

Research into Spectator Behaviour

Final Report

to Sport and Recreation Victoria

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sport and Recreation Victoria (SRV), on behalf of the Department for Victorian Communities and the Australian Sports Commission commissioned La Trobe University to undertake a study into poor spectator behaviour in sport in Victoria. The aim of the project was to identify:

- the extent, type and incidence of poor spectator behaviour at the community level,
- the circumstances in which it occurs,
- the characteristics of the perpetrators, and
- factors and processes which might minimise such behaviour.

The study comprised three stages:

- Identifying current practice in managing poor spectator behaviour,
- Identifying the number and types of poor spectator behaviour incidents, and
- Identifying the factors associated with poor / good spectator behaviour.

Face to face interviews were conducted with representatives from six state sporting organisations, namely the Victorian Soccer Federation (now Football Federation Victoria), Football Victoria, Netball Victoria, Basketball Victoria, Gymnastics Victoria, and the Victorian Little Athletics Association. The sports were selected to be broadly representative of sport spectator domains covering a number of contextual variables including indoor/outdoor settings, team/individual sports, contact/non-contact sport, gender, a variety of competition levels, and varying emphasis on game outcomes/participation. A quantitative survey instrument was mailed to 85 Victorian State Sporting Organisations with the purpose of gathering data on the number and type of incidents related to poor spectator behaviour. Forty five SSOs returned their surveys for a response rate of 53%, which included all the major participation sports. A total of 62 people involved in football, netball, soccer and basketball attended 10 focus groups in a number of regional centres in Victoria and in metropolitan Melbourne. The focus group interview participants consisted of a range of stakeholders (parents, players, coaches, administrators, venue managers, and officials) who were representative of a range of experience levels, qualifications, and gender.

It was concluded that:

- Spectator behaviour for the majority of sports is not a significant problem. However, team based sports do experience problems with the standard of spectator behaviour. As some team based sports have very high participation rates and spectator numbers, the problem of poor spectator behaviour potentially affects a large number of people associated with those sports.
- Poor spectator behaviour can have a negative impact on the sport experience of individuals and communities and specifically the number of people playing, coaching, officiating and administering sport.

- Mild, moderate and severe forms of verbal abuse are the most prevalent forms of poor spectator behaviour.
- Team based sports have a higher number of incidences of mild, moderate and severe abuse, verbal threats, and incidents of violence or aggression compared to individual sports.
- Mild and moderate verbal abuse, threats, invasions of the playing arena, intimidation and actual aggressive acts of violence are more likely to occur in sports where contact between players may occur compared with sports where physical contact is not allowed or is required in the rules of the sport.
- There is no significant difference between male or female dominated sports or sports where the participation rates are roughly equal in terms of the incidence of various forms of spectator behaviour.
- Males are more likely to engage in poor spectator behaviour than females, especially at the sub elite level of sport.
- General supporters and parents or guardians engage more in most forms of poor spectator behaviour compared with other types of spectators such as bench players, coaches, and team managers.
- Less than half of Victorian SSOs record details of poor spectator behaviour incidents at the state level.
- A majority of Victorian SSOs perceived that the standard of spectator behaviour is the same or has improved from five years ago for all forms of spectator behaviour.
- Mild verbal abuse appears to be commonplace in most sports and is considered to be somewhat accepted as part of the game or “banter” that exists when watching sport.
- Moderate verbal abuse and all other more extreme forms of poor spectator behaviour are considered unacceptable.
- A range of human, environmental, and organisational factors are associated with poor spectator behaviour, including:
 - Human - parental expectations, an unreasonable “win at all costs” mentality in junior sport, poor knowledge of the rules of sport, and tribalism;
 - Environmental – open versus closed environments, the size of the venue, proximity of spectators, venue entry design, timing of games, and players and officials entry to the playing area;

- Organisational – the standard of officiating, standard of play, club or venue culture, the presence of alcohol, the role of the coach, the pressure of the final minutes of games, and final competitions.
- The standard and quality of officiating (or the perceptions of officiating) has a significant impact on the incidence and level of poor spectator behaviour.
- A significant level of confusion and uncertainty at the community level of sport exists over the question of who has jurisdiction and control over the behaviour of sport spectators, particularly in relation to the role of sport officials in controlling behaviour outside the field of play.
- Sport officials are often charged with the responsibility for managing poor spectator behaviour in addition to their on field officiating duties.
- Sport organisations use a range of preventative, immediate and post incident strategies to manage poor spectator behaviour.
- The effectiveness of spectator behaviour management strategies is dependent on the quality of the human resources to develop and enforce a culture of good spectator behaviour.
- A number of challenges exist for community level sport organisations to develop, implement and adequately resource effective strategies to manage poor spectator behaviour.

The key recommendations of the study were that:

- SSOs should consider recording details of poor spectator behaviour incidents in order to monitor the effectiveness of measures implemented to manage such behaviour.
- SSOs should consider addressing spectator behaviour as part of their strategic planning and facilitating the development of local association, club or venue specific strategies to manage poor spectator behaviour.
- State government should consider the development of a generic code of conduct for poor spectator behaviour targeting general supporters and parents / guardians based on the ASC codes of conduct and disseminating this information to SSOs.
- Further research should be conducted into the efficacy of micro level strategies to manage poor spectator behaviour such as the use of a code of conduct card system of warnings, suspension and expulsion; the use of “Silent Saturdays” where no verbal barracking is allowed; using an education campaign similar to the “not playing for sheep stations” campaign used by the AFL; and improved venue signage for promoting acceptable spectator behaviour.

Specific recommendations for sports to consider were:

- Developing a culture of good behaviour through promoting a statement of acceptable spectator behaviour, consider adopting a zero tolerance stance to all forms of poor spectator behaviour, and creating a family friendly environment within sport clubs and venues.
- Developing a code of conduct and an associated education campaign for parents or guardians upon registering junior players that focuses on appropriate spectator behaviour.
- Investing in human resource training of staff and volunteers to increase awareness and understanding of spectator behaviour issues and the impact of poor spectator behaviour on participation, coaching, officiating and volunteering.
- Ensuring coach education and accreditation courses include information on the role of the coach as an important role model for spectator behaviour and the impact of poor spectator behaviour on participation, coaching, officiating and volunteering.
- Planning game day environments to manage potential interaction between players, officials, and spectators by using separate races for opposing teams and officials, and providing separate change room facilities for officials.
- Limiting the use of finals in under age sporting competitions.
- Restricting the use of game time clocks visible to spectators in order to reduce poor spectator behaviour in the closing stages of games.
- Ensuring conflict resolution strategies are part of the training provided for officials.
- Creating a designated position that has responsibility for the training, support and development of sport officials.
- Linking with existing alcohol management programs such as the Good Sports program developed by the ADF in order to minimise the impact of alcohol consumption on poor spectator behaviour.
- Developing and disseminating appropriate protocols and procedures that clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of officials, coaches, team managers, venue managers and other administrators or volunteers in dealing with various categories of poor spectator behaviour. These protocols and procedures should focus particularly on clarifying the role of sport officials (i.e. referees, umpires, judges) in controlling spectator behaviour and should be developed in light of the rights, responsibilities and powers conferred to sport officials in sport-specific rules of competition.
- Clarifying who their members are and what jurisdictional powers they have over their various categories of members.
- Applying set penalties for player abuse of officials as a deterrent to poor spectator behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

Sport and Recreation Victoria (SRV), on behalf of the Department for Victorian Communities and the Australian Sports Commission commissioned La Trobe University to undertake research into spectator behaviour that impacts on sport and recreation participation, volunteering and officiating. Existing research into spectator behaviour has largely utilised the perspectives of criminology, sociology, and psychology and has almost exclusively focussed on spectator behaviour within professional sport. This is hardly surprising given the large crowds that gather to watch professional sport and the associated media attention associated with spectator behaviours such as pitch invasions, violence and vandalism. In particular, a significant portion of the research literature concerned with poor spectator behaviour in sport has examined football hooliganism at the elite level, focussing particularly on the behaviours of UK and European spectators who support professional soccer clubs.

Ian Warren provides a summary of the major theoretical perspectives that have been used to explore poor spectator behaviour, or as Warren states “theories of disorder at sporting events” (Warren, 2003, p. 15). These include theories of aggression in group settings; psychological traits of perpetrators; social, class and gender theories of who may be involved in behaving poorly at sporting events; political economy; and macro social theories concerned with the effects of institutionalisation and civilisation on human behaviour. These theories have sought to identify the causes of and solutions to the incidence of harm occurring in large crowds at sporting events (Warren, 2003, p. 15). Sociologists have investigated football hooliganism within UK and European professional soccer leagues (Gulianotti, 1995a; 1995b) and have sought to understand the motivations, social factors and impacts of poor spectator behaviour in large sporting event contexts. Psychologists have also examined spectator and player behaviour in detail, specifically theories of aggression and violence in a wide range of sporting environments (Warren, 1993).

One Australian study is particularly informative for this study. Research conducted by Vamplew (1991) sought to measure perceptions of the prevalence of poor spectator behaviour in a range of sports and to identify the nature of poor spectator behaviour which was identified as foul language, abuse of officials, racial and ethnic abuse, sexual harassment, throwing missiles, drunkenness and pitch invasions, and acts of vandalism. The research also sought to identify the nature of poor spectator behaviour in junior sport which included foul language, verbal and physical abuse of officials, reticent children pushed into participating, and criticism of opposition by parents and inciting children to unsporting behaviour. Some 13 years on, there appears to have been no further attempts to investigate the nature, incidence or extent of poor spectator behaviour at the community level of sport in Australia.

Significant government responses to the issue of poor spectator behaviour have included the development by the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) in the late 1980s of a set of codes of behaviour for the core groups involved in sport: players, coaches, administrators, officials, parents, spectators, teachers and the media (Wrenn, 1989). These codes of behaviour have been subsequently reviewed and updated and form the basis for sport specific codes of behaviour that have been developed by national and state sporting organisations.

However, while sport governing bodies have devised a number of strategies to address poor spectator behaviour there has been little research conducted on the nature of poor spectator behaviour at the community level of sport to inform these strategies. Addressing poor spectator behaviour should lead to an increase in organised sport and recreation participation, volunteering and officiating.

The aim of the project was to identify:

- the extent, type and incidence of poor spectator behaviour at the community level,
- the circumstances in which it occurs,
- the characteristics of the perpetrators, and
- factors and processes which might minimise such behaviour.

This report outlines the method used to undertake the research, the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

METHOD

The study comprised three stages:

1. Identifying current practice in managing poor spectator behaviour,
2. Identifying the number and types of poor spectator behaviour incidents, and
3. Identifying the factors associated with poor / good spectator behaviour.

Stage 1 – Identifying current practice in managing poor spectator behaviour

This stage involved conducting semi-structured interviews with representatives (staff and/or volunteers) from six Victorian SSOs. The sports were selected to be broadly representative of sport spectator domains covering a number of contextual variables including indoor/outdoor settings, team/individual sports, contact/non-contact sport, gender, a variety of competition levels, and varying emphasis on game outcomes/participation. The interviews were designed to gather data on the detail of policies, strategies and initiatives developed and/or implemented to manage poor spectator behaviour or promote good behaviour, as well as perceptions as to their efficacy and issues associated with implementation (see Appendix 1). The interviews also provided an opportunity for SSOs to identify regional association, club or venue specific examples to be used for focus group interviews in Stage 3. A total of 6 interviews were conducted, one for each sport, which involved 10 individuals. The sample of SSOs included the Victorian Soccer Federation, Football Victoria, Netball Victoria, Basketball Victoria, Gymnastics Victoria, and the Victorian Little Athletics Association.

Stage 2 – Identifying the number and types of poor spectator behaviour incidents

This stage involved the distribution of a quantitative survey instrument to 85 Victorian State Sporting Organisations with the purpose of gathering data on the number and type of incidents related to poor spectator behaviour that SSOs became aware of, or had some formal involvement. It was assumed that SSOs perhaps only become aware of more serious incidents either through internal complaint mechanisms or tribunal reports, or even only at the elite end of sport such as premier leagues or State level competitions. As such the survey instrument was designed to gather data on actual reported incidents to SSOs as well as perceptions of SSO staff and/or volunteers as to the number and type of incidents involving poor spectator behaviour across the State in their particular sport (see Appendix 2). After an initial mailout and two reminders, a total of 45 surveys were returned, representing a response rate of 53%. The SSOs that did respond included all of the major participation sports (i.e. with registered player numbers greater than 20,000). As such the data can be considered as being representative of the majority of sport participation in the State. The data was analysed using SPSS, a standard statistical software program.

Stage 3 – Identifying the factors associated with poor / good spectator behaviour

This stage involved the investigation of a number of contexts to identify the factors that create the environment for poor spectator behaviour (physical settings, stages of competition or games, competition levels, organisational strategies and policies), trigger the behaviour of perpetrators (coaches, spectators, players, parents, etc.), and explore the antecedents of the various types of poor spectator behaviour evident (foul language, verbal abuse, threats of physical abuse, actual physical abuse, vandalism, criticism of opposition players, or general unsporting behaviour).

