Basketball:

Basketball Australia

“Our strength as a sport lies in our strength of participation nationally and our broad offering to all participants, men and women, masters and juniors, able and disabled.”

Basketball is a welcoming and inclusive sport that can be enjoyed by all Australians. From the three year old playing ‘tot ball’ in Darwin to the 73-year-old playing masters basketball in Victoria, basketball is a game that is accessible to people of all abilities.

It is also another sport where Australia is proving very successful on the world stage – following the 2004 Athens Olympics, Australia held a combined world ranking of third. The women finished the 2004 tournament with a silver medal performance, and the men in ninth position. The women went one better at the 2006 World Championships - taking out the title.

The history of basketball

The first official game of basketball was played between teachers and students of the YMCA in Springfield, Massachusetts in 1892, and in 1898 the first professional league was created in the USA. The first recorded game in Australia was played in 1905 at the YMCA in Melbourne.

Initially created under the name of International Basketball Federation (FIBB), the Fédération Internationale de Basketball (FIBA) was born in 1932 with eight countries as its founding members: Argentina, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, Romania, Switzerland and Czechoslovakia. In Australia, the forerunner to the Australian Basketball Federation, the Amateur Basketball Union of Australia was formed in 1939, an association between the NSW and Victorian Basketball Associations.

In 1946, the first Australian National Men’s Championships were played in Sydney and the first National Women’s Championships were played in 1955. The National Basketball League (NBL) started play as the first national professional competition in Australia in 1979, followed two years later by the Women’s Interstate Basketball Conference competition, predecessor of the WNBL.

Basketball Australia

Basketball Australia is the governing body for basketball in Australia, overseeing the sport at all levels, from the grass roots to national teams and national leagues.

The organisation has developed extensive national and state-based programs to ensure that development opportunities are provided for all participants in the sport. These pathways,
which include the National Intensive Training Centre Program and the Australian Institute of the Sport, are regarded as some of the best in the world. It is not only athletes who reap the benefits of development opportunities, but also coaches, officials and administrators.\(^4\)

The flagship domestic basketball competitions are the Philips Championship National Basketball League (NBL) and the Women’s National Basketball League (WNBL), which run from October to March. A total of 12 teams compete in the men’s competition (eight teams in the women’s league) representing all states (except Tasmania) and the two territories (and a New Zealand team in the men’s competition).

The Australian Basketball Association (ABA) is the national development competition under the NBL and WNBL. It features over 120 member teams from major cities and key regional centres. The season runs from March and culminates in the national finals weekend in August.

**One Basketball**

‘One Basketball’ is the concept which arose out of a major strategic review that was conducted across Australia and took 18 months to complete.

Basketball Australia’s plan is for everyone in the sport to have a shared vision and a clear sense of their strategic direction. The vision is to provide good value for their customers; high quality services consistently delivered; outstanding leadership from top to bottom; and integrate people into new networks to achieve common goals.

Its immediate focus is:

- to integrate the four national bodies (BA, NBL, WNBL and ABA) under one roof.
- a new schools/junior development program across Australia (*Aussie Hoops*).
- the Basketball Network – a new on-line presence connecting everyone in the sport.
- common sponsorship and marketing programs.\(^5\)

**Who plays basketball?**

Basketball is one of the top participation sports in the country. This is likely to strengthen in years to come with basketball playing an integral part of the Australian Sports Commission’s (ASC) national Active After School Communities Program, which provides free and structured physical activity to children after school, and the ongoing development and expansion of the *Aussie Hoops* program.\(^6\)

There are 161,200 people who play basketball in Australia; the majority of whom are males (accounting for 58.5\% of all basketballers). Male participation is higher than female participation in all age groups.\(^7\)

Participants in basketball show a younger age profile than that of participants in other sports and activities – 74.6\% of people are less than 35 years of age, while just 48.2\% of all other sports participants fall into this age group.\(^8\)

Basketball is extremely popular within many local Indigenous communities and community groups. Basketball Australia has recognised the need to provide initiatives (like the Indigenous
Sports Program) that contribute to the growth of basketball within Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander communities.\(^9\)

Basketball Australia President John Maddock said: “Our strength as a sport lies in our strength of participation nationally and our broad offering to all participants – men and women, masters and juniors, able and disabled. We are a safe sport that is appealing to juniors and parents and provides a legitimate national and global pathway for athletes, officials and administrators”.\(^10\)

**Building Better Basketball**

For associations, strong numbers in junior competitions will create a pool of players, coaches and officials that will move into senior ranks. Strong junior competitions can also help to generate interest in senior programs, such as ABA teams. To create strong junior competitions, opportunities for young people to participate as well as retaining interest, needs to be a prime area of focus.

