HELPING KIDS AND COMMUNITIES GET ACTIVE

An interim report of the evaluation of the Australian Sports Commission’s Active After-school Communities program 2005–2007
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The Australian Sports Commission is the Commonwealth Government agency that manages, develops and invests in sport at all levels. It was established in 1985 and operates under the Australian Sports Commission Act 1989. The Commission’s national leadership role is achieved through the following operational areas: the Australian Institute of Sport, Sport Performance and Development, Community Sport, Corporate Services, Commercial and Facilities, and Finance.

The Australian Sports Commission forms part of the Health and Ageing portfolio.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AASC  Active After-school Communities
ABS  Australian Bureau of Statistics
ASC  Australian Sports Commission
CATI  Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing
CBSR  Colmar Brunton Social Research
CCB  Childcare benefit
CCTP  Community Coach Training Program
OSHCS  Out of school hours care service
RC  Regional coordinator
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Glossary</strong></th>
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**Cohort 1**  
The first cohort in the study, including baseline data collection in term 3, 2005 and follow-up data collection in term 3, 2006

**Cohort 2**  
The second cohort, including baseline data collection in term 3, 2006 and follow-up data collection in term 3, 2007

**Cohort 3**  
The third cohort, including baseline data collection in term 3, 2007 and follow-up data collection in term 3, 2008

**Deliverer**  
AASC-registered individual who delivers structured physical activity and motor skills programs as part of the AASC program

**General physical activity**  
Any physical activity that is not classified as structured physical activity

**Leisure time**  
Any time during out-of-school hours, including before-school hours, after-school hours, weekends and school holidays

**Non-participating child**  
A primary school child not enrolled to participate in the AASC program

**Parent of non-participating child**  
The parent of a primary school child not enrolled to participate in the AASC program

**Parent of participating child**  
The parent of a primary school child enrolled to participate in the AASC program

**Participating child**  
A primary school child enrolled to participate in the AASC program

**Stakeholders**  
AASC participating schools and OSHCS staff, children participating in the AASC program and their parents, AASC program deliverers and AASC program staff

**Structured physical activity**  
An organised, supervised physical activity that happens on a regular basis at a set time and place

**Total physical activity**  
The combination of structured physical activity and general physical activity
Right from the inception of the Active After-school Communities program, the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) recognised the importance of continuing research and evaluation, and put in place a comprehensive plan to provide regular feedback. Now, as the program enters its fourth year, we can share the insights gained from this ongoing process. Doing this does not mean constructing a ‘pass or fail’ score card. Rather, it allows us to see whether, or to what extent, the objectives of the program are being achieved. It provides an opportunity not only for reflection and learning, but also to reach out to those people who are working at the community level to make this program a success.

Evaluations such as this help to ensure that the Active After-school Communities program is as appropriate, efficient and effective as it can be. The information provided in this report is timely, practical and helpful, and will allow us to plan, implement and, if necessary, revise components of the program.

Evaluation is an important part of any continuous improvement process; simply put, it is a method of discovering whether there are better ways to do things. The information provided in this report represents an interim evaluation — a snapshot of the program to date. A final report for the 2005–07 research will be produced and distributed in mid-2009. Additional research will also be conducted as the program continues.

The evaluation for the period 2005–07 was undertaken by Colmar Brunton Social Research, in collaboration with the ASC’s Research and Corporate Planning team. It led to this summary report being prepared by the ASC, which we are making available to a wider audience so that those involved in the Active After-school Communities program can see the positive changes that they are making in increasing levels of physical activity among our children, and to plan for continued success.

Brent Espeland AM
Acting Chief Executive Officer
Australian Sports Commission
This report summarises the major interim findings from an ongoing evaluation of the Active After-school Communities (AASC) program. The AASC program is a Commonwealth Government-funded program that provides primary school-aged children with access to free, fun, safe, inclusive and structured physical activities in the after-school timeslot of 3.00–5.30pm.

The Australian Sports Commission (ASC) administers the program, which is open to all Australian primary schools and childcare benefit-approved out of school hours care services (OSHCS).

The AASC program is designed to engage traditionally non-active children in structured physical activities that focus on mobility skills and motor-skill development. The program also aims to build pathways within local community organisations in order to stimulate community involvement in delivering sport and physical activity programs.

The AASC program has been running since 2005, and has had an evaluation plan in place since its inception. This report summarises the key findings of research conducted between 2005 and 2007 that evaluated the progress of the program in meeting its objectives of:

> enhancing the physical activity levels of Australian primary school-aged children through a nationally coordinated program
> providing increased opportunities for inclusive participation in quality, safe and fun structured physical activity
> growing community capacity and stimulating local community involvement in sport and structured physical activity.
The report also provides an overview of stakeholders’ satisfaction with the program, and includes on-the-ground case studies that highlight the evaluation findings. It is important to note that the evaluation focused on providing an understanding of whether the AASC program has had an impact on non-active children’s participation in structured physical activity. When viewed collectively, the results of this interim evaluation suggest that by participating in the AASC program, children have become more physically active in their leisure time, that they have grown to love structured physical activity and want to continue their involvement. In addition, participating schools and OSHCS increased their capacity to deliver structured physical activity outside of the AASC program, memberships at local clubs and structured physical activity organisations increased through their involvement in the AASC program and local communities were strengthened through the AASC program being delivered in their area. The program achieved exceptionally high stakeholder satisfaction ratings, and was considered safe, fun and inclusive. In these matters the AASC program can be considered to have successfully met its objectives. In the concluding section of the interim report, the evaluators analyse the findings and provide advice on a number of ways in which the AASC program can be further enhanced. These include:

- considering strategies to increase longevity in the program
- increasing the frequency with which children participate in the program
- conducting additional research to assess how the program can be made more effective for all children
- increasing awareness of the AASC program and its benefits
- mapping demand for the program and its activities
- considering strategies to better link schools, OSHCS, deliverers and sports clubs
- examining stakeholder feedback for suggestions on additional improvements, and assessing whether they are viable
- communicating the evaluation results to stakeholders.
The Australian Sports Commission (ASC) is Australia’s primary national sports administration and advisory agency, and the cornerstone of a wide-ranging sports system. On behalf of the Commonwealth Government, the ASC plays a central leadership role in the development and operation of the Australian sports system; it administers and funds innovative sports programs and provides leadership, coordination and support for the sports sector.

The ASC is recognised as a world leader in the development of high performance sport and sports participation. Services are provided in a range of fields, including high performance coaching, sport sciences, sports information, sports education and resources, sports participation development and delivery of funding programs to national sporting organisations.
The Active After-school Communities (AASC) program is a Commonwealth Government program that provides primary school-aged children with access to quality, fun, safe, inclusive and structured physical activity in the after-school timeslot of 3.00–5.30pm.

The AASC program is provided free of charge as part of the Government’s commitment to improving the physical activity levels, health and wellbeing of Australian children.

The program’s objectives are to:

- enhance the physical activity levels of Australian primary school-aged children through a nationally coordinated program
- provide increased opportunities for inclusive participation in quality, safe and fun structured physical activity
- grow community capacity, and stimulate local community involvement in sport and structured physical activity.

The AASC program offers organised sporting games and activities, concentrating on a ‘playing for life’ approach. This approach centres on:

- the fun of the game
- the need to cater for all abilities
- a model whereby the coach is seen as a facilitator who modifies the game based on feedback from the players
- the encouragement and engagement of children in modified sporting games that focus on mobility skills and motor-skill development.

The types of activities and games delivered through the AASC program range from traditional sports such as basketball, netball and football to non-traditional sports such as frisbee and martial arts. Other structured physical activities, such as dance and circus skills, are also available (see Appendix A for a detailed list).

The coordinators at each school/OSHCS select activities based on their knowledge of the children’s ages and abilities, available community resources, the environment and any identified barriers to involvement.

Two to three AASC sessions are offered each week and, in general, a minimum of 15 children are required to participate in each session. However, all of the program’s parameters may be modified under certain conditions; for example, in order to meet the local needs of remote or Indigenous communities.

