



Participation in Sport and  
Recreation by Culturally and  
Linguistically Diverse Women

**SPRC Report 8/08**

Natasha Cortis, Pooja Sawrikar  
and Kristy Muir

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## **Abbreviations**

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ASC	Australian Sports Commission
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
FACSIA	Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
NSO	National Sporting Organisation
SPRC	Social Policy Research Centre

## 1 Executive Summary

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

The project has been conducted in three stages beginning in mid 2006. Firstly, a literature and data review was undertaken to explore available statistical data and Australian and international research pertaining to cultural diversity and sport in Australia. The resulting report (Cortis et al, 2006) outlines how CALD women participate in sport and recreation in Australia according to national surveys (and the limitations of national surveys). It also draws on academic literature and policy and program reports to examine the factors that affect CALD women's participation and the features of policies and programs seeking to promote their inclusion.

Secondly, the project team conducted consultative interviews with fifteen key stakeholders in sporting, cultural and women's organisations (Cortis and Muir, 2007). This showed that the perception of sport as a 'level playing field' is pervasive, and that supporting cultural diversity is not currently considered a high priority by National Sporting Organisations (NSOs). With the exception of Indigenous Australians, NSOs tend to promote their sports to the mainstream rather than particular cultural groups, and do not tend to monitor the cultural backgrounds or characteristics of participants. Notwithstanding, interviewees recognised a range of barriers that CALD women may confront, including language barriers, a lack of information about opportunities, and culturally inappropriate dress codes and facilities.

Stage Three, the subject of this report, involved twelve focus groups with CALD women conducted in New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia in February and March 2007. The focus groups explored CALD women's patterns of involvement in sport and recreation; their experience of any barriers to participation; and their perspectives on strategies to support their involvement. Demographic information was collected in a questionnaire.

The ninety-four women who took part in the focus groups were from a range of cultural backgrounds, being born in 35 different countries. Six focus groups were conducted with women from a shared cultural background: Indian, Japanese, Somalian, Islamic Arabic speaking (two groups, one with older and one with younger women), and Pacific Islander women. Six of the groups included women from a mix of cultural backgrounds. Two of these mixed-ethnicity groups were held with women aged 50 and over to capture the perspectives of older women, and one group was held with women aged under 30.

Informal physical activities, like walking or participating with family and friends were particularly important to most women, as were organised physical recreation activities like aqua-aerobics or group fitness classes, although some women in nine of the groups were involved in organised sports like netball, soccer or martial arts (including several who were involved in non-playing roles). Some of the women found they had greater opportunity to participate in organised sport and recreation in Australia than they had in other countries, although some who participated previously did not do so in Australia.

Like the representatives of sporting, cultural and women's organisations, the CALD women in the study tended to agree that sport in Australia offers a level playing field, pointing out that it is actively encouraged in Australia, and is more open and accessible than in other countries. However, women across the groups identified multiple barriers that could reduce their desire to participate or change the kinds of sport and recreation activities they would choose. A lack of culturally appropriate facilities, high costs, family responsibilities or a lack of transport, for example could cause women to choose informal activities (like walking or exercising at home) over either organised sport or recreation activities. These barriers have been summarised below.

## **1.1 Barriers to participation**

### **Socio-cultural barriers**

A few of the women described their experiences as racism or discrimination, for example being unable to participate in a walking group for fear of public verbal abuse, or being deliberately excluded from team mates in organised sport. Although experiences like these were identified by only a minority of women (confirming the perspectives of the stakeholders interviewed in Stage Two of the project, see Cortis and Muir, 2007), they had profound effects on those involved, causing them to withdraw their participation or change their chosen sports. Although a few women had experienced racism, the women more commonly experienced subtle and indirect socio-cultural barriers to their participation, as cultural notions of female physicality and dress for example clashed with the norms and requirements of sporting organisations.

Across the four study regions – Western Sydney, central Adelaide, regional Victoria, and regional NSW, women identified how cultural and religious notions of female physicality raised particular issues for their involvement in sport and recreation, with physical activity not seen as appropriate or important for women from some cultural backgrounds. This was particularly the case for women needing to cover their bodies and adhere to cultural and religious standards of modesty, an experience which was strongest amongst (but not exclusive to) women from Muslim backgrounds. While some of the women routinely adapted their dress to comply both with religious requirements and sport and recreation norms (for example wearing long clothing under uniforms or in the pool), they tended to find this uncomfortable and potentially stigmatising. Overwhelmingly, the women would prefer to have opportunities to participate in women- only (but not culturally segregated) sport and recreation contexts than to cover their bodies in mixed-gender facilities.

Notions of beauty and body image also impacted on CALD women's participation, with some women, such as the Pacific Islanders in regional NSW, feeling more conscious of their body image in Australia, making them apprehensive about participating. Many of the women described how in their culture, they were expected to adhere to gender roles by participating in separate activities from men. In many cases, sport was not perceived as appropriate or as a priority for women, presenting a barrier to women's participation.

Women identified family responsibilities as pervasive barriers to participating in sport and recreation. An unequal burden of childcare and household responsibilities was seen to make it easier for men than women to participate, and the leisure time of women with dependent children or grandchildren was particularly limited.

### **Access barriers**

The women identified access barriers relating to language, facilities and transport. English language skills were perceived as major barriers for CALD women, especially for those who had not been in Australia for long. Language proficiency shaped women's opportunities to find out about, access and participate in sport and recreation activities, and poor English skills could leave women socially isolated and uninformed. Learning English profoundly changed these women's lives, making it easier to mix, and improving awareness of the resources and opportunities available in their community.

The availability of safe, comfortable, accessible and culturally appropriate sport and recreation facilities were identified as significant influences on participation. The most important issue was access to women-only exercise spaces, and private change room areas. This theme was most important for the Muslim women in the study, who required privacy from men, but other women also expressed a desire for greater access to women-only facilities. Public transport to and from facilities, or having facilities close to home, were also important to how the women could access sport and recreation opportunities, and whether they could take their children.

### **Affective barriers**

Some of the women in the study described how they did not wish to participate in sport and recreation, or that these activities were low priorities in their culture, and had been low priority in their childhoods. Others disliked particular aspects of sport, such as competition.

### **Resource barriers**

Resource barriers related to time and finances (both of women themselves and their sporting organisations). Time was a major barrier to participating in sport and recreation, given the women's family and work commitments. Some women also found that organised sporting activities were not offered at times that were convenient to them.

While some women found sport and recreation to be less costly in Australia, most of the women found the cost of sport and recreation presented barriers to their participation, especially after migrating. As well as lacking the money to participate themselves, some

women also perceived women's sport and recreation organisations to have resource problems. A lack of money could prevent women's sporting organisations from advertising to attract new members, for example, or from providing a range of social activities for club members.

### **Physiological barriers**

The women identified physiological barriers relating to poor health or old age. These barriers were most profound for the older women in the study, whose patterns of participation were affected by accidents and injuries as well as age-related problems like arthritis. Gentle exercise, which allowed these women to work at their own pace, helped to facilitate their inclusion in sport and recreation. For other women, health and age related barriers were largely about perceptions, some women, for example, perceived themselves to be too old to learn to swim.

### **Interpersonal barriers**

The women also identified a lack of confidence as a barrier to participating, especially when they did not know others who participated. Without a personal connection women did not know what to expect and did not necessarily have the self-assurance to join unsolicited.

## **1.2 Perceptions of strategies for supporting CALD women's participation**

The women in the study identified a range of strategies that could be used to increase and support their participation in sport and recreation activities. The women felt that providing information to CALD women about activities and facilities would help them and other CALD women to participate. Information should portray sport as culturally diverse and welcoming; reinforce the health benefits of exercise; and explain what participating in sport involves.

As well as targeting information and advertising to CALD women, the women in the study also emphasised the need to alter facilities (especially gyms and swimming pools), recognising the need for funding to ensure they were culturally appropriate and easily accessible. To address some of the family-related barriers to CALD women's participation, some women identified a need for childcare generally while others identified a specific need for childcare facilities at sporting venues.

Overcoming financial barriers were seen as essential in getting more women from CALD backgrounds to participate in sport and recreation. The women identified a need for strategies to reduce the cost of activities for women, and to reduce associated costs such as transport or childcare. One woman was aware of a local initiative designed to target young CALD women with children to participate in physical activities and was successful by offering free child care and providing the classes at minimal cost.

The women also identified that role modelling and promoting sporting organisations as multicultural would help encourage women to participate, and emphasised the importance of setting up opportunities for CALD women to participate. This could

include setting up ethnically based girls sporting teams; providing funding for sport promotion programs; providing tickets to CALD women's sporting groups to watch games; providing the required clothing and footwear to CALD women; establishing sporting scholarships for CALD women and girls; and running community-based cultural events.

Finally, some of the women identified how, in the longer term, the participation of CALD women in sport and recreation requires addressing deep-seated ideas about the role of women. These women saw the need to broaden notions of women's roles as child-bearers and caregivers to emphasise the health and social benefits of leisure and personal time. Some of the women also saw that men could help by sharing domestic responsibilities and encouraging women to participate.

## 2 Introduction

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

The project has been conducted in three stages: a data review and analysis (completed in August 2006, see Cortis et. al., 2006); consultations with key stakeholders (completed in late 2006, see Cortis and Muir, 2007); and focus groups with CALD women in three states about their experiences and perceptions of sport and recreation activities (the subject of this report).

### 2.1 Findings from Stage One

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

The statistical data shows how women born outside the main English speaking countries are less likely than other women to take part in organised or non-organised sport, and those not proficient in spoken English have even lower levels of involvement (ABS, 2006). Table 2.1 shows how rates of participation in sport and physical activity were low for those born outside the main English speaking countries who were not proficient in spoken English, at around 35 per cent for both males and females. For those proficient in spoken English, participation rates rise to 60.2 per cent for males and 49.8 per cent for females.

**Table 2.1: Participation rates by sex, country of birth, and language proficiency, Australia 2002**

	Born in Australia (per cent)	Born in main English-speaking countries (per cent)	Born in other countries: not proficient in spoken English (per cent)	Born in other countries: not proficient in spoken English (per cent)
Male	68.5	74.6	60.2	35.2
Female	63.6	66.5	49.8	34.7
Total	66	70.7	55.4	35.0

Source: Migrants and Participation in Sport and Physical Activity (ABS 2006b: 10).

Table 2.2 shows how women born in any region of the world (apart from North-West Europe and Oceania) are less likely to participate than Australian born women. Less than one in five women born in North Africa or the Middle East participated in the last twelve months (compared with over three in five Australian born women).

**Table 2.2: Participation in sport and physical activity by sex and region of birth, Australia, 2002**

	Males (%)	Females (%)	All (%)
North-West Europe	69.8	64.7	67.4
Australia	68.5	63.6	66.0
Oceania and Antarctica	69.1	63.6	66.3
Sub-Saharan Africa	72.0	60.0	50.8
Americas	67.5	56.0	52.6
North-East Asia	68.8	53.5	61.9
South-East Asia	61.1	52.3	56.2
Southern and Central Asia	63.0	43.6	74.2
Southern and Eastern Europe	44.1	40.7	42.5
North Africa and the Middle East	42.7	19.5	31.2

Source: Migrants and Participation in Sport and Physical Activity (ABS 2006b: 10).

The literature review explored the factors affecting CALD women's participation. This highlighted a range of ways to categorise the barriers to participation. Collins et al (1999) for example, consider barriers to participation in sport in terms of structural factors (relating to the appropriateness of the physical and social environment); mediating factors (such as organisational policies and social stereotypes); and personal factors (such as a lack of time, money and self-image). Tsai and Coleman (1999) use a more detailed framework to understand the factors influencing migrants' participation in sport and recreation in Australia. They concluded that barriers or constraints fall into six main groups:

- *Socio-cultural* constraints. These barriers may be direct, such as being required to follow particular codes or traditions, and indirect, such as experiencing dissonance or discomfort in certain social settings. Examples include dress requirements, for example for Muslim women who need to cover. Not being able to participate in sports in ways that allow them to express their religious identity can facilitate a desire amongst women to participate in activities with others who share the same cultural, linguistic and religious background (Taylor and Toohey, 2002).
- *Access* constraints. These barriers relate to provision and availability of culturally appropriate recreation facilities and programs, information, and transport, issues which arise repeatedly in the literature (eg Taylor and Toohey, 1998; Keogh, 2002).

- *Affective* constraints relate to how appealing and meaningful people consider certain activities. That CALD girls and women form an interest in sporting activities in the first place is obviously a critical pre-requisite for their participation. Teachers and schooling environments are recognised to play an important role in facilitating equal access without invoking stereotypes (Taylor, 2004), as are ensuring that ethno-specific organisations have full information about the sporting associations and clubs and services offered in their local areas (Keogh, 2002).
- *Physiological* constraints relate to physical problems and old age. While physiological factors do present barriers to some women's participation, these are unlikely to be unique to CALD women.
- *Resource* constraints relate to a lack of time and money. Migrants may find the costs of participating particularly difficult if they face resettlement costs or are experiencing financial pressures or barriers to employment as a result of migration. Women's primary responsibility for child and elder care constrains their available income and time for leisure, thereby limiting their participation in sport and recreation (CCEH, 2006).
- *Interpersonal* constraints such as not having anybody to participate with are strong themes arising from studies of the barriers to CALD women's participation in sport and recreation (Johnson, 2000). Social networks have been found to be important facilitators of CALD women's participation, and participation in activities with family and friends can offer supportive environments for the expression and transmission of identity (Taylor and Toohey, 2002).

The Discussion Paper also outlined how policies and programs currently promote the inclusion of CALD women. One strategy is to provide information and promote activities to CALD women. Womensport and the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues in Victoria<sup>1</sup>, for example, publish resources to support CALD participation. These include translated program resources, tip sheets for sport providers about how to engage young CALD women in sport and physical activity, tips for newly arrived young people to join a club, and tip sheets for coaches about the inclusion of culturally and linguistically diverse participants.

A second strategy includes developing sport and recreation organisations. Taylor's study of netball, for example, found that sport administrators tended to leave inclusion to occur through chance rather than any direct planning (Taylor, 2004), highlighting a need for cross-cultural training and education about the benefits of becoming culturally inclusive

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<sup>1</sup> The CMYI Multicultural Sport and Recreation Program aims to create a more responsive sports sector that is attuned to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) young people, as well as increase access and participation in sport and recreation for CLD young people. The Program receives its funding from VicHealth and the Department of Victorian Communities.

and guidance from government agencies to sporting organisations about how to develop policies and strategies targeted toward specific cultures.

A third set of strategies relates to establishing peer support and peer education as a means of supporting and enhancing CALD women's participation. One example is the Queensland Government, which, in partnership with the Islamic Women's Association of Queensland Inc undertook the 'Active Sisters!' project. This project trained Islamic women as peer educators while establishing community physical activity programs, including a religiously appropriate personal-development program, swimming lessons and recreational swimming, local walking groups, peer-education and support (Islamic Women's Assoc of Qld Inc).

A fourth set of strategies relate to establishing activities, training and competitions for CALD women. The inclusion of a funding strand for culturally and linguistically diverse women under the Australian Sports Commission's 2006-07 Sport Leadership Grants for Women program offers to support such activities. Sporting programs for CALD women have also been established in the states, involving collaborations between governments, sport and recreation and cultural organisations to facilitate activities for CALD women (for example women only swimming programs).

A fifth approach to supporting CALD women's participation is in developing high level strategies, standards and frameworks, such as codes of practice. The UK Government, for example has a comprehensive strategy for achieving sport and physical activity objectives (Strategy Office, 2002), a Strategy Framework for Women and Sport (UK Sport, 2005), as well as a standard to promote racial equality in local authority sport and leisure services (Sharma, 2004).

While examples of these strategies can all be found in Australia, initiatives directed at including CALD women in sport and recreation tend to be small and short term. Moreover, few have been rigorously evaluated, leaving knowledge gaps about what constitutes best practice in reducing barriers and supporting the participation of different CALD groups (Cortis et al. 2006).

## **2.2 Findings from Stage Two**

Building on the material contained in the Discussion Paper, Stage Two (Cortis and Muir, 2007) showed the ways key stakeholders in sporting, women's and cultural organisations perceive the barriers to CALD women's participation in sport and recreation activities, and strategies for overcoming them. The fifteen stakeholders interviewed highlighted barriers identified in other studies, such as language, dress and culturally inappropriate sporting facilities. In terms of what participants perceive would help support CALD women, targeted funding and partnership relationships emerged as strong themes. Other important findings were that interviewees were largely unaware of what other organisations were doing to support CALD women in sport. Developing the sector's capacity to share and disseminate evidence of good practice on the issue thus appears

essential to enhancing the capacity of organisations to effectively support the involvement of CALD women in sport.

