



Conclusion and Key Issues

Sport has long played an important social and cultural role in Australia. It provides a form of social glue which binds communities and creates a broader, more unified society. Sport has enriched the Australian language and added to its humour. It has developed a rich celebrity culture as well as revered sites and traditions.¹

To many, sport is everything. The legendary Liverpool (UK) football manager Bill Shankly once remarked: “Some people think football is a matter of life and death . . . I can assure them that it is much more serious than that”.² And in Australia such a sentiment often seems very true. Take, for instance, the most mentioned media items recorded by Media Monitors during 3–9 July 2006: the FIFA World Cup drew 19,330 mentions; the Wimbledon tennis tournament scored 14,648; there were 8,774 mentions about the State of Origin rugby league final; followed by 8,072 mentions regarding North Korea test firing seven long-range missiles which sparked world-wide condemnation. At times, sport can eclipse everything else in this country.³

But why do people choose to participate in one sport over another? The answers to this are as diverse as the number of sporting activities in this country; people’s choices are influenced by their parents, their friends, access and barriers to different sports, cost, physical attributes, and the list goes on.

But there is one constant when it comes to sport – if participants find involvement in their sport of choice enjoyable and fulfilling then they will be more likely to continue into their adult lives. An enjoyable early experience increases the chance of lifelong participation with that sport, be it as a player, coach, administrator or official. As such, it is a priority of Australia’s sporting organisations today that their policies and programs are focused on making sure that their sport is fun, safe, inclusive, healthy and fulfilling to people of all backgrounds who participate.

Sport increases social capital

Sport plays an important role in creating ‘social capital’ and helping communities develop trust, openness and respect for different individuals and groups. This can lead to greater cooperation and a higher level of unity and social cohesion within those communities.

Social capital is an umbrella term used to describe the institutions, relationships, attitudes and values that govern interactions among people and contributes to economic and social development.⁴ Broadly speaking social capital is comprised of three core components – norms, networks and trust.

Waleed Aly, a member of the Islamic Council of Victoria, said “Aged six, I was asked at my local football clinic to play football against 10 years olds. At seven, I was playing cricket in the under 12s and took a hat-trick. At school, people wanted to be on my team and all of a sudden I wasn’t so foreign. In those formative years I was not playing a game; I was creating social capital.”⁵

While social capital is hard to quantify, its benefits are real and significant, and should not be forgotten when identifying the value of sport and its role and effect in community building.

Policy Director of Jesuit Social Services Father Peter Norden said: “Clubs used to represent local communities. Now they represent communities of common interest, not necessarily with a common geographical base. Affiliation with a club could become one of the significant social connections of the future”.⁶

Health and social benefits of sport for Indigenous and CALD communities

For many Australians, sport and exercise offer an opportunity for different individuals and community groups to come together and interact on a social level. Researchers suggest that taking part in social activities helps encourage healthy family environments, build stronger communities and enhance cultural identity.⁷

Sport can also provide a vital pathway to improving the social and economic wellbeing of Indigenous communities and plays a very important part of contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life. It is a means to enhance better health and has the potential to create positive individual and community well-being and life choices.

Research conducted by the Curtin University Indigenous Research Centre in 2000, showed that the AFL *Kickstart* program increased: self-esteem and confidence; community cohesion and sense of purpose; individual well being and awareness of healthy lifestyle issues and; school attendance and academic achievement. The research also showed that the program decreased: community level vandalism; alcohol and substance abuse and; anti-social behaviour and crime at public events and locations.

As such, many sporting programs now aim to: increase and retain the number of Indigenous people actively participating in structured sport longer term; build genuine community sports capacity; promote and provide the necessary support for mainstream sporting pathways and development opportunities for talented Indigenous sportspeople.

