

**Adolescent Participation in Gymnasium Based Exercise Programs:
Barriers and Opportunities**

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

September 2019

ABSTRACT

This thesis involves a study of adolescent participation in gymnasium based exercise programs (GBEPs) in Australia. It investigates the problematic nature of, and the influences on their low levels of participation. Special attention is given to the significance of gymnasiums as spaces for adolescent exercise participation, and—in the light of both the prevailing regulatory context and operations of the Exercise and Fitness Industry (EFI)—the capacity of gymnasium businesses and their workers to appropriately cater for this cohort.

The study used a triangulated mixed-method research design, with data sourced from semi-structured telephone interviews, a structured online questionnaire, and documents relating to the operations and conduct of the EFI in Australia. Interviews were conducted with 16 informants, including a government minister, government and industry association executives, and senior managers from gymnasium businesses. Also from across Australia, were 44 parents and/or guardians of adolescent children who completed the questionnaire. The document analysis incorporated independent industry reports and government regulations relevant to the EFI and the context of this study. In particular, industry codes in four state and self-governing mainland territories, which were the main and generally enforceable regulations specific to the EFI in Australia, were examined. The study was framed by stakeholder theory, with the data situated in an analytical setting guided by regulation theory.

The findings suggested that gymnasium businesses generally discriminated against adolescents through informal exclusion and restrictive policies on gymnasium based exercise program (GBEP) participation, and it was clear that this customer segment was not given the attention it deserved. In addition, most stakeholders believed that there was a need for better educated and suitably qualified gymnasium instructors and personal trainers, able to provide appropriate supervision, guidance and exercise instruction. Also demonstrated was strong support for external EFI regulation, including mandatory gymnasium business and instructor accreditation, with interview informants, in the main, believing that it would result in better quality and safer industry practices, offering quality assurance. While the findings showed that gymnasiums were mostly viewed as appropriate spaces for adolescent exercise participation, some stakeholders felt that the prevailing levels of regulation of the EFI, as well as its internal practices, were unable to deliver Australia's adolescents with equitable access and appropriate levels of support to participate effectively in GBEPs.

The findings were used to formulate a number of recommendations—predominantly for the EFI—with special attention to advancing the participation of adolescents in GBEPs across Australia. Accordingly, the thesis culminates in the analysis of policy options and strategic opportunities to increase their participation, whilst ensuring equal gymnasium access. This includes the nationwide introduction of external industry regulation, mandatory gymnasium business and instructor accreditation, and a gymnasium access requirement which provides all adolescents with the opportunity to participate in GBEPs. The ensuing recommendations are to support both adolescent and adult GBEP participants, improve enterprise and industry performance, and potentially contribute to building a healthier and more active Australian population.

DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

I, Luke Anthony Grikepelis, declare that the PhD thesis entitled *Adolescent Participation in Gymnasium Based Exercise Programs: Barriers and Opportunities* is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Signature



Date 30 September 2019

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In 2004, I commenced the double degree, Bachelor of Exercise Science and Human Movement/Bachelor of Arts (Sport Administration) at Victoria University. The first semester was a valuable and positive introduction to my tertiary education. My lecturer for the subject Sport Funding and Finance was Professor Bob Stewart—a consummate professional whose genuineness and expertise in sport regulation and policy in particular, influenced me to approach him about becoming my principal supervisor for this doctoral research. I am indebted to Professor Stewart for his input and support throughout.

External associate supervisor Professor Aaron Smith from the College of Business Office, RMIT University, committed himself to this doctoral research despite his existing heavy workload. For this, I am most grateful.

I sincerely appreciate the willingness of Professor Mark Andersen of Victoria University to be independently involved as a registered psychologist.

In the second semester of 2004, my lecturer for the subject Sport and Globalisation was Doctor Brian Moroney. Doctor Moroney emphasised the importance of quality writing and I am grateful for his influence on my written work. As a colleague of Professor Stewart he became involved in this research, once again providing feedback and advice.

My family, in particular my parents Judy and Algis, have been incredibly supportive throughout my tertiary education. Their belief, and that of my grandmother Margaret and partner Sarah, in my ability to succeed with this research has been a source of ongoing motivation. Our wonderful dogs Jessie, Molly and Tess were often by my side as I wrote.

I feel most fortunate to have received support and encouragement throughout this process, none more so than from my family to whom I dedicate this thesis.

PUBLICATIONS AND AWARDS

- 2012 L. Grikepelis and B. Stewart, 'The Structure and Conduct of the Australian Exercise and Fitness Industry: An Exploratory Analysis', in M. Burke and B. Stewart (eds), *Sport, Culture and Society: Connections, Techniques and Viewpoints*, Elwood: Maribyrnong Press, 2012, pp. 113–28. ISBN 978-0-9752384-7-9
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Chapter overview

This chapter introduces the reader to the study, and explains how it was conceptualised, structured and operationalised. It thus sets the scene for this Australian national study about adolescent participation in gymnasium based exercise programs (GBEPs). The chapter outlines the research topic, and at the same time, establishes the context of the study. It also outlines the direction of the dissertation. The chapter begins with the nomenclature adopted in this thesis and clarification of essential terms. Both the conceptual framework, namely stakeholder theory, and the analytical setting employed, are identified. The chapter presents the apparent fundamental problem of exclusion and restriction affecting adolescent gymnasium based exercise program (GBEP) participation in the Exercise and Fitness Industry (EFI) in Australia, and in this context, it raises the issue of adolescent physical inactivity. It then states the purpose of the study, lists the research questions which have been formulated to address the problem of adolescent participation in GBEPs in Australia, and is followed by the aims and outcomes of this research. The chapter closes with a snapshot of the content that follows from this introduction, setting the scene for the rest of the dissertation.

Nomenclature and clarification of terms

The following nomenclature has been adopted in this thesis. Essential terms are also clarified.

The Fitness Industry in Australia, also less widely known as the Health and Fitness Industry, is referred to in this thesis as the Exercise and Fitness Industry, or EFI in its abbreviated form. The justification for altering the industry descriptor in this way is provided in the EFI analysis in chapter two.

For the purpose of this thesis, the term ‘gymnasium based exercise program’, or ‘GBEP’ in its abbreviated form, refers to a program centred on cardiovascular and/or resistance exercise (of a non-aquatic nature), offered at an exercise facility operating as a business, and which is accessible to the public. The term ‘adolescent’, when used in a context which directly links to this study, refers to minors between the ages of 12 and 17 years. This is the age range of the adolescent population in focus. In Australia, ‘minors’ are those under the age of 18 years.

Conceptual framework

Stakeholder theory

This study about the participation of adolescents in GBEPs is framed by stakeholder theory which is driven by the proposition that the operations of a business may be assisted or constrained by the strategic aims of other businesses that have an interest in its growth and development.¹ In the context of this study and relevant stakeholder interests, it was deemed necessary to investigate the government (federal, state and self-governing mainland territory governments), Industry Skills Council and industry association, business (gymnasiums), and parents/guardians of adolescent children stakeholder categories. The stakeholders in these categories, who were first invited to participate in this study, are documented in chapter three.

Analytical context

Regulation theory

The study involves investigation via interviews, a questionnaire and document analysis. The results were analysed in the context of regulation theory. The use of regulation theory to assist the analysis of the findings was considered to be crucial, as the fundamental issues underlying the questions in the interviews and questionnaire related

¹ R. Freeman, *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, New York: Cambridge University Press, [1984] 2010; See also R. Freeman, J. Harrison, A. Wicks, B. Parmar and S. de Colle, *Stakeholder Theory: The State of the Art*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

to the level of regulation of the Australian EFI—which has been viewed as light²—and anecdotal evidence of its internal practices. The evidence indicated that many gymnasium businesses seemed to discriminate against minors through exclusion and restriction. By focusing the analysis of data from the interviews and questionnaire, and of the document analysis, around regulation theory, it was anticipated that the apparent barriers to participation by adolescents in GBEPs would be more clearly revealed. This led inevitably to discussion of the need for, and expected benefits of additional external control of the EFI.

The fundamental problem affecting adolescent GBEP participation

In the Australian EFI, discrimination against minors by gymnasium businesses through exclusion and restriction would appear to be a barrier to their GBEP participation. There is a mix of inconsistent and restrictive minimum participation age requirements and blocking of access to minors for participation in GBEPs, by gymnasium operators. An EFI practice which seems to be commonplace is for businesses to deny gymnasium access to persons under the age of 16 years, with some only granting access from 18 years of age. Consumers aged 17 years and younger represent just 5% of the EFI's market (estimated as a percentage of EFI revenue in 2011–12), which is the industry's smallest age segment.³ The apparent barriers of exclusion and restriction concerning GBEP participation—of adolescents in particular—is a fundamental reason for the existence of this study, with an adolescent population in focus.

This industry resistance to the accommodation of adolescents is surprising considering the need for further action to increase levels of physical activity participation in young people, and the predominantly health- and economic-related public and private benefits which would be expected to accrue from a more active and healthy population.

² N. Sallmann, 'IBISWorld Industry Report X0025: Fitness in Australia', *IBISWorld*, 2012, pp. 1–27.

³ Sallmann, 'IBISWorld Industry Report X0025'.

Adolescent physical inactivity

The benefits which can be derived from physical activity have been well documented,⁴ and it is widely regarded that young people must become more active.⁵ Early in this study's investigation (2009), less than one third of young people globally were considered sufficiently active for it to be of benefit to their health and well-being at that stage of their lives, and into the future. In addition, their levels of activity, including physical education and other physical activities in schools were decreasing.⁶ This is a cause for concern, as it is the stage of life when leisure habits are formed, and views about the relevance of physical activities are shaped.⁷

Physical inactivity has been recognised as a major contributor to the health problems suffered by many Australians, including young people,⁸ with overweight and obesity of particular concern. Obesity in childhood is an important predictor of obesity when an adult, indicating that the associated considerable long-term consequences for personal

⁴ A. Hardman and D. Stensel, *Physical Activity and Health: The Evidence Explained*, second edition, Abingdon: Routledge, 2009; See also R. Paffenbarger, R. Hyde, A. Wing and C. Hsieh, 'Physical Activity, All-Cause Mortality, and Longevity of College Alumni', *New England Journal of Medicine*, vol. 314, no. 10, 1986, pp. 605–13; See also R. Paffenbarger, R. Hyde, A. Wing, I. Lee, D. Jung and J. Kampert, 'The Association of Changes in Physical-Activity Level and Other Lifestyle Characteristics with Mortality among Men', *New England Journal of Medicine*, vol. 328, no. 8, 1993, pp. 538–45.

⁵ A. Bauman and N. Owen, 'Physical Activity of Adult Australians: Epidemiological Evidence and Potential Strategies for Health Gain', *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1999, pp. 30–41; See also U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 'Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General', *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion*, 1996, pp. i–278; See also World Health Organization, 'The World Health Report 2002: Reducing Risks, Promoting Healthy Life', *World Health Organization*, 2002, pp. 1–248.

⁶ World Health Organization, *Physical Activity and Young People*, Geneva, 2009, http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/factsheet_young_people/en/print.html, accessed 3 June 2009.

⁷ R. Stalsberg and A. Pedersen, 'Effects of Socioeconomic Status on the Physical Activity in Adolescents: A Systematic Review of the Evidence', *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports*, vol. 20, 2010, pp. 368–83.

⁸ A. Bauman, B. Bellew, P. Vita, W. Brown and N. Owen, 'Getting Australia Active: Towards Better Practice for the Promotion of Physical Activity', *National Public Health Partnership*, 2002, pp. i–186; See also National Public Health Partnership, 'Be Active Australia: A Framework for Health Sector Action for Physical Activity', *NPHP*, 2005, pp. i–57.

health, can stem from the early years.⁹ Unhealthy diets and physical inactivity are major causes of the enormous economic costs of obesity.¹⁰ Diet and physical activity are two of the main risk factors for non-communicable diseases, which are a substantial economic burden on health systems and a source of considerable costs to the community.¹¹

It is now widely acknowledged that there is a pressing requirement for environmental, social and policy change to increase physical activity.¹² For children specifically, it is necessary to reassess the action which needs to be taken to increase their level and frequency of physical activity participation.¹³ The magnitude of the physical inactivity problem affecting Australians, both young and old, is evident, as is the crucial importance of finding a remedy.

Purpose of the study

Calls for action—on a widespread community scale—to increase participation in physical activity have been made, yet gymnasiums are seldom explored as an option,¹⁴ despite them being common in many communities. This, as well as the apparent barriers of exclusion and restriction concerning GBEP participation—of adolescents in particular—begs the question of why gymnasiums are generally not involved as part of a strategic solution to the problem of adolescent physical inactivity, and what will need to be done to ensure their effective contribution to the solution.

The significant adolescent physical inactivity problem requires a multifaceted solution. In addressing this, one generally neglected facet is the expansive network of

⁹ S. Honisett, S. Woolcock, C. Porter and I. Hughes, 'Developing an Award Program for Children's Settings to Support Healthy Eating and Physical Activity and Reduce the Risk of Overweight and Obesity', *BMC Public Health*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2009, p. 345.

¹⁰ Standing Committee on Health and Ageing, 'Weighing It Up: Obesity in Australia', *The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Health and Ageing*, 2009, pp. i–206.

¹¹ World Health Organization, 'Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health', *World Health Organization*, 2004, pp. 1–18.

¹² Bauman et al., 'Getting Australia Active'.

¹³ A. Smith and S. Bird, 'From Evidence to Policy: Reflections on Emerging Themes in Health-Enhancing Physical Activity', *Journal of Sports Sciences*, vol. 22, no. 8, 2004, pp. 791–99.

¹⁴ World Health Organization, 'Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health'.

gymnasiums and other EFI businesses across Australia which could offer valuable, yet largely unexploited physical activity community resources for adolescents. The purpose of this study is to critically examine the structure, conduct and practices of the Australian EFI, and evaluate, with subsequent recommendations, its potential to increase adolescent participation in GBEPs across Australia, and effectively contribute to the solution for the adolescent physical inactivity problem.

This thesis will also examine the prevailing levels of regulation of the EFI, and how changes in the regulatory context might provide Australia's adolescents with equal access and appropriate levels of encouragement and support to participate in GBEPs, as part of a full range of opportunities available to them to improve their health, fitness, and well-being. Gymnasium business accreditation, gymnasium instructor accreditation, and industry regulation, are key issues to be addressed in the development of policies which aim to increase adolescent participation in GBEPs across Australia. Thus, the identification of policy-gaps in gymnasium business and instructor accreditation, particularly regarding the participation of adolescents in GBEPs, is a focus of this study.

Research questions

Adolescent GBEP participation in the Australian EFI is highly problematic. The research questions which follow from this issue are: (1) What are the policies of federal, state and self-governing mainland territory governments, industry associations, and gymnasium businesses regarding adolescent participation in GBEPs in Australia? (2) To what extent have any previous and/or existing policies enhanced or inhibited adolescent participation in GBEPs in Australia? (3) What are the policies under development which might be implemented and directly or indirectly affect adolescent participation in GBEPs in Australia?

Aims

In line with the research problem as identified above, the aims of this study are threefold. The first is to explain the influences on participation by adolescents in GBEPs in Australia. The second is to identify how gymnasiums could contribute more

effectively as part of the solution to the problem of adolescent physical inactivity in Australia. The third aim is to provide policy options for the EFI primarily to increase adolescent participation in GBEPs in Australia, with a focus on gymnasium business and instructor accreditation and industry regulation.

Both the semi-structured telephone interview and structured online questionnaire schedules were designed, first and foremost, to achieve these aims, and to effectively address the research questions. Accordingly, interviews secured with a minister, senior executives, executives and senior managers from federal, state and self-governing mainland territory governments, industry associations, and gymnasium businesses from across Australia, are the primary focus of this study. Whilst the questionnaire was an important component, for which parents and/or guardians of adolescents from across Australia were recruited to participate, it was essentially designed as a subsidiary exercise to complement the interviews. These data sources were supplemented by the document analysis incorporating independent industry reports and government regulations relevant to the EFI and the context of this study. In particular, industry codes in four state and self-governing mainland territories were examined, as these were the main and generally enforceable regulations specific to the EFI in Australia, and of most significance to this study at the time of investigation (2014).

Research outcomes

The supposition is made that the findings of this research will lead to both the development and stakeholder acceptance of a policy, regulatory and operational approach to improve gymnasium operations and service delivery concerning adolescent GBEP participation in Australia in particular. An intention of this approach is to generate cultural and attitudinal change in the broader public arena, built on opportunity, encouragement and support to practise life-long healthy lifestyles with physical activity as the centrepiece, for both public and private benefit.

Key outcomes of this research are the provision of policy options and identification of strategic opportunities to increase GBEP participation by Australia's adolescents, whilst ensuring equal gymnasium access. Additionally, there are subsequent

recommendations—predominantly for the EFI—to support both adolescent and adult GBEP participants, improve enterprise and industry performance, and potentially contribute to building a healthier and more active Australian population. The acceptance of the recommendations made, together with appropriate design and implementation, would offer significant and predominantly health- and economic-related public and private benefits.

Public benefit is expected to affect governments, an Industry Skills Council, industry associations and the general public. It is vital for the nation to have an effective solution to the problem of adolescent physical inactivity, and ultimately, as a consequence of a more active, healthier population, there would be less pressure on Australia's health system through a reduction in avoidable medical procedures and associated costs. Thus, in accomplishing the ultimate purpose of this study—to formulate policies and strategies to increase adolescent participation in GBEPs across Australia and effectively contribute to the solution for the adolescent physical inactivity problem—this thesis makes an important contribution to the solution.

Private benefit is expected to particularly affect gymnasium businesses. This study identifies the prevailing levels of regulation of the EFI—and its internal practices, it would seem—as being inadequate for providing Australia's adolescents with equal access and appropriate levels of encouragement and support to participate in GBEPs. Comprehensive policy options and strategic opportunities to address this problem will therefore be presented. These options and opportunities cover (1) national external industry regulation, (2) national mandatory gymnasium business and instructor accreditation, and (3) strategic encouragement and support of adolescent participation in GBEPs. It will be determined that this strategic approach is necessary to dismantle the barriers to participation by adolescents in GBEPs, and to subsequently increase their involvement. National external regulation of the EFI, in particular, is thus crucial to increase adolescent participation in GBEPs, whilst ensuring equal gymnasium access, and to improve enterprise and industry performance in Australia. Through national external industry regulation and the concepts proposed in this thesis, gymnasium businesses—and also gymnasium instructors and personal trainers—would have an

unprecedented level of guidance and support, making for a more professional and profitable industry with an enhanced public standing.

It is beyond the scope of this study to thoroughly examine policy options and strategic opportunities regarding the participation in GBEPs of those younger than 12 years of age, but it does provide a framework for further studies to investigate the options and opportunities to increase participation by this age group, in addition to young people aged 12 years and above.

Organisation of the thesis

Following this introductory chapter, the dissertation advances to an examination of the literature relevant to this thesis. Chapter two deals with first, stakeholder theory, second, physical inactivity in adolescence, third, the EFI, and fourth, regulation, with a focus on the latter two.

Literature review

The literature review (chapter two) begins with a discussion about stakeholder theory—the basis of this study—and by acknowledging the physical inactivity problem affecting adolescents, other minors and adults. With young people as a focus, the personal benefits which arise from regular physical activity participation are discussed, followed by the recommended amount of daily physical activity, the actual levels of participation globally, and the connection between their existing and future activity levels. The topic of overweight and obesity in Australia's young people is then raised, with reference to the potential long-term health consequences of childhood obesity, and the increased risks to health linked to overweight and obesity in adulthood. Also identified are the economic costs of obesity and the mortality rate, which have been attributed to physical inactivity in Australia. Further demonstrating the importance of health is the relationship between non-communicable diseases and a nation's development and economic growth. Healthy eating and physical activity programs for disease prevention are then identified as key instruments in policies to achieve developmental goals. With a

focus on policy development, action required to increase physical activity participation is presented, and also linked to the involvement of gymnasium businesses.

The chapter then provides an analysis of the Australian EFI, beginning with an examination of its structure, which includes a justification for referring to the Fitness Industry as the EFI in this thesis, the identification of the barriers to participation in GBEPs, the main services delivered to customers, the market leaders and other important players, and the emerging gymnasium businesses at the time of investigation. The main services are divided into seven categories, and there is a focus on the first and dominant category ‘integrated exercise services’, as it includes the gymnasium businesses selected for this study. Also identified are the market leaders and other important players’ share of the market and the location of EFI businesses operating in Australia. In addition, the major customer segments according to age are discussed.

The analysis advances to a discussion about the economic performance of the EFI over time, as well as the industry’s costs. Regulation is then discussed, with a focus on the main and generally enforceable regulations specific to the EFI, that is, the industry codes prescribed under the relevant fair trading acts in the Australian Capital Territory, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia. In the context of opportunities for industry development, with adolescents aged between 12 and 17 years as a focus, the section goes on to discuss the mix of inconsistent and restrictive minimum participation age requirements and blocking of access to minors for participation in GBEPs, by gymnasium operators. Gymnasium business and instructor accreditation, and industry regulation, are identified as key issues to be addressed in the development of policies which aim to increase adolescent participation in GBEPs across Australia. A possible industry title change, from Fitness Industry/Health and Fitness Industry to EFI, will also be proposed. The analysis closes considering the significant adolescent physical inactivity problem to require a multifaceted solution, with the expansive network of gymnasiums and other EFI businesses across Australia as not only one generally neglected facet in addressing this problem, but one which could also offer valuable, yet largely unexploited physical activity community resources for the adolescent market segment.

Following the analysis of the EFI, the chapter advances to a review of the variety of regulatory tools and technologies which can be used to secure compliance. The importance of this review is magnified by the fact that the analysis of the results of this study takes place in the context of regulation theory. The analysis of the technologies begins with two fundamental types of regulation, internally driven and externally driven regulation. The section proceeds to explain the composition of both micro and macro regulation. It is also stated that social control tends to be referred to as meta-regulation, which indicates that it functions in the midst of the micro world of individual principles and beliefs, and the macro world of government legislation and the industry regulator.¹⁵ In sharp contrast with social control is economic and political regulation, which is most often described as macro regulation.¹⁶

It is explained that the under-supply problem comes about in circumstances where there are external or social benefits, as well as private benefits. Where under-supply results in market failure, in order to establish a more equitable environment, the argument for appropriate government regulation—and assistance—holds weight. In addition, it is recognised that, as with under-supply, also problematic is the over-supply of products resulting in external costs as well as private benefits.¹⁷ In this situation, regulations designed to curb excessive supply can be implemented. A self-regulatory model is part of the ensuing discussion.

The chapter ends with a discussion about designing regulations, in which it is mentioned that central to the design of a regulatory model is identification of the type of regulation which allows most space to behaviours providing pleasures and benefits, or social utility, whilst disallowing space to those behaviours that destabilise or lessen the quality of life and social utility of a community.

¹⁵ J. Chriss, *Social Control: An Introduction*, second edition, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013.

¹⁶ R. Baldwin, M. Cave and M. Lodge, *Understanding Regulation: Theory, Strategy and Practice*, second edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012; See also A. Freiberg, *The Tools of Regulation*, Sydney: Federation Press, 2010.

¹⁷ Baldwin, Cave and Lodge, *Understanding Regulation*.

Methodology and methods

Both the methodology and methods used to drive this research project are explained in chapter three. The chapter begins with a confirmation of the ethics approval to conduct this research, a justification of the selected age range of the adolescent population in focus, and the identification of the framework of this research and the research design. The chapter moves into a discussion about the triangulated mixed-method research design, which includes a justification for the adoption of an interpretivist approach to this research. It highlights the use of semi-structured telephone interviews with a minister, senior executives, executives and senior managers from federal, state and self-governing mainland territory governments, industry associations, and gymnasium businesses from across Australia, to secure detailed commentary about participation by adolescents in GBEPs. Also discussed is the employment of the structured online questionnaire as a subsidiary exercise to complement the interviews, which, in the main, investigated the attitudes and opinions of parents and/or guardians of adolescents from across Australia, about adolescent participation in GBEPs. These data sources were supplemented by the document analysis which is mentioned accordingly.

Designed, first and foremost, to effectively address the research questions and to achieve the aims of this study, both the interview and questionnaire schedules are discussed, together with an analysis of the methods used to select and secure interview informants, and to recruit questionnaire respondents. Included in this analysis is a discussion of the under-representation of respondents. The chapter ends with the identification of the methods of analysis, as well as an explanation of the risk and risk mitigation and management associated with the data collection procedures.

Results

The interview and questionnaire findings are documented in chapter four. Included are the results from the interviews with 16 stakeholders and the questionnaire involving 44 stakeholders, from across Australia. For the interviews, whilst the government, Industry Skills Council and industry association, and business stakeholder categories were involved, the Industry Skills Council selected was unrepresented. For the questionnaire, the stakeholder category involved was parents/guardians of adolescent children.

Questionnaire respondent demographics are incorporated in the results. As a prelude to the findings, the interview information provided is about the relevant stakeholders, includes the type of primary and supplementary questions they were asked, and raises the themes of the main findings. Similarly, the questionnaire information provided refers to the relevant stakeholders, includes the type of questions posed to them, and is about the categorisation of the main findings.

These stakeholders were largely questioned about the significance of gymnasiums as spaces for adolescent exercise participation, and—in the light of both the prevailing regulatory context and operations of the EFI in Australia—the capacity of gymnasium businesses and their workers to appropriately cater for this cohort. In accordance with the triangulated mixed-method design of this study, in this chapter, responses to the 11 set interview questions are presented in text based format, whilst responses to the 21 multi-choice questions from the questionnaire are compiled as descriptive statistics.

Discussion, conclusions and recommendations

The final chapter examines the interview and questionnaire findings in the context of documents relating to the operations and conduct of the EFI in Australia and, more broadly, other relevant literature on physical inactivity in adolescence, the industry, and regulation. Furthermore, the analysis of these findings is assisted by the use of regulation theory. Accordingly, there is a discussion about the potential for gymnasiums to be part of the solution to the problem of adolescent physical inactivity, gymnasium age restrictions and access requirements, and the need for, and expected benefits of national external regulation of the Australian EFI. With stakeholder theory as the basis of this study, interview informants and questionnaire respondents consisted of stakeholders (1) who were perceived to have a common interest in increasing physical activity participation, and (2) whose interests were considered to have the most potential to affect, or be affected by, the accomplishment of the ultimate purpose of this study, which is to formulate policies and strategies to increase adolescent participation in GBEPs across Australia and effectively contribute to the solution for the adolescent physical inactivity problem. Interviews with the relevant stakeholders were the primary focus of this study, therefore in this chapter there is a significant emphasis on the related

findings, whilst the responses to the questionnaire, although important, were used to mainly supplement and illuminate the interview findings. Before proceeding to the examination and analysis of the findings, the chapter begins by outlining the highly problematic situation of adolescent GBEP participation in the Australian EFI.

The final chapter returns to the core research questions underpinning this thesis, and the aims of the study are also achieved within. The chapter also provides policy options and identifies strategic opportunities to increase GBEP participation by Australia's adolescents, whilst ensuring equal gymnasium access. Additionally, there are subsequent recommendations—predominantly for the EFI—to support both adolescent and adult GBEP participants, improve enterprise and industry performance, and potentially contribute to building a healthier and more active Australian population. The chapter ends by discussing the limitations and delimitations of this research, as well as the implications for future investigations into participation by young people in GBEPs. A snapshot of the appendices is also included.

Chapter summary

This chapter provided the foundation for this study. It outlined the research topic, and at the same time, established the context of the study. It also outlined the direction of the dissertation. The chapter began with the nomenclature adopted in this thesis and clarification of essential terms. Both the conceptual framework, namely stakeholder theory, and the analytical setting employed, were identified. The chapter presented the apparent fundamental problem of exclusion and restriction affecting adolescent GBEP participation in the Australian EFI, and in this context, it raised the issue of adolescent physical inactivity. It then stated the purpose of the study, listed the research questions which were formulated to address the problem of adolescent participation in GBEPs in Australia, and was followed by the aims and outcomes of this research. The chapter ended by providing a snapshot of the content that follows from this introduction, setting the scene for the rest of the dissertation.

As mentioned, the literature relevant to this thesis is examined next in chapter two.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter overview

The chapter examines the literature relevant to this thesis. It begins with a discussion about stakeholder theory, the basis of the study. The chapter is organised primarily around the following three interrelated themes, with a focus on the latter two. The first recognises the issue of adolescent physical inactivity, and includes the health- and economic-related impact on Australians. The second analyses the Exercise and Fitness Industry (EFI) in Australia, focusing on its structure and operations, including identification of the main services it delivers. Further, the regulatory framework under which the industry functions is discussed. The third theme examines in detail, the theory and practice of regulation. Primarily, this is to develop a better understanding of not only the EFI's prevailing regulatory arrangements and the influence they have on service delivery and involvement of Australia's adolescents, but also how changes in the regulatory context might provide another opportunity to improve adolescent health and activity levels, whilst enhancing industry performance.

Consistent with this approach, the chapter acknowledges the physical inactivity problem affecting adolescents, other minors and adults. With young people as a focus, the personal benefits which arise from regular physical activity participation are discussed, followed by the recommended amount of daily physical activity, the actual levels of participation globally, and the connection between their existing and future activity levels. The topic of overweight and obesity in Australia's young people is then raised, with reference to the potential long-term health consequences of childhood obesity, and the increased risks to health linked to overweight and obesity in adulthood. Also identified are the economic costs of obesity and the mortality rate, which have been attributed to physical inactivity in Australia. Further demonstrating the importance of health is the relationship between non-communicable diseases and a nation's development and economic growth. Healthy eating and physical activity programs for disease prevention are then identified as key instruments in policies to achieve

developmental goals. With a focus on policy development, action required to increase physical activity participation is presented, and also linked to the involvement of gymnasium businesses.

The chapter then provides an analysis of the Australian EFI, beginning with an examination of its structure, which includes a justification for referring to the Fitness Industry as the EFI in this thesis, the identification of the barriers to participation in gymnasium based exercise programs (GBEPs), the main services delivered to customers, the market leaders and other important players, and the emerging gymnasium businesses at the time of investigation. The main services are divided into seven categories, and there is a focus on the first and dominant category ‘integrated exercise services’, as it includes the gymnasium businesses selected for this study. Also identified are the market leaders and other important players’ share of the market and the location of EFI businesses operating in Australia. In addition, the major customer segments according to age are discussed.

The section advances to a discussion about the economic performance of the EFI over time, as well as the industry’s costs. Regulation is then discussed, with a focus on the main and generally enforceable regulations specific to the EFI, that is, the industry codes prescribed under the relevant fair trading acts in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), Queensland (QLD), Western Australia (WA) and South Australia (SA). In the context of opportunities for industry development, with adolescents aged between 12 and 17 years as a focus, the section goes on to discuss the existence of a mix of inconsistent and restrictive minimum participation age requirements and blocking of access to minors for participation in GBEPs, by gymnasium operators. Gymnasium business and instructor accreditation, and industry regulation, are identified as key issues to be addressed in the development of policies which aim to increase adolescent participation in GBEPs across Australia. A possible industry title change, from Fitness Industry/Health and Fitness Industry to EFI, will also be proposed. The analysis closes considering the significant adolescent physical inactivity problem to require a multifaceted solution, with the expansive network of gymnasiums and other EFI businesses across Australia as not only one generally neglected facet in addressing this

problem, but one which could also offer valuable, yet largely unexploited physical activity community resources for the adolescent market segment.

Following the analysis of the EFI, the chapter advances to a review of the variety of regulatory tools and technologies which can be used to secure compliance. The importance of this review is magnified by the fact that the analysis of the results of this study takes place in the context of regulation theory. The use of regulation theory to assist the analysis of the findings was considered to be crucial, as the fundamental issues underlying the questions in the interviews and questionnaire (which are explained in detail in the methodology and methods chapter which follows), related to the level of regulation of the Australian EFI and anecdotal evidence of its internal practices. The analysis of the regulatory technologies begins with two fundamental types of regulation, internally driven and externally driven regulation. The section proceeds to explain the composition of both micro and macro regulation. In domestic and everyday life, the psychological and socio-cultural influencers which predominately operate are typically described as micro regulators, whereas economic and political influencers, typically described as macro regulators, predominately operate in the organisational and corporate area.

The term ‘social control’ summarises the major objective behind the different types of regulation. It is stated that social control tends to be referred to as meta-regulation, which indicates that it functions in the midst of the micro world of individual principles and beliefs, and the macro world of government legislation and the industry regulator.¹⁸ In sharp contrast with social control is economic and political regulation, which is most often described as macro regulation because of its use by governments as a regulatory vehicle.¹⁹ When a market’s operations do not coincide with what is best for society, a market failure can occur.²⁰ It is explained that the under-supply problem comes about in circumstances where there are external or social benefits, as well as private benefits. Where under-supply results in market failure, in order to establish a more equitable

¹⁸ J. Chriss, *Social Control: An Introduction*, second edition, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013.

¹⁹ R. Baldwin, M. Cave and M. Lodge, *Understanding Regulation: Theory, Strategy and Practice*, second edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012; See also A. Freiberg, *The Tools of Regulation*, Sydney: Federation Press, 2010.

²⁰ Baldwin, Cave and Lodge, *Understanding Regulation*; See also Freiberg, *The Tools of Regulation*.

environment, the argument for appropriate government regulation—and assistance—holds weight. In addition, it is recognised that, as with under-supply, also problematic is the over-supply of products resulting in external costs as well as private benefits.²¹ In this situation, regulations designed to curb excessive supply can be implemented. The various types of regulation provide a powerful collection of instruments for managing the behaviour of organisations and other groups, as well as individuals. Regulations can be soft or hard, and formal or informal. A self-regulatory model is also discussed, and whilst it has flaws, so do all types of regulation.

The chapter ends with a discussion about designing regulations, in which it is mentioned that central to the design of a regulatory model is identification of the type of regulation which allows most space to behaviours providing pleasures and benefits, or social utility, whilst disallowing space to those behaviours that destabilise or lessen the quality of life and social utility of a community.

STAKEHOLDER THEORY

Stakeholder theory is driven by the proposition that the operations of a business may be assisted or constrained by the strategic aims of other businesses that have an interest in its growth and development. Stakeholder theory asserts that success is dependent on the ability of a business to create value for, and to effectively manage its relationships with customers, employees, suppliers, communities, and financiers. It implies that these stakeholders, at the very least, are groups and/or individuals with multifaceted and inherently joint interests, which can affect or be affected by the accomplishment of organisational purpose.²² That is, stakeholders can not only be passive beneficiaries of a business's growth and development, they can also actively shape its structures and operations,²³ and this would seem to be especially so, when acting as part of a coalition.

²¹ Baldwin, Cave and Lodge, *Understanding Regulation*.

²² R. Freeman, *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, New York: Cambridge University Press, [1984] 2010; See also R. Freeman, J. Harrison, A. Wicks, B. Parmar and S. de Colle, *Stakeholder Theory: The State of the Art*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

²³ J. Post, L. Preston and S. Sachs, 'Managing the Extended Enterprise: The New Stakeholder View', *California Management Review*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2002, pp. 6–28.

With its genesis in the field of strategy, early conceptions of stakeholders concentrated on those able to influence the firm. Consequently, the management of its primary stakeholders was the focal point.²⁴ The first reference to stakeholder interests occurred in 1963 when external influences on the survival of the firm were acknowledged in an internal memorandum at Stanford Research Institute²⁵. The word ‘stakeholder’ was used ‘to generalize the notion of stockholder as the only group to whom management need be responsive’²⁶—signalling the mutual interdependencies between the firm and connected groups, and the cross-benefits that can be achieved. Within this context, the definition of the concept of the stakeholder was ‘those groups without whose support the organization would cease to exist’.²⁷ Over time, the concept of the stakeholder developed, and despite some criticisms,²⁸ has been widely embraced,²⁹ especially by the business research community. In this respect, Freeman’s seminal 1984 work on the stakeholder concept, *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*,³⁰ is significant. Freeman argued that changes in the external environment of business necessitated a new, more effective approach to strategic management, proposing an unconventional conceptual model of the firm that accounted for its stakeholders.

It is important to acknowledge, as Miles confirms,³¹ that there is a wide range of views on the precise meaning of the word ‘stakeholder’. In addition, Freeman et al.³² have noted the suggestion that the definition of the central term of stakeholder theory is too ambiguous for it to be a legitimate theory. Proponents of stakeholder theory however, have made clear that a pragmatic perspective is the most appropriate, as opposed to that of a theory unable to comprehensively explain the issues with which it deals. This is plainly a logical perspective as stakeholder theory aims to be practical,³³ which more

²⁴ S. Miles, ‘Stakeholder: Essentially Contested or Just Confused?’, *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 108, no. 3, 2012, pp. 285–98.

²⁵ Freeman, *Strategic Management*.

²⁶ Freeman, *Strategic Management*, p. 31.

²⁷ The quotation was cited in: Freeman, *Strategic Management*, p. 31.

²⁸ J. Stieb, ‘Assessing Freeman’s Stakeholder Theory’, *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 87, no. 3, 2009, pp. 401–14.

²⁹ Miles, ‘Stakeholder’.

³⁰ Freeman, *Strategic Management*.

³¹ Miles, ‘Stakeholder’.

³² Freeman et al., *Stakeholder Theory*.

³³ R. Freeman, G. Rusconi, S. Signori and A. Strudler, ‘Stakeholder Theory(ies): Ethical Ideas and Managerial Action’, *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 109, no. 1, 2012, pp. 1–2.

specifically, is about providing ‘tools that managers can use to better create value for the range of their constituents, tools that constituencies can use to improve their dealings with managers, and tools that theorists can use to better understand how value creation and trade take place’.³⁴

As stakeholder theory maintains that stakeholder interests can be in conflict, and that a coalition of stakeholders can apply pressure to assert their common interests,³⁵ it is apparent that a pragmatic approach to the application of the theory is best. Moreover, it advocates that both the decisions made by, and the actions of a business, affect stakeholders, and therefore the business is responsible for the ensuing implications.³⁶

This is of particular importance for managers, which Engster³⁷ builds on, stating that ‘stakeholder theory suggests that businesses have an ethical responsibility to consider the interests and attend to the needs of all individuals and groups who are affected by their policies and operations’. Business ethics is at the basis of stakeholder management.³⁸ The integration of business and ethics should be clear, and both will remain connected whilst there is good or bad conduct in business.³⁹

Most organisational researchers have considered stakeholder theory a vehicle for conveying ethics and justice into business,⁴⁰ and certainly, it has been an important and powerful contributor in advocating corporate responsibility. This is ascribed to its capacity to persuade companies to take stakeholder demands seriously.⁴¹

³⁴ Freeman et al., ‘Stakeholder Theory(ies)’, p. 1.

³⁵ B. Neville and B. Menguc, ‘Stakeholder Multiplicity: Toward an Understanding of the Interactions between Stakeholders’, *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 66, no. 4, 2006, pp. 377–91.

³⁶ Y. Fassin, ‘Stakeholder Management, Reciprocity and Stakeholder Responsibility’, *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 109, no. 1, 2012, pp. 83–96.

³⁷ D. Engster, ‘Care Ethics and Stakeholder Theory’, p. 94, in M. Hamington and M. Sander-Staudt (eds), *Applying Care Ethics to Business* [e-book], Dordrecht: Springer, (Issues in Business Ethics: vol. 34), 2011, *Victoria University Library Catalogue*, EBSCOhost, accessed 2 May 2016.

³⁸ Fassin, ‘Stakeholder Management, Reciprocity and Stakeholder Responsibility’.

³⁹ Stieb, ‘Assessing Freeman’s Stakeholder Theory’.

⁴⁰ R. Freeman, ‘Managing for Stakeholders: Trade-offs or Value Creation’, *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 96, Supplement 1, 2010, pp. 7–9.

⁴¹ Fassin, ‘Stakeholder Management, Reciprocity and Stakeholder Responsibility’.

Accordingly, it was deemed necessary, for the purposes of this study, to investigate those stakeholders (1) who were perceived to have a common interest in increasing physical activity participation, and (2) whose interests were considered to have the most potential to affect, or be affected by, the accomplishment of the ultimate purpose of this study, which is to formulate policies and strategies to increase adolescent participation in GBEPs across Australia and effectively contribute to the solution for the adolescent physical inactivity problem. These stakeholders are identified and categorised in chapter three. Gymnasium businesses comprising the business stakeholder category—one of four stakeholder categories—form part of the industry analysis, the second of three interrelated themes which follow this discussion about stakeholder theory.

THE ADOLESCENT PHYSICAL INACTIVITY PROBLEM

Consequences and action

The benefits which can be derived from physical activity have been well documented.⁴² Through numerous campaigns aiming to increase public awareness of such benefits, there have been instances of significant improvement in health and well-being.⁴³ Among the many individual benefits of regular physical activity participation is mitigation of the risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, colon cancer, osteoporosis and injury, as well as reduced depression and anxiety, and strengthened

⁴² A. Hardman and D. Stensel, *Physical Activity and Health: The Evidence Explained*, second edition, Abingdon: Routledge, 2009; See also R. Paffenbarger, R. Hyde, A. Wing and C. Hsieh, 'Physical Activity, All-Cause Mortality, and Longevity of College Alumni', *New England Journal of Medicine*, vol. 314, no. 10, 1986, pp. 605–13; See also R. Paffenbarger, R. Hyde, A. Wing, I. Lee, D. Jung and J. Kampert, 'The Association of Changes in Physical-Activity Level and Other Lifestyle Characteristics with Mortality among Men', *New England Journal of Medicine*, vol. 328, no. 8, 1993, pp. 538–45.

⁴³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Physical Activity and the Health of Young People*, Division of Adolescent and School Health, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, 2008, <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/physicalactivity/pdf/facts.pdf>, accessed 9 December 2011; See also U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 'Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General', *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion*, 1996, pp. i–278.

self-esteem.⁴⁴ Also linked to such participation when a child, is the possible delayed onset of chronic disease as an adult.⁴⁵ For children and adolescents in particular, improvements in school performance, as well as reduced drug and alcohol consumption, have been associated with regular physical activity participation. Increased social interaction and integration through such participation also yield social benefits for communities.⁴⁶ In this context, it is widely regarded that young people must become more active.⁴⁷

Early in this study's investigation (2009), the World Health Organisation recommended that young people of school age should engage in daily physical activity of moderate- to vigorous-intensity, totalling at least 60 minutes. Such activity particularly aids healthy musculoskeletal and cardiovascular development and the growth of neuromuscular awareness, and assists in the maintenance of a healthy body weight.⁴⁸ A tracking study from childhood to adulthood showed that physical activity participation at nine to 18 years of age predicts activity levels in adulthood, and there is a greater probability of being an active adult when physical activity is regularly undertaken in childhood and adolescence.⁴⁹ This emphasises the importance of young people engaging in such physical activity. Less than one third of young people globally however, were considered sufficiently active for it to be of benefit to their health and well-being at that stage of their lives, and into the future. In addition, their levels of activity, including

⁴⁴ A. Bauman, B. Bellew, P. Vita, W. Brown and N. Owen, 'Getting Australia Active: Towards Better Practice for the Promotion of Physical Activity', *National Public Health Partnership*, 2002, pp. i-186.

⁴⁵ S. Blair, H. Kohl, R. Paffenbarger, D. Clark, K. Cooper and L. Gibbons, 'Physical Fitness and All-Cause Mortality: A Prospective Study of Healthy Men and Women', *JAMA*, vol. 262, no. 17, 1989, pp. 2395-401.

⁴⁶ Bauman et al., 'Getting Australia Active'.

⁴⁷ A. Bauman and N. Owen, 'Physical Activity of Adult Australians: Epidemiological Evidence and Potential Strategies for Health Gain', *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1999, pp. 30-41; See also U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 'Physical Activity and Health'; See also World Health Organization, 'The World Health Report 2002: Reducing Risks, Promoting Healthy Life', *World Health Organization*, 2002, pp. 1-248.

⁴⁸ World Health Organization, *Physical Activity and Young People*, Geneva, 2009, http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/factsheet_young_people/en/print.html, accessed 3 June 2009.

⁴⁹ R. Telama, X. Yang, J. Viikari, I. Valimaki, O. Wanne and O. Raitakari, 'Physical Activity from Childhood to Adulthood: A 21-Year Tracking Study', *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2005, pp. 267-73.

physical education and other physical activities in schools, were decreasing.⁵⁰ This is a cause for concern, as it is the stage of life when leisure habits are formed, and views about the relevance of physical activities are shaped.⁵¹

Physical inactivity has been recognised as a major contributor to the health problems suffered by many Australians, including young people.⁵² When investigated in 2016, national statistics showed that of those aged five to 17 years, over 27%—approximately one in four—were overweight or obese.⁵³ Not only can overweight and obesity lead to a reduced quality of life,⁵⁴ this statistic is particularly concerning when considering the health consequences of childhood obesity which include hypertension, early markers of cardiovascular disease, insulin resistance, psychological problems and a heightened risk of fractures. Moreover, childhood obesity is linked with an increased likelihood of obesity, disability and premature death in adulthood.⁵⁵

Unhealthy diets and physical inactivity are major contributors to the enormous costs of obesity.⁵⁶ Early in this study's investigation (2009), the estimated financial cost of obesity in Australia accounted for just under \$8.3 billion, including \$3.6 billion in productivity costs and \$2 billion in health system costs. Further, the net cost of lost well-being was estimated to be \$49.9 billion, which amounted to a total annual cost of

⁵⁰ World Health Organization, *Physical Activity and Young People*.

⁵¹ R. Stalsberg and A. Pedersen, 'Effects of Socioeconomic Status on the Physical Activity in Adolescents: A Systematic Review of the Evidence', *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports*, vol. 20, 2010, pp. 368–83.

⁵² Bauman et al., 'Getting Australia Active'; See also National Public Health Partnership, 'Be Active Australia: A Framework for Health Sector Action for Physical Activity', *NPHP*, 2005, pp. i–57.

⁵³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'National Health Survey: First Results, 2014–15', *Australian Bureau of Statistics*, 2015, pp. 1–51.

⁵⁴ S. Honisett, S. Woolcock, C. Porter and I. Hughes, 'Developing an Award Program for Children's Settings to Support Healthy Eating and Physical Activity and Reduce the Risk of Overweight and Obesity', *BMC Public Health*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2009, p. 345.

⁵⁵ World Health Organization, *Obesity and Overweight: Fact Sheet*, Geneva, 2016, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs311/en/>, accessed 20 July 2016.

⁵⁶ Standing Committee on Health and Ageing, 'Weighing It Up: Obesity in Australia', *The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Health and Ageing*, 2009, pp. i–206.

\$58.2 billion attributed to obesity.⁵⁷ Alarming, physical inactivity has been linked to over 8,000 deaths in Australia annually, which were considered to be avoidable.⁵⁸

Two of the main risk factors for non-communicable diseases are diet and physical activity, which often coexist and interact. The substantial economic burden on health systems and considerable costs to the community as a result of non-communicable diseases, demonstrate the importance of health as a significant factor in economic development, and a precursor of growth. Programs for the promotion of active and healthy lifestyles and in turn, disease prevention, are important policy instruments for the achievement of developmental objectives.⁵⁹

Whilst physical activity policy development is in its early stages globally,⁶⁰ the pressing requirement for increased activity by Australians, through environmental, social and policy change is now widely acknowledged.⁶¹ For children specifically, it is necessary to reassess the action which needs to be taken to increase their level and frequency of physical activity participation.⁶² The magnitude of the physical inactivity problem affecting Australians, both young and old, is evident, as is the crucial importance of finding a remedy. Calls for action—on a widespread community scale—to increase participation in physical activity have been made, yet gymnasiums are seldom explored as an option,⁶³ despite them being common in many communities. There have been further calls for action through policy—beyond health and sport—to increase physical activity levels with a focus on other sectors, including recreation, together with greater intersectoral collaboration. Such integration has been considered necessary ‘within and

⁵⁷ Access Economics, ‘The Growing Cost of Obesity in 2008: Three Years On’, *Report by Access Economics for Diabetes Australia*, 2008, pp. i–25.

⁵⁸ Bauman et al., ‘Getting Australia Active’.

⁵⁹ World Health Organization, ‘Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health’, *World Health Organization*, 2004, pp. 1–18.

⁶⁰ F. Bull, B. Bellew, S. Schoppe and A. Bauman, ‘Developments in National Physical Activity Policy: An International Review and Recommendations Towards Better Practice’, *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*, vol. 7, no. 1, Supplement 1, 2004, pp. 93–104.

⁶¹ Bauman et al., ‘Getting Australia Active’.

⁶² A. Smith and S. Bird, ‘From Evidence to Policy: Reflections on Emerging Themes in Health-Enhancing Physical Activity’, *Journal of Sports Sciences*, vol. 22, no. 8, 2004, pp. 791–99.

⁶³ World Health Organization, ‘Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health’.

between government and non-government organisations as well as engagement with the private sector’, to optimise this opportunity for positive change.⁶⁴

Despite the need for further action to increase levels of physical activity participation in young people, and the predominantly health- and economic-related public and private benefits which would be expected to accrue from a more active and healthy population, it would seem that many gymnasium businesses in Australia, through exclusion and restrictive practices, discriminate against minors. Such exclusion and restriction is a fundamental reason why, in the context of this study, investigation into the structure and operations of the EFI is needed, to begin to identify whether the industry, gymnasiums in particular, can become one facet of a comprehensive strategy for increasing adolescent physical activity in Australia.

THE EXERCISE AND FITNESS INDUSTRY

Section introduction

Post-industrial societies like Australia are built on the back of various sectors and industries. Over the last 50 years of Australia’s development the service sector has undergone rapid growth, and by 2011 it employed around 70% of the nation’s workforce.⁶⁵ This analysis of the Australian EFI, which is part of the service sector, highlights not only the potential of the adolescent market segment to expand ‘product sales’ and enhance service quality in the process, but also its capacity to improve the level of public health, by inculcating appropriate and regular gymnasium based exercise program (GBEP) participation into the lives of young people who might otherwise default to sedentary lifestyles and high-risk leisure activities like smoking and binge drinking. The section closes by suggesting that benefits to health, through the dismantling of barriers to adolescent participation in GBEPs, may be denied to the broader community if not accompanied by further innovation, a stronger measure of industry self-discipline, and national external regulation.

⁶⁴ Bull et al., ‘Developments in National Physical Activity Policy’, p. 95.

⁶⁵ R. Tanton, B. Phillips, M. Corliss, Y. Vidyattama and E. Hansnata, ‘We Can Work it Out’, AMP.NATSEM Income and Wealth Report, no. 36, 2014.

EFI structure in Australia

The industry defined

The Fitness Industry in Australia, also less widely known as the Health and Fitness Industry, is referred to in this thesis as the Exercise and Fitness Industry, or EFI in its abbreviated form. The EFI descriptor provides for greater inclusion and better represents the make-up of the industry, hence its use. The analysis which follows makes this apparent. In the context of the Australian EFI, the term ‘exercise and fitness’ defines those products and services designed to improve the levels of health and physical performance of consumers. EFI products and services cover an extensive range including, not only gymnasium instruction, personal training and group exercise services, but also commercial sport services—martial arts for example—and exercise equipment, footwear, apparel and nutritional supplements, amongst others.⁶⁶ Early in this study’s investigation, surveys showed that around 2008, 4.5 million Australians—27% of the adult population—participated in some type of GBEP. As a point of contrast, less than 3% of Australians played Australian Rules football and just over 4% played soccer.⁶⁷ While many more Australians exercised at gymnasiums than played competitive team sports, the EFI has been criticised for being poorly managed, staffed by ‘softly’ qualified gymnasium instructors, and focused mainly on the bodily aesthetics and fitness needs of working adults.⁶⁸

Changing industry perceptions

Gymnasiums, where structured exercise programs are often undertaken, have traditionally been viewed as places where young men lift weights and consume nutritional supplements to build muscle.⁶⁹ According to some researchers these spaces were frequently filled with testosterone, and occupied by a grotesque ensemble of misogynistic, homophobic and narcissistic ‘losers’, seduced by comic book depictions

⁶⁶ N. Sallmann, ‘IBISWorld Industry Report X0025: Fitness in Australia’, *IBISWorld*, 2012, pp. 1–27.

⁶⁷ Australian Sports Commission, *Participation in Exercise, Recreation and Sport, Annual Report 2008*, Australian Government Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport, Canberra, 2009.

⁶⁸ B. Abbott and C. Barber, ‘Embodied Image: Gender Differences in Functional and Aesthetic Body Image Among Australian Adolescents’, *Body Image*, vol. 7, no. 4, 2010, pp. 22–31.

⁶⁹ L. Monaghan, ‘Looking Good, Feeling Good: The Embodied Pleasures of Vibrant Physicality’, *Sociology of Health and Illness*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2010, pp. 330–56.

of masculinity.⁷⁰ This typical, if exaggerated, stereotype still seems to linger. It is necessary to improve the EFI's image and dismantle the notion of the hyper-masculine bodybuilding gymnasium environment, which can discourage participation in GBEPs. Over time, children, adolescents, females, the elderly, the unfit and those inexperienced in exercise or sport, have generally been unwelcome at gymnasiums.⁷¹ For the most part, it appears the perceived barriers to GBEP participation, which may act as a deterrent to some who would otherwise choose to participate, are progressively being erased. Minors however, still seem to be frequently marginalised through either limited, or indeed, no gymnasium access being granted by gymnasium operators, whose focus often appears to be heavily weighted on short-term growth.

Main services

Exercise services dominate the Australian EFI, and at the time of investigation (2012), could be divided into seven service categories, which are summarised in Figure 2.1. The categories and related information are the result of investigation of websites relevant to the EFI and an enquiry with a gymnasium business involved in this study. (For reasons of privacy, this business cannot be disclosed).

⁷⁰ A. Klein, *Little Big Men: Bodybuilding Subculture and Gender Construction*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1993; See also B. Phillips, 'Working Out: Consumers and the Culture of Exercise', *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 38, no. 3, 2005, pp. 525–50.

⁷¹ Monaghan, 'Looking Good, Feeling Good'.

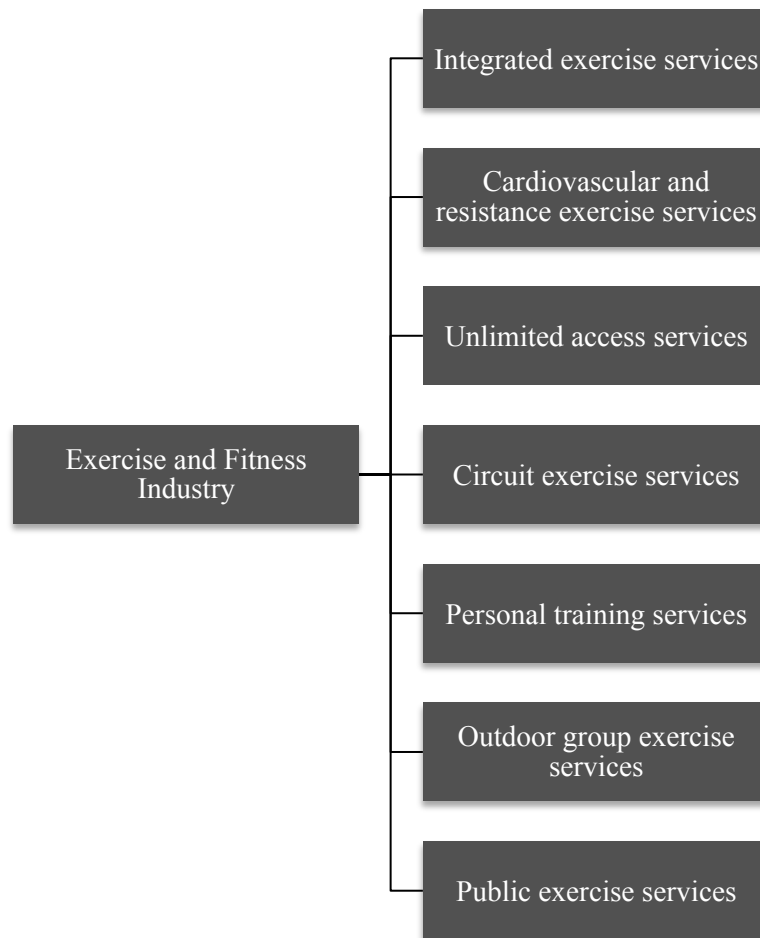


Figure 2.1. The Australian EFI service categories.

The first, and dominant category involves ‘integrated exercise services’, which comprises businesses that operate large-scale integrated exercise facilities. These services include cardiovascular and resistance exercise programs, group exercise classes, swimming and other water based exercise programs. ‘Integrated exercise services’ can be divided into major, moderate and minor subcategories, depending upon the number of operational facilities they control, as illustrated in Figure 2.2. The ‘major’ businesses provide a range of exercise programs at greater than 24 operational facilities, the ‘moderate’ businesses also offer a range of exercise programs but at 10 to 24 operational facilities, while ‘minor’ businesses offer a range of exercise programs at one to nine operational facilities.

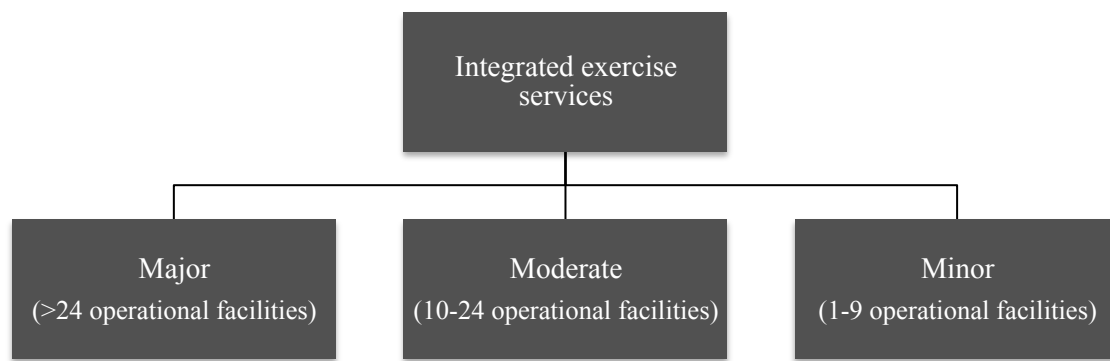


Figure 2.2. Integrated exercise services subcategories.

Businesses within the major and moderate ‘integrated exercise services’ subcategories provide coverage of each state and self-governing mainland territory. GBEPs feature in their range of exercise programs, and they provide a degree of exercise supervision for the full duration of operating hours, and also give public access throughout these hours, at all their operational exercise facilities in Australia. Based on this categorisation, as at September 2011, the commencement of data collection organisation, businesses classified as major included Fernwood Women’s Health Clubs, Fitness First Australia, Genesis, Goodlife Health Clubs, and YMCA Australia (which incorporated the management of many local government owned gymnasiums). Businesses classified as moderate, included Fenix Fitness Clubs and Healthworks Fitness Centres.

The second service category ‘cardiovascular and resistance exercise services’, is defined as businesses primarily operating facilities for cardiovascular and resistance exercise programs. The third category ‘unlimited access services’, is defined as businesses primarily operating facilities for self-managed cardiovascular and resistance exercise. These businesses provide 24 hour trading, yet are only staffed at specific times which vary between businesses and locations. The fourth category ‘circuit exercise services’, is defined as businesses that offer around 30 minutes of machine focused circuit exercise combining cardiovascular and resistance exercise. The fifth category ‘personal training services’, is defined as businesses primarily operating as providers of individual and small group cardiovascular and resistance exercise training to a client base at a

small-sized facility, a customer's residence and/or outdoors. The sixth category 'outdoor group exercise services', is defined as businesses operating a mobile service for group cardiovascular and resistance exercise at public locations that include parks and beaches. The seventh category 'public exercise services' consists of local governments and community groups that offer exercise programs at council facilities, community centres, participating EFI businesses and/or outdoors, at no direct cost or at a subsidised price.

Businesses within these seven service categories primarily operate as service providers, which means they deliver programs and activities to markets of users, who are usually labelled as customers and clients. Some of these businesses also operate as product suppliers, selling goods such as exercise equipment for private use, exercise accessories, and nutritional supplements to customers.

Market leaders and other important players

At the time of investigation (2012), the Australian EFI was dominated by a small number of service providers and product suppliers. In terms of market share, the largest 'players' were Fitness First Australia, the Rebel Group, and RCG Corporation, all of which were privately owned and operated organisations. Other important players included the Ardent Leisure Group, also privately owned and operated, and the non-profit organisation, YMCA Australia.⁷²

Fitness First, which is a global group and one of the world's largest EFI businesses, commenced operations in the United Kingdom in 1993 with just one gymnasium, and has since expanded through Europe, Australia and Asia, and also franchised its brand and operating model in the Middle East. Fitness First Australia, a division of Fitness First, commenced local operations in 2000, and until recently, it was Australia's dominant gymnasium business, but Fitness First has been affected by weak consumer expenditure and the growth of budget gymnasiums in both the United Kingdom and

⁷² Sallmann, 'IBISWorld Industry Report X0025'.

Australia. In 2012, 24 of its 97 Australian based gymnasiums were consequently listed for sale.⁷³

The Rebel Group comprises the sports retail companies Amart Sports and Rebel. The Rebel Group is a part of the Super Retail Group,⁷⁴ which owns a further five retail businesses, which are BCF (Boating, Camping, Fishing), FCO (Fishing, Camping, Outdoors), Ray's Outdoors, Goldcross Cycles and Supercheap Auto. RCG Corporation competes in the footwear and apparel sectors and owns and operates The Athlete's Foot Australia and Shoe Superstore Group. RCG Brands is RCG Corporation's wholesale and distribution subsidiary, which is the Australian distributor for Cushe and Chaco brands of footwear, and also Merrell and CAT (Caterpillar) footwear and apparel brands.⁷⁵

Ardent Leisure Group owns and operates some of Australia and New Zealand's most successful leisure businesses including Goodlife Health Clubs, Dreamworld, WhiteWater World, SkyPoint attractions, d'Albora Marinas, AMF and Kingpin Bowling.⁷⁶ In 2009, Ardent Leisure Group acquired Macquarie Leisure Management,⁷⁷ while in 2010, increased its 'Goodlife' presence in the WA EFI market by acquiring seven Perth based gymnasiums from Zest Health Clubs. At the time of investigation (2012), there were 66 'Goodlife' exercise facilities in operation, 23 of which were located in QLD, 20 in Victoria (VIC), 13 in SA, six in WA, and four in New South Wales (NSW).⁷⁸

⁷³ Fitness First Group, *Fitness First Group*, Poole, 2011, <http://www.fitnessfirst.com/group/about-us/history.aspx>, accessed 10 December 2012; See also Sallmann, 'IBISWorld Industry Report X0025'; See also G. Wilkins, 'Fitness First Sheds Clubs in Debt Workout', *The Age*, 1 June 2012, <http://www.theage.com.au/business/fitness-first-sheds-clubs-in-debt-workout-20120601-1zm0r.html>, accessed 1 June 2012.

⁷⁴ Rebel, *Rebel*, Silverwater, 2012, <http://www.rebelsport.com.au/eng/aboutus/aboutus.cfm>, accessed 12 December 2012.

⁷⁵ RCG Corporation, *RCG Corporation*, Waterloo, 2012, <http://www.rcgcorp.com.au/about.html>, accessed 13 December 2012.

⁷⁶ Ardent Leisure Group, 'Annual Report 2012', *Ardent Leisure Group*, 2012, pp. 1–136; See also Ardent Leisure Group, *Ardent Leisure Group*, Milsons Point, 2012, <http://www.ardentleisure.com.au/Home/>, accessed 17 December 2012.

⁷⁷ N. Sallmann, 'IBISWorld Industry Report P9312: Gyms, Sports Grounds, and Other Facilities in Australia', *IBISWorld*, 2012, pp. 1–36.

⁷⁸ Ardent Leisure Group, *Ardent Leisure Group*, Milsons Point, 2012, <http://www.ardentleisure.com.au/Leisure-Portfolio/Goodlife-Health-Clubs.aspx>, accessed 16 December 2012.

YMCA Australia has a long history of engagement with the physical recreation sector. At the time of investigation (2012), YMCA Australia was comprised of 30 independent Member Associations and operated from over 500 locations across Australia, providing recreation, accommodation, childcare, youth and family services. It has become especially important as the 'contracted out' manager of many local government owned sport and recreation facilities providing associated exercise services. The Member Associations of YMCA Australia are each governed by their own voluntary Board of Directors, elected by local members. The National Council of YMCAs in Australia is the federation of these associations. The YMCA is a global movement, but YMCA Australia operates independently.⁷⁹

Recent entrants

Two relatively new entrants into the Australian EFI are Jetts Fitness Operations, trading as Jetts, and Anytime Australia, trading as Anytime Fitness. They have grown rapidly, and are now considered to be significant players. Jetts became the fastest growing gymnasium franchise in Australia by 2012, and by late in that year there were 180 Jetts exercise facilities across Australia, and 50 in New Zealand, either in operation or confirmed to be operating in 2013.⁸⁰ As a point of comparison, Anytime Fitness had 218 operational exercise facilities across Australia.⁸¹ Snap Fitness, the trading arm of Snap Fitness Corporate Australia, is another emerging business in the Australian EFI, with 113 operational exercise facilities across the nation in late 2012.⁸²

In contrast to the business models of more established businesses like Fitness First Australia, it should be noted that Jetts, Anytime Fitness and Snap Fitness chose to focus on the broad distribution of relatively small-sized exercise facilities, rather than aiming

⁷⁹ Sallmann, 'IBISWorld Industry Report X0025'; See also YMCA Australia, 'YMCA Australia 2011 Annual Report', *YMCA Australia*, 2011, pp. 1–28.

⁸⁰ Jetts Fitness Operations, *Jetts Fitness Operations*, Mooloolaba, 2012, <http://www.jetts.com.au/clubs>, accessed 21 October 2012; See also Jetts Fitness Operations, *Jetts Fitness Operations*, Mooloolaba, 2012, <http://www.jetts.co.nz/find-a-club>, accessed 21 October 2012.

⁸¹ Anytime Australia, *Anytime Australia*, Lane Cove, 2012, <http://www.anytimefitness.com.au>, accessed 21 October 2012.

⁸² Snap Fitness, *Snap Fitness*, Chanhassen, 2012, <http://www.snapfitness.com/locations>, accessed 21 October 2012.

for thousands of members at a smaller number of mega-facilities.⁸³ Jetts, Anytime Fitness and Snap Fitness have not only added to the Australian EFI competitive mix, but have also introduced a different user experience by providing 24 hour trading facilities that offer exercise equipment primarily for self-managed cardiovascular and resistance exercise. Facilities are staffed at specific times only, which vary between businesses and locations. Typically, the duration of staffed hours is greater during the working week, and less on weekends. This type of business attracts customers who seek flexible facility access and a generally less crowded facility, with a relatively low membership fee.⁸⁴

As a result of the growth of Jetts, Anytime Fitness, and Snap Fitness, there has been a significant increase in competition between gymnasiums, and a constant battle to secure a point of differentiation that can be used to build a promotional edge. For example, Jetts has employed a ‘self-managed’ exercise business model involving lower wage costs to undercut the more traditional integrated high cost, premium exercise services business model as developed by Fitness First. Customers can now choose between self-managed, flexible options involving low cost 24 hour trading, or a labour intensive, fully integrated range of services. Moreover, an increasing number of gymnasium businesses are progressively adopting features from the ‘self-managed’ model. In general, EFI businesses are reshaping their offerings in order to attract and retain customers, demonstrating a high degree of innovation together with regular adaptation to an ever-changing market.

Market share

The combined market share of the three largest EFI businesses was just under 35% in 2011–12, thus market concentration in the EFI was relatively low. Over the previous decade however, the level of concentration had risen as Fitness First Australia, and more recently the Ardent Leisure Group, acquired other gymnasium businesses. For 2011–12 it was considered that Fitness First Australia held a 13.5% share of the EFI market, followed by the Rebel Group at 12.6%, RCG Corporation at 7.9%, and YMCA

⁸³ Sallmann, ‘IBISWorld Industry Report P9312’.

⁸⁴ Sallmann, ‘IBISWorld Industry Report P9312’.

Australia at 3.5% (estimated).⁸⁵ In this context, a comparison cannot be made with the Ardent Leisure Group as a whole. The Group commanded approximately 6% of a somewhat similar market, comprised of companies and organisations operating indoor and/or outdoor sports and/or exercise facilities (excluding horse and dog racing facilities).⁸⁶ Accordingly, this figure must be treated cautiously.

Additionally, in 2014, the Ardent Leisure Group increased its presence in the EFI by acquiring Hypoxi Australia. The HYPOXI brand specialises in fat reduction, primarily via non-invasive vacuum and compression technology in conjunction with cardiovascular exercise.⁸⁷ In April 2016, ‘Hypoxi’ was either operating or soon to be operating at 74 locations across Australia, some being within the Group’s ‘Goodlife’ exercise facilities. Further afield, Hypoxi Australia has entered the New Zealand market and also acquired the distribution rights to HYPOXI in the United States and Canada.⁸⁸

Business locations

In 2011–12, the location of EFI businesses across Australia mimicked the spread of the Australian population.⁸⁹ Collectively, 81% of Australian EFI businesses were located in the eastern mainland states, which accounted for around 85% of the nation’s population, and eight of its 10 largest cities.⁹⁰ NSW had 41% of EFI businesses, followed by VIC at

⁸⁵ Sallmann, ‘IBISWorld Industry Report X0025’.

⁸⁶ Sallmann, ‘IBISWorld Industry Report P9312’.

⁸⁷ Hypoxi Australia, *What is HYPOXI?*, Chippendale, 2016, <https://www.hypoxi.com.au/what-is-hypoxi/>, accessed 8 April 2016.

