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Kerry A. Brown
Southern Cross University

Robyn L. Keast
Queensland University of Technology

Michael B. Charles
Southern Cross University

Neal F. Ryan
Southern Cross University

Grant Cairncross
Southern Cross University

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Public-Private Partnerships in the Promotion of Sport and Well-being: A governance model.

Kerry Brown

School of Tourism and Hospitality Management
Southern Cross University
Tweed Heads, Australia
Email: kerry.brown@scu.edu.au

Robyn Keast

School of Management
Queensland University of Technology
Brisbane, Australia

Michael Charles

Graduate College of Management
Southern Cross University
Tweed Heads, Australia

Neal Ryan

Southern Cross University
Tweed Heads, Australia

Grant Cairncross

School of Tourism and Hospitality Management
Southern Cross University
Coffs Harbour, Australia

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* Corresponding Author

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Abstract

This research focuses on exploring the links between sport, Indigenous self determination and deeper engagement within mainstream Australia especially with regard to the issue of promoting healthy lifestyles and the role of governance, through sport governance. Against all social, economic and health criteria Indigenous Australians are disadvantaged – despite government attention and financial input. It is well understood that education is a basis to better health, employment and lifestyle (Furneaux and Brown, 2008). However, many of the issues confronting Indigenous people have not responded to conventional government approaches based on program development and policy initiatives from single organisations (Ryan et al 2006). As a consequence, new approaches that both tap into the specific interests of Indigenous people and better engage them in the process of governance are required. The case material of the research focuses on the Australian Football League (AFL) Kickstart program.

Introduction

Many of the issues confronting Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander communities are multifaceted and do not respond conventional approaches premised on individual government departments providing single agency service delivery (Pearson, 1999; 2001). It is argued that a more comprehensive integrated approach to policy and service delivery is both effective and efficient however it is difficult to achieve (Provan and Milward, 1995; Keast, 2003). A more holistic approach is also consistent with the culture and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (Melton, 1999; Clear and Karp, 2000).

Prior research which addresses the impact of sport and physical activity programs on youth behaviour has generally shown a positive relationship between participation in sport and improved health and well being, although gaps remain (Beneforti & Cunningham, 2002). Specifically sport participation has been linked with the development of pro-social outcomes for young people and a reduction in anti-social behaviour including substance abuse and criminal activity (Morris, Sallybanks & Makkai, 2003). Sports programs that have specific social as well as sporting goals are already happening in Australia, and are of increasing interest to governments. The AFL (Australian Rules Football) Kickstart Program is one of these programs. The program has been introduced into Indigenous communities as a way of increasing sport participation and improving health and well-being however, it also combines social and community elements of game administration and leadership. Australian Rules Football, though it is not entirely dissimilar to Gaelic Football, is a football game with rules that are particular to Australia.

Despite the existence of government sponsored initiatives, there has been little systematic evaluation of sports and recreation programs conducted in Indigenous communities. The evidence supporting the benefits of using sport as an element of diversionary programs to promote positive health and community outcomes is suggestive rather than conclusive (Morris et.al. 2003). Further, the evaluations that have occurred to date have tended to focus on short term impacts of the programs, rather than sustainable change. Hence the impact of community characteristics such as infrastructure and leadership have not been considered in determining the success of sports programs.

Considerable attention has been given to governance within indigenous communities (see, e.g Behrendt, 2002). The issues arising from this area of research tends to focus on cultural and social factors limiting the extent to which mainstream styles of governance can be implemented in Indigenous communities. This research will review the literature on sport and governance in conjunction with the case material on ALF Kickstart to establish a governance framework that may operate to improve the well-being and community participation of members of Indigenous communities.

The AFL Kickstart program, while it focuses on playing sport, also adopts an approach that relies on sport participation to deliver not only positive health and lifestyle messages but community participation in governance using the medium of football. Anecdotally, the use of football as a medium to deliver positive lifestyle messages has a significant and positive impact on communities, yet little systematic evaluation has been undertaken.

AFL Kickstart differs from traditional sports programs in that it has explicit social as well as sporting goals and relies on significant cross-sectoral and community support for its implementation. This provides an ideal opportunity to conduct an evaluation drawing on the existing indicators for development work (Beneforti & Cunningham, 2002).

