

MORE VICTORIANS IN THE GAME

VICSPORT POLICY AGENDA
AUGUST 2014



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VICSPORT

As the peak body for sport and active recreation, Vicsport represents the collective interests of Victoria's single largest community sector. With over 170 member groups, 16,000 clubs and associations, and 1.8 million participants, workers and volunteers, the community sport and active recreation sector makes a significant contribution to the social, physical, mental and economic wellbeing of our communities.

Vicsport's purpose is to build the capacity and capability of members and stakeholders to enable, encourage and assist more Victorians and Victorian communities to enjoy the benefits that sport and active recreation can provide.

Vicsport's Strategic Plan 2014-16 outlines the organisation's priorities to achieve this goal:

- Building the capacity of the sport sector
- New and non-affiliated participation in community sport
- Volunteering
- Strengthening government relations
- Financial diversity
- Communication and brand

Vicsport's policy agenda represents a key component of this strategy by presenting the views of key stakeholders in community sport in Victoria. The priority areas highlighted through this document have been identified through extensive consultation with state sporting organisations, regional sport assemblies, key sporting bodies in the state, local government sport and active recreation departments and a wide range of professionals and volunteers working to improve the lives of Victorians through sport.

VICSPORT'S POLICY AGENDA

Victoria is undergoing substantial change. The state's population is growing, diversifying and ageing. People are moving to new growth areas; the balance is shifting between urban, regional and rural communities. Society is becoming increasingly time-poor and, for many, more restricted in terms of budget. Changing lifestyles and competing forms of entertainment have created a complex landscape.

Victoria is facing increasing health, social and community cohesion challenges born out of these changes. Victorians are becoming less active, more unhealthy and are finding it more difficult to connect with their communities. Sport and active recreation plays an important role in addressing these challenges. But it can do more.

It is now more critical than ever to get more Victorians regularly participating, using our sporting facilities and joining our sport clubs and teams.

To support this objective, the sport and active recreation sector is calling for a coordinated response from the next state government, led by the sport and recreation portfolio but with commitments from multiple portfolio areas.



GETTING MORE VICTORIANS PARTICIPATING IN SPORT, USING OUR SPORTS FACILITIES AND JOINING OUR COMMUNITY CLUBS TO DELIVER A HEALTHIER, BETTER CONNECTED VICTORIA.

THE KEY PRIORITIES OF THE NEXT STATE GOVERNMENT RELATED TO VICTORIAN COMMUNITY SPORT SHOULD BE:

PRIORITY	POLICY INITIATIVES
<p>1 WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT APPROACH TO MAXIMISE THE BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY SPORT</p> <p>Broaden the areas of government investing in the health, social and community benefits of community sport and active recreation.</p>	<p>1.1 Develop a whole-of-government investment plan for sport and active recreation programs and facilities.</p> <p>1.2 Institute a year round 'get active' campaign.</p> <p>1.3 Enhance capacity within the state education sector to promote sport and physical education in schools and enable increased community access to school facilities.</p>
<p>2 STRENGTHEN VOLUNTEERING AND ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY</p> <p>Direct long term support to sport and active recreation volunteers and organisations to assist them to respond to Victorians' need for more flexible and social sport participation options.</p>	<p>2.1 Implement singular, multi-year government funding agreements for state and regional sporting organisations.</p> <p>2.2 Prioritise funding for sport organisations offering flexible participation and membership options.</p> <p>2.3 Commit a minimum of one third of government volunteer funding to directly support sport volunteering outcomes.</p>
<p>3 IMPROVE FACILITY ACCESS FOR COMMUNITY SPORT ORGANISATIONS</p> <p>Prioritise regular and affordable access for community sport and active recreation organisations through facility funding schemes.</p>	<p>3.1 Develop a State Government sport and active recreation facility investment plan.</p> <p>3.2 When awarding state government funding for new sporting infrastructure or facility upgrades, strengthen criteria related to access for community sport organisations and multi-sport use.</p>
<p>4 INVEST IN PARTICIPATION FOR PEOPLE WHERE COST IS A BARRIER</p> <p>Strengthen community club participation through a targeted subsidy scheme.</p>	<p>4.1 Establish a scheme to subsidise club membership costs for children and young people for whom cost is a barrier.</p> <p>4.2 Pending successful outcomes of a club membership subsidy scheme for children and young people, extend the initiative to include other Victorians at need.</p>

SPORT AND ACTIVE RECREATION IN VICTORIA – THE CURRENT CONTEXT

Victoria prides itself on the sporting achievements of the state's athletes and as the host of the country's most iconic sports events. Victorian teams and athletes consistently excel in national and international competition, Melbourne has been named the sporting capital of the world on four separate occasions¹ and the intensity and passion Victorians have for sport is unmatched in any other state.

