



Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission

Fact Sheet

Active After-school Communities in the Northern Territory — Playing for Life



The Australian Government's Active After-school Communities (AASC) program has been highly successful in the Northern Territory, providing free sport and other structured physical activity programs to hundreds of children at around 70 locations.

The AASC program is a free initiative delivered nationally by the Australian Sports Commission. It is not only helping inactive children become active in the Northern Territory, but also strengthening communities by building their capacity to provide sport to young people.

Getting inactive children active in the Northern Territory

Inactive children in the Northern Territory are becoming more physically active as a result of the AASC program, with program deliverers saying children feel more positive toward physical activity after participating in the program.

'By being non-competitive, the program has the potential to attract kids who might otherwise not participate in sport,' one deliverer from the Northern Territory says. Another says they have no problem targeting inactive kids because the program is so popular "they just join in'.

Some deliverers credit the program's popularity to the range of sports on offer.

'There's a mix of traditional and non-traditional sports,' one Northern Territory school says, adding that some children did not want to take part in sports that were about winning or losing. 'Here, kids have the choice — maybe judo isn't their first preference, but they might try it out, and like it. It also helps to cross gender stereotypes; for example, we have some boys doing belly dancing'.

A Northern Territory coach explains how the range of sports is a bonus of the program. 'The kids can say, "I tried this, and I liked it." It's easier for the parents too, because they don't waste money signing their kids up for sports that they might not like.'

Responses from children involved in the AASC program in the Northern Territory are overwhelmingly positive, showing they enjoy the program and think it is fun. They say the benefits of participation include increased fitness, having fun, building friendships, increasing self-esteem, developing leadership skills, emotional maturity and improved sporting skills.

In their own words: 'When you kick a goal, it makes you look great. You feel really special', and 'When we beat the other team, we say, "Good game!" We shake hands, make them feel happy', and 'It's good for you to run fast, get fit and strong'.

Participation in the AASC program is also increasing physical activity levels of participants outside the program, with almost all participating parents in the Northern Territory saying their child has become more physically active overall.

'By being non-competitive, the program has the potential to attract kids who might otherwise not participate in sport'

'The AASC can be like a little light in the community'

'The messages about child nutrition, the way you discipline or praise the kids, these things would spread into the community'

'It stops kids from getting into too much mischief, like breaking in and graffiti. In the summer when it's really hot, the kids want to go swimming, but there's lots of jellyfish. The program gives them something else to do'

Strengthening communities in the Northern Territory

The AASC program has improved the capacity of Northern Territory communities to provide sport for school-aged children, especially with more than half the programs running in remote parts of the territory.

The majority of community coaches say the AASC program ensures more people in the local community are equipped with the skills to deliver physical activity to children.

'The AASC can be like a little light in the community,' one school says. 'The messages about child nutrition, the way you discipline or praise the kids, these things would spread into the community.'

The program also provides equipment, resources and training that enable these communities to provide sport into the future.

Northern Territory stakeholders have also noted the AASC program's positive effect on discipline issues and the flow-on effect for the broader community. The program has been seen to reduce vandalism and stop children from 'running amuck'.

This is considered particularly important in remote communities where boredom is viewed as the key motivator for bad habits such as truancy, gambling and substance abuse.

One program deliverer from Milikapiti says, 'It stops kids from getting into too much mischief, like breaking in and graffiti. In the summer when it's really hot, the kids want to go swimming, but there's lots of jellyfish. The program gives them something else to do'.

Another deliverer acknowledged the difference in children after starting the program. 'In the school holidays, they would sit around, play cards, or get bored. Now they're here all the time, every day.'



Active After-school Communities

Helping kids and communities get active

For more information visit
ausport.gov.au/aasc

Facts at a glance

- 93% of schools and after-school care providers in the Northern Territory believe children of all socio-economic backgrounds feel welcome participating in the program
- 81% of schools and after-school care providers believe children and their families are more aware of the benefits of physical activity after taking part in the AASC program
- 71% of community coaches are satisfied the program is stimulating community involvement in sport
- 70% of community coaches say the AASC program ensures more people in the local community are equipped with the skills to deliver physical activity to children