



**Australian Government**

Australian Government response to the  
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal  
and Torres Strait Islander Affairs report:

*Sport – More Than Just A Game*

Inquiry into the contribution of sport to Indigenous  
wellbeing and mentoring

December 2017



## Introduction

The Commonwealth Government (the Commonwealth) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs titled *Sport - More Than Just A Game* and thanks all those who contributed to the Committee's inquiry.

Since the completion of the above report, there has been significant change in the way sport and recreation funding for Indigenous programmes is managed. The Commonwealth introduced the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) on 1 July 2014 and committed \$4.9 billion over four years to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through the delivery of a range of programmes, including sport and recreation. The IAS replaced more than 150 individual programmes and activities run by various departments, including the Attorney-General's Department, Department of Communications and the Arts, Department of Education and Training, Department of Employment, Department of the Environment and Energy, Department of Health, Department of Industry, Innovation and Science and Department of Social Services, with five flexible broad-based programmes managed by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C). These programmes are:

- Jobs, Land and Economy;
- Children and Schooling;
- Safety and Wellbeing;
- Culture and Capability; and
- Remote Australia Strategies.

These new arrangements make funding more flexible and ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are actively involved in the development and delivery of local solutions. The Commonwealth has set three clear priorities under these arrangements to make sure efforts are effectively targeted: increasing school attendance; getting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into work; and making communities safer.

Through the IAS, the Commonwealth currently has committed over \$135 million to support 151 activities that use sport as a tool to achieve Closing the Gap outcomes. This investment includes activities that increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' participation in sport and recreation, use sport and recreation to improve wellbeing and resilience, improve educational attendance and attainment, engage youth, develop or upgrade infrastructure facilities and help to provide employment and training opportunities. Rather than activities being funded for the sake of sport, this approach ensures that investments are being made into activities which lever outcomes for the broader community. Where possible, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are employed and trained to deliver these programmes – meaning the capacity remains in communities to continue delivering sustainable programmes.

A number of other activities are delivered by state bodies and clubs of the Australian Football League and National Rugby League that, despite not including a sporting component, deliver employment and training programmes and encourage school attendance and attainment in communities. These programmes take advantage of the popularity and reputation of these sports and their players to create positive role models and pathways to education and work for Indigenous Australians.

In the 2017 Budget the Commonwealth committed \$10 million a year over four years to strengthen the evaluation of the IAS programmes and activities. The multi-year programme of evaluations will be underpinned by a formal Evaluation Framework to strengthen reporting, monitoring and evaluation at a contract, programme and outcome level.

Before responding to the recommendations made by the Committee, the Commonwealth wanted to make sure arrangements under the IAS were bedded down and working effectively. Going forward it is expected that measures being developed as part of the National Sport Plan will also complement the efforts currently being made under the IAS.

The Commonwealth's response to these recommendations is set out below.

## **Recommendations and Responses**

### **Recommendation 1 – Framework for sport programs and Close the Gap outcomes**

The Committee recommends the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, in consultation with the Minister for Sport, develop an overarching framework of service delivery and evaluation for Commonwealth agencies which fund sport programs to clearly identify outcomes that align with Close the Gap targets.

Commonwealth agencies, such as the Australian Sports Commission, which predominantly fund programs for sports-specific outcomes, should be exempt from the framework.

*Response:* Support

As discussed above, this recommendation has been implemented through the establishment of the IAS, which funds programmes and projects that support activities aimed at improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that link to Closing the Gap targets. These programmes have a particular emphasis on closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous school attendance and halving the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by 2018. The IAS includes activities that are either directly related to the health and wellbeing of communities and rely on sport and active participation as a tool to achieve this or use sports activities to support other IAS objectives such as getting children into school and adults into work.