The cornerstone of the AASC program is the involvement of local communities in delivery of the program. This involvement offers opportunities to support and strengthen community cohesion and development. All activities and games must be facilitated by deliverers who are registered with the ASC. Anyone may apply for registration, including individuals and organisations. Current AASC deliverers include school teachers, OSHCS staff, development officers from national and state sporting organisations, local club personnel, local government staff, parents, private providers and university and high school students. In order to gain registration, deliverers must complete the...
Community Coach Training Program (CCTP) and a satisfactory police check or working with children check. The CCTP is offered free to participants, and has been designed to teach core skills such as communicating with children, behaviour management, promoting safe environments, nutrition and wellbeing, and, most importantly, the playing for life philosophy. At the end of 2007, more than 22 000 community members had completed the CCTP.

A key objective of the AASC program is to build the capacity of communities to create and maintain opportunities for physical activity. This means building pathways within local community organisations, including sporting clubs, and stimulating community involvement in sport and structured physical activity. It includes an approach that:

- encourages local community partnerships
- promotes a local community approach to increasing participation in structured physical activity
- provides participating schools/OSHCS with support to determine programs that meet the needs of their community.

AASC regional coordinators are critical to the success of this approach. They are the on-the-ground people who forge relationships, provide advice and guidance, and empower stakeholders to become involved. Their role is to:

- link suitable ASC-registered deliverers from the community with schools/OSHCS to meet their program requirements
- help schools/OSHCS to plan and develop suitable programs to engage traditionally non-active children
- identify and train suitable deliverers in the community to meet the quality standards set by the program
- monitor, assess and provide feedback to deliverers on the quality of program delivery
- explore and identify opportunities for unique community initiatives to enhance the program’s objectives.

**Rationale for the AASC program**

The AASC program was initiated in 2004 by the former Government, as a result of the following societal changes:

- primary school-aged children across Australia becoming less active and subsequently less healthy
- the motor-skills competencies of children being poor, in large part as a result of the continuing decline of physical education and sport in Australian schools, which began over two decades ago
- work patterns changing, and thereby reducing opportunities for families to support their children’s out-of-school activities, whether in sport or other activity areas
- opportunities for children to be physically active in the home setting diminishing as families become increasingly mindful of the dangers of leaving children to play in unsupervised settings and instruct children to remain inside
- screen-based leisure time activities becoming increasingly popular.

The AASC program marks an important stage in efforts to improve physical activity outcomes for Australian primary school-aged children.
Evolution of the AASC program

In recognition of the growing challenges in engaging children in structured physical activity, including sport, in 2002 the ASC began exploring options to provide opportunities for more children to become physically active. The major challenge was to provide an attractive, safe and accessible program that would have potential to compete for children’s time against electronic games, television, the internet, shopping mall trips and other sedentary activities.

Both in-school and out-of-school time slots were considered, and pilot programs across Australia tested different delivery models. This included an outside-of-school-hours sports program, conducted in 2003 in partnership with VicHealth. This program was evaluated, recommendations were made and these were subsequently incorporated into the budding blueprint for the AASC program.

The AASC program was launched in 2004 as a part of the former Government’s initiative, Building a Healthy, Active Australia. In the first school term of 2005, the AASC program was piloted in 21 schools and OSHCS around Australia (see Appendix B). It quickly expanded to 900 primary schools and OSHCS in term 2, 2005.

The AASC program is now delivered to more than 3200 schools and OSHCS, and more than 150 000 Australian primary school-aged children are involved.

In 2007, the former Government announced it would extend the AASC program for a further three years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AASC FACTS* (by term 4, 2007)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt; The AASC program was being delivered at 3126 schools and OSHCS sites across the country.</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; Half of AASC schools and OSHCS were located in regional and remote areas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; Around 150 000 children were participating in the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Eighty traditional and non-traditional structured physical activities were being offered for delivery around the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Over 22 000 community members had been trained by AASC staff in the CCTP since 2005.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; A network of AASC regional coordinators all over Australia were continuing to make the program work at the local level, with local communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; More than 4000 participating teachers and almost 3000 participating OSHCS staff had received free professional development training related to structured physical activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; More than $40 million in grants had been awarded to participating schools and OSHCS staff to assist in areas such as training and purchasing equipment, and each had received Playing for Life resource kits, which provide over 100 activity cards and eight-week lesson plans for 14 different sports and activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These facts and figures are representative of the period 1 January 2005 to 31 December 2007.
Figure 1: AASC around Australia*

* Site and participant figures are based on Term 4 (Term 3 in Tasmania) of 2007. Figures for the Community Coach Training Program trained community members are representative of the period 1 January 2005 to 31 December 2007.
The AASC program originally had a three-year implementation timeframe, from 2005 to 2007. This interim report provides initial feedback for the years 2005–07, and was commissioned to provide a snapshot of the AASC program’s performance against its objectives and future potential.

The aims of the evaluation were to:

- assess whether the AASC program has achieved its stated objectives:
  - to enhance the physical activity levels of Australian primary school-aged children through a nationally coordinated program. For the purposes of the evaluation this is defined further as follows:
    - Increase in participation levels of non-active children within structured physical activity
    - Improved attitude of non-active children towards structured physical activity
    - Increase in fundamental motor skill development of non-active children
  - to provide increased opportunities for inclusive participation in quality, safe, fun and structured physical activity
  - to grow community capacity¹ and stimulate local community involvement in sport and structured physical activity

- determine and evaluate the effectiveness of the associated quality assurance framework in supporting and guiding the development and implementation of the AASC program

- monitor children’s participation within the AASC program over the life of the program, including the transition of participating children from the program to the local club structure and/or level of junior sport membership

- assess the level of satisfaction with the AASC program from the perspective of participants, deliverers and other key stakeholders

- measure the level of ‘unmet’ demand for the AASC program’s services

- identify reasons for lack of participation among children, both within schools and OSHCS offering the AASC program and those not offering the AASC program, including barriers to participation

- provide information and draw conclusions about the strengths and weaknesses of the AASC program model of delivery

- suggest modifications deemed necessary to achieve the stated aims and objectives of the AASC program.

¹ For the purposes of the research, ‘community capacity’ was defined as building infrastructure, building partnerships and building solving capability; see www.ncsmc.org.au/usefulbox.community_capacity_building.htm.
The challenge for any evaluator is to design an appropriate framework to collect reliable, representative and insightful data in order to assess performance against a range of objectives. The evaluation objectives for the AASC program are particularly wide ranging, and therefore require input from a range of different stakeholder groups. Consequently, the AASC evaluators developed a number of research components to assess the program’s performance. The following sub-sections provide an overview of the evaluation design and its limitations.

The evaluation design

One of the biggest challenges faced in developing and executing an evaluation of the AASC program was timing. The speed with which the AASC program was developed and delivered meant the initial evaluation approach had to be designed within tight time frames, to ensure that baseline information could be collected in time. Secondly, the research and evaluation commenced alongside the implementation of the AASC program. This meant that the program itself was going through a phase of natural evolution, and the evaluation approach had to be flexible enough to adapt where needed.

The evaluation of the AASC program is intended to assist with the implementation of the program, enable its ongoing refinement and assess its effectiveness in establishing after-school structured physical activity programs. The ASC and its evaluators, Colmar Brunton Social Research (CBSR), undertook an extensive scoping phase to develop and design an appropriate evaluation framework within the constraints of timing, budget and other external demands. This process included a series of discussions with various government and community stakeholders, and an intensive planning phase.

A traditional model of formative evaluation was initially considered, because this model can be used to help design and modify a program as it is being developed. It requires a process of planning, data collection, reflection, further planning of adjustment and re-measuring. This process is a simple, circular, think-plan-listen-think strategy, but was felt to be too simplistic for the purposes of the AASC program evaluation.

