



**SQUASH  
AUSTRALIA**

**PARTICIPATION PLAN  
2016-2020**



# “ACTIVATING SQUASH”

*A vision for the growth of the game in  
Australia  
2016-2020*

# About

## Who does this apply to?

The plan is written for all stakeholders of squash committed to growing the participation base of the sport. For the purpose of this document, 'State Associations' refers to State and Territory Associations.

## Inherent values

The plan is based on principles of **cooperation and collaboration** ensuring our method is efficient and the complementary roles each organisation plays ensure a lean and effective delivery structure based around the needs of the individual.

It is underpinned by an assumption of **open and effective communication** at all levels, with respect for positive relationships and a common will to benefit more people through squash.

It is founded on an assumption of scrupulous **financial responsibility** and sound governance on the part of stakeholders at all levels.

# Why Squash?

**Squash is a game for everyone.**

**It's Healthy.** It's non-contact, improves agility and hand-eye coordination, encourages flexibility and provides a solid cardio workout. It alleviates stress, sharpens concentration and encourages social interaction.

**It fits in.** Play alone, in pairs or groups at a time that suits, in as little as half an hour. It's played indoors and can be played year-round.

**It's exciting.** It's fast paced, it's an adrenalin rush, it's fun.

## *Through Squash, Australians Excel*

*It is the intent of this plan and its interested stakeholders to grow participation in the game of squash so that more Australians may experience the benefits it offers.*

"It's a great game, with great people who have drastically influenced my life"

"It's exciting because of the one-on-one mental and physical challenges"

"I've been playing for 38 years and still love it"

"I am fascinated by the level of skill involved"

# A History of Success



*Heather McKay, pictured, was possibly the most dominant sportswoman in history, being unbeaten from 1962 to 1981.*

Squash has an illustrious modern history in Australian sport- from the early games in the British army barracks in the early 1900's to the regular pennants competitions occurring in modern day facilities.

Australia is arguably the most successful squash country in the world, with a long list of world champions. Heather McKay, Ken Hiscoe, Geoff Hunt, Vicki Cardwell, Steve Bowditch, Rhonda Thorne, Michelle and Rodney Martin, Sarah Fitz-Gerald and Rachael Grinham all became World Squash Champions at senior level and Peter Nance, Chris Robertson, Robyn Lambourne, achieved the same distinction at junior level.

And surely, the future of the game is bright. Squash is a sport that fits with so much of what we know about the sporting and lifestyle needs of modern Australians. But as with all sports, a new rate of change is required to ensure Squash remains relevant and is able to keep up with, and drive, demand.



# The Case for Change

## The general sporting landscape is changing.

- Our sporting choices are changing.
- Expectations of 'membership' are changing.
- We are spending less time playing, more time working.
- We have more physical activity alternatives.
- The way we do business is changing.

*For more information regarding these changes to the general sporting landscape, see Appendix One.*

