



Northern  
Territory  
Government

# Towards a Sport and Active Recreation Policy *An Issues Paper*

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## Message from the Minister

It is with great pleasure that I announce the opening of the consultation stage for the development of the Territory's first ever Sport and Active Recreation Policy.

The policy will outline the actions the Northern Territory Government will take to encourage the vision of Territorians having a lifelong involvement in sport and active recreation.

The policy will provide a framework for future planning, identify priorities for the community and provide the basis for the Territory Government's strategic direction in sport and recreation. It will maximise government investment in sport and active recreation programs and facilities and align with other Northern Territory Government priorities such as improving physical health and wellbeing and contributing to safer communities.

We all understand the substantial benefits that participation in sport and active recreation brings to health, crime prevention, the economy and education, and, we realise that sport builds stronger communities by connecting people and places. Sport is an intrinsic part of the Territory's future and its unique outdoor lifestyle.

Our government extends an invitation to all Territorians to have input into the development of this policy. Opportunities to have your say are being provided through face to face forums and written submissions via our dedicated web site. The consultation stage is open to all community members and all sport and recreation stakeholders.

I encourage you to be a part of the Territory's sporting future and have your say in our first Sport and Active Recreation Policy.

For more information review the materials enclosed, or, visit our website: [www.nt.gov.au/sportandrecreation](http://www.nt.gov.au/sportandrecreation)



**Karl Hampton**

Minister for Sport and Recreation

## Providing feedback

The Northern Territory Government invites feedback on this *Issues Paper Towards a Sport and Active Recreation Policy*.

Feedback can be provided:

- By attending consultation sessions.  
Details are available at [www.nt.gov.au/sportandrecreation](http://www.nt.gov.au/sportandrecreation)
- Online at [www.nt.gov.au/sportandrecreation](http://www.nt.gov.au/sportandrecreation)
- By fax to (08) 8982 2306
- By email to [feedback.sportandrecreation@nt.gov.au](mailto:feedback.sportandrecreation@nt.gov.au)
- By written submission and posted to:  
Sport and Recreation Policy Feedback  
PO Box 1448  
Darwin NT 0801

All feedback will be treated as public documents unless marked confidential.

Once all feedback is received, this information will be utilised to draft a Sport and Active Recreation Policy, which will then be released for public comment later this year.

## Introduction

This issues paper is the beginning of the development of the Northern Territory Government's Sport and Active Recreation Policy. The community is being asked to contribute their views on Government's part in the future of sport and active recreation in the Territory.

This is a perfect opportunity to review current strategies and practices and to identify current issues.

Responses to many of the issues facing the sport and active recreation industry will be formalised in the Sport and Active Recreation Policy. It will provide a foundation for future planning, a framework for identifying priorities and a solid base for decision making.

The policy will also see the Northern Territory Government in a better position to respond to demand and to maximise its investment in sport and active recreation activities.

Involvement in sport and active recreation is an important part of the Territory lifestyle. It provides significant health, social, education and economic benefits to the community.

One of greatest threats to our lifestyle is physical inactivity (and resulting overweight and obesity). It is a contributor to many chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and some cancers. The growing incidence of physical inactivity comes at a great financial cost to the community.

The life skills gained from participation in sport and active recreation improves quality of life. Participants usually experience increased confidence and greater resilience to the pressures of modern living. Educational performance may be improved. Sport and recreation clubs and associations provide a hub for social interaction providing a level of safety and belonging, which develops and strengthens the community.

Despite the known benefits of sport and active recreation, many people enjoy sport for sport's sake – they participate because they enjoy it.

Sport and active recreation can also assist in creating a healthier balance between work and personal commitments.

And nothing is more inspiring than the successes of our sporting athletes at the Olympics. It gives us inspiration knowing that by working hard and committing to goals, great achievements can be made.

The *Issues Paper* will focus on five areas of sport and active recreation:

- Overarching – issues which cut across the four key focus areas of communities, environments, pathways and events
- Communities – who participates and ways of improving participation rates
- Environments – to improve access to facilities and maximise usage
- Pathways – how to progress skills and performance of athletes, coaches, officials and administrators
- Events – attract national and international competitions.

