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Physical and sport education in Australia: organisation, placement and related issues

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Physical and sport education in Australia: Organisation, placement and related issues

**Andrew Taggart
and
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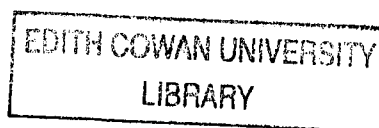
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This paper provides a review of how physical and sport education in Australian schools is organised and administered. The roles and responsibilities of education and sport personnel are outlined. Issues of equity are addressed as is the extent of student participation. Implementation of physical and sport education programs, the links between PE and sport and teacher involvement are also discussed. The context of the new millennium and the place of government schools in Australia provides a backdrop for the interpretation of the review. The review assumes an advocacy orientation, and so presents a position paper that reacts to the macropolitical factors that have had a profound effect on physical and sport education in the past decade. A passive position would fail to inform outsiders of the realities systems, administrators, teachers and students are confronting in Australian schools at the beginning of 21st century.

Readers are reminded that Australian sport is both a school and community endeavour with effective links and destructive barriers continually appearing as we strive for the best possible environment for young people's participation in physical activity. The move to see sport and physical education as component of an Active Australia (Australian Sports Commission, 1997) reflects both a philosophical change and a change in rhetoric in the conceptualisation of physical and sport education in Australia. Data on participation in sport and physical activity in Australia is available from a recent Australian Bureau of Statistics (1997) report however limited data is available for the organisation and implementation of physical education in Australian schools. The reader should be aware that first section of the paper, on physical education in schools reflects both research-based, anecdotal and experiential data. The second section relies on case studies to portray the 'best' picture of school sport in Australia.

Schooling in Australia

Approximately 70% of children and adolescents in Australia attend government schools the administration of which is the responsibility of the various state and territory governments. All state and territory education systems have very similar structures with a Director General as the chief executive officer responsible to the Minister of Education. All state and territory Directors General meet on a regular basis with the Federal Minister of Education to determine policy for schools.

With the advent of the national and state curriculum projects (1989-1994) government and independent schools have become more similar than different in many ways but particularly in terms of curriculum development and implementation. State and Territory governments are aggressively pursuing education as a means for 'skilling the future workforce' and have ensured that all sectors share the state's common goals. Generic life skill outcomes are features of the contemporary goals for education.

The new millennium context and schools

Students and teachers live in times where "progress is increasingly defined in terms of economic, rather than social or cultural growth" (Alexander, 1999, p1) social cohesiveness and goodwill to others are secondary to national catch cries in capitalist democracies, like Australia and South Africa, of productivity and consumption. While this may be a regrettable context it is part of the reality of life in the new millennium.

In the new millennium young people will need to be equipped to make decisions about their lives in general and the important part physical and sport education plays in helping them cope with the

lifestyle choices that confront them as children and adolescents. Students at all levels are confronted with the exponential increase in both the amount and sophistication of information presented to us. Cultures are being transformed through global economies and communication, schools need to support the empowering of young people so that they can respond to the new millennium challenges.

While the context for the new millennium will continue to change the goals for physical and sport education must respond to these changes with programs and pedagogies that provide students with life skills that will support healthy active lifestyles. PE and sport teachers and their programs must strive to facilitate outcomes that empower students to be critical consumers and exercise social responsibility while they develop skills and understandings to maintain healthy active lifestyles.

While some adolescents are turning away from traditional school and community sport, many others continue to enjoy sporting experiences and support high levels of participation (Taggart & Sharp, 1997; Penney, Carlson, Kirk & Braiuka, 1999), physical and sport educators should gain strength from the realisation that children and adolescents of the new millennium are primarily interested in achievement, belonging and security (Alexander, 1999). Such interests and needs that can, in part, be realised through quality sport and physical education experiences in schools.

Goals and outcomes for physical and sport education in the new millennium

Outcomes for students in physical education, including school-based sport, need to support the national/state goals for education. As a reference point for this paper physical education is defined as:

... any process that increases an individual's ability and desire to participate, in a socially responsible way, in the movement culture inside and outside schools. Games, sport, dance, outdoor adventure activities and other active recreational pursuits are all part of that culture. (Alexander & Taggart, 1995, p.11)

Whether it be at preschool, primary school or secondary school, PE and sport experiences in all these settings must have the goal of increasing students' approach tendencies to the movement culture. Barriers must not be presented in schools. Access, equity, enjoyment and learning remain the continual challenge for physical and sport educators if these approach tendencies are to be developed.

National and state curricula and junior sport policies

With national and state curricula and complementary national and state junior sport policies the context can be set for a country to develop a vision to support all forms of participation in physical activity. Policies must be in place to ensure that structural and historical constraints that have previously inhibited the participation of some young people in physical activity are recognised and changed to support their need to be physically active.

National and state curricula for physical and sport education

In Australia in 1989 the plans for a National Curriculum for Australian Schools were begun. One major result of this period of change was the development of eight learning areas for the school curriculum, one of which was the Health and Physical Education (HPE) Learning Area (see Appendix

1). Previously PE had been targeted as one of the few curriculum areas that had traditionally failed to enunciate a national or state curriculum.

The nineties saw increased scrutiny applied to Physical and Sport Education as the national curriculum for schools was developed (Australian Education Council, 1989). Federal and State Reports and academic crisis meetings identified, some say created, a view of the precarious position that PE found itself at school and system levels. PE's marginality was highlighted in Government Reviews of physical and sport education which focussed on problems confronting PE and sport programs in schools (Senate, 1992; Directorate of School Education, 1993; House, 1994). The need for better PE, more resources for PE and more time for PE in the curriculum were advocated by many. In some instances more resources were allocated and time issues addressed, the issue of better PE remained problematic.

From 1991-3 the AEC Curriculum and Assessment Committee (CURASS) coordinated the design and development of the national statements and profiles. The documents (Curriculum Corporation, 1994a; Curriculum Corporation, 1994b) were released in July 1993 and were then referred to the States and Territories (see Appendix A). As a result of this national initiative each state/territory began to develop their own curriculum profile/framework and changes at system, school, teacher and student levels began to emerge as early as 1995.

By 1994, the result of changing political landscapes and acceptance by the new Federal Government that the states and territories had the constitutional responsibility for schooling, the national curriculum as a state initiative enabled the Health and Physical Education learning area as a new and integrated learning area to be legitimated. These curriculum initiatives led to calls for new curriculum models and the transformation of school practices through the 'new' outcomes-based education. There was a recognition by educators that while better PE was needed any improvements that were to be long lasting should recognise existing program arrangements/restrictions and workplace conditions (Alexander, Taggart & Thorpe, 1996). It was clear that existing multi-activity programs constrained student achievement in PE and were often incompatible with the principles of outcomes-based education (Locke, 1992).

The key statement for HPE learning area in Western Australian schools, which reflects the national statement and profiles, and corresponds with those in other states is:

The Health and Physical Education learning area focuses on a holistic concept of health. It recognises the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual dimensions of the health of the individual. It examines the impact of interactions between the individual, the family, the wider community and the environment on the health of populations.

Students plan, act and reflect in order to develop the essential knowledge and understandings, attitudes, values and skills which promote health practices, encourage participation in regular, physical activity and support the maintenance of a healthy lifestyle.

These are conceptualised and taught through an integrated approach to ensure that students achieve a healthy, active lifestyle, including a sense of well-being.

(Curriculum Council, 1998, p. 114).

The focus of PE in schools in Australia has changed both rapidly and in moved in a very different direction over recent times. The changes have resulted in a broader range of goals being addressed

in an attempt to support children and adolescents in making informed decisions to support physically active lifestyles now and in the future. The vision, provided by the national and state curricula, clearly supports a new and enlightened physical and sport education. The challenge is for the administration and organisation of PE and the work practices of the teachers to change to support new programs and pedagogies to match the state's vision .

New millennium responses: Reconceptualising health and physical education

As the various Health and Physical Education learning area (HPELA) Statements evolved and then through the subsequent work by teachers, researchers, policy writers and community members from 1994-6 issues confronting contemporary PE and sport arose. It was productive process which by its end enabled physical educators to develop a rhetoric that saw PE, within the HPELA, as an essential component of the education of children and adolescents. The rationale for HPE learning area became:

The HPELA focuses on a holistic concept of health. It recognises the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual dimensions of the health of the individual. It examines the impact of the interactions between the individual, the family, the wider community and the environment on the health of populations. Students plan, act and reflect in order to develop the essential knowledge and understandings, attitudes, values and skills which promote health practices, encourage participation in regular physical activity and support the maintenance of a healthy lifestyle.