## Squash is at a crossroads.

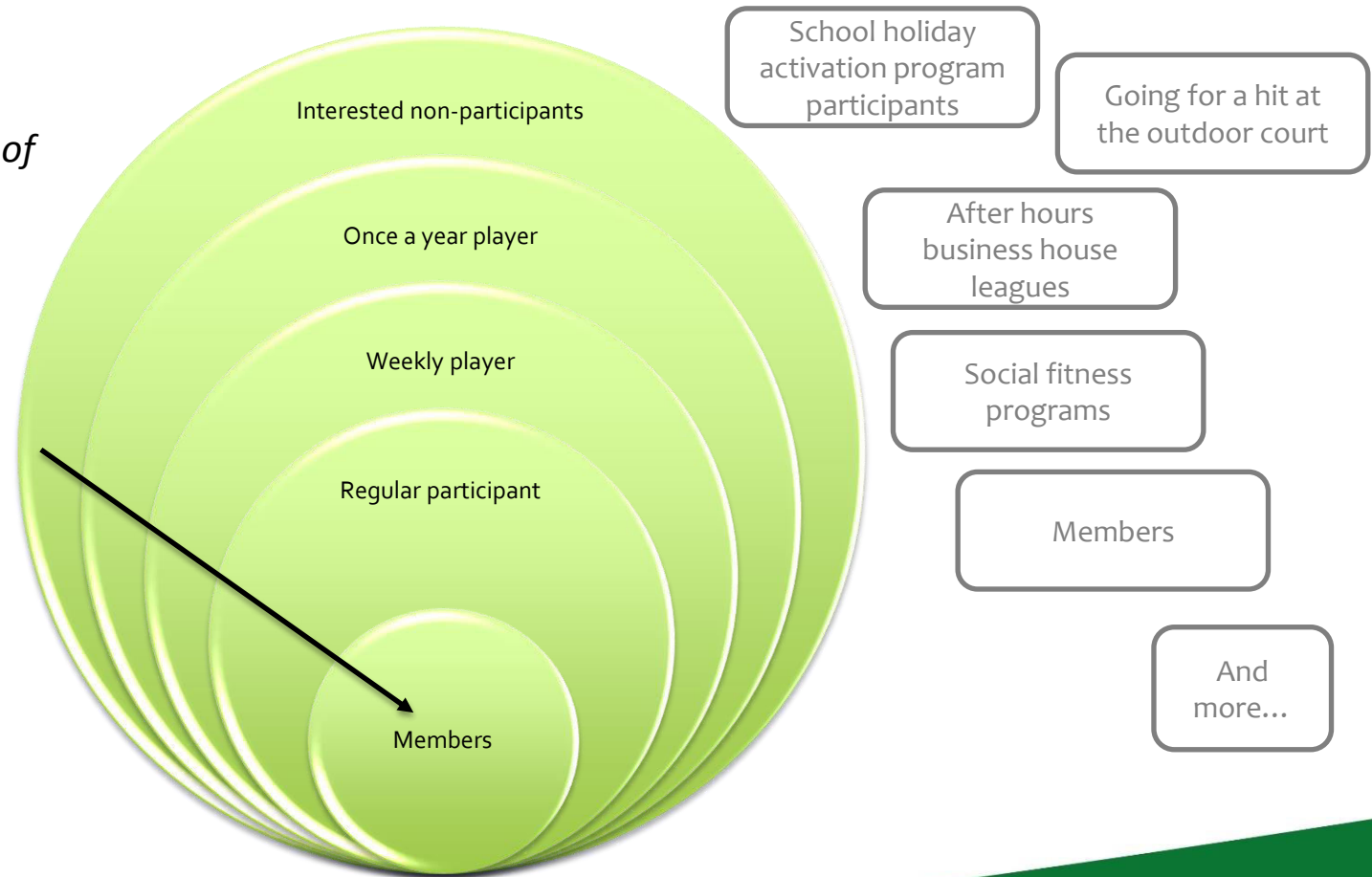
- Over the past decade, squash has seen a rapid, year-on-year **decline in participation rates** from 321,000 participants in 1997/98 ,182,300 participants in 2005/06 to 104,500 in 2013/14.
- Existing facilities on non-community land are under threat based on the value of the property for other uses, such as property development.
- The sport has been operating in a relative **information 'vacuum'**, with limited basis upon which to understand and respond to the needs of its participants.
- The existing mechanism of **communication is bureaucratic** and an impediment to the level of change that is needed to arrest the decline of participation and sustain the sport..
- The State Associations have limited engagement with participants of squash that exist outside the traditional competition structure.

# Who is our audience?

This plan will initially target a wide audience of all **existing and interested players**, until we have a strong enough evidence base to better understand its existing and potential customers and hence have an ability to narrow the focus.

*What are the barriers we must remove? 'Who' lies within each of these categories?*

***Our broad aim is to get more players on courts, more often.***



# Understand them, to take them with you



**“I want to play in nice surrounds which are convenient for me to access.”**



**“I want people who understand my needs to support my game.”**



**“I want squash that suits me & my schedule”**

**“I want to be excited, to have fun!”**



**“I want welcoming competitions and events.”**

*Understanding the needs of our current and future participants is crucial to maintaining participation levels and growing its customer base.*



# A Vision for a Squash Community



# Vision for a Squash Community

## WHAT MIGHT THIS LOOK LIKE?

Case Study 2:

***Joe, 37 year old stay-at-home father of 2***

Joe takes his kids down to the local court on a Monday morning to teach them racquetball and plays squash on Friday evenings with his mates, followed by a beer in the clubhouse. Joe signs up to be a member of at the club to receive equipment discounts through the national squash loyalty program and to find out about local training programs offered through council and the local university, to improve his coaching skills for his kids.

## WHAT MIGHT THIS LOOK LIKE?

Case Study 3:

***Barry & Bob***

Barry and Bob have been playing squash each week at their local centre. They book the court online and are not interested in committing to pennant competition or club events. Barry and Bob are regular social participants.

