



**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**

November 2012

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Purpose

This submission seeks to inform the Committee of the work that Cricket Australia (CA) does in Indigenous communities, delivering opportunities in cricket for Indigenous men and women across Australia, and the positive impacts on Indigenous wellbeing as a result. This submission analyses what more can be done to utilise cricket as a way of “closing the gap” for Indigenous Australians, particularly in regards to access to role models and mentoring programmes. CA is firmly of the view that sport is a great vehicle to enhance the wellbeing of Indigenous Australians, and that cricket is an important sport in this process.

Executive Summary

Cricket has a unique place in the Australian community as the nation’s most popular summer sport in terms of participants, spectators, media coverage and contribution to the economy.

In fact, our figures for 2011-12 demonstrate that cricket is clearly Australia’s number 1 participation sport, with more than 880,000 Australians playing cricket. Add to this the fact that female participation is up 27 per cent on last year, and our game is well placed to positively impact the lives of more Australians than any other sport.

CA’s vision is for cricket to be Australia’s favourite sport and therefore, a sport for all Australians. The development of grassroots and community cricket is crucial to realising this vision and CA is committed to catering for Australia’s diverse communities in its pursuit to become the nation’s favourite sport.

However, conventional wisdom suggests that cricket is not the number 1 sport among Indigenous Australians. While there are no doubt challenges for CA to establish cricket as the first choice summer sport for Indigenous men and women, there is much that we have done, and more we can do, which will reap rewards down the track. And, at a closer examination, the involvement by Indigenous Australians in the game of cricket extends back more than 150 years, demonstrating that there is a much richer history of Indigenous involvement in cricket than what people would initially be led to believe.

CA, along with our state and territory associations, appreciates the power of sport to effect social change, and through dedicated Indigenous cricket programs direct efforts are being made to raise the health and social standards of Indigenous Australians in line with the Australian Government’s Indigenous mandate.

This submission demonstrates the success that Australian Cricket has achieved, along with recommendations that could assist in developing more opportunities to assist in developing the wellbeing of Indigenous Australians.

The submission also touches on the importance of role models and mentors in delivering a message to Indigenous Australians which inspires the next generation of Indigenous cricketers and supporters of cricket.

Background

Sport has a widely acknowledged ability to encourage social inclusion and provide a concurrent healthy and active lifestyle. Reports and academia are littered with references to the power of sport to commit these benefits.

This is particularly true of cricket, with the game's core values being that of sportsmanship, fair play and leadership. Add to this the fact that cricket teaches eight of the eleven basic motor skills in a child's physical development, which is more than any other sport, and you have a great blend which makes cricket a great enabler of social and physical wellbeing.

Cricket is also a safe game, particularly when compared to contact sports. It is also an inclusive game: formats that cricket offers to junior cricketers include T20 Blast, which encourages mass participation regardless of gender, is considerably shorter than a standard cricket match, and provides time for participants to interact with each other.

Indigenous involvement in the game of cricket also goes back a long way. Much longer than what most Australians would probably realise.

The first Australian team to tour England was in fact the Australian Aboriginal team in 1868, and they were the first organised group of Australian cricketers to travel abroad. While the tour was a mixed success, due to the consternation caused in England about a "black" team touring, this tour represented a landmark moment in the sporting history of Indigenous Australians.

Fast forward 63 years, to a Sheffield Shield match at the Gabba in Brisbane between Queensland and New South Wales in 1931, where Queensland's Indigenous fast bowler Eddie Gilbert dismissed the great Sir Donald Bradman for a third-ball duck. After retiring from the game, "The Don" conceded that Eddie was easily the fastest bowler he had ever faced in his career.

However, despite these landmark moments in the history of cricket in Australia, Indigenous involvement in the sport stalled, and this presents the challenge for cricket today. Even today,

Indigenous participation in sport is well below national averages, and remains a key focus for Cricket Australia.

The underlying statistic that just 30.1% of Indigenous Australians aged 15 and up participate in sport compared to 63.6% of the general population (ABS “Sports and Physical Recreation: A Statistical Overview, Australia” 2011) and 47% of Indigenous children aged 4-14 years play sport compared to 63.1% of the general population (ABS “Perspectives on Sport Indigenous People’s Participation in Sport and Physical Activities” 2010) demonstrates a gap in participation that the proposed national Indigenous cricket workforce will address.

Further investigation of junior participation amongst Indigenous Australians uncovers only 5% of boys and 1% of girls aged 4-14 played cricket which is why we want to invest more in this area.

