



## South Gippsland Demonstrates Excellence in Sport Participation

South Gippsland has been identified as the second highest area for sport participation in Victoria according to State Government research.

The *Sport Participation Rates – Victoria 2015* report identified that 33.5 player registrations were completed for every 100 residents in South Gippsland.

This participation rate ranked South Gippsland as the second highest in the state following Buloke at 39.1 registrations per 100 residents.

Australian football, basketball, bowls, cricket, soccer, golf, gymnastics, hockey, netball, sailing and tennis player membership databases from 2015 were analysed to gain these insights into community participation in organised sport in Victoria.

The research project was a collaboration between VicHealth, Sport and Recreation Victoria, Federation University, Victoria University and the 11 sports.

Council's Recreation Officer Ian Murphy was pleased that South Gippsland was identified with the second highest participation rate in the state.

"South Gippsland should be extremely proud that our community has such a commitment to playing local sport and being a healthy and active community. It is the volunteers who give their time to support their local sports clubs that make these opportunities possible for our community.

"This research demonstrates the need for continual support of our local sporting clubs and the maintenance of our recreational assets which Council provides through community grants and access to State government funding for major projects," said Mr Murphy.

The seven golf courses, ten bowls clubs, numerous indoor sports stadiums and twenty recreation reserves with ovals and outdoor courts in South Gippsland all contribute to making a broad range of activities available for everyone in our community.

Secretary of the Leongatha and District Cricket Association Gary Adams was happy to see the positive result and imagined it would only improve in the future.

"The Leongatha and District Cricket Association, with probably the largest number of participating teams in Gippsland, is also looking to expand with a new girl's competition starting in February," said Mr Adams.

According to a Gippsland Soccer League spokesperson participation in soccer continues to grow across the region.

“The successful introduction of a dedicated under 15 girls age group last season, the strength of the women’s competition and the continued popularity of the game with children has ensured numbers continue to grow in our family orientated league. We want the whole family to play, mum, dad and the kids.”

At Leongatha Golf Club they have a strong commitment to maximising opportunities for people to play according to Club President Dan Poynton.

“As a club, growing our participation rates and giving as many people in our community access to the sport of golf and our club has been a high priority for us. We’ve really made a point of not just going down the traditional golf participation model of 18 hole competition golf and pushing memberships onto people as well.

“Through the support of Council and working with our Regional Sports Assembly GippSport, we’ve been trying to be innovative by delivering a range of programs as well as social participation opportunities. Things like kinder golf programs that run indoors, all abilities programs for local people with disabilities, Swing Fit Golf Australia’s new women’s social program, big hole golf and other shortened formats are starting to really take off.

“We’re currently planning foot-golf, a hybrid golf and soccer program with a local soccer club too. I guess we’re lucky in that golf is a sport for life. You can learn it young and play until very late in your life unlike footy and other more physical contact sports. We have participants ranging in age from three to 90 years old,” said Mr Poynton.

Netball Victoria CEO Rosie King confirmed that netball continues to be active across many communities.

“It’s very positive to see sport is so strong in South Gippsland, the level of physical activity has been a hot topic for a while particularly in our younger demographic. With netball still the number one sport for females we are seeing growth in all abilities as well as male participation, not only as players but as officials. This is a great opportunity to thank our volunteers who work so hard to offer a variety of ways to be involved in netball as well as the South Gippsland Shire for their vision,” said Ms King.

Individuals wishing to know more about the research study and its results can visit [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/victorian-participation-in-organised-sport](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/victorian-participation-in-organised-sport).

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