These are conceptualised and taught through an integrated approach to ensure that students achieve a healthy lifestyle, including a sense of well-being.

Curriculum Council of WA, 1998, p. 114

The emphasised features of the curriculum framework became phrases such as:

Students are supported in making informed, personally and socially responsible decisions in relation to healthy, physically active lifestyles now and in the future.

Students' develop attitudes, knowledge and understandings about health, a range of movement and sporting skills and an awareness of the processes involved in making health and activity enhancing decisions in our diverse society.

Essential physical activity skills relate to play, fundamental movement skills, games, sport, dance, outdoor pursuits, aquatics and other forms of recreation. Students' growing appreciation of a range of forms of movement is also developed.

The development of self-management and interpersonal skills enables students to communicate effectively with others so that students may act responsibly, individually and as members of diverse groups.

Taggart, Alexander and Burns, 1995, pp 2-4

The holistic nature of the HPELA challenges physical educators to deliver PE outcomes beyond skills for physical activity. What this rationale has achieved, in less than 2 years, is a realisation by many that participation in regular physical activity requires more than attention to movement skill outcomes. Sport-based PE, which remains the predominant form of PE across Australia in both primary and secondary schools, needs to change if outcomes-based education is to be an integral part of student's schooling in physical education.

Physical education in schools

The schooling structure in Australia is primarily based on two levels, primary schooling for ages 4/5-12 (grades kindergarten - 6/7) and secondary schooling for ages 12-17 (grades 6/7-12). There are however current initiatives to develop the middle schools (grades 6-8) in several states and territories adding to the existing senior colleges for grade 11 and 12 students in most states. Over 80% of Australian students complete 13 years of schooling, eleven of which are compulsory. Grades 11 and 12, the post-compulsory years, vary greatly in the provision of PE.

In primary and secondary schools students engage in a variety of physical education and sport experiences. These are best considered through the phases or bands of schooling as outlined by the national and state curriculum documents. Phases of schooling focus on the ways, and the typical curriculum experiences, that learning might progress at four overlapping phases of development. Readers are reminded that what stands for physical and sport education in Australian schools, particularly primary schools "is both variable and confusing" (Tinning, Kirk & Evans, 1993).

Early Childhood (kindergarten to grade 3; ages 4-8)

For children aged 4-8 (Grades K-3) PE is typically taken by the classroom teacher which reflects the holistic view of learning for this age group. A developmental approach is pursued with an emphasis on play and games. The national curriculum supported by related research (Walkley et al., 1994) has encouraged a more extensive program that emphasises the development of fundamental movement skills (eg., running, jumping, throwing, catching, striking) and an integrated approach for PE. The previous defacto national curriculum, Daily PE (ACHPER, 1982), has given way with the advent of the new curricula, to a realisation that education systems cannot support specialist PE teachers in all primary schools. It has never been a reality in Australian schools (Tinning, Kirk & Evans, 1993) and is questioned as being desirable in any case (Taggart, Medland & Alexander, 1995). New outcomes-based programs attempting to invite classroom teachers into teaching PE (Education Department of WA., 1998; ACHPER, 1995) have been developed.

During these years students engage in programs that vary in scope and quality. At Kindergarten and Pre-primary (age 4-5) teachers, with the support of assistants, provide outdoor play experiences on a daily basis and skill development and game experiences on an adhoc basis varying from 30-120 minutes per week (Taggart & Rogers, 1996). In 10-20% of schools these programs are carried out by a PE specialist during which time the class teacher is completing duties other than teaching.

In grades 1-3 PE programs focus on skill development and modified games. Fitness activities and tabloids provide structure for many programs (ACHPER, 1982). In 20-25% of schools this work is carried out by a PE specialist during which time the class teacher is completing duties other than teaching.

There is virtually no school sport at this level although gala sport days based around athletics/track and field events and swimming carnivals occur with a participation focus.

Middle Childhood (grades 3-7; ages 8-12)

Tinning et al. (1993) indicate that during middle childhood primary school students engage in a variety of PE programs. PE programs can be described as ad hoc, semi-organised, specialist-organised, visitor controlled, privatised PE (Tinning et al., 1993) and the curriculum leader concept. In ad hoc programs the responsibility is left to the classroom teacher and there is often little form of accountability to see if PE happens. The semi-organised program typically relies on a platoon system where a section of the school (eg., 3 grade 6 classes do PE together) are taught in small groups with teachers team teaching and students rotating between teachers. Specialist-organised physical education is indicative of a school-based decision to allocate a teacher as the PE specialist. Typically the specialist takes all PE classes for the school. Class teachers in this situation have no involvement in teaching PE. Visitors for PE occur where schools access sport development officers from the major sporting organisations to run brief sports-based programs consistent with the Aussie Sport program. In a growing number of schools, yet still a rarity, the school contracts a private provider to implement the PE program. These programs are taught by a variety of personnel, including pre-service teachers, offer short block programs throughout the year. The curriculum leader concept involves a PE specialist teacher working collaboratively with the class teacher to jointly deliver the program. This concept is gaining credibility in line with new curriculum initiatives and preliminary research suggest student and program outcomes are enhanced (Taggart et al., 1995). In 20-25% of schools the PE programs are taught by a PE specialist during which time the class teacher is completing duties other than teaching.

Fitness activities and tabloids provide structure for many programs (ACHPER,1982). Playing modified games through the Aussie Sport Program (Australian Sports Commission,1991) also provide structure for many PE and sport programs. Preparation for swimming and athletic carnivals are also features of many school PE programs during terms 1 and 3. Innovative student-centred programs that reflect HPE as an integrated learning area (Taggart at al., 1995) responding to national and state curriculum initiatives are being implemented in a growing number of schools (Alexander & Luckman, 1998).

School sport education

Sport offerings during this phase reflect the traditional school-based athletics and swimming carnivals implemented at school, district, region and state levels. Cross-country is also frequently available. Competitive sport is offered to varying degrees for children in the upper primary years (grades 5-6/7). Intra school sport is a very common Friday afternoon occurrence while interschool sport sees some schools deciding to take no involvement to full-on weekly competition between other schools. Short seasons or whole day round robin competitions are becoming more popular than regular interschool competitions. The structure of this component is detailed in the second part of the paper.

Early Adolescence (grades 7-10)

In grades 7/8-10 students undertake extensive compulsory programs with PE specialists. The programs are typically multi-activity in design with 5-6 week units being offered. Sport is the predominant component (70-80%) of these programs with dance and outdoor education also offered. Students participate in PE for 60-120 minutes per week. Innovative programs, consistent with outcomes-based education and new curriculum directives, such as sport education are

increasingly being offered in the school offerings. Programs are being changed to accommodate the 10 week schedule of sport education.

This phase of schooling in terms of PE programs is the most consistent across Australia. Single sex and co-educational classes during these years have a strong instructional focus.

School sport education

Sport offerings during this phase incorporate the traditional school-based athletics, cross-country and swimming carnivals implemented at school, district, region and state levels. Competitive sport is offered to varying degrees for this age group. Intra school sport is offered one afternoon each week while interschool sport sees schools deciding to take no involvement to full-on weekly competition between other schools. Interschool sport is increasingly seen as an elective. The structure of this component of schooling is detailed in the second part of the paper.

Late adolescence/Early Adulthood (grades 10-12)

Since 1989 major curriculum reforms for the post-compulsory years have been implemented across Australia. For PE in the post-compulsory years there has been a concerted attempt to provide options to extend the PE related knowledge, skills and understandings gained in early adolescence (McCormack & Lees, 1996). With increased retention rates in years 11 and 12 there was a need to offer physical education as a legitimate area of study. The resulting courses incorporated the academic disciplines associated with human movement and utilised physical activity as the means to promote the associated outcomes. In some states this became a very academic subject (eg., biomechanics; exercise physiology etc.) while in others the physical activity focus was highlighted (eg., personal performance in a sport). Dance and outdoor education have evolved in a similar fashion though the activity focus has always been paramount for these courses.

