



INDIGENOUS
MARATHON
PROJECT

RUN • SWEAT • INSPIRE

The Indigenous Marathon Project

Run. Sweat. Inspire

*Parliamentary Inquiry into the contribution of Sport
to Indigenous wellbeing and mentoring*

IMP objectives

1. To promote healthy and active lifestyles throughout Indigenous communities nationally and reduce the incidence of Indigenous chronic disease: &
2. To create Indigenous distance running champions and to inspire Indigenous people.

Background

The Indigenous Marathon Project (IMP) was established in 2009 by World Champion marathon runner and 1983 Australian of the Year, Robert de Castella.

IMP annually selects, educates, trains and takes a group of inspirational young Indigenous men and women aged 18-30 to compete in the world's biggest marathon – the New York City Marathon.



IMP is not a sports program. IMP is a social change program that uses the simple act of running as a vehicle to promote the benefits of active and healthy lifestyles and change lives. The group of men and women are similar to rocks in a pond, with their ripple effect continuing to inspire local family and community members as well as thousands of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians nationally.

The Project highlights the incredible natural talent that exists within the Australian Indigenous population, with the hope to one day unearth an Indigenous long-distance running champion to take on the African dominance.



The core running squad push their physical and mental boundaries to beyond what they ever thought they were capable of, and after crossing the finish line of the world's biggest marathon, they know they can achieve anything.

These runners are trained to become healthy lifestyle leaders by completing a Certificate IV in Health and Leisure, with a focus on Indigenous healthy lifestyle.

This qualification is used to promote community based health and exercise initiatives including the Deadly Fun Run Series.

Runners become role models within their communities and are leaders in the promotion of health and physical exercise in order to address the high instances of chronic disease such as diabetes, heart disease and renal failure.

A national tryout tour is held at the start of each year, with a core squad of athletes announced in April.

During the Project year, the athletes train in their communities, with the squad coming together on four occasions during the year for training camps to progress their running training, undertake elements of their Certificate IV in Health and Leisure and run in major national fun runs. These camps include:

- Canberra – Mother's Day Classic - May
- Gold Coast – Gold Coast Running Festival - June
- Sydney – City2Surf – August
- Alice Springs – 30km test event and team selection - September

During the year, athletes also take part in other running events across the country including:

- Sydney City2Surf
- Perth City2Surf
- Australian Outback Marathon
- Melbourne Running Festival
- Blackmores Sydney Running Festival
- ABC Alice Springs Half-Marathon
- Gove Runners North Half-Marathon
- Northern Territory Athletics Championships
- Park Run Series
- Fernleigh 15
- Forster Running Festival
- Hunter Valley Running Festival



Certificate IV in Health and Leisure

Throughout the Project year (Feb-Feb), squad members sit a Certificate IV in Health and Leisure (Indigenous health focussed) with content delivered at the four major training camps scattered across the country.

IMP has developed an effective model to deliver additional course content through the use of camcorders and social media. The abovementioned camps coincide with iconic Australian running races such as the Sydney City2Surf & the Gold Coast Half Marathon events.



At all other times, squad members remain at home in their communities, running daily and doing their Cert IV to maximise the positive impact they can have. In partnership with a locally appointed community mentor, responsibility is bestowed upon each individual to continue their training and study in order to remain in contention for a coveted ticket to the New York City Marathon.

IMP creates local and relevant Indigenous champions and empowers each squad member through the simple act of running, helping them believe that they are capable of so much more than they, or anyone ever thought possible. A documentary titled “Running to America” highlighting the Project’s impact went to air on the ABC in December 2011 in front of a viewing audience of over 500,000 Australians. The reach, awareness and health outcomes that IMP continues to deliver are simply awe inspiring.

The Deadly Fun Run Series



The Deadly Fun Run Series (DFRS) is a component of the IMP and is a series of easily facilitated fun runs operating within 15 communities nationally. In 2012, 1,143 Indigenous men and women competed in Deadly Fun Runs across the country. The DFRS is based where IMP athletes live and combine the running training and educational

components of the project itself to provide a practical and effective way to engage the wider community.