Basketball Australia has produced a series of free educational pamphlets which are specifically designed to help coaches, administrators and referees improve the standard of their contribution to the game.

Each ‘Building Better Basketball’ installment includes helpful hints on how to overcome common problems faced in basketball and to improve overall performance. There are three different series available – one for referees, administrators and coaches. A new issue for each series is added every month.\(^11\)

**Doing Basketball Better!**

Much of the work associations do is focused on the delivery of junior sport. Time spent running ‘learn to play’ programs, development programs, junior competitions and junior representative teams would make up more than half the activity in almost every association.

*Doing Basketball Better!* is an initiative of Basketball Australia in conjunction with the state and territory basketball associations (and supported by the Australian Sports Commission) and is designed to help local associations to deliver a safe, fun, quality and healthy environment that welcomes all people to the sport – whether as players, officials, administrators or spectators.

*Doing Basketball Better!* highlights strategies that may help associations to present a sport that young people want to be involved in. This includes providing: modified games; flexible and contemporary uniforms (relaxing uniform requirements to cater for cultural and religious beliefs may encourage young people from cultural backgrounds to participate); attractive competitions (schedule competitions at times/days that are ‘friendly’ to other things young adults want to do); and running short or informal (‘pick up’) sessions to attract people that have not played before.\(^12\)
Aussie Hoops

Launched in 2002, Aussie Hoops is Basketball Australia’s development program for primary school aged children. It features a range of fun games that use basketball activities to help children develop skills. Hundreds of thousands of children are exposed to Aussie Hoops each year, building the interest and participation base of the sport.

The program is player-centred, fun-focused and affordable to all. Girls and boys; abled or disabled; naturally gifted or sporting battler, Aussie Hoops caters for all.15 It is delivered throughout Australia by local associations, who have trained presenters providing activity sessions at local schools, community centres or local stadiums.

The Aussie Hoops program continued to gain momentum in 2005, with approximately 210 associations (including NBL/WNBL clubs) currently running programs – an increase of about 30 per cent from 2004.14

Aussie Hoops was also featured in the first edition of Fit Kidz, a new series of DVDs aimed at helping kids be active. The DVD, features Belinda Snell (G.E.T. Sydney Uni Flames and Price Attack Opals), Jason Smith (Trendwest Sydney Kings and Boomers) and Jeremy Van Asperan (Rollers) demonstrating basketball skills, and giving kids tips on nutrition and looking after themselves.15

The Australian Sports Commission’s (ASC) funding through the Targeted Sports Participation and Growth Program (TSPGP) finished on 30 June 2005, however Basketball Australia and each state/territory remain committed to the growth of the Aussie Hoops program. Basketball Australia will continue to provide funding to state/territories/associations for the program.

Indigenous Sports Program

In 2005, the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) conducted an extensive review of the structure and delivery of Indigenous services, which has created significant changes to the funding programs nationally.

In 2006, this resulted in Basketball Australia and the state and territory associations liaising with newly-established Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICCs) as part of the Indigenous Sport and Recreation Program, while continuing to work closely with the ASC’s Indigenous Sports Unit.

The Basketball Australia Indigenous Sports Program (ISP) is designed to provide the opportunity for multicultural, Torres Strait Islander and Indigenous Australians to participate in basketball.

The program contributes to the Indigenous community by providing necessary health and social outcomes. It provides opportunities for Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander people to have ownership of programs and competitions within their communities, as well as being able to connect with mainstream associations.

There are programs delivered to 500 Indigenous schools and 450 Indigenous communities nationally. There were also 100 coaching courses and 30 officiating courses conducted in Indigenous communities across Australia during 2005.16
The inaugural National ATSI Basketball Championships will be held in 2006, providing another opportunity for all ATSI participants to be involved with basketball from all around Australia.

In 2005, Basketball Australia conducted an Indigenous Sports Program workshop comprising of a representative from each state and territory association, as well as representatives from the Department of Sport and Recreation in Victoria, New South Wales and the ACT. From this workshop, Basketball Australia’s plan was compiled for implementation from 2006. Basketball Australia proposes to conduct a National Indigenous Workshop in 2006 and 2007.

