

Sport as a vehicle to Close the Gap

- 2.1 The National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 2008, commits all governments to the following six Close the Gap targets to address the disadvantage faced by Indigenous Australians:
- to close the life-expectancy gap within a generation
 - to halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade
 - to ensure access to early childhood education for all Indigenous four years olds in remote communities within five years
 - to halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for children within a decade
 - to halve the gap in Indigenous Year 12 achievement by 2020, and
 - to halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade.
- 2.2 The NIRA identifies seven action areas called 'building blocks', these being early childhood schooling, health, economic participation, healthy homes, safe communities, governance and leadership.¹ The NIRA is supported by an investment of \$4.6 billion through a series of Indigenous-specific and mainstream National Partnership Agreements.²

1 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), Closing the Gap: Targets and building blocks, <www.fahcsia.gov.au/our-responsibilities/indigenous-australians/programs-services/closing-the-gap/closing-the-gap-targets-and-building-blocks> accessed 20 March 2013.

2 FaHCSIA, *Submission 42*, p. 1.

- 2.3 The Prime Minister's Closing the Gap Report 2013 acknowledged the importance of the Indigenous sports programs to Closing the Gap through its contribution to the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Australians.³
- 2.4 Many participants in the inquiry recognised that sport is a powerful vehicle for engaging Indigenous Australians in positive activities which lead to positive non-sport outcomes such as education, employment, health and wellbeing. The Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport (DRALGAS) submitted that sport and active recreation have indirect benefits under Closing the Gap building blocks, including:
- health - by encouraging a healthier lifestyle that includes physical activity
 - economic participation - through employment opportunities for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people such as sport and recreation officers
 - safe communities - by providing an alternative to anti-social behaviour, and
 - governance and leadership - by funding initiatives to build capacity of Indigenous communities to deliver sport and recreation activities independently.
- 2.5 Mr Matt Davies from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) spoke about sport participation as a 'very powerful vehicle for engaging communities in positive activities'. Outcomes of DEEWR programs are not sport focused, rather they use sport as a mechanism to engage and build positive education and employment outcomes.⁴
- 2.6 The Heart Foundation pointed to the health benefits to Indigenous Australians of physical activity among Indigenous Australians, including a reduction in risk for chronic disease, coronary heart disease and stroke, bowel and breast cancer, diabetes and depression.⁵
- 2.7 Swimming Australia submitted that swimming activities greatly assist in overcoming Indigenous disadvantage, including reducing illness and hearing related health issues:
- In some communities as many as 70 per cent of children have been found to have skin sores, at any one time. Impaired hearing, a

3 Closing the Gap: Prime Minister's Report 2013 <www.fahcsia.gov.au/our-responsibilities/indigenous-australians/programs-services/closing-the-gap/closing-the-gap-prime-ministers-report-2013> accessed 22 April 2013.

4 M Davies, DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 7 February 2013, p. 1.

5 Heart Foundation, *Submission 58*, pp. 1-2.

symptom of glue ear, can seriously affect performance at school, and social circumstances. Between 14 and 67 per cent has some degree of hearing loss.

Swimming pool use in remote communities has been shown to reduce the prevalence of hearing loss and skin sores and other infections, which can result in long-term benefits through reduction in chronic disease burden as well as improved educational and social outcomes.⁶

- 2.8 Dr Bruce Hearn Mackinnon spoke about his observations in Central Australian communities of the ability of sport, particularly Australian Rules Football, to activate people and potentially enhance closing the gap:

Therefore it just strikes me that if we are looking at how to close the gaps and all the other targets governments and society talks about, we should be building on an activity which already has the passion and interest of the communities. This is not just in terms of participation in playing football. I see sports as being an opportunity to be leveraged in broader capacity building. Sporting teams need administrators, coaches, physios, bus drivers, cooks, timekeepers. Using sport as a model, I can see it as having the opportunity to become the centre for growth in community development.⁷

- 2.9 Mrs Fiona Pelling from North Queensland Cowboys described how rugby league clubs work with government towards closing the gap:

The contribution of Indigenous sporting programs and the principal contribution of our programs to the Closing the Gap targets is in engaging Indigenous young people and their families in those activities which directly influence the Closing the Gap target, education, employment and healthy lifestyles. We are able to do this because Rugby League is probably the highest-profile sport in North Queensland, including in most Indigenous communities. Indigenous legends within the Cowboys such as Johnathan Thurston and Matthew Bowen have a very real role model status amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the region and nationally. We have a deliberate commitment to engage Indigenous young people and their families, and we employ skilled staff to achieve that.⁸

6 Swimming Australia, *Submission 8*, p. 2.

7 B Hearn Mackinnon, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 22 November 2012, p. 4.

8 F Pelling, North Queensland Cowboys, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 December 2012, p. 4.

- 2.10 Ms Trish Crews from National Rugby League spoke about the power of sport to engage children in other activities that are not necessarily about playing the game:

Our reading program is a really good example of that. We have all got kids and nieces and nephews and we all know lots of little kids out there who really do not like reading; however, if you can combine reading with rugby league, all of a sudden they are interested. They want to read about their heroes. They want to read about the games they see on TV. If you can provide curriculum based and appropriate reading levels based around the sport – and we have research behind this now – it does engage reluctant readers, particularly boys. It is the same with maths; it is the same with health.⁹

- 2.11 Mr Matthew Francis from Titans 4 Tomorrow stated that it is important to the club to make the distinction between the social outcomes made from government funding rather than the sport outcomes:

And we are very committed to what we are funded for, and that is those employment, education and training outcomes. So we are not using that funding to promote participation in sport per se. That might be a welcome by-product, but our key focus, and what the government is funding, is to increase the retention of kids at school and to provide them with a career pathway once they complete school. So the government dollars are spent where the government has asked us to spend them. That is a very important distinction for us to make.¹⁰

- 2.12 Left-field Business Solutions referred to the need for governments to clearly articulate what role sport plays in non-sport outcomes:

Critical to the use of sport as a vehicle to achieve non-sport outcomes is the development and design of programs and services that clearly identify what role sport plays. This is critical because sport is neither a panacea nor a silver bullet that will achieve holistic outcomes.¹¹

- 2.13 Further, Left-field Business Solutions stated that it is unrealistic to expect the sports industry to deliver non-sport outcomes in isolation to its core business to achieve quality sport outcomes, including increases in participation and improved high performance results. Therefore, partnerships between the sports industry and service providers of health,
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9 T Crews, National Rugby League, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 21 November 2012, pp.13-14.

10 M Francis, Titans 4 Tomorrow, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 December 2012, p. 8.

11 Left-field Business Solutions, *Submission 55*, p. 1.

education, employment, social wellbeing and justice should be mandatory.¹²

Commonwealth Government sport initiatives

- 2.14 Sports policy has moved across Commonwealth Government portfolios numerous times in the last ten years. From 2004 to 2007, administrative responsibility for sport rested with the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. The Department of Health and Ageing administered sport from 2007 to October 2010, when the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet took over responsibility. The Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport has been responsible for sport since December 2011.¹³
- 2.15 Indigenous sports programs are funded through a number of Commonwealth agencies including:
- Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport
 - Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
 - Department of Health and Ageing, and
 - Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.
- 2.16 The state and territory governments provide funds to Indigenous sports programs and a large body of the evidence received by the Committee refers to these programs. The Committee has chosen to focus its discussion in this chapter on Commonwealth Government programs and the essential partnerships and coordination required between all levels of government and other stakeholders to achieve positive outcomes for Indigenous people.

