



# Outdoor Council of Australia

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National Outdoor Strategy 2009 - 2012

May 2010

**'Securing a sustainable future for the outdoor sector by strengthening alliances between relevant government, business and community organizations'.**



## FOREWORD

Dear friends of the outdoor sector,

There have been many contributors to this National Outdoor Strategy which was first drafted following a National Outdoors Summit held in Brisbane in August 2008. We have widely circulated many drafts for feedback as we have continued to fine tune this important statement about the future of the Outdoors Sector in Australia. Thank you to all who have provided valuable input into this strategy.

One of our challenges is to obtain support for the strategy and the sector from the Federal Government. We are a sector in need of a Minister.

We are working to find opportunities to brief relevant Ministers and ideally this foreword would be written by the Federal Minister responsible for our sector. Unfortunately we do not currently belong to any portfolio. Once we are able to find a 'home' at the Federal level we then propose to use this document as a starting point for discussions regarding the future needs of our sector.

We are now distributing this updated version of the document for your information. We of course welcome any further feedback as we see this as a living document that will continue to evolve over the coming months and years.

In the meantime we will continue to work towards the priorities and actions outlined in this document.

David Petherick  
President  
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## 1. THE VISION

***The vision for the National Outdoor Strategy is to secure a sustainable future for the outdoor sector by strengthening alliances between relevant government, business and community organizations.***

There are many organisations involved in the provision of services and infrastructure that support outdoor activities, including government at a local, State and Federal level, private enterprises, schools and other educational institutions and community-based organisations. This National Outdoor Strategy has been prepared following consultation with all of these stakeholders.

The result is a Strategy that seeks to:

- *promote* the value of participation in outdoor activities and the sector in general;
- *quantify* participation, its impact on the environment, the economy, individuals and the community; and
- *grow* the sector in general as well as participation in outdoor activities.

## 2. WHY A NATIONAL OUTDOOR STRATEGY

A significant number of Australians and international visitors participate in outdoor activities in different parts of the national landscape. Whether people participate for education, recreation, tourism or personal development reasons, outdoor activities are important components of the Australian lifestyle and offer opportunities for enhancing health, wellbeing, social responsibility, economic return and environmental stewardship. Part of the Australian lifestyle, the great outdoors offer diversity and complexity through our beautiful beaches, forests, deserts, mountains, coral reefs, rivers, urban and rural landscapes.

Research has shown that outdoor activities provide opportunities for Australians to connect with themselves, their families, their landscapes and with nature. Importantly, outdoor activities are also critical to the physical health and well-being of the nation's population. Given the rate of population growth in Australia, it is essential we make the best use of our existing landscapes for these activities and, where necessary, provide new places to enjoy the outdoors, both for the people who live here and for those who visit.

The Outdoor Council of Australia has facilitated the development of a National Outdoor Strategy to seek a coordinated approach to ensure the necessary facilities, access and resources are available to enable outdoor activities to remain as a valued and sustainable part of Australia's cultural identity. It is hoped this approach will encourage better planning for the development of services and infrastructure for outdoor activities and more efficient long term management.

### 2.1. *The role of the National Outdoor Strategy*

The role of the National Outdoor Strategy is to encourage collaboration to improve the provision of quality outdoor experiences in Australia. This entails developing strategies and actions to focus and coordinate the efforts of the three spheres of government and the sector towards a set of common goals. In doing this, it aims to address actions that currently fall between the different tiers of responsibility and develop efficiencies while working towards recognised goals.

The National Outdoor Strategy is an **agreement to collaborate, rather than a prescription as to what any one organisation, jurisdiction or sphere of government should do**. It aims to establish strategies for improving the provision of quality outdoor experiences across the transport, planning, environment, education, health, sport and recreation, and tourism portfolios. The approach taken will aim to minimise the duplication of initiatives and maximise efforts to reach common goals.

The National Outdoor Strategy covers the period from 2009 to 2012. It is intended that the Outdoor Council of Australia and its members will engage with government to review and renew this document towards the end of that period.

### 2.2. *The benefits of engaging in activity in the outdoors*

Evidence-based research detailed within the *Australian Outdoor Adventure Activity Benefits Catalogue* (OCA, 2008b) recognises the ways in which outdoor activities contribute to society, including:

- Health (physical, social, psychological, quality of life);
- Personal and group development;
- Environmental awareness;
- Healthy families and communities, social capital; and
- Local and district economy.