Interviews with representatives from the six NSOs revealed particular issues pertaining to the upper echelons of the sporting sector. Monitoring the cultural backgrounds of participants and targeting specific groups appeared antithetical to these organisations' current emphasis on promoting sport to the mainstream. Some NSOs were strongly optimistic about the capacity of sport to provide a 'level playing field', and some did not perceive that their organisational cultures and arrangements would contribute to low rates of participation amongst CALD women. Moreover, none described having cultural diversity frameworks or strategies in place that guided their activities and those of member organisations. The commercial imperative and resource pressures of NSOs and the prevailing attitudes of its representatives indicated that providing special purpose funding to target CALD women (perhaps in partnership with cultural organisations) coupled with an education campaign, is likely to effectively raise awareness of cultural diversity across the sector, and to give rise to specific policies and programs in sporting organisations.

These findings informed the third and final stage of the project, in which the research team conducted focus groups with CALD women in metropolitan and regional Australia during February and March 2007. The results of these focus groups are the major focus of this report.

### **2.3 Aims of Stage Three**

Having reviewed the literature and consulted with stakeholders in sporting, women's and cultural organisations, the third and final stage of the project contributes CALD women's perspectives on sport and recreation, the barriers they face, and the strategies that can better support their participation. The focus groups were conducted in metropolitan and regional Australia in early 2007, with the questioning route and study design informed by the findings in Stages One and Two.

Focus group participants included women who self-identified as being from a CALD background, and who were aged 18 and over. CALD women who were current participants in sport and recreation activities took part in the interviews, as did those who were not currently participating (but had done so in the past) and some who had never participated in sport and recreation. While six of the groups included women from a mix of cultural backgrounds, six were with single cultural groups: Indian, Japanese, Somalian, Islamic Arabic speaking (two groups), and Pacific Islander women. Two mixed-ethnicity groups were also held with women aged 50 and over to capture the perspectives of older women, and one group was held with women 18-30 years.

The discussions, which are described more fully in the following sections, focused on identifying both the barriers to CALD women's participation and strategies for overcoming them, and informing policies and programs that might enhance the inclusion of CALD women in sport and recreation.

### 3 Focus Group Methodology

In total, 94 women from various CALD backgrounds participated in this study. The women lived in regional and urban locations in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, and were sporting and recreation participants or non-participants. Six of the twelve focus groups were participants from a single cultural background and the remaining groups were mixed. The single ethnicity groups were with women from India, Japan, Somalia, the Pacific Islands, and the Middle East (two groups). The focus groups included 19 women from urban NSW, 24 from regional NSW, 14 from regional Victoria, and 37 from urban South Australia. Four focus groups included sport and recreation participants, three were of sports and recreation non-participants, and the remaining five were comprised of a mix of participants and non-participants.

#### 3.1 Focus group design

##### Urban and regional sites

The groups were conducted in three states and in regional and metropolitan areas in order to capture the perspectives of women from a diversity of geographic, socio-economic and cultural contexts. The areas were: urban New South Wales (western Sydney); urban South Australia (central Adelaide); regional Victoria; and regional New South Wales. Table 3 lists the numbers of participants in each group by location and focus group number.

**Table 3: Focus group participants by location and group number**

Group Number	Location	Participants
Group 1	Urban NSW	7
Group 2	Regional Vic	3
Group 3	Regional Vic	11
Group 4	Urban NSW	6
Group 5	Urban NSW	6
Group 6	Urban SA	11
Group 7	Urban SA	9
Group 8	Urban SA	8
Group 9	Urban SA	9
Group 10	Regional NSW	9
Group 11	Regional NSW	7
Group 12	Regional NSW	8

##### Mixed and single ethnicity groups

The twelve focus groups were designed to include groups of women from a single cultural background, as well as women from a mix of cultural backgrounds, across three states. Six of the groups were conducted with women from a common cultural grouping. We targeted women for whom cultural background and English proficiency may influence decisions to participate or not participate in sport and recreation. Two of these

were with Islamic Arabic speakers (primarily Iraqi and Afghan women)<sup>2</sup>. One group was held with women from Somalia. This was to ensure the research captured issues pertinent to women from Middle Eastern and African backgrounds, as Stages One and Two of the research showed they have particularly low rates of participation. In addition, separate focus groups were conducted with Japanese, Indian, and Pacific Islander women.

While the single ethnicity groups allowed deeper exploration of the motivators and barriers affecting different cultures, the six mixed ethnicity groups ensured the research captured the multiplicity of views across a range of cultures. While three of the six mixed-ethnicity groups included CALD women of any background and of all ages, three were designed to capture the perspectives of CALD women of particular age groups. We conducted two groups with women aged 50 and over in western Sydney, and one group with women aged under 30 in Adelaide.

Members of the project team facilitated the twelve focus groups, with assistance from a bilingual moderator for Groups 2, 3 and 9 (with Arabic speakers and Somalian women). However, this was either not requested or required in the other single ethnicity groups.

### **Sport participants and non-participants**

As shown in Table 4, four of the focus groups included sport and recreation participants only, three were with women who were not currently participating in sport and recreation activities, and the remaining five consisted of a mix of sport participants and non-participants.

**Table 4: Focus group participants by location and self-identified sport participation status**

	Sport and Recreation participants	Sport and Recreation non-participants	Mixed
Urban NSW	Groups 4 & 5 (12 women)	--	Group 1(7 women)
Urban SA	Group 6 (11 women)	Group 9 (9 women)	Group 7 & 8 (17 women)
Regional NSW	Group 11 (7 women)	--	Groups 10 & 12 (17 women)
Regional VIC	--	Groups 2 & 3(14 women)	--

The groups containing a mix of sport participant and non-participants proved beneficial, as those who were involved in organised activities could share information and experiences of different facilities and activities. This helped to develop some of the women’s knowledge of activities and opportunities available in their local community.

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<sup>2</sup> Separate groups were held with older and younger women.

### **3.2 Recruitment**

To recruit the participants, we firstly obtained advice from peak multicultural organisations, then followed local advice about how to recruit participants in each site. In western Sydney, our recruitment strategy consisted of community radio notices, and recruitment through a health and recreation organisation. In Adelaide and regional New South Wales, we recruited through a mix of cultural and sporting organisations, educational institutions (TAFE, English language schools, and universities) and non-government organisations. In regional Victoria, participants were recruited through cultural networks and the local TAFE.

Groups in metropolitan areas were designed to include eight participants each, with six participants targeted for groups in the regional sites. In line with focus group protocols, we over-sampled slightly to account for possible no-shows. However, we found participants to be overwhelmingly enthusiastic about attending. As a result, some of the groups were slightly larger than anticipated, which made for more lively discussion and more diverse representation of views.

The research methodology was approved by the University of New South Wales Ethics' Committee. The rights and privacy of the focus group participants were respected throughout the recruitment, focus groups and in this report. The identities of the participants are confidential. As such, all names have been changed, and any identifying information has been altered or removed. Participants' cultural background and age groups have been retained, as this information helps to understand participants' experiences and perceptions, but does not identify individuals.

### **3.3 Questioning route**

The full questioning route is listed in Appendix B. Each participant was firstly asked to introduce herself by stating her name, cultural background and by speaking briefly about her current involvement in sport and recreation activities (or how she had been involved in the past). Participants were asked why they chose their activities, and anything they liked or disliked about sport and recreation. Participants were then asked to reflect on the role of sport and recreation for women in their culture, and their experiences of sport as they were growing up. Those who did not grow up in Australia were asked to discuss differences in how they felt about sport and recreation after arriving in Australia.

To explore the barriers to participation, the focus group facilitators asked the women how, if at all, they would like sport and recreation to play a different role in their lives, and the factors preventing them from participating more. Finally, the groups discussed the barriers to participation they perceived women from their cultural backgrounds might experience, and strategies for overcoming these. At the end, the women were invited to add any further thoughts they had on the topic, and, for reasons of quality assurance, to comment on whether the questioning route had covered the issues they deemed relevant.

### **3.4 Questionnaire**

In addition to participating in the discussion, the women were asked to fill in a short questionnaire (Appendix C). This was designed to capture relevant demographic

characteristics which may not be discussed in the group but which were likely to impact on participants' experiences and perspectives, such as age, country of birth, cultural identity, religion, education level, family type and income source. The questionnaire also collected information about frequency of moderate to vigorous physical exercise, levels of interest in sport overall, and all the sport and recreation activities the women had participated in. In most cases, this was completed as a written questionnaire. In some cases, participants preferred to complete the questions verbally or with assistance from the group facilitator, interpreter or another woman in the group.

### **3.5 Analysis**

With participants' consent, focus group discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed. They were then analysed thematically. The initial coding framework was drawn from issues arising from Stages One and Two of the research, for example, the barriers to CALD women's participation identified in the literature review and in the consultations with stakeholders (such as dress codes, facility design, family responsibilities etc). However, the framework was adapted to incorporate themes and issues that arose in CALD women's accounts, to ensure their perspectives were fully captured without being forced into pre-existing categories.

The focus group findings show how CALD women perceive the health and social benefits of sport and recreation, the barriers to their participation and strategies for overcoming these barriers. It is important to recognise however, that while the responses of interviewees and focus group participants reflect perceptions present amongst CALD women in the sample, their responses are also tied up with personal attitudes, perceptions and beliefs, and may not be nationally representative.

## 4 Participant Demographics

### 4.1 CALD backgrounds of focus group participants

Participants were women who identified themselves as being from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds. The 94 women in the groups had a range of migration histories. Some were from non-English speaking backgrounds and had migrated to Australia, others were residing temporarily in Australia. A few had been born in Australia and identified as culturally diverse because of their parent's birth place, the cultural practices within the family, or the language spoken within the family home.

#### Country of birth

The range and frequency of participants' countries of birth are listed in Appendix D. The women were born in 35 different countries. The largest numbers of women in the study were from Iraq (11), Japan (10), Somalia (9), and India (8), reflecting the inclusion of women from these backgrounds in the single ethnicity groups. A summary of participants, by region of birth and focus group location is below in Table 5. This shows that the highest number of women in the group were from North Africa and the Middle East (21) and sub-Saharan Africa (18).

**Table 4: Participants by focus group location and region of birth**

	Urban NSW	Regional VIC	Urban SA	Regional NSW	Total
North Africa and Middle East	6	14	1	0	21
Sub Saharan Africa	0	0	14	4	18
North East Asia	0	0	10	1	11
Southern and Central Asia	8	0	3	0	11
Southern and Eastern Europe	3	0	0	6	9
South East Asia	1	0	3	4	8
Australia	0	0	3	3	6
Oceania	0	0	0	5	5
North Europe	1	0	3	0	4
Americas	0	0	0	1	1
Total	19	14	37	24	94

#### Languages spoken at home

The majority, 88 per cent (83 women), of participants spoke a language other than English at home, and twelve of the women spoke two languages other than English in their homes. The first languages spoken at home by those who answered the question are listed in Table 6.

**Table 6: First language spoken at home by focus group participants**

Language	No. women	Language	No. women
Arabic	16	German	1
Somali	9	Kannada	1
Dari	3	Konkani	1
Chinese	2	Korean	1
Filipino	2	Pidgin English	1
Italian	2	Pukapukan	1
Japanese	2	Tagalog	1
Marathi	2	Tamil	1
Swahili	2	Telegu	1
Cook Islander	1	Temne	1
Danish	1	Urdu	1
Farsi	1	Vietnamese	1
French	1		

### **Australian citizenship**

Just over half of the focus group participants (48 women) were Australian citizens, 33 women were permanent residents, and the remaining 14 women were temporary visa holders.

### **Religion**

Most women in the focus groups identified their religions as Islam (35 women) and Christianity (32 women) (see Table 7). The two major groups identifying as Muslims were from Iraq and Somalia. The majority of women with no religion or who identified as practicing Buddhism were Japanese.

**Table 7: Religion of focus group participants**

Religion	Persons	Per cent
Islam	35	38.5
Christianity	32	35.2
Hinduism	6	6.6
No religion	9	9.9
Buddhism	5	5.5
Other	4	4.4
Total	91	100

## **4.2 Other characteristics of focus group participants**

### **Age**

Most women who participated in the focus groups were aged in their 20s and 30s (55 women), 14 of the women were aged 60 and over, and 8 women were aged in their late teens.

### **Household structure**

Of the 91 participants who answered the question about their household structure, 46 women lived in households with children. Of these women, 27 lived in couple households with children, while 19 lived in one-parent households with children. The remaining women lived in couple household with no children (19), alone (11), or in a multi-family household (7). Eight women were living in ‘other’ situations; most of these women were in shared housing with friends or a relative.

### **Disability**

The majority of the women stated that they did not have a disability. Eight women identified as having a disability. All of these women named physical problems or injuries such as rheumatism or cancer remission.

### **Education levels**

Many of the women who volunteered to participate in the focus groups were well educated. Of the 90 women who answered the question, 39 had been to university, and an additional 26 completed Year 12 or it’s equivalent. Nine women had completed a trade certificate or an apprenticeship.

### **Income**

Just over half of the women in the focus groups (48 participants) stated that their main source of income was government benefits. Over a quarter (25 women) received their main income from paid work, while 19 per cent (18 women) were supported from other sources, most commonly their husband or partner. Most of the sample was either studying or caring full-time.

### **Summary**

Overall, the ninety-four focus group participants were born in thirty-five different countries. Amongst them, at least twenty-five language other than English were spoken. They had diverse migration histories, consisting of migrants to Australia, women residing temporarily in Australia, and women born in Australia who identified as culturally diverse. While most participants were aged in their twenties and thirties, they ranged from their late teens to over seventy, and almost half had government benefits as their main source of income.

## 5 Benefits of Sport and Recreation Participation

Participating in sport and physical recreation enhances social inclusion as well as health and wellbeing. The mental and physical health benefits of physical activity are well known. Participation in these activities, for example, can improve cardiovascular health, decrease stress and improve self-esteem. Participation in sport and group-based physical recreation has also been found to help facilitate social interaction, build community strength, decrease anti-social behaviour and promote ethnic and cultural harmony and community involvement. These benefits extend into the economic sphere to include cost-effective health prevention, a fit and productive workforce, business growth, tourism and employment (Collins and Kay 2003: 28-33; Cortis et al. 2006).

### 5.1 Benefits for CALD Women

The women in the focus groups acknowledged the health and social benefits of participating in sport and recreation. While those participating in sport and recreation provided clear examples of how physical activity had benefited them, their communities and the nation, women who were not currently involved in physical activity also recognised the important role physical activity could play.

#### Health benefits of sport and recreation

Participants perceived a range of health benefits from participating in sport and recreation, including feeling good and keeping fit; managing weight (especially for those affected by migration-related changes in diet); and recovering from illness or injury or staying active (for the older woman). These benefits were recognised to benefit society as well as individuals, through reduced health spending.

#### *Weight management*

For women who grew up outside Australia and especially those from Middle Eastern or African backgrounds, sport and recreation were understood primarily as opportunities to enhance health and manage weight through exercise. Aziza, a Somali woman aged in her late 30s (group 9) for example, felt she was more mobile when she first arrived in Australia from Somalia, and now wanted desperately to go to the gym to lose weight. Weight gain was an issue for other African women, whose diets included richer, higher calorie foods post-migration. Similarly, in regional Victoria, the health benefits of sport were framed as a way to alleviate problems caused by dietary changes, and a way to enhance sleep. Through a translator, one Iraqi woman described:

We have too much oil in our food, I'll die when I'm 18! ... I hope someone forces me to play sport everyday ... sport makes you tired, so you sleep better ... sport re-energises you. (Group3)

Problems of weight gain were compounded by other lifestyle changes post-migration, most notably, a reduced tendency to walk for transport. Sadia, a young African-Australian woman born in Sierra Leone described how the very concept of sport and recreation seems redundant for women from Africa, where walking and physical work

are instilled as part of women's daily routine, and where time is spent attending to the necessities of life rather than in leisure. She described how migration represented a deep shift in African women's physical routines:

Exercise was part of our routine without realising it was exercise. What western countries call exercise, we didn't have that concept, it's just you did your daily routine, you walk everywhere you know, do really physical manual handling ... back home everybody walks to every place... We don't think of it as exercise; to us it's just I have to get there, I will walk (Sadia, group 7)

It was not only the African or Middle Eastern women in the study who framed sport and recreation as a way of addressing health problems associated with migration. Tamiko, a Japanese woman in her late 30s who had been in Australia for around 4 years also linked post-migratory weight gain primarily with diet, rather than altered patterns of exercise:

I once gained fourteen kilos in Australia and it was pretty hard to shed off all those kilos. I never want to do that again! ... You find each portion that you are eating is much bigger than when you are living in Japan. ... Other people eat a lot more than you usually do ... and being there you will be like that, and it's quite an unconscious process. (Tamiko in Adelaide, group 7).

### *Mental health benefits*

While the issue of weight management emerged strongly amongst women from Africa and the Middle East, women across the groups and from various cultural backgrounds identified the mental health benefits of sport and recreation. Opportune, a Burundian in her late teens from regional NSW, described simply that 'I just go walking because when I walk I feel good in my life' (group 10). Similarly, Michelle, a Pacific Islander described, 'When I'm walking I actually meditate, I take that time to meditate and prepare myself for the day, I find that's fantastic' (group 11).