In small numbers of schools PE is a compulsory subject in grade 11 with the predominant foci being recreational and sporting pursuits. Participation rather than instruction is foregrounded in these programs.

School sport education

Sport offerings are typically optional during this time with school-based athletics and swimming carnivals implemented at school, district, region and state levels. Some schools enter teams in district and regional competitions sponsored by Sporting Associations. Competitive sport is offered to varying degrees for this age group. Intra school sport is sometimes offered one afternoon each week while interschool sport sees schools deciding to take no involvement to 'full-on' weekly competition between other schools. Interschool sport is rarely compulsory. The structure of this component of schooling is detailed in the second part of the paper.

Issues of equity in PE

The social, physical and cultural factors which may constitute barriers to students having a meaningful educational experience in and through PE have been identified. The design and implementation of appropriate developmental programs, sensitive teaching practices and fair assessment strategies remains a challenge. Specific policy and programs designed for girls,

Aborigines and the disabled have been developed (Australian Sports Commission, 1991c; 1992; Atkinson, 1991; Brooks, 1994).

Teachers at work

90-95% of beginning teachers in Australian schools are 4-year trained. Early childhood and primary teachers are trained as generalist teachers with pre-service pathways enabling specialisation in a variety of learning areas. PE is a popular area of specialisation with undergraduate students. High school PE teachers are all 4-year trained and have completed specialist degrees in education (BEd. Major in PE) or discipline-based degrees (Bachelor of Human Movement; Bachelor Sport Science.) followed by a Diploma of Education.

Workloads vary from school to school, across systems and states/territories. Primary school teachers will typically teach from 9am - 3pm with breaks for lunch and recess periods. They have 30-90 minutes of time for duties other than teaching during the week dependent on their roles and responsibilities. Learning area coordinators are given time allowances.

High school teachers in a 30 period week (6 periods per day, 1 hour periods) will teach 22-28 periods per week depending on their roles and responsibilities. Departments are the standard organisational pattern for high schools. PHE Departments have a Head who teachers 0.7-0.8 also depending on their roles and responsibilities. Many Heads of Department are the designated Sports Coordinator for the school.

Career pathways have changed with the move to 4-year training. Previously (pre 1998) all primary teachers were all 3-year trained and the completion of the 4th year gave them a BEd. This 4th year was often a chance for them to specialise in PE. Four year programs now offer specialisation pathways. Post-graduate courses are increasingly been seen as the pathway to promotional opportunities and advanced teaching status. All universities offer post-graduate courses in education and physical education.

During both undergraduate programs and in-service courses increasing numbers of teachers are completing coaching accreditation courses. Umpiring and administrative courses are also available though not often chosen. Sporting Associations and Ministries of Sport and Recreation offer these courses, some in conjunction with universities.

State and Territory Departments of Education

The clear divisions between the states and territories are demonstrated in the variety of approaches they take to the organisation of physical education in schools. Since the emergence of state curriculum frameworks more states consider PE as part of the HPELA. In Victoria it is still seen as physical and sport education while in NSW the area is referred to personal development, health and physical education.(PDHPE). Sport and PE sections within the department are nowadays less likely to be integrated, though many still work closely together on special projects.

Most states and territories have a central coordinating HPE section within the Curriculum Directorate of the education departments. With devolution to districts and school levels large numbers of centrally placed PE staff no longer exist. Typically these sections have a Learning Area Consultant/Superintendent, Curriculum Officer/s, Special Project Officers and administrative support personnel.

Sport in schools

The organisation of sport in Australia mirrors the education system with the Australian Sports Commission being the federal agency responsible for the overseeing and policy development for sport at the both elite and participation levels. Ministries of Sport and Recreation (MSR) in each state and territory implement sport policy and oversee and support the extensive community sport programs for children, youth and adults. They typically work closely with education systems to support participation in schools. MSR's together with national and state sporting associations support administration, umpiring and coaching programs for the volunteer helpers. It should be noted that sport in Australia is fundamentally seen as both a community and school based endeavour with schools in some instances playing a complementary role and in others a central one.

Junior sport policies in Australia focus on the age group 7-19 years and address the structural and philosophical changes required to develop a systematic and coordinated delivery of junior sport in Australia. The 1994 National Junior Sport Policy (Australian Sports Commission, 1994) recognises that sport is integral to the school curriculum. The purpose of the Junior Sport policy is to ensure the provision of opportunity to all young Australians to develop and enrich their lives through sport. Sport is constructed through a consideration of social justice, sport being beneficial to young people and society and sport as education.

The junior sport developmental model in Australia "provides a logical progression of experiences that will assist all young participants to develop fitness, skills, knowledge and positive attitudes through physical activities and sports" (Australian Sports Commission, 1994, p7). While acknowledging the responsibilities of national sporting organisations to determine their own junior sport policies the National Policy aims to provide the framework and principles which will govern the sport's policy development. Catch cries such as enjoyment and successful participation, modified sports, no early specialisation and transition to adult sport pervade the document.

School and community links are also stressed so that duplication (eg. overtraining, burn-out), inconsistencies (eg. competition ages, rules) and shared resources should be considered in implementing PE and sport programs at school and in the community. Education systems in each state in Australia were involved in the development of the Policy, endorse it and endeavour to incorporate the principles in their policies and practices.

Special junior sport initiatives for girls, indigenous Australians and other disadvantaged groups are addressing structural and historical constraints inherent in sport in the community. The allocation of resources to these groups has at times been criticised by the conservative male-dominated sporting institutions but with the principles of access and equity underlying policy such initiatives are now well established (Penney, Carlson, Kirk & Braiuka, 1999). Changes in the participation levels of girls and arresting the drop-out rate of adolescents in sport (Taggart and Sharp, 1997) will take decades to overcome but a long-term commitment to an equitable junior sport policy is essential if this is to occur.

A junior sport policy that is committed to a participation model will also meet the needs of elite performers. There are virtually no young people with elite potential who slip through the identification net established in Australian junior sport at school or in the community. Some elite youngsters may drop-out for various reasons, and sport itself is often to blame, however elite players in capitalist societies will always be looked after.

Structures and processes have been set in place to measure the impact of junior sport policy with 5-yearly reviews and an ongoing data base established of participation levels emerging at national, state and specific sport levels. The 1999 review outlined key objectives for the new National Junior Sport framework

1. To introduce children and young people to the skills, values and opportunities of sport so that they gain a commitment to participation in sport and physical activity that will be sustained throughout their lives.
2. To provide an opportunity for "gifted and talented" young sportspeople to fully develop their skills and talents as part of each successive generation of Australia's sporting elite.
3. To integrate the skills, values and opportunities of sport into the broader education curriculum.

National Junior Sport Policy [1994] Review (1999), p39.

Objectives 1 and 3 clearly link sport priorities with national and state health and physical education curricula.

With complementary educational and sport policy, both physical education and school and community sport can achieve new goals. The challenge in schools remains to provide a quality sport education. Physical educators must build on this supportive context and develop the programs and pedagogies that children and adolescents deserve.

Penney et al. (1999), reflecting on the policies of the Australian Sports Commission in the early 1990's, identified that perhaps the best role for schools was the provision of a breadth of sports. Issues of access and equity in community sport were highlighted in 1995 (Kirk, Carlson, O'Connor, Davis & Glover, 1995) when research indicated that socioeconomic status of families, family structure and geographic location as key factors affecting young people's involvement in sport.

In 1990 36% of children did not participate in sport (school or community) while 29% participated (ASC, 1991). Recent data from Western Australia and Queensland indicate that over 85% of children and adolescents participated in recreational or social sport while over 50% of students participated in sport outside school (Taggart & Sharp, 1997; Penney et al., 1999). The blurring of physical and sport education in schools has made it difficult to gain an accurate picture of participation levels in school sport. State-based data appears later in the paper.

The Active Australia campaign (ASC, 1997) promoting participation in sport, community recreation, fitness and other physical activities, supports a broad framework that encourages enjoyment, diversity and choice. This needs to be the continual message for schools as they work with the community in providing opportunities for sporting involvement. Like Penney et al. (1999) we conclude that the message for sport providers should be whether in schools or the community: 'Sport participation. You only have to take it regularly, not seriously.' This is even more important within the confines of schools where all children and adolescents have access and the opportunities for educationally justifiable sport.