Far from the realm of elite and high performance sport, community sport and active recreation provide health benefits and social support networks for Victorians, promote community cohesion across Victoria and draw in a diverse range of people across the state. But only a small percent of Victorians are able to regularly participate in community sport and active recreation.

APPROXIMATELY 40% OF VICTORIANS OVER THE AGE OF FIFTEEN PARTICIPATE IN SOME FORM OF ORGANISED SPORT OR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY; HOWEVER, JUST 12.4% PARTICIPATE ON A REGULAR BASIS.²

The community sport and active recreation sector is under pressure as a result of changes in the Victorian population in terms of lifestyle choices, geographic location and increasing diversity. Community sport organisations are increasingly challenged in their efforts to provide relevant, affordable and accessible opportunities to engage in sport and recreation by rising delivery costs, difficulties in getting access to appropriate facilities, changes in volunteering trends, reduced emphasis on sport in schools and a societal shift toward recreational physical activity and social participation.

The clear implication is that sport organisations need to develop service offerings that are more responsive to the changing socio-cultural and economic landscape; in particular, there is a need to address changes in how people want to engage with sport and physical activity by offering more flexible and social participation options. The need to address the impact of these societal changes is consistent across various aspects of the sector, including participation, membership, workforce and club development offerings.



In many cases addressing the changing needs will require change within a sport at state, regional and local level. This change extends beyond membership models: it can entail re-defining the sport's consumer base;³ brokering partnerships with private providers; initiating innovative commercial arrangements; and developing associated workforce development strategy that is able to account for the impact of the volunteer intensive nature of community sport.⁴ This level of change requires a whole-of-sport commitment that comprises capacity building at all levels, including clubs' and associations' committees and senior administrators, boards, executive and professional staff working at a state level, as well as those working in regional organisations and through local government. The sport and active recreation sector is committed to these changes to ensure more Victorians can access flexible, social and responsive sport participation options.

As Victoria's population continues to become more obese, age, grow and diversify, pressures on the state's health, education and community service sectors will intensify. In this context, there is a substantial evidence base underscoring the important contribution that community sport and active recreation can make to reduce these escalating financial pressures that threaten to cripple future government expenditures.

REGULAR PARTICIPATION IN SPORT AND ACTIVE RECREATION OFFERS INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY BENEFITS CONTRIBUTING TO A RANGE OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC OBJECTIVES.

The sport and active recreation sector looks forward to working with the next Victorian government to evolve the sport sector to maximise these benefits. Specifically, the sector is calling for: whole-of-government support to strengthen community sport including volunteering; subsidies for participation costs for children and young people where cost is a barrier; investment in facility access in concert with facility development; and streamlined funding and compliance requirements to bolster organisational capacity in the sector.

¹ Sports Business Insider: Melbourne wins top sports city gong (Vojdinovski, 2014)

³ Market Segmentation for sport participation (Australian Sports Commission, 2013).

² In 2010 1,791,100 Victorians over the aged 15 or over participated in organised physical activity for exercise, recreation and sport over a 12month period [40.9% of Victorians]. Of these participants only 541,200 participated three or more times a week [12.4% of Victorians] (Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport, 2011).

⁴ Sport policy development and implementation in context: Researching and understanding the perceptions of community-end users (Donaldson et al., 2011).

KEY PRIORITIES

- 1 WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT APPROACH TO MAXIMISE THE BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY SPORT
- 2 STRENGTHEN VOLUNTEERING AND ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY
- 3 IMPROVE FACILITY ACCESS FOR COMMUNITY SPORT ORGANISATIONS
- 4 INVEST IN PARTICIPATION FOR PEOPLE WHERE COST IS A BARRIER

PRIORITY 1: WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT APPROACH TO MAXIMISE THE BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY SPORT

BROADEN THE AREAS OF GOVERNMENT INVESTING IN THE HEALTH, SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY SPORT AND ACTIVE RECREATION.

