

How to be More Inclusive of people from diverse backgrounds



A guide for sport and recreation clubs and associations in Western Australia.



Department of Sport and Recreation
Government of Western Australia

Overview

WA is one of Australia's most multicultural states. A quarter of Australians were born overseas. Between the years 2000 and 2005 more than 55,000 migrants settled in the Perth metropolitan area.

Research suggests that people born in mainly English speaking counties have the highest participation rate in organised physical activity such as local and state sporting clubs (69 per cent), compared with only 50 per cent of people born overseas.

Many culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) groups and individuals however, participate in sport mainly at a social level – for example, at schools, in local parks, with youth groups, after school and with family and friends from their communities. When comparing structured sports to social physical activity, participation rates by CaLD people are relatively lower than people born in Australia.

There is great potential for sporting associations and clubs to expand their membership by encouraging people of diverse backgrounds to join and participate. This booklet outlines the benefits of becoming an inclusive club as well as practical strategies to assist you.

Definitions

Before we begin to look at strategies, it is important to look at some definitions.

A migrant is someone who chooses to leave their country of origin for a range of personal or economic reasons.

CaLD is a term used to describe people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The term is used to describe people who were born overseas or who are Australian born with one or both parents (or grandparents) born overseas.

A refugee is a person who, "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of their nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him/herself of the protection of that country". Refugees do not choose to leave their home countries but are forced out, owing to a range of political factors that threaten their lives.

A significant proportion of people who can be classified under the CaLD umbrella are in fact neither refugees nor migrants, but are second and even third-generation Australians whose parents or grandparents were born in non English-speaking countries. These people face different and often less challenging barriers to those faced by new migrants and refugees.

Common barriers faced by new migrants and refugees

New migrants and refugees face a range of challenges when attempting to establish new lives in Australia. These include learning a new language; adapting to a new education system; lifestyle change and loss of family support. Importantly, refugees in particular may have witnessed or experienced torture, trauma and extreme violence before being resettled in Australia. Some other barriers to participation in sport experienced by refugees in particular include:

- Difficulties understanding the concept of structured sporting activities after a lifetime of living in countries without structured, community-based sporting opportunities.
- Memories of torture, trauma and extreme violence that affects the ability to trust, engage and participate fully in society.
- Difficulties engaging with mainstream Australians, some of whom react negatively to perceived “cultural differences”.
- Lack of family or parental support due to ongoing challenges and pressures of resettlement.
- Cost of activities. Many refugees face extreme financial hardship and families often do not perceive sporting activities as a financial priority.

What are the benefits of being inclusive?

- Increased membership of your club
- Increase in the number of players, volunteers, and administrators, who can help contribute to the success and running of the club
- Increase in the skills and abilities within the club
- Clubs benefit from a widespread understanding and experience of diversity
- A richer club environment in which members appreciate and learn from each others’ backgrounds and experiences, which will particularly benefit junior teams
- Increased chance of sponsorship from companies with diverse management or consumer base
- Strengthen the community as a whole by encouraging everyone to contribute to building a stronger society.

How can your club increase participation from CaLD communities?

- Speak with service providers who work with new migrants and refugees such as migrant resource centres.
- Talk to ethnic community groups and community leaders. Provide them with information about your club and form links with them.
- Contact your local council and find out which ethnic community groups or CaLD service providers operate in your area.
- Contact the Office of Multicultural Interests for information on the specific needs of different CaLD groups and for guidance on how to establish contact with groups in your area.
- Be open to new ideas for getting new people to join your club. Often CaLD Australians wish to participate in structured sporting opportunities but are unsure how to participate in a way that does not compromise their needs. Speaking to community leaders and service providers is one way to discover how your club might do something new or different to meet these needs.
- Look at your facilities and think outside the box! Read Touch West's case study *Kenya Touch It?* and see how they used their facilities creatively to become an inclusive organisation.
- Think about putting in place an anti-discrimination policy so that any forms of inequity and/or racism can be addressed quickly. Experiences of racism and discrimination can be a massive deterrent to participation. Remember that people can experience social situations in very different ways, and that these experiences can often be influenced by differences in cultural backgrounds.
- You may wish to consider holding classes and competitions on the premises of ethnic community organisations, to encourage those too shy to approach recreation centres and sporting clubs.
- Often there may be strong pressure on potential participants to devote their time to family priorities. A strategy for overcoming this barrier is to encourage the whole family to participate, e.g. cutting oranges, umpiring, equipment maintenance and most importantly, attending games as spectators.
- Regular open days and coaching sessions at schools may encourage local people to visit the club and become familiar with the facilities and members.

