

**Submission: Australian Government  
Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs**

**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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## **Summary**

Closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is a key priority for the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). As the lead agency for Indigenous Affairs, FaHCSIA provides whole-of-government coordination, policy advice and support for the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA).

The NIRA endorsed by COAG in 2008, commits all governments to six ambitious Closing the Gap targets relating to life expectancy, infant mortality, education and employment. The Agreement identifies seven inter-related areas for investment and change — the 'building blocks' for better lives. It is supported by historic investment of \$4.6 billion through a series of Indigenous-specific and mainstream National Partnership Agreements.

FaHCSIA supports Indigenous Australians through a range of programs and services including Closing the Gap initiatives. FaHCSIA also works in partnership with community organisations, service providers and—most importantly—community members to promote healthy, functioning, independent and sustainable futures for Indigenous Australians.

The Department welcomes the inquiry into the important contribution of sport to Indigenous wellbeing and mentoring. In addition to the positive physical and emotional benefits of participation in sport, the Australian Government recognises sport can also be a powerful vehicle to achieve and support other key outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

In providing funding to sporting organisations, Government considers the broader social and community impact of sport activities, recognising that sporting activities offer an opportunity for social participation, provide communities with a shared activity and point of interest, and present young people with positive role models.

Through significant investment by the Government in number of programs and initiatives, sport is being utilised to improve the wellbeing of Indigenous Australians. This includes harnessing sport as a diversionary tool to engage and empower vulnerable Indigenous young people, encourage school attendance and promote healthy and active lifestyles through sustained and long term commitment to initiatives such as the the Youth in Communities program delivered by FaHCSIA.

Sport is also being utilised to promote positive behaviours, respectful relationships and safer communities through key supporting initiatives under the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-22* and the Respectful Relationships strategy. Projects supporting these initiatives focus on delivering messages around healthy and respectful relationships and violence prevention to Indigenous Australian through the participation and involvement of sporting leaders from various codes. More broadly, the Government is working in partnership with sporting codes such as the Australian Football League to support the delivery of a range of sporting programs and activities to build the leadership capacity of Indigenous Australians and their communities across Australia.

Through significant investment in Mental Health reforms, the Government also recognises the positive role sport can play in improving the emotional wellbeing and healing of Indigenous Australians through participation in sport via programs such as the Targeted Community Mental Health Care Program managed by FaHCSIA.

In order to best direct Government investment, further evidence is needed about which activities or combination of sporting activities have the most beneficial effect on Indigenous wellbeing, how to best target activities in a way that is appropriate to both gender, and whether sport is effective as a prevention activity, as opposed to a diversionary method. Further research on the efficacy of sport in encouraging a sustained and sustainable change in behaviour over time would also assist in ensuring that future investment is well targeted.

### **Summary of FaHCSIA funded activities**

Outlined below are some of the key initiatives supported by FaHCSIA which utilise sport as a mechanism to improve outcomes for Indigenous Australians, including the mainstream programs and policies which make a positive contribution Indigenous wellbeing and mentoring through sport.

### **Respectful Relationships**

Respectful Relationships is a primary prevention strategy that seeks to prevent sexual assault and domestic and family violence through education. The Australian Government is investing over \$9 million over five years to 2012-13 in implementing Respectful Relationships nationally. The strategy works with young people to raise their awareness of ethical behaviour; to develop protective behaviours; and to develop their skills in conducting respectful relationships. Since 2009 FaHCSIA has funded 32 Respectful Relationships projects across three funding rounds, including two projects from sporting organisations:

- In 2009-2010 the University of New South Wales and the National Rugby League were funded \$101,348 to implement the Sex and Ethics program with sub-elite players in Queensland. The program aimed to increase the capacity of the participants to negotiate ethical and respectful intimate relationships, and to increased their knowledge of sexual assault and provide skills to prevent it within dating contexts.
- In 2010-12 the Australian Football League (AFL) were funded \$400,000 to implement the Respect and Responsibility program consisting of violence prevention education workshops within community sport settings to 16 – 21 year old participants involved in national, state, community football competitions.

### **National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022**

In 2010 the Australian Government committed \$3.75 million over three years from 2011-12 to 2013-2014 for Community Action Grants to support communities in reducing violence against women. The grants are part of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-22*.

The grants support activities that prevent and speak out against violence, change community attitudes and behaviours and encourage community responsibility to support the reduction of violence against women. The grants have been distributed amongst 14 community and three sporting organisations across the country. Those with a sporting focus include:

- The Australian Netball Association were funded \$250,000 to provide a project which includes education modules on healthy relationships and violence prevention for young players, a training course for coaches, and a peer education and mentoring program for Indigenous young women.

- The AFL were funded \$244,800 to distribute training resources nationally, supported by training for trainers in each state, an online violence prevention education tool for young male players, a violence prevention quality framework for state football bodies and tool kits for local football clubs.
- The National Rugby League (NRL) were funded \$250,000 to undertake a broad based media campaign using the reach of the NRL to raise awareness of violence and a grass roots campaign to promote violence prevention through the code of conduct. The project will also include a YouTube competition for clubs to create videos showing what their club is doing to prevent violence against women, and respectful relationships education for elite representative players aged 13-19.