⁸⁸ Hypoxi Australia, *HYPOXI Studios*, Chippendale, 2016, <https://www.hypoxi.com.au/studios/>, accessed 8 April 2016; See also Hypoxi Australia, *Studios*, Chippendale, 2016, <https://www.hypoxi.com.au/studios/qld/>, accessed 8 April 2016; See also Hypoxi Australia, *Studios*, Chippendale, 2016, <https://www.hypoxi.com.au/studios/act/>, accessed 8 April 2016; See also Hypoxi Australia, *Studios*, Chippendale, 2016, <https://www.hypoxi.com.au/studios/vic/>, accessed 8 April 2016; See also Hypoxi Australia, *Studios*, Chippendale, 2016, <https://www.hypoxi.com.au/studios/wa/>, accessed 8 April 2016; See also Hypoxi Australia, *Studios*, Chippendale, 2016, <https://www.hypoxi.com.au/studios/sa/>, accessed 8 April 2016; See also Hypoxi Australia, *Studios*, Chippendale, 2016, <https://www.hypoxi.com.au/studios/new-zealand/>, accessed 8 April 2016; See also Ardent Leisure, *HYPOXI*, Milsons Point, 2016, <https://www.ardentleisure.com/our-brands/hypoxi/>, accessed 8 April 2016.

⁸⁹ Sallmann, ‘IBISWorld Industry Report X0025’.

⁹⁰ B. Salt, *The Big Shift: Welcome to the Third Australian Culture*, Hardie Grant Books, Melbourne, 2003.

21%, and QLD at 19%.⁹¹ Figure 2.3 provides more information on the proportion of EFI businesses located in each Australian state and self-governing mainland territory.



Figure 2.3. Proportion of EFI businesses located in each Australian state and self-governing mainland territory in 2011–12.⁹² Key: NSW: New South Wales, VIC: Victoria, QLD: Queensland, SA: South Australia, WA: Western Australia, ACT: Australian Capital Territory, NT: Northern Territory, TAS: Tasmania⁹³

⁹¹ Sallmann, 'IBISWorld Industry Report X0025'.

⁹² Sallmann, 'IBISWorld Industry Report X0025'.

⁹³ The map of Australia in Figure 2.3 has been adapted after being sourced from: Geoscience Australia, *Geoscience Australia*, Canberra, 2005, http://www.ga.gov.au/corporate_data/61755/61755.gif, accessed 19 November 2012.

Major customer segments

There are many methods by which the EFI services market can be segmented, however for the purpose of this industry analysis, ‘age’ is an important focal point. Characteristically, participation rates in organised sport have been relatively high for teenagers and those in their early twenties.⁹⁴ It is therefore surprising that consumers aged up to 24 years accounted for only 15% of EFI revenue in 2011–12 (see Figure 2.4 for further details). Notably, from this group, those 17 years of age and younger accounted for just 5% of EFI revenue. In contrast, consumers between the ages of 25 and 44 accounted for 58% of EFI revenue. Additionally, EFI consumers aged 45 years and older made up 27% of the market, but this segment was viewed as a growth area due to both a greater public awareness of the health benefits of being physically active throughout life, and Australia’s ageing population.⁹⁵

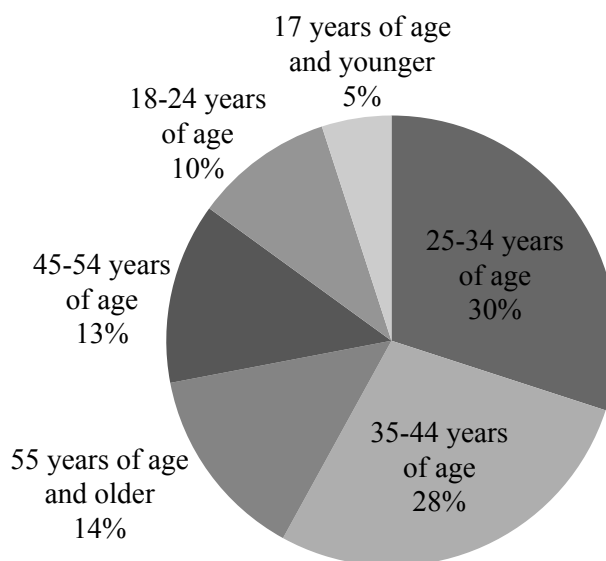


Figure 2.4. Major customer segmentation according to age (estimated as a percentage of EFI revenue in 2011–12).⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Sallmann, ‘IBISWorld Industry Report X0025’; See also D. Warburton, C. Nicol and S. Bredin, ‘Health Benefits of Physical Activity: The Evidence’, *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, vol. 174, no. 6, 2006, pp. 801–09.

⁹⁵ Sallmann, ‘IBISWorld Industry Report X0025’.

⁹⁶ Sallmann, ‘IBISWorld Industry Report X0025’.

The relatively low participation level of young EFI consumers is concerning, considering that this relates to the stage of life when leisure habits are formed, and views about the relevance of physical activities are shaped,⁹⁷ and also as it has been shown that a young person's participation in physical activity is a predictor of activity levels when an adult.⁹⁸

Industry performance

Operating performance

In the decade preceding the global economic downturn of 2008, the Australian EFI grew steadily as a result of consumer confidence supported by increased disposable income and levels of employment, low interest rates, asset price growth, and a greater public awareness of the health benefits of physical activity. It was also resilient at a time when the world was recovering from the poor economic climate of 2008–09 and 2009–10. For 2011–12, EFI revenue in Australia was estimated to be \$2.9 billion, with a 1.4% annualised growth rate—much of which was attributed to the increasing range of products and services—and a profit close to \$230 million,⁹⁹ demonstrating the industry's economic viability.

The segment covering small-sized gymnasiums through to large integrated exercise facilities, which included the delivery of cardiovascular and resistance exercise programs, group exercise classes, swimming and other water based exercise programs, was dominant, accounting for 38% of EFI products and services revenue in 2011–12.¹⁰⁰ This market segment delivered a 13% annual growth in revenue over the five years up to the end of 2011–12, which is an impressive growth rate by any leisure practice standard. Growing awareness of the obesity problem affecting Australians and the health benefits of being physically active, as well as regular increases in disposable

⁹⁷ R. Stalsberg and A. Pedersen, 'Effects of Socioeconomic Status on the Physical Activity in Adolescents: A Systematic Review of the Evidence', *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports*, vol. 20, 2010, pp. 368–83.

⁹⁸ R. Telama, X. Yang, J. Viikari, I. Valimaki, O. Wanne and O. Raitakari, 'Physical Activity from Childhood to Adulthood: A 21-Year Tracking Study', *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2005, pp. 267–73.

⁹⁹ Sallmann, 'IBISWorld Industry Report X0025'.

¹⁰⁰ Sallmann, 'IBISWorld Industry Report X0025'.

income, have been important in contributing to the growth in both membership and revenue. Across Australia, at this time, there were an estimated 1.8 million gymnasium members.¹⁰¹ For services specifically, the personal training services segment (20%) was the next highest generator of EFI revenue¹⁰² (see Figure 2.5 for further details).

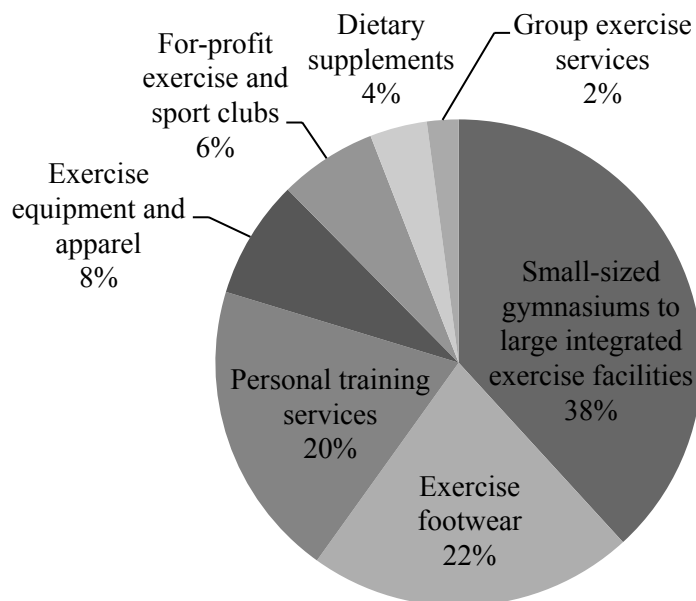


Figure 2.5. EFI products and services segmentation (estimated as a percentage of EFI revenue in 2011–12).¹⁰³

Despite the downward pressure imposed by the global financial crisis, as noted above the EFI is growing solidly, being underpinned by increased public awareness of the health benefits of physical activity, especially among the middle to old age population, and a growing trend to household outsourcing of exercise services, as evidenced in the growth of personal training. It was predicted that by 2016–17 the EFI would be approaching maturity, and consist of more than 12,000 businesses, with revenue increasing at an average annual rate of just under 4%, to a total turnover of

¹⁰¹ Sallmann, 'IBISWorld Industry Report P9312'.

¹⁰² Sallmann, 'IBISWorld Industry Report X0025'.

¹⁰³ Sallmann, 'IBISWorld Industry Report X0025'.

approximately \$3.4 billion. It was also anticipated that consumers aged 45 years and older would be key drivers of this revenue growth because of their potentially higher incomes, their attention to health and fitness issues, and an increase in their leisure time.¹⁰⁴

Costs

Many EFI costs are fixed, and as a consequence the profit margin is conditional on changes in customer demand and revenue. This is because average fixed costs fall as more people use the same stocks of capital. These costs include core labour and wages, rent, marketing, and the depreciation of fixed assets. Furthermore, it is important to understand that the Australian EFI is predominantly a service industry, for which labour was the largest single cost item at 42% of EFI revenue (see Figure 2.6 for more information), with gross total wages and salaries of all EFI employees in Australia estimated to be \$1.2 billion for 2011–12. The personal training services segment ranked highest for the amount of EFI revenue absorbed by labour costs. Facilities and equipment costs were relatively low for the personal training services segment when compared to that of the ‘small-sized gymnasiums to large integrated exercise facilities’ segment. This larger scale segment absorbs high exercise equipment expenses, whereas the personal training services segment is less capital intensive, in part due to the common use of outdoor public space and the tendency to be less reliant on an expensive range of exercise equipment to conduct its programs. Overall, the balance of EFI labour costs to equipment and depreciation costs revealed a medium-to-low level of capital intensity, where, for each dollar expended on equipment, almost six dollars was spent on labour.¹⁰⁵ This heavy reliance on staff to deliver exercise services is the driving force behind strategies aimed at increasing labour productivity in the EFI. As noted above, Jetts, Anytime Fitness and Snap Fitness, have each developed ‘self-managed’ exercise business models as a means of avoiding the burden of high labour costs.

¹⁰⁴ Sallmann, ‘IBISWorld Industry Report X0025’.

¹⁰⁵ Sallmann, ‘IBISWorld Industry Report X0025’.

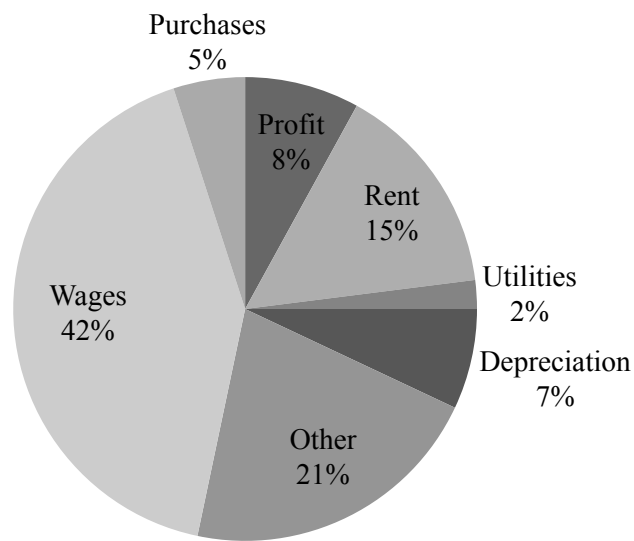


Figure 2.6. EFI costs in 2011–12 (estimated as a percentage of revenue). Costs categorised as ‘Other’ can include marketing and communications, insurance, franchise fees, general administration, and business services (e.g., legal and accounting).¹⁰⁶

The large integrated exercise facilities have also examined strategies for containing wage costs, whilst at the same time aiming for an appropriate level of professional support and supervision for customers. This has been partly achieved by operating a ‘mixed workforce’. In this type of setting there is a blend of directly employed staff who work under the close supervision of management, and independent contractors who operate a separate business at the exercise facility under agreement with the operator. In a way similar to commercial tenancy contracts, these personal trainers pay fees to the operator to conduct their business within the exercise facility over a designated period.

In general, gymnasium operators have been careful to contain wage costs, which explains their concerns about staff being overqualified, and their preference for independent contractors and lower cost casual workers. The relatively low educational requirements of the EFI have enabled large numbers of people to enter its workforce in recent years, but have also put downward pressure on wages. Over the five years up to

¹⁰⁶ Sallmann, ‘IBISWorld Industry Report X0025’.

the end of 2011–12, the EFI experienced a 1% average annual employment growth, whilst there was a 0.6% fall in wages. The average annual salary for a personal trainer was approximately two thousand dollars less than the amount earned five years earlier.¹⁰⁷

Industry regulation

In Australia, the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010*,¹⁰⁸ which includes the Australian Consumer Law, largely concerns competition, fair trading and consumer protection, and applies to all businesses, including those in the EFI. Whilst requirements of the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010* include those pertinent to EFI businesses, the main and generally enforceable regulations specific to the industry—and of most significance to this study at the time of investigation (2014)—were industry codes prescribed under the relevant fair trading acts in the ACT, QLD, WA and SA. These industry codes did not apply in NSW, the Northern Territory, Tasmania or VIC. In NSW however, there was the *Fitness Services (Pre-paid Fees) Regulation 2011*, made under the *Fitness Services (Pre-paid Fees) Act 2000*. The provisions of this regulation mostly pertain to the administration of trust accounts in which businesses are required to hold monies received as prepaid fees for the supply of exercise services at exercise facilities.¹⁰⁹ Of the following four fair trading regulations under analysis, the *Fitness Industry Code of Practice* (in the *Fair Trading (Fitness Industry) Code of Practice 2009*)¹¹⁰ in the ACT, is the most comprehensive and of greatest relevance to this study.

Australian Capital Territory

In the ACT, many noteworthy provisions of relevance spanning diverse aspects of business operations are contained in the *Fitness Industry Code of Practice*.¹¹¹ They can

¹⁰⁷ Sallmann, 'IBISWorld Industry Report P9312'.

¹⁰⁸ Attorney-General's Department, *Competition and Consumer Act 2010*, volumes 1–3, Office of Legislative Drafting and Publishing, Canberra, 2011.

¹⁰⁹ Parliamentary Counsel's Office, *Fitness Services (Pre-paid Fees) Regulation 2011*, Parliamentary Counsel's Office, Sydney, 2011.

¹¹⁰ ACT Parliamentary Counsel, *Fair Trading (Fitness Industry) Code of Practice 2009*, DI2009–65, Commissioner for Fair Trading, Canberra, 2009.

¹¹¹ ACT Parliamentary Counsel, *Fair Trading (Fitness Industry) Code of Practice 2009*.

be categorised as ‘marketing, memberships and exercise facilities’, ‘risk mitigation, safety and health’ and ‘qualifications, complaints and other operational matters’.

The ‘marketing, memberships and exercise facilities’ category mostly concerns (1) advertising and marketing practices that are misleading or unfair, (2) the availability of sufficient information concerning memberships, the requirements associated with truthful, accurate and unambiguous promotional material, false or misleading comparisons regarding programs, and the requirements surrounding potential customer inspection of an exercise facility, (3) the availability of a service offered under a membership agreement, (4) the disclosure of fees under a membership agreement, (5) the description of memberships pertaining to programs included as free or discounted, (6) ethical and professional conduct, and unreasonable techniques in the selling of memberships, (7) the general requirements and content of membership agreements, (8) the limitations on the period of a membership, (9) the structure, content and requirements of a periodic payment membership agreement, (10) the holding of monies received as prepaid fees for fixed period membership agreements, and the restriction on when this type of membership can be sold before an exercise facility is operational, (11) the restrictions on the renewal of a membership, (12) the cooling-off period of a membership and the associated requirements pertaining to termination, (13) the deferment or termination of a membership due to physical incapacity, and the associated requirements, which in the case of termination mainly pertain to refunds, (14) the supply of a copy of the rules of an exercise facility and a membership agreement—on request—and a signed copy of the agreement, (15) the positioning of exercise facility signage concerning the rules of the facility, (16) the obligations of a customer under a membership agreement, and the associated compliance to the rules of the exercise facility and reasonable directions of its employees, and (17) exercise facility ventilation.

The ‘risk mitigation, safety and health’ category mostly concerns (1) the completion of a questionnaire about the participatory risk of exercise, before entering into a membership agreement, and the restrictions and requirements surrounding the provision of exercise services to those who may be at risk, (2) the requirements concerning the participatory risk of those not bound by a membership agreement, before an exercise service is provided, (3) the required content and positioning of exercise facility signage

concerning the potentially hazardous misuse of exercise equipment, (4) employee training in the operation of exercise equipment, (5) the safety, functioning and servicing of equipment at an exercise facility, (6) the restrictions on the number of group and resistance exercise participants at any one time, and the safety of resistance exercise areas, (7) the cleaning of wet areas, and (8) first-aid kits at exercise facilities and the associated requirements.

The ‘qualifications, complaints and other operational matters’ category mostly concerns (1) the supply of information regarding the right to lodge a complaint, (2) the qualifications of an employee who provides an exercise service, (3) the supervision by an appropriately qualified person of each exercise service at an exercise facility, (4) public liability and professional indemnity insurance, (5) employee awareness and understanding of the code, (6) the disclosure of confidential information, (7) misrepresentation of qualifications held, (8) the supervision of a person gaining experience to fulfil registration requirements, (9) registration requirements which qualify an employee to provide an exercise service, (10) consumer obligations concerning potential risk from participation in an exercise service, (11) the composition and functions of the committee responsible for administering the code, as well as the requirements and content of the annual report, (12) the appointment, tenure and responsibilities of committee members, including the role of the Commissioner for Fair Trading for the ACT, and the disclosure of information, (13) the resolution of complaints relevant to services provided under a membership agreement, (14) the requirement to have a complaint resolution policy, and employee familiarity with both the policy and associated procedures, (15) the grounds for referring a complaint to the appropriate Commissioner, and the associated requirements, and (16) compliance with the code.

In the context of this study it is important to elaborate on some of these points concerning the *Fitness Industry Code of Practice*¹¹² in the ACT. The clause relating to points two and three in the ‘qualifications, complaints and other operational matters’ category, about workers and services, states that an employee who provides an exercise service is required to be qualified to do so, and the business is obligated to ensure that

¹¹² ACT Parliamentary Counsel, *Fair Trading (Fitness Industry) Code of Practice 2009*.

this is the case. Furthermore, an appropriately qualified person is required to supervise each exercise service provided at an exercise facility, and the business is obliged to ensure their availability throughout the provision of each service. Similarly, the clause relating to point nine in this category states that for an employee to be qualified to provide an exercise service, the employee is required to be registered by either Fitness Australia (FA) or another body approved as a registering authority by the minister who administers the *Fair Trading Act 1992*, and also provide service at the level of their registration. In addition, the clause relating to point five in the ‘risk mitigation, safety and health’ category, about equipment safety, states that a business is required to ensure that all equipment at its exercise facility ‘conforms to safety standards established by Standards Australia; ... is mechanically sound; ... is installed and operating in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions; and ... is serviced adequately, efficiently and regularly to ensure continued user safety’.¹¹³ These measures are unparalleled in the QLD, Western Australian and South Australian industry codes below.

Queensland

In QLD, noteworthy provisions of relevance contained in the *Fitness Industry Code of Practice* (in the *Fair Trading (Code of Practice—Fitness Industry) Regulation 2003*)¹¹⁴ mainly concern the areas of marketing, memberships and disclosure of information. Specifically, these provisions mostly relate to (1) false claims of membership of, or endorsement by, an organisation or association, (2) high pressure tactics, harassment and unconscionable conduct in the selling of memberships, (3) soliciting by means of false or misleading advertisements or other communications, as well as false or misleading comparisons regarding services, (4) the required positioning, content and design of exercise facility signage concerning the participatory risk to personal health, (5) the disclosure of sufficient information about services, and the requirements for associated promotional material, (6) the availability of the code for perusal, (7) the supply of a copy of a membership agreement and rules of the exercise facility, as well as the availability of the facility for potential customer inspection, (8) exercise facility

¹¹³ ACT Parliamentary Counsel, *Fair Trading (Fitness Industry) Code of Practice 2009*, p. 13.

¹¹⁴ Governor in Council, *Fair Trading (Code of Practice—Fitness Industry) Regulation 2003*, SL No. 65, Executive Council, Brisbane, 2003.

signage requirements for the purpose of disclosing additions or changes to the rules of the facility, (9) the use and disclosure of confidential information, (10) the disclosure of fees under a membership agreement and information about free or discounted services included, (11) the requirements and content of a membership agreement and supply of a signed copy, (12) the availability of a service offered under a membership agreement, (13) the limitation on the period of a membership for which fees can be prepaid, (14) the requirements specific to an ongoing membership agreement, (15) entering into a membership agreement and the restriction on the payment of fees before an exercise facility is operational, notification of the opening day and the availability of the facility for customer inspection during the cooling-off period, (16) the termination of a membership agreement during the cooling-off period or due to permanent sickness or physical incapacity in particular, and the associated requirements which mainly pertain to fees payable and refunds, and (17) complaint handling requirements and procedures.

Western Australia

In WA, noteworthy provisions of relevance contained in the *Fitness Industry Code of Practice 2010* (in the *Fair Trading (Fitness Industry Code of Practice) Regulations 2010*)¹¹⁵ also mainly concern the areas of marketing, memberships and disclosure of information. Specifically, these provisions mostly relate to (1) false claims and representations of membership of, or endorsement by, an organisation or association, (2) false and misleading representations of qualifications held, (3) high pressure techniques and tactics, harassment and unconscionable conduct in the selling of memberships, (4) soliciting by means of false or misleading advertisements, other representations or statements, (5) the use and disclosure of confidential information, (6) the description of memberships pertaining to programs included as free or discounted, (7) the disclosure of sufficient information, the requirements for promotional material, and false or misleading comparisons, statements and representations, in relation to services, (8) the disclosure of a membership agreement and rules of the exercise facility, as well as the availability of the facility for potential customer inspection, (9) the requirements and content of a membership agreement, and the cooling-off period,

¹¹⁵ Department of the Premier and Cabinet, *Fair Trading (Fitness Industry Code of Practice) Regulations 2010*, Version 00-d0-00, State Law Publisher, West Perth, 2010.

(10) the supply of a true copy of a signed membership agreement, (11) the limitations on the period of a membership for which fees can be prepaid, (12) the termination of a membership agreement and associated requirements, and (13) complaint handling requirements and procedures.

Whilst there are similarities between this scope of relevant provisions and those of the QLD industry code, both clearly lack the extensiveness of the ACT industry code, as analysed. This is also the case for the South Australian industry code, details of which follow.

South Australia

In SA, noteworthy provisions of relevance contained in the *Health and Fitness Industry Code 2007* (in the *Fair Trading (Health and Fitness Industry Code) Regulations 2007*)¹¹⁶ mostly concern (1) the general requirements and content of membership agreements, (2) the requirements of an ongoing membership agreement with periodic payments and a fixed period membership agreement, (3) the termination and associated requirements of such agreements, (4) the restrictions on the renegotiation of membership agreements, (5) the limitations on the period of an ongoing agreement (with periodic payments) for which fees can be paid in advance, and (6) the supply of a copy of a signed membership agreement.

On the one hand, the scope of relevant provisions concerning membership agreements seems adequate, yet on the other, it demonstrates the narrow confines of the application to EFI fair trading matters in general in SA.

Advances in governance

The level of EFI regulation has been viewed as light¹¹⁷ and it is clear that collectively, the main and generally enforceable regulations specific to the industry as detailed above, lack comprehensiveness and—because of their jurisdictional confines, for

¹¹⁶ Attorney-General's Department, *Fair Trading (Health and Fitness Industry Code) Regulations 2007*, Office of Parliamentary Counsel, Adelaide, 2007.

¹¹⁷ Sallmann, 'IBISWorld Industry Report X0025'.

example—have limited influence on both the wider EFI and the Australian population. Of the ACT, QLD, Western Australian and South Australian fair trading regulations, those which have most significance are the *Fitness Industry Code of Practice*¹¹⁸ requirements in the ACT concerning (1) the registration of an employee providing an exercise service at an exercise facility by an approved registering authority such as FA, (2) the supervision by an appropriately qualified person of each exercise service provided at an exercise facility, and (3) the safety of all equipment at an exercise facility which is: compliant with the standards established by Standards Australia; in good operating condition; and serviced appropriately for continued user safety. Requirements such as these seem to be steps in the right direction for the EFI in Australia to become a more professional industry. In light of advances in governance, also positive is a national code of practice for the EFI which was under development by FA at the time of investigation (2014). It focused on membership agreements, contracts and safety. Other aspects included standards of professionalism, conduct, complaints and disclosure of information.¹¹⁹

EFI regulation beyond gymnasiums

In recent years there has also been an increased level of local government regulation of the use of public space—parks in particular—by personal trainers. It is noteworthy that many local governments now require permits to be obtained for the conduct of individual and group personal training commercial activities in a public space.¹²⁰

Industry associations, accreditation and certification

Two non-profit industry associations representing the Australian EFI, and of most relevance to this study, are FA and Physical Activity Australia (PAA). Specifically, both advocate a physically active lifestyle for Australians, whilst supporting and working to develop the EFI—and in the case of PAA—with a focus on workers,

¹¹⁸ ACT Parliamentary Counsel, *Fair Trading (Fitness Industry) Code of Practice 2009*.

¹¹⁹ Fitness Australia, 'Fitness Industry Code of Practice' [draft], *Fitness Australia*, 2012, pp. 1–9.

¹²⁰ Sallmann, 'IBISWorld Industry Report X0025'.

including gymnasium instructors and personal trainers.¹²¹ FA and PAA operate on a national basis, and are the only EFI bodies which offer professional registration for gymnasium instructors and personal trainers (traditionally and collectively referred to as instructor accreditation or registration) and in the case of FA, business registration for gymnasiums as well (traditionally referred to as business accreditation or registration). PAA previously provided this type of registration also. These forms of registration are highly relevant to this study. (Where appropriate, the term 'gymnasium instructor accreditation' in this thesis concerns both gymnasium instructors and personal trainers). It is acknowledged that FA and PAA also offer other types of registration/accreditation. Whilst only employees in the ACT providing exercise services at exercise facilities are required to be registered by an approved registering authority such as FA, it is significant that no general requirement exists in Australia for gymnasium businesses, gymnasium instructors and personal trainers to register or gain accreditation with an appropriate industry association.

The providers of professional indemnity insurance indirectly regulate the certification of gymnasium instructors and personal trainers however it is by no means a comprehensive method. If businesses and/or individuals opt for, and acquire this insurance type, it will only be provided if the gymnasium instructor or personal trainer in question has valid certification.¹²² At the very least, this could be an incentive for gymnasium managers to employ certified individuals only, for these positions. In addition, it appears that there is no employee association or union within the Australian EFI, and the industry does not receive any external assistance or specific protection.¹²³

Generally, certified gymnasium instructors hold a Certificate III in Fitness, while certified personal trainers also hold a Certificate IV in Fitness. These nationally recognised qualifications have been designed for approved education providers to train and assess students, and are part of the Sport, Fitness and Recreation Training Package which is the Australian national framework for skills development that applies to the

¹²¹ Physical Activity Australia, *About Us*, Port Melbourne, 2016, <http://www.physicalactivityaustralia.org.au/about-us/>, accessed 29 November 2016; See also Fitness Australia, *About Us*, Alexandria, 2015, <http://fitness.org.au/articles/about-us/597/17>, accessed 29 November 2016.

¹²² Sallmann, 'IBISWorld Industry Report X0025'.

¹²³ Sallmann, 'IBISWorld Industry Report X0025'.

Australian EFI.¹²⁴ This training package is administered by Service Skills Australia, a non-profit, independent Industry Skills Council. Service Skills Australia is funded by the Australian Government to support skills development, and represents the Australian EFI—clearly in a different capacity to the industry associations FA and PAA—and other industry sectors.¹²⁵

Opportunities for industry development

The EFI is highly competitive. As it approaches maturity, and in a low growth environment, there is strong competition between gymnasium businesses over existing customers. This environment encourages further differentiation between businesses, with a focus on pricing and the quality of exercise facilities and services to both attract and retain custom.¹²⁶ At first glance it may appear that most people in modern Australian society are well catered for within the EFI. Gymnasium culture is undergoing progressive and positive change, and as mentioned, it appears that most of the perceived barriers to GBEP participation are being erased. ‘Female only’ gymnasiums are spread across Australia, led by Fernwood Women’s Health Clubs and Curves, which in April 2016, collectively had 229 local operational facilities.¹²⁷ Middle to old age consumers are also catered for, and as mentioned previously, this cohort is increasingly mindful of the link between physical activity and health, and also has the capacity to pay for a variety of active leisure experiences.¹²⁸

However, it is surprising that despite the need to increase the physical activity participation of young people, and considering that the desire to improve bodily appearance can become very important to them, minors seem to be frequently marginalised through either limited, or indeed, no gymnasium access being granted.

¹²⁴ Service Skills Australia, *Service Skills Australia*, Sydney, 2010, <http://www.serviceskills.com.au/sport%2C-fitness-and-recreation-training-package>, accessed 19 December 2012.

¹²⁵ Service Skills Australia, *Service Skills Australia*, Sydney, 2010, <http://www.serviceskills.com.au>, accessed 19 December 2012.

¹²⁶ Sallmann, ‘IBISWorld Industry Report X0025’.

¹²⁷ Fernwood Womens Health Club, *Clubs and Classes*, Melbourne, 2016, <http://www.fernwoodfitness.com.au/clubs/>, accessed 7 April 2016; See also Curves, *Curves*, Melbourne, 2016, <http://curves.com.au/find-a-club>, accessed 7 April 2016.

¹²⁸ Sallmann, ‘IBISWorld Industry Report X0025’.

This is also difficult to understand in the context of a growing industry that, as noted previously, is continually seeking out new markets and customer segments as a way of building its revenue base. So how can this industry resistance to the accommodation of adolescent ‘physicality’, in particular, be explained?

In the first place, an opinion that seems to be common in the EFI is that minors are a high-maintenance cohort requiring greater levels of gymnasium supervision than adults. Further, the relatively low educational requirements of the EFI may also dissuade gymnasium operators from encouraging participation by minors, as it appears that gymnasium instructors and personal trainers are often inadequately trained to offer an appropriate level of support and supervision. While these factors provide some legitimacy to the building of barriers to adolescent participation in GBEPs, gymnasium operators who exclude young people are effectively denying them access to a full range of opportunities to improve their health, fitness, and well-being.

It should be a right of young people to have equitable access to physical activity programs,¹²⁹ yet it appears that many gymnasiums neglect minors. An EFI practice which seems to be commonplace is for businesses to deny gymnasium access to persons under the age of 16 years, with some only granting access from 18 years of age. Consumers aged 17 years and younger represent just 5% of the EFI’s market (estimated as a percentage of EFI revenue in 2011–12), which is the industry’s smallest age segment.¹³⁰ Not only is the EFI’s apparent preparedness to neglect this opportunity for further growth perplexing, the prevailing levels of industry regulation, coupled with the absence of effective national policies specific to adolescent participation in GBEPs, seems to confirm that the EFI, and gymnasiums in particular, are their own worst enemies by not capitalising on all their markets.

It would seem that the mix of inconsistent and restrictive minimum participation age requirements and blocking of access to minors for GBEP participation, by gymnasium operators, frequently marginalises the already marginal, and can be problematic for

¹²⁹ R. Parker, E. Elliott, A. Georga and M. Booth, ‘Developing a Charter of Physical Activity and Sport for Children and Youth’, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, vol. 27, no. 5, 2003, pp. 517–19.

¹³⁰ Sallmann, ‘IBISWorld Industry Report X0025’.

parents and young people alike. This could discourage parents and/or guardians from supporting their child's desire to participate in GBEPs, and, at the same time, influence them to encourage their child to participate in other forms of physical activity, such as organised sport, and/or even largely passive leisure activities instead. In the worst-case scenario, if left to their own devices, a young person may succumb to socially questionable pastimes.

Whilst a number of physical activity options would ideally be undertaken by young people, it is acknowledged that such exclusion and restrictive factors, as well as parents' willingness and availability to enable their children's participation, could impact on this being achieved. Nevertheless, organised sport is fundamentally a competitor to GBEPs, as are outdoor recreational activities like jogging and cycling. As previously indicated, a negative impact on gymnasium business revenue, attributed to the loss of custom to other activity options, could be compounded, should disgruntled parents themselves be subsequently deterred from participating in GBEPs. This could include parents of adolescent children from the segment previously mentioned as a growth area¹³¹—comprised of EFI consumers aged 45 years and older—and it is therefore apparent that gymnasium businesses which neglect adolescents, simply cannot afford to continue to do so.

Furthermore, the mix of inconsistent and restrictive minimum participation age requirements and blocking of access to minors for GBEP participation, goes against government policies which aim to remove barriers to participation, and increase sport, exercise, and physical recreation participation levels. This suggests that the physical inactivity problem of Australian adolescents fails to be properly addressed, or adequately resourced.

Despite their limited resources, 12 to 17 year olds are a highly suitable EFI adolescent target market segment. Their underlying reserves of energy and physical resilience, together with their high levels of sociability, make them well prepared to engage with gymnasium activities. Studies of the physiological and psychological readiness of young people indicate that they can easily accommodate regular participation in a whole

¹³¹ Sallmann, 'IBISWorld Industry Report X0025'.

range of gymnasium activities, with resistance exercise being especially suitable for building physical strength and developing physique.¹³²

However, the issue of attracting adolescents to gymnasiums and gaining the support of their parents and/or guardians is compounded by the fact that no general requirement exists for gymnasium instructors and personal trainers to undertake comprehensive training in child and adolescent development and appropriate exercise programming. This is concerning, as those who could best guide minors towards a balanced healthy lifestyle through exercise, a pattern to be adopted and continued into and throughout adult life, would be equipped with relevant, up-to-date knowledge of child and adolescent physiology and psychology, and a thorough understanding of appropriate activities for the different stages of their development.¹³³

Before the EFI can capitalise on the growth opportunities offered by a largely unexploited adolescent market segment, it would seem that operational issues regarding the introduction of effective national policies and programs to accommodate adolescent engagement with GBEPs need to be addressed. There are varying requirements of the state and self-governing mainland territory governments in relation to working with children checks and police checks for those who work with minors, as well as structural weaknesses in the EFI that seem to make the levels of supervision and exercise instruction of adolescents highly problematic. Given the special needs of adolescents during this phase of their growth and maturation, the level and quality of supervision of young people participating in GBEPs appears to be limited at best and inadequate at worst. Significant to the supervision issue is the absence of (1) national compulsory or mandatory gymnasium business accreditation, (2) national compulsory or mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation, and (3) national external industry regulation, to support adolescent GBEP participants in particular.

¹³² A. Faigenbaum, W. Kraemer, B. Cahill, J. Chandler, J. Dziados, L. Elfrink, E. Forman, M. Gaudiose, L. Micheli, M. Nitka and S. Roberts, 'Youth Resistance Training: Position Statement Paper and Literature Review', *Strength and Conditioning*, vol. 18, 1996, pp. 62–75.

¹³³ W. van Mechelen, J. Twisk, G. Post, J. Snel and H. Kemper, 'Physical Activity of Young People: The Amsterdam Longitudinal Growth and Health Study', *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*, vol. 32, no. 9, 2000, pp. 1610–16; See also L. Wankel and P. Kreisel, 'Factors Underlying Enjoyment of Youth Sports: Sport and Age Group Comparisons', *Journal of Sport Psychology*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1985, pp. 51–64.

It would appear that the key factors of gymnasium business and instructor accreditation, and industry regulation should therefore be addressed by policymakers aiming to increase adolescent participation in GBEPs across Australia. This would be important for ultimately providing adolescents with equal access to GBEPs, and to ensure that those who participate are given appropriate advice, instruction, and a level of supervision that not only produces healthy outcomes and ensures ongoing participation, but also minimises the risk of injury.

Section conclusion

In Australia, the Fitness Industry/Health and Fitness Industry and consumers could benefit from an industry title change. The title Exercise and Fitness Industry, or EFI in its abbreviated form, for example, provides for greater inclusion and better represents the make-up of the industry, which is apparent in this analysis. With effective marketing, a clear title such as this would be expected to strengthen the ‘brand’ of the industry. The title EFI would be more relevant to most existing and potential consumers, and could be used to better promote the industry’s products and services.

Through innovative planning and new technologies, the flexible delivery of GBEPs by both employees and independent contractors, and the growth opportunities offered by a largely unexploited adolescent market segment, there are good prospects for the Australian EFI. There is potential for the industry to be well placed to promote gymnasiums as an avenue for adolescents, and almost all Australians, to be physically active. Traditionally, government has used competitive sport as the ‘bait’ to encourage more young people to be active, but the evidence increasingly shows that not everyone is necessarily interested in sport, nor should it be assumed that all persons wish to participate in sport. Gymnasiums offer many benefits, including (1) a variety of exercise programs that can be tailored to suit individual needs, (2) an ability to exercise free of a need to rely on other participants, (3) flexible attendance, where activities can be undertaken at different times during the day and night, and (4) time efficiency, where only short time allocations are needed to secure a demonstrable outcome. They are now also one of the few active-leisure spaces with the flexibility for males and females to be

integrated or segregated as appropriate, depending upon the nature of the activity and the needs of participants.

At the same time, there appear to be a number of serious problems—though not necessarily systemic—with the structure, organisation, and operational practices of the EFI. The industry has a poor image built on hyper-masculine posturing, an often obsessive participant concern for bodily appearance, and ‘cowboy’ gymnasium operators. The apparent problems surrounding GBEPs specifically include (1) inadequate gymnasium instructor and personal trainer education, (2) inadequate exercise supervision, (3) discrimination against minors through an inconsistently applied combination of exclusion and restriction, as well as (4) a lack of industry-wide price incentives to encourage young people to participate at gymnasiums across Australia.

Despite the global economic downturn of 2008, EFI performance is encouraging, with further opportunity for growth in both the middle to old age and adolescent segments. The baby boomer generation is around retirement age and thus, is considered to be one of the largest population groups with an impending increase in leisure time. This presents gymnasium businesses with an opportunity for further growth, through targeting their services to this market.¹³⁴ The EFI could also substantially benefit from the implementation of measures which would widely enable adolescents to access appropriate GBEPs, and, at the same time, provide more intensive adolescent supervision, more stringent gymnasium business and instructor accreditation, and more comprehensive external regulation.

At the time of investigation (2013), EFI guidelines for the participation of Australia’s adolescents in GBEPs were inadequate, and exacerbated by policy-gaps in gymnasium business and instructor accreditation, and the absence of national external industry regulation. Gymnasium business and instructor accreditation, and industry regulation, are key issues to be addressed in the development of policies which aim to increase adolescent participation in GBEPs.

¹³⁴ Sallmann, ‘IBISWorld Industry Report P9312’.

It is noteworthy that, at present, EFI guidelines of relevance are essentially unenforceable. *Kids in Gyms: Guidelines for Running Physical Activity Programs for Young People in Fitness and Leisure Centres in NSW*¹³⁵ is one of the main industry guidelines of relevance aiming to increase the level of young people's participation at gymnasiums in NSW and ultimately across Australia. These guidelines contain various age restrictions based on the different types of exercise programs and classes provided, including a recommended minimum age of 16 years for participation in unsupervised resistance exercise programs. In the document, it is stated that gymnasium businesses are well placed to provide young people with safe and enjoyable spaces in which to be physically active, and to maximise their safety and well-being when participating, specific guidelines are a necessity. At the time of investigation, a decade had passed since these guidelines were first published yet it seemed that most gymnasium operators continued to restrict or deny access to adolescents, and remained heavily focused on adult consumers. For the EFI to be truly ready to accommodate mass participation by adolescents (aged between 12 and 17 years) in GBEPs, positioning it to successfully attract and retain adolescent customers, the industry appears to require operational and environmental change to its gymnasiums across Australia.

Beyond essentially unenforceable guidelines, this analysis demonstrates that it is necessary to investigate whether gymnasium business and instructor accreditation should be more stringent, and whether industry regulation should be more comprehensive, and be designed to support adolescent participation in GBEPs.

The significant adolescent physical inactivity problem requires a multifaceted solution. In addressing this, one generally neglected facet is the expansive network of gymnasiums and other EFI businesses across Australia which could offer valuable, yet largely unexploited physical activity community resources for the adolescent market segment. As communities around the nation become more concerned with the desire to design safe and healthy environments for their members, and to guide them into active lifestyles, the EFI becomes an increasingly valuable social and commercial space. It

¹³⁵ R. Parker, *Kids in Gyms: Guidelines for Running Physical Activity Programs for Young People in Fitness and Leisure Centres in NSW*, NSW Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation, Sydney Olympic Park, 2003, <http://fulltext.ausport.gov.au/fulltext/2003/nsw/kidsingyms.pdf>, accessed 8 February 2013.

appears that unless wholesale changes to the EFI are enacted, there is unlikely to be any significant increase in adolescent engagement with gymnasium activities, and this constitutes a serious problem for not only the industry, but also for policymakers who want to see the barriers to physical activity participation dismantled as soon as possible.

REGULATION

Section introduction

All societies experience some form of regulation, and the EFI is no exception. Regulation is a central concept in policymaking, and if properly designed and implemented, can enhance a nation's quality of life by encouraging socially valued practices on the one hand, and discouraging socially dysfunctional conduct on the other. Regardless of the simplicity or complexity of regulatory structures, there are always systems in place which are designed to maintain order, and at the same time ensure that people behave acceptably.¹³⁶ Whilst there is universal acceptance of the notion of social order as an essential factor, there is considerable conflict regarding which behaviours should be sanctioned and which penalties would be appropriate for contraventions.¹³⁷ Fundamental social issues such as those concerning behavioural standards, individual and corporate responsibilities and human rights, generally require consideration to be given to the way a particular issue is regulated, as opposed to simply being prohibited, for the purpose of maximising the good of society in general.¹³⁸ The ingrained values, customs and rituals which govern a person's normal behaviour constitute the building blocks of regulation, largely by way of unsupported laws and rules. Entrenched in a person's way of life, these building blocks however can be powerful implements for securing compliance. The regulatory technologies that can be utilised will now be discussed beginning with two fundamental types of regulation, internally driven and externally driven regulation.

¹³⁶ W. Haviland, H. Prins, D. Walrath and B. McBride, *Cultural Anthropology: The Human Challenge*, Belmont: Wadsworth, 2008.

¹³⁷ Freiberg, *The Tools of Regulation*.

¹³⁸ M. Innes, *Understanding Social Control: Deviance, Crime and Social Order*, Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2003.

Regulatory technologies

Internally driven regulation largely addresses the values, beliefs and customs entrenched in a person's mind.¹³⁹ By way of example, in a community it may be commonplace for younger citizens to open doors, give up their seats on public transport and so on, generally showing respect and care for the elderly, as it is considered to be their civic duty. Externally driven regulation involves the imposition of sanctions by way of laws and rules for the purpose of securing compliance with societal and customary standards.¹⁴⁰ Sanctions can differ significantly, such as the negative, where a non-compliant person can be penalised, and the positive, where those who conform can be rewarded. Externally driven regulation can also be classified as formal or informal. Usually there is a clear understanding about, and universal acceptance of formal sanctions, which strongly influence compliance. Such legitimised sanctions usually involve well-defined rewards for compliance, and consistent penalties for transgressions.

Understanding the difference between internally and externally driven regulation is a good basis from which to delve further into this analysis of regulation. This is particularly necessary as regulation in developed and technologically advanced societies is multifaceted. In domestic and everyday life, the psychological and socio-cultural influencers which predominately operate are typically described as micro regulators, whereas economic and political influencers, typically described as macro regulators, predominately operate in the organisational and corporate area.

Micro regulation

Whilst psychological and socio-cultural types of regulation both endeavour to secure compliance with specific standards of behaviour, their regulatory interventions differ greatly. The self-regulation of individuals is the main focus of psychological types of regulation, whilst socio-cultural forms relate to externally imposed regulations on groups of people, including workplace team members. Furthermore, externally imposed regulations can either be light and restrained or firm and compelling.

¹³⁹ Haviland et al., *Cultural Anthropology*; See also Innes, *Understanding Social Control*.

¹⁴⁰ Innes, *Understanding Social Control*.

Psychological types of regulation consist of the values, traditions and restrictions entrenched in a person's mind through socialisation. People enter life with a vast spectrum of behavioural possibilities, however through the process of socialisation the behaviours which actually develop through living with others in organised, sociable communities are restricted to a more limited range of acceptable standards.¹⁴¹ Such behaviours can exhibit as moral principles. In a particular community it may be highly improper for a couple to live together prior to marriage, for example. These behaviours can also exhibit as daily routines based on a strong group connection, such as regular prayer sessions. Such practices are fundamental to their way of life and community identity.¹⁴²

Whilst socio-cultural types of regulation can be internalised, they can also be challenged. Thus more tangible confirmation is necessary, in the form of social gestures, inter-personal cues, and public declarations which enforce social standards (the outcome of common patterns of behaviour amongst friends, work colleagues, community groups or organisations). There can be consequences for deviations from behaviour which is considered acceptable. Sanctions can be transitory and subtle or concrete and straightforward. A cinema patron whose mobile telephone rings during the movie, for example, may be cautioned by those around him through stern looks and quiet, yet disapproving comments. Conversely, a secondary school student who consistently fails to complete homework tasks, will be reminded that she is not meeting subject requirements and consequently may not pass at the end of the semester. Socio-cultural regulation is also entrenched in organisational cultures, frequently summarised by the expectation that matters are dealt with in particular ways within a given organisation.¹⁴³ Hence the implied consequence for those who conform is that they will receive acceptance and most probably prosper within the establishment, however, those who do not will have a far less fulfilling or successful career. In addition, organisational cultures allow for both formal and informal sanctions. Formal sanctions may include warnings of the possibility of loss of seniority or privileges, whilst informal sanctions can involve embarrassment, derision and condemnation.

¹⁴¹ Innes, *Understanding Social Control*.

¹⁴² B. Miller, *Cultural Anthropology*, third edition, Boston: Pearson, 2005.

¹⁴³ E. Schein, *Organisational Culture and Leadership*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

The term ‘social control’ summarises the major objective behind the different types of regulation. It refers to the range of social and political mechanisms and procedures which not only regulate individual and group behaviour, but also corporate conduct.¹⁴⁴ Social controls result in compliance to the rules of a particular society or group. In contemporary society the notion of social control is more closely linked to conformity than initially, when it basically referred to society’s capacity to control its people and enterprises through coercion. In more current politically-correct terminology, social control tends to be referred to as meta-regulation, which indicates that it functions in the midst of the micro world of individual principles and beliefs, and the macro world of government legislation and the industry regulator.¹⁴⁵

Macro regulation

In sharp contrast with social control is economic and political regulation, which is most often described as macro regulation because of its use by governments as a regulatory vehicle.¹⁴⁶ It employs a higher level of formal interventions requiring heavy documentation and bureaucratic support, and non-compliance is usually met with harsh sanctions. Hefty controls are used to regulate the behaviour of citizens and groups in contemporary societies by classifying some activities as criminal. Such controls also apply to the conduct of organisations, particularly in relation to competition, pricing, product standards, service delivery and conditions of employment. The same regulations will not always suit every economic and political situation, as the size of organisations, their purposes, and the markets in which they operate, differ. Consequently, in policy design, regulations must be appropriate for the particular circumstances of different markets and the organisations supplying them.¹⁴⁷ It is a fundamental principle of such regulations to protect consumers, the beneficiaries of the products and services supplied. The imposition of sanctions on organisations which deceive or exploit consumers through false or misleading representations is generally the only means of accomplishing this.

¹⁴⁴ Innes, *Understanding Social Control*.

¹⁴⁵ Chriss, *Social Control*.

¹⁴⁶ Baldwin, Cave and Lodge, *Understanding Regulation*; See also Freiberg, *The Tools of Regulation*.

¹⁴⁷ Freiberg, *The Tools of Regulation*.

A distinction can be made, in the context of macro regulation, between two facets of the regulatory process. Central to economic regulation are the rules which effect the competitiveness of markets or industries, whilst the measures protecting consumers from unjust, unconscionable and deceptive supplier conduct, is the focus of social regulation.¹⁴⁸ Regardless of whether the regulatory focus specifically concerns markets, industries or consumers, it needs to be based on formal external control, as more subtle types of social control will be ineffective.

Control is exerted by governments in the form of macro regulation, to secure compliance from influential corporations, associations and groups. Specifically, this is achieved by governments and their agencies through use of law enforcement mechanisms and other formal sanctions such as fines and imprisonment. As formal external controls are established through legislation by elected representatives in a democracy, they therefore receive support and voluntary compliance from the majority of the population. However, any type of formal external control is only as effective as the relative strength of the sanction, gauged by the extent of the penalties, the monitoring capability of the external authority, and in addition, the level of social control exerted over organisations and individuals.¹⁴⁹

The regulation argument

Consideration needs to be given to the value of regulation to communities or whether they would benefit more if left unregulated. In addition, it is important to understand that regardless of a nation's relative wealth, government resources alone are insufficient to satisfy the demands of every group. Resources must be controlled, and for most countries this transpires via markets and the relationship between demand, supply and price. When a market's operations do not coincide with what is best for society however, a market failure can occur.¹⁵⁰ Specifically, this failure occurs when the maximum benefit of a market is not attained.

¹⁴⁸ D. Vogel, 'The Private Regulation of Global Corporate Conduct: Achievements and Limitations', *Business and Society*, vol. 49, no. 1, 2010, pp. 68–87.

¹⁴⁹ Freiberg, *The Tools of Regulation*.

¹⁵⁰ Baldwin, Cave and Lodge, *Understanding Regulation*; See also Freiberg, *The Tools of Regulation*.

Amongst the many possible reasons for market failure, often it is due to a shortage in supply of socially desirable products, an excess supply of less desirable products, or cartel conduct such as price fixing, market sharing, and misleading advertising.¹⁵¹ A market failure can also arise when the products or services, regardless of their original desirability, develop an exacerbated user risk of accident, injury and/or illness. The under-supply problem comes about in circumstances where there are external or social benefits, as well as private benefits. Private benefits consist of the value gained by consumers from the immediate purchase of a product or service, like regular personal training sessions at a gymnasium. Social benefits represent the value gained by society from the generation of a product or service, such as a community which is more active and healthy. Where social benefits can be shown, the allocation of additional resources to such activities would be more beneficial to society. In circumstances where the private sector considers the profit potential to be inadequate for investment in a particular market, it will be left to governments to supply this market with sufficient products or services. Regulating supply in this way would generally occur through the use of taxpayer money to finance additional infrastructure and services. Where under-supply results in market failure, in order to establish a more equitable environment, the argument for appropriate government regulation—and assistance—holds weight. To enable fair access for a particular market, governments can either create their own low cost service or subsidise the pricing structure of existing product and/or service providers.

As with under-supply, the over-supply of products resulting in external costs as well as private benefits is also problematic,¹⁵² and in this situation, regulations designed to curb excessive supply can be implemented. Such external costs include accidents in the workplace and pollution attributable to product manufacturing, the marketing of a product which places an unexpected risk on the user, and misleading advertising or other representations about the alleged benefits of a product. The inequitable distribution of costs and potential harm to consumers and/or workers, rather than the manufacturer, is evident in these examples. Thus service deliverers, those organisations comprising a given industry, and the users of the services are also affected by market

¹⁵¹ Baldwin, Cave and Lodge, *Understanding Regulation*.

¹⁵² Baldwin, Cave and Lodge, *Understanding Regulation*.

failure. Specifically, a market failure impacting on these organisations constitutes an economic failure, whilst the consumers are confronted with a social failure.

An economic market failure transpires when an inadequate level of competition in a given product or service orientated market impedes a consumer's freedom of choice. When a product or service is subject to a monopoly, the unwarrantable inflation of prices and limitation of supply enables organisations to benefit from excessively high profits, at the expense of the consumer. Monopolies empower corrupt suppliers to compile a framework of asymmetric information, which provides them with a level of product know-how that is unattainable by prospective customers,¹⁵³ such as actual quality and anticipated life span, pricing mark-ups, and the possible exploitation of workers in sweatshop conditions. As a result, monopolies engender heavy regulation.

There is a growing need for regulatory agencies due to privatisation of an increasing number of industries and markets, no longer operating under direct government influence. Since the mid-1980s, privatisation has brought about a rise in the number of government regulatory agencies exercising control over an increasingly diverse range of commercialised businesses, including those in the areas of telecommunications, electricity, and banking, for example. There has been significant growth in the extent of institutional regulatory innovation over the past two decades as a result of privatisation, in spite of the emergence of hard-line neo-liberal ideologies within governments.¹⁵⁴ Usually recognised as independent regulatory authorities, most new entities of this kind have been awarded some degree of autonomy from direct government control for the purpose of enhancing their policy credibility in addition to their ability to ensure effective balance between consumer protection and the efficient functioning of markets.

When the sale of a product or service places an unforeseen risk of harm on consumers, or when its marketing is misleading and ethically questionable, there is a social market

¹⁵³ M. Mason and D. Scammon, 'Unintended Consequences of Health Supplement Information Regulations: The Importance of Recognising Consumer Motivations', *The Journal of Consumer Affairs*, vol. 45, no. 2, 2011, pp. 201–23.

¹⁵⁴ R. Shamir, 'The Age of Responsibilization: On Market-Embedded Morality', *Economy and Society*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2008, pp. 1–19.

failure.¹⁵⁵ Social regulation seeks to protect consumers by mitigating risk to their personal welfare, whilst consumer protection regulations, which safeguard customers from corrupt suppliers and counteract the asymmetry of product know-how, are included under economic regulation. The various types of regulation provide a powerful collection of instruments for managing the behaviour of organisations and other groups, as well as individuals. However, some in the business community appear to believe that fewer regulations are better than more, particularly regarding economic regulation. This view seemed to be shared by the federal government, with the Honourable J.B. Hockey MP, Treasurer of the Commonwealth of Australia at the time, stating in his 2014–15 budget speech, “We are removing \$1 billion a year in red tape because regulation means more staff doing paperwork and fewer staff helping customers”.¹⁵⁶ The cost saving aside, this apparent devaluation of regulation for the purpose of appealing to voters, suggests a preference for deregulation by the Australian Government in this instance.

The deregulation of markets gained prominence from the mid-1980s, but there have still been more regulatory agencies rather than fewer created. This period has also been supported by a laissez-faire/neo-liberal economic philosophy, disseminated at a time of reduced anti-monopoly sentiment, less consumer protection enforcement, and a general lack of new regulatory initiatives.¹⁵⁷ This economic philosophy is supported by the beliefs that the power lies with the consumers, as their purchase intention determines what a supplier should produce and in what quantity, to deliver to market, and that growth in intra-market competition could eliminate or considerably reduce most market failures.

Whilst conceding that some level of economic regulation aids fair competition, free market conservatives in support of the laissez-faire/neo-liberal economic philosophy also contend that in competitive markets, social regulation does not produce many benefits. Instead, according to the free market position, social market failures can best be restricted through the counterbalancing power of consumers shifting their purchase

¹⁵⁵ Mason and Scammon, ‘Unintended Consequences of Health Supplement Information Regulations’.

¹⁵⁶ J. Hockey, *Budget Speech 2014-15*, delivered 13 May 2014 on the Second Reading of the Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2014-15, Australian Government, 2014, <http://www.budget.gov.au/2014-15/content/speech/html/speech.htm>, accessed 13 June 2014.

¹⁵⁷ S. Hall, ‘The Neo-Liberal Revolution’, *Cultural Studies*, vol. 26, no. 6, 2011, pp. 706–28.

behaviour from businesses instigating such market failures.¹⁵⁸ Consequently, those businesses which comprise an affected market must remedy the problem or leave the marketplace. Whilst the free market stance is that the asymmetric knowledge problem is too highly regarded, it is also believed that consumers are sufficiently astute, and thus able to make appropriate marketplace choices. The necessity for social regulation or some other form of government intervention is therefore lessened.

Deregulatory policies of free market conservatives however, leave consumers susceptible to misleading and unprincipled business practices. In competitive markets, consumers are offered a vast scale of products and/or services from which to choose, but consumer sovereignty does not always result in effective marketplace regulation. Social interventionists contend that the laissez-faire/neo-liberal economic philosophy does not sufficiently decrease the incidence of social market failure. They assert that consumers cannot always determine if a product is adequately safe and reliable, or if there is ethically questionable advertising or other representations about the product's alleged benefits, such as those which are false or misleading. Social interventionists maintain that some level of government intervention is a necessity, as consumers are not sufficiently sophisticated or powerful enough to regulate the marketplace through their combined purchase decisions.¹⁵⁹

When making a case for the suitability of either externally managed economic regulation or externally managed social regulation as the preferred method of guiding organisational conduct, the notion of self-regulation has come about as a way of securing better outcomes from industry as well as stronger consumer protection. A self-regulated industry manages its own actions and behaviour by establishing an arms-length authority with the power to discourage particular conduct and at the same time encourage compliance with desirable conduct.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Mason and Scammon, 'Unintended Consequences of Health Supplement Information Regulations'.

¹⁵⁹ Mason and Scammon, 'Unintended Consequences of Health Supplement Information Regulations'.

¹⁶⁰ E. Koornneef, *Measuring the Effects of Regulation on the Quality of Health Services: Developing a Conceptual Framework for Evaluation*, 2010, ECPR Third Biennial Conference: Regulation in the Age of Crisis, UCD, Dublin, 19 June 2010.

There are flaws with a self-regulatory model however, as with all types of regulation, particularly when considering the ability to demonstrate true independence and impartiality when investigating serious allegations and issues within an industry. Whilst regulation can be effective in changing social behaviour, at times however, the change can deviate from that planned by its advocates. In addition, it may not have been based on a reasonable analysis, as policy always has interrelated values, beliefs, customs and habits at its foundation. Regulation can also be hijacked by those with a vested interest to deliver outcomes which support their agenda, in the guise of being in the best interests of the public.

Section conclusion

The idea of regulation is easy to comprehend, to the extent that it endeavours to ensure that selected organisations, other groups, or individuals conform to particular standards of behaviour which are either imposed or agreed upon. However, it is also challenging to appropriately categorise because of the great variety of tools and technologies which are used to secure compliance. Regulations can be soft, such as in the workplace where it may be agreed that personal telephone calls should not be made during working hours, and they can also be hard, such as legislating to prohibit gambling advertisements in sports broadcasts. Regulations can be formal, as in a clause in a contractual agreement between a professional sports league and a given club, that its personnel will not make damaging public comments about league umpires. They can also be informal, such as having an implied consensus in a community that its pedestrians keep to the left on footpaths, when using stairs and so on.

In designing regulations, it is necessary to begin by identifying the regulatory technologies that can be utilised to modify the conduct of individuals, as well as organisations and other groups. Considerably more difficult, is determining which collection of tools could be best used for particular circumstances.¹⁶¹ This involves consideration about the aims of the regulations under design, the type of actions and behaviour to be penalised or rewarded, and the anticipated social goods or social utility which may ensue.

¹⁶¹ Freiberg, *The Tools of Regulation*.

Understanding the purpose of the regulations under design requires extensive decision-making about the costs that need to be restrained and the benefits to be enabled. Also to be determined is the degree of importance of the various categories of these costs and benefits. Further complicating the matter, whilst any regulatory model will shape future benefits, existing levels of benefits will also be affected, adversely at times. The suitability of the regulations under design is dependent upon a comprehensive appraisal of costs and benefits based on an advanced knowledge of the manner in which different types of regulation interact, and then stimulate or curtail action.

Whilst the establishment costs of a regulatory model are an important consideration, attention must also be given to the considerably higher operating costs. The greater the complexity of an agency established to regulate an industry, and the more involved the registration, monitoring and enforcement processes, the greater the cost of its operations. The costs sustained by a wholly deregulated industry would be minimal in comparison.

Whilst problems exist in the design of regulatory models which are claimed to affect people in positive ways, all regulatory models function under the supposition that individuals, groups, communities, and countries will be in a better position with them, rather than without them.¹⁶² In addition, the supposition is made, though frequently with less assurance, that the generally favoured regulatory options will provide better outcomes than those less favoured or rejected. With few aspects of life remaining unregulated, central to the design of a regulatory model is identification of the type of regulation which allows most space to behaviours providing pleasures and benefits, or social utility, whilst disallowing space to those behaviours that destabilise or lessen the quality of life and social utility of a community. Designing regulatory models which allow the benefits that particular behaviours might provide, yet also eradicate the costs and harms connected with those behaviours, is a challenging task facing policymakers.

¹⁶² Freiberg, *The Tools of Regulation*.

Chapter summary

The chapter commenced with a discussion about stakeholder theory and by acknowledging the physical inactivity problem affecting adolescents, other minors and adults. With young people as a focus, the personal benefits which arise from regular physical activity participation were discussed, followed by the recommended amount of daily physical activity, the actual levels of participation globally, and the connection between their existing and future activity levels. The topic of overweight and obesity in Australia's young people was then raised, with reference to the potential long-term health consequences of childhood obesity, and the increased risks to health linked to overweight and obesity in adulthood. Also identified were the economic costs of obesity and the mortality rate, which have been attributed to physical inactivity in Australia. Further demonstrating the importance of health was the relationship between non-communicable diseases and a nation's development and economic growth. Healthy eating and physical activity programs for disease prevention were then identified as key instruments in policies to achieve developmental goals. With a focus on policy development, action required to increase physical activity participation was presented, and also linked to the involvement of gymnasium businesses.

The ensuing comprehensive analysis of the Australian EFI began with an examination of its structure, which included a justification for referring to the Fitness Industry as the EFI in this thesis, the identification of the barriers to participation in GBEPs, the main services delivered to customers, the market leaders and other important players, and the emerging gymnasium businesses at the time of investigation. The main services were divided into seven categories, and there was a focus on the first and dominant category 'integrated exercise services', as it included the gymnasium businesses selected for this study. Also identified were the market leaders and other important players' share of the market and the location of EFI businesses operating in Australia. In addition, the major customer segments according to age were discussed.

The section proceeded to a discussion about the economic performance of the EFI over time, as well as the industry's costs. The regulation of the EFI was then discussed, with a focus on the industry codes made under the relevant fair trading acts in the ACT,

QLD, WA and SA. In the context of opportunities for industry development, with adolescents aged between 12 and 17 years as a focus, the section went on to discuss the mix of inconsistent and restrictive minimum participation age requirements and blocking of access to minors for participation in GBEPs, by gymnasium operators. Gymnasium business and instructor accreditation, and industry regulation, were identified as key issues to be addressed in the development of policies which aim to increase adolescent participation in GBEPs across Australia. A possible industry title change, from Fitness Industry/Health and Fitness Industry to EFI, was proposed. The analysis ended considering the significant adolescent physical inactivity problem to require a multifaceted solution, with the expansive network of gymnasiums and other EFI businesses across Australia as not only one generally neglected facet in addressing this problem, but one which could also offer valuable, yet largely unexploited physical activity community resources for the adolescent market segment.

The chapter then advanced to a review of the variety of regulatory tools and technologies which can be used to secure compliance. The analysis of the technologies began with two fundamental types of regulation, internally driven and externally driven regulation. The section proceeded to explain the composition of both micro and macro regulation. It was also stated that social control tends to be referred to as meta-regulation, which indicates that it functions in the midst of the micro world of individual principles and beliefs, and the macro world of government legislation and the industry regulator.¹⁶³ In sharp contrast with social control is economic and political regulation, which is most often described as macro regulation because of its use by governments as a regulatory vehicle.¹⁶⁴

It was explained that the under-supply problem comes about in circumstances where there are external or social benefits, as well as private benefits. Where under-supply results in market failure, in order to establish a more equitable environment, the argument for appropriate government regulation—and assistance—holds weight. In addition, it was recognised that, as with under-supply, also problematic is the over-

¹⁶³ Chriss, *Social Control*.

¹⁶⁴ Baldwin, Cave and Lodge, *Understanding Regulation*; See also Freiberg, *The Tools of Regulation*.

supply of products resulting in external costs as well as private benefits.¹⁶⁵ The various types of regulation provide a powerful collection of instruments for managing the behaviour of organisations and other groups, as well as individuals. Regulations can be soft or hard, and formal or informal. A self-regulatory model was also discussed, and whilst it has flaws, so do all types of regulation.

The chapter ended with a discussion about designing regulations, in which it was mentioned that central to the design of a regulatory model is identification of the type of regulation which allows most space to behaviours providing pleasures and benefits, or social utility, whilst disallowing space to those behaviours that destabilise or lessen the quality of life and social utility of a community.

This chapter ultimately assists the study in two ways in chapter five. First, it does so in the examination of the interview and questionnaire findings, which takes place in the context of documents relating to the operations and conduct of the EFI and, more broadly, other relevant literature on physical inactivity in adolescence, the industry, and regulation. Second, regulation theory is used to assist the analysis of these findings.

Both the methodology and methods of this research are explained in chapter three. In this next part of the thesis the triangulated mixed-method research design is discussed in detail.

¹⁶⁵ Baldwin, Cave and Lodge, *Understanding Regulation*.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Chapter overview

The chapter explains both the methodology and methods used to drive this research project. It begins with a confirmation of the ethics approval to conduct this research, a justification of the selected age range of the adolescent population in focus, and the identification of the framework of this research and the research design. The chapter moves into a discussion about the triangulated mixed-method research design, which includes a justification for the adoption of an interpretivist approach to this research. It highlights the use of interviews with a minister, senior executives, executives and senior managers from federal, state and self-governing mainland territory governments, industry associations, and gymnasium businesses from across Australia, to secure detailed commentary about participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs (GBEPs). Also discussed is the employment of a questionnaire as a subsidiary exercise to complement the interviews, which, in the main, investigated the attitudes and opinions of parents and/or guardians of adolescents from across Australia, about adolescent participation in GBEPs. These data sources were supplemented by a document analysis which is mentioned accordingly.

Designed, first and foremost, to effectively address the research questions and to achieve the aims of this study, both the interview and questionnaire schedules are discussed, together with an analysis of the methods used to select and secure interview informants, and to recruit questionnaire respondents. Included in this analysis is a discussion of the under-representation of respondents. The chapter ends with the identification of the methods of analysis, as well as an explanation of the risk and risk mitigation and management associated with the data collection procedures.

Ethics approval

Ethics approval to conduct this research was granted by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee (VUHREC) on 2 February 2010 (HRETH 09/193) (see appendix A for more details).

Citations

Footnote citations have been used to ensure the clarity and readability of this thesis, and for the convenience of the reader in the identification of key sources of information and secondary evidence.

Adolescent population in focus

As stated in chapter one, for the purpose of this thesis, the term ‘adolescent’, when used in a context which directly links to this study, refers to minors between the ages of 12 and 17 years. This was the age range of the adolescent population in focus. With young people generally beginning their secondary schooling at the ages of 12 or 13 in Australia, the minimum age of 12 was selected, understanding that physiological and psychological readiness, unique to each individual, is an important factor for participation in resistance exercise,¹⁶⁶ a common form of exercise training conducted at gymnasiums. The position statement¹⁶⁷ on resistance training for children and adolescents of the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) (United States), the global authority on strength and conditioning,¹⁶⁸ provides support for the minimum age of 12 as being appropriate for this study. The position of the NSCA is that an appropriately designed and supervised resistance exercise program (1) is relatively safe for child and adolescent participation, (2) can improve their muscular strength and

¹⁶⁶ A. Faigenbaum, W. Kraemer, B. Cahill, J. Chandler, J. Dziados, L. Elfrink, E. Forman, M. Gaudiose, L. Micheli, M. Nitka and S. Roberts, ‘Youth Resistance Training: Position Statement Paper and Literature Review’, *Strength and Conditioning*, vol. 18, 1996, pp. 62–75.

¹⁶⁷ A. Faigenbaum, W. Kraemer, C. Blimkie, I. Jeffreys, L. Micheli, M. Nitka and T. Rowland, ‘Youth Resistance Training: Updated Position Statement Paper from the National Strength and Conditioning Association’, *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research*, vol. 23, no. 5, 2009, pp. S60–S79.

¹⁶⁸ National Strength and Conditioning Association, *About Us*, Colorado Springs, 2014, <http://www.nsca.com/about-us/>, accessed 28 January 2014.

power, (3) can improve their cardiovascular risk profile, (4) can enhance their motor skill performance and also contribute to improved sports performance, (5) can increase their resistance to sports-related injuries, (6) can contribute to improved psychosocial well-being, and (7) can assist in the promotion and development of exercise habits in childhood and adolescence.¹⁶⁹

Research design

The research design for this study comprised a mix of inductive and deductive methods, centred around interviews, a questionnaire and document analysis. Stakeholder theory and regulation theory provided the criteria for theming and categorising the pertinent data.

Stakeholder theory

This study was framed by stakeholder theory. As discussed in chapter two, stakeholder theory is driven by the proposition that the operations of a business may be assisted or constrained by the strategic aims of other businesses that have an interest in its growth and development. Stakeholder theory asserts that success is dependent on the ability of a business to create value for, and to effectively manage its relationships with customers, employees, suppliers, communities, and financiers. It implies that these stakeholders, at the very least, are groups and/or individuals with multifaceted and inherently joint interests, which can affect or be affected by the accomplishment of organisational purpose.¹⁷⁰ That is, stakeholders can not only be passive beneficiaries of a business's growth and development, they can also actively shape its structures and operations,¹⁷¹ and this would seem to be especially so, when acting as part of a coalition.

¹⁶⁹ Faigenbaum, 'Youth Resistance Training: Updated'.

¹⁷⁰ R. Freeman, *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, New York: Cambridge University Press, [1984] 2010; See also R. Freeman, J. Harrison, A. Wicks, B. Parmar and S. de Colle, *Stakeholder Theory: The State of the Art*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

¹⁷¹ J. Post, L. Preston and S. Sachs, 'Managing the Extended Enterprise: The New Stakeholder View', *California Management Review*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2002, pp. 6–28.