In order to identify why some types of poor spectator behaviour occur more in certain contexts, what factors promote good spectator behaviour, and what environmental, organisational and human factors are involved, a series of focus group interviews were conducted with a range of sports across Victoria (see Appendix 3). The selection of focus group interview participants was carried out after Stage 1 of the study had been completed, when the SSOs could identify a variety of clubs or venues in metropolitan and rural/regional locations that would enable a range of sport contexts to be covered. These contexts included indoor/outdoor settings, team/individual sports, contact/non-contact sport, gender, a variety of competition levels, and varying emphasis on game outcomes/participation. A total of 62 people involved in football, netball, soccer and basketball attended 10 focus groups in a number of regional centres in Victoria and in metropolitan Melbourne. The focus group interview participants consisted of a range of stakeholders (parents, players, coaches, administrators, venue managers, and officials) who were representative of a range of experience levels, qualifications, and gender. The mean age of the focus group participants was in the range 40-49 years, and 58% were male. The mean number of years participants had been involved in the following roles was coach (10 years), board member (14 years), official (16 years), and player (20 years).

At the commencement of each focus group, the researchers introduced themselves and explained the purpose and procedures of the focus group. The focus group participants were asked to read and sign an ethical clearance/informed consent form. One researcher acted as the group facilitator, and the other researcher took detailed notes. Each focus group was also audio-taped as a backup to the interview notes. Shortly after each focus group, the notes were word-processed. The notes for each focus group interview were used to probe emergent themes in subsequent focus groups. These data have not been included in the report in order to protect the anonymity of the focus group participants and their organisations. The data analysis employed qualitative procedures aimed at uncovering themes in the perceptions of focus group participants regarding the factors associated with poor spectator behaviour. The underlying themes emerged after several phases of response coding.

Statements were coded firstly using an open (or initial meaning code) and secondly an axial (or categorisation of open codes) coding scheme recommended by Miles and Huberman (1984). Where statements had several identifiable points they were duplicated and coded with appropriate separate codes. Thus statements could have several codes and the number of codes would tend to be more than the number of subjects. The coding procedures retained the essential meaning of the information provided about problems and issues within particular sports, but constant comparison with other statements and previously used codes ensured a reduction of the variety and details of descriptions. A check of the reliability of coding was conducted using two coders independently analysing the same set of statements. It showed a high degree of consistency between coders' choice of codes for statements.

It is important to note that individual incidents of poor spectator behaviour were not discussed in the focus group interviews. Rather, each focus group was used to document a particular context within which poor / good spectator behaviour occurs. By then comparing the contexts, the important environmental, organisational and human factors were identified.

Limitations

This study does not claim to present views that are fully representative (in a statistical sense) of the views of staff and volunteers in all sports. All care was taken by the researchers to ensure the data collection and analyses were not dominated by any particular individuals within focus groups by actively seeking the views of all participants.

FINDINGS

The findings are presented in a number of sections that (1) define poor spectator behaviour, (2) examine the extent of poor spectator behaviour, (3) explore the human, environmental and organisational factors associated with poor spectator behaviour, and (4) identify a number of jurisdictional and management issues concerning spectator behaviour. To improve readability, the findings are presented without reference to whether they are based on data from SSO interviews, SSO surveys or the focus group interviews, except to clarify differences in perceptions between these data sources or to highlight limitations in the veracity of the data.

Section 1 - Defining poor spectator behaviour

Based on a review of literature and information gathered from interviews with Victorian SSOs and the focus group interviews, the following definition of poor spectator behaviour in sport has been developed:

Poor spectator behaviour in sport is verbal abuse, emotional abuse, vandalism, invasion of the playing arena, intimidation and threatened or actual violence at a sporting activity or event.

In this context “spectator” includes not only supporters and parents, but also “bench” players, coaches, team, club or league officials, venue staff and general public within view of the field of play.

Verbal abuse can take the form of openly and continually criticizing officiating decisions, personally abusing individual officials, players, coaches, other spectators, or venue/club/league administrators or staff, or the use of foul language. Emotional abuse usually takes the form of parents pressuring their children to perform, encouraging poor sportsmanship in the pursuit of winning, or criticising them unduly for their performance on the sporting field. Vandalism includes wilful acts of damage to sporting equipment, the playing area, spectator facilities or surrounding areas of a sporting venue. Invasion of the playing arena includes spectators encroaching on the field of play during the course of a game where competition rules strictly prohibit such action (i.e. stepping onto a playing area to abuse an official or enter a melee of players). Intimidation includes such acts as inappropriately confronting officials during breaks in play or after games, adults “standing over” younger officials, or groups of spectators pressuring others through weight in numbers. Threatened or actual violence includes making statements proposing injury or harm to others or their property, or actually causing injury or harm to others or their property.

The majority of these behaviours occur during the course of play, but in some cases can occur after play has concluded (i.e. directly following the conclusion of play or days after). A sporting activity or event means organised sport participation opportunities governed by a league, association or venue. The majority of poor spectator behaviour seems to arise from the interaction between players and officials, with player reactions to officiating decisions and their real or perceived impact on game outcomes influencing the behaviour of spectators. The following diagram represents the various interactions between spectators, coaches, players, officials and administrators during a game, in either an open or closed environment (although this will alter the nature of the interactions).

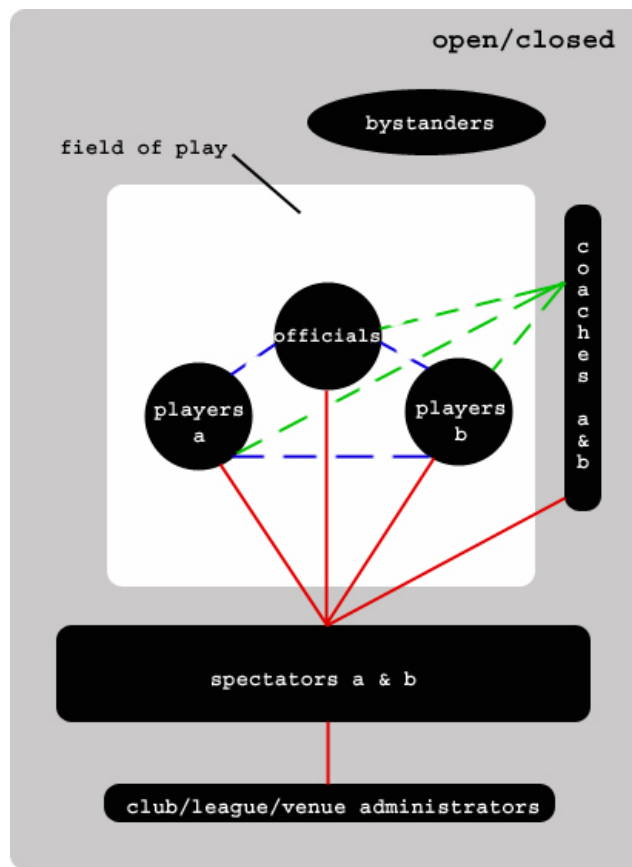


Figure 1 – Representation of spectator behaviour elements

Poor spectator behaviour can have a negative impact on the sport experience of individuals and communities and specifically the number of people playing, coaching, officiating and administrating sport. Poor spectator behaviour can impinge on the ability of people involved in sport to enjoy a safe physical, social and cultural sport environment (Department for Victorian Communities, 2003). It can turn a club or venue in which participants feel connected to family, friends and their community in a fun and welcoming setting into one in which participants are confronted by experiences that are neither enjoyable, nor safe.

Section 2 – The extent of poor spectator behaviour

Do spectators behave poorly?

Data from the focus group interviews indicated that the majority of spectator behaviour is considered acceptable, however the concept of “acceptable” spectator behaviour varied between sports and in particular contexts. While sports took a very context specific approach to determining acceptable behaviour, there was some support for the development of sport wide codes of conduct that established boundaries for good and bad spectator behaviour. Overall, the following points are the key findings in relation to the nature of poor spectator behaviour.

Mild, moderate and severe forms of verbal abuse are the primary and most prevalent forms of poor spectator behaviour. Physical abuse and incidents such as vandalism and invasions of the playing arena occur infrequently. Figure 2 illustrates the mean scores for perceptions held by Victorian SSOs of the incidence of eight different categories of poor spectator behaviour across sports in Victoria. A number one (1) represents the behaviour never occurs, a two (2) rarely or just a few times per year across Victoria, a three (3) sometimes or a few times per month across the State, and a four (4) often or at least once each week across Victoria.

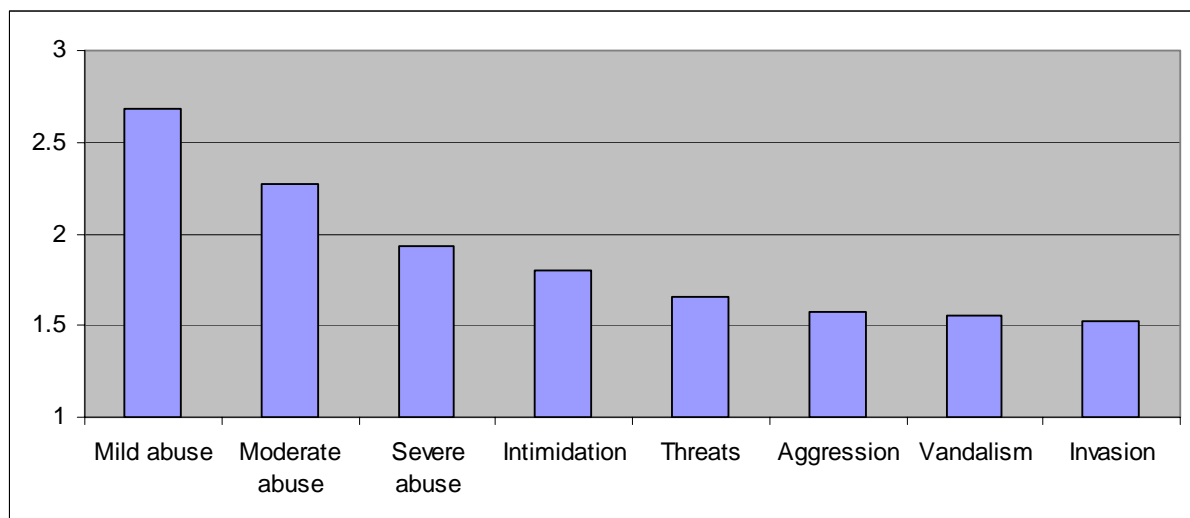


Figure 2 – Mean scores for perceptions of the incidence of poor spectator behaviour

Fifty seven percent of SSOs perceived that mild verbal abuse occurs sometimes or often in their sport, while 34% felt moderate abuse occurred sometimes or often, and 20% felt that severe verbal abuse occurred sometimes or often in their sport. In contrast, only 11% of SSOs felt that physical acts of aggression occurred sometimes or often in their sport. Incidents of verbal threats, vandalism, invasion of the playing arena and intimidation were also considered rare.

There are significant differences in the incidence of poor spectator behaviour between team and individual sports. The data from the survey of SSOs indicates that team based sports tend to have a higher number of incidences of mild, moderate and severe abuse and verbal threats compared to individual sports and are also more likely to have incidents of violence or aggression (see Appendix 8). There were no significant differences in perceptions of the incidence of intimidation, invasion of the playing area and acts of vandalism between team and individual sports. Figure 3 illustrates the mean scores for perceptions held by Victorian SSOs of the incidence of five different categories of poor spectator behaviour across team and individual sports in Victoria. A number one (1) represents the behaviour never occurs, a two (2) rarely or just a few times per year across Victoria, a three (3) sometimes or a few times per month across the State, and a four (4) often or at least once each week across Victoria.