### **FaHCSIA funding to the Australian Football League (AFL)**

FaHCSIA has provided over \$14.6 million in funding to the AFL and its affiliated organisations from 2010-11 onwards for a range of initiatives across Australia, including more than \$6 million anticipated for 2012-13. This includes several projects funded through other initiatives highlighted in this submission such as Respectful Relationships. The range of activities funded via the AFL and its affiliated bodies are often discrete projects which are developed on a case by case basis and are driven by local priorities.

Examples of some of the initiatives funded by FaHCSIA delivered by the AFL include:

- \$600,000 in funding for 2010-11 and 2011-12 to provide the National AFL Club Fostership Program, which facilitates the establishment of partnerships between 6 AFL clubs and Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory and South Australia to deliver football related activities, promote healthy, active lifestyle messages and encourage school attendance.
- From 2011-12 to 2012-13 \$1.5 million is being provided for the Strength and Unity through Football project which delivers a football programs in Maningrida, Yirrkala, Ngukurr, Lajamanu and Hermannsburg communities which provide leadership skills and Certificate 1 in Indigenous Leadership training to Indigenous people.
- \$150,000 in funding was provided over 2 years from 2010-11 for an Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands South Australian National Football League Coordinator.
- In 2012-13 FaHCSIA and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations made a joint contribution of \$300,000 to the Adelaide Football Club to deliver an Aboriginal Youth Leadership Program in the APY Lands. Through this program, the Adelaide Football Club is providing intensive mentoring and leadership training to 30 senior students to support them in obtaining their South Australian Certificates of Education.
- \$200,000 in funding was provided in 2010-11 for the West Australian Football Commission Inc in partnership with Garnduwa Amboryn Wirnan Aboriginal Corporation to deliver leadership outcomes through the engagement and development of East Kimberley Indigenous people with a range of AFL activities, including training, Auskick workshops, carnivals and competitions for up to 14 East Kimberley communities.

### **Targeted Community Care (TCC) Mental Health Program**

Under the TCC (Mental Health) Program, the Australian Government funds three community mental health services to assist people with mental illness and their families and carers to manage the impact of mental illness. These services are:

- Personal Helpers and Mentors;
- Mental Health Respite: Carer Support; and
- Family Mental Health Support Services.

Services funded under the Program help people to engage in their communities, which can be through recreational and sporting activities. This recognises that sport can contribute to recovery for people with mental illness and build resilience for families and carers.

In the 2011–12 Budget, the Australian Government announced a significant investment for a major expansion of all three TCC Program activities, building on the successes of the previous five years. The Government allocated a total of \$269.3 million in its Mental Health Reform Budget measures that will see new services rolled out over the five years from 2011–12 to 2015–16. The Budget measures will be targeting support to areas and communities that need it most, such as Indigenous communities and socioeconomically disadvantaged areas that are underserved. The Program services urban, regional and remote areas across the country.

### **Sports Leadership Grants and Scholarships for Women Program**

The Sports Leadership Grants and Scholarships for Women Program is an example of the important work FaHCSIA undertakes which provides an opportunity for social inclusion and participation, through the development of leadership skills. A range of women, including Indigenous women, have been provided opportunities under the program with nine of the 56 individual grant recipients for the 2012-13 program identifying as Indigenous women. Some of the successful applications are also located in regional and remote communities.

The Program is a joint initiative between the Office for Women within FaHCSIA and the Australian Sports Commission (ASC). The Program provides development opportunities and training for women to reach their leadership potential within the sport industry through:

- Funding and support for women seeking accredited training and education in the five key areas of coaching; officiating; administration and management; media, communications and marketing, and; governance.
- Scholarships for women in upper sports management to gain qualifications to support their progression to senior executive roles. The scholarships component of the Program was introduced in the 2009-10 funding round.

The Program has been in place since November 2002. Over 20,600 women have benefited from the Program with a total funding allocation of \$3.7 million. Of the total funding for the 2012-13 round (around \$520,000) FaHCSIA contributed \$350,000. Indigenous players in from a variety of sporting codes are involved as both mentors and participants.

### **Youth in Communities Program**

The Youth in Communities Program has operated since 2009 across more than 30 locations in the Northern Territory, delivering early intervention, prevention and diversionary initiatives for young Indigenous people at risk. The Program aims to improve life choices and outcomes for young people aged 10 to 20 years through engagement in positive activities that build resilience and promote pathways to better health and wellbeing, education and employment. Participation in sport to engage youth at risk, enhance wellbeing and build leadership capacity has been a key focus of the Program.

The Australian Government provided funding of \$28.4 million for 2009–12 for the Program under the *Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement*. Since 2009, thirty-two

projects have been funded for youth worker services, youth diversion activities such as sport and infrastructure projects, with an additional three for professional development and mentoring, evaluation and research.