Accordingly, it was deemed necessary, for the purposes of this study, to investigate those stakeholders (1) who were perceived to have a common interest in increasing physical activity participation, and (2) whose interests were considered to have the most potential to affect, or be affected by, the accomplishment of the ultimate purpose of this study, which is to formulate policies and strategies to increase adolescent participation in GBEPs across Australia and effectively contribute to the solution for the adolescent physical inactivity problem. These stakeholders are identified and categorised in Figure 3.1.

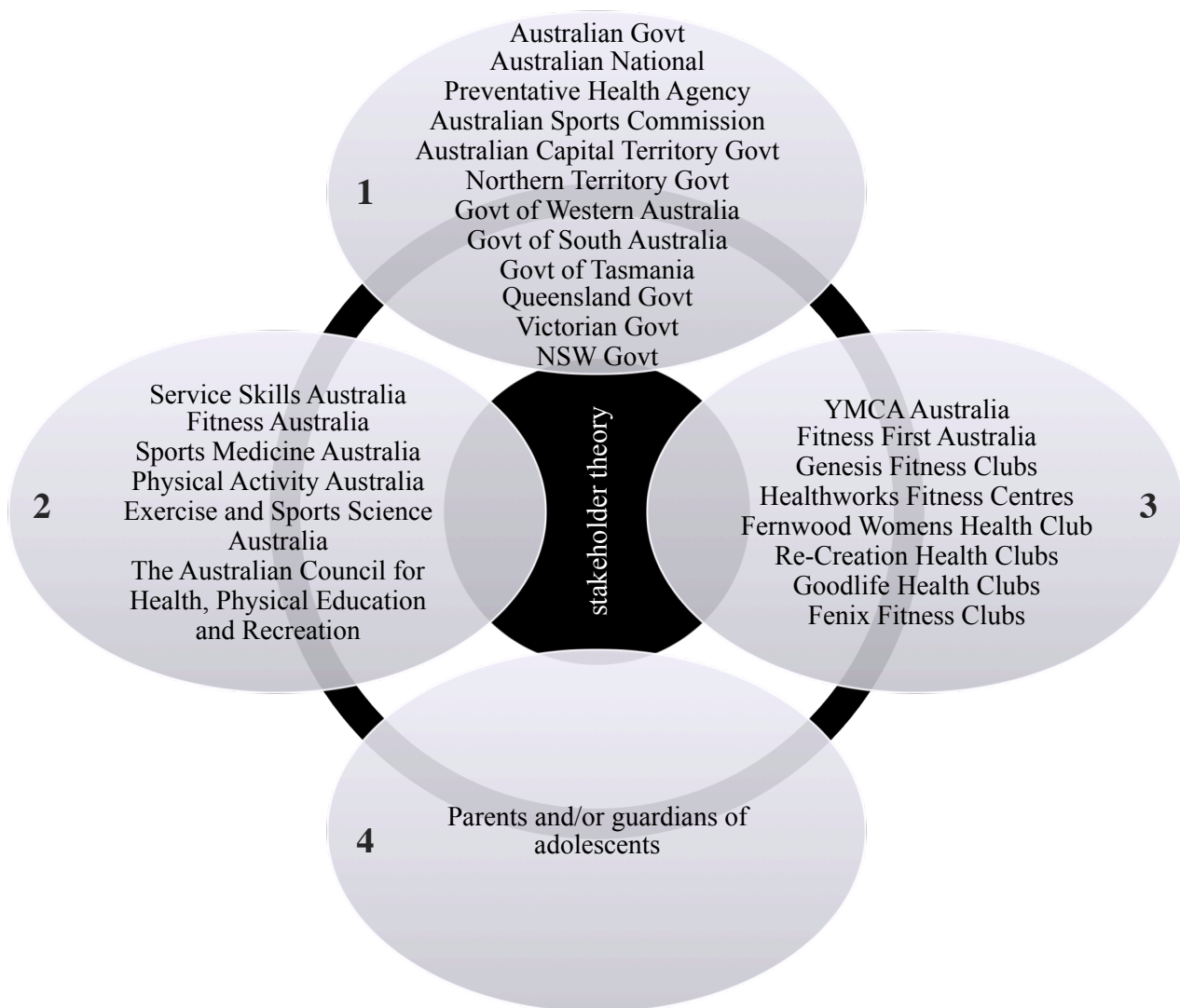


Figure 3.1. Stakeholder map according to relevant interests. The first stakeholder category comprises federal, state and self-governing mainland territory governments, the second category comprises an Industry Skills Council and industry associations, the third category comprises gymnasium businesses, and the fourth category comprises parents and/or guardians of adolescent children.

In addition, Figure 3.1 represents ways in which stakeholders can exert influence over other stakeholders, and it provides space for not only gymnasium businesses and users, but also gymnasium instructors and personal trainers, for example.

Categorised as (1) government, (2) Industry Skills Council and industry association, (3) business, and (4) parents/guardians of adolescent children, stakeholders within each category were linked by what was perceived to be a common specific interest in physical activity participation. Governments and their agencies under the first category have an interest in the health and fitness of the population. The Industry Skills Council and industry associations in the second category have an interest in occupations with a connection to physical activity. Gymnasium businesses under the third category have an interest in their own growth and profitability. Parents and/or guardians in the fourth category have an interest in the health and fitness of their adolescent children.

Whilst connected by a common specific interest, stakeholders within the Industry Skills Council and industry association category for example, differ in terms of their level of resources at hand. Thus, not every stakeholder has the same potential to exert influence over other stakeholders, or to shape policy. In this respect, the different levels of government and their agencies have—because of their generally deep reservoir of funds and expertise—the power to not only set the policy agenda, but also to drive it through to completion.

As this study was framed by stakeholder theory, whilst not at the forefront of the analytical context, inevitably, it was also important in shaping the analysis of the results and subsequent discussion.

Regulation theory

The results of this study are situated in an analytical setting guided by regulation theory. The use of regulation theory to assist the analysis of the findings was considered to be crucial, as the fundamental issues underlying the questions in the interviews and questionnaire related to the level of regulation of the Australian Exercise and Fitness Industry (EFI)—which has been viewed as light¹⁷²—and anecdotal evidence of its internal practices. The evidence indicated that many gymnasium businesses seemed to discriminate against minors through exclusion and restriction. By focusing the analysis of data from the interviews and questionnaire, and of the document analysis, around

¹⁷² N. Sallmann, 'IBISWorld Industry Report X0025: Fitness in Australia', *IBISWorld*, 2012, pp. 1–27.

regulation theory, it was anticipated that the apparent barriers to participation by adolescents in GBEPs would be more clearly revealed.

Design aspects and data collection

This Australian national study about adolescent participation in GBEPs is mixed-method (triangulated) in design, and involves investigation via semi-structured telephone interviews (using set questions), a structured online questionnaire and document analysis. Accordingly, in this thesis, interview data is presented in text based format, whilst questionnaire data is compiled as descriptive statistics. The questionnaire was a subsidiary exercise to complement the interviews. These two data sources were supplemented by the document analysis incorporating independent industry reports and government regulations relevant to the EFI and the context of this study. Investigation of federal, state and self-governing mainland territory governments, an Industry Skills Council, industry associations, gymnasium businesses, and parents and/or guardians of adolescents was also considered to be important for identifying the influences on participation by adolescents in GBEPs, and determining the short and medium-term feasibility of their effective and continued participation. Adolescents themselves were not invited to participate in this study due to legal and social parent/guardian control, and the potential for unreliable data. Such legal control also means that if an adolescent wishes to engage in a potentially risky activity, typically the prior consent of their parent or guardian must be gained.

A key factor of this research was a critical examination of the structure, conduct and practices of the Australian EFI, and central to the methods were the subsequent aims: (1) to explain the influences on participation by adolescents in GBEPs in Australia, (2) to identify how gymnasiums could contribute more effectively as part of the solution to the problem of adolescent physical inactivity in Australia, and (3) to provide policy options for the EFI primarily to increase adolescent participation in GBEPs in Australia, with a focus on gymnasium business and instructor accreditation and industry regulation. Both the telephone interview and online questionnaire schedules were designed, first and foremost, to achieve these aims, and to effectively address the research questions which were: (1) What are the policies of federal, state and self-

governing mainland territory governments, industry associations, and gymnasium businesses regarding adolescent participation in GBEPs in Australia? (2) To what extent have any previous and/or existing policies enhanced or inhibited adolescent participation in GBEPs in Australia? (3) What are the policies under development which might be implemented and directly or indirectly affect adolescent participation in GBEPs in Australia?

Interviews

To ensure an appropriate and comprehensive investigation, pilot testing of the telephone interview schedule was conducted prior to the commencement of data collection. Each interview began with a preamble in which informants were provided with information about the interview and their involvement. A digital recorder was used for audio recording of the interviews. Prior to participation, informants were made aware that the recordings would subsequently be transcribed by a professional transcription service provider.

Interview schedule

Eleven set questions were the focus of the interview schedule (see appendix B for more details). These primary and supplementary questions posed to interview informants were about: (1) where physical activity was placed within their lifestyles, (2) whether they and their department / agency / organisation believed that there was a problem regarding physical inactivity and adolescents, and what they believed was causing this problem, (3) the types of policies, campaigns and programs which they believed might alleviate the adolescent physical inactivity problem, including the role gymnasiums could play, (4) their department / agency / organisation's position or policy stance on adolescent participation in GBEPs, (5) whether they were aware of any policies and/or practices that might have enhanced or inhibited participation by adolescents in GBEPs, as well as any policies being developed with potential to affect participation, (6) the key categories of stakeholders they would select for collaboration if their department / agency / organisation were to initiate policies regarding participation by adolescents in GBEPs, (7) whether they felt there should be a minimum age requirement for the participation of adolescent boys and girls in GBEPs, the reason for their position, and

the minimum age they would nominate, (8) whether they believed in the principles of mandatory gymnasium business accreditation, mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation and mandatory EFI regulation, and what they considered to be—in a national context—the positive and/or negative features of each, and (9) the departments, agencies and/or organisations they felt were best placed to play a major accreditation and regulatory role if policy and/or legislation were introduced to regulate the Australian EFI.

Interview schedule preamble

Each interview commenced with a preamble (see appendix B, interview schedule template, for further details) in which informants were reminded that the interview was about the issue of adolescent physical inactivity, and the term ‘adolescents’ referred to minors who were between the ages of 12 and 17 years. Informants were notified that they would be made aware when the recording was to commence and also once it had ceased. They were asked to confirm their identity (e.g., title, first name, surname, position title and the government / agency / organisation represented), and were notified of the coded number assigned to them. Informants were advised that during recording, only their coded number would be used to identify them, and that their privacy would always be maintained. They were made aware that their participation in the interview would take no more than 45 minutes, and were also asked if they understood and agreed to the condition that their undivided attention was required for the duration of the interview. In addition to a requirement that informants complete and submit a consent form prior to their interviews, at the commencement of recording its receipt was acknowledged and informants were asked to confirm that they consented to participate in the interview. (See appendices B and C for the interview schedule template and interview transcripts, which provide further details).

However, whilst informants provided a completed consent form and also gave verbal consent to participate, it was necessary to make allowances for informants 015 and 016 who were unable to provide a personally completed consent form prior to their interviews. Informant 015 requested with minimal notice, to participate in an interview together with informant 014 (both of whom were from the same department / agency /

organisation). The study investigators agreed to this proposal on the condition that informant 015 would complete and return a consent form as soon as possible. In the case of informant 016, as a consent form had not been received prior to interview, at the commencement of recording the study investigator completed the form on his/her behalf, clearly explaining what had been written and ensuring the non-disclosure of personally identifiable information. An additional completed consent form was subsequently received from this informant.

Recruitment of interview informants

For a period of approximately six months, interview informants were sourced via mail, telephone, electronic and facsimile communication. Potential informants were notified about this study and their involvement via an information pack which contained a cover letter (see appendix D for more details), an '*Information to Participants Involved in Research*' letter (see appendix E for further details), and a '*Consent Form for Participants Involved in Research*' (see appendix F for more details), and a reply-paid envelope for return of the completed consent form. Telephone and electronic communication were used to follow up recipients within seven business days of the probable receipt of the information pack to organise an interview date. Communication with the initial selection of potential informants generated leads to other potential informants, who were also contacted. These informants were instructed that their completed consent forms must be received by the study investigators (either via the reply-paid envelope provided, or electronically) prior to interview. As discussed however, whilst interview informants provided a completed consent form and also gave verbal consent to participate at the commencement of recording, allowances were made for informants 015 and 016 who were unable to provide a personally completed consent form prior to their interviews.

Selection of interview informants

In the context of this study and relevant stakeholder interests, those first invited to participate in an interview were 25 potential informants from across Australia. They comprised ministers and senior executives from federal, state and self-governing mainland territory governments (see Table 3.1 for further details), an Industry Skills

Council and industry associations (see Table 3.2 for further details), and gymnasium businesses (see Table 3.3 for more details).

Specifically, eight gymnasium businesses (see Table 3.3 for more details) were selected due to (1) their classification as being within the major or moderate ‘integrated exercise services’ subcategories (comprised of businesses operating a minimum of 10 large-scale integrated exercise facilities), providing coverage across all Australian states and self-governing mainland territories, (2) their range of exercise programs (particularly GBEPs), and (3) the provision of a degree of exercise supervision, and the availability of public access, for the full duration of operating hours at all their operational exercise facilities in Australia (correct as at September 2011, the commencement of data collection organisation).

The gymnasium businesses selected for this study included more than 250 commercial chain exercise facilities in operation, and over 500 operational YMCA Australia facilities (which incorporated the management of gymnasiums at many of these sites, the majority being local government owned) across all Australian states and self-governing mainland territories (correct as at September 2011, the commencement of data collection organisation).

Table 3.1. Information relating to the ministers and senior executives from federal, state and self-governing mainland territory governments who were invited to participate in an interview. Limited detail is provided to maintain privacy.

Government / agency	Position title
Australian Government	Minister for Sport
Australian National Preventative Health Agency	Chief Executive Officer
Australian Sports Commission	Chief Executive Officer
NSW Government	Minister for Sports and Recreation
Victorian Government	Minister for Sport and Recreation
Queensland Government	Minister for Sport
Government of South Australia	Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing
Government of Western Australia	Minister for Sport and Recreation; Racing and Gaming
Government of Tasmania	Minister for Sport and Recreation
Northern Territory Government	Minister for Sport and Recreation
Australian Capital Territory Government	Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation

Table 3.2. Information relating to the senior executives from an Industry Skills Council and industry associations who were invited to participate in an interview. Limited detail is provided to maintain privacy.

Organisation	Position title
Service Skills Australia	Chief Executive Officer
Physical Activity Australia	Chief Executive Officer
Fitness Australia	Chief Executive Officer
Exercise and Sports Science Australia	Executive Officer
Sports Medicine Australia	Chief Executive Officer
The Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation	National Executive Director

Table 3.3. Information relating to the senior executives from gymnasium businesses who were invited to participate in an interview. Limited detail is provided to maintain privacy.

Organisation	Position title
Fernwood Womens Health Club	Chief Executive Officer
YMCA Australia	Chief Executive Officer
Fitness First Australia	Chief Executive Officer
Genesis Fitness Clubs	Chief Executive Officer
Goodlife Health Clubs	Chief Executive Officer
Fenix Fitness Clubs	Chief Executive Officer
Re-Creation Health Clubs	Chief Executive Officer
Healthworks Fitness Centres	Managing Director

Interviews conducted

Interview informants consisted of 16 stakeholders (a minister, senior executives, executives and senior managers) from federal, state and self-governing mainland territory governments, industry associations, and gymnasium businesses from across Australia (see Table 3.4 for more details). In all, there were 13 interviews conducted, three of which included participation by two informants. It should be noted that from Table 3.4 onwards, the Industry Skills Council and industry association stakeholder category will be referred to as ‘industry association’, as the Industry Skills Council selected was unrepresented.

Table 3.4. Information relating to the stakeholders from federal, state and self-governing mainland territory governments, industry associations and gymnasium businesses who participated in an interview. Limited detail is provided to maintain privacy.

Stakeholder category	Position category and level of responsibility	
Government	Minister	State/territory
Government	Senior executive	Federal
Government	Senior executive	State/territory
Government	Senior executive	State/territory
Government	Executive	State/territory
Government	Senior manager	State/territory
Industry association	Senior executive	National
Industry association	Senior executive	National
Industry association	Senior executive	National
Industry association	Senior executive	National
Industry association	Senior executive	National
Industry association	Executive	National
Industry association	Senior manager	National
Business (gymnasium)	Senior manager	National
Business (gymnasium)	Senior manager	National
Business (gymnasium)	Senior manager	State/territory

Questionnaire

Qualtrics online survey software was used to design and conduct the online questionnaire, and analyse the responses. To ensure an appropriate and comprehensive investigation, pilot testing of the questionnaire was conducted prior to the commencement of data collection. At the beginning of the questionnaire (prior to advancing to the questions), potential respondents were provided with information about the questionnaire and their involvement.

Questionnaire schedule

The questionnaire schedule included 21 multi-choice questions which were varied in design, and addressed: (1) the level of importance respondents placed on both their own health and fitness and that of their adolescent children, (2) the level of importance respondents placed on walking, running, cycling, swimming and gymnasium based exercise for their own health and fitness, and that of their adolescent children, (3) the average weekly amount of physical activity undertaken by respondents' adolescent

children, (4) whether respondents supported the principle of participation by adolescents in GBEPs, and if they would support their participation within a gymnasium environment which also caters for adults, (5) the level of importance respondents placed on appropriate gymnasium supervision for the health and fitness of their adolescent children, (6) whether respondents had approached a gymnasium about engaging their adolescent children in GBEPs, whether their adolescent children had been denied access by a gymnasium because they were deemed to be too young, and if such age restrictions had discouraged them from persisting to approach gymnasiums to engage their adolescent children in GBEPs, (7) the age at which respondents deemed it to be appropriate for their adolescent children to participate in GBEPs, (8) the level of importance respondents placed on action to ensure that gymnasium instructors would be adequately educated for the supervision of adolescents who participate in GBEPs, (9) whether respondents felt that it should be mandatory for gymnasium businesses and supervising instructors granting access to adolescents for participation in GBEPs, to have relevant accreditation with an industry association, and whether they believed that gymnasium businesses which allow adolescents to participate should be subject to mandatory EFI regulation to improve participant safety and well-being, (10) the level of importance respondents placed on a more personal gymnasium culture and appropriate social environment, equal gymnasium access, appropriate gymnasium supervision, and more stringent gymnasium business and instructor accreditation, when considering participation by their adolescent children in GBEPs, and (11) respondent demographics, consisting of the postcode and state or territory of each respondent's principal place of residence (both were queried for the purpose of cross-checking), their gender, the number of adolescent children they parented, and their total household income. (See appendix G, online questionnaire screenshots, for further details. With the exception of a few minor differences, the screenshots capture the visual experience afforded to the respondents).

Questionnaire schedule preamble

In accordance with the questionnaire advertisement template (see appendix H for more details), potential respondents were advised at the beginning of the online anonymous questionnaire that (1) those eligible to complete and submit the questionnaire were either

the parent or guardian of an adolescent whose principal place of residence was in Australia, (2) the term ‘adolescents’ referred to minors who were between the ages of 12 and 17 years, and (3) the questionnaire was about adolescent participation in GBEPs. As in the advertisement template, as well as the modified advertisement template (see appendix I for more details), it was mentioned that the questionnaire should take approximately 10 minutes to complete online, and that this study was being conducted at Victoria University. Potential respondents were informed that proceeding beyond the first page would confirm their eligibility.

Potential respondents were then introduced to the study and provided with a general explanation about it. They were informed that completion of the online questionnaire would be the extent of their involvement. The importance of their contribution and the intended use of the data acquired were also explained. In addition, potential respondents were informed that (1) they could withdraw from the study without consequence, by opting to not advance to the next question, whilst completing the questionnaire, (2) completion of the questionnaire implied their consent to participate, (3) only the data from completed questionnaires would be submitted to the study investigators for analysis, and (4) all individual results would remain strictly confidential and if any personally identifiable information was provided to the study investigators, the respondent in question would be assigned a coded number. Respondents were also advised that if they felt discomforted by any question in the questionnaire, they were entitled to consult a registered psychologist, who was independent of this study. Further information was provided about the support available to respondents, including the appropriate contact details. In addition, instructions were provided for completing the questionnaire. (See appendix G, online questionnaire screenshots, for more details).

Recruitment of questionnaire respondents

As stated, those eligible to complete and submit the online questionnaire were either the parent or guardian of an adolescent whose principal place of residence was in Australia. Interview informants were asked to consider informing their department / agency / organisation’s networks about the questionnaire. Each informant agreed to at least consider this request. Informants were therefore provided with an offline version of the

questionnaire, and the relevant URL link to view the online format (see appendix G, online questionnaire screenshots, for more details). Informants were also provided with advertisement templates (as referred to above), for promotion of the questionnaire. Most were given a brief text-only template (see appendix H for further details), and for those who stipulated strict word count guidelines, a shortened version of this template (see appendix I for more details), was provided. Both advertisement templates included a URL link to the online questionnaire. In sourcing questionnaire respondents, informants elected to notify their department / agency / organisation's networks via electronic newsletters, social media, and websites.

Facilitating the promotion of the questionnaire in this way was primarily to encourage as many interview informants as possible to notify their department / agency / organisation's networks about it. For this type of study, this approach was deemed to be the most appropriate way to reach as many eligible parents and/or guardians as possible to participate in the questionnaire. Through informant connections, it also resulted in other organisations, with primary operations involving (1) an advocacy network of parents for children in Australia, and (2) childcare services, promoting the questionnaire in Australia. This recruitment process guaranteed the privacy of these networks and the anonymity of the questionnaire respondents.

Eligible questionnaire respondents

Whilst achieving a national recruitment target minimum of 750 eligible questionnaire respondents to a maximum of 1000 would have been ideal, there were only 44 eligible respondents from across Australia (see Table 3.5 for more details) who completed and submitted the online questionnaire, and the data provided by each of these respondents was included. All responses from these parents and/or guardians were deliberately unidentifiable as the questionnaire was anonymous.

Table 3.5. Demographics of eligible respondents who completed and submitted the questionnaire. Limited detail is provided due to questionnaire anonymity.

State/territory residential location	Eligible respondents	Response rate (%)
Australian Capital Territory	1	2
New South Wales	18	41
Northern Territory	0	0
Queensland	11	25
South Australia	2	5
Tasmania	0	0
Victoria	9	20
Western Australia	3	7
	44	100

Under-representation of questionnaire respondents

As mentioned, each interview informant agreed to at least consider informing their department / agency / organisation's networks about the online questionnaire. Whilst the recruitment process guaranteed the privacy of these networks and the anonymity of the questionnaire respondents, a limitation was that it was up to the informants to act, on receipt of the subsequent electronic communication in which advertisement templates were provided for promotion of the questionnaire. Consequently, of those targeted as part of the questionnaire recruitment process, the number of parents and/or guardians eligible to complete and submit the questionnaire was unknown, and this made it difficult to determine why the response rate was low. It is possible that the number of those eligible was also low. Alternatively, the number of eligible parents and/or guardians may have been high, but the level of interest, and the number willing to participate in this type of study, may have been low.

Two organisations notified the study investigators regarding the number of people who were targeted. This revealed that collectively, the questionnaire was promoted to no less than 27,770 people. Whilst the recruitment process appears to have led to a relatively large number of people being targeted, the resultant small sample size of 44 eligible questionnaire respondents from across Australia was clearly a limitation of this study. Based on the limited and relevant available evidence, the assumption is made that in this

instance, the questionnaire recruitment process was inadequate for achieving a national recruitment target minimum of 750 eligible respondents to a maximum of 1000.

For reasons of privacy, the study investigators did not seek specific information about the networks of the departments / agencies / organisations involved, but this did contribute to the difficulty of anticipating the eligible response rate. Control of the distribution spread of the questionnaire was limited by the reliance on the networks contacted to collectively span the nation. To secure a cross-section of the population distribution, a spread relative to the estimated population size of each state and self-governing mainland territory at the time, would have been ideal for this study. Realistically however, of the networks informed about the questionnaire, this was an unlikely outcome.

Design of questions in the interviews and questionnaire

It has been stated that both the interview and questionnaire schedules were designed, first and foremost, to effectively address the research questions and to achieve the aims of this study. In regard to the interview schedule, as mentioned, the focus was on set questions. With the exception of those concerned with demographics, the multi-choice questions in the questionnaire were subsidiaries of the interview questions.

The opening interview question—‘Where is physical activity placed within your lifestyle?’—sought to determine informants’ prioritisation of physical activity. Similarly, the initial questions posed to respondents of the questionnaire were first, ‘How important to you is health and fitness? ...’, and second, ‘How important to you is the health and fitness of your adolescent child? ...’. The two questions that followed were designed to establish where respondents placed gymnasiums amongst other physical activity options. Accordingly, the third and fourth questions respectively, were: (1) ‘Rank the following activities in order of their importance for your health and fitness ...’, and (2) ‘Rank the following activities in order of their importance regarding your views about your adolescent child’s health and fitness ...’. The purpose of the fifth was to ascertain the physical activity levels of respondents’ adolescent children, as follows: ‘Select the option below that best indicates your adolescent child’s average weekly

amount of physical activity ...'. (See appendix G, online questionnaire screenshots, for further details). This preceded more direct questioning surrounding both the core research questions underpinning this thesis and the aims of the study.

Of the questions posed to interview informants, the third was designed to contribute to addressing the first research question about the policies of federal, state and self-governing mainland territory governments, industry associations, and gymnasium businesses regarding adolescent participation in GBEPs in Australia. Accordingly, this interview question was: 'For gymnasium based exercise programs (such as cardiovascular and resistance exercise), what is your department / agency / organisation's position or policy stance on participation by adolescents?' This was also the case for the design of the 10th question in the questionnaire, which was: 'Has your adolescent child ever been denied access by a gymnasium, to participate in gymnasium based exercise programs because he/she was deemed to be too young? ...' (See appendix G for more details).

The next interview question was designed to contribute to addressing the second research question regarding the extent to which policies have impacted on adolescent participation in GBEPs in Australia. Accordingly, the fourth interview question was: 'Are you aware of any previous and existing policies and/or practices that might have enhanced or inhibited participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs?' With regard to the questionnaire, this was also the case for the design of both the 10th (included above) and 11th questions. Question 11 was: 'Have age restrictions for gymnasium access discouraged you from persisting to approach gymnasiums to engage your adolescent child in gymnasium based exercise programs? ...' (See appendix G for more details).

The interview question that followed was designed to address the third and final research question regarding policies under development which might be implemented, and potentially affect adolescent participation in GBEPs in Australia. Accordingly, the fifth interview question was: 'Are you aware of any policies that are currently being developed which may directly or indirectly affect (i.e., encourage or discourage) adolescent participation in gymnasium based exercise programs?' Additionally,

interview questions three to five were designed to contribute to achieving the first aim regarding the influences on participation by adolescents in GBEPs in Australia. This was also the case for the design of the sixth, seventh, 10th and 11th questions in the questionnaire. Further to questions 10 and 11 included above, the sixth and seventh respectively, were: (1) ‘In principle, do you support participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs (such as cardiovascular and resistance exercise)? ...’, and (2) ‘Would you support participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs within an environment that caters for adults as well as adolescents? ...’ (See appendix G for further details).

The sixth and seventh interview questions were designed to contribute to achieving the second aim regarding the way gymnasiums could contribute more effectively as part of the solution to the problem of adolescent physical inactivity in Australia. The sixth was: ‘If your department / agency / organisation was to initiate policies regarding participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs in Australia, which key categories of stakeholders would you select for collaboration?’ The seventh, comprised of primary and supplementary segments, was: ‘Specifically, do you feel that there should be a minimum age requirement for the participation of adolescent boys and girls in gymnasium based exercise programs? If so, (a) what is your reason for this, and (b) what minimum participation age would you nominate for adolescent boys and girls?’

In addition, the second interview question—comprised of primary and supplementary segments—was designed to contribute to achieving the second aim. Relating either directly or indirectly, the question segments were as follows: ‘Do you and your department / agency / organisation believe that a problem exists regarding physical inactivity and adolescents? If so, (a) what do you think is causing this problem, (b) what types of policies, campaigns and programs do you think might alleviate this problem, and (c) what role do you think gymnasiums can play in alleviating this problem?’

Relating either directly or indirectly, the seventh to 12th, and 16th questions in the questionnaire were also designed to contribute to achieving the second aim. Further to the relevant questions included above, the eighth, ninth, 12th and 16th questions

respectively, were: (1) ‘How important to you is appropriate gymnasium supervision for the health and fitness of your adolescent child? ...’, (2) ‘Have you approached a gymnasium about engaging your adolescent child in gymnasium based exercise programs? ...’ (3) ‘From what age do you deem it to be appropriate for your adolescent child to participate in gymnasium based exercise programs? ...’, and (4) ‘For each of the six features listed below, rate its level of importance to you, for the participation of your adolescent child in gymnasium based exercise programs. ...’ (See appendix G for further details).

The eighth, ninth and 10th interview questions—each comprised of primary and supplementary segments—were designed to contribute to achieving the third aim. This final aim concerned policy options for the EFI primarily to increase adolescent participation in GBEPs in Australia, with a focus on gymnasium business and instructor accreditation and industry regulation. Accordingly, the eighth interview question was as follows: ‘While we are on the topic of regulation, do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium accreditation? (a) What would be the positive and/or negative features of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?’ The ninth was: ‘Do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation? (a) What would be the positive and/or negative features of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation?’ The 10th was: ‘Do you believe in the principle of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation? (a) What would be the positive and/or negative features of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation?’

With regard to the questionnaire, the sixth to eighth, and 12th to 16th questions were also designed to contribute to achieving the third aim. Further to the relevant questions included above, the 13th to 15th respectively, were as follows: (1) ‘What level of importance do you place on action to ensure that gymnasium instructors are adequately educated to supervise adolescents who participate in gymnasium based exercise programs? ...’, (2) ‘Do you feel that it should be mandatory for gymnasiums and supervising instructors who grant adolescents access to participate in gymnasium based exercise programs, to have relevant accreditation with an industry association? ...’, and (3) ‘Do you believe that gymnasiums which allow adolescents to participate in gymnasium based exercise programs, should be subject to mandatory industry

regulation to improve participant safety and well-being? ...’ (See appendix G for more details).

Beyond more direct questioning surrounding both the research questions and aims of this study, the 11th interview question was: ‘If policy and/or legislation was introduced to regulate the Australian Fitness Industry, which agencies and/or organisations do you feel are best placed to play a major accreditation and regulatory role?’ In the event of it being determined that there is a need for such change in the prevailing regulatory context of the EFI, this closing question was designed to provide informant perspective for the identification of stakeholders with the greatest potential to be key contributors. With regard to the questionnaire, the final questions, 17 to 21, were as follows: (1) ‘What is the postcode of your principal place of residence? ...’, (2) ‘In which state or territory is the location of your principal place of residence? ...’, (3) ‘What is your gender? ...’, (4) ‘How many adolescent children do you parent? ...’, and (5) ‘What is your total household income (before tax)? ...’ (See appendix G for further details). This was the case as the questionnaire schedule was partly designed to produce information for investigating the possibility of a socio-economic affect on (1) the level of importance respondents placed on both their own health and fitness and that of their adolescent children, (2) the average weekly amount of physical activity undertaken by respondents’ adolescent children, and consequently (3) the attitudes and opinions of respondents about adolescent participation in GBEPs in Australia.

Examination and analysis of data

A focus of the analysis of data from the interviews and questionnaire, and of the document analysis, was determining the most appropriate way to dismantle the barriers to participation by adolescents in GBEPs, and to subsequently increase their participation. Stakeholder theory and regulation theory were used to analyse and interrogate the data. The use of stakeholder theory was to most effectively identify and explain the similarities—in particular—between the responses to the questions in the interviews and questionnaire, across the stakeholder categories involved. The use of regulation theory was to most effectively show the preference of stakeholders for either self-regulation, external regulation or a combination of both, with regard to the EFI.

Digital audio recording, followed by transcription of each interview, enabled thorough examination and analysis of responses to interview questions using thematic coding analysis. Questionnaire responses received via Qualtrics online survey software, were examined using descriptive statistics.

Data from the interviews was initially sorted and coded according to the 11 set questions posed to informants. The main findings, as determined through the thematic coding analysis, are presented under 11 distinct themes in chapter four. The themes are: (1) the prioritisation of physical activity, (2) the adolescent physical inactivity problem, (3) positions and policies on adolescent participation in GBEPs, (4) informant awareness of policies or practices concerning adolescent participation in GBEPs, (5) informant awareness of policies under development that could affect adolescent participation in GBEPs, (6) key categories of stakeholders, (7) minimum age requirement for the participation of adolescents in GBEPs, (8) mandatory gymnasium business accreditation, (9) mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation, (10) mandatory EFI regulation, and (11) the departments, agencies and organisations which informants nominated to play a major accreditation and regulatory role. These themes are, in the main, consistent with both the research questions and aims of this study.

As referred to above, data acquired from the 21 multi-choice questions posed to respondents of the questionnaire was compiled as descriptive statistics. The main findings of which, are presented under 10 distinct categories in chapter four. The categories are: (1) the level of importance of health and fitness, (2) the level of importance of activity types for health and fitness, (3) average volume of physical activity participation, (4) the level of support for participation by adolescents in GBEPs, (5) the level of importance of appropriate gymnasium supervision for health and fitness, (6) parental contact with gymnasiums and discriminatory access, concerning adolescents, (7) appropriate age for adolescents to participate in GBEPs, (8) the level of importance of adequate education for gymnasium instructors, (9) mandatory gymnasium business and instructor accreditation, and EFI regulation, and (10) the level of importance of culture, environment, access, supervision and accreditation in adolescent participation in GBEPs. These categories are, for the most part, consistent with both the research questions and aims of this study.

This analysis made it possible to identify how the partially regulated EFI, gymnasiums in particular, could become worthy contributors to a comprehensive solution for the adolescent physical inactivity problem in Australia.

Identification and mitigation of risk

Participants in this study were considered to be ‘at risk’ according to the VUHREC (which granted ethics approval to conduct this research), although the level of risk was, and remains, minimal. Considering the factors to be stated below, the potential value of participant contributions to the outcomes of this research, outweigh the risks.

The identifiable risks associated with this study were that (1) some interview informants could potentially have experienced anxiety when questioned about topical matters, (2) some questionnaire respondents could potentially have felt uncomfortable responding to topical and/or demographic questions, and (3) some informants could potentially have been reluctant, out of fear or concern about reprisals, to disclose information that might have been critical of the represented department / agency / organisation or could have revealed policy shortcomings. Prior to study commencement, protocols were designed to respond to an occurrence of these risks.

Assurance was given (in the ‘*Information to Participants Involved in Research*’ letter sent to interview informants, and to respondents at the beginning of the questionnaire) that if a participant withdrew, due to experiencing anxiety or discomfort for example, their information would not be a part of this study. They were also informed that all individual results would remain strictly confidential, and no personally identifiable information would be used in any publications. If required, participants were entitled to consult a registered psychologist, who was independent of this study. (Authorisation of the psychologist’s involvement was obtained prior to study commencement). Contact details for the psychologist were provided in the interview information pack, and at the beginning and end of the questionnaire.

Interviews

If an informant experienced anxiety during the interview process, and if it was considered inappropriate by the informant and/or study investigator to continue, the study investigator would have immediately stopped the interview. In this situation, informants would have been reminded that they could withdraw from the study at any time (via submission of a written request to withdraw) without consequence, should he/she have felt it necessary to do so.

All interviews were conducted via telephone. This enabled informants to choose a suitable phone line, location (thus, presumably a non-threatening environment), date and time for the interview to take place. Informants were interviewed in a one-on-one situation (or on request, a one-on-two situation) with only one study investigator and the interview informant(s) involved in, and listening to, the conversation. Informants were assured that the information disclosed would be de-identified to ensure confidentiality. Participant details accompanying the reported data are limited to coded numbers and generally representative categories (e.g., Informant 002, a government representative). This will also be the case when reporting the data elsewhere. Further, personally identifiable information, such as in the completed '*Consent Form for Participants Involved in Research*', will never accompany any recorded data. The consent forms are stored separately in a locked filing cabinet. Only the study investigators have access to the raw data, though, by necessity, exception was granted to the professional transcription service provider who required access to the interview audio recordings. Informants were notified of this via the '*Information to Participants Involved in Research*' letter (see appendix E, information pack letter, for further details). The risk to privacy is managed by the assurance of confidentiality, which, as mentioned, was given to informants at the beginning of each interview, and also in the '*Information to Participants Involved in Research*' letter.

Questionnaire

If a respondent felt uncomfortable during completion of the questionnaire, it was their right to cease participation, and therefore withdraw from the study. Had notification of any such event been received, the study investigators were prepared to communicate

promptly via telephone and in writing with the respondent. At the beginning of the questionnaire, respondents were informed that they could withdraw without consequence whilst completing the questionnaire, and that only the data from completed questionnaires would be submitted to the study investigators for analysis. A consent form for respondents was not deemed necessary by the VUHREC, as completion of the questionnaire implied consent.

As discussed, the process for recruiting questionnaire respondents guaranteed the privacy of the networks notified about this study, and the anonymity of the respondents. As for the interview informants, the risk to privacy is managed by the assurance of confidentiality, which was given to respondents at the beginning of the questionnaire (see appendix G for more details). Also provided in this part of the questionnaire was information about the support available to respondents if required. Only respondents were able to initiate contact with the Ethics and Biosafety Coordinator from the VUHREC, the registered psychologist, and/or the study investigators. Following the final question, respondents were again informed about the support available to them, including the appropriate contact details.

Chapter summary

The chapter explained both the methodology and methods of this research. The framework of this research and the research design were identified. The triangulated mixed-method research design information included a justification for adopting an interpretivist approach to this research. There was a focus on the use of interviews, to secure detailed commentary about participation by adolescents in GBEPs in Australia, with (1) a minister, senior executives, an executive and a senior manager from federal, state and self-governing mainland territory governments, (2) senior executives, an executive and a senior manager from industry associations, and (3) senior managers of gymnasium businesses. Also discussed was the questionnaire, which, in the main, investigated the attitudes and opinions of parents and/or guardians of adolescents, about adolescent participation in GBEPs in Australia. These data sources were supplemented by the document analysis, which was mentioned accordingly. The design of both the interview and questionnaire schedules was discussed, along with a succinct analysis of

the methods used to select and secure interview informants, and to recruit questionnaire respondents. Included in this analysis was a discussion of the under-representation of respondents. The methods of analysis were identified, and the risk and risk mitigation and management associated with the data collection procedures were explained.

The findings of the interviews and questionnaire are documented in the next part of the thesis, which is chapter four.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Chapter overview

This chapter documents the findings of (1) the semi-structured telephone interviews, and (2) the structured online questionnaire. For the interviews, the stakeholder categories involved were governments, industry associations and businesses. For the questionnaire, the stakeholder category involved was parents/guardians of adolescent children. Questionnaire respondent demographics are incorporated in the results. As a prelude to the findings, the interview information provided is about the relevant stakeholders, includes the type of primary and supplementary questions they were asked, and raises the themes of the main findings. Similarly, the questionnaire information provided refers to the relevant stakeholders, includes the type of questions posed to them, and is about the categorisation of the main findings.

These stakeholders were largely questioned about the significance of gymnasiums as spaces for adolescent exercise participation, and—in the light of both the prevailing regulatory context and operations of the Exercise and Fitness Industry (EFI) in Australia—the capacity of gymnasium businesses and their workers to appropriately cater for this cohort. In accordance with the triangulated mixed-method design of this study, responses to the interview questions are presented in text based format, whilst the questionnaire responses are compiled as descriptive statistics. The reader is referred to appendices B, C and G for the full interview schedule, interview transcripts and questionnaire schedule. (It should be noted that identifiable information in the interview transcripts has been redacted to maintain privacy, and this is indicated accordingly).

Interview findings

Interview informants consisted of 16 stakeholders (a minister, senior executives, executives and senior managers) from federal, state and self-governing mainland

territory governments, industry associations, and gymnasium businesses from across Australia (see Table 4.1 for more details).

Table 4.1. Information relating to the stakeholders from federal, state and self-governing mainland territory governments, industry associations and gymnasium businesses who participated in an interview. Limited detail is provided to maintain privacy.

Stakeholder category	Position category and level of responsibility	
Government	Minister	State/territory
Government	Senior executive	Federal
Government	Senior executive	State/territory
Government	Senior executive	State/territory
Government	Executive	State/territory
Government	Senior manager	State/territory
Industry association	Senior executive	National
Industry association	Senior executive	National
Industry association	Senior executive	National
Industry association	Senior executive	National
Industry association	Senior executive	National
Industry association	Executive	National
Industry association	Senior manager	National
Business (gymnasium)	Senior manager	National
Business (gymnasium)	Senior manager	National
Business (gymnasium)	Senior manager	State/territory

Data from the semi-structured telephone interviews was initially sorted and coded according to the 11 set questions posed to informants. As mentioned in chapter three, these primary and supplementary questions (see appendix B for more details) were about: (1) where physical activity was placed within their lifestyles, (2) whether they and their department / agency / organisation believed that there was a problem regarding physical inactivity and adolescents, and what they believed was causing this problem, (3) the types of policies, campaigns and programs which they believed might alleviate the adolescent physical inactivity problem, including the role gymnasiums could play, (4) their department / agency / organisation's position or policy stance on adolescent participation in gymnasium based exercise programs (GBEPs), (5) whether they were aware of any policies and/or practices that might have enhanced or inhibited

participation by adolescents in GBEPs, as well as any policies being developed with potential to affect participation, (6) the key categories of stakeholders they would select for collaboration if their department / agency / organisation were to initiate policies regarding participation by adolescents in GBEPs, (7) whether they felt there should be a minimum age requirement for the participation of adolescent boys and girls in GBEPs, the reason for their position, and the minimum age they would nominate, (8) whether they believed in the principles of mandatory gymnasium business accreditation, mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation and mandatory EFI regulation, and what they considered to be—in a national context—the positive and/or negative features of each, and (9) the departments, agencies and/or organisations they felt were best placed to play a major accreditation and regulatory role if policy and/or legislation were introduced to regulate the Australian EFI.

The main interview findings in this section, as determined through the thematic coding analysis, will be presented in the chapter summary under 11 distinct themes, which are: (1) the prioritisation of physical activity, (2) the adolescent physical inactivity problem, (3) positions and policies on adolescent participation in GBEPs, (4) informant awareness of policies or practices concerning adolescent participation in GBEPs, (5) informant awareness of policies under development that could affect adolescent participation in GBEPs, (6) key categories of stakeholders, (7) minimum age requirement for the participation of adolescents in GBEPs, (8) mandatory gymnasium business accreditation, (9) mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation, (10) mandatory EFI regulation, and (11) the departments, agencies and organisations which informants nominated to play a major accreditation and regulatory role.

The prioritisation of physical activity

All informants believed in the value of physical activity to both individuals and communities. However, not all informants were regularly physically active. While 11 informants (which accounted for 73% of the total), rated their level of physical activity participation as ‘high’, two informants rated their level of physical activity participation as ‘moderate’, and another two informants rated it as ‘low’. (It should be noted that, in

this thesis, the percentage ‘of the total’ only concerns those informants who responded directly to the associated interview question).

Informant 011, a government representative, stated that:

“Very high. I’ve been involved with sport since I was a kid. I have played competitive sport right through ... I am also involved in ... coaching roles ...”.

Informant 016, an industry association representative, stated that:

“In my own lifestyle it has been a very large part. Since I was a child I have been involved ... through sport, games, and recreational pastimes. ... I am still involved in masters games tournaments ... I still actually play cricket on Saturdays for my club”.

Informant 017, an industry association representative, stated that:

“It is a high priority. For myself and my kids and we try to do something daily ...”.

The adolescent physical inactivity problem

All informants, as well as their department / agency / organisation, believed that a problem exists regarding physical inactivity and adolescents. It was agreed that the low level of physical activity participation was a cause for concern. It was also agreed that a physically active adolescent ‘cohort’ brought with it many health benefits.

Informant 016, an industry association representative, stated that:

“I think the problem has always existed. We tend to see it as a challenge ... In my profession ... certainly, we have acknowledged ... just how important [it is] ... that there is more and more inactivity ... in our society. ... it needs to be addressed. ... we have taken some measures ... through our professional association and we expect those who work in the profession to also try and take some measures”.

Informant 003, a government representative, stated that:

“Yes, clearly there are lots of challenges for adolescents these days ... [we need to ensure] that we encourage their involvement in organised sporting and recreational

activities. There are lots of other alternatives for them ... that perhaps weren't available to prior generations".

Informant 018, a business representative, stated that:

"Yes, we do and it is something we have observed both anecdotally ... [in] clients ... and ... in the research in industry and ... the background of potential members for our fitness services ... that ... younger people especially [are] tending to be less active and obesity is ... more and more of a problem ... especially in that cohort [of 12 to 17 year olds] ...".

Causes of the adolescent physical inactivity problem

Informants indicated that the problem of adolescent physical inactivity was strongly linked to the present day accessibility of computers, mobile telephones, television, video gaming devices, the Internet and social media. They also understood that there had been a decline in adolescent participation in outdoor physical activity pastimes, and that regular bouts of vigorous play were no longer the norm for young people. In addition, they believed that the Internet had enabled social interaction to occur without the need to engage in group based physical activity programs.

The majority of informants stated that adolescent physical inactivity was a multifaceted problem in which sedentary screen time pastimes provided an attractive alternative to physical activity. This form of behaviour was viewed as more of a problem than an opportunity, and was addressed by nine informants, which accounted for 64% of the total.

Informant 016, an industry association representative, stated that:

"... it is a multifaceted problem. I think the issue of less activity links very directly to the increase in screen time that children and adolescents are faced with. Technology has had a marked impact on kids' desire to be involved in physical activity".

Informant 008, a government representative, stated that:

“... in the past children were more active because they didn’t have access to things like computers and things that make them sit for longer. That has meant that adolescents have become less active than they were in the past. There is no question of that”.

Informant 003, a government representative, stated that:

“... the options and alternatives [to physical activity] are now far greater than they have ever been. Clearly we live in a much more technological age which does consume a lot more of the time available to all segments of the community”.

The other significant cause of adolescent physical inactivity was seen to be the limited amount of time parents could devote to the sport, exercise and physical recreation needs of their children. In a number of instances informants cited the career demands of parents and the consequent squeeze on leisure time, as factors contributing to adolescent physical inactivity. These factors reduced parents’ availability to take their children to organised sport and physical activity programs.

Informant 010, a government representative, stated that:

“... the ability of parents, where today you have both parents typically working to get kids to training and things like that isn’t quite the same”.

A few informants also blamed poor parenting and a lack of discipline for the fall in physical activity levels amongst adolescents. They argued that deficits in parental and adolescent education were associated with increasing levels of sedentary behaviour amongst adolescents. Specifically there was a lack of appropriate parental guidance concerning the benefits that arise from healthy eating and being active. They also stated that there was an insufficient primary and secondary school curriculum focus on physical activity.

Informant 010, a government representative, firmly stated that:

“... it is parents who are uneducated as to what their kids need to be doing”.

Informant 011, a government representative, stated that:

“... school and the curriculum ... there is, in my mind, not enough ... importance in terms of physical activity within that space”.

One informant also suggested that the regular training and competition commitments of organised sport were a reason for some adolescents shunning this particular pastime. He/she also believed that these negative attitudes to organised sport had consequently increased the likelihood of young people engaging in sedentary alternatives.

Informant 007, a government representative, stated that:

“... many adolescents ... probably don’t ... want to go down the path of a formalised sporting system. They don’t want that commitment of training and playing the same time every week [and] on a weekend. ... sedentary behaviour like ... computer screens or ... phones. ... that type of social connection is easy ... they don’t ... have to turn to a sport or physical activity to get that social contact”.

Options for alleviating the adolescent physical inactivity problem

Informants identified primary and secondary schools as important settings in which to alleviate the problem of adolescent physical inactivity. It was considered that this could be done through curriculum changes, which would ensure a greater emphasis on sport and physical education, physical activity and healthy eating. This was addressed in detail by eight informants, which accounted for 57% of the total.

A mixture of federal, state and territory-wide initiatives were suggested, the common point being that parents, and young people in particular, need to be targeted across the nation. Some informants mentioned that not only should this strategy target adolescents at secondary school, but it should begin at a young age (at primary school), to attempt to instil in young people the importance of a life-long healthy lifestyle with physical activity as the centrepiece.

Informant 002, a government representative, stated that:

“... the most important ... despite any of the policies and programs, is ... the school setting. That quality physical education and sport are firmly embedded within curriculum time ... with both parents working or single parent families with financial and time constraints ... school ... offers the obvious place to expose and provide opportunity for adolescents to be active”.

Informant 017, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... the curriculum for schools need[s] to change ... it is crowded but it definitely needs ... greater importance ... on physical activity ...”.

Other key ideas included tax incentives or subsidies for parents to reduce their children’s sport and physical activity participation costs, to encourage parental support for their participation, and to make sport and physical activity opportunities more accessible to as many young people as possible.

Informant 017, an industry association representative, stated that there should be:

“... tax incentives for parents or some kind of benefit ... to encourage their kids ... to participate in physical activity”.

It was also observed that there needs to be a variety of physical activity opportunities promoted to, and made available for young people. This includes opportunities at gymnasiums, not just those linked to organised sport, for example.

Informant 007, a government representative, stated that:

“... obviously ... still some young people ... want to take part in organised sports ... but ... working with service deliverers, local government ... getting them to think about the type of activities they are offering ... about offering them at a variety of times and in a variety of formats, because it is ... about trying to allow the kids access when it suits them”.

Informant 018, a business representative, stated that:

“... group exercise [classes] ... provides that social connection that you sometimes don’t get in a gym just working out on your own. ... that is ... something that could be looked at, that element of social interaction ... in a fitness environment, being sold towards ... adolescents ... an option away from competitive sport that sometimes doesn’t appeal to all young people”.

This interview question led to additional interesting comments. Whilst several informants highlighted the need for change to the education curriculum, it was mentioned that work in this area was ongoing and improvements to the curriculum, in regard to physical education and physical activity, were being finalised.

Informant 016, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... we have tried to influence school programs so they are absolutely aware of the impact of inactivity. ... We have done it ... by arguing with our teachers ... and our parents [about the need for] physical education [to be] regularly programmed ... on a daily basis leading up to adolescence ... Many schools have adopted that policy and we ... still have daily physical activity in our primary school[s]. ... we stand by that as really critical for developing positive attitudes towards physical activity in preadolescence. In the secondary schools we have tried to get teachers to really help students understand the consequences of inactivity. ... all of the schools systems have now adopted the notion of health and physical education as a core and critical part of the school curriculum. That has been established and will be part of the new national curriculum that is being developed this year [2012]”.

Gymnasiums as part of the solution

It was clear that all informants believed gymnasiums should be part of the solution to alleviate the problem of adolescent physical inactivity. Gymnasiums were labelled as an equally important physical activity option, alongside organised sport and other physical activities. This was addressed by eight informants, which accounted for 57% of the total. Several informants further stated that the solution to alleviate the problem of

adolescent physical inactivity depended on a variety of these activity options, not simply one in isolation.

Informant 002, a government representative, stated that:

“... gymnasiums ... play a great role in that they can offer something that is not as organised or structured as perhaps sport and other things ... people can use them when they want and it doesn’t interfere with their life ...”.

Informant 018, a business representative, stated that:

“... the role gymnasiums could provide is ... that ... option where it is sort of [a] structured format where they ... are given guidance and specialist advice to achieve ... [their] goal ... I think that is ... lacking in a recreational sporting setting ... A local netball coach may [have] ... just played netball all their life and she can’t really address those other needs that often adolescents have in relation to fitness”.

Other suggestions included an educational role for gymnasiums, in which there needs to be suitably educated instructors who are capable of teaching adolescent participants about appropriate exercise programs and techniques, as well as the importance and wide-ranging benefits of leading a healthy lifestyle.

Informant 015, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... gymnasiums ... can be an example of hubs for conditioning ... exercise ... provision of access to community for equipment and programming, educative processes ... [about regular] physical activity ... [which can] improve their quality of life, and that leads to behavioural changes, shifting of societal norms and cultural changes in the way ... we view physical activity in the longer term. ... I ... see a gymnasium of the future ... incorporating or being a hub for other community engagement and outreach services ... as well”.

Informant 016, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... they [gymnasiums] can play a key role ... they are a recognised setting for providing appropriate physical activities and providing appropriate advice and I think that is critical. ... gymnasiums should have education at the forefront of their thinking. To

educate people more about the value of what they can do in a gymnasium. That a gymnasium is not just for Generation-Y, so they can look better. It is a place for kids, older people ...”.

It was also cited that gymnasiums could further appeal to young people by creating new exercise programs and an environment which reflected their present day interests, as a point of differentiation to organised sport. The cost associated with adolescent participation in GBEPs was also labelled as a barrier.

Informant 007, a government representative, stated that:

“... making sure that they provide the environment that is comfortable for the kids. ... similar to adults, some teenagers might have the view that gyms are about ... lifting heavy weights and having to look good before you even get in there. ... having a think about ... the types of classes they offer, rather than ... just offering circuits or ... kids having to ... do their own thing. Having a real think about the types of ... programs they are offering that might be a bit different and ... more attuned to what ... young people are interested in”.

Informant 002, a government representative, stated that:

“The main constraint will be cost and the capacity of gymnasiums to offer things that appeal to young people”.

This interview question led to a collection of additional interesting informant comments, including (1) the community health benefits associated with recreation centres and gymnasiums that are located on school grounds and offer both student and public access, (2) gymnasium age restrictions as an impediment to adolescent participation in physical activity, and (3) the need for widespread child and adolescent specific GBEPs.

Informant 016, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... I love the situations where ... a recreation centre and gymnasium ... is ... within the school complex so that school, gymnasium and the recreational centre can ... work in ... partnership. Facilities are shared so that students can have ... incentives to come into

gymnasiums after school. The teachers understand the value of using the gymnasium as well. Activities are not just being involved in team sports as we know”.

Informant 010, a government representative, stated that:

“... I have a 14 year old daughter, and I really wanted her to join the gym that I belong to. ... there is [sic] age limit issues there, and until they are 16 ... they won’t take them on, which is challenging as she is keen to go ... sometimes it would be useful if she could go without me ... because of work hours and things. That isn’t available at the moment and it is a sort of an impediment to her having that avenue of physical fitness”.

Informant 013, an industry association representative, stated that:

“I think there needs to be more kids’ gym programs available. ... there probably needs to be something at the majority of facilities where the children and/or adolescents can participate”.

Stakeholder positions on adolescent gymnasium based exercise program (GBEP) participation

Informants mostly commented that their department / agency / organisation did not have a formal position or policy stance specific to adolescent participation in GBEPs, yet there was general support among informants for this type of participation by adolescents. It was revealed that four departments / agencies / organisations, which accounted for 31% of the total, held a formal position or policy stance which supported adolescent participation in GBEPs, although three included limitations to their participation. These limitations related to the type of GBEPs available to adolescents, the level of supervision required and access times.

Informant 015, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... we ... require ... registered exercise professionals [to uphold the] relevant registrative [sic] requirements ... We are moving through a development phase in our standards platform ...”.

Informant 018, a business representative, stated that:

“... any adolescent between the age of 12 and ... 18 can enrol in our club [gymnasium] with parental consent. ... they can participate ... in group exercise classes because they are under direct supervision ... However, they can’t [engage in general cardiovascular and resistance] exercise ... without direct supervision from either their parent or ... [appropriately qualified] personal trainer ... we look at [adolescents] ... as a high risk population ... they are not fully developed physically or mentally ... they could injure themselves ...”.

Informant 019, a business representative, stated that:

“... most, if not all of our facilities have some sort of program for adolescents. ... we do promote a different type of activity ... for the age group 12 to 17 ... [which] is probably ... lighter weights, [and] more flexibility ... education and ... socialisation ...”.

Informant 020, a business representative, stated that:

“... We allow [gymnasium] access for ... the ages of 11 to 16 under the direct supervision of an adult ... but ... a limited range of activities. ... we ... create classes ... based [on] ... the machinery [machine weights, so] there are controls in place for our kids to ... participate ... With the parent [supervising], there is no [adolescent access time] restriction anymore. ... because ... that was too restrictive. We used to ... only allow them in certain times after school, under supervision of our staff. ... we still offer that [time limited alternative to parental] supervision ...”.

Several informants commented that they supported adolescent participation in GBEPs as much as other physical activity, such as organised sport, physical recreation and active transport.

Informant 007, a government representative, stated that:

“... we would support it [GBEPs] as one avenue for kids in terms of being physically active ... amongst a suite of activities that should range from ... organised sport ... to ... walking with your friends”.

Informant 011, a government representative, stated that:

“... our broad direction and policies ... about physical activity ... is ... something that is structured ... well managed and definitely endorsed. There is nothing specific in the space of gymnasiums”.

A few informants also identified the importance of the level of gymnasium instructor and personal trainer education for the provision of appropriate GBEPs and supervision of adolescent participants.

Informant 017, an industry association representative, stated that:

“We ... believe that ... [gymnasium instructors] have to be appropriately trained. We don’t see that the certificate IV [in fitness] graduates have enough. ... in a lot of cases we think that they [are not] ... really thinking about kids’ ages and making ... [physical activity] fun ... quality is about having appropriate training [and] ... supervision ...”.

Informant 016, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... both of those forms of physical activity are very, very important. ... Gymnasiums are good places to provide that. ... the key ... is that they are provided with the right sort of advice around them. ... weight resistance activity ... is really critical for kids [as is the need for] improving ... strength for particular sports participation”.

This interview question led to additional interesting informant comments, including (1) the potential long-term benefits for health, schools, communities and businesses from adolescent participation in GBEPs, and (2) the individual and community benefits of organised sport participation as opposed to unstructured or unaccompanied physical activity.

Informant 016, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... young people are the future participants in gymnasiums so to get them interested during ... the adolescent years ... is pretty important and ... by showing that ... [a gymnasium is] prepared to work with a school ... the physical education teachers and sports coaches then I think everyone benefits”.

Informant 008, a government representative, stated that:

“... coming from a sport background ... being part of sporting club they [young people] learn ... cooperation, team work, trust, respect and ... how to win and lose ... They learn too that ... the sporting club ... is run by ... people ... willing to give up time to make their community sporting club function. ... children ... might not get [grasp these values] if they were simply walking with a couple of mates or ... doing something in isolation ...”.

Policies and practices impacting on adolescent GBEP participation

Most informants were not aware of any policies or practices that might have enhanced or inhibited participation by adolescents in GBEPs. This was the case for 10 informants, which accounted for 67% of the total. From the five informants who were aware, each mentioned issues related to participation age as inhibiting adolescent participation in GBEPs. Specifically, four of these informants cited gymnasium age restrictions as a barrier to adolescent participation in GBEPs.

Informant 013, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... The only thing I am aware of is ... facilities that are geared towards kids or adolescents programs. ... As far as hindering adolescents ... a lot of them [gymnasiums] ... have minimum age requirements for when they [adolescents] can participate on their own or that they need to be supervised ... a parent ... needs to be there ... from what I have seen that can create a lot of problems. ... it is an extra responsibility for mums and dads. ... fitness facilities ... these days ... a lot of them don't have gym floor staff specifically they have ... contractors who are [only] there for personal training or ... group exercise ... classes ... There isn't a lot of supervision on the gym floor ...”.

Informant 017, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... Fitness Australia ... had a policy ... I don't know if it is still active ... it had recommendations that you had to be 16 which we were opposed to, particularly if a university trained instructor ... could ... design a program for no matter what age, as long as they [young participants] were supervised fully. ... that policy has limited what a lot of fitness centres are doing”.

Informant 019, a business representative, stated that:

“... definitely ... in the past in some facilities ... [there was] an all out [ban of] people under a certain age ... because of ... concerns around younger people using weights. ... it was a non child and adolescent zone for a period of time ... I would say ... it was an industry wide commonly known thing that for that age group ... those sorts of activities were not suitable”.

Informant 020, a business representative, stated that:

“The guidelines in the past have clearly directed gymnasiums not to allow access for young people under the age of 16 ... I think ... it was [from] the New South Wales department of sport and recreation or the New South Wales fitness guidelines”.

Informant 014, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... the ... industry has ... targeted ... adults and ... is only now starting to emerge [with] some groups ... specifically targeting children and adolescents with their facilities, services and programs. ... those will ... lower barriers [to adolescent participation in GBEPs] ... but ... the [present] barriers ... are that the majority of the industry is just focused on adults”.

Some informants mentioned that they broadly support adolescent participation in physical activity, yet their focus was on sport and recreation as opportunities to be active, rather than GBEPs. In some cases, informants reverted to discussion about sport and general physical activity when they were not aware of any relevant policies or practices that were specific to adolescent participation in GBEPs. This included a suggestion that investigations into sport participation costs and demographics could be similarly extend to adolescent participants of GBEPs.

Informant 007, a government representative, stated that:

“... the focus from this department’s point of view is probably more around sport and recreation activities ... one of the inhibitors that ... could exist is ... the cost of membership particularly for people in the lower socio-economic area ... the lower socio-economic areas [typically] have the lower participation rates ... because of the costs and

the membership requirements ... you are not going to find that those people will necessarily ... join a gym”.

Informant 011, a government representative, stated that:

“... [young peoples’ participation in] physical activity ... we are very broadly supportive of it but there hasn’t been anything policy specific about going to a gymnasium ...”.

Informant 016, an industry association representative, stated that:

“I am not aware of anything specifically but ... refer ... to the development of the Australian Sports Commission’s junior sports policy. ... One of the ... sections ... was about weight training [for sport] and when should it be introduced to kids”.

This interview question led to further interesting comments, in which it was mentioned that the general view held by the EFI was that participation by adolescents in GBEPs created an operational burden and risk, over and above participation by adults. However, this informant stated that his/her business welcomed adolescent participation in their GBEPs, and they had not encountered any associated problems, yet still appeared to consider their participation to be somewhat of a burden.

Informant 018, a business representative, stated that:

“... there is nothing specific but ... it is ... looked upon ... as a burden in some cases to ... supervise ... adolescents within a gymnasium. ... [there] is the belief ... in the gymnasium industry, that ... adolescents take up more resources. ... there is [also] a [common] perception that they [adolescents] are an occupational health and safety risk ... [in] the gymnasium environment. ... We [however] are happy to have adolescents enrolled and it is not something that we have found to be a problem ... [but] the main concern ... [still] relates to having qualified instructors and rates of pay and the amount of resources that have to be on that person [adolescent participant] we are monitoring ...”.

Policy development

Most informants were not aware of any policies under development that could affect adolescent participation in GBEPs. This was the case for 11 informants, which accounted for 79% of the total. There were three informants who provided relevant information, although the item of highest importance was a review of existing guidelines about participation by young people in GBEPs. Another informant stated that the policy development within his/her business had a family and community focus to encourage ongoing participation by parents and children. These developments had a similar focus, in that families were identified as important to improving the level of adolescent participation in GBEPs. The only mentioned external policy under development was of indirect relevance to adolescent participation in GBEPs.

Informant 015, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... the review of the ‘Kids in Gyms’ guidelines will be an important review ... for advancement in this area ... the content of those guidelines [will likely] refer to the physical, psychological, social and emotional development of the child and therefore the suitability of that [type of physical] activity ... We are aware ... that these new models ... refer to incorporating a variety of activities ... and an involvement of family ...”.

Informant 020, a business representative, stated that:

“Only with some internal policies that are focused on making gymnasiums not just health and fitness centres but community spaces where ... families ... can come together and pursue healthy activities ...”.

Informant 026, an industry association representative, stated that:

“The only item I am aware of ... is the development of a national policy for children and adolescents’ physical activity and sedentary behaviour, being conducted at a national level. ... [but] It’s not specific to gymnasiums”.

To improve the level of adolescent participation in GBEPs, the benefits of family involvement were again recognised as important.

Informant 008, a government representative, stated that:

“We have regular contract with Fitness Australia and it strikes me that they are not necessarily pitching at that demographic [adolescents]. They are pitching at an older demographic ... to people who are earning and would take up [a] gym membership. ... they [gymnasiums] should be ... pitching family membership. ... that would be to everyone’s advantage not only to gym owners but to the broader community [by] getting kids into the habit, with their parents, of undertaking physical activity ... more than likely ... those habits [will continue] for the rest of their lives”.

This interview question also led to additional interesting comments, in which it was mentioned that regardless of the physical activity setting, it is the quality of the activity, service delivery and advice that is important. Instructor knowledge and the quality advice offered to young people were demonstrated as important to the business of another informant. This business offered its students the option of undertaking a child instructor unit that is commonly reserved for those enrolled in a Certificate IV in Fitness.

Informant 016, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... health and PE policies ... are fairly general in terms of trying to recommend that activity is a good thing and it doesn’t matter the setting where you get that activity ... but it is the quality of that service or opportunity ... [and] advice that you get ... they are the really critical things. ... I know that the guidelines for physical activity for young people are going to be reviewed and redone. They have been developed by the health and ageing department some years ago and ... are outdated ... but I am not aware of any specific policies that relate to gymnasiums ...”.

Informant 018, a business representative, stated that:

“... there is nothing we are directly developing but ... we do ... provide a [separate] child instructor module ... [from] that course [Certificate IV in Fitness] ... we will continue [to offer this optional unit] ... with the new certificate III and IV [in fitness] course[s] that will be rolled out in March [2012] ...”.

Selection of stakeholders for collaboration

The majority of informants chose industry associations/peak bodies, governments and schools as the key categories of stakeholders that their department / agency / organisation would select for collaboration if it were to initiate policies regarding participation by adolescents in GBEPs in Australia. Fitness Australia (FA) was the most common selection. Industry associations and other peak bodies were specifically mentioned by eight informants, which accounted for 57% of the total.

Informant 020, a business representative, stated that:

“Definitely Fitness Australia and ... local government ... key bodies ... and also ... schools and partnering with them to making [sic] sure the kids are coming from school and going to the next step of activity [at gymnasiums]”.

Collectively, local, state, territory and commonwealth governments were also commonly mentioned, and spanned a variety of areas including education, sport and recreation departments and commissions for young people. The education system (primary and secondary schools in particular) was often mentioned as being important for influencing family lifestyles. Despite expressing frustration about an apparent resistance to partnerships between schools and gymnasium businesses, this informant still selected the education system as having the most potential to influence a family’s view about physical activity.

Informant 010, a government representative, stated that:

“... I think it would be good to get ... a cross section of the community like parents and children and even people involved in schooling and education department[s] ... to ... elicit the views of the principle beneficiaries ... the parents and the children that would benefit from having that sort of access and a policy that would support that”.

Informant 018, a business representative, stated that:

“... schools ... as counter intuitive as that sounds, because they have their own programs but ... they [have] such an ability to influence both parents and children’s approaches towards ... physical activity ... it is very difficult to engage with schools because

obviously they ... have the child's privacy protection to heart ... but the education system tends to not want to be involved ... They ... get involved with community based organisations and sporting affiliations rather than a commercial gymnasium ... if we and the [exercise and fitness] industry could engage with anyone to affect points of view towards exercising in a gymnasium ... [it] would be the education system in some way ... I think they ... have the most potential to ... influence what ... adolescents [do] ... because ... a lot of their feelings and habits come from the education system and their peers ...”.

Adolescents, parents, representative groups for adolescents and community groups/organisations, including the Police Citizens Youth Clubs, as well as the higher education sector, were also mentioned as stakeholders that should have input to potential policy development. Only two informants mentioned gymnasiums as a stakeholder, with a third who provided general reference to the EFI, and a fourth who cited gymnasium instructors and personal trainers as stakeholders.

Informant 013, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... the large chain fitness facilities, organisation[s] such as YMCA, Fitness First, and Genesis ... They seem to open up gateways for the smaller facilities to follow. ... If we are talking specifically about an in-house policy then that is where we would go. If we were looking at [external] policy or ... legislation ... that ... avenue [would be] into federal government”.

Minimum age requirement for the participation of adolescents in GBEPs

The majority of informants were unwilling to nominate a minimum age requirement for the participation of adolescent boys and girls in GBEPs, and felt that age alone was not the most important consideration. Alternatively, they mentioned the appropriateness of activities offered, the physical development and maturity of each child, the quality of gymnasium instruction, and that relevant evidence and advice from medical and exercise professionals should be considered.

Informant 002, a government representative, stated that:

“... I think it can be a bit dangerous just [to] go by age because it is really about their physical development and age doesn’t always go with [it] ...”.

Informant 011, a government representative, stated that:

“Age is sort of a bit of a funny way of categorising kids at this stage because it is really in terms of their development cycles ...”.

Informant 010, a government representative, stated that:

“There should be other criteria [in addition to a minimum participation age] that need to be ... assessed”.

Five informants felt there should be a minimum age requirement for the participation of adolescents in GBEPs at typical adult gymnasiums, although three of them were of the opinion that this should not apply to gymnasiums which cater for young people. Another two informants believed there should not be a specified age limit. One stated that GBEP guidelines for young people are necessary, but age limits are not. The other informant’s position was dependent on the appropriateness of activities offered, the physical development and maturity of each child, and the quality of gymnasium instruction.

Informant 014, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... in the ... typical adult setting ... I think it is important that there is a threshold that is applied for an age ... but if in ... these new gyms and facilities that are opening up and specifically catering for children ... there doesn’t need to be”.

Informant 007, a government representative, stated that:

“... If you are looking at it from a traditional kind of use of the gyms, then yes. ... if the gyms are coming up with ... appropriate activity programs for younger kids ... then I think that there is room to promote it to the younger age group. ... if it is programs regarding the use of weights I think it should be guided by the recommendations and ... evidence ...”.

Informant 020, a business representative, stated that:

“I don’t think there should be an age limit or a starting age but there has to be guidelines around the type of activities they do. ... and it will drive the weights [programs] to be designed [for young people] but they are not designed for that right now”.

