



16<sup>th</sup> August 2010

Disability Care and Support  
Productivity Commission  
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To whom this may concern,

Please find following Wheelchair Sports Victoria's submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Disability Care and Support.

Established in 1962, Wheelchair Sports Victoria is the leading provider of sport and recreation programs for Victorians with a disability. Our mission is to provide and promote positive health outcomes for Victorians with a disability through participation in sport and recreation.

In our view, service coordination, service promotion and a focus on individual needs is key to creating better ways of helping people with disability to access the most appropriate sport or recreation activity. By navigating the institutionalised nature of sports provision and allocating physical and financial resources we are best able to adopt a person-centred approach to supporting people with disability.

We are grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this Inquiry.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rob Anderson".

Rob Anderson  
Chief Executive Officer



## **Wheelchair Sports Victoria Submission to Productivity Commission Inquiry into Disability Care and Support**

### **Wheelchair Sports Victoria**

Formed in 1962, Wheelchair Sports Victoria is the leading provider of sport and recreation opportunities for people with a disability in Victoria. Wheelchair Sports Victoria employs a total of 45 paid staff and has many volunteers who regularly assist.

We are a state government registered Disability Service Provider, Registered Community Group Program Provider with TAC and a State Sporting Association.

***Our mission: to provide and promote positive health outcomes for Victorians with a disability through participation in sport and recreation.***

***Our values: access, equity and respect.***

***Our vision: a community where there is access and equity for all.***

Wheelchair Sports Victoria has almost 900 members, who have a range of disabilities including paraplegia and quadriplegia, lower and upper limb amputees, spina bifida and cerebral palsy. We have members in metropolitan, regional and rural Victoria of all ages. Wheelchair Sports Victoria provides programs across 22 different sports including: Athletics (track and field), Wheelchair Basketball, Handcycling, Lawn Bowls, Wheelchair Rugby, Shooting, Swimming, Tennis, Rowing, Cerebral Palsy Football, Table Tennis, Junior Recreation Camps, Sports Development Camps and the Active Masters Program for people over 40 years of age with a disability. In the past 12 months approximately 500 Victorians with disability accessed direct service programs. and hundreds more accessed programs we deliver with our partners in the sector.

Our community education and disability awareness program, **WheelTalk** reaches 20,000 young Victorians in schools, tertiary institutions, community groups and youth justice centres annually

and it continues to grow. WheelTalk presenters share their personal story of disability and how participation in sport helped in their recovery and the importance of physical activity for everyone. We are preparing to launch a disability awareness program, IMPACT, which is designed for Victorian workplaces.

In February 2010 we commenced planning an innovative pilot program, “**Rehabilitation to Recreation**” to introduce sport and recreation to people with a recently acquired disability in Victorian Rehabilitation settings. Inpatients will be able to try a range of sport and recreation opportunities through the Mobile Sports Equipment Library and with the support of trained program staff. A peer support model is being developed to support this initiative and to assist inpatients in their transition from rehabilitation settings back into the community. Implementation of Rehabilitation to Recreation will commence as a pilot program in November 2010.

### **A Social Model of Health: Linking sport and recreation participation to better health outcomes for Victorians with disability**

In Victoria, 64.2% of adult males and 61.2% of adult females are sufficiently active to enjoy the health benefits of physical activity (AIHW, 2008). Participation rates are up to 3 times lower than average among people with disabilities. Just 28.2% of males with a disability and 21.1% of females with a disability participate in sport or physical recreation (ABS, 2008).

Physical activity, social connection and freedom from discrimination are among the key social and economic determinants of mental and physical health (Participation for health: A framework for action 2009 – 2013, VicHealth 2010).

Anecdotal evidence from Wheelchair Sports Victoria members has reported that participation in sport and recreation has reduced the impact of their disability and has made it easier to contribute to other aspects of community, working and family life. This has positive effects for carers, friends, family members, colleagues as well as broader economic, health and social impacts.

