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House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

PO Box 6021

Parliament House

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By email: ATSIA@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Members

Inquiry into the Contribution of Sport to Indigenous Wellbeing and Mentoring

Netball welcomes the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs consulting with the community on the contribution of sport to Indigenous wellbeing and mentoring.

It is encouraging that the Committee's Chair, Mr Shayne Neumann MP, noted that the challenge is "to increase participation in sport and remove barriers to participation". Accordingly, netball's attached submission provides a number of examples that we trust go to the heart of the Committee's inquiry.

The Council of Australian Government's Closing the Gap commitments, along with the national apology to Australia's Indigenous peoples, and the formal endorsement of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples are noteworthy actions.

Netball appreciates the opportunity to provide its Submission to the Inquiry and looks forward to ongoing involvement.

If you require further information, please contact me on phone [REDACTED], or email

[REDACTED].

Yours sincerely

By email

Nadine Cohen

Head of Strategy & Government Liaison

26 October 2012

Encl.





**Netball's Submission to the
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal
and Torres Strait Islander Affairs' Inquiry into the
Contribution of Sport to Indigenous Wellbeing and Mentoring**

October 2012

Level 2, 140 King Street
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AUSTRALIAN NETBALL
diamonds

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Netball's Submission into the Contribution of Sport to Indigenous¹ Wellbeing and Mentoring

Executive Overview

There is absolutely no doubt that the contribution of sport, both on and off the court, positively contributes to social change. Participation in sport challenges social norms and barriers, enabling women and girls to assume new roles within their communities. Indigenous women and girls are no different.

The sport sector has been “used” to achieve many social policy outcomes such as education, housing, employment, safety, crime prevention and economic development. Creating lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity has been subsidiary (the use of sport as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself). Yet for many sports, the latter is at the core of our business. Socialisation, structure, teamwork, confidence, leadership skills, development, pressure of competition, making and learning from mistakes, pride, communication, determination, dedication and so much more are central to the culture of what sport is all about. Pure sport and social policy outcomes ought not to be mutually exclusive.

Whilst sport reflects many of society's inequalities, women and girls can now engage in a wider variety of sports and have greater opportunities than ever before to participate as coaches, umpires, officials, administrators and volunteers. Yes we still see disparities in participation, differences in rewards, disparities in media coverage, lack of female role models, inequitable resources and access to facilities, cultural and religious barriers, discrimination and stereotyping, but we must not lose sight of the advances that have been made. Women are seeing increasing prospects!

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).

Netball appreciates that working in Indigenous communities is a complex area, intensified by historical, social, community, family and individual factors, along with geographic variation across urban, rural, and remote communities. For Indigenous girls and women accessing sport programs and services are far more multifaceted, but no less attainable.

Success in Indigenous programs shares factors in common with non-Indigenous programs. Many of these factors are not new to sport. The challenge is capacity and in some cases capability.

¹ As per community practice, the word Indigenous is used to describe Australians from both Aboriginal (mainland Australia and Tasmania) and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

Background

As Australia's leading female sport, netball strives to deliver fair, safe, inclusive, respectful and supportive environments for all Australians. We believe that netball offers the enjoyment of participation, a sense of belonging and life-long involvement – no matter whether that's as a player, coach, official, administrator, volunteer or fan.

Netball in Australia (Netball Australia and the State/Territory Netball Associations) is committed to leading social change, strengthening and building capacity and capability in communities and providing innovative and sustainable netball programs to empower women and girls.

Netball is ranked as the leading women's participation team sport and the top team based sport in Australia for 15 to 24 year olds. Over 1.2 million participants enjoy the game nationally and Australia has been dominant on the international stage since 1963. Netball Australia has more than 330,000 registered members; 5,000 clubs nationally; 570 Associations; and eight member organisations.

1.975 million people in Australia say they are interested in netball, which equates to 11% of the population aged 14+.

Netball Australia is committed to advancing the sport of netball internationally. Australia has an obligation, as a world leader in netball, to share our knowledge and expertise to support international harmony, enhance integrity, and build capacity within other nations.

Netball is the largest female community based sporting organisation in the world, with more than 70 nations playing and over 21 million participants world-wide. Netball can make a real difference in the lives of women and girls.

By way of background, the sport of netball as a social change agent espouses many of the underlying principles that would have informed the Terms of Reference for this Inquiry released by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. At the strategic level, and nationally, examples include:

- In 2004, the National Netball Indigenous Advisory Group was formed to provide advice to Netball Australia management on matters relating to the promotion and development of the game of netball for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as part of Netball Australia's strategic priority of making netball an inclusive sport.
- In 2005, Netball Australia commissioned Indigenous research to:
 - Analyse the various netball programs being conducted for Indigenous Australians.
 - Undertake a demographic analysis of each State/Territory to identify heavily populated Indigenous regions.
 - Analyse and recommend programs and events that are essential for the development of Indigenous Australians in netball, including looking at barriers to participation. The research concluded that the main barriers to participation clustered around:

- In-effective, poor or non-existent communication, collaboration and strategic partnerships.
 - Finance, infrastructure and services (lack of capital and life-cycle funding).
 - Transport and logistics especially given the remoteness of some geographic areas.
 - Culture, including attitudes to physical activity, Anglo-Saxon planning and delivery.
 - Work force, including volunteers and lack of appropriately trained people.
 - Program awareness and delivery, including male domination of sport in communities, and “one size fits all” approach.
- Acknowledge that whilst it would be ideal for all Indigenous peoples to join mainstream pathways, many Indigenous peoples do not have the confidence and or opportunity, as such pathways for players, coaches and umpires were identified.
 - Develop a National strategy (resultant initiatives are used as examples in this submission).