Sport is also very important for people from CALD backgrounds. The Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues states that “resettlement issues, such as cultural differences, language barriers and disrupted schooling can make the adjustment into Australian society (for people from a CALD background) difficult.”⁸

Professor of sociology at La Trobe University in Melbourne John Carroll said: “According to the criterion of where most Australians are likely to find group attachment – that is, a sense of meaningful belonging to a collectivity – three domains stand out – work, family and sport”.⁹

Many immigrants have found that sport has helped them become involved in the community and interact with people from different backgrounds. AFL CEO Andrew Demetriou explains: “To many people football is a fantastic introduction to life in this country. People may not share the same language, same beliefs or same heritage, but they can join together and certainly share the same passion for a football club.”¹⁰

KEY ISSUES

Intense competition for new members

One of the most difficult challenges facing national sporting organisations in today's environment is the diverse range of choices that people have for leisure and recreational pursuits.

As a result there is intense competition between sports to attract new participants, with many codes now injecting significant resources into junior, Indigenous and CALD community development. To remain popular, sporting codes realise that they must constantly evaluate their performance, analyse the challenges and identify areas where they can grow the number of participants.

The Australian Football League (AFL) leads the way in this area, devoting unprecedented resources to developing the game amongst their existing base of players, administrators, coaches, officials, referees and volunteers, as well as promoting the game to potential participants, particularly those from non-traditional markets.

The AFL and state and territory football bodies invested more than \$30 million in the development of the game in 2005 through strategies and programs designed to grow the game at the community level. This commitment to investment has seen the number of players increase by 102,000 in the past five years. In September 2006, they launched '*Next Generation – Securing the Future of Australian Football*', which will result in the biggest ever investment in game development. A total of \$208 million will be spent over the next five years on growing the game in schools, juniors, club recreation, women's football and Indigenous and multicultural programs.

However, not all sporting codes have the huge financial resources of the AFL, the National Rugby League, the Australian Rugby Union or Cricket Australia. Many sports surveyed do not have the time, staff or financial resources to develop and implement extensive game development programs.

New introduction programs and modified games to attract new participants

Sporting organisations understand that increasing numbers in junior competitions will create a pool of players, coaches and officials that will move into senior ranks and hopefully stay in the sport for life. To attract new participants and create strong junior competitions, many of the sporting organisations have developed introduction programs and modified versions of their sports to generate interest and provide opportunities for young people to learn and participate.

The ASC's Targeted Sports Participation Growth Program, which is currently winding down, has assisted a number of sports, both financially and through support services, to expand active membership in their clubs and associations. By mostly targeting more popular sports with an existing club infrastructure, the program aimed to achieve significant growth in the number of people of all ages participating in grassroots sport.

As part of this program, Softball Australia developed *Play Ball*, while Basketball Australia developed *Aussie Hoops* and Football Federation Australia developed *Football Anytime*. These are just a few examples of the programs the sports surveyed in the report have implemented to attract new participants.

In addition, some sports such as cycling and athletics are characterised by a very large community participation in the activity, but a relatively low membership rate. This is an issue that those national sporting organisations are addressing through targeted participation programs and modified introduction versions of their sport.

While most of these programs are relatively new, having been developed in the past two or three years, the available figures seem to indicate that they are working. What isn't so clear however, is how participation in these programs is translating to increases in club membership.

Gathering information/data on introduction programs and modified games should allow sporting organisations to be able to determine the success of these projects and thereby ascertain whether this is translating into increased membership or not.

Increase of sporting education programs for schools

National sporting organisations recognise the important role that schools play in providing sporting experiences and opportunities to children. As such, there are a range of school-specific sport programs which have been developed by various sporting codes in recent years. These programs can be delivered by teachers or sport development officers, depending on the needs of the school.

These programs include: *EdRugby* – the ARU's national education program for schools; Cricket Australia's *CricKids* resources including *CricKids* Ashes Challenge, *CricKids* School Cricket and *CricKids* Playing in Harmony; and AFL resources such as 'AFL sport education', 'AFL – our national game', 'Eat well play well', 'AFL heritage' and an AFL multicultural schools resource 'Welcome to the AFL'.

The ASC has also designed a website *Sport Working with Education*, which is designed to assist people working in sporting organisations to understand and work more effectively with the education sector, including schools, principals, teachers, administrators, parents and students.

It is hoped that by exposing children to sporting activities within the school environment, more children and young people will make the links with local sporting clubs and organisations and establish a lifelong involvement in sport.