Background

In recent years, school sport in Australia has been the subject of a number of reviews at both national and state levels. As a result, a good deal of general information is available on the issues facing school sport, along with recommendations for future action. There is, however, little accurate information available which quantifies teacher and student participation, costs of school sport, or the relationships between school and community sport.

Some of the major issues for school sport include:

- participation vs elitism
- the provision of opportunity for girls
- the relationships between school and community sport
- drop out rates from school sport
- recognition of teachers as volunteers.

The principal aim of this section of the paper is to describe how school sport operates in Australia. As a result, issues, such as those raised above, will only be discussed where relevant.

There is no one model for school sport in Australia. At any level of intrastate school sport, one may encounter several different approaches and combinations of approaches to funding, organisation and infrastructure. The only truly common approach to school sport is to be found at the level at which states compete against each other, in national school sport competitions. That model is dealt with in detail later in this paper. Appendix A provides an illustration of the different levels of competition in school sport in Australia. The model is a 'typical' one and not necessarily representative of all state and territory structures.

The organisation of school sport is important. For many Australian students (if not most), schools provide their first and in some cases, only, experiences of organised sport. Especially at primary school level, these experiences may come as a natural progression from physical education lessons and may be no more than extensions of a lesson. This paper addresses the common organisational features of school sport at the intrastate level and seeks to highlight some of the different approaches to its organisation.

School sport in Australia is characterised by choice. To a large degree¹, that choice extends to whether or not a school participates in any level of school sport; whether students participate in sport offered at school (as distinct from core health and physical education programs); the variety of choices available to students for school sport; and whether or not teachers choose to become involved in their school's sport program. The examples later in this paper serve to illustrate the level of choice available to schools, teachers and students.

At the intraschool, or grass roots level, school sport may be highly competitive, perhaps organised through the traditional "house" system, where (usually) four houses compete against each other in a variety of sports. On the other hand, it is not difficult to find schools, especially at the primary level, which eschew competition and choose not to participate in school sport at any level.

¹ In Victorian Government schools, since 1996, it has been compulsory for students between Years 3 and 10 to participate in some level of 'sport education'. A similar requirement was introduced into ACT Government schools in 1997.

Roles and responsibilities

Commonwealth Education Department (Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs)

The Federal Government plays no direct role in education delivery. Rather, it seeks to influence the policies and practices of the states and territories through its programs and funding of strategic priorities.² Indirectly, by funding the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) (and previous support of peak organisations such as the Confederation of Australian Sport), the Australian Government has exerted some influence over junior sport and therefore, school sport. The development of the National Junior Sport Policy, dealt with in more detail later in this paper, is an example of that indirect influence on school sport.

It should be noted that, since 1996, the Federal Government has moved even further away from having any influence on school sport in the states and territories. Previous funding for the Confederation of Australian Sport and School Sport Australia (the body which oversees school sport) was withdrawn and the ASC, once heavily involved in the delivery of its own programs, has moved to a more 'strategic' focus³.

Through its Active Australia Schools Program (facilitated by the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation), the ASC could still be seen to exert some influence on the wider area of physical activity in schools. The Active Australia Schools Program is part of a wider initiative to refocus Australians' attention on the importance of physical activity as an integral part of a healthy lifestyle⁴.

Essentially then, school sport, apart from at the elite, interstate level, should be seen to be very much state and territory based, in terms of both policy development and implementation. Even the national body for school sport, School Sport Australia, exists only through an agreement between the states and territories to provide per capita funding to meet the expenses associated with its administration. The Conference of Education Systems' Chief Executive Officers (CESCEO) meets three to four times per year to discuss issues of common importance to the states and territories. It is under the auspices of CESCEO that School Sport Australia exists.

State and Territory Departments of Education

The clear divisions between the states and territories are demonstrated in the variety of approaches they take to the organisation of school sport. The only level at which they share a fully common approach is interstate school sport, the organisation of which is discussed in more detail later in this paper. It could be argued that at a deeper level, they share many common features, such as the existence of primary and secondary school sports associations and the organisation of interschool sport through a system of zones, districts or regions (although even these 'common' features are manifested in different forms between the states and territories). However, at other levels, such as the ways in which school sport is funded, or the structure of the local school sport organisations, there are several approaches.

² Current examples include literacy, numeracy, drug education and enterprise education.

³ Where once the ASC developed specific programs to assist sport development, it now focuses more strongly on developing strategy, often contracting other organisations to develop appropriate programs.

⁴ In many ways, it builds and improves upon its predecessor, the 'Life - Be In It' focus of the 1980s.

Some of the key similarities between the states and territories are:

- a focus on a model of sport participation which results in ever decreasing numbers of students as competitions progress
- participation in at least some level of interstate school sport (all states and territories participate in the secondary level program to some extent)
- the existence of teacher based organisations to administer and deliver interschool sport at the primary and secondary levels
- a heavy (almost complete) reliance on teacher voluntarism at the school level (and in many instances at the administrative level) to make school sport happen and
- a general lack of agreement on the direction of 'grass roots', or participation level school sport.

The majority of the larger states have, since the Senate Inquiry into Physical and Sport Education (1992)⁵, conducted some form of review of physical education and school sport. It is important to note that in all cases, including the nationwide Senate Inquiry, reviews have examined both physical education and school sport. Such approaches recognise the indivisibility of these two areas in schools.

In order to illustrate some of the unique approaches to the organisation of school sport at the state/territory level, specific examples of approaches of state governments will be used. It is not unreasonable to note that the support for a greater focus on school sport (and therefore, physical education) in any state has been directly proportional to the support and patronage of the relevant Education Minister.

In the course of discussions with education officials about the current structure of school sport in the states and territories, several sought to stress that their approach to school sport was still 'under review' and may well change in the not too distant future.

Example 1 - The South Australian model⁶

The provision of school sport in South Australia is characterised by a distinct lack of formal statements covering the roles and responsibilities of those involved. There is no service agreement or operational framework for school sport, except that provided by the constitutions and historical operations of the school sports associations. This is fairly typical of most jurisdictions, where a history of teacher voluntarism (teachers were responsible for starting the primary and secondary schools sports associations in each state and territory) has led to an attitude which resists overt participation or interference (other than through necessary funding) by the government of the day through its education department.

Table 1, below, provides an indication of the structure of school sport administration, from an education department level, in South Australia.

⁵ Commonwealth of Australia, Physical and Sport Education, Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts, Canberra, 1992

⁶ Roberts P, Manager, School Sport, South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment, interview and written summary, 13/7/99.

Table 1 - Current structure at the education department level⁷

South Australian Department of Education positions	School sport organisational structures
Chief Executive Officer	Participation at a strategic level through the Conference of Education Systems' Chief Executive Officers
Executive Director, Schools	
Assistant Director, Projects and Programs	Sport Management Committee
Manager, Sport	South Australian Secondary Schools Sports Association (SASSSA) and Primary Schools Amateur Sports Association (SAPSASA)
School Sport Officers x 3	
ASO 1 x 2	

Explanation of Table 1

Assistant Director, Projects and Programs, is the most senior education official with a direct management role in school sport through the Sport Management Committee.

The Manager, Sport - - provides policy advice, oversees sport development and liaison with the community and school sport organisations, SASSSA (secondary sport) and SAPSASA (primary sport).

School Sport Officers - one officer is responsible for primary program organisation and delivery, servicing SAPSASA
 - two officers are responsible for secondary program organisation and delivery, servicing SASSSA
 - ASO 1's (Administrative Service Officers, Class 1 – base grade clerks), provide administrative support to the School Sport Officers.

The Sport Management Committee

This is a relatively recent initiative by the South Australian Department of Education to bring the key groups in school sport together to oversee school sport and provide advice to the department on issues as they arise. The committee consists of representatives from primary and secondary school principals, Executive of SAPSASA and SASSSA, parents and the Curriculum and Operations Sections of the department. While the committee has no clear jurisdiction over the two schools sports associations, it does provide a forum to bring them together. (This example further exemplifies the typically fierce independence of school sport organisations at the primary and secondary levels.) Both SAPSASA and SASSSA are incorporated under the Associations Act and both regard themselves as independent of any other body. This independence flows through into their decision making processes.

⁷ Roberts P, Manager, School Sport, South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment, interview and written summary, 13/7/99.