At the core of any initiative must be capacity building and consideration of long-term sustainability, including authentic community ownership and control, planning and delivery, a holistic approach and links to partnerships.

Community cohesion and involvement in mainstream sport requires sensitivity to the needs of participants, provision of a wide range of programs, and provision of opportunities for all genders, age ranges and abilities. The resultant outcomes include trust and strengthened relationships.

Central to any program design strategy to empower communities must be equality of access to services, equity of participation and equitable and appropriate outcomes.

- All netball State/Territory development staff received cross-cultural awareness training. Outcomes included understanding issues such obligations of family members and the wider community surrounding occasions of deaths, funerals and coming of age; lack of transport opportunities, family and public transport, especially in geographically isolated areas; community internal politics; and that cultural activities will take precedence over netball (sport).
- Netball Australia sees the inclusion of State/Territory Departments of Sport and Recreation and other community service deliverers as critical to developing on-going relationships with Indigenous communities. The Indigenous Sport and Recreation Development Officers Network (see comments later in this submission), has been the biggest contributing factor to the successful roll-out of netball’s Indigenous grass roots strategy ~ San Remo NetSetGo!². Their links to community and key community people provided a vehicle for introduction and discussion.

² San Remo NetSetGO! incorporates skill activities, minor games and modified matches in a fun and safe environment. It provides an opportunity to meet new friends for not only the children, but also the parents. The weekly program is coordinated by accredited coaches to ensure a quality experience for all participants. The structured program provides every participant with the opportunity to develop netball skills, physical fitness, social skills, sportsmanship and an understanding of the game of netball. Clubs, Associations, schools or community groups can apply to become an accredited San Remo NetSetGO! Centre.

- Netball has developed and implemented a Member Protection Policy aimed at providing safe environments. The Policy informs people involved in netball of their legal and ethical rights and responsibilities in relation to anti-discrimination and harassment, including age; disability; family/carer responsibilities; gender identity/transgender status; homosexuality and sexual orientation; irrelevant medical record; irrelevant criminal record; political belief/activity; pregnancy and breastfeeding; race; religious belief/activity; sex or gender; social origin; trade union membership/activity.

The Member Protection Policy provides assurances that improper conduct will not be tolerated and will be dealt with. The Policy also encourages any person or group who feels that they may have been subject to improper or unlawful behaviour to come forward to discuss their concerns.

- Advocating “Play by the Rules” - a unique partnership between the Australian Sports Commission, the Australian Human Rights Commission, all State/Territory sport and recreation and anti-discrimination agencies and the NSW Commission for Children and Young People.

“Play by the Rules” provides information and online learning for community sport and recreation on how to prevent and deal with discrimination, harassment and child abuse and develop inclusive and welcoming environments for participation.

- As part of the Australian Government’s Gender Equality for Women Community Action Grants Stream, delivering Expect Respect Education aimed at young people aged 12 – 24; delivering social marketing and peer education in partnership with the David Wirrpanda Foundation targeting Indigenous school-aged girls; and developing a “NO to Violence” module in Netball Australia’s coaching framework.
- Commending the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children.
- Working to deliver greater equality between women and men through facilitating aspirational leadership, providing opportunities for board directorships and senior executive management positions, increasing opportunities in coaching, officiating and administration, introducing contemporary employment practices, providing minimum terms of employment for elite netballers, and raising the profile of women’s sport.
- Giving much needed support to our paid staff and volunteers by developing a Work Force Planning and Development Strategy. This is critical as sport is one of the areas that attract the highest volunteering rates.
- Training and skilling our paid staff and volunteers through enhanced on-line learning platforms and resources; especially for coaches and administrators who are key influencers for our youth.
- Developing a Corporate Social Responsibility Framework, Respect & Responsibility Framework, and Racial and Religious Vilification Framework.
- A key priority for Netball’s Community Engagement Manager will be to engage, develop and implement a Netball Reconciliation Action Plan in 2013.

Context

In framing netball's response to the Inquiry into the Contribution of Sport to Indigenous Wellbeing and Mentoring it was important to understand the context and some of the key concepts, in particular:

- Closing the Gap Clearinghouse¹ conveyed that:
 - Indigenous Australians suffer the worst health of any population group in Australia, having a burden of disease that is estimated to be two and a half times that of the total Australian population. This is reflected in a worse life expectancy for Indigenous Australians—12 and 10 years less for males and females respectively than that of the non-Indigenous population.
 - Socioeconomic disadvantage with its links to poor living conditions and inequitable distribution of power, money and resources is also associated with an unhealthier lifestyle, higher chronic disease risk status and poorer health outcomes.
 - Over half (51%) of Indigenous people living in non-remote parts of Australia aged 15 and over do very little or no exercise, compared with 33% of non-Indigenous Australians. Regular and frequent physical activity is a key determinant to overall personal and communal wellbeing and good health.
 - The benefits to health of participating in sport are well recognised and participation rates for Indigenous children are comparable with those of non-Indigenous children. For example, over two-thirds (69%) of Indigenous boys and over half (51%) of Indigenous girls aged 12–14 participate in organised sport. By comparison, participation rates for 12–14 year olds in the general Australian population are 74% for boys and 55% for girls. However, participation in sport decreases rapidly with age and participation rates for women are much lower than for men.
 - Sport can be used to promote healthy lifestyles. A small number of evaluations suggest a link between sports role models and health-promoting behaviour. These are most effective for children and youth where significant adults in their community form long-term mentoring relationships, alongside the shorter-term involvement of sporting celebrities.
- The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare² in the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples defines (social and emotional) **wellbeing** as a broad and holistic concept that reflects the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander holistic understanding of life and health. It includes mental health, but also considers other factors such as cultural, spiritual and social wellbeing. It encompasses not just the wellbeing of the individual, but also the wellbeing on their family and community.

