THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

THE SPORTS DEMONSTRATION PROJECT
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AN EVALUATION

DR TONY ROSSI & DR STEVEN RYNNE

AUSTRALIAN CENTRE of SPORT, PHYSICAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION RESEARCH

SCHOOL OF HUMAN MOVEMENT STUDIES
FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCE
THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

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Project Outline

Background to the evaluation – A summary of the process

The Sport Development Project (SDP) was a comprehensive youth strategy for sport in the Northern Territory aimed at diversion from 'at-risk' behaviours, improvement of life choices and outcomes, and strengthening youth service infrastructure through engagement in positive (sport) activities.

There were five Remote Service Delivery sites that were involved in the trial of this 'best practice' model for delivering sport-focused diversion activities. These include: Gapuwiyak, Wadeye, Yuendumu, Gunbalunya and Nguiu.

Work Profile

Given the budgetary and time constraints, this evaluation was essentially a scoping exercise which aimed to present some emerging findings, allude to the relative value of the program and propose future embedded evaluations. The components to the evaluation were therefore:

- PHASE 1: Making Connections
- PHASE 2: Framing the Evaluation
- PHASE 3: The Fieldwork
- PHASE 4: Bringing it Together

PHASE 1: Making Connections

This phase was about identifying the intersecting relationships between the SDP and other programs. The SDP team created a loose 'mud map' that described these intersections and relationships between all relevant programs (in relation to the SPD) but did so in general rather than finite terms. Supporting documents were provided to the evaluation team and forwarded along with a small number of brief case studies. This Phase, as with all phases, experienced minor disruptions through the restructuring of the Australian Sports Commission.

PHASE 2: Framing the Evaluation

This phase identified key questions for the evaluation based on the outcome of the previous phase. These questions were tightly targeted and explicitly related to the aims of the SDP. The SDP team and ASC management commented widely on the development of these questions. Once agreed, the key questions and sub-questions were circulated to all relevant SDP and Australian Sports Commission (ASC) personnel. The SDP team also identified other information available as well as what sources were still to be accessed (i.e. who key participants were and how they would best be able to contribute).

PHASE 3: The Fieldwork

After the identification of key personnel, it was agreed that interview fieldwork should be undertaken. This phase was slow to complete mainly as a consequence of the poor health and subsequent death of the mother of one of the evaluators in the UK. This warranted travel to and from the UK and significant legal issues pertaining to the settlement of the estate. This was extremely disruptive for the greater part of 2012. However eventually the interview fieldwork phase took place across several months (shaped mainly by the availability of personnel and scheduling) in Canberra and Darwin and also included phone interviews to Sydney, Canberra, Tiwi Islands (Northern Territory) in addition to meetings held in Brisbane.

PHASE 4: Bringing it Together

During this Phase the data sets were principally analysed by the Evaluation Team with checking points made with SDP and ASC personnel (specifically Hamish MacDonald). This process focussed mainly on identifying key themes (as well as gaps in the analysis that should be addressed through an ongoing evaluation framework). This final report emerged from a combination of these phases. The process of bringing the themes and representations togethers is noted later in the report

Introduction

Evaluations take many guises. Invariably, government agencies tend to show a preference for numerical data that demonstrates cause and effect, how many, how much and at what cost? Other evaluations try to demonstrate other potential outcomes, for example whether an intervention or program of activity/education was successful in creating awareness (about something), did it increase participant knowledge about something (healthy lifestyles or the value of physical activity). Evaluations such as these are sometimes regarded as somewhat ethereal. In any example an evaluation must be fit for purpose (see Armour and Sandford 2012) and yet it must fall within the parameters of what is feasible in terms of cost, access and personnel. In this evaluation, a joint agreement between officers of the Australian Sports Commission and The University of Queensland led to the acceptance of the idea that the evaluation would resemble a scoping project in order to get some sense of the design, roll out and impact of the Sports Demonstration Project. There were good reasons for this. First, the remote nature of the communities into which this project was introduced meant that travel, accommodation and time were likely to be inordinately difficult to marshal and would entail a significant cost. Secondly, it was necessary that key players in the program implementation were consulted, as their views about the SDP project were likely to be more dispassionate (they were not always!). Finally there was logic in meeting with people who were able to get to and work with the communities, rather than visit the communities 'cold'. We have argued elsewhere (see Rossi, Rynne & Nelson, 2013) that good research activities in Indigenous communities only happens if respect from that community is earned (this was also an implementation issue we will talk about later) We did not have adequate resources (specifically time) to develop such relationships with the communities. In this respect we were able to speak to key personnel involved in the project from Canberra (the project manager for its duration) and staff from the Northern Territory Sports and Recreation Department. We talk about this in greater detail later in the report.

Sport as a developmental tool

Most of the contemporary literature in the area of development that occurs in and through sport is related to children. This is useful and key elements of the literature will be covered shortly. However it is important to bring to the fore at this stage, acknowledging that this is unusual, an important finding from the fieldwork. There was a view that limiting sport development work to any particular part of the community (e.g. children only) was alienating and exclusionary. This will be covered in greater depth later. However it does suggest that a broader literature needs to be considered and much of this literature is framed by the idea of social capital.

Positive Youth Development through Sport

In general there is considerable support of positive youth development through sport. Indeed this case for optimism is a well-developed argument in the book by Holt (2008). However it is important to understand that Holt, and indeed others in the field take a very specific position on youth transitions and largely this is informed by a strengths-based approach. In other words, youth are not, as a matter of principle referred to using the language of crisis. This is a departure from some of the conventional youth literature but an increasing trend. This is consistent in the literature related to Indigenous persons in Australia and other parts of the world where disenfranchised first nation people live in 'settler states (see Wolfe, 1991). In

other words it is common to see the term 'strengths-based' rather than 'deficit' when reading about Indigenous persons and groups (see Rossi, Rynne and Nelson, 2013).

Positive youth development is a rather amorphous terms, that often means whatever an author wants it to mean. In general youth development is said to fall into four main categories: physical, intellectual, psychological/emotional and social (The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine [NRCIM], 2002). Inevitably each of these categories contains a subset of 'assets' and these contribute to the overall category. For example good health habits and health risk management skills are said to contribute to physical development while self-regard, coping skills and conflict management skills are included under the psychological well being category. In addition, the NRCIM (2002) also indicate that for young people to develop positively, they need to be connected to peers, family, and other adults, have a strong sense of social place and be able to negotiate diverse social contexts. In the context of Aboriginal youth all of these resonate as indeed do most other categorical list that seek to identify *assets.* At the same time one can see how sport might be seen as a vehicle to develop some (perhaps even many) of these assets. Sport, though often talked about as a panacea, which it is not, does provide opportunities through well structured programs offer developmental opportunities to young people (See Hellison & Cutforth, 1997; Fraser – Thomas, Côté & Deakin, 2005). That said, there is only modest published research that has "examined the benefits of sport within the framework of positive youth development" (Fraser –Thomas, Côté & Deakin, 2005, p.23).

Physical development is often couched in biomedical terms (such as prevention of non-communicable disease induced by sedentary lifestyles) and this has a lengthy history (Bar-Or, 1983) that certainly exceeds the recent moral panic over obesity (Botteril, 2006). However, the benefits of modest to vigorous physical activity are well documented and sport clearly provides a potential platform for this. Of greater value potentially are the lifelong physical activity habits that often develop through youth physical activity involvement including sport (Robertson-Wilson, et al, 2003).

In contrast the psychological benefits tend to be written about in far less scientifically rigorous terms and sometimes amount to little more than a list of 'feel good' factors. It is simply impossible to say that all children and youth experience sport as either wholesome or fun or even entertaining. For many, sport remains an exercise in humiliation across a school career and beyond (see Myerson, 2006). There are studies however that tie happiness, satisfaction and subjective well being to sport, though often this connection is taken as mantra not to mention a political catch cry.

Research into Social development through sport is well established and some general trends indicate that involvement in sport can lead to leadership skills, career development, and positive peer relationships (see Fraser –Thomas, Côté & Deakin, 2005 for a comprehensive review on this). Additionally Côté (2002) indicated that sport provides an important social space where cooperative skills, assertiveness (rather than aggression) and responsibility among others can develop. There is also some evidence to suggest sport can provide a vehicle for diverting young people away from anti-social and high-risk behaviour and the work of Don Hellison (1995) is well recognised.

Inevitably in all of these categories there are potential negative outcomes. These are important not necessarily to list and analyse but rather to acknowledge that they exist. Sport sometimes manages to generate its own bad press from drug abuse at the top level (and increasingly at lower competitive levels) to racism and sexism to motor elitism and social exclusion. As Myerson (2006) says in her wonderful little book physical education and sport can be great levellers. This should not be taken as a virtue, in her book it is a sad indictment of the way sport can marginalise and even brutalise those of limited skills levels and indeed interest in sport. We would argue that this is not necessarily sport that is at fault but more than

likely the sporting experiences that get constructed in certain ways that are exclusionary, non-educative and overly competitive in the learning stages.

Evaluation as a process

As Granger (1998) suggested there are significant challenges in establishing relational causality in programs and outcomes and Crabbe and colleagues (2006) are rather more forthright when they claimed, it becomes more an exercise of trying to get square pegs into round holes. Hence as House et al (2005) suggest evaluation studies need to be broad brush or in the words of House and colleagues 'ecumenical'. It is apparent there tends to be an over-reliance on anecdote serving as evidence and this perhaps comes as no great shock given the complexity and difficulty of even trying to gather data. As Armour and Sandford (2012) suggested however, decisions have to be made about how *best* to evaluate a program within the constraints placed upon the evaluation process. One of the constraints of this project (similar to the Armour and Sandford evaluation) is that the project was likely to look different in different communities. Hence a process was required that might take the 'helicopter' view so that a general overall picture could be gained. However it is crucial that this view is adequately comprehensive to at least provide a snapshot of what happened when a program of sport was initiated with some fairly grandiose intentions. For all intents and purposes this project was an intervention in the true sense of the word as it was framed as a diversionary program to move children (though this was challenged) away from high-risk behaviour. As laudable a goal this might be, showing direct associations was going to be difficult given the dispersal of communities, the variation in ideas as to the focus of the intervention and indeed whether there was adequate time to 'measure' or at least monitor change. In spite of this, evaluation remains helpful on 'process' grounds. Some refer to this as assessing the 'fidelity' of the processes to fulfil the intentions (see Gibson et al, 2008). Moreover, Rabiei et al (2009) argue that process evaluation is crucial to understand and improve intervention (or in other words) implementation strategies. Armour and Sandford (2012) suggest that though evaluations are fraught with difficulty, the need to provide some insight for those responsible for implementing intervention strategies (i.e. personnel on the ground) and how strategies might actually develop into other projects so that they are better informed. To this end, it is useful to draw on the principle of central the idea of Crabbe and colleagues (2006) who indicate that in evaluation studies, it makes sense to consider the 'distance travelled' rather than simply was an endpoint reached.