Sport programs, AFL Kickstart and community outcomes

The case material of this paper will focus on the AFL Kickstart program. In Australia, Australian Rules Football, known colloquially as 'Aussie Rules' comes closest to being Australia's national football code, with the sport being played in every state and territory. Despite this, only the states of Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory have adopted Australian Rules Football as their premier winter sport, while Rugby League (and Rugby Union to a lesser extent) is regarded as such in the states of Queensland and New South Wales, in addition to the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). The national competition, which incorporates teams from all Australian states and territories, with the exception of Tasmania, the Northern Territory and the ACT, is known as the Australian Football League (AFL). This is also the sport's premier governing body in Australia and is charged with promoting the game and ensuring continued grassroots support.

AFL Kickstart is a program that began in 1997 with a grant of $A25,000 from Rio Tinto Mining to facilitate visits to "remote and isolated Communities to encourage AFL participation" (Qantas AFL Kickstart, 2008). The program has since expanded to sponsorship of $A500,000 from a combination of AFL, State and Federal government and corporate funding (Qantas AFL Kickstart, 2008a).

The AFL Kickstart program, while it focuses on playing sport, it also adopts an innovative approach to deliver positive health and lifestyle messages using the medium of football.
The objectives of Kickstart are to:

- improve individual health outcomes through active sport participation;
- deliver specific positive health and lifestyle messages on behalf of the program partners including providing incentives for increased school attendance;
- develop leadership skills through coaching and umpiring education; and
- develop community capacity by developing transferable administrative and leadership skills through the creation of local competitions.

The Program has three elements:

- Participation - 12 week program for 5-15 years conducted by the AFL Development Officers);
- Leadership - coaching, umpiring, administration) conducted by, or under the supervision of the Community Sport & Recreation Officers (SRO); and
- Life-Skills, including the reinforcement of positive lifestyle messages.

Visits to Indigenous communities are based on a formal application process applying criteria such as infrastructure requirements, sport and recreation officer involvement and anticipated whole of community support. Of particular importance, children participating in the Kickstart program "have to be attending school on a regular basis up to 3 days a week, have no recent history of substance abuse or other drugs, no recent history of domestic violence/bullying for which they are responsible …" (Qantas AFL Kickstart, 2008b).

The longitudinal, multi-method evaluation of the Kickstart program proposed for up to 40 communities in regional areas of Queensland and the Northern Territory seeks to develop a governance framework and may serve as an exemplar of positive interactions between private industry, government and Indigenous communities.

AFL Kickstart is a program implemented in a complex environment. The proposed systematic longitudinal evaluation of the program contributes to a better understanding of the links between sport and physical activity programs and the development of healthier communities. This research proposes to measure the short and long term impacts on promoting pro-social behaviour such as attendance at school and reduction in anti-social behaviour including crime; short and long term impacts on individual health behaviours such as increased participation in physical activities and reduction of substance abuse; and the short and long term impacts on community capacity and development of transferable leadership and other skills through successful participation in coaching, umpiring and sport administration programs and the conduct of sporting competitions.

The association between health status and health gain and policy and programs that lie outside of the direct influence of the health sector is a unique feature of this study. The program relies on strong cross-sectoral partnerships to deliver health and lifestyle messages and provides transferable skills training using AFL football as a focus and delivery mechanism. To measure the effectiveness of AFL Kickstart in achieving its broader social and health objectives, in addition to its sporting objectives, evaluation needs to be based on multidisciplinary models of research practice. The research will contribute to improved health and well being for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, through a better understanding of how positive lifestyle messages are taken up by young Indigenous people.

The major research questions guiding the study design and implementation are:
1. Does the AFL Kickstart program impact the health and social well-being of remote Indigenous communities in Australia? 1a. Is AFL Kickstart associated with decreases in anti-social behaviour and increases in school attendance? 1b. What is the perceived impact and the perceived satisfaction of the implementation from the perspectives of key stakeholders in Aboriginal communities? 2. To what extent is participation in sport/recreation programs sustained beyond the intervention period? 3. To what extent is the AFL Kickstart program associated with inter-sectoral collaboration at the community level? 3a. What are the implications for governance and governance models?