Therefore, the final evaluation approach adopted follows more closely a systems–theory model, whereby:

- the needs and strategies of the evaluation are agreed and objectives set using previous experience
- planning is completed by the team of researchers from CBSR and the ASC, alongside key personnel from the AASC program
- key informants are identified and engaged in the evaluation process
- evaluation instruments are cognitively tested and piloted
- the AASC program implementation and process is monitored through a series of data collection over three years
- the AASC program impact is compared between participants and non-participants
- outcomes are shown through analysis and interpretation of the data from different evaluation components.
The evaluation focuses on providing an understanding as to whether the AASC program has met its stated objectives; in particular, whether it has had a positive impact on children’s participation in structured physical activity. Table 1 provides an overview of the evaluation methods.

**Table 1: Overview of evaluation methods**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research participants</th>
<th>Research method</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quantitative research</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents of participating children</td>
<td>Pre and post-measure Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) with three cohorts in 2005, 2006 and 2007. The third post-measure was conducted in 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents of non-participating children</td>
<td>Pre and post-measure CATI with three cohorts in 2005, 2006 and 2007. The third post-measure was conducted in 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representatives from participating school and OSHCS</td>
<td>A web-based survey inviting representatives from all schools and OSHCS in term 4 (term 3 for Tasmania) in 2005, 2006 and 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AASC program staff</td>
<td>A web-based survey inviting all AASC program staff in term 4 (term 3 for Tasmania) in 2005, 2006 and 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AASC program deliverers</td>
<td>A web-based survey inviting all deliverers in term 4 (term 3 for Tasmania) in 2005, 2006 and 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualitative research</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected participating and non-participating communities</td>
<td>Two four-day visits, spaced a year apart, to nine selected communities. Case studies included a mix of focus groups, in-depth interviews and use of a self-completion questionnaire. Case studies were conducted in the following communities: Pine Rivers (QLD) Adelaide (SA) Queanbeyan (NSW) Lyell/Queenstown (TAS) Greater Hobart (TAS) Perth — Northern Metropolitan (WA) Busselton (WA) Geelong (VIC) Roma (QLD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected Indigenous communities</td>
<td>One four-day visit to two selected Indigenous communities. Case studies included a mix of focus groups, in-depth interviews and use of picture drawing, as appropriate. Case studies were conducted in the following Indigenous communities: Milikapiti (NT) Lombadina (WA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings presented in this interim report draw on all evaluation methods, including the community case studies.

Refer to Appendix C for further details about the evaluation design and limitations. Appendix D provides interpretive notes for this interim report, including ratings, reporting scales, weighting, significance testing and sample sizes.
Summary of findings

The interim evaluation findings after the first three years of the AASC program’s operation show that it is achieving its aims of:

1. Enhancing the physical activity of Australian primary school-aged children through a nationally coordinated program

   AASC children now take part in more sport and structured physical activities after school:
   - On average, participating children in the AASC program almost doubled their structured physical activity hours per week.
   - Participating children in the AASC program also significantly increased their total physical activity hours per week by up to 1.4 hours.
   - More than 80 per cent of school and OSHCS staff were satisfied or extremely satisfied that the AASC program encouraged traditionally non-active children to participate in organised, supervised physical activities.

   AASC children love being physically active and want to keep participating in sport and structured physical activity:
   - More than 80 per cent of participating children reported that they liked participating in physical activity classes and sports.
   - More than three-quarters of participating children reported that they wanted to again participate in the AASC program after the school holidays.
   - Four in every five AASC deliverers said that children involved in the program were becoming more positive towards organised, supervised physical activity.
   - Three-quarters of parents of participating children said their children had expressed interest in new sports and physical activity in the previous 12 months.
   - Two out of three parents of participating children indicated that their child would like to join a new sporting club or organisation.

2. Providing increased opportunities for inclusive participation in quality, safe and fun structured physical activity

   The AASC program is of high quality and offers fun and safe experiences for children:
   - The AASC program network now covers 3250 schools and OSHCS sites across the country, 50 per cent of which are in regional or remote areas.
   - More than 80 per cent of participating children, their parents, AASC program deliverers, participating schools and OSHCS rated the AASC program as being fun.
   - More than 90 per cent of parents of participating children, deliverers, schools and OSHCS rated the program as being safe.
   - More than 80 per cent of parents of participating children considered the program to be of high quality.
3 Growing community capacity and stimulating local community involvement in sport and structured physical activity

The AASC program is a springboard for growth for participating schools and OSHCS, local communities and structured physical activity organisations:

- More than three-quarters of participating schools and OSHCS reported that they had increased their capacity to deliver structured physical activities.
- Of the AASC program deliverers from sporting clubs or physical activity organisations, 50 per cent reported an increase in the number of children attending and participating at their club or organisation.
- More than 70 per cent of school and OSHCS staff and AASC program deliverers were satisfied in their view that the AASC program had stimulated local community involvement in sport and physical activity.
- In addition, at least two in every three program deliverers agreed that the community in which they worked had improved its ability to support and encourage children’s participation in structured physical activities since participating in the AASC program.
- As part of the research, participating schools with a dedicated physical education teacher reported that in many instances these teachers spent less than 70 per cent of their time on physical education. A high proportion of schools also reported that they had no dedicated physical education teacher. As part of the AASC program, more than 4000 participating teachers and almost 3000 OSHCS staff were provided with free professional development relating to structured physical activity. More than $40 million in grants were also provided to participating schools and OSHCS, along with Playing for Life resource kits.
- More than 22 000 community members were trained free of charge by AASC program staff in the CCTP.

4 Satisfying stakeholders with the operation and effectiveness of the program

The AASC program wins stakeholder acclaim and support:

- More than 80 per cent of parents of participating children said they were satisfied with the AASC program.
- More than 80 per cent of parents acted on this satisfaction by enrolling their child in the program more than once.
- More than 80 per cent of participating children reported that they found participating in the AASC program fun.
- More than 80 per cent of school and OSHCS staff, program deliverers and AASC staff said they were satisfied with the AASC program overall.
- More than 80 per cent of school and OSHCS staff and program deliverers said they were satisfied with the AASC program’s implementation.
- This was further supported when broken down into elements that included:
  - More than 85 per cent of school and OSHCS staff and deliverers were satisfied with the overall performance of regional coordinators.
  - More than 80 per cent of school and OSHCS staff were satisfied with the funding process.
  - More than 80 per cent of program deliverers were satisfied with their registration process and with the CCTP.
AASC objective 1:
Enhancing the physical activity levels of Australian primary school-aged children through a nationally coordinated program

AASC children now take part in more sport and structured physical activities after school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY FINDINGS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents of participating children reported significant increases in both the structured physical activity and total physical activity of their children per week*, more so than parents of non-participating children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents of participating children were more likely to report that their child’s structured physical activity* had increased in the previous 12 months than parents of non-participating children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The AASC program helped to improve the participation of non-active children in structured physical activity, according to the majority of identified stakeholders, including school and OSHCS staff, program deliverers and AASC regional coordinators.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The hours related to children’s physical activity levels refer only to the time that children spent on physical activity in their leisure time.

‘The kids involved are active when they are doing the sessions ... some are definitely more active than they used to be.’ Source: AASC program deliverer, Roma community case study, Queensland

‘The program has helped produce healthier, fitter, more active kids.’ Source: AASC stakeholder, Queenstown community case study, Tasmania

Not only did participating children almost double their structured physical activity hours per week, AASC program stakeholders saw the children enjoy a range of other benefits. These included:

- improved motor skills, including improved throwing, kicking, spatial awareness, running skills and basic coordination levels, particularly in children aged between 5 and 12 years
- making new friends
- improved social skills and teamwork
- improved confidence levels
- increased leadership and cognitive skills.

