

Determining the gender balance on Tasmanian state sporting organisation boards

Prepared by Ms Julia Tomat, Sport and Recreation Tasmania

August 2009

Contents

Background.....	3
Methodology.....	3
Results.....	4
Discussion of results.....	5
What is the composition of Tasmanian SSO boards?.....	5
How do Tasmanian SSOs compare with their National Sporting Organisations?.....	6
How many women are required on a board to influence decisions?.....	8
How does the sport and recreation sector compare to other sectors?.....	10
What are the barriers preventing more women becoming board members?.....	10
Why is having more women on boards important?.....	11
What strategies might encourage more women to take on board members.....	12
Conclusion.....	13
References.....	14
Appendix A.....	15

Background

Sport and Recreation Tasmania (SRT) is committed to providing a vibrant and innovative sport and recreation sector that provides participation opportunities for all Tasmanians.

A key component of this is the goal to develop “a sport and recreation sector that provides diverse opportunities for participation” (Goal 2 of SRT’s Strategic Plan).

To achieve this goal, SRT implements initiatives delivered solely by SRT (e.g. funding the 2008-09 Community Recreation Grants Program) and other projects delivered in collaboration with the Australian Sports Commission (ASC).

Projects delivered in collaboration with the ASC cover a broad range of areas including ethics, women in sport, junior sport, disability and sport and innovation and best practice.

With regard to women in sport, SRT and the ASC work collaboratively on a number of projects that include promoting the ASC’s Sport Leadership Grants for Women, providing support and promotional services to state sporting organisations (SSO’s) that receive ASC grants and attending annual women and sport meetings organised by the ASC.

This research project aims to provide SRT with an increased awareness of the gender balance on the boards of Tasmanian SSOs. This information will contribute to the future development of SRT’s strategic initiatives with regard to women in sport.

Methodology

This research project investigated **28** SSOs funded under SRT’s 2009 SGP.

In 2009, SRT launched a revised SGP, which placed SSOs into tiers based on their membership numbers.

The table below indicates the membership numbers required and the funding available to each of the tiers under the 2009 SGP.

	Membership numbers	Maximum funding available
Tier 1	>3 500	\$50 000
Tier 2	501 – 3 500	\$35 000
Tier 3	≤ 500	\$5 000

A total of 28 SSOs received funding through the 2009 SGP. This included nine Tier One SSOs, 12 Tier Two SSOs, and seven Tier Three SSOs.

To determine the gender balance of the boards of these SSOs, information was gathered from their websites and/or from their most recent annual reports. Please see Attachment A for a full list of organisations examined in this report.

This information was assessed to determine the number of females sitting on Tasmanian SSO boards and the number of females undertaking the role of president.

The same information was also collected for the corresponding national sporting organisations (NSOs) in order to provide a comparison. This information was gathered from the NSO websites and/or from their most recent annual reports.

Originally the research project scope included looking at the percentage of females sitting within the executive of the boards¹. However, once the research project began it became apparent that many of the Tasmanian SSO boards do not use this model. Many SSOs only elect a president with other members being 'general members', 'directors' or similar. On this basis, the information collected in this research report did not include information on board executives and instead focused on collecting information on the proportion of female presidents only.

Results

	Tier 1 SSOs	NSOs	Tier 2 SSOs	NSOs	Tier 3 SSOs	NSOs	All SSOs	All NSOs
Total funded:	9	9	12	12	7	7	28	28
Total board positions:	69	76	107	91	56	42	232	209
Number of vacancies:	0	0	3	3	1	0	4	3
Average number of members per board:	7.67	8.44	8.92	7.53	8.14	6	8.32	7.36
Number of women represented:	23 or 33.3%	18 or 23.7%	37 or 35.6%	18 or 20.5%	19 or 33.9%	9 or 21.4%	79 or 34.5%	45 or 21.8%
Average number of women per board:	2.56	2.00	3.08	1.50	2.71	1.29	2.82	1.61
Number of boards with a female president:	3 or 33.33%	3 or 33.33%	2 or 16.67%	1 or 8.33%	0	3 or 42.86%	5 or 17.86%	7 or 25%

¹ The executive of a board consists of the roles of president, vice-president, treasurer and secretary

Discussion of results

What is the composition of Tasmanian SSO boards?

Overall, Tasmanian SSOs average 8.32 members per board. Over the three tiers of sports the average number of board members was relatively similar ranging from 7.7 members in Tier One sports through to 8.9 within Tier Two sports.