In general, the personal benefits gained by engaging in activity incorporate connecting with self, others and the environment. More expansively, the wider benefits include enhanced physical/mental health of participants, value to communities, opportunities for skills development and relationship building, environmental stewardship and significance to the economy.

Covering the psycho-social, psychological, physical, environmental and spiritual domains, outdoor activities offer positive outcomes across the gamut of wellbeing indicators. To achieve these benefits however, requires the provision of appropriate facilities and natural resources as well as the design of programs that are intentionally working towards particular objectives. Further, it also requires the building of capacity of organisations (particularly not for profit groups) to deliver programs and desirable outcomes.

These findings are consistent with current government policy and agendas and have been highlighted through:

- the National Preventative Health Strategy;
- outcomes from the 2009 National Linking Landscapes Summit; and
- the Crawford Report into sports funding in Australia.

### **2.3.      *Resourcing the strategy***

Consultation during the development of the Strategy indicated the importance of the commitment of resources to outdoor activities. While it is acknowledged there are substantial resources already going into provision of outdoor adventure-based spaces and programmes across all three spheres of government a detailed audit of existing resourcing has not been undertaken. This means it is difficult to make a precise determination of existing supply or resource need to meet ongoing and future demand. Further, because outdoor activities are often secondary uses of space (e.g. after conservation, forestry, agriculture, water supply), or subsidiary aspects of existing programmes (e.g. health and physical education in schools; or cycleways for transport) there is little targeted resourcing of this very important aspect of human physical activity and nature engagement.

The purpose of this Strategy is not to determine a schedule for the future allocation of outdoor funding. Those decisions are made by individual governments and stakeholder organisations. Rather, the Strategy seeks to place the activities of the various governments and other stakeholders within a National context and provide a framework for collaboration and sharing best practice to make the most of the available funds. **It is a collaborative approach not a directive approach.** The Strategy seeks to utilise existing programs and resources for many of its proposed actions.

By encouraging organisations and agencies to collaborate, and raising the profile of outdoor activities for national health and wellbeing purposes, the Strategy leaves it to Australian, state, territory and local governments and other stakeholders to decide what targets and related benchmarks they will establish within their jurisdiction.



### 3. PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS

- Promote
- Quantify
- Grow

Priorities to achieve the goals to Promote, Quantify and Grow the outdoor sector focus on:

**Collaboration:** Providing leadership and developing partnerships to support and promote the outdoor sector in Australia.

**Provision of access and infrastructure:** Recognition of outdoor activities and outdoor spaces as essential components of planning to enable the provision of appropriate access, infrastructure and facilities.

**Individual and Community Growth:** Providing ample opportunities for engagement in outdoor experiences that will lead to quality of health and lifestyle outcomes.

**Sustainability:** Providing leadership in the exploration and implementation of “Best Practice” with regards to land and water use, access, infrastructure, and service provision and in the measurement and evaluation of outdoor experiences.

**Co-ordination:** Improving coordination of activities relevant to the provision of quality outdoor experiences in the appropriate portfolios of Australian, state/ territory and local governments.

**Training, Professional Development and Capacity Building:** Increasing professional capacity within the sector by promoting and improving the skills for responsible delivery of safe, quality outdoor experiences in an ethical manner.

### 3.1. Collaboration

*Providing leadership and developing partnerships to support and promote the outdoor sector in Australia*

As well as improved access to land and water for outdoor activities and the necessary infrastructure, a commitment to increased participation calls for underlying social conditions, policies and programs to be addressed. This will involve institutional arrangements, management systems, communications and community education, including events and promotion. In many cases it will be necessary to remove barriers, such as the lack of research or knowledge. Australian, state, territory and local governments can raise the profile of outdoor activities as a sustainable and active transport, education, recreation, health and tourism choice. There is also the potential for valuable partnerships within and across the sector, non-government organisations and private businesses, including major employers. Leadership is required to develop these partnerships and networks in order to promote the sector and the benefits and value of outdoor activities.