The series is delivered with a minimum of four races run in each community over a six month period and links in with existing sport, health and education networks to ensure it is delivered effectively and efficiently.

The DFRS unearths four community champions (male/female – senior/junior) who are given the opportunity to represent their community at the

Deadly Fun Run Championships (DFRC) at Uluru. The inaugural championships took place in June 2012.



The DFRS continues to have an amazing impact throughout Indigenous Australia from a number of health, sporting and community engagement perspectives. In 2013, the DFRC will be hosted by the Mutitjulu community at the base of Uluru.

The DFRS and DFRC look to create a defined pathway for Indigenous youth nationally and similarly to IMP, creates community champions, paving the way for future role models and stories of achievement and success

2010 squad

In the Project's inaugural, four young Indigenous men were selected to compete in the New York Marathon as the first ever Indigenous Australians to do so. They were:

Charlie Maher	Alice Springs, NT	New York 2010, Boston 2011
Caleb Hart	Alice Springs, NT	New York 2010
Juan Darwin	Maningrida, NT	New York 2010
Joseph Davies	Kununurra, WA	New York 2010

Charlie Maher went on to run in the Boston Marathon in April, 2011.

2011 squad

In 2011, an initial squad of 20 was selected, with 11 Indigenous runners finishing the New York Marathon, including the four of the first ever Indigenous women. One male and one female athlete finished the Boston Marathon in April this year.

Men		
Arian Pearson	Yirrkala, NT	New York 2011
Reggie Smith	Alice Springs, NT	New York 2011
Kiwa Schilling	Kanmantoo, SA	New York 2011
Caine Schofield	Sunbury, Vic	New York 2011
Michael Purcell	Charleville, QLD	New York 2011
Nathan Sutherland	Orange, NSW	New York 2011
Patrick Keain	Hove, SA	New York 2011
Jamie Wunungmurra	Yirrkala, NT	Boston 2012
Peter Amarant	Karunga, NT	Withdrew from squad
Derek Hill	York, WA	Withdrew from squad
Donald Lyden	Perth, WA	Withdrew from squad
Isaiah Smith	Maningrida, NT	Withdrew from squad
Women		
Nadine Hunt	Cairns, QLD	New York 2011
Bianca Graham	Weipa, QLD	New York 2011
Bridgette Williams	Mt Gravatt, QLD	New York 2011
Sam Shephard	Mt Nasura, WA	New York 2011
Tegan Pigram	Derby, WA	Boston 2012
Tahli Rafferty	Merriwa, WA	Withdrew from squad

Kelsey Youngblutt	Palm Island, QLD	Withdrew from squad
Beth Ali	Maningrida, NT	Withdrew from squad

2012 squad

The selection of the 2012 squad focussed on some of the country's more remote communities. A squad of 12 was selected in April 2012.

IMP New York Marathon team	
Korey Summers	Alice Springs, NT
Justin Gaykamangu	Ramingining, NT
Nat Heath	Newcastle, NSW
Marius Clarke	Gunbalanya, NT
Jurgean Tabuai	Townsville, QLD
Kieren De Santis	Tiwi Islands, NT
Amber Parker	Cessnock, NSW
Grace Eather	Maningrida, NT
IMP Boston Marathon squad	
Nicky Kerindun	Aurukun, QLD
Emma Cameron	Darwin, NT

A response to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs regarding an inquiry into the contribution of sport to Indigenous wellbeing and mentoring

The Indigenous Marathon Project (IMP)

IMP has drafted a response surrounding its programs and experience and summarised this under the terms of reference which the enquiry addresses. Please see attached an outline of the projects operations and the below notations surrounding these terms of reference.