Lack of data/census information on participation in sport (particularly by Indigenous and CALD people)

While there is a plethora of information available on the general number and characteristics of Australian people who participate in sport and recreational activities (including age, gender, frequency and type of participation), very little data is available on the participation rates of Indigenous people and those from a CALD background.

Similarly, there are a large number of reports and surveys about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, migrant and refugee communities, which cover a broad range of study areas; however, once again, very few include details on participation in sport and recreation by these groups.

All of the sporting organisations included in this report were surveyed to see what relevant baseline data they have collected in this area. The only sports to conduct an annual census

to record member participation details were the AFL, Cricket Australia, Hockey Australia and Tennis Australia. However, specific details in these censuses on Indigenous and CALD participation are also very limited.

Many of the sports surveyed recognise the need for this type of data and state that they will be taking pro-active measures to obtain information on these groups in the near future.

It is clear that information provided by a census would enable sports to be more strategic in their planning and provide an in-depth analysis of exactly who is playing their sport and how they can tailor their education, schools, Indigenous and CALD programs to have the greatest impact.

Low levels of involvement in sport and physical activity by CALD groups

As the Australian population has changed in recent decades, participation in sport has also become increasingly diverse. However, there are still particular groups in society who have traditionally low levels of participation in sport and physical activity. These include people from CALD backgrounds, and particularly women from these groups.

The ABS survey on involvement in organised sport and physical activity (2004) showed that a total of 31 per cent of people born in Australia aged 15 years and over were involved in sport (including as players and non-playing involvement) compared to 12.2 per cent of people from 'other than main English speaking countries' (15.6 per cent of males and 8.9 per cent of females).¹¹

Another ABS survey on children's participation in cultural and leisure activities (2003) showed that the participation rate of children between 5-14 years from couple families where both parents were born in Australia is 69 per cent (comprising 75.7 per cent for males and 62.6 per cent for females), compared to 41.5 per cent for both parents born in other countries (comprising 50 per cent for males and 32.4 per cent for females).¹²

The ABS National Health Survey (2001) summary results reported that 'persons born in Southern and Eastern Europe, North Africa and the Middle East report lower levels of physical activity. And persons born in Asia also report lower levels of exercise.'¹³

Strategies and programs aimed at promoting the benefits of sport and physical activity to groups that have a traditionally low level of participation can only help to address this issue.

Low level of participation by CALD communities in organised sport

Of the people from CALD backgrounds who take part in sport, many participate on an informal, social basis in trusted environments, such as schools, leisure and community centres, and not in an organised club environment.

The available research indicates that new arrivals to the country prefer to play sport with people with whom they have a close relationship, such as their friends and peer groups, rather than joining an established club.

In addition, many new arrivals may not know what sporting clubs exist in their area, or how to go about joining a club. Others may feel intimidated or uncomfortable about approaching a club, without the support of friends or peers.

Family, community or religious commitments can also pose barriers to participation, including a restriction of the days or times certain faiths can play or train; the type of food that can be eaten at functions; when food or drink may be taken; and the clothing that may be worn, particularly by women.¹⁴ Other things that limit women's participation in sport include: language barriers (a particular problem for newly-arrived migrants and older women), limited information, limited resources and limited transport.

Gavin Brown from the Victorian Aboriginal Youth Sport and Recreation Organisation argues that for a long time the structures in sport haven't catered for different cultural groups. "They cater for a mono-cultural society where you train on a Tuesday and Thursday and you play on a Saturday or Sunday."¹⁵

Creating links and establishing partnerships with CALD communities will help codes promote their sport to these groups and may lead to increased levels of participation.

Recognition for sporting participation to reflect Australia's population demographic

Since 1945 more than 6.5 million people have come to Australia as new settlers and more than 660 000 people have arrived under humanitarian programmes, initially as displaced persons and more recently as refugees.

Today, nearly one in four of Australia's 20 million people were born overseas. The number of settlers arriving in the country between July 2004 and June 2005 totalled 123 424 - coming from nearly 200 countries.¹⁶

Surf Life Saving Australia is just one sporting organisation that understands that their membership growth has been limited to a predominantly white Anglo-Australian demographic and that they need to target ethnic communities to participate in life saving. In 2000 they commissioned a research report, called '*Sound the Siren*', to examine why the range of nationalities that make up their total membership was not comparable with the overall population of Australia. The organisation has used the results from this report to implement strategies to target membership from a diverse range of community groups.