Older women in the groups in western Sydney, who tended to have been in Australia for longer periods (mostly over twenty years), identified a wide range of mental health benefits. While many of these women attended activities such as gentle exercise, aqua exercise or tai chi to help with health problems like arthritis or blood pressure, these were not necessarily the women's primary reason for attending. Some attended mainly for the mental health and social benefits, and the meaning activities gave to their lives. Bernadine, an older woman from a German background in Western Sydney described:

It helps and clears my head from my worries. When I'm walking I can solve all my problems. When I'm belly dancing I don't think about anything else, just moving. It's not just health reasons, it's feeling good. (Group 5)

Bernadine also found recreational activities to give her a sense of meaning, stating that 'It's important to get up in the morning and have a purpose'. In the same group (group 5),

mental health benefits were also identified, with the activities seen to ‘give me inner peace’ (Reena from Mauritius). Georgia, an older woman from a Greek background described:

When I stopped working I was very depressed. When I walk I feel really happy inside. I’m much better health wise, mind and physically. I have had [health] problems so I was too scared to do anything, but now I do I’m really happy. I like to meet other people to. Sports make me happier. (Group 5)

The mental health benefits were also recognised by younger women. Elene, a Sudanese-Australian in her early 20s in South Australia found, for example that:

When you’re really stressed or really angry or really upset and you’re sitting there doing something monotonous you actually force yourself to have to think about it, and by the time you get off the machine [at the gym] you’ve kind of gotten rid of a lot of that bad energy and you just feel a whole lot better. (Group 6)

### **Social benefits of sport and recreation**

As well as the physical and mental health benefits, participants in all the groups perceived sport and recreation to have a range of social benefits. These included opportunities to make friends and socialise; opportunities for personal development and personal time (including time away from husbands or children); self-development; mixing with other cultures and retaining one’s cultural identity.

#### *Friendship*

Making friends was a commonly identified benefit of participating in sport and recreation. Some of the women deliberately became involved for this reason, like Susanne, a young German woman who described: ‘I started to play touch football because of that – to meet people.’ Susanne found the social aspects of her sport helped maintain her motivation to attend ‘because you’re meeting the same people every time’.

Meeting people was something that Elene (a Sudanese-Australian) missed about the competitive sports she used to do (she now found it easier to find time to attend the gym than to attend organised team sports):

I like being involved with a group of people and you meet a lot of people and it is a lot more fun than I think just going to the gym by yourself. (Group 6)

Josephine, an older Filipino woman in regional NSW also appreciated the social benefits of sport and recreation:

I like company! Aside from sport making you fit and it’s good for your body, you also socialise, you get to enjoy it. You know, the laughter

and everything, so after the sport and everything you feel more, ah lighter, relaxed, happier when you get home. (Group 10)

Some women who were not involved in sport aspired to join to make friends. As Roza, a young Iraqi woman in regional Victoria (group 2) explained, ‘When I see people [playing together] it makes me envious ... I just want to practice with them ... it will help even just having friends, and making friends’.

#### *Personal time*

While some found sport and recreation an opportunity to make friends, others saw these activities as opportunities for personal time. For Linda a Maltese Australian in western Sydney, regular organised activities gave her personal time away from her husband:

It gives me two days away from [my husband] because we’re both retired ... he does his own thing on a Monday and Wednesday, and I do my own thing which is great. It gives us our own time. (Group 4)

Time out from family and other responsibilities was also an issue for Nadia, a Lebanese-Australian in her early twenties in South Australia:

Even though you’re out playing in a team it’s different from your studies and your family life. When you play sport, it’s free time for yourself. (Group 7)

#### *Personal development*

As well appreciating it as an opportunity to make friends and have some personal time, the women believed sport and recreation helps with personal development. Shikha, an Indian woman in Adelaide, commented:

Sport is a good leveller, and more than actually the skills of playing those games you are involving yourself with other people and management of people, group skills, how to keep your ego under control, trying not to control, playing with other teams, playing with people and of course the competitive spirit at an individual sports level, and to be a good loser rather than winner. (Group 7)

In other groups, participants also mentioned that sport could help their personal development, especially their confidence. Vailea, a Cook Islander in regional New South Wales felt her non-playing role (as a referee) helped her to grow:

I think you learn more as well, like you watch other teams play and you can see like their tactics or whatever so you try and bring it into your own skills and grow as a person. (Group 11)

### *Mixing with people from other cultures*

For the older women who participated in Western Sydney and regional NSW, sport and recreation activities offered opportunities to mix with people from other countries. Linda, a Maltese Australian saw mixing with other cultures as a direct benefit of the sport and recreation activities in which they participated. In seeing sport as a way to experience diversity and gain confidence she articulated a sentiment shared by others:

When you're mixing with other cultures you feel that outgoing; you're not as reserved as before you started mixing with people. And I think that's very important because people [who] don't participate in sport or don't participate in anything, they get very reserved, "Oh will I be able to do it?" They haven't got confidence ... You get to know other cultures by mixing in. And you know, we're just like a happy family, like you know their customs and things like that ... I don't like mixing with just my culture. I like mixing with other people, because you broaden everything. You're learning all the time by mixing with other people and I think sports is a wonderful way of doing that. (Group 4)

Catarina, an older Italian woman in regional NSW, also cited meeting people from other cultures as a social aspect of sport and recreation:

You have a lot of fun, and you exchange recipes or lot of things and that's what make the fun...it's very important at our age, and in your community, you meet people from different cultures, your views change, it's very good, you grow, and you see things. (Group 12)

Maria shared the sentiment that mixing with others was a reason to participate. However, she felt that by participating she had transgressed cultural norms for women, and had to sacrifice friendships with other women from her community. She felt excluded from her Italian community because of her choice to be physically active:

Do you know how criticised I am for the way I dress, the way I move? I am criticised. Do you know how many Italian friends I have? Two. (Group 5)

### *Retaining cultural identity*

While the women identified how sport could help integrate different cultural groups, they also found sport played a role in helping them retain cultural identity. As discussed in Stage One of the project, the retention of cultural diversity can be a positive aspect of sport and leisure, with Taylor and Toohey (2002) for example advocating:

Leisure activities that occur in the context of family and friendship groups with few social limitations serve to provide a supportive environment for the expression and transmission of subcultural identity, that is, the retention of certain core cultural or religious traits.

Sadia's story (Figure 1) reflects how sport and recreation (in this case, cultural dance) can help maintain identity.

**Figure 1**

**MAINTAINING IDENTITY THROUGH CULTURAL DANCE**

Sadia was born in Sierra Leone and arrived in Australia when she was thirteen. Recalling her childhood, she describes the role of dance:

In our culture like every part of your life you dance about something. Somebody dies, you dance in a certain way, somebody gets married, you dance in a certain way, or if it rains, with farmers you dance in a certain way just to thank god or something. The dance we do is a celebration of womanhood. ... Every holiday there was dancing competitions [laughing]. We're Muslim and we have like the eve after the fasting we have the big celebration and then on the day of course we have visitors and we just put music on and all the kids in the house would have a dance off.

Sadia continued to participate in cultural dance in Australia:

I chose to do the dancing because it's cultural. And I help coach the younger ones to do it properly because they don't really know how to do it since they didn't grow up in the environment of the African culture ... I love it - one part of it is it's practicing my culture, something that's cultural, that's important to me; on the other hand it keeps you very fit ... I just love that part of dance, for me being in Australia I still maintain that part of my culture. I take it further by encouraging the younger ones who are born here to keep it going. (Group 7)

## **5.2 Under representation**

Despite the benefits of sport and recreation, women from CALD backgrounds are underrepresented participants. As Stage One found:

- Women born in countries other than the main English speaking countries are less likely to participate in sport and recreation than Australian born women, especially if they are not proficient in spoken English (ABS, 2006);
- In 2002, 64 per cent of Australian born women participated in sport and recreation compared to 46 per cent of females born in a non-English speaking countries (ABS 2003); and
- Women born in North Africa or Middle Eastern countries were least likely to participate. Only one in five of these women, compared to three in five Australian born women participated in sport and recreation (ABS 2006: 10).

Many of the women who participated in the focus groups were amongst the minority of CALD women who do participate in sport and/or physical recreation. All of the participants except for the 8 Arabic-speakers in regional Victoria reported currently engaging in moderate to vigorous sport or recreation activity at least once a week (although for many this was informal activity, like walking). It is important to understand the benefits they perceive, as these facilitate their participation. The next section of the report deals with the diverse range of sport and recreation activities these women engage in and the importance of recognising not only the important role organised sport plays in

women's lives, but also the importance of physical recreation and informal physical activity.

## **6 Diversity of Sport and Recreation Activities**

### **6.1 Definitions**

#### **Sport and recreation**

The Australian Sports Commission defines sport as:

A human activity capable of achieving a result requiring physical exertion and/or physical skill which, by its nature and organisation, is competitive and is generally accepted as being a sport (ASC website, <http://www.ausport.gov.au/nso/recognition.asp>).

While recreation activities are not so clearly defined, this research focuses on recreation activities that involve some physical exertion, usually done for exercise. Unlike sport, recreation activities are not generally competitive. The sport and recreation activities CALD women from the focus groups participated in can be categorised into three groups:

1. Organised sport: a person may be competing individually (for example, swimming, athletics, cycling, triathlon, martial arts) or as a team member (soccer, netball, hockey, football, etc)
2. Organised physical recreation activities: not usually competitive but organised physical activity, such as non-government organisation, club or gym based walking groups, Tai Chi, yoga, aerobics;
3. Informal physical recreation activities: non-competitive, individual or informal group based-activity, such as walking, jogging or cycling alone or with a friend or playing unorganised sports with friends/family at picnics or in the park. This category can also include physical activities not done directly for exercise, but that have a physical exertion effect, such as gardening.

### **6.2 Focus group participants' current activities**

Many of the women who participated in the focus group did at least some informal physical recreation activity. For example, 59 per cent of women (48 of the 82 who answered the question) identified that their current sport and recreation activities included walking. Other (less frequent) informal activities included running, cycling, swimming, weights, cardio-work in a gym, bushwalking and gardening. A number of women participated in organised physical recreation activities like aerobics, dancing, tai chi and yoga groups or classes. A minority of women were active in organised competitive sports, like netball, soccer, table tennis and squash. Table 8 provides a categorised list of the range of activities the women were involved in.

**Table 8: Focus group participants' current involvement in sport and recreation**

Organised sport	Organised physical recreation activities	Informal physical recreation activities
Soccer / Indoor Soccer	Relaxation	Walking
Netball /Indoor Netball	Aerobics	Running / Jogging
Basketball	Aqua Aerobics	Relaxation
Touch Football	Yoga	Housework and gardening
Squash	Swimming	Bushwalking
Judo	Table Tennis	Bike Riding
Taekwondo	Taebo	Weights
	Tai Chi	Swimming
	Tennis	
	Exercise/ Fitness Classes/ Gym	
	Belly Dancing	
	Dancing/ International Dance	
	Capoeira	

Note: Some activities can fit within more than one category. For example, tennis can be played both as a competitive sport and in a less formalised setting. The activities placed in columns reflect the type of participation by the women in the focus groups. Note that some women were doing activities in more than one group.

### *Organised physical recreation*

The range of organised physical recreation activities reflects the important role these activities play in women's lives. They provide both health and social benefits without the rigidity, commitment or competition of organised sport.

Some of the women specifically chose informal or individual sport and recreation opportunities over organised team sports, which were sometimes associated with pressure, competition, stress and responsibility to others rather than personal enjoyment. The Japanese women, for example, tended to prefer individual and informal sports over organised, team sports:

I choose individual ones because individual ones you don't need to worry about other team-mates. If you're in a team and you couldn't achieve anything at all you feel enormous pressure and I hate that (Naoko, group 8).

Women from other backgrounds also participated in organised physical recreation activities because they disliked the pressure of team, organised or competitive sports. Marion, a Swiss German in her late twenties for example described:

I used to do competitive sports as well when I was younger and I never felt at home. So I did sports for a couple of years until I found a way to do it comfortably independent of competition. (Group 7)

### *Informal physical recreation activities*

As discussed above, the most common sport and recreation activity amongst the women was walking. In the focus groups, the women also described how much of their sport and recreation activity took place in community settings with family and friends. For some of the women, such as the Pacific Islander women in regional NSW, sport and recreation activities were important aspects of community gatherings and celebrations. Michelle explained:

Sport is very big in the community, like on the weekend, we could get together to play volleyball and have a BBQ... sport is more a social thing ... with us, everybody comes, like aunty, uncle, everybody. ... The spectators get up, they dance, they sing, and then they sit down, and that's more exciting than the actual game! And that's why sport is an important thing because it brings the community together and it brings dancing and singing. (Group 11)

As well as participating in regular organised activities with women in her age group, Linda participated in informal recreation activities with family:

In our family I think we do a lot of sports definitely together, even when we go out on a picnic we organise races for the kids, we have three legged races for ourselves, egg and spoon race, so to us, to our family, sports activities are very very important. (Group 4)

Importantly, the group reporting the lowest level of involvement in sport and recreation in the study – Somalian women – had also participated in informal sport and recreation activities, such as dancing and walking. However, this group had only encountered the concept of physical activity for leisure, and indeed the concept of leisure time itself, since arriving in Australia.

### *Perspectives on organised sport*

In addition to being involved in sport in informal, family or community contexts, some women in nine of the groups were involved in organised sport, including netball, soccer, basketball and touch football.<sup>3</sup> A few were also involved in teaching, coaching, umpiring, or committee work in their clubs.

Even those who were not currently participating in organised sports had been exposed to them as children, often at school (although the sports played were not necessarily common in Australia). Those who did not have access to school were often at a disadvantage when it came to sport, as Afia (from Burundi) explained:

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<sup>3</sup> For a breakdown of the groups by participant and non-participant status, see Table 4.

With sports, when you didn't have a chance to go to school, you don't know anything. If you went to school you have chance to know everything, but if you didn't go to school - because in our country it's very difficult to go to school because you have to pay money, and in our country you don't have enough money to pay, maybe you have twelve children and to go to school is very hard to pay for all them. ... If you didn't go to school, you don't know anything (group 6)

Sports played in childhood remained familiar, influencing women's chosen activities later in life. Two women in their early forties in regional NSW, for example, explained why they played netball:

We get used to the sport that we were brought up with (Moana, Papua New Guinean).

For me, I know the rules; I'm familiar with it (Michelle, Pacific Islander).

However, most of the Middle Eastern and African women and some of the Indian women had not had opportunities to play sport previously, and found they had greater opportunities to participate in Australia, or to try new sports. Priyanka described:

Because you've never been given the opportunity it actually encourages me to get into involved. (Group 1)

### **Frequency of participation in moderate or vigorous physical activity**

On average, women who participated in any of the three categories of sport and recreation reported doing so for at least 30 minutes three days per week. Most commonly, women stated they participated in moderate to vigorous physical activity two or three days per week (see Table 9).

**Table 9: Frequency of number of days per week doing at least 30 minutes of moderate or vigorous physical activity**

Physically active days per week	Number	Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
0	12	13.04	13.04
1	5	5.43	18.48
2	22	23.91	42.39
3	21	22.83	65.22
4	10	10.87	76.09
5	14	15.22	91.30
6	2	2.17	93.48
7	6	6.52	100.00
Total	92	100.00	
No response	2		
	94		

Of the 12 participants who do not do at least 30 minutes of physical activity per week, eight were born in Iraq. Some women who were not currently doing any moderate to vigorous physical activity had participated in sport and recreation overseas. This was particularly apparent amongst the Japanese women in the study. Kagami, aged in her early 20s described this:

Before I came here I used to do sports. I played swimming, running, basketball, and since I'm here about 7 years ago I stopped all the sports.  
(Group 8)

Some of the reasons women like Kagami might reduce or cease their involvement in organised and non-organised sports, or choose not to become involved are explored in Section 7, which considers the barriers to participation women in the study identified. Lack of participation did not necessarily signify disinterest.

### **Interest in sport**

The general interest in sport and physical recreation rated highly among the interviewees, even by those who were not currently participating. On a range of 1-10 (one being 'not at all interested' and ten being 'very interested') the women in the focus groups scored an average 7.4. Interestingly, eight of the Iraqi-born women reported that they were 'very interested' in sport, and yet all eight women also reported that they do not participate in physical activity on any day of the week. On average, those who did not participate in organised sport rated their interest in sport only slightly lower than the sport participants (6.8 compared to 8.1).

## **Summary**

The women in the focus groups who were sport and recreation participants were involved in a diverse range of activities. These can be divided into three categories: organised sport (competitive and formalised), organised physical recreation activities (non-competitive, group based and semi-formal), and informal physical recreation activities (non-competitive, individualised, friend or family based and informal). These different categories of sport and recreation play varying roles in the women's lives. Organised physical recreation activities were particularly important for health and social benefits and provided a structure that was perceived to be less rigid and less confronting. On average, the women in the focus groups participated in moderate to vigorous physical activity three times per week. It was not necessarily a lack of interest that prevented the non-participants from becoming active.

