

# Tennis: *Tennis Australia*

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*‘Tennis Australia is committed to equality of access and equality of opportunity for people of all ages and both sexes, irrespective of geographic location, social background, ethnicity, disability, and other variables.’<sup>1</sup>*

There is no definitive point in history at which the game of tennis began. Many argue it was the ancient civilisations in Greece and Rome that first played racquet and ball games similar to the ones we know now. Others say it was not until the 18th and 19th centuries in France and England that modern tennis was born, when indoor sports such as Real Tennis and Jeu-de-Paume were moved outside.<sup>2</sup>

The new game became established in England and in 1875 a meeting was held at the Marylebone Cricket Club to determine a standardised set of rules for the sport of Lawn Tennis. In 1877 the Wimbledon tournament began.<sup>3</sup>

The first tennis tournament ever played in Australia was held in January 1880, on the courts of the Melbourne Cricket Club, built two years earlier. For the next 20 or so years, tennis grew in popularity around Australia, particularly amongst the well-to-do.

In 1900, the British Isles and the USA had played off for the trophy now known as the Davis Cup. By 1904, the competition had expanded to include Austria, Belgium and France, and many in Australia considered it was time the new nation mounted a challenge.

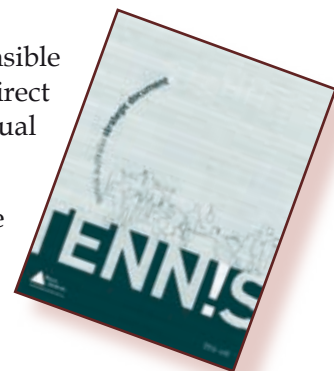
To do this, however, Australia required a national body. At a meeting of state representatives in September that year, it was agreed to form the Australasian Lawn Tennis Association, taking in the interests of both Australia and New Zealand. It was here that Australia’s great Davis Cup tradition, and the Australian Open (now 101 years old), were born.<sup>4</sup>

## **Tennis Australia**

Tennis Australia is the governing body of tennis within Australia, linking to member associations throughout the country. They promote and facilitate participation in tennis at all levels, and also conduct national and international tournaments.

Eight state and territory tennis bodies (Member Associations or MAs) are responsible for implementing Tennis Australia’s initiatives. Tennis Australia does not have direct affiliation with tennis clubs, centres or associations – clubs and their individual members pay a registration fee for affiliation to their local MA.

This affiliation enables clubs, centres and associations to take advantage of a range of important benefits including: insurance, resources, access to club development programs and funding opportunities, as well as expert advice on a number of tennis related topics.



After gradually increasing over a period of six years, the number of affiliated clubs (2,056) and registered players (225,763) has been fairly static since 2003.<sup>5</sup>

### Who plays tennis?



Each year Tennis Australia produces a Health Index which monitors participation in the sport. The 2005–06 Health Check revealed that tennis is the fifth most popular form of recreation, exercise and sport in Australia with 689,000 men and 634,000 women playing.

According to the Australian Sports Commission's most recent study (2004) 1.3-million people aged 15 years and over play tennis or 8.4 per cent of Australia's population.<sup>6</sup>

Tennis is most popular with the 25–34 year-old age group, with 303,000 playing annually (ASC). The game maintained its position as the second most popular activity during the winter months, with 23 per cent of the population aged 15 years and over participating (Sweeney Report).<sup>7</sup>

Tennis Australia's Community Tennis Manager, Mark McAllion said: "One of the great attractions of tennis is that it can be played by everybody, everywhere. At a tennis club you can join in the tennis community. It gives you the opportunity to play sport with your friends or to meet new friends. There's a very strong social aspect".<sup>8</sup>

### Increasing participation

Tennis is one of Australia's most popular participation sports. Surveys show that Australia has the highest participation rate in the world with 1.9 million people (nearly 10 per cent of the population) playing tennis; however the frequency of play (less than once a week) is below the world average for major tennis nations.<sup>9</sup>

To increase participation, Tennis Australia states in their 2004–05 Annual Report that it 'wants to achieve a modest increase in the number of players and a substantial increase in the frequency of play to at least once a week'.

