



Stride Foundation Ltd
ABN 97 006 716 758
Level 3, 533 Little Lonsdale St,
Melbourne VIC 3000
T 03 9602 3311 F 03 9602 3377
E office@stride.org.au
www.stride.org.au

25 October 2012

Mr Shayne Neumann
House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
Parliament House,
CANBERRA
ACT 2600

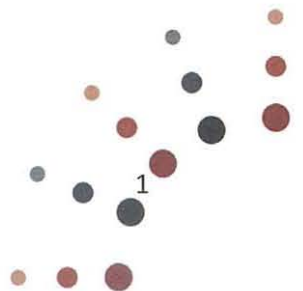
Dear Mr Neumann,

Inquiry into the contribution of sport to Indigenous wellbeing and mentoring

Stride Foundation (Stride) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (the Committee) review into the contribution of sport to Indigenous wellbeing and mentoring. We appreciate that the Committee has recognised the importance of sport as an engagement method in Indigenous communities, and among young people especially.

Stride has considered the Committee's terms of reference which we address in point form below. The following comments come directly from community members/leaders and secondly, from the perspective and observation of our program managers.

- **Sporting bodies increasing opportunities for Indigenous participation, including opportunities for Indigenous women.**
 1. Stride's programs increase the participation rate of Indigenous young people in sport and recreation during the school and the holiday periods. This is one of many positive contributors to a sense of wellbeing for young Indigenous people.
 2. Participation levels are certainly increased by providing sport-based activities, primarily in health and physical activities and indirectly in education, community engagement and overall wellbeing.



3. Sport is embraced by community generally, but it is the participation in regular, organised sport and education in healthy lifestyle choices and behaviours that will create lasting impacts.
 4. Though sport is undoubtedly an effective engagement tool in community, all stakeholders must be aware that there may be issues of shame related to Indigenous young people and adults not participating in sport. It might be possible to ameliorate this effect by drawing on the insight and stories of Indigenous athletes who have succeeded so that we can support and encourage Indigenous people to be confident in participating in sport, at any level.
 5. Stride encourages Indigenous mentors to deliver programs to Indigenous young people; they role model success and positive engagement as an Indigenous person and their stories are relevant. This develops capacity within Indigenous organisations and communities more broadly. More education, encouragement and incentives for role models or prospective role models might enhance the community leadership's skills and motivation of role models.
 6. Greater promotion of team sports such as hockey, softball, soccer, basketball, netball and AFL would ensure a greater rate of participation among young females who are more likely to get involved if their friends or family are participating.
 7. A vital dimension to sporting engagement for participation and wellbeing in Indigenous communities is the strategic cross-sectoral collaboration of service providers. It is imperative that local sporting organisations and key Indigenous health and family service providers work more closely in order to better connect Indigenous people to sporting opportunities and health services. Perhaps the biggest barrier to this is the 'silo effect' between local sporting associations and providers of key services to Indigenous people.
 8. Stride would like to propose a joint initiative between the Australian Sports Commission for National Sporting Organisations, state based sporting bodies and grass roots local sporting associations. We suggest putting in place a formal structure whereby local sporting associations are actively connected with key service providers for the purposes of educating community about the organised sport and health and wellbeing opportunities available.
 9. Collaboration is important to help community members and especially young people make the transition from 'holiday' programs to club-based participation.
- **Non-government organisations utilising sport as a vehicle to improve outcomes for Indigenous people.**
10. Community have expressed to Stride the need for more concrete outcomes, as opposed to just 'another sports program' that captures numbers.

*"I'm not interested in numbers in any sports program. Sport is good for our young people but it is not the amount of kids it attracts it what it means later that matters. I'm interested in culture and how programs have anything to do with our culture. Everything comes back to culture even sport's so it must be relevant and lasting."
(Community Leader, Coober Pedy)*

11. Sport based programs must link directly to local sports clubs, teams and developing community capacity (coaches, team leadership, referees, competition's). This ensures what is delivered in communities can be continued and sustained beyond project timelines and funding restrictions.
12. Organisations that utilise sport as a vehicle for engagement need to be very clear in their messages to young people about achievement and success particularly with Indigenous youth. While sporting success is clearly an effective method of engagement for Indigenous young people, role models/sports players need to relay that sports is not the only avenue of success in the world and the underlying skills acquired in their career can be applied in any context.

"Not every one of our kids is going to be an AFL player and I don't like when people lead them to believe they can be or that is the only way they can succeed. If that is going to be your path you know very early, 16/17. We need to see either higher achievement in sport from sport programs or the kids becoming leaders in other areas". Ceduna (Community Leader)

13. It is important that young people are offered a range of sports to in which to participate. Sporting role model programs in Indigenous communities tend to be football based and/or male dominated, often excluding young females.

- **The contribution of Indigenous sporting programs, as supplied by:**

- i) **The sporting codes**

Although high profile athletes can attract large community turn out, their professional commitments often dictate a limited, fly-in fly-out appearance. Community feedback to Stride Foundation is that for this reason the programs to which these athletes are attached often lack substance and continuity.

- ii) **The private and NGO sectors**

Usually these agencies have the capability and expertise to provide more structured programs, generating short to medium term impacts.

- iii) **Federal government assistance and Closing the Gap targets**

Stride Foundation has long advocated the importance of multi-year funding for funded projects. Achieving targets in Indigenous communities takes time and continued presence from service providers, necessary for building trust and knowledge of the community, its needs and strengths.

If you wish to discuss any of the matters addressed in this letter, please contact my office.

Yours Faithfully, 

Jane Hill
Chief Executive Officer
Stride Foundation Ltd