## 7 Barriers to Sport and Recreation

### 7.1 Perceptions of sport as a ‘level playing field’

Women in the focus groups were asked if they agreed with the idea that sport in Australia is a level playing field, that is, an area of life that everyone can participate in equally, and that everyone can access. This gives some insight into the extent to which they confront any barriers to participation, and their overall perceptions of equality and access in the sport and recreation field. Participants tended to agree with the statement, perceiving sport and recreation to be actively encouraged in Australia, and to be more open and accessible than in other countries. One Indian-Japanese participant in Adelaide described, for example:

I think Australia does make sport quite accessible to everybody. It seems like from a young age you're encouraged, like the beach, the surfing. That's the image we have when we come here, all the surfing, the hiking, the soccer, the football, it's everywhere. (Devi, group 6)

Catarina, an older Italian woman in regional NSW agreed with the idea of sport as a level playing field, remarking:

We see the Olympics, we always see the Australian team, very big relative to a small population, and that gives you an idea what we are in this country, that sport is so available to everyone, it's just the way, it's just the facilities, it's just the mind of the people I think. (Group 12)

Camelia, a Romanian in her early thirties in regional NSW similarly perceived, ‘you feel like Australia welcomes you to take part in any sport activities...I feel welcome anywhere I go, I feel Australia is very open to every culture’ (group 10).

The Islamic Arabic-speaking women in regional Victoria also remarked that sport in Australia was a level playing field:

People in this country have their own wishes and freedom, nothing stops them from wanting to do what they want to. (Kasi, from Afghanistan, group 2)

The women aged over 50 in Western Sydney (groups 4 and 5) also felt that sport and recreation in Australia was an area of life that everybody can access and participate in equally. These two groups of women were adamant that sport and recreation was a ‘level playing field’ because they were all physically active and they came from diverse backgrounds: ‘look at all the nationalities we have here; all kinds’ (group 5). These women were recruited through a health promotion program which had an explicit commitment to ensuring recreation activities enabled CALD women to participate and build relationships across cultural divides. After reflection, some of the women acknowledged that it could be difficult to engage women, indicating that gender and cultural norms meant sport and recreation was not necessarily equally accessible to all. In

regional NSW, a Pacific Islander aged in her late teens for example felt sport was a level playing field socially, but there were financial barriers:

Socially it is a [level] playing field but in organised sport, there's a cost involved so financially some people aren't able to take part in organised sport, but at least socially, everyone's accepted and encouraged to participate. (Nyree, group 11)

Others, like Elene (a Sudanese-Australian aged in her early twenties who had grown up in Australia) felt that while migrants were not necessarily well catered for, sport was more of a level playing field for the second generation:

A lot of immigrants and refugees that are from Islamic cultures we do not cater for at all, like a lot of refugees from where my father's from [Sudan] the women they don't they actually like to leave the house particularly much, because a lot of language barriers and also because where they're from they're not used to doing things without their husbands company or they don't want to be uncovered in front of men and we don't cater for that. So I don't think there's a level playing field as far as that's concerned, but it's a bit of a different situation for their children, I think their children do have a level playing field. (Group 6)

Indeed, while women in the groups tended to agree that sport in Australia was (or could be) a level playing field, they all went on to identify an extensive range of barriers that they believed would shape experiences of sport and recreation activities amongst women from their cultures. The barriers that emerged from the study can be classified as follows:

**Socio-cultural barriers** (see section 7.2)

- Racism and discrimination
- Female physicality and dress
- Beauty and body image
- Gender roles and expectations
- Family responsibilities

**Access barriers** (see section 7.3)

- Language
- Facilities
- Transport

**Affective barriers** (see section 7.4)

- Culturally embedded priorities

**Resource barriers** (see section 7.5)

- Time

- Personal finances
- Organisational finances

**Physiological barriers** (see section 7.6)

- Health and age

**Interpersonal barriers** (see section 7.7)

- Confidence and interpersonal networks

## 7.2 Socio-cultural barriers

### Racism and discrimination

Although only a minority of the women reported experiencing racism and discrimination in sport and recreation, those who did were profoundly affected. Sadia, an African-Australian in her late teens had experienced racist exclusion in school sport:

In school if I played basketball, the girls wouldn't pass the ball. Why? Because I'm black. That is the racism that happens. They just wouldn't do it. That's why most black girls would just not play sport, unless we have a majority team ... When you play sport you want to feel part of a team you want to feel like you're contributing, but when you're excluded you don't feel like you're part of a team at all, especially basketball, it's team work. (Group 7)

Even when Sadia pursued opportunities outside of a team environment (at the gym) she felt her skin colour attracted attention and that other people had stereotypes about which kinds of sport people from African backgrounds should be doing:

You go to the gym and you're the only black person there and then everybody will just stop and stare, they won't do the exercises, just they focus on what you're doing ... I'm there sometimes thinking "Will you stop staring so I can do my stuff?" and I feel so uncomfortable and conscious that I'm thinking "Gee, why did I ever bother coming? I want to go back home". It's there, it's subtle, it's not that it's spoken to you. It's almost as if this is not your place ... [People expect Africans to] go and find your track and do your running or go and jump in a tree which all that stuff that African people do, that's what they think of, like basketball, or go and kick a soccer ball outside. (Group 7)

Like Sadia, Shikha an Indian woman in her late 20s, had also felt marginalised, noticing 'some sort of hesitation' on the part of white Australian women at a cricket club:

I've actually joined a club here, a cricket club. ... It was not racism but just the idea, the notion that you're constructed definitely and directly as "the other". And it's not that they've made a conscious decision that things should not be given to me, there was some sort of hesitation. The

hesitation came out more from the fact that they did not have diverse cultural experiences because all the other six girls were all white Australians, whatever that means, but I and my other friend we were the only two people who were - I am Indian, she is from Zimbabwe - an African from Zimbabwe. It's not that they totally discriminate against us but there was this thing, subtly, that they like to be among themselves, so we were at the periphery. (Group 7)

In regional Victoria, Iraqi women also described feeling public hostility in the current political climate. This compromised their safety and marginalised them from activities in the community:

I organised a walking group but especially when they talk about Islam on the media, we can't go outside, they call out "terrorist" ... I don't feel safe walking down the street. (Group 3)

Similarly, in Western Sydney, Amira reported some Lebanese-Muslim women felt uncomfortable in public, as a result of the media attention around religious leaders and the Cronulla riots. She appealed to women to get out from the house and mix with other nationalities:

There is a bundle of bad kids, they ruin our name. There are a few, the minority, but the good people they have to get out from the house and mix with the other nationalities to show there are good people around, not only the bad people. (Group 4)

However, only a minority of women in the groups described feeling marginalised by cultural stereotypes, or subject to racial discrimination. Carrie, a young woman from a Filipino background in Adelaide, for example responded:

I've never felt anything like that ever... ..Maybe because I was born here. But never at school, nothing like that. I guess it depends (group 7)

Similarly, for Linda, a Maltese-Australian:

Whatever activities we ever did, we were always accepted into whatever we wanted to do, if you're prepared to do it, we have always been accepted, so I haven't seen any problems. (Group 4)

### **Female physicality and dress**

Across the four study regions, women identified how culturally embedded notions of female physicality raise particular issues for their involvement in sport and recreation, with physical activity not seen as appropriate for women from some cultural backgrounds. Notions of modesty were strongest for (but not exclusive to) women from Muslim backgrounds. The Somali women (group 9), for example, felt they could not participate in many activities because of their need to adhere to cultural and religious standards of modesty. Similarly, the Afghan and Iraqi women in regional Victoria

described how physical activities, such as riding a bike, were not seen as appropriate for women:

I'm not allowed to cycle because my father don't like for girls to cycle, because my father always say "It's for boys not for girls" ... We are Muslim, and in Islam it's not allowed. (Kasi, group 3)

However, notions of female physicality presented barriers to participation for non-Muslim women as well. Shikha, a Hindu Indian woman in Adelaide, explained similar notions of modesty amongst Indian women:

In India swimming is not so much a part of most women's activities, even not for men, because it's more concerned with what parts of the body you can show and you cannot show ... some parts of the body are considered sacred or private or something, so I think that's why some of these outdoor activities where there is a lot of revealing is not encouraged either. (Shikha, Adelaide, group 7)

A similar theme emerged among Christian Pacific Islanders in regional NSW, for whom swimwear presented a barrier to participation. As Moana (a 40-44 year old Papua New Guinean woman from regional NSW) explained, 'It's our religion [Christianity], our values, to cover the body' (group 11).

The need to cover the body often clashed with the dress requirements of sporting organisations, making it difficult for some women to participate in mainstream sport and recreation facilities and organisations. Naja, who was born in Somalia but spent her high school years in Australia, found dress codes restricted the kinds of sports she did as a young person:

Like netball, they wear those tiny skirts! I was never allowed to do that because the skirts were too short and they wouldn't let you wear long clothes, and like golf it's actually written into the rules that your pants ... can't go below the knees..., which is the opposite than for us. Like it's the actually sports themselves sometimes, like that limits your choice to do the sport. (Group 9)

Alika, who like Naja had spent her teenage years in Australia, aspired to comply with cultural norms and to participate in mainstream activities:

They [parents] don't want us to go over the cultural norms ... Somali kids they want to do everything, but they also want to keep their identity (Alika, group 9)

Indeed, women like Alika and Naja explained negotiating ways to participate by adapting their dress to comply both with cultural norms and the norms of sporting activities (for example wearing tights or long sleeves underneath uniforms, and had done thorough research about the levels of privacy in various gyms. Other women also forged opportunities to participate despite cultural notions of female physicality, for example, by

wearing less revealing swimming costumes, seeking out appropriate facilities, playing in family spaces only, or avoiding activities (like soccer) where they could not control their level of privacy. Indeed, the Middle Eastern women in regional Victoria were keen to swim, and were determined that wearing long pants or shirts in the water would not preclude them from participating.

Modifying sports attire, such as wearing longer clothing or a ‘burkhini’ were recognised as options by some women in the study, however, many found these physically uncomfortable and potentially stigmatising. Amira (who preferred women-only time at the pool to swimming in long clothes) described how she adapted her dress for swimming but found it uncomfortable:

I’m covered too. I find it difficult. Not all the sports I can do, you see, just a few, because it’s a bit hard, like at swimming we go and it’s only for women. I go sometimes to one for everyone [men and women] but I have to wear a long one [gestures] and cover my head. It’s not comfortable. (Group 4)

Wearing the burkhini was not seen as a preferred option for swimming, with one Iraqi woman in regional Victoria, for example, explaining through a translator that this was ‘no good...we cover up all the time...want to feel free’ (group 3). On the basis that covering up could attract unwanted attention or stigma, Sadia felt African women in Australia would prefer women’s only swimming facilities or private time:

Most of the women can’t go to a public other place because they feel conscious of when they have to have their own special swimmers made for them which is different to other people, the t-shirt, fully covered in a way that allows them to swim. Other people stare, they can’t understand that concept. So ... they ... have private time when they go as a group and have their own swimming session, which I think is great. (Sadia, African-Australian, group 7)

Overall, the Muslim women in the groups preferred women-only settings to wearing modified uniforms like long swimming costumes or ‘burkhis’ or long pants, sleeves, and scarf for ‘dry’ sports. These were perceived as physically uncomfortable and potentially stigmatising (see Amira’s perspective in Figure 2), although they did allow Muslim women to participate. Choice in attire, combined with options to attend women’s only facilities (see section 8.2) would help CALD women to participate in sport.

**Figure 2**

**WOMEN ONLY AQUA EXERCISE**

Amira is a Lebanese-Australian aged in her sixties. She attends an aqua-exercise program for older women in Western Sydney.

I came to Australia forty two years ago. My background is I'm Lebanese, my Mum's Brazilian. My Dad's Lebanese. I'm married in Australia forty two years ago. I have four children. Three of them married. My daughter-in-law is Australian, the second one Italian, my son-in-law Lebanese. It's United Nations at my place [*laughs*] ... We love mixing with other cultures - all different cultures. Our religion doesn't stop us to mix from other cultures. We have in the pool Lebanese, Turkish, Syrian, Iraqi, Australian, Italian, Greek [women]. We're all like we come from one family. We're very very nice group ... We enjoy it a lot, the swimming time.

Two years ago I decided to go to Mecca to pray. Become Hajji. When you become Hajji you have to wear the hijab. And since then I start to wear hijab. And I'm not embarrassed or ashamed wearing it. But like my friend what she said, while you do the exercise when men are around, you have to wear the hijab, otherwise you do a sin against your religion ... With all women we have no problem, because when you do exercise you have to wear something comfortable, you have to take the veil off and uncover, and if men are round you don't feel comfortable. Like I did mention for when I go swimming sometimes I go when the pool is opened to everyone, I have to wear a longer costume, you know, and I don't feel comfortable. I have to wear the hijab. I can't do everything I want because the hijab is on me... ...when you cover you have to a little bit isolate yourself. Not from other culture. No, we love to mix with everyone. That's our religion, to mix with all religion, with all nationalities.

### **Beauty and body image**

As well as culturally embedded notions of female physicality, ideas about beauty and body image also shaped some of these women's participation in sport and recreation. This was strong amongst the Japanese women in the study. These women explained how Japanese women chose to perform some exercise to adhere to notions of beauty as slimness:

All the girls are very thin and skinny, I feel sort of like I have to be like everyone else, I have to be a skinny girl, so it's not really pressure on doing sport, just they have to keep slim and tiny, which means [we] have to do some exercise. (Sumi, group 8)

However, they also explained that Japanese women would choose to exercise only moderately, as being hot and sweaty and building up muscles would be considered unattractive. Notwithstanding, the women felt they were under less pressure in Australia to maintain these notions of beauty. Whereas self-consciousness about dress and body

image deterred Tamiko, for example, from attending the gym in Japan, she felt this was less of a problem in Australia. However she maintained her habit of exercising in private:

When I was in Japan I sometimes feel really high self-conscious, then I really didn't want to go to gym, it's public space wearing sports uniform to do exercise. That's why I always do that in house. It became part of my habit. I can go gym easily in Australia I have no self conscious thing at all but still do that in house because it's much convenience for me. (Group 8)

Indian women also made this point, perceiving there to be less pressure to worry about one's body image in Australia. Priyanka in western Sydney felt that:

Since I've come to Australia that [self-consciousness] has just faded out, I see people going for a walk any time of the day, they are wearing anything, they don't comment on anybody else because they're not bothered about how the other person looks...no one is conscious or bothered (group 1).

Radhika agreed, with respect to swimming:

Wearing the swimming costume or not being good at swimming doesn't really bother me here ... because no one's really looking at you. (Group 1)

However, unlike the Indian and Japanese women, some African women, and the Pacific Islander women in regional NSW felt more conscious of their body image in Australia, which made them feel less comfortable about participating. Sadia, from Sierra Leone, perceived that African women also felt pressure to participate more in physical activities in Australia in the hope of pursuing western notions of beauty. Yet they found exercising difficult because facilities made them feel uncomfortable or did not cater to their need for privacy from men:

Over there it's celebrated to be curvy, not like a stick figure. Curvy. That's what we believe is the typical woman is beautiful. It's flaunted, that's what we have. And then here they're told what you have is considered fat. Then it's a problem [finding somewhere to exercise] ... you go mainstream and then you feel out of place, or it's mostly men. (Group 7)

Arihi, a Tongan woman in her early thirties in regional NSW, described how she felt uncomfortable about her physique in Australia, especially in swimwear: 'It's just uncomfortable, you go outside, and see all those skinny things around you, you just don't feel comfortable' (group 11).

Interestingly, Michelle, from a Cook Islander and Scottish background, felt that notions of beauty and body image, which could make it uncomfortable to participate, were social rather than personal constructions, as they differed according to cultural context:

Here in Australia, I feel overweight because the western society here are very thin so they encourage that you should be a certain figure and if you're not, you're overweight. Whereas when I go to New Zealand I feel so skinny, I really do, because the majority of people are quite obese. It's the general body image of the community ... I don't think it's a personal thing, I think it's a society thing. (Group 11)

### **Gender roles and expectations**

Some women in the groups described how in their culture, women were expected to adhere to particular roles and participate in separate activities from men. In many cases, sport was not perceived as appropriate or as a priority for women. The Arabic-speaking women in regional Victoria described how sport was not considered something that women in their culture should do. Roza, an Iraqi in her early twenties, described:

We are Muslims, it's like mostly we have to be with ladies, like I can't play football with the men, it's difficult for me. (Group 2)

Kasi, an Afghan in her late teens also in regional Victoria, described how participating would go against her family expectations:

[They will say] what is wrong with you? ... See this girl, she's not good, she go for sport ... that's why my family don't allow us. (Group 2)

The Muslim women in the study were not alone in identifying strong gender roles as factors which could preclude them from participating in sport and recreation. Indeed, this theme was strong amongst the Indian women in the focus groups. Shikha, a young Indian woman in Adelaide, for example, described:

What seems to have carried on with the diaspora Indians is the old construction of women have to do only certain types of activity, and men have to do only certain type of activity. So, for example, most of the outdoor sport activity is cricket, because Indians are cricket mad and cricket crazy. In most cases men participate. We've never had a women's cricket team or anything (Group 7)

Sneha, an Indian woman in western Sydney also noticed gender roles were constructed around sport, remarking that, 'women are not encouraged like men in cricket...even in other sports, they are not encouraged as much' (group 1). Other Indian women commented on how sports were seen as less appropriate for girls as they reached adolescence, when family priorities tended to shift toward education and preparing for careers.