Key performance indicators under IAS funding agreements provide data for monitoring the performance of funded activities. In the 2017 Budget the Commonwealth committed \$10 million a year over four years to strengthen the evaluation of Indigenous Advancement Strategy programmes and activities. This multi-year programme of evaluations will help deliver best practice policies and programmes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by assessing what works, and what has not worked. The evaluations will be underpinned by a formal Evaluation Framework to strengthen reporting, monitoring and evaluation at a contract, programme and outcome level. There are also a range of reports, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework biennial reports and the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Report (produced every two – three years), which monitor levels of physical activity by Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Physical inactivity is an important risk factor associated with potentially preventable chronic diseases that are prevalent in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, stroke, hypertension and diabetes. In 2011,

physical inactivity accounted for eight per cent of the health gap with non-Indigenous Australians (AIHW 2016).<sup>1</sup>

**Recommendation 2 – Evaluating outcomes of sports programs**

The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government develop evaluation mechanisms for sports programs that include the collection of data on sport participation outcomes as well as non-sport outcomes such as the Close the Gap targets.

The Committee recommends that all Commonwealth funded sports programs should collect comprehensive data on Indigenous participation. The data should be collected at the start and finish of each program and should be analysed as part of an evaluation process for individual programs.

The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government incorporate results of evaluations of sports programs and their contribution to Indigenous wellbeing into the annual Close the Gap reporting to Parliament.

*Response:* Support in Principle

As noted at Recommendation 1, in the 2017 Budget the Commonwealth committed \$10 million a year over four years to strengthen evaluation of Indigenous Advancement Strategy programmes and activities. In addition, key performance indicators under IAS funding agreements provide data for monitoring the performance of funded activities in delivering better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This work complements the Commonwealth’s analysis of information received from IAS grant recipients as part of their regular reporting process.

Other agencies also collect data on Indigenous participation in their programmes. The Australian Sports Commission collects data on Indigenous participation at both national and state levels through its large national survey of adults and children’s sport and physical recreation participation, the AusPlay survey. The Australian Sports Commission also collects data on participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary school students in the Sporting Schools programme on a quarterly basis.

**Recommendation 3 – Learn Earn Legend**

The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government extend the funding of the Learn Earn Legend! program to target Indigenous students in the high school years.

The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government assess in 2016 the effectiveness of further funding the Learn Earn Legend! program to target Indigenous students in the primary school years.

*Response:* Support

The Learn Earn Legend! brand is used by a number of sporting organisations to promote their projects. This was formerly managed under the Indigenous Employment Programmes and has

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016. Australian Burden of Disease Study 2011: impact and causes of illness and death in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 2011, Australian Burden of Disease Study series no. 6, Cat. no. BOD 7, AIHW: Canberra.

been transferred into the IAS. The IAS has funded a number of projects that use the Learn Earn Legend! brand. These projects are designed to increase school attendance and attainment and include mentoring, work experience, leadership activities, career pathway support and transition to further education and work. There are also a large number of similar projects aimed at primary and secondary school students that utilise many of the key features of the Learn Earn Legend! brand. For example, mentoring, engagement and school-based academy projects assist over 20,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people stay engaged and complete their school education and support successful post-school transitions to further study or employment.

**Recommendation 4 – Indigenous sporting carnivals**

The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government provide base funding and coordinated assistance to Indigenous regional and state sporting carnivals which draw together governments, sporting codes and clubs, mentors and role models, corporates and businesses to address health, education and employment Close the Gap targets.

The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government ensure that funding is provided to sport and recreation carnivals and events, in particular those which support high participation by Indigenous females.

*Response:* Support in part

The aim of the IAS is to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other stakeholders to develop and implement activities that address local emerging needs and closely align with IAS priorities (i.e. increasing school attendance; getting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into work; and making communities safer). These activities are generally funded through a grant application process. Only activities that meet IAS priorities are supported through the grant application process.

The focus of the IAS is not specifically on providing base funding and coordinated assistance to organisations running Indigenous regional and state sporting carnivals. These organisations are eligible for funding under the IAS provided they meet its priorities.