CONTEXT

Victoria is facing increasingly complex health, social and community issues. Victoria's population is expected to soar to 10 million by 2051, including a net migration increase of 2.7 million people. The percentage of the population aged 65 and over is also projected to increase from 14.1% in 2011 to 21.4% in 2051.⁵

At the same time the country is facing an obesity and physical inactivity epidemic. Fifty seven percent of the population does not meet the recommended physical activity levels for good health.⁶

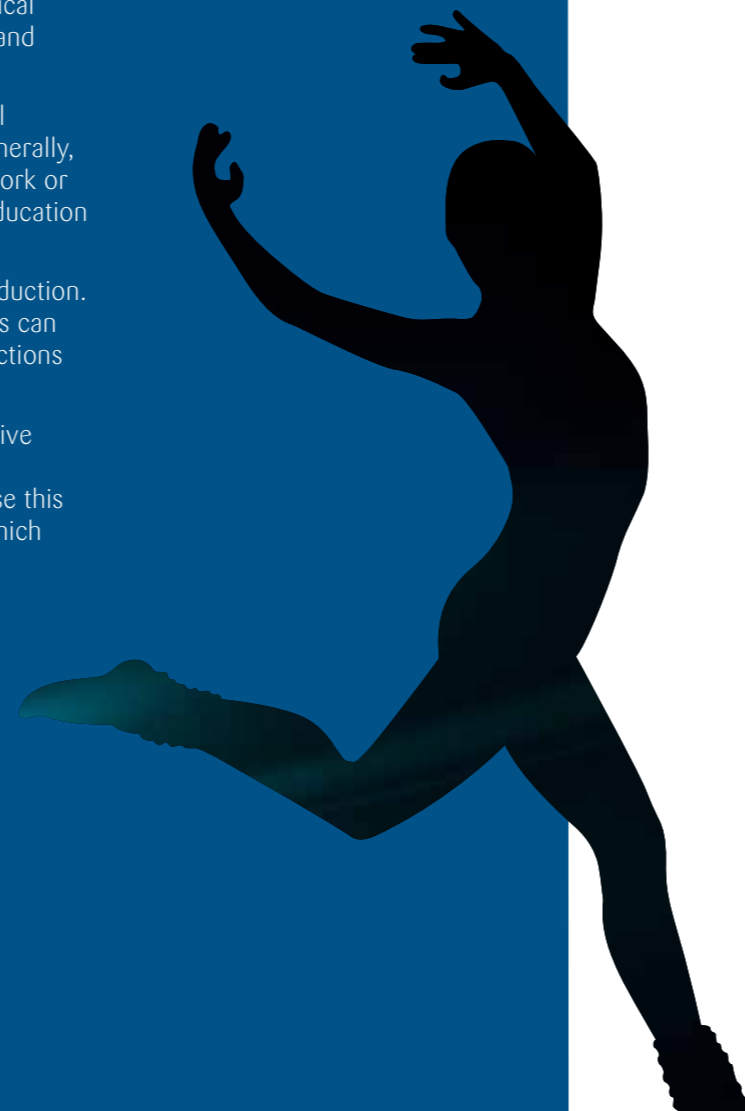
SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY BENEFITS OF ORGANISED SPORT

In this context the value of investing in getting more Victorians physically active is well recognised. Less understood are the much broader social and community benefits of investment in organised sport and active recreation. A growing evidence base points to extensive social and community returns, additional to the physical health benefits,⁷ that are derived from people participating in organised sport and active recreation.

Club-based sport and active recreation play an important role in integrating all people into the Victorian community, be they new arrivals or older adults. Generally, people involved in sport enjoy better mental health, social connections and work or educational outcomes. Students who take part in quality sport and physical education in the school environment consistently produce better academic results.

There is also a correlation between increased sport participation and crime reduction. Australian and international research has shown funding sport-based programs can provide up to 5:1 social return on investment through savings related to reductions in crime, truancy, substance abuse and ill health.⁸

Through well planned and appropriately delivered interventions, sport and active recreation can make effective and highly cost efficient contributions towards addressing some of the social and economic issues facing Victorians. To realise this potential, investment is required from the broad range of portfolio areas to which sport and active recreation can contribute.