Gender roles and expectations also made it difficult for women from other cultures to participate. Carmina, from Italy described a similar sentiment:

Because you're a girl, it's not important for you to play sport, it's important for you to learn how to keep a house, how to cook, how to iron. (Group 12)

Like others, Devi, a Japanese-Indian woman in Adelaide found, 'women aren't really encouraged to do sports, they're more encouraged to get married and have babies and settle down' (group 6).

Indeed, marriage and having children could break women's patterns of participation in sport and recreation, with some ceasing involvement at this point due to time pressures:

When I was at school we did sport ... but when I was married I didn't practice basketball anymore ... I was studying and [had] children. I was too busy ... I think most people who do sport don't have children, they don't work maybe full-time, they don't study ... it's very hard. (Layla, group 12)

### **Family responsibilities**

Culturally embedded gender roles underpin an unequal distribution of family responsibilities, which were identified by women in the groups as reasons for a lack of leisure time and pervasive barriers to participation in sport and recreation. Indeed, family responsibilities emerged as major barriers by women in the study. Michelle, a Pacific Islander from regional NSW described how the unequal burden of childcare and household responsibilities made it easier for men than women to participate in activities:

More is taken up on the mother than on the father. Whereas when the father comes home, he goes to gym, no big deal about that, he doesn't need to think about dinner or anything like that, whereas the mother has to consider everything, who's looking after my child, who's got dinner? (Group 11)

Tasleem, in Adelaide, described how caring for others constrained her leisure time, causing her to continue to defer her gym membership:

I used to love going to the gym and doing exercise and walking on a regular basis. Now with the children and a family it's a bit hard to get out but I try as much as possible. At least once a week, otherwise I'd feel very very bad. But it just makes it difficult with a family to get out as often, to find the facilities with a crèche and things like that and I've got a membership that I've deferred for two years in a row [laughs]. (Group 6)

Habiba, from Eritrea, also found family responsibilities to compound new arrivals' barriers to participating:

Some of the newcomers, they don't even know how to start, some of them are young mothers, they've got kids and things, they do want to

mix in sport or whatever, they want to participate but they have restrictions, they've got to look after kids. (Group 6)

It was not only caring for one's own family that presented barriers to participation. The older CALD women in western Sydney had not tended to participate in sport and recreation as adults until after their children had left home, as childrearing was their first priority. Yet later in life, caring for grandchildren also constrained their leisure time. Rashida explained these constraints:

When we were young we used to look after the children and housework. When we grow up we have to look after the grandchildren. (Group 4)

### **GENDER ROLES, FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES AND SPORT**

Sadia is a young African-Australian. She describes how gender roles shape women's patterns of participation in sport in her culture:

Over there it's a thing of we should cook, we should clean. It was never "Oh, exercise is actually good for your health" ... The girls are encouraged to be in the kitchen. Start learning how to be a woman; it's your role as a wife in the future, start practicing that. Kicking a ball outside, that has no benefit to you or tell you what to do with your husband ... We didn't play soccer, because if you did it it's like, "Oh you want to be a tom boy", your parents would think, "Oh dear, my girl is losing her womanhood" they're always putting you into a category, the girl does girl stuff, the boy does boy stuff. If you cross over, it became an issue.

Society is made in such a way we shouldn't think about yourself, we should be self-less, give give give give never ask for anything in return. That is the problem. So exercise – how come women don't exercise? How can you exercise? Exercise is for yourself, it makes you feel good. I feel really good when I exercise for myself, it has nothing to do with other people. But how can you do that? You feel selfish. Your kid might need feeding, your husband might need food. Perhaps he should learn how to cook! At the end of the day I feel sorry for our parents. Women are still not equal to men. Anybody says different that's crap. They're still not equal.

## **7.3 Access**

### **Language**

English language skills were perceived as major barriers for CALD women, especially for those who had not been in Australia for long, such as the Muslim women in regional Victoria, and the Somali women in Adelaide. Language proficiency shaped women's opportunities to find out about, access and participate in sport and recreation activities, and poor English skills could leave women socially isolated and uninformed.

English skills were seen as essential for participating in organised sport or mainstream fitness classes, as instruction was almost always in English. Amira (group 4) perceived that language difficulties could cause some women to become insular, and made it

difficult to mix with people outside their cultural group, limiting their access to activities. Kagami, a Japanese participant aged in her twenties found language barriers made it hard to approach sporting clubs when she first arrived in Australia:

I was still young and didn't have a lot of English level; it was hard to communicate with other people so I would stay back and not join a club. (Group 8)

Older CALD women who arrived in the post-war period and who had not had access to English lessons also found language to be a barrier. Maria, for example, began working in Australia in the 1950s and did not have access to English tuition:

It wasn't easy to join in. Not at all. Because of the different culture. You work in a factory and you have your friend next to you and you talk Italian. We were only here six months. The women packing said "Speak English", but we only had six words between us. We couldn't really integrate. There was no encouragement. There wasn't any encouragement from the government. Not even to teach English. (Group 5)

Learning English profoundly changed these women's lives, making it easier to mix, and improving awareness of the resources available in the community, and their opportunities to participate. Improving English skills helped women to make friends who could then facilitate access to sport and recreation. Maria explained that as she became proficient in English, friends from her workplace began to invite her to play sport: 'My work friends said to play tennis and I did because I love sport' (group 5).

Importantly however, language skills were not the only factors seen to contribute to a lack of information about sport and recreation activities. Women on shorter term visits to Australia were perceived as more likely to be insular and less likely to actively seek out information about opportunities. Marion explained:

I find many European women coming to Australia maybe for shorter term that they don't really integrate with the Australians and therefore they stay together in a smaller group of other Europeans and often they are not aware of available community sports and venues and opportunities, so they just don't know what's out there (group 7)

Notwithstanding, there was consensus that information was easier to access for those speaking English, and those who had grown up in Australia:

if we were born and brought up here ... we would have a lot more information as to who to contact, where to go, what to look for (Priyanka, 30-34 year old Indian from urban NSW).

## Facilities

The availability of safe, comfortable and culturally appropriate sport and recreation facilities were identified as important influences on participation. The women wanted facilities to be safe, in good condition, and easy to access. However, the most important issue was access to women-only exercise spaces, and private change room areas (see Figure 3). This theme was most important for the Muslim women in the study, who required privacy from men. Indeed, the Somali women explained how they could participate in sport and recreation activities, but not with men around, while Eritrean women in Adelaide described difficulties in finding an appropriately private venue in which to hold an exercise group for women from their community.

**Figure 3**

**PRIVATE CHANGE ROOMS**

'My name is Naja and I grew up in Australia, I came here when I was seven. I'm Somalian and I'm a Muslim. I participated in many organised sports but then around about when I was seventeen I stopped because – not because I didn't want to be doing it, but because the time issues like I'm studying, but also, like, there not being anything. Like there's a boys soccer team in my community but no girls team. It's not that girls don't want to, it's just that it's not there.

I like running along the beach and walking, I walk most days. And just recently I joined a women's only gym, but I'm still uncomfortable about the changing rooms, like they don't have enclosed spaces where you can change privately - everyone can come in, so it's very uncomfortable.

It's really good because it's all women so you feel really comfortable, you know you don't have to wear hijab, you can wear clothes that keep you cool during the workout but the change rooms are still an issue for me. We change in the toilets, and then it's like aren't we supposed to be changing in the change rooms? It's totally open it's just benches and lockers. There's nowhere for you to actually go into and change. And they should do that. Then they would attract every single type of woman.'

Muslim women in regional Victoria felt sport and recreation activities could offer opportunities to strengthen identity and forge a sense of belonging, but they required access to culturally appropriate facilities. One Iraqi woman described (through a translator):

We would like to have any big hall and we will do any activity ... we just want to do [physical activities] with [people in the] community and to see each other to achieve something for ourself [sic] and feel important. (Group 3)

Private swimming facilities were particularly difficult to find, with women in regional Victoria describing recently losing their women-only swimming time, as facilities no longer offered it, and those in western Sydney losing access due to a lack of transport. However, where pools did restrict access to ensure a women-only environment for certain periods (usually only 1-2 hours a week), the women greatly appreciated the opportunity. Amira (group 4) observed that more women used her pool during women-only time than

during mixed times. Other women also identified opportunities for pools to use women-only time to expand their customer-base. Women-only swimming time was also important for water safety. For an Afghan woman in western Sydney for example, having access to a learn-to-swim program for women provided her with the opportunity to be able to attend swimming classes:

They shut the pool for women; only women. ... I feel very good because [there are] only women. (Farishta, group 5)

Similarly, an older Syrian woman who has a physical disability attended a women's only swimming group, which was a positive experience:

I don't want men to look at me. I was so happy, I was like a baby. I enjoyed myself. (Munira, Group 5)

Munira's experience demonstrates that women-only swimming times are also beneficial for women for other reasons besides religion.

Some of the women found that although they appreciated opportunities to swim in a women-only environment, the times available were inadequate, with one Iraqi woman in regional Victoria describing (through a translator):

Because of Islam, our choices are limited, so it would be good if the pool was open 2-3 days a week, not just one day a week ... even though we are busy with our children, we will arrange ourselves if 3 days per week, 2 hours a day, not just one day a week. (Group 3).

Moreover, the standards of privacy at available facilities were not always culturally appropriate, with some women feeling uncomfortable. Roza, for example, commented that the 'curtains at the pool weren't secret enough' (group 2). In Adelaide, Naja was deterred from attending a women's only gym because the change rooms were not private enough:

It's weird if people are like looking at you and stuff in the gym, and then also in the changing rooms it's weird, because then you've got to change in front of people ... I just feel awkward changing in front of people. It would be good if they had change rooms like most of the shops have separate change rooms (group 9).

Culturally inappropriate facilities pushed CALD women into non-organised, informal physical activities, like walking. Roza in regional Victoria (group 2) walks for exercise because of a lack of women-only teams and activities. Similarly, Rashida perceived her Muslim friends in western Sydney to walk instead of participate in organised activities.

As for my religion, there is a few friends I know they like to attend activities and things. But if they wear a scarf and they find it's a man and woman [joint activity] y'know they don't attend because of that. So they like to attend where it's woman only environment. And most of

them they find it difficult to find these places or they don't know if there is something. So what they do is they walk in the morning sometimes. (Group 4)

Parveen, a Pakistani woman in Adelaide also described how in the absence of appropriate community facilities, Muslim women would swim privately:

Because we are Muslim we do not like the women to swim. But I think most women swim in their homes. Some women have a swimming pool at their home so they can swim, but not in public or as an organised game. (Group 7)

Greater access to gender segregated opportunities would enable these women to participate in formal, organised, group activities, providing them with the social as well as health benefits of sport and recreation. Women in group 4 and 5, however, pointed out that gender segregation should not mean culturally segregated opportunities. Amira was adamant:

It doesn't mean we want to be isolated from other cultures. That's most important ... when we go to the pool, there is mixed, all nationalities, all religions, but because it's for only women, for women-only, they feel everyone is comfortable ... All different religions, different backgrounds you know, and they feel more comfortable, not only for the Muslim people that want cover. (Group 4)

Participating alongside women from different cultural backgrounds was something that Linda (also in group 4) felt made the experience enjoyable. Other women who were not Muslims also preferred women-only time. Devi, for example, expressed a preference for women-only facilities, commenting, 'you don't want the whole world to be looking into you when you're practicing' (group 6) and Elene, who described how at her gym:

At any given time there'll be about eight or nine people at this massive window watching, and so many women feel self conscious. And it's just, I'd feel so much better about it if it wasn't like this. (Group 6)

## **Transport**

Public transport to and from facilities, or having facilities close to home, was important to how the women could access sport and recreation opportunities. For example, Farishta, an older Afghan woman in group 5 explained how she had participated in physical recreation for the first time in Australia by joining a women's only swimming program in western Sydney. After completing a six-month program, Farishta could no longer access the pool, as the bus service did not continue after the swimming program. The lack of public transport interrupted her participation, and that of other women transitioning into a more active lifestyle in Australia, as those without access to cars could not attend.

Transport was particularly important issue amongst the Japanese women in the study. For Sumi (group 8) not having a car meant she could not attend golf, as courses tended to be

outside the city, while Naoko perceived that although she (and other Japanese women studying in Australia) wanted to participate, they usually had the added hurdle of having to find somebody with a car to take them.

Transport was also important to CALD women's capacity to take their children to sporting activities. The Somalian women, for example, said their children liked sports but that they didn't have facilities nearby or a car to drive to them.

Safety was also entwined with transport for some of the women. Tam described her experience of travelling to training:

They'd switch the lights off as soon as training was over, and I'd have to walk through the parklands to catch a bus, and I mean I did martial arts when I was a kid so I can look after myself but it was still really scary walking through the park in the dark about 8, 9 o'clock in winter by yourself. Everyone else would be picked up by their parents and I'd have to catch two buses. (Group 6)

#### **7.4 Affective barriers**

Some of the women in the study described how they did not wish to participate in sport and recreation, or that these activities were low priorities for women in their culture. Others disliked specific aspects of sport, such as competition. In part, these affective barriers related to culturally embedded priorities.

##### **Culturally embedded priorities**

The women recognised their preferences and priorities were embedded in cultural practices and expectations, so were not a simple matter of not wanting to participate. Nidhi captured differences in the way sport is perceived in India compared with Australia, where she described it as a 'way of life':

It is not a necessity of life ... Sports is a luxury; it is not a way of life. There is a different way of looking at things, in Australia you know... back home it's like you're wasting your time. (Group 1)

Radhika explained that in Indian culture

We don't really give value to sports ... myself and my entire family has been very socially active [but] sports has never really been developed as an interest right from the childhood whereas all these other activities were ... sport really comes at the bottom of our list of priorities. (Group 1)

She went on to explain how sport was seen as a rebellious rather than mainstream activity:

Sports was considered to be a rebellious thing, especially the adolescent if they want to be a sports person in future ... you have to accept what

your parents say therefore very few people could really manage to pursue what they want to. (Group 1)

Women from Asian backgrounds explained how education and other leisure activities, such as music, tended to take precedence over sport. Carrie, for example, explained that:

Filipinos or I don't know, Asian, they tend to think it's education and musical instruments are more important than sport sort of thing. Sport is not a focus. (Group 7)

Similarly, Min, a young Korean woman explained that her culture emphasised participation in education rather than sport

I didn't do many sports when I was young because in our culture we don't really have time to play sports. Even when I was young, we just go to school and when we finish school we go to private institute to study other things. So basically we don't have time to play sports. ... so I didn't do any sports when I was young, I just played something like ping pong for one hour or just play a game, video or computer game but not really sport. (Group 7)

Some of the women also perceived that those who did not grow up in Australia would consider sport to be a low priority while they were settling in:

Initially when you migrate to a country, first few years, you're probably struggling to establish yourself, get a house, get a job, keep your career, all that, so initially your focus is not on going for recreational activities at all, and after a while you get so involved in your own life that you hardly think about these things, plus you're not brought up to think that that's one of your needs as well... For most of us, from an Indian background, sports hasn't been given as much importance ... you don't think that you're missing or lacking anything ... it's just the way. (Priyanka, group 1)

## **7.5 Resource barriers**

### **Time**

For women in the focus groups, time was a major barrier to participating in sport and recreation. A common difficulty was a shortage of time, given the women's family and work commitments. Some women also found that organised sport activities were not offered at times that were convenient to them.