Informant 026, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... there are probably a number of activities that could be done at any age provided they are done safely and within the realms of the level of development that each individual has, and provided that those who are delivering the training are aware of that ...”.

Informant 018, a business representative, stated that:

“... we think if you are going to deliver dedicated value added exercise for children below 12 [years of age] then you would need to have some dedicated facilities there ... Certainly, less than 10 [years of age] they need more movement based ... stuff rather than getting on machines and weights ...”.

Explanation of position on age requirement

The most common reason given by informants for their position on a minimum age requirement for the participation of adolescents in GBEPs, referred to the appropriateness of activities provided. This was addressed by 12 informants, which accounted for 80% of the total.

Informant 003, a government representative, stated that:

“... whether there should be age restrictions or not, will depend very much on what type of program and what type of activity the individuals are involved in”.

Informant 011, a government representative, stated that:

“... it is subject to what activities the kids would ultimately be doing ... if you are on ... the cardio equipment ... I suppose, the diminished risk for that is low. The weights training is where there is ... more potential risk in terms of injury”.

The varying rates of physical development and maturity amongst young people, was also given as an important reason for informants' position on a minimum age requirement. It was mentioned that what might be appropriate for one adolescent, may not be appropriate for another. Some informants also commented that participation by adolescents in GBEPs should be based on relevant evidence and advice from medical and exercise professionals, and that quality gymnasium instruction is important.

Informant 008, a government representative, stated that:

“You have just got to make sure that the people that are doing the supervising of kids in these sorts of activities are aware of limitations ... that young bodies can tolerate. ... I don't think there is any great value in young children lifting weights ... this would have to be based on expert advice from the medical profession and ... the qualified people who are doing the fitness instruction”.

Informant 010, a government representative, stated that:

“... acceptable practices ... should be in tandem with the medical profession to ... make sure that you are doing stuff for the benefit not to the detriment of kids”.

Minimum age for participation

The majority of informants were unwilling to nominate a minimum age for the participation of adolescent boys and girls in GBEPs. This was the case for nine informants, which accounted for 60% of the total. Informants commonly chose to maintain the position that age alone was not the most important consideration, alternatively the focus should be on the appropriateness of activities offered, and the physical development and maturity of each child. Informants commented that if a minimum age for the participation of adolescents in GBEPs was to be considered, they would base any decision on relevant evidence and advice from medical and exercise professionals.

Six informants suggested ages ranging between 12 to 16 years as possibly suitable for adolescent boys and girls to begin participating in GBEPs at typical adult gymnasiums, with three nominating the beginning of secondary school as appropriate. A few

informants mentioned that young people could begin participating in predominantly cardiovascular exercise at gymnasiums, at even younger ages.

Informant 016, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... kids right from the beginning of secondary school could benefit from what gymnasiums have to offer. ... there are plenty of primary school kids who could begin some resistance training while they are in those early years of puberty. Certainly, the cardiorespiratory stuff isn’t a problem and that can start much earlier. ... Kids differ so much in their stature, genetics, shape and size at the age of 12 that some kids are through puberty”.

Informant 018, a business representative, stated that:

“In an adult gymnasium, yes. ... around 12 certainly for females ... Below that they probably aren’t going to get a lot out of an adult gymnasium ... a little bit older for ... boys and again for those same ... physical development reasons and also ... for their maturity”.

Informant 019, a business representative, stated that:

“Yeah. I think there is definitely an age limit [required]. ... we usually recommend ... the age of 12. ... earlier than that we promote other sorts of activities, such as running, cycling [and other] movement activities [in the gymnasiums] ... so it may be just more non-weight based equipment using their own body weight ...”.

Informant 017, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... I would say probably yes and ... around 13 or 14 [for both boys and girls]. ... You could have anyone [in gymnasiums] from 13 up to ... maybe 80 ... to also maintain the balance and not ... discouraging the older people from coming in. ... starting high school age ... is an age where they can act responsibly in a public place”.

Informant 013, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... if there is a program specifically designed for that age group then I don’t see any reason why it doesn’t start at toddler age, if we are specifically talking about resistance

training or participating in some of the group exercise classes, I think there probably needs to be a minimum age requirement of 15 or 16”.

Informant 008, a government representative, stated that:

“There is no reason why kids, say from the age of seven or eight, couldn’t participate in some form of cardiovascular type exercise ... for kids it would be a lot more fun for them to be ... playing sport ... or being involved in the activities where they are active all the time. ... perhaps doing a Zumba class or aerobics or something like that”.

Mandatory gymnasium business accreditation

A majority of 13 informants (93% of the total), believed in the principle of mandatory gymnasium business accreditation. Some of these informants commented that it would be important for this type of accreditation to support and protect customers and/or stakeholders.

Informant 008, a government representative, stated that:

“... I think that all gymnasiums should have appropriate accreditation”.

Informant 011, a government representative, stated that:

“... generally in terms of accreditation if it is set up appropriately ... I think [it] is good ... as long as it is accreditation that ... protects the participants in the end ...”.

Informant 010, a government representative, stated that:

“If there are industry standards that apply I don’t think it sounds like a bad idea at all particularly if we are looking at protecting the interests of a whole range of different users and stakeholders”.

Informant 018, a business representative, stated that:

“Yes. ... it depends who it would be with though. ... the industry is self-regulated ... If you don’t want to participate with those organisations [Physical Activity Australia [PAA] and FA] then certainly you are not forced to. And the average person doesn’t realise that there isn’t any real official lawful accreditation of gymnasiums. ... it would

certainly take a lot of discussion ... to ... come up with [an] across the board ... governmental system to accredit gyms because there is such a huge range of gyms ... So there would have to be almost, I guess, levels of accreditation for the different aspects of industry ... I think it would be useful and it would certainly [provide] people with more guidance ... and maybe a little bit more assurance with what they are getting is ... a decent product”.

Whilst supporting the notion of mandatory gymnasium business accreditation, one informant also expressed support for a combination of limited self-regulation together with elements of mandatory accreditation for the EFI.

Informant 016, an industry association representative, stated that:

“Yes ... I believe the industry has a responsibility [for] ... monitoring their own standards and for reviewing those standards but I think that in the gymnasium fitness industry there is a lot of incentive to do this properly and to do it well because the future of the industry depends on it. ... So I think it is very important that there are some mandatory directions. ... [but] it is [also] important that we still want our people in the industry to be looking for new, interesting and diverse ways in going about what they do. ... the ... mandatory things [that] are absolutely important ... are related to safety”.

The only informant who did not support the notion of mandatory gymnasium business accreditation believed the EFI should continue to be partially regulated. It should be noted that this informant chose to focus on partial regulation in general, rather than mandatory gymnasium business accreditation specifically. He/she expressed a desire to achieve consistency in EFI practices across Australia.

Informant 014, an industry association representative, stated that:

“For business, what we are keen to see continue is a level of industry self-regulation. At the moment there are regulations in place in terms of code[s] of practice ... and we think that is important. We are working to get consistency across all of the codes of practice so that they are pretty much at the same level nationwide. We also want to make sure that the codes of practice are not just focussing necessarily on the issues around fair trading which used to be very important but are now less so. It should also be focused

on elements of professionalism and occupational health and safety because those are things ... we believe are now important to the industry. So, we want to see a very robust self-regulatory mechanism within the industry, and having Fitness Australia as an authority in that area and that it is recognised by governments all around Australia as well as [the] Federal Government”.

Implications of national mandatory gymnasium business accreditation for industry performance

Informants mostly considered that the positive features of national mandatory gymnasium business accreditation would outweigh the negative. The main positive features mentioned were improved and quality gymnasium practices with a safer environment for participants, and appropriate supervision and equipment. This was addressed by 10 informants, which accounted for 71% of the total. Informants also considered that mandatory minimum standards for all gymnasiums, their workers, programs and services, would be another positive feature. Risk mitigation of participant injury was also identified as a positive feature; one informant believing that gymnasium businesses would benefit from lower insurance costs through reduced risk and mandatory minimum standards. Informants believed that mandatory gymnasium business accreditation would offer quality assurance to customers, and one informant also felt that the EFI would gain consumer trust. Appropriately qualified, accredited and competent workers were considered to be another positive feature.

Informant 003, a government representative, stated that:

“... in any environment where people are responsible for the care of those who are using the facility ... there needs to be some regulation around the standards that are expected and can be enforced”.

Informant 007, a government representative, stated that:

“... the quality assurance ... the ability to better monitor ... the [exercise and fitness] industry ... would probably help with ... ongoing ... improvement opportunities ... costs could go up because if they [gymnasiums] have to keep those accreditations up ... that

might have a flow-on affect to their charges, but my immediate reaction is that the benefits would outweigh the negatives”.

Informant 020, a business representative, stated that:

“... minimum expectations in the way services and programs would be delivered ... would raise the bar and move away from some of the negatives of not being regulated, like ... allowing supervision levels to be quite low, risk to be high ...”.

Informant 014, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... you don’t [want to] have the cowboys out there operating without any regulation and not being bound by the code of practice, which is a voluntary code at the moment. ... In the code of practice and standards platform which we are developing ... we are looking at best practice. We are not looking for minimal standards”.

The main negative feature mentioned by informants was the expected cost increase for gymnasiums associated with mandatory gymnasium business accreditation, and the likelihood that this would result in higher prices for customers. In this context, informants also cited an increase in bureaucracy and the potential closure of some gymnasiums, due to either an inability to meet mandatory minimum standards or the associated administrative and financial burden, particularly for small businesses. Also mentioned was the potential to impede innovation at gymnasiums. A few informants believed that EFI practices could be compromised by mandatory gymnasium business accreditation if minimum standards became the focus rather than best practice. One informant stated that if a government department became the authority for mandatory gymnasium business accreditation, as an external entity it would not understand the EFI and, thus, minimum standards would be far from comprehensive.

Informant 019, a business representative, stated that:

“The negative ... would ... be that there may be some ... cost increase to the consumer if all gyms have to meet certain standards ... [as] it may increase the cost of running some facilities”.

Informant 013, an industry association representative, stated that:

“Negative would be that a lot of them [gymnasiums] would have to close. A lot of them wouldn’t make [meet] the standards ... one of the things that we are advocating for is regulation of the industry. ... The issues [are] ... the lack of first aid training ... [and] regular supervision so ... 24 hour gyms would be in trouble, and I think from a safety perspective there absolutely needs to be regulation”.

Informant 018, a business representative, stated that:

“I think ... it is going to place ... [an administrative and financial] burden on some smaller organisations that are quite good at what they do. ... that may cause them to be not as competitive ... to be a member of one of the peak bodies ... as an individual, it will probably cost ... [between \$1,200 and] \$1,500 a year to stay registered which given that the Fitness Industry is one of the lowest paid industries at the base level ... that is a relatively high burden ...”.

Mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation

All informants believed in the principle of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation, with the exception of one who did not feel adequately informed to respond directly to the associated question. Another commented that there is a need to develop mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation. He/she believed that voluntary accreditation for gymnasium instructors was flawed and expressed concern about unqualified workers in the EFI. (It is necessary to clarify that the accreditation of gymnasium instructors in the Australian EFI is actually, largely voluntary). A policy initiative of another informant’s organisation required its gymnasium based workers to hold a relevant exercise accreditation and/or qualification, with the exception of those whose role did not include any type of exercise delivery.

Informant 014, an industry association representative, stated that:

“Yes ... that is something that we need to work towards. ... We have over 24,000 registered [exercise professionals] with Fitness Australia. There is kinect [PAA] ... as well which have around four or five thousand registered but it is still a voluntary scheme and there are still a number of fitness professionals working ... who aren’t

registered and who don't hold the appropriate credentials. There is nothing anyone can really do about that. They are practising and that is of concern to us".

Informant 018, a business representative, stated that:

"We require anybody working in our gyms ... even if they are not delivering exercise directly ... to be minimum certificate III [in fitness] qualified. Obviously not our sales people because they are not delivering any exercise. ... but the managers who ... work in gymnasiums are required ... All trainers in the gym including group exercise [classes] ... have to be either certificate III [in fitness] [or] a registered group exercise instructor [a FA registered Group Exercise Leader], depending on their role ...".

Implications of national mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation for industry performance

Some informants commented that the positive and negative features of national mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation were similar to those they had mentioned for national mandatory gymnasium business accreditation. Informants focused much more on the positive than negative features. The main positive features mentioned were better quality gymnasium instructor practices, including supervision, and more knowledgeable, better educated, and appropriately qualified and accredited gymnasium instructors who would provide appropriate exercise instruction and guidance for the benefit of participants. This was addressed by 11 informants, which accounted for 85% of the total. Risk mitigation of participant injury was also mentioned as another positive feature. It was believed that mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation would offer quality control and assurance, consumer confidence and a sense of safety under the guidance of accredited gymnasium instructors. Another positive feature mentioned by some informants was the expectation that ongoing mandatory professional development would be a component of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation, to improve the professionalism, knowledge and skills of gymnasium instructors. One informant also felt that mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation would build a much stronger culture of industry professionalism.

Informant 002, a government representative, stated that:

“If you are qualified, you have got knowledge, expertise and people feel safe in that regard”.

Informant 003, a government representative, stated that:

“... if there is no accreditation for instructors then there is potential for injury. That obviously carries with it potential for liability ...”.

Informant 017, an industry association representative, stated that:

“It would ... allow you to regulate those [exercise professionals] who may have complaints against them ...”.

Informant 014, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... we would build a much stronger culture of professionalism ... the mandatory elements of continuing education is really important ... to build the knowledge, skill and experience base within the profession. ... We would like to see government recognition of mandatory accreditation ... managed ... by groups like ours or [those] who have the capacity to do that”.

The main negative features of national mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation related to the potential impact on existing and prospective exercise professionals. Specifically, four informants believed that (1) it could lead to a lack of suitably qualified and accredited workers, (2) a rigorous process could deter people from seeking accreditation as gymnasium instructors, and (3) experienced exercise professionals who lack sufficient formal qualifications, yet still have excellent knowledge and experience, could be disadvantaged by an accreditation requirement where the minimum qualification is below their level of expertise. One informant commented that if gymnasium instructor accreditation was mandatory, the standards of course delivery (e.g., for certificates III and IV in fitness) and graduate knowledge and skills, would still vary considerably, especially as the relevant certificates are competency based, only requiring a 50% pass grade. Another informant commented that if national mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation was administered by a government department the focus may be on minimum standards rather than robust best practice.

Informant 019, a business representative, stated that:

“... the negative would really be the difficulty in finding suitably qualified staff. ... The positives ... would be upping the knowledge of the people on the [gymnasium] floor and ... the level of supervision ... making sure they are ... qualified and that in turn reduces the risk associated with teaching [instructing participants] ...”.

Informant 007, a government representative, stated that:

“... if they know they have to go through a rigorous accreditation process ... people might think twice about ... becoming an instructor”.

Informant 013, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... even though we have a national qualification the standards of delivery vary considerably. ... you only need to be 50% competent to pass the course. So there are still varying levels of knowledge and skill from graduates, but ... from a consumer’s perspective knowing that the staff are appropriately qualified is definitely a plus and having some faith in trainers to instruct appropriately, safely and effectively. ... people who have been in the industry for quite some time ... are actually quite knowledgeable and they do know what they are doing. ... to make them ... complete a current qualification ... would be well and truly below their ... level of expertise”.

Mandatory EFI regulation

A majority of 10 informants believed in the principle of mandatory EFI regulation. This accounted for 83% of the total. Whilst supporting this principle, one of these informants specified that his/her organisation wanted well targeted, systemic and consistent national EFI regulation that would not inhibit industry growth. Existing state/territory regulations including occupational health and safety and fair trading, were highlighted by some of these informants, one commenting on the need for EFI regulation that specifically includes the servicing and safety of commercial exercise equipment. Resistance exercise instruction and participation was singled-out by one of these informants as having potential to inflict serious injury.

Informant 020, a business representative, stated that:

“... I think regulation is crucial ... as the industry continues to grow, and it has ... so significantly over the last 10 to 15 years, regulation is probably more important than ever”.

Informant 011, a government representative, stated that:

“... there should be some level of regulation to suggest ... if you were getting tuition around the use of weights ... that they [exercise professionals] are appropriately qualified and that the gymnasiums have that duty of care to all of their gym users not just kids”.

Informant 018, a business representative, stated that:

“... certainly in areas of ... occupational health and safety. ... Making sure people working in the industry and the venues themselves are all safe and insured correctly. ... already ... workplaces ... are under the workplace safety regulation. But ... there are probably some elements of gymnasium regulation that could do with some more focused attention ... [such as] the servicing ... and ... safety of the equipment. That would vary a lot between ... different providers ...”.

Informant 014, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... it would depend on what the regulation was aimed at. At the moment there are some mandatory regulations ... For instance, the code of practice that exists in the ACT ... All businesses have to comply with that code ... In most of the states there is an element of mandatory regulation that exists around fair trading. So, there is a bit of a mix and that is why we are trying to get ... consistent national [EFI] regulation, but to make sure it is targeted at ... the right places and that it isn't going to inhibit the growth of the industry. ... If you just pick off bit[s] and pieces, it [mandatory regulation] becomes ... inconsistent and confusing to manage. ... But if you had a systemic approach to registration being mandatory [for example] then you have covered off the qualifications, the first aid, the CPR and the continuing education in one fell swoop”.

One informant, who was undecided, expressed some support for the principle of mandatory regulation, but not for the EFI specifically. Another informant appeared to favour self-regulation but did acknowledge that mandatory EFI regulation has a place.

Informant 026, an industry association representative, stated that:

“There is a degree of sense that mandatory regulation in principle is the right thing to do, but ... I am not sure whether [in the EFI] there is necessarily a requirement for it”.

Informant 016, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... I think ... at a higher level within the industry that [mandatory EFI regulation] is important but of course it has to be partly self-regulation. The industry has to be able to look after itself and prove that it can do what is necessary to run safe, efficient, good service places. ... I would lean more towards continued self-regulation”.

Implications of national mandatory EFI regulation for industry performance

Some informants commented that the positive and negative features of national mandatory EFI regulation were similar to those mentioned for both mandatory gymnasium business and instructor accreditation. Informants focused more on the positive than negative features. For mandatory EFI regulation, the main positive features mentioned were better quality and safer EFI practices, offering quality assurance. This was addressed by 10 informants, which accounted for 77% of the total. Informants stated that mandatory qualifications and better educated exercise professionals would also be positive features. They believed that mandatory EFI regulation would offer a safer exercise facility environment for participants, with appropriate exercise equipment. Informants also cited consumer confidence in the EFI, and risk mitigation of participant injury, as other positive features.

Informant 002, a government representative, stated that:

“... it is all about the quality and mitigating risk ... obviously people [in the EFI] will have to jump through some hoops to get with that [regulatory] process but that is ... absolutely essential”.

Informant 017, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... the positives of ensuring that there are safe practices and that everyone knows that they are seeing appropriately trained people, there is appropriate equipment, [and] that there are people who know how to do first-aid ... So it would ... hopefully make a difference for the industry”.

Informant 013, an industry association representative, stated that:

“I think from a consumer’s perspective just knowing that it is safe ... they [the EFI] don’t have a very good name [in regard to safety]”.

Informant 018, a business representative, stated that:

“... there is ... a lot of second-hand equipment. ... a lot of dumping of ... equipment once the warranty period ... [is] up and it would be ... if not unsafe, then at least very unreliable. ... I am not someone to over regulate the gym industry, but ... Using older equipment ... you can look at it and go, ‘you might get away with that for 10 years, but one day someone is going to get injured because of that practice or that structure of your gym’ ...”.

Informant 014, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... [it] provides confidence in the industry services and professionals if there is some level of [mandatory] regulation ...”.

The most commonly mentioned negative feature of mandatory EFI regulation was the cost associated with meeting regulatory requirements. Informants were also concerned that this expected cost increase to gymnasium businesses would result in increased prices for customers. One informant stated that this could preclude those who cannot afford, or who may be unwilling, to pay higher prices. Another informant cited the cost of establishing EFI regulation as another problematic feature. One informant again mentioned that EFI regulation needs to be systemic, otherwise it would become confusing and costly to manage.

Informant 026, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... if ... everybody is following a basic standard then there is a major cost associated with that level of regulation, which ultimately is passed on to the consumer, so it has to be balanced up”.

Informant 010, a government representative, stated that:

“... you want to make sure the industry and the availability of gymnasiums to all people remains ... affordable but ... you don't want people ... exploiting the system and just running programs and making money without really thinking about looking after the well-being and interests of the people they are giving those services to, particularly kids”.

Some informants also cited the time dedication needed to meet regulatory requirements as a negative feature of mandatory EFI regulation. One informant stated that many businesses would have to cease trading due to an inability to meet minimum standards. Another cited the potential to drive small businesses out of the EFI through over-regulation. One informant mentioned that any level of mandatory regulation could have a negative impact on the EFI if it wasn't in accordance with its diversity and rapid growth.

Informant 018, a business representative, stated that:

“... the negative for some people may be the cost ... but also the fact that it is going to take up a lot of their time to meet ... the regulations ... you would have to be careful not to ... drive the smaller operator out of the industry by over-regulation which tends to be, from what I have seen already, to be a big burden for smaller operators but ... some form of regulation is needed to keep some of the gyms safe ...”.

Informant 015, an industry association representative, stated that:

“It is such a diverse industry ... that is growing very quickly ... any level of mandatory regulation could be negative if it wasn't consentient of that development ...”.

Two other informants who were undecided whether mandatory EFI regulation was necessary, did not directly detail any positive or negative features, but did make some interesting comments.

Informant 008, a government representative, stated that:

“From what I see at the moment in the dealings I have with the Fitness Industry, Fitness Australia are absolutely red hot about making sure that its members do have qualified people, and that they adopt the best possible practices”.

Informant 016, an industry association representative, stated that:

“Provided the industry has established the appropriate mechanisms to monitor and review what happens ... and communicates really well with all of the members of its industry then you shouldn’t have any problems. ... there has to be some level of mandatory regulation but in saying that if the industry ... has set up the appropriate mechanisms and communications systems ... then I do lean more to self-regulation”.

Departments, agencies and organisations nominated to play a major accreditation and regulatory role

If policy and/or legislation were introduced to regulate the Australian EFI, a clear majority of informants believed that the peak bodies, such as FA and/or PAA, would be best placed to play a major accreditation and regulatory role. This was addressed by nine informants, which accounted for 64% of the total. Commentary about some of the organisations and government departments proposed, revealed differing informant opinions about their suitability or willingness to hold a role of this kind. Collaboration between a selection of the proposed players was suggested, whilst some nominated a single entity as best placed to play a major accreditation and regulatory role.

Informant 019, a business representative, stated that:

“... [a] body ... that is independent, not for profit and that has an unbiased view and has a focus on the safety and promotion of physical activity and health and fitness. ... probably the closest thing to that would be Physical Activity Australia”.

Informant 017, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... Fitness Australia or ... Physical Activity Australia. ... there would be a lot of work we would have to do to get them in a position to ensure that it would be of a high standard and quality. They haven’t really looked at that in the past but yes, I think it would need to sit with them”.

Informant 026, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... organisations that are already involved ... such as ... [Sports Medicine Australia] ... Fitness Australia and Kinect Australia [PAA] ... ESSA [Exercise and Sports Science Australia] ... would be the sorts of organisations that would be key stakeholders ... beyond that ... some of the consumer organisations ... might also be involved ...”.

Informant 016, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... Fitness Australia ... But certainly groups like ... [The Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation] wouldn’t like to be accreditors [sic] in the way gymnasiums operate but ... would rather be an advisory ... than an accrediting group in that area”.

State and territory government departments, such as sport and recreation and health, were also considered by interview informants to be important. However, a consensus was not reached regarding the best placed department to assume a regulatory role. It was proposed by one of these informants that relevant legislation could be initiated at a federal level by the Department of Health, with state and territory agreement to then be sought on uniform legislation. It was suggested that consumer authorities, such as the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), and workplace health and safety authorities, such as WorkCover, could play a role in EFI regulation.

Informant 003, a government representative, stated that:

“... the state governments are the obvious regulators through legislation and administration of the sports and recreation areas”.

Informant 007, a government representative, stated that:

“I think probably [at a] state level because all the states and territories are so different ... to be done in partnership with one of the peak bodies, whether it is ... Fitness Australia [for example] ... the most obvious one would be ... the various departments like ... sport and recreation. ... Whether or not they [state and territory government departments] would be happy to do that is another question”.

Informant 008, a government representative, stated that:

“... it is not something that I would have thought that the sport and recreation departments would want to get involved in. ... it would probably have to be initiated by the commonwealth health department ... and then get agreement from the states and territories that there needs to be uniform legislation across the country”.

Informant 010, a government representative, stated that:

“... we are not sure but we [a state/territory government department comprising sport and recreation] would certainly be a very ... interested stakeholder ... and be part of the process of teasing that out”.

Two informants stated that an industry association, PAA or FA, should establish an independent organisation to regulate the EFI. It was also mentioned that change would be necessary at a state and territory level to best achieve effective Australian EFI regulation.

Informant 012, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... [PAA] would need to establish a new independent organisation. ... Physical Activity Australia [’s] ... independence from gym owners ... [and] across the board would mean ... [PAA] would be well suited to do that”.

Informant 014, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... it is in ... [FA’s] strategic agenda to do this ... but if ... there needed to be ... an authority that is recognised by government ... [FA] would create that authority as a separate arm”.

Informant 013, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... we should be advocating for state [and territory] change ... so it becomes ... a national registration scheme ...”.

One informant stated that Service Skills Australia (which has been described in the industry analysis in chapter two), was best placed to regulate the EFI, and firmly believed that legitimate commercial industry relationships held by FA and PAA would preclude them from being unbiased regulators. This informant commented that an organisation with EFI expertise would need to play a role in EFI regulation, and that the majority of the industry would not consider FA or PAA to be best placed in this instance. For example, this informant believed that his/her organisation could influence FA due to its member status.

Informant 018, a business representative, stated that:

“... Service Skills Australia ... probably spend the most time interacting with industry [the EFI] writing the various courses that industry use ... I would be surprised if any other organisation had that corporate knowledge about the industry that would allow them to work on a level where they could regulate but also allow enough freedom to the industry ... to continue to innovate ... Fitness Australia or kinect [PAA], may have, but ... they have commercial relationships with large fitness providers be they educators or gym chain owners. ... that ... legitimate commercial relationship ... would preclude them from being ... unbiased ... it [EFI regulation] would have to involve someone with expertise within the industry. ... I don't think it would be viewed by the majority of industry as being a good way to do it [to empower FA or PAA as an EFI regulator]. We are a member of Fitness Australia ourselves in the [gymnasium] chain I represent and purely ... for that reason ... we can get them to see our points of view and act on our behalf if necessary when dealing with other organisations”.

There were additional interesting informant comments that included a physical activity screening tool for adults as well as the development of a similar screening tool for minors. This Australia-wide initiative aims to promote appropriate pre-exercise screening, including at gymnasiums, to match participants with a suitably qualified professional for exercise program design and supervision. Ultimately, this informant

wanted the use of this physical activity screening tool to be a requirement under EFI regulation. Another informant, whilst essentially reiterating that any regulator of the EFI must be without bias, compared the Australian EFI to its European counterpart to demonstrate a need for mandatory EFI regulation locally.

Informant 017, an industry association representative, stated that:

“... there is a new physical activity screening tool [for adult participants] that ... Exercise and Sports Science Australia, Fitness Australia and Sports Medicine Australia developed last year ... and we are working on the children’s one this year [2012]. The importance of it is that ... they [young people under 18 years] are appropriately screened and that ... would ... determine who is the most appropriate person to write the programs or supervise ... the current ... adult ones ... is [sic] a three stage screening tool ... any fitness [professional] or exercise physiologist could do the screening and it [is] also designed as a self-assessment ... it will identify if you are ready to exercise [under the guidance of a Certificate IV in Fitness graduate] or if you need to be screened further [and trained] by an exercise physiologist. ... through Fitness Australia we are really pushing it at the moment. We can’t make it compulsory but if you talk about ... regulation this would be a requirement then everyone fills in these and ... is screened before ... exercising”.

Informant 018, a business representative, stated that:

“... [at present] there is [sic] a lot [of] people working who haven’t got a certificate III and IV [in fitness] ... so I think if you started to bring that [mandatory regulation of instructors, trainers and gymnasiums] in ... you would have to have a body that was seen as ... unbiased to carry that big shake up off because it would be [a] major change for the Fitness Industry. ... the European Union, brought in their own regulatory body for the first time ... in 2007–2008 and they have tried to start to register fitness trainers across Europe under a peak body almost like what we have done in Australia. It has been very slow in the industry, and they haven’t really embraced it. They don’t have any regulatory or legislative power behind it ... But I think if you are going to do it [EFI regulation] in Australia ... people would [also] just go ‘... unless there is going to be inspectors in our gyms shutting us down’ ... we are not going to embrace it that quickly

... especially a lot of the smaller and independent gymnasiums because they are going to associate cost and administrative burden with it ...”.

Questionnaire findings

Questionnaire respondents consisted of 44 stakeholders (parents and/or guardians of adolescent children) from across Australia (see chapter three, Table 3.5 for more details). The examination of data acquired from the 21 multi-choice questions posed to respondents of the structured online questionnaire, was performed—via Qualtrics online survey software—using descriptive statistics. As mentioned in chapter three, these questions (see appendix G, online questionnaire screenshots, for further details) were varied in design, and addressed: (1) the level of importance respondents placed on both their own health and fitness and that of their adolescent children, (2) the level of importance respondents placed on walking, running, cycling, swimming and gymnasium based exercise for their own health and fitness, and that of their adolescent children, (3) the average weekly amount of physical activity undertaken by respondents’ adolescent children, (4) whether respondents supported the principle of participation by adolescents in GBEPs, and if they would support their participation within a gymnasium environment which also caters for adults, (5) the level of importance respondents placed on appropriate gymnasium supervision for the health and fitness of their adolescent children, (6) whether respondents had approached a gymnasium about engaging their adolescent children in GBEPs, whether their adolescent children had been denied access by a gymnasium because they were deemed to be too young, and if such age restrictions had discouraged them from persisting to approach gymnasiums to engage their adolescent children in GBEPs, (7) the age at which respondents deemed it to be appropriate for their adolescent children to participate in GBEPs, (8) the level of importance respondents placed on action to ensure that gymnasium instructors would be adequately educated for the supervision of adolescents who participate in GBEPs, (9) whether respondents felt that it should be mandatory for gymnasium businesses and supervising instructors granting access to adolescents for participation in GBEPs, to have relevant accreditation with an industry association, and whether they believed that gymnasium businesses which allow adolescents to participate should be subject to mandatory EFI regulation to improve participant safety and well-being, (10) the level of

importance respondents placed on a more personal gymnasium culture and appropriate social environment, equal gymnasium access, appropriate gymnasium supervision, and more stringent gymnasium business and instructor accreditation, when considering participation by their adolescent children in GBEPs, and (11) respondent demographics, consisting of the postcode and state or territory of each respondent's principal place of residence, their gender, the number of adolescent children they parented, and their total household income.

The main questionnaire findings in this section will be presented in the chapter summary under 10 distinct categories, which are: (1) the level of importance of health and fitness, (2) the level of importance of activity types for health and fitness, (3) average volume of physical activity participation, (4) the level of support for participation by adolescents in GBEPs, (5) the level of importance of appropriate gymnasium supervision for health and fitness, (6) parental contact with gymnasiums and discriminatory access, concerning adolescents, (7) appropriate age for adolescents to participate in GBEPs, (8) the level of importance of adequate education for gymnasium instructors, (9) mandatory gymnasium business and instructor accreditation, and EFI regulation, and (10) the level of importance of culture, environment, access, supervision and accreditation in adolescent participation in GBEPs.

Importance of health and fitness

Health and fitness was shown to be 'very important' to 36 respondents (82%), 'important' to seven respondents (16%), and 'somewhat important' to one respondent (2%). Similarly, the health and fitness of a respondent's adolescent child was 'very important' to 36 respondents (82%), 'important' to six respondents (14%), 'neutral' to one respondent (2%), and 'somewhat important' to one respondent (2%).

Importance of activity types

On a scale of one to five, with one as most important and five as least important, 'walking' averaged 2.34 (1.35) and was the highest of the respondent-ranked activities regarding its level of importance for their health and fitness. This was followed by 'cycling' which averaged 2.91 (1.03), then 'running' which averaged 3.2 (1.52),

‘gymnasium based exercise’ which averaged 3.25 (1.54), and lastly ‘swimming’ which averaged 3.3 (1.42).

On a scale of one to five, with one as most important and five as least important, ‘walking’ averaged 2.36 (1.31) and was the highest of the respondent-ranked activities regarding its level of importance for their adolescent child’s health and fitness. This was followed by ‘running’ which averaged 3.0 (1.56), then ‘swimming’ which averaged 3.09 (1.34), ‘gymnasium based exercise’ which averaged 3.25 (1.51), and lastly ‘cycling’ which averaged 3.3 (1.19).

Volume of physical activity participation

The average weekly amount of time spent on physical activity by a respondent’s adolescent child was ‘greater than four hours per week’ for 20 respondents (45%), ‘three to four hours per week’ for nine respondents (20%), ‘two to three hours per week’ for seven respondents (16%), ‘one to two hours per week’ for four respondents (9%), ‘one half of an hour to one hour per week’ for two respondents (5%), and ‘less than one half of an hour per week’ for two respondents (5%).

Support for adolescent GBEP participation

Overwhelmingly, 39 respondents (89%) supported the principle of participation by adolescents in GBEPs, four respondents (9%) were ‘undecided’, and just one respondent (2%) did not support this. In comparison to ‘in principle’ support for participation by adolescents in GBEPs, a reduced majority of 28 respondents (64%) supported participation by adolescents in GBEPs within an environment that also caters for adults, 11 respondents (25%) were ‘undecided’, and five respondents (11%) did not support this.

Gymnasium supervision

An appropriate level of gymnasium supervision for the health and fitness of a respondent’s adolescent child was shown to be ‘very important’ to 32 respondents (73%), ‘important’ to nine respondents (20%), ‘neutral’ to one respondent (2%),

‘somewhat important’ to one respondent (2%), and ‘not important’ to one respondent (2%).

Parental contact with gymnasiums

Although 27 respondents (61%) had not approached a gymnasium about engaging their adolescent children in GBEPs, 17 respondents (39%) had done so.

From the respondents for which the associated question was applicable, although adolescent children of 20 respondents (45%) had not been denied access by a gymnasium to participate in GBEPs because they were deemed to be too young, 15 respondents (34%) had. Accordingly, from the respondents for which the associated question was applicable, although age restrictions for gymnasium access had not discouraged 21 respondents (48%) from persisting to approach gymnasiums to engage their adolescent children in GBEPs, 13 respondents (30%) had been discouraged.

Minimum age for participation

Although there was variation in the minimum age that respondents deemed it to be appropriate for their adolescent child to participate in GBEPs, combined, 31 respondents (70%) considered this to be appropriate at 12 to 14 years of age. Specifically, 13 respondents (30%) nominated ‘14 years’, nine respondents (20%) nominated ‘13 years’, nine respondents (20%) nominated ‘12 years’, six respondents (14%) nominated ‘15 years’, four respondents (9%) nominated ‘16 years’, two respondents (5%) nominated ‘under 12 years’, and just one respondent (2%) nominated ‘17 years’.

Gymnasium instructor education

A majority of 33 respondents (75%) considered it to be ‘very important’ for there to be action to ensure that gymnasium instructors are adequately educated to supervise adolescents who participate in GBEPs. A further 10 respondents (23%) considered this to be ‘important’, and only ‘somewhat important’ to just one respondent (2%).

Gymnasium business and instructor accreditation, and industry regulation

Overwhelmingly, 39 respondents (89%) felt that it should be mandatory for gymnasium businesses and supervising instructors granting access to adolescents for participation in GBEPs, to have relevant accreditation with an industry association. Although there weren't any respondents opposing this notion, five respondents (11%) were 'undecided'. Similarly, 36 respondents (82%) felt that gymnasium businesses which allow adolescents to participate in GBEPs, should be subject to mandatory EFI regulation to improve participant safety and well-being. There was just one respondent (2%) who opposed this notion, and seven respondents (16%) were 'undecided'.

Importance of culture, environment, access, supervision and accreditation

For the participation of a respondent's adolescent child in GBEPs, 'appropriate gymnasium supervision of adolescents', 'more stringent instructor accreditation', and 'more stringent gymnasium accreditation' were 'very important' to the majority of respondents. In addition, an 'appropriate social environment for adolescents', 'equal gymnasium access for adolescents', and 'a more personal gymnasium culture' were 'important' to the majority of respondents.

For the participation of a respondent's adolescent child in GBEPs, specifically, 'a more personal gymnasium culture' was 'important' to 17 respondents (39%), 'neutral' to 13 respondents (30%), 'very important' to 10 respondents (23%), 'somewhat important' to three respondents (7%), and 'not important' to one respondent (2%).

For the participation of a respondent's adolescent child in GBEPs, specifically, an 'appropriate social environment for adolescents' was 'important' to 20 respondents (45%), 'very important' to 16 respondents (36%), 'neutral' to five respondents (11%), and 'somewhat important' to three respondents (7%).

For the participation of a respondent's adolescent child in GBEPs, specifically, 'equal gymnasium access for adolescents' was 'important' to 20 respondents (45%), 'neutral' to 11 respondents (25%), 'very important' to nine respondents (20%), and 'somewhat important' to four respondents (9%).

For the participation of a respondent's adolescent child in GBEPs, specifically, 'appropriate gymnasium supervision of adolescents' was 'very important' to 33 respondents (75%), 'important' to eight respondents (18%), 'neutral' to one respondent (2%), 'somewhat important' to one respondent (2%), and 'not important' to one respondent (2%).

For the participation of a respondent's adolescent child in GBEPs, specifically, 'more stringent instructor accreditation' was 'very important' to 24 respondents (55%), 'important' to 12 respondents (27%), 'neutral' to seven respondents (16%), and 'not important' to one respondent (2%).

For the participation of a respondent's adolescent child in GBEPs, specifically, 'more stringent gymnasium accreditation' was 'very important' to 23 respondents (52%), 'important' to 10 respondents (23%), 'neutral' to 10 respondents (23%), and 'not important' to one respondent (2%).

Questionnaire respondent demographics

Postcode and state/territory residential location

The postcode of each respondent's principal place of residence was provided (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Postcode of each respondent's principal place of residence. Limited detail is provided due to questionnaire anonymity.

Postcode								
2066	2096	2112	2116	2193	2207	2223	2234	2234
2263	2287	2429	2444	2444	2611	2750	2752	2758
2880	3021	3030	3088	3089	3134	3136	3318	3840
3931	4068	4070	4075	4152	4173	4173	4552	4556
4802	4817	4870	5152	5173	6014	6149	6167	

As shown by the location of each respondent's principal place of residence, Tasmania was the only unrepresented state and the Northern Territory was the only unrepresented

self-governing mainland territory. There were 18 respondents (41%) located in New South Wales, 11 respondents (25%) were located in Queensland, nine respondents (20%) were located in Victoria, three respondents (7%) were located in Western Australia, two respondents (5%) were located in South Australia, and one respondent (2%) was located in the Australian Capital Territory.

Gender

A majority of 36 respondents (82%) were female, and eight (18%) were male.

Adolescent children

A majority of 25 respondents (57%) were the parents/guardians of one adolescent male, and six respondents (14%) were the parents/guardians of two adolescent males. There were 13 respondents (30%) who did not parent an adolescent male. Somewhat similar for the opposite sex, a majority of 19 respondents (43%) were the parents/guardians of one adolescent female, six respondents (14%) were the parents/guardians of two adolescent females, and another two respondents (5%) were the parents/guardians of three adolescent females. There were 17 respondents (39%) who did not parent an adolescent female.

Total household income

Selected by 16 respondents (36%), the most common total household income (before tax) bracket was '\$80,001–130,000'. This was followed by 10 respondents (23%) who selected the '\$130,001–180,000' bracket, seven respondents (16%) who selected the '\$180,001 and above' bracket, seven respondents (16%) who selected the '\$37,001–80,000' bracket, and four respondents (9%) who selected the '\$0–37,000' bracket.

Chapter summary

This chapter documented the findings of (1) the semi-structured telephone interviews, and (2) the structured online questionnaire. As a prelude to the findings, the interview information provided was about the relevant stakeholders, included the type of primary

and supplementary questions they were asked, and raised the themes of the main findings. Similarly, the questionnaire information provided, referred to the relevant stakeholders, included the type of questions posed to them, and concerned the categorisation of the main findings.

The interview findings were a product of the investigation of 16 stakeholders (a minister, senior executives, executives and senior managers) from federal, state and self-governing mainland territory governments, industry associations, and gymnasium businesses from across Australia. The questionnaire findings, including respondent demographics, were a product of the investigation of 44 stakeholders, consisting of parents and/or guardians of adolescent children, also from across Australia. These stakeholders were largely questioned about the significance of gymnasiums as spaces for adolescent exercise participation, and—in the light of both the prevailing regulatory context and operations of the EFI in Australia—the capacity of gymnasium businesses and their workers to appropriately cater for this cohort.

Data from the interviews was initially sorted and coded according to the 11 set questions posed to informants. In accordance with the triangulated mixed-method design of this study, responses to the questions were presented in text based format. The main findings, as determined through the thematic coding analysis, are included in Table 4.3 under the following 11 distinct themes: (1) the prioritisation of physical activity, (2) the adolescent physical inactivity problem, (3) positions and policies on adolescent participation in GBEPs, (4) informant awareness of policies or practices concerning adolescent participation in GBEPs, (5) informant awareness of policies under development that could affect adolescent participation in GBEPs, (6) key categories of stakeholders, (7) minimum age requirement for the participation of adolescents in GBEPs, (8) mandatory gymnasium business accreditation, (9) mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation, (10) mandatory EFI regulation, and (11) the departments, agencies and organisations which informants nominated to play a major accreditation and regulatory role.

Informants generally viewed gymnasiums as important spaces for adolescent exercise participation, and there was strong support for external industry regulation, including mandatory gymnasium business and instructor accreditation.

Table 4.3. Main interview findings. The main findings from the interviews are presented in the table, under 11 distinct themes.

Interview findings theme	Main interview findings
The prioritisation of physical activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The majority of informants were regularly, very physically active.
The adolescent physical inactivity problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All informants, as well as their department / agency / organisation, believed that a problem exists regarding physical inactivity and adolescents. ▪ The majority of informants stated that this was a multifaceted problem where sedentary screen time pastimes provided an attractive alternative to physical activity. ▪ Informants mainly identified primary and secondary schools as important to alleviate the problem of adolescent physical inactivity through curriculum changes. ▪ It was clear that all informants believed gymnasiums should be part of the solution to alleviate this problem. Gymnasiums were labelled as an equally important physical activity option, alongside organised sport and other physical activities.
Positions and policies on adolescent participation in GBEPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Informants mostly commented that their department / agency / organisation did not have a formal position or policy stance specific to adolescent participation in GBEPs, yet there was general support among informants for this type of participation by adolescents.
Informant awareness of policies or practices concerning adolescent participation in GBEPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Most informants were not aware of any policies or practices that might have enhanced or inhibited participation by adolescents in GBEPs.
Informant awareness of policies under development that could affect adolescent participation in GBEPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Most informants were not aware of any policies under development that could affect adolescent participation in GBEPs.
Key categories of stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The majority of informants chose industry associations/peak bodies, governments and schools as the key categories of stakeholders that their department / agency / organisation would select for collaboration if it were to initiate policies regarding participation by adolescents in GBEPs in Australia. In this context, industry associations and other peak bodies were

	specifically mentioned by the majority.
Minimum age requirement for the participation of adolescents in GBEPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The majority of informants were unwilling to nominate a minimum age requirement for the participation of adolescent boys and girls in GBEPs, and felt that age alone was not the most important consideration. The most common reason given by informants for their position on such a minimum age requirement, referred to the appropriateness of activities provided. ▪ The majority of informants were unwilling to nominate a minimum age for the participation of adolescent boys and girls in GBEPs.
Mandatory gymnasium business accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An overwhelming majority of informants believed in the principle of mandatory gymnasium business accreditation. ▪ Informants mostly considered that the positive features of national mandatory gymnasium business accreditation would outweigh the negative. The main positive features mentioned were improved and quality gymnasium practices with a safer environment for participants, and appropriate supervision and equipment.
Mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All informants believed in the principle of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation, with the exception of one who did not feel adequately informed to respond directly to the associated question. ▪ Informants focused much more on the positive than negative features of national mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation. The main positive features mentioned were better quality gymnasium instructor practices, including supervision, and more knowledgeable, better educated, and appropriately qualified and accredited gymnasium instructors who would provide appropriate exercise instruction and guidance for the benefit of participants.
Mandatory EFI regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The majority of informants believed in the principle of mandatory EFI regulation. ▪ Informants focused more on the positive than negative features of national mandatory EFI regulation. The main positive features mentioned were better quality and safer EFI practices, offering quality assurance.
The departments, agencies and organisations which informants nominated to play a major accreditation and regulatory role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If policy and/or legislation were introduced to regulate the Australian EFI, a clear majority of informants believed that the peak bodies, such as FA and/or PAA, would be best placed to play a major accreditation and regulatory role.

In accordance with the triangulated mixed-method research design, data acquired from the 21 multi-choice questions posed to respondents of the questionnaire, was compiled as descriptive statistics. The main findings are included in Table 4.4 under the following

10 distinct categories: (1) the level of importance of health and fitness, (2) the level of importance of activity types for health and fitness, (3) average volume of physical activity participation, (4) the level of support for participation by adolescents in GBEPs, (5) the level of importance of appropriate gymnasium supervision for health and fitness, (6) parental contact with gymnasiums and discriminatory access, concerning adolescents, (7) appropriate age for adolescents to participate in GBEPs, (8) the level of importance of adequate education for gymnasium instructors, (9) mandatory gymnasium business and instructor accreditation, and EFI regulation, and (10) the level of importance of culture, environment, access, supervision and accreditation in adolescent participation in GBEPs.

Overall, respondents viewed gymnasiums as important spaces for adolescent exercise participation, and there was strong support for external industry regulation, including mandatory gymnasium business and instructor accreditation.

Table 4.4. Main questionnaire findings. The main findings from the questionnaire are presented in the table, under 10 distinct categories.

Questionnaire findings category	Main questionnaire findings
The level of importance of health and fitness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Health and fitness was very important to the majority of respondents. ▪ The health and fitness of a respondent's adolescent child was very important to the majority.
The level of importance of activity types for health and fitness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 'Walking' was the highest of the respondent-ranked activities regarding its level of importance for their own health and fitness, and that of their adolescent children. ▪ Overall, respondents viewed 'gymnasium based exercise' as important as 'running', 'cycling' and 'swimming' for their own health and fitness, and that of their adolescent children, but not as important as 'walking'.
Average volume of physical activity participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The average weekly amount of time spent on physical activity by a respondent's adolescent child was at least three hours per week for the majority, of which more than half spent greater than four hours per week.
The level of support for participation by adolescents in GBEPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An overwhelming majority of respondents supported the principle of participation by adolescents in GBEPs. ▪ However, a reduced majority of respondents supported participation by adolescents in GBEPs within an

	environment that caters for adults as well as adolescents.
The level of importance of appropriate gymnasium supervision for health and fitness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An appropriate level of gymnasium supervision for the health and fitness of a respondent's adolescent child was very important to the majority.
Parental contact with gymnasiums and discriminatory access, concerning adolescents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Although the majority of respondents had not approached a gymnasium about engaging their adolescent children in GBEPs, 39% had done so. ▪ From the respondents for which the associated question was applicable, although adolescent children of the majority (45%) had not been denied access by a gymnasium to participate in GBEPs because they were deemed to be too young, 34% had. ▪ In addition, from the respondents for which the associated question was applicable, although age restrictions for gymnasium access had not discouraged the majority (48%) from persisting to approach gymnasiums to engage their adolescent children in GBEPs, 30% had been discouraged.
Appropriate age for adolescents to participate in GBEPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Although there was variation in the minimum age that respondents deemed it to be appropriate for their adolescent children to participate in GBEPs, the majority considered this to be appropriate at 12 to 14 years of age.
The level of importance of adequate education for gymnasium instructors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The majority of respondents considered it to be very important for there to be action to ensure that gymnasium instructors are adequately educated to supervise adolescents who participate in GBEPs.
Mandatory gymnasium business and instructor accreditation, and EFI regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Overwhelming, the majority of respondents felt that it should be mandatory for gymnasium businesses and supervising instructors granting access to adolescents for participation in GBEPs, to have relevant accreditation with an industry association. ▪ Similarly, the majority of respondents felt that gymnasium businesses which allow adolescents to participate in GBEPs, should be subject to mandatory EFI regulation to improve participant safety and well-being.
The level of importance of culture, environment, access, supervision and accreditation in adolescent participation in GBEPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For the participation of a respondent's adolescent child in GBEPs, appropriate gymnasium supervision, more stringent gymnasium instructor accreditation, and more stringent gymnasium business accreditation were very important to the majority of respondents. In addition, an appropriate social environment, equal gymnasium access, and a more personal gymnasium culture were important to the majority of respondents.

The interview and questionnaire findings are examined next in the context of documents relating to the operations and conduct of the EFI in Australia, and other literature relevant to this dissertation. Furthermore, the analysis of these findings is assisted by the

use of regulation theory. This is covered in the final part of the thesis, which is chapter five.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter overview

This final chapter examines the interview and questionnaire findings in the context of documents relating to the operations and conduct of the Exercise and Fitness Industry (EFI) and, more broadly, other relevant literature on physical inactivity in adolescence, the industry, and regulation. Furthermore, regulation theory is used to assist the analysis of these findings. Accordingly, the following discussion is about the potential for gymnasiums to be part of the solution to the problem of adolescent physical inactivity, gymnasium age restrictions and access requirements, and the need for, and expected benefits of national external regulation of the Australian EFI. With stakeholder theory as the basis of this study, interview informants and questionnaire respondents consisted of stakeholders (1) who were perceived to have a common interest in increasing physical activity participation, and (2) whose interests were considered to have the most potential to affect, or be affected by, the accomplishment of the ultimate purpose of this study, which is to formulate policies and strategies to increase adolescent participation in gymnasium based exercise programs (GBEPs) across Australia and effectively contribute to the solution for the adolescent physical inactivity problem. Interviews with the relevant stakeholders were the primary focus of this study, therefore in this chapter there is a significant emphasis on the related findings, whilst the responses to the questionnaire, although important, were used to mainly supplement and illuminate the interview findings. For the interviews, the stakeholder categories involved were governments, industry associations and businesses. For the questionnaire, the stakeholder category involved was parents/guardians of adolescent children. Before proceeding to the examination and analysis of the findings of this study, the chapter begins by outlining the highly problematic situation of adolescent gymnasium based exercise program (GBEP) participation in the Australian EFI.

The chapter returns to the core research questions underpinning this thesis which are:

- (1) What are the policies of federal, state and self-governing mainland territory

governments, industry associations, and gymnasium businesses regarding adolescent participation in GBEPs in Australia? (2) To what extent have any previous and/or existing policies enhanced or inhibited adolescent participation in GBEPs in Australia? (3) What are the policies under development which might be implemented and directly or indirectly affect adolescent participation in GBEPs in Australia? These questions have, in turn, been translated into the aims of this study which are: (1) to explain the influences on participation by adolescents in GBEPs in Australia, (2) to identify how gymnasiums could contribute more effectively as part of the solution to the problem of adolescent physical inactivity in Australia, and (3) to provide policy options for the EFI primarily to increase adolescent participation in GBEPs in Australia, with a focus on gymnasium business and instructor accreditation and industry regulation, which are also achieved within the chapter.

Accordingly, this final chapter provides policy options and identifies strategic opportunities to increase GBEP participation by Australia's adolescents, whilst ensuring equal gymnasium access. Additionally, there are subsequent recommendations—predominantly for the EFI—to support both adolescent and adult GBEP participants, improve enterprise and industry performance, and potentially contribute to building a healthier and more active Australian population. The chapter ends by discussing the limitations and delimitations of this research, as well as the implications for future investigations into participation by young people in GBEPs. In addition to the chapter summary, a snapshot of the appendices follows.

Adolescent GBEP participation in the Australian EFI

Adolescent GBEP participation in the Australian EFI is highly problematic. It is helpful to reconsider this situation before proceeding to the examination and analysis of the findings of this study.

Despite the need to increase levels of physical activity participation in young people, and the predominantly health- and economic-related public and private benefits which would be expected to accrue from a more active and healthy population, it would seem that many gymnasium businesses in Australia, through exclusion and restrictive

practices, have discriminated against minors. There has been a mix of inconsistent and restrictive minimum participation age requirements and blocking of access to minors for participation in GBEPs, by gymnasium operators. An EFI practice which seems to be commonplace is for businesses to deny gymnasium access to persons under the age of 16 years, with some only granting access from 18 years of age. Such exclusion and restriction appear to be barriers to adolescent GBEP participation. These barriers should be dismantled, as it is important to ensure equal gymnasium access for Australia's young people and to increase their participation in GBEPs, as part of the solution for the adolescent physical inactivity problem. It is most encouraging that there are good prospects for the Australian EFI, and, at the same time, perplexing that the industry, gymnasium businesses in particular, has apparently been prepared to neglect the growth opportunities offered by a largely unexploited adolescent market segment.

The issue of attracting adolescents to gymnasiums and gaining the support of their parents and/or guardians, is compounded by the fact that no general requirement exists for gymnasium instructors and personal trainers to undertake comprehensive training in child and adolescent development and appropriate exercise programming. It is noteworthy that, at present, EFI guidelines for the participation of young people in GBEPs are essentially unenforceable. Significantly, there is also an absence of effective national policies specific to adolescent participation in GBEPs. It seems essential for policymakers aiming to increase adolescent GBEP participation across Australia, to address the policy-gaps in gymnasium business and instructor accreditation, and the absence of national external industry regulation, in dealing with the significant accreditation and regulation issues facing the EFI. This would be important for ultimately providing adolescents with equal access to GBEPs, and to ensure that those who participate are given appropriate advice, instruction, and a level of supervision that not only produces healthy outcomes and ensures ongoing participation, but also minimises the risk of injury.

Before the EFI can capitalise on the growth opportunities offered by the adolescent market segment, it would seem that operational issues regarding the introduction of effective national policies and programs to accommodate adolescent engagement with GBEPs need to be addressed. This includes the varying requirements of the state and

self-governing mainland territory governments in relation to working with children checks and police checks for those who work with minors, as well as the structural weaknesses in the EFI that appear to make the levels of supervision and exercise instruction of adolescents highly problematic. Given the special needs of adolescents during this phase of their growth and maturation, the level and quality of supervision of young people participating in GBEPs appears to be limited at best and inadequate at worst. Significant to the supervision issue is the absence of (1) national compulsory or mandatory gymnasium business accreditation, (2) national compulsory or mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation, and (3) national external industry regulation, to support adolescent GBEP participants in particular.

This suggests that the physical inactivity problem of Australian adolescents fails to be properly addressed, or adequately resourced. For the EFI to be truly ready to accommodate mass participation by adolescents (aged between 12 and 17 years) in GBEPs, positioning it to successfully attract and retain adolescent customers, the industry appears to require operational and environmental change to its gymnasiums across Australia.

Policy option context

In this chapter, an intention of the policy options which concern EFI businesses is to complement, where appropriate, requirements of the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010*,¹⁷³ which includes the Australian Consumer Law and applies to all businesses in Australia.

Gymnasiums as spaces for increasing adolescent physical activity

Policy options / strategic opportunities 1–6

1: Promote gymnasium technologies

The interview findings revealed that all informants, as well as their department / agency / organisation, believed that a problem exists regarding physical inactivity and

¹⁷³ Attorney-General's Department, *Competition and Consumer Act 2010*, volumes 1–3, Office of Legislative Drafting and Publishing, Canberra, 2011.

adolescents. The majority of informants stated that adolescent physical inactivity was a multifaceted problem in which sedentary screen time pastimes provided an attractive alternative to physical activity. The solution to this problem must also be multifaceted, and it should incorporate screen time in an active way, not only to attract adolescents to increase their level of physical activity, but also to turn this sedentary pastime into a more active one.

In addressing this inactivity problem, one generally neglected facet is the expansive network of gymnasiums and other EFI businesses across Australia which could offer valuable, yet largely unexploited physical activity community resources for the adolescent market segment. Gymnasiums were labelled by interview informants as an equally important physical activity option, alongside organised sport and other physical activities. Several informants further stated that the solution to alleviate this problem depended on a variety of these activity options, not simply one in isolation. For questionnaire respondents, the level of importance they placed on ‘walking’ for their own health and fitness, and that of their adolescent children, clearly indicated that it was the most valued type of physical activity, and respectively averaged 2.34 (1.35) and 2.36 (1.31) on a scale of one to five, with one as most important and five as least important. At the same time, according to the respective averages for ‘gymnasium based exercise’ (3.25 (1.54) and 3.25 (1.51)), ‘running’ (3.2 (1.52) and 3.0 (1.56)), ‘cycling’ (2.91 (1.03) and 3.3 (1.19)) and ‘swimming’ (3.3 (1.42) and 3.09 (1.34)), it is shown that overall, respondents considered gymnasiums to be as important as the other physical activity options, with the exception of ‘walking’.

Not only could gymnasiums be part of the solution, they are unique in that they conveniently provide a variety of exercise options in one place. Gymnasiums typically offer a range of cardiovascular and resistance exercise equipment, personal training services, group exercise classes, and a number of facilities also have swimming pools. This variety of exercise options could help encourage adolescents to participate in GBEPs, and also motivate their ongoing participation. Unlike some organised sports and outdoor physical recreation activities, gymnasiums have added appeal in that their operations are largely unaffected by weather conditions, and include exercise options that are not reliant on the attendance of others.

The interview findings revealed that all informants believed gymnasiums should be part of the solution to alleviate the problem of adolescent physical inactivity. One informant (an industry association representative), mentioned that there was a need for widespread child and adolescent specific GBEPs, and another (a government representative), mentioned that gymnasiums could appeal to young people by creating new exercise programs and an environment which reflected their present day interests, as a point of differentiation to organised sport. Modern cardiovascular and resistance exercise equipment, as well as exercise programs, are progressively incorporating computer based technologies, and despite the appeal of these technologies to adolescents, it seems that most gymnasiums have failed to encourage them to regularly participate in GBEPs.

Interview informants indicated that the problem of adolescent physical inactivity was strongly linked to the present day accessibility of computers, mobile telephones, television, video gaming devices, the Internet and social media. Typically, these technologies are used whilst sedentary, but this does not always have to be the case. An increasing number of gymnasiums in Australia offer exercise equipment that incorporates such technologies. The latest cardiovascular exercise equipment for the mass market includes built-in touch screens, television, Internet and social media, compatibility with mobile telephones and other music devices, plus data feedback on personal exercise performance compared with other gymnasium users. The latest resistance exercise equipment includes electronic displays which provide the user with data feedback on exercise performance. The latest associated computer software allows participants to also access their exercise data remotely via the Internet, enabling further opportunities for interaction between gymnasiums and participants, not limited to the boundaries of the facility. Some gymnasiums also provide interactive video game based cardiovascular exercise equipment which the user operates by exercising (e.g., cycling), and can be performed in competition with other participants. Gymnasiums offer one of the few physical activity options enabling social interaction via technologies, whether exercising alone or with others. This is a competitive advantage to gymnasiums over other activities, such as organised sport.

Social interaction and physical activity participation form the centrepiece of this physical activity option, which acknowledges informants' belief that the Internet

enables social interaction without the need for engaging in group based physical activity programs. It also represents an adaptation to the changing interests of adolescents, rather than focusing on the physical activity interests of previous generations, which appear to be decreasing in popularity. Adolescent participants in organised sport, for example, are commonly segregated by age and sex, and thus social interaction is somewhat restricted to participants of similar demographics. Gymnasiums however, whilst not devoid of limitations, commonly include both males and females of varying ages and backgrounds. This diverse exercise environment would offer good opportunities for adolescents to interact with a variety of people, whilst it also presents a challenge to the EFI to ensure the safety of all gymnasium participants.

Interview informants also understood that there had been a decline in adolescent participation in outdoor physical activity pastimes, and that regular bouts of energetic play were no longer the norm for young people. This drift to sedentary lifestyles could be reversed in part, by incorporating screen time with exercise through use of the latest appropriate commercial gymnasium exercise equipment. Screen time activities have captured the interest of many adolescents, as well as adults. EFI marketing should draw on this interest to attract adolescents to participate in GBEPs and to motivate their ongoing participation.

2: Promote family participation, 3: Encourage school and service provider partnerships

The other significant cause of adolescent physical inactivity was seen to be the limited amount of time parents could devote to the sport, exercise and physical recreation needs of their children. In a number of instances informants cited the career demands of parents and the consequent squeeze on leisure time, as factors contributing to adolescent physical inactivity. Commonly, adolescent participation in organised sport is supported by parents on the 'side-lines'. However, if parents and their adolescent children participated in physical activity at the same time, at the same location, either together or independently, the negative impact of these factors could be diminished. Not only are gymnasiums potential sites for this to take place, gymnasiums could also offer an opportunity for both minors and adults to interact with friends, similar to organised

sport. Typically, GBEPs are a flexible and time efficient option compared to time-consuming organised sports, such as cricket.

Of course, some may not want, or be able to exercise at the same time, but GBEPs could provide an opportunity for families to increase their level of physical activity participation, and also lessen the demand on parents to take their children to various sports training, competitions, and other activities. In addition, one interview informant (a government representative) suggested that the regular training and competition commitments of organised sport were a reason for some adolescents shunning this particular pastime. Informants also observed that there needs to be a variety of physical activity opportunities promoted to, and made available for young people. One informant (an industry association representative) emphasised that resistance exercise is crucial for adolescents, as is the need for improving their strength for participation in particular sports. Depending on parents' willingness and availability to enable their children's participation, a number of physical activity options would ideally be undertaken in adolescence.

Some interview informants argued that deficits in parental and adolescent education were associated with increasing levels of sedentary behaviour amongst adolescents. Specifically mentioned was a lack of appropriate parental guidance regarding the benefits of being active and eating healthily. Informants mainly identified primary and secondary schools as important sites in which to alleviate the problem of adolescent physical inactivity through curriculum changes to ensure a greater emphasis on sport and physical education, physical activity and healthy eating. One informant (an industry association representative), mentioned that work in this area was ongoing, and that there was a focus on improving the curriculum in the areas of physical education and physical activity. However, an already crowded curriculum alone may not offer the best avenue for further educating young people about the benefits of physical activity and healthy eating. This informant believed that if gymnasiums were prepared to work with schools to encourage adolescent participation in GBEPs, this type of partnership could offer long-term benefits for health, schools, communities and business. In essence, schools could be a link between families and service providers specialising in physical activity and/or healthy eating. State and territory education departments could encourage

Australian schools to build networks with these service providers. Partnerships already exist between schools and various local businesses. Gymnasium businesses could become important partners with schools across Australia, playing a key role in better informing families about the benefits of being active and eating healthily.

From the variety of federal, state and territory-wide initiatives that were suggested by interview informants, the common point was that parents, and young people in particular, needed to be targeted across the nation. Some informants mentioned that not only should this strategy target adolescents at secondary school, but it should begin at a young age (at primary school), to attempt to instil in young people the importance of a life-long healthy lifestyle. Whilst it is acknowledged that physical activity and healthy eating strategies should collectively support people of all ages, and that those targeting primary school-age children and younger are particularly important in the development of healthy life-long habits, the focus of this study is on an adolescent population between the ages of 12 and 17 years.

There needs to be a clear and consistent educational message to Australia's young people and their parents about the benefits of physical activity and healthy eating. Uniquely, schools have a powerful connection with this target audience, offering an important setting in which to deliver this message. The curriculum alone however, would not provide young people with ongoing support, resources and opportunities to develop and practise life-long healthy lifestyles with physical activity as the centrepiece. Arguably, school-related activities consume a large portion of adolescents' time during school terms, providing an important opportunity for schools to influence adolescent lifestyles. However, the degree of influence is somewhat limited as schools do not operate year-round. To embed regular physical activity and healthy eating into the lifestyles of adolescents at a stage of life that brings with it change and challenges for families, regular access to service providers, such as gymnasium businesses, which offer physical activity and/or dietary support and/or resources, is important. Schools are an invaluable hub which could connect families with these services, to potentially provide adolescents with widespread, ongoing physical activity and dietary support and resources, for practising healthy and active lifestyles, not only through their school years, but also throughout life.

4: Build national consensus on adolescent participation

The results of this study seem to indicate that gymnasiums generally neglect minors. Although unfortunate, it was not surprising that the department / agency / organisation of most interview informants did not have a formal position or policy stance specific to adolescent participation in GBEPs. However, this was at odds with the general support among interview informants for adolescent participation in GBEPs, and the overwhelming majority of questionnaire respondents (89%) who supported the principle of such participation by adolescents. Based on these findings, and acknowledging that a limitation of this study was the small sample size of questionnaire respondents, generally, it appears that these departments / agencies / organisations may lack a comprehensive understanding about the type of physical activities endorsed by parents and/or guardians, in particular, for the physical activity needs of their adolescent children. This is compounded by the EFI's apparent preparedness to neglect adolescents, who seem to be frequently marginalised through either limited, or indeed, no gymnasium access being granted.

The blocking of gymnasium access for minors goes against government policies aiming to remove barriers to participation, and increase sport, exercise, and physical recreation participation levels. This, together with the absence of effective national policies specific to adolescent participation in GBEPs, demonstrates that the physical inactivity problem of Australian adolescents fails to be properly addressed, or adequately resourced. It is now more clear why consumers aged 17 years and younger represent just 5% of the EFI's market (estimated as a percentage of EFI revenue in 2011–12), which is the industry's smallest age segment.¹⁷⁴ Not only is the EFI's apparent preparedness to neglect this opportunity for further growth perplexing, the prevailing levels of industry regulation, coupled with the absence of effective national policies specific to adolescent participation, seems to confirm that the EFI, and gymnasiums in particular, are their own worst enemies by not capitalising on all their markets. One interview informant (an industry association representative) defined young people as the gymnasium participants of the future, and stated that for this reason it is important for gymnasium businesses to engage the interest of adolescents.

¹⁷⁴ N. Sallmann, 'IBISWorld Industry Report X0025: Fitness in Australia', *IBISWorld*, 2012, pp. 1–27.

Three of the four organisations holding a formal position or policy stance supporting adolescent participation in GBEPs included limitations to their participation, which in effect act as barriers, despite this not being the intention. One interview informant (a business representative) stated that his/her gymnasium business employer permitted access to young people between 12 and 18 years of age, with parental consent. However, adolescent participants were only permitted to participate in GBEPs under the direct supervision of either their parent or an appropriately qualified personal trainer. To justify this condition, it was proclaimed that adolescents are a high risk population who could injure themselves, as they lack full physical and mental development. Considering this, it is challenging to understand why, for example, a 19 year-old participant would be considered physically and mentally mature enough to use a treadmill, but a 17 year-old participant would require direct supervision. Not only is this unreasonable, it is also a barrier to participation. A supervision requirement such as this could deter adolescents, particularly those in their mid to late teenage years, from choosing to attend a gymnasium. It could also deter parents from supporting their child's participation in GBEPs, due to either the additional cost of engaging a personal trainer or the time required for supervision. It is unprofessional for this business to deflect customer supervision responsibilities to parents, unless they are willing and able to pay for a personal trainer to supervise their child when participating in GBEPs.

Similarly, another interview informant (a business representative) stated that his/her gymnasium business employer permitted access to adolescents between 11 and 16 years of age, under the direct supervision of an adult. However, a limited range of programs based on machine weights was offered to adolescents, acting as an injury prevention control. Although this business had partly removed its limited access times for adolescents because it was found to be too restrictive, general access for adolescents was conditional on parental supervision when attending the gymnasium outside of its 'after school' times. The time limited alternative to parental supervision remained available, during which staff would supervise adolescent participants, but this restricted access to specific 'after school' times. These restrictions are barriers to participation in GBEPs, and although they may not have a negative impact on all families involved, they demonstrate the need to dismantle as many barriers to participation as possible. These businesses see the worth in providing adolescents with access to GBEPs, but their

self-imposed restrictions seem to be influenced by a perceived high risk associated with young people and gymnasium exercise equipment, consequently limiting the potential of their initiatives. A consistent policy approach with a focus on equality of access, encouragement and support for Australia's adolescents to participate in GBEPs, would go a long way to removing the barriers to their participation. The information included above answers the first research question about the policies of federal, state and self-governing mainland territory governments, industry associations, and gymnasium businesses regarding adolescent participation in GBEPs in Australia.

There are many organised sports, including Australian Rules football, in which participants are subject to far riskier conditions and activities than those at gymnasiums. Relatively, gymnasiums offer a safe and controlled environment for participants, unmatched by most other physical activities. However, for this partially regulated industry, it is acknowledged that safety levels would vary between gymnasiums. Under external EFI regulation, industry growth could be enhanced by nationally consistent gymnasium practices supporting minors and adults alike, with a gymnasium environment and operations built around participant education in safe and sociable conduct, appropriate gymnasium instructor supervision, and well maintained quality exercise equipment.

Such change could also improve the EFI's image and help to dismantle the notion of the hyper-masculine bodybuilding gymnasium environment. The EFI may not yet be ready to accommodate mass participation by adolescents, but ultimately, with operational and environmental change to gymnasiums across Australia, the industry would be well placed to successfully attract and retain adolescent customers. Significantly, adult consumers accounted for 95% of EFI revenue in 2011–12.¹⁷⁵ This highlights how important it is to fully consider the potential impact on the adult market segments in the design and implementation of operational and environmental change to gymnasiums, particularly considering 25% of questionnaire respondents were undecided about participation by adolescents in GBEPs within an environment that also caters for adults. This contributed to the reduced majority of respondents (64%) in favour of this more diverse environment, in spite of the overwhelming support for the principle of

¹⁷⁵ Sallmann, 'IBISWorld Industry Report X0025'.

participation by adolescents in GBEPs. Possibly, for some respondents these differing results may simply reflect a preference for exercising at gymnasiums without having adolescents around.