### **Services to Address Barriers to Participation**

Whilst many people with disability would like to participate in sport and active recreation there are many barriers, including:

- confusion about how to get started;
- the type of sports they can play;
- what services are on offer;

- transport to and from programs;
- accessible accommodation at sporting events;
- access to equipment needed to participate (eg. sports wheelchairs);
- financial barriers;
- nervousness about being accepted by peers and local club officials; and
- physical accessibility of venues including accessible toilets, club rooms etc.

Wheelchair Sports Victoria is addressing some of these barriers to sport and recreation participation by improving coordination of sector services, educating the community and implementing outreach programs.

Wheelchair Sports Victoria aims to address this barrier through the development of the “Sports Access” Model to be launched on International Day of People with Disability on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2010. The Sports Access Model features a website with search engine function and a 1800 number.

- **1800 Access Number** – people with disabilities or their carers, can speak to trained “sports navigators” to receive up to date information on opportunities according to specific criteria such as disability type, location, age, gender and/ or sport and recreation interests.
- **Sports Access** web-based search function. The user can search for their activity of choice according to pre-established criteria such as disability type, location, age and/ or gender. The search engine will provide the most appropriate sport and recreation activities according to the criteria entered. For example, a person can input that they have Quadriplegia and wish to participate in a program in Shepparton. The search would then provide a complete list of the sports that are available for their type of disability, for example Wheelchair Rugby, and the details of service providers coordinating these programs.

Wheelchair Sports Victoria also addresses barriers to participation through adopting innovative outreach programs and events which promote collaboration amongst key stakeholders, including:

- Development of the “**Rehabilitation to Recreation**” Program which introduces sport and recreation to people with recently acquired disabilities in Victorian rehabilitation setting. The program is also accessible to people that have recently departed the rehabilitation system through ongoing peer support and a mobile sports equipment library. The purpose of the Mobile Sports Equipment Library is to provide access to

equipment and resources free of charge so that people with disabilities can try a range of sport and recreation activities and find something they like. Through our volunteer peer support networks and expertise of Wheelchair Sports Victoria staff we will then assist people with disabilities to continue to participate in the sporting activity or their choice when they leave the rehabilitation centre.

- **2010 Disability Sport and Recreation Festival 'Able and Active'** – The Festival is an interactive, unique public event promoting healthy, physically active lifestyles through participation in accessible and inclusive sport and recreation. The Disability Sport and Recreation Festival "Able and Active" will bring together more than 15 community organisations which focus on sport and recreation opportunities, equity and health issues for Victorians with disability, in an exhibition-style, free public event. The Festival will be a great opportunity for the sector to unite around common goals of "participation and equity for health" and will provide a one-stop-shop for consumers of disability sport and recreation, carers, family and friends.

The Festival will begin with the Annual Disability Sports Awards Breakfast where sports men and women with disabilities are awarded for their outstanding achievements. This is a ticketed event and will be held at Zinc at Federation Square.

Members of the public will be able to speak with representatives from community-focused organisations exhibiting at the Festival to find out what kind of sport and recreation activities are available to them. Visitors to the festival can participate in a range of "come and try" style activities, for example wheelchair rugby, shooting hoops from a sports wheelchair, blind sports etc. The exhibition will take place in the forecourt areas of Federation Square.

A "Workplace Challenge" wheelchair basketball knock-out style competition will be held during lunch time at the event. Teams for the "Workplace Challenge" can be made up of people of all abilities to encourage a greater understanding of the issues facing people with a disability by people who do not have a disability.

A range of speakers will be invited to present at the "Scoring the Equaliser" Mini-Conference which will run as part of the festival. The Mini-Conference theme is "towards better health for Victorians with disability through equal opportunities in community sport and recreation. As part of our commitment to equity, the conference will be a free event however, delegates must register to attend.

The Disability Sport and Recreation Festival is supported by the State Government Victoria, City of Melbourne and Federation Square and will be held on International Day of People with Disability.