A clear statement of sport’s capacity to benefit Indigenous Australians is laid out in The Crawford Report, The Future of Sport in Australia:

“Sport offers one of the most efficient and trusted pathways for success for many Indigenous people and communities. We underplay its significance in Australia and fail to take advantage of one of our clearest opportunities to deliver successful social outcomes – it’s not just about Aboriginal role models in sport – it is the total pathway of health, setting clear goals, aligning sporting opportunities with responsibility around education and employment.” (“The Crawford Report, The Future of Sport in Australia,” Executive Overview, p.41)

In working with the Australian Government to promote positive health and wellbeing messages a lasting and tangible difference can be made to ‘close the gap’ between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

CA has demonstrated its ongoing commitment to creating Indigenous cricket programs linked to employment and education opportunities, and we are seeing more Indigenous Australians playing cricket than ever before. Our investment in Indigenous cricket is significant, and is having a substantial impact on the lives of Indigenous Australians.

Australian Cricket Initiatives

CA, along with its state and territory associations, deliver a number of Indigenous initiatives which aim to increase active participation, promote a healthy lifestyle and contribute to community involvement with the ultimate goal of making a lasting and tangible difference to ‘closing the gap’

between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. CA invested more than \$473,000 last financial year in its Indigenous programs, achieving significant success including the following:

1. The Australian Cricket **Diversity Council** has been recently established. It enables the organisation to position diversity as an important strategic asset to achieve business objectives across Australian cricket. In addition, the Council will influence the strategic direction of diversity including setting measurable diversity objectives, creating the Diversity and Inclusion strategy, and providing leadership in identifying current and emerging opportunities to advance the diversity agenda. The Indigenous strategy for Australian Cricket will cascade from the Diversity and Inclusion strategy.
2. **Formal Diversity educational training** commenced in June 2012 and is continuing within CA and State and Territory Game Development cricket departments.
3. In partnership with the **Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR)**, Australian cricket was able to deliver the **Learn Earn Legend!** program. This assisted in the staging of activities associated with the “Imparja Cup”. These activities build on linkages with local Indigenous communities and organisations to encourage and support Indigenous Australians to take up education, training and employment opportunities and become a legend within their community. This allows exposure of DEEWR’s Indigenous employment and education programs. The funding also enabled Cricket Australia to engage three *Learn Earn Legend!* Ambassadors for the Imparja Cup, and other official Cricket Australia events throughout the year.
4. In partnership with the Australian Government and **DEEWR**, the **No School No Play** program was delivered within three regions across Australia in 2011. Each State or Territory involved appointed a No School No Play officer who was responsible for all logistical requirements along with conducting the sessions. The 6-8 week program provided clear expectations to the school, students and parents. The program used items such as balls, bats, batting gloves and playing shirts as an incentive to improve school attendance. Following the completion of each session, students were allocated an area where they were provided with breakfast. Parents were welcomed and encouraged to engage within the program and invited to attend any component with a number of opportunities to assist throughout the sessions. This year will see Cricket NSW host the program to over 150 Indigenous students in November 2012. In addition, all students, government officials and key stakeholders will be invited to a Sixers Big Bash League match and engage in numerous activities. Although cricket participation is the main focus, all students will be engaged in many cultural activities whilst involved in the program.