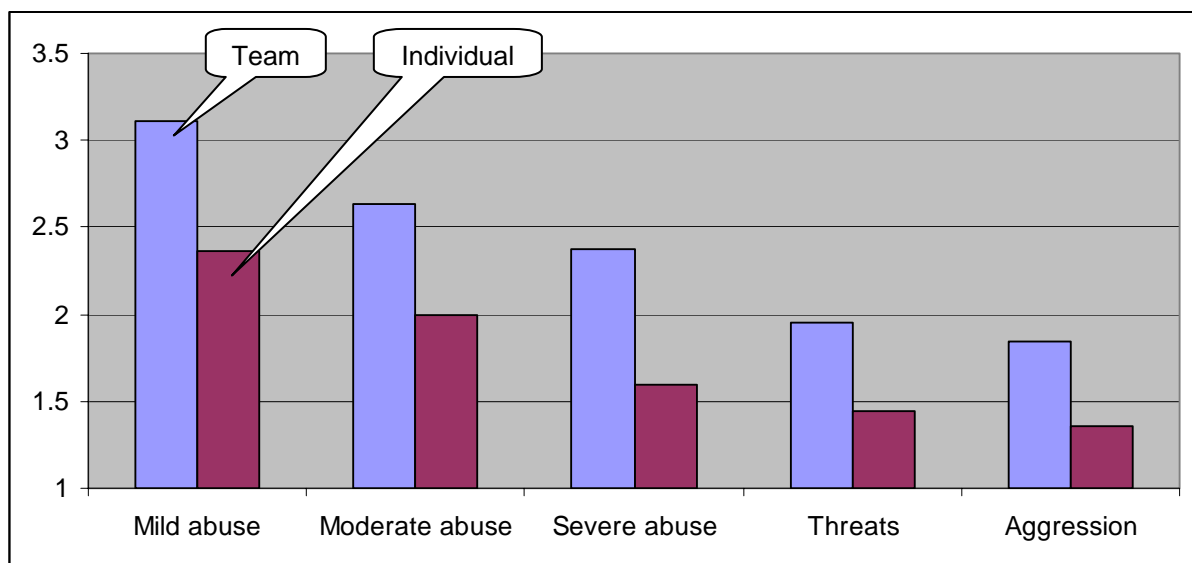


Figure 3 – Mean scores for perceptions of the incidence of poor spectator behaviour – team and individual sports

In addition, differences in the nature of the sporting activity (no contact allowed, structured physical contact, or purposeful contact such as tackling) also led to significant differences in the incidence of spectator behaviour (see Appendix 8). Mild and moderate verbal abuse, threats, invasions of the playing arena, intimidation and actual aggressive acts of violence are more likely to occur in sports where structured physical contact may occur (such as basketball, soccer, netball, etc., which do not involve direct tackling of an opponent) than those sports where physical contact is not allowed at all (i.e. golf) or is commonplace (i.e. Australian rules football). This is because the contact may be contentious or subject to high levels of official interpretation, leading to spectator reactions. There were no significant differences between the nature of the sporting activity and the likelihood of vandalism or severe verbal abuse occurring. Figure 4 illustrates the mean scores for perceptions held by Victorian SSOs of the incidence of six different categories of poor spectator behaviour across sports where direct tackling is allowed, structured physical contact may occur, and contact is not allowed in Victoria. A number one (1) represents the behaviour never occurs, a two (2)

rarely or just a few times per year across Victoria, a three (3) sometimes or a few times per month across the State, and a four (4) often or at least once each week across Victoria.

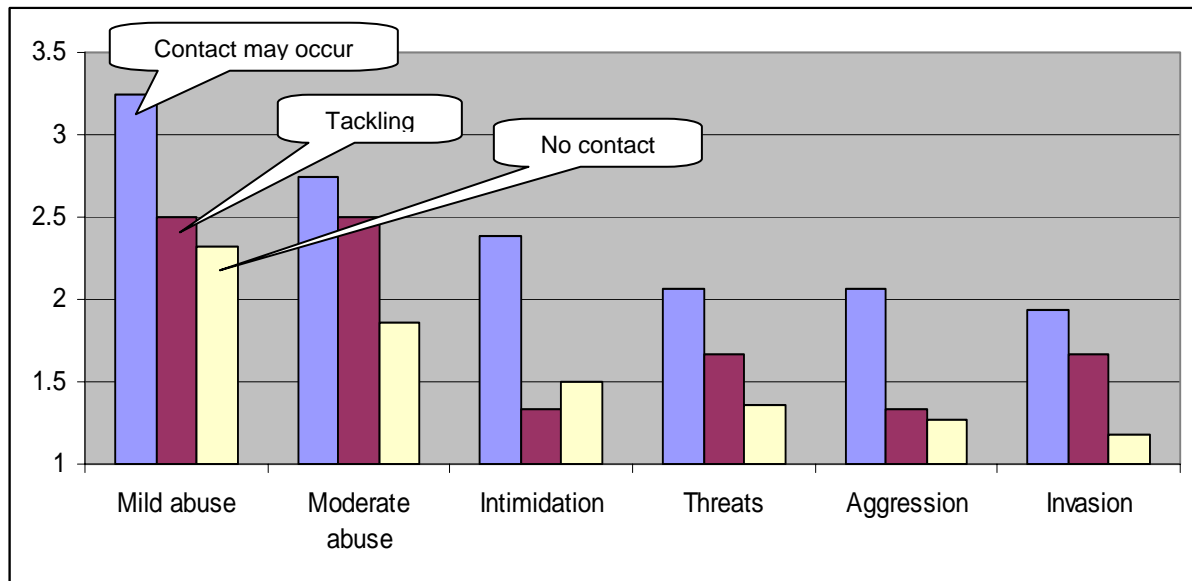


Figure 4 – Mean scores for perceptions of the incidence of poor spectator behaviour –sports where structured physical contact may occur, direct tackling allowed, and contact is not allowed

The gender of the players does not make any difference in the incidence of poor spectator behaviour with no significant differences between male or female dominated sports or sports where the participation rates are roughly equal for any of the eight categories of poor spectator behaviour (see Appendix 8).

Data from the focus group interviews indicated that in some sports at the sub-elite level, spectators perceived that their role was to “put opposition players off”, thereby providing a mindset for poor behaviour. Some spectator behaviour may be premeditated in the build up to a game at the semi-elite level and fan, club or game websites may be used to fuel these actions and supporter groups.

There was a general perception from focus group participants that rural sport did not have as many poor spectator behaviour incidents as their urban counterparts because of a variety of factors. These factors included the perceived “laid back” nature of rural people, the belief that most people in rural towns know each other (or at least know of each other) and because people from opposing teams interact on a daily basis in general society in the country as opposed to teams in urban areas that might only come together to play each other on the court or field. There was also a perception that there were fewer drug or alcohol problems in rural areas that could be associated with poor spectator behaviour.

Which spectators behave poorly?

Focus group participants were of the view that at junior levels poor spectator behaviour is exhibited by males and females equally, but at the sub elite level poor spectator behaviour is dominated by males. The view of respondents to the SSO survey was that 66% thought that males are more likely to engage in poor spectator behaviour, while 34% said it was roughly equal between males and females. No respondents said it was more likely to be females than males.

General supporters and parents / guardians in all sports exhibit poor spectator behaviour in the forms of mild, moderate and severe verbal abuse more so than other categories of spectators. Bench players and coaches are the next categories of spectators likely to engage in these types of poor spectator behaviour, followed by team managers, administrators and officials. Figure 5 illustrates the mean scores for perceptions held by Victorian SSOs of the incidence of mild, moderate and severe verbal abuse in which the various categories of spectators might engage. A number one (1) represents the behaviour never occurs, a two (2) rarely or just a few times per year across Victoria, and a three (3) sometimes or a few times per month across the State.

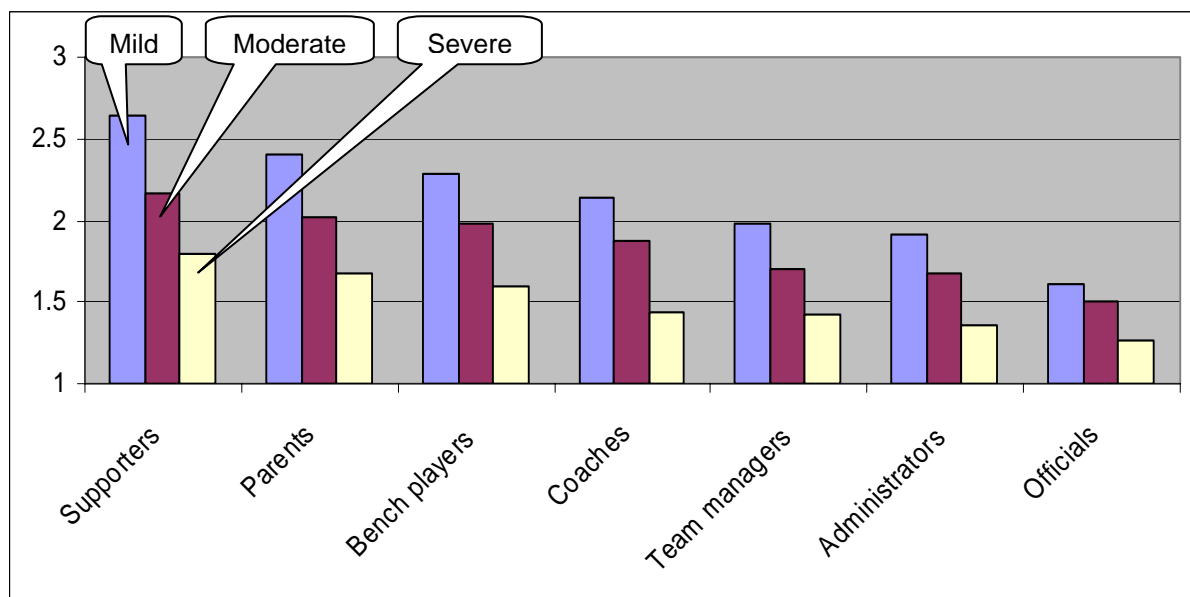


Figure 5 – Mean scores for perceptions of who engages in mild, moderate and severe verbal abuse in all sports

General supporters and parents / guardians in all sports also exhibit poor spectator behaviour in the form of intimidation more so than other categories of spectators. Coaches and bench players are the next categories of spectators likely to engage in this type of poor spectator behaviour, followed by team managers, officials and administrators. Figure 6 illustrates the mean scores for perceptions held by Victorian SSOs of the incidence of intimidation in which the various categories of spectators might engage. A number one (1) represents the behaviour never occurs, a two (2) rarely or just a few times per year across Victoria, and a three (3) sometimes or a few times per month across the State.

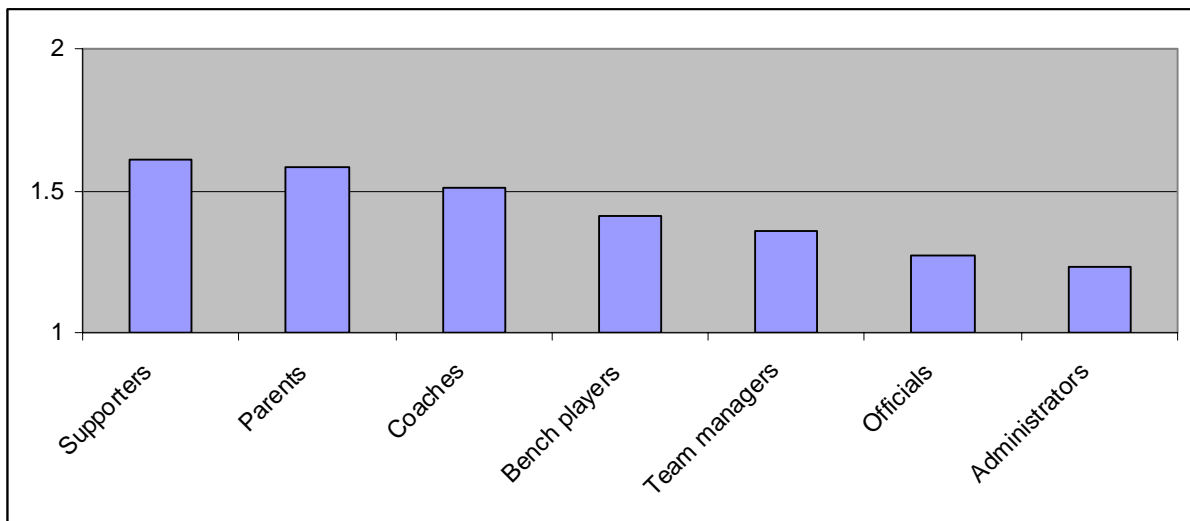


Figure 6 – Mean scores for perceptions of who engages in intimidation in all sports

General supporters and parents / guardians in all sports also exhibit poor spectator behaviour in the forms of verbal threats and acts of aggression or violence more so than other categories of spectators. Bench players and coaches are the next categories of spectators likely to engage in these types of poor spectator behaviour, followed by team managers, administrators and officials. Figure 7 illustrates the mean scores for perceptions held by Victorian SSOs of the incidence of threats and acts of aggression or violence in which the various categories of spectators might engage. A number one (1) represents the behaviour never occurs, a two (2) rarely or just a few times per year across Victoria, and a three (3) sometimes or a few times per month across the State.