Relating the work of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare to sporting environment, issues such as positive wellbeing (happiness and vitality), discrimination (perceived rejection and persecution by the dominant culture) and cultural identification (sense of belonging at the community level and connection to country) can be impacted given many sporting clubs and opportunities are culturally and socially inappropriate for Indigenous Australians.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Report highlighted that Indigenous males were significantly more likely than females to experience positive well-being.

Further, Indigenous female youth (aged 12 – 17 years) were more likely to have low levels of self-esteem (internalized self-image, feelings of self-worth and efficacy) than their male counterparts. Low levels of self-esteem are known as a cause and consequence of many emotional or behavioural difficulties.

- A literature review commissioned by VicHealth³ into sports role models noted that role models, heroes and mentors are part of everyday life and therefore are thought to have a significant impact on the beliefs and actions of individuals. The terms, rightly or wrongly, are often used interchangeably.

Role models may influence others through such features as attractiveness, status, competency and similarity. Characteristics such as race gender, socio-economic status may also be important. Identification of role models change over time for an individual as their experience various life-stages and influencers.

In the context of the sporting environment, sport role models provide a strong influence on children. Gender difference identified that males tend to identify athletes as role models more often than females. This is unsurprising given the media plays a large role and when athletes reach a certain level of visibility, they become role models whether they like it or not, and male sport is far more visible when compared to female sport.

The VicHealth review highlights **mentoring** may be a significant mechanism of social influence where the role model/learner relationship is different than the usual process of role modelling. Mentoring is, in fact, the process of people helping people where helping, teaching, advising, counselling, instructing and guidance are provided by one person to another. In the sporting sphere, the process of coaching is one in which the place of a mentor would be perceived by many people as most appropriate.

Mentoring has been shown to play an important role in various areas including the development of coaches and helping individuals such as women overcome barriers which inhibit them from obtaining sports leadership positions.

Mentoring has been found to be particularly advantageous to minority groups in sport. Evaluation of mentoring programs have identified that mentees gain benefits such as increased support and advice, increased confidence and empowerment, improved goal setting, developed networks, increased motivation, enthusiasm and personal satisfaction. This outcome subsequently provided a catalyst in maintaining their interest and involvement in the sport and recreation industry.

The VicHealth review concluded that when people communicate and observe people of similar backgrounds who have been successful, this is a significant key for encouraging behavioural change. In general, the most effective role model programs are those that focus on developing a long term, mentor relationship particularly for individuals from socially disadvantaged groups.

Interpretations

Sport: Racism

In Australia, racism undermines the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and redressing racism has been identified as a national priority. Racism is conceptualised as comprising avoidable and unfair phenomena that lead to inequalities in power, resources and opportunities across racial or ethnic groups. It can be expressed through beliefs and stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination, and occurs at many social levels, including interpersonally and systemically, and as internalised racism. Aboriginal Australians experience substantial disadvantage compared with the rest of the Australian population. This disadvantage is associated with both historical and contemporary racism, colonisation and oppression⁴.

A challenge for sport is the stereotype that Indigenous people are physically gifted, especially as Australian rules and rugby league footballers.

Sport is a microcosm of society reflecting many things, however, the impact and influence of sport is heightened as a result of media exposure.

Sport must combat racism in order to make a sustainable and valid contribution to Indigenous wellbeing. Netball Australia, on behalf of the netball community, is a supporter of the Australian Human Rights Commission's 'RACISM. IT STOPS WITH ME.' Campaign. The purpose of the campaign is to:

- Ensure more Australians recognise that racism is unacceptable in our community.
- Give more Australians, at an individual and organisational level, the tools and resources to take practical action against racism.
- Empower individuals and organisations to prevent and respond effectively to racism where it may happen.

Marcia Ella-Duncan was the first Aboriginal scholarship holder at the Australian Institute of Sport and the first Aboriginal woman to represent Australia in netball, for which she was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia. Outside of sport she has spent her life working in the area of criminal justice. Marcia is a member of the National Netball Indigenous Advisory Group. Marcia identifies both as a descendant of the Yuin nation and as a member of the La Perouse Aboriginal community.

Marcia states that it is not sport's sole responsibility to deal with racism. However, sport does have the ability to provide that level playing field. In Marcia's personal experience, sport had a profound effect on her own personal development and where she is in the world right now – it was a very positive experience.

Marcia notes that maturation of the country around tolerance, diversity and acceptance means that our awareness of racism in sport has been heightened. There are still racist people in Australia and in our sporting institutions, but what has changed in sport is the way we deal with it. She feels that we still have a long way to go in terms of local park level, but generally we are better at dealing with racism when it does become an issue.

In 2004, Marcia founded The Pearlers; a netball club that has a diverse representation and a very strong identity as an Aboriginal netball club. However, the club is not incorporated under the *Aboriginal Incorporations Act*, does not include the word “Aboriginal” in the name, and nowhere in the governance of policy does it say that the club is only for Aboriginal people. What the club does have are policies containing upfront statements about tolerance, acceptance, diversity and responsibility to provide a safe and fun experience for young women in particular.

The club has a large portion of players from disadvantaged backgrounds and seeks to raise funds to help ease the financial burden for families. The club actively encourages girls from the local Aboriginal community, girls from single parent families and girls from large families to play netball. The club nurtures values such as inclusion, valuing diversity and participation in a competitive team environment. It provides an opportunity for growth, excellence, friendship and fun.

