



Submission to the House Standing Committee on Aboriginal  
and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

## Inquiry into the contribution of sport to Indigenous wellbeing and mentoring

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## 1. The Australian Drug Foundation

The Australian Drug Foundation (ADF) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that was formed in 1959. Our vision is ‘Healthy People, Strong communities.’ Our Mission is ‘Working together to prevent alcohol and other drug problems in communities’.

While the ADF is concerned with preventing problems and harms that result from legal and illicit drugs alike, it concentrates specific attention on preventing alcohol related harms.

With its focus on alcohol:

- ADF works in a range of settings - community, workplace, professional sport, defence, community sport and community - to reduce alcohol related harm through changing culture. We support social change by providing practice leadership in key community settings.
- ADF raises awareness in the community of the need to change Australia’s drinking culture and develops resources for communities and individuals who want to take action to.
- ADF works towards increasing investment in activity which will change Australia’s drinking culture. Through coalitions with key groups and individuals we inform government of current and emerging issues in the community and provide a roadmap for government to invest with the aim of improving Australians’ quality of life.

## 2. Overview of this submission

With this submission we wish to draw the Committee’s attention to the role of the *Good Sports* Program in the general community and explain how it is being adapted to operate in Indigenous communities throughout Australia.

*Good Sports* was developed by the ADF to reduce alcohol-related harm through changing the drinking culture in community sport clubs. Developed in 2000 after several years’ preparatory work, Good Sports now has over 5500 clubs improving their amenity and increasing community support by reducing risky alcohol practices.

*Good Sports*’ results in reducing alcohol consumption in community sporting clubs and reducing related harm (e.g. drink driving) is recorded in the peer reviewed literature (see below).

A current focus of *Good Sports* is to determine the most appropriate role for the *Good Sports* program in remote Indigenous Communities and to assist those communities to adapt it in order to reduce alcohol and possibly other substance related problems and harms.

Consequently the Australian Drug Foundation’s submission addresses the second term of reference, i.e. ‘non-government organisations utilising sport as a vehicle to improve outcomes for Indigenous people.’

**Note** The Australian Drug Foundation would be pleased to amplify this submission and provide the Committee with further information about this work, both orally at public hearings, and in writing, should the Committee so wish.

### 3. The Public Health Context

#### 3.1 Alcohol and its harms

Alcohol is the most commonly used recreational drug in Australia and potentially the most harmful. Alcohol misuse creates multiple harms — both immediate and long term. In 2003, alcohol harm was responsible for 3.2% of the total burden of disease and injury in Australia (1) and the annual cost from alcohol-related harm is estimated to be more than \$15 billion (2). This includes lost productivity, health-care costs, and costs related to crime and road accidents. Its adverse effects go beyond the drinker and involve harm for others in the community. Harm to others ranges from inconvenience, such as street noise or costs from damaged property at one end of the spectrum, to assault, child abuse, domestic violence and murder at the other (3, 4).

All regions of Australia are affected by alcohol misuse, although consumption patterns vary between urban and rural areas, and between Australian states and territories. In 2010 people living in the Northern Territory were more likely to drink alcohol at quantities that placed them at risk of lifetime harm (29.4%), while those living in New South Wales (18.6%) and Victoria (18.4%) were the least likely to consume at this level. Likewise, Territorians were also most likely to drink alcohol at levels that placed them at risk of an alcohol-related injury from a single occasion of drinking at least once in 12 months (50.8%). People living in remote or very remote areas are more likely to drink at risky levels (for both lifetime and single occasion risk) than those living in other areas (5). Indigenous Australians are about twice as likely to abstain from alcohol as non-Indigenous Australians; however those who do drink may be up to six times more likely to drink at high-risk levels than non-Indigenous people (6).

#### 3.2 Alcohol and Sport

Alcohol and sport are inextricably linked in Australian culture. It is difficult to be involved in sport in Australia and not be exposed to alcohol or the promotion of drinking and binge drinking and other alcohol problems are unfortunately common in sporting settings. Research undertaken by the Australian Drug Foundation found high levels of problematic drinking throughout amateur and community sport (7-12). Taking the average across all six studies, it is estimated that over a third of players and members in community sporting clubs drank over 4 standard drinks per session (35.7%) on a regular basis at their club. Collectively, these studies indicate very high levels of short term risky drinking within community sporting clubs in Australia.