The AFL Kickstart Program itself is well-established with substantial and ongoing community and government support. The AFL Kickstart Program has been underway in Northern Territory Indigenous communities for several years, but has recently been enhanced to include explicit health message delivery and the promotion of social goals. The research proposes to determine its effectiveness and identify ways of improving its implementation and impact on health and social wellbeing at the community level. Anecdotally, the AFL Kickstart program is perceived as being of great benefit to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that are participating, or will participate, in the program. There is a wider benefit, however, in evaluating more generally the effect of a sport / recreation program with explicit social goals on the health and well-being of a community. The AFL Kickstart program itself builds much capability in communities through its coaching accreditation process, competition arrangement, infrastructure development, and transfer of organisational / administrative skills.

The popularity of AFL for Aboriginal community youth makes it an attractive intervention for increasing the health and wellbeing of remote Aboriginal communities. The AFL Kickstart program itself enjoys wide support from government and community organisations in the Northern Territory, although its effectiveness has not been systematically evaluated. Furthermore, the research focuses not only on short-term gains, but also on the sustainability of the sporting program and long-term outcomes such as community capacity and building effective governance structures.

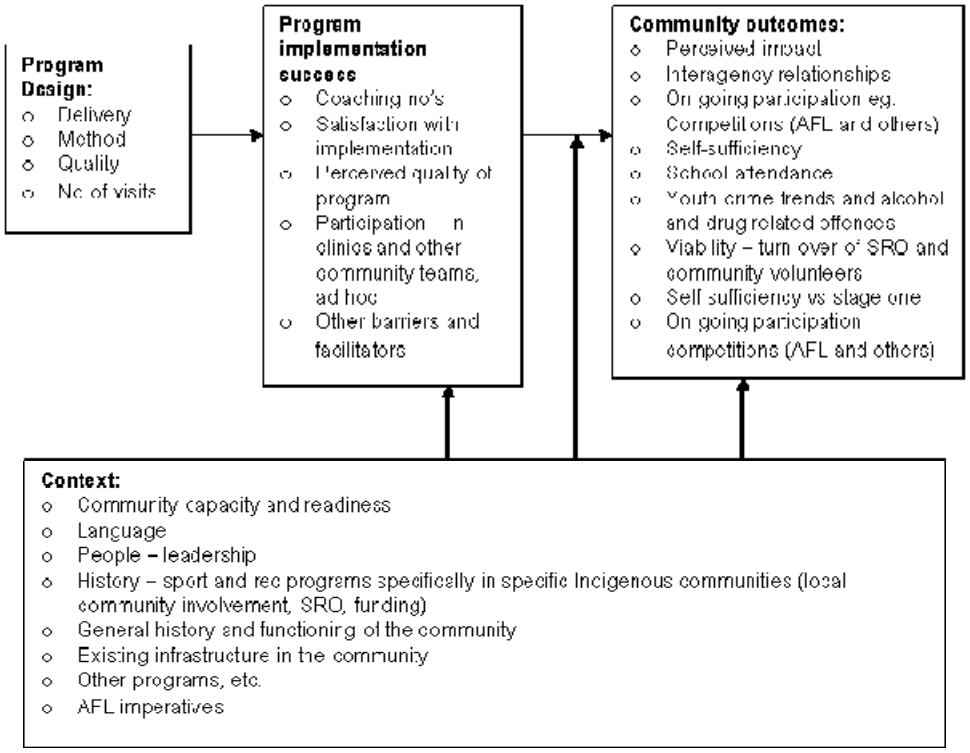
Methodology and Research Design

A longitudinal, multi-method evaluation of the AFL Kickstart program will be applied in participating Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory to determine the effect of sport programs on individual and community health and well being. AFL Kickstart program will be monitored to assess the consistency and effectiveness of implementation across communities. Two broad outcome measures include program implementation, which will establish how successful the AFL Kickstart program was in each community; and community outcomes, including measures such as school attendance, on-going participation/competitions and crime trends, as well as outcomes such as perceived impact of the program, changes to inter-agency relationships and perceived self-sufficiency. These outcomes will be considered in light of the context of each community, including its history, existing infrastructure, leadership capability and language.

It is proposed to use a combination of primary and secondary data collection. Primary data collection will involve interviews with key individuals, such as teachers, police officers, health workers, council members and sport and recreation officers. Participants will be offered the opportunity to review the summary transcript of their interviews, to approve the use of direct quotes, to withdraw their participation at any time.