Department of Regional Australia, Local Government and Sport

- 2.17 Commonwealth responsibility for sport currently lies with the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government and Sport (DRALGAS). Within DRALGAS, the Office for Sport is responsible for two Indigenous sports programs:
- the Indigenous Sports and Recreation Program (ISARP), and
 - the Indigenous Sport Development Officers Program (ISDOP).

12 Left-field Business Solutions, *Submission 55*, p. 1.

13 DRALGAS, *Submission 51*, p. 3.

Indigenous Sports and Recreation Program

- 2.18 The ISARP supports community participation in sport and recreation activities that help to improve the health and physical wellbeing of Indigenous Australians and those that contribute to broader social benefits for participants and their communities.
- 2.19 Prior to 2012, funding under ISARP was granted on an annual basis. This was to allow funding to be provided to the best proposals around Australia from year to year. However, this arrangement created too much uncertainty, since it was mostly ongoing activities or annual events that were funded. The annual funding round was also an administrative burden for recipients and the Office for Sport. Consequently, since 2012, most funding agreements have been approved for three years.¹⁴
- 2.20 The 2012-13 funding round of the ISARP resulted in 123 activities being approved for funding. The majority of funding agreements will run for three years to the end of 2014-15. The Office for Sport received 219 applications seeking funds totalling \$41.5 million for 2012-13. Recipients of funding are mostly community organisations, with some sporting organisations and local and state governments also receiving funding.¹⁵
- 2.21 The ISARP aims to support projects encouraging broad involvement and projects which involve groups that may not typically be considered prime candidates for sport and physical activity programs. The guidelines for 2013-14 grants encourage the submission of projects that focus on increasing involvement by Indigenous females through participation in the activities and also in other roles, such as coaches and administrators.
- 2.22 Some ISARP projects are spread across large areas of Australia, such as Athletics Australia's Athletics for the Outback and the Indigenous Golf Association of Victoria's 2012 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Golf Championships project. Other programs are directed at specific areas, such as funding to AFL Cape York Limited (Qld), South Australian National Football League and Australian Football League (AFL) (Victoria) Limited.
- 2.23 Activities funded by ISARP grants in recent years have included athletics, Australian rules football, basketball, boxing, golf, hockey, lacrosse, netball, rugby league, rugby union, soccer, softball, surf lifesaving, surfing, swimming and tennis.¹⁶

14 DRALGAS, *Submission 51*, pp. 10-11.

15 DRALGAS, *Submission 51*, pp. 11 & 24.

16 DRALGAS, *Submission 51.1*, pp. 7-10.

Indigenous Sport Development Officers

- 2.24 There are 50 Indigenous Sport Development Officers (ISDOs) nationally. The Office for Sport funds 28 of these ISDOs dispersed around Australia and employed by State and Territory departments of sport and recreation, with the exception of Queensland which elected not to accept Commonwealth funding.¹⁷
- 2.25 However, the Queensland Government is working with 38 Indigenous communities to form Sport and Recreation Reference Groups (SRG) which will act as a coordination point comprised of key stakeholders in the community. The SRG will develop a community sport and recreation plan as the focus of effort for the organisations looking to provide support.¹⁸
- 2.26 The two main objectives of the ISDOs are to:
- increase the active participation of Indigenous Australians in sport and physical recreation, and
 - encourage Indigenous community ownership and management of sport and physical recreation activities, including through skills development.¹⁹
- 2.27 The ISDOs liaise with Indigenous communities in their region to assess sporting needs and priorities and coordinate the delivery of programs, resources and services in partnership with the mainstream sporting industry and the relevant state and territory departments of sport and recreation. The ISDOs develop a range of partnerships between sporting organisations, clubs, Indigenous community organisations, local governments, state and territory government agencies, and schools.²⁰
- 2.28 Much of the work of the ISDOs is focused on building the capacity of others to deliver, rather than directly delivering activities. DRALGAS submitted that community involvement in the coordination and running of activities had improved, however a number of activities continue to rely heavily on ISDOs to provide organisational and management roles for sporting and recreational programs.²¹
- 2.29 Netball Australia commented on the valuable 'brokering role of the Indigenous Sports Development Officers:
- Their aim is to create sustainable programs by focusing on building the sporting capacity of Indigenous Australians. This is

17 DRALGAS, *Submission 51.1*, p. 2.

18 Queensland Government, *Submission 46*, p. 4.

19 DRALGAS, *Submission 51.1*, p. 4.

20 DRALGAS, *Submission 51*, p. 12 & *Submission 51.1*, pp. 4-5.

21 DRALGAS, *Submission 51.1*, p. 6.

achieved through coordinating the delivery of accredited coaching and officiating courses, building links to existing sporting clubs or assisting in the creation of new clubs and where possible, linking individuals to mainstream sporting competitions.²²

- 2.30 However, Netball Australia stated that the linkages between the national sporting organisation and Indigenous Sport Development Officer network had weakened over the previous 18 months, possibly due to a shift to providing general strategic and participation support, rather than a 'brokering' role.²³
- 2.31 Mr Adam Pine from Swimming Australia believed the ISDOs provide a very important link for peak sporting bodies to programs and communities. Mr Pine stated that ISDOs provide an understanding of the issues on the ground within communities which is difficult from the head office in Canberra.²⁴
- 2.32 Professor Colin Tatz believed Indigenous sports officers should be in every Indigenous community and should assist to organise sporting activities and competitions and coordinate funding.²⁵
- 2.33 Feedback to ISDOs from Indigenous communities and organisations and state sporting organisations in 2011-12 indicated 'satisfactory' to 'very satisfactory' results with the performance of ISDOs in coordinating and delivering activities.²⁶

Australian Sports Commission programs

- 2.34 The Australian Sports Commission (ASC), a statutory agency within DRALGAS' portfolio, focuses on getting more Australians participating and excelling in sport. The ASC is responsible for two programs related to promoting sporting activities among Indigenous Australians:
- the Elite Indigenous Travel and Accommodation Assistance Program (EITAAP) assists Indigenous sportspeople and their sponsoring organisation to attend national or international events and competitions, and
 - participation funding grants to national sporting organisations to support participation by Indigenous Australians. A wide variety of sporting organisations receive grants, including Australian Football

22 Netball Australia, *Submission 28*, p. 18.

23 Netball Australia, *Submission 28*, p. 18.

24 A Pine, Swimming Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 December 2012, p. 17.

25 C Tatz, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 21 November 2012, p. 3.

26 DRALGAS, *Submission 51.1*, p. 6.

League (AFL), basketball, cricket, hockey, netball, rugby union, rugby league, surfing, softball, tennis, swimming and touch football.²⁷

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

- 2.35 The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) has a number of programs that use sport and other activities, such as dance and performing arts, to improve educational and employment outcomes for Indigenous youth. DEEWR funds two Indigenous sport programs:
- Sporting Chance, and
 - Learn Earn Legend.
- 2.36 Up to December 2012, DEEWR also funded the No School, No Play program.²⁸
- 2.37 The DEEWR programs contribute to three key Closing the Gap targets:
- to halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for Indigenous children within a decade,
 - to halve the gap for Indigenous students in year 12 equivalent attainment by 2020, and
 - to halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade.
- 2.38 From an educational perspective, the aim is to increase educational engagement so that youth gain a Year 12 or equivalent qualification. From an employment perspective, the focus is on improving participation in education, so that Indigenous youth are skilled, confident and competitive when entering the workforce, and on providing access to employment opportunities. DEEWR explained:
- These programs do not seek to produce elite sports men and women. They use sport as a hook to improve educational outcomes and employment prospects of all participants as a contribution to closing the gap in the participation of Indigenous people in social and economic life and often in locations where the gaps are at their greatest.²⁹
- 2.39 Also of relevance under the education portfolio is the development of a national health and physical education curriculum which is expected to be finalised in late 2013. This curriculum will deliver the health and