Cricket Australia has also acknowledged the need for the game to embrace Australia's changing population and to develop strategies to foster greater participation and inclusion from non-traditional cricket groups. In the last few years the organisation has been proactive in encouraging participation amongst juniors, CALD communities and Indigenous people through a comprehensive range of programs and resources.

These examples demonstrate the importance of sporting organisations monitoring their participation data to determine whether their membership reflects the wider community. If it is not a close reflection, it would be prudent to investigate the reasons why and then implement strategies to target membership from these groups.

Barriers to participation for Indigenous people

National, state and territory sporting organisations have extensive Indigenous sports programs in place, however there remain a range of barriers to participation in sport for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, which include:

- the difference and diversity of geographical location
- the exclusiveness of the current structure of some sports

- lack of financial resources
- lack of role models working in and playing the game
- lack of information and knowledge about the game, and
- the need for respect.¹⁷

Sporting organisations understand that family and community ties are enormously important to the Indigenous people; as such they are starting to base their programs around sporting activities that have children learning fundamentals of the game in conjunction with older family members, who take on a coaching or management role.

Hockey Queensland has developed programs that involve the whole community. In fact, gaining the support of Elders, parents and school teachers has been critical to the success of their Remote and Indigenous Communities Hockey Program. Another vital consideration is to develop and support locally-based coaches and administrators who can take over the management of development programs after they are up and running.

By auditing their structure and set-up to see what barriers exist for the participation of Indigenous people in their sport, sporting organisations can then implement measures to address these if required.

Barriers to participation for CALD communities

There are also many barriers to participation in sport faced by people from a CALD background, such as:

- coming from countries without structured community-based sport
- lack of familiarity with sporting clubs and environments and available services/activities
- lack of understanding of the rules of some sports or lack of confidence in their physical ability to play certain sports
- absence of effective public transport
- potential threat or experience of discrimination or racism
- feelings of isolation
- language barriers
- alcohol consumption being perceived as a main activity of sports clubs
- cost of activities and equipment, and
- family or cultural communities may take priority over sport.¹⁸

Young women from a CALD background are particularly limited from participating in sport due to barriers within their own communities and those that they face from sporting organisations. These may include; culturally inappropriate uniform requirements, lack of female coaches, and a lack of appropriate facilities or programs to participate in.

Some of the sports surveyed indicated that they had no specific focus on increasing participation amongst Indigenous or CALD communities as their sports already encouraged participation from everyone, irrespective of race or background. While this approach is fair in principle, it fails to recognise the barriers to participation that may exist for these groups

to become involved in their sport – such as the high cost of equipment, membership fees, access to training and competition venues – that if investigated and addressed could result in greater inclusion and participation.

Cross cultural awareness training

Education and cross cultural understanding can go a long way towards breaking down barriers and opening up channels of communication. The ASC's Indigenous Sport Program developed a sport-specific cross-cultural awareness training package in 2000 to provide a basic understanding and appreciation of issues, culture, protocols and history of Indigenous Australians, and to promote awareness of their experiences and culture in a sport-specific environment.

The *Cross Cultural Awareness Package – Understanding and Tolerance* includes a one-day training course and provides practical advice for working with Indigenous communities. A range of national and state sporting organisations have received this training.

The package is currently being reviewed and updated, with consideration being given to broadening the scope of the program to include a focus on multicultural awareness.

In addition, sporting organisations such as the NRL conduct cross cultural awareness presentations as part of their annual 'Rookie Camp' and the training has also been presented to all ARL Development Officers.

The Rugby Union Players' Association (RUPA) also launched a training program in November 2005 to promote diversity and prevent racial vilification on and off the field.

The program was developed in consultation with the Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW, with key players and RUPA officers trained to deliver workshops to elite and academy rugby players.

Widespread utilization of cultural awareness and diversity training can only help to break down barriers and further increase awareness and understanding between sportspeople.