POLICY INITIATIVES

- 1.1 Develop a whole-of-government investment plan for sport and active recreation programs and facilities.

Establish a whole-of-government taskforce to develop a coordinated plan to invest in the health, social and educational outcomes of participation in sport and active recreation, with defined contributions from the sport and recreation, health, education, community development and planning portfolio areas.

- 1.2 Institute a year round 'get active' campaign

Change the Premier's 'Active April' to become a year round public campaign integrated with the various 'healthy communities' programs in many local government areas. The campaign has a significant focus on promoting the health, well-being and community cohesion benefits of participating in organised sport and active recreation clubs.

- 1.3 Enhance capacity within the state education sector to promote sport and physical education in schools and facilitate community access to school facilities

Enhance human resource and budgetary capacity within the Department of Education to promote, assist and monitor:

- the provision of quality, mandated sport and physical education in Victorian schools; and,
- outside of school hours access to school sporting facilities for community sport and active recreation groups.

⁵ Victoria In Future 2014 (Department of Planning, Transport and Local Infrastructure, 2014).

⁶ Australian health survey: Physical Activity, 2011-12 (ABS, 2013).

⁷ See Eime et al., 2013; Kay and Dudfield, 2012; Kidd and Donnelly, 2007.

⁸ Sport Scores: The cost and benefits of sport for crime reduction (Ecroys, 2012) & Red Dust Role Models: Alcohol Education & Community Liaison Program Social Return on Investment Forecast (Red Dust, 2014).

PRIORITY 2: STRENGTHEN VOLUNTEERING AND ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY

DIRECT AND LONG TERM SUPPORT FOR SPORT AND ACTIVE RECREATION VOLUNTEERS AND ORGANISATIONS TO ASSIST THEM TO RESPOND TO VICTORIANS' CHANGING PARTICIPATION NEEDS.

CONTEXT

The way Victorians are engaging with sport and active recreation is shifting. Changes in people's lifestyles, work habits and leisure time are impacting on when and how individuals and families can play, volunteer in and support sport.

At the same time, regional growth, increasing cultural diversity and an ageing population in Victoria are having an impact on the sport and physical activity services that Victorians want.⁹ Organised and club-based sport offers the most substantial returns in terms of health, well being and social connectivity;¹⁰ however, people are increasingly looking for more social and less structured options.¹¹ This trend is putting substantial pressure on the sector's volunteers, workforce and organisations to deliver sport that meets the needs of Victorian communities.

CHANGING VOLUNTEERING TRENDS

Strengthening the capacity of sport volunteers to offer more flexible, social and connected sport participation options must be a priority in responding to broader societal change. Volunteers are a critical element in the delivery of community sport and active recreation.¹² Victoria's volunteers contribute almost \$5billion to the Victorian economy. More than one third of these volunteers donate their workforce hours to the sport and recreation sector, to the value of \$1.2billion.¹³ But the nature of volunteering is also changing, and with it, what the sector needs from volunteers. Volunteers outside the traditional catchment are required. Young people, those from culturally diverse backgrounds and older Victorians are currently underrepresented in sport volunteer cohorts but offer the most potential to support Victorian's changing sport and recreation needs.¹⁴ Supporting such a diversified pool of volunteers is complex and demands additional capacity and expertise in volunteer driven organisations, including state, regional and community sport and active recreation clubs. It is crucial for the government to re-invest a percentage of the contribution sport volunteers make to the Victorian economy to directly supporting the recruitment, capacity building and retention of community sport volunteers. This investment will not only ensure more Victorians can access the benefits of community sport and active recreation, but it will also protect the current economic contribution made by sport volunteers.

⁹ The Future of Australian Sport produced by CSIRO in partnership with the Australian Sports Commission describe these trends as 'The Perfect Fit' and 'Everyone's Game'. People are having to fit sport into their increasingly busy and time-fragmented lifestyles, while the shifting demographic and cultural make up of Australia is changing the types of sports Australians play and how they wish to play them (Hajkowicz, 2013).