Sporting bodies increasing opportunities for Indigenous participation, including opportunities for Indigenous women:

- As far as IMP is aware, in 2011 – the first ever team of Indigenous women competed in and finished the New York City Marathon.
- IMP offers a series of remote and regional community fun runs/walks all over Australia – The Deadly Fun Run Series. The series was established in 2011 and is funded wholly by the Federal Government under the Indigenous Sport and Active Recreation Program (ISARP). In the past 12 months, the series has had over 1,300 participants with an 85% Indigenous participation rate and 52% female participation rate.
- Tiwi Islands Sport and Recreation Manager has established a Tiwi Island Road Runners club comprised primarily of female members of the community. They train together at least once a week as a group and are hoping to make it to the Deadly Fun Run Championships at Uluru.
- This year, IMP coached and trained Cathy Freeman towards her first ever marathon. Unfortunately the New York marathon was cancelled and Cathy was unable to make her debut. She intends to race the Hobart Marathon and will do so with IMP's full support. Cathy believes the IMP women's team poses a source of inspiration to her as an individual and stated this at the first of our camps at the AIS in May 2012.
- Women IMP squad members are wanting to pave a way for other women within their communities to make a change and follow in their footsteps. We have an amazing woman based in Maningrida who had seen what 2010 project Member Juan Darwin had done for the men of her community – now she wanted to do the same for the women. She had said that women were rated lower than the dogs in her community and wanted to change people's mindsets by doing something positive.
- IMP staff believe that there are ever increasing opportunities provided by sporting bodies in terms of Indigenous involvement in Sport. However, it is shocking to hear that major sporting bodies such as The Australian Rugby Union do not already have Indigenous Development Officers working for them on the ground. AFL is way ahead of the game and have gained a massive advantage in terms of the development of sport within communities and the opportunities available to community members (primarily men). IMP is looking to target those men who are just that one second to slow to the ball, or one step off the pace in terms of raw speed – AFL is also heavily

male focused and again IMP are looking to promote the sport of distance running and walking to Indigenous women nationally. In 2012, IMP has a squad member from Gunbalanya and his brother are both St. Kilda and West Coast reps respectively. It is all well and good that sporting bodies work occasionally within Gunbalanya (such as AFL), however if they don't have an immediate mentor on the ground who is a local and relevant member of the community, it is hard for the kids to see why sport is so important to one's development (i.e. providing structure, health benefits, achievements and sense of self-worth). The beauty of IMP is that community members remain in community for the majority of the project year where they have to train and be seen training. This raises awareness of their involvement in sport/IMP, their profile within the community and overall the respect that people hold for them within community and the wider region.

- Certain programs on the ground are quite male dominated. In some instances, IMP has heard of programs that come into classrooms and take all of the young men out of the class to play football while the young girls are left in the classrooms to finish their studies / homework. This seems unequal and there is a greater need for broad sports programs for women on the ground within community.

Non-government organisations utilising sport as a vehicle to improve outcomes for Indigenous people:

IMP is a NGO working towards utilising sport as a vehicle to improve outcomes for Indigenous people. IMP is not a sporting program, however uses sport as a vehicle to promote regular physical activity and healthy lifestyles across Indigenous Australia. IMP has two major objectives:

1. To create local and relevant role models to promote the benefits of active and healthy lifestyles to reduce the incidence of Indigenous chronic disease and lifestyle related diseases, and;
2. To unearth Indigenous distance running champions.

IMP is able to achieve this on two fronts.

1. The IMP squad comprising of roughly 6 men and 6 women who participates in a number of training camps and sit a Certificate IV in Leisure and Health throughout the year and runs in the New York City Marathon, and;
2. The Deadly fun/walk Run Series (DFRS). An initiative aimed at the communities which IMP athletes reside in and is also expanding to communities beyond these. The series is funded through ISARP and targets Indigenous men and women of all ages and running abilities.

IMP has found that by the creation and promotion of local and relevant community champions, be it through the direct IMP NYC marathon squad or the DFRS, it is able to gain the attention of many people within the community. These highlighted community champions may not necessarily be the best sportsman/woman, or the fittest sportsman/woman, however they are being rewarded for their participation which is crucial

for the development of sport as a whole within these communities. As both programs are completely non-discriminatory and are easily accessible to all due to the ease of performing the activity, it is starting to gain some serious momentum and the health outcomes of both programs are starting to show in their entirety. IMP is finding that individuals are turning up regularly to try and beat last month's run or walk time and as a result, begin training between events. This in turn is having a drastic impact on people's health and reducing the likelihood of lifestyle related illness – not only this, running makes you feel good and gives you a sense of purpose and fills you with a sense of self-worth. Substantively it is hard to prove, however this will be having an impact with regards to mental illness and suicide control within some communities.