Indigenous participation and targeted sporting programs

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people demonstrate exceptional ability in a diverse range of sports, but across the board they are still not represented proportionally in sporting organisations. While many sporting organisations have dedicated Indigenous sporting programs there are still many others who have not developed specific initiatives to promote indigenous participation or development.

Many national and state sporting organisations are involved with the ASC's Indigenous Sports Program. The centrepiece of the program is a national network of 50 Indigenous sport development officers working within each of the state and territory departments of sport and recreation. The program also works closely with 16 national sporting organisations to increase participation, infrastructure and skill development in Indigenous communities.

Many of the sporting organisations have also developed their own strategies and programs to encourage Indigenous participation in their sport. For instance, Cricket Australia established a strategic plan titled *Two Cultures: Australia's New Cricket Tradition* in 2002 that outlines

the main barriers to participation, along with key steps to develop programs and provide Indigenous Australians with the opportunity to play cricket.

Athletics Australia's *Athletics for the Outback* program was launched in 2004 by ambassadors Cathy Freeman and former Olympic hurdler Kyle Van der Kuyp. It provides education, participation opportunities and equipment to remote areas. Tennis Australia has also developed its own Indigenous Tennis Program, which aims to develop tennis programs that can be taken to the Indigenous communities.

Basketball Australia has recognised the need to provide initiatives that contribute to the growth of basketball within Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander communities, and Softball Australia continues to work closely with state associations and external delivery organisations to ensure that there are opportunities to develop softball in the Indigenous community.

These are just some of the examples which demonstrate how valuable Indigenous sports programs are in promoting Indigenous participation in sport, and how participation in sporting activities can lead to increased community cohesion.

CALD participation and targeted sporting programs

Some sports surveyed for this report have had no problems encouraging participation from people from a diverse, multicultural background, including soccer, basketball, softball, gymnastics and weightlifting to name a few.

However, people from CALD backgrounds are under-represented in the numbers participating in sporting organisations and competitions, and the range of sports participated in. While some of the major sports in Australia have comprehensive policies and programs in place to encourage the participation of CALD communities, many organisations surveyed have not developed specific initiatives to promote an inclusive environment.

Many sports realise that their long term future is dependant upon embracing all people, irrespective of their age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion or ability. They also understand that the strategies and projects they have implemented (and those of state associations and clubs) will not succeed unless the perceived barriers to participation are addressed and their sport is seen as encouraging diversity and providing a welcoming culture.

Through their multicultural programs, many sports are building strong bonds with diverse communities to develop strategies to encourage their involvement in the game and in the wider community.

There are several new innovative programs which aim to make participation in sport accessible to refugees and new arrivals. The New Arrivals Basketball Program is one such project, which offers basketball training and competition to new and recent arrivals to South Australia. The program provides regular training and games in a welcoming and fun environment that is centrally located, close to public transport and are subsidised.

'*On the Same Wave*' is another new project that aims to provide support to young Australians of all backgrounds, particularly young Australians of Middle Eastern background, to engage in surf lifesaving around Australia. The project aims to achieve greater harmony between all beach users and promote a culture that 'the beach is there to share'.

Once again, these examples show the importance and benefits of dedicated programs to promote participation among people from a CALD background.

Indigenous/CALD sporting development officers

Many sporting organisations surveyed have recently appointed specific personnel to manage and develop Indigenous and CALD programs. The AFL has assembled a dedicated team through its multicultural program to assist and encourage migrant and refugee communities to access Australian football. In 2005, they appointed their first Multicultural Project Coordinator, and five multicultural development officers currently work within the Western Bulldogs, Hawthorn, Collingwood, Essendon and Richmond Football Clubs to implement the program in clubs and schools.

In late 2005, Cricket Australia appointed a Senior Officer – Indigenous Cricket, based in Darwin, to help drive Australian cricket's strategy and increase participation in cricket among Indigenous people. Cricket Australia has also employed Indigenous Cricket Development Officers in several states.

ARL Development is charged with administering a coordinated national development and participation program and has a team of more than 60 National Development Officers engaged in full-time development through schools and coaching clinics.