## WHAT MIGHT THIS LOOK LIKE?

Case Study 1:

***Kelly, 15 year old school student***

Kelly hits a squash ball around with her friends after school at a nearby outdoor squash court. She was introduced to the local club when a school holiday clinic visited the court and now she is a regular participant in a squash fitness program for girls run on Sunday mornings. She uses her pocket money to pay for the weekly sessions. Her skills are improving and she's considering entering the local competition. Kelly receives weekly emails which update her on opportunities to participate in other programs and competitions with girls her own age.

# A Role for Everyone

The delivery structure of squash in Australia must function as a lean and efficient system if it is to adequately respond to the changing needs of the players of squash, both existing and potential. The overall structure must be founded on positive relationships based on common goals, with role clarity for each organisation linked to the greater picture.

The following pages are not intended as an exhaustive to-do list for organisations. However it is the intention of this plan to provide guidance as to the roles of each level of organisation in meeting the needs of current and future participants. It is the responsibility of each stakeholder to plan according to their own stakeholders' needs and organisational priorities.

It is acknowledged that many other organisations exist to support the players of the game that are not specified within this plan, but whose roles are equally vital. This plan speaks to all stakeholders aligned to this vision.



*“I want to play in nice surrounds, which are convenient to access”*



# Court 1: FACILITIES

Evidence suggests that the provision of appropriate and sufficient sports facilities has considerable influence on participation in sport. The availability of suitable sports facilities, access to those facilities, and the conditions under which a facility operates can either encourage participation or act as a barrier to participation. (Australian Clearinghouse for Sport)

Role of Club/Centre	Role of State Association	Role of Squash Australia
Provide enticing club facilities and welcoming venues	Support state level planning in liaison with state/territory departments, local councils, clubs & centres	Provide guidance on best practice facility and business management, including marketing
Generate sustainable income streams to support facility maintenance and business viability	Support opportunities to drive club/centre growth through programs and commercial arrangements	Provide nationally branded products to drive participation and therefore increase revenue in clubs and centres
Support local level planning in liaison with local council and other funders	Support the activation of outdoor squash courts in conjunction with state departments, local councils and other stakeholders	Develop and maintain a plan for the activation of outdoor squash courts
	To ensure the community has access to a wide range of, and mix of, venues and services that will attract, engage and increase the number of people in the game	Maintain a strategic view of Australian squash facilities- structures, financial health and geographic gaps in squash provision

## Success looks like....

*A network of accessible, high quality squash venues operating sustainably throughout Australia.*

**Key Performance Indicator:** *Sustainable business models for squash courts are understood and best practice is promoted.*

*“I want welcoming, exciting opportunities to compete”*

# Court 2: COMPETITIONS & EVENTS

Evidence suggests competition can serve as motivation for continued sports participation; or if competition is misused or misinterpreted, it can drive participants away from organised sports participation. (Australian Sports Clearinghouse)



Role of Club/Centre	Role of State Association	Role of Squash Australia
Manage local competition for players of various ages & skill levels	Provide leadership to clubs & centres through the provision of best practice state-level events for all age groups	Provide leadership to States, clubs & centres through the provision of best practice national level events for all age groups
Ensure competition/event management volunteers & staff have the necessary skills and are well supported	Ensure best practice state level event and competition provision	Provide best practice guidance to event providers, particularly in relation to marketing, fundraising and sponsorship
Recognise & support talented players to progress to higher levels	Ensure the provision of competitive pathways to state level for all ages	Ensure competitive pathways are accessible to national and international level for all ages & grades
To identify creative event and competition formats that will attract new markets and increase participation	To identify creative event and competition formats that will attract new markets and increase participation	To identify creative event and competition formats that will attract new markets and increase participation
		Maintain the national rankings system for all players

## Success looks like....

*High quality, accessible competitive pathways for participants of all ages and stages.*

**Key Performance Indicator:** An increase in the number of individual affiliations.



*“I want to be healthy, to have fun!”*

# Court 3: AWARENESS

As part of a marketing strategy, social media can assist sport to potentially enhance its level of community engagement; increase levels of participation and over time improve sustainability via new income streams. (Australian Clearinghouse for sport)



