services and support, regardless of which disability website they lookup.

5.1 A single on-line information portal to be developed to allow individuals, groups or organisations interested in the access to, or provision and/or funding of sport and recreation services for people who have a disability, to simply and quickly access appropriate information. Fair Play Network members and other key stakeholders to link their websites to the portal, to allow multiple entry points to the repository.
All 24 respondents agreed with this recommendation; however concerns were raised regarding the ability to reach all groups within the disability sector.

“We are concerned that this option may increase the exclusion faced by people with a disability and their family/carers from non-English speaking backgrounds.”

“Over the past 12 months, Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that 45 per cent of people with a disability did not use or access the internet. This means that any communication strategy that only includes a web presence will only reach about half the target audience”.

“Who will develop the resource and more importantly who maintains and evolves it?”

5.2 Funding agencies and service providers to improve the collection, analysis and use of all relevant data relating to their programs (e.g. population statistics per disability type, per geographic area, per age group, identified sport and active recreation needs of people who have different types of disabilities, etc.) Wherever possible, this information should be uploaded to the single information portal referred to in Recommendation 5.1 above.

Twenty-three respondents agree to this recommendation while one disagreed. As with recommendation 5.1 there were concerns regarding who will provide the resources for continued support for the portal. It was also noted that a similar online portal system – NICAN - previously proved unsuccessful in Western Australia.

“This is a real opportunity for investment from DSR into using this data to drive outcomes”.

“We are concerned that the limited resources of organisations will be used to deliver this”.

“To ensure this recommendation is implemented efficiently we believe that a minimum data collection set should include; ethnicity, ancestry, proficiency in English, language spoken at home and country of birth”.
6.

**Sector Support**

Interested sport and recreation service providers require information, consultation, direction and support to understand and develop the commitment, competency and capacity to deliver high quality inclusive activities/services.

6.1 DSR redesign the current position of Sports Connect Project Officer to become “Capacity Building for Inclusion” Project Officer situated at the DSR. Interested sport and recreation service providers would be assisted through provision of information, consultation, direction, networking and support, as required/feasible.

Twenty-three respondents agree to this recommendation, one disagreed.

“We strongly agree that sector support is very much needed, but who best provides this service given the diversity of the sector/industry”?

“We understand that this action has already been actioned and change has occurred at DSR”.

6.2 The “Capacity Building for Inclusion” Project Officer would use the Service Provider Readiness Assessment Tool (refer to Recommendation 3.2 above) to gauge the state of readiness of a service provider and access the required skills and expertise through the Fair Play Network and other available avenues, to enhance service provider capacity.

Twenty-three respondents agree with this recommendation, while one disagreed.

“Don’t use the LAC model, there needs to be a more creative approach”.

“There is an inherent danger that being confronted on all sides by numerous disability service providers – all with their own agenda – that sports throw their hands in the air and walk away from everyone”.

“We would encourage DSR to continue to develop the new role to ensure that there is a coordinated approach to supporting sports in a holistic way, which enables them to be inclusive of all people”.

Note: DSR has implemented Recommendations 6.1 and 6.2.