SLSA has also recently appointed a National Diversity Manager and State Diversity Manager who will be joined by two project development officers to assist with the continued engagement of the CALD communities.

However devoting staff to further these specific projects seems to be a luxury for the larger, better-resourced sporting organisations; many of the smaller organisations surveyed do not have the funds or staff to directly target different community groups.

Importance of sportspeople as role models

Sporting people are commonly elevated to the status of 'modern day gods' in Australian society and with this exalted position comes the responsibility to act as a role model for their sport and the wider community. As cricket legend Sir Donald Bradman said: "It is the responsibility of all those that play the game to leave the game in a better state than when they first became involved."¹⁹

Most of the sporting organisations surveyed have programs whereby prominent athletes competing in their sport contribute to community projects and use their position to promote participation in sport, adopt positive lifestyles and act as role models for others to follow. Indeed, many have it included as a requirement in their contracts.

Sportspeople are also acting as role models to promote a wide range of services and causes in Australia at present. Australian touch football representative Bo De la Cruz recently accepted an invitation to join the National Indigenous Ambassador programme. She will work alongside rugby league legend Arthur Beetson and former Olympic hurdler Kyle Vander-Kuyp to spread the word about government services available in Indigenous communities.

Swimmer Ian Thorpe promotes his own Foundation of Youth program which is dedicated to improving the health and education of disadvantaged children. He has also helped to launch a nation-wide children's reading challenge to direct resources to remote Aboriginal communities where illiteracy is very high.

AFL footballers Adam Goodes and Michael O'Loughlin, champion boxers Anthony and Tony Mundine and rugby league player Amos Roberts led a campaign by high-profile Indigenous Australians to encourage young Aboriginal men to take part in the recent 2006 census.

However, the absence of female sporting role models has long been cited as a contributing factor to the low participation rates of girls in sport and recreation activities. There are many shining examples of these positive role models in Australian sport; they deserve to be championed by their sporting organisations, as well as the community, to inspire and support women.

Sporting events that recognise Indigenous culture

Many sports have developed a range of events to showcase the skills of Indigenous players, at junior and elite levels, and to celebrate the importance and influence of Aboriginal culture.

One of the findings from a study on Aboriginality and rugby league in Australia was the importance of 'all Aboriginal sporting carnivals in sustaining community pride and fulfilling Aboriginal culture and social needs. These all-Aboriginal spaces provided invaluable opportunities for Aboriginal people to re-establish and maintain cultural ties within their community'.²⁰

The AFL has organised events such as the AFL club and Indigenous AFL All Stars match; the annual Sydney vs Essendon match at Telstra Stadium for the Marngrook Trophy; 'Dreamtime at the G' played between Richmond and Essendon; and the first NAIDOC-themed match between Richmond and Essendon.

Cricket has established the Imparja Cup; an all-Indigenous cricket carnival, first held in 1994 as a Northern Territory community-based event between Alice Springs and Tennant Creek. Since then, it has expanded to become a national tournament and an important fixture on the Australian cricket calendar.

The contribution of Indigenous players to the game of rugby league is celebrated during the annual NAIDOC Week, which many NRL clubs support through a range of activities and events.

These events are an important way to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' contribution to sport and show recognition and respect for their culture.

Targeting discrimination, harassment and abuse

Sport is not immune from acts of discrimination, harassment and abuse; rather it often provides an environment which can lend itself to conduct which is not only inappropriate, but also unlawful. Rather than ignore this reality, all sporting organisations surveyed have policies in place to protect their members from discrimination, harassment, abuse and other inappropriate conduct.

The Australian Sports Commission (ASC) has played a lead role in assisting the sport industry to formulate policies, practices, programs and resources to address ethical issues and enhance ethical conduct in Australian sport. Their Harassment-free Sport Strategy has been a key initiative to assist sporting organisations address harassment, discrimination and abuse issues and they provide a range of resources, policy templates, training programs and other information to help sporting organisations create safe and harassment-free environments.

State and territory sport and recreation departments, along with state equal opportunity and anti-discrimination commissions, also help promote the strategy and deliver Harassment-free Sport training programs to the organisations with which they work.

