

Margins 2 Mainstream Submission Template

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Playing their part - a snapshot of the role of sports organisations in promoting social inclusion, reducing discrimination and preventing violence.

Since its establishment in 1987, VicHealth has been funding sport and active recreation organisations to act undertake as health promoters. Things have moved significantly since the initial years of sponsorship, where the focus was largely on spectators at major events, who were subject to individual behaviour change messages such as 'Eat well, Live well', 'Booze Less, Bes Your Best' or 'Be Active'.

From 2001, VicHealth has taken a much stronger systemic approach to it's funding – supporting local through to state level organisations to bring about both organisational and individual change for its participants, by increasing their involvement in healthy, welcoming and inclusive environments. Increased participation is good for a community in a range of ways including decreasing the social and economic cost of illness and improving the mental health and wellbeing in the community. Involved and active communities are good places to live - this means that sport and active recreation organisations can play a pivotal role in how healthy a community is.

Following a review of achievements in late 2006, VicHealth recognized that certain groups in the community were still experiencing lower participation rates in physical activity than others. For example, children and adolescents with a disability were shown to be 40-66% less likely than children without a disability to meet the Australian guidelines for physical activity (Packer et al 2006) and Indigenous Australians were more likely to report no physical activity in their leisure time. It was also recognized that many of those who could benefit most from increased participation in sport and active recreation also have the least access and opportunity to participate (AIHW 2004). This is particularly true for those of low socioeconomic status, Indigenous Australians, refugees and people with disabilities.

In July 2007 VicHealth took the next step in building sport and active recreation organisations as health promoters by targeting these four specific groups for attention. The Participation in Community Sport and Active Recreation (PICSAR) program was introduced, and currently comprises three levels of activity – state, regional and local. By coordinating the work undertaken across each level and working in partnership across different sectors, VicHealth aims to build a sport and active recreation sector that has healthy policies and environments and strong communities and organizations that embrace everyone in the community! Included in the PICSAR program is the need to have an impact in a range of areas (e.g. active participation, supporting, coaching, administration and management); and to work with people and organisations from other sectors to respond to the needs of the most disadvantaged. As well, to ensure that all age ranges are targeted and that the target groups are actively involved in decision-making.

This presentation will explore the role that sports organisations can play in promoting social inclusion, reducing discrimination and preventing violence by highlighting work undertaken by four organisations funded by VicHealth via the PICSAR program. It will share the experiences of these organisations including providing 'real life' strategies of how to more actively engage those

who are often the most difficult to engage as well as the challenges!

References

Packer, T.L., Briffa, T., Downs, J., Ciccarelli, M., and Passmore, A. (2006). *The Physical Activity Study of Children and Adolescents with a Disability*. Curtin University of Technology.

Australian Institute of Health & Welfare 2004, 'Australia's Health 2004', AIHW, Canberra