To achieve its desired overall growth rate, Tennis Australia and its Member Associations aim to maintain and develop innovative programs and services that recruit and retain tennis players, as well as increase the frequency of play for current tennis players. They do this by promoting tennis as 'a social, fun, healthy, accessible, inexpensive and year round sporting option to children, parents, teachers and schools together with utilising the game as a tool for improving the social connectedness within the community'.<sup>10</sup>

Programs encourage involvement and are accessible to all Australians, including people with disability, Indigenous people and people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

### Strategic plan

In their 2004–08 Strategic Document, Tennis Australia states that it 'needs to increase levels of media coverage, events, activities, public relations, marketing, advertising and promotion of tennis. Simultaneously, clubs and centres around Australia need to be able to accommodate growth in membership numbers and frequency of play and provide a level of service befitting any national marketing program'.<sup>11</sup>

The quality of the courts and related facilities of many affiliated bodies around Australia has remained virtually unchanged for decades and is now below modern player expectations. In many cases the only significant investment has been the addition of floodlights and/or the conversion of the playing surface from clay to hard court to synthetic grass (of varying quality). There has been limited maintenance since and restricted applicability for player development.<sup>12</sup>

To address this, Tennis Australia has appointed a National Facilities Reference Group and is developing a four-year strategy and a 20-year blueprint to address long-term challenges.

### **Tennis in schools program**

Tennis Australia recognises the need for primary school children to learn the fun, social, healthy, lifestyle and competitive aspect of being involved in sport and to do so at an early age.

While the specifics of the Tennis in Schools program varies between state and territory Member Associations, the program aims to increase tennis activity during school time and link school children to their local coach and club so they can continue to learn the game.

Tennis Australia is currently producing a schools kit includes appropriate equipment, and a Tennis in Schools CD Rom, which provides national guidelines and policies for teaching tennis to school aged children.<sup>13</sup>

### **Talent Search**

This initiative is aimed at identifying athletes from a non-tennis background. Tennis Australia's Talent Search complements tennis-based talent identification programs already in place for thousands of players already immersed in the sport.

The objective of the program is to identify young children that have exciting athletic skills, a desire to compete in sport and are looking for a new challenge in the tennis arena. If children show these skills and an aptitude to learn new ones, then they are on their way to learning how to play tennis.

National Player Development Director Craig Tiley said: "It's the beginning of a project that will permeate throughout the country. We're going to draw them out and put them in tennis programs, where the players haven't traditionally been".<sup>14</sup>

The Talent Search day tests each child in game sense, physical skills and tennis skills. Tennis Australia plans to refine its Talent Search Days and run more throughout Australia, as part of a key initiative to attract young athletes who might otherwise have chosen a different sport.

### **Indigenous Sports Program**

The Indigenous Sport Program is funded by the Australia Sports Commission (ASC) and offers an integrated development pathway that includes a scholarship and grants program as well as development workshops. These initiatives are linked to existing sports development structures and assist Indigenous coaches, managers, trainers, athletes and officials.

Tennis has its own Indigenous Tennis Program (ITP) which aims to develop tennis programs that can be taken to the Indigenous communities. This includes the transfer of tennis skills and expertise to Indigenous Australians, and to empower them to develop and implement meaningful tennis programs that are community-owned and driven.

This program adopts a holistic approach to sport development by assisting Indigenous Australian's to become coaches, officials and administrators, which ultimately ensures all participants have an enjoyable and safe tennis experience.<sup>15</sup> Some examples of the programs operating in the states are included below:

### **ACT Indigenous Program**

Tennis ACT is working with Sport and Recreation ACT to provide a social tennis program for Indigenous women and their children to participate in tennis in a fun and friendly environment.