Marcia believes that coaches have a responsibility to ensure fairness and equity and to model appropriate behaviour. Every player, manager and coach involved gets a letter from the president which reminds them that racism is not acceptable and that the club promotes diversity and tolerance as its core values.

Ultimately, it’s not just about racism and being tolerant; it’s about allowing people to feel the benefits of active participation in sport.

Adapted from Walker, Ashley. *An Interview with Marcia Ella-Duncan*. Indigenous Law Bulletin, Vol. 7, No. 20, Sept/Oct 2010: 25-27.

Sport: Cultural Identification

As noted above, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Report highlighted a sense of belonging at the community level and connection to country. The sport sector, whilst aiming for fair, safe and inclusive environments for all, must not underestimate the importance of identity.

Indigenous researcher, Darren Godwell⁵ noted that Aboriginal people personalise their culture and their traditions in many ways, including through Aboriginal sports carnivals.

The carnivals provide a rare contemporary chance to reaffirm connections, the importance of elders, geographic lineage, Aboriginal heritage, language, tribal affiliations and cultural differences. Connection to place, people and symbolism of Aboriginal-only sporting competition helps Indigenous people to identify sport with existing values and cultural practices. As such flexibility and customisation are essential to ensure practical decisions at grass roots level benefit the participants across various environments.

The **All Indigenous Boomerangs Netball Team** is a South Australian based sporting team. One of the roles of the team is to actively promote awareness regarding a healthy lifestyle among Indigenous people. The team also serves to increase self-esteem and self-confidence through players’ participation.

Australian Indigenous Schoolgirls Netball Carnival

The annual Australian Indigenous Schoolgirls Netball Carnival consists of match play competing against other states, finals matches and possible and probable selections. Players are exposed to a range of development sessions involving skills, positional knowledge and court structure. Players must fulfill 2 criteria (1) must be at school and (2) must be Indigenous to be selected in the national Indigenous schoolgirls' netball teams.

Charlestown Netball Association, in partnership with NSW Sport and Recreation, for more than 10 years has hosted a tournament attracting more than 300 Aboriginal netballers across three divisions (1) Open Women, (2) Junior Girls and (3) Mixed.

The Tournament is aimed at increasing participation of Aboriginal Women in Sport and Recreation in a fun competitive environment.

A maximum of fourteen players can be registered per team, including a maximum of three non-Aboriginal players per team.

The Code of Conduct notes that all umpires, players, officials, spectators and volunteers must respect the rights, dignity and worth of all people involved in the game, regardless of their gender, ability, religion or cultural background.

NAIDOC Netball Carnival & NAIDOC All Stars Team

Held in July every year, all Western Australian grass roots sites are encouraged to participate in the competition and are financially supported by Netball WA to attend. In 2012, the NAIDOC Netball Carnival had a record breaking 68 teams register with over 1,100 athletes participating and more than 1,000 spectators attending to support this event as there is always a social element attached to the carnivals every year.

Every year Netball WA selects a NAIDOC All Stars team. This team consists of 12 athletes, Head Coach, Assistant Coach and Team Manager. In 2012, the NAIDOC All Stars team attended the Inter-Regional Cadet Carnival. This carnival is part of the Netball WA Athlete Pathway and is held every year for regions to display their best athletes aged 17 years and under.

The **Ronny Gibbs 7's Rugby League and Netball tournament** was held for the 16th year in Bourke and hosted by the Far West Academy of Sport. The tournament attracted 31 teams representing ten schools and one academy from across the region; Bourke, Cobar, Nyngan, Wilcannia, Gilgandra, Coonamble, Cunnamulla, Baradine, Lightning Ridge and Girri Girri Academy.

The **Jenny Wright Shield** run in conjunction with the Ricky Walford Shield is held annually in Walgett, NSW and provides a netball carnival for the local and surrounding Indigenous community. 2012 was the 20th anniversary with hundreds participating from schools in Western NSW.

Mildura sports carnival - a real team effort

With a history spanning nearly 30 years, Victoria's annual Indigenous Football and Netball Carnival is an annual highlight for Indigenous communities attracting more than 3,000 participants and spectators.

Hosted by the Mildura Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group (IFVRAG), the main aim of the annual carnival is to bring Indigenous community members together.

The event in 2012 brought together 24 netball teams and 14 AFL football teams from Mildura, Shepparton, Echuca, Bendigo and metropolitan Melbourne.

IFVRAG Chairperson and Mildura LIN participant Janine Wilson said: "Sport is the biggest activity that brings us together, and it's one of the reasons why this carnival has been such a major success for many years. It's also an opportunity to showcase our culture and focus on community pride".

To stage the event IFVRAG works in partnership with the Robinvale and Mildura LINs, Mildura Aboriginal Corporation, Mildura Rural City Council, Department of Justice, Mallee Sports Assembly and Victoria Police.

Adapted from Voice of Indigenous Community Engagement, Issue 4, June 2012, Stories from Victoria's Local Indigenous Networks.

Sport: Linkages with Other Strategies

Many federal and State/Territory government plans, initiatives and projects exist to support improvements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's health, education, housing, employment, discrimination, safety, and economic development, amongst others. More often than not, these priority areas have the resources, financial and others, and sport is used to achieve these broader policy outcomes.