5: Increase level of education and gymnasium supervision

To alleviate the adolescent physical inactivity problem, one of the main suggestions by interview informants was for gymnasiums to have an educational role. This would be carried out by suitably educated instructors capable of teaching adolescent participants about appropriate exercise programs and techniques, as well as the importance and wide-ranging benefits of leading a healthy lifestyle. The EFI has been criticised for being poorly managed, staffed by ‘softly’ qualified gymnasium instructors, and focused mainly on the bodily aesthetics and fitness needs of working adults,¹⁷⁶ yet this criticism does not seem to have deterred customers from turning to gymnasium instructors and personal trainers for advice that can be beyond their level of expertise. Injuries in particular are often accompanied by customer questions that effectively seek some sort of diagnosis. Gymnasium instructor and personal trainer practices should always comply with their level of education, and generally in these instances, customers need direction to an appropriate medical and/or allied health professional. Nevertheless, under external industry regulation, a higher level of education would enhance the credibility of gymnasium instructors, personal trainers, and the wider EFI. Better gymnasium instructor and personal trainer education and practices could help to improve gymnasium safety and quality assurance, and also mitigate the risk of injury to customers. The importance of better education and practices is magnified when considering the potential inclusion of adolescents in GBEPs, given their special needs during this phase of their growth and maturation.

If an appropriate level of gymnasium instructor supervision became a focus for gymnasiums across Australia, this could improve service levels and help ensure the safety of all participants whilst benefiting their health and fitness, and ultimately increasing the level of support for a gymnasium environment shared by both adults and adolescents. It is expected that supervision improvements would generally be

¹⁷⁶ B. Abbott and C. Barber, ‘Embodied Image: Gender Differences in Functional and Aesthetic Body Image Among Australian Adolescents’, *Body Image*, vol. 7, no. 4, 2010, pp. 22–31.

welcomed, as an appropriate level of gymnasium supervision for the health and fitness of a respondent's adolescent child was rated as 'very important' by the majority (73%), and 'important' by another 20% of questionnaire respondents. Similarly, the majority of respondents (75%) considered it to be 'very important', and another 23% believed it to be 'important' for there to be action to ensure that gymnasium instructors are adequately educated to supervise adolescents who participate in GBEPs.

Some interview informants also identified the importance of gymnasium instructor and personal trainer education for the provision of appropriate GBEPs and supervision of adolescent participants. Specifically, one interview informant (an industry association representative) stated that his/her organisation did not believe that Certificate IV in Fitness qualified personal trainers were adequately educated to provide appropriate GBEPs for adolescents. This informant defined quality gymnasium instructors and personal trainers as those who are suitably educated and who provide appropriate gymnasium supervision. The implication was that these are two areas of the EFI that require improvement. Another informant (an industry association representative) described cardiovascular and resistance exercise as very important, stating that an appropriate level of advice is crucial for their delivery to adolescent participants at gymnasiums. He/she commented that regardless of the physical activity setting, in addition to quality advice, quality activities and service delivery are also important. Instructor knowledge and the quality advice offered to young people were also demonstrated as important to the business of another informant (a business representative).

It is expected that there would probably be some EFI resistance to improving the level of gymnasium instructor supervision, as generally gymnasium operators have been careful to contain wage costs, which explains their concerns about staff being overqualified, and their preference for independent contractors and lower cost casual workers. As a result of the growth of Jetts, Anytime Fitness, and Snap Fitness, the significant increase in competition between gymnasiums, and the constant battle to secure a point of differentiation, have provided customers with the choice of self-managed, flexible options involving low cost 24 hour trading, or a labour intensive, fully integrated range of services. This has led to an increasing number of gymnasium

businesses progressively adopting features from the ‘self-managed’ exercise business model to lower labour costs. In contrast, the growth opportunities offered by a largely unexploited adolescent market segment—which could promote further competition between gymnasium businesses—demand a focus on staffing capabilities to best supervise and support, and therefore, attract and retain both adolescent and adult customers. Better educated gymnasium instructors and personal trainers, and higher instructor to GBEP participant ratios will obviously increase labour costs, but by providing an appropriately supervised gymnasium environment for all participants, the return on this investment will help the EFI reach its long-term growth potential.

6: Implement customer loyalty strategies

To help the EFI reach its long-term growth potential, gymnasium businesses could adopt a similar strategy to those used by the banking sector with the purpose of developing customer loyalty from a young age. For some time, banks have offered fee-free personal accounts to primary and secondary school and tertiary students. This investment in young people aims to develop brand loyalty for the purpose of financial return in the longer term, as there is a greater probability that these customers will continue banking with the same institution after graduating and commencing a career. This initiative particularly relates to tertiary students, as it has been projected that university graduates will earn higher incomes over their lifetimes than those without tertiary qualifications. For example, a person holding a bachelor degree will earn nearly 1.7 times the projected lifetime earnings of another whose highest level of education is Year 11 or below.¹⁷⁷ Thus, there is an increased likelihood of higher returns from investing in tertiary students, through the greater consumption of financial products together with an ability and willingness to pay bank fees. If gymnasium businesses were to adopt a similar customer loyalty strategy for the adolescent market segment, in addition to the many benefits of granting Australia’s adolescents access to participate in GBEPs, gymnasiums could experience increased revenue growth and higher levels of member retention in the long-term.

¹⁷⁷ R. Cassells, A. Duncan, A. Abello, G. D’Souza and B. Nepal, ‘Smart Australians: Education and Innovation in Australia’, AMP.NATSEM Income and Wealth Report, no. 32, 2012.

For the adolescent market segment, inclusion and positive experiences with a gymnasium brand are important factors in the development of brand loyalty and increasing the likelihood of the continued participation of adolescents into adulthood and throughout life. Having an appropriate level of gymnasium instructor supervision could make it more likely that adolescent participants would feel welcome and have positive experiences whilst participating in GBEPs. Not only could the adoption of customer loyalty strategy—of the type mentioned above—increase brand loyalty and lead to greater numbers of people including gymnasiums as part of their ongoing healthy lifestyles, it could also raise brand profiles. This potential for growth could encourage gymnasium businesses to implement this type of strategy, and it could lead to expanded services for adolescents and an increased level of competition to attract and retain adolescent customers.

Tax incentives or subsidies for parents to reduce their children's sport and physical activity participation costs, and subsequently to encourage greater parental support, was a key idea suggested by interview informants to alleviate the adolescent physical inactivity problem. Specifically, the cost associated with adolescent participation in GBEPs was labelled as a barrier. A cost-benefit analysis of any government incentive to minimise the apparent cost barrier would be necessary, although at first glance there are encouraging potential benefits, including increased participation levels (as a result of an anticipated higher level of support amongst parents, with more motivating their adolescent children's participation in GBEPs), and product supplier and service provider revenue and growth. It is vital for the nation to have an effective solution to the problem of adolescent physical inactivity, and ultimately, as a consequence of a more active, healthier population, there would be less pressure on Australia's health system through a reduction in avoidable medical procedures and associated costs.

In addition to any government incentive to minimise the apparent cost barrier, the adoption of a customer loyalty strategy by gymnasium businesses should include a low margin fee structure to attract adolescent customers, with an aim of developing brand loyalty for the purpose of financial return in the longer term. An advantage of a gymnasium business that caters for both minors and adults is that more people would have access to GBEPs, demonstrating that this strategy also has the potential to

encourage parents and/or guardians of adolescent children, as well as other family members and friends, to become gymnasium members. This would provide an immediate offset to a low margin fee structure for adolescent participants.

Stakeholders identified for collaboration

The interview findings confirm that there is a policy-gap in the participation of adolescents in GBEPs. Industry associations/peak bodies, governments and schools were the key categories of stakeholders the majority of interview informants would select for collaboration if their department / agency / organisation were to initiate policies regarding participation by adolescents in GBEPs in Australia. Industry associations and other peak bodies were specifically mentioned by 57% of informants. Collectively, local, state, territory and commonwealth governments were also commonly mentioned, and included education, sport and recreation departments and commissions for young people. Whilst the education system (primary and secondary schools in particular) was often mentioned by informants as being important for influencing family lifestyles, gymnasium businesses were seldom mentioned as a stakeholder. One informant (an industry association representative), did comment that his/her organisation would collaborate with major businesses such as YMCA Australia, Fitness First Australia, and Genesis because they seem to generate means for smaller gymnasium businesses to reproduce initiatives, and with a favourable outcome, there is potential for greater success.

Local governments, primary and secondary schools, adolescents, parents, representative groups for adolescents, community groups/organisations, and gymnasium instructors were selected as stakeholders, and at a local level, each would potentially be an important collaborator for the design and implementation of individual gymnasium business policies regarding adolescent participation in GBEPs. However, at a state/territory and/or national level, it seems more appropriate that any input from these potential stakeholders should be in the form of feedback to policymakers as part of a consultation process for policy design.

Schools, for example, could better contribute at a local level through partnerships with

gymnasiums, which one informant (a business representative) suggested, to increase the likelihood of young people engaging in GBEPs and other physical activities outside school hours. As previously discussed, state and territory education departments could encourage Australian schools to build networks with service providers who specialise in physical activity and/or healthy eating. Gymnasium businesses could become important partners with schools across Australia, and play a key role in better informing families about the benefits of being active and eating healthily, as well as providing the resources for physical activity participation. If policies were to be initiated at a state/territory and/or national level, state and territory education departments would be more suitable stakeholders than schools. Interestingly, despite expressing frustration about the apparent resistance of schools to partnerships with gymnasium businesses, it did not deter one informant (another business representative), from stressing the importance of such a relationship. This informant regarded schools as the best setting to influence a family's view about physical activity, and their participation in GBEPs specifically.

The findings of this study suggest that the key categories of stakeholders for potential involvement in policy design regarding adolescent participation in GBEPs across Australia, should include: federal, state and territory governments (specifically, the health, sport and recreation, and education departments, and commissions for young people), an Industry Skills Council, industry associations, and businesses within the major and moderate 'integrated exercise services' subcategories (comprised of businesses operating a minimum of 10 large-scale integrated exercise facilities).

Gymnasium age restrictions and access requirements

Policies and practices inhibiting participation by adolescents

Despite the fact that most interview informants were not aware of any policies or practices that might have enhanced or inhibited participation by adolescents in GBEPs, interestingly, those who were aware (33%), mentioned issues related to participation age as inhibiting adolescent participation in GBEPs. With the exception of one, these informants specifically cited gymnasium age restrictions as a barrier. The common lack of gymnasium supervision was also labelled as an inhibitor to adolescent participation

in GBEPs, and it was also mentioned (by an industry association representative) that the requirement by some gymnasiums for adolescent participants to be supervised by their parents, can create problems, particularly for parents. The informant linked this problem to the many gymnasiums no longer employing staff to supervise participants. Instead they have independent contractors who are generally only present for personal training appointments and to acquire new clients. The deflection of supervision responsibilities to parents by these gymnasium operators, regardless of parental knowledge about appropriate exercise for adolescents, represents a failure in their duty of care to participants. It demonstrates that these businesses place their own interests ahead of the welfare of participants.

While it should be a right of young people to have equitable access to physical activity programs,¹⁷⁸ an EFI practice which seems to be commonplace is for businesses to deny gymnasium access to persons under the age of 16 years, with some only granting access from 18 years of age. A Fitness Australia (FA) policy recommending that gymnasiums only grant access to persons aged 16 years and above, has limited the operations of many gymnasiums, according to one interview informant (an industry association representative). Similarly, a second informant (a business representative) referred to previous guidelines clearly directing gymnasiums to deny access to those under the age of 16 years. It was also mentioned (by another business representative) that a number of gymnasiums previously banned young people from participating due to concerns about them engaging in resistance exercise, which he/she believed were shared industry wide. Studies of the physiological and psychological readiness of young people however, indicate that they can easily accommodate regular participation in a whole range of gymnasium activities, with resistance exercise being especially suitable for building physical strength and developing physique.¹⁷⁹

Nevertheless, an opinion that seems to be common in the EFI is that minors are a high-maintenance cohort requiring greater levels of gymnasium supervision than adults. One

¹⁷⁸ R. Parker, E. Elliott, A. Georga and M. Booth, 'Developing a Charter of Physical Activity and Sport for Children and Youth', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, vol. 27, no. 5, 2003, pp. 517–19.

¹⁷⁹ A. Faigenbaum, W. Kraemer, B. Cahill, J. Chandler, J. Dziados, L. Elfrink, E. Forman, M. Gaudiose, L. Micheli, M. Nitka and S. Roberts, 'Youth Resistance Training: Position Statement Paper and Literature Review', *Strength and Conditioning*, vol. 18, 1996, pp. 62–75.

interview informant (a business representative) stated the general view held by the EFI was that participation by adolescents in GBEPs created an operational burden and risk, over and above participation by adults. However, this informant mentioned that his/her business welcomed adolescent participation in their GBEPs, and they had not encountered any associated problems, yet still appeared to consider their participation to be somewhat of a burden. He/she maintained that the principal concerns about participation by adolescents in GBEPs related to the need for appropriately qualified gymnasium instructors, and the required allocation of these resources to provide an adequate level of supervision, as well as the associated labour costs. Regarding the EFI's long standing focus on adults, another informant (an industry association representative) mentioned that the emerging focus on young people by some organisations will lower barriers to adolescent participation in GBEPs, although it seems that most gymnasium operators continue to support these barriers through their bias towards adult consumers. Some other informants mentioned that they broadly support adolescent participation in physical activity, yet their focus was on sport and recreation rather than GBEPs.

The blocking of gymnasium access to minors, and/or the restrictions placed on them by gymnasium operators can be problematic for parents and young people alike. Specifically, age and time restrictions for adolescents, parental supervision requirements, and a lack of supervising gymnasium instructors are barriers to participation by adolescents in GBEPs. Some of these barriers appear to have been exacerbated by a previously held widespread belief within the EFI regarding the perceived unsuitability of resistance exercise for young people. Currently, the main issue for the EFI regarding adolescent participation in GBEPs seems to be about the cost to gymnasium businesses of providing an adequate level of supervision. Properly engaging the adolescent market segment offers potential to further grow the EFI, especially over the long-term. However, this opportunity seems to be ignored by most gymnasium operators, and has been worsened by inadequate partial regulation in particular. A lack of government support appears to be another problematic factor. Assistance in the form of national external industry regulation is necessary to provide adolescents with equal gymnasium access. The poor foresight demonstrated by many gymnasium operators could help to explain why just two of the eight gymnasium

business invitees, chose to participate in this type of study. (It is acknowledged that three gymnasium business representatives participated, two being from the same gymnasium group). From the government agency/departments, industry associations and gymnasium businesses involved, the least represented were gymnasiums, and this was a limitation of this study.

Gymnasium age restrictions were shown to have impacted on a number of questionnaire respondents and their adolescent children. Even though the majority of respondents had not approached a gymnasium about engaging their adolescent children in GBEPs, 39% had done so. A number of these adolescents were denied gymnasium access because they were deemed to be too young, and to illustrate the importance of this finding, when the 'not applicable' responses to the associated question are disregarded, 43% of the adolescent children of these respondents have actually been denied access. As an example, one interview informant (a government representative) was a member of a gymnasium where his/her 14 year old daughter had been denied access because she was below the age of 16. In addition, such age restrictions had also discouraged several respondents from persisting to approach gymnasiums about engaging their adolescent children in GBEPs. To illustrate the importance of this finding, age restrictions for gymnasium access had actually discouraged 38% of these respondents, when disregarding the 'not applicable' responses to the associated question. Gymnasium operators who exclude young people from participating in GBEPs, thus denying them access to a full range of opportunities to improve their health, fitness, and well-being, could effectively discourage parents from participating themselves, and prompt them to seek more 'family friendly' exercise alternatives. In the context of a growing industry continually seeking out new markets and customer segments as a way of building its revenue base, the blocking of gymnasium access to minors directly and indirectly inhibits the EFI from reaching its growth potential. The information included above answers the second research question regarding the extent to which policies have impacted on adolescent participation in GBEPs in Australia.

Gymnasium age restrictions versus family involvement in GBEPs

Gymnasium age restrictions in Australia are clearly a barrier to adolescent participation in GBEPs. It follows that they should be promptly dismantled if policymakers are serious about increasing participation in exercise, sport and physical recreation. In this partially regulated industry, the policies and guidelines discussed are, in the main, essentially unenforceable. Most have had an inhibitory effect on equal gymnasium access for young people. Although the majority of interview informants (79%) were not aware of any policies under development that could affect adolescent participation in GBEPs, it is encouraging that the *Kids in Gyms: Guidelines for Running Physical Activity Programs for Young People in Fitness and Leisure Centres in NSW*¹⁸⁰ is apparently under review. However, it is questionable whether the existence of such essentially unenforceable guidelines significantly improves the treatment of young people by those gymnasium businesses neglecting them. At the time of investigation, a decade had passed since these guidelines were first published yet it seems that most gymnasium operators continue to restrict or deny access to adolescents, and remain heavily focused on adult consumers.

‘Kids in Gyms’,¹⁸¹ one of the main EFI guidelines of relevance aiming to increase the level of young people’s participation at gymnasiums in New South Wales (NSW) and ultimately across Australia, contains various age restrictions based on the different types of exercise programs and classes provided, including a recommended minimum age of 16 years for participation in unsupervised resistance exercise programs. A comment in the guidelines that gymnasium operators had commonly denied access to young people simply to avoid dealing with the issue of their participation, adds some weight to the notion that the gymnasium age restriction barrier may have been built on simplistic underpinnings. These guidelines and other initiatives have not gone far enough to effectively contribute to increasing the level of adolescent participation in GBEPs. It is evident that national external industry regulation is required for a sizeable shift in the quality and consistency of relevant EFI policies and practices, to ensure equal

¹⁸⁰ R. Parker, *Kids in Gyms: Guidelines for Running Physical Activity Programs for Young People in Fitness and Leisure Centres in NSW*, NSW Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation, Sydney Olympic Park, 2003, <http://fulltext.ausport.gov.au/fulltext/2003/nsw/kidsingyms.pdf>, accessed 8 February 2013.

¹⁸¹ Parker, *Kids in Gyms*.

gymnasium access for Australia's adolescents.

The interview informant (an industry association representative) who provided the information about the review of 'Kids in Gyms',¹⁸² mentioned that the revised guidelines will suggest that young people should participate in a variety of physical activities and it will encourage family involvement. Similarly, the policy development within another informant's (a business representative) gymnasium business had a family and community focus to encourage ongoing participation by parents and children. The importance of families highlighted in these developments, adds weight to the earlier discussion about the potential for families to increase their level of physical activity participation through GBEPs. Acknowledging the benefits of family participation in GBEPs, another informant (a government representative) who had regular contact with FA, mentioned that regardless of this organisation's bias towards adult consumers, gymnasium businesses should be targeting families to improve the level of adolescent participation. It was argued that in addition to gymnasium businesses, the broader community would also benefit. Family involvement in physical activities could increase the chances of minors developing favourable lifelong physical activity habits from a young age. The information included above answers the third and final research question regarding policies under development which might be implemented and potentially affect adolescent participation in GBEPs in Australia.

As well as adolescents benefiting from gymnasium businesses catering for families, younger children could benefit too. Access to childcare can be a determining factor in the frequency and duration of participation in GBEPs for some parents, and whether or not they participate at all. For these parents, gymnasiums with childcare facilities obviously hold an advantage over those without. Nevertheless, if gymnasium programs and classes for younger children were to become commonplace (providing another option to childcare), the benefits expected from adolescent participation in GBEPs could similarly be extended to those younger.

¹⁸² Parker, *Kids in Gyms*.

Policy option / strategic opportunity 7

Implement a national gymnasium access requirement

The categorisation of people by age, to determine their rights and responsibilities, is commonplace. Australian adult citizens, for example, have both a right and responsibility to vote in government elections. It is also common to segregate sport participants by their age, which is a generally accepted method, despite it not being the most equitable. Although this disregards the mental and physical development unique to each participant, particularly minors, the segregation of sport participants by their age provides a clear eligibility criterion for participation. The EFI's failure to offer such clarity about gymnasium access is a by-product of inadequate partial regulation, more specifically, inconsistent and restrictive minimum age requirements and blocking of access to young people. This demonstrates a need for a clear eligibility criterion for adolescents to access GBEPs, and enforcement by national external industry regulation to ensure EFI-wide support for participation by Australia's adolescents.

Having the same minimum age for both adolescent boys and girls, would offer families a straightforward, unambiguous gymnasium access requirement. This would assist gymnasium operators to provide young people with beneficial, well-targeted exercise programs, whilst helping to dismantle the barriers to adolescent participation in GBEPs. The majority of interview informants however, were unwilling to nominate a minimum age requirement for the participation of adolescent boys and girls in GBEPs, because they felt that age alone was not the most important consideration. The appropriateness of activities offered, the physical development and maturity of each child, the quality of gymnasium instruction, and relevant evidence and advice from medical and exercise professionals, were the factors they felt should also be considered in determining an adolescent's suitability to participate in GBEPs. Under external EFI regulation, these additional considerations could be addressed through a higher level of gymnasium instructor and personal trainer education, with a focus on adolescent mental and physical development and appropriate exercise prescription. This would also help to improve the quality of pre-exercise screening and gymnasium instruction, whilst providing adolescent participants with appropriate advice and physical activities.

Of the five interview informants who considered it necessary for there to be a minimum age requirement for adolescent participation at typical adult-oriented gymnasiums, three felt that this should not however, apply to gymnasiums which cater specifically for young people. The enforcement of a nationally consistent minimum age for adolescents would provide a clear eligibility criterion for participation, but would also be problematic because it would discriminate against those younger by precluding them from participating in GBEPs, and hinder, in some cases block, the operations of gymnasium businesses that already cater for them. Importantly however, the small number of gymnasiums solely catering for minors would still be able to operate for adolescent customers who have reached the stipulated minimum age under external EFI regulation. Adolescents represent the most suitable group of minors to participate in GBEPs across Australia, especially considering that the majority of gymnasiums are typically adult-oriented. It is beyond the scope of this study to thoroughly examine policy options and strategic opportunities regarding the participation in GBEPs of those younger than 12 years of age. Further studies are therefore necessary to investigate the options and opportunities to increase participation by this age group. Ideally, the EFI would be able to cater appropriately for all ages.

The reason given by the majority of interview informants (80%) regarding a minimum age requirement for adolescent participation in GBEPs, again referred to the appropriateness of activities provided. Whilst the type of activity is a key consideration in this setting, the quality of the technique with which an exercise is performed is generally of greater importance. Furthermore, through national external industry regulation, better educated gymnasium instructors and personal trainers in particular, capable of providing adolescents with appropriately tailored exercise programs and level of supervision and guidance, would allow for the implementation of a clear gymnasium access requirement consisting of a single minimum age. This would eradicate inconsistent gymnasium access restrictions and go a long way towards the dismantling of barriers to adolescent participation in GBEPs.

The majority of interview informants (60%) were unwilling to nominate a minimum age for the participation of adolescents in GBEPs, which was also the case when they were questioned about a minimum age requirement. For the most part, they reiterated that the

focus should also be on the appropriateness of activities offered, the physical development and maturity of each child, and if they were to nominate a minimum age it would be guided by relevant evidence and advice from medical and exercise professionals. However, six informants suggested ages ranging between 12 to 16 years as possibly suitable for boys and girls to begin participating at typical adult-oriented gymnasiums, which was similar to the combined 70% of questionnaire respondents who nominated ages ranging between 12 to 14 years as appropriate for their adolescent child to begin participating in GBEPs. Half of these interview informants nominated the beginning of secondary school as appropriate for adolescents to commence participation, which is generally equivalent to the ages of 12 or 13 years. These ages were also specifically nominated by a combined 40% of questionnaire respondents. As mentioned, studies of the physiological and psychological readiness of young people indicate that they can easily accommodate regular participation in a whole range of gymnasium activities, including resistance exercise.¹⁸³ Whilst acknowledging the varying responses by interview informants and questionnaire respondents about an appropriate minimum age for participation in GBEPs, if national external industry regulation were to be introduced to support the participation of adolescents in particular, it would be appropriate for gymnasiums across Australia to grant access to boys and girls from the age of 12 years.

EFI regulation

Policy options / strategic opportunities 8–11

8: Implement national mandatory gymnasium business accreditation, 9: Implement national mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation

The absence of any comprehensive requirement for gymnasium businesses and gymnasium instructors to register or gain accreditation with the EFI bodies Physical Activity Australia (PAA) or FA (as appropriate), was at odds with the views of both interview informants and questionnaire respondents. Overwhelmingly, the majority of interview informants (93%) believed in the principle of mandatory gymnasium business accreditation, and all informants believed in the principle of mandatory gymnasium

¹⁸³ Faigenbaum, 'Youth Resistance Training'.

instructor accreditation, with the exception of one who did not feel adequately informed to respond directly to the associated question. In addition, 89% of questionnaire respondents felt it should be mandatory for gymnasium businesses and supervising instructors granting access to adolescents for participation in GBEPs, to have relevant accreditation with an industry association. Whilst certification of gymnasium instructors and personal trainers is indirectly regulated by the providers of professional indemnity insurance, it is by no means a comprehensive method. If businesses and/or individuals opt for, and acquire this insurance type, it will only be provided if the gymnasium instructor or personal trainer in question has valid certification.¹⁸⁴ Inadequate EFI partial regulation has resulted in the need for more robust levels of gymnasium business and instructor accreditation. The findings of this study clearly demonstrate support for a mandatory accreditation system to replace the EFI's largely voluntary approach to accreditation.

Whilst supporting mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation because of concerns about unqualified and unregistered workers in the EFI, and flaws in the voluntary accreditation of gymnasium instructors, one interview informant (an industry association representative) did not, however, support the notion of mandatory gymnasium business accreditation, believing that the EFI should continue to be self-regulated. (It is important to note that in actuality, the Australian EFI is partly regulated and the accreditation of gymnasium instructors is largely voluntary). Whereas another informant (an industry association representative), who supported the notion of mandatory gymnasium business accreditation, also advocated a combination of limited EFI self-regulation together with elements of mandatory accreditation. The importance of external EFI regulation was acknowledged, yet self-regulation appeared to be favoured. Contrasting types of regulation however—for what is already a partly regulated environment—could complicate EFI operations and cause uncertainty within the industry about adolescent participation in GBEPs. If a mix of self-regulation and more comprehensive external regulation—potentially rife with complexity—was to be implemented, it could be accompanied by unnecessary bureaucracy. As the enforcement of a nationally consistent minimum age for adolescents would provide a clear eligibility criterion for participation in GBEPs, similarly, a nationally consistent mandatory

¹⁸⁴ Sallmann, 'IBISWorld Industry Report X0025'.

accreditation system would provide the Australian EFI, gymnasium businesses and their workers in particular, with straightforward accreditation requirements, regardless of state and/or territory location(s). The EFI needs an appropriate, impartial and effective mandatory accreditation system to support and protect its stakeholders, particularly customers, gymnasium instructors, personal trainers and gymnasium businesses. To achieve this, the system must be administered by an independent regulator.

Interview informants mostly considered that the positive features of national mandatory gymnasium business accreditation would outweigh the negative, and they focused much more on the positive features when discussing the notion of national mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation. Improved and quality gymnasium practices with a safer environment for participants, and appropriate supervision and equipment, were the main perceived positive features of mandatory gymnasium business accreditation mentioned by 71% of informants. Similarly, the main positive features of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation mentioned by 85% of informants were better quality gymnasium instructor practices—including supervision, appropriate exercise instruction and guidance—and more knowledgeable, better educated, appropriately qualified and accredited gymnasium instructors. Whilst some informants expressed concern about the notion of minimum standards, generally they considered that mandatory minimum standards for all gymnasiums, their workers, programs and services, would be a positive feature of mandatory gymnasium business accreditation. Risk mitigation of participant injury was also identified as a positive feature of both national mandatory gymnasium business and instructor accreditation.

Some interview informants expected that ongoing professional development would be a component of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation, and considered this to be a positive feature to improve the professionalism, knowledge and skills of gymnasium instructors. FA and PAA require their registered gymnasium instructors and personal trainers to participate in ongoing professional development to maintain their registration. Registered instructors and trainers are also required to have a current Level Two Senior First Aid qualification or equivalent, including a current cardiopulmonary

resuscitation qualification.¹⁸⁵ In order for these first aid qualifications to remain valid, the holder must keep them updated by undertaking applicable first aid training within predetermined periods. However, this is problematic because there are no EFI-wide requirements for practising instructors and trainers to be registered with PAA or FA, or to hold relevant and valid first aid qualifications, demonstrating once more the need for a mandatory accreditation system. Significantly, no general requirement exists for instructors and trainers to undertake comprehensive training in child and adolescent development and appropriate exercise programming. In this context, ongoing professional development is also important, as those who could best guide minors towards a balanced healthy lifestyle through exercise, would be equipped with relevant, up-to-date knowledge of child and adolescent physiology and psychology, and a thorough understanding of appropriate activities for the different stages of their development.¹⁸⁶

The duty of care that instructors, trainers and gymnasium businesses have to their customers, emphasises the importance of instructors and trainers holding valid relevant first aid qualifications, to ensure they are capable of providing appropriate assistance in the event of an injury, adverse medical episode, and/or accident (e.g., through misuse of exercise equipment). Whilst gymnasiums generally provide a safe and relatively controlled exercise environment, there is potential for these events to occur. A mandatory accreditation system must include relevant and robust professional development and first aid qualification requirements for instructors and trainers to improve their professionalism, knowledge and skills, and to strengthen the credibility of the EFI.

¹⁸⁵ Physical Activity Australia, *Physical Activity Australia*, South Melbourne, 2012, <http://www.physicalactivityaustralia.org.au/index.php/exercise-professionals-registration/about-registration/>, accessed 23 October 2013; See also Fitness Australia, *Fitness Australia*, Alexandria, 2013, <http://www.fitness.org.au/exerciseprofessionalregister.html>, accessed 23 October 2013.

¹⁸⁶ W. van Mechelen, J. Twisk, G. Post, J. Snel and H. Kemper, 'Physical Activity of Young People: The Amsterdam Longitudinal Growth and Health Study', *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*, vol. 32, no. 9, 2000, pp. 1610–16; See also L. Wankel and P. Kreisel, 'Factors Underlying Enjoyment of Youth Sports: Sport and Age Group Comparisons', *Journal of Sport Psychology*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1985, pp. 51–64.

In addition to the overwhelming support demonstrated by interview informants for a mandatory accreditation system, some negative considerations were also raised. The main negative feature mentioned regarding mandatory gymnasium business accreditation, was the expected cost increase for gymnasiums, with the likelihood that this would result in higher prices for customers. In this context, informants also expressed concern about an increase in bureaucracy and the potential closure of some gymnasiums, due to either an inability to meet mandatory minimum standards or the associated administrative and financial burden. A government incentive for parents to reduce their adolescent children's GBEP participation costs would help to offset both the potentially higher customer prices and, indirectly, the expected cost increase for gymnasiums associated with mandatory gymnasium business accreditation. As previously discussed, the potential benefits of any government incentive to minimise the apparent cost barrier to adolescent participation in GBEPs include increased participation levels, and product supplier and service provider revenue and growth. In addition, the implementation of a customer loyalty strategy by gymnasium businesses, including a low margin fee structure for adolescent customers, with an aim of developing brand loyalty, offers gymnasiums catering for both minors and adults immediate and longer term opportunities to increase revenue. This, together with a nationally consistent mandatory accreditation system, has potential to enhance EFI growth whilst minimising bureaucracy (in comparison to an environment of contrasting regulation types, rife with complexity), and promoting innovation amongst gymnasium businesses seeking to capitalise on the growth opportunities offered by a largely unexploited adolescent market segment.

Whilst interview informants focused on the expected cost increase to gymnasium businesses and customers as a negative feature of national mandatory gymnasium business accreditation, the main negative features of national mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation related to the potential impact on exercise professionals. Specifically, there could be: (1) a lack of suitably qualified and accredited workers, (2) a rigorous process deterring people from seeking accreditation as gymnasium instructors, and (3) experienced exercise professionals lacking sufficient formal qualifications, yet still having excellent knowledge and experience, disadvantaged by an accreditation requirement to obtain a minimum qualification below their level of expertise. These

perceived negative features of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation could also have consequences for gymnasium businesses, however, they could ultimately benefit the EFI, whilst rewarding quality instructors and trainers, and offering an enhanced user experience. It can be a challenge for gymnasium businesses to attract quality gymnasium instructors and personal trainers, which could partly be attributed to the relatively low levels of education typically required for employment in the EFI. According to one informant (a business representative), many instructors and trainers working in Australia lack the respective certificate III and IV qualifications. Not only are the industry qualifications for the most part unenforceable, this situation has enabled large numbers of people to enter its workforce in recent years, and has also put downward pressure on wages.¹⁸⁷ Should there be a short-term lack of suitably qualified and accredited instructors and trainers as a result of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation, this could nevertheless help to reduce the number of ‘cowboys’ within the EFI. Although a rigorous accreditation process could deter some people from seeking employment and accreditation, it could help to attract better quality candidates willing to be part of what would be a more professional industry.

Having better quality instructors and trainers throughout the EFI would not only help to improve its credibility, it would also be particularly important should the industry suitably cater for Australia’s adolescents, which would include the provision of appropriate GBEPs. A national mandatory accreditation system which supports participation by both adolescents and adults would enable more people to access GBEPs, which could stimulate demand for qualified instructors and trainers whilst putting upward pressure on wages. Raised education standards under a mandatory accreditation system, could bring about improved levels of services to customers, providing a basis for gymnasium businesses to increase fees for some adult customer segments. Increased revenue from an expected growth in custom and the higher fees, would help gymnasium businesses fund higher wages to attract and retain better qualified instructors and trainers.

¹⁸⁷ N. Sallmann, ‘IBISWorld Industry Report P9312: Gyms, Sports Grounds, and Other Facilities in Australia’, *IBISWorld*, 2012, pp. 1–36.

As Advanced Standing (recognition of prior learning through education and/or experience) is an important component of a mandatory accreditation system, potential applicants for national mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation must be given the option to demonstrate relevant industry experience. It would be unacceptable to assume however, sufficient levels of knowledge and skills to appropriately cater for both adolescent and adult GBEP participants, if instructors and trainers lacked sufficient qualifications. At the very least, these instructors and trainers must be required to complete a relevant theoretical examination to determine whether it is necessary to undertake a standard approved course to become accredited. Under a nationwide mandatory accreditation system, this process would ensure that all registered instructors and trainers in the Australian EFI meet a minimum required qualification standard, offering quality assurance to customers of accredited gymnasium businesses.

The profile of the EFI would be lifted by the introduction of national mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation. This must incorporate raised and enforced education standards for existing and prospective gymnasium instructors and personal trainers, from certificate III and IV levels respectively, to a single nationally recognised diploma level qualification (for example), and strengthened by relevant and robust professional development and first aid qualification requirements. Under a nationwide mandatory accreditation system, a single nationally recognised qualification would help to simplify such major structural change in the EFI. It would provide gymnasium businesses, instructors, trainers and customers in particular, with a clear understanding of the relevant minimum industry education standard. This change could lead instructors and trainers in particular, to call for the establishment of an employee association or union, as this type of support does not seem to exist within the EFI. Ultimately, having the same education standard for gymnasium instructors and personal trainers could negate the need for separate titles. Generally, the performance of personal training sessions is the main difference between the roles of personal trainers and gymnasium instructors. If they were better qualified, to the same minimum standard, capable of providing appropriate GBEPs, including training, supervision and advice for adolescents and adults, both could be referred to as personal trainers, or given a new and more descriptive title such as exercise and fitness trainer.

In addition to taking gymnasiums into consideration regarding the funding of higher wages and the expected cost increase associated with mandatory gymnasium business accreditation, and also the likelihood of higher prices for customers, it is important to consider any financial implications for gymnasium instructors and personal trainers required to further their education under a nationwide mandatory accreditation system. For instance, it is reasonable to expect that instructors and trainers across the EFI would generally face greater work-related expenses under a mandatory accreditation system which incorporates a single nationally recognised diploma level qualification and robust professional development and first aid qualification requirements. At the same time, higher wages for instructors and trainers could offset such work-related expenses.

Whilst acknowledging that there would be increased consumer confidence in the ability of instructors and trainers to provide appropriate, safe and effective exercise guidance if it were mandatory for them to be suitably qualified, an interview informant (an industry association representative), expressed concern about limitations of the qualifications. He/she commented that if gymnasium instructor accreditation was mandatory, the standards of course delivery (e.g., for certificates III and IV in fitness) and graduate knowledge and skills, would still vary considerably, especially as the relevant certificates are competency based, only requiring a 50% pass grade. A single nationally recognised diploma level qualification for instructors and trainers, as proposed, would also be competency based. As a point of comparison, the qualification requirements for typical undergraduate and postgraduate coursework degrees, essentially also require students to achieve a minimum 50% pass grade. In most educational settings, both within and between institutions, variations in the standards of course delivery and outcomes for graduates are inevitable. Regardless of this common course design limitation, if there were to be raised education standards for all existing and prospective instructors and trainers under a mandatory accreditation system, a general improvement in graduate knowledge and skills would be expected.

10: Implement national external industry regulation, 11: Enhance consumer and worker safety

There is a need for regulatory and operational change in the Australian EFI. The policy-gaps in gymnasium business and instructor accreditation, particularly regarding the participation of adolescents in GBEPs, appear to have a negative effect on this partly regulated industry. Collectively, the main and generally enforceable regulations specific to the EFI, that is, the industry codes prescribed under the relevant fair trading acts in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), Queensland (QLD), Western Australia (WA) and South Australia (SA), lack comprehensiveness and—because of their jurisdictional confines, for example—have limited influence on both the wider EFI and the Australian population.

Further, the interview and questionnaire findings demonstrate strong support for external EFI regulation, including a mandatory accreditation system. Specifically, the majority of interview informants (83%) believed in the principle of external EFI regulation, and 82% of questionnaire respondents felt that gymnasiums which allow adolescents to participate in GBEPs, should be subject to external EFI regulation to improve participant safety and well-being.

Whilst supporting the principle of external EFI regulation, one interview informant (an industry association representative) explained that his/her organisation wanted well targeted, systemic and consistent national EFI regulation that would not inhibit industry growth. He/she believed that a comprehensive approach to external regulation would avoid confusion within the industry, and be cost effective to manage. These are important points to be considered for the design of external EFI regulation, especially considering the limited influence of the industry codes as mentioned above.

Before the EFI can capitalise on the growth opportunities offered by a largely unexploited adolescent market segment, operational issues regarding the introduction of effective national policies and programs to accommodate adolescent engagement with GBEPs must be addressed. This includes the varying requirements of the state and self-governing mainland territory governments in relation to working with children checks

and police checks for those who work with minors, as well as the structural weaknesses in the EFI that seem to make the levels of supervision and exercise instruction of adolescents highly problematic. Significant to the supervision issue is the absence of national external industry regulation incorporating a mandatory accreditation system, to support adolescent GBEP participants in particular. The key factors of gymnasium business and instructor accreditation, and industry regulation must therefore be addressed by policymakers aiming to increase adolescent participation in GBEPs across Australia. This is crucial for ultimately providing adolescents with equal access to GBEPs, and to ensure that those who participate are given appropriate advice, instruction, and a level of supervision that not only produces healthy outcomes and ensures ongoing participation, but also minimises the risk of injury.

Regarding the participation of their adolescent children in GBEPs, the majority of questionnaire respondents rated supervision and accreditation features as having the highest level of importance to them. Specifically, appropriate gymnasium supervision of adolescents (75%), more stringent gymnasium instructor accreditation (55%), and more stringent gymnasium business accreditation (52%) were classified as ‘very important’. Additionally, an appropriate social environment for adolescents (45%), equal gymnasium access for adolescents (45%), and a more personal gymnasium culture (39%) were classified as ‘important’ by the majority. Whilst these key features represent deficiencies within the EFI, the high importance placed on supervision and accreditation by the majority of respondents, adds to the support for external EFI regulation, including a mandatory accreditation system, in part, to address the adolescent supervision issue. For the most part, as children and adolescents have essentially been unwelcome at gymnasiums,¹⁸⁸ action to improve these features, for adolescents in particular, would help to dismantle the barriers to their participation in GBEPs. In doing so, this would lift the profile of the EFI and also help the industry reach its long-term growth potential. The level of industry regulation and policy clearly require advancement.

¹⁸⁸ L. Monaghan, ‘Looking Good, Feeling Good: The Embodied Pleasures of Vibrant Physicality’, *Sociology of Health and Illness*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2010, pp. 330–56.

Interview informants focused more on the positive than negative features of national external EFI regulation, and whilst a few features differed somewhat, generally there were similarities with those mentioned for both mandatory gymnasium business and instructor accreditation. Better quality and safer EFI practices, offering quality assurance, were the main perceived positive features of external EFI regulation mentioned by 77% of informants, and which would be especially important if the industry were to suitably cater for Australia's adolescents. To realise the potential benefits of these features, the provision of appropriate GBEPs for adolescent participants, as well as consumer and worker safety, must be priorities of external EFI regulation. Informants expected other positive features to be mandatory qualifications for instructors and trainers, better educated exercise professionals, a safer exercise facility environment for participants with appropriate exercise equipment, consumer confidence in the EFI, and mitigation of the risk of participant injury. An improved EFI reputation as a result of these features would be welcomed by one informant in particular (an industry association representative), who believed the EFI has a poor reputation for safety, and that external regulation could increase consumer confidence in gymnasium facility safety. Another informant (a business representative) claimed there is a large amount of ageing, second-hand, unreliable and potentially unsafe exercise equipment in use at gymnasiums. He/she believed that an outcome of external regulation, which incorporated exercise equipment safety and servicing requirements, would be a safer exercise facility environment for participants.

Whilst gymnasiums generally provide a safe and relatively controlled exercise environment, as mentioned, it is not devoid of the potential for accidents, injuries and/or adverse medical episodes. Additionally, the informant focus on safety confirms that a safe exercise facility environment with appropriate and well maintained exercise equipment is most important for the EFI and its consumers. Exercise equipment build quality should also be considered in determining the suitability of its use. With different brands, types and levels of use at the variety of gymnasiums across Australia, the most viable national approach to improving equipment safety initially, should require gymnasium businesses to have their exercise equipment well maintained, including an appropriate range of equipment for use by the consumer markets specific to each gymnasium, as well as adolescents. This requirement should be based on what a

reasonable person would deem to be safe and appropriate for use at any given gymnasium. It must include periodic servicing, as well as repairs, to be carried out by an appropriately qualified technician, for any item of exercise equipment requiring this level of maintenance. For example, it would be expected that a reasonable person would consider it necessary for a treadmill in use at a gymnasium to require periodic servicing, but not a dumbbell. Similarly, it would be expected that only a qualified technician should replace a broken machine weight cable, whereas a gymnasium worker without an appropriate technical qualification could replace a standard karabiner used to connect a cable attachment, if broken.

A potential benefit of periodic servicing by a qualified technician is feedback to gymnasium businesses about the condition of exercise equipment and foreseeable repairs. This would be advantageous, given that these proposed exercise equipment safety requirements are somewhat open to interpretation, and do not take into account that a reasonable person would not necessarily have the knowledge to make an informed decision about the safety of technologically advanced exercise equipment. Another necessary requirement of gymnasium businesses would be that they keep detailed records of exercise equipment maintenance and faults. This would cover items sold, leased or donated to commercial, non-profit and/or charitable organisations offering gymnasium facilities to the public (but excluding any period(s) of private ownership and/or use).

Under national external regulation of the EFI, the regulator should have legislated powers to enter any gymnasium business in Australia unannounced to assess the safety and suitability of exercise equipment, and inspect associated maintenance records. The process for enforcement of the proposed exercise equipment safety requirements should include a combination of randomly and specifically selected gymnasium businesses for inspection. For the short to medium-term, it would not be the intention to inspect all gymnasium businesses in Australia, and although inspections would need to be ongoing, they need not be constant. This is designed to exploit the possibility of inspection as a potential motivator for gymnasium business compliance, whilst being a relatively low resource consuming, economical, national concept. Importantly, all gymnasium businesses would need to be informed about these safety requirements and their

responsibilities, as well as the process for enforcement and the associated consequences for those deemed non-compliant. This level of enforcement presents a reasonable approach to generating a safer exercise facility environment for the benefit of both participants and the EFI, whilst aiming to avoid over-regulation and unnecessary bureaucracy.

Interestingly, one informant (a business representative) expected gymnasium businesses in Australia would initially resist external EFI regulation, unless enforced through inspections, with consequences for those deemed non-compliant. He/she singled out small businesses as being the most likely to associate administrative and financial burden with regulation, acting as a deterrent to their compliance. Gymnasium business inspections enforcing the proposed exercise equipment safety requirements would be intended to complement the operations of workplace health and safety authorities, such as WorkSafe/WorkCover. Gymnasium businesses should be able to continue their existing operations and be given a reasonable period to implement any required changes, before the regulator could issue penalties for non-compliance. It would be necessary for the regulator to make concessions for some businesses if it were deemed inappropriate for them to cater for some, or all adolescent groups. For example, 'female only' gymnasiums like Fernwood Women's Health Clubs should not be required to cater for adolescent boys. It is not the intention to use external regulation as a vehicle to dismantle the operations of existing gymnasiums and other EFI businesses, unless justifiably necessary.

Undoubtedly, the introduction of national external industry regulation would be a significant change for the EFI. Particularly important for gymnasium businesses, the proposed adaptable approach to improving exercise equipment safety would not stifle innovation within the EFI, and would support gymnasiums catering appropriately for any market segment comprised of consumers from the age of 12 years. Excluding children below this age from GBEP participation could be especially damaging for the small number of gymnasium businesses solely catering for minors, but importantly it would not prevent them from providing for adolescents aged 12 years and above. Gymnasium businesses which provide other physical activity options such as swimming, at large-scale integrated exercise facilities for example, could continue to

cater for those younger, unrestricted by external regulations specific to GBEPs. In this setting, the variety of physical activity options may attract the interest of some children, and once reaching the stipulated minimum age, could result in GBEP participation. If further studies investigating policy options to increase participation in GBEPs were to show that it would be appropriate for children under the age of 12 years to participate, and made possible through external EFI regulation for example, the consequence could be an even healthier population, whilst further enhancing EFI growth.

The adaptability of the proposed exercise equipment safety requirements ensures gymnasiums across Australia would not be prevented from changing their mix of equipment, providing there is an appropriate range for their specific consumer markets, as well as adolescents. This concept supports the generally high degree of innovation within the EFI and regular adaptation by businesses to an ever-changing market. Whilst well maintained quality exercise equipment would be expected to offer enhanced safety and reliability, particularly benefiting gymnasium participants, it is also important for gymnasium businesses to be able to upgrade and/or change their exercise equipment to help attract and retain customers. If national external regulation were to be introduced, requiring the EFI to cater for Australia's adolescents, gymnasium businesses in need of appropriate exercise equipment should generally face a relatively low additional expense. This is because most exercise equipment is suitable for use by persons of differing body mass and height, with the majority of gymnasium businesses expected to already have suitable equipment for use by most adolescents aged between 12 and 17 years. For example, resistance exercise equipment can generally be adjusted to adapt for different exercises as well as users. However, considering the adult-oriented design of most gymnasium exercise equipment, it is expected that the majority of gymnasiums would have limited equipment for safe and appropriate use by children well under the age of 12 years. Furthermore, at present, it would be unjustifiable to require typical adult gymnasiums to have specific exercise equipment for these children, especially considering that for the short-term in particular, it is possible that not all gymnasiums would attract any or many participants from this age group. These factors add weight to the fundamental recommendation of this thesis that gymnasiums across Australia grant access to adolescents from the age of 12 years.

In addition to the safety and suitability of exercise equipment, and associated maintenance records, it could be necessary for the regulator to utilise gymnasium business inspections to enforce other aspects of external regulation, such as gymnasium instructor accreditation requirements. The provision of appropriate GBEPs for adolescent participants would be an even greater priority for the regulator than exercise equipment safety. As discussed, better gymnasium instructor and personal trainer education and practices could help to improve gymnasium safety and quality assurance, and also mitigate the risk of injury to customers. The importance of this is magnified when considering the potential inclusion of adolescents in GBEPs, given their special needs during this phase of their growth and maturation.

Whilst the majority of interview informants demonstrated support for external EFI regulation, problematic features were also raised, the most common being the cost associated with meeting regulatory requirements. Informants were also concerned that this expected cost increase for gymnasium businesses would result in increased prices for customers, which was fundamentally the same as the main negative feature mentioned regarding mandatory gymnasium business accreditation. One informant (a government representative) stated that the expected higher prices for customers could preclude those who cannot afford, or who may be unwilling to pay, whilst another informant (an industry association representative) cited the cost of establishing EFI regulation as another negative feature. As previously discussed in relation to a mandatory accreditation system (a key part of national external industry regulation), a government incentive for parents to reduce their adolescent children's GBEP participation costs would help to offset both the potentially higher customer prices and, indirectly, the expected cost increase for gymnasium businesses. In addition, the implementation of a customer loyalty strategy by gymnasium businesses, including a low margin fee structure for adolescent customers, with an aim of developing brand loyalty, offers gymnasium businesses catering for both minors and adults immediate and longer term opportunities to increase revenue.

As mentioned, under a mandatory accreditation system, raised education standards for instructors and trainers could bring about improved levels of services to customers, providing a basis for gymnasium businesses to increase fees for some adult customer

segments. Though discriminating against these adult groups, for parents affected, whose adolescent children also participate in GBEPs, the proposed government incentive would help to offset the higher fees. By necessity however, both the incentive and customer loyalty strategy would be biased towards adolescent customers. In addition to the benefits for adolescent health, fitness, and well-being, granting equal gymnasium access to Australia's adolescents could encourage more innovative suitable GBEPs and further competition between gymnasium businesses, with an expected increase in custom and revenue, collectively contributing to EFI growth. Ultimately, this could also contribute to offsetting the cost of establishing external EFI regulation.

The amount of time necessary to meet regulatory requirements, cited by some interview informants as a negative feature of external EFI regulation, was raised in a similar context regarding mandatory gymnasium business accreditation, as was the concern of one informant (an industry association representative) who stated that many businesses would have to cease trading due to an inability to meet minimum standards. However, as previously discussed, government incentives and the implementation of a customer loyalty strategy by gymnasium businesses, together with a nationally consistent mandatory accreditation system, have potential to increase EFI revenue and growth, whilst minimising bureaucracy and promoting innovation amongst gymnasium businesses seeking to capitalise on the growth opportunities offered by a largely unexploited adolescent market segment. If national external industry regulation were to be introduced, as well as the concepts proposed in this chapter, gymnasium businesses—and also gymnasium instructors and personal trainers—would have an unprecedented level of guidance and support, making for a more professional and profitable industry with an enhanced public standing.

In summary, the prevailing levels of regulation of the EFI—and its internal practices, it would seem—have been inadequate for providing Australia's adolescents with equal access and appropriate levels of encouragement and support to participate in GBEPs. To comprehensively address this problem, the following 11 policy options and strategic opportunities have been proposed: (1) promote gymnasium technologies, (2) promote family participation, (3) encourage school and service provider partnerships, (4) build national consensus on adolescent participation, (5) increase level of education and

gymnasium supervision, (6) implement customer loyalty strategies, (7) implement a national gymnasium access requirement, (8) implement national mandatory gymnasium business accreditation, (9) implement national mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation, (10) implement national external industry regulation, and (11) enhance consumer and worker safety. These key areas for increasing adolescent GBEP participation in Australia, whilst ensuring equal gymnasium access, are presented in Figure 5.1.

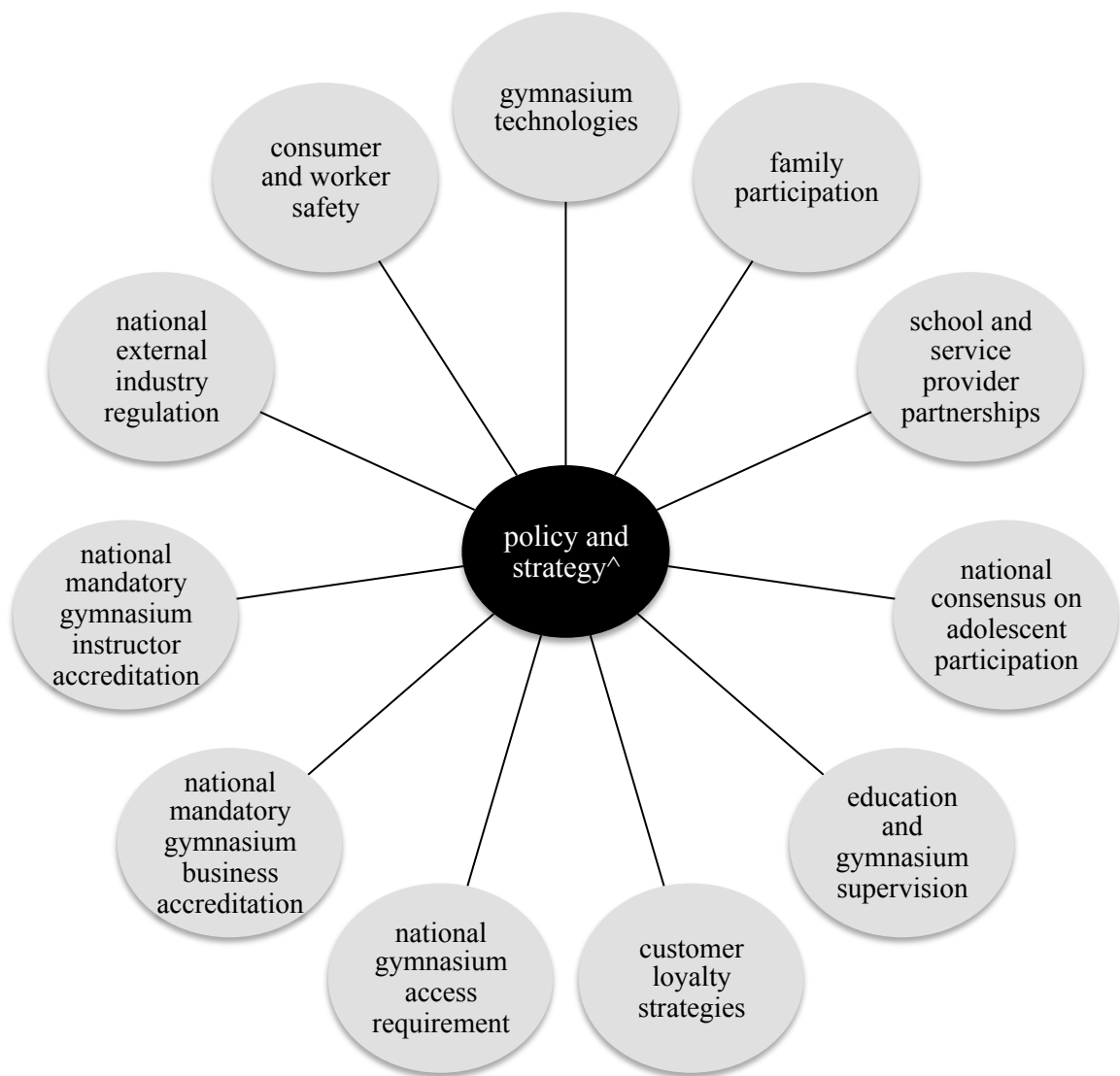


Figure 5.1. Policy options and strategic opportunities to increase adolescent GBEP participation, whilst ensuring equal gymnasium access, in the Australian EFI. (As represented by the key areas shown). ^The abbreviation ‘policy and strategy’ stands for policy options and strategic opportunities.

The aims of this study have been clearly achieved within the chapter thus far. Specifically, (1) the influences on participation by adolescents in GBEPs in Australia have been explained, (2) it has been identified how gymnasiums could contribute more effectively as part of the solution to the problem of adolescent physical inactivity in Australia, and (3) policy options have been provided for the EFI primarily to increase adolescent participation in GBEPs in Australia, with a focus on gymnasium business and instructor accreditation and industry regulation.

A collaborative approach to accreditation and regulation

Industry associations and other peak bodies, were the key categories of stakeholders selected by 57% of interview informants for collaboration, should their department / agency / organisation initiate GBEP participation policies for adolescents in Australia. Similarly, if policy and/or legislation were introduced to regulate the Australian EFI, the majority of informants (64%) believed that peak bodies such as FA and/or PAA, would be best placed to play a major accreditation and regulatory role. One informant (a business representative) believed that PAA best fitted the profile of an independent, not for profit and unbiased organisation which focused on the safety and promotion of physical activity, therefore making it suitable to assume a significant regulatory role. Despite believing that a great deal of work would be required before either FA or PAA would be in a position to ensure a high standard of regulation, another informant (an industry association representative), still considered these bodies to be best placed. Alternatively, two informants (both industry association representatives) suggested that FA or PAA should establish an independent organisation to regulate the EFI, one considering PAA to be legitimately independent and therefore the most appropriate. This does not however, appear to be the best option because its origin could affect industry confidence in its ability to be impartial, further damaging the credibility of the EFI.

Whilst confirming that an organisation with EFI expertise would need to play a role in industry regulation, another informant (a business representative) believed that legitimate commercial industry relationships held by FA and PAA, would preclude them from being unbiased regulators. As an example, this informant believed his/her

organisation could influence FA due to its member status. He/she further commented that any regulator of the EFI must be without bias, to increase the probability of the success of external regulation, in what would be a significant change for the industry. This informant believed that the Industry Skills Council, Service Skills Australia, would be best placed to regulate the EFI, and that the majority of the industry would not consider FA or PAA to be suitable regulators. Unfortunately it is not possible for this study to adequately explore the accuracy of this opinion, as only two of the eight gymnasium businesses invited to participate, are represented.

As previously discussed, in order for the EFI to have an appropriate, impartial and effective mandatory accreditation system to support and protect its stakeholders—particularly customers, gymnasium instructors, personal trainers and gymnasium businesses—it must be administered by an independent regulator. Importantly, the regulator must also be without a vested interest in the EFI, which should negate the possibility of perceptions of bias within the industry. Whilst the regulator would be the authority for external EFI regulation in Australia, it is both important and necessary for its operations to include collaboration with a selection of key industry stakeholders, including both FA and PAA, to perform a major accreditation and/or regulatory role, for the benefit of all stakeholders. Such industry engagement is important for the acceptance, effectiveness, and ultimate success of external regulation. This becomes more apparent when considering the differing informant opinions about the suitability or willingness of some organisations and government departments regarding potential involvement in EFI regulation.

State and territory government departments, such as sport and recreation and health, were also considered important by interview informants. Despite consensus not being reached regarding the best placed department to assume a regulatory role, a worthy suggestion of an informant (a government representative) was for relevant legislation to be initiated at a federal level by the Department of Health. It would then be necessary to seek state and territory agreement on uniform legislation. One informant (a government representative) commented that due to the diversity of the states and territories, external EFI regulation should be the responsibility of their sport and recreation departments for example, in partnership with one of the EFI's peak bodies, such as Fitness Australia.

Interestingly, these government representatives were uncertain whether the sport and recreation departments would want to play a regulatory role, whereas another informant (a representative from a state/territory government department comprising sport and recreation), considered that his/her department would be a very interested stakeholder which would want to contribute to the design of external EFI regulation. A further government representative commented that state and territory government departments, guided by legislation, would be best placed to play a major accreditation and regulatory role, with another, (an industry association representative), asserting that change at a state and territory level would be needed to best achieve effective Australian EFI regulation.

Specifically, to ensure equal gymnasium access for adolescents, external industry regulation is required for a sizeable shift in the quality and consistency of relevant EFI policies and practices. Additionally, external factors such as the varying requirements of the states and territories in relation to working with children checks and police checks for those who work with minors, are amongst the operational issues to be addressed regarding the introduction of effective national policies and programs to accommodate adolescent engagement with GBEPs. If national external industry regulation were to be introduced, it would be fundamentally important for the federal, state and territory governments to play a major accreditation and regulatory role. At a state and territory level in particular, the sport and recreation departments appear most appropriate to be included.

Consumer authorities, such as the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), and workplace health and safety authorities, such as WorkCover, were also suggested to play a role in EFI regulation. However, considering that in general, the compliance by individuals and businesses—in the EFI specifically—with Australian competition, fair trading, and consumer protection laws, the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010*, in particular, is not a direct focus of the primary and other responsibilities of the ACCC,¹⁸⁹ it does not appear necessary for it to have a key role in either the design or implementation of national external EFI regulation. Nevertheless, as it is intended

¹⁸⁹ Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, *About Us*, Canberra, n.d., <http://www.accc.gov.au/about-us>, accessed 7 January 2014.

that the policy options which concern EFI businesses should complement where appropriate, requirements of the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010*,¹⁹⁰ it could be worthwhile for the EFI regulator to collaborate with the ACCC where appropriate. It seems suitable to involve the consumer protection agencies of the ACT, QLD, WA, SA and NSW in the design of external regulation. This is because the industry codes—the main and generally enforceable regulations specific to the EFI—and the *Fitness Services (Pre-paid Fees) Regulation 2011*¹⁹¹ come under the general area of fair trading in the related state or territory.

Additionally, as previously discussed, under national external regulation of the EFI, the regulator should have legislated powers to enter any gymnasium business in Australia unannounced to assess the safety and suitability of exercise equipment, and inspect associated maintenance records. An intention of this would be to complement the operations of workplace health and safety authorities, rather than WorkSafe/WorkCover, for example, assuming a role in EFI regulation.

EFI change to increase adolescent GBEP participation

Despite the potential of the extensive network of gymnasiums across Australia which could offer valuable physical activity community resources for the adolescent market segment, it would seem that for the most part, the EFI has been prepared to neglect this age group. The findings of this study suggest that without external regulation requiring the EFI to cater appropriately for Australia's adolescents, gymnasiums would not evolve to be worthy contributors to a solution for the adolescent physical inactivity problem. From this perspective, the EFI cannot continue to be partially regulated. A mix of self-regulation and more comprehensive external regulation is an option, but would also be inadequate for addressing the policy-gaps in gymnasium business and instructor accreditation, particularly regarding the participation of adolescents in GBEPs. Contrasting types of regulation—for what is already a partly regulated environment—could be accompanied by unnecessary bureaucracy, potentially complicate EFI

¹⁹⁰ Attorney-General's Department, *Competition and Consumer Act 2010*.

¹⁹¹ Parliamentary Counsel's Office, *Fitness Services (Pre-paid Fees) Regulation 2011*, Parliamentary Counsel's Office, Sydney, 2011.

operations, and cause uncertainty within the industry. External regulation, with an independent regulator devoid of a vested interest in the EFI, is therefore required to increase participation by Australia's adolescents in GBEPs, whilst supporting and protecting all participants.

This study has identified that the prevailing levels of regulation of the EFI—and its internal practices, it would seem—have been inadequate for providing Australia's adolescents with equal access and appropriate levels of encouragement and support to participate in GBEPs. Comprehensive policy options and strategic opportunities to address this problem have therefore been presented. These options and opportunities cover (1) national external industry regulation, (2) national mandatory gymnasium business and instructor accreditation, and (3) strategic encouragement and support of adolescent participation in GBEPs. This strategic approach is necessary to dismantle the barriers to participation by adolescents in GBEPs, and to subsequently increase their involvement. National external regulation of the EFI, in particular, is thus crucial to increase adolescent participation in GBEPs, whilst ensuring equal gymnasium access, and to improve enterprise and industry performance in Australia. An outline of this strategic approach primarily to increase adolescent GBEP participation is provided in Figure 5.2.

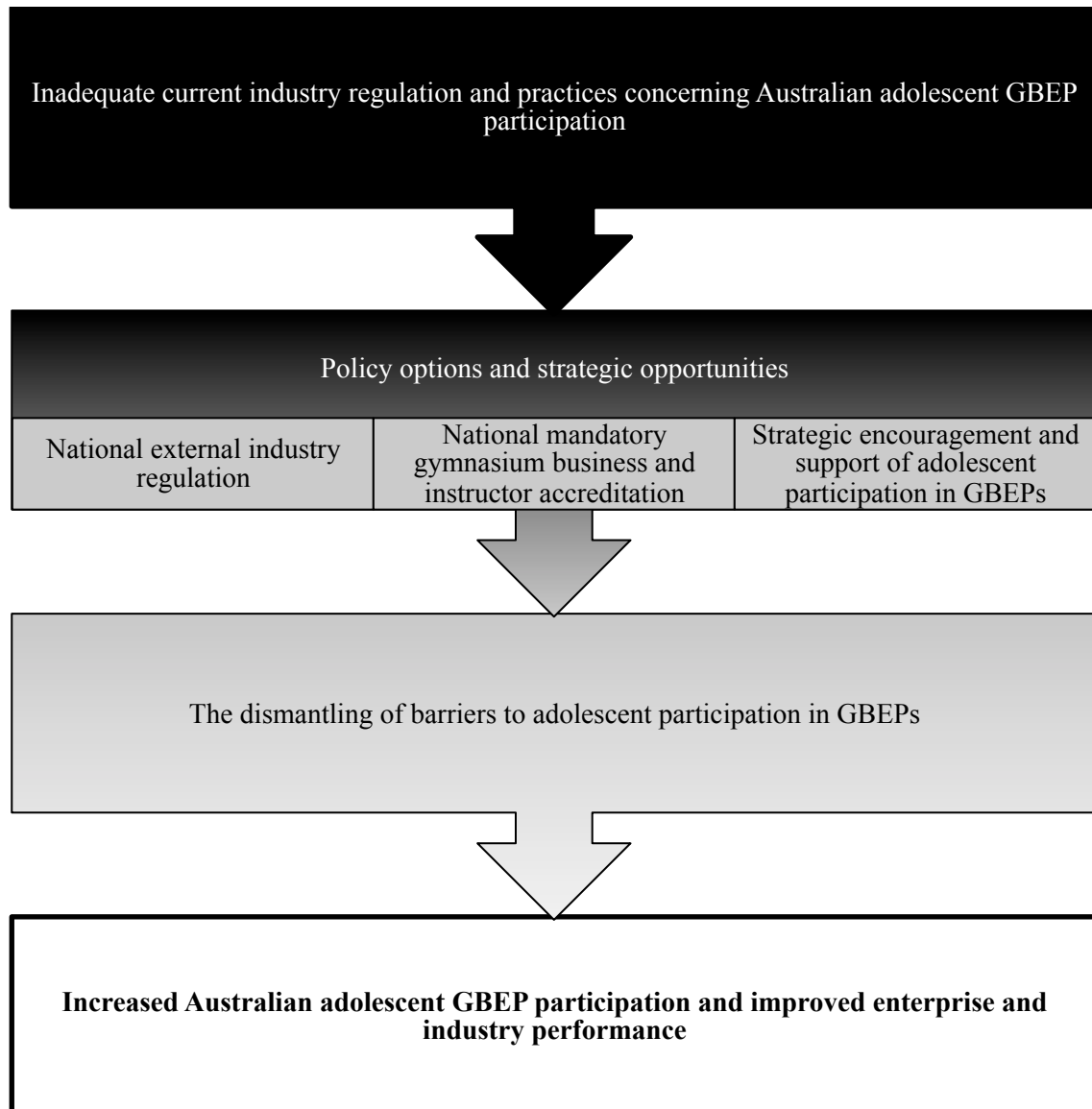


Figure 5.2. A strategic approach primarily to increase adolescent GBEP participation in the Australian EFI.

There is a need for EFI change, from inadequate partial regulation to nationally consistent external regulation encompassing a mandatory accreditation system, a clear gymnasium access requirement consisting of a single minimum age, and with a policy approach which can be adapted to accommodate each state and territory. Comprehensive industry consultation is crucial for the success of external EFI regulation, particularly during its design and implementation. Further, it has been

suggested appropriate to involve the consumer protection agencies of the ACT, QLD, WA, SA and NSW in its design.

As identified, the key categories of stakeholders required for involvement in policy design regarding adolescent participation in GBEPs across Australia, include federal, state and territory governments (specifically, the health, sport and recreation and education departments, and commissions for young people), an Industry Skills Council, industry associations, and businesses within the major and moderate 'integrated exercise services' subcategories (comprised of businesses operating a minimum of 10 large-scale integrated exercise facilities).

If policy and/or legislation were introduced to regulate the Australian EFI, some of the departments and organisations identified as best placed to play a major accreditation and/or regulatory role, were included in the above key stakeholder categories. At a federal level, with the Department of Health (formerly the Department of Health and Ageing) to assume responsibility for Sport,¹⁹² it seems this department would be especially suited to be the regulator. To best achieve effective Australian EFI regulation, taking into account the diverse composition of the states and territories, it appears most appropriate for external regulation to be coordinated at a state and territory level by the sport and recreation departments, which are also independent and without a vested interest in the EFI. This could be made possible through relevant legislation initiated and administered by the Department of Health, with agreement between state and territory sport and recreation departments on uniform legislation. The industry associations FA and PAA were also identified as best placed, and should assume a major accreditation role, but in collaboration with, and under the authority of these government departments. In addition, the Industry Skills Council, Service Skills Australia was identified as best placed and should play a major regulatory role in external EFI regulation. Whilst operational adjustments would be necessary, the general roles of organisations such as these should continue.

¹⁹² Department of Health, *Department of Health*, Woden Town Centre, n.d., <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/Home>, accessed 15 January 2014.

A responsibility of Service Skills Australia is to provide advice on workforce development and skills needs, to the independent statutory body the Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency, which, as a part of its role, advises the Department of Industry on the nation's existing and prospective skills and workforce development needs.¹⁹³ Considering this, if the Department of Health were to become the regulator of the EFI, with involvement from Service Skills Australia, communication between the departments of health and industry would be required.