The average number of female members reflected this pattern, with the average number of females similar across all tiers, with Tier Two sports having the highest average number of female board members (see Figure 1).

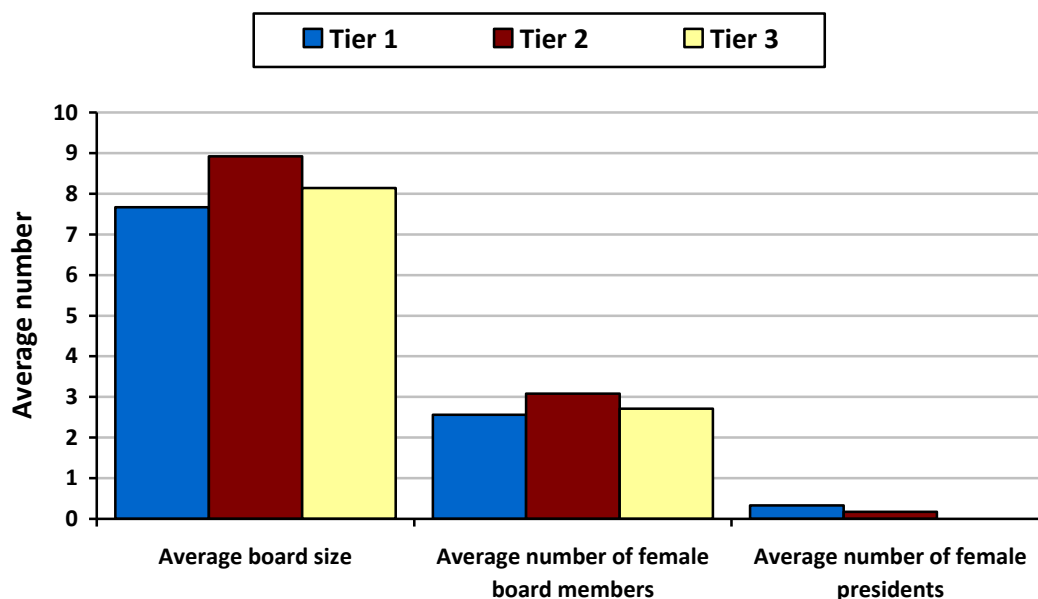


Figure 1: Average Board Composition for SSOs funded under the 2009 SGP

Over all the Tasmanian SSOs there were only four identified board vacancies, with two of these within a sport with a unitary model. This suggests that generally SSOs are able to find sufficient volunteer numbers to fill board positions.

Figure 2 (over page) shows that within the SSOs, the proportion of female board membership was fairly even ranging from 33 percent in Tier One sports to almost 36 per cent in Tier Two sports. However, the proportion of female presidents varied substantially across the three tiers. Thirty three percent of Tier One sports have female presidents, 17 percent of Tier Two sports have female presidents and no Tier Three sports have a female president.

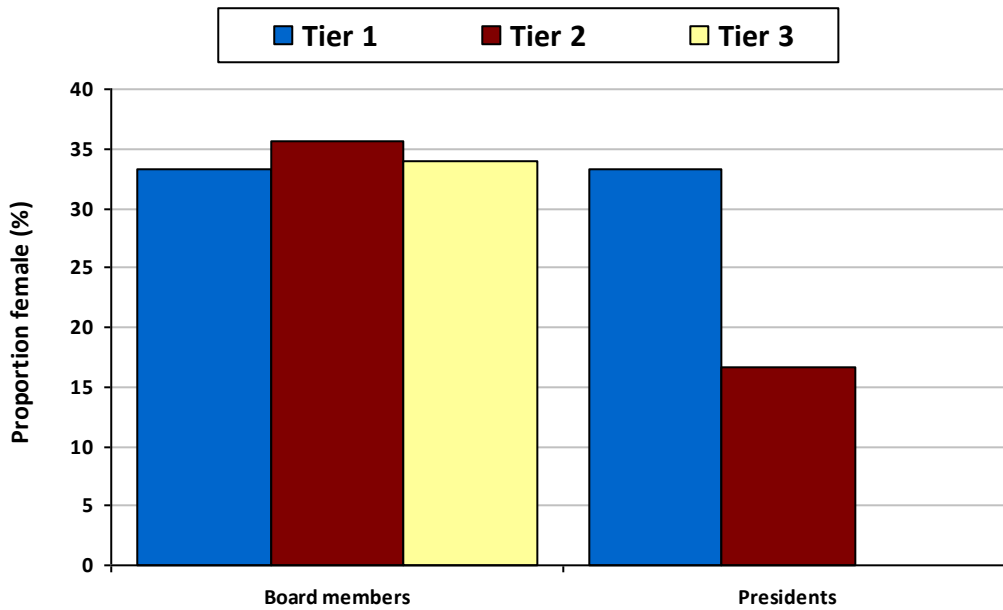


Figure 2: Comparison of the proportion of female board members and presidents amongst the three Tiers of sport

How do Tasmanian SSOs compare with their National Sporting Organisations?