An evidence snapshot

- On average, cohort 1 and cohort 2 parents of participating children reported that their child almost doubled their structured physical activity hours per week, from 1.5 hours in baseline measure to 2.9 hours in follow-up measure.
- Meanwhile, non-participating children also had an increase in their average structured physical activity hours per week, from 1.6 hours to 2.5 hours (cohort 1) and from 1.7 hours to 2.6 hours (cohort 2). The evaluators report that this may be due to a number of factors, including that children’s physical abilities improved, that they were older and therefore able to participate in some activities that previously may have been unavailable to them, or that more activities were available or offered at a more convenient time.
It is important to note that the increase of structured physical activity for participating children (1.4 hours per week, on average) was significantly higher than for non-participating children (0.9 hours per week, on average). At a follow up with both survey cohorts, 15 per cent of parents of participating children who reported their child’s increase of structured physical activity mentioned the AASC program or after-school sport as a reason for their child’s increased participation in structured physical activity over the preceding 12 months.

Participating children also significantly increased their total physical activity hours per week on average, from 7.9 hours in baseline measure to 8.6 hours in follow-up measure (cohort 1) and 6.6 hours to 8.0 hours (cohort 2).

In contrast, non-participating children recorded no significant difference in total physical activity for cohort 1 (from 8.2 hours to 8.0 hours per week), but a decline in total physical activity for cohort 2 (from 8.1 hours to 7.4 hours per week).

In assessing the views of identified stakeholders about the effectiveness of the program, around three-quarters were satisfied that the AASC program encouraged non-active children to participate in organised, supervised physical activities (see Table 2).

Table 2: Satisfaction that the AASC program encourages non-active children to spend more time doing organised, supervised physical activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School/OSHCS staff</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program deliverers</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AASC program staff</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Hours per week spent doing total physical activity in an average term 2 week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours/Week</th>
<th>Cohort 1</th>
<th>Cohort 2</th>
<th>Cohort 1</th>
<th>Cohort 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participating children</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-participating children</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**AASC SNAPSHOT**

**Penola scores big with football**

With the success of the 2006 Football World Cup, young children in South Australia have decided to take up the sport with the help of local award-winning AASC community coach, Guy Detot. Detot has successfully taken the AASC program’s version of football (soccer) to Penola and other small schools and local communities in the south-east of the state, in an effort to get kids active and generate a passion for football.

AASC Regional Coordinator, Josephine Duigan, said that with a current population of 1200 there had never really been the capacity or interest to establish a local club or competition in Penola. However, this has all changed with the introduction of Detot’s football program. ‘Due to Guy’s enthusiasm for football, AASC participants have become inspired and many now travel a 100-kilometre round trip each week for training and games with clubs in Mount Gambier and Naracoorte,’ Duigan said.

Inspired by his most recent state AASC Community Coach Award, Detot’s passion for football continues to burn. He has singlehandedly organised a fun Saturday morning football competition, which is hosted with the approval of the governing council at Penola Primary School. Detot said that parents and students from five AASC sites including Nangwarry, Kalangadoo, Glencoe, Mount Burr and Penola, are involved in various roles each week. ‘Parents take on the roles of coaches and referees, and teams are changed each week to ensure a fun, fair and social game,’ Detot said. ‘It is quite possible that the huge turnout of parents is because the morning ends with a “kids versus parents” friendly game. I have never seen so many mums and dads so keen to get on the field!’

Detot, who is a member of the Western Border Centrals Soccer Club, is now calling for local children and adults to register their interest in a twilight summer competition. ‘Through the competition I hope to attract local footballers and netballers of all ages to continue their fitness regimes through playing football in the off season,’ Detot said. Detot maintains that his enthusiasm for creating community football opportunities was generated by his participation in the AASC Community Coach Training Program, learning about the Playing for Life philosophy and becoming a popular choice for local sites participating in the AASC program. Duigan believes that, given the momentum that has been created by one person’s love of a popular sport, it seems safe to assume that with support from the community, a new club will eventually emerge.

*Source: AASC National Newsletter, December 2006*
AASC children love being physically active and want to keep participating in sport and structured physical activity

**KEY FINDINGS**

- More than 80 per cent of participating children reported that they liked participating in physical activity classes and sports. (2005=83%, 2006=84%, 2007=85%)

- More than three-quarters of participating children reported that they wanted to again participate in the AASC program after the school holidays. (2005=78%, 2006=79%, 2007=81%)

- Participating children are becoming more positive towards organised, supervised physical activity according to four in every five AASC program deliverers. (2005=82%, 2006=84%, 2007=86%)

- Participating children expressed interest in new sports and physical activity in the previous 12 months, according to three-quarters of parents surveyed in 2007.

- Parents of participating children were more likely to agree that their child would like to and will join a new sporting club or organisation than parents of non-participating children.

- Of the AASC program deliverers from sporting clubs or structured physical activity organisations, 50 per cent reported an increase in the number of children attending and participating at their club or organisation. (2006=50%, 2007=50%)

*The program definitely has improved the kids’ attitudes to doing sport. It might be that they can encourage other mates to come along after the first session. Not many kids drop out — kids stay fairly the same week in, week out. If you start with 20 you have around about 20 at each session.* Source: AASC program deliverer, Busselton community case study, Western Australia

*They are more positive about themselves and in giving things a go because they are not being “bagged out” by the others.* Source: School staff, Queenstown community case study, Tasmania

By becoming involved in the AASC program, children grew to love structured physical activity and wanted more. They reported that they were making new friends, having fun and learning about new activities. These activities included modified sports and non-traditional activities, such as dance classes, which gave them increased opportunities to find activities at which they could excel. This was seen as particularly positive for non-active children whose confidence levels may inhibit participation in traditional and competitive structured activities. A combination of elements was seen as contributing towards improving children’s attitudes towards participating in structured physical activity. These included:

- the variety of activities
- the emphasis on fun rather than competition
- the eight-week program structure that allowed children’s competency and confidence to build
- the quality and enthusiasm of the program deliverers.

Many deliverers reported benefiting from an increasing number of children participating in physical activity and/or sport at their organisation. Yet, while many parents felt their children would like to join a new sporting club, fewer felt that it would actually happen in the forthcoming 12 months. This suggests that while the AASC program can improve the attitudes of participating children towards structured physical activity, other barriers such as cost, parental time constraints, travel and transport issues may be affecting that transition.
An evidence snapshot

My name is [redacted] and I like playing soccer and basketball. My favourite fruit is apple, orange and banana. And I like play football too.

Drawing from an AASC program participant
Three in every four (75 per cent) parents of participating children (cohort 2) agreed that since participating in the AASC program their child had expressed interest in new sports and physical activities in the previous 12 months. This perception was significantly stronger when compared with parents of non-participating children, of whom 62 per cent agreed.

Almost two in every three (63 per cent) parents of participating children agreed that their child would like to join a new sporting club or organisation. This perception was significantly stronger in comparison with parents of non-participating children, of whom 48 per cent agreed.

However, while a majority of parents of both participating and non-participating children agreed that their child would like to join a new sporting club, fewer parents of participating children (49 per cent) agreed that their child would actually join a new sporting club or organisation in the following 12 months. This was just 5 per cent higher than the proportion of parents of non-participating children (44 per cent) who agreed that their child would join a club or organisation.

**Table 3: Parents’ views on children joining a new sporting club**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Children would like to join a new sporting club or organisation</th>
<th>Children will join a new sporting club or organisation in the following 12 months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents of participating children</td>
<td>Parents of non-participating children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AASC objective 2:
Providing increased opportunities for inclusive participation in quality, safe and fun structured physical activity

The AASC program is of high quality and offers fun and safe experiences for children

KEY FINDINGS

A vast majority of identified stakeholders, including parents of participating children, agreed that the AASC program is a fun, safe and high-quality program.

‘They don’t see it as activity, they see it as having fun with their friends. The program creates an environment where they can have fun.’ Source: Teacher, Geelong community case study, Victoria

‘The games we play are fun … The teachers join in and it’s cool … It’s fun … never boring.’
Source: Child, Vasse community case study, Western Australia

‘The AASC program is definitely more inclusive than traditional school sports. Quite often with organised sports and teams, the kids who aren’t as coordinated get less time on the field, which makes them feel less involved. This program makes the kids feel included.’ Source: Key stakeholder, Hobart community case study, Tasmania

Surveyed stakeholders believed that the AASC program not only provided more opportunities for children to experience supervised physical activity after school, but to do so in a safe and fun manner. The inclusiveness of the program was another big factor in their positive assessment of the program. They also indicated that they thought the way the AASC program was organised and run ensured it was a high-quality program, and made particularly favourable mentions of the presence and enthusiasm of the AASC’s regional coordinators.