Recommendations

This study has identified that the prevailing levels of regulation of the EFI—and its internal practices, it would seem—have been inadequate for providing Australia's adolescents with equal access and appropriate levels of encouragement and support to participate in GBEPs. It is perplexing that the industry, gymnasium businesses in particular, has apparently been prepared to neglect the growth opportunities offered by a largely unexploited adolescent market segment. In addition, it is the ethical responsibility of businesses to consider the interests and needs of all those affected by their policies and operations, as stakeholder theory implies.¹⁹⁴ The following recommendations addressing this problem are directed predominantly at the EFI, and cover the 11 policy options and strategic opportunities previously presented: (1) promote gymnasium technologies, (2) promote family participation, (3) encourage school and service provider partnerships, (4) build national consensus on adolescent participation, (5) increase level of education and gymnasium supervision, (6) implement customer loyalty strategies, (7) implement a national gymnasium access requirement, (8) implement national mandatory gymnasium business accreditation, (9) implement national mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation, (10) implement national external industry regulation, and (11) enhance consumer and worker safety. It is

¹⁹³ Industry Skills Councils, *Industry Skills Councils*, 2012, <http://www.isc.org.au/about.php>, accessed 22 January 2014; See also Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency, *Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency*, Canberra, 2014, <http://www.awpa.gov.au/about-us/Pages/default.aspx>, accessed 22 January 2014.

¹⁹⁴ D. Engster, 'Care Ethics and Stakeholder Theory', p. 94, in M. Hamington and M. Sander-Staudt (eds), *Applying Care Ethics to Business* [e-book], Dordrecht: Springer, (Issues in Business Ethics: vol. 34), 2011, *Victoria University Library Catalogue*, EBSCOhost, accessed 2 May 2016.

anticipated that the acceptance of the recommendations made, together with appropriate design and implementation, would offer significant and predominantly health- and economic-related public and private benefits. Regulatory models function under the supposition that individuals, groups, communities, and countries will be in a better position with them, rather than without them,¹⁹⁵ and this is especially so for the ensuing external regulatory model—in place of partial regulation of the EFI.

Policy option and strategic opportunity recommendations 1–10

1: EFI marketing should inform families about the potential to increase their level of physical activity participation through GBEPs.

The expansive network of gymnasium businesses across Australia should be part of a wide-ranging solution to the multifaceted problem of adolescent physical inactivity. Through nationally consistent external regulation requiring the EFI to cater appropriately for Australia's adolescents, gymnasiums would be well placed to play a key role in better informing families about the benefits of physical activity and healthy eating, as well as providing ongoing support and resources across Australia for effective physical activity participation. EFI marketing should inform families about the potential to increase their level of physical activity participation through GBEPs, with emphasis placed on this being a safe, typically flexible and time efficient physical activity option, convenient for the participation of parents and their adolescent children, at the same time, at the same location, either together or independently.

2: EFI marketing should draw on the interest in screen time activities to attract adolescents to participate in GBEPs.

Despite an increasing number of gymnasiums in Australia offering exercise equipment which incorporates computer based technologies of particular interest to many adolescents, the EFI's apparent preparedness to neglect them continues, representing an opportunity for further growth yet to be seized. EFI marketing should also draw on the interest in screen time activities to attract adolescents to participate in GBEPs and to motivate their ongoing participation, turning what is largely a sedentary pastime into a more active one.

¹⁹⁵ A. Freiberg, *The Tools of Regulation*, Sydney: Federation Press, 2010.

3: State and territory education departments should encourage Australian schools to build networks with service providers such as gymnasium businesses.

There needs to be a clear and consistent message to Australia's adolescents and their parents about the benefits of being active and eating healthily. Uniquely, schools are an invaluable hub which could connect this target audience with service providers specialising in physical activity and/or healthy eating. State and territory education departments should encourage Australian schools to build networks with service providers such as gymnasium businesses, to play an important part in the delivery of this message.

4: The EFI needs to have a consistent policy approach with a focus on equality of access, encouragement and support for Australia's adolescents to participate in GBEPs.

A consistent policy approach with a focus on equality of access, encouragement and support for Australia's adolescents to participate in GBEPs is a necessity for the EFI, and would make considerable inroads into removal of the barriers to their participation. Importantly, this policy approach must also be adaptable to accommodate the varying requirements of the states and territories. As the EFI does not yet appear ready to accommodate mass participation by adolescents, ultimately, for the industry to be well placed to successfully attract and retain adolescent customers, operational and environmental change is required in gymnasiums across Australia. In the design and implementation of such change the potential impact on the adult market segments must be fully considered. Additionally, EFI growth could be enhanced under external regulation, through nationally consistent gymnasium practices supporting adolescents and adults alike, with a gymnasium environment and operations built around participant education in safe and sociable conduct, appropriate gymnasium instructor supervision, and well maintained quality exercise equipment.

5: Gymnasium instructors and personal trainers need to be better educated and higher instructor to GBEP participant ratios are required.

The growth opportunities offered by a largely unexploited adolescent market segment demand a focus on staffing capabilities to best supervise and support, and therefore, attract and retain both adolescent and adult customers. Better educated gymnasium instructors and personal trainers, and higher instructor to GBEP participant ratios are needed. If gymnasiums across Australia provide an appropriately supervised gymnasium environment for all participants, improving service levels and potentially benefiting participant health and fitness, the return on this investment will help the EFI reach its long-term growth potential. Furthermore, better gymnasium instructor and personal trainer education and practices could help to improve gymnasium safety and quality assurance, and also mitigate the risk of injury to customers. Under external industry regulation, a higher level of education, with a focus on adolescent mental and physical development and appropriate exercise prescription, instruction and supervision, would enhance the credibility of gymnasium instructors, personal trainers, and the wider EFI.

6: Gymnasium businesses should be required to have their exercise equipment well maintained, including an appropriate range of equipment for use by the consumer markets specific to each gymnasium, as well as adolescents.

Consumer and worker safety must be a priority of external EFI regulation. An initial national approach to improving equipment safety should require gymnasium businesses to have their exercise equipment well maintained, including an appropriate range of equipment for use by the consumer markets specific to each gymnasium, as well as adolescents. This requirement must include periodic servicing, as well as repairs, to be carried out by an appropriately qualified technician, for any item of exercise equipment in need of this level of maintenance. Gymnasium businesses must also be required to keep detailed records of exercise equipment maintenance and faults. Under national external regulation of the EFI, to enforce these safety requirements, the regulator should have legislated powers to enter any gymnasium business in Australia unannounced to assess the safety and suitability of exercise equipment, and inspect associated maintenance records.

7: Gymnasium businesses across Australia should have a customer loyalty strategy for the adolescent market segment, including a low margin fee structure to attract adolescent customers.

Due to an apparent cost barrier to participation by adolescents in GBEPs, as part of the design process for external EFI regulation, the federal government should undertake a cost-benefit analysis of a government incentive for parents to reduce their adolescent children's participation costs. Potential benefits of an incentive such as this include increased GBEP participation levels (as a result of an anticipated higher level of support amongst parents, with more motivating their adolescent children's participation), and product supplier and service provider revenue and growth. In addition to any government incentive to minimise this barrier, gymnasium businesses across Australia should implement a customer loyalty strategy for the adolescent market segment, including a low margin fee structure to attract adolescent customers, with an aim of developing brand loyalty for the purpose of financial return in the longer term. Further to the many benefits of granting Australia's adolescents' access to participate in GBEPs, businesses with an effective customer loyalty strategy could also experience raised brand profiles. It is vital for the nation to have an effective solution to the problem of adolescent physical inactivity, and ultimately, as a consequence of a more active, healthier population, there would be less pressure on Australia's health system through a reduction in avoidable medical procedures and associated costs.

8: The EFI needs to be externally regulated, fundamentally to provide Australia's adolescents with equal gymnasium access.

The main issue for the EFI regarding adolescent participation in GBEPs appears to be the cost to gymnasium businesses of providing an adequate level of supervision. Properly engaging the adolescent market segment offers potential to further grow the EFI, this opportunity however, seems to be ignored by most gymnasium operators, and has been worsened by inadequate partial regulation in particular. In the context of a growing industry continually seeking out new markets and customer segments as a way of building its revenue base, the blocking of gymnasium access to minors directly and indirectly inhibits the EFI from reaching its growth potential. Assistance is required in the form of national external industry regulation, fundamentally to provide adolescents

with equal gymnasium access, as part of a full range of opportunities available to them to improve their health, fitness, and well-being.

9: Gymnasiums across Australia must grant access to, and cater appropriately for, boys and girls from the age of 12 years.

The EFI's failure to offer clarity about gymnasium access for minors is a by-product of inadequate partial regulation, more specifically, inconsistent and restrictive minimum age requirements and blocking of access to young people. Discrimination through exclusion and restriction is a fundamental reason why external EFI regulation, designed to support adolescent participation in GBEPs, is needed. As part of a comprehensive solution to the problem of adolescent physical inactivity, gymnasiums across Australia must grant access to, and cater appropriately for, boys and girls from the age of 12 years (but this must be flexible for those businesses granted concessions by the regulator). Enforced by external EFI regulation, a nationally consistent gymnasium access requirement consisting of a single minimum age, would provide a clear eligibility criterion for participation, and eradicate the inconsistent gymnasium access restrictions, and go a long way towards the dismantling of barriers to adolescent participation in GBEPs.

10: The EFI requires a nationally consistent mandatory accreditation system, which must incorporate raised and enforced education standards for existing and prospective gymnasium instructors and personal trainers, from certificate III and IV levels respectively, to a single nationally recognised diploma level qualification.

The findings of this study demonstrate strong support for external EFI regulation, including a mandatory accreditation system. Inadequate EFI partial regulation has resulted in the need for more robust levels of gymnasium business and instructor accreditation. An appropriate, impartial and effective mandatory accreditation system is required in the Australian EFI to support and protect its customers, gymnasium instructors and personal trainers, and gymnasium businesses in particular. To achieve this, it must be administered by an independent regulator devoid of a vested interest in the industry. Importantly, a nationwide mandatory accreditation system which supports participation by both adolescents and adults would enable more people to access

GBEPs. A nationally consistent mandatory accreditation system must incorporate raised and enforced education standards for existing and prospective gymnasium instructors and personal trainers, from certificate III and IV levels respectively, to a single nationally recognised diploma level qualification, and strengthened by relevant and robust professional development and first aid qualification requirements.

Before the EFI can capitalise on the growth opportunities offered by a largely unexploited adolescent market segment, operational issues regarding the introduction of effective national policies and programs to accommodate adolescent engagement with GBEPs must be addressed. Accordingly, policymakers aiming to increase their participation in GBEPs across Australia, must attend to the key factors of gymnasium business and instructor accreditation, and industry regulation. This is crucial for ultimately providing adolescents with equal access to GBEPs, and to ensure that those who participate are given appropriate advice, instruction, and a level of supervision that not only produces healthy outcomes and ensures ongoing participation, but also minimises the risk of injury.

Through national external regulation of the EFI, and the concepts proposed in this chapter, gymnasium businesses—and also gymnasium instructors and personal trainers—would have an unprecedented level of guidance and support, making for a more professional and profitable industry with an enhanced public standing. Gymnasium age restrictions and the blocking of access to adolescents are clearly barriers to their participation in GBEPs, which—in the interests of policy logic, at the very least—should be dismantled without delay. To this point, initiatives have not gone far enough to effectively contribute to increasing the level of participation. It is evident that external industry regulation is required for a sizeable shift in the quality and consistency of relevant EFI policies and practices, to ensure equal gymnasium access for Australia's adolescents and to increase their participation in GBEPs. It is too important to ignore this need for change.

Recommendation context

An intention of the preceding recommendations which concern EFI businesses is to complement, where appropriate, requirements of the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010*,¹⁹⁶ which includes the Australian Consumer Law and applies to all businesses in Australia.

Research limitations

Limitations of this research include the under-representation of both gymnasium businesses and questionnaire respondents, and the process for recruiting respondents.

Under-representation of gymnasium businesses

As previously indicated, only two of the eight gymnasium business invitees chose to participate in an interview. (It is acknowledged that three gymnasium business representatives participated, two being from the same gymnasium group). Notably, from the government agency/departments, industry associations and gymnasium businesses involved, the least represented were gymnasiums, and this was a limitation of this study.

Under-representation of questionnaire respondents and the recruitment process

As mentioned in chapter three, each interview informant agreed to at least consider informing their department / agency / organisation's networks about the online questionnaire. Whilst the recruitment process guaranteed the privacy of these networks and the anonymity of the questionnaire respondents, a limitation was that it was up to the informants to act, on receipt of the subsequent electronic communication in which advertisement templates were provided for promotion of the questionnaire. Consequently, of those targeted as part of the questionnaire recruitment process, the number of parents and/or guardians eligible to complete and submit the questionnaire was unknown, and this made it difficult to determine why the response rate was low. It is possible that the number of those eligible was also low. Alternatively, the number of

¹⁹⁶ Attorney-General's Department, *Competition and Consumer Act 2010*.

eligible parents and/or guardians may have been high, but the level of interest, and the number willing to participate in this type of study, may have been low.

The provision of advertisement templates was primarily to encourage as many interview informants as possible to notify their department / agency / organisation's networks about the questionnaire. For this type of study, this approach was deemed to be the most appropriate way to reach as many eligible parents and/or guardians as possible to participate in the questionnaire. Through informant connections, it also resulted in other organisations promoting the questionnaire in Australia. Two organisations notified the study investigators regarding the number of people who were targeted. This revealed that collectively, the questionnaire was promoted to no less than 27,770 people. Whilst the recruitment process appears to have led to a relatively large number of people being targeted, the resultant small sample size of 44 eligible questionnaire respondents from across Australia was clearly a limitation of this study. Based on the limited and relevant available evidence, the assumption is made that in this instance, the questionnaire recruitment process was inadequate for achieving a national recruitment target minimum of 750 eligible respondents to a maximum of 1000, which would have been ideal.

For reasons of privacy, the study investigators did not seek specific information about the networks of the departments / agencies / organisations involved, but this did contribute to the difficulty of anticipating the eligible response rate. Control of the distribution spread of the questionnaire was limited by the reliance on the networks contacted to collectively span the nation. To secure a cross-section of the population distribution, a spread relative to the estimated population size of each state and self-governing mainland territory at the time, would have been ideal for this study. Realistically however, of the networks informed about the questionnaire, this was an unlikely outcome.

Research delimitations

Delimitations of this research include the absence of a focus on children, the non-participation of adolescents, and the limited use of questionnaire respondent demographics and other relevant data. Reference to other omissions is also made below.

Absence of a focus on children

The barriers of exclusion and restriction concerning GBEP participation—of adolescents in particular—is a fundamental reason for the existence of this study, with an adolescent population in focus. The minimum age of 12 years was determined to be appropriate for this group, which made it beyond the scope of this study to thoroughly examine policy options and strategic opportunities regarding the participation in GBEPs of those younger than 12, and therefore children of this age group were not a focus.

Non-participation of adolescents

Whilst it was deemed necessary to investigate the government, Industry Skills Council, industry association, business, and parents/guardians of adolescent children stakeholder categories, for a study of this kind, adolescents themselves were not invited to participate, due to legal and social parent/guardian control, and the potential for unreliable data. Accordingly, the project design and ethics approval to conduct this research determined the non-participation of adolescents.

Limited use of questionnaire respondent demographics and other relevant data

The questionnaire was partly designed to produce information for investigating the possibility of a socio-economic affect on (1) the level of importance respondents placed on both their own health and fitness and that of their adolescent children, (2) the average weekly amount of physical activity undertaken by respondents' adolescent children, and consequently (3) the attitudes and opinions of respondents about adolescent participation in GBEPs in Australia. However, as an indication of the fluidity of this study, the possibility of such an affect was not investigated. The low rate of eligible response to the questionnaire determined this, and therefore the limited use of respondent demographics reported in this thesis, consisting of the postcode and state or territory of each respondent's principal place of residence, their gender, the number of adolescent children they parented, and their total household income. With only 44 eligible respondents from across Australia who completed and submitted the questionnaire, the data provided by each, although important, was used to mainly

supplement and illuminate the findings of the interviews, which were the primary focus of this study.

Other omissions

Whilst this study was quite fluid, within its confines it was not possible to address all relevant developments concerning the EFI in particular, which transpired during the course of the study. Nevertheless, every effort was made to produce thorough and up-to-date work. Significant factors such as the generally high degree of innovation within the EFI and regular adaptation by businesses to an ever-changing market, determined the fluidity of this study. By necessity, works cited herein date from several years.

Further research

Implications of this research for future investigations into participation by young people in GBEPs include exploration of (1) the attitudes and opinions of both adolescent and adult GBEP participants, and (2) policy options and strategic opportunities to increase the participation of children under 12 in particular, as well as other young people.

Attitudes and opinions of GBEP participants

The fundamental recommendation of this thesis is that gymnasiums across Australia grant access to adolescents from the age of 12 years. In this study adolescents were essentially represented by parents and/or guardians. Building on this, it would be prudent for further research into the matter of adolescent GBEP participation in Australia to investigate the attitudes and opinions of the GBEP participants themselves, both adolescents and adults.

GBEPs for children and other young people

It was beyond the scope of this study to thoroughly examine policy options and strategic opportunities regarding the participation in GBEPs of those younger than 12 years of age, but it does provide a framework for further studies to investigate the options and opportunities to increase participation by this age group, in addition to young people

aged 12 years and above. Ideally, the EFI would be able to cater appropriately for all ages.

With stakeholder theory as the conceptual framework, it was deemed necessary, for the purposes of the study, to investigate those stakeholders (1) who were perceived to have a common interest in increasing physical activity participation, and (2) whose interests were considered to have the most potential to affect, or be affected by, the accomplishment of the ultimate purpose of this study—to formulate policies and strategies to increase adolescent participation in GBEPs across Australia and effectively contribute to the solution for the adolescent physical inactivity problem. The analysis of the findings of this research—involving investigation via interviews, a questionnaire and document analysis—took place in the context of regulation theory. Beyond this research project, stakeholder theory and regulation theory have the potential to respectively serve as a conceptual framework and an analytical tool for such further studies, not necessarily limited to the bounds of Australia.

Chapter summary

This final chapter examined the interview and questionnaire findings in the context of documents relating to the operations and conduct of the EFI in Australia and, more broadly, other relevant literature on physical inactivity in adolescence, the industry, and regulation. Furthermore, regulation theory was used to assist the analysis of these findings. Accordingly, the discussion concerned the potential for gymnasiums to be part of the solution to the problem of adolescent physical inactivity, gymnasium age restrictions and access requirements, and the need for, and expected benefits of national external regulation of the Australian EFI. Before proceeding to the examination and analysis of the findings, the chapter began by outlining the highly problematic situation of adolescent GBEP participation in the EFI. While the findings showed that gymnasiums were generally viewed as important spaces for adolescent exercise participation, the prevailing levels of regulation of the EFI—and its internal practices, it would seem—have been identified as inadequate for providing Australia's adolescents with equal access and appropriate levels of encouragement and support to participate in GBEPs. The research questions were addressed, the aims of this study were achieved,

and its ultimate purpose, to formulate policies and strategies to increase adolescent participation in GBEPs across Australia and effectively contribute to the solution for the adolescent physical inactivity problem, was accomplished.

The chapter provided policy options and identified strategic opportunities to increase GBEP participation by Australia's adolescents, whilst ensuring equal gymnasium access. It culminated in providing recommendations—predominantly for the EFI—to support both adolescent and adult GBEP participants, improve enterprise and industry performance, and potentially contribute to building a healthier and more active Australian population. It is anticipated that the acceptance of the recommendations, together with appropriate design and implementation, would offer significant and predominantly health- and economic-related public and private benefits.

It is helpful to consider the 10 key recommendations together with the corresponding 11 policy option and strategic opportunity key areas. They are the previously identified areas of: (1) gymnasium technologies, (2) family participation, (3) school and service provider partnerships, (4) national consensus on adolescent participation, (5) education and gymnasium supervision, (6) customer loyalty strategies, (7) national gymnasium access requirement, (8) national mandatory gymnasium business accreditation, (9) national mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation, (10) national external industry regulation, and (11) consumer and worker safety. The key recommendations for EFI change are categorised accordingly in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1. Key recommendations for EFI change. The recommendations in the table are categorised by the corresponding policy option and strategic opportunity key areas for increasing adolescent GBEP participation in Australia, whilst ensuring equal gymnasium access.

Recommendation category	Key recommendations for EFI change
Family participation	EFI marketing should inform families about the potential to increase their level of physical activity participation through GBEPs.
Gymnasium technologies	EFI marketing should draw on the interest in screen time activities to attract adolescents to participate in GBEPs.
School and service provider partnerships	State and territory education departments should encourage Australian schools to build networks with service providers such as gymnasium businesses.
National consensus on adolescent participation	The EFI needs to have a consistent policy approach with a focus on equality of access, encouragement and support for Australia's adolescents to participate in GBEPs.
Education and gymnasium supervision	Gymnasium instructors and personal trainers need to be better educated and higher instructor to GBEP participant ratios are required.
Consumer and worker safety	Gymnasium businesses should be required to have their exercise equipment well maintained, including an appropriate range of equipment for use by the consumer markets specific to each gymnasium, as well as adolescents.
Customer loyalty strategies	Gymnasium businesses across Australia should have a customer loyalty strategy for the adolescent market segment, including a low margin fee structure to attract adolescent customers.
National external industry regulation	The EFI needs to be externally regulated, fundamentally to provide Australia's adolescents with equal gymnasium access.
National gymnasium access requirement	Gymnasiums across Australia must grant access to, and cater appropriately for, boys and girls from the age of 12 years.
National mandatory gymnasium business and instructor accreditation	The EFI requires a nationally consistent mandatory accreditation system, which must incorporate raised and enforced education standards for existing and prospective gymnasium instructors and personal trainers, from certificate III and IV levels respectively, to a single nationally recognised diploma level qualification.

The chapter ended by discussing the limitations and delimitations of this research, as well as the implications for future investigations into participation by young people in GBEPs. In addition, a snapshot of the appendices follows.

Snapshot of appendices

Beyond the reference list that follows are the appendices. Referred to across chapters three and four, the appendices comprise: appendix A, the approval by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee to conduct this research; appendix B, the template of the schedule used for the interviews; appendix C, the transcripts of interviews conducted; appendix D, the template of the cover letter contained in the information packs notifying the interview informants, and others selected for participation, about this study and their involvement; appendix E, the letter contained in the information packs; appendix F, the consent form contained in the information packs; appendix G, the screenshots of the online questionnaire which capture, with the exception of a few minor differences, the visual experience afforded to the respondents; appendix H, the text-only advertisement template provided to most informants for promotion of the questionnaire; and appendix I, a shortened version of the original advertisement template (in appendix H), for use in promotion of the questionnaire by those informants who stipulated strict word count guidelines. The appendices complete this thesis.

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APPENDIX A
ETHICS APPROVAL



MEMO

TO A/Prof Bob Stewart
 School of Exercise & Sports Science
 Footscray Park Campus

DATE 02/02/2010

FROM Dr Tony Watt
 Deputy Chair
 Arts, Education & Human Development Human Research
 Ethics Subcommittee

SUBJECT Ethics Application – HRETH 09/193

Dear A/Prof Stewart,

Thank you for submitting your application for ethical approval of the project:

HRETH09/193 Policy options to increase adolescent participation in gymnasium exercise programs.

The proposed research project has been accepted and deemed to meet the requirements of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) 'National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)', by the Deputy Chair, Faculty of Arts, Education & Human Development Human Research Ethics Committee. Approval has been granted from 02/02/2010 to 23/02/2012.

Continued approval of this research project by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee (VUHREC) is conditional upon the provision of a report within 12 months of the above approval date (by **02/02/2011**) or upon the completion of the project (if earlier). A report proforma may be downloaded from the VUHREC web site at: <http://research.vu.edu.au/hrec.php>

Please note that the Human Research Ethics Committee must be informed of the following: any changes to the approved research protocol, project timelines, any serious events or adverse and/or unforeseen events that may affect continued ethical acceptability of the project. In these unlikely events, researchers must immediately cease all data collection until the Committee has approved the changes. Researchers are also reminded of the need to notify the approving HREC of changes to personnel in research projects via a request for a minor amendment.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me on 9919 4119.

On behalf of the Committee, I wish you all the best for the conduct of the project.

Dr Tony Watt
Deputy Chair
Faculty of Arts, Education & Human Development Human Research Ethics Committee

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE TEMPLATE

Interview schedule

i. Thank you for agreeing to this interview on the issue of adolescent physical inactivity. It is very much appreciated. In this interview, the term ‘adolescents’ refers to minors who are between the ages of 12 and 17 years.

ii. This part of our conversation is not currently being recorded. I will inform you when the recording is to commence and also once the recording has ceased.

iii. Please confirm that you are (INSERT TITLE, FIRST NAME AND SURNAME OF INFORMANT), the (INSERT POSITION TITLE OF INFORMANT) of (INSERT NAME OF THE GOVERNMENT / AGENCY / ORGANISATION REPRESENTED).

☐ (mark this box to confirm response)

iv. For this interview, you are assigned the coded number (INSERT CODED NUMBER). During recording, only this coded number will be used to identify you. Your privacy will always be maintained.

v. Your participation in this interview will take no more than 45 minutes.

vi. The method of this research requires your undivided attention for the duration of this interview. Do you understand and do you agree to this condition?

☐ (mark this box to confirm response)

vii. I will now commence the recording of our conversation.

viii. This interview is being conducted with informant (INSERT CODED NUMBER).

ix. Informant (INSERT CODED NUMBER), thank you for providing us with your completed ‘Consent form’. Could you please confirm that you consent to participate in this interview.

1. Where is physical activity placed within your lifestyle?

2. Do you and your department / agency / organisation believe that a problem exists regarding physical inactivity and adolescents? If so, (a) what do you think is causing this problem, (b) what types of policies, campaigns and programs do you think might alleviate this problem, and (c) what role do you think gymnasiums can play in alleviating this problem?

3. For gymnasium based exercise programs (such as cardiovascular and resistance exercise), what is your department / agency / organisation's position or policy stance on participation by adolescents?

4. Are you aware of any previous and existing policies and/or practices that might have enhanced or inhibited participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs?

5. Are you aware of any policies that are currently being developed which may directly or indirectly affect (i.e., encourage or discourage) adolescent participation in gymnasium based exercise programs?

6. If your department / agency / organisation was to initiate policies regarding participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs in Australia, which key categories of stakeholders would you select for collaboration?

7. Specifically, do you feel that there should be a minimum age requirement for the participation of adolescent boys and girls in gymnasium based exercise programs? If so, (a) what is your reason for this, and (b) what minimum participation age would you nominate for adolescent boys and girls?

8. While we are on the topic of regulation, do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium accreditation? (a) What would be the positive and/or negative features of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

9. Do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation? (a) What would be the positive and/or negative features of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation?

10. Do you believe in the principle of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation? (a) What would be the positive and/or negative features of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation?

11. If policy and/or legislation was introduced to regulate the Australian Fitness Industry, which agencies and/or organisations do you feel are best placed to play a major accreditation and regulatory role?

x. This interview is now over.

xi. Recording has ceased.

xii. Thank you (INSERT TITLE AND SURNAME OF INFORMANT).

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Adolescent Participation in Gymnasium Based Exercise Programs: Barriers and Opportunities

Transcription of Interview with Informant 002

Interviewer (I): This interview is being conducted with Informant 002. Informant 002, thank you for providing us with your completed consent form. Could you please confirm that you consent to participate in this interview?

Informant 002 (I 002): Yes.

I: Informant 002, where is physical activity placed within your lifestyle?

I 002: I am very physically active. I have always played sport and I will do something on at least six out of seven days each week.

I: Very good. Do you and your agency believe that a problem exists regarding physical inactivity and adolescents?

I 002: Yes, we do.

I: And what do you think is causing this problem?

I 002: Obviously, in terms of society, greater access and time spent in sedentary activities particularly the multimedia situation. They are probably more reliant on less active transport than there once was. There has been a general change in what interests young people.

I: Right, well what types of policies, campaigns and programs do you think might alleviate this type of problem?

I 002: I personally believe that the most important setting, despite any of the policies and programs, is within the school setting. That quality physical education and sport are firmly embedded within curriculum time. With families often with both parents working or single parent families with financial and time constraints, the school setting offers the obvious place to expose and provide opportunity for adolescents to be active.

I: Right and what roles do you think gymnasiums can play in elevating this problem?

I 002: In terms of gymnasiums, I think they play a great role in that they can offer something that is not as organised or structured as perhaps sport and other things are. So, people can use them when they want and it doesn't interfere with their life etcetera. The main constraint will be cost and the capacity of gymnasiums to offer things that appeal to young people.

I: For gymnasium based exercise programs such as cardiovascular and resistance exercise, what is your agency's position or policy stance on participation by adolescents?

I 002: We don't have a policy stance on that.

I: That is fine, not a problem. Are you aware of any previous and existing policies and/or practices that might have enhanced or inhibited participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 002: Not actually so aware of policies but a general concern that with the developing physical needs of adolescents, you need to be pretty careful about what you are getting them to do in a gymnasium context because the capacity for long term damage particularly in resistance training, if that is not managed appropriately, then it is a concern.

I: Are you aware of any policies that are currently being developed which may directly or indirectly affect, that is, encourage or discourage, adolescent participation in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 002: No.

I: That is fine. If your agency was to initiate policies regarding participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs within Australia, which key categories of stakeholders would you select for collaboration?

I 002: I have to say that our agency wouldn't do that. It is not something that we are involved in at all.

I: This is also more of a hypothetical situation.

I 002: Look, we would be very much, um, engaging with probably our key stakeholders such as our national sporting organisations, Fitness Australia and also the academic and research side of things such as Sports Medicine Australia.

I: When you say research I assume you are referring to higher education?

I 002: Yes, I am.

I: Excellent. Specifically, do you feel there should be a minimum age requirement for the participation of adolescent boys and girls in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 002: Could you please repeat that again?

I: Sure. (Repeats question)

I 002: Well, I think it can be a bit dangerous to just go by age because it is really about their physical development and age doesn't always go with...it's not a...what would you say...the kids develop differently according to their own physical growth and not necessarily by age.

I: Absolutely. So your main reason for this is more so based on psychological and physical maturity of each child then, of course.

I 002: Yes, that is right.

I: Would you be prepared to, despite what you have said there, to nominate a minimum participation age for adolescent boys or girls or would you prefer to say, stick with your own stance there?

I 002: No, stick with my own stance, thanks.

I: No problems. Thank you. While on the topic of regulation, do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

I 002: Yes.

I: What positive and negative features of mandatory gymnasium accreditation do you feel exist?

I 002: Mandatory accreditation means that the practices of the gymnasium are sound and quality. I would assume that the trainers of fitness in there are fully accredited and qualified. So, the mitigating risk then of injury or liability, you aren't going to get rid of that totally but it is a risk mitigation. I don't see if there is any negative, I wouldn't be at all saying that I support non-accreditation. I just don't think that that is at all feasible.

I: You have almost answered this next question, but I will ask you anyway, do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation?

I 002: Yes.

I: Again, what positive or negative features would you envisage of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation?

I 002: The positive...well...again, no negatives. It is like any profession, if you are not qualified, you just don't do it as far as I am concerned.

I: And the positives are basically what you said in the previous question?

I 002: Yeah. Absolutely. If you are qualified, you have got knowledge, expertise and people feel safe in that regard.

I: Great, and do you believe in the principle of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation?

I 002: Yes.

I: Finally, what positive and/or negative features of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation do you envisage?

I 002: Again, it is all about the quality and mitigating risk for me, so that is a positive and I don't see any negatives. I mean, you know, obviously people will have to jump through some hoops to get with that process but that is to me, absolutely essential.

I: So, similar theme to how you answered the other two questions?

I 002: Absolutely, yeah.

I: Great, and the final question for the interview. If policy and legislation was introduced to regulate the Australian Fitness Industry, which agencies and/or organisations do you feel are best placed to play a major accreditation and regulatory role?

I 002: Sorry, can you say that again?

I: Sure. (Question repeated)

I 002: Well, it is the peak body. Whoever the peak body is, and there is probably more than one, but like Fitness Australia for example.

I: So, that is just the peak bodies you would refer to for this question?

I 002: Yes.

I: Thank you very much Informant 002. This interview is now over.

I 002: Thank you.

Adolescent Participation in Gymnasium Based Exercise Programs: Barriers and Opportunities

Transcription of Interview with Informant 003

Interviewer (I): This interview is being conducted with Informant 003. Informant 003, thank you for providing us with your completed consent form. Could you please confirm that you do consent to participate in this interview?

Informant 003 (I 003): Yes

I: Thank you. 003, where is physical activity placed within your lifestyle?

I 003: In terms of priority?

I: Yeah, where would it fit within your schedule?

I 003: Well, it is a high priority for me. It has been for most of my life, but obviously it has to fit around my working commitments.

I: Absolutely. Do you and your department believe that a problem exists regarding physical inactivity and adolescents?

I 003: Yes, clearly there are lots of challenges for adolescents these days in terms of...well, ensuring that we encourage their involvement in organised sporting and recreational activities. There are lots of other alternatives for them these days that perhaps weren't available to prior generations.

I: And what do you think is causing this problem?

I 003: I think it is a lifestyle change to be honest. I think that clearly sport and recreational activities are still very popular. So I don't think we are at a crisis point by any stretch of the imagination but the options and alternatives are now far greater than they have ever been. Clearly we live in a much more technological age which does consume a lot more of the time available to all segments of the community.

I: Taking into account your response there, what types of policies, campaigns and programs do you think might alleviate this type of problem?

I 003: Well, I think we obviously have to point out the benefits of being involved in some sort of physical activity. That doesn't necessarily mean organised sporting activities. It can mean any kind of physical activity and not for just the obvious health benefits which is what automatically springs to mind when people talk about 'Why should you exercise?' but there are a lot of other medical and social issues that I think can be addressed through involvement in physical activity. I think there is a clear link between physical activity and the reduction in the incidence of mental health issues. I think that there is an opportunity to address many of the social issues confronting society such as juvenile crime and generally teaching people good social skills as well.

I: And what role do you think gymnasiums could play in alleviating this problem?

I 003: Gymnasiums are, I guess, one component of the overall sport and recreation spectrum but probably no more or less important than sporting fields, parks or any other type of activity that you can think of.

I: Absolutely. So, part of an overall picture essentially.

I 003: Clearly.

I: For gymnasium based exercise programs such as cardiovascular and resistance exercise, what is your department's position or policy stance on participation by adolescents?

I 003: Well, it's purely to encourage it. We tend not to single out any particular segment of the industry, if I can refer to it as an industry?

I: Yeah.

I 003: Our goal is to encourage activity in whatever field of interest the individual would like to pursue. We tend not to focus or favour any particular type of activity as being preferable over another.

I: Are you aware of any previous or existing policies and/or practices that might have enhanced or inhibited participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 003: No, not that I am aware of.

I: That is fine. Are you aware of any policies that are currently being developed which may directly or indirectly affect, that is, encourage or discourage, adolescent participation in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 003: No.

I: That is fine. Thank you. If your department was to initiate policies regarding participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs within Australia, which key categories of stakeholders would you select for collaboration?

I 003: Well, I think there are some obvious ones like PCYC (Police Citizens Youth Clubs). There are sports that are more historically linked to gymnasium type activities like boxing, wrestling and general indoor aerobic type activities. Yeah, well, I don't really know what you are looking for in that answer?

I: More so, I suppose the stakeholders? Whether there are any industry bodies or government departments or even independent organisations that you think would be appropriate to liaise with, or to initiate policies, or in the design of policies for the participation by adolescents.

I 003: Specifically in gymnasiums?

I: Yes.

I 003: Um, um. Well, I scratched my head and thought 'no I can't' because we tend to focus on the overall picture rather than a specific type of activity.

I: That is fine. Thank you for your response. Specifically, do you feel there should be a minimum age requirement for the participation of adolescent boys and girls in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 003: It depends what they are doing in the gymnasium. I think there are lots of things you can do inside a gymnasium, and I think that whether there should be age restrictions or not, will depend very much on what type of program and what type of activity the individuals are involved in.

I: Now, considering that, would you, and this is hypothetical, we aren't actually being specific here, but what minimum age would you nominate for adolescent boys and girls? Would you be prepared to nominate an age based on what you have said of course? You don't have to.

I 003: Not really, because as I said it will depend on and vary widely based on the type of activity. You know, I think there has to be care taken around any type of activity that may place young people in particular at risk. Whether that be risk of head injury or limb injuries depending on the particular stage of development that they are at.

I: Absolutely. While on the topic of regulation, do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

I 003: Yes, I do. Yes.

I: What would be the positive and/or negative features of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

I 003: I think that particularly in any environment where people are responsible for the care of those who are using the facility, then there needs to be some regulation around the standards that are expected and can be enforced. The positives are, obviously that they provide a safe environment for people to participate. The negatives are that it can increase red tape and potentially limit the number of operators who would like to be involved in the industry.

I: Specifically, do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation?

I 003: Yes.

I: Again, what would be the positive and/or negative features of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation?

I 003: Clearly, I think there is potential for...if there is no accreditation for instructors then there is potential for injury. That obviously carries with it potential for liability as well. So, that is important. But more on the positive side, it is important that if people are using the facilities of the gymnasium and they are attempting to improve their level of skill in whatever it is that they are attempting, then they should be getting instruction that is going to aid them in that objective.

I: In a broader sense, do you believe in the principle of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation?

I 003: By and large, yes.

I: Again, what would be the positive and/or negative features of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation?

I 003: They are very similar. Obviously, it has to be a safe environment. There needs to be qualified practitioners operating in that environment. There needs to be a way to protect people against operators who are in it for a financial return only, to make a quick buck. To ensure that occupational health and safety issues are always maintained at a very high level.

I: Absolutely, and the final question for the interview. If policy and legislation was introduced to regulate the Australian Fitness Industry, which agencies and/or organisations do you feel are best placed to play a major accreditation and regulatory role?

I 003: Well, I think that under the regulation structure that we have in this country, I think obviously the state governments are the obvious regulators through legislation and administration of the sports and recreation areas. I think that would be the obvious answer.

I: Thank you very much. Informant 003, this interview is now over.

Adolescent Participation in Gymnasium Based Exercise Programs: Barriers and Opportunities

Transcription of Interview with Informant 007

Interviewer (I): This interview is being conducted with Informant 007. Informant 007, thank you for providing us with your completed consent form. Could you please confirm that you consent to participate in this interview?

Informant 007 (I 007): Yes, I do.

I: Thank you. Informant 007, where is physical activity placed within your lifestyle?

I 007: Personally?

I: Yes, personally.

I 007: Yes, fairly high up. It has sort of been a fairly important part of my life right throughout. Probably, in the earlier years, it was more formal sport participation. Now, probably, still a little bit of that, but more a mix of running and walking.

I: And you are doing that on a regular basis?

I 007: Yes.

I: Very good. Now, do you and your department believe that a problem exists regarding physical inactivity and adolescents?

I 007: Yes, we do.

I: And what do you think is causing this problem?

I 007: I think there are a myriad of problems, and we have started to look into what some of the barriers are. I think that the mix of the opportunities that are provided. There are many adolescents that probably don't necessarily want to go down the path of a formalised sporting system. They don't want that commitment of training and playing the same time every week on a weekend. So I think some of them are turning away from that. Others have multiple pressures of teenage years, I suppose with school and friends and part-time work, so I guess trying to find time to fit it in. Then the big issue around spending time with friends but at home more sedentary behaviour like sitting behind the computer screens or on their phones. So that type of social connection is easy for them and they don't necessarily have to turn to a sport or physical activity to get that social contact.

I: What types of policies, campaigns and programs do you think might alleviate this problem?

I 007: We have been grappling with this as well. Certainly, I don't think that there is one silver bullet. I think that one thing that we are looking to work on is more the promotion of a variety of activities for young people. So, obviously, there are still some young people who

want to take part in organised sports, so that is fine and there is a captive market there, but just working with service deliverers, local government, for example, or even as you say, the commercial providers, and just getting them to think about the type of activities they are offering, and trying to get them to think about offering them at a variety of times and in a variety of formats, because it is really about trying to allow the kids access when it suits them. Another avenue is really actually talking to the kids. We find that a lot of the time, and I am sure a lot of the other states are the same, that often we are the ones that are setting the policies and the strategies and we are doing it because we think it is what they want rather than necessarily engaging them and asking them about what is really going to make them get up and get active. Probably thirdly, the other thing that we are very keen on looking at is parents and the role that parents play in supporting their adolescent kids in terms of participating. So, one from being a role model through to how they facilitate opportunities for them, rather than dictating where they should be at one such given time, but helping them with the information they need and where the kids can go to be active.

I: Specifically, what role do you think gymnasiums can play in alleviating this problem?

I 007: I think that going back to my point of offering the variety; I think that gymnasiums could be one part of that suite of activities that can be attractive to adolescent kids. So, when you are talking about gymnasiums you are talking about the fitness centres?

I: Yes, where they conduct cardiovascular, resistance exercise and the use of treadmills, machine weight and free weights equipment and those sort of places. So, fitness centres, yes.

I 007: I think they are one part of the picture and again just making sure that they provide the environment that is comfortable for the kids. Even, similar to adults, some teenagers might have the view that gyms are about, you know, lifting heavy weights and having to look good before you even get in there. Really, having a think about the environment that they are providing, and maybe thinking of the types of classes they offer, rather than maybe just offering circuits or you know, kids having to come in and to do their own thing. Having a real think about the types of classes or programs they are offering that might be a bit different and might be a bit more attuned to what the young people are interested in.

I: Yes. Now, for gymnasium based exercise programs such as cardiovascular and resistance exercise, what is your department's position or policy stance on participation by adolescents?

I 007: In relation to the gymnasiums?

I: Yes.

I 007: Well. Look, I suggest that we wouldn't have a policy as such but I would suggest, as I said, that we would support it as one avenue for kids in terms of being physically active. Obviously, we wouldn't have a position that one is more important than another. I think it is going back to our position around providing the variety of activities. Obviously that does offer a good option, but it is one avenue amongst a suite of activities that should range from the organised sport right through to the more incidental stuff like going around and walking with your friends.

I: Absolutely. 007, are you aware of any previous and existing policies and/or practices that might have enhanced or inhibited participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 007: Nothing immediate comes to mind. I think the focus from this department's point of view is probably more around sport and recreation activities but definitely the work done in partnership with the peak bodies like Fitness Australia etcetera, again, are really around trying to look at the types of activities that are offered. I guess one of the inhibitors that possibly could exist is around the cost of membership particularly for people in the lower socio-economic area, so we look at where participation rates, are at and obviously where the lower socio-economic areas have the lower participation rates and often because of the costs and the membership requirements etcetera, you are not going to find that those people will necessarily put their hands up to go and join a gym. That is a tricky one from that perspective. So definitely looking at the membership and costs options are something which I know would be supported by this department, but I couldn't say anything specifically around particular policies to support that.

I: I understand. Thank you. Are you aware of any policies that are currently being developed which may directly or indirectly affect, that is, encourage or discourage, adolescent participation in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 007: Again, none that are around specific gymnasium participation. So, I guess similar to my previous answer, this department is certainly looking at its policy response to adolescent participation in general, and doing that in consultation with other relevant departments as well, but nothing specifically relating to gymnasiums.

I: That is fine. Thank you. If your department was to initiate policies regarding participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs within Australia, which key categories of stakeholders would you select for collaboration?

I 007: Obviously, the Fitness Industry and local government. I suggest the Department of Education. I would also look for the departments, I guess, that have the youth portfolio, so for example, whether it be community services that actually have youth as a part of their portfolio. I would also look at any states that have commissions for young people or I guess councils that are particularly looking after young people. I know that a couple of states have a commission for young people for example, so engaging those sorts of stakeholders and dealing directly with youth I think would be very important, as well the various sport and recreation departments.

I: Thank you. Specifically, do you feel that there should be a minimum age requirement for the participation of adolescent boys and girls in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 007: I think there are two ways to look at it. If you are looking at it from a traditional kind of use of the gyms, then yes. I don't know what that necessarily should be, whether it is in terms of the developmental considerations, whether that should be thirteen or fourteen for example. But, you know, if the gyms are coming up with innovators, non-threatening, appropriate activity programs for younger kids that might not be necessarily involving weights, but with activities using their own body weight and that sort of thing, then I think that there is room to promote it to the younger age group. I think definitely if it is programs

regarding the use of weights I think it should be guided by the recommendations and what evidence is talked about when young people using weights.

I: Understanding your response there, would you be prepared to, under this scenario, to nominate a minimum participation age and if so, what would be your reason for nominating that age? But you don't have to. I just wanted to confirm that.

I 007: I think I'd prefer to have a bit more of a look at what the evidence is saying around that from a point of young people and activities in gymnasiums.

I: Understood.

I 007: Yeah. It has been a while since I have had a look at this sort of area so I think it would be good to have a look at what the evidence is saying.

I: That is fine. Would it be fair to say that any age that you might nominate would be based on physiological and psychological maturity then?

I 007: Yeah. I would suggest so, yes.

I: And of course what the literature would recommend?

I 007: Yes.

I: Thank you very much. While on the topic of regulation, do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

I 007: Yes, I do.

I: What would be the positive and/or negative features of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

I 007: Probably the quality assurance. The ability to better monitor what is happening in the industry. It would probably help with, I guess, ongoing and continuous improvement opportunities through those mechanisms. The barriers could just mean that maybe the costs could go up because if they have to keep those accreditations up maybe that might have a flow-on effect to their charges, but my immediate reaction is that the benefits would outweigh the negatives.

I: Do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation?

I 007: Yes.

I: And again, the positive and/or the negative features?

I 007: Similar reasons. The quality control and I guess even more so if we are talking about dealing with young people. Just the whole Working with Children Check aspect and all those sorts of things that go to make up for a quality, safe organisation. I think the benefits are very similar. Again, I think the barriers just might limit people's willingness to maybe put their hand up if they know they have to go through a rigorous accreditation process. Obviously making sure it is within reason, but that again would probably be the barrier in that people might think twice about coming on board and becoming an instructor.

I: In terms of the barriers, would you say that the costs of say, accreditation, or the process itself, or both would you see as the major possible barriers there?

I 007: I would say probably both.

I: Right. Do you believe in the principle of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation?

I 007: The principle of it? Yeah. I think so, yes.

I: Again, what would be the positive and/or negative features of this?

I 007: I think similar, with something around quality assurance. I think transferability I suppose. You know, if you are getting qualifications in one state you are getting a consistency across the country. So if you happen to move elsewhere then it is consistent across the jurisdictions. Again, I go back to the whole quality assurance both from a, I guess, right from the instructor level down to the way a gym is maintained through to the professionalism of it. Then again, the negatives would be the deterrents around the time and cost of getting any kind of accreditation or meeting regulations such as that.

I: With this question being focused on industry regulation would you also have those concerns say for providers who are operating in several states or say setting up a start-up company in another state, but their ability to work across the country isn't impeded of course by any regulation that is in place?

I 007: I think ideally it would be great if there is that consistent regulation. So, if you do have a provider who is in a position to set-up and establish themselves across a number of jurisdictions, I guess if you have got that more consistent industry regulation then that sort of thing certainly would be a lot easier.

I: Absolutely. So either way, at a nationwide level, to have a consistency is the main point I am getting at, if that is correct.

I 007: Yep. Yes.

I: Excellent. 007, the final question for the interview. If policy and or legislation was introduced to regulate the Australian Fitness Industry, which agencies and/or organisations do you feel are best placed to play a major accreditation and regulatory role?

I 007: It is a very good question. Do you mean from a federal or state level?

I: Currently it is state run in terms of the set up for gymnasiums whether it is a territory or a state. I don't believe it is administrated from a federal level. They don't have the power at the federal level. So currently that is how it is set up, but seeing this is a hypothetical question, you could, if you felt it was better, to provide a major accreditation or regulatory role from a federal level, that would be okay, or from a state or territory level that would be okay as well, but it is just a hypothetical question.

I 007: I think probably state level because all the states and territories are so different and they have different systems and different environments in which they operate, so probably at a state level. I think somehow it would be needed to be done in partnership with one of the peak bodies, whether it is the Fitness Australia branches or whatever but logically you would think the most obvious one would be through the various departments like the Department of

Sport and Recreation. That would probably be the most obvious. Whether or not they would be happy to do that is another question. That just occurred to me as being the most obvious.

I: Right. Saying whether or not they would be happy to do that, do you feel that there would be a need to set up, say another department or branch of actually that department that would deal specifically with the Fitness Industry, or do you feel it could be incorporated into the existing structure?

I 007: It could be either way. It depends on; obviously the various departments are quite different across the country, so it might be a little bit different across the departments. Some might already have the capacity or some might already have a unit that deals with recreation and fitness type peak bodies so it could fit within there. Again, it would be needed to be done in partnership with industry, and whether you ended up having a separate panel or something like that, that sort of oversees it. Maybe one example that I am just thinking of is for example, the various combat sports commissions across the country for example. So a number of those are managed as such through the departments, but they have like a separate board or commission that oversees the regulatory role. So there could be a mix of examples that you seek out to see how, you know, different regulatory processes are put in place, but it would really depend on how each of the individual departments are structured and what their priorities are.

I: Absolutely, a very good point. 007 thank you very much this interview is now over.

Adolescent Participation in Gymnasium Based Exercise Programs: Barriers and Opportunities

Transcription of Interview with Informant 008

Interviewer (I): This interview is being conducted with Informant 008. Informant 008, thank you for providing us with your completed consent form. Could you please confirm that you consent to participate in this interview?

Informant 008 (I 008): Yep.

I: Informant 008, where is physical activity placed within your lifestyle?

I 008: Within my lifestyle? It is very important. I exercise regularly three or four times a week. I do that by running as it is the form of physical activity that I like the most, and what I am best at.

I: Fantastic. Do you and your department believe that a problem exists regarding physical inactivity and adolescents?

I 008: There is no question of that. The world has become a more sedentary place. There is no doubt about that. Whereas in the past children were more active because they didn't have access to things like computers and things that make them sit for longer. That has meant that adolescents have become less active than they were in the past. There is no question of that. So the challenge is, well, there are many, many challenges, but we have got to ensure that children are re-engaged, that a number of children are re-engaged and be physically active. We have got to make physical activity fun for kids and we've got to have organisations like ours to re-engage not only with the sporting organisations in our state but also very, very strongly engaged with the education department to develop a relationship with the education sector, so that some of the programs that have been run in a number of individual schools around Tasmania, really, really good programs, are not only covering sport, recreation, physical activity, (but also) good eating and hydration habits, so it encompasses all those things. So we are not just talking about, you know, we need to make sure all those sort of programs are consistent across the whole system so we don't just have one or two of the schools in the state doing things brilliantly, whilst others are doing them moderately, or other schools are not doing anything at all. So, that is the process we have actually commenced in Tasmania. We commenced that in November with a forum in Launceston where we heard about some of the great programs that are going on in the state that encompasses all those things, and engaged parents, and how we might find ways to make them consistent across the system.

I: Right. What role do you think gymnasiums can play in alleviating this problem?

I 008: Well, I think gymnasiums are really important. They mean, as I just said during the previous answer, it is just not one thing in isolation that is going to help solve this problem. There is a whole range of things that need to come into the mix to make kids more physically active. By gymnasiums, do you mean like indoor sports facilities, or do you mean

gymnasiums where children go to do, you know, aerobics and weight training and all that sort of stuff?

I: More so the latter, so where you conduct cardiovascular and resistance exercise. So it could be a commercial or council facility. (It comes in) many different forms but generally whether it would be weights equipment, and generally an opportunity to do cardiovascular activity as well.

I 008: Yeah, well, I mean they are really important and I guess it is up to the peak body in Australia, Fitness Australia. They need to market their product so it is attractive for younger people. I am not too sure at the moment whether they do that. The market for people to take up gym membership seems to be for people that are earning money and can afford to pay for it. I am not sure at the moment whether they have provided a product that suits the target audience which we are talking about here, which is between eight and seventeen.

I: I understand, and for gymnasium based exercise programs such as cardiovascular or resistance exercise, what is your department's position or policy stance on participation by adolescents?

I 008: We don't have any policies with regard to the sort of activities that children, you know, we don't have policies on the type of activities that children should undertake. Broadly speaking we adopt the national health guidelines which point to children for good health, that children should have a minimum of 60 minutes, five times a week. 60 minutes of physical activity five times a week for good health. For adults we recommend, and the national health guidelines point to five lots of thirty minutes of physical activity per week. So, as long as children are getting five lots of 60 minutes of physical activity a week then that is, well, we are supportive of that because that is the requirement that they would need to undertake for good health.

I: That is right. So you are happy for wherever they can than be active, whether it is through active transport and walking to school, or participating in a sports club or going to a gymnasium as long as they meet the guideline, that is the level of importance you would place there, I guess?

I 008: Absolutely. The other thing I would say, if kids are getting five lots of 60 minutes a week, now that is fantastic and the more kids we can get doing that the better. What I would say though, coming from a sport background, is that if they are doing that in a group or a club, sporting club type situation, they will also learn other important values and skills that can develop them as people. For example, being part of sporting clubs, they learn things like cooperation, teamwork, trust, respect, and they learn how to win and lose with a bit of dignity and grace as well. They learn too that the role of volunteering in the community is critical as well because they see that the sporting club that they are a member of is run by very strongly minded people within the community who have a strong sense of citizenship that are willing to give up time to make their community sporting club function. So there are all those sort of things I guess that children learn and pick up by being involved in a community sporting club that they might not get if they were simply walking with a couple of mates, or walking on their own, or doing something in isolation from other people five times a week.

I: Are you aware of any previous and existing policies and/or practices that might have enhanced or inhibited participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 008: That is a good question. Any? Um, not at the top of my head, no.

I: That is okay. Are you aware of any policies that are currently being developed which may directly or indirectly affect, that is, encourage or discourage, adolescent participation in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 008: Any policies that...?

I: Any policies that are currently being developed.

I 008: No. None that would hinder the take up rates of eight to seventeen year olds who are using gymnasiums I wouldn't have thought. Not that I can think of any policies at the top of my head that would limit the take up if that is what you are getting at, isn't it?

I: Limit or encourage. So, any positive or negative I suppose in terms of the encouragement or discouragement of adolescent participation in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 008: No, but there is an issue we have perhaps with that they might have to pay fringe benefits tax on workplace health and wellbeing programs that obviously use gymnasiums, but that doesn't really pertain to eight to seventeen year olds. I am not aware of any policies that are directly encouraging children to participate in the sort of gymnasium activities that you mentioned earlier.

I: As you mentioned, also, you haven't been aware of any gyms that are encouraging the uptake from adolescents participating in their programs either?

I 008: Not really. We have regular contract with Fitness Australia and it strikes me that they are not necessarily pitching at that demographic. They are pitching at an older demographic, as I said before, to people who are earning and would take up gym membership.

I: There are some minor programs being run by the bigger chains but it is not uniform, and what you said before about a consistent approach across Tasmania. The same could be applied for the commercial sector to have a consistent approach, so parents and guardians and adolescents know where to go and know what is out there, as well rather than, I suppose, other opportunities to be physically active as well.

I 008: Well, I absolutely agree. Well, what they should be doing is pitching family membership. That is what they should be doing, and that would be to everyone's advantage, not only to gym owners, but to the broader community in so far as getting kids into the habit, with their parents, of undertaking physical activity, because there are countless studies that show if kids are imbued with good physical activity habits at a young age, they are more than likely to take those habits with them for the rest of their lives. So, you know, that sort of family membership package I would have thought would be to the advantage of gym owners to get families working out together, doing physical activity together and also to make sure that they get the kids at a young age, and make sure that they keep up their physical activity for the rest of their lives.

I: The company I actually work for offers family memberships, and we find it is our most successful program for keeping younger people, and of course, the parents involved as well, so you touch on a key, and what we have found anyway, and in the business sense, quite an effective program that we have adopted from an American system. I think it is becoming a little bit more widespread in the industry, but certainly not on a mass scale at the moment. Just to confirm, also, the age group that we are talking about here for this interview are adolescents aged between twelve and seventeen. It is totally okay to be talking about children and adolescents outside of that age group but just confirming, it is from the ages of twelve to seventeen.

I 008: Okay. Right.

I: If your department was to initiate policies regarding participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs in Australia, which key categories of stakeholders would you select for collaboration?

I 008: I think you would obviously want to be talking to Fitness Australia. If we were doing that in Tasmania...were you talking about doing that across Tasmania, or were you talking about doing it across Australia?

I: I guess, for your department, I guess it would be more specific for Tasmania but whoever is the appropriate stakeholder, you would feel for the market that your department would be focusing on.

I 008: Well, I think, um, you will be probably looking at Fitness Australia, the education department, you know, because the kids who we are talking about here, twelve to seventeen, obviously fall between the ages of kids being at school. You would probably involve an organisation like the Premier's Physical Activity Council here in Tasmania. It is a body set up by the state government (of Tasmania) to increase the rates of physical activity in the state. You probably need to have representatives of gymnasiums in the state as part of any working party that you have created. Probably look at entities like the Children's Commissioner as well. She would probably have some input into it as well. I am just trying to think who else, from the top of my head? That would probably be the main ones.

I: That is fine. Thank you very much.

I 008: Ah, probably other entities like you know the Heart Foundation and Diabetes Australia as well.

I: Very good. Now, specifically, do you feel that there should be a minimum age requirement for the participation of adolescent boys and girls in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 008: You have just got to make sure that the people that are doing the supervising of kids in these sorts of activities are aware of limitations that young bodies can, you know, the workouts that young bodies can tolerate. I think that is really important. I don't think there is any great value in young children lifting weights at a young age. Obviously I think it would be valuable for them to be involved in some cardiovascular type activities but there is no, I wouldn't have thought that there would be any great benefit of kids of eleven or twelve being involved with lifting weights. I am not sure. I mean all of this would have to be based on

expert advice from the medical profession and from the people who are doing the fitness instruction, the qualified people who are doing the fitness instruction.

I: Understanding what you just said, would you be prepared to nominate a minimum participation age for both boys and girls to participate?

I 008: I think that it is important that kids are physically active at a young age. I mean, there is no, you know, when they get to the age of five, six, seven there is no reason why children can't be physically active. There is no reason why kids, say from the age of seven or eight, couldn't participate in some form of cardiovascular type exercise, like a Zumba class or something like that.

I: So, for boys or girls say even younger than twelve they could participate say in a gymnasium environment in cardio vascular activity but maybe you are suggesting restricting the weights type activity until thirteen and above roughly? You don't have to nominate if you don't want to, it is just that I am trying to get an understanding.

I 008: Well, it would depend on...I am not an expert when it comes to muscular skeletal tolerance of young kids. That is something that I would leave up to the experts, you know I am not going to speculate on that. I know for example, that, you know, my son who is heavily into football, started doing a weights program when he was sixteen or seventeen on the advice from people who are experts in the field of elite sport. I mean, I don't have the knowledge of, as I said before, you know, what people of a young age, what their muscular skeletal system can tolerate, so I would leave it up to the experts. I would have thought for kids it would be a lot more fun for them being involved with, you know, the sort of activities that I mentioned before, either playing sport in a gymnasium, playing basketball, volleyball or whatever or being involved in the activities where they are active all the time. Like perhaps doing a Zumba class, or doing aerobics or something like that.

I: I understand. Just to go back on the point you made before saying about not too much benefit for eleven to twelve year olds to do, say weight training, and what would be your main concern if eleven to twelve year olds were doing that?

I 008: My main concern would be whether their bodies are physically equipped to deal with it. That would be my major concern.

I: Right. Thank you very much. While on the topic of regulation, do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

I 008: Yeah, I think that all gymnasiums should have appropriate accreditation.

I: What would be the positive and/or negative features of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

I 008: Well, the positives would be that everyone that goes into that gym knows that the equipment is best practice, and that the programs, processes and training and qualifications of the people involved in providing direction to the clients is of the highest quality possible.

I: Any negatives there related to that?

I 008: Well, I guess that the negatives would be, is that there could well be a cost implications to that as far as gymnasiums go.

I: Now, you have almost answered the next question. I will ask it anyway. Do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation?

I 008: Yeah.

I: And again, any positive and/or negative feedback which is related to this?

I 008: Well, the positives are that, as I have said before, people can be assured that they are getting the best possible direction from people who are appropriately qualified. If you are not getting direction from people who are qualified, it opens up risk on a whole range of fronts, in particular poor direction and unqualified advice could lead to people being injured.

I: Right. Do you believe in the principle of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation?

I 008: What do you mean by that specifically?

I: Currently, the Fitness Industry is a self-regulated industry. What we are proposing in this hypothetical question is that do you believe in the principle of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation? So, like enforced regulation on the industry.

I 008: So, via legislation?

I: Yes.

I 008: Look, to be honest with you, from the top of my head I haven't really looked at the ramifications of that enough to give an informed answer.

I: That is okay. Off the top of your head, are there any positive or negative features of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation?

I 008: Well, I think, again that would be along the lines of...I guess there would have to be a case made for 'why would we need it?' If we have a situation at the moment where, excuse the language, if there was a cowboy or rogue element within the Fitness Industry, and that there was a number of instances where people would go to gymnasiums and were being advised poorly on the sort of programs they were doing, and as a result they were getting themselves injured or seriously hurt, if there was a widespread instance of, or a number of instances where this was happening, then you would probably need to look at mandatory Fitness Industry regulation and not self-regulation. From what I see at the moment in the dealings I have with the Fitness Industry, Fitness Australia are absolutely red hot about making sure that its members do have qualified people, and that they adopt the best possible practices. So you go down a pathway, of having mandatory regulation if there are issues that need to be addressed, and I am not too sure, and I don't know enough about the instances of people getting injured, or there being accidents or what have you, to make an informed comment of whether there should be mandatory regulation.

I: That is fine. I appreciate your response. Now, the final question of the interview, if policy and/or legislation was introduced to regulate the Australian Fitness Industry, which agencies and/or organisations do you feel are best placed to play a major accreditation and regulatory role?

I 008: (Pause). Yes, it is an interesting one, isn't it? You know I would have to ask myself, for example, whether it would be the state departments of sport and recreation, whether it is their role to enforce that. It may well be something that the various health departments around Australia would administer. It would probably need to be legislation introduced at a national level, and the states would have mirror legislation as well, and it would probably need to be administered by the various health departments around the place, possibly, the public and environmental health components of the various health departments. Off the top of my head, it is not something that I would have thought that the sport and recreation departments would want to get involved in.

I: So, some type of uniform policy or legislation across the country?

I 008: Yeah, I think that is probably the best way of doing it. Obviously, first of all, you would need to have a look to see what the various states and territories had in regards to that sort of legislation in place. It may well be that some states or territories already have that, and then if there isn't that in place, then I would have thought that it would probably have to be initiated by the commonwealth health department in the first instance, and then get agreement from the states and territories that there needs to be uniform legislation across the country. Yeah.

I: 008, this interview is now over.

Adolescent Participation in Gymnasium Based Exercise Programs: Barriers and Opportunities

Transcription of Interview with Informants 010 and 011

Interviewer (I): This interview is being conducted with Informant 010 and 011. Informant 010 and 011, thank you for each providing us with your completed consent form. Could you please confirm that you consent to participate in this interview?

Informant 010 (I 010): I consent.

Informant 011 (I 011): I consent.

I: Thank you very much. Informant 010, where is physical activity placed within your lifestyle?

I 010: Where is it placed?

I: Where does it fit within your lifestyle?

I 010: In the margins. I would have to say. Busy lifestyle, two kids, teenage children and busy work but I am a gym member and I do try to go three days a week and I also do exercise with my children, you know walking a couple of times a week.

I: Very good. Informant 011, where is physical activity placed within your lifestyle?

I 011: Very high. I've been involved with sport since I was a kid. I have played competitive sport right through until currently. I am also involved in a couple of coaching roles, etcetera.

I: Great. The questions that will follow now are for either of you. You can both respond or you can choose who responds. It is totally fine. Do you and your department believe that a problem exists regarding physical inactivity and adolescents?

I 011: Yes.

I 010: Yeah.

I: What do you think is causing this problem?

I 010: I think it is a combination of lifestyles and, you know, where kids and adolescents interests are at the moment. It is very much a social media focus at the moment. There is a lot of stuff that goes on in the virtual world and taking away from the real world a little bit.

I 011: I would add to that, there is also, I guess, the school and the curriculum. There is, in my mind, not enough or a higher degree of the placement of importance in terms of physical activity within that space. Then there are also the other elements of stranger danger and the media and the like issues, surrounding paedophiles and the like, that for many parents, I think the ability or wanting to allow kids to cycle or to ride to school etcetera has probably

been dropping off as well. Culmination of all those things that I think are impacting on participation in physical activity.

I 010: That is true and I might also add that the ability of parents, where today you have both parents typically working to get kids to training and things like that isn't quite the same. So it is just adding on to the whole stranger danger you know, just letting your kids wander down to the sports training for the afternoon, where quite often most parents may quite often have hours of work that don't correspond with that. It is a little bit challenging. So there are changes in society definitely.

I: Now, building on that, what types of policies, campaigns and programs do you think might alleviate this type of problem?

I 011: I think that something that we have discussed and would like, but it is in a broader government sense, whilst there has been talk about mandatory participation or hours of tuition of PE in schools, (it needs) to be enforced more rigorously because I think across the board it has been talked about but not so necessarily followed up. Again, whether there is research around some of the health, obesity issues, etcetera, to try and support parents and families to integrate into sport and a range of other activities, whether it is after school care or a range of physical activities then there needs to be potentially more focus on that space.

I 010: Yes, that is more of a range of after school activities would be good and ways of engaging. I think, I am just trying to recall the age group we are talking about, twelve to seventeen, is that right?

I: Yes, absolutely.

I 010: Yeah, because a number of kids of that age won't necessarily be in after school care, so it is working out ways in which rather than just going home, and I am reflecting on my own children, I guess, that there are key, accessible organised sporting or recreational events that they can get to and go to.

I 011: There is also space within this, I guess as I have seen some research in papers as well and one of the important areas that we see is the twelve to seventeen age group, in some respects it is a little too late. If kids haven't got good motor skills development already, or been introduced to sport, that it is very hard to get the hook in at that point so that whole progression and interaction and getting the kids from a very young age at being comfortable and having the motor skill development that facilitates choosing or going into a pathway of sport and recreation or physical activity is very important.

I 010: Um, the grassroots stuff. I have to agree.

I: It is absolutely important from a very young age, that is for sure. Building on this, what role do you think gymnasiums can play in alleviating this problem?

I 011: Can you just describe what you mean as gymnasiums?

I: Gymnasiums, I describe as a commercial facility for exercise, where you conduct say cardiovascular and resistance type exercise.

I 011: Yep. Cool, just wanted to make sure.

I: Not a problem.

I 010: I might add that you know, from my own personal perspective here again, which is you know, I have a fourteen year old daughter, and I really wanted her to join the gym that I belong to. Now there is age limit issues there, and until they are sixteen at the particular gym I go to, and I don't know if that is universal, they won't take them on, which is challenging as she is keen to go, and I'd like her to go. I can predominately be there with her but sometimes it would be useful if she could go without me having to be around because of work hours and things. That isn't available at the moment and it is a sort of an impediment to her having that avenue of physical fitness.

I 011: There are probably a couple of things there. We obviously have through what we do at...[identifiable information redacted to maintain privacy], a connection to the ACT Academy of Sport, young athletes developing elite athletes, and they have obviously very good strength and conditioning programs in gymnasiums. In that point where I am going to go is, that there is a little bit of a, and again whether research can confirm or not, I am exactly sure in this space, but there is a little bit of a wives tale that suggests that, 'oh, you don't want your kids in the gymnasium whilst they are in their growing phases' but that is definitely not the case with some of our elite athletes and programs, and it is definitely done on the basis of having very good, muscle and skeletal screenings and well educated strength conditioning staff to oversee that development stuff. In that age group I think that is probably one element around the gymnasiums, about making sure the tuition is doing good rather than harm if they are in that space. So, I think gymnasiums as opposed to other broader exercise are probably just as important.

I: You have both touched on some very, very significant factors there. If you have the chance to trial or review the online questionnaire that we are actually conducting with parents and guardians, particularly regarding the age component there, we do focus quite a bit because it certainly is an issue. What you have raised informant 010 is something that appears to be widespread and at least within Australia and I can certainly appreciate your concern and frustration surrounding that too, and for your daughter because it is not just an isolated case. Now, um, moving on. For gymnasium based exercise programs in particular, so again referring to such as cardiovascular and resistance exercise for example, what is your department's position or policy stance on participation by adolescents?

I 011: We don't have a strict policy position in the sense of that age group participating in gymnasiums for either cardiovascular or weight training per se, as there is no formal policy. As a general overview, our broad direction and policies talk about physical activity and the like is obviously something that is structured and is well managed and definitely endorsed. There is nothing specific in the space of gymnasiums.

I: No problems. Are you aware of any previous and existing policies and/or practices that might have enhanced or inhibited participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 010: I'm not.

I 011: No, not to my knowledge, no. As I said there is that element of the wives tale so that from a more general sense rather than a policy sense. Well, should we be actively trying to get kids involved in physical activity and whatever physical activity that is, that is where we

are very broadly supportive of it but there hasn't been anything policy specific about going to a gymnasium or commercial gyms etcetera.

I: Oh, right. Further to that, are you aware of any policies that are currently being developed which may directly or indirectly affect, that is, encourage or discourage, adolescent participation in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 010: No.

I 011: Not in the ACT.

I: No, no worries. If your department was to initiate policies regarding participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs within Australia, which key categories of stakeholders would you select for collaboration?

I 011: Um, look, I think in that space, given largely gymnasiums are in a commercial sense, we look to probably engage definitely with, through obviously the peak bodies or the relevant groups in the ACT, so Fitness ACT I like, and then whether there are other relevant peak bodies or associated organisations where we want to seek out their views.

I 010: Um. I think it would be good to get obviously a cross section of the community like parents and children and even people involved in schooling and education department in those discussions as well to work out ways in which we can elicit the views of the principle beneficiaries which I think would be the parents and the children that would benefit from having that sort of access and a policy that would support that.