How can club members make a difference?

- Provide a welcoming environment
- Befriend new members
- Offer support and advice
- Be sensitive to diversity
- Make a stand against discrimination or racial harassment
- Offer help with transport
- Share sports equipment
- Help new members learn the rules
- Be aware that people who speak English as their first language tend to speak quickly which may be difficult for a person learning English to comprehend. Try to speak clearly and avoid slang, but don't speak with a false accent, shout, or talk slowly.
- Take time to develop relationships

TIP: Be open and honest. Don't be afraid to ask questions. It is okay to ask a person questions about where they have come from; how they like Australia; what sports they like playing etc.

Handy tips when working with CaLD groups:

- Make it visual
- Keep it simple
- Walk in their shoes
- Remember that there are many ways of communicating, so even if someone has limited English they can still join in.

Hint: refer to the DSR *Top 20 Tips for Coaches*.

How accessible is your club?

Complete this simple checklist to see how welcoming your club is to someone who is unfamiliar with the sports structure in Australia.

- Is it easy to join your club?
- Is it easy to find out about your club?
- Is your signage easy to read?
- Are staff available and willing to help people fill out the membership forms if they have difficulties reading English?
- Are existing members and staff friendly and open to new members?
- Do existing members and staff offer advice and support?
- Do you have an induction for new members?
- Does your club have a buddy system for new members?
- Do training session times correspond with public transport?
- Does your organisation advertise via local ethnic community centres or in ethnic community newsletters?

Is your club inclusive for all members of the community?

- Is the club open to everyone?
- Are participation opportunities provided for females where appropriate?
- Are there appropriate facilities available such as private change rooms for women, child care services, women's only activities?
- How flexible is your uniform policy? Does it allow for those who may have financial difficulties? Does it allow for a degree of modesty (e.g. for people who wish to keep their bodies covered)?
- Are you aware of the timing of religious celebrations that may impact on the ability of some members to attend training sessions and matches? Is everyone treated fairly and equally, regardless of age, gender, religion or ethnic background?
- Does the club have an anti-discrimination policy so that any forms of discrimination and/or racism can be addressed quickly?
- Are programs within your club flexible enough to cater for people's varying needs?

Catering for diversity

Some clubs may feel that developing new networks, programs and procedures may be too difficult, too expensive or too time consuming for already over-stretched volunteers/staff. The skills you would use to include people from CaLD backgrounds are no different from the program planning you would do for other people. An inclusive club adapts to the needs of all individuals.

Women:

- Just like other Australians, female Australians from CaLD backgrounds enjoy being involved in sport and recreation.
- Try to form partnerships with existing women's organisations and groups within CaLD communities to ensure appropriate cultural and gender issues are addressed when developing programs and policies.
- Some women prefer to participate in women-only environments. As a result, simple program modifications may need to be implemented such as: using female coaches; expanding the club to include female teams and competition; and providing women-only spaces.
- Some women prefer to continue wearing traditional clothing, including headscarves and clothing that covers the knees and shoulders, when playing sport. Allowing for and encouraging uniform alteration for these women will increase the likelihood that they will feel comfortable enough to participate.

CASE STUDY

Kenya Touch It?

The Kenyan Community of WA have partnered up with Touch West to develop an exciting project that targets Kenyan men and women and involves touch football. The 'Kenya Touch It?' program was designed to increase physical activity among non-active members of the Kenyan community by introducing a fun approach to touch football skills.

The project started by introducing informal training sessions to the group, which in the past had limited experience in Touch Football, and progressed into mini social games. Once the group members understood the rules and were comfortable playing, a friendly match was arranged against one of Southern Districts social teams that did not make the finals. Some participants of 'Kenya Touch It?' program joined the Southern Districts club competition.

The Kenyan community believed that Touch Football appealed to women as it was a non-contact sport, and encouraged women to participate instead of "staying on the sidelines". More than 20 men and women are still involved in this program as regular players in the competition. The Touch association has benefited by gaining extra teams and enjoying the friendliness and rich diversity that resulted from the addition of Kenyan players.

The Kenyan community received a grant from the Department of Sport and Recreation in 2006 to increase the involvement of individuals from non English-speaking backgrounds.

List of helpful contacts

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Acknowledgement

The Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI): Tips Sheet for Clubs – Becoming Inclusive of People from Culturally and linguistically Diverse Backgrounds, 2005.