Parents used words and phrases such as ‘fun’, ‘encouraging’, ‘friendly’ and ‘well organised’ to describe the program. They also found it convenient that activities were being delivered within school or OSHCS environments, which they considered to be safe for their children, and believed the program to be of a high standard because a quality assurance framework was in place.
The AASC program is fun and safe

Table 4: Parents of participating children’s perceptions of the AASC program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree that AASC program is …</th>
<th>Cohort 1</th>
<th>Cohort 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A high-quality program</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe for children to participate in</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun for children to participate in</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Stakeholders’ perceptions of the AASC program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree that AASC program provides …</th>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a safe experience for children</td>
<td>Deliverers</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School/OSHCS</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a fun experience for children</td>
<td>Deliverers</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School/OSHCS</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The AASC program is a high-quality program

> More than 80 per cent of school and OSHCS staff were satisfied with the overall performance of deliverers (2005=84 per cent, 2006=88 per cent, 2007=89 per cent).

> The majority of school and OSHCS staff were satisfied with deliverers’ ability to provide physical activity sessions appropriate to the likes and needs of children (2005=83 per cent, 2006=87 per cent, 2007=88 per cent).

> In addition, more than 80 per cent of AASC program deliverers expressed satisfaction with the CCTP. The CCTP trains prospective AASC program deliverers in the required qualifications, knowledge and expertise to join the program. Deliverers are satisfied that the CCTP has helped them:
  
  – deliver physical activities that are fun (2005=86 per cent, 2006=88 per cent, 2007=89 per cent)
  
  – provide physical activity sessions appropriate to the likes and needs of children (2005=83 per cent, 2006=83 per cent, 2007=85 per cent)
  
  – ensure the safety of children participating in the AASC program (2005=84 per cent, 2006=85 per cent, 2007=85 per cent)
  
  – deliver physical activities that maximise involvement of all children (2005=85 per cent, 2006=85 per cent, 2007=85 per cent)
  
  – adjust activities to suit the needs of individual children (2005=81 per cent, 2006=81 per cent, 2007=81 per cent).
The AASC program is a springboard for growth for participating schools and OSHCS, local communities and structured physical activity organisations.

### KEY FINDINGS — SCHOOLS AND OSHCS

Since participating in the program, more than three-quarters of AASC participating schools and OSHCS agreed that their organisation had improved its ability to support and encourage student participation in structured physical activity. (2005=79%, 2006=83%, 2007=85%)

‘It’s [the AASC program] effective ... it has helped with the professional development of our staff ... teaching them new skills ...’ Source: School teacher, Geelong community case study, Victoria

A high proportion of schools involved in this research reported that they did not have a physical education teacher. In those schools that did, the majority of those teachers spent less than 70 per cent of their time on physical education. The AASC program has taken steps to address this trend. In supporting participating schools and OSHCS the AASC program has provided:

- free professional development through the CCTP to 4232 participating teachers and 2786 participating OSHCS staff
- more than $40 million in grants to participating schools and OSHCS, to support the delivery of structured physical activities
- free Playing for Life resource kits (with more than 100 games and activities), companion books for 14 different sports (providing eight-week lesson plans) to each participating school and OSHCS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 6: Schools’ and OSHCS’ views on improved ability to support and encourage participation in structured physical activity since the introduction of the AASC program

AASC objective 3: Growing community capacity and stimulating local community involvement in sport and structured physical activity.
KEY FINDINGS — AASC PROGRAM DELIVERERS

Half of all AASC program deliverers who were directly involved with a local sporting club or other organised sport/physical activity program agreed that the AASC program is leading to an increase in the number of children participating in organised sport and/or physical activity programs at their organisation. (2006=50%, 2007=50%)

Through participating in the program and doing judo and karate we’ve had about 5 per cent of the kids join those clubs. Particularly we’ve had a lot of girls go into dancing after having done it here. About three to four have joined the club this term.” Source: School staff member, Busselton community case study, Western Australia

‘More clubs are now looking to provide opportunities for young kids whereas they used to mainly target adults and teenagers. When we started out the only activity for the young ones was little athletics. Since we started the program a lot more clubs are now catering for younger kids and there are more opportunities for families to become involved. We see clubs watching what other clubs are doing in terms of working out activities for the younger ones and they imitate them so they do not get left behind.’ Source: OSHCS staff, Pine Rivers Shire community case study, Queensland

Some AASC program deliverers reported an increasing movement into clubs, local sports, dance and other activities in the community as a result of the AASC program. Parents also reported some movement into local sporting clubs, as well as increased interest in sports not earlier considered by children, and even in some sports that are not part of the AASC program. Therefore, there is some evidence that children in the program have followed their interests into local sporting clubs.

However, parents’ time constraints and financial costs continue to inhibit greater movement of children into clubs. Parents were keen for their children to remain in the AASC program as it is delivered at venues of the school or OSHCS and it is free of charge. Parents even suggested that the program could be expanded to cover all primary school children as well as young teenagers.

Some deliverers reported falling attendance at some sessions, and some schools have withdrawn from the program. This suggests that further efforts are required to market and promote the program to children and parents in schools, to ensure that overall attendance in established sites is maintained. It also means that mechanisms, such as succession planning, should also be in place to cope with staff changes or program champions moving on.

In supporting local clubs and structured physical activity organisations, the AASC program has provided:

- training for more than 16,000 community members through the CCTP, including local clubs, students and parents
- more than $300,000 in grants directly to local organisations delivering structured physical activity.

AASC SNAPSHOT

Growing local clubs

At Deniliquin in New South Wales, the local golf club’s partnership with the AASC program attracted so many budding young golfers that the club is looking to start a junior competition. With a town population of just over 8000 people, 50 local primary school students were introduced to the sport when it became part of the local AASC program in April 2007. The club saw the potential of the AASC program to attract new members, and seven club members became registered AASC program deliverers. Club member Pat Aitken said the program gave the club the resources and confidence to be proactive in attracting juniors. ‘Initially, we set about attracting new members and seeking some much-needed funds for the club, but our involvement has been much more rewarding than we imagined,’ she said. ‘To see the look on a student’s face when they finally connect with the ball is quite inspirational.’
KEY FINDINGS — LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The majority of identified stakeholders believe that the AASC program is growing community capacity and stimulating local community involvement in sport and structured physical activity.

‘There are a lot more partnerships now between agencies like the local council, Queensland Health and the AASC and local clubs.’ Source: Key stakeholder, Roma community case study, Queensland

‘More people have become qualified coaches as a result of the program. This provides the community with a long-term resource to foster ongoing physical activity for the future.’ Source: Key stakeholder, Busselton community case study, Western Australia

Many elements contributed to the finding that local communities were strengthened through the AASC program being delivered in their area. AASC program deliverers and school and OSHCS staff shared many examples of how the program positively impacted on community resources, community capacity, partnerships and problem-solving capabilities. These included:

- forming links and partnerships within the community between sporting and recreation clubs, state and national level sports organisations, and schools and OSHCS (for example, Police and Citizens Youth Clubs see the AASC program as an opportunity to maximise use of facilities, and sports organisations see the AASC program as a ‘feeder’ that will help them retain and increase membership and sustain their viability)
- generating interest in different sports
- building skills (of parents, teachers, local students, volunteers) to increase the number of trained sports deliverers and coaches in the community through the CCTP
- raising parental awareness of the issue of childhood activity
- increasing awareness of the facilities and leisure options available in community sporting and recreation clubs
- providing primary schools and OSHCS with sporting equipment they would not otherwise have
- providing an accessible means of participation in structured physical activity (for example, special needs and isolated children).