The principal aim of the research is to understand how and to what extent sport and recreation programs build stronger Indigenous communities. The research is based on a dual framework of theory and practice. The findings will contribute to the development of theoretical notions which help explain how sport and recreation programs impact remote communities as well as establishing the extent to which program outcomes can be measured. Figure 1 outlines the evaluation framework and possible outcomes from the program. It links the elements of the AFL Kickstart Program to measures of implementation success and consequent community outcomes.

Figure 1. Evaluation Framework



When advertising the AFL Kickstart program, there are often more applications than available places, so a ranking system has been devised. “Tier 1” communities are identified in conjunction with indigenous leaders and the NT Government on the basis of social need; community size (school environment); available supporting infra-structure (such as Community-based Sport & Recreation Officer, School, Health and Police support). Tier 1 communities will receive a fully integrated AFL Kickstart program, with 4-5 visits per year, as well as visits from program partners in Health and Police and program resources developed in conjunction with Education. “Tier 2” communities are similar to Tier One communities, but lack critical infrastructure to support the program (eg. Police Officers). A Tier 2 community will receive 2 visits per year, and will also receive lifestyle messages and where possible supporting visits by Health and Police. Educational outcomes will continue to be addressed by AFL ‘Sticker Album’ concept that promotes continued school attendance.

The AFL expects to implement the AFL Kickstart program in up to 15 Tier 1 and 15 Tier 2 communities per year over the coming years. Tier 1 communities will receive all elements of the program and are the main focus of this evaluation. Tier 2 communities will receive only some aspects of the program, and we will collect only limited data about them. As part of our evaluation, we will visit all Tier 1 communities once during the year in which AFL Kickstart is implemented (to build rapport and gather important contextual information) and once approximately a year after implementation (to collect primary data and provide initial feedback). Secondary data will be obtained for all Tier 1 and Tier 2 communities. This will include historical data for up to three years prior to the program, as well as data for the year of implementation and up to 3 subsequent years. This will allow us to see both short-term and longer-term changes, if any. The figure below shows the main variables to be considered in the evaluation.

Four categories of data (based on the work of Beneforti & Cunningham, 2002 and outlined in Figure 1), each including a number of different variables will be sourced to address the research questions. AFL Kickstart program design will be monitored to assess the consistency of implementation across communities and within each Tier. Two broad outcome measures include program implementation, which will establish how successful the AFL Kickstart program was in each community, and community outcomes, including both objective measures such as school attendance, on-going participation and competitions and crime trends, as well as more subjective outcomes such as perceived impact of the program, changes to inter-agency relationships and perceived self-sufficiency. These outcomes will be considered in light of the context of each community, including its history, existing infrastructure, leadership capability and language (refer Figure 1). These context variables are likely to significantly impact the extent to which positive outcomes are evident.

Up to 15 Tier 1 and 15 Tier 2 Aboriginal communities in the NT will be enrolled during each of the first 3 years of the study (up to a maximum of 90 communities). These communities will be selected by AFL Kickstart staff following a formal application process on the basis of criteria such as infrastructure requirements, sport and recreation officer involvement and anticipated whole of community support. Agreement to be involved in the evaluation of the program is also a pre-requisite for selection. This sampling strategy places more emphasis on community motivation than 'need' per se, but support for the AFL Kickstart program at a local level is essential to its implementation.

A structured interview schedule covering a core set of topics will be developed and used for all key informant interviews. Additional topics may be included to address local areas of interest in particular communities.

Methods of Data Collection: Both primary and secondary data will be collected, as shown.

Data Type	**Variables**	**Source**
Secondary Data	Program design variables: Delivery; method; quality; number of visits	AFL; Community Sport and Recreation Officers (SROs)
	Program implementation success: Coaching numbers; Participation in clinics and other community activities	AFL; SROs
	Community outcomes: Ongoing participation e.g. competitions; Viability e.g. turnover of SROs	NT Sport & Recreation, SROs
	Community outcomes: School attendance; Youth crime trends; alcohol and drug related offences; Comm. health	NT Education,NT Police, NT Dept of Health
	Context: Language; History (sport & rec + general); Existing infrastructure; Other programs; AFL imperatives	NT Sport & Recreation, various published data
Primary Data	Program implementation success: Satisfaction with implementation; Perceived quality of program; Other barriers and facilitators	Key stakeholders (council members; SROs; school teachers/ principals; local police), AFL
	Community outcomes: Perceived impact of the program; Inter-agency relationships; Self-sufficiency; Viability e.g. turnover of community volunteers	As above.
	Context: Community readiness and capacity; Leadership	AFL; NT Sport & Recreation

Analysis: Given the richness of the data set and the diversity of the target audience, a variety of complementary analytical tools will be required, ranging from simple graphical

presentations of community-level time trends in measures such as school attendance and juvenile crime, to sophisticated multiple regression models which can take into account the impact of contextual factors and variation in program implementation.