The program, which commenced in May 2006, runs for eight weeks and consists of skill acquisition and development, match play, access to facilities, equipment and competitions, as well as improving health through physical activity.<sup>16</sup>

### **Tennis Queensland**

Tennis Queensland, in conjunction with the QLD Department of Sport and Recreation, Tennis Australia and the Australian Sports Commission, conducts a state-wide Indigenous Tennis Program aimed at developing tennis programs that can be taken into Indigenous communities.

The program provides communities with equipment, coaching resources and information to be self-sufficient and conduct their own tennis programs, and links to a local tennis club. This provides a pathway for achievement and opportunity for participants to play fixtures or continue with coaching.<sup>17</sup>

### **Living in Harmony project**

Tennis Australia has been a Harmony Day partner since 2004 and has used the high profile of the Australian Open tournament to promote Harmony Day.

Tennis Australia President Geoff Pollard said: "It is extremely important to the success of our sport that every Australian is provided the opportunity, feels welcome and enjoys participation in tennis, therefore Tennis Australia fully supports the activities and principle of Harmony Day 2006."<sup>18</sup>

Tennis Australia also promotes Harmony Day throughout its clubs and associations nationally and has recently produced a guide titled *'Tennis: Everybody Everywhere'* (see below). The booklet has been distributed to all clubs and associations, and provides a number of useful activities and ideas to make tennis a more inclusive and culturally sensitive game.

"Tennis Australia's participation goal is to ensure that people from all backgrounds are made welcome and enjoy the tennis experience. We highly value equality of opportunity for people of all cultures and believe this is integral to the growth of our sport," Mr Pollard said.

## Tennis: 'Everybody Everywhere'

Tennis Australia states that they are: 'consistently working towards an ideal where all people share equality of opportunity, are free from discrimination and where all cultures and heritage can be respected and sustained'.<sup>19</sup>

As such, they have produced a booklet called '*Tennis: Everybody Everywhere*' to provide examples of discriminatory language and behaviour; some common barriers facing migrants and refugees that can limit their access to sport; pose questions for clubs to consider about how inclusive they are for people from different religions of cultures, and; provide some practical considerations for dealing with young people from diverse backgrounds.



In addition to providing definitions on migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, the booklet outlines different facts and demographics of Australia's multicultural composition and highlights that 'ethnic people are dramatically under represented in both the numbers playing sport and the range of sports played in Australia (ABS, Involvement in Sport, Australia, 1997).<sup>20</sup> It adds 'resettlement issues, such as cultural differences, language barriers and disrupted schooling can make the adjustment into Australian society difficult' (Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues, 2003).<sup>21</sup>

The booklet outlines common barriers to sport faced by migrants and refugees, such as:

- may have come from countries without structured community based sport
- lack of familiarity with sporting clubs and environments
- absence of effective public transport
- potential threat or experience of racism
- feelings of isolation
- language barriers
- alcohol consumption being perceived as a main activity of sports clubs
- cost of activities, and
- family or cultural communities may take priority over sport.<sup>22</sup>

There are also important questions posed to clubs, schools and individuals in tennis about these issues in the booklet. These include: how accessible is your club? How do you let people know about your club? Do you need a translator? Can you make arrangements to pick up participants for whom public transport is difficult? How expensive is it joining your club? Do you have arrangements in place to allocate used equipment and clothing to help new members get started? Is there flexibility in the payment of fees? Does your normal uniform exclude participants from different religions or cultures and can you modify these requirements? Does your club's social life cater to people from different social backgrounds? Is there a variety of food or music to suit the cultural mix of your club members and families at social events? Do you have flexibility when some religious events impact on the sporting environment?<sup>23</sup>

These are questions that are probably new to many clubs and individuals, but need to be answered if tennis is to be truly inclusive and welcoming to people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Head of the US-based Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport, Richard Lapchick said: “If it was not for sport many people would not have the opportunity to interact with people from a wide cultural mix”.<sup>24</sup> The benefits of cultural diversity and interaction to the clubs and individuals are immeasurable and include:

