



Department of
Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries

16

How to be an inclusive club



Sport and recreation clubs are important to local communities and can be the best place to encourage positive contact and cooperation between people from a range of different backgrounds and abilities. There is great potential for sporting clubs and community groups to expand their memberships and reduce social isolation, by encouraging people of diverse backgrounds, abilities and age to join and participate.

Sport and Recreation (WA), a division of the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) has a position statement with regard to inclusive participation, this being:

“Sport and Recreation expects all Western Australians to have the opportunity to participate in sport and recreation activities regardless of their age, gender, religion, cultural background, sexual orientation, disability, income or geographical location”.

A copy of the full position statement can be accessed from the website or obtained from the Manager, Community Participation at Sport and Recreation (WA).

Australia is a diverse nation, with Western Australia (WA) one of the most diverse of all the states and territories. In 2011, Western Australia's population was 2.2 million people, an increase of 14% from 2006, and expected to increase further from the 2016 statistics. WA had the highest proportion of its population (31%) born overseas of all Australian states and territories, with Perth the highest proportion of overseas-born (35%) of all Australian capital cities.

WA is home to people from more than 190 countries, speaking approximately 270 languages and dialects (including around 50 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages). Western Australians follow more than 130 religious faiths. People from the United Kingdom, Europe, South-East Asia and the Middle East, and more recently from South Asia and Africa, have made Western Australia their home, creating a harmonious environment that respects diversity.

According to the 2011 Census, there were 69,664 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in WA. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represent 3.1% of the WA population.

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

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

Definitions

Before we begin to look at strategies, it is important to look at some definitions. These can also be viewed on the Sport and Recreation website.

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

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

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

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

When considering how your club can be diverse and inclusive, particular attention should be paid to ensuring that all people are included.

What are the benefits of being inclusive?

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

Common barriers faced by Aboriginal people

Aboriginal people can face a number of challenges to participating in sport and recreation, particularly within a club environment. These often relate to a lack of understanding of Aboriginal culture, society and history and can result in a lack of participation.

Some further barriers include:

- Being a minority and feeling different to the rest
- Not feeling welcome
- Not feeling comfortable to ask questions
- Difficulties with committing to ongoing structured sporting activities, due to family and community commitments
- Negative experiences during life that affects their ability to trust, engage and participate fully in society
- English as a second language
- Difficulties with the payment of fees, purchase of uniforms and access to transport.

Common barriers faced by new migrants and refugees

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

Some other barriers to participation in sport experienced by refugees include the following:

- Difficulties understanding the concept of structured sporting activities after a lifetime of living in countries without structured, community-based sporting opportunities

- Memories of torture, trauma and extreme violence that affects the ability to trust, engage and participate fully in society
- Difficulties engaging with mainstream Australians, some of whom react negatively to perceived cultural differences
- Lack of family or parental support due to ongoing challenges and pressures of resettlement
- Cost of activities. Many refugees face extreme financial hardship and families often do not perceive sporting activities as a financial priority.

Common barriers faced by people with disability

Everyone has the right to be a part of an inclusive and welcoming community where their contribution is recognised and valued. People with disability should have equal opportunity to participate in a mainstream community club.

Participation in community sport or recreation provides an opportunity to develop physical skills and social connectedness. This can be a life-changing experience especially for those with limited social networks.

Some other barriers to participation in sport experienced by people with disability include the following:

- Assumptions about a person's abilities, with people afraid to ask if help required
- Unsafe, and inaccessible environments (steps, space, etc.)
- Too many physical activities, that don't allow open participation
- Limited supporting facilities (such as toilets or changing rooms)
- Limited signage or inclusive publication material
- Lack of interpreter services.

A separate booklet on including people with disability in sport and recreation is available on the Sport and Recreation (WA) website.

How accessible is your club?

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

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

Is your club inclusive for all members of the community?

Complete this simple checklist to see how inclusive your club presently is:

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

Further information is available from the [Sport and Recreation \(WA\) website](#), with supporting download documents and an inclusive club checklist.

How can your club increase participation from diverse communities?