Although the research design is not experimental and does not use control groups, the design is intended to be as robust as possible given the constraints inherent in this type of research, such as: the need to minimise burden on communities by minimising primary data collection; a widespread belief that sport and recreation programs are beneficial, which makes justifying the use of control groups difficult; the non-random method of selecting communities for inclusion in the program; and the remote locations for data collection and associated costs.

It is proposed to use a combination of primary and secondary data collection. Primary data collection will involve interviews with key individuals, such as teachers, police officers, health workers, council members and sport and recreation officers. Individuals will be informed about the project and can indicate whether or not they wish to participate and, if so, whether they wish to have the interview taped. Secondary data relating to individuals will be de-identified and grouped at community level by the relevant departments (for education, police, sport and recreation and health data) and by AFL Kickstart program staff (for program participation and related data).

What type of governance?

The issue of governance of sport in Indigenous communities is informed by several bodies of research. First, there is the literature dealing with government-third sector (or private sector) relations. This literature addresses the relationship between the not-for-profit sporting organisations (Groeneveld, 2009) and government charged with the responsibility of delivering services in indigenous communities (Ryan et al 2006). Second, considerable attention has been given to governance within indigenous communities (see, e.g Behrendt, 2002). The issues arising from this research tend to focus on cultural and social factors limiting the extent to which mainstream styles of governance can be implemented in Indigenous communities. Finally, there is the body literature dealing specifically with the governance of sport.

Prior research already provides some insight into the type of relationship which develops between government and the not-for-profit sector. For example, in their analysis of Australian state government funding of community sector organisations, (Brown and Ryan, 2003; Ryan and Brown 2006) identify four types of relationships, these being extension, partnership, charity and advocacy. Extension of government referred to a relationship whereby government has strong control over the resources, set priorities and control the agenda. Partnership is a more equal distribution of power, with community organisations and government sharing power. According to this mode, programs are designed cooperatively and both parties are involved in setting the agenda. Charity is characterised as government supporting worthy causes, although government does not become involved in the delivery of the service. Here, community organisations remain largely independent of government. Finally, an advocacy model involves the provision of public funds to support interest groups which do not have the resources to engage in public policy processes.

Similarly, there has been considerable attention given to forms of government which might be appropriate to indigenous communities in Australia. New forms of governance are a common feature of reform strategies for Indigenous peoples and their communities (Fitzgerald Report, 2001; Pearson, 2001; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice

Commissioner, 2001; Stokes, 2002; Behrendt, 2002, 2003) to overcome legacies of prior dysfunctional governance arrangements. The rejection of the traditional governance models for indigenous communities related to the absence of an appropriate ideological, cultural or practical 'fit'. O'Malley (1996) has described the traditional governance as a "programmatic version of governance" and contends that these impersonal, rule-oriented forms do not work in the context of Aboriginal social relations. The language of whole of government and partnership tends to be important in the literature dealing with Indigenous governance in Australia (Humpage, 2005; Carter *et al.*, 2005).

Finally, research into the governance of sport tends to be dominated by analysis of the regulatory framework surrounding sport. For example, Chaker (2004) provides a comparative analysis of the regulatory framework in twenty European countries as a means of examining the role of government in sport. However, sport has been the subject of several case studies of broader issues including the relationship between government and third sector organisations. McDonald (2005) examines the extent to which the development of partnerships between government and voluntary organisations has translated into sports administration. Sport is used as the empirical basis for testing a broader theoretical framework on the dynamics of partnership. Of particular relevance to this paper is Green's analysis (2007) of the role of sport in the broader social investment of the contemporary advanced liberal state.
The language of partnership is a common theme throughout these bodies of literature. As a mode of governance, partnership provides a starting point for this analysis of the Australian Rules Football Kickstart program.