Excessive drinking among athletes, club members and sports spectators is related to an attitudinal link between sporting prowess and power and status (machismo), the association of drinking with camaraderie, relaxation and celebration, and the marketing of alcohol brands through all levels of sport (13-15). Concern with the effects of alcohol within community based sport led the Australian Drug Foundation to develop its successful *Good Sports* program to challenge the risky alcohol culture in grassroots sports.

### 4. The *Good Sports* Program

#### 4.1 Role of *Good Sports*

*Good Sports* is an alcohol harm reduction program. *Good Sports* supports clubs to introduce policies and practices that create a culture of responsible drinking within the club. The program operates in community sporting clubs across the country.

*Good Sports* supports community sporting clubs to introduce systematic change within their club to realise sustained responsible management of alcohol. More specifically *Good Sports* works to promote:

- Changes in clubs’ culture around alcohol consumption and the behaviour of players, members and supporters;
- Reductions in alcohol-related problems such as underage drinking, binge drinking, drink driving, violence and assault; and
- Improved financial viability and positive social impact of sporting clubs in their communities.

The program’s reach is considerable. *Good Sports* can be found in capital cities, regional centres and rural areas across Australia. There are *Good Sports* clubs in over 385 LGAs across the country. With an average membership of around 250 members per club, *Good Sports* reaches over 1.5 million Australians of all ages.

#### 4.2 *Good Sports* Operation

Good Sports’ success hinges on a three level Accreditation system (table 1). The progressive accreditation levels establish alcohol management standards for clubs which sell and/or consume alcohol.

Table 1. The *Good Sports* Accreditation Criteria

LEVEL	FOCUS	CRITERIA
Level 1	Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adherence to Liquor Licence legislation</li> <li>• Bar management (RSA training)</li> <li>• Smoke-free facilities</li> </ul>
Level 2	Behaviours/Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance of Level 1 criteria</li> <li>• Enhanced bar management</li> <li>• Food and drink (low alcohol and non-alcoholic) options</li> <li>• Safe transport policy</li> <li>• Diverse revenue generation</li> <li>• No discount drink promotions</li> </ul>
Level 3	Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance of Level 1 and 2 criteria</li> <li>• Alcohol management policy</li> <li>• Smoke-free policy</li> </ul>
Level 0	Clubs that don’t sell and/or consume but wish to participate in <i>Good Sports</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alcohol-free facilities</li> <li>• Smoke-free policy</li> <li>• Smoke-free facilities</li> <li>• Diverse revenue generation</li> <li>• Promotion of the <i>Good Sports</i> program</li> <li>• Safe transport policy</li> <li>• Alcohol management policy</li> </ul>

Safe Transport Policy: minimum of three strategies at Level 2 and five strategies at Level 3 from the list.

- Designated driver program
- Key register
- Taxi vouchers as prizes
- Taxi numbers clearly displayed
- Free call service for taxis
- Free non-alcoholic drinks for designated drivers
- Free bar snacks for designated drivers
- Free non-alcoholic drinks for bar servers
- Free bar snacks for bar servers
- Free club transport

On joining *Good Sports* clubs commit to progressing through the Accreditation levels in a set period, and increase their commitment to changing practices and policies as they advance to the next level. A local *Good Sports* Project Officer guides the club through the Accreditation process. The Project Officers work directly with each participating club and provide information, technical assistance and material resources, such as indoor and outdoor signage, publications and merchandise, and assist clubs to promote their involvement in the program. All the resources and the support of the Project Officer are provided to clubs free of charge.

Progression through all three *Good Sports* Accreditation levels is usually completed within 3-5 years. The staged process enables progressive changes to be embedded within the club before setting greater expectations at the next Level and it is important that the club committee takes ownership of the process.

## **5. Impact of the *Good Sports* Program**

Since 2006 a total of ten evaluation reports and peer reviewed publications have recorded outcomes for Good Sports in various jurisdictions across Australia. They reported the *Good Sports* program has delivered positive health and wellbeing outcomes to club members. Benefits include reduced levels of risky drinking, less anti-social behaviour, lower rates of drink-driving and closer social relationships. A summary of each finding follows.