#### Outcome - Short (within 2 years)

Collaboration	Action	Responsibility	End Date
	Develop and implement marketing strategies that promote the outdoor sector and activities and their benefits, using existing or new marketing materials.	OCA, outdoor sector	Ongoing
	Promote the Benefits Catalogue.	OCA & member organisations	Ongoing
	Identify Australian, state, territory and local government funding programs (with appropriate criteria) which could be used to support the achievement of actions within the National Outdoor Strategy.	OCA & member organisations	Ongoing
	Establish and maintain a system to enable regular communication between the outdoor sector stakeholders.	OCA & member organisations	Ongoing

#### Outcome - Medium (2-5yrs)

Collaboration	Action	Responsibility	End Date
	For all States/ Territories to have, or be represented by, a sustainable peak outdoor organization.	OCA/Gov't/State peaks	
	Increase OCA membership.	OCA	
	Encourage corporate engagement with the Outdoor Sector through promotion of peak national outdoor events.	OCA	
Collaborate with research institutions to broaden understanding of the outdoor industry and its contribution to Australian wellbeing.	OCA		

### 3.2. Provision of access and infrastructure

*Recognition of outdoor activities as an essential component of planning to enable the provision of appropriate access, infrastructure and facilities.*

Significant increases in participation will only come about when outdoor activities are incorporated into land use planning. This will ensure that a mix of land uses are valued and created, and ensure that facilities associated with outdoor activities are integrated with roads, public transport networks and other infrastructure. Improved provision of infrastructure and facilities for outdoor activities will encourage greater participation. Australian, state, territory and local governments have complementary roles in the provision of infrastructure and facilities for outdoor activities and this strategy seeks to support those roles.

#### Outcome - Short (within 2 years)

Access	Action	Responsibility	End Date
	Incorporate planning for outdoor activities into federal, state, territory and local government land use policies, strategies and planning instruments to ensure that needs are considered in the course of all relevant planning and infrastructure delivery activities.	Federal, state, territory and local governments	
	Develop guidance to support planning for infrastructure and facilities for outdoor activities by local government	State, territory and local governments	
	Support work to identify routes, standards for facilities, and the development of routes (such as trails) that support participation in outdoor activities	State outdoor industry associations	

#### Outcome - Medium (2-5yrs)

Access	Action	Responsibility	End Date
	Increase standardization of access across Australia in relation to the outdoors, especially in places like National Parks	OCA	
	Spaces for outdoor recreation have enduring protection and are seen as integral areas, core to Australian lifestyle and environmental protection.	State, territory and local governments	
	Enable processes that encourage private landholders to open up their land for outdoor recreation purposes.	State, territory and local Governments	
	Offset arrangements institutionalized for loss of greenspace and waterways for recreation.	State, territory and local governments	

### 3.3. Individual and Community Growth

*Providing ample opportunities for engagement in outdoor experiences that will lead to quality of health and lifestyle outcomes.*

Whilst the health benefits of physical activity are well publicised, transferring that knowledge into life-long participation for an individual or a community requires the provision and coordination of support, knowledge, infrastructure and possibly, incentive. For example, there is a need for research into triggers to engage people to participate in outdoor activities to enhance health and reduce the likelihood of disease. Governments as well as the community, and individuals within the community will play roles in providing these requirements.

#### Outcome - Short (within 2 years)

Community Growth	Action	Responsibility	End Date
	Conduct an annual national outdoor community-based event (e.g. a national campout).	OCA; State Peak Outdoor Organisations	2010
	Encourage recognition of the health benefits of outdoor activities and identify actions that will lead to an increase in the number of people who participate for transport, exercise and recreation in all appropriate health and physical activity strategies and initiatives.	Federal, state, territory and local governments; OCA and other peaks	Ongoing
	Increase awareness of the links between healthy lifestyle - particularly healthy diet, physical activity and healthy weight - and preventing or reducing the risk of chronic diseases. Research and develop tools for promotion and engagement.	Federal, state, territory and local governments	
	Research the changing nature of children, their development, and the context they are growing up in to provide suitable outdoor opportunities	OCA and other peaks	

#### Outcome - Medium (2-5yrs)

Community Growth	Action	Responsibility	End Date
	Develop and implement a strategic research program on emerging issues that have relevance to participation in outdoor activities.	Federal, state, territory and local governments, OCA and other peaks	
	Clearly and comprehensively articulate the form and value of outdoor education in curriculum development as a learning medium	OCA, OEA and other interested parties	
	Established recognition of the qualitative benefits of outdoor engagement taking into consideration the often unstructured and independent nature of participation.	OCA, Research partners	

### 3.4 Sustainability

*Providing leadership in the exploration and implementation of “Best Practice” with regards to land and water use, access, infrastructure, and service provision and in the measurement and evaluation of outdoor experiences.*

Sustainability incorporates participation, land/water use, infrastructure and communities and economies. Participation includes users, providers and volunteers. Due to the informal nature of the industry many providers and users act as volunteers in some way. It is important to encourage, support and recognize the important role these volunteers play.