Feedback on the issues raised in this *Issues Paper* is encouraged. Ways of providing this feedback are listed on page 2 or available at [www.nt.gov.au/sportandrecreation](http://www.nt.gov.au/sportandrecreation)

## Scope of discussion

### Sport

“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.” (Australian Sports Commission)

### Active Recreation

“Activities engaged in for the purpose of relaxation or enjoyment with the primary activity requiring physical exertion and primary focus is on human activity.”

“Active recreations will provide pathways into sport.”

### Leisure

“The state of having time at one’s disposal; time in which to spend as one pleases, sometimes in activities that are non competitive, informal and non threatening.”

Definitions for sport, recreation and leisure can be broad and sometimes overlap, but they all involve play and fun, and for most people, amusements and diversions from the everyday commitments to work and home.

This *Issues Paper* will focus on physical activity as it relates to sport and active recreation.

### Sport and Active Recreation Industry

“The industry includes organisations and people who provide goods and services to support sport and active recreation activities.”

The industry includes the following:

- Northern Territory Government
- Australian Government
- Local Government
- National sporting organisations
- Peak sporting organisations (NT)
- Sporting organisations (including clubs)
- Recreation organisations
- Commercial businesses
- Community

It needs to be noted that many of the industry’s participants are volunteers.

### Demographic Groups

Some groups would benefit from targeted sport and active recreation programs. These groups include:

- Remote Indigenous people
- Seniors
- People with disabilities

### Locations

Where people live and choose to spend their time, often dictates their access to sport and active recreation activities. These locations include:

- Urban areas
- Remote and regional areas
- Primary and secondary schools
- Workplace
- Home

## Critical issues

The sport and active recreation industry faces many challenges and it is important that a more informed understanding of these issues is gained through this consultation process.

The following tables summarise these challenges as currently understood by the Northern Territory Government and we are aware that this process of consultation will inevitably add to the list. The tables provide points of reference, to stimulate discussion and encourage community responses. The tables cover the following issues and challenges related to overarching issues and the key focus areas of communities, environment, pathways and events:

### **Table 1: Overarching issues**

### **Table 2: Key focus areas**

Discussion questions at the end of the tables can guide your thoughts and feedback.

The ultimate goal of this proposed policy is to increase the levels of participation in sport and active recreation on a sustainable basis.

Table 1: Overarching issues

OVERARCHING ISSUES	CHALLENGES
<p>1. How to improve integration and co-ordination of effort across the sport and active recreation industry to improve efficiencies and optimise the use of resources.</p>	<p>To improve partnerships between sport and active recreation groups including government partnerships (to co fund or leverage projects) to maximise effort and outcomes.</p>
	<p>To clarify the roles and responsibilities of each tier of government to reduce the level of overlap and duplication.</p>
	<p>To develop a “whole of Northern Territory Government” approach to the sport and active recreation agenda especially sport and active recreation in schools, to improve planning and collaboration.</p>
	<p>To influence the national sport and active recreation agenda including the new national directions process, to provide a voice for Northern Territory issues and priorities.</p>
<p>2. How to strengthen community development through participation in sport and active recreation.</p>	<p>To have a formal voice to government on sport and active recreation matters, as an effective link to influence government policy.</p>
	<p>To provide a grants program that meets government and recipient objectives and which is formally and regularly evaluated and reviewed.</p>
	<p>To clarify the pivotal role of peak sporting bodies in developing their sport and to provide a leading role in the sport and active recreation industry.</p>
<p>3. How to achieve sustainable and financially viable sports organisations through capacity building and development.</p>	<p>To strengthen sports organisations through providing resources and advice on governance structures and planning.</p>
	<p>To reduce the risk to government of sports organisations which become financially unviable.</p>

Table 2: Key focus areas

AREAS	CRITICAL ISSUES	CHALLENGES
1. Communities	1. How to increase participation in sport and active recreation for the health, education, social and economic benefits for the community on a sustainable basis.	To address the low participation rates for Indigenous Territorians particularly in remote areas.
		To enable greater engagement by seniors and disabled athletes in physical activity.
		To better understand community needs and perceptions about sport and active recreations with a view to target planning to address these needs.
		To investigate and respond to the constraints to participation in sport and active recreation such as time, cost and access to facilities.
		To foster integrity and ethics in sport and active recreation so that the concepts of fair play, respect and safety for participants are upheld.
	2. How to attract and retain professionals and volunteers.	To increase the pool of volunteers who work as coaches, officials and administrators, to maintain the sustainability of sport and active recreation organisations.
		To address the shortage of sport professionals such as physiotherapists, coaches, officials and sports scientists, to strengthen the industry's support to Territorians.