- increased membership and more funds for club activities,
- the opportunity to increase the number of skilled or gifted players in your club,
- more potential volunteers or administrators,
- lifting the profile of you club in the local community and beyond,
- learning more about other cultures,
- more spectators and increased social benefits associated with new members and their family groups,
- assist new arrivals to settle in,
- raise the awareness of the benefits of sport in culturally diverse families, and
- builds relationships between cultures.<sup>25</sup>

### Member Protection Policy (MPP)

Member protection is all about policies, practices and procedures which protect a sport’s athletes, administrators, coaches and officials.

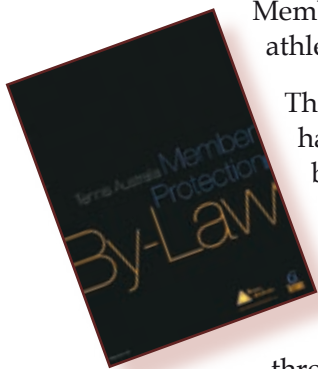
This protects members from physical and emotional harassment, such as sexual harassment and racial discrimination, which are unlawful and can result in action being taken against an organisation. Other forms of harassment such as bullying and humiliation of athletes and abuse of umpires are not unlawful, but they can drive away members and are not compatible with the ethic of ‘fair play’ in tennis.

Harassment in sport can serve to drastically undermine the intrinsic benefits of involvement in tennis, including health and fitness, and self esteem built up through social interaction and involvement with the community. Tennis Australia President Geoff Pollard said: “The unfortunate reality is that tennis, as a sport, is not immune from acts of discrimination, harassment and abuse, rather to the contrary, sport provides an environment which in many cases lends itself to conduct which is not only inappropriate, but also unlawful”.<sup>26</sup>

Depending on the nature of the case, instances of harassment or abuse in sport can have devastating effects for 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 volunteers and the prospect of long-term damage to the organisation’s image and reputation. These are all unnecessary harms which Tennis Australia is anxious to avoid.<sup>27</sup>

As a result, they have developed a Member Protection By-Law which covers harassment, discrimination, abuse and vilification.

However, the adoption of the Member Protection By-Law itself is just the first step in providing members and participants with protection. The successful implementation and enforcement of this By-Law requires the cooperation and commitment of Tennis Australia members and



participants at all levels. To this end, the organisation has developed an 'Information Kit' to assist regional associations and affiliated clubs with implementing and understanding the By-Law.

### What is harassment, vilification and discrimination?

Under the these By-Laws, harassment is defined as any behaviour by a person or organisation which is 'offensive, abusive, belittling or threatening which is directed at any other person or a group of people and which refers to a particular characteristic of that person or group of people'.<sup>28</sup>

**Harassment** can be expressed or implied, physical, verbal or non-verbal. Examples include:

- abusive behaviour aimed at humiliating or intimidating (this may also be vilification),
- jokes or comments directed at a person's body, looks, age, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability (this may also be discrimination),
- unwelcome remarks including teasing, name calling or insults (for example to umpires or other officials),
- innuendo or taunting,
- offensive emails, letters, notes, and/or
- displaying offensive materials e.g. posters, computer screen savers.<sup>29</sup>

**Vilification** involves 'a person inciting hatred towards, serious contempt for, or severe ridicule of, a person or group of persons by public act. Public acts that may amount to vilification include any form of communication to the public and any conduct observable by the public'.<sup>30</sup>

**Discrimination** is defined as 'treating or proposing to treat a person less favourably than someone else in certain areas of public life on the basis of an attribute or personal characteristic they have'<sup>31</sup>, including:

- physical features - this includes a person weight, size, height and other physical features,
- political belief/activity,
- race, and/or
- religious belief/activity.<sup>32</sup>

Discrimination includes direct discrimination and indirect discrimination. Requesting, assisting, instructing, inducing or encouraging another person to engage in discrimination, is also deemed discrimination. It also includes victimisation, which occurs when 'a person is subject to, or is threatened to suffer, any detriment or unfair treatment, because that person has or intends to pursue their legal rights under anti-harassment legislation or the By-Law'.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to the description of discrimination in the By-Law, any behaviour or conduct which is discrimination under any federal or state legislation is considered discrimination for the purposes of Tennis Australia's By-Law and is regarded as an offence.