Before recreation can occur, spaces must be identified for appropriate use for outdoor activity/recreation. Informal use makes it almost impossible to quantify supply and demand. Research in areas that are not easily observable is crucial to strategic planning by the industry’s key stakeholders. Major decisions by government regarding infrastructure may be influenced by plans supported by appropriate research.

Fortunately most outdoor recreators have a sense of responsibility to act as custodians for the environment. Guiding principles for appropriate land use, consistent with international standards, are regularly being developed, benchmarked, and updated. Further, there are sectors of the industry dedicated to providing guidance for sustainable land use, low impact on the environment, access to the broader community and information to government.

Sustainability is closely linked to 3.6 ‘Training and Professional Development’, as sustainability includes the capacity of the industry to professionally and safely deliver services and outcomes.

#### Outcome - Short (within 2 years)

Sustainability	Action	Responsibility	End Date
	Development of codes of ethics on land and water use.	OCA	
	Advocate for appropriate land/water use.	OCA	
	Educate industry and users of appropriate/ sustainable use of the environment.	OCA, Peak Industry Organisations	
	Advocate for volunteer support within the industry including recognition and affordable training.	OCA, Peak Industry Organisations	

#### Outcome - Medium (2-5yrs)

Sustainability	Action	Responsibility	End Date
	Outdoor Recreation/ Education recognized as an industry classification through the Australian Bureau of Statistics.	Federal, state, territory governments, OCA	
Contribution of the outdoor industry to national GDP recognized and investigated by ABS.	Federal, state, territory governments, OCA		

### 3.5 Co-ordination

*Improving coordination of activities relevant to the provision of quality outdoor experiences in the appropriate portfolios of Australian, state/ territory and local governments.*

To be successful, the National Outdoor Strategy needs to be supported by a range of policies and programs implemented by all spheres of government, individuals and organisations in Australia. Activities to support the outdoor sector need to be integrated across transport, planning, sport and recreation, health, environment, tourism, and education. Actions in this priority area aim to improve integration and coordination across the different spheres of government and the sector.

#### Outcome - Short (within 2 years)

Coordination	Action	Responsibility	End Date
	Seek the support of relevant Ministers (including Planning, Sport and Recreation, Health, Tourism, Environment and Education) in recognising the benefits of increased participation in outdoor activities to their portfolio, in implementing the Strategy, and in giving consideration to funding particular actions.	OCA	December 2009
	Develop and implement a monitoring framework for the Strategy.	OCA	June 2010
	Provide a detailed annual progress report to the outdoor sector.	OCA	December 2010
	Establish a centralised database of existing sector information to capture sufficient data to identify trends, substantiate benefits/value of sector and build profile.	OCA	June 2010
	Conduct a national outdoor sector data collection day.	OCA	June 2010
	Collect and report compatible state and territory data and indicators in order to provide a comparative national perspective on outcomes, and in particular measures of participation in outdoor activities.	ABS and state and territory agencies through ERASS with supplementary information	Initially by December 2010 then annually
	Identify and collate examples of benefit cost analyses and other planning resources that quantify the benefits of outdoor activities.	OCA	Initially by December 2009 then update and expand annually
	Promote collaboration between government agencies, the outdoor sector and other public and private organisations in implementing the Strategy.	OCA	Ongoing
Continue to develop initiatives in the Australian, state, territory and local government spheres that will help achieve the vision of the Strategy.	OCA, its members, government agencies, organisations and individuals within the sector	Ongoing	

**Outcome - Medium (2 – 5years)**

<b>Coordination</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>End Date</b>
	Develop a comprehensive database of contacts relevant to the sector.	OCA & Industry Peak Organisations	
	Collect and report compatible state and territory data and indicators on safety of participants through a National Incident Database.	OCA	
	Establish a web-based resource centre as a repository for data, information and best practice relating to planning, policy, programs and projects (for example, projects that demonstrate good practice in land use planning, infrastructure and facilities for outdoor activities).	OCA	
	Establish a national outdoor sector research body - Knowledge Bank.	OCA & research partners	
	Develop an information and advice service in conjunction with the web-based resource centre, to be administered by staff who would answer inquiries and provide advice through (wherever possible) a website.		