SAPSASA and SASSSA deal with policy development and implementation, operational policy, rules, guidelines, procedures, programming, program coordination and delivery, advice and recommendations to the department.

The majority of the costs for school sport are met through the department's budget. It covers the salaries of the departmental officials in Table 1 above, the costs associated with replacing teachers involved with school sport during school time and office infrastructure costs. Operational costs for the school sports associations are met through affiliation fees from schools (each school pays a sum to its school sport body, usually based on the school student population) and event nomination fees (levied on each school which nominates to participate in a given sport).

It is estimated that the South Australian Education Department provides approximately \$1.5m to fund sport in its schools each year. This sum includes the budgeted costs listed above, plus sports grants for secondary schools; zone convenor time allocations; payment to the Office of Recreation and Sport to fund an annual Sports Camp for gifted and talented students; and initiatives in sport for isolated students.

Individual secondary schools' budgets for participation in school sport range from \$0 to \$19,000 per annum. This is another example of the different approaches to school sport by Australian schools. The size of the allocation to sport by individual South Australian schools is in no way related to the size of the school itself.

In terms of budgets, the SASSSA has an annual turnover of approximately \$500,000. The SAPSASA has an annual turnover of approximately \$300,000.

School sport in South Australia at the interschool level is organised on a zone or regional basis, which reflects the geographic locations of member schools. In each secondary zone and primary district, a part time convenor, a teacher, is funded by the education department to organise and conduct sport competitions between schools in the zone/district. The control of school sport in South Australia is, like Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, relatively centralised within the Department of Education.

Example 2 – School Sport in Western Australia (WA)

School sport in Western Australia has recently moved from a centrally managed, departmentally focused model, to an arrangement where the Education Department of WA, through a service agreement, contracts School Sport Western Australia (the state affiliate of School Sport Australia) to manage competitive school sport programs on its behalf.

Teachers in government and non government schools contribute their services voluntarily to ensure the success of the various competitions. Those charged with the responsibility of managing these school sport programs work closely with state sporting associations, local government, kindred organisations in other states, schools and other agencies.

The intended outcomes of the program are:

- for student participation to be optimised in safe, well managed local, interschool and interstate competitions;

- for teachers to act as administrators, coordinators, managers and coaches of sporting teams, officials and judges and dispense their roles competently and meet the standards necessary for the competition being safely and efficiently conducted; and
- to work towards integrating schools' programs with the programs of state sporting associations.

The School Sport WA program caters for students from all education systems and sectors in WA. The program coordinators also work closely with state sporting associations to present school sport as an integral part of the sequential development plans of those sports.

Thirty three sports are currently offered by School Sport WA. School Sport WA describes some of the benefits of its programs as 'enhancing the lifestyle of students by encouraging school spirit, building self esteem, encouraging teamwork and providing opportunities for the development of positive and lasting lifestyle attitudes and practices.'⁸

Under the WA school sport system, the Education Department of WA purchases a number of services from School Sport WA. This type of arrangement takes school sport to a new level in Australia. School Sport WA and the Education Department have agreed on a number of performance indicators for the contract. They include the:

- number of students who participate in centrally managed school sport programs annually
- number of students by education system and sector who access interschool and interstate programs annually
- number of schools which access programs
- responses from principals, teachers, parents and sporting associations relative to the safety and quality of operational procedures
- number of teachers who are involved in the presentation of sport by school sector/system, task and function
- number of state sport associations which work collaboratively with the administrators of school sport to present safe, well managed quality school sport programs.

Each of the 33 sports administered under the service agreement between School Sport WA and the Education Department has a sport management committee. Committees are expected to collect data which will assist with reporting against the above outcomes.

Program evaluations are also conducted, usually at the end of sporting seasons or events, to gauge customer satisfaction, event efficiencies, and consistency with state and national standards.

The School Sport WA program focuses mainly on secondary students. WA is not represented in primary events at the interstate school sport level. The state sporting associations found little support for competition at this level and schools, students and parents have not been demanding it.

WA's philosophy in relation to primary school sport is mirrored to some extent in Tasmania and South Australia. While the reasons for lack of participation at the primary interstate level may not be consistent across those states, certainly the National Junior Sport Policy has exerted at least some influence on expectations and philosophies.

⁸ School Sport Western Australia, Operational Overview, 1997/98, undated

Table 2, below, provides an indication of the sports in which School Sport Western Australia organises competitions at interschool level:

Table 2 - interschool sport competitions organised by School Sport Western Australia⁹

Primary	Secondary		
Swimming carnivals	Aerobics	Athletics	Australian Football
Cross country	Badminton	Baseball	Basketball
Champion school events in Australian Football, Netball and Touch	Cricket	Cross Country	Country Senior High Schools Carnival (multi sport for country schools)
	Disabled sports	Golf	Hockey
	Lawn bowls	Netball	Orienteering
	Pool	Rugby League	Sailing
	Soccer	Softball	Squash
	Surfing	Swimming	Tennis
	Touch	Triathlon	Volleyball
	Water Polo		

As part of its contract, School Sport WA prepares a 'Sports Directory' annually which presents a full summary of each competitive sport offering so that schools can make choices for participation. The directory includes:

- organising committee contact details
- nomination forms for each sport
- analysis of costs associated with participation in each sport
- competition commencement and conclusion dates
- nomination forms for interstate competition (where relevant).

Participation in school sport (level, nature)

Teachers

In some states, for example New South Wales and Victoria, where school sport is 'officially' integrated into the curriculum, the supervision of school sport is part of teachers' operational responsibilities. Other states, such as Western Australia, ACT and South Australia, organise their school sport around a variety of models - some sport is played in school time, some outside of school time and some is even played on weekends. Teacher participation in school sport is characterised by a high level of voluntarism – even where sport is conducted in school time, many teachers conduct training, team selections and related pastoral care out of school hours.

Western Australia has attempted to quantify the value of the contribution of volunteer teachers to school sport. The author of the paper in which the figures are represented asks readers to note the very conservative nature of the figures - the actual value of volunteers to school sport is likely to be much higher. Table 3, below, provides an example of the value of volunteers to WA school sport.

⁹ School Sport Western Australia, Operational Overview, 1997/98, undated

Table 3 - value of volunteers to school sport in Western Australia¹⁰

Function	Number of volunteers (teachers)	Time commitment (at an average of 16 hours per sport)	Value (\$)
Coaches/managers	3,600	57,000 hours	1,080,000
Sport committee membership	162	2,592 hours	48,600
School Sport WA management members	20	320	6,000
Totals	3,782	59,892	1,134,600

NB - The value of teacher volunteers in WA is based on a unit of an eight hour day, valued at approximately \$150. This is approximately what a replacement teacher would be paid each day and does not represent the total cost to the department, which would be closer to \$250 a day.

The New South Wales (NSW) Department of Education has published figures, reproduced in Table 4, below, that illustrate the levels of involvement of teachers and students at each stage of school sport.

Table 4 - teacher and student involvement in school sport in New South Wales¹¹

Geographic level	Tiers	Sports (no)	Convenors	Student participants
local	142 Primary associations (each comprising 10 to 25 schools)	13	1846	125,000
local	50 High school zones (each comprising 6 to 8 schools)	28	1400	
regional	10 Regional Primary Schools' Sports Associations	13 sports offering a total of 19 carnivals	130	16,000
regional	10 Regional High Schools' Sports Associations	28 sports offering a total of 31 carnivals	320	
state	Primary Schools Sports Association	13 sports offering a total of 19 carnivals	13	2,000
state	Combined High Schools Sports Association	28 sports offering a total of 41 carnivals	28	

¹⁰ School Sport Western Australia, Operational Overview, 1997/98, undated

¹¹ New South Wales Department of Education and Training, Fact Sheet on School Sport, undated

At another level, the *NSW Fitness and Physical Activity Survey, 1997*¹², provides some limited data on levels of adult participation in school sport. Those data are reproduced below. The survey also sought to quantify the level of parental participation in school sport. It is clear from these data, in Table 5, below, that parental involvement, while significant in rural primary schools in NSW, is minimal at all other levels.