27 DRALGAS, *Submission 51*, pp. 2, 15-17.

28 DEEWR, *Submission 48*, p. 1.

29 DEEWR, *Submission 48*, p. 3.

wellbeing learning that all students require, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.³⁰

Sporting Chance

- 2.40 The Sporting Chance program aims to improve educational outcomes such as strengthened engagement with school, improved attitudes to schooling, increased school attendance, increased retention to Year 12, and increased capacity to make informed decisions about post-school pathways. Providers work with schools, education authorities, sporting bodies, businesses, communities and parents.
- 2.41 The Sporting Chance program comprises two elements:
- school-based sports academies – targets secondary students and delivers sports activities up to three hours a week, including training and competitions. In addition, up to nine hours a week is spent on behaviour and leadership camps, mentoring programs, cultural activities, reward excursions, support to complete vocational or technical courses and employment expos, and
 - educational engagement strategies – targets primary and secondary students in remote communities and delivers a range of sport and recreation based activities to engage students in education. The program provides a few visits per community a year.³¹
- 2.42 The Sporting Chance Program funding model requires providers to source two thirds of the operating costs of an academy.³²
- 2.43 A notable example of a sporting academy is the Clontarf Foundation, which uses Australian Rules Football as the hook to attract Indigenous boys to school, engage them in learning and improve their education, discipline, life skills, self-esteem and employment prospects. By creating an attractive, safe, welcoming and supportive environment, some of the most at-risk and disengaged students are drawn into education. The Clontarf Foundation operates 40 school based sports academies across Western Australia, Northern Territory, Victoria and New South Wales.³³
- 2.44 The Achieving Results Through Indigenous Education (ARTIE) program is a rugby league Sporting Chance program which operates in 21 schools in Queensland and uses former and current origin players to ‘promote the

30 DEEWR, *Submission 48*, p. 1.

31 DEEWR, *Submission 48*, p. 5.

32 DEEWR, *Submission 48.1*, p. 4.

33 DEEWR, *Submission 48*, pp. 12-14 & *Submission 48.1*, p. 4.

- importance of attending school, engaging in literacy and numeracy and how that impacts life beyond school'.³⁴
- 2.45 The National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy (NASCA) runs two academies:
- the Walan Barramal Sporting Chance Academy in South Sydney consisting of 94 students (in 2011) from Tempe High School, Alexandria Park Community School and Marrickville High School, and
 - the Gambirrang Sporting Chance Academy in the Dubbo region, consisting of 117 students (in 2011) from Dubbo College Senior Campus, Dubbo College Delroy Campus, Wellington High School, and Narromine High School.³⁵
- 2.46 Role Models and Leaders Australia operate seven girls-only academies in Western Australia, four in the Northern Territory, and one in New South Wales. Every school where Role Models and Leaders Australia operate an academy, there is also a Clontarf Foundation boy's academy. There are 13 co-educational academies operating under the Sporting Chance program.³⁶
- 2.47 DEEWR reported that at the end of 2012, 39 percent of academy participants were female and 61 percent were male. In 2013, \$3 million has been allocated to girls' only academies, \$6.5 million to boys' only academies, and \$4.3 million to co-educational academies.³⁷
- 2.48 An example of education engagement strategies under the Sporting Chance program is the ARMTour (Athletes as Role Models) NT project which is delivered by NASCA. The project aims to encourage the educational engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary and secondary students in Papunya, Hermannsburg, Yuelamu and Santa Teresa in the Northern Territory. The project uses sport and high profile athletes as role models to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in remote communities to stay in school, lead healthy lifestyles and make positive choices in life.³⁸
- 2.49 NASCA recommended that the Sporting Chance Program funding continue and that the program be expanded throughout the country. In its submission, NASCA described why its Academies in South Sydney and

34 M Martin, Former Origin Greats, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 December 2012, p. 5.

35 NASCA, *Submission 38*, p. 37.

36 DEEWR, *Submission 48.1*, p. 4.

37 DEEWR, *Submission 48.1*, p. 4.

38 DEEWR, *Sporting Chance program education and attainment strategies*, <www.deewr.gov.au/sporting-chance-program-education-engagement-strategies> accessed 21 February 2013.

central NSW and the ARMtour program in the central desert have been successful:

The strength in these lies with the strong relationships between NASCA staff, the students and the communities, coupled with the wide range of interesting and engaging activities. Students attend school because they know if they don't they won't get to participate in NASCA activities. School attendance and behaviour in sessions are used as measures for whether they attend end of year camps and other activities. Past students have said this was the only reason they kept going to school. We have waiting lists of students wanting to be in our Academies. Not only are the Academies enjoyable, they provide a support structure for students that they are often not getting elsewhere.³⁹

Evaluations of the Sporting Chance program

- 2.50 DEEWR collects attendance data, general literacy and numeracy improvement data and case studies. DEEWR stated that it is not possible to establish causal links between the contributions of sport to specific improvements in educational outcomes. However, data showed that participation in the Sporting Chance Program was a contributing factor in improving education outcomes.⁴⁰
- 2.51 An evaluation in December 2010 of the Sporting Chance program found that more than 90 percent of the students interviewed and surveyed reported a positive attitude toward their schooling, particularly in relation to their attitudes to school, self-identity, sense of pride in being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and self-efficacy as learners.⁴¹
- 2.52 DEEWR submitted that the average attendance rate of girls that participate in a Role Models and Leaders Australia academy is 71 percent, whereas the average attendance rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls that do not participate in an academy is 68 percent. The Clontarf Foundation academy participant's average 72 percent attendance while the cohort of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys that do not participate in the academy is 66 percent.⁴²
- 2.53 Student feedback on the Sporting Chance program is that it is successful in engaging students in school but the nature of the educational engagement activities meant that the impact is likely to be short-term rather than sustained. Effective educational engagement activities were characterised
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39 NASCA, *Submission 38*, p. 7.

40 DEEWR, *Submission 48*, p. 7.

41 DEEWR, *Submission 48*, p. 9.

42 DEEWR, *Submission 48.1*, pp. 3-4.

by consistent and regular delivery, without too much time occurring between visits.⁴³

- 2.54 Netball Australia noted that the involvement of girls in academies under the Sporting Chance program is likely to be complex. For example, in a review of the program in 2009, the one girls-only academy, Role Models Western Australian Clontarf Girls Academy, indicated that the lack of purpose-built boarding accommodation in remote areas led to a high turnover of girls at the school. The review found that research was required into the needs of Indigenous female students and their motivations. Further, specific strategies for females needed to be developed.⁴⁴

Learn Earn Legend

- 2.55 The Learn Earn Legend program encourages young Indigenous people to remain in education and be aware of and explore career opportunities. In 2011-2012, the total expenditure by the Commonwealth Government to Learn Earn Legend was over \$9.25 million.⁴⁵ The focus is on school to work transitions and aspiration building. DEEWR stated:

Sport provides a means of engaging students and employers. The initiatives supported under the LEL! banner are not sporting programs, nor do they encourage students to become sports people. They are projects which encourage students, particularly those in the latter years of school, to remain engaged and to see beyond the end of school. The majority of the projects provide intensive, individual support to participant students, assisting them to realise their career goals. Intensive, individual support is provided to students, assisting them to realise their career goals.⁴⁶