It is interesting to compare the Tasmanian SSOs to their NSOs. As seen in Figure 3, at the SSO level there is a greater proportion of female board members in each organisation type.

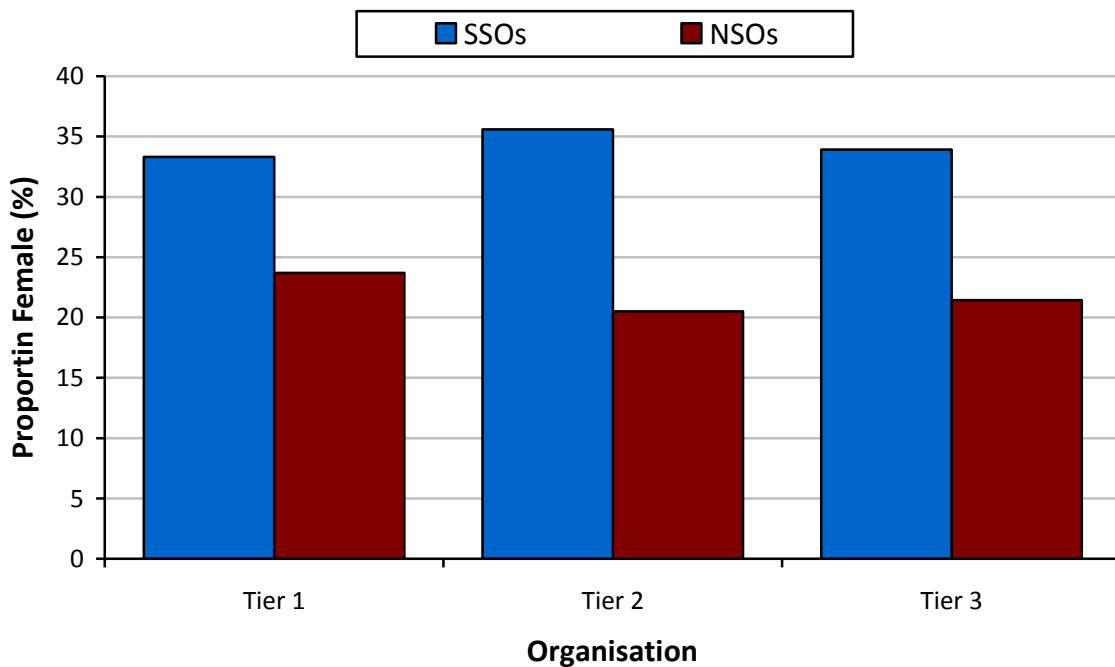


Figure 3: Proportion of female board members in Tasmanian SSOs and at national level

However, the difference in the proportion of female ‘presidents’ between Tasmanian SSOs and NSOs shows a slightly different picture, as seen in Figure 4, below. Tier One SSOs have the same proportion of female presidents at both national and state level and interestingly two of the three organisations that have female presidents at a state level also have them at a national level (hockey and netball). Tier Two SSOs had a greater proportion of female presidents than their NSOs while this trend was reversed for Tier Three sports.