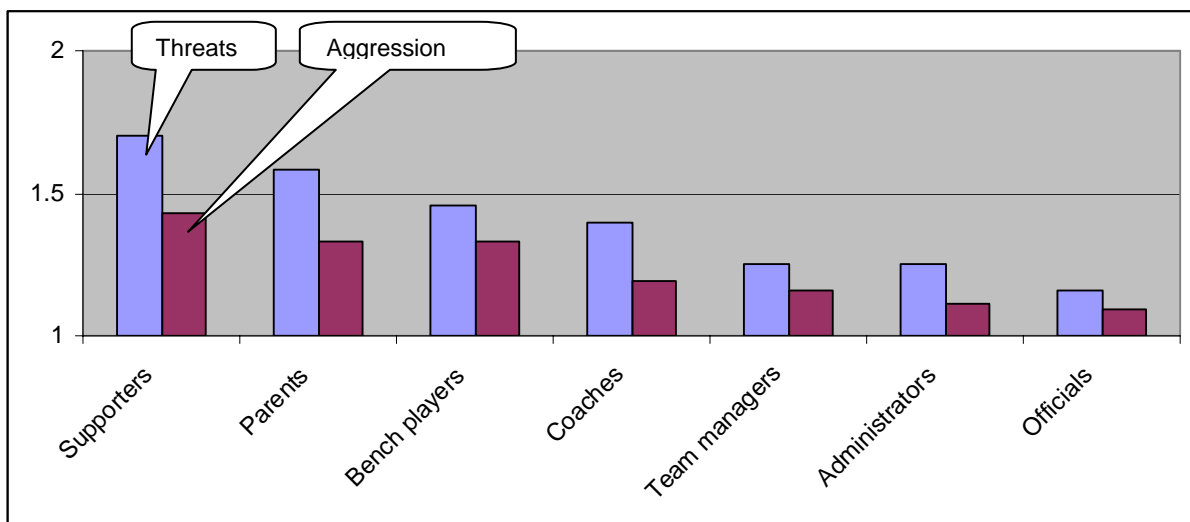


Figure 7 – Mean scores for perceptions of who engages in threats or acts of aggression or violence in all sports

There is very little difference in the likelihood of each category of spectator to engage in acts of vandalism, but general supporters are again more likely than other categories of spectators. Figure 8 illustrates the mean scores for perceptions held by Victorian SSOs of the incidence of vandalism in which the various categories of spectators might engage. A number one (1) represents the behaviour never occurs, and a two (2) rarely or just a few times per year across Victoria.

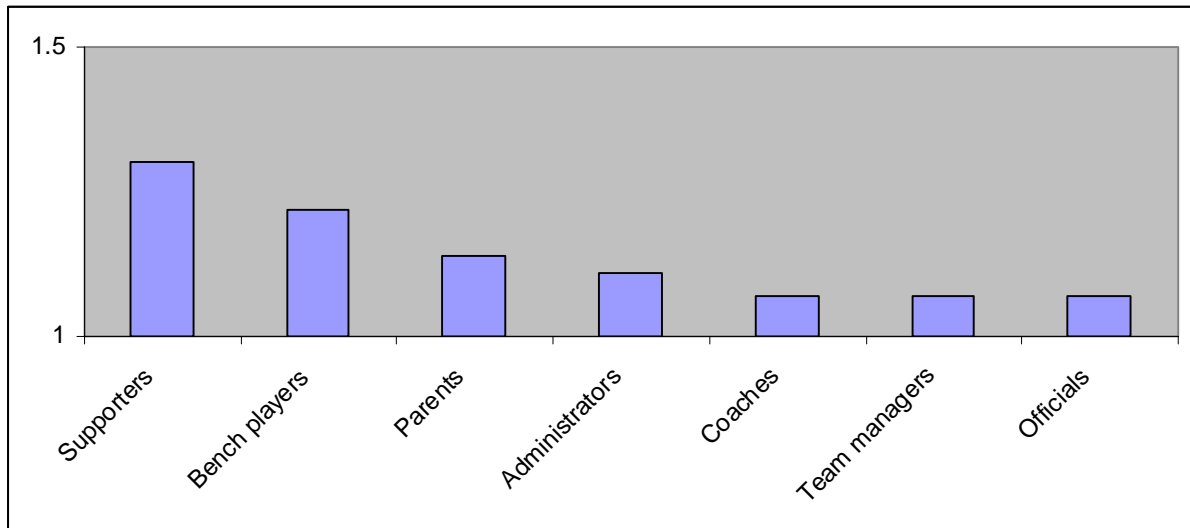


Figure 8 – Mean scores for perceptions of who engages in acts of vandalism in all sports

Finally, there is also very little difference in the likelihood of each category of spectator to invade the playing area, but parents / guardians and general supporters are again more likely than other categories of spectators. Figure 9 illustrates the mean scores for perceptions held by Victorian SSOs of the incidence of invasions of the playing area in which the various categories of spectators might engage. A number one (1) represents the behaviour never occurs, and a two (2) rarely or just a few times per year across Victoria.

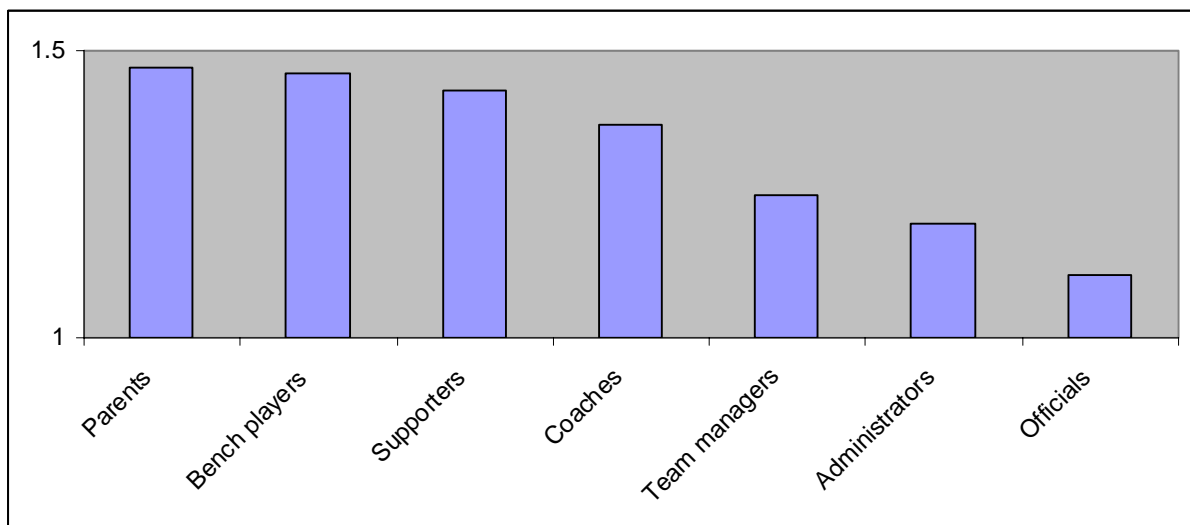


Figure 9 – Mean scores for perceptions of who invades the playing area in all sports

Is spectator behaviour getting worse?

Twenty three of the SSOs (51%) who responded to the survey reported that details of poor spectator behaviour incidents were recorded at the state level. Thirteen of the 20 team sports record details of poor spectator behaviour incidents, while only 9 of the 25 individual sports recorded such incidents. Of those that indicated that they did record the details, 15 SSOs received reports of a total of 171 incidents to their state office in the last 12 months, in roughly equal proportions between team and individual sports. The data from the SSO survey suggests that for all categories of spectator behaviour, the standard is the same or getting better in the vast majority of sports. Figure 10 illustrates the percentage of SSOs who perceive that spectator behaviour is better, the same or worse than five years ago for each of the eight categories of spectator behaviour.

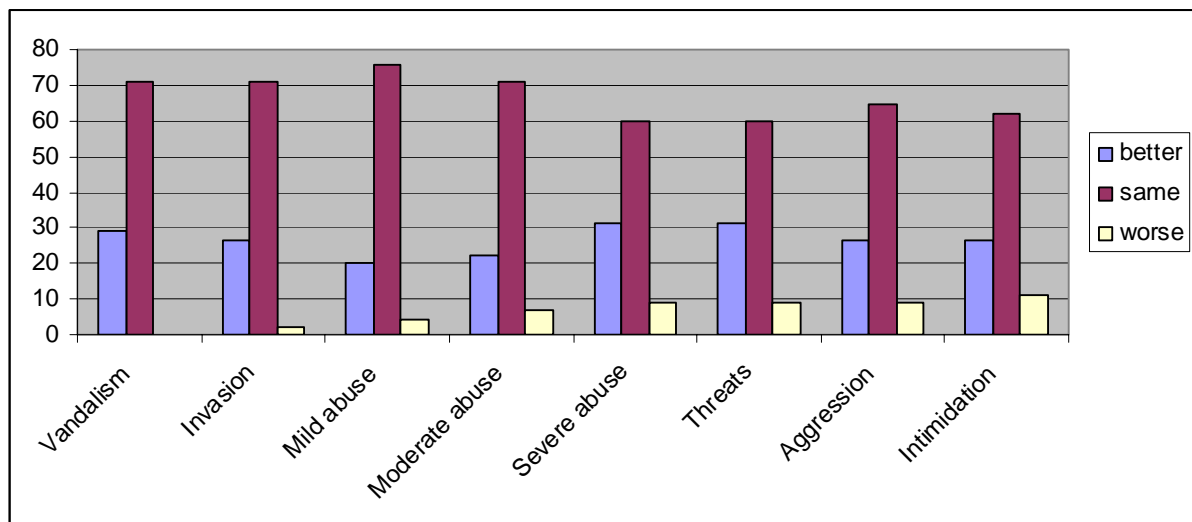


Figure 10 – SSO perceptions of changes in spectator behaviour

The perception of focus group participants as to whether spectator behaviour is getting worse differed between sports, within regions and between urban and rural areas. Some people suggest it has been getting worse over the last 10-20 years, while others suggest it has been getting better. Spectator behaviour is perceived as a microcosm of society. Some people perceive that the use of poor language is more prevalent in society now and therefore the use of this type of language is more prevalent within sporting contexts. Thus it could be argued that it is difficult to say that spectator behaviour is worse, rather, general behaviour (manifest in language) is worse and this has flowed on to sport. What might be considered bad language in some contexts is acceptable while in others it is considered offensive.

Some focus group participants suggested that there was now less respect shown of authority by young people and as a result spectator behaviour is now worse. Conversely, some focus group participants suggested that older people were actually poorer spectators and that typically the younger spectators had better education programs and had grown up in sport environments that were aware of the need to develop and maintain good spectator behaviour.

What is acceptable spectator behaviour?

While verbal abuse is the primary and most prevalent form of poor spectator behaviour, it is also the only type of poor behaviour that is accepted to a certain degree. Figure 11 illustrates the mean scores for perceptions held by Victorian SSOs of the incidence of eight different categories of poor spectator behaviour across sports in Victoria. A number one (1) represents the behaviour is completely acceptable, while a ten (10) represents the behaviour is completely unacceptable. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of SSOs consider behaviour such as moderate verbal abuse and all other more extreme categories of poor spectator behaviour to be completely unacceptable. Fifty percent of SSOs considered mild verbal abuse to be unacceptable (scoring 8 or above), while 23% considered it acceptable at some level (scoring 4 or below). This result supports the perceptions held by most focus group participants that some form of commentary or mild verbal abuse was considered part of the “banter” of the game and considered largely harmless. When this verbal abuse becomes personal or derogatory towards somebody's appearance, manner or performance it is considered unacceptable.

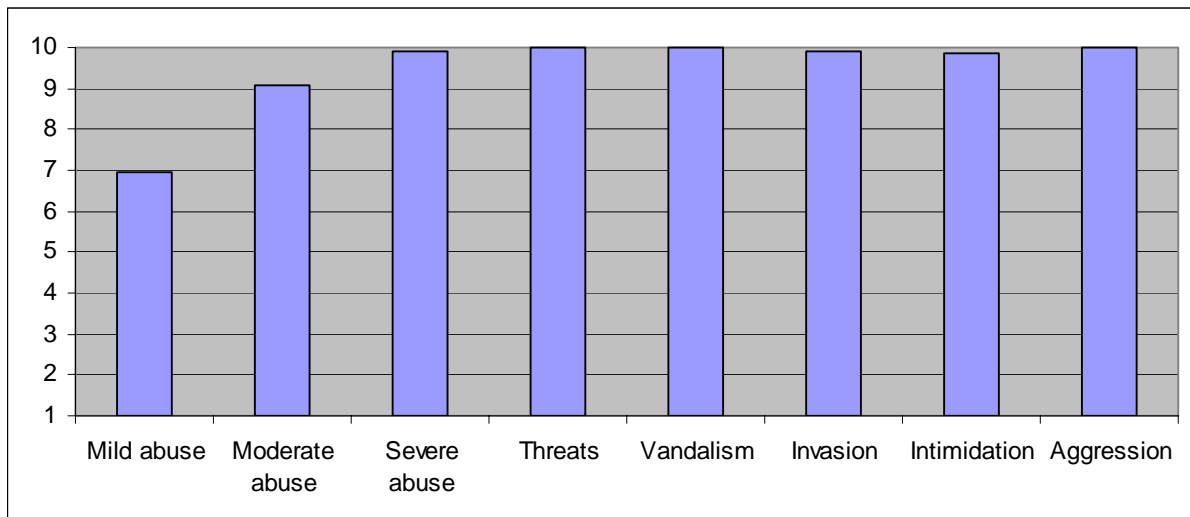


Figure 11 – Mean scores for attitudes of the acceptance of poor spectator behaviour

The level of acceptance of these types of poor spectator behaviour does not differ significantly between male, female or mixed sports, between the degree of physical contact allowed within sports or between team and individual sports.