Play by the Rules compliments the ASC's Harassment-free Sport Strategy by providing online information and training on how to prevent and deal with discrimination, harassment and child abuse. Most sporting organisations surveyed referred to *Play by the Rules* in their member protection information or had links to the website and resources.

By continuing to utilise Harassment-free Sport, *Play by the Rules* and state sport and recreation training programs, sporting organisations will help to create an environment free from discrimination, harassment and abuse.

Member protection policies

'Member Protection' is a term that is now widely used in the sports industry. It describes the practices and procedures that sporting associations have put in place to protect their members – including players/participants, administrators, coaches and officials – from harassment and inappropriate behaviour.

The ASC has developed a Member Protection Policy template designed to assist organisations to write their own sport-specific policy to deal with complaints of harassment, discrimination, child abuse and other inappropriate behaviour. It provides key policy statements on issues such as anti-harassment and discrimination; codes of conduct that are relevant to all state/territory member associations, clubs and individuals; guidelines on state/territory child protection legislative requirements; and processes such as complaint handling.

All national sporting organisations surveyed have member protection policies and codes of conduct in place, which are disseminated to state and regional associations, and individual clubs. These policies reaffirm the sporting bodies' commitment to eliminating discrimination, harassment, child abuse and other forms of inappropriate behaviour from the sport and ensuring that everyone is aware of their legal and ethical rights and responsibilities.

However, the adoption of member protection policies themselves is just the first step in providing members and participants with protection. The successful implementation and enforcement of these policies requires the cooperation and commitment of sporting associations and participants at all levels.

To this end, various national sporting organisations have developed their own websites, information kits or national membership administration systems which contain a variety of game development policies and procedures and administrative resources to assist regional associations and affiliated clubs with implementing and understanding them. The ASC's *Club Development Network*, which provides a range of guidelines and information, is also widely used and referred to.

The issue of crowd behaviour

Fans targeting players for racist abuse has a long history in Australian sport. A fan described her views: "*Of course I sing out 'black bastard', but I don't mean it. It's all part of being at the footy on a Saturday arvo. The media makes too much of [racial taunts]. It's just a way of letting out your feelings.*"²¹

An increase in incidents of poor crowd behaviour in recent times has signaled that this battle has yet to be won. The crucial issue for sport and sporting codes in Australia in the foreseeable future will be how the governing bodies respond to incidents of racial abuse.

Following incidents of racial abuse by spectators at Australian cricket venues in the 2005–06 season aimed at the touring South African and Sri Lankan teams, Cricket Australia moved swiftly to address the issue and has begun canvassing a range of options to eliminate racist abuse by spectators.

And following ethnic-based violence at a NSW Premier League soccer match in 2005 which resulted in a near riot, the NSW Parliament passed laws which will see violent fans banned from attending matches for up to 10 years, as well as bans on national and political symbols at soccer grounds and on club insignia. In addition, clubs will have to share information on troublemakers with police, provide separate seating for avid fans, and removed inflammatory material from club websites.²²

New strategies are necessary and tough laws help but the attitudes that give rise to racist behaviour at sporting events do not seem to have shifted a great deal. For instance, a recent survey of cricket fans indicates that opinion is divided on the contentious behaviour of Australian crowds. Many seem to think there is no problem at all. A poll on cricket website baggygreen.com.au found that 46 per cent of 12,000 respondents believed crowd behaviour had been acceptable during the 2005–06 summer season.²³

Journalist Alex Brown summed this up. “This, of course, is not merely the problem of Cricket Australia. This is a national issue. Our reputation as a fair and tolerant sporting nation has taken a battering in recent years. Yet the biggest problem is not how we are perceived outside our borders, but rather how we perceive ourselves. If, after the Jones controversy (Australian cricket TV commentator Dean Jones reportedly referred to South African Muslim batsman Hashim Amla as a “terrorist”), we tolerate the outburst and roll our collective eyes at the whistleblower, we have a problem far more serious than mere overseas perception.”²⁴

Former head of News and Current Affairs at the ABC, Peter Manning, said: “I remember being at a crucial Bulldogs versus Roosters semi-final a few years ago when a bunch of Roosters fans in the Sydney Football Stadium members enclosure began taunting champion goalkicker Hazem el Masri because of his Arab and Muslim background. Their abuse was disgusting and, despite objections, continued all match.” Manning asks the pertinent question: “How much of this abuse exists because the abusers are sure their insults reflect the feelings of the crowd around them?”

