



Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission

Fact Sheet

Active After-school Communities — contributing to regional/remote Australia



Regional and remote communities in locations as diverse as Moffatdale and Milikapiti, the Shoalhaven and Swan West, are experiencing the benefits of the Active After-school Communities (AASC) program. The program is inspiring children and families to lead more active, healthy lifestyles while also creating stronger communities and jobs.

This free Australian Government initiative is delivered nationally by the Australian Sports Commission. It is run in 3270 schools and after-school care centres. More than half (58 per cent) are in regional and remote locations—in Semester 1, 2010 that involved 108 403 children. In addition, 23 per cent of AASC program sites are low socio-economic communities and 14 per cent are Indigenous communities.

The AASC program provides primary school children with the opportunity to experience around 70 different sports and up to 20 other structured physical activities. It is cost-free to parents, demonstrating the Australian Sports Commission's commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of Australian children through sport and physical activity, no matter where they live.

Motivating children to get active

The AASC program targets children in the early years to establish healthy habits that will remain with them throughout their lives. Research tells us that without the program, a high percentage of participating children would not be engaged in structured physical activity.

The program's success is widely attributed to the fact that it is fun for children and offers a broad range of activities. Children can experience traditional sports like netball, rugby, cricket and hockey. They may also enjoy learning archery, circus skills, dance or martial arts. The variety and non-competitive environment encourages both active and inactive children to get involved, enabling everyone to find something that suits

their personality and skills and sparks their interest and enthusiasm.

The program offers a healthy option for the vast majority of participating parents who say there is no other sport available to their child, or they were unaware of alternatives before their child became involved in the AASC program.

Aside from the physical benefits, the AASC program also improves children's confidence and self-esteem. Staff from Tara & District Branch Little Athletics based in The Gums, Queensland found that children who are involved in sport 'always have a more positive outlook'. The organisation also found its members excelled at regional and state competitions after starting athletics at the AASC program.

A coach with East Coast Youth Basketball based in Swansea, New South Wales, says it was obvious that some children had previously been used to sitting in front of the television in the after-school timeslot. 'They're finally up there and they're working with other kids out there, and developing skills, developing self-esteem. They feel better within themselves and their relationships with others are improving...'

Developing regional communities

Communities are coming together around the common goal of getting inactive kids more engaged with physical activity, through the AASC program.

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Northern Territory stakeholders have 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

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Local sporting clubs around the country are also experiencing benefits with community coaches reporting increased membership and more opportunities for their organisation as a result of hosting the AASC program. For example, a program deliverer from Colac Junior Badminton in Alvie, Victoria, says the program has had 'a huge effect' on membership, which nearly doubled after the club became involved with the AASC program.

In some regional and remote areas where there are few or no sporting clubs and limited facilities, the AASC program is extending the options available by providing free training to local community members, creating related job opportunities, connecting schools and communities in order to build greater capacity, inspiring and enabling parents to take on roles they might otherwise not have, bringing in expertise from neighbouring regions or offering activities that can be enjoyed regardless of available facilities.

Benefiting Indigenous children

The AASC program has been shown to improve the health of Indigenous communities through increased education, physical activity and the capacity to deliver sport. Many stakeholders in Indigenous communities agree that the AASC program helps get children active and off the streets. One school principal says, 'It's a happy, fun and safe program, and it involves the community. The little kids get involved, and the parents watch. There's a definite 'wow' factor when the parents see the positive experiences of the kids'.

Strengthening community networks

The AASC program is locally focused, allowing schools and after-school care providers to tailor their program to meet the needs of children and families in their community. This stimulates community involvement in sport—almost two-thirds of community coaches involved in the program say it creates links between schools and local sporting clubs.

In many cases the AASC program also strengthens relationships between clubs and local councils. Lacrosse Victoria in Campbells Creek, Victoria, says the Council provides a ground to play on at no charge thanks to the club's contribution to community sport. The YMCA also provides a ground at nearby Kangaroo Flats.

In Queensland, Bundaberg Basketball has experienced additional support from local government and local businesses as a result of its involvement with the program. 'Our local government has seen that we coach so many kids, last term about 200 kids, so local government can help with applying for grants and write letters of approval,' a representative says.

Another provider in Queensland calls the AASC program a 'recipe for success' in bringing the schools, clubs and service providers together. The AASC program gets the ball rolling in terms of community connections and 'the rest happens because the various players can see the objectives of the program provide benefits for themselves and their community'.

A welcome flow-on effect of the program has been parents also getting involved with community sport. Wurruk Hockey Club in Sale, Victoria, says some of the parents are more active than they had been for years: 'Some of the parents are down there running the training...running around after the kids.'

Active After-school Communities

Helping kids and communities get active

For more information visit
ausport.gov.au/aasc

Facts at a glance

In Semester 1, 2010

- 1886 out of a total of 3269 participating sites (58%) are in regional/remote Australia
- \$5 941 980 out of a total of \$10 213 383 was dedicated to regional/remote schools and Out of Schools Hours Centres—60% of participating coaches delivered the program in regional/remote Australia—that's 4235 out of a total of 7075 AASC program coaches
- 64% of coaches trained in the Community Coach Training Program were in regional/remote Australia—that's 5273 out of a total of 8180
- 79% of teachers were trained in regional/remote Australia—that's 578 teachers, out of a total of 735
- 82% of participating schools and after-school care providers reported children and families were more aware of the benefits of physical activity after participating in the AASC program
- 91% of participating children are engaging in structured after-school physical activity through the AASC program that they would not otherwise be doing
- Close to 70% of community coaches agree more children are joining local sporting clubs or other sporting organisations