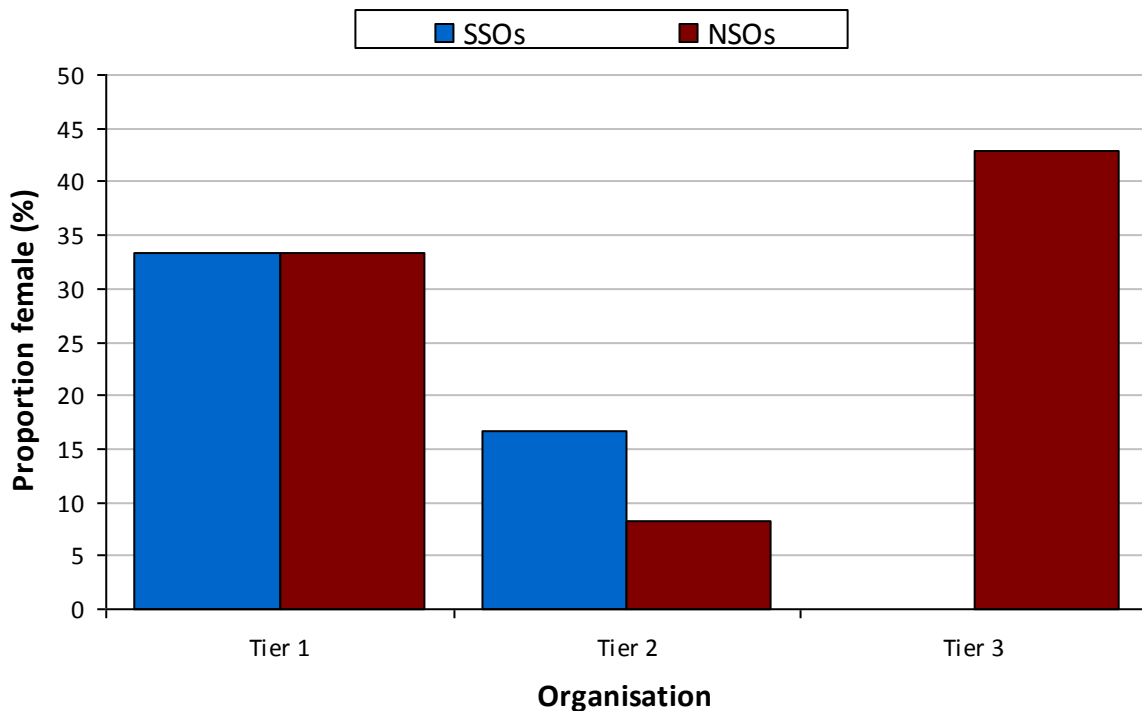


Figure 4: Proportion of female presidents in Tasmanian SSOs and national organisations.

As shown in Figure 5 (over page), Tasmanian SSOs had a higher proportion of female board members than their NSOs. However, there are a greater proportion of female presidents at NSO level than at the Tasmanian SSO level.

This equates to one female board member for every two men at the state level and one woman to every four men at the national level. This is an improvement from 2005 where at the NSO level there was only one woman for every seven men (Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee 2006).

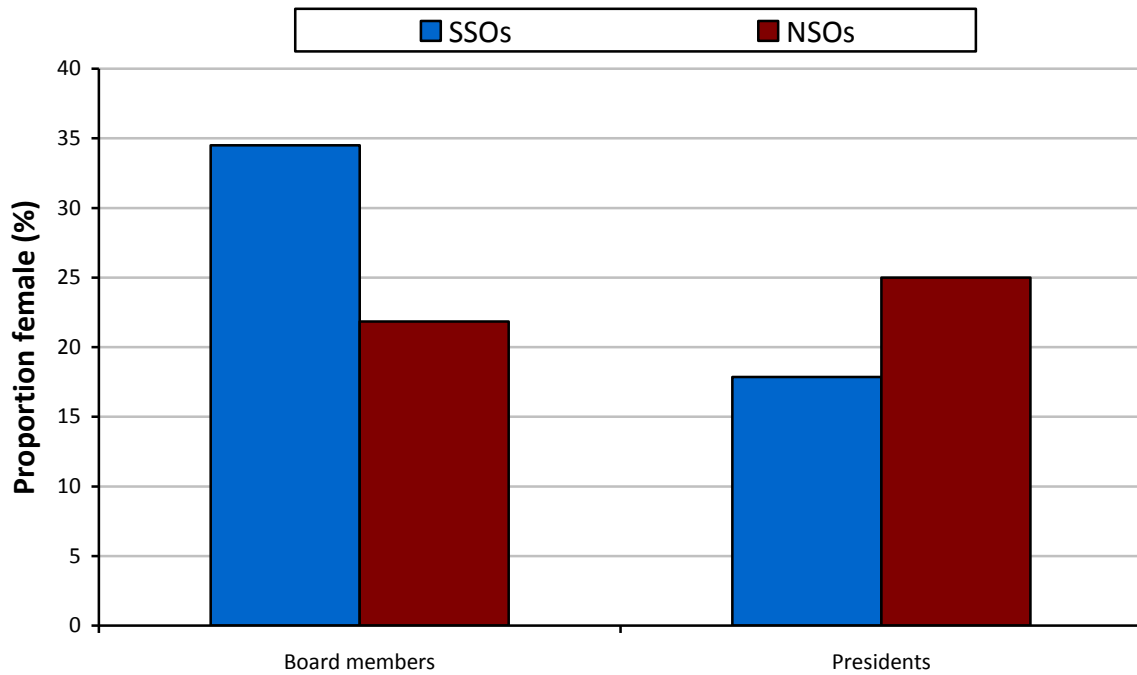


Figure 5: Proportion of female members in all Tasmanian and Australian organisations

How many women are required on a board to influence decisions?