Section 3 – Factors associated with poor spectator behaviour

Human Factors

Win at all costs

The win-at-all-costs mentality portrayed through some spectators' behaviour is particularly problematic in junior sports. In senior sports the win-at-all-costs mentality is typically manifest in poor player behaviour (which may influence spectators), but at junior level the impact of the win-at-all-costs mentality is most apparent in the behaviour of parents and coaches of junior teams. This has a number of consequences:

- Parents and coaches criticise officials for (perceived) poor decisions.
- Parents and coaches ignore the primary concept that junior sport should be about fun and skill development, rather than winning.
- Parents and coaches are unwilling to support, encourage or congratulate opposition players for good play or for winning.
- Parents and coaches do not support or encourage their own players. Rather, they berate them for mistakes or exhort them to 'play hard' (often outside the rules) in order to achieve victory for the team.
- Coaches may be more inclined to play their best players to achieve a victory, rather than establish a system whereby there is some equality in terms of opportunity for all players at junior level.

Parental expectations

Parents who harbour inappropriate expectations of their children's ability, motivation or commitment to sport may exhibit poor behaviour that has a number of consequences:

- Parents that expect too much of their children may barrack inappropriately, berate their children for mistakes or generally create an atmosphere of anxiety about a child's sporting performance.
- Parents who believe their child deserves more playing time may pressure coaches by approaching them during games, directly after games and in the days following games. This may also occur at representative team trials and selection where parents may behave inappropriately if they feel their child is not being given enough game time or playing in the wrong position and therefore may miss out on selection for higher grade teams.

- Poor spectator behaviour exhibited by parents can be adopted by players, leading to inappropriate player behaviour at junior levels. In addition, some parents may be “serial abusers” of coaches and simply move their child to a new team, club or venue when they are banned or suspended.
- Parents who are new to a sport often have little understanding of the rules and nuances of the game and may behave inappropriately. This behaviour can be compounded by the fact that often young or inexperienced officials are officiating junior sport and parents may have unrealistic expectations of the skill level of these officials.

Knowledge of the game

Every sport has different rules and an ethos or culture of acceptable behaviour which can influence the behaviour of spectators. For example, in the case of basketball the rules are subject to interpretation by the referee, particularly where the issue of contact is concerned. Grey areas in the officiating of sport can give rise to poor spectator behaviour, particularly where the officials are aware of the technicalities and nuances of the rules, but the players and spectators (who may have been involved in the sport for a significant period of time) do not have the same knowledge or understanding.

Tribalism

Teams at the elite or sub elite level may have supporter groups that exhibit features of tribal behaviour. This tribal behaviour can often manifest as poor or bad spectator behaviour (for example, concentrated verbal abuse of opposition players, taunting and baiting opposition players, spectators, officials and venue/club staff, spitting or physical intimidation of players, opposition spectators, officials or venue/club staff, vandalism, physical assault of opposition spectators, players, officials, venue/club staff). These tribal behaviours may be exacerbated by a range of factors, including the composition of the spectator group, such as their ethnicity.

Environmental Factors

Spectator behaviour is changed by the physical environment in which it occurs. The following factors influence the extent and frequency of poor spectator behaviour, as well as its impact.

Open vs. closed environments

It can be easier to control spectators in a “closed” environment such as an indoor basketball court because the game official is able to exert greater control over players, coaches and spectators. In such an environment, the game official is able to stop the game, identify spectators that need to be warned, and communicate with the coach that a group of bench players or spectators needs to be controlled or modify their behaviour. Open environments such as large football ovals with no fences make it hard for game officials to identify spectators that are behaving poorly and thus exert any control over such behaviour.

The use of abusive language can be magnified in closed sporting environments. For example, the impact of abusive language at a basketball stadium could be greater than the same spectator behaviour at a football ground. At a football game verbal abuse can be “lost” in the open environment. Voices do not carry as far and the size of the sporting arena (both the playing space and the spectator space) can mean that officials and players do not hear the abuse or are largely unaware of it. Within the same sport, levels of poor spectator behaviour can differ depending on whether the environment is open or closed (i.e. indoor and outdoor netball courts).

Venue size

The size of the venue can have an impact on the incidence of poor spectator behaviour, or at very least the monitoring and perception of the behaviour. In smaller venues the spectators are likely to be close together which can create a problem when opposing groups of spectators are seated close to each other. Larger venues can result in poor spectator behaviour being ‘lost’ or not heard by game officials or venue managers but may still impact on players or other spectators.

Proximity of Spectators

The proximity of the spectators to players, officials, coaches and “bench” players can have an influence on the sport environment, and consequently the frequency and level of poor spectator behaviour. For example, in basketball and netball spectators are relatively close to the field of play. This means that spectator comments are heard by officials and players, as well as the fact that spectators may perceive themselves to be part of the game because of their proximity to the playing area and as a result, feel more inclined to “participate” in the game through their behaviour.

Venue Entry

The entry point to grounds and stadiums can be a site for poor spectator behaviour. Spectators who are denied entry are likely to react poorly, while spectators who are required to pay an entry fee may exhibit poor spectator behaviour. For example, if a venue does not charge during the regular season for spectator entry, but does charge during finals, spectators may feel aggrieved at the imposed fee. This could result in poor behaviour, usually in the form of abuse of venue managers or staff. In extreme cases, spectators outside the ground may cause more problems (for example, spectators deemed to be under the influence of alcohol and are subsequently denied entry, may cause trouble outside the venue).

Timing

Centrally controlled scheduling and timing of games can lessen the incidence of poor spectator behaviour. In sports in which the game clock does not stop, spectators may be less inclined to exhibit poor spectator due to its obvious impact on the game.

Player and official entry

A closed race for the entry and exit of players and officials can assist in the management of poor spectator behaviour. Similarly, the provision of separate change room facilities and spectator areas may assist in lessening the likelihood of poor spectator behaviour occurring and its subsequent impact on players or officials.

Organisational Factors

Officiating

The perception of the performance of game officials is one of the key catalysts for poor spectator behaviour. The relationship between the officials and players and the officials and coaches has a major impact on spectator behaviour (in this respect the coaches can act as spectators, but also influence non-coach spectators). Game related factors in general, and officiating specifically, appear to be at the heart of poor spectator behaviour that occurs throughout the course of a game, match, meet or competition. Some focus group participants suggested that perceptions of decisions made by officials accounted for more than 90% of poor spectator behaviour.

- A perceived poor decision or set of decisions by an official throughout the course of a game can lead to poor spectator behaviour at a variety of levels, ranging from verbal abuse through to spectators physically assaulting officials. The perception that the official has made a poor decision that affects the game outcome or the score can be the “igniter” for the poor spectator behaviour.
- Young or inexperienced officials can be easily intimidated by senior players, coaches and spectators. The intimidation in itself is poor behaviour, but can lead to more noticeable behaviours, such as verbal abuse. The inability of young or inexperienced referees to control the players, coaches or spectators can further exacerbate the problem.

Standard of play

Representative squad teams or games seem to attract a higher incidence and level of poor spectator behaviour as the stakes are perceived to be higher than regular competition. At domestic level there can be a policy to keep spectators involved and busy by allocating roles such as scorer in an attempt to avoid poor behaviour incidents. This type of opportunity does not exist in higher grades as higher standards (i.e. training and accreditation) are usually imposed for the standard of officials involved in the game.

Club/Venue culture

Clubs or venues that have a long standing reputation for good behaviour try hard to maintain that reputation, particularly through the custodianship of senior administrators. Venues or clubs that have had a group of senior administrators or venue managers at the helm for a number of years tend to have a better standard of spectator behaviour as they have developed a culture of good behaviour.

Alcohol

The serving of alcohol at venues can have an impact on the incidence and severity of poor spectator behaviour. Although there is evidence to suggest that poor spectator behaviour occurs at games where alcohol is not served, there is also evidence that spectators under the influence of alcohol are more likely to exhibit signs of poor spectator behaviour and that spectators who typically behave poorly are likely to be worse if under the influence of alcohol. The consumption of alcohol also presents a management challenge for venues that do not sell or permit the consumption of alcohol. In this case, the consumption of alcohol purchased prior to entry to a venue by spectators constitutes poor behaviour, but also necessitates action such as asking spectators to leave, which may provoke further poor behaviour.

The role of the coach

Comments made by coaches can lead to spectators making comments as the coach sets the tone for the spectator group in some contexts (for example, in closed environments). Some focus groups reported that coaches can be a major problem in creating the environment for poor spectator behaviour.

The final minutes

Basketball tribunal reports suggest that a vast majority of spectator incidents that come before the tribunal are related to something that occurred during the final minutes of the game. The build up in the final minute may be due to the closeness of the game, or the officials letting things get out of hand from the beginning, which culminates in an incident.

Finals time

The behaviour of spectators can be worse during finals. During finals a number of things occur that can lead to or exacerbate poor spectator behaviour:

- Spectator Numbers – at finals time in most sports the number of spectators rises appreciably. This can be a major challenge for venue and ground managers, as well as officials. The sheer number of spectators can create a mob mentality, which can be manifest as a variety of behaviours. Increased spectators numbers can also mean that the verbal abuse of officials rises, which in turn creates further challenges for venue and ground managers. Some sports meet these challenges by providing security at finals, limiting the sale of alcohol to certain parts of the ground/venue, providing a safe exit point for officials or having senior members of the association patrol the venue or ground.
- The Novice Spectator – the increase in the number of spectators at finals is complemented by an increase in the ‘novice’ spectator, who has watched very few or no games of the sport and/or does not fully grasp the rules or the game’s nuances. These ‘novice’ spectators, however, can be quite vocal during finals, in support of the team or their favourite player. This can be manifest in the abuse and criticism of officials and players from the opposition team. The problem of the ‘novice’ spectator during finals time is compounded by their relative anonymity (in comparison to regular

attendees) and the possibility that they are familiar with sporting environments that have a different culture. The case of the “football boyfriend” who comes to watch the “netball girlfriend” is a good example in this respect.

- **Game Stakes** – at finals time the stakes of the game rise and there is a subsequent rise in emotions, both among players and among spectators. The emotional levels of players can influence the spectators and the emotional levels of the spectators can influence the players.
- **Officiating Standards** – during finals the standard of officiating can differ markedly, as can the perception of standard. During finals the number of games played at a venue can decrease and this means that the less experienced officials are not officiating. The result can be that officiating interpretations can be different during finals, or that spectators perceive a difference. Either way, the result can be an increase in spectator anxiety about officiating and the game result, which in turn can lead to poor behaviour.
- **Next Week** – the fact that the losing team does not play next week (in knock-out scenarios) can result in an increase in poor spectator behaviour. The stakes of the game are obviously higher, but the atmosphere is one in which the team (and its spectators) have to do everything and anything they can to ensure victory.
- **Tribal Teams** – teams and their spectators during finals can adopt tribal cultures. An ‘us against them’ approach or mentality could be one manifestation of the tribal team during finals. This tribalism, which spectators often perceive as loyalty to the team, can result in opposing spectators abusing each other, either verbally or physically.
- **Under Age Finals** – the introduction of finals can increase the incidence of poor spectator behaviour. Hence, some sports have chosen to delay the introduction of finals until the under 13 age bracket.
- **Elite Level** – At some sports at the elite level the behaviour of spectators may be better at finals because “the hard yards have been done” (salaries and bonuses earned, finals made) and the crowd may be more diverse than the regular season (other teams supporters coming to watch the finals, etc.).

Section 4 – Jurisdictional and management issues

While not a focus of the project, a number of jurisdictional and management issues concerning poor spectator behaviour were raised by focus group participants. The issues focus on the questions of who is responsible for controlling spectator behaviour, how is it managed, and concerns about jurisdiction.

Who is responsible for control?

The vast majority of poor spectator behaviour occurs within the proximity of the playing area and the vast majority of poor spectator behaviour is game related. Officials have a large part to play in controlling, limiting and policing poor spectator behaviour because of their role in controlling the field of play. The majority of sports therefore rely on the game official to control poor spectator behaviour in addition to officiating the game.

Venue, league and association administrators play an important role in controlling, limiting and policing spectator behaviour because of their authority. In some sports venue managers and security staff have been employed to monitor and manage crowds. In general, the management of crowds is a difficult task, and volunteer staff may not have the knowledge, seniority or “presence” to manage sporting crowds well or effectively. In some sports at some venues the senior members of the league or association patrol the venue, particularly at finals, but there have been instances in which this person has been subsequently assaulted by the spectator. The effectiveness of this strategy depends on adequate training, resources and clear procedures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of administrators, volunteers and staff.

Clubs can play a role in controlling their spectators. Bad language at some venues is considered an embarrassment for the club and as such, the club sees it as its responsibility to police its supporters. At some clubs within some sports a strategic plan or related document can be used to stipulate behaviours that are unacceptable, as well as state the features of the ideal club culture that is being created.