**2006 Indigenous Sports Program**

Basketball Australia works closely with state and territory associations in the delivery of the National Indigenous Sports Program (ISP). Each state and territory association submits a project plan, with Basketball Australia providing resources, coordination and strategic direction. Specifically the national ISP objectives are to:

- Provide access for multicultural and Indigenous Australians to mainstream competition and training programs.
- Increase participation in basketball through culturally aware associations, programs and servicing of Indigenous communities.
- Improve the capacity to deliver sustainable basketball competitions and programs within Indigenous communities.
- Provide adequate, purposeful resources for the community to assist in the delivery of basketball programs and competitions.
- Promote the values of engaging equity, fairness, friendship and respect in our culturally diverse society.
- Promote initiatives within the school sectors that engage multicultural and Indigenous Australians to basketball.

Basketball Australia will coordinate the national ISP and will:

- Produce a *The Little Red Book* – a local community resource that encompasses a range of information from how to run a competition to useful links on various aspects of managing an association.
- Develop on-line learning, education and professional development systems for coaches, officials, administrators and volunteers.
- Include a Basketball Australia Indigenous Person of the Year at the National Junior Championships Awards.
- Develop a better understanding nationally of the number of people from multicultural, Indigenous and non-English speaking backgrounds through ‘The Basketball Network’ database.
- Continue to form stronger links with ICC’s, DCITA and other organisations that will assist basketball become more accessible for participants and families within the local community.
• Improve the number of sustainable ‘Aussie Hoops’ programs within local communities.
• Actively participate in and recognise Harmony Day in March 2007.

Basketball Australia also uses Indigenous role models from its national teams: currently Rohanee Cox (Townsville) and Michelle Musselwhite (Sydney), and Nathan Jai Wai (QLD) and Patrick Mills (ACT).

There are also a range of Indigenous Sports Program in each state and territory. Following is a focus on Basketball Northern Territory’s programs.

**Northern Territory Indigenous Sporting Development Program**

The focus of Basketball Northern Territory’s program is to develop sustainable basketball competitions within and between Indigenous communities. This requires education in the rules and skills of the game, as well as competition structures.

The focus of the program is identifying and skilling people within communities who will be responsible for the ongoing development of referees, players, coaches and administrators to ensure a sustainable participation in basketball.

**Providing resources to communities**

Resources such as modified rules for basketball, competition administration (scoresheets, draws etc.) can be provided to communities either directly or through Indigenous Sport Development Officers. There is also a need for physical resources (playing equipment, bibs, training equipment) in many communities and community schools.

A leadership course has been very well received in a number of community schools and can be extended to the broader communities. These visits incorporate teaching basketball skills, rules and running competitions, which are vital to the creation of sustainable outcomes. To date, the course has been run in schools, with senior students being skilled to run sessions for the junior students. As a follow up to these courses a number of communities have identified a need for more specific referee courses.

**Regional clinic**

Basketball Northern Territory is participating in the Katherine Regional Project, a joint initiative of the NT Department of Sport and Recreation and the Australian Sports Commission. This will involve a Level 1 coaching course and participating coaches will be provided with a start-up kit, including equipment and training aids.

**The National Vibe 3on3 basketball and hip hop challenge**

Over the past seven years, the Vibe 3on3 challenge has been run in Indigenous communities around the nation.

Vibe 3on3 is a two-day Aboriginal youth weekend festival that incorporates basketball, dancing, art, culture and health. The Challenge also welcomes non-Indigenous people to attend and participate. It aims to promote healthy lifestyles, strengthen communities and
boost self-esteem, and is an excellent opportunity for health services and related organisations to introduce themselves to the wider community.

The Vibe 3on3 challenge is sponsored by Rio Tinto Aboriginal Foundation, the Department of Health and Ageing through the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts.

**Fostering inclusion**

Obviously there must be rules for any sport and for the conduct of any association or their competitions. However, sometimes these rules may act as ‘rules of exclusion’ and stop rather than encourage people from playing. Associations must be conscious of a number of factors that can impact upon getting young people involved in basketball.19

Young people from some cultural backgrounds have relatively low rates of participation in general sporting activities. This may be particularly relevant to basketball associations in areas where there are a large proportion of young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.20

Cost is a powerful factor in determining opportunities for participation in sport. While basketball requires relatively inexpensive equipment, it does not mean it is a cheap sport to play. Long seasons and the cost of indoor facilities are two factors that can make traditional basketball competitions relatively expensive compared to some other sports.21

Young people (and associations) from rural and remote regions can be disadvantaged because of the limited number of young people available to play, the distances they have to travel and the limited expertise available in the areas of coaching and officiating.22

A range of state associations have developed programs to engage young people from CALD communities into the sport. A sample of these follow.