- 2.56 Elite sportspeople act as role models or Ambassadors for the Learn Earn Legend program with access to corporate sponsors facilitated through the sporting codes. For example, the Broncos partnered with Arrow Energy and All Trades Queensland to provide school based traineeships and apprenticeships for 15 students across Brisbane and Ipswich.⁴⁷ Tennis Australia, in collaboration with the Evonne Goolagong Foundation, delivers the Learn Earn Legend message through a range of programs such as 'Come and Try' days and camps.⁴⁸

43 DEEWR, *Submission 48*, pp. 10-11.

44 Netball Australia, *Submission 28*, p. 15

45 DEEWR, *Submission 48.1*, p. 1.

46 DEEWR, *Submission 48*, p. 18.

47 Brisbane Broncos, *Submission 3*, p. 17.

48 Tennis Australia, *Submission 24*, pp. 4-6.

- 2.57 The Imparja Cup is Cricket Australia's 'marquee event' as part of its Indigenous program. The Imparja Cup is designed to encourage Indigenous Australians to participate in cricket and in 2012 had 32 teams participate, including a super clinic with approximately 120 children from local schools around Alice Springs. During the Imparja Cup, Learn Earn Legend funding assists Cricket Australia to stage activities to encourage and support Indigenous Australians take up education, training and employment opportunities.⁴⁹
- 2.58 Learn Earn Legend supports several other sporting events and programs such as the NRL Indigenous All Stars team and its yearly match against the NRL All Stars, Former Origin Greats (FOGs) Employment and Careers Expos, Dreamtime at the 'G and associated matches, and Local Legends, who are everyday people doing great things in their community.
- 2.59 Mr Mark deWeerd from National Rugby League discussed the benefits of the Learn Earn Legend program:
- The biggest benefit out of Learn Earn Legend is the ability for us to build the aspirations of young Indigenous people. We provide a range of programs to do that. It provides us with access. Learn Earn Legend has it clear message, which is about getting an education, finding employment and then becoming a legend in your community.⁵⁰
- 2.60 The Broncos reported results for students on the club's Learn Earn Legend program. For example in 2010, 39 out of 41 students entered into jobs, training or further education. In 2011-12, 103 of the 135 students found further education opportunities, work or training.⁵¹
- 2.61 Learn Earn Legend projects focus on senior students in Years 10 to 12 in order to address decreasing retention rates and to improve employment outcomes by providing young Indigenous people with a vision of their potential pathways beyond school. DEEWR submitted that retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students rapidly decrease over Years 10 to 12. The retention rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students for Years 7/8 to Year 10 in 2011 was 98.7 percent. This decreased to 73.3 percent for Years 7/8 to Year 11 and 48.7 percent for Year 7/8 to Year 12.⁵²

49 S Kipman, Cricket Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 22 November 2012, p. 11. Cricket Australia, *Submission 35*, p. 6.

50 M deWeerd, National Rugby League, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 21 November 2012, p. 16.

51 Brisbane Broncos, *Submission 3*, p. 17.

52 DEEWR, *Submission 48*, p. 19.

- 2.62 Several sporting organisations which run Learn Earn Legend programs supported the extension of the program to lower high school grades and into primary school years.⁵³
- 2.63 The North Queensland Cowboys recommended the Commonwealth Government extend the Learn Earn Legend funding to primary age groups:
- We know from the Obe Geia challenge and the Every Day Counts initiative that the power of legends like Johnathan and Matthew to engage Indigenous young people is even more pronounced within the primary school children than it is with the secondary students. We also know from school feedback that successfully engaging with Indigenous students in primary school is the best way of setting them up for success in secondary school and beyond.⁵⁴
- 2.64 The North Queensland Cowboys self-fund the Every Day Counts program as an add-on to the Learn Earn Legend program aims to increase attendance rates for Indigenous children in the primary school grades. Mrs Fiona Pelling described the impetus for the Every Day Counts program:
- A big part of the problem we are finding with the Learn Earn Legend! program is that a lot of our kids that are coming out in year 11 and year 12 have only got grade 5 or grade 6 numeracy and literacy skills, which severely compromises their choices as they leave school. Through our investigations we have found that a lot of this is due to nonattendance at school and non-engagement. If you can get them to attend primary school and get those attendance levels up I think their engagement in their high school years will be much better. They will feel included at the same level as the other kids at school and they will be less likely to truant.⁵⁵

No School No Play

- 2.65 The Commonwealth Government provided \$2 million to the No School No Play initiative to support eight national sporting organisations to promote school attendance. Programs were based on partnerships between sporting organisations, parents and communities of secondary school students. The goal was to assist Indigenous students to increase their Year 12 attainment through reward and incentive initiatives,

53 J Creamer, Titans 4 Tomorrow Lt, R Jensen, Take Pride Program, M Martin, Former Origin Greats, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 December 2012, p. 7.

54 F Pelling, North Queensland Cowboys, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 December 2012, p. 4.

55 F Pelling, North Queensland Cowboys, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 December 2012, p. 3.

- mentoring and personal development and community engagement. The program ceased in 2012.⁵⁶
- 2.66 DEEWR reported that in December 2011, No School No Play projects were being delivered to 2 727 students, of which 2 540 were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. On average approximately 80 percent of No School No Play participants were reported to have improved school attendance and school engagement.⁵⁷
- 2.67 Basketball Australia expressed its disappointment at the discontinued funding of the No School No Play program and reported that in 2011, 80 per cent of the participants in No School No Play through Basketball Australia improved their engagement with school, and 90 per cent improved the numbers of days they attended school. One school in Coffs Harbour went from an average of 50 per cent attendance at the school to 91 per cent attendance, across two terms in which they operated No School No Play.⁵⁸
- 2.68 The Committee heard evidence about no school, no play programs operating without government funding. Some sports work with schools to run no school, no play programs. For instance, Rugby Union stated the concept of no school, no play has been entrenched in their programs for years.⁵⁹

Department of Health and Ageing

- 2.69 The Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) funds a number of programs which aim to increase physical activity among Indigenous people. Some examples of DoHA's contributions to improving the health and wellbeing of Indigenous people through sport and physical activity are:
- the Indigenous Chronic Disease Package which aims to close the gap in life expectancy within a generation. One of the aims of this package is to reduce major risk factors for chronic disease. As part of the package, Regional Tackling Smoking and Healthy Lifestyle Teams promote and support good health including through sporting role models who promote smoke-free healthy messages
 - the Deadly Choices campaign, developed by the Institute of Urban Indigenous Health in Queensland, uses sporting role models to engage

56 DEEWR, *Submission 48*, pp. 16-18.

57 DEEWR, *Submission 48*, p. 17.

58 K Keneally, Basketball Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 21 November 2012, p. 26.

59 T Evans, Lloyd McDermott Rugby Development Team Inc., *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 21 November 2012, p. 41.

with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The program aims to empower Indigenous people to make healthy choices for themselves and their families, including exercising and undergoing health checks

- the Healthy Communities initiative provides funding to local councils to implement community-based, healthy lifestyle programs targeting disadvantaged populations and unemployed adults. Many of these programs benefit Indigenous people
- funding to Vibe Australia Pty Ltd to develop, produce and disseminate health and lifestyle promotion materials for Indigenous people. Sports people are regularly featured as role models
- as part of the 'Swap it, Don't Stop It' program, a dedicated Indigenous webpage was created and includes messages such as swapping sedentary behaviour for physical activity, and
- funding to the Clontarf Foundation through DEEWR to incorporate health promotion activities. Under the National Binge Drinking Strategy, the Australian National Preventative Health Agency funds the David Wirrpanda Foundation to support its 'Gwabba Yorga - Gabaa Worra' project, which uses netball as a means to educate Indigenous girls about the dangers of binge-drinking.⁶⁰

Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

2.70 As the lead agency for Indigenous affairs, the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) provides whole of government coordination, policy advice and support for the Council of Australian Governments' National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA).⁶¹

2.71 FaHCSIA funds several initiatives, some of which are not Indigenous specific, that use sport as a mechanism to improve outcomes for Indigenous Australians, including:

- the Respectful Relationships strategy aims to prevent sexual assault and domestic and family violence through education. Funding has been provided to National Rugby League and the AFL
- Community Action Grants under the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-22 which provide support to communities in reducing violence against women. The Australian

60 DoHA, *Submission 43*, pp.4-8.

61 FaHSCIA, *Submission 42*, p. 1.

Netball Association was funded to educate on healthy relationships and violence prevention, train coaches and implement a peer education and mentoring program for Indigenous young women. The AFL was funded for an education program and National Rugby League was funded for a communications program⁶²

- to the AFL and AFL affiliates for a range of initiatives across Australia, for example:
 - ⇒ to establish partnerships between AFL clubs and Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory and South Australia
 - ⇒ a 'Strength and Unity through Football' project delivers football programs in Maningrida, Yirrkala, Ngukurr, Lajamanu and Hermannsburg communities to provide leadership skills and training
 - ⇒ a South Australian National Football League Coordinator in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in South Australia
 - ⇒ a Youth Leadership Program in the APY Lands delivered by the Adelaide Football Club in collaboration with former AFL player Andrew McLeod,⁶³ and
 - ⇒ a range of activities, including training, workshops, carnivals and competitions for East Kimberley communities delivered by the West Australian Football Commission in partnership with Garnduwa Amborn Wirnan Aboriginal Corporation⁶⁴
- Sports Leadership Grants and Scholarships for Women Program is a joint initiative with the Australian Sports Commission which provides development opportunities and training to women to reach their leadership potential in the sport industry, and
- The Youth in Communities Program operates in more than 30 locations in the Northern Territory, delivering early intervention, prevention and diversionary initiatives for Indigenous youth at risk. Some examples of sport related activities are:
 - ⇒ a Sport Demonstration Project to trial a best practice model for delivering sport focused diversion activities through improved whole of government coordination and the use of place based

62 FaHSCIA, *Submission 42*, pp. 2-3.

63 Adelaide Football Club, *Submission 6*, p. 1.

64 Further details on the \$13.2 million provided to the AFL and AFL affiliates through FaHSCIA from 2010-11 to 2012-13 is in *Submission 42.1*.

- approach to service delivery to build community capacity in Gapuwiyak, Wadeye, Yuendumu, Gunbalanya and Nguiu
- ⇒ diversionary programs in Yirrkala, Milingimbi, Ramingining, Gapuwiyak and Umbakumba run by the East Arnhem Shire Council
 - ⇒ a regional development manager working in Wadeye and Galiwin'ku with AFL Northern Territory to establish and coofinate competitions organise coaching and umpiring courses and promote healthy lifestyles, and
 - ⇒ suicide prevention education and activities with a focus on sport in the Northern Territory.
- 2.72 In 2012, the Commonwealth Government made a commitment to continue the Youth in Communities Program for 10 years. Under the Package, the program will be progressively integrated into 15 new remote sites across the Northern Territory. This will increase the level of access to and integration of a variety of services including mentoring, sport and recreation.⁶⁵
- 2.73 An interim evaluation report in 2011 of the Youth in Communities program found the program made good progress in engaging Indigenous young people in positive activities. FaHCSIA submitted that the evaluation included evidence of young people at risk engaging constructively with peers, participating in community events such as sport, increasing self-care and self-esteem, improving attendance and re-engagement with school, contributing to community wellbeing, influencing the resilience of peers and engaging in cultural activities.⁶⁶
- 2.74 In addition to regular reporting and monitoring arrangements, FaHCSIA has commissioned independent evaluations of AFL funded programs, including the AFL Remote Regional Development Program in Wadeye, the AFL National Partnership Agreement, and the Youth in Communities Program. FaHCSIA submitted that evaluations show that:
- AFL involvement in these programs has a positive impact in encouraging healthy and active lifestyles, building leadership skills, strengthening community cohesion, improving school attendance and engagement in some type of training, education or paid work in remote Indigenous communities.⁶⁷

65 FaHCSIA, *Submission 42*, pp. 2-6.

66 FaHCSIA, *Submission 42*, p. 6.

67 FaHCSIA, *Submission 42.1*, p. 9.

Government coordination to achieve Close the Gap outcomes

- 2.75 Coordination across government departments in the delivery of Indigenous sports programs was a common theme in submissions to the inquiry. For example, Professor Colin Tatz described what he called 'passing the buck' on sport:

Let me just get out of the way the need to look into the constant shuffling of sport between government departments, with each one passing the buck, so to speak, to other departments, saying, 'We're not into sport; we're into housing,' or, 'We're into health; it's not about sport,' et cetera. Government departments are obstinate in refusing to see a correlation between the two.⁶⁸

- 2.76 Left-field Business Solutions stated that because the funding of sport related programs for Indigenous Australians is spread amongst a number of Commonwealth Government agencies, there is an immediate risk that these programs do not operate cooperatively to achieve Close the Gap outcomes. Left-field Business Solutions recommended a framework be developed for government agencies that fund sport for non-sport outcomes:

The NIRA and service delivery principles provide the basis for an overarching framework which agencies that fund sport for non-sport outcomes can operate under. Such a framework should be developed and managed by the lead agency for Indigenous affairs, the Department for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), in consultation with the lead agency for sport, the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport (DRALGAS) and other agencies already investing in sport programs for non-sport outcomes. Funding to the sports industry from the Australian Sports Commission (ASC), Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) and other State/Territory Institutes and Academies of Sport should be exempt from this framework as this funding predominantly supports sport-specific outcomes like participation, capability building (coaching and officiating), junior and elite pathways (e.g. State/National Championships, Commonwealth Games, World Championships etc.).⁶⁹

68 C Tatz, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 21 November 2012, p. 1.

69 Left-field Business Solutions, *Submission 55*, p. 4.

- 2.77 Similarly, Netball Australia called on the development of an overarching strategic framework for the long term investment in Indigenous sport programs:

In acknowledging that a significant amount of work has been done to empower Indigenous communities and recognising the valuable contributions of many committed, motivated and dedicated individuals and organisations, the main impediment is that the sport sector has been devoid of an overarching strategic framework and/or policy positions and the long-term investment that is required to achieve sustainable and successful Indigenous policies and programs (be they culturally inclusive, mainstream or Indigenous specific).⁷⁰

- 2.78 The submission from the Indigenous Marathon Project stated that education, health and sports departments should take a collaborative approach when developing programs in communities:

IMP believes that there needs to be more collaboration between Federal Departments and the Deadly Fun Runs are an example of this. The main source of assistance for the Deadly Fun Runs does not necessarily come from Indigenous Sport Development Officers (ISDO's DRLGAS funded) but more so the Healthy Lifestyle Workers located all over the country (DOHA funded). So we have a program funded by the department of Sport, but delivered by Department Health on the ground (and ISDO's in a number of areas). ... In order to develop sporting programs it would seem DOHA and DRLGAS should work a little closer in order to achieve the most efficient value for money programs on the ground for both parties.⁷¹

- 2.79 Many participants in the inquiry referred to the need for a coordinated effort from all levels of government, non-government entities and Indigenous communities on the delivery of sports programs.
- 2.80 DRALGAS stated that the Office for Sport and the ASC were seeking to build relationships with state and territory sport and recreation departments to facilitate coordination, where possible, in various communities and regions.⁷²
- 2.81 The application process for ISARP funding includes referring general details of grant applications to other Australian, state and territory governments and agencies that provide grants of a similar type.