#### *A shortage of time*

The women explained how work, education and women's unequal share of family responsibilities limited the amount of personal time available. Priyanka, an Indian woman aged in her early 30s, described that the:

Problem you face are the time restrictions because of the family responsibility and the culture in the family as well. Like you're not given your time, there's no your-time, it's all family-time, all the time, you come right at the bottom ..., so that makes it just impossible, out of question for you to sort of go [and play sport]. (Group 1)

Those with young children found caring responsibilities severely limited their time:

I have a baby now... I'm too busy with him, especially now since I'm studying. When I go my home, I have to look after him and after the house, so before I had more time. (Roza, Iraqi group 2)

Time pressures established in early adulthood appeared to eclipse patterns of participation established during childhood, or could cause some to participate in individual or informal recreation activities rather than team sports. Elene, for example, found it easier to attend the gym than play team sports due to her time pressures:

When I was younger I used to play every sport under the sun and then stopped towards the end of high school and then didn't really exercise for about four or five years and started again with a gym membership. I miss playing team sports but with uni and work it's really hard to find time to be part of a team. (Group 6)

While time pressures appeared less of an issue amongst the older women in the study, some, like Carmina, an Italian woman in her 50s, also found that caring responsibilities and housework restricted the time available for sport and recreation:

We don't have the time! That is the main problem... I have grandchildren, I have my daughter, and by the time I help her, and do my housework, and do whatever other bits I have to do, the week's gone! (Group 12)

#### *Inconvenient opening times*

A heavy domestic load, combined with inconvenient gym opening hours, underpinned Angela's choice to walk or run in her own time:

I have to work from 9 to 5 which then means I will get home at 5, then I have to cook, clean, dinner, so at night it [the gym] is not open, or early in the morning you have to do breakfast, so conclusion, you can't do it, that's why for me it works to go walking or running in my time, when I have the time. (Group 10)

Indeed, the opening hours of gyms were a common source of frustration. As Vailea described:

Girls-only gyms are only open till 8 or 9 and all other gyms are open till later ... and that's the time you're like putting the children to sleep you

know, getting dinner ready, so it's just not a really good time to go.  
(Group 11)

The timing of activities other than gyms were also seen as inconvenient or culturally inappropriate, such as activities on the Sabbath, or if time pressures meant sport activities would be too rushed, which made them less enjoyable:

These [sporting] clubs ... the times also don't suit me ... working full time ... it's all in a rush ... I don't want to go. (Nidhi, group 1)

### **Personal financial barriers**

As well as time pressures, the women also identified financial barriers to participating in sport and recreation. Women from wealthy countries like Japan and Switzerland however, found sporting activities in Australia to be less costly. As Toshi explained:

I noticed playing golf is much cheaper here and tennis or swimming, anything, it's more like a part of life here and in Japan maybe - where I lived you have to spend quite a lot of money to join some club or start any sport. (Group 8)

However, for most of the women, the cost of sport and recreation activities presented barriers to their participation. The cost pressures could be felt most acutely immediately after migrating. Reflecting on the time when she was settling into Australia, Deepti in western Sydney, explained how sport was a low priority during this phase, because of the cost:

Sport was a luxury; we had so many other priorities in life that money was just hand to mouth, managing daily expenses, so we couldn't even think about going to clubs or buying expensive outfits. (Group 1)

However, other women who had grown up in Australia or had been here a while also found the costs prohibitive. Organised activities, such as tennis, golf or netball, could be particularly expensive to participate in, especially for those competing at representative levels. As Elene, a Sudanese-Australian and former state level tennis player explained:

I'd love to get back into tennis and I've wanted to for a couple of years. I just can't afford it. I really cannot afford it. Partly because it would mean I'd have to miss probably one shift a week at work, which isn't that much, but then when you look at having to buy clothes to wear, tennis rackets, club membership, petrol to get there, I just can't afford it ... I used to play state and pennant; if I was going to do it I'd wanna be trying to get back to near that level, which would also require private coaching and things like that, which is a huge expense.

Vailea, in her early twenties was also frustrated with the costs of participating in team sports in regional NSW:

Like netball it's \$100 just to register, then every game you have to play \$15 so you know it all adds up. (Group 11)

For the older women in western Sydney, having access to affordable physical recreation activities provided by a non-profit organisation was critical to their participation. While the women recognised their subsidised activities gave them value for money, they agreed that the cost of attending mainstream facilities would be prohibitive. Linda explained that as a retired person, costs were particularly important to participation:

They haven't got the finances that a working person has, so I think finances would be a good help. ... Personally speaking I couldn't afford to go to a gym. So this is something that finance would have a lot to do with (group 4).

Indeed, another older woman, Allegra, in regional NSW, found attending a gym to present a heavy financial burden:

I went to gym almost every day of the week, but so expensive, but I would love to go [again] ... the financial burden...that's why I'm not going ... I believe it's important for my health. (Group 12)

Costs were also enhanced for women in large families, and for women with childcare responsibilities. One Arabic-speaking woman from regional Victoria explained, through a translator, the impact of rising costs of attendance:

At the beginning it (the pool) was just \$2 or \$3 but then extra costs started coming, and so now it's \$7...this is a problem when you have a big family. (Group 3)

For those requiring childcare while they participated, costs could be prohibitive. As Michelle (40-44 years old, Pacific Islander from regional NSW) said:

I reckon (childcare) that's another cost too though, I know it would be great to have that facility, but then the person that participates they have a cost too. (Group 11)

Cost barriers could also push women into informal, individual activities, like walking, or playing with friends or family, rather than participating with other women in their community. Josephine, an older Filipino woman in regional NSW explained:

Our friends ... find it expensive for the whole family to go to tenpin bowling, so we started playing table tennis in our garage or in the back of houses of our families you know, every Friday night we have a group and we have sports ... maybe because the standard of living now, you know, everyday things we need is expensive we don't have any more spare money to play. (Group 10)

Tamiko, who had come to Australia to study, also exercised on her own at home when she could not afford to attend formal activities:

After I finished my university I didn't really have any excess money to pay for gym. So I did exercise in the house watching DVDs – trying to do that actually two or three times in the week and I kept continue that.  
(Group 8)

However, while there were opportunities to take part in less costly or even free sport and recreation activities like walking, jogging, exercising at home or playing with friends, costs precluded many of the women from participating in the organised and team based activities which they preferred. Financial barriers thus could exclude CALD women from sport, cause them to reduce their participation, or cause them to change the way they participated, restricting some to unorganised activities in informal settings, like walking or exercising at home alone.

### **Organisational financial barriers**

Women's lack of money for sport and recreation gives rise to resource problems for women's sporting organisations. A lack of money was seen to prevent women's sporting organisations from advertising to attract new members, or from providing a range of social activities for club members. Nadia, a young Lebanese-Australian in Adelaide, for example, described how her women's soccer club tended to be less well resourced than men's clubs, which she felt was unfair:

One thing I've noticed is an inequality for example our soccer club last year the women's team didn't have a website, didn't do any of the club things, didn't have any real support. (Group 7)

A shortage of resources, especially for promoting opportunities to women, would compound barriers to CALD women's participation in sport and recreation, and a lack of money for social activities would make it more difficult for women's organisations to engage and retain members. Linked to this were inequalities in the media attention and sponsorship provided to women's sporting organisations. Indeed, women in the study described how men's sporting organisations and achievements receive more publicity as well as money:

[We] never really see ladies on TV doing sport, they always put the men first, because they think it's like our job to stay at home or whatever. (Sefina, group 10)

Michelle, in regional NSW also noticed this disparity, in terms of pay for professional sportspeople:

The guys get paid and the girls don't, even though the girls are just as good as the guys. So I think for guys that's an incentive for them to continue on, so I see the males are more encouraged whereas the poor ladies, well they still have to pay for their own way. (Group 11)

## 7.6 Physiological barriers

### Health and age

Physiological barriers to participation were also found to impede participation for some women in the study. These barriers, related to health and age, were most profound for the older women, whose patterns of participation were affected by accidents and injuries as well as age-related problems like arthritis. Gentle exercise, which allowed these women to work at their own pace, helped to facilitate their inclusion.

For others, health and age-related barriers were largely about perceptions. Sufia, a Somalian woman in her late 30s, felt she was too old to learn to swim (group 9), and Aanya, an Eritrean in her early forties (group 7) also considered it might be too late to learn. Those who had not participated in sports before were more likely to perceive activities as physically too challenging. As Sadia, an African-Australian described:

Someone who has never played any kind of sport, put them in a field, it would be a strain on the body, that is something that would stop them, they don't know how to play, their body's not really up to that. (Group 7)

Tamiko felt Australian women were physically larger and more experienced when it came to sport, so Japanese women would require training or physical preparation before joining an organised activity:

Australians are a lot more bigger and taller and they have a lot more experience in participating in sports than other common Japanese women I guess. So sometimes I feel I need to prepare to join that. It doesn't mean the door is closed or anything, but just I feel ... I need to be a little bit better or more physically stronger. (Group 8)

## 7.7 Interpersonal barriers

Other barriers related to CALD women's interpersonal networks and their confidence to engage in sport and recreation activities. Some women lacked confidence to participate as they didn't know other people involved in particular activities, or did not know what to expect. Sumi explained:

I'm just scared to start the class because I don't know how many beginners in the club and who can help me. Probably I'm the only person who's starting this [and] I'd be embarrassed to do it. (Group 8)

A perceived lack of skill could also impede some women from participating, as Tanya described:

I'd love to swim so effortlessly like most Australians do, but one of things that stops me is, "What are all these whites going to think of

me?” This dumb Indian just thrashing about. I always think I’m so terrible at swimming, and they’re all so fantastic, I don’t want to make a fool of myself. (Group 1)

Attending activities with a friend could help CALD women to overcome their lack of confidence. Having a friend or acquaintance involved also gave women access to information about sport and recreation opportunities, and encouragement to participate. Georgia, an older Greek woman in western Sydney described how she became involved through her Greek friends:

We were part of a Greek group and one of the ladies came to visit and said, “Why don’t you come and do gentle aerobics?” It took me 2 or 3 months. She said, “Come and have a look”. Now I’m running a group. (Group 5)

#### Figure 4

### Joining new environments

Tamiko is a Japanese woman in her late thirties who came to Australia to study about four years ago. She saw shyness to be a cultural trait, which underpinned her preference to exercise privately:

Many Japanese are shy and many have some sort of idea [they] do not want to stick out from anything. ... It somehow prevents them from joining new environment like sports ... When I was in Japan I sometimes feel really highly self-conscious, then I really didn’t want to go to gym, it’s public space wearing sports uniforms to do exercise. That’s why I always do that in house. It became part of my habit. I can go to the gym easily in Australia, I have no self conscious thing at all but I still do that in the house because it’s more convenient for me. But sometimes it prevented me from going to the gym in Japan.

Tamiko felt less self conscious in Australia than in Japan, but it was still difficult to make initial contact with sporting clubs. She found it easier to join the gym because she knew some people there:

I was a student when I joined the gym [for] the first time in Australia so I had a lot less pressure to go to a new environment because I knew some people from my class. ... You feel culturally stranger yourself in there. The environment is not so friendly, you do eventually feel it’s really good and to be there; it’s fun, but always the first time it’s really difficult.

Sadia observed that groups were particularly important for women in her community:

Every time there’s an activity the women always go as a bunch, that’s it, it’s like all the women going together as one, united, they have each other to rely on, you know, laugh together if someone makes a mistake. One person would not go there, they would be like no way, forget it ...

they just think they're going to be rejected, so everything they have to go as a group. (Group 7)

Friends' attendance was also important to the women's participation. Naja, a Somali woman in her late teens, describes how knowing other young women would be there would facilitate the participation of others:

Because one group of girls don't go another group decide not to go, then none of the girls want to be there because there's only going to be one or two girls there ... so they [the sporting clubs] don't set up a girls' team. (Group 9)

## 8 Strategies to Support CALD Women

After discussing the range of socio-cultural, access, affective, physiological and interpersonal barriers to their participation in sport and recreation, the women were invited to discuss what could be done by sporting organisations, governments and community leaders to overcome these barriers. The women identified the provision of information about activities and facilities to be important, along with expanding access to culturally appropriate facilities, and supporting low cost activities.

### 8.1 Information and advertising

The women in the study felt that providing information to CALD women about activities and facilities would help CALD women to participate. Tam, for example, felt strongly that governments should ‘reach out’ to facilitate CALD women’s participation:

There should be some sort of reaching out on the part of the government so they know they are accepted and they know there is assistance for them, there are programs for them, like the soccer program ... you can’t just expect people to integrate, you need to let them know they are accepted. Like there are all these sports and all these recreational activities available. (Group 6)

#### What to communicate

In particular, the women recommended that sporting organisations and government agencies provide information that portrays sport as culturally diverse and welcoming; that reinforces the health benefits of exercise; and that explains what participating in sport involves.

Tanya for example, recommended that an advertising campaign promote the message that sport is diverse, and that ‘for everyone, everyone’s welcome, there’s all sorts of people doing this’ (group 1). Sadia also believed that promoting sporting organisations as multicultural would establish role models and encourage CALD women to participate:

That might be something [that] make this woman feel comfortable in coming – there’s somebody who actually looks like me. That has always been something that has encouraged, especially people from multicultural backgrounds, having someone who looks like you, it’s something that just attracts you, and oh, I can refer to them if I need any help or assistance, or we can speak the same language or they’ll understand me or whatever difficulties I have. (Group 7)

Another woman from an African background (Naja, group 9) also described a need to show multicultural role models:

Like for Aboriginal kids it was great role modelling that Cathy Freeman did. And there were heaps of kids that want to do running and football. I don’t think there’s any Somali women doing stuff now but there’s lots

of Muslim women who are great role models that keep their culture, they keep their religion strong but also they participate in sport and enjoy it.

The Japanese women also felt that seeing role models, and knowing that sports organisations were multicultural would help encourage them to participate:

It's not necessary to have a Japanese worker but if that sports organisation has a really multicultural, if they already have different backgrounds of people doing something together you'd probably feel it's more easy to join in. (Sumi, group 8)

### **MAKING DIVERSITY IN SPORT VISIBLE**

Tanya, aged in her early thirties, is an Indian permanent resident, who arrived in Australia when she was 23 years old. She is a single parent working part time, and exercises on most days. For her, publicly portraying the cultural diversity of women in sport is important.

"The image of sport here is the bronzed blonde Australian...even though no one says you have to be like that overtly to participate, I think subliminally it kind of affects me, like I'm not the blonde bronzed Australian, I'm not going to fit in... if there are people doing it that you don't identify with, it's always a prohibiting factor. You always think, "I won't fit in", or "I don't know the rules" ... I have no clue what the difference is between AFL and NRL! I'd love to go and cheer at these games. "

"At the moment, you look at sport, on the television, Australian sport, it's so white, not that there's anything wrong with whites but imagine if ... migrants from all over the world living here [were] actually participating, it would be so much more vibrant. And it would just like encourage-like if I saw some Indians playing touch footy; I'd love to go join them. At the moment it's like a white thing; I can't join them; I don't know what to do; I don't know the rules. Even the advertisements like Sydney Olympic Park for the Aquatic Centre, big billboards saying "Come and play" have blonde kids and blonde women. ... It's just the whole image that sport has in the media, look at the Australian Olympic team, it's not representative at all of the cultural diversity in this country ... We don't have any images to relate to; we don't have any mirrors to see ourselves. "

Promoting the health benefits of sport was identified by older women, given their health needs, and by women from African backgrounds, who may not previously have heard messages about the importance of exercise to one's health. Sadia explained this:

What I know from women from my culture exercise is not really something they should do. If it was advertised as something as part of health, being healthy, in western societies, really they should eat healthy, you should exercise. Over there it's a thing of we should cook, we should clean. It was never 'oh, exercise is actually good for your

health'.... ..Exercise is just something that women or even young girls I know don't think it's necessary. (Group 7)

Interestingly, the Muslim women in regional Victoria identified a need to inform men from their culture about the importance of sport and recreation for women's health, as they believed this would translate into encouragement and support. African women also identified a need for information about what they (and their families) should expect of sporting activities, and what would be expected of them, as participants. The two young Somali women in group 9, who were well rehearsed in adapting sporting dress codes to fit their need for modesty saw a need for education that this is possible, suggesting:

Education to Somalis about what they can have. Like they can cover up, Somali girls can cover up. They don't have to say oh we can't do it... ..you can outline the dress code, that you can wear covered clothing and ...they can change beforehand or there'll be adequate change-rooms. (Naja, group 9)

And showing that

They can wear pants but it doesn't necessarily have to be all pants, like they can wear tights underneath shorts, like long shorts and or the skirts could be longer- they could even wear different ones. (Alika, group 9)

Sadia also believed that African women and their families would require detailed information about what participating in sport and recreation involves, especially for young people:

African parents always want to know who is going to be there, who is going to be heading the program for their kids, ... if it's gonna be safe, whether there are other alien - what we call other people - there. ... They want to know the specific age group it's targeting, so they know ok this kids going to be with their age peers or they going to be with adults ... whether it's close to the house, so they can get home safe, if they have to pick them up. They have a lot of factors ... and parents have to look at that before they can actually agree, "Yes, my child can do this activity". ... It's just cultural issues come into play especially young girls involved in activities; there's just so many limitations.

### **How to communicate**

Many of the women recommended promoting activities using multicultural media, such as local radio, newspapers, leaving pamphlets or posters in shops in multicultural areas, and in educational institutions, and women's health and childcare centres. Advertising campaigns were considered to be good ways of increasing the participation of CALD women in sport. Those involved with organisations already doing good work in engaging CALD women were seen to need some extra funding for advertising and promotions.

Some women suggested that information about all the sport and recreation opportunities in a local area be compiled, translated and distributed to households. However, others felt strongly that information in the form of booklets or pamphlets would be disregarded. The Muslim women in regional Victoria, for example, felt that discussion groups and word of mouth were the best way to communicate, and that booklets or pamphlets would only be ‘thrown out’ or ‘laughed at’; ‘talking is better...otherwise they will say ‘rubbish’ to the information’ (Kasi, group 2). Others considered word of mouth, and ‘bring a friend’ days as more effective ways to engage CALD women.

Other suggestions were to direct information through organisations like Migrant Resource Centres or through community leaders or existing committee structures, with one idea being to have women visit community organisations to talk about sport and recreation opportunities and benefits (Ping, group 4). As Sadia described:

Just go through their committee and say okay, here is you know, how many dollars, organise a group that your women can do, or consult with them... ..Go straight to women, ask them what they want target them, that’s it, you get them participating.