### 3.6 Training, Professional Development and Capacity Building

*Increasing professional capacity within the sector by promoting and improving the skills to enable the responsible delivery of safe, quality outdoor experiences in an ethical manner.*

Ensuring that outdoor activities can be undertaken safely will increase participation. The delivery of environmentally and financially sustainable activities will enable continued provision of a diverse range of opportunities. This requires addressing the skills of those that plan and deliver programs in a paid and volunteer capacity, as well as those who seek to participate independently. In addition, there is a need to build the capacity of clubs and community organisations to deliver accessible, low cost programs that enable people to experience and sustain their interest in a range of outdoor activities.

#### Outcome - Short (within 2 years)

Training	Action	Responsibility	End Date
	Continue input into education and training reforms and the upgrade of education and training resources.	OCA, state outdoor peak bodies, Skills Councils (SSA and state equivalents)	Ongoing
	Encourage research into education and training needs, outcomes, effective methodology, etc.	Skills Councils – SSA and state equivalents	Ongoing
	Match learning opportunities with suitable on the job skill development .	Outdoor sector	Ongoing
	Provide adequate, cost effective training opportunities in remote and rural areas and to volunteers.	Australian, state and territory governments	Ongoing
	Encourage the adoption of nationally recognised training standards i.e. the National Sport and Recreation Training Package and benchmarks for operating procedures (e.g. AAS)	OCA	Ongoing
	Encourage the adoption of nationally recognised industry certification (e.g. NOLRS or equivalent)	OCA	Ongoing
	Promote and encourage skills development in the sector	OCA, SSA, Peak Industry Organisations	Ongoing
Identify resources and funding that can support sector capacity building (e.g. staff training, volunteer management, affordable program delivery)	OCA, National and state peak industry organisations, government	Ongoing	

#### Outcome - Medium (2-5yrs)

Training	Action	Responsibility	End Date
	Minimise the risk and impact of accidents and emergencies through effective targeted risk management and incident management training, used in collaboration with research from incident database.	OCA	
Establish standards/codes of conduct for business operations.	OCA and sector		



## 4. An overview of the Outdoor Sector

### 4.1. *The value of the outdoor sector*

Research into the benefits of outdoor activities highlights the valuable contribution they make to personal health and wellbeing.

In the face of health concerns regarding decreasing levels of physical activity and associated rising obesity rates, the broader community is looking for effective ways of combating these problems. While participation in outdoor adventure activities is not a panacea for social and environmental ills, the growing body of research into the benefits of engagement in outdoor adventure activities (and into the programs and methods used) points towards multiple benefits for people, their connection with others and with nature.

The Outdoor Sector also makes a significant contribution to the Australian economy. Recent work done by the Outdoors Industry Taskforce in Victoria following the February 2009 bushfires estimated the value in Victoria alone at \$182 million annually.

### 4.2. *Profile of the outdoor sector*

The outdoor sector consists of the individuals, organisations and agencies that promote, conduct and manage activities in the outdoors. The 'outdoor sector' is inclusive of the numerous contexts and range of purposes in which outdoor activities are conducted including:

- **Non-competitive outdoor recreation** – activities in a non-competitive context (for example, bushwalking, bicycle touring, and camping);
- **Outdoor sports** – formally organised, competitive events such as orienteering, rogaining, surfing competitions, fishing competitions long distance off-road motorcycle racing, car rallies and endurance horse riding;
- **Outdoor and environmental education** – using outdoor activities to help achieve formal and informal educational outcomes;
- **Health and lifestyle improvement** – active forms of outdoor activity (walking, riding, canoeing, etc.) to improve health and wellbeing or as part of a balanced lifestyle;
- **Adventure-based counselling** – using outdoor activities for therapeutic outcomes – improved physical, psychological, social and spiritual well-being; and
- **Adventure tourism, eco-tourism and nature-based tourism**—outdoor adventure activities provided by commercial tourism enterprises.