AREAS	CRITICAL ISSUES	CHALLENGES
2. Environments	1. How to plan and provide for adequate facilities and environments.	To identify future infrastructure priorities so that facilities meet the demographic and diverse needs of the community.
		To plan for the development and management of Marrara Sports Precinct to maximise the community benefits and utilisation of the area.
		To develop a Remote Sports Facilities Strategy to address the needs of remote Indigenous communities.
		To encourage and broker partnerships and agreements between organisations to share multipurpose facilities.
	2. How to improve access to facilities	To consider “healthy” options for venue management including non smoking venues, and the provision of healthy food and low alcohol beverages.
		To increase the availability of open spaces and infrastructure for sport and active recreation activities, such as after hours school facilities.

AREAS	CRITICAL ISSUES	CHALLENGES
3. Pathways	1. How to better encourage pathways to participation in sport and active recreation from grass roots through to elite levels.	To investigate constraints to effective pathways such as the lack of high level competition and a lack of depth in coaching talent.
		To develop a systemic approach to providing clear pathways for athletes from grass roots to elite competition including athletes from regional and remote areas.
		To better integrate the services delivered by schools, peak sports bodies and the Northern Territory Institute of Sport so that athletes can be talent identified and developed to potential.
		To investigate ways of getting people interested and involved in grass roots sport and active recreation so that they continue to participate throughout the lifespan.
		To foster links between active recreation organisations with the associated sports organisation so that participants have an alternative pathway to develop their skills and interests.
	2. How to develop high level athlete, coaches, officials and administrators performance.	To focus on and develop an overall strategy for the Northern Territory Institute of Sport which builds on its role as the centre for sports excellence and development of sport.
		To increase opportunities for talented athletes to be identified and to excel in sport and active recreation activities particularly for athletes from regional and remote areas.
		To increase the number of people wanting to be coaches, officials and administrators and to provide better pathways for them to develop their skills, competence and potential career.

AREAS	CRITICAL ISSUES	CHALLENGES
4. Events	1. How to attract and retain major events.	To identify possible new events for staging in the Territory.
		To develop a model to respond to proposals for a sporting event; which will provide a consistent approach to new proposals.
	2. How to increase access to national and international competition	To forge relationships with national and international sporting organisations to promote the Territory as a sports destination.
		To continue the important research work of the NTIS such as heat acclimatisation and to use this expertise to encourage sporting teams to use Darwin as a training base for national and international competitions.

Individual flyers are available for the key focus areas. These are available at [www.nt.gov.au/sportandrecreation](http://www.nt.gov.au/sportandrecreation)

## Discussion questions

### Overarching issues

1. What do you believe should be the role and responsibility of the various levels of government in developing sport and active recreation?
2. What do you think is the best way that the community can provide input into the planning and prioritising of sport and active recreation activities by government?
3. How can we improve the delivery of sport and active recreation in regional and remote areas?
4. How can we improve relationships and integration between the organisations within the sport and active recreation industry?

### Communities

1. How do you think we can best promote the benefits of participation in sport and active recreation in the community?
2. How can we improve participation rates for Territorians?
3. How can we best recruit and retain the services of volunteers and professionals?

### Environments

1. How can we improve the management of current sport and active recreation facilities?
2. How can we rationalise the use of facilities particularly in remote and urban areas?
3. How should we plan for the future of sport and recreation facilities?

### Pathways

1. How can grass roots sport and active recreation activities be developed as the foundation for future pathways?
2. How do we ensure pathways to advancement to elite levels for people in regional and remote areas and from 'lower profile' sports?
3. How can the Northern Territory Institute of Sport deliver better outcomes for elite athletes and coaches?
4. How could we enhance the role of schools in junior sport development?

### Events

1. What are the community's expectations of the Territory Government investing in events?

## Appendix 1 - The Territory Profile

Sport and active recreation should be seen in the context of the Northern Territory's unique and challenging environment. These conditions will impact on future strategies and intended outcomes.

### People

The Territory has a relatively small population of 217,600 which comprises only 1% of the total Australian population of approximately 21 million (ABS, 2007). It is also the youngest population with a median age of 31.1 years compared to 36.8 nationally (ABS, 2007).