Currently, there are a range of IAS funded activities that include state and regional sporting carnivals and events (e.g. football, hockey, basketball, cricket, swimming and surfing). Some of these activities also focus on empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and young girls to become leaders and improve their health and wellbeing (e.g. hockey and football).

**Recommendation 5 – Three year funding**

The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government should fund Indigenous sports programs over a longer term preferably a three year cycle.

*Response:* Support in Principle

The Commonwealth recognises the advantages of longer term funding agreements and the benefits they can provide. IAS funding agreement durations are based on the nature and risks associated with individual projects and prior funding relationships. In accordance with the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines, longer term grant agreements are used where appropriate.

The Commonwealth is conscious of the need to reduce administrative burden on providers, as well as the need to give longer term certainty to providers running activities in communities. However due to the specific nature of some programmes, short term agreements may be appropriate, taking into consideration the nature and circumstances of each individual project (as well as the risks). As a result, arrangements for grant funding through the IAS are considered on a case by case basis.

The IAS is designed as a strategic investment in Indigenous Affairs and improves the way the Commonwealth does business, including simpler programme arrangements with less red tape. It is aimed at directing effort where it is most needed and tailoring funding to solve localised issues.

**Recommendation 6 – Research the impact of sport**

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government conduct a comprehensive project to measure and compare the range of outcomes across gender and age from Indigenous participation in sport and cultural activities.

*Response:* Support in Principle

As indicated in the responses to Recommendations 1 and 2, in the 2017 Budget the Commonwealth committed \$10 million a year over four years to strengthen the evaluation of Indigenous Advancement Strategy programmes and activities. These evaluations will include an analysis of data across gender and age where relevant. This information is complemented by existing data collection activities, such as the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (a six-yearly multidimensional social survey undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics) and the Australian Sports Commission AusPlay survey. The Australian Sports Commission is also undertaking qualitative research in 2017 to explore the sports and physical recreation participation behaviour of Indigenous Australians, and particularly understand the drivers of that behaviour. The sum of this information means there is a strong suite of relevant data available to help deliver best-practice policies and programmes for Indigenous Australians.

**Recommendation 7 – Sport participation roles**

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government acknowledge and develop Indigenous participation in the supporting roles around sport, such as coaches, umpires, health workers and administrators.

*Response:* Support

A strong component of sporting related activities under the IAS, is to provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to undertake roles such as sport and recreation managers, healthy lifestyle officers, coaching and umpiring. These opportunities include the provision of training (such as Certificate II in Sport and Recreation) and mentoring sessions designed to improve long term participation in sport and recreational activities, increase employment opportunities and expand career pathways. Key performance indicators used to assess performance under IAS funding agreements include, where relevant, a measure of the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people engaged in a suitable training activity designed to increase employment or enable career progression.

The Australian Sports Commission, through the Sporting Schools programme, is also developing a coach education and training pathway for Indigenous secondary school students as a part of a broader initiative which seeks to investigate sustainable models of sport delivery and participation within remote Indigenous communities.

**Recommendation 8 – Participation of Indigenous women**

The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government prioritise strategies within its sports programs to increase opportunities for Indigenous women to participate in physical activity.

*Response:* Support

The Commonwealth supports encouraging choice and opportunity for women and girls to take part in physical activity.

Through the IAS, the Commonwealth has provided more than \$65 million from 2015 to 2017 for programmes and activities supporting the education and leadership outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young women and girls. Many of these programmes incorporate sport as a healthy and positive way to help achieve their goals.

Through the IAS, \$213,200 has been provided over five years to 2020 to the Anyinginyi Health Aboriginal Corporation to deliver Anyinginyi Wilyarkka Kirriji Ki (Women in Sport) to create participation opportunities in sport and recreation for Indigenous women in Tennant Creek and the Barkly region. The activity includes the development and delivery of sporting and recreation activities that are targeted specifically at women. The activity is delivered in addition to Anyinginyi Sport and Recreation, which receives a further \$1.3 million under the IAS to deliver social sport competitions, after school activities and fitness classes to the region. These activities have allowed the development of five women's basketball teams and eight women's volleyball teams which now compete locally.