No School No Play Initiative: Deadly Sista Girlz

The No School No Play Deadly Sista Girlz Netball Program is delivered in partnership with the David Wirrpanda Foundation through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations No School No Play initiative. The program is designed to build self-esteem and confidence in young disadvantaged women and it engages, inspires and empowers the young women to become leaders in their families, schools and communities. The program combines netball and 'life skills' while mentoring young women about how to improve their health, education and employment outcomes.

Participants were selected by the Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers, Welfare Teachers and Year Coordinators and then invited to participate in the No School No Play Deadly Sista Girlz Netball Program. Invitations to the program were given to the girls who had poor attendance and/or behaviour outcomes and who were considered at risk of disengaging and/or engaging in risky behaviours. Approximately 80% of the participants did not play netball and many had never played before.

Netball is used as a medium in five schools to engage girls and encourage them to attend school. Identity, goal setting, communication, learning styles, leadership, healthy relationships, sexual health, nutrition, drugs and alcohol, financial literacy and personal hygiene are also covered. Results include positive growth and development in the girls, and high engagement and retention rates.

Memorandums of Understanding were developed and completed for each school. A consistent point of contact was developed at each school, which made it easier for communication about the program. The David Wirrpanda Foundation has had regular contact with the schools, collects weekly attendance data and feedback from the participants and schools, and collect written feedback through surveys a couple of times per year.

The No School No Play Deadly Sista Girlz Netball Program in early 2012 was recommended as a best practice project by the Western Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People.

Mentors work weekly with the girls in the program and have really started to notice changes in girls' attitudes, behaviours and engagement. Older students or returning girls start to lead the younger participants.

"The girls from last year really stepped up and I've buddied them up with the year 7/8 girls for our sessions as some of the younger girls are very shy (and 2 are actually illiterate) so I thought that would help out. It was also really great hearing the older girls talking to the younger ones about the program and their experiences; they have really matured this year which was great to see".

Older girls provide strong role models for the younger girls and are starting to influence them beyond the program sessions.

"We talked about fighting in the school and community, we still have a few year 8 (girls) that are causing a lot of trouble with other students in the school. Some of the older girls in the group talked about the need to make good friends in the school and not bully other kids into fearing them".

Mentors meet with the Aboriginal Education Officers, or Deputy Principals, before or after each session to gain some insight into some of the issues or events that has happened since their last session. The weekly delivery helps to provide a much more stable environment and a consistent behaviour management program.

Communication and relationships are improving between each other, their peers and their teachers; this is driven by the mentors facilitating discussions around improving communication.

"We then had a round table discussion on the difficulties of communicating in a classroom setting and some of the things we can do to overcome those (making eye contact, speaking clearly, using palm cards, being prepared and listening when someone else is talking)".

The girls' confidence and pride has really developed throughout the program.

"One of our girls spoke about reconciliation and what it means to her personally along with the reading of a poem. Quite a few of the staff faculty commented on the wonderful attendance of the Aboriginal girls and how fantastic it was to hear one of them speak".

The girls are communicating better with their teachers and the activities have helped to build and create this interaction.

"The other really great thing to report on was the fantastic interaction between the girls and the teachers in an informal setting. The teachers showed a lot of interest and gave the girls a lot of positive praise for the coffee shop. I also heard quite a lot of teachers congratulating a student on her athletic achievement last week".

(The Australian Government funding allocated to Netball Australia for the No School No Play initiative ceases on 31 December 2012. Existing funding agreements will not be extended beyond this date).

National Binge Drinking Strategy - Gwabba Yorga Gabba Worra (Good Girls Don't Drink)

Netball WA and the David Wirrpanda Foundation deliver the National Binge Drinking Strategy to all Netball WA Grass Roots Sites to educate young Indigenous females on the effects of drinking alcohol and how this may affect their family, friends and people in the community.

Using netball as a vehicle to deliver this project, Netball WA and the David Wirrpanda Foundation mentors focus on educating the athletes on what binge drinking is and its affects. Athletes are encouraged to discuss media stories which are alcohol related and talk about who this story has affected, how others have been affected and what as a community they can do to prevent events like these from happening.

Netball WA has had more of an opportunity to engage or re-engage with grass roots Sites as a result of its involvement with David Wirrpanda Foundation and the National Binge Drinking Strategy Program.

Newman Senior High School – Shooting Goals Program

A partnership program between Newman Senior High School, Swan Districts Football Association and BHP Billiton Iron Ore. (Hedland Senior High school is running a similar program for the fifth year in 2013).

Shooting Goals places a strong focus on a comprehensive two-three hour a week netball curriculum linked to the Health and Physical Education learning outcomes. This allows students to be extended in the physical, technical, tactical and mental components of netball.

The program is designed to promote school attendance and engagement, develop individual self-esteem, demonstrate the importance of goals and aspiration, explore the notions of team work and leadership and demonstrate the importance of health and wellbeing.

The incentive program encourages participants in the program to apply their acquired skills within the community, benefiting local sporting organisations with qualified coaches, umpired, trainers and administrators.

The examples above highlight the role that netball has played in broader social policy issues. Notwithstanding, netball has grappled with being primarily used as a tool to achieve broader policy outcomes with no secondary benefit to sport per se (the use of sport as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself).

A valid program that goes to the heart of netball's dilemma is the Australian Government's Learn Earn Legend! initiative that encourages and supports young Indigenous Australians to stay at school, get a job and be a legend for themselves, their family and their community.

The Learn Earn Legend! initiative is strongly associated with the National Rugby League, Former Origin Greats and Australian Football League matches. In 2011, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations identified low level of female participation in Learn Earn Legend! initiatives and commenced discussions with Netball Australia to become part of the program.