IMP believes that the success of the DFRS is also related to the fact that each community that comes on board has to buy into the program. IMP offers 4 places for community members to attend a championship event at Uluru at the end of the series, however only covers the individual's accommodation expenses (and 1 – 2 flights in some circumstances) hence the community must resource the remaining flights. As a result of this and the fact that an IMP squad member may reside in that community and that the program is fully run and owned by the community, IMP believes it is able to obtain a buy in and a commitment from the community to deliver the series.

It is also evident that each individual involved with the project has an amazing commitment and responsibility to their family and their community.

IMP believes that the personal sense of self-worth, pride and accomplishment that running provides an individual with is unreflected across the country in any other sport. Running is an individual sport and does not encourage or promote post game celebrations or the group mentality that some sports such as AFL and NRL promote and encourage. In fact the sport of distance running is quite the contrary and it is very unlikely that a dedicated distance runner will make it past a late hour in the evening or be tempted to drink alcohol or abuse substances. It is no surprise that once this structure and purpose is brought into someone's life that the rest of their life seems to reflect this. It is also amazing just what can happen when someone starts believing in themselves and this is the platform that IMP provides.

It is this culture that IMP hopes to continue to promote through the creation of the above mentioned local and relevant community champions. It is therefore crucial that IMP is able to assist each of its graduates into meaningful and perpetual employment through the establishment of developmental pathways either in sport, health or education and in order to achieve this, the project team must expand.

IMP believes that there needs to be more collaboration between Federal Departments and the Deadly Fun Runs are an example of this. The main source of assistance for the Deadly Fun Runs does not necessarily come from Indigenous Sport Development Officers (ISDO's DRLGAS funded) but more so the Healthy Lifestyle Workers located all over the country (DOHA funded). So we have a program funded by the department of Sport, but delivered by Department Health on the ground (and ISDO's in a number of areas). Federally funded health and sport workers seem to be crying out for innovative, effective and simple



programs to run on the ground the engage the community and the Deadly Fun Run Series is proving to be one of these. In order to develop sporting programs it would seem DOHA and DRLGAS should work a little closer in order to achieve the most efficient value for money programs on the ground for both parties. The overall cost to each community for the fun run series and attendance at the DFRS champs at Uluru is very cheap and roughly \$7,000 per community (inclusive of administrative duties performed by IMP staff in their head office)

Throughout IMP's travels and experience working within Indigenous communities, there seems to two major focuses for these communities with one underlying theme. These focuses are Education and Health and the underlying theme (or link) is sport. It is obvious that education, health and sport are closely linked together and when working in remote areas there are obvious shortages of resources - therefore it makes sense for The Education, Health & Sports departments to take a collaborative approach when developing programs in their given areas.

IMP has encountered a number of issues relating to existing programs run within communities around Australia. One of these would be the comparisons between NGO programs and Government / locally / federally funded initiatives. An example is in Yirrkala (Gove) in East Arnhem Land in the NT. An NGO has established an amazing program run by ex-AFL players to ensure education outcomes are met by enforcing a rule that no kids can play footy if they don't adhere to a minimum participation rating in the classroom. This has proved really effective with engaging the kids (mainly boys) off the AFL field, however tensions arise when the council or any other health/sport group, run their own funded programs (AFL or any other sport based programs) which don't necessarily have this participation element associated with it. Therefore, the kids have an alternate option to going to the Clontarf activities (and the classroom), so they simply involve themselves with the council sports programs and do not need to attend school. This is an issue impacting a number of communities and the answer is unclear however Governmental programs may need to take a look at the effectiveness of such program models like the NGO mentioned and work in partnership with existing NGO sporting programs on the ground (i.e. have the this NGO run broader sporting programs based off educational participation rates)

The contribution of Indigenous sporting programs, as supplied by:

The sporting codes:

IMP operates mostly independently throughout Australia and does not have a great deal of interaction with the sporting codes. From a broad perspective, IMP believes that the sporting codes are increasingly developing their Indigenous sports programs and this can only be a positive thing. As mentioned, it seems the AFL are 20 years advanced in terms of development of the sport and this is a very positive thing for their sport.