Role of Club/Centre	Role of State Association	Role of Squash Australia
Use social media to grow your local audience-base	Use social media to promote squash activities at state level	Advocate for social media usage by all stakeholders and lead the promotion of squash activities through social media
Maintain attractive, user-friendly websites which entice & direct potential & existing squash participants & stakeholders	Maintain attractive, user-friendly websites which entice & direct potential & existing squash participants & stakeholders	Maintain an attractive, user-friendly website which entices & directs potential & existing squash participants & stakeholders
Create community connections with schools, gyms, universities, council, local businesses and other groups to grow the audience base and position squash in local hearts and minds	Raise and maintain the profile of squash in the minds of critical state stakeholders, including State/Territory Government to secure and increase funding	Raise and maintain the profile of squash in the minds of critical stakeholders, including the Australian Sports Commission, and secure and increase funding
Promote local opportunities to get involved through a variety of advertising mediums	Support and advocate for local marketing efforts	Maintain a central repository for news articles, good-news stories, images and videos for use by all stakeholders and host a modern, engaging national brand and profile campaign

## Success looks like....

*Engaging media content flowing freely to a wider-than-squash audience.*

**Key Performance Indicator:** An increase in the social media reach of the collective squash delivery system

*“I want squash that suits me & my schedule”*

# Court 4: PROGRAMS/PRODUCTS



Australian Sports Commission research found that membership to sports clubs can be encouraged by:

- providing sport delivery that focuses on fun and enjoyment rather than competition;
- providing products and services that are inclusive, promote equal treatment, and focus on fun and participation regardless of skill level and ability;
- providing a variety of pricing packages and different types of membership that allow for flexibility of attendance and time commitment;
- identifying the potential for growth opportunities in sport club membership by understanding the needs of different segments and the products they may be attracted to.

Role of Club/Centre	Role of State Association	Role of Squash Australia
Where possible, modify competitions, formats & equipment to suit new audiences as well as retain existing	Identify, develop & promote locally generated ideas	Maintain nationally branded products for different market segments, including an outdoor squash concept and package
Deliver a diverse range of products, including racquetball, customised to the needs of different groups	Promote access to state and national products and services to clubs, centres and individual members	Position racquetball within the squash offering
Provide relevant, customised communications to players	Build on state and national membership benefits to all age groups and competition levels	Maintain a national membership program of relevant benefits to all age groups and competition levels
	Provide relevant, customised communications to state members	Provide relevant, customised communications to all stakeholders of squash

## Success looks like....

*A wide variety of quality squash products customised to meet the needs of different audiences.*

**Key Performance Indicator:** An increase in the number of participants in squash related products

*“I want people who understand my needs to support my game”*



# Court 5: WORKFORCE

Overall, the participation experience is a key component in a participant’s rationale for entering, and then continuing in a sport. The quality of the event, coaching, general environment also contributes to a participant’s satisfaction with his/her sporting experience and continued performance development. Technical officials (referees) provide necessary guidance and support, so that players (i.e. active participants) and spectators can benefit from their sporting experience.