An evidence snapshot

In assessing the views of identified stakeholders, the majority were satisfied that the AASC program stimulates local community involvement in sport and physical activity:

- school and OSHCS staff — 2005=71 per cent, 2006=77 per cent, 2007=76 per cent
- AASC program deliverers — 2005=76 per cent, 2006=76 per cent, 2007=78 per cent
- AASC staff — 2005=57 per cent, 2006=67 per cent, 2007=70 per cent.

In addition, at least two in every three program deliverers agreed that the community in which they worked had improved its ability to support and encourage children’s participation in structured physical activities since participating in the AASC program.
**AASC SNAPSHOT**

**Building community capacity**

The Northern Territory has more than 60 sites participating in the AASC program, with over 60 per cent of these located in remote areas. Just under half of these sites are exclusively for Indigenous children. The program aims to build community capacity through many means, including training and supporting local people to deliver sport.

Wallace Dennis is a local resident in the remote community of Minyerri, 260 kilometres southeast of Katherine. With the assistance of the AASC program, he has gained important qualifications and employment through his involvement, and is a vibrant role model for younger children in the region. ‘Sport is important for young people within the community because it gives them something to do and makes them feel good about themselves,’ Dennis said.

Through the AASC program, Dennis has completed his CCTP and now assists in coaching junior AFL, cricket, softball and football. He completed Year 10 in 2005 and now has a full-time position as Minyerri Council’s sport and recreation officer. Dennis has two employees and runs the AASC program and holiday programs in the area.

*Source: AASC National Newsletter, September 2007*
Satisfying stakeholders with the operation and effectiveness of the program

The AASC program wins stakeholder acclaim and support

**KEY FINDINGS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY FINDINGS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The majority of parents of participating children, schools, OSHCS staff,</td>
<td>The majority of parents of participating children, schools, OSHCS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deliverers and AASC staff were satisfied with the AASC program overall.</td>
<td>staff, deliverers and AASC staff were satisfied with the AASC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A large majority of school and OSHCS staff and deliverers were also</td>
<td>regional coordinators’ performances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>satisfied with the AASC program deliverers’ overall performance,</td>
<td>Parents of participating children were satisfied with the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ability to provide appropriate sessions and ability to adjust activities</td>
<td>AASC program deliverers’ overall performance, ability to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to suit individual needs.</td>
<td>provide appropriate sessions and ability to adjust activities to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School and OSHCS staff, deliverers and AASC staff reported high levels</td>
<td>suit individual needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of satisfaction with the implementation of the AASC program.</td>
<td>School and OSHCS staff, deliverers and AASC staff reported high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A majority of program deliverers were satisfied with their registration</td>
<td>levels of satisfaction with the implementation of the AASC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>process and with the CCTP.</td>
<td>program.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schools and OSHCS were strong supporters of the AASC program, as it gave children in their care more opportunities to engage in structured physical activities. The program’s funding also enabled them to purchase new sporting equipment and through the AASC training, enhance the skills of their staff. In the case of OSHCS, this led to higher enrolments on the days the program was running. Schools and OSHCS often felt they received a high level of service from the AASC program staff, and that the AASC’s quality assurance framework delivered a quality product. Schools and OSHCS also reported that participating children benefited with:

- improved motor skills
- enhanced leadership and thinking skills
- improved attitude to physical activity
- improved ability to interact with each other
- improved self-confidence
- increased opportunities to try new things
- greater awareness of the importance of being active
- encouragement to follow their interests by joining local clubs.
Parents were also extremely supportive of the program, believing it to be essential in exposing children to a range of activities and discovering where their talents lie.

Key stakeholders believed the use of community-based regional coordinators was very effective as it helped broaden the coordinators’ knowledge of the local community and built community awareness of the AASC program.

Deliverers were particularly happy with the opportunity to market their activities among children. They valued the CCTP and the assistance they received from the AASC program.

**An evidence snapshot**

- More than 80 per cent of parents of participating children said that they were satisfied with the AASC program (cohort 1=84 per cent, cohort 2=87 per cent). They acted on this satisfaction by enrolling their children in the program more than once (cohort 1=87 per cent, cohort 2=89 per cent). Among the main reasons for re-enrolling their children, parents said it was because their children liked the activities and asked to be enrolled, their children were more active and watched less television while participating in the program, and their children learnt new skills from the program.

- More than 80 per cent of school and OSHCS staff, program deliverers and AASC staff said they were satisfied with the AASC program overall:
  - school and OSHCS staff — 2005=88 per cent, 2006=93 per cent, 2007=93 per cent
  - AASC program deliverers — 2005=87 per cent, 2006=87 per cent, 2007=89 per cent
  - AASC staff — 2005=83 per cent, 2006=93 per cent, 2007=92 per cent.
Based on the findings thus far, the AASC program has demonstrably benefited many of the participating children, participating schools and OSHCS, program deliverers and local communities. The evaluators recommend that this benefit could be further enhanced (and experienced by many more children) if the ASC can implement strategies to:

> **Increase longevity in the program** in terms of ensuring that schools and OSHCS continue to offer the AASC program (thus ensuring minimal drop out at the school/OSHCS level) and ensuring that individual children participating in the AASC program continue to participate for as many terms as possible.

> **Increase the frequency with which children participate in the program.** In the first instance, investigate what can be done to encourage schools and OSHCS to offer the AASC program on more days per week. In the second instance, investigate what can be done to encourage children to participate in the AASC program more frequently.

> **Conduct qualitative research with parents whose children drop out of the AASC program and/or with parents whose children decrease structured physical activity.**
  - The program is benefiting those who participate in it (and stay in it), but it is important to understand, in depth, why children are dropping out and what can be done to prevent this from happening.
  - It is equally important to understand, in depth, why the program is not working for some children (that is, decreased structured physical activity) and what can be done to make the program more effective for them.

> **Increase awareness of the AASC program and its benefits** among parents of participating children in particular, and possibly parents generally (depending on the ASC’s ability to meet any resultant demand). Throughout the evaluation, the researchers observed that there is low awareness of the AASC program among parents of participating children. Most commonly parents know that their child is participating in after-school sport, but not of the involvement of the ASC. Increased awareness and knowledge of the AASC program (and the ASC’s role in providing the program) may facilitate greater recognition among parents of the impacts the AASC program may be having on their children.

> **Consider mapping demand** so that any future expansion of the AASC program is targeted at areas where unmet demand is greatest.

> **Communicate directly with parents** that the AASC program provides free, supervised, structured physical activity, and that the AASC program operates in the after-school time slot. This may help minimise barriers to children participating in the AASC program. The decision to undertake such communication activities, of course, needs to be made in the context of the ability of the AASC program to meet any demand that may result.

> **Better link schools, OSHCS, deliverers and sports clubs.** Evidence suggests that linkages and pathways are starting to be successfully established that allow children to move from the AASC program to the local club structure. However, in keeping with the notion of continuous improvement, more direct communication with children and parents about relevant sporting clubs and/or communication with relevant sporting clubs about the AASC program may help promote development of these pathways.
> **Consider stakeholder feedback and suggestions** on additional improvements to program delivery. These include having:
- even more deliverers
- more activities
- increased communication between participating schools and OSHCS to share ideas and resources
- updated information on what deliverers can offer
- more incentives for schools, OSHCS and deliverers.

> **Consider whether any of the deliverer suggestions as to how the AASC program could be improved are viable.** The most frequently mentioned were:
- further and different training options
- more funding for resources
- more variety and flexibility of activities
- better communication and links across the AASC program and communities
- more advertising, marketing, media and merchandise.

