

Episode 41: Gymnastics Victoria – Gymnastics for Everybody



<http://theinclusionclub.com/2013/gymnasticsvic/>

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Peter Downs: Hello everybody, it's Peter Downs here from The Inclusion Club. I have Kerry Tavrou with me from Gymnastics Victoria here. Hi, how you are going Kerry?

Kerry Tavrou: I am going very well, thank you.

Peter: Yeah, good we got to talk to Kerry about the Gymnastics For Everybody program, which you can read about in this episode. But it's a good chance to catch-up with Kerry and get it straight from the horse's mouth, so to speak, about what they do down in Victoria and through gymnastics generally through

the Gymnastics for Everybody program. Now first Kerry can you tell me just a little bit about your role with Gymnastics Victoria?

Kerry: Sure. So my role — I am the Inclusion Coordinator and I basically support our clubs affiliated with Gymnastics Victoria, which is 104 clubs across the state, to be more inclusive of all people. My role is funded through VicHealth and where our focus is at the moment is disability.

Peter: Yeah, that's great Kerry. As we mentioned, Gymnastics Victoria does some great work in terms of the Gymnastics For Everybody program down there. One of the messages in the video that people will also be able to see in this episode is that inclusive coaching is just good coaching. Now I love that message and I am sure you have some good coaches there already.

But have you done anything extra at all? Do you have meetings, do you have any extra kind of training that you provided to your coaches particularly when you are talking about inclusion of people with disabilities?

Kerry: Yeah. Our inclusive training—there's a lot of depth. For example, if you're a coach coming into gymnastics anywhere across the country, you do an online training course, which is called Managing Inclusion in Gymnastics, and you go through that training course which gives you the basics about what it is to be an inclusive coach. And it just puts it on the radar for any new coach. I have recently been supporting Gymnastics Australia to update that resource. Gymnastics Victoria also created an inclusion awareness training module.

This module is bit of a practical module where we go out to clubs and we support coaches, administration, committee members, and basically give them the education and that message that inclusive coaching is just good coaching. And it doesn't matter who it is you're coaching, you just need to look the best way they learn and just be creative in working out what supports they need to learn a particular task.

Peter: Yeah, I remember the Managing Inclusion in Gymnastics—the MIG Program—because I was little bit involved with that in the early days.

Kerry: Yes.

Peter: That's quite a significant online resource you have there.

Kerry: Yeah, yeah it is a good resource and it is good to have that flagged with all coaches no matter where they coming from, that inclusion is important to any coach.

Peter: Yeah.

Kerry: We also have other resources that we have to support our clubs such as *Language is Important* document, just speaking about the importance of inclusive language. We also have *How to Get the Most Out of Your Gymnasts*, which is a bit of a factsheet about any gymnasts, doesn't have to be a person with a disability. They could be from anywhere, which just tells you...you can gather information about how they learn, what kind of supports they need, and basically you can get the most out of your gymnasts.

Peter: That's great, maybe we can get some links and some downloads of some of those resources here for people to have a look at. That will be great.

Kerry: Yeah, definitely. We also have the GymAbility Gym Mix, which is a resource that was developed a few years ago, which is quite a heavy book on how to coach inclusively, and it's got practical examples. We are also developing leader clubs within Victoria. So the idea is that we develop leader clubs in each of the metropolitan areas. So east, north, south, and west as well as our regional areas.

And these clubs will act as hubs—inclusive hubs—and support clubs around them. So if a clubs wants to become more inclusive they can go to that inclusive club, watch a few classes, gets some tips off coaches and go from there.

Peter: Fantastic, okay. Now gymnastics is a real diverse sport as you were just talking about with all the different disciplines and everything. Now you seem to have created a really good inclusive culture, not just in your club but almost in the whole sport around inclusion. But how did this happen? I am interested to see how that kind of evolved over time.

Kerry: Yeah, I think within the gymnastics community, there is lot of different types of cultures. Some gymnastics clubs are focused on elite sort of level and other gymnastics clubs are really community focused. Now I've found working with most of our clubs, that they are all open to becoming more inclusive and they're a real team and they are happy to support each other, even if it's kids in a class or coaches. They are all supportive of

everybody. They know that to get the most out of your gymnasts, you need to provide a good environment.

So I have been really lucky coming into this sport because it is a really inclusive and open community. And I think the supports are there from Gymnastics Victoria or Gymnastics Australia to foster that inclusive kind of community.

Peter: Yeah, and it helps doesn't it? When it's not just about people with disabilities we're talking about here, it's all sorts of diverse groups that are involved with the Gymnastics For Everyone program within there.

Kerry: Yes.

Peter: And that really helps overall with that culture of inclusion that you have.

Kerry: Yeah, absolutely. That's it. The whole point of having gymnastics for everybody is it is an explanation of what we are trying to achieve. Even though my role is targeting participants with a disability, I am continuously looking at ways to get anybody involved, whether they are from a CALD background or an indigenous background—any minority group really. We're just supporting basically everyone to get involved because it is such a great support for your health.

Peter: It's an interesting thing isn't it? If you separated out your disability program from that then you wouldn't be being inclusive at all. So the overall inclusive nature of what you do really helps a lot.

Kerry: Absolutely, yeah definitely. It is important to continually think of the bigger picture, because I think inclusive work is—the basic foundation of it is the same. It doesn't matter who you're trying to include, it's all the same really. So this kind of supports you, if I am developing a resource specifically for people with a disability, it's easy to just change the wording in opening up to everybody and that's what we try to do.

Peter: Yeah, fantastic. And you also produce some very cool resources, some very nice resources in your posters; the video as well is very well produced. The quality is very very good. Do you think that also makes a difference in promoting what you do? The quality of how you promote is really adding to that as well?

Kerry: Yeah, definitely. When we develop the poster, flier, and DVD

series, we did want a professional look to this campaign because it showed that we are serious about including participants with a disability. So it did cost a bit more money but I think the message has really been sent far and wide. I am getting calls all the time from clubs, from schools, from individuals who are interested in getting involved. So the campaign has been really successful.

Peter: I think that's a real big lesson for a lot of organisations across the world really, because you're the standard of the resources that you produced to promote your message and your program. They are equal to any other program that gymnastics do. The quality is just the same.

Kerry: Absolutely. We have seen such a good response and it's actually been a fantastic way for us to engage our clubs, having individuals contact us and then we take those individual to a club and support them to be included within that environment. And then it also gives us a chance to educate our coaches within that club and develop that club to be more inclusive. So everything has been driven by a needs basis which has been good.

Peter: Yeah, excellent. Well we could have a chat all day, Kerry but there's a lot more information that I'll include about the work that you do here, which I think is really kind of a model for lot of other clubs not just in Australia but worldwide to have a look at. So I encourage people who are looking at this episode to really have a look at the resources that you have and the approach that you have got to everything you do down there. But I will cut it off there as a short little interview. So thank you very much for your time, Kerry, really appreciate it and keep up the great work.

Kerry: Thanks.

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