## Codes of conduct

To protect the health, safety and well being of its members Tennis Australia has developed a Code of Conduct which deals with specific standards and requirements for administrators, coaches, players and parents/guardians.

The Codes are designed to reinforce conduct which Tennis Australia considers is appropriate and to discourage inappropriate behaviour.

## Complaints

Tennis Australia believes everyone who participates in the sport has the right to be treated with respect and dignity. They also have the right to have any complaints dealt with in a fair, confidential and sensitive manner, and to be given the opportunity to be heard before any penalties are imposed.

Any person or organisation can make a complaint if they consider that a person or organization has committed an offence or breached the By-Laws. A complaint should be made to a Member Protection Officer of Tennis Australia or the relevant Member Association, which have procedures established for dealing with complaints (outlined in detail in the Member Protection By-Laws).

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> *Tennis Australia strategic plan 2004–08* at <http://www.tennisaustralia.com.au/pages/image.aspx?assetid=RDM38286.5293896412>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.tennisaustralia.com.au/pages/default.aspx?id=4&pageId=282>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.tennisaustralia.com.au/pages/default.aspx?id=4&pageId=282>.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.tennisaustralia.com.au/pages/default.aspx?id=4&pageId=282>.

<sup>5</sup> *Tennis health check fact sheet 2005–06* at <http://www.tennisaustralia.com.au/pages/image.aspx?assetid=RDM38945.6482349306>.

<sup>6</sup> *Tennis health check fact sheet 2005–06* at <http://www.tennisaustralia.com.au/pages/image.aspx?assetid=RDM38945.6482349306>.

<sup>7</sup> *Tennis health check fact sheet 2005–06* at <http://www.tennisaustralia.com.au/pages/image.aspx?assetid=RDM38945.6482349306>.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.tennisaustralia.com.au/pages/default.aspx?id=4&pageId=9342>.

<sup>9</sup> *Tennis Australia Annual Report 2004–05*. P16.

<sup>10</sup> *Tennis Australia strategic plan 2004–08*.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Tennis Australia Annual Report 2004–05*. P54.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.tennisaustralia.com.au/pages/default.aspx?id=4&pageId=10372>.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.tennisaustralia.com.au/pages/default.aspx?id=4&pageId=7866>.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.tennisact.com.au/pages/default.aspx?id=26&pageId=8440>.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.tennisqueensland.com.au/pages/default.aspx?id=21&PageID=965>.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.harmony.gov.au/partners/tennis.htm>.

<sup>19</sup> *'Tennis: Everybody Everywhere'* booklet.

<sup>20</sup> *'Tennis: Everybody Everywhere'* booklet.

<sup>21</sup> *'Tennis: Everybody Everywhere'* booklet.

<sup>22</sup> *'Tennis: Everybody Everywhere'* booklet.

<sup>23</sup> *'Tennis: Everybody Everywhere'* booklet.

<sup>24</sup> ABC radio *Sports Factor*, May 2003.

<sup>25</sup> *'Tennis: Everybody Everywhere'* booklet.

<sup>26</sup> Member Protection By Law preface by President Geoff Pollard AM.

<sup>27</sup> Member Protection By Law preface by President Geoff Pollard AM.

<sup>28</sup> Member Protection By Law 9.2.

<sup>29</sup> Member Protection By Law 9.3.

<sup>30</sup> Member Protection By Law 9.12.

<sup>31</sup> Member Protection By Law 10.1.

<sup>32</sup> Member Protection By Law 10.2.

<sup>33</sup> Member Protection By Law 10.6.