Table 5 - Adult involvement in sport in NSW schools¹³

Who involved (PRIMARY)	Urban (%)	Rural (%)
mostly specialist PE teachers	3	0
mostly classroom teachers	100	100
parents	7	36
outside sport coaches	28	50
Who involved (SECONDARY)	Urban (%)	Rural (%)
mostly specialist PE teachers	21	14
mostly classroom teachers	86	100
parents	3	0
outside sport coaches	17	21

Student Participation

There are no accurate figures for student participation in school sport in Australia. Some states, either as a result of restructuring (WA), or through survey (NSW) have developed estimates of some aspects of student participation. However, these are not comparable across states, as the conditions of participation are often widely disparate (for example, WA includes non government school students in its secondary competition, while NSW generally has separate competitions for government and non government students).

A number of factors contribute to the lack of accurate data about students' participation in school sport. First, as the majority of school sport relies on volunteers, either teachers or parents, the imposition of another level of responsibility, that is, statistician, on those administrators may not be welcomed. Teacher sports administrators tend to view requests for statistical information from education administrators with some suspicion.

Secondly, at the school level, intraschool sport (and perhaps to an extent, some interschool sport) can be ad hoc, irregular and reliant on the existence of a favourable set of conditions (eg, weather, venues, transport, teacher interest). Again, accurate record keeping has not been a priority at this level.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), through its regular population surveys, has in recent years attempted to quantify young people's participation in sport, both at school and community

¹² Booth M, Macaskill P, McLellan L, Phongsavan P, Okely T, Patterson J, Wright J, Bauman A & Baur L. *NSW Schools Fitness and Physical Activity Survey, 1997*. Sydney: NSW Department of School Education, 1997

¹³ Booth M, Macaskill P, McLellan L, Phongsavan P, Okely T, Patterson J, Wright J, Bauman A & Baur L. *NSW Schools Fitness and Physical Activity Survey, 1997*. Sydney: NSW Department of School Education, 1997

level. Unfortunately, the data, while interesting, still give only a partial picture of participation. The two most limiting factors are that the survey only includes young people up to age 14 and only considers school sport played out of hours. Most states and territories play a significant amount of sport in school time.

The most recent figures from the ABS for participation in school sport include only organised school sport played after school. Those figures (Australian totals) for organised, after school sport and club sport are reproduced in Table 6. As discussed earlier, a good deal of school sport is played during school time.

Table 6 - Participation of young people, aged 5 to 14 years, in sport.¹⁴

Number (000,s)

Australia	school organised			club organised			total		
	males	females	persons	males	females	persons	males	females	persons
	305.2	229.4	534.5	759.9	622.4	1382.3	861.3	727.1	1588.4

Participation rate (%)

Australia	school organised			club organised			total		
	males	females	persons	males	females	persons	males	females	persons
	22.9	18.1	20.6	57.1	49.2	53.2	64.7	57.4	61.1

Points to note: includes children 5 to 14 years only; includes school sport out of school hours only

Western Australia has attempted to quantify its student participation in events organised by School Sport WA. These events are for secondary students only and represent participation out of a potential student population of approximately 100,000. Students may participate in more than one sport. Table 7, below, represents participation of secondary students in School Sport WA events in 1998.

Table 7 - Participation of secondary students in school sport WA

EVENT	SPORT PROGRAMS OFFERED	NUMBER OF TEAMS	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
Interschool Sport			
- round robin	33	1,788	28,319
- knockout			
Special one day	13	358	11,045
Interstate	27	196	820
Country Week			
- sports	8	212	2612
- speech and debating	2		
Pacific School Games	4	1	562
Special Other			
- disabled	10	30	145
- inter sectoral	2		
Total	99	2,585	43,503

¹⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Participation in Sport and Physical Activities 1997-98*, Australian Government.

Table 7 - student participation in school sport (interschool and above) in Western Australia¹⁵

NOTES (to table 7):

- Schools and students participating are counted as one unit/activity. In some cases students will participate in more than one activity and schools similarly are likely to enter a number of competitions.
- School Sport WA programs are focused mainly at a secondary sector level.

There are some statistics available at the state level which give an indication of school sport participation by students. For example, in 1997, the NSW Department of Education implemented the *NSW Schools Fitness and Physical Activity Survey 1997*¹⁶.

A random sample of 45 primary and 44 high schools was selected proportionally from the three education sectors across NSW (except the very remote rural regions). Classes were selected at random from each of Years 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10. The study focused on obtaining data on:

- health related fitness components (eg aerobic capacity, skinfolds, girths, muscular strength);
- levels of mastery of fundamental motor skills (eg catch, overhand throw, kick); and
- information about physical activity habits (for high school students only).

Tables 8 and 9, from the *NSW Schools Fitness and Physical Activity Survey 1997*¹⁷, summarise the amounts of time spent on school sport at different levels of schooling within New South Wales schools.

Table 8 - Time available for school sport each week (primary schools)

Time (range)	Year 2 (%)	Year 4 (%)	Year 6 (%)
Less than 45 mins	31	5	5
46-60 mins	61	64	56
61-120 mins	8	31	39

Table 9 - Time available for sport each week (secondary schools)

Time (range)	Year 8 (%)	Year 10 (%)
Less than 60 mins	7	7
60-90 mins	33	30
91-120 mins	51	53
121-180 mins	9	9

¹⁵ School Sport Western Australia, Operational Overview, 1997/98, undated

¹⁶ Booth M, Macaskill P, McLellan L, Phongsavan P, Okely T, Patterson J, Wright J, Bauman A & Baur L. NSW Schools Fitness and Physical Activity Survey, 1997. Sydney: NSW Department of School Education, 1997

¹⁷ Booth M, Macaskill P, McLellan L, Phongsavan P, Okely T, Patterson J, Wright J, Bauman A & Baur L. NSW Schools Fitness and Physical Activity Survey, 1997. Sydney: NSW Department of School Education, 1997

Funding of School Sport

Funding models for school sport range from total integration into department of education structures (Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia), to grant in aid type arrangements (Australian Capital Territory), where the department of education provides an untied grant to the overarching school sport body to enable it to run its programs, to a 'purchaser/provider' type model, such as that found in Western Australia (mentioned earlier in this paper).

Some clear similarities exist between the states and territories, no matter what the funding model. They are:

- a reliance on substantial funding from the local department of education
- an almost total failure to recognise the value of teacher volunteers to school sport
- the existence of at least some full time school sport administrators, usually housed in the department of education premises
- generally poor financial support from the private sector (with the exception of NSW - outlined later in this paper).

Examples of funding arrangements

At the school level, there is general acceptance that each school will pay a 'levy' to its relevant school sporting association (the PSSA for primary schools and the SSSA for secondary schools). These levies are calculated and collected in different ways. However, a common method is to ask schools for a levy based on student population. In the ACT, primary schools pay their PSSA fifty cents a student for all students in Year 3 or above, while in secondary schools the levy paid to the SSSA is forty cents a student, based on the total student population. These levies are annual and may be paid from a separate sport budget, or out of schools' consolidated revenue. The levies may be used to help offset the costs of administration, ground/venue hire, officials, first aid officers and in some cases, teacher replacement for teachers involved with sports teams.

Each school sport association manages its own finances and depending on how it is funded, reports to the department of education, or to a council type body which oversees its operations. In the larger states where school sports organisations may be integrated into the education departments, financial management is the responsibility of paid staff. Other states may have voluntary treasurers, usually full time teachers, who accept responsibility for the financial management of the school sports associations.

Most school sports associations operate on a zero budget principle. That is, at the end of a sporting competition, they should have budgeted to pay all of the costs associated with participation, without having made a profit or a loss. Development of sport specific budgets is generally the role of sport convenors (usually full time teacher volunteers) and they stipulate to participating schools what, if anything, students will be required to pay to play that sport.

At the departmental/system level, the contributions of education departments vary significantly between the states and territories.

In NSW, South Australia and Victoria, the infrastructure for school sport exists within the departments of education. As a result, their budgets are developed through the annual budgeting process for the respective state governments. Under such arrangements, the departments would

typically fund full time school sport administrators. Naturally, the level of support depends on a number of factors, the most significant being student population.

In the ACT and Western Australia, the departments of education provide a grant to the overarching school sport organisations, in return for the provision of services. In those systems, this was seen as an excellent method to 'cap' the cost of school sport to the system, whereas under previous arrangements, one off requests for special funding were relatively common, often resulting in budget over-runs.