A discussion paper by Oldenhove (n.d.) suggests that in order for a group to have any cultural effect on a board or committee there needs to be a level of representation above tokenistic. Oldenhove cites a study that suggests 10 per cent representation is merely tokenistic, 20 per cent representation means a voice is present, 30 per cent representation means the voice or position will be heard with at least 40 per cent representation required for real influence and involvement in decisions.

Within Tasmania, 39 per cent of the SSOs included in this study had 40 per cent or greater female representation on their boards (Figure 6). However, close to 11 per cent of organisations had no female board members with a further seven per cent having less than 10 per cent female members.

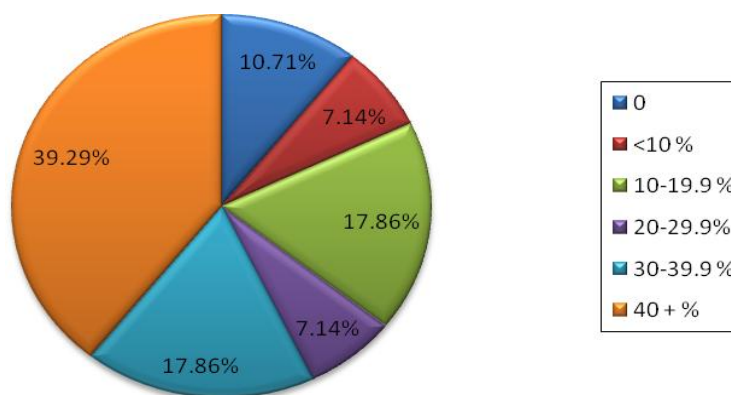


Figure 6: Proportion of female board members in Tasmanian organisations

However, Tasmanian SSO boards are performing at a better level on this measure than those at NSO level (Figure 7). Only 14 per cent of NSOs achieved 40 per cent or greater female representation on their boards, compared to Tasmania's 39 percent.

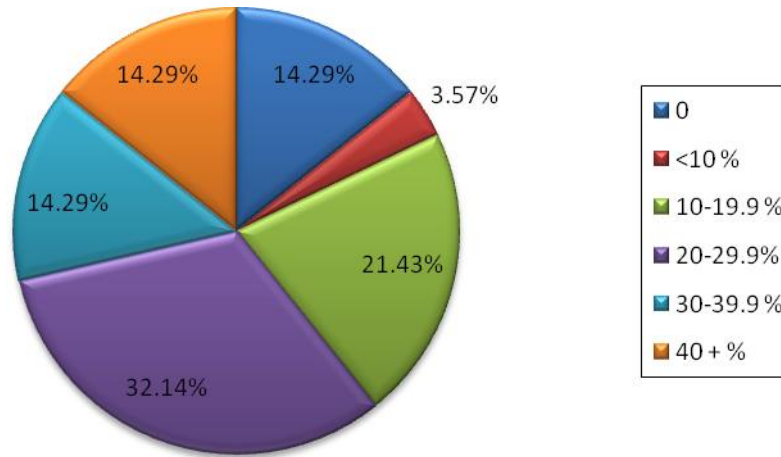


Figure 7: Proportion of female board members in Australian organisations

Further research by Konrad, Kramer and Erkut (cited in Medd and Braund, 2008) involved looking at the impact one, two and three women had in the board room. This research involved interviewing 50 Fortune 1000 female directors and CEOs as well as male CEOs. The comments made during these interviews suggest that while a lone woman can, and often does, have an impact on a board, two women are better than one and three women on a board makes a significant difference.

Looking at this measure Tasmanian SSOs outperformed NSOs at an even greater rate with 55.6 per cent of these SSOs having three or more female board members while only 14.8 per cent of NSOs had three or more females. See Figure 8 (over page) for a comparison at each tier.