Method

This evaluation was undertaken in four stages, and these mirror the work profile as described above. The first stage was an iterative process that allowed for the development of the first set of questions to be used in the first interview with the SDP Manager. This involved the evaluators, the Program Manager herself, and other leadership staff at the Australian Sports Commission. Initially the questions were based on the original funding proposal *and* the second proposal that was aimed at securing further funding. As a reflexive process this honed and trimmed the questions such that they then were framed by key questions related to intended outcomes, structural matters, and processes. Each question included either sub-questions or prompts in order to delve further at particular points. The interviewer and the Program Manager therefore had a shared understanding of the intended approach to the series of discussions that were held across almost an entire working day. The interview yielded nearly five hours of text data. The discussions were recorded on a digital recording device and subsequently transcribed by a professional service based in Brisbane. These data were then analysed using the original iterative process as a framework. This enabled the clustering of data under key thematic headings.

Stage two used the clustered headings from phase stage one to develop a learning conversation (see Thomas & Harri-Augstein, 1985; Harri-Augstein & Thomas, 1994) to be undertaken in a group discussion with three Northern Territory personnel from the NT Sport and Recreation department. This process involves a discussion that acts as an interview. The learning conversation was loosely structured around the headings in order to create opportunities for iteration, reiteration and reflexivity during the course of the two conversations both of which lasted in excess of 90 minutes. These data were not transcribed but analysed directly from the recording by the evaluator/interviewer who transcribed or paraphrased the key elements of meaningful l feedback about the project. At the time of the conversations (all held on one day) field notes were also taken to add for clarity and for points of emphasis that might not emerge from the recordings

Stage two had a further component involving a local SDP manager who ran the program on Tiwi Islands. The structure of stage two was adjusted to allow for a one to one conversation that was conducted on a hotel landline telephone and was recorded directly from the speaker. Similarly this recording was not transcribed and key emergent themes were checked against the emergent themes from the NT Sport and Recreation personnel.

Stage three was the process of bringing together disparate data sources (even though about the same thing) into meaning segments that had both clarity and relevance. This was consolidated back in Brisbane and forms the bulk of this report. The aggregated data were compared taking into consideration, the role, location and authority of each person. Some data were crosschecked in a further phone call to one of the Northern Territory workers. In addition, through this process Hamish MacDonald of the Sports Commission was consulted widely for insight into the cross border politics involved in such a program (controlled out of Canberra but delivered in Northern Territory) and of the politics (with a small p) of the personnel involved. This information was invaluable.

Findings

After much consideration, we have elected to represent the findings of this evaluation by representing the perspectives of those interviewed given their influence in the rollout of the project. There are some key issues that emerge from the data and we list these below and we will return to them in broader discursive terms (rather than as headings) after we have presented the perspectives.

The central issues related to the Sports Demonstration Project (not listed in any order)

- Channels of communication
- Sovereignty, authority and management
- Relationships
- Choice of sports and duplication
- Personnel and leadership
- Nature and complexities of, and differences between and within communities
- Self-determination and dependence
- The success of sport as a vehicle (apriori and empirical)
- The targeted population

These central issues were important features that contributed to or hindered (or in some cases both) the success of this project. It is important to note that to call this project successful or unsuccessful is an unnecessary dualism or binary and would be mostly unhelpful for guiding future projects or as a contributor to thinking about funding projects that have similar ambitions or indeed programs that are used to complement other programs of support and development related to health, housing, employment or simply the liveability within remote communities. However what can be said is that certain facets of the project and its roll out were successful but this success tended to be uneven across the five sites. In addition, success in one community was not an indicator of success in another. Hence success should be regarded as a relative term. In what follows we attempt to sift out the successful outcomes and indicate what seem to be the reasons for the success such that if the *conditions* for that success could be replicated, successful outcomes would be more likely to follow. Finally, it is important to acknowledge that the implementation of this project and the associated successful outcomes were different across the five communities, in different facets of the program and at different times across the life of the project. Uniformity is not a word that can be used to describe this project.

Perspectives of the Key Players

The Sports Demonstration Project Manager

Preamble

No indication was made to us as to how the manager for this project was selected. However it seems that the person appointed was under no illusion as to the complexity of the challenge and the level of preparedness that was required. The manager rightly identified communication as one of the key issues of the project and that this had to be done as well as possible. Importantly, this is underlined by others (as shall be seen) who identified the building of relationships as being the most important task to be undertaken in projects such as these. However it is important to grasp that these, though related, are in this context not

exactly the same thing. The imposition (this word has been used intentionally) of a manager of a program from Canberra into the Northern Territory to work on the delivery of a service (that to all intent and purposes has a welfare objective attached to it) presented the appointee with serious communication challenges, not least of which were communicating with a range of personnel who were already delivering similar services to communities and already had established lines and channels of communication. We would argue that this potentially slowed the carriage of this project. That said, the Manager worked through an arduous maze of personnel and interested (and disinterested it would seem) parties to eventually move the project forward. It is reasonable to suggest that where the lines of communication functioned best is where the project was more smoothly rolled out and the commensurate success more obvious. Lines of communication that had to be established were (among others):

- The communities and community members and leaders
- General business managers
- Local government officers (at various levels of Government) responsible for sports projects in remote communities in the Northern Territory
- Community police personnel
- Health providers and clinic personnel
- School principals and other school personnel
- The Red Cross
- Multiple sports governing bodies (building on ASC networks)
- Sports development officers
- Coaches and sports leaders
- Local press and media personnel

It is highly likely, that the networking required in order to develop relationships across all these platforms, was both onerous and time consuming. This strategy would need to be carefully considered in subsequent programs of this nature.

Conducting an Audit

One of the central premises of the project was that communities would be consulted and decisions would be based on the interests and perceived needs identified as a result of that consultation. The audit was considered a major success by the manager, however there is an important caveat here that emerged later in the data gathering. The audit and then later community consultation led to extravagant demands listed as desirable – for example one community asked for a wave pool. It might be prudent to put parameters around such discussions in other projects of this nature – one doesn't want to stifle enterprise or imagination, but these programs are constrained by fiscal realities. I'll write more about this under a different section. That said the audit appears to have gathered useable data and provided a comprehensive picture of what was in communities already. As the manager said:

> I mean I talk about the success being what we probably found out, so not so
> much the success in terms of how the programs were conducted or - and I'll
> probably give you an example of that in a second, but we did so much in the
> lead up to this, my first few months was just all about doing an audit of each of
> the communities to find out what facilities were in the community, what
> development officers we had in the community, what programs were currently
> running that were run with the State sporting organisations. It came back each

community was very different in terms of what was happening within that area. (Manager Interview 1)

So when we talk about the successes of the program I think one of the biggest successes was doing that audit first up and going into a community knowing that so in Yuendumu there isn't a Sport Development Officer. The youth organisation there, (Mt Theo) actually conducts anything to do with sport. So having that information, going to the community and knowing… that helped me, and that was (organised) through NT Sport and Rec (*in other words to get access to that information*). (Manager, interview 1)

This may seem innocuous. However there are issues of importance here that warrant consideration. First it is clear that the audit, though time consuming, helped to establish some of the ongoing relationships that were deemed to be important by both the manager and by other personnel in later interviews. The personnel involved in the audits were wide ranging (though not the same in each community) and this meant that access to a wide range of people was also facilitated. However the down side is that the audit perhaps did not make enough use of the available information. A consequence of this was a duplication of some processes. This does suggest that inadequate use of local expertise and knowledge may not have been as widely used as possible. However, this has to be juxtaposed with the value of being in the community.

Style of communication and approach to dealing with Communities

It seems that the approach of the manager was admired. This is crucial and again it added to the nature of the relationships that were being fostered. As the manager said in her first interview:

...but I think it was more my approach. I walked into the community, I met with the key people that I needed to meet but I was very much - my approach was this is what I'm here to do, but tell me what you want and we'll figure it out together … I'm here to trial things and I'm here to talk through what is and isn't going to work. … feedback particularly from the Wadeye School and particularly from the Yuendumu Youth Workers, was that they liked me going into the community and they liked me going in because I went in with that approach rather than this is what we're going to do, this is how we're going to do it... (Manager, Interview 1)

This consultative style was clearly important, though it seems that such a style was not always easy to use outside of the confines of the communities and some of the factional disagreements that we will talk about later did not facilitate consultation in quite the same way. None the less the collaborative approach to this project was widely regarded as both appropriate but more importantly *imperative.*

Facilitating the delivery of sport

In my view this aspect of the study has much less clarity. At first glance it appears to have been an exercise in duplication, support or lack thereof of the various sporting bodies and codes and the divergent interests of the communities. On top of this there appears to be some confusion over the principle of 'core sports' and 'come and try sports'. It is important to identify this philosophically. If there was a core sports program either already running (and there seems to be some evidence of this) or if one was in development then it raises questions

about the project in the first place. However if the principle of a 'core sports approach' was in place and it needed impetus then the project clearly has a stronger foundation. The collective of interviews suggest some confusion over the nature of this 'trial'. We would argue that some of the impact of the program was probably diluted as a consequence.