School Sport WA has made the clearest attempt to quantify the cost, per student, of participation in its events. Table 10 illustrates the estimated cost per student of participation in different aspects of the School Sport WA program.

Program	Student Participant Numbers	Total cost per student (estimate) \$
Interschool Sporting events	28,319	13.30
National Championships (SSA interstate sport)	820	577.00
Country Senior High Schools Carnival	2,612	239.00
Special One Day events	11,045	4.50
TOTAL		1,413,072.50

Table 10 - Estimated cost per student of participation in school sport events¹⁸

Notes to Table 10, above

- Costs per student were calculated to include: Teacher relief (replacement of classroom teachers taking sport); Education Department grants; operational budget; and, Executive Officer (based in the Education Department) salary and on costs.
- Total costs per student are an estimate based on actual contributions from sponsorship, State Sporting Organisations' contributions, student contributions and an estimate of school charges including transport, accommodation and uniform costs where applicable.
- Estimates do not include any value placed on voluntary teacher time in any role (for example, lunch time coaching, after school team selections).

Private Sector Support of School Sport

Private sector sponsorship of school sport in Australia is relatively minor and ad hoc. All states' school sport programs benefit from some level of business sponsorship, usually through 'in kind' deals such as discounted travel, or small (less than \$5,000) cash payments. However, only one state, NSW, has negotiated any sponsorship for school sport which could be considered major. The NSW sponsorship consists of a strategic alliance of companies, brought together in 1997, under the

¹⁸ School Sport Western Australia, Operational Overview, 1997/98, undated

banner of 'School Sport 2000'. In total, the participating companies inject approximately \$600,000 per annum into NSW school sport and physical activity programs over a three year period. Participating companies are Dairy Farmers, Foxtel, Fresh Fruit and Vegies and the National Roads and Motorists Association (NRMA). Each company was selected for its appropriateness to the school environment and/or the relevance of its message to school students.

The funds from the School Sport 2000 sponsorship are administered by the NSW School Sport Unit, an arm of the NSW Department of Education. Table 11 summarises the activities for which the sponsorship funds were used in 1998.

activity
State and area level representative sporting activities (PSSA and CHS events). Approximately \$5,000 for each of the 10 sports areas in 1998
Special Swimming Scheme (swimming lessons for approx 100,000 students)
Active Youth Program – targeting special programs at students less likely to participate in traditional school sport opportunities
Access Sports - for students with disabilities program
Grants to Schools (up to \$2000 per school, through application, demonstrating innovative projects to encourage physical activity). The majority of funds support this area.

Table 11 - Activities and programs supported by School Sport 2000 sponsorship in 1998.¹⁹

School Sport Australia (the Australian schools sports council)

The rise in the popularity of interschool and interstate sport led to the development of the Australian Schools Sports Council (ASSC) in 1981 as the parent body for all school sport. For the purposes of clarity and accuracy, the ASSC will be referred to at all times, including in any historical context, by its current name, School Sport Australia (SSA).

For several years after its creation, SSA coexisted with two other school sports organisations - the Australian Primary Schools Sports Association and the Australian Secondary Schools Sports Federation.

To assist with the streamlining of school sport, a review was established in 1986 to examine the functions and purposes of the three organisations. As a result of the review, SSA assumed the role of peak body for school sport in Australia. The other two organisations ceased to exist and their functions were incorporated into the newly reconstituted SSA. This was achieved through the establishment of primary and secondary management committees, which retain their roles to this day. Those management committees reflect and represent the primary and secondary sports associations in the states and territories. The aims of SSA at that time were to:

- provide a forum for discussion and agreement about sports competition between States
- develop and make recommendations about sports policy to the Directors-General of Education (the heads of state/territory education departments)
- coordinate and monitor interstate competitions

¹⁹ School Sport 2000 promotional leaflet, New South Wales Department of Education and Training, undated

- act as the authorising body for international school sport, in cooperation with the national sports organisations concerned
- act as a lobby and a focus for Australian school sport
- liaise with government sports departments and organisations and national sports organisations
- provide information and documentation about sport.²⁰

Sports for competition at the national schools level must be approved by SSA. Table 12, below, compares the sports approved for competition in 1990, with those approved for 2000.

<i>Primary 1990</i>	<i>Primary 2000</i>	<i>Secondary 1990</i>	<i>Secondary 2000</i>
Australian Football (b)	Australian Football (b)	Australian Football (b)	Australian Football (b)
		Baseball (b)	Baseball (b)
Basketball	Basketball		Basketball
Cricket (b)	Cricket (b & g)		
Cross Country	Cross Country	Cross Country	Cross Country
		Golf	Golf
Diving			
Hockey	Hockey	Hockey	Hockey
Netball (g)	Netball (g)	Netball	Netball
		Orienteering	Orienteering
Rugby League (b)	Rugby League (b)		Rugby League (b)
	Rugby Union (b)	Rugby Union (b)	Rugby Union (b)
Soccer	Soccer	Soccer	Soccer
Softball (g)	Softball (g)		Softball (g)
Swimming	Swimming		Swimming
	Tennis	Tennis	Tennis
			Teams Tennis
	Touch (g)	Touch	Touch
			Triathlon
Track and Field	Track and Field		
		Volleyball	Volleyball
		Water polo	Water polo

Table 12 - Sports approved for interstate championships and exchanges, 1990, 2000
Sources: ASSC and SSA Handbooks, 1990 and 1999

Note the contrast with the program offered in 1990. Without the intervening years shown, it is difficult for the reader to gain an insight into the turmoil surrounding the participation of some sports in the interstate school sport competition calendar. Sports are only endorsed for interstate competition where at least four states or territories agree to field teams. Also, under the National Junior Sport Policy, the national sporting association must approve the event. At least three states, Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania, have little or no representation at the primary interstate level.

Duplication of sporting events, once an issue for some sports, has now largely been overcome with greater collaboration and cooperation between community and school sports. In 1996 for example,

²⁰ ASSC Handbook 1990

it was possible for a promising young hockey player to be selected in the Under 15 team for their state to compete at a national under age championship, then, in the same year, be picked in an Under 15 school team for their state, to compete at the national schools championships. The incorporation by most sports of the national schools event into their development calendars has all but eliminated such duplication.

There is a strong educational and developmental ethic inherent in the policies of SSA. Secondary championships and primary exchanges are required to include an educational experience for the students. Coaching clinics are an integral part of most, if not all primary exchanges, with specialist coaches brought in specifically to assist with students' development in their sport. The educational excursions are facilitated, usually during a rest day, to enable visiting students to learn about the unique characteristics of the area in which the event is being staged.

Perhaps the pinnacle of SSA's program is the opportunity for some students to participate in international school sporting competitions. In 2000, SSA will, with the endorsement of the national sporting associations, facilitate the participation of Australian school teams in soccer, basketball, cross country, hockey and water polo. These tours run strictly on a user pays basis, where participants and officials cover their own costs.

Every Olympic year, SSA also oversees, through one of its state affiliates, the organisation of an event called the Pacific School Games. The Pacific School Games (PSG) allow for gifted and talented school athletes to compete in an international event, against students from as many as 50 other countries from the Pacific Rim.

The Place of Interstate Competition in School Sport

The place of interstate competition in school sport has been a vexed question. For more than ten years, questions have been raised about the wisdom of interstate sporting competitions for primary aged students. The Good Sport Report (1991)²¹, was, ostensibly, a review into the place of interstate competition in school sport. The report actually went much wider, and informed much of the thinking which was to challenge (and is currently challenging) some of the long held beliefs about school sport.

In 1990, the South Australian Government sought to address the issue, with the development of its Junior Sport Policy. (It is worth noting here that the South Australian Policy went on to inform a good deal of the development of the National Junior Sport Policy in 1994.) The South Australian policy was developed to ensure a coordinated and consistent approach to junior sport. The policy sought to map out a series of developmental ages and the activities most suited to appropriate development at each stage. Space precludes the inclusion of the continuum here. However, it is very similar to the continuum included in the National Junior Sport Policy, which is reproduced later in this paper.

Participation in interstate competition for primary students in SA was phased out because the government contended that interstate competition provided for a limited number of children and that through talent squads and camps, resources could be used better to provide more opportunities for more children.

²¹ Gaffney M and Kendall D, The Good Sport Report 1991, ACT Department of Education and the Arts

Development of school sport policy

Table 13, below, is a representation of the junior sport development model proposed by the NJSP.