After lengthy consideration, Netball Australia made a strategic decision not to proceed given many of the Learn Earn Legend key performance indicators were beyond the scope of what a sport could achieve, namely increasing retention for year 10 and 11 students progressing into year 12, the number of student transitioning to employment, the number of students transitioning to further education, and the number of students transitioning to an apprentice/traineeship.

It is encouraging to note that Learn Earn Legend! has recently partnered with Tennis Australia and the Evonne Goolagong foundation to involve Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander youth in a national tennis program. The program aims to provide Indigenous youth with the opportunity to pick up a racquet, have fun and have a healthier lifestyle. This approach is well within what Netball Australia could have achieved.

The Sporting Chance Program is another valuable package that uses sport as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. Started in 2007 by the Australian Government, the Program's objective is to encourage improved educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (boys and girls) using sport and recreation. The development of sporting skills and participation in sport are subsidiary outcomes. There are netball Sporting Chance Program providers and projects.

The Sporting Chance Program has two elements; (a) 59 School-based Sports Academies that provide intensive, innovative and high quality sports-focused learning and development opportunities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary school students; and (b) five Education Engagement Strategies that provide a range of sport, recreation and education activities for up to 6,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary and secondary school students

In 2009, the Department of Finance and Deregulation's Sporting Chance Program⁶ review found that:

- Sport Chance Academies used sport as a hook to engage students, rather than as an activity in its own right. According to academy providers this approach has many advantages. Organised sport provides a useful framework for instilling and reinforcing appropriate behaviours and discipline for

the students. Academies are often able to secure additional funding and in-kind support from different professional sporting codes, such as the support of local coaches to develop and deliver components of academy programs and to connect students to local sporting events or sporting networks.

- Providers indicated that sport also helped to facilitate team building, improved school spirit and improved engagement with the local community or communities further afield through participation in sporting events.
- The audit concluded that the most important aspect of the program for many students is the mentoring role played by academy staff and the relationships they develop with other students.
- The level of involvement of girls in the academies has not been as successful as the program's original target of 50 per cent of participants. In 2008, girls represented approximately 30 per cent of total academy participants (it is important to note that the eight Clontarf Foundation academies only deliver their program to Indigenous boys).
- Academies and schools have indicated that it is a challenge to engage and retain girls in academy programs and some have found it necessary to change academy activities regularly to maintain their interest. The academies were interested in opportunities to share information about strategies that may work for girls.
- The issues relating to the involvement of girls in academies are likely to be complex. For example, the one girls-only academy, Role Models WA Clontarf Girls Academy, indicated that the lack of purpose-built boarding accommodation for girls from remote areas attending the school has led to a high turnover of girls at the school and consequently in their program.
- The retention of girls in the program requires investigation. Research should be conducted into the needs of Indigenous female students and their motivations. It may be that specific strategies need to be developed for females, either within the framework of the Sporting Chance Program or through alternative programs.
- Sport appears to be providing a useful framework through which appropriate discipline and behaviour can be reinforced to students. Academies provided examples of how sport was able to serve as a development tool building confidence, motivation and self-discipline.
- Academies seek to improve students' connections with school by enabling them to demonstrate success through sport and link that to success at school, or just by being a part of something positive, healthy and which they enjoy and which is associated with school.

In effect, the netball "brand" is used to achieve outcomes such as work experience and increased school attendance at the expense of developing, building and sustaining trust and connections with and within Indigenous communities. There is limited or no direct contact with areas that link people, sporting groups and communities, such as coaching, officiating, administration and volunteering. Whilst acknowledging that any policy response needs to be multi-dimensional, the risk is that people will see sport as a "social policy fix" as opposed to structured physical activity that can result in life-long benefits such as well-being, social cohesion and capacity building.

Indigenous Netball Academy Proposal

In March 2011 Netball Australia developed an Indigenous Netball Academy Proposal aimed at providing young Indigenous girls (aged 14 to 17 years) with the same opportunities as netballers within the mainstream to access specialist coaching in a non-threatening environment of their peers. In addition, Indigenous netballers would be provided with information, life skills, resources and services aimed at advancing their life positions such as employment/career management, lifestyle management, finance, health and wellbeing, and nutrition.

The Indigenous Netball Academy proposed four levels: (1) talent identification via community visits competitions and selection trails; (2) State/Territory based Indigenous Netball Academies; (3) National Indigenous Talent Camp; and (4) National Indigenous Development team.

The budget was in the order of \$420,000.

Unfortunately, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations elected not to fund a national initiative, instead opting for a small pilot in NSW. Netball Australia determined not to proceed as this would have resulted in an unfair system advantage for NSW at the expense of the broader national pathway, access and equity.

Sport: Capacity

It is important to acknowledge the limited capacity of the sport sector, particular at State/Territory organisation, association, region and club level. This coupled with the broad range of social, environmental, cultural, geographic and historical considerations in delivering programs to group such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples impacts on the ability to develop sustainable models and real partnerships.

Programs that have been instrumental in building capacity and consequently sustainable programs have a heavy emphasis on what James Cook University (Australia) terms “cultural brokers” and “cultural mentors” (the roles may overlap).

Cultural brokers are people and or organisations who facilitate the broader crossing of another person or group of people from one culture to another, bridging, linking or mediating between groups or persons of different cultural backgrounds. The key outcome for sports would be to bridge the cultural divide, facilitate a smooth introduction and interaction between the sport and the Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander community and help all parties to understand all views and cultural values, beliefs, and practices.

Cultural mentors help to teach sport about local customs and norms, providing advice about views and cultural values, beliefs, practices and associated protocols which need to be followed. Often the cultural mentor is a person from the participant group or community that the sport wants to work with.