Interviewee:	Yeah, I guess there's probably two ways to answer this question. There were the sports that were wanted by the communities and then there were the sports that were able to deliver on the demand in the communities, so if you like we'll put it into supply and demand.
Facilitator:	Yeah, okay.
Interviewee:	That's the best way to describe it - so the demand in each of the five communities, there were three core sports, which were basketball, AFL, softball. They were the three main sports that were in demand and then from there each community had a different approach. So Gapuwiyak had different sports come through - rugby union and touch football … You then had Tiwi Islands. They wanted to focus on cricket and tennis outside of those core sports. Yuendumu have a massive football role in there so it's particularly young boys. They have about 30 boys there who just want to play football or soccer as we know it... (Manager, Interview 1)

This sequence shows that a 'core sports' mindset existed and probably pre-existed the SDP project. In fact it is reasonable to suggest the idea of core sports was constantly promoted in subsequent interviews with the Sport and Rec personnel in the Northern Territory. Moreover this mindset seems to have driven local delivery of sport prior to the SDP commencing and in some senses this was a point of contention. What the manger went on to say was that soccer was "the only sport outside of what they do that stood out" (Manager Interview 1). What is meant here is that outside of the demand for 'core sports' this type of football, which appears to be a cross between 5-a-side indoor football and futsal was in demand but not because of the SDP but because but had evolved ecologically – through the facilities available, the ease with which it could be played (i.e. low equipment needs) and the non-intervention of adults. Indeed one might even be prepared to suggest it was an example of self-determination. Admittedly, there is no sporting pathway attached to this (something that the Northern Territory personnel emphasised constantly). However if one looks at one of the key aims – sport as a diversionary tactic – this football in Yuendumu may have been exactly that. According to descriptions young (boys and men) would play from about 9pm (when it was a little cooler) until around midnight. In addition this activity seems to have been a great bonding agent in the community of boys within the broader community of Yuendumu:

> Yeah and then they just basically just kick the hell out of this football for hours and I thought in such a confined space – these are just my thoughts - I thought in such a confined space there is - like this could end badly. If someone kicked someone else in the head with the ball or - I mean we're talking about a very volatile community, like it could break out into violence or whatever. But when someone scored a goal they all cheered, all of them. They all cheered for each other and clapped and... (Manager, Interview 1)

To capitalize on this interest the SDP focused on taking a group of the boys to Alice Springs for coaching and to see an indoor game:

> So the idea we had for the Sports Demonstration Project was to take a group
> of young boys to Alice Springs where they could watch an indoor soccer
> game being played, get some coaching around how it can be played and see if
> that changes their view on the way that they currently play. (Manager,
> Interview 1)

This might seem like a reasonable idea, however it seems to lack connection to the original project and more importantly, provides no strategy for sustainability. In fact we would argue apriori that even if this even managed to take place we would imagine it had little effect on the football boys of Yuendumu. It might seem like a nice trip, however it is difficult to see how this would serve the needs of the target group or the project brief itself. Indeed in the next section of the interview that Manager said:

> But to see them in that environment and the way that they played, there's no
> need to change it. There is no need to change it. The only thing that might
> change is I think if they saw indoor soccer played the way it's meant to be
> played, they would love the game even more and they would want to play it
> in that format because it's so quick and it's like you have so much more room
> to move. (Manager, Interview 1)

In spite of the good intentions of ideas like this (trips, outings etc.) it is difficult to find them convincing as a behaviour change mechanism. The Northern Territory personnel also used trips though these seemed to be more aimed at facilitating the experience of greater competition. Sporting trips for competition bring other advantages, which are well documented and we discuss these later (meeting others, broadening experience, representing communities etc.). The trip to Alice Springs for the Yuendemu 'football boys' appears, if I may speculate, to be a way of using the funding provided but to little or no end.

The involvement of sporting bodies and authorities

It is clear that this project was contingent upon the buy-in of the various sports associations. For all of the promise showed by the football boys the Football Federation of Australia apparently showed little interest in the SDP. We might look at this most disapprovingly. However perhaps there should be more circumspection. There were (and are) a number of sports already present. The AFL, now offering opportunities for males and females, has had a strong record of outreach work for many years. The youth programs and coaching schemes are all highly regarded. This community investment often pays of in terms of numbers that play or on other areas numbers that 'consume' the game as spectators and supporters of professional teams. However, the AFL also has a presence in remote Australia as a way of talent spotting – so tough it is not exactly a 'quid pro quo' arrangement – one can see there is sense in the investment AFL makes (especially when one realises it is not club or franchise money that is spent but Government money. However, the Football Federation, despite it being a top professional game in Australia may have far less expectation of recruitment in the game acknowledging that their players are more likely to come from areas of greater population and urban environments. It is not surprising then that the FFA of Australia is not overly committed to a presence in remote Indigenous Australia. As a consequence there was no involvement. In other sports a different story plays out. Prime examples are softball and basketball. Both of these sports were identified as being in demand in the communities in spite of their own internal governance wrangles and difficulties in the Northern Territory. These sports then, though interested, played little face-to-face part hence developmental work

in these areas was carried out by other personnel. Softball was both popular and successful on Tiwi Islands though there were limits as to how far it could progress. It is important to acknowledge however that the success on Tiwi was largely because of a group of dedicated women on the islands and the support of the local manager responsible for sport.

An important success story (though perhaps it should be seen as regionalised success) was cricket and this can be attributed to the enthusiasm of NT Cricket and its willingness to connect to communities and develop interest that was clearly already in certain communities (Tiwi is a good example here).

> Yeah, whereas Cricket NT had a Development Officer who was willing, had the time and the willingness to go over to Tiwi Islands and spend a lot of time setting up the program and getting cricket up and running in the community. That's why there was a major focus on that sport and on that community, was because Cricket NT said yeah, this is a priority for us. We want to get it up and running. (Manager, Interview 1).

It is important to note that cricket programs (especially on Tiwi) built on previous initiatives, especially on Tiwi. Former Test cricketer Matthew Hayden has been building on his presence and spreading enthusiasm for cricket since 2004 on Tiwi. In 2010, The Australian (NewsCorp) reported that Hayden's trips had become annual and that he was helping to build a cricket culture on the Islands. A further report in 2012 indicated that there were 80 children involved with Hayden's cricket project with support from the Macquarie Group to $700,000. Importantly this should not undermine the success of NT Cricket nor belittle their enthusiasm for cricket on Tiwi. However it is important to note that the developing cricket culture on Tiwi cannot be attributed solely to the work of NT Cricket or more specifically the SDP. This is especially so given that the SDP was about demonstrating sports that might divert youth from harmful behaviour. However the team on the ground on Tiwi managed to develop a pathway structure for cricket and this should be seen as a significant achievement and we will refer to this later in the report.

Connecting with Government agencies, NGOs and other organisations

As stated at the beginning, the need for establishing communication channels and networks was extensive. The General Business Managers (GBMs) of each community were clearly a key source of information and were important for the successful implementation of this project As the Project manager said: "the GBMs in each of the communities were the key role for me finding out what was really going on in a community" (Interview 1). This simple statement perhaps belies the importance of the GBMs, later the Project Manager was more forceful:

> So the GBMs have a massive role to play and … they wanted to help me out with getting the Sports Demonstration Project done, putting it into context for me made it a lot easier for me to say okay, it's just something that we are going to have to do. I'm just going to have to go ahead and do it and I'm just going to inform the GBM of what's going on. If they have any issues or any problems I just let them know to let me know. A lot of them, they were like weekly contact meetings with the GBMs. They were very good at getting back to me about the action plans - they'd never miss any of the community working party meetings. They were really involved in all of that, so yeah …. in all of the five communities.(Manager, Interview 1)

Because of the scope of their role the GBMs were able to advise the Manager on strategic alliances, who was best placed to deliver programs, where the strengths in communities were and what personnel would be best suited to take on particular roles. It is clear from the Manager's testimony that communication above this level, that is from the GBMs up was fraught with territorialism, non-compliance and finger pointing about things (not this project) related to governance and competency. However, that manger was able to use the skill and connections of the GBMs to ensure that work at the community level, as uneven as it was, was still being done. In spite of this successful and functional communication level there were other channels that were not as effective and these were not necessarily related to the SDP but had existed prior to its commencement. The key issue here is not that various agencies do not communicate well with each other; rather it is how well-intentioned projects can become entangled in local politics, strategic positioning, and inter and intra department wrangling.

It was clear that schools were implicated in the project. The NT Education Department's preference was for the SDP to run in schools however the logic of this position was framed by sport as a reward for coming to school. This has been used successfully before (e.g. Wadeye and football, but outside of this project - see also the Col Brunton study). However some school principles viewed the SDP as a distraction from other (what they viewed as) compelling concerns; notably literacy. In addition, the program was not a program of school sport but a diversionary tactic, so schools though useful sites for community engagement were not really the best places for this project to happen. That said the school was in some cases the safest place in the community. There are tensions around this issue that should be more thoroughly considered prior to the roll out of a similar program.

Dependence, independence, sustainability
Issues of sustainability are often framed by a notion of ongoing (external) funding. To some this might represent the idea of 'entitlement'. This is likely to come under severe scrutiny no matter what government is voted in over the next few electoral cycles (and possible for generations to come). If Joe Hockey's recent speech[1] (2013) is any indicator then this is highly likely. Admittedly Hockey's speech was given to the Institute of Economic Affairs – an avowedly pro market think tank in the UK (and therefore a more than willing audience). Of course Hockey's speech included little that was new and barely a month before Liam Fox (a former UK Defence Secretary) argued, Conservatives need to, reverse the "great socialist coup of the last decade"[2]. In other words the sustainability of programs has to be built from within rather than through a sense of entitlement. This talks to the very heart of notions of dependence, independence and self-determination. Therefore one would expect to see, even in a trial, a slow and perhaps modest move towards self-determination in community (youth specifically) sports programs, especially as sport is widely regarded as a key factor in community renewal and growth (it is argued that the inception of the Wadeye Magic is a good example of this). However this kind of sustainability was not widely observed across the five sites and suggestions of dependence were hard to avoid. So as the Program Manager suggested:

> … this is probably a bit harsh but so we had probably, there were three
> communities who were very strong-willed you could say and can organise

[1] www.theage.com.au/national/the-end-of-the-age-of-entitlement-20120419-1x8vj.html
[2] www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/9922579/Liam-Foxs-speech-to-the-Institute-of-Economic-Affairs-in-full.html

sport activities for themselves. Then we have two communities - I don't like the word but I'm going to - they're lazy. They're just … it's all too much work; we want someone to come in and do it for us. If we can't have that then it's just not going to get up and running, so two completely different attitudes but all five of them, what they really liked was the action plan and the co-ordination that went with the SDP. That's what they really got out of the project [I think, yeah]. (Interview 1)

I guess the concept behind the Sports Demonstration Project was always about setting it up to be a long-term sustainable program. We knew to do that it wasn't about me delivering a program or about a sport coming in and running a program. It was about teaching community members to be able to run a program themselves. So for example, where we had - so Tiwi Islands, who [unclear] we want cricket. It wasn't the cricket development ... going out to one of the younger - running a sport program, running a cricket program themselves and then leaving. It was about the development officer going out, spending time in the community and really getting back to the basics of the cricket program. So an example of that was the cricket development officer sitting down with the sport rec officers and saying, okay, what do we know about cricket?

What's the history on the island? What do we need to do to get a program up and running? Even things such as what format do you want cricket to be played in? We don't have to do it the way that we've traditionally done it, we can modify it. What equipment do you want to use? Because there's all forms of equipment that we can use when it comes to cricket. So it was really about asking the questions, and I think, XXXX alludes to this, he's a development officer, he says this quite a bit. The important thing was to ask the right questions, rather than just ask a question and not think about what question you were actually asking.