**South Australia New Arrivals Basketball Program**

The New Arrivals Basketball Program offers basketball training and competition to new and recent arrivals to South Australia. The program aims to make participation in basketball accessible to refugees and new arrivals by providing regular training and games in a welcoming and fun environment that is centrally located and close to public transport.23

Any player interested in becoming a member of the New Arrivals Basketball Program is invited to attend a training session. The program welcomes people of all abilities and backgrounds and seeks to constantly challenge and support each participant to develop sporting, language and social skills.

The current program has three male teams competing in the social competition at the Wayville Sports Centre. In addition, the program provides opportunities for more experienced and skilled players to compete at higher levels, through junior/senior district clubs.24

The majority of participants are male refugees aged 13–39 who have arrived within the previous two years from a variety of countries including Nigeria, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Russia, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, Philippines, Malaysia, Samoa and Iraq.25
At June 2006, well over 100 new arrival students have attended the sessions since the program began. At present there is an average of 20–30 regular male participants, but a larger number of more transient participants.26

Some members are eligible to receive a subsidy to partially cover the cost of playing; this subsidy is possible thanks to the support of the Migrant Resource Centre of SA. Members of the program that qualify for the subsidy need to have been in Australia for less than three years and be aged between 10 to 25 years. Those players who are eligible for the subsidy pay $4.00 per game; players who don’t qualify for the subsidy pay the full $7.50 per game.27

Uniforms are also provided to all participants in the social competition free of charge for matches, along with a basketball to use before and during the match. The team is coached and players are given equal court time wherever possible.

Basketball South Australia is looking to expand the Program and provide greater opportunities to primary and high school age youth to become involved in the sport.

**Key issues in delivering the program**

Approximately 75 per cent of participants use public transport to get to activities so being close to these networks is very important. Providing information about which buses to catch and from where has been an important part of the program. Matches are played in the early evening so participants can use public transport to get home.

Behaviour that Basketball South Australia considers unacceptable is dealt with on the spot. In nearly all cases, problems encountered are resolved due to a careful explanation of what is expected within the Australian sporting environment. Examples encountered so far include:

- use or consumption of alcohol before or during the game
- abusive verbal and physical behaviour towards referees, opponents, team members and coaches
- taking referee decisions personally and the perception they are being picked on due to race
- participants only wanting to play with better players or those of the same background, and
- participants struggling with females in an authoritarian role and lack of understanding about appropriate behaviour towards a female in such a position.

Many of the participants are not regular in their attendance of games and training sessions. This creates a set of issues of not having enough or having too many people to run sessions. With irregular attendance it is difficult to develop skills and team/game concepts within the group. However, by being flexible and not demanding that those involved attend every session, there has been a large number and variety of participants through the program.
Basketball Victoria Multicultural and Indigenous Program

Basketball Victoria received a ‘Go for your life’ Physical Activity Grant for a Multicultural Development Program. The project enabled the organisation to employ a dedicated Multicultural and Indigenous Development Officer for two years. The officer is developing and implementing a Multicultural Inclusion Plan, a Multicultural Policy, and sustainable Ethno-Specific Basketball Programs. The project will facilitate widespread organisational change, enabling Basketball Victoria to include multiculturalism in all areas of its strategic planning, policy and program delivery.28

Multicultural Young Women’s Basketball League

The Centre for Multicultural and Youth Issues (CMYI), Sunshine Basketball Association and Basketball Victoria started a new basketball league which ran from January to March 2006. The Multicultural Young Women’s Basketball League is for young women between the ages of 14 and 17 and registration is free. The competition was funded by the Department of Victorian Communities and the Office of Commonwealth Games.29

3 Ball competition

3 Ball is a new outdoor half court 3 on 3 social basketball competition for youth from 12 to 18 years of age (in particular for new arrivals, refugees and migrants) held in various locations around Adelaide. 3 Ball is supported by the Multicultural Communities Council, City of Port Adelaide Enfield, Basketball SA, Office for Recreation and Sport (Be Active).

Providing a positive basketball experience

Basketball Australia and the state and territory associations are committed to the health, safety and well-being of all its members and participants and are dedicated to providing a safe environment to participate in basketball throughout Australia.