Approximately one in every three Territorians identifies as Indigenous (32%) compared to 2.5% of the Australian population. It is also estimated that 81% of Indigenous Territorians reside in remote or very remote locations compared to 24% in the Australian population (ABS, 2006).

The Territory population is also a very mobile population. The 2006 Census shows 20% of the Territory's 2006 population had moved here since 2001. This far exceeds other state mobility indicators of 7-11%, with the exception of the Australian Capital Territory.

Projections indicate that the Territory's population will increase steadily from 217,600 to 265,000 by 2021; the median age is also expected to increase from 28.6 to 32.7 years; the proportion of the population over 40 will increase by around 10% and the proportion of the Territory's population under 30 will decrease by around 8%. It is also expected that the proportion of the Indigenous population will continue to increase (ABS, 2001).

### Land, Climate and Economy

The Territory has an area of 1,346,200 square kilometres comprising approximately 17% of Australia's land mass. It is located within two major climatic zones; monsoon tropical in the north and semi arid to arid in the south.

The Territory has a small population base dispersed over a large land mass and is generally classified as regional Australia. Distance, extreme climate conditions, the high cost of goods and services and population diversity, contribute to complexities in delivering services and facilities.

The Territory has the highest proportion of Indigenous people to non-Indigenous people in Australia, with the majority of the Indigenous population residing in very remote areas. Given this geographical isolation and the subsequent impact on service delivery, Indigenous people do not have the same access to sport and recreation as do the non-Indigenous population.

The Territory economy has been growing steadily over the past few years with general increases experienced in most economic indicators. Demand for sport and recreation will continue as socio economic conditions for Territorians grow.

## Stakeholders

It is important that stakeholders are actively engaged in the development of sport and active recreation. The best results will be achieved when stakeholders work together and work towards the common goal of a vibrant and effective sport and recreation community.

### Northern Territory Government

The Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sport, through the Division of Sport and Recreation, supports organisations to encourage participation in sport and recreation activities; to develop sporting excellence through the Northern Territory Institute of Sport; to develop, manage and maintain key sporting facilities and to arrange sporting events.

The Department of Education and Training, through the school curriculum and School Sport NT, encourages school students to maintain an active lifestyle that promotes health and vitality. It promotes a holistic approach to health and physical education and the importance of taking action for life.

The Department of Health and Families, works with a number of government and non-government organisations to implement related preventative health initiatives in areas like nutrition, substance abuse and mental health.

### Australian Government

The Australian Sports Commission (ASC) is the Australian Government body that provides national leadership in all facets of sport from the elite level through to the wider sporting community.

The ASC provides grant funding directly to sports organisations, and funding to the Northern Territory Government to assist in delivery of Northern Territory based sport activities such as the Indigenous Sports Program.

The Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) aims to achieve better health and active ageing for all Australians. One of DoHA's priorities is to focus the health and aged care system more on healthy lifestyles, prevention and early intervention of chronic disease.

### Local Government

Local government is responsible for the management of sport and recreation facilities and infrastructure including parks and reserves, footpaths and other recreational tracks located within council boundaries. Some undertake the delivery of sport and recreation programs.

The Northern Territory Government funds shire councils to employ Community Sport and Recreation Officers in Indigenous communities

#### Peak bodies

A peak organisation is the single sport or recreation organisation responsible for representing the Northern Territory and developing its primary sport or recreation activity and its affiliated clubs/branches and associations. Most peak organisations are affiliated to a national body.

The Northern Territory Government funds 55 peak organisations.

#### Sporting Organisations (including sporting clubs)

An organisation with the primary purpose to administer a sport that meets the Australian Sports Commission's definition (refer to scope of discussion).

#### Recreation Organisations

An organisation with the core business to administer activities meeting the definition of physically active recreation activities (refer to scope of discussion).

#### Commercial businesses

A number of commercial enterprises offer organised sporting competition or physical recreation activities on a profit basis. Participation is on a "pay as you go" type method, or sometimes referred to as "takeaway sport". These enterprises are generally indoor facilities and are staffed by paid employees.

#### Community

This includes Territorians who are involved, either on a paid or voluntary basis, in sport and active recreation activities as players/participants, coaches, officials, administrators and spectators.