So that was quite important in terms of the setting up of the programs. In some communities, we were very lucky that the shire or the working party held the same beliefs that we did, in that it was about up skilling the community to do it themselves, rather than having someone come in and do it for them. For a few of the other communities, that was a bit more of an education process. They still wanted someone to come in and run the program, rather than them learning how to do it them selves, so yeah, it was dependent upon the community as to how well it was taken up. (Interview 2)

A learned culture of dependency. It's going to take years to break that. Even in the cricket program that we set up, I spoke to the cricket coordinator yesterday and he said that he's basically been doing everything, because they've decided now that they don't want to do it and it's - like they fall back into that pattern rather than - and it's because someone is there doing it for them, rather than them doing it themselves, so we need to constantly remind them that, well, no. You need to learn how to run this program yourself. (Interview 2)

Importantly there were indications of gender differences around the issue of dependency. In some communities here was evidence of 'strong deadly women' and they wanted to see programs developed for their young people. Yet in the same communities the (mostly young)

men wanted programs (particularly in AFL) to be run for them – so though the interest in their boys playing football was there, there was a far greater reluctance to take responsibility for the program/coaching/youth development.

There are two key issues. First, sustainability (the capacity to keep programs going) is not widespread and in some communities programs only happen when others implemented them. In such communities there appears to be only modest interest in maintenance. However in others (and it emerged later that Tiwi was an example of this) the community was wholly committed to develop a broad range of experiences that meant sport provided a pathway. As will be seen later, this interest was thwarted when the money from the trial eventually ran out. In a sense this left a taste of unfinished business in those committed communities. In other words sustainability is not just about money – it is about time. Time has to be adequate to buy the time (rather than material goods) to develop a culture of self-determination. However secondly and on a more positive, note the action plans were well received. In other words developing a plan at least provides a blue print for programs to commence, develop and then be sustained. Programs of implementation must be built with programs of sustainability as part of the fabric that holds action plans together. A good example of this will be provided later.

Steering Committees

Central to the implementation of this project was the establishment of a steering committee. The steering committee was to provide advice on project implementation, communities, resources – the brief was wide. This initiative was regarded as a good idea, however the Manager suggested that there was confusion from the start as to the role not only of the committee, but also of those of which it was composed. What also emerged however was regardless of whether committee members came from sport, the key was commitment to the project and often this was slow in coming, not for reasons of recalcitrance but mainly through lack of dedicated time, lack of real understanding of the projects objectives and confusion over role.

The Manager had this to say:

> Yeah, I think - and this was the first time that this had ever been attempted in terms of NT Sport and Recreation, but I think from the start it all got a bit confusing about whose role it was to do what. I'll explain that because we had NT Sport and Recreation who employed me; then we had the Australian Sports Commission and the representative for the Australian Sports Commission was the Active After School Communities Program Manager. He was based in Darwin and he was the Chair of the Steering Committee. I just think it got very confusing and there could have been a much simpler way for us to do it.

> The concept of a steering committee … as a co-ordinator I loved the concept of it. What I probably wanted more from them was more guidance, I wanted more support, I wanted more - and I just don't think that a lot of them had the time or the interest in giving that until we got further down the track and they started hearing about the activities through other organisations. That's when they started to really understand what we were doing and wanted to be involved in it … it's quite interesting.

> XXXX who was from Local Government, my first meeting with him was very interesting. I met with him one on one and he straight out said "I don't know why

> I'm on the steering committee. I was basically told to be on it. I have no interest in sport whatsoever, I don't play sport, I don't watch sport … so I'm not quite sure what I can contribute". I thought for sure after the first meeting he would be the one that jumped off and said I don't see what Local Government's doing in this.

> He ended up being the best out of the whole group, so he - I think after the first two initial meetings he started to see the role that sport plays in communities and where Local Government and sport links up and the synergies between what NT Sport and Rec were going through as an organisation and what Local Government has to go through in terms of the strategies and ideas that they have to come up with. So he was the surprise to me out of the steering committee, for someone who straight away just said not sure if I should be here, don't know what I'm going to contribute. He was the biggest contributor out of everyone.

Steering Committees clearly provide useful administrative and managerial roles. However confusion at the beginning often hampers the timely roll out of projects. There is probably prudence in establishing such groups ahead of time. In addition it is clear that advocacy comes from all quarters, sometimes unexpectedly. This confirms that who might be best suited for a project may be hard to pick and the form of steering groups maybe more to do with serendipity than with informed choices. It is also apparent that the membership of the committee because it was drawn from a range of offices meant that the access to wide ranging information was possible. This to some extent kept the manager informed. At other times such information presented ethical dilemmas (for example who else to share information with). There are two important stories attached to this and these are probably too sensitive to include in this report. Suffice it to say, the access to this level of information about communities (both the target communities and peripheral) precipitated a lot of (mostly good) action.

The issue of diversion

One of the key objectives of the SDP was to see if sports programs as well as potentially delivering health and welfare (in the broadest sense) objectives could be successful in diverting young people away from high-risk behaviours. This is an ambitious objective since as Tatz (2012) indicated, there is no "*incontestable* truth" (p.926) to the idea that sport both generally and specifically, reduces delinquent or other negative risk behaviour. And yet, as Tatz went on to describe the relationship between sport and lower incidences of delinquency, high-risk behaviours and petty crime (and even violent crime) is strongly believed by significantly high numbers of Aboriginal communities (particularly by Elders – see Rynne & Rossi 2012) and the police. Tatz then cited a number of places where this relationship is underlined as being certain and importantly two communities mentioned are part of this project. As a specific example Tatz indicated that in Port Lincoln during the football season juvenile crime amongst young Aborigines drops to almost zero. Tatz says similar claims can be made about the relationship between sport and youth suicide and though again, less concrete evidence exists about this within the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context, there is ample anecdotal evidence to suggest that sports gives both hope and meaning in and to life in Indigenous communities. Tatz points to the belief that sport is increasingly important to counteract the sense of moral despair amongst some Aborigines. Findings from the evaluation of the AFL remote development program undertaken by consultants Colmar Brunton[3] also indicate that the program showed evidence of the follow trends: improved school attendance, strengthening of authority, strengthening social cohesion, is aspirational, reduction in gang violence. However it is important to note that community members and

[3] Evaluation of the AFL Remote Regional Development Program – Wadeye, prepared by Colmar Brunton Consultants and commissioned by Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, February 2012. CB contact: John Young, Project No. 4275042

local service providers alike could not really agree on whether there were significant changes in violent behaviour.

The views of the manager of the SDP had similarly conflicting views. This was not because she could not make up her mind. Such conflicting views were indicative of the complexity of the communities involved in this project. At the level of belief it was clear she shared the views identified above. However empirical data is modest at best. That said, in the following testimony one can see both potential and indeed hope for the role of sport as a version strategy of as Tatz (2012) would call it a deterrent to high-risk, delinquent and anti-social behaviour:

Interviewee:	Yep … Look, I was astounded - when I got to the NT and I looked at the population of each of the communities and then I got deeper into that … I looked at the youth population of each of the communities, I think in Wadeye, it's something ridiculous like 70 per cent are youth in that community, which is massive, absolutely massive … I will use Wadeye as an example, because it's the one that I've done the most reading into, but so many issues. So many - so - you know, families fighting with families and I was trying to understand why that happened and why these youth have grown up with this attitude of so many different areas.
	I'm not quite sure where to start, but we'll start with the fact that - so Wadeye was - is a community that - none of them belong to. They were all actually *brought* to that community.
Facilitator:	They were moved there? Okay…
Interviewee:	Yep, but they were moved there from the desert, half of them, and from the water, the other half. The way that they put it is that desert people and saltwater people shouldn't mix, so going back to that concept, you've got these people living in this environment where they were never supposed to be living, because then they just don't mix. They should not be put together and that's what contributes to the outbursts of violence and anger that happens in the community … they're now mixing, so you've now got those families mixing together, having kids, doing all that sort of stuff.
	You add to that the housing complications in (to) that. I mean, this is the largest indigenous community, in the Northern Territory. You've got houses where you've got 12, 13 people still sleeping in the same house. They play cards all night, every night. They don't go to school, because their parents don't want them to go to school and when you find out the reasons behind that, it's because the parents think the schools not a safe place, but they don't know where that idea came from or why they think that. They've just been told that's not a safe place. Then, you've got kids having kids. So you've got all these things going on in - and not just in that community, within the [off-site] communities as well. So when you look at diversionary tools, it's really hard to come up with the answer.

>Sport is - I believe … sport is one answer. It's been proven by … we run the women's program, and they show up and they play, so therefore, they're doing something that's keeping them active. We had the comment over in XXXXXXX and it was such a simple off the cuff comment that it's just ridiculous how - we were just talking about the cricket program and we asked one of the young boys, I said, what do you get out of playing cricket on a Saturday morning? What does cricket do for you on a Saturday morning?
>
>Without even knowing it, he just acknowledged how important it was. He said, it stops me from thinking about committing suicide.

Facilitator: Okay.

Interviewee: It stops me from doing things that I shouldn't be doing, like, stealing cars or - and he just said it so - like, he didn't even have to think about it, he just said it and we all just sat there and just went, we weren't expecting that. We were not expecting - so that's how I see the program has succeeded and how, yes, sport is a diversionary tool and that's why it's a diversionary tool … Particularly for youth. Like, given youth is the major population of these communities. (Manager, Interview 2)

These anecdotes, though far from robust empirical data do at least provide insight from one small example as to how sport can make a difference to a person's life (there were other examples we came to know about later). Within the context of a trial, this points to a reasonable case for bigger and more encompassing trials. Admittedly these are expensive and trials can be 'exclusive' (in the same way clinical trials for pharmaceutical products can be[4]) in that by design, some communities will be left out (this was a criticism of this project form some of the Northern Territory). However this is the nature of trials and though there is generally support for the idea of sport as a diversionary strategy, empirical data is somewhat light. This is not a challenge to researchers or evaluators who take on this work; rather it is a product of the social complexity of the communities under observation and the methodological difficulties in undertaking such work (see Rynne and Rossi 2012, 2013). In addition, and this is well recognised (see Rynne and Rossi, 2012; and a number of ABS pages and entries), the Indigenous population of Australia is generally younger than non-Indigenous population of Australia. The Project manager was mindful of this phenomenon when she assumed the role. However, seeing it first hand on clearly made an impact on her to the extent that she strongly believes that programs of support, diversion, and structure need to be made available to young indigenous Australians not to produce Indigenous Champions but to be a vehicle for life skills, lifestyle choices, and personal development.

Reflections by the Manager
The reflections of the Manager are significant. They reveal that in spite of great ambition the SDP was a significant challenge As stated below her Indigeneity was important and certainly helped to overcome the intrusion of 'white' Australian experts. However, this appears to have been inadequate basis for dealing with the various factions, who considered themselves to be

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[4] It is often argued that one of the moral problems of clinical trials for new drugs (say for cancer or other serious diseases) is that if they prove to be successful; the control and placebo groups in the trial are excluded by design. Even though participants do not know this to be the case, the moral dilemma for clinicians exists none-the-less.

stakeholders. In addition, the lengthy audit process, though it yielded good data slowed the initial processes of the project and there was evidence to emerge later that some communities, had no idea about the project and its money until the project had been running for some time. It is difficult to discern why this might have come about given the data set but it seems likely that the multiple channels of communication, factional differences, distances between communities all conspired to make this more difficult for some communities than others. What is clearer from this testimony is that where things went smoothly and where outcomes could be described as successful it was down to the people involved at the ground level.

