

# A winning game plan

Creating opportunities in sport and active recreation



# Introduction



**Physically active communities are more likely to be healthier communities, and active people are more likely to experience a better quality of life.**

**It's great for our health to be physically active. Regular physical activity not only protects against many illnesses; it also makes people mentally healthy, alert and resilient against the stresses of modern life.**

VicHealth – the peak body for health promotion in Victoria – supports organisations to increase participation in physical activity. Through its **Active Participation Grants**, community-based organisations are funded for one to two years to work in partnership with a diverse range of organisations within their community to develop opportunities for people who would not normally participate in traditional sport or active recreation.

This booklet showcases some of the inspiring projects funded by this program, from young refugees playing in a local basketball league through to older people going on organised walks in their local area.

The stories show what individuals and organisations are doing to improve health and connect communities. They focus on the creative ways of addressing participation barriers and creating opportunities, from stakeholder support and partnership development to sustainable programming. They also illustrate the importance of having a passionate, committed and skilled person driving the project.

VicHealth hopes that other partnerships and organisations working to increase levels of physical activity across the whole community will be inspired by these examples.

We encourage other local councils, recreation organisations, health providers and community organisations to work together to find ways of ensuring that everyone gets the chance to reap the health and social benefits of being physically active.

To find out more, go to:

**[www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/physicalactivity](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/physicalactivity)**

# Contents



<b>1</b>	<b>Life's better on a bike</b>	<b>4</b>
	Careful planning gets more women cycling more often	
<b>2</b>	<b>Creating a sporting chance</b>	<b>6</b>
	Uni students and people with intellectual disabilities reap the benefits of a transferable program	
<b>3</b>	<b>Fun, friends and a wicked topspin</b>	<b>8</b>
	Stakeholders come together to connect older people across a table tennis table	
<b>4</b>	<b>Scoring goals</b>	<b>10</b>
	A soccer club improves participation on and off the field	
<b>5</b>	<b>Go west (and walk)</b>	<b>12</b>
	Local councils plan together to get people moving	
<b>6</b>	<b>Bridging gaps with basketball</b>	<b>14</b>
	Community spirit gives young people a new beginning	

# 1

## Life's better on a bike



### Careful planning gets more women cycling more often

**Bicycle Victoria's mission is a simple one – get more people cycling, and get them doing it more often.**

As the state's premier cycling organisation, Bicycle Victoria is always looking for new opportunities to increase the number of people who cycle. With this in mind, it applied for a VicHealth Active Participation Grant for *Cycling for Health*, a one-year program to encourage women aged over 35 years to build cycling into their daily lives.

Preparation and careful planning has been the key to the success of this project, which was piloted in Geelong.

"It isn't enough to have an idea and then charge in like a bull at a gate", explains Juan Martorana, project manager from Bicycle Victoria. "Program planning is a vital, albeit time-consuming process. Without it the chances of success are limited."

Individual riders were signed up to *Cycling for Health* for three months. Bicycle Victoria provided the participants with an introduction to cycling, including a safety course and bike maintenance tips, and monitored their progress. Local bike shops provided free bicycle set-up so that the bikes were comfortable to ride.

In the end, 87 women passed through the pilot program. By the end most women felt confident and were, says Juan, "riding regularly and loving it".

"I felt a renewed sense of direction that will take me many places and help me achieve things I thought were impossible", reveals Sandra, one of the older participants. New friend and cycling partner Margaret said the program rekindled her interest in cycling as a way to get more activity in her day. "The program has been extremely positive and empowering."

Juan is delighted by the good feedback. "The key to success," he explains, "was setting realistic and achievable goals."

“Program planning is a vital, albeit time-consuming, process – without it the chances of success are limited.”

Bicycle Victoria chose an area where there would be a good chance to build on existing infrastructure; Geelong already had decent cycling facilities and existing cycling groups. They also had to find organisations that could deliver one or more elements of the program. They approached community health centres, local councils, GP associations, the regional sports assembly and cycling shops. In all they attracted 12 key partners.

Recruiting these partners was a learning experience, as Juan found out.

He advises not to write-off an organisation after speaking to just one person. “They might be too busy or not the right person, but they might know someone else you can talk to, or put you onto other groups.”