The issue of racial abuse by spectators is a growing concern. Comprehensive measures have been taken in Europe to address the problem, particularly in football. It is an issue that Australian sporting organisations will need to pro-actively address to ensure the sporting public is in no doubt that this sort of behaviour will not be tolerated.

The benefits to sport

There is no doubting that the benefits of encouraging greater cultural diversity and interaction between Indigenous and CALD people to individuals and sporting clubs are immeasurable. They include:

- increased membership base and more funds for club activities,
- the opportunity to increase the number of skilled or gifted players in a club,
- more potential volunteers or administrators,
- lifting the profile of a club in the local community and beyond,

- learning more about other cultures,
- more spectators and increased social benefits associated with new members and their family groups,
- assist new arrivals to settle in,
- raise the awareness of the benefits of sport in culturally diverse families, and
- builds relationships between cultures.

By implementing policies to take advantage of these opportunities and benefits, sporting organisations will be laying the groundwork for a successful (and diverse) future.

Endnotes

¹ 'Sport is culture, and nowhere more so than in Australia' by Richard Cashman in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 November 2003.

² 'A Better world is the ultimate goal' by Neil Clark in *The Australian*, 27 June 2006.

³ Media Monitors Australia data in New Value in *The Australian*, 10 July 2006.

⁴ Productivity Commission 2003, pp. 9–11.

⁵ 'The next issue' by Waleed Aly in *The Age*, 21 May 2005.

⁶ 'Everyone's game' by Peter Di Sisto in the *AFL Record*, Round 12 June 16–24 2006.

⁷ Beneforti, M and Cunningham J, 2002 *Investigating indicators for measuring the health and social impact of sport and recreation programs in Indigenous communities*, Australian Sports Commission and Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health, Darwin.

⁸ 'Tennis: Everybody Everywhere' booklet by Tennis Australia.

⁹ 'Join the club, mate' by John Carroll in *The Weekend Australian*, 2–3 September 2006.

¹⁰ 'AFL to spread the word' by Sam Lienert from AAP, 5 June 2006.

¹¹ ABS *Involvement in Organised Sport and Physical Activity*, Australia, 2004, (6285.0).

¹² ABS *Children's Participation in Cultural And Leisure Activities*, Australia, 2003 (4901.0).

¹³ ABS *National Health Survey* (2001).

¹⁴ CMYI Multicultural Resource kit for state sporting associations, 2005, p16.

¹⁵ *Sporting Diversity* by Gavin Brown in *Yikes: Newsletter of the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria Inc.* Vol 1, edition 9, November 2001.

¹⁶ <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/02key.htm>.

¹⁷ Cricket Australia's *Two Strong Cultures: Australia's New Cricket Tradition* 2002.

¹⁸ 'Tennis: Everybody Everywhere' booklet by Tennis Australia.

¹⁹ Cricket Australia *Junior Cricket Policy*. P25.

²⁰ *Aboriginality and rugby league in Australia: An exploratory study of identity construction and professional sport* by Darren John Godwell, Canada, 1997.

²¹ McNamara L, 'Tackling Racial Hatred: Conciliation, Reconciliation and Football' in *Australian Journal of Human Rights* 2, 2000.

²² 'Ten-year red card for soccer hooligans' by Jonathan Pearlman and Michael Cockerill, in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, May 5, 2005.

²³ 'SCG warns fans about racial abuse' by Iain Payten in *The Daily Telegraph*. 4 February 2006.

²⁴ 'Jones has dropped us down the order' by Alex Brown in the *Sydney Morning Herald* online at <http://www.smh.com.au/news/cricket/me-and-my-big-mouth/2006/08/08/1154802888117.html> 9 August 2006.

²⁵ 'Our racist habits: despite the denials, the runs are on the board' by Peter Manning in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 August 2006.