In response to the National Health Survey 2014-15 that identified no or low levels of exercise among girls aged 15 – 17, the Commonwealth launched the Girls Make Your Move campaign in February 2016 to inspire, energise and empower young women and girls aged 12-19 years to be more active and reinforce the many benefits of an active life, whether through recreation, incidental physical activity or sport. An evaluation of its success indicates that of the 82 per cent of the target audience who recalled seeing the campaign, 71 per cent had done something as a result of its impact, such as talking about doing more physical activity or looking up related information. The evaluation also indicated significant improvements in perceptions amongst the target audience relating to the importance of young women and girls being physically active.

In 2017 the \$160 million Sporting Schools programme administered by the Australian Sports Commission expanded to include Year 7 and 8 students, with priority given to girls aged between 12 and 14 years, and to schools where there is evidence of disadvantage and/or a large cohort of inactive students.

The 1967 Referendum -50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Indigenous Education Package provided \$19 million in 2017 to assist girls to engage in secondary education through sporting activities. This included \$12 million towards AFL Cape York House for Girls, \$5 million to the Beyond the



Broncos Girls Academy, \$1 million to Stars Foundation and \$1 million towards the Kaziew Rangath Girls Academy.

**Recommendation 9 – Prioritise funding for Indigenous women and girls**

The Committee recommends the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport ensure that funding for sport and active recreation for Indigenous women and girls is prioritised.

*Response:* Support in Principle

A large number of sports activities under the IAS aim to increase the participation of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in sports and recreation activities to improve wellbeing and resilience. These projects cover a wide range of areas and include activities that target both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males and females (such as football, cricket, surfing and athletics); and specifically Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls (such as hockey, sports competitions, fitness classes and general sporting activities).

See response to Recommendation 8 for further related information.

**Recommendation 10 – Sponsorship towards Closing the Gap**

The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government investigate strategies to encourage philanthropy through mechanisms such as tax deductions for sponsorship by corporate bodies of Indigenous sporting programs linked to Closing the Gap outcomes.

*Response:* Noted

The Commonwealth supports mechanisms for investment in Indigenous sports activities and partnerships with corporate organisations. The Commonwealth notes that there are already a range of ways this recommendation is addressed, and corporate and philanthropic organisations are supported to sponsor Indigenous sporting programmes.

Through the IAS, funding arrangements are designed to encourage partnership, collaboration and innovation and require funding recipients to work collaboratively with stakeholders (across all levels of Government, service providers and other corporate and philanthropic partners) to deliver the IAS outcomes.

Under existing taxation rules, sponsorships of organisations such as those funded under the IAS may be considered tax deductible as a general business expense.

The Australian Sports Foundation (ASF) also assists community organisations to raise funds for the development of Australian sport. Tax deductible donations can be made where programmes meet the eligibility criteria under ASF requirements.

**Recommendation 11 – Promoting role models**

The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government support initiatives that increase the range of Indigenous sports role models at all levels, including and beyond the elite level.

*Response:* Support

The Commonwealth supports initiatives that increase the range of Indigenous sports role models and these include the activities set out below.

- The IAS funds a range of projects for both primary and secondary school students that use sporting and other role-models as mentors to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to help them stay engaged and complete their school education and support successful post-school transitions to further study or employment. These include the Cathy Freeman Foundation, National Rugby League and Australian Football League organisations such as the Port Adelaide Football Club and Richmond Football Club, Role Models and Leaders Australia, and the National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy Athletes and Role Models Tour.
- The Women Leaders in Sport programme, managed by the Australian Sports Commission in partnership with the Office for Women, provides women with development opportunities to reach their leadership potential in the sports industry. The programme administers grants for individual development and organisation and targeted leadership development include support for Indigenous leadership programmes.