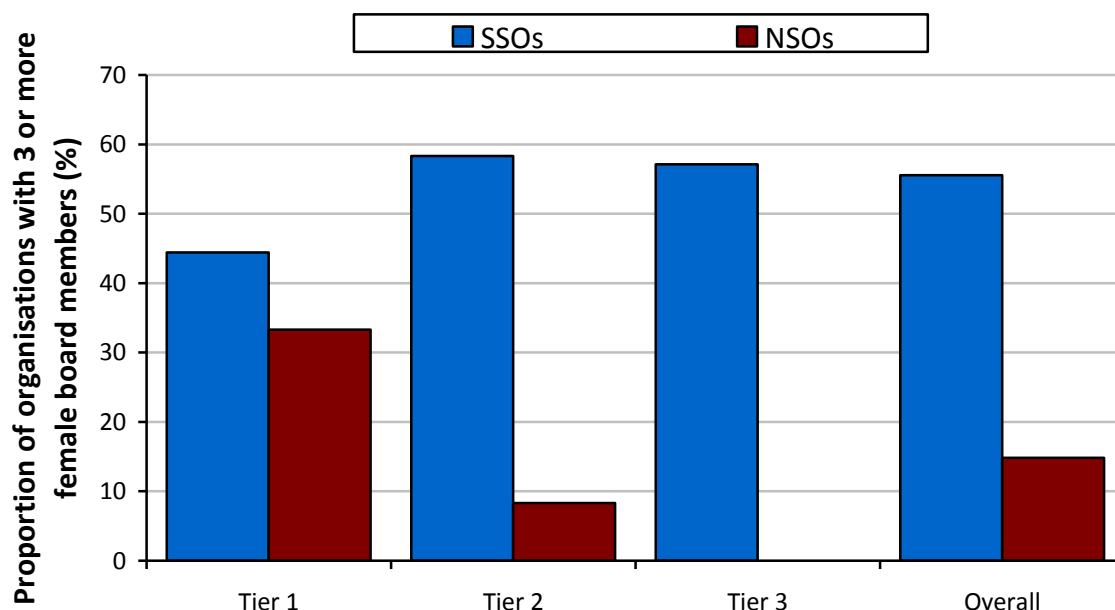


Figure 8: Proportion of organisations with three or more female board members

How does the sport and recreation sector compare to other sectors?

While there is no comparative data available for the not-for-profit sector, there is data available from the corporate sector. The EOWA 2008 Australian Census of Women in Leadership looks at the progress of women in corporate leadership amongst the companies listed on the ASX200 index of the Australian Stock Exchange. Amongst these companies women occupy only 8.3 per cent of board positions. This equates to approximately one female board member for every eleven male members. Only 49 per cent of these companies had at least one female board director compared to 90 per cent of Tasmanian SSOs and 85 per cent of NSOs.

What are the barriers preventing more women becoming board members?

A 2006 senate enquiry by the Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee into women in sport and recreation in Australia examined some of the barriers preventing women from advancing to leadership roles. The barriers identified included “the attitudes and perceptions of ‘male dominated sport culture’, perceptions and expectations of women, and work –life issues” (page 79).

Often the way sport is structured is in itself a barrier to more women taking on leadership roles. National boards are normally nominated by states and state nominations are often made by clubs. At club level many leadership positions are undertaken by men. This creates a vicious circle whereby organisations need women in these positions to act as role models to encourage more women to get involved at this level but the low numbers of female participants at club level means that women aren’t getting the opportunity to take on these roles. This is particularly true when sports adopt an internal recruitment process, filling positions discretionally or via a system of nominations and elections rather than adopting an open competitive process.

There is a lack of advocates within current leaders actively promoting and encouraging the participation of women in leadership roles. To improve women's participation levels leaders need to be comfortable with the language and ideas behind diversity. Current leaders are often seen as reluctant to embrace change and unmotivated to foster female talent (The Commission on the Future of Women's Sport, 2009).

Female leaders are often seen less favourably than males and are expected to meet higher standards of performance than males in similar positions. A common reason given for not appointing females to boards is that they lack the skills required to undertake the job. The SA Premier's Council for Women believe this argument is not evidenced based with many women having the required skills and experience but they lack the networks or recognition required to attain appointment (Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee 2006).

Work-life balance is also a commonly acknowledged barrier, with women still the primary caregivers in many families a substantial barrier is created when juggling work and family responsibilities with an additional commitment such as board membership. The SA Premier's Council for Women argues that offering reimbursement of child care and out of pocket expenses incurred as part of work undertaken for the board would encourage more women to take up the role (Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee 2006).

