



Triathlon/Multisport: *Triathlon Australia*

*'If we do not look after those involved with our sport,
the sport will not continue to grow'.¹*

Triathlon, some argue, is the ultimate modern day sport and one that is ideally suited to Australians and the Australian environment.

It combines the sports of swimming, cycling and running into the one event. There are also many new disciplines evolving from the core of triathlon, including: long distance triathlon, duathlon (run/bike/run), winter triathlon (cross country ski/bike/run), indoor triathlon (pool swim/velodrome bike/track run) and aquathlon (run/swim/run).

Triathlon and multisport are a great way to keep fit and maintain a healthy life. Like athletics, triathlon, duathlon and aquathlon can be competed over a range of distances depending on the level of fitness and endurance and the size of the challenge that is desired.

The history of triathlon

The San Diego Track Club founded the first official triathlon event held at Mission Bay (USA) in 1974. The sport was developed the year before to add some alternative endurance activities to traditional track workouts. The club's first event consisted of a 10km run, an 8km cycle and a 500m swim.²

The Hawaii Ironman was the next multi-discipline endurance event to follow in 1978. Navy Commander John Collins dreamed up a race to settle a long-standing debate: who is fitter – swimmers, runners or cyclists? He combined three existing races held in Hawaii to be completed in succession: the Waikiki Roughwater Swim, the Around Oahu Bike Race (originally a two-day event) and the Honolulu Marathon.³

Today triathlons can range in distance – anywhere from a 300m swim, 10km cycle and a 3km run to a more gruelling 3.8km swim, 180km cycle and 42km run (Ironman distance). In addition, there are a number of junior events with shortened distances aimed at enticing school aged children into the sport.

In 1989, the International Triathlon Union (ITU) was established in Avignon, France. At the 97th session of the IOC, ITU was given the status as the official world governing body for the sport. Since then 140 countries have become affiliated.⁴

Triathlon was one of two new sports on the 2000 Olympic Games program and made its debut at the Commonwealth Games at Manchester in 2002.

Triathlon Australia

Triathlon Australia is the national governing body for the sport of triathlon. It oversees the administration and development of the sport and has member associations in every state and territory.

Triathlon Australia and its member associations share a common vision for the sport: 'To provide a quality service for Australian triathletes using best practices in leadership and management to ensure Australia is the world's leading triathlon nation'.⁵

The national body runs the Australian Triathlon Series, which showcases some of the world's best triathletes racing in Australia, while also providing a fair playing field for age group athletes looking to qualify for the Australian team. In 2006, there were five elite events in four states held as part of this series, including the Australian Olympic Distance Championships.

Australia is home to many of the world's best performed triathletes, including: Greg Bennett, Brad Beven, Emma Carney, Jackie Gallagher, Loretta Harrop, Michellie Jones, Chris McCormack, Peter Robertson, Brad Kahlefeldt, Miles Stewart, Greg Welch and Emma Snowsill.

Who competes in triathlons?

In many cases, participation in one sport encourages participation in triathlons. For example, the running required for triathlon can be developed by playing football, soccer and netball. The swimming side of triathlon can develop from playing water polo or participating in swimming training. Sports like gymnastics and judo help develop strength, flexibility, balance and co-ordination which are all important in triathlon.⁶

Whether it is the challenge of conquering three sports in the one go or making a decision to adopt a healthier lifestyle, up to 160,000 Australians motivate themselves each year to participate in triathlon events.

Barriers to participation

One of the main barriers to participation is the cost of membership (although you don't have to be a member of a club to compete in events), training and equipment. Competing across three sporting disciplines, participants need equipment for swimming (goggles and bathers), cycling (bike, helmet shoes) and (running shoes, socks and clothing). Dedicated participants may also choose to take part in swimming, running and bike training, which carries with it additional costs.

Another potential barrier is the fact that triathlon includes swimming as one of its disciplines. Some people from ethnic backgrounds are not strong swimmers and may be reluctant to swim in open water.

Triathlon Australia is conscious of this fact and tries to make competing as safe as possible. All triathlon events have marshals supervising the swim legs and not all triathlon-related activities are run in open water; many are held in swimming pools.

Getting kids into triathlon

The TRYstars Sub Junior Club program is a Triathlon Australia initiative open to young people aged 7–15 years who like to have fun, get fit and be healthy. The events are held in a safe club environment with qualified coaches to ensure young people learn the sport and have a good time.

