



## **SCOA DISCUSSION PAPER**

### **Sport and Settlement**

This discussion paper is put forward to stimulate conversation about the role between sports and settlement. It includes suggestions and recommendations, developed through member consultation and discussion with sporting bodies. SCOA welcomes feedback on any issues raised in the paper, acknowledging that there are a wide variety of programs operating successfully across the country, and that the policy landscape is one that can change rapidly.

#### **Introduction to SCOA and why position statement was developed**

The Settlement Council of Australia (SCOA) represents a broad network of nearly 80 settlement agencies around Australia. Settlement agencies have played a pivotal role in enabling settlement, enhancing integration and ensuring equity across the country. As advocates and service providers, the sector has a unique knowledge of the realities of the settlement experience, over time, across the country, and among hundreds of different ethno-cultural communities.

SCOA has a vision of “an equitable, respectful and inclusive Australia where effective settlement outcomes provide every opportunity to humanitarian entrants and migrants to fully participate in society”. Good settlement outcomes contribute to social harmony, greater productivity, and foster social cohesion.

SCOA was invited to participate in a roundtable discussion by (then) Minister Arbib and (then) Senator Lundy on sports and settlement in September 2011. To prepare for this meeting SCOA held a consultation with members on the subject of sports and settlement, and undertook research on current recommendations to the sporting sector, and their relationship to settlement.

#### **Brief summary of issues**

Sports play an integral part in settlement and offers well documented physical, psychological and social benefits to participants (Oliff, 2007). However, the participation rates for refugee and non-

English speaking migrant groups in sports is significantly lower than for the general population (ABS, 2009).

Participation helps establish social networks for migrants and refugees living in Australia and can offer a social and political space in which to cultivate cultural diversity. The social interactions which occur through participation in sporting teams and community clubs play an important part in shaping and reinforcing patterns of community identification and community belonging (Atherley, 2006, Cortis, Sawrikar & Muir, 2007:1, Smailes, 2002:89).

A lack of participation in sports amongst migrant and refugee groups can have a detrimental effect on health status and health behaviours. In particular, there is evidence that physical inactivity is common in migrant CALD groups, and is a key contributing risk factor to chronic disease for these individuals (Caperchione, Kolt, Mummery, 2009).

SCOA has identified the most significant barriers which limit migrants and refugees engagement in sports and impact on the success of sports programs as:

1. Lack of funding
2. Lack of communication and collaboration between sporting and settlement organisations
3. Issues surrounding cultural sensitivity and appropriateness
4. Lack of opportunities for women in sports
5. Lack of information around sporting opportunities

## **SCOA'S POSITION**

The consensus from our research and consultation with members is that sports can play a vital role in contributing to positive settlement outcomes, promoting social inclusion and supporting migrant and refugee integration into Australian society. The benefits of sport are well documented, ranging from personal through to socio-cultural and economic benefits (CMY 2007).

Settlement agencies across the country are deeply embedded in migrant and refugee communities and can greatly contribute towards building the links, developing the cultural awareness (on both sides) and fostering the engagement of newly emerging communities in a wide range of sporting activities.

## **KEY AREAS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

SCOA has identified the following as key areas that need to be addressed and has made recommendations to improve sport programs in the settlement sector:

### **1. Lack of Funding**

#### **Issue:**

A major issue related to the funding of sporting programs is its often ad hoc and short-term nature. Many local programs rely on funding from philanthropic organisations such as Sports without Borders, state sporting associations such as the AFL Multicultural Program, or related local and state government grants (CMY 2007). The funding received from these bodies, however, is often project-based and lacks the ‘follow through’ needed to strengthen community engagement in sport, limiting the development of genuine community capacity and undermining the potential for sustainable community-run sport programs (Crawford, 2009). Projects are often ‘one-off’ giving migrants and refugees a ‘taste’ but leaving them nowhere else to go once the project is completed.

Much funding and sponsorship is provided to mainstream sports which are then dependent on the volunteer support and goodwill of settlement agencies and communities to provide them with clients and organise these clients to attend sporting workshops and events.

A large proportion of Australia’s sporting budget is directed at elite sports and the elite level athletes. Resources are used to find ‘the few stars’ within the new and emerging communities, but not necessarily providing entry into sport and recreation for a large number of young people who would benefit from participating. Additionally, current funding is not being targeted to the areas of sport that new and emerging communities want to participate in, such as football and volleyball.