There is some ambiguity in the roles and responsibilities of clubs and venues for spectator behaviour. For example, the state association may devolve all cost and responsibility for monitoring and managing spectator behaviour to the host club. In these instances the level of poor spectator behaviour may be quite high, and yet the state association does not fund or resource the monitoring or management of such behaviour. This scenario may be made increasingly problematic if clubs that host games are fined for incidences of poor spectator behaviour, whether this originates with the home or the away supporters. Home clubs may be able to control home spectators, but often find it difficult to control spectators associated with a visiting team. In some cases these spectators may seek out trouble in order to bring disrepute to the home club.

Policies and codes of conduct provide a framework for describing ideal spectator behaviour, but it is the quality of the people at the coalface (i.e. club and venue administrators) who determine the usefulness of the policies and hence, the control of spectator behaviour. Codes of conduct at a club with a lack of quality human resources can be ill applied or meaningless, while the same code of conduct at a club rich in experienced human resources can be a valuable and effective document that is used to both police and educate spectators.

How is poor spectator behaviour managed?

Strategies used to manage poor spectator behaviour fall into three categories: strategies designed to educate spectators and develop a better culture (preventative); strategies to deal with incidents of poor spectator behaviour as they occur (immediate); and strategies designed to punish or prosecute poor behaviour after an incident (post incident).

Preventative measures

- No finals for junior competition. This strategy assumes that a significant proportion of poor spectator behaviour in junior sport occurs at finals time, when the emphasis shifts from fun and participation to winning, often at all costs.
- Club/team manager information packs contain codes of conduct for distribution. This strategy is typically used in conjunction with the display of codes of conduct at the venue. The club/team manager distributes the codes of conduct to parents of junior players, although is unable to distribute the codes to all spectators, particularly those who are unknown to the club/team manager.
- Zero tolerance policy. Some venues have adopted this strategy for selected junior competitions. This strategy relies on good human resources and the willingness of the club to police the strategy.
- The education of officials is an important strategy in combating poor spectator behaviour. Officials play a central role in incidents that lead to poor spectator behaviour, as well as the subsequent policing and limitation of the behaviour. Educating officials on how to interact appropriately with spectators and develop techniques to minimise poor spectator behaviour is essential in this context.
- A paid coordinator or umpires or referees can improve the standard of officiating. Support for younger officials (particularly increasing the number of officials and the available pool through training) is essential. Younger officials are the most vulnerable when it comes to the effects of poor spectator behaviour, to the point that it can cause them to cease their participation in the sport. Training and support strategies can successfully ameliorate the impact of poor spectator behaviour.
- Positioning of bars and “wet” areas at some sports can have an impact on the way in which a crowd is able to be managed and hence the incidence and level of poor

spectator behaviour. At some sports, bars and “wet” areas have been positioned away from the area through which the match officials enter or exit the arena. This results in minimal contact between match officials and spectators that are more likely to engage in verbal or physical abuse of match officials.

- Signage at some venues notes that the spectators are representing their community (particularly in the country areas) and that they are requested to use respectful language. This strategy relies on spectators being members of small communities in which they are identifiable. The signage must be supported by policing and associated strategies.
- The AFL parents for football behaviour campaign with the slogan ‘Not Playing for Sheep Stations’ was perceived by focus group participants to have been used successfully within junior sport. This strategy, developed by AFL Queensland, involves the education of parents, as well as their continual self-assessment throughout the season. The strategy is supported by policing in the form of ground marshals.
- Consistent national rules for the conduct of spectators are perceived to be a useful resource for all sports to use in educating spectators. Although most sports have a different ethos or culture and operate in often vastly different physical and organisational contexts, the development of generic rules for the conduct of spectators could remove the onus on small clubs and associations to develop their own. More broadly, this strategy would mean that spectators would be getting a consistent message from every sport about what behaviours were unacceptable and would not be tolerated.

Immediate measures

- Spectator is approached by venue/association/league staff and asked to modify their behaviour. As with the strategy in which the spectator is asked to leave the venue, the spectator can be asked to modify their behaviour by the official, a supervisor of officials or the league/association/venue staff depending on the sport and the context.
- A code of conduct is presented to the spectator behaving poorly. As with the strategies in which the spectator is asked to leave the venue or modify their behaviour, the code of conduct is typically presented by league/venue/association staff. This strategy may limit further instances of poor spectator or may inflame the situation as a result of the “shaming” of the spectator.
- Spectator is asked to leave the venue. The willingness of the spectator to do this can differ depending on the sport, the state of the game, the consumption of alcohol, etc. The spectator can be asked to leave by the official, a supervisor of officials or the league/association/venue staff depending on the sport and the context. The official

may stop the game in order to approach venue/league/association staff to ask the spectator to leave.

- The officials or the venue/league/association administrators can call off the game, which may limit further instances of poor spectator behaviour or may inflame the situation. The threat of this action is used by some sports in some contexts to apply pressure to a particular club to control their spectators. The ability of the club to do this differs greatly depending on the level of poor behaviour, the ethos or culture of the sport and the standard of play.
- An intermediary can often defuse a situation. At some venues within some sports, an intermediary either patrols the venue or is dispatched to hear the complaints of spectators (these are often complaints about officials).
- A code of conduct card (yellow or red, etc.) system is used in some sports at some venues. In this system spectators who exhibit poor spectator behaviour are given a yellow card and spectators who continue to exhibit poor behaviour after receiving a yellow card are given a red card, at which point they are required to leave the venue. This system relies on good human resources and the commitment of the club and venue to adhere to the rules.
- Police visiting games can reduce the incidence of poor spectator behaviour, but some respondents suggested that police sometimes choose to ignore the use of abusive language. This strategy is prevalent in rural areas, where the police are known as members of the community and are often members of the respective sporting club. This familiarity can cause a problem, particular when judgements are made about the appropriateness of behaviour based on club or sport culture/ethos.

Post-incident measures

- Spectator is reported and the issue is dealt with through the league/venue/association tribunal mechanism. This strategy is sometime difficult to apply because the status of the spectator is unknown. Often the league/venue/association relies on linking the spectator to a particular club.
- Suspend players for the abuse of officials. This strategy, although not directly related to spectators, can be used to minimise the incidence of poor spectator behaviour and improve the sport culture in which the spectator participates. The actions of players often incite or encourage spectators to engage in poor behaviour, particularly the verbal abuse of match officials. Suspending players for incidences in which they abuse match officials, has the resultant effect of curbing the worst elements of poor spectator behaviour at worst and improving the overall sport culture at best.

Jurisdictional measures and challenges

Concerns about the preventative, immediate and post-incident strategies were also raised by focus group participants. Their concerns centred on the legality of the strategies and the level of resources required to ensure they were effective.

- Asking spectators to leave the venue is often not within the rules (as far as the officials' power over the game is concerned). Often the match officials engage in a game of bluff with the spectators, in which they claim to have more power over the spectator than they do. From venue to venue, even within the same sport, there are differing opinions about the power of officials to police the behaviour of spectators.
- The use of codes of conduct differs markedly between sports and within sports. Some venues display them prominently at the entry point to the venue, while others have them pinned to a noticeboard in a position that very few people would pass by, let alone spectators who generally proceed from the entry point to the position from which they will watch the game. Codes of conduct are only effective if they are displayed, people are educated about them and they are enforced. If any one of these three conditions are not met then the code is ineffective.
- Codes of conduct are presented to spectators who are behaving poorly in some sports. It is unclear, however, on what authority the codes are being presented and whether they contain any provision for the spectator to be penalised for their behaviour and on what grounds can a club or venue impose such penalties. There is uncertainty among staff and volunteers within sport venues, leagues and associations that paying an entry fee is a form of contract and what power this provides to control poor spectator behaviour.
- Enforcing codes of conduct relies on having enough staff or volunteers to monitor and patrol the venue. These staff also need to be experienced enough to deal with a variety of situations that arise. In general, these people are seen to be the senior members of the league or association, but it is rare that these people are trained to deal with conflict or dispute resolution.
- Venues, leagues and associations often take a band-aid approach to solving short term problems and respond to individual incidences of poor spectator behaviour on a case-by-case basis. Major incidents typically cause the venue, league or association to take more systematic and widespread action.
- Venues, leagues and regional associations typically have to approach the state association for help, rather than the state association providing the help without being asked. This often results in the venues, leagues and associations simply not asking for help and attempting to create their own solutions. This compounds the problem when there is a major incident involving poor spectator behaviour.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the project was to identify the extent, type and incidence of poor spectator behaviour at the community level, the circumstances in which it occurs, the characteristics of the perpetrators, and factors and processes which might minimise such behaviour.

It was concluded that:

- Spectator behaviour for the majority of sports is not a significant problem. However, team based sports do experience problems with the standard of spectator behaviour. As some team based sports have very high participation rates and spectator numbers, the problem of poor spectator behaviour potentially affects a large number of people associated with those sports.
- Poor spectator behaviour can have a negative impact on the sport experience of individuals and communities and specifically the number of people playing, coaching, officiating and administrating sport.
- Mild, moderate and severe forms of verbal abuse are the most prevalent forms of poor spectator behaviour.
- Team based sports have a higher number of incidences of mild, moderate and severe abuse, verbal threats, and incidents of violence or aggression compared to individual sports.
- Mild and moderate verbal abuse, threats, invasions of the playing arena, intimidation and actual aggressive acts of violence are more likely to occur in sports where contact between players may occur compared with sports where physical contact is not allowed or is required in the rules of the sport.
- There is no significant difference between male or female dominated sports or sports where the participation rates are roughly equal in terms of the incidence of various forms of spectator behaviour.
- Males are more likely to engage in poor spectator behaviour than females, especially at the sub elite level of sport.
- General supporters and parents or guardians engage more in most forms of poor spectator behaviour compared with other types of spectators such as bench players, coaches, and team managers.
- Less than half of Victorian SSOs record details of poor spectator behaviour incidents at the state level.

- A majority of Victorian SSOs perceived that the standard of spectator behaviour is the same or is improved from five years ago for all forms of spectator behaviour.
- Mild verbal abuse appears to be commonplace in most sports and is considered to be somewhat accepted as part of the game or “banter” that exists when watching sport.
- Moderate verbal abuse and all other more extreme forms of poor spectator behaviour are considered unacceptable.
- A range of human, environmental, and organisational factors are associated with poor spectator behaviour, including:
 - Human - parental expectations, an unreasonable “win at all costs” mentality in junior sport, poor knowledge of the rules of sport, and tribalism;
 - Environmental – open versus closed environments, the size of the venue, proximity of spectators, venue entry design, timing of games, and players and officials entry to the playing area;
 - Organisational – the standard of officiating, standard of play, club or venue culture, the presence of alcohol, the role of the coach, the pressure of the final minutes of games, and final competitions.
- The standard and quality of officiating (or the perceptions of officiating) has a significant impact on the incidence and level of poor spectator behaviour.
- A significant level of confusion and uncertainty at the community level of sport exists over the question of who has jurisdiction and control over the behaviour of sport spectators, particularly in relation to the role of sport officials in controlling behaviour outside the field of play.
- Sport officials are often charged with the responsibility for managing poor spectator behaviour in addition to their on field officiating duties.
- Sport organisations use a range of preventative, immediate and post incident strategies to manage poor spectator behaviour.
- The effectiveness of spectator behaviour management strategies is dependent on the quality of the human resources to develop and enforce a culture of good spectator behaviour.
- A number of challenges exist for community level sport organisations to develop, implement and adequately resource effective strategies to manage poor spectator behaviour.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this report suggest that strategies to address poor spectator behaviour in sport at the community level must acknowledge the different human, environmental and organisational factors and sporting contexts in which it occurs. The following are a series of general recommendations for addressing poor spectator behaviour in sport.

- SSOs should consider recording details of poor spectator behaviour incidents in order to monitor the effectiveness of measures implemented to manage such behaviour.
- SSOs should consider addressing spectator behaviour as part of their strategic planning and facilitating the development of local association, club or venue specific strategies to manage poor spectator behaviour.
- State government should consider the development of a generic code of conduct for poor spectator behaviour targeting general supporters and parents / guardians based on the ASC codes of conduct and disseminating this information to SSOs.
- Further research should be conducted into the efficacy of micro level strategies to manage poor spectator behaviour such as the use of a code of conduct card system of warnings, suspension and expulsion; the use of “Silent Saturdays” where no verbal barracking is allowed; using an education campaign similar to the AFL parents for football behaviour campaign with the slogan ‘Not Playing for Sheep Stations’ developed by AFL Queensland; and improved venue signage for promoting acceptable spectator behaviour.

The following are a series of specific recommendations for addressing poor spectator behaviour in sport that sports should consider.