In 2006, the program has expanded to 20 clubs in NSW, Victoria, Northern Territory, Western Australia and Queensland, and Triathlon ACT and Triathlon Tasmania will again be implementing the program.⁷

CALD programs

Triathlon Australia does not have any statistical data on the number of Indigenous or culturally and linguistically diverse people who participate in triathlons, nor do they have any strategies to encourage people from these backgrounds to become involved.⁸

Member protection

Triathlon Australia states that ‘the protection of its members and participants, whether they are competitors, volunteers, technical officials, race directors or committee members, is of paramount importance’.⁹

Its Member Protection By-law sets out the procedures to be followed in dealing with harassment and other forms of inappropriate behaviour in an effective and timely way, and provides a procedure for the informal and formal resolution of complaints.¹⁰

Discrimination and harassment by-law

Triathlon Australia aims to provide a sporting environment where all those involved in its activities are treated with dignity and respect, and without harassment or discrimination.

They recognise that all those involved in its activities cannot enjoy themselves, perform to their best, or be effective or fully productive if they are being treated unfairly, discriminated against or harassed because of their sex, marital status, pregnancy, parental status, race, age, disability, homosexuality, sexuality, transgender, religion, political belief and/or industrial activity.¹¹

Under the Bylaw, **Discrimination** means ‘treating or proposing to treat a person less favourably than someone else in certain areas of public life on the basis of an attribute or personal characteristic they have. These attributes or characteristics include: physical features; political belief/activity; race; or religious belief/activity’.¹³

Requesting, assisting, instructing, inducing or encouraging another person to engage in discrimination may also be considered to be discriminatory conduct. The Bylaw also makes the point that discrimination may be direct or indirect.

Harassment is defined as ‘any type of behaviour that the other person does not want and does not return and that is offensive, abusive, belittling or threatening. The behaviour is unwelcome and of a type that a reasonable person would recognise as being unwelcome and likely to cause the recipient to feel offended, humiliated or intimidated’.¹⁴

Unlawful harassment may include targeting a person because of their race, sex, pregnancy, marital status, sexuality or other characteristic. Whether or not the behaviour is harassment is determined from the point of view of the person being harassed. Harassment may be a single incident or repeated. It may be explicit or implicit, verbal or non-verbal.¹⁵

Vilification involves 'a person or organisation doing public acts to incite hatred towards, serious contempt for, or severe ridicule of a person or group of persons having any of the attributes or characteristics within the meaning of discrimination. Public acts that may amount to vilification include any form of communication to the public and any conduct observable by the public'.¹⁶

Code of Conduct

Triathlon Australia requires every individual and organisation bound by their Code of Conduct to:

- be ethical, fair and honest in all their dealings with other people and Triathlon Australia;
- treat all persons with respect and courtesy and have proper regard for their dignity, rights and obligations;
- operate within the rules and spirit of the sport;
- comply with all relevant Australian laws (federal, state and territory), particularly anti-discrimination and child protection laws.¹⁷

The General Code of Conduct states that participants should 'refrain from any form of abuse, harassment or discrimination towards others'.¹⁸

The competitor/athlete Code of Behaviour says to: 'control anger and tempers. Verbal abuse of officials and sledging other participants, deliberately distracting or provoking an opponent are not acceptable or permitted behaviours in any sport'.¹⁹

The competitor, parents and spectator Code of Conduct all state that people are to: 'respect the rights, dignity and worth of all participants regardless of their gender, ability, cultural background or religion'.²⁰

The coaches Code of Ethics requires coaches to: 'respect the rights, dignity and worth of every human being. Within the context of the activity, treat everyone equally regardless of sex, disability, ethnic origin or religion' and 'refrain from any form of harassment towards your athletes. This includes sexual and racial harassment, racial vilification and harassment on the grounds of disability'.²¹

Complaints

Triathlon Australia aims to provide an easy to use, confidential and trustworthy procedure for complaints based on the principles of natural justice. Any person may report a complaint about a person or organisation if they reasonably believe that the Bylaw has been breached. A complaint should be reported to the Member Protection Officer.

Individuals and organisations to which this policy applies may also pursue their complaint externally under anti-discrimination, child-protection or other relevant legislation.²²

Endnotes

¹ Triathlon Australia President Chris Hewitt in the preface to the Triathlon Australia Member Protection Bylaw.

² Triathlon ACT website.

³ <http://www.melbourne2006.com.au/Sports+and+Venues/Triathlon/History/>.

⁴ www.triathlon.org.

⁵ Triathlon Australia Member Protection Bylaw.

⁶ Wayne Goldsmith from www.triathlon.org.au/.

⁷ <http://www.trystars.org.au/>.

⁸ Triathlon Australia CEO Andrew Hamilton 11 July 2006.

⁹ Triathlon Australia Member Protection Bylaw.

¹⁰ Chris Hewitt President Triathlon Australia in Triathlon Australia Member Protection Bylaw.

¹¹ Triathlon Australia Member Protection Bylaw.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Triathlon Australia Member Protection Bylaw.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Triathlon Australia Member Protection Bylaw.

²¹ Triathlon Australia Member Protection Bylaw.

²² Triathlon Australia Member Protection Bylaw.