As a consequence, the outdoor sector includes:

- **Individual** participants in outdoor recreation activities, including anyone who is a surfer, four-wheel driver, camper, water skier, mountain bike rider, sailor, hang glider, etc.;
- **Community organisations** including youth groups, church groups, activity-based clubs, professional associations and volunteer-based search and rescue organisations;
- Public and private **schools** with outdoor education programs;
- Federal and State **Government departments**, agencies and corporations which manage areas where outdoor adventure activities occur or which have responsibilities that affect how, where, when and why people participate in outdoor adventure;

- **Local governments;** and
- **Private enterprise** including:
- **Private landholders** offering outdoor adventure opportunities on a commercial basis;
- **Manufacturers**, importers and retailers of outdoor adventure equipment; and
- Eco-tourism, nature-based **tourism** or adventure tourism operators.

Further, the responsibilities for outdoor activities and the places where they occur, and resolution of consequent issues, are spread across a number of Federal, State and Local governments. These government agencies manage matters which include land use planning, water supply, sport, recreation, fisheries management, wildlife management, tourism, search and rescue, nature conservation, forestry, licensing of drivers and registration of motor vehicles, transport planning, cultural heritage, outdoor and environmental education, physical and mental health and management of bushfires, weeds and feral animals.

**Stakeholders include but are not limited to...**

Campsites	Insurers
Commercial Operators	Land Managers
Conference Centres	Manufacturers/Suppliers
Community Organisations	Not For Profit Groups/clubs
Consultants	Outdoor Education Centres
Corporate training Providers	Park Management
Education/Training Providers	Retailers
Environmental Education Centres	Retreats
Government	Resorts
Individuals	Schools
Industry Body/Professional Associations	Tour Operators
	Volunteers

**Outdoor Activities include...**

Abseiling	Kite-flying
Adventure Racing	Kite-surfing
Archery	Mountain Bike Riding
Artificial Climbing	Nature Studies
Ballooning	Orienteering
Birdwatching	Parachuting
Boating/Power	Picnicking
Boating/Sailing	Rafting
Bungy jumping	Rockclimbing
Bushwalking	Rogaining
Camel Riding	Ropes Courses- High/Low
Camping	Sailboarding
Canoeing	Sailing
Canyoning	Scuba diving
Caving	Skiing/Cross country/Nordic
Cycling	Snorkelling
Downhill snow skiing	Sport Surfing
Fishing	Team Building/ Initiatives
Fossicking/Collecting	

Four-wheel-driving	Therapeutic Recreation
Gliding/Hang-gliding/Para-gliding	Trail Bike Riding
Horse Riding	Tree Climbing
Hunting/Shooting	Water Skiing (Cable)
Jet Skiing	Waterskiing/Wakeboarding
Kayaking	Windsurfing Yachting

### **4.3. Outdoor sector values**

The outdoor sector acknowledges a number of guiding principles in order to achieve the vision and goals of this Strategy:

#### **Collaboration**

- Working together with a united commitment to the relevance of the outdoor sector;
- Strengthening communities by providing ample opportunities to engage in an outdoor experience that will lead to quality of health and lifestyle.

#### **Sustainability**

- Environmentally aware, responsible custodians of the land and water;
- Appropriate natural resource use, resulting in minimal impact.

#### **Ethical Practices**

- Culturally aware, responsible, ethical business practices;
- Looking after volunteers, employees, clients and the community.

#### **Quality**

- Compliance with standards and codes of conduct/practice;
- Best practice in the provision of services and in business operations;
- Professional development in order to deliver positive outdoor experiences in a safe environment, embracing all opportunities for improvement.

#### **Connecting**

- Appreciating the environment, providing opportunities for others to learn;
- Influencing cultural and behavioural change.

#### **Equity & Inclusivity**

- Encouraging access to all in the formal and informal use of the outdoors;
- Enabling access to programs and services regardless of economic circumstances.

#### **Diversity**

- Providing a diversity of programs, locations and activities;
- Developing specific programs to cater to target groups.