¹⁰ Participation rates in individual activities like running, walking, cycling and gym membership have risen dramatically in the past decade while participation in many traditional sports have stagnated or declined (Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport, 2011).

¹¹ Participation rates in individual activities like running, walking, cycling and gym membership have risen dramatically in the past decade while participation in many traditional sports have stagnated or declined (Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport, 2010).

¹² Sports volunteering: Play to your strengths (Volunteering Victoria, 2013).

¹³ The Economic Value of Volunteering to Victoria (Ironmonger, 2012).

¹⁴ Both the Independent Sports Panel (2009) report on the Future of Australian sport and the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria's report on youth-centered volunteering (Wynne, 2011) have recognised the potential to engage under-represented groups in sport and broader volunteering opportunities.

¹⁵ Vicsport Chief Executive Officer Survey (Vicsport, 2014).

Organisational capacity and long-term financial sustainability are also key challenges across the sport and active recreation sector. Organisational capacity and sustainability were cited as key issues facing the sector by 75.6% of state sporting organisations' CEOs.¹⁵ Government funding is an important source of revenue for state and regional sporting organisations. Government support for sport directly reduces the cost incurred by Victorians to access quality sport and assists state and regional level organisations to build the capacity of volunteers, local clubs and associations. However, the range of government funding schemes places an administrative burden on sporting organisations, in particular for state and regional level agencies. Streamlining funding, reporting and compliance requirements would improve productivity across these organisations. Specifically, multi-year funding and partnership arrangements which are aligned to the strategic plans of the respective organisations are requested.

POLICY INITIATIVES

- 2.1 Implement singular, multi-year government funding agreements for state and regional sporting organisations.

Longer-term, consolidated funding would assist state and regional sporting organisations to implement more strategic sustainable support for local clubs and associations, address retention across the sport workforce and ultimately better meet the changing demands of Victorians. Increased capacity and financial sustainability of sporting organisations will result in an enhanced ability to develop and to cater for increased participation, diversity and inclusion.

- 2.2 Prioritise funding for sport organisations offering flexible participation and membership options.

Prioritise investment in sporting organisations with strategies that respond to changing participation trends, in particular the rise in flexible, social and non-affiliated participation.

- 2.3 Commit a minimum of one third of government funding for volunteering to directly support sport volunteering outcomes.

Mandate that whole-of-government investment in volunteering includes direct support for sporting organisations, or clearly delivers outcomes for sport volunteers. This investment should be proportionate to the percentage of total volunteer numbers in the state that sport volunteers represent, currently over thirty-three percent.



PRIORITY 3: IMPROVE FACILITY ACCESS FOR COMMUNITY SPORT ORGANISATIONS

REGULAR AND AFFORDABLE FACILITY ACCESS FOR COMMUNITY SPORT AND ACTIVE RECREATION ORGANISATIONS.

CONTEXT

There is a strong positive association between the provision of sport facilities and the level of participation in sport.¹⁶ The state government committed \$35 million to upgrade or redevelop strategic sporting infrastructure and a further \$2 million for community sports facilities in the last Victorian State Budget.¹⁷ This commitment represents an important investment in ensuring more Victorians get to watch quality sport and makes a contribution to substantial local government investment in community sport and active recreation facilities.

FACILITY ACCESS CHALLENGES

Facility development and upgrades represent one component of the challenge. An equally important issue is ensuring that community sport and active recreation organisations are able to get regular and affordable access to existing sporting facilities. Rising access costs for community facilities and limited access to schools-based facilities are making it increasingly difficult for community sport and active recreation groups to provide opportunities for more Victorians to participate.

In particular, costs and access for indoor, aquatic and adventure sports present considerable challenges. Community sporting organisations are relegated to impractical use times or incur unsustainable cost. Facilitating affordable and regular access for community sport and active recreation clubs, including for smaller and special interest sports, is an important issue that the sport and active recreation sector is looking to the state government to take the lead on.

Arguments calling for facility access costs to be set at a level that enables full cost recovery for facility construction and operation do not account for the long term health, social and economic benefits communities enjoy when more people participate in club based sport and active recreation. It is proposed that when assessing the mix between funding, developer investment and access costs for community sporting facilities, methodology that accounts for the economic, social and environmental impacts be utilised.