> **Communicate the evaluation results to stakeholders.** All stakeholders (that is, parents of participating and non-participating children, participating children, school and OSHCS staff, AASC staff and deliverers) need to know that the program works, that it is safe and fun.
- The key messages (and communication channels) will obviously need to be tailored appropriately to each target audience in order to be effective.
- Assuming the key messages can be communicated effectively, it is anticipated that the ASC would see further improvements to the evaluation results and maximum uptake of the available program places.
Appendix A: List of traditional and non-traditional structured physical activities being delivered under the AASC program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abseiling</th>
<th>Golf</th>
<th>Skateboarding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aerobics</td>
<td>Gymnastics</td>
<td>Skating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFL</td>
<td>Gymnastics — rhythmic</td>
<td>Snorkelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aquatics</td>
<td>Handball</td>
<td>Snow skiing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archery</td>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletics</td>
<td>Ice hockey</td>
<td>Softball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badminton</td>
<td>Ice skating</td>
<td>Squash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>Indoor cricket</td>
<td>Surfing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>Inline hockey</td>
<td>Swimming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beach tennis</td>
<td>Inline skating</td>
<td>Table tennis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beach volleyball</td>
<td>Judo</td>
<td>Taekwondo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billycarting</td>
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<td>Tai Chi</td>
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<tr>
<td>BMX</td>
<td>Karate</td>
<td>Teeball</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bocce/Pentanque</td>
<td>Kite flying</td>
<td>Tenpin bowling</td>
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<td>Korfball</td>
<td>Tennis</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Lacrosse</td>
<td>Touch football</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calisthenics</td>
<td>Lawn bowls</td>
<td>Traditional Indigenous games</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Martial arts</td>
<td>Trampolining</td>
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<td>Mountain bike</td>
<td>Triathlon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cheerleading</td>
<td>Multi-skill</td>
<td>Vigoro</td>
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<td>Volleyball</td>
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<td>Oztag</td>
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<td>Pilates</td>
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<td>Pool lifesaving</td>
<td>Yoga</td>
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<td>Rowing</td>
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<td>Fencing</td>
<td>Rugby league</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fitness/Circuit</td>
<td>Rugby union</td>
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<td>Floorball</td>
<td>Sailing</td>
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<td>Frisbee</td>
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<td>Futsal</td>
<td>Scuba diving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gaelic football</td>
<td>Self-defence</td>
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Appendix B:
AASC pilot programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>AASC region</th>
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<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
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<td>NSW</td>
<td>North Coast</td>
<td>Wollongbar Public School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>North West Sydney</td>
<td>Gladesville Putney Before and After School Care</td>
</tr>
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<td>NT</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Larapinta YMCA OSHC</td>
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<td>NT</td>
<td>Katherine/Barkly</td>
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<td>Gold Coast North</td>
<td>Gullivers SwimGym OSHC centre</td>
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<td>Redbank Plains OSHC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>Eyre Peninsula</td>
<td>Streaky Bay Area School</td>
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<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>Mid North/York Peninsula</td>
<td>Port Pirie West Primary School</td>
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<td>Metro North 1</td>
<td>Le Fevre Primary School</td>
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<td>North</td>
<td>Norwood Primary School</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>North West</td>
<td>Spreyton ASC/Spreyton Primary School</td>
</tr>
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<td>VIC</td>
<td>Gippsland</td>
<td>Longwarry Primary School</td>
</tr>
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<td>Gippsland — Morwell</td>
<td>Heyfield Primary School</td>
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<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Metro Eastern — 1</td>
<td>Kew Primary School/OSHCS</td>
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<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Swan 1</td>
<td>Girrawheen Primary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Fremantle</td>
<td>Communicare OSHCS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Great Southern</td>
<td>Spencer Park Primary School</td>
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</table>
CATI survey with parents of participating and non-participating children

Due to the various complexities involved, namely the broad range of children’s ages and the budget limitations, it was determined that parents\(^2\) would act as the proxy report for their children’s participation. The subsequent approach involved a pre and post-measure, which was undertaken with parents of participating and non-participating children. The purpose of this pre and post-measure approach was to determine whether any changes in activity levels occurred following the child’s participation in the AASC program, in addition to other changes in attitudes towards structured physical activity. Comparisons of these two groups were then undertaken.

To capture data for each year of the AASC program, a new cohort of parents of participating and non-participating children was included in the evaluation, equating to three cohorts in total. Parents of participating children were recruited from lists collated by the ASC from randomly selected participating schools and OSHCS in term 3 of each year. Non-participating parents were recruited from the general population through random sampling from the White Pages listings. The criterion for recruitment of all parents was the amount of time their child spent in structured physical activity. In order to establish the comparable sample groups between parents of participating children and parents of non-participating children, screening questions were used to restrict the CATI survey to parents whose children had participated in three hours or less of structured physical activity per week in their leisure time at the time they were interviewed for the first time. This was to ensure this component of the evaluation was targeted on the AASC program’s focus of delivering structured physical activities.

Online survey of children

The online survey of children was a fun and interactive, web-based survey designed specifically for children. The survey was conducted quarterly (in each school term) using a random sample of sites drawn from the nationwide pool of schools and OSHCS enrolled in the AASC program. The methodology employed in 2005, 2006 and 2007 was as follows: during the appropriate school term, the AASC program regional coordinators contacted the randomly selected school or OSHCS sites and invited them to participate in the research. Following this, the regional coordinators scheduled a survey day with the school or OSHCS and arranged for a letter to be provided to AASC program parents, describing the research and seeking their approval for their children to participate in the online survey. On the survey day, the regional coordinators attended the sites and assisted the children to complete an online survey or printed copies of the survey where an internet connection was not available.

\(^2\) In developing the approach for this evaluation, the ASC and its evaluators referred to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) approach to collecting children’s participation data. The ABS’s report on Children’s Participation in Organised Sport – 2000, 2003, 2006 used parents as the proxy report for their children’s participation in organised activities in out of school hours: www.ausport.gov.au/information/scors/othrer_related_reports.
Online surveys of school and OSHCS staff, deliverers and AASC program staff

All participating primary school and OSHCS staff, AASC program staff and AASC program deliverers were invited to participate in an online survey, which was conducted annually in term 4 (term 3 in Tasmania). Those who did not have access to the internet were sent a hard copy questionnaire and their results were entered into the database by the researchers within the same fieldwork period. These surveys focused on satisfaction with aspects of the AASC program, effectiveness of processes, satisfaction with other stakeholders and suggestions to improve the AASC program.

Qualitative case studies

A case-study approach was undertaken in order to provide a qualitative understanding of the ways in which the AASC program has influenced or affected the community. Nine carefully selected communities were visited twice by a CBSR qualitative researcher over the course of the evaluation, to allow comparisons over a 12-month period and to explore how effective the AASC program had been in building community capacity from the stakeholders’ perspectives. The methodology used for the case studies included, as appropriate, a mixture of one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders, OSHCS and primary school teachers, and focus groups with parents and children. In addition, all one-on-one interview participants and parents involved in the focus group discussions were asked to complete a self-completion questionnaire.

Two Indigenous community case studies were also conducted in remote locations. These case studies were less formal in nature and more freeflowing, allowing for the different circumstances of each community. Participants were recruited using a snowball method, whereby key members of the community introduced the researchers to potential participants in the community. Face-to-face interviews were the predominant method of information gathering, while a small number of telephone interviews was conducted with government and other stakeholder groups who were not available at the time of the field visit. In addition, focus groups and drawing activities were used with the participating children to help gain an understanding of their experiences of participating in the AASC program.

Appendix D provides interpretive notes for this interim report, including ratings, reporting scales, weighting and significance testing.

A more detailed methodology will be included in the final report.

Limitation of the evaluation methods

No physical measurement component for children’s physical activity levels

Body mass index is a widely used indicator of overweight or obesity in the health literature, due to its intuitive appeal, and the ease with which height and weight information can be obtained. Body mass index and other objective measures for physical activity are also widely used in the area of physical activity research. During the initial program development phase, body mass index was considered by the ASC for use as a measure of effectiveness for the AASC program, among a number of other key measures. However, after consultation and deliberation it was decided that physical measures would not be employed in the evaluation activities undertaken by the ASC due to the concerns raised by some state and territory departments of education and other stakeholders about taking children’s body measurements, and the potential negative consequences for the children involved, such as body image, stigma of being considered overweight, etc.