In addition, capacity and capability building have, at the core, the use of sport as an end in itself. As noted above, whilst sport’s relationship to social change is multi-dimensional and there are clear linkages, it is important to focus on core sport strategies, such as:

- Developing sport among Indigenous peoples.
- Increasing numbers of Indigenous peoples who play, coach, officiate, administer and volunteer at the community level in metropolitan, regional and remote areas.
- Providing a pathway for more talented Indigenous peoples, including players, coaches, officials and administrators in mainstream sport.
- Focusing of “fan” engagement.
- Accessing facilities, resources and infrastructure to enable easier access to participation.
- Encouraging inclusiveness, especially in community grass roots clubs.

Leadership within the sport and active recreation system could be provided through the National Sport and Active Recreation Policy Framework agreed by all governments in June 2011. The Framework provides a guide for the development and alignment of policies, strategies and programs by governments within their own jurisdictions in pursuit of a system that delivers: increased participation; success in international competition; strong national sporting competition; and contributes to whole of government objectives including improved health and education outcomes (including sport in schools and higher education institutions), enhanced social inclusion and community development.

The Australian Sports Commission could also take a greater leadership role, utilising the “Essence of Australian Sport” as the framework, to proactively help the sport industry to reaffirm and implement “a fair go for all” into their daily activities, processes and policies.

The Australian Sports Commission, on behalf of Commonwealth Agencies and State/Territory Departments of Sport and Recreation, managed and administered the Indigenous Sport Program⁷. In effect, the Australian Sports Commission provided a “brokering role” to help sport increase participation and encourage community ownership and management of sport activities, including skill development.

The Indigenous Sport Program created valuable pathways, at the base of which was the experience of community-based sport programs that invariably led to connections and engagement with sporting clubs and competitions. The networks created the potential to build greater opportunities for participants, athletes and teams to take the varied pathway that the “mainstream” sporting system offers.

A central pillar of the program is the Indigenous Sport Development Officers who liaise with Indigenous communities in their region to assess the sporting needs and priorities. Their aim is to create sustainable programs by focusing on building the sporting capacity of Indigenous Australians. This is 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.

The Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport currently manages the national network of 50 Indigenous Sport Development Officers, supported by 28 Indigenous Sport Development Officer positions through funding agreements with States/Territories.

Over the last 18 months, netball has noticed that linkages between the national sporting organisation and Indigenous Sport Development Officer network have weakened. A potential reason could be the shift in how the Australian Sports Commission provides participation support; general strategic support around participation growth is now provided, as opposed to the “brokering” role.

In effect, Netball Australia lost the direct relationship with the Indigenous Sport Development Officers who after consulting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to better understand their sporting needs, then negotiated with sporting organisations as to the availability of sport participation and development programs and coordinated the delivery of programs, in partnership with sporting organisations.

Indigenous netballers swell representative ranks

A single Bunbury Indigenous women's netball team has become the backbone of the WA region's representative sides, at times providing up to half the sides' representative players.

Since the Moorditj Noongar Yorgas Netball club formed four years ago with support from the Australian Sports Commission's Indigenous Sport Program, it has attracted over 50 registered players.

The club has also had 15 women become accredited coaches and another 15 become accredited umpires, including one who is now accredited to umpire at state level.

A locally employed Indigenous netball program officer attracted older women to skills clinics that included courses for coaching and officiating as well as playing skills.

This gave the club a depth of officials and coaches as well as administrative skills to run and maintain club processes.

The Australian Sports Commission's Perth-based Indigenous Sport Development Officer Clem Rodney said the club was built on a solid foundation that included:

- Holding skills clinics not only in playing but in coaching and officiating.
- Creating an inclusive atmosphere that encouraged women to build their skills together.
- Providing opportunities for the women to take over the running of the club and ensuring they had the skills to do so.
- Providing a pathway for talented club members to go on to WA regional netball academies to further improve their skills.

Adapted from Small Candle Consulting, *Indigenous Sport Program: Evaluation Report*, August 2009, p.12.

The Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport, Office for Sport administers the Indigenous Sport and Active Recreation Program which aims to increase active participation of able and disabled Indigenous Australians in sport and active recreation activities; encourage and increase community ownership and management of sport and active recreation activities; provide employment opportunities for people to support the provision of sport and recreations activities; promote and provide support for mainstream sporting pathways and development opportunities through competition for talented Indigenous athletes, and deliver flexible sport and recreation programs focused on whole of government outcomes that meet the needs of communities.

Rumbalara Football Netball Club builds community spirit

In 2012/13 the Rumbalara Football Netball Club received a \$214,500 Indigenous Sport and Active Recreation Program grant to assist in football and netball participation in Shepparton, Victoria.

The Rumbalara Football Netball Club has competed in over 16 seasons, during 2012 the club fielded four football and nine netball teams in local competitions.

It is the wider benefits for the local Aboriginal community that has really earned Rumbalara Football Netball Club its reputation, in particular the clubs' ability to promote good health, healthy lifestyles, social inclusion and community building.

Rumbalara Football Netball Club does not promote drinking, advertises quit smoking, and actively goes through good health practices, hoping that that these positive messages will spill out into the community.

As members grow up in the club, progressing from players to coaches, they have the chance to learn valuable leadership skills.

The club builds its role models, builds its mentors and builds skills in the club to give people who wouldn't normally get the opportunity to take roles of leadership in sight of the community or their families.

