

Sport Waitakere Community Sport Focus Group – 6 November 2008

Summary of responses from the three breakout groups

1. What is good in your sport?

1.1 Schools

- Increasing relationships with RSOs in many sports (Secondary School)
- Increased variety of sporting activities – growth of ‘new’ sports e.g. BMX, Mountain bike, surfing
- Wider ethnic involvement
- Increasing female participation
- Increasing participation in informal play – lunchtime etc, particularly at primary school
- Some ‘cheap’ sports growing e.g. kilikiti, touch football
- Beginnings of some school / club collaboration models (rather than competitive)
- School sport a ‘cheaper option’ than club sport

1.2 Clubs

- Evidence of some collaboration between clubs resulting in increased participation (e.g. athletics) and some multi-sport clubs emerging
- Junior numbers very good in many sports (Primary school age group)
- Gymnastics numbers helped by revamped Push-Play programme
- Gender amalgamation in clubs (Bowls and Soccer) helping participation numbers
- Family orientated activity with younger age-groups helping to retain players particularly football
- Younger children (below 5) becoming involved in many codes
- Revamped formats for sport helping shorter time frames (e.g. Mates in Bowls)

1.3 RSOs

- Emphasis on skill development with children now more apparent in many sports
- Growth of more ‘social sport’ options for youth and adults proving popular
- Family sports increasing – kilikiti, basketball, sailing, cycling, touch
- Junior numbers growing in many sports
- Lots of ‘Talent’ in Waitakere – as yet untapped – particularly strong Polynesian talent base
- Increasing cultural diversity in sport
- Venue quality improving with a move to more centralised facilities at elite level supported by Council

2: What stops it being better?

2.1 Schools

- Poor quality coaching – can sometimes get people to ‘coach’ but often these people are not trained or lack knowledge about the sport and/or coaching process
- Lack of facilities – just not enough of them
- Lack of funds pushing costs of participation beyond reach of many, including the burden of regional and national affiliation fees or levies. Also need to support costs incurred by volunteers – no budget to do this in RSOs or clubs or schools

- Often the same participants are paying affiliation fees twice when representing school and club in the same sports – this is seen as inequitable
- Little support from many RSOs
- Lack of flexibility of principals to allow participation in community clubs as opposed to school teams – considerable pressure to play for the ‘school’
- Schools and clubs (RSOs) have different philosophies around appropriate competition structures
- Lack of support (financial and logistical) for teachers willing to take sports teams
- Lack of volunteer support programmes – volunteer coaches, managers, officials are taken for granted and not acknowledged or supported
- Schools need to prioritise sport to a great extent – there is a general understanding of the role sport can play in people’s lives

2.2 Clubs

- Lack of specialist facilities – many sports are not able to operate effectively because they have to share facilities with inappropriate partners
- Lack of training facilities for turf based sports. Often match facilities are provided but the demand for training / practice facilities is high and cannot be borne by simply using the competitive facility because it gets to an unusable state (overuse)
- Overlap of seasons not allowing participants to play a summer and winter sport. An undesirable move by many sports to an 8-10 month involvement at community level. This length of season also works against recruiting volunteer support
- Lack of indoor facilities for sports like gymnastics who have to limit intake
- Too many clubs in small geographic area competing for people and dollars. Need more club collaborative models
- Schools not creating an environment of encouraging participants to stay linked with a community club and transition them into a club post-school. Schools appear only interested in participants while they are at school

2.3 RSO

- Access to facilities - lack of specialist facilities and cost of facility access from Council
- Funding application process – too much going to NSO / RSO and not available to clubs
- Funding application process (Community / Gaming Trusts) does not appear to support smaller sports
- Cost of equipment (e.g. sailing) is prohibitive for many
- Lack of sympathy for bike riders in terms of road usage
- Facility design poor particularly around parking requirements
- Lack of school role in transitioning participants into community club when they leave school (e.g. secondary schools happy to recruit students when they arrive in year 9 but don’t appear to care where they go when they leave school)
- Coaching standards – need better coach training so quality of coaching is improved
- Lack of coaches – club limiting team / player numbers because no coaches are available
- Demanding parents wanting an over sophistication of sporting experience too early. This results in high cost sport for young participants when it is not required
- Talented athletes blocked from progressing because of cost

- Waitakere has a lack of RSOs in its region therefore it tends to get under-serviced from predominantly Auckland or North harbour based RSOs
- Concept of professional sport is filtering too low in the system so that participation and fun for all is being under-minded
- Schools take little responsibility for development of coaches, officials etc. Just expect them to be available
- School sports is very elitist – 1st XI/XV and top teams looked after while others are provided sub-standard experience

3: What's changing in your sport?