He also recommends finding people with passion and skills. “Look to volunteers to build a legacy.”

During the research and planning stages of *Cycling for Health*, Juan identified numerous obstacles to getting women riding. These included a lack of motivation, social support, time, skills, knowledge and confidence (especially with older women), as well as needing to get a bike repaired, and work and family commitments. Other issues that potential cyclists raised included the weather and ‘helmet hair’.

To be successful the project team had to come up with ways of addressing these barriers.

“Finding ways to do this helped us to plan the program properly and to bring the partners on board” says Juan. “In our promotional material, for example, we used testimonials from women who had solved these problems. They were simple but powerful messages.”

While partners are a key part of any program, Juan stresses that there comes a time when “less is more”.

“You need regular communication with partners, but the more of them you have the harder the juggling act. Try and keep it manageable. If you plan your time you will get better quality by not overstretching yourself.”

“Set dates and goals and stick to them. Get the most important things done first and think laterally when dealing with multiple tasks. Don’t think that what is on your grant application form is the final word and don’t be afraid to ask for help. This is where VicHealth is good – sometimes all that people running a project need is to hear a friendly voice.”

Juan has one more piece of advice for people when it comes to planning any program: Ask yourself, how will your program be documented and evaluated?

“You must think about this from the beginning. Think about how people can access and share information. You don’t want to waste time hunting for documents and chasing things up.”

Careful planning has paid off. Bicycle Victoria has now secured funding from the Victorian State Government to run *Cycling for Health* in other localities across the state. The good news is that this will create many more opportunities for people to experience first-hand that, as they say, ‘life’s better on a bike’.

**For more information about *Cycling for Health* contact Bicycle Victoria, phone (03) 8636 8888 or visit [www.bv.com.au](http://www.bv.com.au)**

### Tips for success

- *Day 1 – think about how to document and evaluate your program*
- *Take the time to plan properly, but be prepared to be flexible*
- *Set realistic and achievable goals*
- *Be smart about who you partner with – sometimes less is more*
- *Maintain regular communication with your partners*
- *Listen to your target audience and address their barriers to being involved*

# 2

## Creating a sporting chance



### Uni students and people with intellectual disabilities reap the benefits of a transferable program

**Netball is a popular participation sport, but it has taken a unique partnership to ensure that intellectually disabled people get to play too.**

Thanks to the *Creating a Sporting Chance* program at the Bundoora Netball & Sports Centre at RMIT, nearly 300 people with intellectual disabilities are signed up in netball programs that are financially sustainable and provide valuable training to new graduates.

Dr Jeff Walkley, an RMIT lecturer, is the man behind the innovative project.

“In late 1999 we undertook a small project involving people with intellectual disabilities in cardiovascular fitness. We realised that it improved both physical and mental health, so we were inspired to extend the project. We prepared a plan and decided that to work, our projects had to be evidence-based, low-cost, transferable and sustainable.”

With 12 months of seed funding from VicHealth, the initial project began with six participants. Today, the project helps hundreds of intellectually disabled people across Melbourne.

The project at RMIT is coordinated by the Disability Recreation Alliance, a partnership including the Bundoora Netball & Sports Centre, care agencies working with the intellectually disabled participants, Plenty Valley Netball Association, Nillumbik, Whittlesea and Banyule local councils, and the university.

Developing an effective partnership has been crucial for ensuring that the project could become sustainable. “Making sure that our program would be fully sustainable was one of our main aims,” says Merylyn Gamble, Project Officer based at Bundoora Netball & Sports Centre.

Ensuring the ongoing viability of the project has been one of the biggest challenges, and successes, of the project.

“We always looked at the VicHealth Active Participation Grant as seed funding, just to start us off. We had to convince the sports centre that this was an ongoing program that could make money and look after itself. We were sustainable within the first year,” Merrilyn says.

There are now around 280 intellectually disabled people participating in several *Creating a Sporting Chance* programs at RMIT. As Merrilyn points out, “That’s a lot of people who bring in \$3.50 to \$4.50 for each class. Out of that, we can pay for the hire of the sports centre and my wage”.