70 Netball Australia, *Submission 28*, p. 2.

71 IMP, *Submission 49*, pp. 10-11.

72 DRALGAS, *Submission 51*, p. 23

DRALGAS stated that there could be scope for increased efficiency if all government agencies adopted a similar approach so that information on grant applications for sport and active recreation and grant approvals could be shared.⁷³

- 2.82 The Queensland Government referred to the challenges with the coordination of funding to sports programs:

The Queensland Government has consistently invested funding with local governments, sport, recreation and community organisations to strengthen participation opportunities for Indigenous people. A consistent challenge in achieving increased participation is coordinating the diversity of effort and funding that occurs particularly in remote communities and engaging community members to identify sport and recreation needs.⁷⁴

- 2.83 vicsport stated that sport must be combined with other government services in tackling health inequalities in Indigenous communities:

To solely focus on sport as a determinant of wellbeing fails to appreciate the vital role that all government departments play in the health of communities including key community services such as education, employment, health, law and order. All relevant government departments should be working towards a whole of government approach in tackling health inequalities prevalent in Indigenous communities.⁷⁵

- 2.84 The Government of South Australian claimed there are multiple levels of disadvantage in urban, regional and remote areas and therefore multiple strategies using sport to achieve outcomes, whether they are sport related or other outcomes with regard to education, health, employment or crime prevention. The South Australian Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure stated that sport can provide a range of benefits for Indigenous people but it is not a panacea and governments need to be clear about what they are trying to achieve through the delivery of sport and recreation programs:

It is the view of the DPTI that it is not a lack of financial resources that is limiting development of sustainable sport but rather the lack of clarity around desired outcomes, limited coordination and communication, and significant duplication of effort across various levels of Government and NGOs. Anecdotal evidence in remote areas has pointed to an overwhelming number of

73 DRALGAS, *Submission 51*, p. 24.

74 Queensland Government, *Submission 46*, p. 4.

75 vicsport, *Submission 34*, p. 5.

organisations visiting communities to achieve the same or similar outcomes. Sport also falls into this category.⁷⁶

- 2.85 Left-field business solutions stated that governments should be clear about what data is to be collected to determine the impact of Indigenous sports initiatives and suggested that output related data, such as number of participants and sport sessions, should be measured along with participant, deliverer and partnership feedback. Independent evaluations are also necessary to ensure accuracy and validity of data collected.⁷⁷
- 2.86 Mr Bill Fogarty asserted there was a need for better evaluations of the links between sports programs and non-sport outcomes in order for service providers to know where to spend their efforts.⁷⁸

Committee comment

- 2.87 Individuals and communities are passionate about sport. Sport excites people, gets them active and involves whole communities. The Committee found that sport can be a very powerful way of engaging Indigenous people and providing positive outcomes in the Close the Gap in areas of health, education, employment and justice.
- 2.88 However, the Committee notes that sport is not the sole ingredient to Indigenous wellbeing. While sport is often the hook, many government services, in partnership with Indigenous communities and the sporting industry, play a role in achieving Close the Gap outcomes. The importance of partnerships is discussed further in chapter 3.
- 2.89 Numerous participants in the inquiry pointed to the lack of coordination and the duplication of effort around achieving outcomes through sport programs. The Committee heard that the duplication of activities and limited strategic direction has resulted in a fragmented approach to sport and recreation service delivery for Indigenous Australians.
- 2.90 The Committee considers there must be clear direction on the purpose of sports initiatives and what outcomes governments are trying to achieve. There is presently no overarching strategy on how sports programs can be coordinated, involving partnerships and communities, and provide the outcomes in relation to Close the Gap targets.
- 2.91 The Committee considers that the Commonwealth Government must take a stronger lead in promoting better coordination of sport and recreation programs for Indigenous Australians.

76 Government of South Australia, *Submission 41*, p. 3.

77 Left-field business solutions, *Submission 55*, pp. 1-2.

78 B Fogarty, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 22 November 2012, p. 3.

- 2.92 The Committee considers that the Ministers for Indigenous Affairs, Sport, Health and Education need to take a more collaborative approach when developing sport programs in their portfolio areas. The Committee recommends the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, in consultation with the Minister for Sport, develop an overarching framework of service delivery and evaluation for Commonwealth agencies which fund sport programs. Outcomes should be aligned with Close the Gap targets.

Recommendation 1 - Framework for sport programs and Close the Gap outcomes

- 2.93 **The Committee recommends the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, in consultation with the Minister for Sport, develop an overarching framework of service delivery and evaluation for Commonwealth agencies which fund sport programs to clearly identify outcomes that align with Close the Gap targets.**

Commonwealth agencies, such as the Australian Sports Commission, which predominantly fund programs for sports-specific outcomes, should be exempt from the framework.

- 2.94 The Committee commends the sporting codes and clubs which are demonstrating Close the Gap outcomes through government funded programs. For example, the Australian Rugby League Commission outlined in its submission how its programs are contributing to each of the Close the Gap objectives in schooling, health, economic participation, safe communities, and government and leadership.⁷⁹ The Committee discusses sporting codes creating positive change for Indigenous communities in chapter 3.
- 2.95 Some government programs are focussing on particular Close the Gap outcomes, such as Learn Earn Legend, which aims to achieve positive outcomes in Year 12 attainment, employment and improvements in literacy and numeracy.
- 2.96 However, other sports programs are being rolled out with very little understanding of how the Close the Gap outcomes are being achieved.
- 2.97 Governments need greater understanding of what sports programs are achieving in relation to the governments' Close the Gap objectives. The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government develop

⁷⁹ Australian Rugby League Commission, *Submission 16*, pp. 22-26.

evaluation mechanisms for sports programs to include the collection of data on both participation outcomes and Close the Gap outcomes.

- 2.98 The Committee recommends that data collection for Indigenous participation in sport, including age and gender, is mandatory for all clubs and organisations that receive Commonwealth funding to run targeted Indigenous sporting programs. This Indigenous participation data should be compiled and provided back to the responsible Commonwealth agency for evaluation and analysis. This will assist both the sporting groups and the Commonwealth Government to gain a better understanding of whether the Indigenous sporting programs are having an impact on participation numbers.
- 2.99 Further, the Committee recommends results from sports program evaluations be incorporated into annual Close the Gap reporting to Parliament.

Recommendation 2 - Evaluating outcomes of sports programs

- 2.100 **The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government develop evaluation mechanisms for sports programs that include the collection of data on sport participation outcomes as well as non-sport outcomes such as the Close the Gap targets.**

The Committee recommends that all Commonwealth funded sports programs should collect comprehensive data on Indigenous participation. The data should be collected at the start and finish of each program and should be analysed as part of an evaluation process for individual programs.

The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government incorporate results of evaluations of sports programs and their contribution to Indigenous wellbeing into the annual Close the Gap reporting to Parliament.

- 2.101 The Committee notes the positive comments from non-government agencies regarding the DEEWR programs Learn Earn Legend and Sporting Chance. Sports clubs and codes demonstrated how these programs can contribute to better education and employment outcomes for Indigenous Australians. The Committee supports the continuation of funding to these two programs.
- 2.102 The sporting industry has demonstrated that the Learn Earn Legend program is effective at engaging Indigenous youth and promoting the

positive messages of completing high school years and gaining employment.