Before this paper turns its attention to the governance of sport in Indigenous communities, it is important to discuss, albeit briefly, some of the background issues affecting Indigenous Australians. Australia was 'colonized' by Europeans from 1788, the year in which Great Britain set up a penal colony in Sydney, New South Wales. Before that time, Australia was inhabited by groups of Indigenous Australians with a multitude of cultures, languages and belief systems. Though initial engagement between black and white was friendly enough, indeed remarkably so given that the British colonists had commandeered traditional lands, conflict inevitably broke out. Mass shootings and poisonings of Indigenous Australians were certainly not unknown and mirrored the atrocities committed on Native Americans in the United States, though the extent to which genocidal actions were carried out remains highly controversial. Thus a pattern of adversarial relationships ensued, the end result being that Indigenous Australians were regarded as foreigners in their own country. There was even a view expressed in the nineteenth century that Indigenous Australians would ultimately die out, thereby obviating any concerted government response to their plight.

Indeed, it was not until 1964 until Indigenous Australians were awarded Australian citizenship, and thus the right to vote, or be elected to office. A central tenet relating to the treatment of Indigenous Australians was that Australia was terra nullius, a land belonging to nobody, before European colonization. This obviously erroneous viewpoint was overturned in a landmark High Court of Australia decision (known as the Mabo decision) in 1988. While these actions have improved conditions for Indigenous Australians to some extent, a substantial gap between Indigenous Australia and the rest of Australian society remains.

The Indigenous Community and Sport

Though the Indigenous community is poorly represented in most fields of Australian life, this community has made an outstanding contribution to sport, and the various codes of football in particular. Footballers such as Arthur Beetson (Rugby League), Gavin Wanganeen

(Australian Rules Football) and Mark Ella (Rugby Union) have made an enormous contribution to their particular codes, not only on account of their near-legendary prowess on the sporting field, but also because they provide heroes who both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, and young people in particular, can aim to emulate. Indigenous footballers, have also demonstrated exceptional leadership capacity, as captains and senior players of the sides in which they have played. They have thus demonstrated to people from all walks of life that Indigenous people are worthy of respect, and worthy to follow.

Indigenous footballers have also demonstrated exceptional leadership capacity in retirement. They have served on the committees of major football clubs, acted as coaches at various levels, and have also taken their place on State and National selection panels. As elder Indigenous statesmen of the game, ex-players such as Arthur Beetson have emerged as important opinion leaders on the controversies and politics relating to their respective codes. Indigenous involvement in sport thus does not constitute empty tokenism, but represents an important aspect of Australian football, especially within Rugby League and Australian Rules Football.

Although football is often associated, at least in the media, both in Australia and internationally, with negative social behaviours such as alcohol and substance abuse, sexual harassment, and off-the-field violence, it nonetheless serves as unifying force in isolated and rural communities. Among Indigenous communities, football can become the central focus of a community's life and a means by which cultural identity can be forged. It is through football that people meet, that social activity takes place, and a communal reference point is established. In a nation as geographically vast as Australia, football also provides a reason for diverse Indigenous communities to come together that might otherwise have no reason to do so. Hundreds of kilometres are sometimes travelled to enable football teams to participate in sport, and then engage in social activity and camaraderie following a game.

As can be seen, sport, and football in particular, is of fundamental interest to Indigenous Australians. Football, across the codes, is also a universal language through which Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians can find a common ground and, from there, engage in meaningful and productive discourse.

Sport and Governance

Sport has been "recognised as potentially powerful force in Indigenous community life" (Beneforti & Cunningham 2002: 1). Traditionally, health and lifestyle programs are delivered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by different agencies such as health, police, sport and education. This results in uncoordinated, rather than integrated delivery. Delivering health messages and healthy lifestyle through sport programs such as the AFL Kickstart program is argued to develop an alternative and innovative approach to delivering health and lifestyle messages using the medium of AFL football. It operates by identifying specific health and lifestyle messages and delivering and reinforcing these messages to and with selected Aboriginal communities. The messages aim to improve health and social outcomes on both an individual and community level.

The research offers two levels of investigation. First, it evaluates the impact of an ongoing sport and recreation program on community health and wellbeing. How to influence the uptake of positive health messages by young people in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is a focus here. As noted by Beneforti & Cunningham (2002), such evaluations are necessary, but rare. Second, it seeks to develop a comprehensive governance model to

frame the public-partnerships required for community building and sustainability in Indigenous communities using the medium of sport.