Preventative strategies:

- Developing a culture of good behaviour through promoting a statement of acceptable spectator behaviour, consider adopting a zero tolerance stance to all forms of poor spectator behaviour, and creating a family friendly environment within sport clubs and venues.
- Developing a code of conduct and an associated education campaign for parents or guardians upon registering junior players that focuses on appropriate spectator behaviour.
- Investing in human resource training of staff and volunteers to increase awareness and understanding of spectator behaviour issues and the impact of poor spectator behaviour on participation, coaching, officiating and volunteering.
- Ensuring coach education and accreditation courses include information on the role of the coach as an important role model for spectator behaviour and the impact of poor spectator behaviour on participation, coaching, officiating and volunteering.
- Planning game day environments to manage potential interaction between players, officials, and spectators by using separate races for opposing teams and officials, and providing separate change room facilities for officials.

- Limiting the use of finals in under age sporting competitions.
- Restricting the use of game time clocks visible to spectators in order to reduce poor spectator behaviour in the closing stages of games.
- Ensuring conflict resolution strategies are part of the training provided for officials.
- Creating a designated position that has responsibility for the training, support and development of sport officials.
- Linking with existing alcohol management programs such as the Good Sports program developed by the ADF in order to minimise the impact of alcohol consumption on poor spectator behaviour.

Strategies to deal with incidents of poor spectator behaviour:

- Developing and disseminating appropriate protocols and procedures that clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of officials, coaches, team managers, venue managers and other administrators or volunteers in dealing with various categories of poor spectator behaviour. These protocols and procedures should focus particularly on clarifying the role of sport officials (i.e. referees, umpires, judges) in controlling spectator behaviour and should be developed in light of the rights, responsibilities and powers conferred to sport officials in sport-specific rules of competition.

Post incident strategies:

- Clarifying who their members are and what jurisdictional powers they have over their various categories of members.
- Applying set penalties for player abuse of officials as a deterrent to poor spectator behaviour.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – SSO Interview Schedule

Appendix 2 – SSO self administered survey explanatory letter

Appendix 3 – SSO self administered survey

Appendix 4 – Focus group interview information sheet

Appendix 5 – Focus group consent form

Appendix 6 – Focus group participant profile sheet

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Appendix 1 – SSO Interview Schedule

Explain project and team members

- Lit review
- SSA interviews
- SSA survey
- Club level case studies

Explain synergy with VicSport project

Could you define poor spectator behaviour?

Could you define good spectator behaviour?

Are you happy to comment on a draft definition we will be developing for circulation?

What is the extent and nature of the problem?

How does the SSO become aware of the problem? (reports, tribunals, incident reports, complaints, individual contacts)

Who has responsibility for state level policies and strategies for managing poor spectator behaviour?

What are the state level policies and strategies for managing poor spectator behaviour that have been implemented or about to be developed?

How effective are these policies and strategies in managing poor spectator behaviour?

Can you provide us with club or venue contact details of examples of poor and good spectator behaviour? (2 poor, 2 good, at least one in rural)

Documents to collect (2 copies):

- Statement of Purpose and Rules
- By-laws
- Relevant policies and guidelines
- Strategies & Procedures used to improve spectator behaviour
- Anything that may be relevant to the jurisdiction and control of spectators

Appendix 2 – SSO self administered survey explanatory letter

Sport and Recreation Victoria Poor spectator behaviour in sport project

Information sheet to accompany the Questionnaire for Victorian State Sporting Organisations

The Project

This research project is being conducted by researchers from La Trobe University and Victoria University on behalf of Sport and Recreation Victoria, a division of the Department for Victorian Communities. The project is funded by the Department for Victorian Communities and the Australian Sports Commission.

The project is seeking to investigate spectator behaviour that impacts on sport and recreation participation, volunteering and officiating. Addressing poor spectator behaviour should lead to an increase in organised sport and recreation participation, volunteering and officiating. While government and sport industry initiatives currently incorporate sound principles about the behaviours expected of spectators, administrators, coaches, officials, parents and participants, these principles are not specifically informed by research. The aim of this project is to identify the extent, type and incidence of poor spectator behaviour at the community level; the circumstances in which it occurs; the characteristics of the perpetrators, and the factors and processes which might minimise such behaviour.

What we are doing?

We are asking that the individual in your organisation most familiar with spectator behaviour issues should complete this survey. This may be the senior staff member or a staff member / volunteer who fills the role of managing the tribunal process or complaints regarding spectator behaviour within your organisation. In some cases it may be appropriate that a small group of senior staff or volunteers complete the survey as a group. The survey should take about 20 minutes to complete.

The identity of your organisation will be known only to the researchers and will not be identified in any documents or publications or divulged in any communication with the Department for Victorian Communities. You have the right to withdraw from active participation in this project at anytime and, further, to demand that data arising from your participation are not used in the research project provided that this right is exercised within four weeks of the completion of your participation in the project. You are asked to notify the investigator by letter, e-mail or telephone that you wish to withdraw your consent for your data to be used in this research project. Data will be retained for five years and will remain confidential except where disclosure is required or permitted by law. Thank you for your assistance with this research project.

If you have any complaints or queries that the investigator has not been able to answer to your satisfaction, you may contact the Ethics Liaison Officer, Human Ethics Committee, La Trobe University, Victoria, 3086, (ph: 03 9479 1443, e-mail: humanethics@latrobe.edu.au).

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Matthew.nicholson@vu.edu.au

Appendix 3 – SSO self administered survey

Sport and Recreation Victoria

Poor spectator behaviour in sport project

Survey for Victorian State Sporting Organisations

This research project is being conducted by researchers from La Trobe University and Victoria University on behalf of Sport and Recreation Victoria, a division of the Department for Victorian Communities. The project is funded by the Department for Victorian Communities and the Australian Sports Commission.

The project involves identifying the incidence of poor spectator behaviour in Victorian sport. This survey is designed to collect this information.

All of the SSAs in Victoria are invited to complete this survey.

Instructions

- The individual in your organisation most familiar with spectator behaviour issues should complete this survey, such as the Board member, senior staff person or volunteer who manages the tribunal or complaints process/es. A small number of senior staff or volunteers may complete the survey as a group.
- For the purposes of this survey the term spectators includes not only supporters and parents, but also 'bench' players, coaches, team, club or league officials, venue staff and general public within view of the field of play.
- Please respond to all sections of the survey and try not to leave any questions unanswered.
- If you would like to add comments to clarify any of your responses please feel free to do so on the last page of the survey.
- Please return your completed survey by **Friday 23rd October 2004**.

Returning your completed survey

Return your completed survey in the reply paid envelope provided. If the reply paid envelope has been misplaced, please mail your completed survey to the address below.

Louise Francis

School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management

La Trobe University Victoria 3086

Telephone: 9479 1080

Code for data collection purposes and follow up mailout only : _____

Section A: Sport data

1. How would you describe your sport? (**tick** one box)
 - ₁ Involves structured physical contact (i.e. players can physically tackle one another)
 - ₂ Players may come into contact during the course of the game
 - ₃ Strictly no physical contact allowed

2. How would you describe your sport? (**tick** one box)
 - ₁ Team based
 - ₂ Individual participation

3. How would you describe your sport? (**tick** one box)
 - ₁ Majority of participants are female
 - ₂ Majority of participants are males
 - ₃ Participants are roughly equal male and female

4. Does your organisation record details of poor spectator behaviour incidents at the **State level** office in your sport?
 - ₁ Yes
 - ₂ No – if no proceed to question 6.

5. Of the following types of spectator behaviour, which ones are reported to the **State level** office in your sport and how many of these were reported in the last 12 months?

Tick if reported	Number of Incidents	Type of spectator behaviour
<input type="checkbox"/>		Mild verbal abuse = ‘Banter’, comments perhaps humorous, does not involve foul language.
<input type="checkbox"/>		Moderate verbal abuse = Derogatory or critical comments of others performance, appearance or manner.
<input type="checkbox"/>		Severe verbal abuse = Highly offensive comments, including foul language and directed towards a players’, official’s or coaches’ performance, appearance or manner, or made towards other spectators
<input type="checkbox"/>		Verbal threats = Comments directed at a person in a threatening manner (e.g., “I’m gonna get you!” or “I know where you live!”).
<input type="checkbox"/>		Vandalism = Wilful acts of damage to sporting equipment, the playing area, spectator facilities or surrounding areas of a sporting venue.
<input type="checkbox"/>		Invasion of the playing arena = this includes spectators encroaching on the field of play (e.g., stepping onto a playing area to abuse an official or enter a melee of players).
<input type="checkbox"/>		Intimidation = confronting others in a threatening manner (e.g., adults “standing over” younger officials, or groups of spectators pressuring others through weight in numbers.
<input type="checkbox"/>		Aggression or violence = An act of a physical nature directed towards another person (e.g., hitting, kicking, spitting towards, throwing an object, pushing or tripping).

6. If these behaviours are not reported to the State Office

a) Who are they reported to?.....

.....

b) Who deals with them? (please specify).....

.....

7. What disciplinary processes does your sport have in place to deal with poor spectator behaviour? (e.g. club committee hearing, regional/local association tribunal, state tribunal, etc.?) (please specify)

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

8. Are incidents of poor spectator behaviour more likely to occur at junior or senior/adult events or games?

Please respond to each type of spectator behaviour by circling the number that most closely reflects where the poor spectator behaviour occurs.

	More likely to occur at adult games or events	More likely to occur at junior games/events	As likely to occur at adult games/events as at junior games/events
Mild verbal abuse	1	2	3
Moderate verbal abuse	1	2	3
Severe verbal abuse	1	2	3
Verbal threats	1	2	3
Vandalism	1	2	3
Invasion of the playing arena	1	2	3
Intimidation	1	2	3
Aggression or violence	1	2	3

Section B: Perceptions about the incidence of poor spectator behaviour

Please respond to each item by **circling** the number that most closely represents how frequently, or if at all, these types of spectator behaviour occur in your sport. It is important to this project that you respond to every item.

Never = never occurs

Rarely = occurs a few times per year across Victoria

Sometimes = occurs a few times per month across Victoria

Often = occurs each week across Victoria

Always = occurs at most games or events across Victoria

Item	Never	Rarely	Some times	Often	Always
6. Mild verbal abuse = 'Banter', comments perhaps humorous, does not involve foul language.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Moderate verbal abuse = Derogatory or critical comments of others performance, appearance or manner.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Severe verbal abuse = Highly offensive comments (including foul language) directed at others performance, appearance or manner.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Verbal threats = Comments directed at a person in a threatening manner (e.g. "I'm gonna get you!" or "I know where you live!").	1	2	3	4	5
10. Vandalism = Wilful acts of damage to sporting equipment, the playing area, spectator facilities or surrounding areas of a sporting venue.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Invasion of the playing arena = this includes spectators encroaching on the field of play (e.g. stepping onto a playing area to abuse an official or enter a melee of players).	1	2	3	4	5
12. Intimidation = confronting others in a threatening manner (e.g. adults "standing over" younger officials, or groups of spectators pressuring others through weight of numbers.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Aggression or violence = An act of a physical nature directed towards another person (e.g. hitting, kicking, spitting towards, throwing an object, pushing or tripping).	1	2	3	4	5

Section C: Attitudes about the acceptance of poor spectator behaviour in your sport

Please respond to each item by **circling** the number that most closely represents the attitude of your sport to various types of spectator behaviour. There are no right or wrong answers. It is important to this project that you respond to every item.

A score of one (1) would mean the behaviour should be tolerated all the time

A score of ten (10) would mean the behaviour should not be tolerated under any circumstances

Item	Completely Acceptable	Completely Unacceptable
14. Mild verbal abuse = ‘Banter’, comments perhaps humorous, does not involve foul language.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
15. Moderate verbal abuse = Derogatory or critical comments of others performance, appearance or manner.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
16. Severe verbal abuse = Highly offensive comments (including foul language) directed at others performance, appearance or manner.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
17. Verbal threats = Comments directed at a person in a threatening manner (e.g., “I’m gonna get you!” or “I know where you live!”).	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
18. Vandalism = Wilful acts of damage to sporting equipment, the playing area, spectator facilities or surrounding areas of a sporting venue.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
19. Invasion of the playing arena = this includes spectators encroaching on the field of play (e.g., stepping onto a playing area to abuse an official or enter a melee of players).	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
20. Intimidation = confronting others in a threatening manner (e.g., adults “standing over” younger officials, or groups of spectators pressuring others through weight in numbers.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
21. Aggression or violence = An act of a physical nature directed towards another person (e.g., hitting, kicking, spitting towards, throwing an object, pushing or tripping).	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

Section D: Spectator characteristics

22. How often do each of the following types of spectator engage in *mild verbal abuse* ('Banter', comments perhaps humorous, does not involve foul language) in your sport? (**circle** one number for each type of spectator).

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Bench Players	1	2	3	4	5
Coaches	1	2	3	4	5
Team managers	1	2	3	4	5
Volunteer administrators	1	2	3	4	5
General supporters	1	2	3	4	5
Officials	1	2	3	4	5
Parents or guardians watching children	1	2	3	4	5
Others (please specify)	1	2	3	4	5

23. How often do each of the following types of spectator engage in *moderate verbal abuse* (derogatory or critical comments of others performance, appearance or manner) in your sport? (**circle** one number for each type of spectator).