#### **4.4. Challenges facing the outdoor sector**

The challenges facing the outdoor sector and the associated issues have been detailed more fully in *Active Australians Outdoors: Discussion Paper* (OCA, 2008a) and can be summarised under the following interrelated topics:

- Participation and demographics – who is participating and where? What is impacting upon participation choices? What are the trends in participation to assist planning and management? There is minimal specific data available on outdoor activities use and usage patterns either in general, or related to specific activities.
- Volunteers – declining volunteer numbers coupled with an increasing cost to train volunteers impacts heavily on community-based programs;
- Industry maturity and profile – is the outdoor sector an industry? Are the sector, its leaders and its programs valued? Have the value and benefits of participation in outdoor activities been effectively measured? As a relatively young industry, an identity is yet to be forged based on sound quantifiable research.
- Skills – a highly seasonal, casual workforce expected to experience a skills shortages exacerbated by the fact that work within the sector is not seen as a life-long career;
- Access – suitable number and diversity of outdoor places is the most significant challenge facing the outdoor sector. This is exacerbated by the number of agencies responsible for managing areas used for outdoor activities.

##### **4.4.1. Constraints to participation**

There are five broad categories of barriers or constraints to participation in physical activity commonly identified in leisure research. These are:

- the costs of participating in leisure activities;
- lack of time and/or the pressure of other commitments;
- inadequate or inaccessible facilities;
- isolation (including social isolation and geographical isolation); and
- lack of skills and abilities.

The issue of inadequate or inaccessible facilities (or places) for outdoor activities is exacerbated by population growth which has an impact on demand for public infrastructure (water, roads) and private assets alike (eg. housing). The implications of this increasing population for the outdoor sector are complex and include:

- Increased competition for outdoor settings;
- Activity groups migrating to settings where there has previously been no outdoor activity usage (e.g. user conflict);
- Loss of greenspace and open space for outdoor recreation activities as development is prioritised; and
- Increased environmental impact and deterioration of the quality of the experience due to overcrowding.

With the gradual ageing of the population (with the median age expected to rise from 36 to 45 between 2009 and 2051), coupled with the activity preferences of different age classes as well as an increasing emphasis on a “fit and active lifestyle”, considerable planning effort needs to be expended on the provision of facilities and places to meet the changing demands of the future residents. Another emerging challenge is addressing the requirements of an ageing society as well as the new recreational demands of the younger sections of society within the

already limited area of publicly accessible land that is available for use. There are also challenges in providing the social and operational setting that will be required as issues of fuel costs and transport congestion change behaviour patterns.

## **4.5. Opportunities**

### **4.5.1. Facilitators of participation**

While constraints exist and are expanding, it is also important to realise that research on facilitators of participation indicate that the participation of friends, encouragement from friends, and the sharing of successful physical activity experiences of others are important. By extension, adolescent participation is encouraged by the involvement and role modelling of parents with their children. Structural facilitators of activity include the availability and accessibility of facilities, built and natural, as well as the social and cultural environment and how that supports physical activity by all.

In response to the challenges and issues confronting the outdoor sector, the goal is to;

Promote, quantify and grow the outdoor sector by:

- Continuously improving the networking within the sector;
- Improving membership/engagement with national bodies;
- Engaging government as a significant participant (but not the driver);
- Creating strong effective relationships with governments, peak bodies and relevant forums; and
- Promoting equity in access to the outdoors.

#### **Promote**

Promote the real value of the sector for what it means to individuals, organisations, businesses, communities and government

#### **Quantify**

Research the sector to gain a thorough understanding of its dimensions, needs and characteristics. Who are the current stakeholders, what are their needs and what will we need to do in the future to support the sector.

#### **Grow**

Assist in the development of individuals and organisations to grow the sector to a point where it is recognised for its value and adequately supported for sustainability.

## 5. Measuring Effectiveness

To measure the effectiveness of these goals and actions it will be important to track progress and gauge support for the strategic priorities listed. While the ideas raised in this document are descriptive and aspirational rather than prescriptive, the Outdoor Council of Australia is striving to establish a foundation from which the outdoor sector can grow nationally. Through collaboration comes strength and opportunity. To take these opportunities however, requires teamwork, implementation and review. As such, the Outdoor Council of Australia will review its progress against the priorities listed and use this document to guide interactions with federal, state/ territory and local government agencies.