AFL Kickstart embeds community building within the design and implementation of the program. Specifically, the program's ultimate aim is to assist communities in building self-sustaining sports programs through the development of community run AFL Auskick clinics and local competitions. For a community to run a local competition a range of leadership and administrative skills are required. These are developed as part of the overall AFL Kickstart program through the delivery of coaching, umpiring and sports administration programs. Individuals can apply these skills to other aspects of community life apart from the AFL, such as alternative sports and community programs. Working in conjunction with partner organisations (police, education, health, sport and recreation) to deliver health and well-being messages to young people, also has the net result of building stronger positive relationships, which enhances program effectiveness. The evaluation will also build capacity by: providing opportunities for Indigenous researchers to develop skills; providing detailed feedback to communities about interagency relationships and how the provision of diversionary activities may influence behaviours; and providing systematic feedback to the AFL, so that the AFL Kickstart program may be developed and refined in future implementations.

This research builds on previous public sector management research proposing integrated approaches to service delivery (Keast et al 2004). In particular, it provides a case study of a partnership between a community sector organisation together with the private sector and government that aims to achieve a holistic approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander well being.

In this research, the focus is on an exploration of the links between sport, Indigenous self determination and deeper engagement within mainstream Australia especially with regard to the benefits and the role of governance, through sport governance. The links between physical activity and health promotion are clear from research but the means of achieving this integration are difficult to implement (Yancey, et al, 2007).

Conclusion

The use of Australian Rules Football to develop a program that combines player skills, with leadership to deliver positive lifestyle messages together with community capacity building is offered as a case study to demonstrate that sport and health, through a new governance model may impact Indigenous communities in a positive way in terms of improving community health, well-being and sustainability. The AFL's Kickstart program therefore provides the principles and framework that, as a model, may be applied broadly to any number of recreational or cultural settings.

Possible outcomes are postulated such as:

- Community capacity building achieved through the participation and leadership components of the program itself – particularly in the training of Indigenous staff in coaching, administrative skills, and the conduct of competitions, as well as through the evaluation, via feedback to communities and the AFL

- Better understanding of how third party delivery and reinforcement of health and lifestyle messages contribute to community outcomes.

- Given the dearth of research in the area of social goals that result from sport and recreation programs, it is anticipated that a significant theoretical contribution will be made to existing academic literature, particularly propositions about the mechanisms through which sport impacts other social behaviour, as well as health and well-being.

- The research is anticipated to contribute to community and government policy change through dissemination of research results to:
    (i) local communities about which strategies are most successful/sustainable;
    (ii) industry particularly the AFL, such as influencing the future development of the Kickstart Program itself;
    (iii) government agencies, to inform the development of future programs in the NT (eg. girls softball) and test the effectiveness of coordinated service delivery by multiple departments
    (iv) wider government/industry to inform the development of programs in other areas

One of the key factors in the success of AFL Kickstart and its effect on community health and wellbeing is the extent to which the program is viable and sustainable. Although the project focuses on the impact of football programs on Indigenous communities, the results have a broader application. Indeed, the outcomes of the research will highlight the means by which other sports or recreational activities of interest to Indigenous populations can be utilised in order to promote health, well-being and a greater sense of personal self-worth. The results will therefore help government agencies and related interest groups in the governance, implementation and continued support of these programs.

The study aims to provide data that can be used to monitor and drive sustainable change, rather than merely short-term effects. Thus two broad outcome measures will include:

- Program implementation, which will establish the degree of success achieved by the AFL Kickstart program in each community.
- Community outcomes, including a) objective measures such as school attendance, on-going participation/competitions and crime trends, and b) more subjective outcomes such as perceived impact of the program, changes to inter-agency relationships, and self-sufficiency.

The potential impact of programs such as AFL Kickstart on educational attendance, crime and anti-social behaviour and development of leadership and administrative skills, is an under researched area. Evaluation of this program will provide important information that will inform policy, practice and future research. In sum, the research brings the perspectives of various key government and non-government agencies, in addition to the AFL, to understand the governance arrangements of sport programs and their utility in promoting not only sporting programs but health and community sustainability through partnerships between private and public organisations.

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