

**INQUIRY INTO INQUIRY INTO CHILDHOOD  
OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY**

**Organisation:** Sport NSW  
**Date received:** 25 August 2016

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21 August 2016

**To: The Standing Committee on Social Issues**

**Re: Inquiry into Childhood overweight and obesity**

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This submission is made by the NSW Sports Federation Inc (trading as Sport NSW). Sport NSW is the peak body for sport in the state, representing the interests of over 15,000 sporting clubs and 2.5 million sports participants through its member State Sporting Organisations (SSO's).

Sport NSW is of the strong view that participation in sport is one of the most significant contributing factors to reducing the rate of overweight and obese children in NSW. Accordingly, the contents of this submission refer primarily to Terms of Reference (b), (c), (e).

Terms of reference (b) and (c) look at enabling and supporting children and young adolescents to be active, including by participating in sport. In order to encourage greater levels of participation in sport, Sport NSW advocates for three important actions:

## **1. Physical Education in Schools**

There is an alarming lack of trained physical education teachers in NSW primary schools. The NSW government must move to training and employing specialist physical education teachers in every NSW primary school, then allowing for the curriculum to have time set aside for every student to engage in two 30-minute, physically active lessons per week.

If this practice became commonplace in NSW primary schools every student would have seven years of twice weekly physical activity, which would develop lifelong habits and encourage participation in organised sport outside of school.

Whilst physical education is catered for slightly better in secondary schools, there should still be dedicated time in the curriculum for every child to be physically active in every NSW secondary school to continue the habits from primary school.

Not only would this measure create more jobs for teachers specialising in physical education, it will have a long-term benefit of healthier children with less who are overweight and obese.

## **2. Increased Funding to Sport**

The Office of Sport currently administers the Sport Development Program (SDP) funding where a large number of sports are funded to sustain their operations. Alarming, the quantum of SDP funding has not changed since the year 2000, sitting at just over \$2.5 million to be split amongst all sports for the last 16 years.

While we know that participation in sport can be a key driver of reducing childhood weight problems, the sports must be resourced to provide children those opportunities. Costs have risen significantly since 2000, but SSO's have no additional money to offer children the chance to try, or participate long term, in their sports.



If the government is serious about increasing the activity levels of children, and about giving them more opportunities to participate in sport, then the SSO's must be given additional resources – and accountability for those resources – to play their part.

### **3. Better Access to Sporting Facilities**

As the population of NSW increases there has been very little done to ensure that access to sporting facilities keeps pace with population growth. NSW is nearing a crisis point in terms of accessible green space for sport, as well as the poor state of so many existing facilities.

For sports to continue to provide the opportunity for participation significant funding must be provided to continue to build new facilities and upgrade existing facilities. This must be a long-term investment in the health of the state to ensure that grass roots sport is accessible to everyone, irrespective of where they live.

#### **Summary**

Participation in sport is a lifelong pastime which generates benefits too numerous to list, from teaching important values like teamwork and resilience, to reducing stress levels and increasing friendship groups, as well as undeniable health benefits such as control of weight.

The NSW Government has the choice to make a bold decision to re-direct funds to increasing participation in sport to reap the benefits of reduced health care costs into the future. This is not a payback that will happen overnight, but as health expenditure continues to skyrocket something must be done as the starting point, rather than vast amounts of money being left to the end point where health problems have taken over due to an inactive lifestyle.

Term of Reference (e) refers to coordination between NSW Government agencies. Co-ordination between Health, Education, Planning and Sport will enable the abovementioned changes in school physical education levels and facility development, plus the funding to achieve such initiatives.

Sport NSW advocates in the strongest possible terms for increased investment into physical education in schools, higher funding for State Sporting Organisations and greater investment into sporting facilities so that the combination of all three may lead to substantial increases in participation in sport. The related health benefits, especially reductions in overweight and obesity levels amongst children, will be tangible.

#### **For additional information:**

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