Interviewee:	Like there are so many things I would have done differently and done better now looking back on it, but I've worked in this area for a long time so I do have a lot of expertise. I'm lucky, I live in between two worlds in terms of I've got my Indigenous world and I've got my non-Indigenous world so I'm quite lucky in that I can work in those two areas but bring them together when they need to be brought together. For me this project personally challenged me like nothing has ever challenged me before. I went into this thinking I was going to look out for the best interests of the communities. It's hard to do that when communities don't even know what's best for them at times and you're getting so many conflicting stories and so many ideas.
	Yeah, so it was really about - in the end I was getting a lot of information. I just had to sort through what I thought was going to work and what wasn't going to work. There were some harsh decisions that needed to be made around certain sports and certain - but there was, yeah and it was hard to co-ordinate. Like it was really...
Facilitator:	Yeah, [I can imagine].
Interviewee:	...hard to co-ordinate with a steering committee, Sports Commission, NT Sport and Rec. All have different ideas, all have different ways of doing things and yeah, … It was crazy. Yeah, so it was a tough 18 months, but tough in terms of it just challenged me … (Manager, Interview 2)

She went on to say:

Yeah and I would say that's the one thing that came out, not just in terms of the co-ordination but the people within these communities. The reason why work gets done is because of the people in those communities who get it done, so it's not about facilities, it's not about equipment … it's not about those things. It's about the people and how they form relationships and those people constantly surprised me, like the Development Officer in Wadeye is a 21-year-old girl from the Gold Coast who's never lived in a community before. When I first met her I was just like oh, she's not going to last two seconds. She's been there two years. Oh, she's just very good at what she does. (Manager, Interview 2)

Comments like these are common through all interviews and they strongly endorse the idea that the quality of programs such as these is more likely to be delivered through quality personnel rather than program planning and management. This has been demonstrated across a range of professions including teaching, nursing and social work.

Personnel of The Northern Territory Sport and Recreation Department

Group Interview 1

Preamble
It was clear from the beginning that an alternative account of the SDP was going to be given. The tone of the interviews was different from the start (though this changed as the day progressed) and it was clear that there was an undertone of dissatisfaction with the whole project. It would take some time (and additional interviews) to unravel what was at the heart of this. Three staff members were involved in the interviews and their levels of responsibility to and for the project varied. One member of the group had arrived long after the start of the project but was involved in part of its implementation; the other two had worked in this office for some time but had varied backgrounds. The newer team member was Caucasian from Melbourne but who had a wide variety of remote community work under the auspices of his original training as a social worker. The other two were Indigenous Australians who had extensive backgrounds in community work and sport. All three were well placed to comment on the SDP.

The premise of the program and perceived problems
Whilst there was general agreement that the project was in principal a good idea and the central plank of the project, community consultation, was greatly admired there were suggestions that it was a flawed concept. The community consultation was regarded as a step in the right direction in that it was strengths based (see Nelson, Abbott & MacDonald, 2010) and this level of consultation was something not seen by one of the staff in other remote environments. Key issues related to the program seemed to be:
- The idea of five communities (though the idea of the project as a trial seemed to get lost)
- Duplication
- Youth focus

Five Communities:
It was argued that choosing five communities was courting criticism. It smacked of exclusionary decision-making especially as it seemed that the choice was made from outside. Hence questions (mostly rhetorical) were asked about how were the communities chosen (in other words what criteria were used), and what was to be said to the other 82 communities in the Northern Territory that had traditionally been supported by the NT Sport and Rec Department? It was argued that the perception of the project was one of 'whole of government response' therefore jealousies might be created around the allocation of funds to specific groups. There was even speculation that such a project could encourage a "wider gap" though this was not fully explained though this position seemed to hinge on the potential for animosity to develop in groups that had not been selected. An example was provided as a way of illustration. It was indicated that the local manager responsible for Tiwi Islands argued that any roll out of such a project would include all of the Tiwi Island communities (two Islands Melville and Bathurst, and two main communities Milikapiti and Nguiu plus other smaller communities). In a sense this is a non-argument since though there may be inter-island rivalry, they are so close together there would be no logic in serving one community on Tiwi and not others.

In addition it was argued that within the five communities identified that the cultural differences across groups (salt water, desert, fresh water etc.) meant that a 'one size fits all program' was going to limit the success of any initiative (though there is little evidence to

suggest this was the case). It was also suggested that the funding was considered to be inadequate, not so much that it was a 'one off' sum but that the money itself was not part of a funding stream and was therefore always going to end (there seems to be no sense that this was funded as a trial). The argument was maintained to suggest this was likely to seriously compromises sustainability in that things could be built up and then funds would end and nothing further would be possible other than under old NT funding arrangements. In fact one of the Sports Managers of one of the communities said this was exactly what happened (a later interview confirmed this and we talk about it later especially as it would be considered as one of the more successful roll outs of this project in terms of objectives reached and acquittals met).

Duplication:

The discourse that surrounded this issue was both logical and territorial at the same time. For example one of the group had the responsibility to take the SDP Manager to communities where relationships already existed. This alone suggests duplication was likely. If the team at NT Sport and Rec had established relationships with communities then it seems likely that those relationships would have been established through developing sports options and programs. This further suggests that it is highly likely that such programs would either be in place or out of season or on hold awaiting further support. Regardless, it was clear that a presence had been established and a sense of the demands (i.e. for which sports) was probably well understood.

As described to the evaluation team a core sport framework existed. This consisted of the central sports wanted by the community. In addition the framework sought to provide regular upskilling of local people (for the purposes of sustainability) and a planned pathway to higher (and sometimes other) sport – all the way to high performance if it could be developed within the context of the community. As a consequence it is no real surprise that, for example, there were some difficulties in introducing someone new to the communities. Similarly, the approach and response depended on what was being offered. In the case of the SPD it was money on offer and this was regarded as being much needed. However there were suggestions that the money may have been better coming to NT Sport and Rec or to the Shires because processes and procedures were already in place. Hence the view is that with the money came a duplication of what was happening – just with more money.

Youth Focus:

The youth focus was also considered misguided. This was principally because there is no real youth sport program per se – rather there is sport in general and the age range for sports participation is 16-35. If this is the case then there are two immediate concerns. First, if this was widely understood – why was it not made clearer in the planning phases? In other words on any fact-finding mission to see if this project was viable it stands to reason that this might have emerged. If this is not the case then again we are faced with two possibilities: either appropriate questions were not asked or the information (regarded in these interviews to be important) was not clearly understood. If however, this was not understood then one needs to question whether a project targeted at youth was problematic from the beginning. In any event – the idea of youth focus and the idea of sport as a diversion would have been compromised. It could be significant that where there were noteworthy successes it seems that a 'whole of community' approach was used.

It is also worth noting perhaps that the notion of 'youth' that guided the project was very much a 'western' construct. This may sound like a sop to loose liberal thinking. However as described to the evaluators, the construct of youth in male Aboriginal terms is a time that

precedes manhood. It was argued that potentially in the life of is project some 'boys' would have become men overnight. However, it is difficult to ascertain a) whether this actually happened in the life of this project and b) even if it did would it have been an important factor in this project. A larger interview data set might help shed more light on this.

A voice of reason and compromise within the interview structure suggested that most 'providers' would most likely be 'inclusive' anyway and the various effects that were discernible for different groups/ages within communities could be accommodated at the reporting stage. For future projects this might be a useful way to approach new 'in community' initiatives.

Capacity Building

Any project of this nature would by definition be about building capacity. It is a much (sometimes excessively) used term but in this case (a trial) it might be reasonable for signs to emerge related to less antisocial behaviour, improvements in school attendance, development of skills that can be utilised community wide (coaching, administration, umpiring etc.). In addition, human skills in community building related to encouragement around children playing sport, being physical active, being committed to a goal and so on. As it turns out there is some evidence of this and we will speak about this later. However in this interview (Group Interview 1) there were views expressed about capacity building that were mostly negative. As one interviewee suggested:

> The funds provided did not build capacity for sport in all communities … in fact, some it had been consumed in the roll out process well ahead of the 18 month time plan and in others the money remained unspent – hence judging the KPIs for the roll out is difficult … possibly the fault of the managing groups and support staff – yes consultation is important but some communities remained without funds for 14 months

There is no particular claim here of mismanagement on any side. Rather this gets to the heart of the complexities of trying to implement programs from afar into communities with acknowledged difficulties (otherwise they would not have been selected) in a limited time and funding frame. In fact it was argued by one of the participants that the constraints of time were unreasonable to show results (though one community managed to show some outcomes).

There was further criticism from another of the participants who held a management role in the NT:

> After the funding was announced it took 6 months to get the manager in place - The process of getting to know communities was sketchy – and failed to build on relationships already established (through local efforts) … The project coordinator was often distracted with meetings in Darwin … when XXXX arrived he spent time out in communities and he was doing the 'on the ground' activity…. But the working parties in communities were difficult. The FaHCIA brief was for full consultation and give the communities what they wanted through the process of consultation … however this turned into a wish list and perhaps a more advisable tack might have been to focus on one or two sports (core sports program already mentioned) that already had purchase or in which interest had already been shown (but for which funding was lacking) . … When

the plans came back the 'lists of interest'[5] were way too long. XXXX was advised to return to communities and be 'harsh' in the name of selectivity … in other words to work on the back of sports competitions and other things already going.

(Group Interview 1, some paraphrasing of a very long quotation and material in parentheses added for clarity)

A further point made was that this project might have been viewed[6] as a *further reduction* in autonomy. This was in some respects an odd argument to make yet when explained it had some resonance. Essentially sport in communities could be funded through for example a local council or through the economic activity of a community store. The argument goes, that this money essentially belongs to the community, and the community can use it, to support various services (sport provision among them). It is unclear how this might work, though clearly it is a communal model rather than a self-driven model. The term 'communal' does suggest a degree of sustainability. However, the change in local governance to Shires (from councils) has also changed some of the internal structures in communities. A project on top of such changes with yet different governance structures, it was argued could possibly be too much.

It seems, at least from the Northern territory participants' perspective that the SDP was thrown into a system of complex and highly cumbersome governance, representatives on working groups who were form Shires it seems often spoke from a whole shire perspective and this may not have been broadly representative. There was some vagueness but what can perhaps be said is that competing structures of governance may well have placed limited on the amount of capacity building that was possible.

It may simply have been a case that the duration of the project was simply inadequate to develop good relationships to develop capacity building strategies. This emerged as a common thread across the project.