¹⁶ In 2012, across the 79 LGAs in Victoria, and across seven of the largest sporting codes, there was a "strong" positive correlation between the number of facilities per 1,000 population and the number of membership registrations per 1,000 population (Eime, 2014).

¹⁸ In 2012, across the 79 LGAs in Victoria, and across seven of the largest sporting codes, the number of facilities per 1,000 population varied between 0.33 and 8.21, a 25-fold difference (Eime, 2014).

¹⁷ Supporting community sport through better infrastructure and integrity measures (Victorian Budget 2014-15).

POLICY INITIATIVES

3.1 Develop a state government sport and active recreation facility investment plan.

Establish a working group consisting of key stakeholders, including local government, sport and commercial operators, to develop a state government sport and active recreation facility investment plan. This plan should consider all available information, including the Statewide Facility Audit (completed by the Victorian State Government in 2012/13) and the Sport and Recreation Spatial analysis of facility coverage that shows considerable geographic variation,¹⁸ and use them as the basis for strategic decision making. The plan should define an appropriate ratio between state government investment in facility development and upgrade, facility access and sport development and should differentiate between major events and community sport investment.

3.2 When awarding state government funding for new sporting infrastructure or facility upgrades, strengthen criteria related to access for community sport organisations and multi-sport use.

State investment constitutes one component of multiple public and private investment streams in sport facility development. While recognising that the state government's contribution to total facility costs varies, an opportunity exists for the government to demonstrate further leadership in this space. Prioritising facility access for community sport clubs and multi-sport use as key criteria for funding, and as central to planning requirements, would positively impact on Victorians' ability to access sport facilities.



PRIORITY 4: INVEST IN PARTICIPATION FOR PEOPLE WHERE COST IS A BARRIER

STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY CLUB PARTICIPATION THROUGH A TARGETED SUBSIDY SCHEME.

CONTEXT

Participation figures suggest that just 12.4% of Victorians over 15 years of age take part in organised sport and active recreation on a regular basis.¹⁹ The link between early experiences of sport and active recreation and lifelong participation has been established.²⁰

PARTICIPATION RATES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FOR WHOM COST IS A BARRIER

While participation rates are higher amongst children, the rising cost to participate presents a substantial barrier to more wide spread involvement, in particular for children and young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds.²¹ In Australia, 80% of children in the highest socio-economic grouping participate in organised sport and active recreation; this percentage drops to just slightly over 50% in the lowest socio-economic grouping.²² Urgent intervention is required to make participation in sport and active recreation in Victoria more equitable and reduce the impact of cost as a barrier to participation.

POLICY INITIATIVES

4.1 Establish a scheme to subsidise club membership costs for children and young people for whom cost is a barrier.

Trials in Victoria and across Australia have indicated that directly subsidising club membership for at-need groups has a substantial impact on increasing membership (footnote 23). The time is right to establish such an initiative across Victoria in partnership with local government stakeholders.

4.2 Pending successful outcomes of a club membership subsidy scheme for children and young people, extend the initiative to include other Victorians at need.

¹⁹ Vicsport defines a regular basis as three or more times per week, see Participation in Exercise, Recreation and Sport: Annual Report 2010 (Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport, 2011).

²⁰ Multiple studies have indicated there is an association between childhood participation in sport and physical activity and on-going adult participation (Fuller et al., 2011; Scheerder et al., 2006; Perkins et al., 2004; Trudeau et al., 2004; and, Tammelin et al., 2003).

²¹ See Socio-ecological predictors of participation and dropout in organised sports during childhood (Vella et al., 2014) and Parental perceptions of barriers to children's participation in organised sport in Australia (Hardy et al., 2010).

²² Perspectives on Sport, July 2012 (ABS, 2012).

²³ Western Australia's Kidsport subsidy scheme supported almost 20,000 children who had previously not registered with a sport club take part in club based sport (Department of Sport and Recreation, 2014).

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State Sporting Associations

Regional Sports Assemblies

Regional Sport Victoria

Local Government Authorities

Local sporting clubs and associations

Victorian Institute of Sport

Sports Medicine Australia
(Victorian Branch)

Outdoors Victoria

School Sport Victoria

Sport & Recreation Spatial

LaTrobe University

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