In addition, to ensure a nationally consistent approach was undertaken, and one that was within the available budget, it was determined that parents would act as the proxy reporters for their children’s physical activity levels, and these data were collected through a CATI survey.
Definition for structured physical activity

At the time of the evaluation design in early 2005, there was no consistent or clearly accepted definition of structured physical activity or other physical activity terms. The ASC was therefore required to define structured physical activity and other terms for the purpose of this research and evaluation — refer to the Glossary. Only recently, in 2008, has the ABS released the discussion paper Defining Sport and Exercise: A conceptual model (cat. no. 4149.0).

Qualitative research

It should be noted that qualitative research provides an in-depth understanding of participants’ views, opinions and experiences. However, the findings should be considered as indicative only, and cannot be extrapolated to wider populations with the same degree of certainty that quantitative analysis can.

Non-response bias

Non-response bias occurs in all surveys. It occurs when a large number of people in the survey sample fail to respond, and their response characteristics may differ from those who do respond. During data analysis and reporting, it is assumed that people not responding to the survey have the same response characteristics as the people that do respond. When this assumption is not true, a bias in the estimates is introduced. For example, parents whose children are more physically active may be more likely to agree to participate in the CATI survey than those whose children are non-active.

Different approaches can be used to address the non-response problem or demonstrate and evaluate non-response bias effects; for example, strategies to increase response rates, surveying the non-respondents, etc.

All the research and evaluation activities for the AASC program are voluntary. Based on the available resources, different efforts were made to increase the response rates of the CATI and online surveys, such as ringing people at an appropriate time and booking an appointment whenever it suits respondents, introducing a prize draw for those who participate in the survey, sending a primary approach letter to online survey respondents and a reminder letter a few days before the survey closing time. For the telephone survey, response rates for parents of participating children was 78 per cent or above for the pre-measure and 92 per cent or above for the post-measure. The response rates for parents of non-participating children for the post-measure were also maintained at about 96 per cent for 2006 and 2007. However, the response rate was low in the pre-measure for the first cohort of parents of non-participating children. Thus, the recruitment procedure was revised, which led to an increase in the response rates for the second and third survey cohorts, with response rates increasing by 9 per cent or above. Response rates for the AASC program staff survey were 89 per cent or above during the three years, and response rates for school and OSHCS surveys were also between 39 per cent and 56 per cent.

The ASC recognises the value of seeking information from non-respondents to further validate its findings. However, this was not possible within the available budget.

Errors

All surveys are subject to errors. There are two main types of errors: sampling errors and non-sampling errors.

Sampling error

The sampling error is the error that arises because not every single member of the population was included in the survey. Naturally, it is simply not feasible to survey the whole population to avoid this type of error. One can, however, estimate how big this error component is, using statistical theory. This theory indicates that with a sample of 1000 people from a population of 100 000 people or more, the maximum margin of sampling error on an estimate of a proportion is 3.1 per cent.
The way this can be interpreted is as follows. The survey results estimate that 90 per cent of parents of participating children in the post-measure agreed that the AASC program was fun for children. The maximum margin of error on this estimate of 90 per cent is +/–2 per cent. Hence, one can be 95 per cent confident that the actual proportion of people in the population who agreed that the AASC program was fun for children is between 88 and 92 per cent. In all tables in this report, groups are compared against each other and, where possible, differences are tested for statistical significance at the 95 per cent confidence level.

Efforts were made to reduce the sampling error in the evaluation design, and targets were set to ensure an effectiveness measure within a maximum margin of error of +/–5 per cent at the 95 per cent confidence level for each year of the evaluation. Sample sizes for the parents CATI survey in the pre-measure were about 936 (with the maximum margin of error being +/–2 per cent). This allowed for a reasonable sample size to be maintained (n=635 or more with a maximum margin of error being +/–4 per cent) even after attrition in the post-measure.

Efforts were also made during the recruitment stage. Parents of participating children were recruited randomly from lists collated by the ASC. Non-participating parents were recruited from the general population using random sampling from White Pages listings. The survey with children was conducted quarterly (in each school term) using a random sample of sites drawn from the nationwide pool of schools and OSHCs enrolled in the AASC program.

Research with deliverers, AASC staff, school and OSHCS staff was conducted via online surveys. All deliverers, AASC program staff and representatives from participating schools and OSHCS that had a valid email address were invited to participate in the online surveys. Those school and OSHCS personnel who were unable to access the internet were sent a printed copy of the questionnaire, accompanied by a pre-paid envelope for returning. Reminders were also sent to the people who had not responded to the survey before the closing time.

Non-sampling error

All surveys, regardless of whether they are sample surveys or censuses, are subject to other types of error, called non-sampling error. Non-sampling error includes things such as interviewer keying errors and respondents misunderstanding a question.

Every attempt has been made to minimise the non-sampling error in this evaluation. For example, all the research instruments have been thoroughly pilot tested, and cognitive testing has been undertaken for the development of the CATI questionnaire with parents. These efforts sought to ensure the right questions were asked and interpreted in the way it was intended. However, some types of error are out of the control of the researcher. In particular, the study is reliant on the accurate reporting of behaviours and views by respondents, particularly when parents are the proxy reporters on behalf of their children. For example, a parent may forget that their child played tennis in the relevant time period the research is interested in, and may have failed to report this activity.

Comparability of the data

The data from the AASC research and evaluation is not comparable with data collected through other surveys of children’s participation in physical activity or organised sport. This is due to differences in the scope, methodology and questionnaire design of the various surveys.
Appendix D: Interpretive notes

Rounding

Percentages are generally rounded to whole numbers. Some percentages may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Average duration for participation in structured physical activity or general physical activity is rounded to one decimal place.

Question scales

Some questions in the survey were asked using 10-point scales. These scales were used to indicate level of agreement or satisfaction. To allow for data analysis and ease of interpretation, all 10-point scales have been collapsed in the following way:

- a score of 1–2 is classified as ‘Extremely dissatisfied’ or ‘Strongly disagree’
- a score of 3–4 is classified as ‘Dissatisfied’ or ‘Disagree’
- a score of 5–6 is classified as ‘Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’ or ‘Neither agree nor disagree’
- a score of 7–8 is classified as ‘Satisfied’ or ‘Agree’
- a score of 9–10 is classified as ‘Extremely satisfied’, or ‘Strongly agree’.

Some responses have been further collapsed as follows:

- a score of 1–4 is classified as ‘Dissatisfied’ or ‘Disagree’
- a score of 5–6 is classified as ‘Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’ or ‘Neither agree nor disagree’
- a score of 7–10 is classified as ‘Satisfied’ or ‘Agree’.

Reporting of scales

In this report, results are reported using the terms ‘Satisfaction’ or ‘Agree’ (a score of 7–10) and ‘Dissatisfaction’ or ‘Disagree’ (a score of 1–4). To further highlight results, ‘Extremely satisfied’, ‘Strongly agree’ (a score of 9–10) or ‘Extremely dissatisfied’ or ‘Strongly disagree’ (a score of 1–2) are reported.

Weighting

To ensure the survey results are representative of the target population, they were adjusted, or weighted, using population information from the AASC program and the ABS. This is done because the sample data on its own is biased.

In this research, results from the parents’ and children’s online surveys were weighted based on a standard population weighting approach. Details on how weighting is conducted will be available in the final report after the completion of the 2005–07 evaluation.
**Significance testing**

When differences are detected between statistics, it is important to test to determine if the perceived differences are statistically significant or just due to sampling variability. All comparisons made in this report have been tested by significance testing at the 95 per cent confidence level.

**Sample sizes**

The total samples of records used to produce estimates from each survey are detailed in the following tables. Note that the sample in cohort 3 was greater than that in previous cohorts because it is before the attrition due to the follow-up measure.

**CATI survey with parents**

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<th>Cohort 1</th>
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<tr>
<td>Parents of participating children</td>
<td>664</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>936</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents of non-participating children</td>
<td>750</td>
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**Web-based surveys with stakeholders**

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