Development stage	General age group	Development experiences	Comments
one	5-7 yrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> spontaneous play and movement coordination skills trying more complex tasks informal games minor games (1) 	These years are characterised by a strong desire for general play and physical activity. Emphasise enjoyment, and encourage learning of basic physical skills, as well as social skills, and positive attitudes (fair play, etc)
two	8-10 yrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> coordination skills small group activities general skill development modified sport (2) competitive sport: inter/intra school/club 	Experiences during these years should build upon the foundation laid earlier. In this stage, children accept the challenges of sport participation. Provide enjoyable opportunities for the development of positive social skills and a wide range of physical skills which can then be applied to specific sports.
three	11-12 yrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sport specific skill development modified sport talent squads (3) sports development programs/camps/exchanges (4) competitive sport: inter/intra school/club 	Offer opportunities in a wide range of physical activities, helping to develop interests and skills in particular sports. Maximise positive sporting experiences through cooperation with other schools and clubs. Programs at this stage should emphasise skill development and game appreciation. These programs may include coaching clinics, appropriate competition and educational excursions.
four	13-19 yrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sport specific skill development modified sport, where appropriate talent squads sports camps competitive sport, inter/intra school/club, district/regional, inter/intra state, international, social leadership opportunities 	Take account of general adolescent development as well as individual differences in ability and interest. Continue to cooperate with other schools and clubs in the provision of programs to minimise duplication but still allow for maximum participation opportunities. Educate players about good sporting behaviour and provide excellent role models. Provide leadership development opportunities.

Table 13 - Junior Sport Development Model, from National Junior Sport Policy, 1994²²

Explanatory notes

(1) Minor games are small, structured activities that build basic skills

(2) Modified sports develop skills by allowing for the needs and abilities of developing children. AUSSIE SPORT is the modification model generally accepted in Australia.

(3) Talent squads provide opportunities for talented players to develop their sporting potential. Methods for selection should be decided by sporting associations in consultation with education authorities.

(4) Sports development programs/camps/exchanges provide opportunities for talented players to receive intensive instruction in a specific sport. Programs could be at regional, state or interstate level.

²² Australian Sports Commission, National Junior Sport Policy, Canberra, 1994

As stated earlier, the NJSP provides a framework for the development of more specific junior sport policies. As a result, its interpretation and application has varied from state to state. In fact, only two of the eight states and territories endorsed the NJSP as the framework for their state policies.²³ The 'sovereign status' of most of each of the contributors to junior sport has also resulted in the development of different approaches to the issues facing junior and school sport.

Perhaps one of the major issues for school sport in recent times has been the participation of 10 year olds in interstate sporting exchanges. While the NJSP's junior sport development model clearly indicates that interstate sporting experiences are suitable for students from the age of 11 years, it does not proscribe participation by 10 year olds.

Critics of the NJSP have argued that, in some cases, it does not go far enough in setting the benchmarks for appropriate competitive experiences for young people. Others argue that, in fact, it oversteps the mark, as such decisions are best made by parents, in consultation with their children and coaches.

The recent review²⁴ of the NJSP made the following key findings:

- the policy has been generally well received and has clearly had some positive impact on both school sport and in the community;
- its primary value has been to provide a consistent and credible framework for the development and delivery of junior sport;
- commitment to school sport as part of the school system, both as participation and competition, is declining under pressure from a more crowded curriculum and changing values and expectations from teachers and parents;
- while there are a few examples of where it works well, generally the school/community link in junior sport remains a significant weakness;
- there is a poor information base from which to draw to assess the performance of junior sport programs and services, either in school or in the community; and
- there are important issues, especially about the duty of care and liability dimension of working with young children, to which a new policy should respond. These issues are having an especially strong impact on the supply of volunteers in both the school and club systems.

The Role of Sports Ministries and Community Sporting Organisations in School Sport

The participation by departments of sport, or by community sporting organisations, in school sport can best be described as 'troubled'. While there are some examples of community sporting organisations working with school sport, they are localised and reliant on a great deal of good will to maintain.

Perhaps the best examples of school/community cooperation in sport can be found as a result of the Western Australian 'Be Active School and Community' (BASC) Project, administered by the Department of Education. Space precludes an examination of the program here.

Issues of Equity

Three major groups stand out as possible target groups in Australia for school and junior sport.

²³ The Albany Consulting Group Pty Ltd, National Junior Sport Policy (1994), A Review, Sydney, February 1999

²⁴ The Albany Consulting Group Pty Ltd, National Junior Sport Policy (1994), A Review, Sydney, February 1999

Girls

Statistical analyses of young people's participation in sport and physical activity continue to demonstrate that, overall, girls' participation is lower than that of boys (see ABS figures in Table 6).

Affirmative action campaigns have sought to address the imbalance across all spheres of participation. Governments have funded programs to encourage greater participation by girls and state and territory sports organisations have engaged in affirmative action campaigns, or sought to offer sports which allow for a more even balance between boys' and girls' sports.

At the school sport level, the story is much the same. Administrators have, in the past, taken certain measures, to try to redress the imbalance between boys and girls at interstate school sport level. For example, while girls' soccer has become a very popular participation sport, the three most visible football codes in Australia are still struggling with the idea of all female teams. Girls' and women's rugby and Australian football teams exist and some jurisdictions organise interschool competitions. However, their support is fragmented and opportunities for elite development are limited. Girls' soccer is now offered at the interstate school sport level, for both primary and secondary students. School Sport Australia also facilitates international tours for school level soccer.

Students with disabilities

Several states have specific programs to address the needs of students with disabilities. These programs have assumed a higher level of importance with the policy of greater integration of students with physical disabilities into 'mainstream' schools.

Students from varying race, ethnic, or class backgrounds

These classifications generally do not present an issue for school or junior sport in Australia. Australia has developed into a truly multicultural society, with race and ethnic background being largely irrelevant to sporting participation.

Most departments of education have specific units to assist with the issues facing Indigenous people in terms of their education. Indigenous people's participation in sport, however, is not high on the list of priorities for urgent action. It is generally accepted that Indigenous youth value sport (perhaps like many young people, to the possible detriment of their academic education?) and some have used sport as a vehicle out of the poor conditions in which some sections of Australia's Indigenous community live.

While we have yet to witness any significant rise in the participation of students from Asian backgrounds in 'traditional' western sports, it is generally accepted that it takes at least one generation before such assimilation becomes really apparent. Anecdotal evidence would suggest there has been a rise in the numbers of students from Asian backgrounds who participate in soccer.

Conclusion

School Sport in Australia is heavily reliant on teachers who act as volunteers in all aspects of its organisation, from participation level intraschool sport, right through to competition at an international level.

On the whole, teachers seem to accept their roles as volunteer sports administrators. While some schools participate in little, if any, school sport, most accept the very positive outcomes which result for students through a strong sport program.

School sport is strong in Australia; we don't know how strong, as accurate figures have yet to be compiled. We do know however, that there are still many students whose need for physical activity are not being met through the current offering of school sports programs²⁵. Much of school sport is still premised on the 'elimination' model; that is, students are separated into winners and losers. The winners continue on to the next stage of the process, while the losers are left to seek other challenges, or as is often the case, to fall by the wayside and fade out of participation.

While there have been calls for a new model for school sport (and sport in general), they have generally fallen on deaf ears. School sport, in its current, traditional form, will never disappear altogether. It does, however, run the risk of becoming somewhat marginalised by failing to listen to its main stakeholders, the students.

The issue of greater collaboration and cooperation between school and community sport has continued to provide dilemmas for the teacher administrators of school sport. This area is deserving of a good deal more attention in Australia and will ultimately determine the shape of school sport in the coming years. As the costs of community sport participation continue to climb, the availability of low cost venues in schools, willing teacher administrators and large populations of accessible participants will force community sport and school sport to address any issues which currently keep them apart.

The significant macropolitical changes in Australian education have seen physical and sport education come under increasing scrutiny. This change has in our view presented opportunities for children and adolescents to be advantaged by a new and enlightened form of physical and sport education in schools. We await the development of student outcomes with renewed optimism.

²⁵ Taggart, A and Sharp, S, Adolescents and Sport - determinants of current and future participation, Sport and Physical Activity Research Centre, Edith Cowan University, 1997

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