3.1 Schools

- More opportunities to participate in wider range of sports (growth of extreme sports)
- Costs for participation are increasing particularly for any talent development initiative
- Increase in numbers wanting to participate but lack of space and facilities
- Communication with participants changing with use of technology – texting / emailing now the preferred options
- Lack of time to participate particularly as many students now work after-school to generate money for technology – phones / computers etc
- Some RSTs / RSOs increasing involvement in support of schools and clubs
- Quality of coaches is diminishing and less high quality coaches available
- Employment of coaches in schools for elite teams is resulting in 'rich school's getting stronger at the expense of other schools
- Emergence of sports academies in schools reinforcing elitist nature of school sport and opposed to a participate ethic

3.2 Clubs

- Trend to better governance and strategic planning in clubs
- Commercialisation of sport participants wanting rewards and semi-professional approach which is in a very competitive rather than collaborative club model
- Increase in interest from young children wanting club sport (4-8 years old)
- More 'social' players coming to clubs
- More sampling of sports so participants move from sport to sport more
- In some sports growth rate is rapid and sports administration and facility provision can't keep up
- Health and safety issues are becoming a bigger influence in choice of sport (especially parental choice)
- School Academics increasing pressure on players and don't build a school / club link – they are about marketing the school not about the best interests of the athlete. These academics also are reinforcing that school sport is elitist and therefore other kids drop out of sport

3.3 RSO

- Facility quality has had to improve to retain players
- Coaching quality is having to improve to retain players
- Increasing focus on elite and professional sport – more emphasis on talent and less emphasis on participation for fun / enjoyment

- Club model becoming too competitive in terms of clubs competing for elite players
- Payment of coaches / officials becoming the norm. Volunteer ethic becoming less evident
- Payment of officials, managers, coaches etc pushing up costs of participation
- Improvement in governance and strategic planning in clubs particularly in major clubs

4: How has your sport responded to those changes?

4.1 Schools

- Getting schools and principals to value sport more as a school priority. Often relies on change of principal
- Involving community clubs more in terms of coach provision
- Change format and presentation of the sport to be more 'market driven'
- Lobby councils around facility provision
- Recruit some younger coaches for children's sport – don't have to rely on mature adults
- Develop a wider market for sports – sports for all e.g. Waka Ama for all not just Maori

4.2 Clubs

- Make clubs more 'family friendly'
- Provide social sport options (e.g. Males in Bowls) and casual play option
- Providing more targeted roles for volunteers rather than long roles over long periods – smaller roles for shorter periods of time
- Revamped communication models with youth – texting and emailing becoming important and engaging youth

4.3 RSO

- Lack of facilities forced sport to look at other alternatives – e.g. schools. Some difficulties with access to schools but slowly being overcome
- Utilising the RST in terms of advice and support – starting to understand how they can add value
- Stressing fun / enjoyment element as opposed to competitive success particularly for social participants
- Wider range of comprehensive options – more age and ability appropriate
- Provide mid-week competition options as opposed to solely weekend
- Emphasised coach development as a priority
- Try and provide better communication / incentives for school leavers to return to club sport
- Developing resources / training for parent coaches
- Allocating better coaches to lower teams rather than always prioritising top teams

5: What needs to happen now in your sport?

5.1 School

- Increase range and access to facilities in community for some sports
- Increase access for community into school facilities
- Increase access for schools into community facilities with a more flexible approach from Councils
- Real problem of access to pools and extreme sport facilities – Councils need to recognise this rather than solely concentrate on traditional playing fields

- More equitable access charges to facilities from Councils
- Better links between clubs and schools – particularly in provision of coaching but also need to provide choice in terms of playing sport so duplication is reduced between clubs and schools
- Develop more ‘young coaches’

5.2 Clubs

- Clubs should provide activity for youth outside school commitments to retain contact with their members
- Reduce fees from NSOs and RSOs so that cost of participation are brought down
- SPARC should invest directly into clubs and grassroots rather than solely at national level
- Collaborative club models developed rather than competitive models particularly around talented players, fees and facilities
- Introduce stronger volunteer support programmes

5.3 RSO

- Introduce multi-sport programmes for young children
- Support volunteers better through support programmes
- Train coaches better at all levels
- Provide increased family, social and casual options in sport
- Work with Council around a facilities plan for Waitakere
- Promote the benefit (value of sport) of sport wider in the community
- Increase revenue streams to community sport to reduce costs of participation
- Invest in technology and modern communication modes in sport
- Develop a more collaborative approach to sport between schools, clubs, and RSOs, RSTs
- Facilities need improving – access to specialist facilities, increase availability to reduce costs of access, reduce cancellation issues on sports fields – improve quality.