- 2.103 Currently funding to the Learn Earn Legend program targets Indigenous students in Year 10 to Year 12. The Committee notes the comments by the sporting industry that Learn Earn Legend could have greater positive outcomes in education if it targeted Indigenous children at school during the earlier high school years.
- 2.104 The Committee contends that the Learn Earn Legend is a very effective program at working towards Close the Gap targets in education and employment. The Committee believes targeting Indigenous students in the earlier years of high school would assist to further achieve the Close the Gap target to halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for children within a decade.
- 2.105 The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government extend the funding of the Learn Earn Legend program to target Indigenous students in the high school years. Further, the Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government assess in the year 2016 the effectiveness of the Learn Earn Legend program being extended to target Indigenous students attending primary school.

Recommendation 3 - Learn Earn Legend

- 2.106 **The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government extend the funding of the Learn Earn Legend program to target Indigenous students in the high school years.**
- The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government assess in 2016 the effectiveness of further funding the Learn Earn Legend program to target Indigenous students in the primary school years.**
- 2.107 There are 50 Indigenous Sport Development Officers (ISDOs) across the country employed by the state and territory departments of sport and recreation. Funding by the Commonwealth Government supports 28 of those ISDOs.
- 2.108 The Committee notes that the Queensland Government elected not to be part of the ISDO network, rather it supports 38 Indigenous communities to form Sport and Recreation Reference Groups to coordinate stakeholders in a community.
- 2.109 Some witnesses spoke of the value of ISDOs to provide links between governments, sporting bodies and communities in coordinating sustainable sport and recreation programs. However, the Committee notes

comments by Netball Australia that linkages between national sporting organisations and ISDOs had weakened.

- 2.110 The Committee believes ISDOs have an important role in assisting to breakdown the silo effect of different government departments and to connect key service providers in education, health and employment, with local sporting bodies and community groups about sport and recreational opportunities available.
- 2.111 The Committee encourages the DRALGAS to ensure ISDOs continue to provide the essential links between sporting organisations and stakeholders in Indigenous communities to coordinate sustainable sports programs.

Sports carnivals and events

- 2.112 Many participants spoke of the significance of sporting carnivals and events at bringing communities together for sport and recreation, while enabling service providers to conduct and promote their business.
- 2.113 Dr Alfred Bamblett from the Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd referred to football and netball carnivals which brought together many young participants and enabled health checks:

We have been engaged in a couple of Closing the Gap programs where we have run football and netball carnivals for young people and kids in schools. The idea was to get them to come along so we can do some preliminary health checks – that was to satisfy the funding bodies. Of course, the kids are not interested in the health check; they are really interested in football, netball and getting together. These sorts of things are part of making it happen. It adds benefit. We have had kids who have had to get glasses and kids who have had to have their hearing attended to.⁸⁰

- 2.114 Dr Bruce Hearn Mackinnon discussed the positive impact that sporting carnivals can have on communities in terms of inclusion and capacity building. He commented:

I see sport not only as an incredible opportunity for wider capacity building but also for promoting self-governance, autonomy and strength in these communities. It is one activity for all people, which includes elders, young people, men, women – it just does not seem to matter. There is a unified excitement and passion for

80 A Bamblett, Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 22 November 2012, p. 6.

sports. You only have to visit a remote community sports weekend or the Lightning Carnival in Alice Springs for instance to see that engagement of people. That just shows people can be energised and motivated but people do need assistance.⁸¹

2.115 The NSW Annual Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout carnival has been referred to as a 'modern day corroboree' and brings together more than 100 teams across NSW. Ms Heidi Norman submitted that further annual government funding was required to support the future viability of the event.⁸²

2.116 Representatives from Australian Rugby Union spoke about the opportunities for government to spread messages through sport, such as at rugby carnivals and events. Mr David Sykes from Australian Rugby Union stated:

Effectively, you have a captured market. All of those kids who come along will get a health check, for instance. There will be promotions around anti-gambling. Those events happen anyway and they are always going to happen. They happen irrespective of government funding. So it is a real opportunity to have the government say that this is the message we are going to sell anyway. We do not have to host the cost of the event, but maybe sending someone along to talk to the kids is something that can happen with relatively little or no additional funding.⁸³

2.117 In the Western Desert region of Western Australia the Western Desert Sports Council (WDSC) provides structure around improving the level of sport and recreation programs for Indigenous communities. The WDSC holds three carnivals each year which attract up to 1 000 participants and attendees from eight communities. The WDSC is a partnership between eight communities who work together to develop an integrated regional program of sport and recreation activities. The WDSC has formed a partnership with Desert Feet Inc (DFI) which promotes music, dance and performing arts to the region. The DFI assists the WDSC to ensure cultural activities are provided at the carnivals for those people who are not participating in the sporting activities. The partnership brings sport and music together to focus on the determinants of health to bring about changes in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.⁸⁴

81 B Hearn Mackinnon, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 22 November 2012, p. 23.

82 H Norman, *Submission 44*, pp. 1 & 3.

83 D Sykes, Australian Rugby Union, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 21 November 2012, p. 41.

84 Newcrest Mining Limited and Western Desert Sports Council, *Submission 50*, pp. 3-9.

- 2.118 The Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council (QAIHC) is the state peak body representing community controlled health services across Queensland, and the Queensland affiliate for the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation. In 2011 QAIHC established a partnership with the Arthur Beetson Foundation to support the organisation and running of the Queensland Murri Rugby League Carnivals.
- 2.119 QAIHC utilised the Murri Carnival to promote healthy lifestyles within Indigenous communities and encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to access their local Aboriginal and Islander Community Controlled Health Service (AICCHS). All players and officials competing in the Murri Carnivals are required to complete a health check at their local Community Controlled Health Service. In 2011, this resulted in the completion of over 1 200 health checks throughout Queensland. At the 2012 carnival held in Ipswich, 47 teams competed which equated to around 1 000 competitors over a long weekend.⁸⁵
- 2.120 For players competing in the Under 15 Competition, it was compulsory that they maintain 90 percent attendance at school. The carnivals are promoted as alcohol and drug free events and provide an opportunity to integrate and showcase the work of Tobacco and Health Lifestyle Teams funded by the Department of Health and Ageing. The Institute for Urban Indigenous Health launched its Deadly Choices campaign at the carnival and representatives from groups such as Former Origin Greats provided some role modelling and mentoring.⁸⁶
- 2.121 QAIHC partnered with the Lloyd McDermott Rugby Development Foundation to support similar events through organised Rugby Union competitions, supporting participation at under 16, under 18, senior men's and women's levels. These events utilise the same principles of compulsory health checks for all participants, along with regular participation and attendance at school in order to be eligible for participation. Ella Sevens Events in 2012 were held in Cairns and Brisbane, with around 12 competing men's teams and six women's teams and the National Indigenous under 16 tournament held on the Gold Coast with six competing teams and participants of around 200 young men from all states and territories.⁸⁷
- 2.122 Mr Selwyn Button from QAIHC referred to the importance of having 'solid partnerships' with the Arthur Beetson Foundation and the Lloyd

85 QAIHC, *Submission 26*, p. 3.

86 QAIHC, *Submission 26*, pp. 1-2.

87 QAIHC, *Submission 26*, pp. 2-3.

McDermott Foundation and the endorsement of the state sports governing bodies, such as Queensland Rugby League and Queensland Rugby Union to allow the carnivals to be successful in promoting non-sport outcomes such as health, education and employment:

As we have seen at the Ipswich carnival and a few of the Lloyd McDermott carnivals in Queensland, they do attract some fairly big crowds. We get a fair few people that have come from all over Queensland to come and have a look at this stuff. So what you have created is an environment where not only can you drive home a message around health and wellbeing, around active sport and recreation participation, but there are secondary benefits that we can get out of that as well. We can have conversations with people about the importance of schooling, about the importance of education and training and going on to employment and university and other bits and pieces, and we can even build it into the process of the carnival, particularly for the under 16 boy players.