I: Great. Now we started to talk about age restrictions before, specifically, do you feel that there should be a minimum age requirement for the participation of both adolescent boys and girls in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 011: Look, I think with any of this, in terms of any formal gymnasium, it is all linked to risk. Obviously, it is subject to what activities the kids would ultimately be doing in the sense of if you are on some of the, I guess, the cardio equipment etcetera, well, there is no difference between, you might be using it just for walking as opposed to walking around a lake or the street, so I suppose, the diminished risk for that is low. The weights training is where there is a little bit more need to be aware of more potential risk in terms of injury. I think. So that is where there needs to be a bit of a further investigation about...

I 010: And coming back to...

I 011: ...pathways into skeletal screening to make sure that...

I 010: And that maybe another stakeholder...

I 011: (inaudible, spoken over)

I 010: ...in the medical industry, you know, just making sure that developing such a policy what was just spoken of then in terms of, you know, the health risks and acceptable practices in such a policy should be in tandem with the medical profession to, just to make sure that you are doing stuff for the benefit not to the detriment of kids. The cardio stuff, you know, should be relatively low risk provided, but there is obviously sensible use of the equipment etcetera. It is the weights stuff that I think come in that really needs to be given a

good hard look at, to say, look, you know, can you introduce the practices of using weights without actually having too much weight involved at a particular age so that as kids develop and evolve and get older they can move into what is acceptable weight limits for their age and you know, be of a health benefit.

I: If you were to do so, or if you felt it was necessary, what minimum participation age do you think could be appropriate to nominate for adolescent boys and girls?

I 010: Possibly high school age. It is difficult. I really don't feel enough informed myself to make that call.

I: That is okay. We are just curious on the varied opinions on this as well. But you don't...

I 011: Age is sort of a bit of a funny way of categorising kids at this stage because it is really in terms of their development cycles, so whilst invariably it is always going to happen that whatever age is set, there will be some kids that are further advanced in terms of their development than others, so again, that is where there would be the need to be about having a bit more of a risk profile on what you have mentioned before, is that yes, I think we would want to maybe seek out the views or understand, again, through the ACT Academy of Sport they've had links to the sports medicine professional who may have views, and that is where we would want to understand it if we were to consider any policy position about how that should be managed.

I: Absolutely, and as Informant 010 mentioned before that her fourteen year old daughter appears to be very ready and able to participate in the gym but she is unable whereas it could be another fourteen year old, male or female, that may not have the emotional or physical maturity to participate at this stage.

I 010: Absolutely.

I: So, it is certainly not a clear-cut protocol to just simply have age that is for sure.

I 010: I think that is right. There should be other criteria that need to be, you know, assessed.

I: While on the topic of regulation, do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

I 011: (Hesitates) I don't know enough. Well, generally in terms of accreditation if it is set up appropriately, I think as long as there is, well I guess depending on who is governing it and the standards that they need to adhere to, I think is good, sometimes in some sectors you get accreditation that is just about making money within certain areas of the sector. So as long as it is accreditation that, I guess, protects the participants in the end, then yeah.

I: This form of accreditation that I am referring to, when I say gymnasium accreditation, I actually more so mean business accreditation, so the actual gymnasium businesses, not the actual instructors or the participants at this point.

I 011: Okay.

I: So, would you say a particular company adhering to say, mandatory guidelines enforced by an industry body or whatever government department, or whatever it may be.

I 010: If there are industry standards that apply I don't think it sounds like a bad idea at all particularly if we are looking at protecting the interests of a whole range of different users and stakeholders.

I 011: If it is widely and generally accepted around regulation where it is good to do so and that is maybe Australia wide. With any of these things, it is sometimes difficult where states maybe do it in one and not others because they might be on the margins and consideration as to whether it is needed, that is where, I guess, you have to look at it and research it further from a policy stance.

I: What would be the positive and/or negative features of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

I 011: Look, I think, in terms of the positives or the areas in my mind that you would be wanting to cover is, again, in terms of ensuring that it is deemed appropriate and that there is a level of screening or that staff have certain level of accreditation who are giving the tuition to these children but that enforces those mechanisms. That way, you can maybe, have a system that should hopefully either diminish issues or injuries or risk and the like so I think those areas is where you would probably target.

I 010: I think, well, that is what I was going to say. I think that in terms of ensuring that the risk is appropriately addressed and if you are introducing different policies to make sure that people would meet a minimum standard or that organisations would meet a minimum standard—in terms of their delivery—(this) would not necessarily be a bad thing.

I: Right, we have kind of touched on this point. Do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation?

I 011: Look, again, I am probably not across it enough but...

I 010: And I am probably the same.

I 011: ...it links to largely injury and then obviously in the sense of there is a sector out there, in terms of their boot camps etcetera, and to what degree they really have to go through and to really understand the way the body works and movement and the stresses that they are placing upon it by developing weight programs or boxercise or whatever, if that is not covering young kids then I guess it is exposing them to risk of injury then that is where you would want to have a look at whether it that is a good thing or not.

I 010: Particularly, where there are minors. Adults need to be conscious and exercise their duty of care. I mean obviously they expect also though if they are going to a gym and receiving personal training then they are receiving it from someone who is readily equipped and trained to do so, but I think with minors in particular, particularly when parents and others are, sort of, you know, wanting to ensure, and because they are vulnerable in terms of their muscular skeletal development then it is possibly more important at that stage, to ensure that people are well equipped and accredited to be delivering those services and teaching those kids.

I: Again, what positive and/or negative features would you list for mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation? So, in a hypothetical scenario, if there was mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation?

I 011: Well, again, I think you would work though what are the minimum standards form either a qualification to ensure that they have got the appropriate knowledge to give that tuition. I think, that is probably the hook for me.

I: Right. Do you believe in the principle of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation?

I 011: On that basis, in the end I think yes. In the sense that people are purchasing a service, there should be some level of regulation to suggest that the people out there are appropriately qualified. Again, there should be some mechanism to say, well if you were getting tuition around the use of weights that has the ability to injure people quite significantly, that they are appropriately qualified and that the gymnasiums have that duty of care to all of their gym users not just kids.

I: Of the features you have just discussed and possibly even further, what would be the positive and/or negative features of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation?

I 011: I think as I highlighted before if it provides a safer, better educated environment for consumers then that is probably the end outcome.

I 010: Cost, yeah. Cost would be something you would need to be mindful of and again...I mean, you actually want people out there proving these services and you don't want to make the cost involved in achieving them as such that it *inadvertently* locks potential users out because of the passing on of cost and things. So you want to make sure the industry and the availability of gymnasiums to all people remains I guess, affordable, but by the same token, I would agree, that you don't want people out there exploiting the system and just running programs and making money without really thinking about looking after the well being and interests of the people they are giving those services to, particularly kids.

I: That is right. Now, for the final question of the interview. If policy and or legislation was introduced to regulate the Australian Fitness Industry, which agencies and/or organisations do you feel are best placed to play a major accreditation and regulatory role?

I 011: In the ACT, yeah, well, that is an interesting one. In terms of regulation, we have had connections though to Fitness ACT and the organisation Sport Medicine Australia and the like in the past. In terms of where it would sit it would be something that we would have to think about a little bit further as to whether it would be appropriate within our sort of directorate or if it would be better placed within another area. I am not sure.

I 010: For example, we have legislation that regulates and we are actually looking at the moment at revised legislation around combat sports with other jurisdictions across Australia that have a similar thing, so I mean, you know when it comes to regulating health and safety aspects there is some precedent of some stuff sitting with us but I agree with 011. We have to probably look at it and understand exactly what we are regulating and how to tease that. Whether or not it would all sit with us or whether or not it would sit possibly with elements of health. We are not sure but we would certainly be a very keen interested stakeholder in it and be part of the process of teasing that out.

I: Thank you very much. 010 and 011, this interview is now over.

Adolescent Participation in Gymnasium Based Exercise Programs: Barriers and Opportunities

Transcription of Interview with Informants 012 and 013

Interviewer (I): This interview is being conducted with Informant 013. Informant 013, thank you for providing us with your completed consent form. Could you please confirm that you do consent to participate in this interview?

Informant 013 (I 013): I do.

I: Thank you. Informant 013, where is physical activity placed within your lifestyle?

I 013: Where it is placed within my lifestyle?

I: Yes. Where does physical activity fit within your lifestyle?

I 013: Oh, physical activity in general. Well, I am a personal trainer so probably not as much as it should given what I do but it should as it is part of my living. (Laughs) Personally I like to think that I am fairly active but not as active as I should be on a regular basis.

I: I am sure you are busy training your clients as well.

I 013: Well, that is the problem with PT jobs, there is not a lot of time left for me. (Laughs) I do have my off periods, so if the sun is shining I like to get back out there.

I: Very good. Do you and your organisation believe that a problem exists regarding physical inactivity and adolescents?

I 013: Absolutely.

I: And what do you think is causing this problem?

I 013: From a personal perspective I think it is parents who are uneducated as to what their kids need to be doing. I think it has a lot to do with the different availability of video games, television, social marketing and any excuse not to move from the couch.

I: Sorry, 013 do you mean social media or do you mean social marketing?

I 013: Sorry, social media. Social media.

I: No worries.

I 013: I think that we have just become a lazy society. What we have established as an organisation, well, not us entirely, but the research that we have come across is that mothers will have a greater impact on their children's activity more so than fathers will. Fathers have a tendency to exercise on their own so the kids don't actually see that. Whereas mums if they are going to do something they will do it as a family. So the majority of it stems from

parents, either laziness or time constraints or just lack of, naivety, lack of knowledge and knowing what they should be doing.

I: What types of policies, campaigns and programs do you think might alleviate this problem?

I 013: One of those things that we are actually working on is advocating for policy reform especially for the lower socio-economic demographic for families who receive...

I: Sorry, 013 you are actually cutting out there.

I 013: Is that better?

I: Yes, I can hear you now but I probably missed the last 10 seconds or so.

I 013: That is all right. So we are advocating for policy (inaudible).

I: Sorry to stop you there 013 but it is quite a crackly line.

I 013: Let me find a different spot. Bear with me.

I: Thank you so much. Can you hear me okay.

I 013: We mostly have bad reception in this office. Is this better?

I: That is perfect now.

I 013: I'll just stay here. I am just taking over someone else's office. All right, so we are advocating for tax rebates for families for children to participate in extracurricular activities or any other sporting or physical activities.

I: Very good. So, are you advocating that as a state based initiative or are you advocating that for Australia wide.

I 013: It will be federal.

I: Fantastic. And what roles do you think gymnasiums can play in alleviating this problem?

I 013: I think there needs to be more kids' gym programs available. I know it is starting to happen more and more where they are contracting to some of the smaller providers of kids' programs but I think there probably needs to be something at the majority of facilities where the children and/or adolescents can participate. I think that is really lacking because the aerobics like industries and the gym floor isn't designed for adolescents to participate and the same with the classes. I think they need to be, you know, just something to be put into the gym program that allows for kids' activities specifically.

I: Now, for gymnasium based exercise programs such as cardiovascular and resistance exercise, what is your organisation's position or policy stance on participation by adolescents?

I 013: We don't have one. (Laughs) It is not something that has been discussed. Everything that we are doing at the moment from policy perspective does not specifically

relate to a gym environment, but it is about general physical activities, so any way to get Australians off their backsides and moving. We are not specifically advocating that they, that their physical activity is based in a fitness facility. Just to get up and go for a walk.

I: So, from an immediate sense does your organisation see that to be more likely to have a positive effect by getting the public to be engaged in physical activity in general rather than attending gymnasiums?

I 013: Absolutely. We are very conscious and in my discussions with my colleague, of making sure that what we are doing is also advantageous for our clientele which are trainers and instructors, so the idea is that a lot of people can't do this by themselves or don't want to do it on their own so they then engage a trainer to assist them. Whether that happens to take place outdoors in parks wherever, or in a fitness facility it is entirely their call but we are certainly not specifically pushing them towards a gym.

I: Thank you. Now, are you aware of any previous and existing policies and/or practices that might have enhanced or inhibited participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 013: Are you taking about legislation or government type policy?

I: It could be anything. It could be individual gymnasium policies, it could be a regulation type policy or a self-regulating policy or an actual practice conducted by a business. So anything that you are aware that may have enhanced or inhibited participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 013: I am not sure. The only thing I am aware of is having enhanced facilities that are geared towards kids or adolescents programs. That is what they are there for. As far as hindering adolescents in a gym facility, a lot of them do actually have minimum age requirements for when they can participate on their own or that they need to be supervised so you are adding another level of responsibility that a parent or a guardian who needs to be there all the time, so from what I have seen that can create a lot of problems. Again, it is an extra responsibility for mums and dads.

I: So you are aware of cases where gymnasiums are saying where a child participates, the parent needs to supervise rather than by the actual staff members?

I 013: Absolutely, yep. Well, with the way that fitness facilities are run these days from a staffing perspective, a lot of them don't have gym floor staff specifically, they have trainers who are contractors who are there for personal training, or if they are group exercise trainers, to do their classes, but that is it. There isn't a lot of supervision on the gym floor from what I have seen.

I: Right, so we have talked about the action that your organisation has taken to attempt to increase physical activity from a general activity sense, specifically are you aware of any policies that are currently being developed which may directly or indirectly affect, that is, encourage or discourage, adolescent participation in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 013: No, I am not aware of anything like that.

I: No problems. Thank you 013. Now, moving on. If your organisation was to initiate policies regarding participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs within Australia, which key categories of stakeholders would you select for collaboration?

I 013: Well, I imagine it would be the large chain fitness facilities, organisation such as YMCA, Fitness First, and Genesis etcetera. They seem to open up gateways for the smaller facilities to follow. I think that is probably where it would start. If we are talking specifically about an in-house policy then that is where we would go. If we were looking at policy or some legislation and policy change like where we are currently working with the Council on Obesity and Health Prevention, so you know, that sort of avenue into Federal government.

I: Targeting, say more of the larger gymnasium chains at more of the mainstream level, have you noticed, say, programs that have been implemented and that they have filtered down into smaller operators and become more of an industry wide practice regarding any particular initiative?

I 013: I think I said that they seem to set up trends so I would imagine then that it would filter to the smaller gyms.

I: Can you think of any example in particular or do you just assume it might happen that way?

I 013: The only examples that I can come up with, which is not specifically about physical activity but is about how the larger chains now will very rarely have instructors now as employees. They are contractors and the same with group exercise. The trend we have seen with group exercise is that from old school freestyle aerobics into the pre-choreographed Les Mills type classes and adding spin and things like that, generally tend to start with the larger chains who can actually afford to either train staff or to include both programs. When it is seen as a worldwide trend that is when the smaller gyms seem to pick it up.

I: Thank you 013. Now, we started to talk about age restrictions or requirements of gymnasiums, specifically do you feel that there should be a minimum age requirement for the participation of adolescent boys and girls in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 013: Are we talking unsupervised?

I: I would more so, rather than actual conditions, just entry to a gymnasium. So excluding further conditions placed by a particular gymnasium simply just access to the facilities, do you think there should be a minimum age requirement for boys and girls?

I 013: Well, it depends if, oh, and this is a personal opinion, I think it really depends on what they are going to do while they are there. So, again, if there is a program specifically designed for that age group then I don't see any reason why it doesn't start at toddler age if we are specifically talking about resistance training or participating in some of the group exercise classes, I think there probably needs to be a minimum age requirement of fifteen or sixteen. It is hard to say, as I think there are some fifteen or sixteen year olds who would quite easily cope with the demands of a group exercise class or just a training program and there are probably quite a few who couldn't.

I: Absolutely. So, you are saying that depending on the maturing of the child, really?

I 013: Yes, absolutely.

I: While on the topic of regulation, do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

I 013: Yes, I do.

I: What would be the positive and/or negative features of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

I 013: Negative would be that a lot of them would have to close. A lot of them wouldn't make the standards and one of the things that we are advocating for is regulation of the industry. Positives. Absolutely. That you have well trained and competent staff. The issues that we have seen quite recently is the lack of first aid training available, regular supervision so that the 24 hour gyms would be in trouble, and I think from a safety perspective there absolutely needs to be regulation.

I: Do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation as well?

I 013: Yes.

I: Again, what would be the positive and/or negative features of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation?

I 013: This is a tough area for me because even though we have a national qualification the standards of delivery vary considerably. So, to say that one of the positives would be that we can ensure that all instructors and trainers would be qualified with the knowledge that they come out with, and the fact that it is competency based as well, it means that you only need to be 50% competent to pass the course. So there are still varying levels of knowledge and skill from graduates, but I guess from a consumer's perspective knowing that the staff are appropriately qualified is definitely a plus and having some faith in trainers to instruct appropriately, safely and effectively. Again, that comes from and stems from how it is that they are trained in their course. I don't see any negatives at all. Oh, actually, probably the only negative would be probably for people who have been in the industry for quite some time, and who have gained their knowledge and experience from any professional development they may have done, but also just work experience and that they are actually quite knowledgeable and they do know what they are doing. They might have qualifications you know, it would be sad to have to make them go and complete a current qualification that would be well and truly below their current level of expertise.

I: So, I guess there needs to be various education programs whether they are improved or simply designed and implemented as well to cater for professionals who have been in the industry for a while but also to ensure that new workers that are coming into the industry are adequately educated as well.

I 013: Absolutely, the training package itself needs to reflect that. It has been reviewed just recently but with each delivery and the fact that it is a competency based qualification needs to be reconsidered.

I: And which organisation did they review?

I 013: It stems from Service Skills Australia who answers to federal government so the chance of that changing is very slim. There are some organisations that do get involved. We have been involved in the past but I know Fitness Australia are probably better as well, and a couple of other organisations were involved in as well in the later review.

I: Right, do you believe in the principle of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation?

I 013: Yes.

I: Again, what would be the positive and/or negative features of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation?

I 013: Probably already everything I have already mentioned.

I: That is fine.

I 013: I think from a consumer's perspective, just knowing that it is safe and I am sure you are already aware that they don't have a very good name.

I: Yes, there are certainly perceptions out there that may not be too favourable. Now, my final question 013 is if policy and/or legislation were introduced to regulate the Australian Fitness Industry, which agencies and/or organisations do you feel are best placed to play a major accreditation and regulatory role?

I 013: Us! (Laughs)

I: Absolutely, yes.

I 013: Definitely us. My colleague would probably be better equipped to answer this question for you. I might just put you on speaker if that is okay.

I: Of course you can. Hello there, now I do know your name but seeing that I am recording I won't say it so I do apologise for that but Informant 013 has asked me to repeat the last question. (Repeats question)

Informant 012 (I 012): I believe that...[identifiable information redacted to maintain privacy] would need to establish a new independent organisation. I believe that secondly, Physical Activity Australia, because of...[identifiable information redacted to maintain privacy] independence from gym owners...[identifiable information redacted to maintain privacy] independence across the board would mean...[identifiable information redacted to maintain privacy] would be well suited to do that. I am a very firm believer that it is really important that if...[identifiable information redacted to maintain privacy] are administering a professional registration scheme then like the registration schemes for many professions, it needs to be done independently from anyone who may have an interest.

I: Absolutely, Informant 013, was there anything further you wanted to add regarding that question.

I 013: No, that is it for me. (I 012 prompting answers in background but inaudible)

I: Sorry to interrupt but the volume is quite low.

I 013: Can you use the information that she just gave there?

I: Absolutely. No problems at all.

I 013: In addition we should be advocating for state change nationally so it becomes a national registration or a national scheme and that Physical Activity Australia should be elected or nominated to run that.

I: Thank you very much to you both. The interview is actually now over.

Adolescent Participation in Gymnasium Based Exercise Programs: Barriers and Opportunities

Transcription of Interview with Informants 014 and 015

Interviewer (I): This interview is being conducted with Informant 014 and 015. Informant 014 and 015, thank you for each providing your completed consent form. Could you please confirm that the consent form that you have provided is signed by yourself?

Informant 014 (I 014): Yes.

I: And 015?

Informant 015 (I 015): Yes but I don't think I've actually received it.

I: Oh sorry, you haven't have you; this is a very recent addition. That's okay because it is only decided in the last half hour, so that's okay but 014 thank you for confirming.

Informant 014, where is physical activity placed within your lifestyle?

I 014: In my lifestyle?

I: Yes.

I 014: It is very important to me. I exercise on a daily basis for at least an hour a day.

I: Fantastic and 015, the same question for you. Where is physical activity placed within your lifestyle?

I 015: Yes, a high priority. I exercise regularly.

I: Fantastic. Do you and your organisation believe that a problem exists regarding physical inactivity and adolescents?

I 014: Yes

I 015: Yes.

I: And what do you think is causing this problem?

I 014: I'll start that. I believe that we have managed to engineer activity and exercise out of our lives and that includes adolescents. We have a sedentary lifestyle now and we do a lot of sitting in our daily life and it seems to be more and more prevalent now particularly looking at that age group. Watching TVs, looking at mobile phones, watching screens and playing video games rather than the sort of activity which I did in my adolescence which was outdoor activity which was more exercise related because those things were not there. So that is pretty much I think why, and also the prevalence of overweight (adolescents) compounded by the food sources that are available now. High processed foods with high energy but low nutrient content often full of fat and sugar and salt.

I: There certainly hasn't been a change for the better regarding food and technology, for those reasons but what types of policies, campaigns and programs do you think might alleviate this problem?

I 014: Do you want to try that one I 015? I will think about that for a minute.

I 015: Yes, sure. I think as 014 said, the problems have come about from a mixture of environment, behaviour and various influences. Particularly with the physical environment changing and meaning that the car for instance is very important in our society, and the reduction in activity as a result of technology in a computer age. Behaviour, and this all influences behaviour of course, so as a result I think things have compounded in that regard and as well as that, I think there is a lack of what I would see as sufficient education and understanding in regard to physicality from a young age. I think there is room for improvement in that domain. For instance, in physical education, curriculums and having an understanding and grounding early in life in regard to conditioning our physical state. And sorry, the follow up question was? What sort of policies and/or guidelines could influence a change?

I: Yes.

I 015: I think there needs to be a multi-pronged approach. I think, as I say, there needs to be a better educational framework and content developed, and I think that would have a huge influence and as well as that, I think across the community and health there can be provision of guidelines and assistance so that people have a better understanding and better access across the population that isn't dependent on socio economic status but rather as equity in regard to access to physical activity opportunity.

I: And what role do you think gymnasiums could play in alleviating this problem?

I 015: Well, I think gymnasiums specifically as facilities can be an example of hubs for conditioning and for exercise and provision of access to community for equipment and programming, educative processes that can enhance the individual's capacity to improve or maintain their physical activity on a regular basis and therefore improve their quality of life, and that leads to behavioural changes, shifting of societal norms and cultural changes in the way in which we view physical activity in the longer term. So I would see a gymnasium of the future being somewhat different, incorporating or being a hub for other community engagement and outreach services in other settings as well.

I: Thank you 015. For gymnasium based exercise programs such as cardiovascular and resistance exercise, what is your organisation's position or policy stance on participation by adolescents?

I 015: Do you want me to do that? So, yeah our position is that we obviously require that our registered exercise professionals combined with relevant registrative (sic) requirements including Working with Children Check, but more so, primarily that relevant qualifications and expertise has been gained through certification, and that the baseline certification for the prescription delivery for exercise to apparently healthy children and adolescents is a specific unit of competency in the national Sport, Fitness and Recreation Training Package and that is placed in the new endorsed package at certificate III level. Certificate IV also has a unit

that couples with it, 'interact effectively with children', and it is undertaken in that certificate IV. The diploma has a unit 'deliver and prescribe exercise to children and young adolescents with chronic disease', so there is a provision and recognition in our registration platform of completion of those units, and individuals will be registered in categories as 'children's instructor' if that is completed at a certificate III level in the children's unit at that level and they will be registered as a 'children's trainer' if they have completed the two units for certificate IV. Aside from that we have reference to a document that was developed in 2003, 'Kids in Gyms' guidelines. This document was mainly orientated towards safe practice and process for children and adolescents in an adult gym setting. That document was submitted to New South Wales department of sport and recreation for a review of that document to occur in the second half of 2012. Obviously, Fitness Australia conducts registration platform for exercise professionals and it also oversees the code of practice compliance for fitness businesses across the country under state based codes of practice. We are moving through a development phase in our standards platform but as it sits at the moment, it is primarily those components I have described there.

I: Thank you very much. Are you aware of any previous or existing policies and/or practices that might have enhanced or inhibited participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 015: Not specifically. No, I don't think so, but I would have to look at what may have existed in the past in relation to, and connecting with education and sport but no, there is nothing specifically that I can think of.

I: Great. Thank you. 014, did you want to comment on that question?

I 014: I would probably say that the traditional industry has been targeted quite clearly at adults and there is only now starting to emerge some groups who are specifically targeting children and adolescents with their facilities, services and programs. They are really quite different in their approach, and I think that it is very important when you are going to target a specific group, that you need to be very clear about what sort of services and programs you are offering, and how you actually interact with those people, because I believe it is a very different way of approaching activity between adolescents and adults.

I: Absolutely.

I 014: So those will, I guess, actually lower barriers and with that they will become more prolific, but that the barriers that are there now are that the majority of the industry is just focused on adults.

I: 014 and 015 you begin to touch on this topic and this question is for both of you. I just would like to ask, are you aware of any policies that are currently being developed which many directly or indirectly affect, that is, encourage or discourage, adolescent participation in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 015: Yes well I think the review of the 'Kids in Gyms' guidelines will be an important review, because I think it will lend itself to development of a set of guidelines that is really addressing the opportunity for advancement in this area as we are explaining. We are likely to see the content of those guidelines refer to the physical, psychological, social and emotional development of the child and therefore the suitability of that activity in accordance

with that development. We are aware of the fact that these new models that are emerging refer to incorporating a variety of activities, move across play, and incorporate play and specific sports programming, and an involvement of family and parents. Therefore, it is an encouragement of social support around the child or adolescents in the programming. It is an educative approach to the activities. So it is quite different to what has been provided in the past in an adult setting, and the actually setting in itself is conducive to those elements of programming. So therefore we will be looking, and I imagine an expert group would be looking at precedents and best practice in the development in this sphere and then guidelines set in accordance.

I: I understand that the review you are talking about relates particularly to the New South Wales government. Do you see reviews like that being conducted by other state governments and territories also?

I 015: The history of this particular document was referred to by other entities around the country and not just by state governments. I think this is probably a piece of work that once again, could be referred to by other entities and certainly something Fitness Australia could refer to in moving forward. Obviously we have taken this decision to undertake this development so therefore it would be endorsed by the association.

I: Great, so you would certainly see applications nationwide through that review?

I 015: That is right.

I: Fantastic. Building on what we were talking about here, if your organisation was to initiate policies regarding participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs within Australia, which key category of stakeholders would you select for collaboration?

I 015: Well, in development of the guidelines?

I: Well, it could be developing the guidelines but also, I suppose, if you were to actually initiate policy and implement policy; the stakeholders you would select to actually implement those policies?

I 015: Yes, well it would be, obviously, education. Essentially, the guidelines would complement the content that is being delivered within the qualifications within themselves. So that would be the vocational and higher education sectors but I do believe that we would also look at other community organisations that may be in health and broader in recreation and sport so we get an input in regard to what may be pertinent and what may go across those boundaries as well. What we will find, and we are already seeing, that some of these providers in this space are also collaborating already with other sectors, so we would need to have some influence here in the development of these particular guidelines. I think obviously you would want some level of input from whether it is representative groups for adolescents as well, so we are getting a level of what the requirement and perception is, from those representative entities as well.

I: Thank you 015. So, would you see those categories of stakeholders that would be involved in the actual design of such policy and the actual running of the implementation of the policy as well?

I 015: Yes, I think the recognition of the policy anyway. I think in essence the document and the content would be endorsed by the association, it would be referred to in our standards platform and if it is referred to more broadly then it is good, in regard to consistency and continuity. We have a recent example of a development in the adult pre-exercise screening system and it was jointly developed with Sports Medicine Australia and sports science Australia. That piece of work is already raising attention of government and other entities. I think that is a natural follow-on.

I: Now, specifically do you think there should be a minimum age requirement for the participation of adolescent boys and girls in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 015: Well, technically, it depends on the nature of the actual program and I think if it was an adult oriented specific weight type resistance program I think there is reason for there being a minimum age. However, that is something that physiologists and specialists in sports science would need to determine based on evidence. I wouldn't be able to give you an answer on that.

I: No, that is fine. I totally agree. What I am leading to is more so entry into a gymnasium. So, currently there might be a gymnasium that has its own policy that requires a certain age, say it could be a minimum age of 16 for example for participants to begin participating in the gym, where another gym might have an age group of eighteen. They won't necessarily be aware of them in all those gyms, and what programs will be undertaken once they walk through the door to undertake in a gymnasium. What I was leading at there is more so, do you feel there should be a minimum age requirement in general for allowing adolescents to actually participate?

I 015: If it is the actual signing on or purchasing the actual service, I think that there is typically, again, based on this, would have to be based on legislative requirements and essentially there are certain thresholds there in regard to a parent or guardian being able to sign on to a particular program and payment of the program and so forth. Is that the aspect that you are talking about there? Or is this covered in 'Kids in Gyms' guidelines and it would have to be refreshed again?

I: It is more so simply whether an adolescent walked into a gymnasium with their parent or guardian, and the guardian and the adolescent wanted to participate and just simply enrol as a gymnasium member, whether or not they were involved in personal training or group exercise classes or simply using the gym in general, and my question more so relates to actually, do you feel there should be a minimum age, say whether they have state based guidelines or territory based or simply a national protocol which actually states that for example, that adolescents would not be able to participate in general below this age or...?

I 015: Once again, it is dependent on the activity being provided, and the suitability of it, and I think also the ability of the child to autonomously enter and pay and enter a particular class, if it is on a casual basis or whether it is a membership, and I think that in that instance in an adult setting, I think that traditionally the threshold is appropriate. However, in signing on I think, it always is, that's right, but at that particular age I think it is up for consideration as part of this review. What is your feeling 014?

I 014: Yeah, I would say that in the traditional, typical adult setting, that we have right at the moment, I think it is important that there is a threshold that is applied for an age because they are walking into something that is designed more for adults, but if in the new models where these new gyms and facilities that are opening up and specifically catering for children and adolescent programming there doesn't need to be. Only adult supervision or guidance or authority (is needed) in terms of signing contracts, where you are entering into a contractual relationship that would be the only thing.

I: Right. Thank you very much. While on the topic of regulation, do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

I 015: (Laughs) That is topical.

I 014: I'll answer this. For business, what we are keen to see continue is a level of industry self-regulation. At the moment there are regulations in place in terms of code of practice in each state and territory and we think that is important. We are working to get consistency across all of the codes of practice so that they are pretty much at the same level nationwide. We also want to make sure that the codes of practice are not just focussing necessarily on the issues around fair trading which used to be very important but are now less so. It should also be focused on elements of professionalism and occupational health and safety because those are things we believe are now important to the industry. So, we want to see a very robust self-regulatory mechanism within the industry, and having Fitness Australia as an authority in that area and that it is recognised by governments all around Australia as well as federal government. Then you have got the professional accreditation which is a separate issue.

I: Um. We will touch on that in a moment. Building on what you have said there, what would you see as the positive and/or negative features of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

I 014: The positives would be that every business operating has to comply with some standards, and that potentially would be a good thing to have everyone on the same level playing field so that you don't have the cowboys out there operating without any regulation and not being bound by the code of practice which is a voluntary code at the moment. The potential of the negatives to that is having a standards platform that is really minimal and it could actually lower standards in some cases. In the code of practice and standards platform which we are developing now is really quite robust and is optimal and aspirational. We are looking at best practice. We are not looking for minimal standards. That is one issue. The other negative would be which government department would take carriage for this and how would that work? For instance, if you had an authority like WorkCover coming in and regulating the industry, they really wouldn't do a very good job because they are not in touch with the industry, they don't work within the industry, they don't understand the industry and it would be just going back to just standards in OH&S or something minimal like that rather than standards that go across professionalism, safety and fair trading.

I: 014, you mentioned about gymnasium instructor accreditation as well. Do you believe in the principle of mandatory instructor accreditation?

I 014: Yes, I do. I think that is something that we need to work towards. At the moment we...[identifiable information redacted to maintain privacy]. We have over 24,000 registered

with Fitness Australia. There is kinect in Victoria as well which have around four or five thousand registered but it is still a voluntary scheme and there are still a number of fitness professionals working in the community who aren't registered and who don't hold the appropriate credentials. There is nothing anyone can really do about that. They are practising and that is of concern to us.

I: Um. As I mentioned before, what would be the positive and/or negative features? Building on what you said there, although you have answered to some degree, but what are the positive and/or negative features of mandatory instructor accreditation?

I 014: The positives would be that we would build a much stronger culture of professionalism within that profession. It does exist now to some extent but it would just build it to make it a lot stronger. That they felt like they did in fact belong to a profession and get recognition at government level. Having the mandatory elements of continuing education is really important because the industry and the practices that they are engaged with, you need to be constantly learning new things and improving your own standards of professionalism, knowledge and skill. So that element would be in there as well, I imagine, because it already exists in our registration scheme and that would be important to build the knowledge, skill and experience base within the profession. That would be the real positives. Negatives again? If it went to government, would it water down the standards to a minimal level? Again, we are trying to build a much more robust system. We have enhanced it considerably for the last couple of years and we have got more plans for enhancement systems so that it becomes again very aspirational and looking at best practice all the time and looking at continuous improvement within the system. We would like to see government recognition of mandatory accreditation that I guess, are managed or administered by groups like ours or who have the capacity to do that.

I: Building on what we have talked about there, and the last two questions, from an industry standpoint now, do you believe in the principle of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation. So, this is not self-regulation, like we did talk about. It is actually the proposal of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation?

I 014: Does that relate to business again?

I: You could look at accreditation as a separate element to regulation. It would just depend on, and this is a hypothetical question, it would depend on what type of system was actually introduced. So it is really, I suppose, considering this question as regulation industry wide but enforced regulation. I would assume that such a proposal would certainly include business.

I 014: I suppose it would depend on what the regulation was aimed at. At the moment there are some mandatory regulations that exist. For instance, the code of practice that exists in the ACT is mandatory. All businesses have to comply with that code of practice. In most of the states there is an element of mandatory regulation that exists around fair trading. So, there is a bit of a mix and that is why we are trying to get a consistent platform for regulation of the industry itself. So, we do want to see consistent national regulation, but to make sure it is targeted at the right points, the right places and that it isn't going to inhibit the growth of the industry.

I: Absolutely.

I 015: It is such a diverse industry and it is a vibrant industry that is growing very quickly and continues to grow quickly and is diversifying quickly as well. So it is really I suppose, any level of mandatory regulation could be negative if it wasn't consentient of that development as well.

I 014: I think it has to be quite systemic too. If you just pick off bit and pieces it becomes confusing, inconsistent and confusing to manage. For instance, if you just made having first-aid qualifications mandatory and left alone everything else it would be doing it a disservice. It would sort of fix one issue but it is only half an issue. But if you had a systemic approach to registration being mandatory then you have covered off the qualifications, the first-aid, the CPR and the continuing education in one fell swoop.

I: Do you have anything further to mention like as asked before about the positive and/or negative features of much a mandatory Fitness Industry regulation?

I 015: One point with the professional registration or regulation being mandatory is that the consumer is pride of place and gives a level of assurance to the consumer ultimately and it has to be consumer focused but also in regard to engagement and the profession being part of a broader coordinated service delivery network if you like. Its professional scope of practice is being defined and assured and that is internally and externally.

I 014: I think adding on to that basically provides confidence in the industry services and professionals if there is some level of regulation around it. But I think the negative around industry regulation as such is that it would pick off bits and pieces and could potentially not be a systemic approach. It would just become confusing and costly to manage. You would have to have a considered approach to something like that.

I: Building on that, and this is the final question of the interview, if policy and/or regulation was introduced to regulate the Australian Fitness Industry, which agencies and/or organisations do you feel are best placed to play a major accreditation and regulatory role?

I 014: ...[identifiable information redacted to maintain privacy]

I: Understandably!

I 014 & 015: (Laughs)

I 014: Yeah, the reason why we say that and what we would do, because it is in our strategic agenda to do this, we were born as an industry association and also...[identifiable information redacted to maintain privacy] but if it was to be that there needed to be an agency or an authority that is recognised by government we would create that authority as a separate arm. We would continue on doing the work of an industry association but also look to create a third party.

I: In the creation of such a third party would you see other collaborators, building on our stakeholders question earlier but other organisations or agencies to also work with, if you did set up such a third party...

I 014: Yeah, the common regulatory authorities and departments we work with now are ACCC and fair trading so they cover off a lot of things. Also, we would probably work with the established other peak health associations but there is also the new national register of

health professions, so groups like that would be quite influential, I would imagine. Then you have got all the legislation around work safety, like WorkCover and whoever is looking after occupation health and safety legislation. Those sort of groups we have to work closely with.

I: 015, do you have anything to add before we conclude the interview?

I 015: No, look, no. That seems fine, nothing more to add there.

I: Thank you. This interview is now over.

Adolescent Participation in Gymnasium Based Exercise Programs: Barriers and Opportunities

Transcription of Interview with Informant 016

Interviewer (I): This interview is being conducted with Informant 016. Informant 016, could you please confirm that you consent to participate in this interview?

Informant 016 (I 016): I do. I have received the consent form and I have read it and I agree to the conditions that are involved in that.

I: Thank you. As I haven't received it as yet as I believe it is in the mail as we speak, I will complete the form on your behalf if that is okay with you.

I 016: I am happy with that.

I: Excellent. Just bare with me for one moment. I have just written your first name and surname, suburb and underneath the conditions you have consented to I am signing them on your behalf. I have dated it 19/1/12. Thank you 016. Now, 016, where is physical activity placed within your lifestyle?

I 016: In my own lifestyle it has been a very large part. Since I was a child I have been involved in psychical activity through sport, games, and recreational pastimes. I am still involved. It has been a lifelong involvement for me. I am still involved in masters games tournaments in both cricket and AFL, I still actually play cricket on Saturdays for my club.

I: Fantastic. Excellent. 016, do you and your organisation believe that a problem exists regarding physical inactivity and adolescents?

I 016: I think the problem has always existed. We tend to see it as a challenge, I guess. In my profession which is in...[identifiable information redacted to maintain privacy] and health related activities then certainly, we have acknowledged over the years just how important the fact that there is more and more inactivity seemingly evident in our society. We see how important it is and it needs to be addressed. In addressing that we have taken some measures in our profession through our professional association and we expect those who work in the profession to also try and take some measures.

I: What do you think is causing this problem?

I 016: I think it is a multifaceted problem. I think the issue of less activity links very directly to the increase in screen time that children and adolescents are faced with. Technology has had a marked impact on kids' desire to be involved in physical activity. Many of them get it in a virtual way. I think that is one of the aspects of it. I think often the messages related to chronic disease related to physical inactivity doesn't always get through. While teachers teach for that outcome but it doesn't necessarily come to a positive outcome. Peer group pressure is one of the issues, I guess. We are particularly concerned about physical inactivity in relation to girls. We believe that issue has not been adequately addressed for a

very long time. We believe that starts probably in preadolescence. These are some of the factors but look, family habits and lifestyles also have an impact of course. What mums and dads are modelling and what mums and dads are providing in the kitchen. All those issues of convenience and ease of take away and quick snack foods that we know have had an impact on obesity levels. All of those factors I guess culminate in a series of constraints if you like, or inconveniences to be inactive.

I: You started to mention some initiatives put in place from your organisation about tackling this issue. What type of policies, campaigns and programs might alleviate this type of problem?

I 016: We have concentrated mainly with the school sectors. Over many, many years we have tried to influence school programs so they are absolutely aware of the impact of inactivity. We have done it from two points of view. We have done it from a health related point of view by arguing with our teachers in schools and our parents physical education regularly programmed particularly for the kids on a daily basis leading up to adolescents, we have been very strong on that type of policy. Many schools have adopted that policy and we still have daily physical activity in our primary schools. That is one that we push really hard and we stand by that as really critical for developing positive attitudes towards physical activity in preadolescence. In the secondary schools we have tried to get teachers to really help students understand the consequences of inactivity. It is not just 'let's go out and do something' it is what the implications are if you don't. So that health related knowledge and understanding of chronic disease and the long term impact of not being active, all of those things become part of the health education part linked to physical activity part in schools. We can't make the policy for schools but all of the schools systems have now adopted the notion of health and physical education as a core and critical part of the school curriculum. That has been established and will be part of the new national curriculum that is being developed this year.

I: Right.

I 016: Policies and initiatives tend to try and influence the education and school sectors.

I: Thank you 016. What role do you think gymnasiums can play in alleviating this problem?

I 016: I think they can play a key role. I mean they are a recognised setting for providing appropriate physical activities and providing appropriate advice and I think that is critical. For not only providing the opportunity but providing it in a certain way, in an educative way. There is no point of people going to gymnasiums if they are doing it in a non-thinking way. I believe that gymnasiums should have education at the forefront of their thinking. To educate people more about the value of what they can do in a gymnasium. That a gymnasium is not just for Generation-Y, so they can look better. It is a place for kids, older people and I think the good gymnasiums understand that and they market themselves appropriately. They have appropriately trained staff who can provide the appropriate advice and I love the situations where there is a recreation centre and gymnasium that is all within the school complex so that school gymnasium and the recreational centre can all work in some way in partnership. Facilities are shared so that students can have some incentives to come into

gymnasiums after school. The teachers understand the value of using the gymnasium as well. Activities are not just being involved in team sports as we know.

I: Thank you very much 016. Now, for gymnasium based exercise programs such as cardiovascular and resistance exercise, what is your organisation's position or policy stance on participation by adolescents?

I 016: Look, we believe that both of those forms of physical activity are very, very important. As you know, as people get older, weight bearing activities become more and more important. For younger children weight bearing activities are important and all that links to offsetting osteoporosis. Gymnasiums are good places to provide that. I think the key about those two forms of activity is that they are provided with the right sort of advice around them. I mean exercise can be over prescribed and under prescribed and I think the tailoring exercise programs in those two areas to meet the needs of people whether they are young or older but particularly for adolescents I think is really important. I think there are a few myths to be busted too about it all. I mean gymnasiums certainly have a role in both of those areas and as I said the weight resistance activity stuff is really critical for kids and that is without having to go into improving your strength for particular sports participation. That is the other side of it of course. Kids start to get involved in sports and they come across coaches who really push the 'come back when you are stronger and bigger' sort of thing and kids aren't quite sure what to do. Gymnasiums play an important role there. They can provide advice to schools as well about it.

I: Like you said the partnership type programs when you have gymnasium based activities on the school grounds from my experience that type of arrangement is increasing.

I 016: Yeah, and that is good. That is one of the critical factors. Resources and facilities have to be shared these days and I know many of the gyms are private companies and they are in chains and that sort of stuff and it not their core business to look at schools they can partner with, but you know, young people are the future participants in gymnasiums so to get them interested during those pre, well, certainly in the adolescent years I think is pretty important and if you get them interested by showing that you are prepared to work with a school and with the physical education teachers and sports coaches then I think everyone benefits.

I: Are you aware of any previous or existing policies and/or practices that might have enhanced or inhibited participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 016: I am not aware of anything specifically but I will refer you to the development of the Australian Sports Commission's Junior Sports Policy. There was a great deal of research conducted through the University of Queensland at the time and it looked at all the key factors that people who are developing junior sports policies and I am referring to all of the sporting organisations, that enable them to actually do this in a much more informed way. One of the research sections or papers which were developed there was about weight training and when should it be introduced to kids. There were people in some sports who wanted it introduced for five and six year old kids and some were saying 'oh no, we have to be careful about this'. So with the whole notion about resistance training for kids as they are growing and their joints are growing and their muscles are still in that pre-adolescent phase,

there was some attempt to include in that junior sports policy some direction and guidance if you like, or guidelines, for people in sport about the use of resistance training.

I: As you mentioned before, about the Fitness Industry particularly being subjected to a number of myths, from my experience one of them is actually about the age when children and adolescents should be involved in activities like that. It seems that sport doesn't necessarily have, like it could be primary school and children participating in AFL football or whatever it may be and it could be a contact sport but there seems to be a bit of resistance towards gymnasiums and having children participate there. If, like you said, if the correct training is on offer for people attending the gym then that is critical.

I 016: Yes, that is essential. I mean, it is like any professional advice you get whether it is financial services or whatever you want that advice to be sound and based on proper research and you want it to be a productive analysis so gymnasiums need to take stock of that and I am sure more and more of them are, but when they are inviting younger kids and families in, that they are very careful about the doses of certain sorts of activities that they are providing and that they are providing them with a proper purpose and helping people understand why they are doing it.

I: Are you aware of any policies that are currently being developed which many directly or indirectly affect, that is, encourage or discourage, adolescent participation in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 016: No, look everything you read through the health, physical education research journals points to the importance of all forms of physical activity. It points to choice. It points to convenience. And I go back to that notion of convenience as how things have become inconvenient to people. It is inconvenient for me to go off and spend time on something else and it is much easier for me to do this. I think gymnasiums have capitalised on that a bit and I think the policy of being able to go into gyms anytime of the day and night to do things has been really good. But going back to the health and PE policies, I think they are fairly general in terms of trying to recommend that activity is a good thing and it doesn't matter the setting where you get that activity whether it is in a gymnasium or through a sporting club or swimming pool but it is the quality of that service or opportunity that is being provided to actually be active that is critical. It is the quality of the advice that you get about doses, how often and the intensity and they are the really critical things. I have not come across any out and out policy from health or PE or research areas that say that going to gyms isn't a good thing. You might have some case study, look hey, here is a bad case study, and this is not what you want. This isn't putting a nice glow on the Fitness Industry because the way such and such has run their program or something. I mean you are going to get some so-called professionals in the industry who are going to let the profession down. I am sure it has happened in gymnasiums. It has happened in teaching, it happens in universities but there are no controls over all of that. I know that the guidelines for physical activity for young people are going to be reviewed and redone. They have been developed by the health and aging department some years ago and already after ten years they are outdated and people are saying 'we need a better policy on physical activity in young people' as what we said before about what ought to be the minimum requirements no longer holds. There is research out there now to tell us that those recommendations need to change so I think there will be some new policy coming in around that but I am not aware of any specific policies that relate to gymnasiums about any of the things you are talking about.

I: That is fine. Thank you 016. If your organisation was to initiate policies regarding participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs within Australia which key categories of stakeholders would you select for collaboration?

I 016: Well,...[identifiable information redacted to maintain privacy] teachers and university people who work with either young people in schools or they work with young people who are going to be working with young people as in your case at the university for example. Oh, they would be the sort of people we could influence most in any innovation, in any new policy. If we like a policy that the Department of Health and Ageing put out we would be happy to support it and happy to push it to our members. For example, if the Fitness Industry said they were following a certain policy and we thought that was relevant and beneficial and we thought that there would be reasonable access for young people and it wasn't going to be too costly and those sorts of things then we would be prepared to back those policies and statements. So we are not any anti particular sector within the education, health and fitness industries. We would simply expect quality delivery, quality research to have gone on behind the programs that are being offered and improvement and development of quality settings for it to occur and then we want both partnerships. Our key group that we would try and influence generally would be teachers. And with saying that, I guess through the teachers and the kids, the parents.

I: I guess there are two very important stakeholders in that situation absolutely. Now, 016 specifically do you think there should be a minimum age requirement for the participation of adolescent boys and girls in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 016: I think the research would tell us that kids who have reached puberty, it is alright for them to start doing so without gymnasium based resistance type activity. Certainly, the aerobics stuff is something that we already got going with the little kids in schools. The sort of weight bearing activities we expect from little tackers in the primary school is generally on climbing apparatus and things like that and a whole range of gymnastic type activities at floor level that involve weight on hands and things like that. But in terms of what you would call the traditional gymnastic type offerings I would have no issue with kids from the first year of high school being introduced to that. I think that generally for the primary school they are being introduced to general recreation facilities and they have come through pathways for a range of activities. It is just getting to that point where they are starting to realise, 'gee, I've grown. I am playing this sport and perhaps I need to get stronger now, blah, blah, blah', if you know what I mean? The primary kids not so much. But I think the secondary kids right from the beginning of secondary school could benefit from what gymnasiums have to offer.

I: To confirm, you mentioned that with the onset of puberty would be the point there for say an average age for adolescent boys and girls to participate in such programs. What would be your reason for nominating this?

I 016: Look, the research that I understand and I guess it varies a bit, if you are reading the swimming research they might have kids doing it a little bit earlier, I am not sure. But I am going back to basically those guidelines for junior sport and I am thinking about not only the most appropriate times in terms of developmental factors but I am talking about convenience for the schools as well. I think it is more convenient and more relevant when you have trained physical education teachers and people who know the field. They understand the Fitness Industry and what gymnasiums do. I think it is easier for them to actually start to

introduce kids to that sort of work. I think it is harder for primary kids so they are why I am making that cut off generally. Sure, there are plenty of primary school kids who could begin some resistance training while they are in those early years of puberty. Certainly, the cardiorespiratory stuff isn't a problem and that can start much earlier. I keep going back to the weights and the resistance stuff and I don't know exactly what the latest research is telling us about what is the optimum time. Kids differ so much in their stature, genetics, shape and size at the age of twelve that some kids are through puberty. It is really hard to put that cut off. I am being a bit convenient here, and I keep using the word convenient, but I am being a bit convenient here saying look it is a much easier thing for secondary specialist physical education teachers to do that, to make links with gymnasiums, than it is for primary schools.

I: Look, understanding what you have just said, would you be prepared to nominate a minimum participation age for adolescent boys and girls or would you stick to the response there?

I 016: I would be sticking my neck out a bit and I think the last point about the incredible difference that can occur at around the age of twelve and thirteen, so if I said eleven you would probably say well kids are almost through puberty by then and some girls are.

I: That is right. It totally depends on the individual, doesn't it?

I 016: It does. So, I would be reluctant to say but I am say more at the end of primary. I'm hedging my bets here a bit, aren't I?

I: No, that is right. Roughly, the end of primary or the beginning of high school, that kind of period.

I 016: Yeah, that is a good time to do it.

I: Yeah. Thank you 016, while on the topic of regulation, do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

I 016: Yes, I do. I believe the industry has a responsibility as most industries should, to take responsibility of monitoring their own standards and for reviewing those standards but I think that in the gymnasium fitness industry there is a lot of incentive to do this properly and to do it well because the future of the industry depends on it. And we all know what happens when it is not done well, you can have all sorts of legal liability on your doorstep. So I think it is very important that there are some mandatory directions. I am not sure it ought to be so detailed so that people in the industry can't be flexible and can't be innovative in what they do. I still think it is important that we still want our people in the industry to be looking for new, interesting and diverse ways in going about what they do. That is partly about keeping up their research and partly about having the right people in your employ, on your staff. Yeah, the sort of mandatory things are absolutely important of course are related to safety. That has to be the first thing and then I think then the qualification and experience of the instructors is also pretty critical. So I think with those two things I think it is worth having mandatory sorts of directions about. The rest I think should be guidelines and I think they ought to be subject to review.

I: Are there any further positive and/or negative features of mandatory gymnasium accreditation that you would like to list?

I 016: I have been on a couple of committees where I have had to be a judge for the Fitness Industry awards and it has been very interesting to have a look at the sort of things that people are doing. Apart from safety, apart from the staff...um, I mean, I am thinking about the sort of research that underpins the type of programs that are provided to the public. I am not sure how you can mandate that though, I think you can expect though, let's say for example a new gym opens, whether they are part of a chain or part of a private concern, and that of course includes space, qualifications, confidence in your staff and I think the level of management and administration would be the other area. If you haven't got a well managed and well run gymnasium and it is a bit of a shambles with staff doing what they like, no guidelines for staff and no proper work practices for staff, I think if you are in an environment like that where safety is an issue then you would want to broaden the mandatory guidelines into safety. I am thinking aloud a little bit here, I am trying to think in my head about a person who runs a gym and the staff they have got, the space they have got and the equipment they have got, you know, you would want the equipment to be absolutely maintained and inspected on a regular basis because you wouldn't want accidents or problems with safety like that. So, under that safety banner there are all those sorts of things.

I: Absolutely. For adolescents in particular, in addition to having maintenance of the equipment but having appropriate equipment for them to use in terms of the dimensions of the equipment as well.

I 016: So, the equipment is really critical. The nature of the equipment, the way it is used and how much supervision a particular piece of equipment needs when an adolescent is working on it. Because some, no problem, you are generally pretty okay, working on the treadmills and that sort of things but if they are getting into the weight stuff and they don't know how to use it, there is always a dickhead adolescent in any class who will get into a space and place and...so it needs to be pretty fool proof in terms of equipment, supervision and safety doesn't it?

I: 016, you have almost answered the next question but just to confirm do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation?

I 016: Yes.

I: And what are further the positive and/or negative features of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation that you would like to mention?

I 016: I think the positives are that the people who own or manage the gymnasium can feel satisfied in their own mind that they are providing the right sort of instruction and supervision and I think that is absolutely critical. I wouldn't want to be running a gymnasium where there was any doubt at all over the performance of the instructors and the group session leaders and all that sort of stuff. And that is a real positive. If you have good instructors then they have a good relationship. I think that is one of the key things that instructors have a good relationship with their management and their clients, whether they are kids coming in from a school or an older group they are taking. That relationship I think reflects on the whole of the organisation and if a gymnasium isn't concerned about its relationships within the

organisation, and with its clients, then that would be the one that fails, because people won't come back.

I: It would be very reflective on the culture of that actual business in that environment.

I 016: I remember being a judge on a couple of things, and they were the ones that stood out to me. All could demonstrate that they are up-to-date with the latest research and blah, blah, blah but it was the ones who developed a strong relationship with their clients were the ones who come out as the winners in the industry awards.

I: That is a very interesting point you make there. Now, do you believe in the principle of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation?

I 016: Well, yes I do. I think in the industry at a higher level within the industry that is important but of course it has to be partly self-regulation. The industry has to be able to look after itself and prove that it can do what is necessary to run safe, efficient, good service places. Regulation is a hard one because, you can apply this to other industries too, well, how far do we regulate the finance industry, well, we found out a couple of years ago that maybe we need to do it a bit more. Self-regulation didn't work and the banks were pulled into line and then there are suddenly is more regulation. I don't think you want regulation to occur just because there has been some stuff ups because the quality of service has dropped, there has been some more complaints or accidents or whatever, you want regulation to be something that is continually looked at, accepted as a responsibility by the industry, and hopefully then things are good. I am trying to think of the kind of government regulations that would apply in the Fitness Industry and I guess they would all be about safety, service and proper financial management of organisations and meeting all those requirements as well.

I: Currently the industry is a self-regulated industry and in saying that I can see the importance of self-regulation whilst avoiding over regulation.

I 016: That is well put.

I: Saying that you believe in the Fitness Industry regulation whilst acknowledging that there are some benefits of self-regulation as well. Which would you, to be black and white, which would you, be favouring, the idea of Fitness Industry regulation or the idea of continued self-regulation?

I 016: I would lean more towards continued self-regulation.

I: Right and in addition to what you have told me, are there any positive and/or negative features of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation that you would like to state?

I 016: Provided the industry has established the appropriate mechanisms to monitor and review what happens in the industry and communicates really well with all of the members of its industry then you shouldn't have any problems. But in saying that there are always going to be some incidents somewhere, someplace where it is going to cause someone to call for more regulation. It might be a client who wants to litigate; it might be a small gymnasium who feels hard done by who is being pushed out by the bigger chains. There can be a whole range of reasons why people have grievances. There is that other whole area of employment that I think, if there is going to be some mandatory regulation then it would be

around the conditions of employment. Governments would hopefully expect that there would be appropriate levels of pay, appropriate conditions and appropriately qualified people too. These are the areas where government awards and government safety regulations would all apply. So there has to be some level of mandatory regulation but in saying that if the industry could always demonstrate that it would be able to do all of those things because it has set up the appropriate mechanisms and communications systems within its industry then I do lean more to self-regulation.

I: Right. Thank you very much. Now, the final question for the interview. If policy and/or regulation was introduced to regulate the Australian Fitness Industry which agencies and/or organisations do you feel are best placed to play a major accreditation and regulatory role?

I 016: Well, currently it is Fitness Australia and AFAC isn't it, who are the key bodies. I remember many, many years ago when AFAC, our organisation used to actually run Fitness Industry leadership courses for the Fitness Industry. There was no Fitness Australia, and there was a fairly sporadic mob of activities going on and organisations and the industry hadn't grown that much but now of course, Fitness Australia sits at the peak of the industry I guess. It is AFAC, isn't it, the Australian Fitness Accreditation Council, which does the accrediting?

I: Currently, it is Physical Activity Australia, they have just changed their name from Kinect Australia, so currently Fitness Australia and Physical Activity Australia would be the two leading bodies within the industry.

I 016: Yeah. From my point of view from outside of the industry, it seems to me that that is appropriate and that has worked. But look in this day and age anyone can put their hand up and show themselves to be a providers or creditors, can't they? We are going through that in the teaching profession at the moment where they have developed national professional standards for teachers and they are now trying to work out who is going to accredit these standards, whether it is the school system themselves? Whether it will be outside organisations that can do it? Where will the universities fit in all of this because they are all part of the agreement to produce graduates to a certain standard? There will be a lot of organisations out there who would want to be accreditors or providers and you can always apply under, to be an approved provider and accreditor. So I don't know whether that happens much in the Fitness Industry or whether people who work within that industry are fairly content with the way the structure is now developed. But certainly groups like us wouldn't like to be accreditors in the way gymnasiums operate but we would want to at some stage say, look, we would love you to seek our advice on kids and adolescents. We would rather be an advisory rather than an accrediting group in that area. But I don't know of any other groups out there. Are there any other splinter groups out there in the industry who want to accredit? I suppose there are TAFEs also. They are able to get people to a certain standard. They seem to be able to take on all sorts of courses. That is a an interesting question and I need to think more about that one before I can give a more consolidated answer to that one.

I: That is fine 016. That is a very good response and we would just like to say 'thank you' and the interview is now over.

Adolescent Participation in Gymnasium Based Exercise Programs: Barriers and Opportunities

Transcription of Interview with Informant 017

Interviewer (I): This interview is being conducted with Informant 017. Informant 017, thank you for providing us with your completed consent form. 017, could you please confirm that you consent to participate in this interview?

Informant 017 (I 017): I do consent.

I: Thank you. Informant 017, where is physical activity placed within your lifestyle?

I 017: It is a high priority. For myself and my kids and we try to do something daily if possible.

I: Fantastic. 017, do you and your organisation believe that a problem exists regarding physical inactivity and adolescents?

I 017: Yes, we do.

I: And what do you think is causing this problem?

I 017: Probably a number of factors. I think households, like with the parents being busy; they don't have as much time. I would say technology has been a problem. The lack of importance given to physical activity in schools is important and probably the cost not just to participate but probably the insurance coverage as well has lead to a decline.

I: And from insurance coverage do you mean from a business or personal perspective?

I 017: I am going to say probably both. So, one that maybe the sporting clubs aren't taking out enough insurance so when the kids gets injured there is no insurance behind it or that the parents haven't gone to get private health insurance to adequately support their kids as well.

I: Right. What type of policies, campaigns and programs might alleviate this type of problem?

I 017: I think that going through my list, the curriculum for schools need to change. I know it is crowded but there definitely needs to be a greater importance to be put on physical activity and there is a lot of research to show how active kids do better academically as well. So, I think through government and their processes that way. Also, then having tax incentives for parents or some kind of benefit for parents to encourage their kids to teenagers to participate in physical activity. I think that is probably the two key ones.

I: So, right, some kind of subsidy for parents.

I 017: Yes, correct.

I: Right. What roles do you think gymnasiums can play in alleviating this problem?

I 017: Are you talking about fitness centres or other fitness...

I: So, um, commercial type fitness centres, so places where you conduct resistance exercise, cardio vascular activities and exercises like that.

I 017: Sure. I think they have a role if they are appropriately set-up. So having one, appropriate staff who know how to work with kids and the special considerations you need to have. I think, also them having appropriate equipment and I think there I haven't thought too much about them doing weights but there are other activities, body resistance activities they could be doing or even more aerobic fun and games stuff that could occur that they could use their facilities for. So I would say they are the two areas.

I: Right, for gymnasium based exercise programs such as cardiovascular and resistance exercise, what is your organisation's position or policy stance on participation by adolescents?

I 017: We believe that, yes, it is suitable. We do believe that you have to be appropriately trained. We don't see that the certificate IV graduates have enough. Some certificate IVs, particularly those who have taken those additional modules have that training, but in a lot of cases we think that they don't really try and make them little adults instead of really thinking about kids' ages and making it fun and those types of things. So, I think the quality is about having appropriate training and having appropriate supervision, so having a good ratio to the number of kids in there to the supervisors. They are really the only policies I guess that our organisation has considered at this point.

I: Right. Are you aware of any previous or existing policies and/or practices that might have enhanced or inhibited participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 017: Yeah, I know Fitness Australia, had a policy out, I don't know how long ago, and I am sorry I don't know if it is still active, but it had recommendations that you had to be sixteen which we were opposed to, particularly if a university trained instructor believes that they could go in and design a program for no matter what age, as long as they were supervised fully. So I think that policy has limited what a lot of fitness centres are doing.

I: So, the position of your organisation would be that providing the adequate supervision is there, and if you have an adequately trained supervising instructor, then the child could be less than sixteen years old going into a gym in that environment?

I 017: Yes. Correct. Look we haven't set the minimum but we thought that we didn't see a problem that if we had a kid who was fourteen who was being trained by a personal trainer or had a program written and there was supervision, there then there is nothing wrong with that if the program was designed for their particular needs and that there was supervision, but a minimum hasn't being discussed yet.

I: No, that is fine. Thank you. Now, are you aware of any policies that are currently being developed which may directly or indirectly affect, that is, encourage or discourage, adolescent participation in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 017: I don't know. No, I don't.

I: Now, I will move onto the next questions. If your organisation was to initiate policies regarding participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs within Australia, which key categories of stakeholders would you select for collaboration?

I 017: Well, Fitness Australia, Sports Medicine Australia and probably APA, for the physio's association and the Department of Health and Ageing.

I: Now, specifically, do you feel there should be a minimum age requirement for boys and girls in gymnasium based exercise programs? I know we did just almost answer this question before but I would just like to raise it again.

I 017: Um. Look I would say probably 'yes' and I would probably say around thirteen or fourteen.

I: Is that for boys and girls the same age?

I 017: Um, good question. I would say 'yes'.

I: What would be your reason for that age?

I 017: Um. I think, I guess, it is, and well I am trying to think about the spectrum you are going to have in the gym. You could have anyone from thirteen up to you know, maybe eighty and trying to also maintain the balance and not, I guess, discouraging the older people from coming in. I guess we are looking at starting high school age. It is an age where they can act responsibly in a public place.

I: Fair enough. So, around the year seven age group then?

I 017: Yes, around the seven or eight. Yeah, that age group.

I: Great. Now, while on the topic of regulation, do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

I 017: Yes, we do.

I: Excellent. Now what would be the positive and/or negative features of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

I 017: I think the positives would be a bit of regulation around the industry. There definitely needs to be some rules or standards that are in place on a number of levels. The negatives I think is that the industry itself probably won't like to have some regulation around it. I think it would allow for numerous things but in regard to the topic you are talking about it would ensure better safety for the clientele coming in if we have this.

I: And do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation?

I 017: Yes, I do.

I: And what would be the positive and/or negative features of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation?

I 017: Positives, again ensuring that there are competent instructors out there. It would also allow you to regulate those who may have complaints against them and monitoring them or disbanding them if the severity of the incident. Then it would be, the negatives, again those in the industry who haven't joined up with ourselves or Fitness Australia or Kinect Australia, may feel they have been pushed into something they don't want to do.

I: Do you believe in the principle of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation?

I 017: Yes and I think that would cover all that area, and again the positives of ensuring that there are safe practices and that everyone knows that they are seeing appropriately trained people, there is appropriate equipment, that there are people who know how to do first-aid on site and those sort of things. So it would allow for better safe environments and hopefully make a difference for the industry.

I: Right. Are there any negatives that you would relate to mandatory Fitness Industry regulation?

I 017: I think probably the cost of setting it up would be a negative and probably the industry feeling that there is a loss of control and being forced into some kind of control.

I: Now, the final question for the interview, informant 017. If policy and/or regulation was introduced to regulate the Australian Fitness Industry, which agencies and/or organisations do you feel are best placed to play a major accreditation and regulatory role?

I 017: I would have to support my colleagues in Fitness Australia or Kinect Australia and they are now Physical Activity Australia?

I: That is correct.

I 017: Um, I would say they are in the industry and we don't really sit within their industry. I don't really believe however...I think there would be a lot of work we would have to do to get them in a position to ensure that it would be of a high standard and quality. They haven't really looked at that in the past but yes, I think it would need to sit with them.

I: Informant 017, I would just like to provide an opportunity with anything you would like to provide in regard to the topic of the interview of the day as that was my final question. Is there anything else that you would like to discuss or mention regarding the topic?

I 017: Um, I would say the only other thing I could have fitted into the other question was that there is a new physical activity screening tool that ourselves, Fitness Australia and Sports Medicine Australia developed last year and I guess the importance of if we are getting the young people in, this one is the adult one and we are working on the children's one this year. The importance of it is that if they come in that they are appropriately screened and that screening would then determine who is the most appropriate person to write the programs or supervise. So, if it comes up with that person having certain risk factors or presenting with certain conditions that it is just no 'oh, I am going to give them to whoever is available' that they are filtered through to the most appropriate person again to ensure that they get looked after.

I: And are these guidelines being designed for exercise physiologists specifically?

I 017: No, the current guidelines, the adult ones which were launched in about July last year, it is a three stage screening tool, so you can come in and drop off wherever you like. So in phase one, it is very much like the PAR-Q, and it has a couple of different questions in there and that is basically that any fitness or exercise physiologist could do the screening and it also designed as a self-assessment, so it could be that you are waiting to join the gym and you are filling it in as a way of your initial screening, and you are filling that in as part of your initial screening and it will identify if you are ready to exercise or if you need to be screened further by an exercise physiologist. So, if it comes up that you have had heart conditions and they will do the next screening to determine if you are okay then to be trained by a certificate IV or whether you need to stick to the exercise physiologist. So, the next one allows you to take measures that the cert. IV can actually do; so it is like doing your height, weight and girth. Phase three does more of your point of care so it will take your blood glucose and cholesterol levels. So more exercise physiologists are trained in that. So, through Fitness Australia we are really pushing it at the moment. We can't make it compulsory but if you talk about your regulation this would be a requirement then everyone fills in these and everyone is screened before they are exercising. Then we are developing now, a children's one this year, so if you do get under eighteens then you can fill in a form that will be slightly different.

I: Just to confirm, this initiative is for all states and territories?

I 017: Correct, it is. Would you like a copy of it?

I: That would be fantastic, actually.

I 017: I will send you through the guide and the user's manual that we developed as well so I can send that through to you.

I: Fantastic. Well, this interview is now over. Thank you very much for your participation.

Adolescent Participation in Gymnasium Based Exercise Programs: Barriers and Opportunities

Transcription of Interview with Informant 018

Interviewer (I): This interview is being conducted with Informant 018. Informant 018, thank you for providing us with your completed consent form. Could you please confirm that you do consent to participate in this interview?

Informant 018 (I 018): Yes, I do consent.

I: Thank you. Now, where is physical activity placed within your lifestyle?

I 018: Where is it placed?

I: Yes, where does it fit in your lifestyle?

I 018: It is pretty much a major part of my lifestyle in that I work within the Fitness Industry and I also participate in a lot of physical activity as well. You know, it would probably take up of a week, a total hours in a week, it would probably take up, you know working, my entire week plus pretty much half of my time I spend in recreational activities doing fitness related recreational activities as well.

I: Very good. Do you and your organisation believe that a problem exists regarding physical inactivity and adolescents?

I 018: Yes, we do and it is something we have observed both anecdotally as far as you know, the clients that we have and that sort of, see in the research industry and in the background of potential members for our first services in that, you know, younger people especially tending to be less active and obesity is coming up as more and more of a problem for younger people especially in that cohort that you guys have explained as being part of this study, I guess. That is why we become interested in being part of it in the first place.

I: Fantastic. And what do you think is causing this problem?

I 018: I guess there is not one single factor that you say causes it. In relation to a lot of the younger clients that we get, they tend to get, they attend an all female gym chain. So we tend to get like a mother who wants her daughter to come and exercise with her in the gym with her or unsupervised but normally participating in exercise with the parent. We tend to find that one of the things is that the children sometimes have health problems related to obesity and that a doctor may have referred them to participate in a gym based program rather than sport or some sort of recreational exercise outside of a gymnasium mainly because it is more structured and a parent can be there and there is that support you get from exercise professionals within that environment. Probably one of the ones I notice is that people who have got, whether it be related to functions, they might have an injury or whether it is related to some sort of disease, you know it might be a diet related disease or something to do with their endocrine system or whatever, they often get referred to a

gymnasium to try and address that health related side that the Fitness Industry can provide. It is almost like exercise as medicine. So, that is probably one, that there is often that health related factor there. I guess the other one is time too. I think that the impression I get is that a lot of parents find it difficult now that if their children aren't interested in organised sport or organised recreational activities, then you know, like, netball or football and those sort of like structured activities, then to find time to be active outside of the home. So they are looking towards gymnasiums to provide that activity based element of a child's upbringing in some ways I think at times sometimes. They sort of maybe stuck a bit because they are committed to work and have a busy lifestyle and that you know, I don't have time to take my kids down the park for three or four hours you know.

I: 018, building on that, what type of policies, campaigns and programs might alleviate this type of problem?

I 018: I think gyms aren't always seen as a major option for young people to work out in. So, I think that is something that could be addressed. So when we look at recreational sports related fitness activity for children, you know young adolescents, we tend to in Australia get fixated on sport. You know, organised sport, swimming, tennis, netball, football for males. Whereas, I guess, going to a gym it isn't an organised sport but it is just as beneficial as playing a sport. It just hasn't got that social element possibly but certainly adults in gyms still have a big social relationship with other gym members. I think that is a big thing with the popularity of group exercise is that it provides that social connection that you sometimes don't get in a gym just working out on your own. So I think that is probably something that could be looked at, that element of social interaction and you know, in a fitness environment, being sold towards young adolescents, that it is an option away from competitive sport that sometimes doesn't appeal to all young people. So I am saying that they may find that they want to do and they certainly may address their fitness goals but not through that avenue.