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Bench Players	1	2	3	4	5
Coaches	1	2	3	4	5
Team managers	1	2	3	4	5
Volunteer administrators	1	2	3	4	5
General supporters	1	2	3	4	5
Officials	1	2	3	4	5
Parents or guardians watching children	1	2	3	4	5
Others (please specify)	1	2	3	4	5

24. How often do each of the following types of spectator engage in *severe verbal abuse* (highly offensive comments (including foul language) directed at others performance, appearance or manner) in your sport? (**circle** one number for each type of spectator).

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Bench Players	1	2	3	4	5
Coaches	1	2	3	4	5
Team managers	1	2	3	4	5
Volunteer administrators	1	2	3	4	5
General supporters	1	2	3	4	5
Officials	1	2	3	4	5
Parents or guardians watching children	1	2	3	4	5
Others (please specify)	1	2	3	4	5

25. How often do each of the following types of spectator engage in *verbal threats* (comments directed at a person in a threatening manner) in your sport? (**circle** one number for each type of spectator).

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Bench Players	1	2	3	4	5
Coaches	1	2	3	4	5
Team managers	1	2	3	4	5
Volunteer administrators	1	2	3	4	5
General supporters	1	2	3	4	5
Officials	1	2	3	4	5
Parents or guardians watching children	1	2	3	4	5
Others (please specify)	1	2	3	4	5

26. How often do each of the following types of spectator engage in *vandalism* (wilful acts of damage to sporting equipment, the playing area, spectator facilities or surrounding areas of a sporting venue) in your sport? (**circle** one number for each type of spectator).

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Bench Players	1	2	3	4	5
Coaches	1	2	3	4	5
Team managers	1	2	3	4	5
Volunteer administrators	1	2	3	4	5
General supporters	1	2	3	4	5
Officials	1	2	3	4	5
Parents or guardians watching children	1	2	3	4	5
Others (please specify)	1	2	3	4	5

27. How often do each of the following types of spectator *invade the playing arena* (this includes spectators encroaching on the field of play (e.g., stepping onto a playing area to abuse an official or enter a melee of players) in your sport? (**circle** one number for each type of spectator).

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Bench Players	1	2	3	4	5
Coaches	1	2	3	4	5
Team managers	1	2	3	4	5
Volunteer administrators	1	2	3	4	5
General supporters	1	2	3	4	5
Officials	1	2	3	4	5
Parents or guardians watching children	1	2	3	4	5
Others (please specify)	1	2	3	4	5

28. How often do each of the following types of spectator engage in *intimidation* (confronting others in a threatening manner (e.g., adults “standing over” younger officials, or groups of spectators pressuring others through weight in number) in your sport? (**circle** one number for each type of spectator).

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Bench Players	1	2	3	4	5
Coaches	1	2	3	4	5
Team managers	1	2	3	4	5
Volunteer administrators	1	2	3	4	5
General supporters	1	2	3	4	5
Officials	1	2	3	4	5
Parents or guardians watching children	1	2	3	4	5
Others (please specify)	1	2	3	4	5

29. How often do each of the following types of spectator engage in *aggression or violence* (an act of a physical nature directed towards another person (e.g., hitting, kicking, spitting towards, throwing an object, pushing or tripping) in your sport? (**circle** one number for each type of spectator).

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Bench Players	1	2	3	4	5
Coaches	1	2	3	4	5
Team managers	1	2	3	4	5
Volunteer administrators	1	2	3	4	5
General supporters	1	2	3	4	5
Officials	1	2	3	4	5
Parents or guardians watching children	1	2	3	4	5
Others (please specify)	1	2	3	4	5

30. Are the spectators who behave badly in your sport more likely to be (tick **one** box only)?

- ₁ Male
- ₂ Female
- ₃ Both males and females in roughly equal proportions

31. Compared to five years ago, identify if there has been a change in spectator behaviour? (circle **one** answer for each category of behaviour).

	Better	Same	Worse
Mild verbal abuse			
Moderate verbal abuse			
Severe verbal abuse			
Verbal threats			
Vandalism			
Invasion of the playing arena			
Intimidation			
Aggression or violence			

Appendix 4 – Focus group interview information sheet

Information Sheet for Focus Groups Research into Spectator Behaviour

The Project

This research project is being conducted by researchers from La Trobe University and Victoria University on behalf of Sport and Recreation Victoria, a division of the Department for Victorian Communities. The project is funded by the Department for Victorian Communities and the Australian Sports Commission.

The project is seeking to investigate spectator behaviour that impacts on sport and recreation participation, volunteering and officiating. Addressing poor spectator behaviour should lead to an increase in organised sport and recreation participation, volunteering and officiating. While government and sport industry initiatives currently incorporate sound principles about the behaviours expected of spectators, administrators, coaches, officials, parents and participants, these principles are not specifically informed by research. The aim of this project is to identify the extent, type and incidence of poor spectator behaviour at the community level; the circumstances in which it occurs; the characteristics of the perpetrators, and the factors and processes which might minimise such behaviour.

What we are doing?

The researchers invite volunteers and paid staff in community sport organisations to participate in the project by attending a focus group interview. The researchers will be asking participants (you) to tell us about your experience as a community sport organisation representative or participant. The focus group interview will ask about your experiences of observing and dealing with poor and good spectator behaviour in community level sport. It is important to note that specific incidents of spectator behaviour or individuals involved in any incidents will not be discussed. The discussions will focus on the context within which the behaviour occurs, specifically the environmental, organisational and human factors. You will not be required to talk about any aspect of your experiences in sport about which you do not feel comfortable. Participants are asked to treat the discussions in the focus groups confidential.

You will also be asked at the interview to provide (where available) your organisation's policy on spectator behaviour, any written strategies that have been implemented to address poor spectator behaviour or promote good behaviour.

You have the right to withdraw from active participation in this project at anytime and, further, to demand that data arising from your participation are not used in the research project provided that this right is exercised within four weeks of the completion of your participation in the project. You are asked to notify the investigator by letter, e-mail or telephone that you wish to withdraw your consent for your data to be used in this research project.

The focus group interview should last between 1.5 to 2 hours. With your permission, the focus group interview will be audio-taped so it can be transcribed for later analysis. Data will be retained for five years and will remain confidential except where disclosure is required or permitted by law. Your identity and that of your organisation will be known only to the researchers and will not be identified in any documents or publications or divulged in any communication with the Department for Victorian Communities. You will be asked to complete a consent form that is attached. Thank you for your assistance with this research project.

If you have any complaints or queries that the investigator has not been able to answer to your satisfaction, you may contact the Ethics Liaison Officer, Human Ethics Committee, La Trobe University, Victoria, 3086, (ph: 03 9479 1443, e-mail: humanethics@latrobe.edu.au).

Researcher contact details

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Appendix 5 – Focus group interview consent form

Consent Form for Focus Group Participants
Research into Spectator Behaviour

The Research into Spectator Behaviour project is conducting focus group interviews with members of community sport organisations throughout Victoria. The identities of participants in the project will remain confidential to the researchers. It is important that all focus group participants respect the privacy of all other focus group participants.

I understand that I am not required to participate in this research project if I do not wish to and that I can withdraw from the project at any time without needing to explain my reasons for withdrawing. No loss of benefit will occur as a result of my withdrawal nor will any penalty be incurred. Feedback about the results of the project will be made available to all participants at the discretion of the Department for Victorian Communities.

I have read the information sheet and the consent form. I understand that the project will be carried out as described in the information sheet, a copy of which I have retained. I have had all questions answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the Research into Spectator Behaviour project and give my consent freely.

[] Please indicate with a tick (✓) if you agree to allow yourself to be identified in any publications

[] Please indicate with a tick (✓) if you agree to allow your organization to be identified in any publications.

Signatures:

.....
 Participant

.....
 Date

.....
 Researcher(s)

.....
 Date

FG ID	
CIs	

Appendix 6 – Focus group interview participant profile sheet

**Research into Spectator Behaviour
Focus group participant information sheet**

- 1) Current position title: _____
- 2) Past positions held: _____
- 3) Age group:
[] 19 or less [] 20-29 [] 30-39 [] 40-49 [] 50-59 [] 60+
- 4) Gender: [] Male [] Female
- 5) Current occupation: _____
or retired from occupation: _____
- 6) Number of years as (if applicable)
- Player: _____ years
 - Administrator: _____ years
 - Referee, umpire, judge or match official: _____ years
 - Coach: _____ years
 - Other (specify) _____ : _____ years
- 7) Qualifications related to sport (eg., level 1 coach):

FG ID	
-------	--

Appendix 7 – Focus group interview schedule

Spectator Behaviour Focus Group Questions

Set up checklist

- Tape recorder with multi directional microphone
- Tapes and spare batteries
- Information sheets (10)
- Consent forms (10)
- Background profile sheets (10)
- Refreshments
- Name tags
- Small gifts (10)
- Business cards

Project background

- Distribute information sheets
- Collect signed consent forms and participant background sheets
- Explain project and the format for the focus group

Focus group context

1. Could you tell us a little about the history and development of the club/venue/league/association?
2. How many teams/clubs play here? Are they juniors and/or seniors? How many competition events (games) per week?

Description of spectator behaviour

3. How would you describe the behaviour of spectators here?
4. What kinds of spectator behaviour are unacceptable, inappropriate or not tolerated at this club/venue/league/association? (foul language, verbal abuse, criticism of opposition players, general unsporting behaviour, threats of physical abuse, actual physical abuse, vandalism)
5. How often do these kinds of behaviour occur?
6. Is there any spectator behaviour that is tolerated, but that you would classify as poor or bad spectator behaviour?
7. How often does this occur?
8. What group of spectators are involved – players, coaches, parents, club officials, general public?
9. Do you think that the incidence of poor or bad spectator behaviour has increased or decreased over the last 5-10 years?
10. Do you think that the extent or level of poor or bad spectator behaviour has increased or decreased over the last 5-10 years?

Contextual factors

11. Why do you think spectators behave in this way?

- Environmental (venue, geography, club specific, game incidents)
- Human (social conditions, motivations, connections with players)
- Organisational (education, signage, alcohol serving, culture)

12. Why has the incidence or level of poor spectator behaviour increased or decreased?

13. What measures has the club/venue/association put in place to decrease the incidence or level of poor or bad spectator behaviour?

14. Do you think these measures have been effective?

15. How do you think that spectator behaviour could be improved at this club/venue/league/association?

16. Is there anything else anyone would like to add that we have not covered regarding poor spectator behaviour?

Conclusion

- Thank everyone for their participation and distribute gifts
- Feedback via a project summary report to FG contact person

Appendix 8 – Data analysis tables**Differences in mean scores of perceptions of spectator behaviour for team and individual sports**

	Team sports n= 20		Individual sports n= 25		T test	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	(t)	Sig (p)
Mild verbal abuse	3.11	.88	2.36	.99	2.59	.013*
Moderate verbal abuse	2.63	1.01	2.00	.82	2.29	.027*
Severe verbal abuse	2.37	.96	1.60	.76	2.97	.005*
Verbal threats	1.95	.91	1.44	.58	2.25	.030*
Vandalism	1.47	.61	1.60	.65	-.657	.514
Invasion of the playing arena	1.74	.65	1.36	.64	1.92	.062
Intimidation	1.89	.99	1.72	.84	.63	.532
Aggression or violence	1.84	.89	1.36	.57	2.18	.035*

* p<.05

Differences in mean rank scores of perceptions of spectator behaviour for level of physical contact

	Some contact n= 17	Purposeful contact n=6	No contact n= 22	Kruskal wallis	Sig (p)
	Mean rank	Mean rank	Mean rank	(H)	
Mild verbal abuse	29.44	20.25	18.07	8.08	.018*
Moderate verbal abuse	28.63	24.42	17.52	7.98	.019*
Severe verbal abuse	28.06	22.00	18.59	5.80	.055
Verbal threats	28.03	22.75	18.41	6.30	.043*
Vandalism	23.56	18.83	22.73	.77	.681
Invasion of the playing arena	29.78	24.58	16.64	12.72	.002*
Intimidation	30.22	16.17	18.61	10.88	.004*
Aggression or violence	29.38	19.50	18.32	9.24	.010*

* p<.05

Differences in mean rank scores of perceptions of spectator behaviour for gender

	Female n=6	Male n= 24	Mixed n= 15	Kruskal wallis	
	Mean rank	Mean rank	Mean rank	(H)	Sig (p)
Mild verbal abuse	26.17	22.29	21.29	.671	.715
Moderate verbal abuse	25.58	23.17	20.04	1.044	.593
Severe verbal abuse	22.17	23.19	21.46	.188	.910
Verbal threats	25.92	22.08	21.75	.602	.740
Vandalism	18.83	24.42	20.79	1.613	.446
Invasion of the playing arena	23.00	22.52	22.25	.019	.991
Intimidation	31.17	21.75	20.07	3.898	.142
Aggression or violence	27.50	23.17	19.21	2.410	.300
