

## Doing it ourselves – a multicultural youth basketball program in the West

**Key words:** consultation, outreach, fees, training

### Background

Hoping to initiate some sport activities for newly arrived young people in the west, the local CMY Sport and Recreation Officer brought together twelve young people to discuss their sport and recreational needs.

Top of the list was a weekly basketball program. Young people saw it as a way to develop their sporting skills, to have fun and connect with other young people at the same time. They asked for a two-hour program, once a week, on a Friday afternoon.

### The program

A few decisions had to be made before the basket ball training itself could start.

- **Fees:** the young people were unsure how much they could afford to pay for the training (or whether they could pay at all). As a trial, it was decided that the program would be free for the first eight weeks; this would be revised at the end of the trial, when the group would discuss what they were ready to pay to be part of the program.
- **Location:** YMCA RecWest in Braybrook (bordering both Maribyrnong and Brimbank councils) was nominated by the young people as the best venue. It offers the double advantage of being the main sport and recreational venue in the area and of being familiar to the young people who already access it through school.
- **Support:** Two young basketball players of Sudanese backgrounds whom CMY had worked with through other programs were invited to run the training. They both held coaching qualifications.
- **Promotion:** Other young people involved were asked to spread the news about the program through word-of-mouth.

On the first night approximately eighteen young people (twelve boys and six girls) attended the program.

They all commented how much they enjoyed the session and contributed ideas about how to invite other young people to attend. This included promoting the program through schools and accosting young people at the train station and other afterschool 'hangouts' to let them know of its existence. The young people involved in the trial were happy to take responsibility for this to happen.

### Benefits of the program

This program has produced many positive outcomes for the participants and stakeholders. These include:

- The two peer facilitators running the training who started as volunteers are now employed by the YMCA.

## CMY Multicultural Sport Case Study

- Four young men have been linked into an elite training program / academy, and six young women now play in a basketball club.
- The number of women attending the program has grown significantly reflecting a strong need for more sporting opportunities for young women.
- Some parents attend the program to watch their young people and to engage with the Project Officer about other opportunities.
- The program now has a name and a flyer to attract new participants.
- Young people have been granted funding through 'Open Doors' (YMCA) to continue playing, and have also been supported with appropriate sporting apparel.
- Young people from the program recently took part in an organised semi-structured tournament.

At the end of the eight-week trial program, the group agreed on payment for the next term and on ways to improve the program.

It was agreed that:

- Participants had to arrive by 4.30pm for a 4.45pm start
- Participants would pay \$5 each week to take part in the program; they could apply for 'Open-Doors' funding through YMCA if the fee proved too high.
- Participants must wear sports attire to training every week.

### Challenges

There were some challenges to getting this program off the ground, including getting young people to contribute financially. Newly arrived young people often come from large families where funds are stretched, and their parents may not be able or willing to provide financial support for sporting activities. Money that young people allocate to sport, however small, means something else has been sacrificed.

Making sure that the young people wore appropriate attire (such as running shoes and shorts or a track suit) was also not a given, and it took a few practices before this was achieved.

Another challenge has been to engage young women: female participation was initially slow, and the CMY worker spent considerable time with families to gain their trust, reassure them that their daughters would be safe and advocate for the benefit of sport. Families would often prefer the young women to be at home looking after siblings, cooking, or doing their school work; sport may not seem like a priority in this context.

### Next steps

YMCA was able to use the success of this program to apply and secure funding to further engage more young people in the area and to provide leadership and training opportunities. The CMY worker has been able to step out and hand the program over to the YMCA.

The program now includes young people of Sudanese, Liberian, Sierra Leonean, Fijian, New Zealand-Indian and Vietnamese backgrounds.

YMCA is considering using this model to revive its futsal program. Young people have shown interest, and this could address the scarcity of soccer grounds (compared to demand) in the area.