SCOA members unanimously agreed that a major barrier to participation in sport was the expense involved personally to migrants and refugees. Costs such as uniforms, registration, travel/transport, and time (both as a participant and as a volunteer) present a significant difficulty and there is currently little funding directed specifically at subsidizing these costs.

#### **Recommendations:**

- SCOA recommends that government look at funding various programs to specifically run local programs. Grassroots projects help build engagement as well as allowing peak bodies to connect with CALD communities and promote sport participation.

- SCOA recommends Settlement Grants Program (SGP) funding applications include sporting programs as a category of program delivery.
- SCOA recommends the introduction of subsidies, for example through scholarships, to encourage young people (especially women) to enter mainstream sports, complimenting the resources of community groups who organise their own sporting activities and competitions.
- SCOA recommends that clubs forego registration fees in sporting programs for migrants and refugees, something clubs already do in some cases to increase participation of other groups.

## **2. Lack of communication and collaboration between sporting and settlement organisations**

### **Issue:**

Many sporting organisations, which have the skills and resources required to provide programs to migrants and refugees, lack an understanding of CALD groups and of the settlement services which would be able to help in the organisation of such programs. Similarly, many settlement services lack in-depth knowledge of the sporting sectors or programs currently on offer. This lack of understanding of each other's systems and programs has led to a failure to communicate and/or collaborate effectively and is exacerbated by the fact that responsibility to provide sporting opportunities to migrant and refugee communities does not fit within any one service area (CMY 2007).

Fostering improved partnerships between peak sporting bodies and migrant and ethnic associations working with mainstream community sporting clubs will help break the barriers faced by the refugee and migrant community. The high levels of participation rates with sporting events organised by migrant and refugee themselves show the benefit for the sporting sector in this approach.

### **Recommendations:**

- SCOA recommends overarching coordination between all levels of government, sporting bodies, schools and settlement agencies to develop strategies for:
  - Maximising facilities and resources
  - Targeted marketing
  - Community development approach in engaging with new and emerging CALD communities
  - Maximising pathways between school sport, and amateur and league sport
- SCOA recommends strengthening the role of schools in sports. Schools are a key sport hub, with local schools being the only access to sport for many youth. Schools have the potential

to be used to facilitate various projects which can then be run in such a way that meets key curriculum outcomes for the school.

### **3. Issues surrounding cultural sensitivity and appropriateness**

#### **Issue:**

Many sporting groups have little cultural knowledge about their local CALD communities and are therefore unable to provide appropriate sporting opportunities. Issues can include points such as the provision of prayer space, halal food, culturally appropriate uniforms, game times (which may conflict with religious days or ceremonies) and language services. Cultural sensitivity needs to be mainstreamed through the sport sector.

Language can also create significant barriers to sporting participation, not only in the verbal communication required between individuals and groups, but also in the translation of resources. One example highlighted in the CMY report was of cases where translation of terms such as *life guard*, *sports development officer* and *sports commission* in their publications dissuaded participation due to the negative connotations of such terms for those who have experienced atrocities under oppressive regimes (CMY 2007).

In developing sporting programs for refugees in particular, agencies need to take a holistic view, oriented more towards community development rather than event management. Factors such as participant health (an issue when participants may have spent many years without access to adequate medical support), and managing conflict (which may arise in cases where refugee youth have little exposure to healthy competition) should be considered. Addressing potential conflict issues in program development can mitigate against conflict occurring on and off the field at sporting events.

Another cultural issue is the sporting environments surrounding many Australian sports. Sporting cultures which include drinking alcohol following games, swearing, or aggressive competition are not uncommon and can be confronting or culturally inappropriate for many migrant and refugee groups (CMY 2007).

#### **Recommendations:**

- SCOA recommends that culturally sensitive practices be promoted that are in line with the Australian Sports Commission's (ASC) website *All Cultures* ([http://www.ausport.gov.au/participating/all\\_cultures](http://www.ausport.gov.au/participating/all_cultures)).