### **5.1 Risky Drinking**

Good Sports clubs have less risky drinking than non-Good Sports clubs and moderating effects are enhanced among clubs at higher levels of program accreditation:

- The prevalence of risky drinking among males at Level 2 cricket clubs was found to be less than half that found at non-Good Sports clubs (9% versus 21%) (16).
- A study of football clubs found 68% fewer Level 3 club members engaging in risky drinking when compared to non-Good Sports clubs (41% versus 13%) (17).
- An examination of drinkers at cricket and football clubs found 22% at non-Good Sports clubs were risky drinkers, compared to 14% at Level 3 clubs. Average consumption was 19% lower at the Level 3 clubs (2.93 standard drinks compared to 3.62) (18).
- An examination of football and cricket clubs has revealed a greater prevalence of short-term risky drinkers at non-Good Sports clubs compared to Level 3 clubs (22% compared to 15%) (19). Similarly, a trend has been identified for the proportion of risky drinkers at clubs to decline as the clubs progress through the program: 46% at non Good-Sports clubs, 41% at Level 1 clubs, 38% at Level 2 clubs and 31% at Level 3 (20).

### **5.2 Anti-Social Behaviour**

Aggressive behaviour is reduced as clubs progress through the Good Sports Accreditation levels:

- An analysis of football clubs found fewer reports of threatening incidents and aggressive behaviour related to alcohol among those at the highest level of accreditation. Threatening incidents were reported at 64% of Level 1 clubs compared to 60% of Level 3 clubs, and aggression was reported at 64% of Level 1 clubs compared to 50% of Level 3 clubs (17).
- Similar results have been obtained from cricket clubs, with alcohol-fuelled threats more commonly reported among Level 1 than Level 2 clubs (44% versus 29%) and more alcohol-related aggression recorded at Level 1 clubs (33% versus 28%) (16).

### **5.3 Drink Driving**

Safe transport is emphasised at Levels 2 and 3 of the program. There are indications of reduced drink driving risks as clubs proceed as a Good Sports club. This is substantiated by lower Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) levels, fewer drink drivers and more preventative measures being adopted by Good Sports club members: e.g.

- A study of football/netball clubs found significantly lower BAC and fewer drivers at risk of being over 0.05 at Level 3 clubs when compared to Level 1 clubs (BAC of 0.03 versus 0.05; 3.2% members versus none). This trend was also shown in subjective assessments made by members: 5% of Level 1 members and 2% of Level 3 members admitted to getting drunk and driving home at least three times (16).
- A study involving cricket clubs found the average BAC of drivers was 21% lower at Level 2 clubs than Level 1 clubs. The number of members at risk of drink driving was the same at both levels, but there was a tendency for fewer of the Level 2 members to have been drunk and driven home on three or more occasions (2% compared to 5%) (20).
- BAC levels at cricket clubs in Victoria and South Australia have been examined. It included clubs at all levels of accreditation plus some not in the program. There was a trend for lower BAC's as clubs progressed to reaching the third and final level of accreditation. Average BAC readings for non-Good Sports clubs and clubs at Levels 1, 2 and 3 were respectively 0.11, 0.09, 0.07 and 0.05 (17).
- Another study examined cricket and football club members in Victoria and South Australia. Compared to clubs at Levels 2 and 3, the non-Good Sports clubs had significantly higher BAC's on average (0.03 and 0.03 versus 0.04 respectively) and significantly more members at risk of drink-driving (0.4% and 1.4% versus 2.8% respectively) (18).
- A national survey of clubs found Good Sports members more likely to take precautions to reduce risks of drink-driving (21). The average consumption at Good Sports clubs was 5% lower than at unaccredited clubs, yet more members at Good Sports clubs decided not to drive after drinking (24.8% at unaccredited clubs, 42.1% at Level 1 clubs and 36.8% at Level 2 and 3 clubs). Members of unaccredited clubs were less likely to take any precautions to reduce their drink driving risks: 20% of members at unaccredited clubs had taken no precautions, compared to 9% at Level 1 and 8% at Level 2 and 3 clubs (21).
- A study examined the likelihood of members drink driving in relation to how long a club was part of the Good Sports program (20). Modelling concluded that the odds of an individual driving from his or her club when over the legal BAC decreased by 8% for each season (six months) the club participated in the Good Sports program (20).