5. The **Imparja Cup** is designed to encourage Indigenous Australians to participate in cricket. There are five divisions of competition: State and Territory Men's, State and Territory Women's (currently three teams), Major Centres, Community Men's and Community Women's. During the recent National Indigenous Cricket Advisory Committee (NICAC) meeting, there was a clear direction from key Indigenous stakeholders to focus on developing the women's division. Currently, Cricket Australia is investigating options to support the State and Territory Associations in funding additional women's teams to attend. 2012 saw 32 teams participate; 5 divisions (mixture of elite and recreational); community visits; super clinic with approximately 120 children from local schools (in2CRICKET focus); Fox Sports attendance and live NITV broadcast.
6. CA calls on the **National Indigenous Cricket Advisory Committee (NICAC)** to assist with future planning of Indigenous cricket activities and to provide guidance when dealing with Indigenous-related decisions. NICAC houses state and territory Indigenous representatives who connect directly with their respective communities and speak on their behalf.
7. **Welcome to Country** is performed across the International Cricket Season in conjunction with the National Anthem. This ceremony is held on day one of each test match, along with the first match of a One Day Series.
8. Each year, Cricket Australia CA organises a tour for the **National Indigenous Development Squad**. The past three years have seen this representative squad tour the UK, PNG, participate in the Arafura Games, and most recently the team travelled to India from 14 – 26 October as a part of the Cricket Australia High Performance program. A few highlights of the recent tour were:
 - a. Fourteen (14) intense training sessions in local conditions (Pune);
 - b. Matches at MIG Cricket Club (the club of Sachin Tendulkar, the Cricket Club of India and Poona Cricket Club);
 - c. Community visit with the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard (Delhi);
 - d. Captain Josh Lalor involved in the OzFest Opening Ceremony alongside the Prime Minister;
 - e. OzFest luncheon hosted by MasterChef judges, George Calombaris and Gary Mehigan; and
 - f. A visit to Dharavi (Asia's largest slum), school visits and a village visit.
9. Each year two Indigenous players are selected for a **scholarship** to travel to Mumbai, India for 10 days where they attend the Global Cricket School. In addition, two female and two male young Indigenous players will be involved in talent camps held at the Centre of Excellence.

The future of Australian Cricket

CA's Indigenous programs aim to increase the number of Indigenous Australians participating in the sport from the grassroots to the elite level. Concurrent to this objective is the goal to address the distinct social needs of members of Australia's Indigenous population.

CA believes that its strategy does not cease with participation opportunities; it carries the responsibility to influence positive social change for Indigenous Australians.

CA proposes the establishment of a nationalised Indigenous workforce structure to expand the reach and impact of our Indigenous programs. The proposed Indigenous workforce would consist of:

- A National Indigenous Cricket Officer; and
- Eight (8) state and territory Indigenous Cricket Growth Officers.

The nine-person workforce is the ultimate aim of CA's Indigenous program. To establish the best structure for the program, CA plans to pilot the program in NSW initially.

The workforce will build on CA's diverse Indigenous programs which include junior participation, recreational, school and high-performance activities. Additional Indigenous staff will widen the reach of CA's Indigenous programs and allow ongoing support to ensure continued growth and participation – making cricket and its accompanying benefits accessible to more Indigenous Australians.

The delivery of cricket participation programs by Indigenous Australians to Indigenous Australians will not only create an inherent ownership of the programs within the Indigenous community and will influence the success of the programs it provides employment opportunities, role models for young Indigenous children and champions within communities. All sports need role models to encourage participation, and cricket is no different.

Australian player and Lord Taverner's Indigenous Cricketer of the Year recipient Dan Christian is a highly regarded role model within Indigenous Cricket. In 2009 Dan travelled with the National Indigenous Development Team to the UK to assist our young Indigenous men in a many different areas both on and off the field.

In addition, New South Wales and Sydney Sixers fast bowler Josh Lalor played a similar role with the Indigenous Development Team during the recent tour to India. Josh was empowered to lead players in understanding their role within Indigenous Cricket and local communities. Josh also was one of three *Learn Earn Legend!* Ambassadors in 2012 visiting school students and sharing his story and encouraging other young Indigenous children to believe in themselves.

CA is focussed on increasing female participation across Australia and in particular expanding the women's division within the Imparja Cup. Each State and Territory cricket association in conjunction with the Indigenous Cricket Advisory Committee continue to work to provide Indigenous women with the opportunity to experience cricket at all levels.

Each State and Territory cricket association, along with CA are currently working to develop partnerships to assist financially in allowing these female players to participate in the Imparja Cup held in Alice Springs.

Outcomes

The above mentioned recommendations will assist with the below projected outcomes:

1. The creation of education, vocational training and employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians;
2. The development and promotion of Indigenous role models and leaders, equipped to champion the messages that cricket can aid in a healthy and active lifestyle; through increased resources, cricket would be in a position to establish a formalised mentoring programme to inspire the next generation of Indigenous cricketers.
3. Increased participation in cricket among Australia's Indigenous population, with targeted efforts to further engage females; and
4. Support for CA's vision to be Australia's favourite sport by making cricket a truly inclusive sport.

Conclusion

CA's Indigenous and participation programs are conducted with the support of the Australian Government, demonstrating the strong relationship between CA and the Government. The deepening of the partnership would allow Australian cricket to broaden its Indigenous cricket programs and further deliver the Australian Government's messages, via CA's established structure and networks, to produce sustainable outcomes that assist in 'closing the gap' between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.