It would be ideal to have the following included in all sport programs:

- A part time sports and recreation worker attached to a MRC (metro or regional) or a local council
- Facilities which are accessible to all in the community
- A community development approach to sports programs which looks at the wider context of sports in participant's lives
- Involvement of the Department of Education with the goal of social inclusion in sports participation with regards to migrants and refugee youth
- Greater focus on culturally specific sports to improve the accessibility of cross cultural sports that are most applicable to migrant/refugee communities

#### **4. Lack of opportunities for women in sports**

##### **Issue:**

Research has documented that the participation rates of culturally and linguistically diverse women in sport in Australia are substantially lower than Australian born women (Cortis, Sawrikar & Muir, 2007). This is in part affected by particular cultural traditions, such as considerations about uniforms and families' fears for the safety of young women, both at sporting events and using transport to get to such events, and in part due to a lack of opportunities, with many programs that exist (that target migrant and refugee youth) being aimed primarily at boys and youth.

##### **Recommendations:**

- SCOA recommends that the demographic targeting of programs be broadened to include women of all ages.
- SCOA recommends the provision of culturally specific programs for women (i.e. not after dark, women's only teams, appropriate uniforms)
- SCOA recommends that a female social worker be present at sporting events to allay any fears families might have with regards to the sport and "co-ed" sports
- SCOA recommends assistance in the provision of transport to sporting events for female participants (i.e. by providing buses, car-pooling opportunities, or even simply the provision of bus timetables and maps to events)

#### **5. Lack of information/education available to migrants and refugees regarding sporting opportunities**

**Issue:**

For many migrants and refugees, there is a lack of accessibility to information regarding sporting opportunities. Although they may have the opportunity to participate in one-off grassroots community matches, many migrants and refugees do not know how to go about joining a club and lack an understanding of official registration proceedings.

Most sport and recreation facilities and other resources owned by private clubs, local government and state government (mainly through schools) are not available to new and emerging communities and existing sports resources and support are not well communicated to the migrant and multicultural community (or the settlement sector).

Additionally, many migrant and refugee groups lack an understanding of the rules about access to public spaces and facilities. Instances of groups of youth being expelled from public spaces by council workers due to lack of permission and/or insurance have been noted.

Another major barrier to sporting participation for youth is a lack of knowledge by their parents about Australian sporting culture and the benefits of sports. This lack of awareness of the beneficial health and social outcomes, on top of financial constraints, can lead to a lack parental consent to participation in particular sporting activities. In some refugee communities, the idea of sports or recreational activities is not popular, and thus requires community education to change this perception.

**Recommendations:**

- SCOA recommends the provision of sporting information sessions that target migrant and refugee groups to be held at schools/ English schools/ community centres/ sports clubs. These sessions should cater to the linguistic and cultural needs of the target groups and could also be used to promote '*Come and try*' sports sessions.
- SCOA recommends including families as part of the volunteer program (for example parents running the canteen, refereeing etc.) to give the parents an opportunity to see their children play and other families being able to do something together through sport. This may also encourage parents to allow more girls and young women to participate as a result.
- SCOA recommends ensuring local government leisure services are accountable for equitable access to facilities

**Additional research:** More research needs to be done in order to define multiculturalism in the sport context and the benefits sport brings, for example building on research such as outlined in the *Playing for the Future* report (The Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues, 2007)

### **Case Study: Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre 'Get Active Program'**

Responding to a lack of sports opportunities targeted at migrant and refugee communities in the local area, Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre developed its sports program 'Get Active' in 2009. The program has focused on providing sport, recreational and capacity building activities, including soccer and volleyball training, swimming classes, coaching and referee courses. These activities aim to promote mental and physical health, foster friendships, increase self-esteem, promote cross-cultural understanding among refugee communities, build their confidence and employability and increase their awareness and participation in sport and community life in Fairfield.

#### **Strengths:**

- Direct consultation with the local refugee and migrant communities in the initial program development stage meant that the needs of the groups were being specifically addressed. These meetings identified a strong interest in soccer for boys and volleyball for girls.
- Strong partnerships with other participating organisations like STARTTS, Fairfield Police, Fairfield City Council, Cabramatta Youth team and the Department of Sport and Recreation NSW has led to increased client referrals to the program and ongoing support.
- Strong links with schools while delivering the program

#### **Challenges:**

- The FMRC continue to face funding challenges with its main funding body not directly funding sports programs and without the resources that many sports clubs have access to. Further funding could be used to employ a sports worker, familiar with the needs of CALD groups, to run the program.

#### **Acknowledgements:**

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## APPENDIX

### 1) SCOA members' involvement in sport

SCOA members are involved in direct sports projects with a settlement focus in a wide range of locations, sports and communities across the country. Some specific examples (there are many more available), which show how sport can support settlement and vice versa are listed here:

#### Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre

- Partnership project with Football United to deliver projects in the Liverpool area to refugees to promote engagement in sport, project allows students to access coaching style clinics after school.