For Jeff Walkley, watching the project grow from its original seed funding “has been a great experience. This project has been a win-win for everyone,” he says, “with far-reaching benefits”.

For people with intellectual disabilities who participate in the program, these benefits include increasing their physical health as well as improving their psychological health and connections to their community.

There are a host of benefits for RMIT students too.

“This project gives students experience working with people who have an intellectual disability, and that helps their confidence,” explains Jeff Walkley. “The great thing is that we have a heap of students who want to work in this area now. The evidence showed that they were not previously considering careers with intellectually disabled people.”

Watching fourth year RMIT physical education student Rocky Gentile put his class through their paces, it is clear that the Active Participation Grant has helped to break down traditional barriers between universities and local communities.

“They just love it,” Rocky says.

*Creating a Sporting Chance* has been so successful that VicHealth agreed to extend the project for another 12 months so that it could be developed by Victoria University in Melbourne’s western suburbs.

Anne Browne, a lecturer in Human Movement Studies at Victoria University, says that the program – set-up through the generosity of Jeff Walkley and Merrilyn Gamble and the flow-on effect of their VicHealth Active Participation funding – is working brilliantly.

“Jeff and Merrilyn came to us and said that they had a fantastic program at RMIT and they gave us advice about how to set it up here and helped us approach the appropriate agencies,” Anne says. “Now we’ve got seven agencies, and Brimbank and Maribyrnong Councils, involved too.”

Anne is enthusiastic about the benefits for both the students and the intellectually disabled participants.

“The exciting part for our students is that they are getting the chance to work with people with special needs. It means that they have to improve their teaching skills and it helps them to become more patient.

“This project has been a win-win for everyone, with far-reaching benefits.”

“The participants can practise motor coordination and learn how to maximise physical skill and movement. Plus it’s just great psychologically to be mixing with other people their age without feeling isolated.”

**For more information about *Creating a Sporting Chance* contact the Program Coordinator at the Bundoora Netball & Sports Centre on phone (03) 9925 7999.**

### Successful and sustainable projects are...

- Evidence-based
- Driven by realistic goals
- Affordable to the target audience
- Based on life after the initial funding grant
- Transferable to other localities and organisations
- A win-win for everyone involved

# 3

## Fun, friends and a wicked topspin



### Stakeholders come together to connect older people across a table tennis table

**Una Hempel, 56, a four-year veteran of Keen-Agers social table tennis in Bairnsdale, and her husband Ron, 70, are taking a break as table tennis balls fly around the Bairnsdale Leisure Centre and hearty laughter punctuates the air.**

“Some people look forward to this so much that they try and make all their appointments around the sessions,” says Una.

Keen-Agers Table Tennis is for older residents and retirees in local communities and is promoted as an enjoyable physical activity in a friendly social setting. There are 16 Keen-Agers groups throughout the state, with more in the pipeline.

Support from VicHealth through two years Active Participation funding has enabled the program to grow from its humble beginnings in Bairnsdale. News of the success has spread. State Government is interested in the program, along with peak Victorian agencies that support older adults.

John Gale is the driving force behind Keen-Agers. A regular player for several years in Mornington, he moved to Bairnsdale in July 2001. Four months later the local branch of Keen-Agers was up and running.

While John has been the energetic whirlwind behind Keen-Agers, he says the project would not have succeeded without the support of key stakeholders and a skilled management committee.

Groups involved in falls prevention, cardio rehabilitation and other health services, for example, have become fertile recruiting grounds – professionals recognise the benefits of encouraging people to attend their local Keen-Agers. Many people who attend Keen-Agers have experienced the benefits of getting involved in regular physical activity.

For wider development John has deliberately engaged local government and regional sports assemblies because they have networks and can offer support. Taking the time to identify key stakeholders and develop good working relationships with these groups and organisations has been essential to the successful development of Keen-Agers.

While these groups and organisations can help provide players, contacts and the all-important media coverage, it is the stadiums where the table tennis sessions are held that, in many respects, are the life force or the death knell of the project. They are also often the hardest to lock in.

“Friendships have been one of the unexpected and beautiful things to come out of it.”

