

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Committee, ATSIA \(REPS\);](#)
Date: Friday, 26 October 2012 4:44:31 PM

Dear Dr Dacre

Herewith is my submission to the Inquiry into the contribution of sport to Indigenous wellbeing and mentoring.

My submission is made on the basis of 25 years of academic research into sport as a social and cultural institution and practice (for an overview see my webpage listed in the signature below). My published work includes investigations into race and sport and Aborigines in Australian sport.

Research emanating from nearly every academic discipline—economics, education, history, pedagogy, psychology, psychiatry, social and preventative medicine, sociology and sports studies—reports positive relationships between sport and community well-being. Many of these studies draw attention to the role of sport in fostering individual and community identity as a foundation stone for community well-being. In short, the evidence is unequivocal: sport—as an institution, practice, set of lores, culture—nurtures identity at both the individual and collective (e.g., community, town, regional, provincial, national) levels.

This does not mean that there have not been academic and intellectual criticisms of this argument. However, I think that the Inquiry should be made aware of the concerns that underpin those criticisms and why these concerns should be disregarded in favour of programmes and inventions that encourage sport as a social strategy for community well-being.

There has been a longstanding view among activists, especially

African-American activists in the United States, that black communities have over invested in sport and its purported benefits, and that this overinvestment has inadvertently retarded social progress and mobility. These critics argue that governments have a moral obligation to invest in more substantive areas such as secondary, tertiary and trade school education and business opportunities. In an ideal world this is probably true. However, the reality of black and Indigenous alienation and disempowerment has become so desperate over the past 25 years that one time critics now agree that governments should encourage black and Indigenous individuals and communities to pursue any potentially useful activity—even sport.

In a related sense, critics argue that sport is ephemeral and temporary and thus unsubstantial. Again this is undoubtedly true if one focuses solely on sport as a dramatic cultural practice centered on the final result. However, the social structures and institutions that sport encourages—construction and management of sporting (and physical activity) centers and venues, event planning, media reporting on and presentations of sport, sporting administration and organisation, sports instruction, training and development programmes, sporting celebrations in the form of museums, documentaries and films—are far more permanent and enduring, and ultimately identity nurturing, than the transitory moment of the result of the game.

I look forward to seeing the recommendations of the Inquiry which I am confident will reinforce the large body of academic literature across many disciplines that supports the contribution of sport to Indigenous wellbeing and mentoring.

Yours sincerely

Doug Booth

Professor Douglas Booth
Dean, School of Physical Education
University of Otago
Dunedin
New Zealand