It was one of their requirements to have 90 per cent participation and attendance rates at school leading up to the carnival. So, if you are building those things into the overall package, you are building a much more solid structure from which you are going to get outcomes in terms of not only sporting achievements and sporting abilities but overall social development through participation in school, education and training, university, and other bits and pieces as well.⁸⁸

- 2.123 Mr Selwyn Button spoke about further opportunities for QAIHC to partner with other organisations that run carnivals, such as a netball carnival to attract a large number of females across a large area.⁸⁹

Committee comment

- 2.124 The Committee is encouraged by the success of sports carnivals and events at bringing together a variety of organisations and Indigenous families and communities. The evidence demonstrates that if partnerships are formed in the lead up to a sporting event, the benefits to Indigenous players and their extended families are many, including to health, wellbeing, education and employment. Sporting events and carnivals, such as the Murri Carnival, have helped to promote greater responsibility

88 S Button, QAIHC, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 December 2012, p. 34.

89 S Button, QAIHC, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 December 2012, p. 35.

in managing health conditions and support greater awareness of issues impacting on health in communities.

- 2.125 Data collected by health, education, employment and other agencies at sports carnivals and events would be useful inclusions in the evaluations of sports programs as described previously in this chapter.
- 2.126 The Committee believes there is a role and responsibility for the Commonwealth Government to support Indigenous sporting events and carnivals that promote health and wellbeing, education and employment. Governments should not take control of these events, instead it should fulfil a partnership role in supporting and partnering organisations on the ground.
- 2.127 The Committee believes governments should give further consideration to supporting sporting carnivals and events where sports are played which are popular among female participants.
- 2.128 The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government fund regional and state sporting carnivals which draw together government, non-government, sporting codes and clubs, mentors and role models, and businesses to address health, education and employment Close the Gap targets.

Recommendation 4 - Indigenous sporting carnivals

- 2.129 **The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government provide base funding and coordinated assistance to Indigenous regional and state sporting carnivals which draw together governments, sporting codes and clubs, mentors and role models, corporates and businesses to address health, education and employment Close the Gap targets.**

The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government ensure that funding is provided to sport and recreation carnivals and events in particular those which support high participation by Indigenous females.

Three year funding

- 2.130 While recognising coordination and partnerships are critical to sustainable sports programs that achieve Close the Gap outcomes, numerous participants in the inquiry believed another important requirement was longer term funding to provide sustainable government programs.

2.131 The Chief Executive Officer of the Clontarf Foundation described its success as being due to the partnerships with communities and the long term involvement in the community to build relationships over 30 years.⁹⁰ Long term relationship building needs longer term funding according to Mr Anthony Bowd from vicsport:

The manner in which programs are being funded I do not think has traditionally worked with how successful programs are rolled out. Sporting programs are traditionally funded on a set time period – say, one year or two years – and at the end of that time we tend to count up the numbers and how many people participated, and that dictates whether the program is successful or not. But I think that history demonstrates that the really successful programs occur over a long period of time and that they do not necessarily fit into the standard funding models of 12 months, for example. So sports need to take a longer-term view – and funders also need to take a longer-term view – of how funds are committed to these programs.⁹¹

2.132 The South Australian National Football League (SANFL) submitted that the key risks to the delivery of its sports programs in remote Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands are insufficient funding or the cessation of funding. The Senior Sports League and the Junior Sports Program were reviewed by FaHCSIA and DEEWR in 2010 and found they were essential strategies in the health and wellbeing of people on the APY lands.⁹²

2.133 Left-field Business Solutions also suggested that a collaborative approach to the delivery of successful sports programs is underpinned by funding security, of at least three to five years, and a commitment to sustain services for as long as it takes to achieve outcomes.⁹³

2.134 Some participants in the inquiry suggested that sports receiving government funding and providing ‘fly in, fly out’ programs, provide little to no opportunity for ongoing involvement in many communities. Touch Football Australia referred to the experience of many remote communities:

Community members have become accustomed to sporting programs that begin but very rarely continue because the funding has disappeared or because there has not been an emphasis on providing the education and support necessary for the sport to

90 G Neesham, Clontarf Foundation, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 21 November 2012, pp. 30-2.

91 A Bowd, vicsport, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 22 November 2012, p. 9.

92 SANFL, *Submission 18*, p. 2.

93 Left-field Business Solutions, *Submission 55*, p. 2.

continue within the community, and as a result, community members are now very hesitant in becoming involved in new programs because there is an expectation that it will fail.⁹⁴

- 2.135 NASCA recommended a minimum of three year government funding contracts:

The nature of government contracts means that the grant cycle may be 12 months, which can create program uncertainty. It also makes planning for coming years difficult and in some circumstances can create unrealistic goals for change. This would also assist in the prevention of stop-start, fly-in fly-out activity that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have had so frequently in the past, creating distrust and minimal long term impact.⁹⁵

- 2.136 The North Queensland Cowboys recommended the Commonwealth Government extend the length of the Learn Earn Legend program to run beyond one year at a time:

Currently, the government's Closing the Gap targets and our Learn Earn Legend program are funded to run only one year at a time, and a lot of that is building relationships with the schools so they allow us to run those programs. We need continuity and consistency within the school so that kids feel it is something to aspire to as they go up through the grades.⁹⁶

Committee comment

- 2.137 The Committee contends that financial resources to Indigenous sports programs are significant and the goal of achieving sport and non-sport outcomes through sport programs must start with better coordination of effort and partnerships between governments, non-government organisations and communities. There is a lack of clarity around desired outcomes and duplication of effort across various levels of government and non-government organisations.
- 2.138 Recommendations 1 and 2 aim to provide government with the tools to better direct funding in a coordinated way.
- 2.139 In addition, the Committee maintains that government funding to sport and recreation programs must be over at least three years to assist in achieving sustained and coordinated sport activities and events for Indigenous Australians.

94 Touch Football Australia, *Submission 39*, p. 8.

95 NASCA, *Submission 38*, p. 7.

96 F Pelling, North Queensland Cowboys, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 December 2012, p. 4.

- 2.140 The Committee recommends Commonwealth Government funding to sports and recreation programs in Indigenous communities is over a longer term preferably a three year cycle.

Recommendation 5 - Three year funding

- 2.141 **The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government should fund Indigenous sports programs over a longer term preferably a three year cycle.**
- 2.142 The Committee contends that sports based programs must link to local sporting clubs and communities and develop the community capacity to deliver a program which can be sustained beyond funding timelines.
- 2.143 Partnerships between governments, communities, sporting codes, the corporate sector and other not-for-profit or non-government organisations is critical to the achievement of sustainable sport and non-sport outcomes. Partnerships and sponsorships are discussed in chapter 4.
- 2.144 The involvement of the sporting industry in developing and delivering sustainable sport and recreation programs is essential and various sporting codes and clubs are working with Indigenous Australians to improve their participation rates in sport and recreation and to assist with Close the Gap outcomes.
- 2.145 Participation in various sports and overcoming some of the barriers to participation, including improving participation by Indigenous females are discussed in chapter 3.