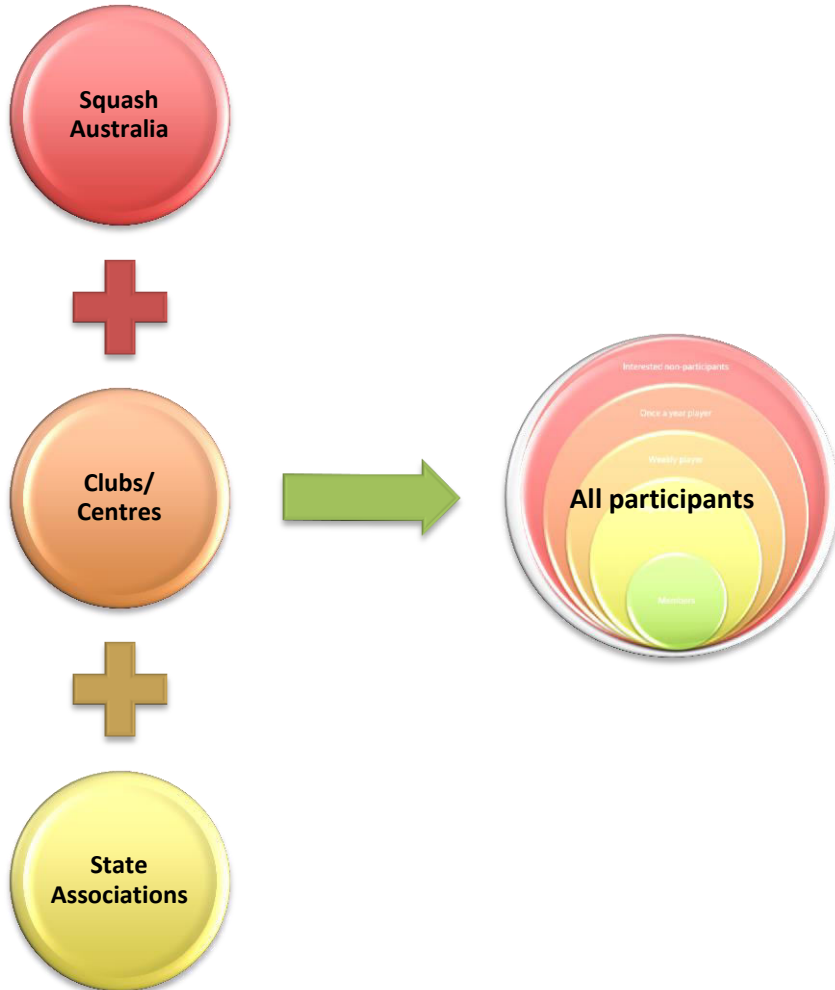
Role of Club/Centre	Role of State Association	Role of Squash Australia
Provide a supportive, encouraging environment for coaches, referees & administrators	Manage accreditation programs for coaches, referees & administrators through the client relationship management platform	Provide training and education pathways and facilitate opportunities for coaches, referees and administrators to progress to a national and international level and provide a client relationship management platform for tracking
Oversee (and manage where possible) player and spectator behaviour in relation to volunteers and staff	Identify and promote, or provide opportunities for professional development for coaches, referees and administrators	Maintain an e-learning platform to support accessible coach, referee and administrator education
Source and promote local professional development opportunities for coaches, referees & administrators		

## Success looks like....

*A sufficient number of supported & valued coaches, referees and administrators engaging with participants of every age & stage.*

**Key Performance Indicator:** An increase in the number of coaches, referees & administrators. An increase in the number of professional development activities occurring throughout Australia

# A Renewed Approach to Communication



In order to meet the needs of customers in a timely and proactive manner, it is essential communication channels remain open through all components of the delivery structure.

To drive the necessary change and engage with a much broader audience, there is a need for an aligned delivery structure, collaborating efforts to ensure the provision of a seamless suite of support services for the participant.

**Richard Vaughan**

Chief Executive Officer

E: [ceo@squash.org.au](mailto:ceo@squash.org.au)

M: +61 439945892

T: (07) 3367 3200

[squashoz@squash.org.au](mailto:squashoz@squash.org.au)

[www.squash.org.au](http://www.squash.org.au)



# Appendix One: The Case for Change

## **Our sporting choices are changing**

### **We like non-organised sport and physical activity**

*While participation rates in organised physical activities have remained level, participation rates for non-organised activities have grown.*

### **We prefer individualised sport**

*With the exception of football, non-team activities such as walking, running and cycling, have grown compared with team sports.*

### **We have a different view of competition**

*The notion of 'winning' is changing- people are more concerned with beating a personal time or fitness target than beating a competitor.*

### **Social pressures are influencing our participation**

*Weight management, social interaction and enjoyment are common motivators for participation in sport.*

## **'Membership' is changing**

*People are a part of more and broader social networks, with looser ties  
There's an increasing focus on the social or altruistic value of membership, facilitating and connecting conversations and relationships.  
Social media platforms are replacing membership.  
Younger generations are increasingly uncomfortable with traditional governance models.  
There are higher expectations of professional service.*

## **We spend less time playing, more time working**

*Total recreation hours are decreasing and the amount of time spent in paid work is increasing*

*Less time is spent playing sport and more time watching screens.*

## **We have more physical activity alternatives**

*Physical exertion required for active electronic games is comparable with light to moderate physical activity, making it a viable alternative to sport.*

*We have more gyms, more personal trainers, (and are buying more lycra and fitness equipment) than ever before. Online communities create opportunities for people to meet others engage in sport and communicate sporting preferences to a wider audience.*

## **The way we do business is changing**

*Loosely organised community sports associations are likely to be replaced by organisations with corporate structures and more formal governance systems in light of market pressures.*

*The proportion of people volunteering in sport is declining  
Individuals, through social media, are creating our content.*