

Tennis Australia

Submission

in relation to the

House of Representatives Committee on
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs:
Inquiry into the contribution of sport to
Indigenous wellbeing and mentoring



October 2012



Executive Summary and background

Tennis Australia is the national sporting organisation responsible for tennis in Australia at every level, from grass roots to elite high performance. Our primary function is to promote tennis at all levels for all Australians, regardless of their age, gender, ability, ethnicity or race.

Tennis Australia is also the owner and operator of a number of major tennis events, including the Australian Open Grand Slam Tennis tournament conducted annually at Melbourne Park (Australian Open). As a major national and international sporting event, the Australian Open holds a very important place in the Australian sporting landscape.

Tennis is a highly accessible sport – it is a sport for all ages and abilities, is not gender specific, and can be self-officiating. Importantly, tennis is highly inclusive and is a truly “world game” played in most countries around the world. Tennis Australia’s strategy for developing the game at all levels, including grass roots, is to ensure that all its participation and development programs are accessible and adaptable to all communities.

Tennis Australia believes that sport plays a critical role in developing communities. A well planned and managed tennis club environment can simultaneously create jobs, teach children basic life skills, build self-esteem, keep kids in school, provide role models, and foster long-lasting community pride and interaction. Tennis Australia considers this strategy to be particularly compelling and relevant in indigenous communities. Tennis Australia submits that:

- preventive care is a better, more cost effective solution than ongoing, reactive care to physical, social issues of indigenous welfare. It is well documented that sport improves academic learning and physical and social well-being for all children. Importantly, sport can assist in keeping children active, educated and occupied;
- sport has a pre-existing network of support and development programs that can be leveraged to ensure success where isolated indigenous programs cannot get traction;
- sport gives children purpose, can create a career path, and can generate and provide access to community leaders and cultural role models; and
- sport can transcend conventional class structures, and the reach of sport, particularly tennis, is Australia wide and even global.

However, Tennis Australia, like all national sporting associations, cannot deliver these programs and objectives on its own, particularly in relation to indigenous communities that may be in remote areas or require specific access arrangements. Tennis Australia needs the assistance of local, state and federal government bodies to successfully progress and implement its strategy in indigenous communities. In particular, Tennis Australia believes that government plays an important role in allowing sports access to education services and curriculum development to ensure that sport is meaningfully integrated in children’s lives. The *Learn, Earn, Legend!* Program is a successful example of government and sport working together to achieve positive results for Indigenous communities. However, further public-private cooperation is required to ensure sustained long term success for this and similar programs.



Tennis Australia is pleased to present this submission, and thanks the Committee for the opportunity to make a submission in the current inquiry. Tennis Australia is happy to meet as required to further elaborate on the information contained within this submission at a time convenient to relevant participants.

If you have any queries regarding this submission please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards,

Bruce Osborne
Community Relations Manager
Tennis Australia



Tennis Australia participation programs

In addition to its ongoing support of grassroots tennis, tennis clubs and associations, junior and elite development, and its conduct of tennis events and tournaments, Tennis Australia has developed and manages a number of participation programs on a national basis, and which include:

- MLC Tennis Hot Shots (which is designed for children and is played on smaller courts with lighter racquets and low compression balls that don't bounce too high and which emphasise making learning tennis fun and easy for primary school-aged children);
- Cardio Tennis Cardio (which is a fun, social, high energy group tennis-fitness program for people of all ages and abilities); and
- Tennis Australia's National Indigenous Program, which includes the *Learn, Earn, Legend!* Program which is supported by the Australian Government (and jointly funded by DEEWR and Tennis Australia, and run by Tennis Australia in partnership with the Evonne Goolagong Cawley Foundation (EGF)).

Evonne Goolagong Cawley, MBE, AO, is a Wiradjuri Aborigine and is Tennis Australia's ambassador for our Learn Earn Legend! program. She has been Australian of the Year and Australian Sportsman of the Year. In 1988 she was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame at Newport Rhode Island and the following year, into the Aboriginal Sporting Hall of Fame. At Barcelona in 1992, she became one of the first ever international Olympic torch bearers and later at Monte Carlo, was part of the successful Sydney 2000 bid. Evonne served on the National Indigenous Advisory Committee to SOCOG at the games. In 2003 Evonne received the IOC Women & Sport Trophy for her services in those fields.



In her glorious tennis career Evonne was ranked the number one player in the world in 1971 and 1976. In total she won 92 pro tournaments, was a finalist in 18 Grand Slam events winning Wimbledon twice, the Australian Open four times, the French Open once and was runner up four years in succession at the US Open. At her second Wimbledon triumph in 1980 Evonne became the first mother to win since Dorothy Lambert Chambers in 1914. She represented Australia seven times in the Fed Cup winning in 1971, 1973–1974 and was Australia's Fed Cup Captain from 2002–2004. Evonne's brother, Ian Goolagong, is Tennis Australia's national Indigenous coach.