I: In terms of the role that you think gymnasiums can play in alleviating this problem, is there anything else that you would like to add there regarding physical inactivity in adolescents?

I 018: I guess the role gymnasiums could provide is to provide that extra option where it is sort of structured format where they can go and attend and they are given guidance and specialist advice to achieve whatever goal they may have in their lives and I think that is even lacking in a recreational sporting setting that they don't get much specialist advice. A local netball coach may be someone who has just played netball all their life and she can't really address those other needs that often adolescents have in relation to fitness. She can certainly teach them how to play netball but can she identify the fact that she has an eating disorder or some sort of muscular dysfunction and refer them onto a health professional outside the gym itself. Certainly fitness professionals can. I guess that gymnasiums provide the ability to identify and refer young adolescents onto other health professionals and other specialists who can provide help for them if they did have other related problems to do with why they are possibly inactive or obese.

I: Right. Thank you 018. Now moving on. For gymnasium based exercise programs such as cardiovascular and resistance exercise, what is your organisation's position or policy stance on participation by adolescents?

I 018: Okay, so our written policy is that any adolescent between the age of twelve and basically eighteen can enrol in our club with parental consent. So obviously, they have to have parental consent to be a member. Then they can participate without parental supervision in group exercise classes because they are under direct supervision during that class by an exercise professional. However, they can't exercise in a gymnasium alone without direct supervision from either their parent or a personal trainer who is qualified as a child trainer and also has a working with children certificate. So, we make that distinction between the two areas. One is that they basically must be supervised at all times in a gymnasium environment.

I: What are the conditions in relation to participating in cardio vascular exercise such as using a treadmill or a cross trainer or a machine like that?

I 018: Yeah, if they are going to use a treadmill or a cross trainer they have to really be under the supervision of their parent or a personal trainer. They wouldn't be able to come into a gymnasium on their own and use cardio vascular equipment without supervision.

I: So, resistance exercise and cardio vascular when it is not in the class environment fall in the same category then?

I 018: Yeah, because we look at it as a high risk population in that, they are not fully developed physically or mentally yet. Certainly nine times out of ten they can probably safely use both weights and cardio vascular equipment but there is still that risk there that is a bit above and beyond an adult where they could injure themselves and they don't quite have the understanding yet that what their bodies are capable and not capable of in that environment.

I: Are you aware of any previous or existing policies and/or practices that might have enhanced or inhibited participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 018: Within our particular gym chain or just in general?

I: Just in general. It could be within your organisation or something that you have been aware of in the industry.

I 018: Look there is nothing specific but I know that it is sort of looked upon, I guess, as a burden in some cases to have to supervise younger adolescents within a gymnasium. You know, they tend not to be structured in their exercise and they tend to need more resources and certainly that is the belief that they need more resources but if there is any more data to support that belief is probably debatable but that tends to be, I guess, a feeling in the gymnasium industry, that younger adolescents take up more resources. The other thing I guess too is that there is a perception that they are an occupational health and safety risk and I guess that is in conjunction with that whole gamut of risk analysis and risk assessment for the gymnasium environment. You know, for some reason, young people are identified as being more at risk in this environment, I guess, due to their inexperience, due to the fact that they are using equipment at times which is quite technical and if they haven't got the confidence or the common sense to approach an instructor to get help then it can be too late, that they have already injured themselves by the time they have worked how to use it I guess. I think that is something which is a common, I guess, feeling in the industry towards adolescents in the gyms.

I: Is that your feeling or have you actually had contact with other organisations and that is the general feeling say through conversation?

I 018: No, to be honest I haven't had that conversation with other organisations. We don't take that point of view necessarily. We are happy to have adolescents enrolled and it is not something that we have found to be a problem in fact in actuality we find in some ways quite the opposite. I was just speaking to one of the managers on Thursday last week who had just enrolled a sixteen year old female in the gymnasium under her mother's consent and she was saying quite the opposite, that she didn't have any problems with them and she is quite happy to have them as long as she was just trying to clarify the change sort of approach to how we look at their participation and what they are and are not allowed to do within a gym and I think the main concern is always, how much supervision has to be done of them in the gym? It is always the concern and that always relates to having qualified instructors and rates of pay and the amount of resources that have to be on that person we are monitoring while they are exercising, I guess.

I: Understood. Thank you very much. Now are you aware of any policies that are currently being developed that may directly or indirectly affect, that is, encourage or discourage, adolescent participation in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 018: You mean within our gymnasium chain?

I: Again, it can be within your organisation or also you might be, say aware of something currently undergoing in the industry, so...

I 018: No, to be honest, there is nothing we are directly developing but one thing that we do is that we provide a specialist child instructor course for our instructors if they want to do that, based on the Australian quality training fund with elements taken out of the certificate four in personal training. It is the child instructor module within that course so we have taken that out as an individual course and delivered that separately to the certificate III and IV in fitness so that people can retrospectively qualify themselves to work with children and young adolescents or they can do a certificate III, normally it is not part of the course but we do provide that as part of the certificate III. So, normally in the certificate III you don't need to have that specialist training but that is normally kept to a certificate IV level qualifications as a personal trainer but we find that because we do have adolescent females in our gyms that it is quite useful for the gym instructors who provide fitness advice across the whole gamut of membership to have that qualification, and most of them exercise that option when they do qualifications with us and they do the child instructor unit. So, I guess that is one thing we do, and we will continue on with the new certificate III and IV course that will be rolled out in March this year. There's a new approved certificate III and IV from Skills Australia, and again we will make sure we have that as an optional elective within both the certificate III and IV.

I: That sounds very good. Now, if your organisation was to initiative policies regarding participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs within Australia which key categories of stakeholders would you select for collaboration?

I 018: I think possibly, schools, as probably as counter intuitive as that sounds, because they have their own programs but I think that they such an ability to influence both parents and children's approaches towards their physical activity whether it be gym based or not, but

just physical activity in general. And certainly it is very difficult to engage with schools because obviously they always have the child's privacy protection to heart which is as it should be, but the education system tends to not want to be involved with commercial entities I guess. They more want to get involved with community based organisations and sporting affiliations rather than a commercial gymnasium which I think would be something that they would pretty much avoid if they could, I guess. They are adverse to it for some reason, but I think if we and the industry could engage with anyone to affect points of view towards exercising in a gymnasium in general, would be the education system in some way at some level. What the level would be, would be difficult to gauge, but I think they are going to have the most potential to really influence what children do or young adolescents, that age cohort that you are talking about, because a lot of their feelings and habits come from the education system and their peers are sort of conveying to them.

I: We started talking before about age related conditions for participation by adolescents within your organisation. Specifically, do you feel there should be a minimum participation age requirement for boys and girls in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 018: In an adult gymnasium, yes. We don't have dedicated children's areas within our gymnasium and we have set the minimum age of twelve, because essentially that is the age when adolescent women start to have their period, and adapt that more adult body type, and be able to utilise a more intense type of training that you get in a gymnasium, and transition from the small number of children's gyms around to a more adult environment I guess. So, I would think probably, and this is debatable with exactly what you would exactly go with, but around twelve certainly for females and young adolescents, it would be twelve or thirteen for that reason. Below that they probably aren't going to get a lot out of an adult gymnasium really to be honest.

I: For adolescent boys, what age or reason would you nominate?

I 018: Um, I might go a little bit older for adolescent boys, and again for those same reasons, those physical development reasons, and also probably for adolescent boys for their maturity. Gymnasiums are places where there does require a certain level of discipline to really get the most out of it and given that boys tend to mature a bit older than girls as far as their intellectual development, it may not suit them to start from as young as twelve or thirteen but physically we have found that it's probably not going to hurt them as long as the trainers are delivering training to a young adolescent and not trying to deliver adult intensity training for that body type. Probably, for both, it would be between the ages of thirteen or fourteen and in some cases it is going to depend on the individual child as well obviously.

I: Absolutely.

I 018: There is such a big difference in development between different children and different sort of, even different cultural groups within Australian society now, we have got a really multicultural population that it is going to be really difficult to give an exact age, but certainly not below twelve would be too young to go into our style of adult gym where we don't have dedicated resources for children's training even though we can adapt a lot of them there is not dedicated area for it.

I: So, before twelve you don't feel it would be appropriate for your organisation anyway.

I 018: Not with the current structure. We have child care facilities for a lot of children within a lot of our facilities but we think if you are going to deliver dedicated value added exercise for children below twelve then you would need to have some dedicated facilities there that really are aimed at that age group, especially when you get below say ten, where they really do need to be trained quite differently I guess in some ways. In some ways it isn't going to suit them. With some ten year olds you can get away with training them a bit harder and with a bit more intensity but with certainly younger children you don't. Certainly, less than ten they need more movement based and sort of multilateral development stuff rather than getting on machines and weights or whatever it may be.

I: That's right. Like you said it isn't a specific adolescent or child exercise environment. There are adults there, so like you said you have to consider the current members and the age of members too, so thank you very much for that. Now, while we are on the topic of regulation, do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

I 018: Yes. We are all accredited so it depends who it would be with though. We sort of I guess, unofficially groups like Kinect Australia and Fitness Australia who act as industry peak bodies but essentially the industry is self-regulated, you would say.

I: Yes.

I 018: To pretty much 100 per cent. If you don't want to participate with those organisations then certainly you are not forced to. And the average person doesn't realise that there isn't any real official lawful accreditation of gymnasiums. I guess it would certainly take a lot of discussion and discourse to try and come up with across the board sort of governmental system to accredit gyms because there is such a huge range of gyms, I guess, everything from personal training studios to huge local government based gyms that have pools, netball courts and weight rooms and thousands of members, I guess. So there would have to be almost, I guess, levels of accreditation for the different aspects of industry I think. I think it would be useful and it would certainly give people more guidance, I guess, and maybe a little bit more assurance with what they are getting is, you know, a decent product.

I: Um. And what would be the positive and/or negative features of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

I 018: I guess, a positive would be that the gymnasiums themselves can demonstrate to their clients that they have met a certain standard within the industry that has been predefined and agreed to across the board and it will certainly also give clients some insurance that the facility and that the staff and the product that they are being delivered is at a minimum standard that certainly they are going to gain something from it if they attend and they are going to be in a safe environment and I guess, trust the industry across the board in that area. I think probably the disadvantage would be, I guess, that it is going to place a burden on some smaller organisations that are quite good at what they do. It will certainly place an administrative and financial burden on them that may cause them to be not as competitive and even driven out of the industry. There is certainly nothing wrong with their product. They just may not have the resources to compete if we start to really, I guess, start to make this a mandatory regulatory burden that they have to carry out all the time. It would depend on what that regulation consisted of, I guess, to some of the smaller providers that

provide that sort of niche, be it personal training or dieticians or whatever it is, in relation to gymnasiums and things like that.

I: So the possibility of added costs and processes, you feel, could present issues for the smaller operators?

I 018: Yeah, I think that even for the larger operators. Even the large chains that operate on a franchise sort of system, some of the franchisees aren't making money across the board in the actual chains, you know what I mean? They will be able to compete at a different level, I guess, and certainly in more competitive urban areas there is pretty much saturation of gymnasium facilities in a lot of the areas. You know those smaller gyms will be driven out by the bigger gyms simply because they will be able to carry the burden of regulation more efficiently and depending on what it is. It is obviously not defined.

I: No, it isn't. It is just a hypothetical.

I 018: If you look at the requirements now if you want to be a member of one of the peak bodies, just as an individual, it will probably cost you about \$1,500 a year to stay registered which given that the Fitness Industry is one of the lowest paid industries at the base level, so across the board, that is a relatively high burden to stay registered. It is more than a truck driver to keep their licence for the year and a fitness professional pays at least twice as much for a driver's licence, I think it is about \$150, so if you think about it that way given the low pay rate then that illustrates some of the drawbacks to high and tight regulation as much as you would get a lot of benefits to it.

I: Um, that \$1,500 approximate cost would be for registration costs and ongoing education to satisfy requirements wouldn't it?

I 018: For continuing education credits I think you need to get about ten a year. It is twenty every two years, and you may have to confirm that with the peak bodies like Fitness Australia and kinect, but I know, I am pretty sure twenty every two years.

I: Right.

I 018: And you would pay approximately \$100 for one CEC that is roughly what it equates to do a course. It costs about \$100 per CEC. A CEC is the equivalent of approximately one hour of ongoing education, roughly. It depends on what you are doing and the course but that is a rough way of equating it. We run some CEC courses and that is essentially a rough guide to how much they cost. Registration is about \$250–300 a year. So by the time you do your ten hours of education and you register yourself as a fitness trainer every year, it costs you between \$1,200 and \$1,500, probably.

I: Right. It certainly adds up. 018, while on the topic of instructors, do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation?

I 018: Yeah, we do. We require anybody working in our gyms, be they a manager even if they are not delivering exercise directly, for anybody who is employed directly in the gym delivering fitness, is to be minimum certificate III qualified.

I: Right.

I 018: Obviously not our sales people because they are not delivering any exercise. They conduct point of sales sort of activities, but the managers who certainly work in gymnasiums are required to be certificate III minimum. All trainers in the gym including group exercise, they have to be either certificate III, a registered group exercise instructor, depending on their role within the gym because a lot of our group exercise instructors are contractors so they are not full-time, but if they are a contractor and they are only there for a few classes a week, they still need to be a registered group exercise instructor.

I: Right. And the managers included will always make sure that the registration is always current as well then.

I 018: Yes, that's right and we offer CEC courses to support that ongoing registration process.

I: And what would you list again as the positive and/or negative features of mandatory instructor accreditation?

I 018: Look, I think the positive is that it is just got that knowledge about what does and doesn't work. They are not drawn into things like fad diets in support of an exercise program and things like that. They realise that providing ongoing successful fitness advice to a client is about addressing the lifestyle with the client and giving them healthy options to make fitness part of their lifestyle rather than trying to provide a quick fix or a sales based approach to selling them something that they are going to use in the short term but that may provide them with the skills or the knowledge that for the rest of their life they will make different choices but keep them 'fit and healthy', whatever that term means, in relation to what the goals of the client may be, so I think that certainly if you look outside the Fitness Industry, those things which you say might be allied with fitness like dieting, I think that when you see that they don't have to be really qualified in any way to provide someone with a diet shake or things like that, then you start to see the drawback to not having that accreditation, not having that sound knowledge that has been defined by professionals, based on science and research that is like 'this is what works', this is what is on the edge of what works and we are not sure, and it doesn't assist you and it is just a fad and you can try it but you aren't really going to be accredited or part of the industry if you are doing that. I think that is like a huge thing that we find with our business is that if you are going to retain a client, they have to feel as if they are gaining life skills, not just getting exercise instruction. I think people are getting savvier about fitness and health. They think that if they turn up at the gym and work out a few times a week, they think that is going to make my exercise needs fit, but there is more to it these days.

I: There certainly is. Do you believe in the principle of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation?

I 018: Yes. I do and certainly in areas of definitely occupational health and safety. You know, that is a huge one, and probably under the insurance banner as well, because that sort of goes hand in hand. Making sure people working in the industry and the venues themselves are all safe and insured correctly. I guess, that would be the two main areas that would lend themselves most to mandatory regulation. I guess that side of it. And pretty much, if you look at the occupational health and safety side of it, they already are under mandatory regulation because they are workplaces, and they are under the workplace safety

regulation. But I guess there are probably some elements of gymnasium regulation that could do with some more focused attention, I guess, rather than just treating them generically in the workplace. There are some elements that certainly have provision in the servicing of equipment and the safety of the equipment. That would vary a lot between different gymnasiums and different providers of fitness, and I think there would be a lot of machinery out there that would probably be, if that was part of the regulatory process, it would probably be labelled as unsafe in some ways.

I: That is right, and warranty periods become an issue then, because from my experience at least, when equipment is out of warranty, the likelihood or how fast it is actually to be repaired, certainly can differ from when it is actually under warranty and the costs therefore are not as great.

I 018: I would also say there is a lot of, I wouldn't say dangerous, but a lot of second-hand equipment. There is certainly a lot of dumping of second hand equipment once the warranty period and things like that are up, and it would be boarding on, if not unsafe, then at least very unreliable. Some of it is just plain unsafe as well. Some that are worn out should not be put back into a commercial facility. I guess that may be part of the regulatory process in relation to, and certainly I am not someone to over regulate the gym industry, but I guess there are certain things that people do in gymnasiums where you think 'why are you doing that, that is just going to end in tears'. Using older equipment or leaving things the way they are set up in weight rooms in places like that, you can look at it and go, 'you might get away with that for ten years, but one day someone is going to get injured because of that practice or that structure of your gym', I guess.

I: Now, building on your response there, are there any further positive and/or negative features of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation that you would like to mention?

I 018: I think again the negative for some people may be the cost, and not just the cost, but also the fact that it is going to take up a lot of their time to meet whatever the regulations there are, and again I would hate to see a lot of small operators not being able to operate in that environment because a lot of them are very good at providing that niche personal training that a lot of people appreciate and want. You know, not everyone wants to go to big gyms, and not everyone can go to the big gyms because not all suburbs have got them and they are not always accessible to all people. So I think you would have to be careful not to really drive the smaller operator out of the industry by over-regulation, which tends to be, from what I have seen already, to be a big burden for smaller operators but by the same token, you know, that certainly doesn't mean that it is precluded because I think some form of regulation is needed to keep some of the gyms safe basically. But I think the main advantage would be that safety factor. Regulating the gyms for the safety factor more than everything else and educating gym owners that there is more to gyms than just providing fitness training to people, that you are sort of responsible for their health and safety outside the exercise environment but also within the gym environment.

I: Absolutely and any regulatory initiative would certainly have to consider all operators in the industry, that is for sure. Now, the final question for the interview, if policy and/or regulation was introduced to regulate the Australian Fitness Industry, which agencies and/or organisations do you feel are best placed to play a major accreditation and regulatory role?

I 018: I personally, and the only reason I say this is, I think Service Skills Australia who currently manage the, and I know they are more of a vocational education and training organisation, I think they probably hold the regulatory knowledge for the industry. They probably spend the most time interacting with industry writing the various courses that industry use to educate themselves with. I would be surprised if any other organisation had that corporate knowledge about the industry that would allow them to work on a level where they could regulate but also allow enough freedom to the industry if it were to continue to innovate and move forward. Possibly, one of the others, Fitness Australia or kinect, may have, but I think to be honest they have a commercial relationship with certain gym chains that would preclude them from being unbiased. I mean if you look at their website, they have commercial relationships with large fitness providers be they educators or gym chain owners. I am not saying that they are in any way corrupt or anything like that but they have got that certain legitimate commercial relationship with them, and I still think that would preclude them from being an unbiased body, whereas Service Skills Australia in some way may be able to provide that advice because they don't have a commercial relationship. They are purely a training institution that outlines what standards are required for the industry but I am not sure whether they would be most able in far as regulation goes to do it, because I don't know what powers they have to enforce. I know the only power they have as far as the industry goes, is to register or deregister training organisations who are providing the fitness credentials to fitness professionals, so certainly maybe from within the training organisation they could provide some advice and subject matter experts to maybe raise some other sort of organisation or become part of, well, you know, maybe it could be WorkCover or something like that but certainly it would have to involve someone with expertise within the industry.

I: What you were mentioning about the say, the interests of Kinect Australia and Fitness Australia regarding other gymnasiums, was it both organisations you were saying you felt had links with other organisations?

I 018: Yes, they do and they are not, as I said, it is certainly not in any way, you know, what you would call, fair link, you know it is quite open and you know, that they have an affiliation with large fitness providers, and they obviously have taken on that responsibility of representing as a peak body of the Fitness Industry. So I guess to do that they need resources, and when you are a large fitness provider, and you want your voice heard, you certainly are going to try and use every avenue you have got, any legal and sort of ethical avenue you have got, to lobby and influence people within the industry that matter. They most openly on their websites display who they are affiliated with, and who supports them, and who provides resources and financing, and as I said, there is nothing bad about that, I just think that from a purely regulatory point of view, you probably wouldn't want that organisation involved unless they could somehow disassociate themselves from that interaction with those entities, but I don't think they can, because they are not placed there now. They have developed the way they have developed for a reason, and that has been because they are representing these bodies, these fitness providers, and you know, they have represented them quite well and done a good job of it, but that is just the way they are you know. I don't think it would be viewed by the majority of industry as being a good way to do it. We are a member of Fitness Australia ourselves in the chain I represent and purely for that reason, because we can get them to see our points of view and act on our behalf if necessary when dealing with other organisations.

I: Your main point being that any organisation being involved in any form of accreditation or any regulatory role needs to be unbiased and have no bias whatsoever?

I 018: Yes, I think that there would be a shake up of the Fitness Industry with mandatory regulation of trainers and gymnasiums themselves if it was brought in as mandatory. Even though it is sort of supposedly mandatory now in terms of having a certificate III and IV across the industry, but there is a lot people working who haven't got a certificate III and IV, and so I think if you started to bring that in, it would be a big shake up for the industry and you would have to have a body that was seen as being unbiased to carry that big shake up off because it would be major change for the Fitness Industry. It is interesting, about three years ago I was involved in trying to, the European Union, brought in their own regulatory body for the first time. That was in 2007–2008 and they have tried to start to register fitness trainers across Europe under a peak body almost like what we have done in Australia. It has been very slow in the industry, and they haven't really embraced it. They don't have any regulatory or legislative power behind it to force people too. They are just trying to do it and they are saying 'this is going to improve the industry and everyone is trying to do it and there is a common standard'. But I think if you are going to do it in Australia that could possibly be the same approach to it here, that people would just go 'unless you are going to make it, unless there is going to be inspectors in our gyms shutting us down', you know, we are not going to embrace it that quickly, I would suspect especially a lot of the smaller and independent gymnasiums, because they are going to associate cost and administrative burden with it I think.

I: They are certainly concerns that need to be considered. Informant 018, thank you very much this interview is now over.

Adolescent Participation in Gymnasium Based Exercise Programs: Barriers and Opportunities

Transcription of Interview with Informant 019

Interviewer (I): This interview is being conducted with Informant 019. Informant 019, thank you for providing us with your completed consent form. Could you please confirm that you do consent to participate in this interview?

Informant 019 (I 019): Yes.

I: Thank you. Where is physical activity placed within your lifestyle?

I 019: Sorry, say that again? Me? Personally, yeah, quite highly actually, yep.

I: Excellent. Could you please explain your average weekly activity?

I 019: I probably run maybe three to four times a week. I probably do a weight session once or twice a week and other incidental exercise like walking, or the occasional swim or sport.

I: Excellent. Do you and your organisation believe that a problem exists regarding physical inactivity and adolescents?

I 019: Yes, I think so.

I: And what do you think is causing this problem?

I 019: I think there are a range of factors from lack of knowledge and education, to lack of access, to poor education about healthy eating as well, and in some cases the socio-economic factors as well.

I: And when you say lack of access were you relating it to your comment then or were you saying it was another issue?

I 019: Look, it is probably another issue around facilities as well. Things like location, social inclusion, as well as the cost and those sorts of things.

I: What type of policies, campaigns and programs do you think might alleviate this type of problem?

I 019: Look, I think it starts with the education of parents and other figures such as schools and community groups as well, so in educating them on the importance of physical activity. Also, obviously at a government level from health promotion to incentives and facilities as well.

I: What role do you think gymnasiums can play in alleviating this problem?

I 019: I think it has a key role as part of the education, but I think it is important that they also get out in the community and play a role in that health part of the promotion, and not just be based there and wait for people to come and cater for the ones that already know the benefits of it.

I: For gymnasium based exercise programs such as cardiovascular and resistance exercise, what is your organisation's position or policy stance on participation by adolescents?

I 019: We do promote it, so most, if not all of our facilities have some sort of program for adolescents. ...[identifiable information redacted to maintain privacy] is a common term for the majority of those sorts of programs, but also the majority of the programs we also have a focus around sport and other physical activity classes and those sorts of things as well that combine with the gym or cardio based activities.

I: So, all in all, in terms of cardiovascular resistance exercise, the typical gymnasium activities, your organisation would be in favour of adolescents participating?

I 019: Yes, in a modified form. Obviously we do promote a different type of activity in those gyms for the age group twelve to seventeen as opposed to adults, and then again older adults are different again, so yeah, we do generally promote activity but a specific type of activity.

I: And can you provide any further information on the specific type of activity?

I 019: Look, it is probably the less weight based and more based around a broader breadth of activity, so, lighter weights, more flexibility, more education and even more socialization as well. Probably more circuit based and doing more of a variety of things as opposed to focusing on just a couple of certain areas of the body or of health and fitness.

I: Thank you. Are you aware of any previous or existing policies and/or practices that might have enhanced or inhibited participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 019: Yeah, there definitely has been in the past in some facilities, and I am not sure of the dates where we have an all out people under a certain age, and I think that varied depending on the time because of those concerns around younger people using weights. So, it was a non child and adolescent zone for a period of time there.

I: Would you say it was industry wide at that point or was it just...[identifiable information redacted to maintain privacy] at that point?

I 019: No, I would say, and it was probably before my time, that it was an industry wide commonly known thing that for that age group there, that those sorts of activities were not suitable.

I: Right. Are you aware of any policies that are currently being developed that may directly or indirectly affect, that is, encourage or discourage, adolescent participation in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 019: At a...[identifiable information redacted to maintain privacy] level?

I: At any level across Australia for the industry.

I 019: Yeah, I would say most of our...[identifiable information redacted to maintain privacy] and I think most gyms nowadays would have some sort of policy governing what an adolescent can and can't do within a gym. I am pretty sure most of our gyms do that, though they aren't all the same. There is definitely a policy resisting some use of some equipment.

I: Right, and are you aware of any policies or development within the industry?

I 019: Um, look not personally from off the top of my head. I know there are lots of other groups like Physical Activity Australia and others who are doing work to promote it, but I don't know if there is one that Physical Activity Australia or Fitness Australia have developed specifically for that. I am assuming they would have some sort of template that they would recommend to their members.

I: Thank you very much. Now, if your organisation was to initiate policies regarding participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs within Australia, which key categories of stakeholders would you select for collaboration?

I 019: Um, we would work with our...each facility has their own stakeholders so usually the owners and partners in the facility, like local council in many cases would be one group. Obviously, the adolescents we work with require quite a collaborate organisation so we would open up that discussion with the specific target group, which is adolescents, and their families. Also, most of our...[identifiable information redacted to maintain privacy] try to have a broader community committee or local board or some sort of group that is representative of that area, but we would be open to any other groups who would have knowledge of that area, and also the people who are specialists, in the health benefits or risks associated with that age group, so if there is a peak body or medical practitioners and those sorts of things.

I: Great. Now we started to touch on age a question or two ago. Now, this question does address age. Specifically, do you feel there should be a minimum participation age requirement for boys and girls in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 019: Um, look I suppose the definition of gymnasium based exercise as well.

I: I can explain that if that would help. When I am referring to gymnasium based exercise programs I would consider that to be say cardiovascular and resistance exercise within a gymnasium facility. So, cardiovascular could be using a treadmill or using a cross trainer, resistance exercise could be using free weights, machine weights, cable resistance weights, that type of activity.

I 019: Yeah. I think there is definitely an age limit to that. I think that we usually recommend and it is probably the age of twelve. I can't speak specifically for our whole organisation on that one but I think usually earlier than that we promote other sorts of activities, such as running, cycling movement activities that have some sort of, you know, promote the same muscle groups but less weight sensitive, so more suitable to that younger muscle development as well. We usually have a different type of, whether it is sport or circuit type classes without those pin loaded type equipment, so it may be just more non-weight based equipment using their own body weight instead of weights.

I: You mentioned that you felt twelve could possibly be the minimum age from your organisation's perspective. Personally, would you be prepared to nominate a minimum participation age for both boys and girls?

I 019: Yeah, look I would probably say twelve if I had to choose. I know we would probably have some programs based in the gymnasiums which are under twelve but those programs probably wouldn't use the weights anyway. They would probably be in the circuit area or the circuit room and they would be using things like Fitball™ or skipping ropes or certain bands or those sorts of things anyway. So even though they are in the gym area, they probably wouldn't be using that. I know that is a long answer, but twelve probably.

I: No, that is great. So what would be your reason for nominating twelve then?

I 019: Um, I think it is that jump from childhood to adolescent. I think that the physical development that goes with puberty and the teenage years and all those sort of things. So, whether the muscles start developing differently.

I: With the feeling that it could be twelve as well for your organisation, were you thinking it would be for both boys and girls being twelve years old?

I 019: Yeah, look I think so, I know obviously we do have a program marketed called...[identifiable information redacted to maintain privacy], so I think that is probably thirteen but...um, yeah, so I would say it is around that for both boys and girls. Usually our programs are for both and I can't think of one that we would totally separate them out.

I: Not a problem. Thank you very much. Now, while we are on the topic of regulation, do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

I 019: Yes.

I: And what would be the positive and/or negative features of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

I 019: I think the positives definitely would be to increase the standards of gymnasiums whether that is of the staff, or facilities or ratios, or who we let in and how we treat them and those sorts of things. So, I think, definitely upping the standards of that and reducing the risk as well that come down to insurance costs and all those other things as well. The negative of that would obviously be that there may be some level of cost increase to the consumer if all gyms have to meet certain standards, whether they be higher ratios or more qualified staff or whatever it maybe, it may increase the cost of running some facilities.

I: Right. You started to touch on this next question in your response just then. Do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation?

I 019: Yeah.

I: Again, would be the positives and/or negative features of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation?

I 019: I think obviously starting with the negative would really be the difficulty in finding suitably qualified staff. Obviously from an employer's point of view, there is the difficulty in finding staff and manning that for the entire opening period. The positives obviously would

be upping the knowledge of the people on the floor and upping the level of supervision that you can get though that, and ensuring that the people who are there, and what they are saying is based on up-to-date education. So, making sure they are recently qualified and that in turn reduces the risk associated with teaching someone old practices or whatever it may be.

I: Regarding the qualifications, what are the minimum qualifications that your organisation requires?

I 019: I think at the moment it is certificate four in health and fitness. Look it depends on the role but I am pretty sure that any class instructor or supervising instructor of a facility has to have a certificate IV.

I: So someone on the gym floor basically?

I 019: Yes.

I: Excellent. Do you believe in the principle of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation?

I 019: Yes.

I: Again, what would be the positive and/or negative features of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation?

I 019: Look, I think it would be around just, again a similar principle around the last two answers, around the standards, so making sure that there is a level of supervision, education and qualification of staff and also the facilities. Again, the negatives would be the cost, difficulties in staffing and those sorts of things. Going back to the positives, it reduces the risk associated with injury or negative publicity or whatever it may be about the industry.

I: Right. Now, the final question for today, if policy and/or regulation was introduced to regulate the Australian Fitness Industry, which agencies and/or organisations do you feel are best placed to play a major accreditation and regulatory role?

I 019: I think an independent body would be, I suppose, most suitable. So, someone that is independent, not for profit and that has an unbiased view and has a focus on the safety and promotion of physical activity and health and fitness. So, I think probably the closest thing to that would be Physical Activity Australia.

I: Fantastic. Excellent. Thank you very much. This interview is now over.

Adolescent Participation in Gymnasium Based Exercise Programs: Barriers and Opportunities

Transcription of Interview with Informant 020

Interviewer (I): This interview is being conducted with Informant 020. Informant 020, thank you for providing us with your completed consent form. Could you please confirm that you consent to participate in this interview?

Informant 020 (I 020): Yes, confirmed.

I: Thank you. Informant 020, where is physical activity placed within your lifestyle?

I 020: Very high.

I: And how much physical activity would you conduct on a weekly basis?

I 020: Personally, daily, at least an hour.

I: Fantastic. Do you and your organisation believe that a problem exists regarding physical inactivity and adolescents?

I 020: Definitely.

I: And what do you think is causing this problem?

I 020: We believe it is access and affordability.

I: Right, considering that, what types of policies, campaigns and programs do you think might alleviate this type of problem?

I 020: I think that breaking down the barriers around the, I guess, inappropriateness of access of young people, so I think that being able to provide facilities at the right cost and I guess with the right policies around engagement with adolescents and adults so that they can get in and be supervised, but also enjoy the benefits of physical activity.

I: What you have talked about there I assume you are talking about gymnasiums in particular?

I 020: Yes, I think sport in general, definitely health and fitness centres, swimming pool environments and sporting clubs plus also, I think in general the participation in sport is down as well. So it is trying to work out how those barriers can be removed so that not just the people who can afford access to such programs get it.

I: Right. Excellent, so access in the sense of access to the affordability of sports programs as well as gymnasiums as well.

I 020: I think that it is making sure that it is not one or the other and that it is a balance of activities.

I: Great and what role do you think that gymnasiums can play in alleviating this problem?

I 020: Look, I think that by opening the doors and getting people to be self supported and confident that they are not doing the wrong thing. Reducing the fear of parents and adults that people are going to get hurt in the gymnasium environment, so in then saying that I mean, you know, the traditional view in the past has been, you know, people shouldn't be going into gymnasiums under the age of sixteen. It is that people we are targeting, people who aren't confident, and don't have high self esteem who can get in there and feel better about themselves through physical activity and to have people to support them and mentor them at the same time.

I: So, safety is a big issue is what I am taking out of that.

I 020: Yeah, other than safety it is confidence, that it is not doing damage and that it is doing good.

I: For gymnasium based exercise programs such as cardiovascular and resistance exercise, what is your organisation's position or policy stance on participation by adolescents?

I 020: We have a really positive policy. We allow access for kids from the ages of eleven to sixteen under the direct supervision of an adult, so that is a guardian or adult supervision where they are actually training together, but within a limited range of activities. So what we try and do is create classes that aren't weight based or heavy weight based and not based as free weights. So with the machinery there are controls in place for our kids to come in and participate in those sort of programs and make it part of their lifestyle, not letting that happen down the track when it is often too late.

I: So, they are participating with their parents. Are there any restrictions in terms of time to come and use the facilities?

I 020: With the parent, there is no restriction anymore. We have changed that policy over the recent years because we found that was too restrictive. We used to in the past only allow them in certain times after school, under supervision of our staff. So we still offer that and kids can still come in between eleven and sixteen and access our facilities with the supervision of our staff and with guided programs and all those different activities. But we have also improved access by saying, 'if you have a parent with you who has also been through that training program, then they can also come in with you and you can train outside those hours'.

I: Are you aware of any previous and existing policies and/or practices that might have enhanced or inhibited participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 020: I think there have been guidelines and once again, the guidelines aren't policies. The guidelines in the past have clearly directed gymnasiums not to allow access for young people under the age of sixteen to enter gymnasiums.

I: And which guidelines in particular are you referring to there?

I 020: I think, from my understanding it was the New South Wales department of sport and recreation or the New South Wales fitness guidelines. I think it was either one of those.

I: Now are you aware of any policies that are currently being developed that may directly or indirectly affect, that is, encourage or discourage, adolescent participation in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 020: Only with some internal policies that are focused on making gymnasiums not just health and fitness centres but community spaces where parents, families and children can come together and pursue healthy activities in the one place. So that is our internal, I guess, policy development around our fitness product, and I guess they are all geared around family coming together at centres.

I: Excellent. If your organisation was to initiate policies regarding participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs within Australia, which key categories of stakeholders would you select for collaboration?

I 020: Definitely Fitness Australia and definitely local government who traditionally own the facilities, and we often partner with them to deliver the services in their facilities. Then, I guess, key bodies, well good question, key bodies focused around young people who might be disengaged such as Mission Australia, the Oasis Program, and also with schools, and partnering with them to making sure the kids are coming from school and going to the next step of activity.

I: Specifically, do you feel there should be a minimum participation age requirement for adolescent boys and girls in gymnasium based exercise programs? I know we have talked about age related issues previously but I just wanted to ask you about that question specifically.

I 020: I don't think there should be an age limit or a starting age but there has to be guidelines around the type of activities they do. So, for instance, we have gymnastic centres where kids are doing elite training programs for elite gymnastic participation. There is no reason why from a young age these kids can't be exposed to gymnasiums in the right environment. But I wouldn't, again, it would have to be clearly guided (sic) around how they participate and what they are accessing, and it will drive the weights to be designed but they are not designed for that right now.

I: So, considering what central factors would you consider to be to having the right set-up for adolescents to participate?

I 020: For adolescents it is much more about space and less about programmed machine and strength based exercises. It is much more about getting people. Traditionally the adolescents who accessed even our teen gym programs will really be the kids who aren't active and who aren't playing sport or that don't have a skill set or are novices at how to train. So it is often about activities that allow them to participate just like a PE class at school. But then it is often about educating them on how the machinery works and the benefit it has. It is much more focused about getting them to connect socially then the outcomes on physical activity as such. They are the side benefits from the social engagement.

I: And all integrated in an adult environment with adult participants as well?

I 020: That is right.

I: Fantastic. While on the topic of regulation, do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

I 020: In the principle of it, I do, but not in the principle of it currently?

I: Well, currently the industry could be described as a self-regulated industry and therefore mandatory accreditation is optional. I am just saying that in a hypothetical situation, do you believe in even the principle of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

I 020: I do believe in the principle of it, yep.

I: Right and what would be the positive and or/negative features of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

I 020: I think the positive would be the minimum expectations in the way services and programs would be delivered which would raise the bar and move away from some of the negatives of not being regulated, like you know, allowing supervision levels to be quite low, risk to be high, all those negative factors that for when things aren't regulated to a minimum standard. You look at the aquatic industry and that is regulated to a standard for a reason and that is because people can drown in pools. Obviously it is not as a severe risk in health clubs but there needs to be some minimum guidelines for the industry to follow.

I: Do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation?

I 020: Yes, definitely.

I: Again, what would be the positive and/or negative features of mandatory instructor accreditation?

I 020: Look the positives is that better knowledge is passed on to the participant and the better formation of classes that actually benefit people rather than just being based on experience and not education. You know, the negatives with unaccredited trainers setting up programs in gyms, is that it increased risk and the poor knowledge provided to people trying to achieve better results and then not achieving results and the negative impact it has on them.

I: Right, do you believe in the principle of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation?

I 020: Yes, but how is that different from the original...well, just let me clarify, how is that different from the first question?

I: Being a hypothetical situation, regulation could be I suppose, it is hard to gauge what the level of regulation would actually be, so what guidelines that would actually be in place. So we are seeing say, accreditation and regulation as related but possibly two different things when at the moment you have a self-regulated industry and the option to be accredited, so...

I 020: Accreditation is literally membership and regulation is the minimum operating practices.

I: Yes, that is right. Regulation is enforced on the industry and accreditation, whether it is at a gymnasium level, so gymnasiums also have to be accredited under these guidelines and whether instructors have to be accredited under these guidelines as opposed to being optional.

I 020: Yeah, I think regulation is crucial to I guess, as the industry continues to grow and it has been so significantly over the last ten to fifteen years, regulation is probably more important than ever.

I: And again, what would be the positive and/or negative features of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation?

I 020: Again, from my end, and I look at accreditation as one, risk minimisation but also product quality and value for money that would be provided to the consumer. But then I look at the risk with so suddenly then, you know, the cost of that service would increase to the consumer so they would have to raise the bar a bit. That is the only real risk I can see outside of having a well regulated system.

I: Right. And my final question for the interview, if policy and/or regulation was introduced to regulate the Australian Fitness Industry, which agencies and/or organisations do you feel are best placed to play a major accreditation and regulatory role?

I 020: I think those that are already displaying the qualities that would be the minimum expectations. So obviously the organisations that are leading the industry, but then I guess, the national bodies that already exist. There a couple of key national bodies like Fitness Australia and Physical Activity Australia. These peak bodies which I guess have an accreditation system but don't regulate, so I think you don't want to recreate the wheel but there needs to have some power given to whoever becomes a regulatory body.

I: So, some form of change within the existing structure, you would say there?

I 020: Yes, some value adding to those. There needs to be a value in becoming accredited, that would obviously be training provided to meet the minimum qualifications and the support, that if you are not there, to be able to get to that standard.

I: Fantastic. Thank you for that information. This interview is now over.

Adolescent Participation in Gymnasium Based Exercise Programs: Barriers and Opportunities

Transcription of Interview with Informant 026

Interviewer (I): This interview is being conducted with Informant 026. Informant 026, thank you for providing us with your completed consent form. Could you please confirm that you consent to participate in this interview?

Informant 026 (I 026): Yes, I consent.

I: Thank you. Informant 026, where is physical activity placed within your lifestyle?

I 026: Personally or professionally?

I: Personally.

I 026: Personally, an active participant, a regular gym user, daily walker and golfer.

I: Fantastic. Do you and your organisation believe that a problem exists regarding physical inactivity and adolescents?

I 026: I am not sure I would define it as a problem but certainly it is an issue that needs to be addressed.

I: I will refer to it as a problem with this question, but what do you think is causing this problem?

I 026: Look, from my perspective it is a number of factors. It is a difficult stage of life. There is a lot happening in an adolescent's time of life and potentially there is, I suppose, there are possibly factors associated with the way in which physical activity is being promoted to this sector of the community.

I: Leading from that, what types of policies, campaigns and programs do you think might alleviate this type of problem?

I 026: Well, I suppose it is really about having targeted programs as such. Without necessarily having a specific silver bullet but it would seem that there would seem to be a need to target adolescents, or the promotion of adolescent health, rather than necessarily expecting it to be bundled in child and adult participation for that matter.

I: Do you think that message should be promoted to the adolescents themselves, to the parents or guardians or both?

I 026: Definitely both.

I: Right, and what role do you think that gymnasiums can play in alleviating this problem?

I 026: I suppose, it is another outlet for adolescents to participate. I think traditionally the expectation is that sector will be involved in sport and obviously school activity, but certainly I would suggest that gymnasiums might be another opportunity during that period. I suppose the other part of it is ensuring that, to go back to a previous question, ensuring that people within that gymnasium industry have appropriate training and qualifications to deal with those issues.

I: For gymnasium based exercise programs such as cardiovascular and resistance exercise, what is your organisation's position or policy stance on participation by adolescents?

I 026: We haven't necessarily singled them out but, certainly we would encourage adolescents to be involved in, well we would encourage all participants to be involved in, be they adolescents or otherwise.

I: Are you aware of any previous and existing policies and/or practices that might have enhanced or inhibited participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 026: Strictly for adolescents?

I: Yes.

I 026: Look, not offhand to be quite honest. I would have to delve back into my memory but from the top of my head I don't recall any as such. I know there has been at different times, programs that targeted high school children, but whether or not they have been necessarily been specific to gymnasium based programs, I am not sure.

I: Not a problem. Thank you. Now are you aware of any policies that are currently being developed that may directly or indirectly affect, that is, encourage or discourage, adolescent participation in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 026: The only item I am aware of at the moment is the development of a national policy for children and adolescents' physical activity and sedentary behaviour, being conducted at a national level.

I: So, for general physical activity then?

I 026: Yes, it is. It's not specific to gymnasiums.

I: No problems. Informant 026, if your organisation was to initiate policies regarding participation by adolescents in gymnasium based exercise programs within Australia, which key categories of stakeholders would you select for collaboration?

I 026: Well, I suppose, from our perspective it would be the peak bodies that we would be working with, so organisations such as Fitness Australia are probably the first one we would be dealing with. From our perspective, we would probably be looking most closely at issues associated with safety in participation at that level, so that is where our bent lies, because there are certainly some other organisations that are well equipped to do some of the other aspects of that work, so we would probably collaborate at that level with those sorts of organisations. Government would be the other one, to the lesser extent schools, but

obviously again, our bent would be on delivery of those or at least the personnel involved and the delivery of those sorts of activities, and their qualifications and skills.

I: Fantastic. Specifically, do you feel there should be a minimum participation age requirement for adolescent boys and girls in gymnasium based exercise programs?

I 026: Yeah. Look I think, again, without getting too cute about it, I suppose the issue is more about physical maturity, but in the absence of that, I would, well, it really depends on how we classify that, as I would argue that there would be a whole lot of activities that don't necessarily need to be heavy resistance training, which is probably what tends to be thought of with gymnasium activity, so therefore there is probably a number of activities that could be done at any age provided they are done safely and within the realms of the level of development that each individual has, and provided that those who are delivering the training are aware of that, I would suggest that all ages should be capable of participating.

I: So considering that, you wouldn't be prepared to nominate a specific age, and would depend on essentially their physical maturity then?

I 026: I would but again, thinking about the question again, I think it is more about the type of activities delivered rather than necessarily the age delivered. That is where I would suggest, that it is quite capable for anybody to be involved in gymnasium type work but ultimately from our perspective, the safety issue is the most important one. Therefore issues of physical maturity are paramount, so we would be suggesting that if all things were equal then we would say anybody would be able to participate, and then if the requirements are compromised in training, then you would probably go for an age where, and I refer to the experts here, where development issues became prominent, so we ensured that there wasn't going to be any growth related injuries. Does that make sense?

I: It certainly does. Thank you very much. While on the topic of regulation, do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

I 026: I do.

I: And what do you think would be the positive and or/negative features of mandatory gymnasium accreditation?

I 026: I suppose from a positive perspective, it would first of all mean that there would be a set of standards that all gymnasiums would be required to follow, and therefore according to issues such as training of personnel, standards of equipment and the quality of services provided. So it provides direction to the consumer as to the sorts of locations that they should be directing themselves towards, so essentially it is a quality assurance type system. So, as far as the negatives are concerned, which is often the case, is the compromise of standards, and sometimes these things are extremely difficult to enforce, so I would suggest that the difficulty that usually runs into these systems is that they go to the lowest common denominator, and as a consequence there can be compromise, and that is always a concern.

I: Leading from your response there, do you believe in the principle of mandatory gymnasium instructor accreditation?

I 026: I do.

I: Again, what would be the positive and/or negative features of mandatory instructor accreditation?

I 026: Again, I would say they are probably similar, and from our perspective the minimum standard ensures that at least there has been a minimum level of training and again, the positives or the negatives are only as good as the standard that is able to be reached. Again, I suppose the difficulty there is again, that the minimum level of training doesn't necessarily, it certainly guarantees a minimum level of training, but there is a requirement of maintenance and an extension of those sort of standards usually, so again I would suggest that it is only a guide generally with the way it has been implemented, and then ultimately there is probably more factors than just the training involved in that.

I: Right. Do you believe in the principle of mandatory Fitness Industry accreditation?

I 026: Can you explain what you mean by that?

I: So, at the moment the Fitness Industry is a self-regulated industry so the proposition here, or what we are proposing is that, asking whether you believe in the principle of making it mandatory to have actually have regulation for the Fitness Industry.

I 026: Yeah, um. I am not sure about that, and I am not entirely certain about mandatory regulation in this instance. There is a degree of sense that mandatory regulation in principle is the right thing to do, but I am not familiar and whether mandatory regulation...well, I would have to see the pros and cons as such and I am not sure whether at that level there is necessarily a requirement for it. Or if ultimately everybody is following a basic standard then there is a major cost associated with that level of regulation, which ultimately is passed on to the consumer, so it has to be balanced up. So I am not sure about the response for that one.

I: That is okay. Are there any further positive and/or negative ideas for the idea of mandatory Fitness Industry regulation?

I 026: Again, if we were to take it on its basic principle, if there was a sense of fundamental requirement that is enforced and followed by all, then that is ultimately a good thing. You know the ultimate impact on the consumer and whether it proves to be a regulation that is far beyond what the industry can manage, then ultimately that might have a detrimental effect on participants being involved in activities at gymnasiums. And it effectively may become elitist.

I: 026, now for the final question of the interview. If policy and/or legislation was introduced to regulate the Australian Fitness Industry which agencies and/or organisations do you feel are best placed to play a major accreditation and regulatory role?

I 026: Oh, gee. Good question. I don't know off hand. The likely suspects are the organisations that are already involved. Organisations such as ours, and organisations such as Fitness Australia and Kinect Australia. Off hand, organisations beyond that, organisations such as the ESSA, so they would be the sorts of organisations that would be key stakeholders in those. I mean beyond that it has been about some of the consumer organisations that might also be involved, but as far as leadership goes, those would be the sorts of organisations would be the ones I would be looking at.

I: Thank you very much Informant 026, that interview is now over.

APPENDIX D
INFORMATION PACK COVER LETTER TEMPLATE

[INSERT TITLE, FIRST NAME AND SURNAME OF ADDRESSEE]
[INSERT POSITION TITLE OF ADDRESSEE]
[INSERT THE APPLICABLE GOVERNMENT / AGENCY / ORGANISATION NAME]
[INSERT ADDRESS, LINE 1]
[INSERT ADDRESS, LINE 2]

09 November 2011

Dear [INSERT TITLE AND SURNAME OF ADDRESSEE],

We would like to invite you to participate in a telephone interview as part of an Australian national study into adolescent physical inactivity and the associated health problem.

This research project, entitled: Policy options to increase adolescent participation in gymnasium exercise programs, is being conducted by student researcher Mr Luke Grikepelis, as part of a PhD study at Victoria University under the supervision of Associate Professor Bob Stewart from the School of Sport and Exercise Science, within the Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development, and Professor Aaron Smith from the College of Business Office, RMIT University.

This study aims to provide policy options that will contribute to increasing the level of physical activity in Australian adolescents, and to support optimal maturation and health and wellbeing throughout life.

Physical inactivity is recognised as a major contributor to the health problems suffered by many young people in Australia. Calls for urgent action by the Australian Government and global organisations to increase participation in physical activity to urgently improve the health and wellbeing of persons of all ages in Australia (and throughout the world), have not resulted in the desired health outcomes for Australian adolescents. (Further information and relevant references are provided in the documents enclosed). We wish to build on prior attempts to address this problem with a more comprehensive approach to increasing the level of physical activity in Australian adolescents, by also promoting appropriate gymnasium access.

This national study will include telephone interviews with ministers / directors / officers across Australia. The interviews will focus on policies and practice concerning adolescent participation and appropriate supervision in exercise programs, conducted by major gymnasiums operating in Australia. Interview participants will each be provided with a coded number to ensure confidentiality. Your privacy will always be maintained. In addition, parents/guardians across Australia will be invited to complete an online anonymous questionnaire to express attitudes and opinions about participation by adolescents in gymnasium-based exercise programs. You are welcome to trial the questionnaire up to the close of business, Monday 21 November 2011 (responses in this period only, will not be recorded).

The questionnaire URL is: http://vuaehd.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_e9EyaMpOZh0sWjy

Please find enclosed further information and documents relevant to this study. Enclosed is an 'Information to Participants Involved in Research' letter, a 'Consent form', and reply-paid envelope for return of the signed 'Consent form'.

We will follow up this letter with a telephone call to your office within the next seven business days to invite you to participate in a telephone interview. The interview will be conducted at your convenience and will take no more than 45 minutes.

If you have any questions in the meantime please do not hesitate to contact us via telephone on either (03) 9919 4350 (A/Prof Bob Stewart) or 0430 911 423 (Mr Luke Grikepelis). We look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

A/Prof Bob Stewart
School of Sport and Exercise Science
Victoria University

Mr Luke Grikepelis
School of Sport and Exercise Science
Victoria University

APPENDIX E
INFORMATION PACK LETTER

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

Invitation to participate

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled:

Policy options to increase adolescent participation in gymnasium exercise programs

This project is being conducted by student researcher Mr Luke Grikepelis, as part of a PhD study at Victoria University under the supervision of Associate Professor Bob Stewart from the School of Sport and Exercise Science, within the Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development, and Professor Aaron Smith from the College of Business Office, RMIT University.

Project explanation

Physical inactivity is recognised as a major contributor to the health problems suffered by many young people in Australia (Bauman et al. 2002; National Public Health Partnership 2005; Parker 2003; World Health Organization 2004). Calls for urgent action by the Australian Government and global organisations (National Public Health Partnership 2005; World Health Organization 2004) to increase participation in physical activity to urgently improve the health and wellbeing of persons of all ages in Australia (and throughout the world) have not resulted in the desired health outcomes for Australian adolescents. Building on prior attempts to address this problem, a more comprehensive approach to increasing physical activity levels by also promoting appropriate gymnasium access, could prove to be successful.

This project aims to provide policy options that will contribute to increasing the level of physical activity in Australian adolescents, and to support optimal maturation and health and wellbeing throughout life. In this project, the term 'adolescents' refers to minors who are between the ages of 12 and 17 years.

Identification of the policy-gap on gymnasium and instructor accreditation, and the absence of industry regulation, will be a focus of this research. The findings of this research will determine the extent to which current policies facilitate effective collaboration and administration to promote appropriately supervised adolescent participation in exercise programs conducted by major gymnasiums in Australia.

The research findings will generate data for use in formulating alternate policies that could be adopted by the Fitness Industry to increase the level of physical activity in Australian adolescents. This data will be used to subsequently improve the associated national health problem affecting young Australians (Bauman et al. 2002; National Public Health Partnership 2005; Parker 2003; World Health Organization 2004), by increasing access and improving the level of supervision for this population group to participate at gymnasiums across Australia.

What will I be asked to do?

This national study will include interviews with ministers / directors / officers from federal, state and self-governing mainland territory governments, an Industry Skills Council, industry associations, and businesses (gymnasiums) across Australia. The interviews will focus on individual policies and practice concerning adolescent participation and supervision in exercise programs, conducted by major gymnasiums operating in Australia. Future policies to increase adolescent participation will also be investigated.

Interviews will be conducted via telephone and will take no more than 45 minutes.

What will I gain from participating?

Participants will make an important contribution to the body of knowledge concerning adolescent participation in gymnasium-based exercise programs. The findings of the study will provide detailed information on appropriate policy options that could 1) be implemented nationally, with the aim of improving the health and wellbeing of Australian adolescents, and, 2) generate cultural and attitudinal change that encourages and promotes life-long regular participation in physical activity. This study will also provide a framework for future investigations on policy options for both child and adolescent participation in gymnasium-based exercise programs and other physical activities.

This research will also provide a more comprehensive approach to increasing the level of physical activity in Australian adolescents, by promoting appropriate gymnasium access and supervision, gymnasium and instructor accreditation, and industry regulation. Participants will contribute to the remedy for a significant national health problem.

How will the information that I provide be used by the researchers?

Interviews will be recorded and transcribed, but participants will each be provided with a coded number to ensure confidentiality. Further, personally identifying information, such as the completed '*Consent form*', will not be included in any recorded data, and will be stored separately from the data in a locked filing cabinet. Code numbers only will be used to report data, and only the study researchers will have access to the raw data. Data will be reported in the form of a PhD thesis and publications arising from this research.

What are the potential risks of participating in this project?

All interviews will be conducted via telephone. This will enable each participant to choose a suitable phone line, location, date and time for the interview to take place. On each occasion, participants will be interviewed in a 'one-on-one' situation with only the study researcher and participant involved in, and listening to, the conversation.

If a participant experiences anxiety during the interview process and if it is considered inappropriate by the participant and/or study researcher to continue, the researcher will immediately stop the interview. In this situation, participants will be reminded that they can withdraw from the study at any time (via submission of a written request to withdraw) without consequence, should he/she feel it necessary to do so.

Should such an event occur, any information obtained from the participant in question would not be used further. All individual results will remain strictly confidential, and no personally identifying information will be used in any publications. If you experience anxiety during the interview process, you have the opportunity to consult registered psychologist, Professor Mark Andersen (Victoria University) who is independent of this study. Professor Andersen can be contacted via telephone on (03) 9919 5413 or email: mark.andersen@vu.edu.au.

Who is conducting the study?

School of Sport and Exercise Science
Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development
Victoria University

Principal Researcher

A/Prof Bob Stewart
Phone: (03) 9919 4350
Email: bob.stewart@vu.edu.au

Student Researcher

Mr Luke Griepelis
Phone: 0430 911 423
Email: luke.griepelis@live.vu.edu.au

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics and Biosafety Coordinator, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, telephone: (03) 9919 4148.

References

- Bauman, A, Bellew, B, Vita, P, Brown, W & Owen, N 2002, 'Getting Australia Active: Towards Better Practice for the Promotion of Physical Activity'.
- National Public Health Partnership 2005, *Be Active Australia: A Framework for Health Sector Action for Physical Activity*, NPHP.
- Parker, RJ 2003, 'Kids in Gyms: Guidelines for Running Physical Activity Programs for Young People in Fitness and Leisure Centres in NSW', pp. 1–28, <<http://fulltext.ausport.gov.au/fulltext/2003/nsw/kidsingyms.pdf>>.
- World Health Organization 2004, *Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health*, viewed 3 June 2009, <http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/strategy/eb11344/strategy_english_web.pdf>.

APPENDIX F
INFORMATION PACK CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:

You are invited to participate in a telephone interview as part of an Australian national study into adolescent physical inactivity and the associated health problem. This study aims to provide policy options that will contribute to increasing the level of physical activity in Australian adolescents, and to support optimal maturation and health and wellbeing throughout life.

CERTIFICATION BY PARTICIPANT

I, _____

of (suburb) _____

certify that I am at least 18 years old* and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study:

Policy options to increase adolescent participation in gymnasium exercise programs

being conducted at Victoria University by:

A/Prof Bob Stewart

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by:

Mr Luke Grikepelis

and that I freely consent to participation involving the below mentioned procedure:

- Interview

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed:

Date:

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the Principal Researcher:

A/Prof Bob Stewart
Phone: (03) 9919 4350

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics & Biosafety Coordinator, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, telephone: (03) 9919 4148.

[*Please note: where the participant/s are aged under 18, separate parental consent is required; where the participant/s are unable to answer for themselves due to mental illness or disability, parental or guardian consent may be required.]

APPENDIX G
ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE SCREENSHOTS

i.

We would like to invite you to be a part of an Australian national study into adolescent physical inactivity and the associated health problem.

You are eligible to complete and submit this online questionnaire **if** you are the parent or legal guardian of an adolescent whose principle place of residence is in Australia. In this questionnaire, the term 'adolescents' refers to minors who are **between the ages of 12 and 17 years**. This questionnaire is about participation by adolescents in gymnasium-based exercise programs, and is an important component of this national study.

The questionnaire should take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

This study, entitled: Policy options to increase adolescent participation in gymnasium exercise programs, is being conducted by student researcher Mr Luke Griepelis, as part of a PhD study at Victoria University under the supervision of Associate Professor Bob Stewart from the School of Sport and Exercise Science, within the Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development,

and Professor Aaron Smith from the College of Business Office, RMIT University.

Selection of the icon (located at the lower-right of this page) **to proceed to the next page, confirms your eligibility**. At any stage whilst completing this anonymous questionnaire, should you no longer wish to be involved, you can withdraw from this study by opting to not advance to the next question. A progress indicator bar is located at the end of each page of this questionnaire. Only the data from completed questionnaires will be submitted to the study researchers for analysis.

If, after reviewing the information on this page and the next, you choose to be involved in this study, you will simply need to complete the online questionnaire.

If you have any questions, at any stage, please do not hesitate to contact us via telephone on either (03) 9919 4350 (A/Prof Bob Stewart) or (03) 9919 5534 (Mr Luke Griepelis). We thank you for your time in reading this information and would be most appreciative should you choose to participate in this study.

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Survey Powered By **Qualtrics**

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ii.

Project explanation

Physical inactivity is recognised as a major contributor to the health problems suffered by many young people in Australia (Bauman et al. 2002; National Public Health Partnership 2005; Parker 2003; World Health Organisation 2004). Calls for urgent action by the Australian Government and global organisations (National Public Health Partnership 2005; World Health Organisation 2004) to increase participation in physical activity to urgently improve the health and wellbeing of persons of all ages in Australia (and throughout the world) have not resulted in the desired health outcomes for Australian adolescents. Building on prior attempts to

address this problem, a more comprehensive approach to increasing physical activity levels by also promoting appropriate gymnasium access, could prove to be successful.

This study aims to provide policy options that will contribute to increasing the level of physical activity in Australian adolescents, and to support optimal maturation and health and wellbeing throughout life.

Identification of the policy-gap on gymnasium and instructor accreditation, and the absence of industry regulation, will be a focus of this research. The findings of this research will determine the extent to which current policies facilitate effective collaboration and administration to promote appropriately supervised adolescent participation in exercise programs conducted by major gymnasiums in Australia.

The research findings will generate data for use in formulating alternate policies that could be adopted by the fitness industry to increase the level of physical activity in Australian adolescents. This data will be used to subsequently improve the associated national health problem affecting young Australians (Bauman et al. 2002; National Public Health Partnership 2005; Parker 2003; World Health Organisation 2004), by increasing access and improving the level of supervision for this population group to participate at gymnasiums across Australia.

What will I be asked to do?

Eligible parents/guardians are invited to complete this online questionnaire to express attitudes and opinions about participation by adolescents in gymnasium-based exercise programs.

As previously mentioned, the questionnaire should take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

What will I gain from participating?

Participants will make an important contribution to the body of knowledge surrounding adolescent participation in gymnasium-based exercise programs. The findings of the study will provide detailed information on appropriate policy options that could 1) be implemented nationally, with the aim of improving the health and wellbeing of Australian adolescents, and, 2) generate cultural and attitudinal change that encourages and promotes life-long regular participation in physical activity. This study will also provide a framework for future investigations on policy options for both child and adolescent participation in gymnasium-based

exercise programs and other physical activities.

This research will also provide a more comprehensive approach to increasing the level of physical activity in Australian adolescents, by promoting appropriate gymnasium access and supervision, gymnasium and instructor accreditation, and industry regulation. Participants will contribute to the remedy for a significant national health problem.

How will the researchers use the information that I provide?

Participants are reminded that this questionnaire is anonymous. In the event that any personally identifying information is provided to the study researchers, the participant(s) will be assigned with a coded number to ensure confidentiality.

Further, any personally identifying information will not be included in any recorded data, and will be stored separately from the data in a locked filing cabinet. If necessary, code numbers only will be used to report data, and only the study researchers will have access to the raw data. Data will be reported in the form of a PhD thesis and publications arising from this research.

What are the potential risks of participating in this project?

If you choose to participate, it should be noted that by completing the questionnaire, you have consented to engage in this study. However, you can withdraw from this study at any stage whilst completing the questionnaire, by opting to not advance to the next question. If you feel discomforted by any question in the questionnaire, it is your right to cease questionnaire participation

at any time, and therefore withdraw from this study, without consequence.

Participants are reminded that only the data from completed questionnaires will be submitted to the study researchers for analysis. All individual results will remain strictly confidential, and no personally identifying information will be used in any publications. If you feel discomforted by any question in the questionnaire, you have the opportunity to consult registered psychologist, Professor Mark Andersen (Victoria University) who is independent of this study. Professor Andersen can be contacted via telephone on (03) 9919 5413 or email: mark.andersen@vu.edu.au.

Who is conducting the study?

School of Sport and Exercise Science
Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development
Victoria University

Principal Researcher

A/Prof Bob Stewart
Phone: (03) 9919 4350
Email: bob.stewart@vu.edu.au

Student Researcher

Mr Luke Grikepelis
Phone: (03) 9919 5534
Email: luke.grikepelis@research.vu.edu.au

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics and Biosafety Coordinator, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, telephone: (03) 9919 4148.

Selection of the icon located at the lower-right of this page, **will commence the questionnaire**. Once a question has been answered, selection of the icon located at the lower-right of each subsequent page will allow the participant to advance to the following question, until the questionnaire is complete.

References

Bauman, A, Bellew, B, Vita, P, Brown, W & Owen, N 2002, 'Getting Australia active: towards better practice for the promotion of physical activity'.

National Public Health Partnership 2005, *Be Active Australia: A Framework for Health Sector Action for Physical Activity*, NPHP.

Parker, RJ 2003, 'Kids in gyms: guidelines for running physical activity programs for young people in fitness and leisure centres in NSW', pp. 1-28, <<http://fulltext.ausport.gov.au/fulltext/2003/nsw/kidsingyms.pdf>>.

World Health Organisation 2004, *A Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health*, viewed 3 June 2009, <http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/strategy/eb11344/strategy_english_web.pdf>.


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Q1. How important to **you is health and fitness?**
Select one option below.

- ☐ Not important
- ☐ Somewhat important
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Very important

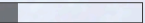
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Q2. How important to you is the health and fitness of **your adolescent child**? Select one option below.

- ☐ Not important
- ☐ Somewhat important
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Very important

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Q3. Rank the following activities in order of their importance for **your** health and fitness (on a scale of number **1** being most important to number **5** being least important). Move the activity options below, in the order that best reflects your ranking.

Walking

Running

Cycling

Swimming

Gymnasium-based exercise

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Q4. Rank the following activities in order of their importance regarding your views about **your adolescent child's** health and fitness (on a scale of number **1** being most important to number **5** being least important). Move the activity options below, in the order that best reflects your ranking.

Walking

Running

Cycling

Swimming

Gymnasium-based exercise

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Q5. Select the option below that best indicates **your adolescent child's** average weekly amount of physical activity (such as organised sport, structured exercise, active recreation and active transport (e.g., walking or cycling to school)).

- ☐ Less than 0.5 hour per week
- ☐ 0.5 - 1 hour per week
- ☐ 1 - 2 hours per week
- ☐ 2 - 3 hours per week
- ☐ 3 - 4 hours per week
- ☐ Greater than 4 hours per week


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Q6. In principle, do you support participation by adolescents in gymnasium-based exercise programs (such as cardiovascular and resistance exercise)? Select one option below.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Undecided


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Q7. Would you support participation by adolescents in gymnasium-based exercise programs within an environment that caters for adults as well as adolescents? Select one option below.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Undecided

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Q8. How important to you is appropriate **gymnasium supervision** for the health and fitness of **your adolescent child**? Select one option below.

- ☐ Not important
- ☐ Somewhat important
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Very important

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Q9. Have you approached a gymnasium about engaging **your adolescent child** in gymnasium-based exercise programs? Select one option below.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

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Q10. Has your adolescent child ever been denied access by a gymnasium, to participate in gymnasium-based exercise programs because he/she was deemed to be too young? Select one option below.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not applicable

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Q11. Have **age restrictions** for gymnasium access discouraged you from persisting to approach gymnasiums to engage **your adolescent child** in gymnasium-based exercise programs? Select one option below.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not applicable

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Q12. From what age do you deem it to be appropriate for **your adolescent child** to participate in gymnasium-based exercise programs? Select one option below.

- ☐ Under 12 years
- ☐ 12 years
- ☐ 13 years
- ☐ 14 years
- ☐ 15 years
- ☐ 16 years
- ☐ 17 years
- ☐ Over 17 years


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Q13. What level of importance do you place on action to ensure that gymnasium instructors are adequately educated to supervise adolescents who participate in gymnasium-based exercise programs? Select one option below.

- ☐ Not important
- ☐ Somewhat important
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Very important

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Q14. Do you feel that it should be **mandatory** for gymnasiums and supervising instructors who grant adolescents access to participate in gymnasium-based exercise programs, to have relevant accreditation with an industry association? Select one option below.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Undecided

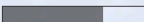
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Q15. Do you believe that gymnasiums which allow adolescents to participate in gymnasium-based exercise programs, should be subject to **mandatory** industry regulation to improve participant safety and wellbeing? Select one option below.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Undecided

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Q16. For each of the six features listed below, rate its **level of importance to you**, for the participation of **your adolescent child** in gymnasium-based exercise programs. Select one option for each feature.

	Very important	Important	Neutral	Somewhat important	Not important
A more personal gymnasium culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Appropriate social environment for adolescents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Equal gymnasium access for adolescents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Appropriate gymnasium supervision of adolescents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More stringent instructor accreditation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More stringent gymnasium accreditation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Q17. What is the postcode of your principal place of residence? Enter your four-digit postcode in the text box below.


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Q18. In which state or territory is the location of your principal place of residence? Select one option below.

- ☐ Australian Capital Territory
- ☐ New South Wales
- ☐ Northern Territory
- ☐ Queensland
- ☐ South Australia
- ☐ Tasmania
- ☐ Victoria
- ☐ Western Australia

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Q19. What is your gender? Select one option below.

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

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Q20. How many adolescent children do you parent? Select the appropriate number for each gender below.

	0	1	2	3	4	5 adolescent children and above
Male	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Female	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Q21. What is your total household income (before tax)? Select one option below.

- ☐ \$0 - \$37,000
- ☐ \$37,001 - \$80,000
- ☐ \$80,001 - \$130,000
- ☐ \$130,001 - \$180,000
- ☐ \$180,001 and above

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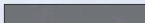
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**Thank you for your participation.
Your opinion is valued and most appreciated.**

As previously stated, if you feel discomforted by any question in this questionnaire, you have the opportunity to consult registered psychologist, Professor Mark Andersen (Victoria University) who is independent of this study. Professor Andersen can be contacted via telephone on (03) 9919 5413 or email: mark.andersen@vu.edu.au.

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics and Biosafety Coordinator, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, telephone: (03) 9919 4148.

If you have any questions, at any stage, please do not hesitate to contact us via telephone on either (03) 9919 4350 (A/Prof Bob Stewart) or (03) 9919 5534 (Mr Luke Griepelis).

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APPENDIX H

QUESTIONNAIRE ADVERTISEMENT TEMPLATE

Australian national study into adolescent physical inactivity

Victoria University (Melbourne) would like to invite you to be a part of an Australian national study into adolescent physical inactivity and the associated health problem.

You are eligible to complete and submit this online questionnaire **if** you are the parent or legal guardian of an adolescent whose principal place of residence is in Australia. In this questionnaire, the term 'adolescents' refers to minors who are **between the ages of 12 and 17 years**. This questionnaire is about participation by adolescents in gymnasium-based exercise programs (such as cardiovascular and resistance exercise), and is an important component of this national study.

The questionnaire should take approximately 10 minutes to complete and is available online until 24 November 2012 at 12:00 AM (AEDT).

Select this URL link to go to the questionnaire:

http://vuaehd.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_e9EyaMpOZh0sWjy

APPENDIX I

MODIFIED QUESTIONNAIRE ADVERTISEMENT TEMPLATE

Victoria University would like to invite you to participate in a 10-minute online questionnaire as part of an **Australian national study into adolescent physical inactivity**.

Questionnaire URL link: **http://vuaehd.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_e9EyaMpOZh0sWjy**