#### MRC South Australia

- In 2002 established an Annual Football Carnival with the then SA Soccer Federation to support the engagement of young people (men & women) with mainstream amateur and league clubs.
- In 2001 established a subsidised registration program for young eligible people to assist them to register and to buy the necessary clothing and equipment to join sports clubs.
- Since 2008 the MRCSA has built partnerships with the Amateur Football League and Football Federation of SA, and the SA Football League, as well as Volleyball and Netball State bodies and 'Be Active SA'.

#### Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre (FMRC)

- FMRC Sport Project, has, over two years of running the project supported over 100 refugee young people to participate in sports such as soccer, volleyball, swimming and coaching courses.
- Currently there over 25 young people participating in soccer and swimming programs
- Over 30 young people of refugee backgrounds received grassroots level soccer and volleyball coaching in 2009
- 12 refugee young people received accredited level one certificate in soccer coaching in 2011
- The FMRC Sport Project won the Humanitarian Award for 2010
- The 'Get Active Program' has benefited a large number of refugee clients and generated a lot of interest from the community and schools.
- Sports included: volleyball, swimming, hip hop, hockey, basketball

### Multicultural Council-NT

- Established a multicultural basketball program in late 2008-2010 which took place monthly and included youth aged 12-18 yrs, including African and Indigenous youth. Local agencies pooled volunteers and received sponsorships from the Member of Legislative Assembly (MLAs).
- Hosted a friendly game between the African youth and the police which was successful

### MRC- Hobart

- Run a variety of programs, including soccer for women and men.
- Sports included: badminton, swimming, kayaking, hill-walking,
- Tai Chi was popular especially among older African clients (surprisingly)
- Experimented with different types of physical activities such as dance and Zumba lessons which have also proven popular.

## **2) Current research, recommendations and reports on sports:**

Recommendations taken on board (thus far) by Government from the Independent Sports Panel (ISP) - Crawford Report (2009):

- Investment of \$1.2 billion is to be made in sporting programs at the elite and community levels as part of the Government's 'new strategic direction' and 'integrated whole-of-sport approach to the Australian sport system'
- At the grassroots level, funding will be allocated for a national volunteer program, participation plans, providing coaches with access to training and support to encourage participation by people experiencing disadvantage.
- Elite level sport will benefit from an extra \$324.8 million for the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) 'to create a secure platform to plan beyond Budget cycles'.
- One particularly innovative initiative to be implemented under the Government's new sport plan will require elite athletes to contribute at the grass roots level as volunteer coaches, sports officials or administrators.
- Additional \$195 million in funding: \$71M for building community sports and \$124M aimed at delivering excellence in sports performance and continued international success

Key Initiatives under the '*Australian Sport: The Pathway to Success*' program of the Government:

- A Sport and Education strategy to bring a new focus on the delivery of quality physical education and sport in schools.
- Requiring national sporting organisations to have an increased focus on participation outcomes as part of their funding agreements with the Commission and boosting support for community clubs.
- Additional coaching and officiating training opportunities for up to 45,000 community coaches and officials, including subsidising training costs for 5,000 new community coaches and officials.
- Investing in the development pathway by doubling the Local Sporting Champions program, and boosting opportunities for up and coming athletes to compete in domestic competition.
- Doubling talent identification programs to support an additional 5,000 aspiring Australian athletes and expand the talent identification network.
- A national sports volunteering strategy requiring amongst other things Australian Institute of Sport scholarship holders to volunteer at local community sporting clubs or junior sport programs.
- Boosting funding to identify, attract, develop and retain our high performance coaches including support for incentive packages and professional development.
- Expanding funding to our high performance athletes to support their training and participation in international competition.
- Introducing new funding and measures to address the particular issues affecting women's participation, advancement and leadership in sport.
- A national social inclusion and sport strategy to support the development of pathways to increase opportunities for all Australians in sport, particularly those who may be marginalized or disadvantaged.

Exceptions:

- Exceptions relate to alternative funding options, most notably to consideration of a system whereby the cost of sports participation could be reduced.
- It could be argued, however, that in its response to the ISP report the Government does not appear to have engaged with the ideological underpinning of some of the ISP's recommendations, especially those relating to the balance between funding for elite and grassroots sports – comparison of funding received.

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