"Learn, Earn, Legend!" – successes and opportunities for sport and government collaboration

Program background and spreading the *Learn, Earn, Legend!* message

Participants in the Learn, Earn Legend! program administered by Tennis Australia (in partnership with the Evonne Goolagong Foundation) are provided with expert coaching and training, and with opportunities to further develop their tennis skills. The Learn, Earn Legend! program awards sporting scholarships to those children who stay at school and complete their education. Healthy lifestyles are also promoted through the program, and tennis equipment is delivered to communities who cannot attend a tennis club.

Tennis Australia's national programs, Cardio Tennis and MLC Tennis Hot Shots, are the key drivers for participation programs and these are utilised through all Indigenous activations.

Tennis Australia uses our extensive communication network to regularly and widely promote the *Learn, Earn, Legend!* message and associated programs. Regular press releases are produced and many media opportunities are made available prior to "Come and Try" days and camps. Websites carry the *Learn, Earn, Legend!* message and Tennis Australia staff and staff from Member Associations reinforce the *Learn, Earn, Legend!* message.

Key features and facts and figures

Tennis Australia is proud of the following:

- to date, over 1,100 kids have participated in "Come and Try" days conducted around each of the Australian States and Territories under the *Learn, Earn, Legend!* initiative, with a view to offering further tennis participation and training opportunities where applicable;
- talent identification conducted at these "come and try" days has identified more than 78 kids to receive further coaching with their local coach at their local club. Of these, up to 60 will attend a State camp, which will culminate in a week long National camp during the first week of the Australian Open for the highest performing kids (approximately 30 kids);
- Tennis Australia Player Development pathways are open to Indigenous kids if they meet the criteria needed to be placed into these pathways; and



- Tennis Australia Academy coaches work with kids at State and National camps to provide information around training and career pathways related to tennis; and

Success in supporting outcomes

Some of the successful outcomes of Tennis Australia's *Learn, Earn, Legend!* program include:

- the promotion of active participation and promulgation of messages to stay in school, get that job and become a legend;
- Tennis Australia has also supported the introduction of tennis in remote communities in the far north of Queensland and the Northern Territory. Gove tennis club is one example and has won club of the year at the Tennis Australia's Newcombe medal annual awards ceremony;
- EGF has funded 32 Indigenous students to attend Pymble Ladies College in Sydney;
- Tennis Australia supports the Aurukun school, Cohen school and Hopevale school in far north Queensland – Cape York Academy to promote the *Learn, Earn, Legend!* message through tennis;
- the *Learn, Earn, Legend!* program has used 15 Indigenous coaches and is working towards signing coaching contracts for 10 Indigenous coaches to provide more role models and demonstrate one of the possible career pathways in our sport; and
- Tennis Australia has signed a letter of agreement with the city of Salisbury's local council in SA to further support the sport of tennis into the Aboriginal community.

Conclusion

The *Learn, Earn, Legend!* Program is a successful example of government and sport working together to achieve positive results for Indigenous communities. In addition, Tennis Australia has successfully partnered with Indigenous role models like Evonne Goolagong-Cawley and Tennis Australia's national indigenous coach Ian Goolagong, and other Indigenous coaches employed and trained by Tennis Australia, to deliver the *Learn, Earn, Legend!* program directly to indigenous communities. These role models and indigenous coaches are imperative to demonstrate to indigenous kids and families that tennis is a sport that supports indigenous youth, and ultimately, increases wellbeing amongst communities.

However, further government investment, and cooperation between sport and government, is required to ensure similar programs are successfully developed and administered to ensure the reduction of barriers to Indigenous Australians playing tennis. In particular, Tennis Australia notes the following barriers to increasing the Indigenous population's access to the sport of tennis:



- remote communities experience transport and logistical issues that prevent or hinder participants accessing venues and staff and coaches accessing communities to deliver courses and educational sessions. These costs and logistical barriers can be prohibitively difficult to overcome.
- Tennis clubs and playing facilities can be seen as unwelcoming. There is a need to break down this perception and to demonstrate a more inclusive environment. Tennis Australia needs assistance accessing community networks and establishing playing opportunities at a low cost. We also need to foster a membership base at relevant clubs, and further develop coaching support at these facilities, but again this comes at a significant cost .
- specific equipment is needed to bring the wonderful sport of tennis to indigenous communities. Racquets, nets, balls and shoes are required. Whilst the *Learn, Earn, Legend!* program is supplying some of this essential equipment, it is not enough to make the sport accessible to the many indigenous children and adults who want to play or who do not otherwise have access to tennis facilities and equipment.

Tennis Australia submits that the integration of sporting curriculum in the education system provides national sporting bodies with an opportunity to access and inform children over an extended period. However, this also requires an investment of time and resources, and a consistent approach across jurisdictions.

Tennis Australia's participation in the *Learn, Earn, Legend!* program is contracted for three years, expiring at the end of 2014. Tennis Australia has shown that it is willing to continue to grow and build upon the successful first year of the *Learn, Earn, Legend!* program, and is seeking an ongoing and enhanced commitment by government to this and similar programs (including beyond the current three year term). Tennis Australia would also welcome the underwriting of sports programming (such as the current tennis indigenous program) on a cost effective "per head" basis, and would welcome further study on this.

We would be pleased to be involved in ongoing discussions on how we can contribute to the discussion on how our sport can contribute to Indigenous wellbeing and mentoring.