If information was presented in written form, the women pointed out the need for it to be provided in community languages – including language groups with small populations. Tamiko (group 8) for example perceived a need for more information in Japanese:

I think there are some information shortages for Japanese women living in Australia. Mostly because [of] language. ...there is information available but we can’t get it... ..it’s not fair. Sometimes I feel I can see the Vietnamese and Chinese and the Indian, and so many languages, everything but Japanese. There’s nothing. ...If you can get that information in Japanese I think it [would] encourage a lot more Japanese women to join.

The Japanese women also felt that obtaining information from workers in sport and recreation organisations in Japanese would encourage them to attend, so they would like information about whether workers or volunteers in various organisations could speak Japanese, or as Suki pointed out:

if I call them and then somebody can speak Japanese, I feel [it’s] more easy to go there (group 8)

An African woman (group 6) also pointed out that information about sport and recreation opportunities in Australia could be provided along with information about housing and Centrelink payments as part of settlement programs. Others also pointed out that children were important sources of information for parents. Afia and Zakia’s children, for example, encouraged them to be more active and taught them how to exercise, and promoted messages about health to her mother:

I have a small girl, she’s four years, she’s very serious, she tells me mummy everytime you force me to eat rich food I’m going to become

like you. I want to know how to run. [laughter] And when we stop when we are hot, she tells me I'm going to leave you, leave you behind because you don't know how to run. You have to try. You have to run with me. Now everytime they help me with some sports. Together with Zakia we go to the park maybe twice a week with the kids mainly and they teach us, how to run, how to do exercises (Afia, group 6).

Importantly however, the women's perspectives suggest that providing information and advertising, especially in traditional written forms, would be unlikely, on their own, to engage CALD women in sport and recreation. Many of those, especially in the older age groups, were initially hesitant about beginning activities, and needed to be encouraged over time to attend.

### **ENGAGING OLDER WOMEN**

I was a child in Mussolini time. It was greatly encouraged for all children to be in gymnastics. Later on in a refugee camp people used to organise themselves, like soccer. We liked to do something to move.

It wasn't easy to join in [when I came to Australia]. ... Because of the different culture [and] we only had 6 [English] words between us. We couldn't really integrate. There was no encouragement.

By learning the language you find out about things. You know what is available. Then you see the difference in this country to men and women to my country. The women can do more. ... Then you meet friend and they say come and do bowling with me; come and play tennis. My work friends said to play tennis and I did because I love sport.

My daughter teaches belly dancing. My daughter said, "Why don't you come and do the exercise with the ladies?"

I said "I don't want to come with the old ladies". My daughter dragged me. I'm one of the oldest.

Being involved in something is the great part, from which I also get the benefit of the body and the mind by moving. I know when I don't do anything [physical activity] I feel I miss something. I want to be agile.

There are many ethnic groups and there are many women. Let them know the existence of the service. Encourage them to join. Every culture, every language. If they do not speak English it doesn't matter. Just encouragement and awareness. It's the encouragement to participation, the facility and being able to afford it. Transport is another issue.

Sometimes they [women] are missing out because their husband didn't want them to let them go today. We need to work on some culture issues. To [teach women to] be assertive, "I need this and I'm going to do it".

They [councils and local government] all say there is no money. If there is money we find instructors, the venue, activities, everything'. (Italian Woman 72 years of age)

## 8.2 Women-only facilities

As well as targeting information and advertising to CALD women, the women in the study also emphasised the need to alter facilities (especially gyms and swimming pools), recognising the need for funding to ensure they were culturally appropriate and easily accessible. Affordable, women-only facilities were perceived to hinder the growth of exercise classes for older women in Western Sydney for example, with one woman, involved in organising these groups pointing out that:

They all say there is no money. If there is money we find instructors, the venue, activities, everything (Group 5)

In all of the areas, a shortage of women only swimming time at public pools was seen to limit the swimming opportunities. In regional Victoria, the Muslim women were disappointed that their two hours a week of women-only swimming time was no longer available. Because fewer women were attending the arrangement could not be sustained. However, the time offered (Saturday afternoons) was difficult for them:

There wasn't enough ladies to go, yeah so they had to close it...I really loved it... at the start there was lots, but then they kept pulling out... they had the pool open once a week for about 2 –3 hours... they were not just Muslim women, they were different nationalities, different people...firstly, there was many, like 30, 40, and lots of little girls, but then less and less (Roza, group 2).

In regional NSW, Dhalia called for funding to subsidise ensuring culturally appropriate swimming opportunities.

We closed off the pool for Arabic women, but it wasn't the council pool it was a private pool, you know just for them ...but it becomes, again, money, lucky if there's funding to subsidise the paying (group 10)

Expanding the availability of women's only facilities was also seen as a way to engage CALD women generally, not just Muslim women, with one Lebanese-Australian perceiving that

Even Christian women or atheist women aren't particularly comfortable with men looking at them anytime, as we've discussed. Having more women's gyms, having more times when it's just for women and making it more enjoyable, more accessible for everyone, I think you get a lot of immigrants more involved. (Nadia, group 7)

The privacy of change rooms was also important. As Naja, a young Somalian woman pointed out:

The biggest thing is how good the change rooms are. They have to at least be covered. So somewhere private you can change. Cos like I

noticed a lot of the women in Fernwood they come already dressed in their gym clothes. Like us Somali women we dress differently to that, we don't consider that - like we don't consider that the type of clothes we can leave the house in. So we have to change basically down to underwear, that's why it's really awkward in the change rooms and we have to use the toilets. (Group 9)

For those sports played outside in public where privacy could not be completely guaranteed, some of the women pointed to ways privacy could be more effectively managed. Tam, a soccer player and volunteer with a CALD women's sporting program (with a number of African girls) described how she helped manage privacy in public spaces by carefully setting protocols about who can watch, as a way to ensure diverse cultural needs were respected in a team environment:

Where I'm a volunteer a lot of the girls aren't allowed to – aren't comfortable playing around guys, we have to make sure there are- like they don't walk around the parklands, they don't stay and watch, because there not used to playing in front of men... .... we make it clear from the start that it's best not to bring your brother or your boyfriend, or your partner, just because other girls aren't used to it and wouldn't feel comfortable. (Group 6)

### **8.3 Childcare**

To address some of the family-related barriers to CALD women's participation, some women identified a need for childcare generally (such as the Somalian women) while others identified a specific need for childcare facilities at sporting venues. Nadia for example, suggested that:

If the government offered subsidies for sporting clubs and gyms for having childcare facilities ... I think that would get rid of a lot of barriers for all cultures (Group 7).

Tasleem also highlighted a need for 'sports venues for people with families ... [that] have facilities for children, like a crèche, or play group area or something' (group 6). The women in group 6 went on to identify how, given the commercial imperative of sporting and fitness providers, it may not be cost effective to target the 'family friendly' niche:

I think in Adelaide it's hard for families just because we're so small. So the aggregate isn't generally big enough for it to be worth it for many clubs and organisations to make things family friendly. (Nadia, group 7)

And from Tasleem:

It's very expensive to make things family friendly. They can make their money on single people, people that don't need the facilities.

Moreover, the women in Group 6 considered whether subsidising childcare at gyms or other facilities might in fact do more to facilitate men's participation, with Elene, for example joking that the likely response of men would be 'No problems honey, I'll look after the kids tonight [gestures handing them over]'.

#### **8.4 Addressing financial barriers**

Overcoming financial barriers were seen as essential in getting more women from CALD backgrounds to participate in sport and recreation. The women identified a need for strategies to reduce the cost of activities for women, and to reduce associated costs such as transport or childcare. One woman was aware of a local initiative designed to target young CALD women with children to participate in physical activities and was successful by offering free child care and providing the classes at minimal cost:

Classes are choc-a-block full because the women are paying \$3 for a class and they are having the children minded. Those classes are \$10-15 [if you go to a private gymnasium]. These are women 20, 30 [years old] with little children. Some are unmarried mothers with two or three children. They cannot afford a \$10 class. But once a week with child minded for free [and] \$3, they can go. (Group 5)

The cost of transport also impacted on the women's participation, especially for the African and Middle Eastern women. Sadia for example said:

The girls I know they would do any sport, any activity if there was transportation and probably, free and we were provided for. Anything like that, you have the cost and the paying- just the fact that there is transportation back and forth, makes a difference. (Group 7)

#### **8.5 Setting up opportunities**

The women emphasised the importance of setting up opportunities for CALD women to participate, including setting up ethnically based girls sporting teams (eg a Somali girls soccer team); providing funding for sport promotion programs; providing tickets to CALD women's sporting groups to watch games; providing clothing and footwear to CALD women; establishing sporting scholarships for CALD women and girls; and running community-based cultural events. Michelle, in regional NSW, for example, suggested occasional family days, perhaps run by local councils:

Make [it a] whole day event and it builds up the community, just something local, it's letting the public know that the council is doing something for the community members. (Group 11)

Others saw the need for groups to be included and targeted rather than individuals, as this is how the women preferred to participate:

If you're going to offer them anything, you have to invite the whole group along then they all come. If one person says they're going then everybody else has to come, but if you just invite one person and say nobody else can come, they won't participate in that. (Sadia, group 7)

Naja saw opportunities for cultural events as a way to engage CALD women in activities, while avoiding potential intergenerational differences:

There should be more cultural events then the kids will get more of the culture. Everything will be fine. Everyone will be happy. Because the kids will have fun and they'll get exercise and they'll get socialising and the parents will get culture and they'll get religion and their identity, they want to keep their identity. And also they want to make Somalis to be progressive. So the best idea for an activity is cultural dance. (Group 9)

## 8.6 Changing gender roles

A final set of strategies for engaging CALD women in sport and recreation would address deep seated ideas about women's role in society, and their perceptions of themselves. Tam, a young soccer player from a Vietnamese background, for example, felt a need for:

Redefining women's self-perception, they shouldn't see themselves as solely child-bearers and caregivers, but as humans in their own right who need to exercise, and need to think of themselves rather than just their children.... ...reduce the burden on women so they can spend more time with themselves working on themselves being happy, enjoy exercising and going for walks instead of just being glued to the pram. (Group 6)

Shikha felt that if men shared domestic responsibilities, women would participate more in sport and recreation activities:

I've come from an Indian culture and I've seen some Indian families and I think if men share housework, childcare, and other things, and then impress women to get out and do the physical activity which they would not have done if they were in their own country in India, I mean yeah, it would be almost a preposterous idea to think that a man would allow his wife to go and play cricket in India. ... A man impressing a woman I think is extremely important by partaking of household duties, and that sort of thing. (Group 7)

Vailea, from a Cook Islander background, felt that:

Men should come in and say “Hey, we’ll take the kids while you go’ ...  
That would then encourage us to feel like, “Yeah, we’ve got the time’  
(group 11).

## 9 Summary of Stage Three

The ninety-four CALD women who participated in the twelve focus groups for Stage Three identified a range of health and social reasons to participate in sport and recreation, and clearly understood the benefits of sport and recreation participation. However, the women perceived that others in their communities may not recognise the benefits and opportunities, identifying a need to advertise existing culturally appropriate opportunities to participate, and expand the provision of facilities and women-only activities.

For those whose diets changed after coming to Australia (including women from Africa, the Middle East and Japan), sport and recreation were particularly important for health reasons. These women faced a range of health risks and felt they needed to take particular care in managing their weight. Other perceived benefits of sport and recreation that can help engage CALD women included making new friends and maintaining cultural identity. Informal physical activities, such as walking, or participating in community activities with family and friends, along with physical recreation activities (like tai chi or fitness classes) were particularly important amongst the women. However, the importance of less formal activities must be understood in the context of the barriers to participating in organised sport that CALD women can face. These barriers, such as a lack of appropriate facilities, high costs, family responsibilities and a lack of transport, caused women to participate in informal contexts rather than in formal, organised sport and recreation activities.

Only a minority of women had experienced racial discrimination in sport and recreation. However, this presented a major barrier to those involved, causing them to reduce their level of participation, or change their chosen sports. Yet overwhelmingly, the women perceived sport and recreation in Australia to provide a level playing field, which could be accessed by all. Notwithstanding, the women identified a range of subtle barriers that could affect the participation of women from their cultural background. Some of these barriers related to socio-cultural factors, such as notions of female physicality and dress, beauty and body image (which made some women self-conscious and reluctant to participate) and gender roles and expectations (which compelled women to take primary responsibility for housework and child and family care, thereby decreasing their leisure time).

Women needing to comply with cultural or religious norms of modesty faced particular barriers relating to dress codes and inappropriate facilities. This was a particular issue for women from Muslim backgrounds in the study. Some of these women adapted their patterns of sport participation by choosing activities where women's privacy (including in change-rooms) could be ensured, or those where it was possible to comply with dress requirements without transgressing cultural norms. However, the women would overwhelmingly prefer access to female-only facilities over exercising in modest attire in mixed gender contexts, as adapted dress was seen as uncomfortable and potentially stigmatising. Importantly, some of the women also pointed out that women-only activities should not mean cultural segregation, and should be open to women from all different backgrounds.

Other barriers to CALD women's access included poor English and a lack of transport, and some cultures also placed low priority on sport participation, which decreased some women's interest and exposure to sport and recreation activities. Resource barriers of time were particularly pronounced for women with children, while the costs of participating were identified across the groups. Health and age were also identified as reasons some women wouldn't participate, although these were largely perceived barriers, with some women believing, for example, they were too old to learn to swim or to take up another activity. Confidence and a perceived lack of skill were also identified as a barrier, with friends' attendance an important facilitator of CALD women's participation.

Indeed, a lack of access to low cost and culturally appropriate women-only facilities seemed to push CALD women into individual, informal activities like walking or exercising privately, or restricted them to activities performed with others in their kin group. Although private or informal sport and recreation activities may deliver health benefits to women, they are less likely to deliver social benefits, such making new friends, mixing with women from other cultures, and feeling included.

Strategies to support CALD women's participation included supporting and expanding culturally appropriate facilities, providing information about activities and facilities, and showing CALD women the range of opportunities to participate that do not require transgressing cultural requirements. The women also suggested addressing family related barriers through childcare at sporting venues and addressing financial barriers by subsidising costs for participants. Role modelling, promoting sporting activities as multicultural, and setting up opportunities were also identified. Some of the women felt that CALD women's participation in sport and recreation would only improve if women's perceptions of themselves as carers and child-bearers changed, and with support from men to free up women for leisure activities.

## **10 Project Findings and Lessons**

### **10.1 Research overview**

This research has examined CALD women's patterns of participation in sport and recreation (Stage One) and analysed the barriers to their participation and strategies for overcoming these, from the perspectives of stakeholders in the field (Stage Two) and CALD women (Stage Three). In Stage Two, telephone interviews were conducted with representatives from 15 sporting, cultural and women's organisations. These responses were influenced by a complex mix of factors including organisational culture, policies and practices, along with personal attitudes, perceptions and beliefs. Stage Three included the views of 94 women from diverse CALD backgrounds who participated in focus groups in regional and urban NSW, Victoria and South Australia. The focus groups captured the experiences of women born in 35 different countries, of sport and recreation participants and non-participants, and of women between 18 and 75 years of age.

### **10.2 Who is participating, what are they participating in and what have we learnt about data collection?**

The ABS data clearly shows a gap between the participation rates of women born in Australia, compared to women born in countries other than the main English ones (ABS, 2005). Women born in North Africa and the Middle East were the least likely group of women to participate in sport or physical activity. Those not proficient in English were also less likely to participate than their counterparts (ABS, 2006). Note however that when data includes both organised and informal sport, participation rates increase for women (from 28.5 per cent to 45.1 per cent) (ABS, 2003).

The ABS data is critical to understanding CALD women's levels of participation in sport and recreation activities. Its importance is compounded as the main alternative, the Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey (ERASS) (conducted by the Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport Research Group) does not collect data on CALD status. However, small sample sizes in the ABS surveys make it difficult to disaggregate participation trends for CALD women at a cultural, ethnic, religious and geographic level. If sample sizes are increased in future data collections, it would also be worthwhile adding additional variables to sport and recreation surveys. By including questions regarding the length of time in Australia, language spoken at home and other indicators of socio-economic status, the relationship between CALD status and the different social, cultural and economic circumstances of CALD women would be better understood.

Limited data also makes it difficult to get a sound understanding of the types of sport and physical activities CALD women engage in. The literature and interviews with sporting organisation representatives reveal that sporting club members' demographic information rarely includes indicators of CALD status (Cortis and Muir, 2007), with this information not seen as sufficiently relevant to the operations of National or State sporting organisations.

Many of the informal activities that women in the focus groups emphasised, such as walking, are not being captured in the ABS Survey of Involvement in Organised Sport

and Physical Activity. Including indicators of CALD status in the Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey would also assist to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the types of activities CALD women participate in. It is important to develop data sources that provide a better understanding of the delineation between CALD women's participation in organised sporting activities, organised physical recreation activities and informal activities in order to develop strategies and target areas where their involvement can be enhanced.

While the 94 women who participated in the focus groups are not necessarily representative of their broader cultural communities, they provide some examples of, and insight into, the experiences of women from diverse cultural backgrounds. These women's experiences reveal the important role organised physical recreation activities can play in CALD women's lives. These activities provide health, social and community benefits, with more flexibility and less responsibility and pressure than organised sport. These activities also offer women a non-competitive environment where they can build confidence and expand their social networks.