Why is having more women on boards important?

The Commission on the Future of Women's Sport (2009) cites research by McKinsey that shows organisations with diverse board membership are better at decision making and are more effective than those without. Diverse boards allow for more innovation and creativity due to the balance of skills and perspectives. As a result of their similar perspectives, boards that lack diversity tend to engage in 'group think' and stagnate.

Further research by McKinsey (cited in The Commission on the Future of Women's Sport, 2009) showed that successful organisations need both male and female leadership behaviours. Nine key organisational behaviours were examined with women scoring higher than men in the five behaviours of people management, role modelling, managing expectations and reward, inspiration and participative decision making.

Organisations that seek to appeal to women employ female leaders in order to assist them understand the female market at a strategic level. Women represent the biggest potential growth market available to sport. To capitalise on this it is vital that sport is attractive to these women and they are encouraged to participate. Underrepresentation of women at the senior level leads to the situation whereby sports are reasonably under equipped to understand and engage women in their product. Having females in board positions allows the sport to relate to the target audience, develop relevant role models and lead by example. While more women want to play sport the way sport is led and delivered has created a situation whereby it is failing to capitalise on the opportunity to grow grass roots participation through a lack of insight about how to target and engage women (The Commission on the Future of Women's Sport, 2009).

What strategies might encourage more women to take on board members?

Several strategies have been proposed to enhance the number of women taking on board positions within the sector. Some of these include:

- Providing appropriate role models for aspiring board members and to encourage sporting organisations to consider female board members (The Commission on the Future of Women's Sport, 2009)
- Providing mentoring opportunities as this benefits both the mentor and the mentee (The Commission on the Future of Women's Sport, 2009)
- Establish a skill based, open and transparent recruitment process (The Commission on the Future of Women's Sport, 2009)
- Pro-actively target potential female board representatives (Medd and Braund, 2008)
- Providing networking and professional development opportunities (Senate, 2006)
- Implementing organisational change to create a more female friendly environment in terms of facilities, meeting times and structure (Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee 2006)
- Rewarding organisations that meet a self-imposed system of increasing female representation on their board e.g. through bonus funding through government departments (Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee 2006)
- Implementing a quota or target system for the proportion of women on boards. Government funding would then be conditional upon this system being in place (Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee 2006)
- Enshrining the rights and representation of members within organisation constitutions (Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee 2006).

The imposition of a quota or target system is something strongly supported by various womensport and recreation organisations and women's councils (Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee 2006).

For example, in Norway a quota system was introduced in 2002 for companies requiring at least 40 per cent female representation on publically listed boards. Private companies were given until 2005 to meet this quota by which time female board representation increased from 6 to 24 percent. Legislation was drafted requiring all companies to comply by 1 January 2008. In 2008 the government announced full compliance. Several other countries in Europe are considering or have passed similar legislation or modifications of the Norwegian legislation (Lewis and Rake, 2008).

While this proposal was initially met with scepticism from many companies, including females already involved at that level, several reports suggest that it has been a positive move for business (e.g. Sweetman, 2009). While there is no requirement at present for sporting organisations to meet the same quotas there is support from most females and young males sporting board members to introduce a regulation prescribing representation of at least 40 per cent of each gender (Hovden, 2004).

However, those who oppose a quota system make compelling arguments for avoiding it instead arguing that the best person for the job should be selected regardless of whether they are male or female.

Detractors argue that the imposition of quotas can undermine the position of female board members as people may interpret a female as only being on the board because of her gender rather than because she earned it. Rather than focus on implementing quotas we should be looking at ensuring affirmative action is occurring. Our focus should be on ensuring there are regulations or a commitment in place in sporting organisations to ensure that men and women are provided with an equal opportunity to take up positions with equal support (Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee 2006).

Macquarie University associate professor and director of Labour Management Studies Peter McGraw suggests that the use of quotas “sets up an oppositional situation. It sets up competition between men and women and can be divisive” (Budd, 2008.). He suggests that governments should be working with business to help women reach executive positions but that quotas are not the solution. This can also be applied to the sport and recreation sector.

Conclusion

Overall, Tasmanian SSOs had a stronger representation of females on their boards than their national counterparts. However, female representation is far from equivalent to male representation with no single tier category reaching 40 per cent female representation.

Over the 28 sports that received funding under the 2009 SGP, the average board composition was 35 per cent female.