Training and support:

- Provide cross-cultural awareness training to committee members and to its members. Details regarding suitable providers of this training can be sourced from the inclusive organisations directory or the Sport and Recreation (WA) Inclusion Officers.
- You may wish to consider holding sessions, classes, activities and competitions on the premises of ethnic and Aboriginal community organisations to encourage those too shy to approach recreation centres and sporting clubs.
- Often there may be strong pressure on potential participants to devote their time to family priorities. A strategy for overcoming this barrier is to encourage the whole family to participate, e.g. cutting oranges, umpiring, equipment maintenance and most importantly, attending games as spectators. The timing of sessions, training, etc. could be worth a review.
- Utilise families — membership can increase when families feel welcome.
- Try to form partnerships with existing women's organisations and groups within Aboriginal and CaLD communities to ensure appropriate cultural and gender issues are addressed when developing programs and policies.
- Consider women-only environments. As a result, simple program modifications may need to be implemented such as using female coaches; expanding the club to include female teams and competition; and providing women-only spaces.
- Consider flexible uniform. Some women prefer to continue wearing traditional clothing, including headscarves and clothing that covers the knees and shoulders, when playing sport. Allowing for and encouraging uniform alteration for these women will increase the likelihood that they will feel comfortable enough to participate.

Knowledge

- Speak with service providers who work with new migrants and refugees such as migrant resource centres and also with local Aboriginal organisations.
- Talk to ethnic and Aboriginal community groups and community leaders. Provide them with information about your club and form links with them.
- Contact your local government and find out which ethnic community, Aboriginal, CaLD or disability service providers operate in your area.
- Contact the Office of Multicultural Interests and Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (formerly Department for Aboriginal Affairs) for information on the specific needs of different CaLD and Aboriginal groups and for guidance on how to establish contact with groups in your area.
- Be open to new ideas for getting new people to join your club. Often individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds wish to participate in structured sporting opportunities but are unsure how to participate in a way that does not compromise their needs. Speaking to community leaders and service providers is one way to discover how your club might do something new or different to meet these needs.
- Be familiar with and have information on hand regarding Sport and Recreation (WA)'s KidSport program. KidSport provides the opportunity for eligible Western Australian children aged 5-18 years to participate in community sport and recreation by offering them financial assistance towards club fees. For further details please view the website.

Facilities:

- Look at your facilities and ensure they are accessible for all
- Regular open days and coaching sessions at schools may encourage local people to visit the club and become familiar with the facilities and members.

Policies and procedures

- Think about putting in place an anti-discrimination policy so that any forms of inequity and/or racism can be addressed quickly. Experiences of racism and discrimination can be a massive deterrent to participation.
- Review the clubs position on social media, particularly images and communication that portrays the club (Facebook, website, pictures of Aboriginal people/artwork etc.).

How can club members make a difference?

- Provide a welcoming environment
- Befriend new members
- Offer support and advice
- Be sensitive to diversity
- Make a stand against discrimination or racial harassment
- Offer help with transport
- Share sports equipment
- Help new members learn the rules
- Be aware that people who speak English as their first language tend to speak quickly, which may be difficult for a person learning English to comprehend. Try to speak clearly and avoid slang, but

don't speak with a false accent, shout, or talk slowly.

- Take time to develop relationships
- Be open and honest. Don't be afraid to ask questions. It is okay to ask a person questions about where they have come from; what Aboriginal group they belong to; what sports they like playing etc.

Catering for diversity

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

For further information please view each of the low-participation groups individual sections on the [website](#).

Support and funding

Sport and Recreation (WA) has two funding programs that specifically target low participation groups, including Aboriginal, CaLD and people with disability. These being as follows, with more detail on the website or by contacting Sport and Recreation (WA) direct:

- **Community Participation Funding**
- **Active Regional Communities Grants**
- **Targeted Participation Program**

Other resources

This resource is part of a series which provides assistance to Western Australian sport and recreation clubs and organisations to become better managed, more sustainable and to provide good quality services to members and participants.

Other resources in the series include:

1. Starting a new club
2. Planning for your club – the future is in your hands
3. Taking the lead! A guide for club presidents
4. The club secretary – the key to efficiency
5. Show me the money – a guide for the club treasurer
6. Effective club meetings – a guide for the chairperson
7. Making meetings effective – a short guide
8. Delegation – help for the overworked committee member
9. Problem solving – a guide for clubs
10. Promoting your club
11. Seeking and servicing a sponsor
12. Establishing your club rules
13. Risky business – a club guide to risk management
14. Clubs' guide to volunteer management
15. Member protection for clubs
16. How to be an inclusive club
17. Passport into schools – linking sports with schools
18. Youth sport – junior sport policy
19. Long-term involvement – junior sport policy
20. Physical growth and maturation – junior sport policy
21. Sport pathways – junior sport policy
22. Forming links – junior sport policy
23. People making it happen – junior sport policy
24. Quality coaching – junior sport policy
25. Making sport safe – junior sport policy
26. The law and sport – junior sport policy
27. Top 20 tips for officials
28. Top 20 tips for successful coaching

You will find the full series of the booklets on Sport and Recreation (WA)'s website:

www.dsr.wa.gov.au/clubs