### **5.4 Social Capital**

Social capital is about the benefits that can emerge from the social relations that exist within communities. There is some support for Good Sports clubs engendering stronger bonds among members and having improved connections within their local communities.

A study involving clubs from more than 20 major sports, found Good Sports clubs had consistently higher levels of social capital than clubs that were not accredited in the program (21). In particular, members of Good Sports clubs were more active and ready to participate in their clubs and saw their clubs as more important parts of the community. They also shared a stronger sense of being valued and appreciated. These feelings of worth and connection replicated earlier work that highlighted them as distinguishing features at clubs that reached Level 3 (22).

## 6. Stakeholders and Partners

Good Sports is partnered by key stakeholders in each jurisdiction, which is essential for the model to respond to the nuances and needs of each State/Territory and local communities in which it operates. Over the last four years relationships have been forged with:

- Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing
- Australian National Preventative Health Agency
- Local government authorities across Australia
- Police departments
- Liquor Licencing Authorities
- Foundation for Alcohol Rehabilitation Education
- Victorian Health Promotion Foundation
- Victorian Department of Health
- Victorian Transport Accident Commission
- Transport for NSW (formerly Roads and Traffic Authority)
- NSW Health Department
- NSW Department of Sport and Recreation
- Motor Accidents Authority (NSW)
- Motor Accident Commission (SA)
- Queensland Health
- Queensland Police Service
- Queensland Gas Company
- Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance (Qld)
- Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services
- Tasmanian Department of Sport and Recreation
- Northern Territory Department of Justice
- Hunter New England Population Health (NSW)
- beyondblue
- and many others

## 7. *Good Sports* Indigenous Pilot Project

*Good Sports* is currently trialling pilot projects funded by the Australian National Preventative Health Agency (ANPHA). These projects are testing the capacity of the *Good Sports* model to be adapted to particular needs: they include ‘*Good Sports* Junior’, an age-appropriate model to address alcohol, tobacco use, nutrition and mental health issues in junior sport; an on-line ‘*Good Sports* Remote’ option for remote clubs that cannot access face-to-face project officers; ‘*Good Sports* Graduate’, a program for clubs that are established at Level 3 for 12 months or more; and ‘*Good Sports* Indigenous’, culturally sensitive models that are appropriate for Indigenous Communities throughout Australia.

### 7.1 *Good Sports* Indigenous

The ADF’s *Good Sports* program requires adaptation for remote and very remote Indigenous communities. The objective of the pilot project is to determine the most suitable role for *Good Sports* in Indigenous Communities and establish an implementation plan for central Australia. The aim is to employ a community development model rather than working with individual teams or clubs. As sport plays a key role in Indigenous Communities it offers an opportunity to link with the broader community. By working with local community leaders and agencies *Good Sports* will support the development of local strategies to manage alcohol related behaviour



through sport. Alongside the local community Good Sports aims to identify key issues in relation to alcohol management within the communities' priority sports, leading to development of specific local criteria that relate to alcohol use in the sporting context

### **7.2 Good Sports Central Australia**

Good Sports Central Australia (GSCA) will blend the existing Good Sports accreditation process and a new accreditation process designed specifically in collaboration with local communities. While there are general principles that will be essential elements of GSCA within Indigenous Communities, it is anticipated that each community will establish different plans relevant to their own needs. The critical role for Good Sports will be managing the engagement and support of community leaders to identify and implement appropriate strategies and to effectively work with other partners to link to broader community plans.