Adapted from <http://www.indigenous.gov.au/rumbalara-football-netball-club-builds-community-spirit/>
Published: 27 September 2012

Netball NSW Far West Development Plan 2012- 2016

Netball NSW is committed to developing netball in the communities of the Far West of NSW. The towns included in this development are: Walgett, Broken Hill, Cobar, Nyngan, Warren, Lightning Ridge, Brewarrina, Colerina, Bourke, Wilcannia, Mennidee, Trangie, Coonamble, Gilgandra, Narromine, Coonabarabran and Goodooga.

Netball NSW has become a contributor to the development of community sport through initiatives such as Barwon Darling Gala Days, the O-5 "Netty for Fun Program" and the Barwon Darling Netball Association has been established.

The successful delivery of netball in the towns will not only have a positive effect on the physical well-being of the community but also contribute to the overall community capacity through developing community competition committees in remote areas and developing the community's sense of ownership through self-management of sporting events.

Over the past 18 months Netball NSW has developed strong partnerships with both the NSW Department of Sport and Recreation and Country Rugby League in the region. In particular:

- Netball NSW has developed a strong partnership with Country Rugby League and work together to deliver the “Footy for Fun” and “Netty for Fun” programs, Gala Days and School programs.
- Netball NSW has a strong partnership with the NSW Department of Sport and Recreation, operating in the region through physical presence in the Dubbo Office of Sport and Recreation. This is vital to supporting the expansion of netball participation and skills development programs in the region, through local knowledge and providing a history of success and failures from previous program service delivery in the region. The NSW Department of Sport and Recreation has provided funding for Netball NSW to engage a full time Regional Development Officer.

Netball NSW intends to further develop and strengthen the partnerships with both the Country Rugby League and NSW Department of Sport and Recreation through continued communication/reporting, shared planning and calendar of events and the joint delivery of programs to communities.

Netball NSW aims to continue to further develop netball in the region and has developed a 2012 -2016 plan to address the delivery of strategies to meet the needs of the remote communities. Specifically:

- Provide opportunities for women and girls in remote communities to participate in regular sporting activities and to be empowered as community volunteers and community leaders to improve health outcomes.
- Increase participation in netball as a sport for women and girls in the remote west.
- Address barriers to participation in sport and structured physical activity to people living in remote communities.
- Build the community capacity to enhance provision of sport and physical activity services to remote communities.
- Provide accreditation or training to develop the skills of volunteers to enable sport and structured physical activity programs to be conducted.

Netball Western Australia Indigenous Netball Program

The Netball WA Indigenous Netball Program is multi-faceted program for participants between the ages of 5 – 17 years who are interested in developing their netball ability. The program supports and builds capacity in athletes, coaches, umpires and volunteers.

The Program runs from February to December of each year with approximately 2,400 participants state-wide.

Netball WA provides a supportive and enjoyable environment for young indigenous athletes, so they can experience and develop skills; participate with confidence in mainstream netball competitions and pathways. Sites develop the capacity to become an Indigenous netball club within a mainstream netball competition.

The objectives of the Netball WA Indigenous Netball Program are:

- To engage and empower Indigenous women to participate in and to help coordinate the Indigenous Netball program within their communities. Through the Indigenous Netball program Netball WA will focus on developing players and building capacity in coaches, umpires and other volunteers so they may have a presence in all netball regions in WA.
- To improve the quality of life, increase participation opportunities and encourage a healthy lifestyle through netball and being active.
- To provide for elite Indigenous athletes, coaches and umpires to be talent identified through participating in Carnivals and Netball WA coordinated or sanctioned events.
- To provide other education and mentoring opportunities where possible.

2013 marks the 10th year anniversary of the Indigenous Netball Program. The program has continued to develop and grow, increasing the number of programs offered throughout the state over the past 4 years and reaching many Indigenous communities to increase and engage participation and development opportunities. Netball WA has been able to deliver a quality, sustainable netball development program to indigenous athletes through development camps, clinics, events, education/training sessions. Although Netball WA has reached many communities, there are still a large number of indigenous communities that are untouched and have not had the opportunity to experience netball.

Garnduwa Development Camp

Netball WA is committed to providing development opportunities for athletes and volunteers in selected communities in the Kimberly. Netball WA, in conjunction with Garnduwa, conducts a development camp in the Derby area. This camp has in the past included a role model/ambassador to assist with the camp. The attendees of the camp are selected from Derby and surrounding communities to represent Derby in the North West Championships.

The objectives of this program are to:

- Expose communities to the game of netball.
- Up-skill young athletes, coaches and umpires.
- Mentor volunteers.
- Select teams and officials to participate in the North West Championships.
- Support teams and officials at North West Championships.
- Provide off-court education such as Nutrition, Recovery and Injury Prevention/Management.

Sports 4 All KidSport Project - Kwinana Djarlyn Netball Participation

In 2012 Kwinana Djarlyn Netball club was able to participate at Success Netball Association with assistance through the Sports 4 All KidSport funding. This program is an initiative of the WA State Government, implemented by the Department of Sport and Recreation and delivered by local government councils.

Participation funding is available to athletes who wish to play sport through the Sports 4 All KidSport voucher system. This allows participants between the ages of 5 – 18 years to apply for financial assistance to contribute towards club fees, uniforms and equipment.

Due to this participation funding Kwinana were able to enter 3 teams into the Success Netball Association competition. Teams entered were 10/U, 15/U and a Senior Team (majority of the seniors players are 15 year olds).

End Notes

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⁴ Priest NC, Paradies YC, Gunthorpe W, Cairney, SJ & Sayers SM, 2011, *Racism as a determinant of social and emotional wellbeing for Aboriginal Australian youth*, *Med J Aust* 2011; 194 (10): p. 546-550.

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