It is disappointing that three Tasmanian SSOs had no female board members and one SSO has no male board members. However, it is encouraging that close to 40 per cent of Tasmanian SSOs has at least 40 per cent female representation on their boards. This research suggests that while many Tasmanian SSOs are including more women on their boards there is still work for SRT to promote the benefits of a diverse board and encourage SSOs to look more widely for board members.

The findings of this report indicate that females are still not equally represented on boards at the SSO level, although does not provide any indication as to why this is so. Given the similarities between Australian society generally and Tasmania it is reasonable to assume that similar barriers exist for Tasmanian women as for Australian women. These barriers were noted earlier in the report.

This suggests that SRT needs to consider working closer with the sector to ensure there are role models, both male and female, to champion the role of women and encourage other women to take up board positions. SRT also need to encourage or provide networking opportunities for women in the sporting sector and encourage SSOs to consider things such as work-life balance when scheduling meetings.

The findings suggest that encouraging more women to take on presidential roles is also an area SRT should be focussing on with less than 18 per cent of SSOs having a female president or chairperson. Again there is no indication from the data to indicate why the disparity exists. Whether it is women feeling they don't have the skills to take on that role, whether they feel they are too time poor to take on such a role, or whether women are nominating for these positions but being overlooked in favour of male nominees. This would be an interesting topic for further research.

References

- Budd, H 2008, *That old glass ceiling not close to breaking*. Retrieved 30 July from <http://www.careerone.com.au/news-advice/women-at-work/that-old-glass-ceiling-not-close-to-breaking-20081103>
- Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee 2006, *About time! Women in sport and recreation in Australia*. Retrieved 5 June, 2009, from http://www.aph.gov.au/SENATE/committee/ecita_ctte/completed_inquiries/2004-07/womeninsport/report/report.pdf
- Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency 2008, *EOWA 2008 Australian Census of Women in Leadership*. Retrieved 13 July 2009 from: www.eowa.gov.au/Australia_Women_In_Leadership_Census.asp
- Hovden, J 2004, Gender political consequences of male dominance in leadership positions in Norwegian sport, *Proceedings at the international congress: Sport, Women and Leadership*, Umea University, Berlin, Germany, Retrieved 30 July, 2009, from <http://www.pedag.umu.se/utbildning/kurslitteratur/litteratur/JoridHovdengender.pdf>
- Lewis R and Rake, K 2008, *Breaking the mould for women leaders: could boardroom quotas hold the key?* Retrieved 13 July, 2009, from <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/documents/Breaking%20the%20Mould%20for%20Women%20Leaders%20-%20could%20boardroom%20quotas%20hold%20the%20key.pdf>
- Medd, R and Braund, C 2008, 'Parity of women's board remuneration still a long way off', *Keeping Good Companies*, December 2008, pp 646-649. Retrieved 30 July, 2009, from www.womenonboards.org.au/pubs/2009/0812_kgc.pdf
- Oldenhove, H n.d., *Women and leadership: A discussion paper*. Retrieved 13 July 2009, from: <http://www.vicsport.asn.au/Assets/Files/Oldenhove%20-%20Women%20and%20Leadership%20Discussion%20Paper.pdf>
- Sweetman, K 2009, *Norway's boards: Two years later, what difference do women make?* Retrieved 30 July 2009 from <http://www.fastcompany.com/blog/kate-sweetman/decoding-leadership/norway-s-boards-two-years-later-what-difference-do-women-make>

Appendix A

2009 State Grant Recipients

Tier One

Bowls Tasmania Inc
Football Federation Tasmania Limited
Football Tasmania Limited
Golf Tasmania Inc
Hockey Tasmania Inc
Tasmanian Basketball Association Inc
Tasmanian Cricket Association
Tasmanian Netball Association Inc
Tennis Tasmania Inc

Tier 2

Athletic Association of Tasmania Inc
Equestrian Federation of Australia (Tasmanian Branch) Inc
Orienteering Tasmania Inc
Pony Club Association of Tasmania Inc
Rowing Tasmania Inc
Tasmanian Gymnastic Association Inc
Tasmanian Little Athletics Association Inc
Tasmanian Rugby Union Inc
Tasmanian Squash Racquets Association Inc
Tasmanian Swimming Inc
Tasmanian Yachting Association Inc
Touch Football Australia Inc

Tier 3

Boxing Tasmania
Canoe Tasmania Inc
Tasmanian Badminton Association Inc
Tasmanian Diving Association Inc
Tasmanian Polocrosse Association
Tasmanian Table Tennis Association Inc
Triathlon Tasmania Inc