Basketball Australia CEO Scott Derwin says: “A positive experience in basketball can instill in young people the need to lead a healthy, balanced lifestyle and to show compassion, support and understanding of all people in society. Young people want a safe and supportive environment which encourages them to do their best. As with all of our customers it is the responsibility of associations to provide a welcoming environment”.30

However, harassment in sport can serve to drastically undermine the intrinsic benefits of being involved in basketball. The unfortunate reality is that basketball, like all sports, is not immune from acts of discrimination, harassment and abuse.31

Harassment, discrimination and abuse are behaviour which can manifest itself in many ways within an association, including:

- verbal abuse of players or officials during games
- abuse or harassment of coaches or officials
- discrimination in selection of teams, coaches or officials.
Depending on the nature of the case, instances of harassment or abuse in sport can have devastating effects, not only the individuals involved but also the sporting organisation itself. Apart from exposing the club or association to potential legal liability, officials may be faced with low morale, an unpleasant environment, higher turnover of personnel and the prospect of long-term damage to the organisation’s image and reputation. These are all unnecessary harms which Basketball Australia is keen to avoid.

**Member Protection Policy (MPP)**

Harassment in sport has become an issue that many sports have had to face. Basketball Australia has acknowledged that a proactive and preventative approach needs to be taken in dealing with the issue.

‘Member Protection’ is a term that is now widely used in the sports industry. Member protection is all about practices and procedures that protect a sports organisation’s members – including players/participants, administrators, coaches and officials. It involves: protecting members from harassment and inappropriate behaviour; adopting appropriate measures to ensure the right people are involved in an organisation; and providing education.

Basketball Australia’s Member Protection Policy provides information on what is acceptable behaviour and provides guidelines for the protection of the health, safety and well-being of participants in basketball.

The MPP sets out the procedures to be followed in dealing with complaints of harassment (which includes sexual harassment, racial harassment, sexuality harassment, disability harassment, abuse, child abuse, vilification and discrimination), in an effective, appropriate and timely manner. This includes procedures for informal and formal resolution of complaints and an appeal mechanism. The MPP applies to basketball associations and clubs, officials, coaches and players.

From 1 July 2005, affiliated associations must comply with Basketball Australia’s Member Protection Policy. Some strategies that associations should have in place are:

- implement Codes of Behaviour for coaches, officials, players and spectators. Have parents and players sign ‘contracts’ agreeing to abide by Codes of Behaviour
- have appropriate people within the association undertake Member Protection Officer training (courses are run by state/territory departments of sport and recreation)
- conduct education/information courses for players, coaches, parents and officials on harassment and discrimination (state/territory departments of sport and recreation can assist with this).

**Codes of Conduct**

Sport may be damaged by any impairment of public confidence in the honest and orderly conduct of sporting events and competitions or in the integrity and good character of the participants. Basketball Australia’s Code of Conduct is designed to ensure that the high standard of sportsmanship, fairness, honesty and honour involved in basketball continues to prevail.
The code states that players must: ‘not do anything which is likely to intimidate, offend, insult or humiliate another participant on the basis of their sex, disability, race, colour, age, religion, national or ethnic origin’.35

The Coaches Code of Conduct and Ethics also states that coaches must: ‘Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every human being within the context of the activity, treat everyone equally regardless of sex, ethnic origin or religion’.36

Complaints

Basketball Australia, states and territories and league associations are required to establish procedures for dealing with complaints made under the Member Protection Policy. If an association has established procedures, then all complaints at association level will be dealt with by the association. If the association has not established the procedures for dealing with complaints, the complaint will be dealt with by the relevant state or national body.

Complaints can be made informally or formally and the MPP contains a resolution procedure for handling both. An individual making a complaint will be referred to the appropriate Member Protection Officer (appointed by the local or state association or shared with another sport) who will be available to: listen to and inform the complainant about their possible options; act as a support person for the complainant, including supporting them through any mediation process undertaken to resolve the complaint; and refer the matter to a hearings convenor for a hearing to be held under the MPP if required.37

Endnotes

1 Basketball Australia President John Maddock in the 2005 Annual Report.
6 Basketball Australia CEO Scott Derwin in the 2005 Annual Report.
10 BA President John Maddock in the 2005 Annual Report.
14 2005 Basketball Australia Annual Report.
24 Basketball South Australia Inclusive Basketball Programs June 2006.
26 Basketball South Australia Inclusive Basketball Programs June 2006.


Basketball Australia Coaches code of conduct and ethics at http://www.basketball.net.au/_uploads/res/1_22748.doc.


Basketball Australia Coaches code of conduct and ethics at http://www.basketball.net.au/_uploads/res/1_22748.doc.