The sports
It was clear that having a 'good' idea is not commensurate with the degree of 'buy-in' from other agencies. It was suggested for example, that the sports were not entirely sure how they were meant to be involved and more pointed than this, it was suggested that sports are unlikely to place someone into a remote region unless someone else pays – even the AFL, which has a significant presence in the Northern Territory, places some limits on its reach. As a consequence, it was argued that some sports simply co d not offer a remote development service as it was far too expensive and some of these were sports for which there was a demand. The observation was made quite pointedly … money for personnel rather than equipment was the key issue.

General support again was made for a core sports model with a much narrower framework based on a Sport Education model (Siedentop, 1994). This model supports a broad involvement in sport over and above participation. This was considered to be a viable model

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[5] This was mentioned previously but in one community the requests were so extravagant that they included a wave pool. This should serve as a reminder that all consultation processes need structure and parameters to ensure groups that are brought together work around a common theme.

[6] It is important to note that this is speculative rather than empirical

since, as in any group or community, not everyone possesses the movement competencies (skills) to participate at anything above a very primitive level. The multiple roles in a Sport Education model were considered to make such a model viable. The idea behind this is that it creates potential sporting pathways and levels. So a participant might be able to reach a number of levels in, for example, officiating, playing, and coaching. This it was argued could potentially lead to better outcomes related to positive risk taking in young people as well as better health outcomes. Indeed the group indicated that it made such a suggestion that would have its origins right down at the grass roots level with a view to creating a pathway for all those that became involved and this would be youth, young adults and older adults alike. It was felt that a pathway model rather than a diversion model was superior.

Commensurate with this position, it was felt that matters of sustainability could be more easily addressed, with a focus on people rather than structures would be a key driver. Therefore building on what had gone on before and being developmental rather than using a 'scatter gun' approach was felt to be a stronger model.

It was also felt that sport should be more closely connected to obligations such as school attendance, staying out of trouble, and other risk factors and in recommending this approach reference was made to the Clontarf Program and the Wadeye AFL program and an important feature of these programs was that they had pathways built into them.

Group Interview 2

Deliverables

An important problem identified was that money (in most cases) was being spent just to set up the project hence the deliverable aspects of the project were always going to be compromised. It seems that the deliverable were somewhat uneven across the communities. As one participant said:

> It supported what was already going on rather than anything new – such as fuel, transport, uniforms etc … So this happened in Tiwi … its important too because travel is such a big issue … XXXX at (Tiwi) delivered on everything they planned [based on core sports] – Wadeye though was different … there was change of sport and rec officer, there were other community issues happening…. One of the things that was [i.e. should have been] easy to deliver in Wadeye was a softball diamond for the girls and SDP was going to support this with $10K but it still has not been done – changes of personnel and circumstances ... so ended up as not a priority I guess. (Material in square parentheses added)

It was also argued that deliverables are hard to pin-down, as the delivery of the program was so uneven across the fiver communities. As one of the group said:

> Comes back to what we said this morning … what's the SDP??[7]… So the key stakeholders in sport in Gapuyuak – admittedly new to the area, did not realise that the community had been allocated $50000 from this project … there was a big disconnect hence deliverables were much more difficult to generate.

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[7] The participant was posing a rhetorical question

It was also apparent that deliverables were contingent on the personnel who could be convinced to contribute (and then did) to the project. This has been mentioned before so key personnel are always a significant key to the successful roll out of programs. The following interview segment strengthens this position.

XXXX: In Yuendemu … people who wanted to run sport and take ownership of it will do it … so you talk to the Principal … the money had to go to the shire but the school works closely with the shire … money filtered down and they ran a 3v3 basketball competition – there were really good results and we did some Auskick as well so we were able to get in that way and we found that this was really useful

Tony: Was it about finding the right mechanisms or personnel or both?

XXXX: Yes … but the only problem with it would have been if XXXX (the Principal) left the school and it would have fallen over ….

Tony: Was it to do with the … did it go because he was enthusiastic

XXXX: Absolutely … He was able to assure XXXX at the time and myself when I went out there to visit - that … we've got this program … this is a great idea… we'll get a lot of people involved into it … but we need the money for it and so the money did go there and they did some great things … but I do wonder what would have happened if XXXX had not been there

Another participant though countered this (at a philosophical level): "See that's another thing – you're talking youth target 12-25 … school is 12-15 but if the principal says no not interested … nothing happens". The implication here is that the 15-25 group, therefore misses out. Whilst there is logic to this argument there is little evidence to suggest this is what happened. That said, the age parameters to the project do appear to have created some discomfort for the NT staff in their interactions with communities when they had to justify the focus of the project. As we have mentioned in the sites where there was measureable success, the age parameters seem to have been mostly ignored.

Sport as a diversion
There was clearly support for this idea though less tangible evidence as to how it might have played out in this project. It is clear that these personnel considered the time frame too short to notice (let alone measure) any discernible changes in behaviour (though some were described later). A number of other projects were identified (that these staff had worked on in previous roles elsewhere) where changes in behaviour were regarded as unequivocal. As one participant said:

My view on sport as a diversion is this… we had a program (he worked in remote communities both during and before SDP) that ran from after school to 8/9 at night, we engaged up to 70 young people every day and I often wondered where those kids would have been and what they would have been doing if they weren't involved in this program and it's something that I've always thought about … and in a small community where there isn't much to do there is a lot of boredom, a lot of high risk behaviours, you can imagine

what they might be doing … or what *potentially* they could be doing … so it can absolutely can be used as a diversion

It is less clear that such outcomes were evident in the SDP. Constantly, a range of other projects were identified that had resulted in things like better school attendance, increased visits to the community clinic for health checks, less incidence of violence, less crime and so on. However, again it was argued that the time was simply inadequate to witness change especially as the project took a long time to gather momentum.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it was suggested that sport, needs to be perceived as *fun* to do (rather than the deficit approach of a diversion). In other words it was argued that "sport should not be a 'task'". It was suggested that the true values of sport are that they bring families together for a range of reasons but this gets lost when sport takes on the role of delivering social and welfare objectives. This was a fitting point to conclude this interview since the 'Sport for Development' movement whilst not understating the fun factor do see sport as being able to deliver social objectives.

The Case of Tiwi Islands

The manager of this part of the project was full of praise for it except for the fact that the funding stream came to an end. There are two aspects to this. First, if the project is regarded as a trial then this site would suggest the trial was a success and the markers of success are listed below. However if it is not regarded as a trial then the outcomes are the same but as funding ceased an element of failure is naturally built into the design. The key issue becomes one of sustainability. It is unclear the extent to which this project was understood as a trial. However that aside the outcomes seem to be impressive. First, all project acquittals added up and were included in the report sheet – the most complete report sheet submitted. Secondly, there is a list of outcomes that seemingly would not have been possible without the injection of money for the SDP project. That said it is important to recognise that this successful model followed a core sports approach. It is worth including the opening section of the interview here. In response to the question "what were the positives" the answer came as follows:

> Where do you want me to start? It enabled the purchase of equipment, apparel, travel for four core sports … it was the backbone of our sporting programs on the Islands[8] … it was an absolute blessing. We were able to offer sports in a structured way, which previously we weren't able to do … uniforms for comps regional and representative sports … the whole lot

 Rather than recount the text that followed it has been distilled into a list of outcomes. The manager considered the following to be important outcome for this project on Tiwi:
- Purchased community based equipment that people had never previously had the chance to use and this made the sports 'real'
- Create sporting pathways from participation,
- Junior T ball leading to women's softball who were then able to compete in the local competition
- Developed a Sister Girls[9] sports program and this is an important issue of equality

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[8] This Manager refused to separate the Island communities for this project

[9] Sistergirl is an Aboriginal English word that is broadly similar in meaning to MtF (Male to Female) transgender, but not necessarily exactly the same. Sistergirls often identify as or live as women. Some do not dress like women, many do. In traditional communities the word sistergirl also includes sisters (gay men) but to urban sistergirls it does not. On the Tiwi islands, there are a lot of sistergirls today, they

- Cricket Program: Milo cricket was delivered to the Islands
- Three-team cricket competition – from this a representative Tiwi side was picked that played in the Imparja Cup
- Junior and women's AFL
- In 2012 the football competition was awarded 'Event of Year on Australia Day
- Cricket trip for Imparja cup led to exposure to marathon running and Tiwi Islander signed up for the Indigenous marathon program run by Robert Di Castella
- Imparja Cup trip was also run this year and the cost was $19.5K. The manager spent 10 months raising this money by door knocking, business and private donations etc. When asked if this took him away from his core role he immediately identified further outcomes – As he said:

> "A bit … but the money was really useful in helping me up-skill people to help them deliver programs so mine was a coordination role really, and to develop pathways".

This provides a much clearer example of the capacity building that could be generated through the project. In addition he suggested that such capacity building has to be part of community life rather than an "add-on". In other words it has to seem natural and seamless. At the heart of this again was that all-important word "relationships". However this Manager was prepared to go much further:

> Yep … I agree with key personnel issue but I would add to that that the key to any roll out is establishing good relationships with key people in community. I have to get permission to be here and listen and who do we need to have on board – key personnel … To be fair we can talk about this all day but until you get a countryman or an elder to sit down and talk about it with you … it won't go anyway … the leaders can help recommend people to support the program … Its about getting kids to have fun with sporting equipment … we're about planting seeds.

In terms of drawbacks the manager suggested there were two crucial issues, the withdrawal of the funds and then the damage that the withdrawal (expiry is a better word) caused afterwards. As he argued:

> It is a relationship-based program, backbone is relationships formed … the amount of funds – but this is always the call. I am reluctant to give too many drawbacks because it is in its early stages – you can't really criticize … we were still learning what it was … we were in our first season - you know in our first year so …[10]

The key damage he refers to is related to the false (as it turned out) promises he made to the community related to higher level sport sports trips to compete:

> The discontinuation has done a lot a damage … we have been able to deliver this structured sporting pathway from participation to performance

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are also known as Yimpininni (literally "boy-girl"). Source: http://www.genderrights.org.au/index.php/all-topics/147-non-white-cultures/67-indigenous-australians-the-sistergirls . There is much more to be understood about this but space is limited here.

[10] The manager demonstrates his understanding of the project as a trial though on occasions this seemingly gets lost

> that had not been done before … I told guys[11] we were going to go the
> Dingo cup[12] as well as the Imparja Cup – as a reward for their participation
> … so we didn't go

So having identified and spoke of these further sport participation pathways and events, this community was unable to participate and this led to disappointment. The consequence of this it seems is that Mick became much maligned in the community for a while and this should come as no surprise since he was seen as just another person not prepared to fulfil promises. This seems like a harsh self-evaluation but this manager had seen such potential in the project and clearly achieved everything that he set out to with the money that apportioned to this community. In a sense he felt like they were being punished for being successful. This again highlights the difficulties of drawing upon funding *pots* rather than funding *streams* to facilitate sport within remote communities. He was also more than mindful that the cessation of the project (underpinned by the funding period coming to an end) might be perceived as his mismanagement of the funds. However the acquittal records show exactly how the funds were spent and everything went into sport development on Tiwi. However his disappointment was difficult to contain, as he said, "You can see so much potential … how could we have so much success, provide opportunities that had not been there before and exceed all the expected outcomes and then have an organization come in and tell you we're not going to let you continue that".