Of the three types of sport and recreation activities (organised sport, organised physical recreation activities, and informal physical recreation activities), the CALD women in the focus groups were most likely to be involved in informal activities, followed by organised physical recreation and, thirdly, organised sport. Many of the women doing informal activities, like walking, were doing so alone. The focus group findings demonstrated that even where women were participating in physical exercise there were still barriers to joining organised activities. These barriers require understanding and redress in order to increase the participation of CALD women and realise the health, social and community benefits of sport and recreation.

### **10.3 Lessons about facilitators and barriers to participation**

The literature highlights the range of factors that have been found to impact on CALD women's participation in sport and recreation activities. These include socio-cultural issues (racial and cultural constraints or freedoms and levels of comfort in certain social settings); access (recreation provision, information, skills and transport); levels of appeal and meaningfulness; physiology (physical capacity and age); resources (time and money); and interpersonal contacts (having or not having someone to participate with) (Tsai and Coleman, as discussed in Cortis et al. 2006). It is important to recognise that women from different CALD groups, geographic areas and socio-economic backgrounds will experience different facilitators and barriers to participation, but the findings of this report demonstrate some common prevailing themes.

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

The research found the perception of sport representing a "level playing field" is pervasive. This perception exists not only amongst representatives of sporting, cultural and women's organisations (see Cortis and Muir, 2007), but also amongst CALD women. There is a general belief that sport and recreation are areas of social life that are equally accessible by all. This was celebrated and embraced by the sporting organisation representatives and many of the women included in the focus groups. The enthusiasm and

acceptance of this concept was surprising given that sporting representatives did not know how many CALD women participate in their sports and did not have supportive policies or strategies in place; and that the stakeholders and the CALD women identified numerous barriers to participation.

### **Barriers**

Some sporting, cultural and women's organisation interviewees were aware that discrimination and racism (both direct and overt) persists in some sporting organisations. Interestingly, discrimination did not emerge as a substantial barrier in the focus groups (although it had profound effects on those experiencing it). This could be attributed to the generalised acceptance of sport and recreation as a 'level playing field'. However, a few women described their experiences as racism or discrimination. More commonly, women discussed subtle and indirect socio-cultural barriers to their participation. Cultural and religious notions of female physicality and dress, for example, clashed with the norms and requirements of many sporting organisations. This was particularly the case for women needing to cover their bodies and adhere to cultural and religious standards of modesty. While this experience was strong among Muslim women, it was also shared by some women from other cultural backgrounds.

Most sporting organisation interviewees admitted that the dress codes of their particular sport conflicted with the dress standards of some religious and cultural groups and that there was a need for this to change. Where dress codes conflict, CALD women are left to balance the requirements of the sport with those of their cultural or religion. While some of the women in the focus groups described adapting their dress to comply with both religious requirements and sport and recreation norms (for example wearing long clothing under uniforms or in the pool), they tended to find this uncomfortable and stigmatising.

Overwhelmingly, the women would prefer to have opportunities to participate in women's only sport and recreation contexts than to cover their bodies in mixed-gender facilities. The important message here is that the issue is not about cultural segregation, but *women* from all backgrounds sharing a safe, comfortable and appropriate space. This was further reinforced by CALD women who were not tied to dress standards because of religious requirements, but as a result of body image or because culturally they were expected to participate in separate activities from men.

The issue of women-only spaces presents a barrier in regard to the availability of facilities. Many women pointed out that they had limited or no options within their communities to participate in women-only spaces. Sporting organisations also reported infrastructure limitations as an institutional problem. They described the difficulty of closing off sections of sporting facilities to men (even for short periods each week) and noted that showers and change rooms often lacked sufficient privacy. The women in the CALD groups who participated in women's only activities and spaces believed women's only times were in the financial interest of sporting organisations and businesses, with catering for CALD women seen as a way to expand their participant-base.

For women to be able to attend these facilities, they also require access to child care at an affordable rate. Household and child care responsibilities overwhelmingly fell to the CALD women in the focus groups, which left them with little or no free time for sport or recreation. Even where child care was provided, cost could prevent some women from participating. Financial limitations could also significantly restrict the participation in sport and recreation of older women and women who had recently migrated to Australia.

Interestingly, sporting organisation interviewees also maintained cost as their major obstacle to addressing some of the barriers CALD women faced. A number of sporting organisation representatives, for example, noted the need for bilingual information and translators, but cited cost and recruitment problems as limitations. The women in the focus groups also discussed the effect of limited English on the participation of CALD women in sport and recreation. But they also pointed out that there was limited information (English or otherwise) targeted to CALD women regarding the benefits of sport and recreation, the availability and range of activities in the community (for people with different levels of fitness, ability, and interests), how to join and how to participate.

#### **10.4 What can be done?**

These barriers can be overcome. Below is a series of recommendations arising from the literature and data review, the interviews with sporting, women's and cultural organisations, and the focus groups with CALD women. These are tangible strategies for increasing the proportion of CALD women participating in sport and recreation.

##### *Education and information*

Education and information could be provided to CALD women that:

- promotes sport and sporting organisations as culturally diverse and welcoming;
- demonstrates culturally appropriate opportunities to participate;
- reinforces the health benefits of exercise;
- explains what participating in sport involves;
- shows the sporting achievements of women from diverse backgrounds and establishes role models;
- Promotes the range of ways women can be involved in sport and recreation: organised sport, organised physical recreation and informal physical recreation activities;

Education and information could be provided to sporting organisations and venues that:

- Promotes the benefits of recruiting CALD women;
- Educates sports administrators (at national, state and community levels) about how to promote their sports to CALD groups and how to inclusively engage CALD women.

This may require the development of specific resources or training modules relating to best practice in working with CALD populations.

Education and information could be provided to the general public that:

- Promotes the importance of including all women in sport and recreation.
- Showcases positive examples of culturally diverse women in sport and recreation.
- Educates community members and leaders about the importance of women-only spaces for physical activity and promote these with a focus on shared gender.

#### *Sport and recreation facilities*

- Provide and promote culturally appropriate and family friendly facilities;
- Provide facilities with a guaranteed gender segregation (not cultural segregation) period at least at certain times each week;
- Ensure public transportation is available so women can attend facilities with women-only times;
- Provide affordable childcare at sporting venues;
- Set up opportunities for CALD women to participate. For example, establish CALD based girls sporting teams; or provide funding for sport promotion programs, tickets to CALD women's sporting groups to watch games, and the required clothing and footwear; establish sporting scholarships for CALD women and girls; and run community-based cultural events;
- Ensure short-lived programs targeting CALD women have transition schemes and pathways to other types of sport and recreation;
- Ensure program funding includes a component for rigorous evaluation and dissemination of best practice;
- Promote, support and build on organised physical recreation groups in communities, for example providing funding to expand existing activities.

#### *Financial issues*

- Provide sporting organisations with financial incentives to recruit and engage CALD women in sport and recreation;
- Implement strategies to make sport and recreation activities for women affordable, along with the associated costs of transport and childcare.

#### *Partnerships*

- Establish formal partnerships between sporting and cultural organisations, especially to supplement the skills and expertise of sport and recreation providers with community contacts and specialised experience with cultural groups.
- Develop formal networks between sporting and cultural organisations so they can share their experience of promoting cultural diversity;
- Develop peer networks between CALD women to educate, encourage and provide women with interpersonal support to participate in sport and recreation;
- Facilitate the building of positive relationships between ethno-specific organisations or individuals from CALD communities and sporting organisations;

*Sporting organisation policies*

- Include relationship building with CALD communities within policy development and planning processes;
- Set standards and establish strategic frameworks that prioritise CALD participation;
- Develop and implement diversity policies at the national, state and community levels;
- Use bilingual women in non-playing roles.

Current research shows that sport and recreation can help build inclusion and express cultural diversity and promote better social relations. Further research is required to more thoroughly establish best practice approaches for engaging CALD women in sport and recreation and to further understand differences in participation between and within groups (such as socio-economic status, country of birth, language spoken, cultural practices, religion, time in Australia).

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## Appendix A

### Recruitment flyer

# Looking for women to take part in research

## Sport & Recreation among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Women

On behalf of the Australian Government Office for Women, (a division of the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs) the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of New South Wales is studying how women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds participate in sport and recreation activities.

We are inviting **women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds** who live in the [REDACTED] area to participate in a focus group discussion for the study. Women aged 18 and over who do not participate in sport or recreation activities are welcome to participate, as well as women who do participate in sport and recreation.

If you would like to be part of the study, you will be invited to take part in a group discussion with other women. You will be asked about your experiences and opinions about sport and recreation activities and to fill out a short survey. This will take about 1.5 hours. We will reimburse you \$50 for your time and travel expenses. What you tell us will be completely confidential. You will not be identified in any publication or report about the study.

**Date:** There are two sessions available:

**Evening:** Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2007, 5.45pm sharp

**Afternoon:** Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2007, 1.45pm sharp

**Where:** The groups will be held in [REDACTED]. We will give you venue information when you phone or email to book.

**Booking:** Booking is essential. Please contact Dr Pooja Sawrikar at the University of New South Wales on **1800 065 576** (freecall) or email [p.sawrikar@unsw.edu.au](mailto:p.sawrikar@unsw.edu.au). You can also call Dr Natasha Cortis on 02 9385 7803 or email [n.cortis@unsw.edu.au](mailto:n.cortis@unsw.edu.au)

**Reimbursement:** We will reimburse participants \$50 for your time and travel expenses, and will provide light refreshments.

**For more information:** Please contact Dr Pooja Sawrikar at the University of New South Wales on **1800 065 576** (freecall) or email [p.sawrikar@unsw.edu.au](mailto:p.sawrikar@unsw.edu.au). You can also call Dr Natasha Cortis on 02 9385 7803 or email [n.cortis@unsw.edu.au](mailto:n.cortis@unsw.edu.au)

## Appendix B

### Questioning route

1. Introductions (name, cultural background, involvement in sport and recreation including non-player roles).
2. Think about the sport and recreation activities you do now, or have done in the past (including non-playing roles). What do you like about these activities and why did you choose them? Is there anything you don't like about sport and recreation activities?
3. When you were growing up, was sport and recreation an important part of the time that you spent with your family and friends? What kinds of things did you do?
4. Those of you who did not grow up in Australia, did you think about sport differently in Australia than you did before you arrived? Was sport and recreation something you thought about doing when you were settling in?
5. In what ways are sport and recreation for women encouraged in your culture? Are some sports not appropriate in your culture? Which aspects?
6. Would you like sport and recreation to play a bigger role in your life? If so, in what ways?
7. What are the things that are stopping you from participating more in sport and recreation?
8. Do you think it's important that women from your cultural background participate in sport and recreation?
9. Can you think of any reasons why women from your cultural background might not want to participate in sport and recreation activities or might not be able to?
  - [Probe] Does it matter:
    - i. when activities are on?
    - ii. how much it costs?
    - iii. where it is?
    - iv. the kind of facility or venue?
    - v. who you play with?
    - vi. what you have to wear?
  - [Probe] Do you think women in your community know about local clubs and organisations, and sport rules? Do they feel confident to play sports they've not played before?
10. In Australian culture, sport is sometimes considered to be a 'level playing field'; that is, it's an area of life that everyone can participate in equally (something

that's accessible to everyone). What do you think of this? Do you agree?

11. Finally, lets talk about some of the strategies you would use to encourage women from your community to participate in sport and recreation. What do you think would help women to participate?

- [Probes] What could be improved about venues and facilities?
- What about sporting organisations? Is there anything they could do to make activities more inclusive?
- What about dress codes?
- What about getting information to women in your community?

End, unless participants have anything else to add.

## Appendix C

### Participant questionnaire

- 1** What is your first name? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2** What age group do you belong to?
- |                                       |             |                                       |             |                                       |             |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | 15-19 years | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | 30-34 years | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>7</sub> | 44-49 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | 20-24 years | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> | 35-39 years | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>8</sub> | 50-59 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | 25-29 years | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub> | 40-44 years | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>9</sub> | 60+ years   |
- 3** What is your postcode?
- 4** Do you identify as Indigenous Australian (Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander)?
- <sub>0</sub> No <sub>1</sub> Yes
- 5** Which country were you born in? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6** If you were NOT born in Australia, how old were you when you arrived in Australia? \_\_\_\_\_ (years)  Not Applicable
- 7** Do you speak a language other than English at home?
- <sub>0</sub> No <sub>1</sub> Yes (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 8** Does anyone in your household speak a language other than English at home?
- <sub>0</sub> No <sub>1</sub> Yes (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 9** How would you describe your ethnicity? (e.g. Chinese, Greek-Australian, etc)
- \_\_\_\_\_
- 10** Which of the following best describes your citizenship status? (Tick one only)
- <sub>1</sub> I'm an Australian citizen
- <sub>2</sub> I'm a permanent resident of Australia
- <sub>3</sub> I'm a temporary visa holder in Australia (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 11** Which of the following best describes your religion? (Tick one only)
- |                                       |              |                                       |                              |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | No religion  | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> | Islam                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | Buddhism     | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub> | Judaism                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | Christianity | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>7</sub> | Other (please specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | Hinduism     |                                       |                              |
- 12** Which of the following best describes the structure of your household?  
(Tick one only)
- |                                       |                              |                                       |                        |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | Couple with children         | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | Lone person            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | Couple with no children      | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> | Multi-family household |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | One parent with children     |                                       |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub> | Other (please specify) _____ |                                       |                        |
- 13** Do you have a disability?
- <sub>0</sub> No <sub>1</sub> Yes (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 14** What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- |                                       |                                  |                                       |                                |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> | University                       | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> | Year 12 or equivalent          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> | Trade certificate/apprenticeship | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> | Year 10 or equivalent or below |



**Appendix D**

## Focus group participants by country of birth

Country of Birth	Frequency	Per cent
Iraq	11	11.70
Japan	10	10.64
Somalia	9	9.57
India	8	8.51
Australia	6	6.38
Italy	5	5.32
Philippines	5	5.32
Afghanistan	4	4.26
Burundi	2	2.13
Congo	2	2.13
Eritrea	2	2.13
Germany	2	2.13
Greece	2	2.13
Kuwait	2	2.13
Lebanon	2	2.13
New Zealand	2	2.13
Syria	2	2.13
Fiji	1	1.06
Hong Kong	1	1.06
Korea	1	1.06
Malaysia	1	1.06
Maldives	1	1.06
Malta	1	1.06
Mauritius	1	1.06
Pakistan	1	1.06
Papua New Guinea	1	1.06
Peru	1	1.06
Romania	1	1.06
Rwanda	1	1.06
Samoa	1	1.06
Sierra Leone	1	1.06
Switzerland	1	1.06
Tanzania	1	1.06
United Kingdom	1	1.06
Vietnam	1	1.06
Total	94	100.00

## Appendix E

### Activities ever played by focus group participants

Activity	Frequency	Activity	Frequency
<b>Water sports</b>		<b>Racquet sports</b>	
swimming	38	pelota	2
aqua exercise/aerobics	3	tennis	25
rowing	2	badminton	13
scuba diving	2	table tennis/ping pong	7
surfing	1	squash	3
beach	1	golf	2
<b>Ball sports</b>		<b>Gym and fitness</b>	
basketball	20	aerobics	4
volleyball/beach volleyball	20	exercise/gentle exercise	4
netball/indoor netball	14	gym	1
soccer/indoor soccer	14	<b>Athletics &amp; running sports</b>	
hockey	9	running/jogging/cross country/track	17
cricket	7	athletics	3
softball	6	marathon running	2
handball	4	disc throw	1
tenpin bowling	4	javelin	1
baseball	3	shot put	1
football	3	trampolining	1
rugby	3	skipping/jumping	2
touch football	3	kho kho	2
bowling	2	kabadi	1
dodge ball	1	hopscotch	1
catching	1	<b>Dance &amp; Gymnastics</b>	
petang	1	ballet	1
Martial arts		capoeira	1
judo	4	dancing	9
tai chi	3	gymnastics	4
kendo (japanese fencing)	1	<b>Snow and Ice sports</b>	
kung fu	1	skiing	5
pilates	1	skating/ice skating	2
taekwondo	1	snow board	1
vovinam (martial art)	1	<b>Cycling</b>	
yoga	1	cycling/bike riding	4
boxing	1	<b>Other</b>	
<b>Walking and hiking</b>		langadi	1
walking	15	tops	1
bushwalking/hiking	3	horse riding	2
camping	1	gardening	2
jogging	1		

NB: this table indicates the sport and recreation activities that focus group participants had ever participated in, as written on their questionnaire forms. While the list indicates the range of activities these CALD women had done, the frequencies should be interpreted with caution. In the discussion, some women added activities which were not listed on their form. While these sports are represented in the list above, they are not reflected in the frequencies. Women may also have defined their participation differently (some people, for example, may not consider walking to be sport and recreation, whereas others do). Notwithstanding, the list provides interesting insight into the range of

sports women have participated in. A number of these, for example pelota and kho kho are uncommon in Australia. Note also that of the participants who listed more than seven activities, four were Pacific Islander, three were Filipino, one was Somali, four were Japanese, one was Italian, and three were Indian.