Some key sporting related activities funded through the Program during 2009-12 include:

- The ASC were funded \$500,000 over 2 years from 2010-11 for a Sport Demonstration Project to trial a best practice model for delivering sport focused diversion activities through improved whole of government coordination and the use of place based approach to service delivery to build community capacity in Gapuwiyak, Wadeye, Yeundumu, Gunbalanya and Ngiu.
- The East Arnhem Shire Council received \$2,384,233 over 3 years from 2009-10 to run diversionary programs in Yirrkala, Milingimbi, Ramingining, Gapuwiyak and Umbakumba including sporting and youth leadership programs.
- The AFL Northern Territory received \$390,000 over 2 years from 2010-11 for a regional development manager working in the Wadeye and Galiwin'ku communities to establish and coordinate competitions, organise coaching and umpiring courses and promote healthy and active lifestyles.

In 2011-12, \$1.2 million of Youth in Communities funding was redirected specifically to address suicide prevention education and activities in the Northern Territory. Those with a sporting focus included:

- The AFL Northern Territory received \$65,000 to undertake a range of suicide prevention activities in the Wadeye, Galiwinku and Angurugu communities. This included using past and present Indigenous footballers to assist with the delivery of the key *beyondblue* messages and promotional material to align the key beyondblue messages at football competitions, including Grand Finals. AFL NT Remote Development Managers, Indigenous mentors, 25 coaches from remote communities and other relevant staff were also supported to undertake a suicide prevention training course.
- CatholicCare NT received funding of \$120,000 to build capacity in communities across the Northern Territory through delivering mental health/suicide training and identifying three sporting clubs with which to develop suicide prevention strategies in partnership.
- The Mental Health Association of Australia received funding of \$51,000 to facilitate an AFL event for youth predominantly of Alice Springs Town Camps and produce educational resources to be used as a tool for 'Suicide Story' training and workshops.

### **Youth in Communities under Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory**

Under the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Child, Youth, Family and Community Wellbeing Package announced in 2012, the Australian Government has made a 10 year commitment to continue the Youth in Communities Program. Under the Package, the Program will be progressively integrated into the 15 new remote Communities for Children (CfC) sites across the Northern Territory. The expanded CfC model will increase the level of access to and integration of early intervention and prevention services for young people and families, including youth leadership and mentoring, sport and recreation, and engagement in education and employment.

Services being funded under Youth in Communities over 2 years from 2012-14 with a significant focus on the positive contribution of sport to Indigenous wellbeing and mentoring include:

- The Australian Red Cross is receiving \$900,000 to implement a roving program coordinator model to support the delivery of a range of recreation and youth enterprise activities across the Tiwi Islands and Nauiyu.
- East Arnhem Shire Council will be funded \$3 million to deliver a range of services including health and wellbeing and diversionary activities such as sporting activities.
- Laynhapuy Homelands Association Inc. will receive \$910,000 for health and wellbeing services including sporting activities and school holiday camps, leadership workshops mentoring and targeted diversion activities.
- \$4.5 million of funding has been awarded to the MacDonnell Shire Council for the delivery of youth development services in nine communities, plus extension to a further three.
- Roper Gulf Shire Council will receive \$1.96 million of funding to provide effective diversion for Indigenous youth from at risk behaviours, improving life choices and outcomes by encouraging them in positive activities that promote pathways to better health and wellbeing such as sport in Ngukurr, Numbulwar and Borroloola.
- The Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council is receiving funding of \$2.34 million to deliver activities including youth leadership, recreation and diversion activities across the NPY Lands.
- The AFL Northern Territory will receive \$500,000 for football themed community enhancement programs and the continuation of remote football projects in Galiwinku and Wadeye.
- Katherine YMCA is receiving funding of \$750,000 to deliver activities including diversionary, sporting, cultural and leadership programs in Katherine and the surrounding region.

### **Youth in Communities Program Evaluation and Outcomes**

In 2010 an independent consultant, Courage Partners, was engaged to conduct an evaluation of the Youth in Communities Program. The interim evaluation report released in 2011 found the program had made good progress in engaging Indigenous young people in positive activities. Overall, it was identified that there are good if not very good outcomes for participants that support wellbeing and positive life choices.

Other identified outcomes include evidence of young people at risk engaging constructively with peers, participating in community events such as sport, increased self-care and self-esteem, attendance or re-engagement with school, contributing to community wellbeing, influencing the resilience of peers and engaging in cultural activities. The final report will be released shortly and will inform the future direction of the Program under the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory – Child, Youth, Family and Community Wellbeing Package.

### **Conclusion**

FaHCSIA is committed to closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage and acknowledges the important contribution of sport to Indigenous wellbeing and mentoring. Sustained effort is required across Governments and in partnership with non-government organisations, the private sector and Indigenous communities to effectively reduce disadvantage.

The examples of Indigenous-specific and mainstream programs delivered by FaHCSIA provided in this submission highlight the various roles sport can play in improving outcomes for Indigenous Australians. The Department looks forward to the outcomes of the Inquiry and any subsequent recommendations made by the Committee.