   This seems to be a common misinterpretation of the program by those in the NT though it was not lost on one of the staff from the NT Sport and Rec office that this was *a trial* – and that importantly it would need monitoring to see if it could continue. The manager on Tiwi though responsive to this after further discussion was still somewhat bemused about the eventual funding outcome since his argument was that all of the deliverables and acquittals showed that this was success so why was it not continued? Exasperatedly he asked, "What do we have to do to try and continue that program?" How will we ever get funds? It was clear that this had led to significant frustration both on the island and in the interview for this evaluation. In his view the successes on the Islands were for the most part ignored. Indeed as far as he could see nobody cared:

> I didn't want acknowledgment … we didn't want pats on the back we just
> wanted ongoing funding … you I tell my guys (his on the ground DOs) it
> reflects what you put in if its good it is because of the work you put in – if it
> not then, it is because of the work that did not get done … so this was totally
> contradicted … we have nothing to show for it ….

It is important to recall that one of the central trial objectives was the idea of sport as a diversion from high risk and anti-social behaviour. In a discussion around this the Tiwi Manager recounted a story of a young Islander who as a consequence of a sports trip to a competition got connected to the Indigenous Marathon running program. This community member then found that running was rewarding and enjoyable. However prior to taking up running, this person had engaged in high heath risk behaviour. As the Tiwi manager described, such an outcome was "more than an SDP outcome" suggesting that such stories are not measureable in the conventional sense (to gauge success of programs) but actually add to the potential on the Island, in the community and send a broader message *about* Aboriginal people that goes beyond the 'deficit' picture. The capacity in this area of sport grew rapidly

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[11] This does appear to be a gendered issue but later there were equal disappointments for girls and women

[12] A NT sponsored Cricket event in Timber Creek NT

on the Islands and soon donations of equipment, running gear followed. Moreover it led to the establishment of a junior running program with a definite pathway to competitive level running and inter-community competition. Though the links to the SDP might seem tenuous, these are the potential effects of funding sport within communities where access and capacity have been traditionally difficult.

The question was raised about funding programs as just another example of 'welfare'. This is now even more relevant given the likely belt tightening that is likely regardless who makes up the Federal Government and particularly in light of Joe Hockey recent comments about entitlement referred to earlier. The Tiwi manager scotched this idea when he said:

> It is not welfare because it is going to get people accredited and getting them up-skilled in the delivery of sports so basically … it was to build self sustaining programs and sport and pathways right up to performance level (6 cricket coaches, 6 footy coaches) … so the funds … the way we used the money was to move towards self sustainability … I mean we purchased equipment … and we had to look after that gear … it just goes on.

In other words this manager viewed such programs as an investment, a way to help build capacity – it is a little like Noel Pearson and others (outside Australia) have suggested, Aboriginal people need a hand up not a hand out (See Langton 2010, Pearson, 2007) his and the message from this manager was exactly that – it was about creating the opportunities for success and then letting that success breed more success to the point of self sustaining programs. As he said when discussing that not all programs are successful "but some work and the SDP worked and looks t at what happened … so if it's the only program that works well that's a result".

In the final part of the interview the manager extolled the virtues of sports program, to not only equip people with sports skills and healthy lifestyles, but as a way of advancing 'life skills'. In this sense he supported the views of other NT personnel by suggesting sport offers opportunities to travel, meet other people, understanding codes of behaviour, the idea of an obligation to others and how to represent one's community with pride. The evaluation of the Wadeye football program and the development of the Wadeye Magic football Club has similar things to say about the value of sport.

What can be learned from these interview data?

At the outset, the evaluation was set up as a scoping project given the distances and time (and as it turned out the disruption to the process). A scoping study is (as we indicated earlier) generally understood to be one where 'identifying', 'highlighting', and 'proposing' are central to the mission of the study – in other words it represents a means rather than an end (see Michel, Gerritsen & Thynne, 2010). In keeping with a scoping study we will conclude by identifying the key issues that appear to facilitate such programs, identify needs for the pursuit of further funding opportunities, and propose structural recommendations for governance.

1.   Relationships and communication

It was clear that this was regarded as extremely important by *all* interviewees. What was not as consistent was how this should be undertaken and in what directions relationships and communication should flow. This discrepancy appears because at the level of governance, there are divergent views as to how well this was done. It is important to realise that this may be as much about sovereignty as it is about good practice. None the less, readers of this report

need to be mindful of the potential for mistrust and dismissiveness when programs are inserted into areas where local personnel consider themselves to be a doing a good job. That said, there are some definite statements that can be made.

Relationships With Communities

Establishing good relationships with communities is crucial for program success. This came across strongly from all interviews, and indeed it was broadly suggested that under lesser conditions programs would not work. It was suggested that good relationships depend on listening to the needs and interests of communities but this has to be an iterative process based on sensible parameters upon which discussions can progress. Good relationships need to be with whole community not just representatives and this requires time to be spent in the communities. This is a point of divergence that emerged, we would argue, as a consequence of the governance structures for the project. By this we are suggesting that the appointment of a manager from outside (i.e. in this case from Canberra) probably did not facilitate 'time in the communities' to a degree that drives the project in advantageous ways. Whilst local personnel were used in this project, their already well-established relationships do not appear to have been used particularly well. A negative outcome of this was that the project proceeded more slowly than it might have.

Relationships with local personnel

We are mindful that the politics of envy might have been at play here. However, running a trial (related to sport) over the top of established sports projects may have not created the best conditions for relationships to become well established and workable. It seems that local expertise, channels of communication, and access all need to be marshalled far more adroitly than they were. It is clear that committees and steering groups were set up efficiently and that local expertise was incorporated onto such groups (for example GBMs and local government officers and local teachers/Principals in remote schools), however future projects of this nature needs to recruit 'on the ground' personnel that are well connected to communities already and who have already shared a vision about the role of sport.

Relationships with the sports

Again an interconnected facet of the communication and relationships issue concerns the sports that were chosen. This type of project given the social hierarchies and complexities of communities, as well as the tyranny of distance needs to work with 'sure things'. That is a commitment is needed up front from sports that will 'buy in' to the idea and invest time in the intentions of the project. There are two issues here that need to be considered in the future: well established sports will already have developed a relationship with local personnel and possibly with communities; parameters need to be set around the consultation process with communities as 'wish lists' are an ineffective way to develop programs and inevitably result in disappointment. This does not mean that the same thing over and over again needs to offered, however riding on the back of what is already established makes good sense. Extensions to such programs for example could be a pathways structure to assist young people broadening their experiences and increasing the expectations and aspirations from sport. This seemed to be successful on the Tiwi Islands.

2.   Program Objectives

There were times in the discussions across the entirety of this evaluation process that the idea of the SDP as a trial seemed to get lost. To explain further, during conversations it seemed that the SDP was thought of as a funding stream that was turned on and then off again with no apparent reason and then other times when it was understood as a trial and felt that more time

might have yielded more information. In addition there were concerns related to the youth focus, the choice of communities and the time for the project to unfold.

Programs as trials

When a program is trialled to see if it can work on a larger scale, this should be made far clearer than it seems to have been. One of the primary concerns related to trials is the question of time – has enough time been attributed to the project to see any effect? At first glance the time frame of this project seems reasonable and funding bodies may be reluctant to fund projects across a longer period (though most research projects that are funded by the Australia government under national research schemes such as the ARC or NHMRC are usually for between three and five years). The time frame for this project was probably too short to show the type of change that was sought especially since much of the early part of the project was taken up in attempting to establish relationships. That said, in Tiwi there are examples where behaviour change did occur. Importantly, this issue is connected to number one (above) in that the relationships took longer to establish than was intended, a consequence of which was a reduced time for rollout in some communities, (recall that it was indicated that after 18 months, workers in Gapuwiyak did not even know the money was available). No reasons are given for this and one is left to assume that the implementation of programs like these, are complex, wrought with politics and seemingly insurmountable logistics. However such assumptions are speculative. What can be said is that it seems odd that a significant way into the project some communities were not conversant with its intentions, aims, and focus not to mention knowing little about the availability of money. In practical terms, making judgements about such trials becomes difficult since one is passing comment not about the quality or intentions of the project per se but rather about its implementation. In other words bureaucratic structures and procedures end up being judged rather than the actual program of activity against its stated intentions. Inevitably this affects the data sources that can be drawn upon. In contrast, the Tiwi Island case study presented earlier is able to demonstrate that the trial was successful as far as it went. The problem for Tiwi people was that the trial would inevitably come to an end even though a strong case for continuance had been built. The consequence of this was that there developed a perception that funding was simply 'turned off' even when there were demonstrated successes.

Choosing Communities

As was indicated earlier, trials often present those running them with a moral challenge – and that is, which communities should be chosen? So if those assessed as being 'most needy' (and the criteria for this would need to be carefully drawn up) are chosen, communities that have reformed, or performed well or have good records of acquittals might feel that they are being punished for the positive steps taken and progressive ideas developed. This is not a light-hearted observation. These exact sentiments were expressed to the Northern Territory personnel at the time of the roll out. This might require more perspective. So prior to the SDP the 87 remote Indigenous communities were served by a relatively small amount of funding (and a relatively small staff of personnel). There are complications related to this, which have more to do with local government reorganisation in NT, nonetheless the available resources were spread necessarily thinly. The influx of other funds that are then targeted to certain communities (15 down to 5), are likely to lead to resentment and envy (as reported). The problem lies not with choosing five communities, rather the problem is in telling other communities this is happening and possibly having to identify why they were not chosen. There is no easy way around this and in the end it is a communication issue and this itself is fraught with problems like labelling, demonising and vilifying communities even when the assessments are based on perceived needs and absence of sporting infrastructure. Serious consideration needs to be given to how choices about trial sites are communicated.

