



2010 Federal Election – ALFA’s Call To Action

The Australian Leisure Facilities Association Inc. (ALFA) represents the 2,000 plus aquatic, recreation and leisure facilities throughout Australia, which we estimate employ over 80,000 workers and manages hundreds of billions of dollars of community assets. As part of the Federal Government Election it is calling on all political parties to commit to supporting the local Leisure Industry, which provides more programs, opportunities and services than all of sport put together. An estimated 263m visits per year to our industry’s centres continue to improve the health and wellbeing of the local communities. The recent government’s responses to the ‘Crawford Review’ and the ‘National Preventative Health Task Force’ reports agree that Australia’s preventative health needs to be a critical focus.

Yet our industry is ignored in terms of funding and understanding, each Party has an opportunity to build this into their election Policy. ALFA requests that each Party demonstrates a commitment to the following in order to make a real contribution to preventative health within Australia:

- Prioritising locally delivered grassroots participation in physical activity as a preventative health action;
- Investing in the infrastructure that delivers community based physical activity;
- Investing in industry training for the aquatics, recreation and leisure facilities industry so that we can keep quality people in our industry;
- Working with leisure facilities to break down barriers to participation, making it more accessible and more enjoyable for every Australian to participate in the community physical activity and/or program of their choice, thereby increasing participation rates in physical activity.

The Challenge

The challenge for any Government is to effectively match the limited available resources to the targeted client groups that are in most need of them. To achieve this, policy must be matched with implementation strategies. Local Government as the key ‘owner and provider’ of the majority of our Industry’s facilities are in a similar position and are not recognised by many political parties, maybe due to the political policy that many governments drive. ALFA is not political and can facilitate the solution for Government if they have Policy for local community participation. ALFA is calling on all parties to determine their Policy for local community health and physical activity so that we can ensure that our Industry can support the Party that will deliver real outcomes to real people’s challenges.

ALFA is asking all parties to consider the following key Policy Areas in their Policy:

1. Grassroots Participation as a Preventative Health Action

The Australian Government needs to prioritise locally delivered grassroots participation in physical activity as a preventative health action as identified in both the ‘Crawford Review’ and ‘The Preventative Health Task Force’ reports.

Our Industry facilities have already proven that they can deliver cost effective and positive outcomes in the areas of:

- Health (e.g. obesity, diabetes, mental health and social isolation); and
- Social Equity (e.g. participation in exercise for youth, equity in participation for women and young girls, indigenous Australians and ethnic minorities).

Through the national network of leisure facilities, ALFA is best placed in supporting a Government Policy for delivering grassroots physical activity within leisure facilities programs that will deliver preventative health outcomes such as:

- Improved blood pressure, cholesterol levels and aerobic fitness;
- Reduced incidence of obesity, decreased risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, prostate and breast cancer; and
- Lower stress and anxiety levels and reduce feelings of depression.

2. Community Infrastructure

The Australian Government needs to invest in the infrastructure that delivers community based physical activity.

There is currently no coherent approach to building and maintaining community leisure facilities. As recommended in the Crawford Report, the Australian Government should develop a strategic national facilities initiative for the funding and

ALFA is the national voice for the industry with strong local networks, together forming an industry alliance.

ALFA’s Regional Bodies:



development of Australia's community sport and recreation facilities over the next decade. The closure of ageing pools and sports facilities will not only impact on the health of the community but will also impact significantly in Australia's desire to return to being a world sports power.

ALFA is able to identify and provide planning advice and prioritization across the Country and tactically can provide viable design solutions to address the access issues that currently prevent specific members of the community from participating in exercise. Effective design solutions can also contribute to making these facilities more sustainable in the long term.

3. Industry Training

Employing an estimated 80,000 plus staff, many young people find their first work experiences in our industry before going to University and onto other careers. We need to provide career opportunities for people to remain in our facilities. Many country areas pools are having to close and reduce their hours due to lack of quality and qualified staff. We want government to commit resources to our industry as it has for other industries otherwise we may not be able to open many of the facilities in the future.

Government Policy needs to address funding support across the Country in an equitable manner, Victoria are the most supportive of all States and Territories and have recognised the importance of training at that level, we want Government to set Policy so that this is the case nationally. We need to be a Targeted Industry for support initiatives.

4. Breaking Down Barriers

The Australian Government needs to work with leisure facilities to break down barriers to participation, making it more accessible and more enjoyable for every Australian to participate in the community physical activity and/or program of their choice, thereby increasing participation rates in physical activity.

Through locally based leisure facilities it is possible to target and provide specific programs that break down barriers and cater for specific populations such as seniors (male and female), school age children, pre-school children, parents and toddlers, women of all ages, people with a disability, indigenous Australians and CALD communities.

Clearly the role that leisure facilities provide for increasing participation and improving the health Australian communities needs to be on the national agenda. Leisure facilities provide opportunities for the grassroots community to get active – tackling obesity and other preventable diseases. They are part of the fabric of local communities, their health, social, physical, emotional and cultural development.

ALFA would welcome the opportunity for ongoing dialogue and partnership on specific initiatives in pursuing our common community health objectives and the preventative health actions, which ALFA can facilitate.

The Leisure, Aquatic & Recreation Industry Profile

With a vision to "Raise the quality, increase usage and improve the customer experience relating to aquatic, recreation and leisure facilities in Australia", ALFA represents individual employees, organisations that own, manage or lease facilities and companies that supply to the industry.

- The industry represents over 2000 leisure, aquatic and recreation facilities
- The industry comprises government and not-for profit facilities
- The turnover of leisure, aquatic and recreation facilities is approximately \$1.26 billion
- The usage of leisure, aquatic and recreation facilities is 263 million people per year and growing
- The industry employs over 80,000 people.

Gary Penfold
ALFA Chairman

For more information, please contact:

Loren Bartley
Executive Officer
Australian Leisure Facilities Association Inc.
PO Box 1322
South Melbourne VIC 3205
0458 800 757
eo@alfaleisure.org.au
www.alfaleisure.org.au