#### **7.2.1 Central Australia Advisory Group**

A Good Sports Advisory Group has been established in Alice Springs to provide strategic advice for this project. Members of the Advisory Group includes: the Mayor of Alice Springs, NT Police, Clontarf Foundation, AFL Central Australia, Liquor Licensing, FaHCSIA, Rugby League, Rugby Union, Cricket, NTG Alcohol & other Drugs, NTG Sport & Recreation. Clontarf Foundation

#### **7.2.2 Consultation with Communities**

*Good Sports* is visiting and consulting with Indigenous Communities that are suitable and willing to participate in the *Good Sports* Accreditation program and meeting with Indigenous leaders to identify engagement strategies that would assist communities to participate in Good Sports. It involves liaising with the *Good Sports* Central Australia Advisory Group members and stakeholders, not only to establish an appropriate role for Good Sports but to explore a possible association with existing and future Alcohol Management Strategies. They are also meeting with sporting clubs and associations to determine current links with Indigenous Communities and expansion or partnership opportunities. In December 2012 the project will deliver a *Good Sports Central Australia* implementation plan that will outline: staffing requirements; accreditation standards; stakeholder relationships; required engagement processes; anticipated variations of *Good Sports* based on individual Community needs and time frames.

#### **7.2.3 Response from Indigenous communities**

Extensive consultation has occurred with two communities within a 200 kilometre radius of Alice Springs. They had made their interest in Good Sports known to NT Good Sports staff through community leaders. Up to ten visits have been made to the communities including four formal community meetings, and meetings with local Aboriginal Corporation, key community members and relevant service providers, including youth, school, clinic, and Congress.

##### Place of sport

- Sport is very highly regarded in the two communities. It engenders community pride and plays crucial role in bringing people together and blends well with “traditional” cultural activities. The main sports are AFL, softball, basketball and swimming. Communities run their own sports carnivals although women’s sport is afforded lower priority & fewer resources than men’s sport. Sports administration gets done but with minimal support & organisation.

##### Alcohol and drug related problems

- Alcohol is consumed by community members in unsafe places that increase the risk of harm; the communities are disturbed by a developing problem with cannabis and there is

a high rate of tobacco consumption among the populations. In Alice Springs there is concern about binge drinking after matches, teams fielding players who are unfit due to high alcohol consumption, poor diet, and smoking; that excessive cannabis consumption leads to reduced motivation and little training. Other problems relate to the lack of safe, affordable transport and accommodation and few designated drivers.

#### Support for *Good Sports*

- Intelligence gained from the consultation to date has suggested *Good Sports* will suit remote communities if community development is the foundation of the model and is integrated into the implementation plan. How the sports are accredited and supported will be critical for the longevity for the work and for the behaviour change that is required for successful outcomes. A positive aspect is the communities have embraced the prospect of a family-friendly sports environment and safe celebratory behaviour is highly valued by people in remote communities.

#### Advice from communities

- *Good Sports* is more likely to be received well and supported if it is guided by the wisdom of the traditional owners & community leaders, if it ensures local ownership and places people before infrastructure. It must respect community time and space, and seek to facilitate action rather than directing action, learn from community history, and support informed decision making.
- The communities suggest Good Sports accreditation could be based on more or other drugs than alcohol -- alternatives are tobacco, ganja, volatile substances -- and on broader criteria such as respectful behaviours; codes of conduct; safe transport; and governance and leadership than

#### Mentoring role

- *Good Sports Central Australia* is exploring the possibility of developing regional approach to Good Sports so that communities which establish a Good Sports model could mentor similar or neighbouring communities. Apart from building capacity in more than one community it may help to solidify regional norms around the preferred behaviours as neighbouring communities would adopt a similar approach and provide a unified approach to the problems behaviour.

## **8. Sustainability of *Good Sports* in Indigenous communities**

*Good Sports'* success in the general community has been established by long term capacity building and has been refined through 12 years' experience. A commitment to ongoing support is also important in Indigenous Communities. We intend the current consultation process for *Good Sports Central Australia* will lead to the adaption of the *Good Sports* approach, alongside other alcohol management strategies, in remote indigenous communities in central Australia. It may be of especial benefit to Indigenous Communities that want to link participation in sport with broader community strategies to control alcohol problems.

The whole *Good Sports* team and the broader Australian Drug Foundation are waiting on the result of the *Good Sports Central Australia* consultation so that it can continue the task of adapting *Good Sports* for Indigenous Communities. We understand that this is a long term project which requires patience and dedication and we look forward to the challenge.

The ADF would be pleased to provide the Committee with further information about the work of *Good Sports* in Indigenous communities, both now and in the future.

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