Youth Focus

The youth focus, though central to the trial was heavily criticised by personnel in the Northern Territory. The reasons were framed by the idea of 'whole community'; that is any initiative should involve a whole community not just a segment of it. There are problems with this that are obvious. Such an attitude flies in the face of available data about youth disenfranchisement and dislocation of Aboriginal youth (it is also argued that such characterisations are not limited to Indigenous communities). Also the idea of youth diversionary projects is not new and some published studies indicate good successes. However it misses the point that was made to us, and that was when any segment of a community is targeted for special treatment it generates jealousies and envy. More important than this however is that 'whole of community' involvement in projects mean that confusion over who is 'youth' and who is not are avoided and the reach of projects can be extended thereby possibly yielding greater success. As we were reminded, most field officers would more likely than not take an inclusive approach and then differentiate at the point of reporting. Though this is at odds with the original structural intent of the program, it was probably easier to administer, avoided some of the politics of envy or exclusion and afforded community members a 'stake' in the progress. The down side is that capturing evidence of success is much more difficult.

3. Approach and style

It was clear that this is important for building relationship. It was widely indicated that the capacity to listen first and talk second is crucial. Beyond this, we have indicated elsewhere that one needs to 'hang out' in communities (see Rossi, Rynne and Nelson, 2013) and though there was some of this, it probably did not extend far enough, however this was not easy given the geographic distribution of the communities. Having said this, it seems that a relaxed approach (perhaps void of 'western' urgencies) was widely favoured. This would also seem to capture the essential nature of collaboration and consultation. That said there were clearly times when such consultation needed parameters to structure conversations around need/interest. It was made clear that consultation that results in 'wish lists' is not especially helpful.

Dependence, independence and capacity building

Opinions on this were divided though clearly it was regarded as important. There were claims of independence and capacity building (see the Tiwi Islands case study) that were countered by claims of 'learned dependency' and Aboriginal writers have argued that this has been over 40 years in the making through 'White Guilt' welfare-ism, low expectations and the avoidance of taking responsibility.[13] So the SDP manager argued that there was evidence of this across the five sites and that if outside workers did not come in and run sporting activities and events then they would not happen. Importantly this seemed to differentiate across gender lines with women being identified as being more prepared to run programs especially when they were meant for young members of the community. It is difficult to determine whether this was a widespread phenomenon and what the reasons for it might be. On the other hand on Tiwi, capacity was built through a structured program of accreditation schemes in officiating and coaching so even though the funding ended that capacity remains within the community. The problem of course is that with a discontinuation of the funding stream, the capacity that was developed had nowhere to go. We would argue that this is counter-productive, since these opportunities provide a sense of purpose, a role for some community members, and even

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[13] Noel Pearson and Marcia Langton have written widely on this and Langton's latest book based on her 2013 Boyer Lectures makes this case strongly. Rossi and Rynne (in press) argue that in the case of sports projects government funded are better regarded as investments in people's capacities.

sometimes, modest opportunities for some income. An expectation of building capacity in sport, we would argue, is an important objective for projects of this nature. Capacity built through sport (as a priority) can then be used as the mechanism for further delivery. This could lead to better or at least more efficient measurements of success, progress and associated outcomes.

4.   Sport as diversion

Fred Coalter (2013) is highly critical of claims that sport can act as a 'diversion' (form crime, anti-social behaviour and poor health and high risk behaviours) and therefore should be a central pillar of social policy. At the same time Tatz (2012) referred to above and drawing on data a lot closer to home suggests the opposite and this is more in keeping with a previous position held by Coalter (1989). However Tatz is naturally cautious in not 'over-claiming' social and welfare outcomes as being solely related to sport. Tatz is among many who suggest such outcomes when they can either be witnessed or measured are often relational. That is, such outcomes are more often than not a consequence of multi-factorial policy initiatives. Jay Coakley (2002) is even more strident in his criticism of what he calls the 'deficit reduction dream'. By this he means that often the idea that sport can have a positive impact on youth deviance is framed by the sense that youth are problematic (in other words the youth 'state' is a problem 'state') and the natural association between youth sport programs and reductions in anti-social and high risk behaviour is a taken for granted conclusion. As Coakley suggests this relationship is tantamount to mythology (see Barthes 1973) – something so obvious and 'true' that believers barely stop to ponder any evidence. Begg et al. (1996) also challenged some of the long held beliefs about sport as a 'deterrent' to delinquent behaviour (sometimes referred to as the deterrent hypothesis) even suggesting there is some support for other hypotheses such as the athletic delinquent. In other words the notion that involvement in sports (or at least certain kinds of sport) may in fact, encourage delinquent behaviour. What can be said is that there is both conflicting evidence and contestable positions on this issue indicating that certainty about the role of sport in behaviour modification is potentially weaker than we might hope.

In this project there were indications that sport might provide a distraction from high risk or delinquent behaviour though there is a lack of evidence that the involvement in sport was especially diversionary. However there is evidence of a strong belief in the power of sport to be diversionary especially among the senior members of the communities. Outside of this project but within some of the same communities other programs have had results in reducing high-risk behaviour and the formation of the Wadeye Magic Football team is a good case. Community based projects such as these sometimes occlude the broader evidence or more importantly the lack of it. The strongest evidence in this project was the evidence of belief as opposed to any behaviour change specifically. That said, there were pockets of activity that were clearly so engaging (the late night football in Yuendemu) that young people were prepared to invest a lot of time there. Of course this raises a whole lot of other concerns (adequate sleep, hygiene, school attendance etc.). Also what is not known is were there any young people who chose not to invest in late night football because they were doing something else that involved high risk behaviour. In addition, this particular example was nothing to do with the SDP, it was already present in the community, hence cause and effect (though notoriously difficult to show anyway) is not even relevant here in the evaluation sense. None the less it can be used as an example of informal sport that captured the imagination of many young people of a community. The role of any community-based project should be to build upon existing success rather than try to impose additional activities/services over the top that themselves may end up being distracting.

5.   Sports Choices

The principle of 'community voice' was upheld in this program to some extent though it is clear that providing open choice though consultation led to delays. This was because in some cases the choices and interests were beyond the scope of the project the consequence of which was some 'negotiating down' to a point of deliverable choices. This is a key issue for projects of this nature. There is a compromise that is necessary between was might be a 'desired state' and what is a 'deliverable reality'. At the level of process evaluation this is of concern. The laudable aim of what appears to be honourable and just aims of consultation must be framed within the context of the possible. So choice and consultation needs to be framed (or perhaps even limited) by what is remotely achievable. Hence in process terms the Commission may find it necessary to compromise certain ideals about community wide consultation or at least frame it within more limited frameworks. However even in the case of this project, this itself drew criticism from those who implemented the programs in the Territory. It seems that a 'core sports' philosophy was in operation already. Hence, the idea of what could be achieved had already been established by local providers through their relationships not only with communities but with sports willing to invest in communities. In our view this, in part, was central to the success on Tiwi Islands. The Development Manager there took the view that it was most appropriate to build on the success of the past and enhance the quality of this rather than seek to build from the start all over again. We recognise that the sporting start point of the Tiwi Islands may well have been in advance of some of the other communities. However, the position to build on a core sports program seems to be not only good logic but makes good philosophical sense. This requires a far greater collaboration with local providers and a willingness to build upon local knowledge to a greater extent than seems to have been the case. The Tiwi Island approach of using the funding to develop sporting pathways appears to us at least to provide a sensible progression from an already sound foundation and this may well have been a better orientation to the program and certainly one that might have placed community capacity building at the centre of the project rather than youth diversion – an appropriate goal that could have been a second phase once capacity had been operationalized.

Conclusions

There is an almost unimpeachable view that sport must be inherently good for communities and for the young people of those communities in particular (Coalter 2013). However as Coalter (2013) also goes on to argue, the evidence to support this is mixed. However, the belief in the value of sport is a strong one and where it has shown to have positive effects on communities and youth, such stories are exalted as being fundamental and therefore broadly applicable. Many believe (as we do) that sport *can* be a wonderful community resource that contributes to community health, well-being, social cohesion and so on. Indeed, sentiments the personnel we interviewed expressed these very sentiments. However, it is worth drawing from House's (2005) study once more where he indicates that even when exactly the same intervention is rolled out across different communities (for House it was different schools) different people will produce different results at different sites. It is reasonable to suggest that the same happened here. This might hardly seem surprising since the different communities have different levels of functionality, different strengths and problems, different amalgamations of peoples (some of which were forced in a different era or period) and so on. Hence it is unreasonable to expect the same outcomes or even for that matter the same processes to apply to all communities. Whilst this seems to have been acknowledged in this project, it seems to have been lost in implementation. We argue that this needs to be at the front of any scheme such as this. So accepting that the outcomes and indeed processes were likely to be different for different communities we offer here a number of suggestions that have project-wide applicability.

1. Greater local collaboration and involvement of personnel

It is clear that though this might have been one of the intentions local expertise was inadequately drawn upon to inform the roll out of this project. Whilst local (small p) politics and petty squabbles related to territorialism and sovereignty also hindered good practice, it is clear that expertise of local personnel was not maximised. The consequence was unnecessary duplication of process and poor use of already established communication channels.

2. Build on previous developments and successes

Following from Point One, local expertise would have provided a launching point for the provision of extensions to programs already running or in developmental stage. These were easily identifiable and on a broader issue may have allowed a wider roll out of this project rather than a targeted approach (we acknowledge this still would have required some identification of communities). Admittedly, this might be perceived as rewarding communities already well endowed with programs. We do not see it that way. Rather, the program could have been rolled out as an enhancement project to a 'core sports' approach that was already in place. Whilst the idea of 'core sports' may sound like placing limits on choice, given the contextual parameters of the communities, their isolation and distances from each other, this is inevitable.

3. Realistic choices and consultation

In connection to the previous point, community consultation needs to be framed by the limits of possibility. This may seem contradictory – providing choice but suggesting some things cannot be chosen with the possible conclusion that programs like this become exclusionary. However, the reciprocal position to this is that offering wide choice ends in making promises that cannot be met. Realistic choices need to be made on current community strengths,

expertise, likely third party involvement and long terms interests rather than short term gain (or no gain).

4. Whole of Community

It was made abundantly clear time and time again that the youth focus, as understandable as this is, was regarded as exclusionary and in some cases created ill feeling. All personnel in the Northern Territory suggested (and some took this action) that sport projects need to be aimed at and connected to 'whole of community' and then within this approach seek to target young people through community capacity building. If youth programs are to run successfully, then the whole community needs to be committed to it and it was suggested that the way to do this is to roll out developmental/demonstration programs for all community members.

5. Sport pathways approach to capacity building

The pathways approach to sport seems to have had the greatest success. We are mindful of earlier cautions about widespread applicability. However, creating pathways for community members to have some role in sport be it coaching, officiating, administration and management would build capacity that then belongs to community. Hence programs can gradually move to a sustainable basis through developing expertise. It seems that this, though a longer term project and possibly beyond the scope of this scheme, might be a lesson well learned. The case study of the Tiwi Islands provides some insight as to how this could work with the necessary adjustments to suit other communities. Though financial support will always be required, local community capacity and expertise might be able to better foster programs aimed at greater youth recruitment into sport and meaningful physical activity programs.

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