IMP is unaware of any programs run by Athletics Australia with regards to Indigenous development.

The private and NGO sectors:

IMP is aware of a number of organisations running sporting programs in remote areas. It has heard varying feedback as to the effectiveness of certain private programs run and remains apolitical on the matter. IMP however realises that certain programs – specifically developed by the mining industry – remain volatile and open to market conditions. If the price of Iron Ore crashes like it has lately, the community engagement divisions seem to be the first to be cut and sports programs run through these divisions and their associated communities seem to suffer as a result.

IMP is aware of some very successful programs that are being run such as the Clontarf Academy in the NT. IMP's future goal is to establish a similar model – by creating an academy based in the NT. This academy will be piloted in a remote community and will comprise of a live-in facility where local runners will reside. They will live, train and learn. They will train every day and run educational programs to children and adults within the community regarding the importance of healthy and active lifestyles. This will not only benefit the community from a health and wellbeing perspective, it will also assist the development of Indigenous sport within the region. Once this model is successful, IMP will look to develop it further across the NT throughout different communities.

Federal government assistance:

Indigenous incarceration: A story that springs to mind is the story of Banksia Hill Juvenile Detention Centre in Western Australia. In early 2011, IMP received a call from an officer within the walls of the detention centre. He explained to the team that the young men who had been following the 2010 IMP mens team (comprised at that stage of 4 young men) and were very excited to hear of their success in New York. They had been following the IMP story and had been cutting out newspaper clippings and putting them up on the walls of the detention centre as a source of inspiration. As a result of this success, the prison officer requested us to write the young men a training program (50 in total) because they believed that if those 4 guys could get to the finish line of a marathon, so too could they! Over the course of 5 months, the boys train for their marathon. They trained 4 times a week and as they reached certain training goals, they were rewarded with certain things (powerades, running singlets and eventually running shoes). After only 5 months of training, 50 men lined up on the inside of the walls of the detention centre, it was a searing hot day and the heat radiated off the walls of the detention centre. The course lined these walls and the longest loop they could create was a 1.75km running loop. The boys set off and of the 50 who started, 26 made it all the way to a half marathon – the remaining 24 made it all the way to the finish line of the marathon – some 24 laps of the track later!! The boy who won was released shortly after and in his release papers, it was written that he must join a running group and continue his training. He still runs to this date! Another boy on the inside was heavily sedated at the start of the running program, he had been taking all sorts of narcotics on the outside and was taking sedatives to calm his moods. By the end of the program, he had come off all of his medications and the doctors along with the prison guards were astounded at his change in mentality. What this shows is the IMP's ability to reach even the most desolate of places and that running has the ability to assist anyone if they give it a try.

Mentoring, role modelling and inspiration come in all shapes and sizes and does not necessarily have to come from a direct source.

ISARP: The Indigenous Sport and Active Recreation Program (ISARP) provide the IMP with funding to facilitate the DFRS. Without this commitment from the Federal government, the DFRS would not have been the amazing initiative it is. IMP hopes to leverage private support in order to expand the series and hopefully with further federal and private assistance, will be able to reach even more communities over the coming years.

Australian Sports Foundation (ASF): Due to recent legislative changes and the toughness of obtaining deductible Gift recipient (DGR) status through the taxation office, the ASF provides IMP with somewhat of a platform to obtain private funding. This is a powerful tool for the IMP as donors can obtain taxation relief if requested when making donations to the project. Without the ASF, IMP believes that it may not have obtained the private support it has in the past, however IMP is still seeking DGR status so as to leverage serious private support as it tries to expand both its core IMP and DFRS operations nationally. IMP hopes to establish a separate foundation through which these funds can be raised. Having DGR status is essential for the IMP to progress as a charitable fundraising entity and will be a determining factor as to the future impact and opportunity IMP can offer.