

# INCREASING CULTURAL INCLUSION - KEON PARK TENNIS CLUB

## THE NEED

The Keon Park Tennis Club is located in Darebin, a Melbourne local council area with a high degree of cultural diversity. The club had a few members from culturally diverse communities, but wanted to encourage more children and young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to try tennis with professional coaches.

However, there are many other sports available in the area, and people who are newly arrived to Australia in particular may not be aware of what is available, or face barriers to accessing tennis such as transport, fees and equipment costs. Furthermore, it can be challenging for a club to find ways to easily communicate with newly arrived communities.

## THE RESPONSE

The club has implemented a range of strategies to encourage people from diverse backgrounds to participate in tennis, with a particular focus on schools.

### Culturally inclusive club promotion

In order to raise the profile of the tennis club and establish interest within culturally diverse communities, the club places brochures on community noticeboards in multicultural organisations and attends as many multicultural events and meetings as it can. A recent meeting focussed on engaging schools within the Darebin District and provided a booklet with information about the area's schools. The club then sent flyers to the schools advertising the club and other activities to do at Keon Park which resulted in an inquiry from the Islamic School in Preston.

"I was very excited when we had the inquiry. We had four people join in the free after-school program and they enjoyed it so much they will come again after Christmas." - Barbara Currie, Club Secretary

The club has found that once one person from a refugee or migrant background attends, they tell their friends who also come along to the club and 'have a hit'.

### Overcoming barriers to participation

The club works hard to provide opportunities that are affordable and accessible for the community without having to join competition sport. They run a free after-school program where young people can see what tennis is all about and learn from professional coaches.

"We have a lot of culturally diverse members & everyone gets on very well."



Pictured: Some of Keon Park Tennis Club's young members

When someone is ready to join the junior competition, the club offers them 12-months free membership. The club receives funding to support this initiative, and some schools offer students a scholarship to reduce financial barriers.

The young people are also given refreshments at each lesson which is an added bonus for the students, many of whom come from lower socio-economic backgrounds. One school offers transport via a group bus for the after-school program.

The club also holds regular 'open days' where the clubs activities and membership specials are promoted and the community can come and give tennis a try with the professional coaches.

### A welcoming and culturally responsive club culture

The club is very welcoming for anyone from the community who wants to come along, hire courts, become a member or join competitions. New people are shown how to use the courts, by watering, bagging and looking after them, so they fully understand what is required of them and feel comfortable in the space.

Family members are encouraged to come along to club events, watch the children and young people play in the after-school program or attend the competition days. Some of the parents have even started umpiring.

## THE OUTCOME

The free after-school program has been running for five years and has strong community interest. Many young people go on to enjoy playing at competition level, like students from Reservoir East Primary School who became club members and now play in the North East Junior Tennis Association.

"The benefits that I see are young people having a great time at our club. We have a lot of culturally diverse members and everyone gets on very well. We are a very welcoming club." - Barbara Currie, Club Secretary.