“I’m always trying to identify the right place and the right people to see if they are friendly and if we can find the right time,” John says. “Ocean Grove had a false start because they could only play at night.”

He looks for availability of the same spot, a price people can afford, secure storage space, an area courtside where people can sit and have a cup of tea and a chat, good parking and an easy location for people to get to. He says that when assessing the suitability of a venue, it’s a good idea to establish a good rapport with the venue manager so that some of these things can be more easily negotiated.

“Just bear in mind, you can’t expect staff from the stadiums to get involved in your program. They want you to run everything. It is their business, but you have to run things,” he says.

“Everywhere we have gone we have found a stadium that needs money and is under-utilised, especially in the morning. In the afternoon they might be flat strap, but in the morning there is silence.”

The support of the stakeholders, including local organisations and the stadiums themselves, is vital. To maintain their interest John has found that it has been important to have at least one extrovert on each Keen-Agers committee.

“There has to be someone with confidence who can relate to others to help the atmosphere and to keep members and stakeholders interested,” he stresses. “Look for people who have some energy. You only need one and the others will follow.”

Careful planning, and ensuring all relevant stakeholders have been included in the planning, has been a recipe for success for Keen-Agers. However, John admits that he hasn’t found the magic formula for supporting stakeholders and that there have been some stumbling blocks along the way. One major challenge has

been how to work with Table Tennis Victoria – the peak body for the sport. Being a small organisation, Table Tennis Victoria is limited in the support it can offer. However, it does promote Keen-Agers where and when it can, and continues to lobby the national table tennis body to have a more accommodating structure for social players.

The sound of laughter and the smiles on Keen-Agers’ faces suggest that, in spite of these hurdles, participants really enjoy their involvement.

While John acknowledges that the social side of the groups has become an essential element of the success of Keen-Agers, that wasn’t the main aim to begin with. “Friendships have been one of the unexpected and beautiful things to come out of it.”

Back at courtside, Una Hempel is very enthusiastic about how Keen-Agers has enriched her life. “I’ve met a whole new range of friends. You can always find someone of your own ability here and are guaranteed to get a hit.”

She even takes table tennis with her on holiday. “We take brochures and bats when we go camping. We tell people about this concept. It works,” she says with a smile before pitching in with the cleaning up as another sessions ends.

**To find out more about Keen-Agers visit [www.keenagers.org.au](http://www.keenagers.org.au)**

### Tips for engaging stakeholders

- *Work with agencies who have networks that can support your project*
- *Seek organisations that can link you with potential participants*
- *Tap into organisations who can assist with securing a local venue*
- *Take the time to develop relationships*
- *Be prepared for the odd knock-back*

# 4

## Scoring goals



Photo: Angela Wylie (Fairfax Photos)

### A soccer club improves participation on and off the field

**Getting the children of the Namatjira Avenue Aboriginal settlement, 30km from the Victorian border, to play for the Mildura United Soccer Club has meant tackling some challenging barriers off the field.**

When the club investigated what prevented the kids from participating, they discovered a number of challenging issues, including a lack of parental support, money and transport to take them the considerable distance to Mildura.

“We’ve got 140 kids on the club’s books and they love to play but many of them just can’t get themselves to training or the games,” says the Mildura United team’s unofficial manager and devoted volunteer Chris Tsvoglou.

As Chris explains, “These are kids from poor backgrounds and broken homes and maybe mum or dad don’t have a car. One problem was just getting them to turn up every week.”

That problem has now been solved. A bus rattles through the settlement four times a week, transporting the keen soccer players to and from practice and weekly matches.

Securing the funding to buy a bus was one thing. But the club still needed funding for a range of other activities, including subsidising the costs of running the bus and training drivers. Thanks to a 12-month VicHealth Active Participation Grant – used by the club to support Aboriginal community fitness and wellbeing – it is closer to becoming self-sustaining.

The VicHealth grant has been used to do practical things like train volunteer bus drivers and buy essential equipment such as uniforms and shin guards. However, the money is also helping the club to work with the local regional sports assembly – Mallee Sports Assembly – to develop their administration skills to improve the long-term prospects of the club.

Billy Carol, who administers the region's Indigenous Employment Program and helped Mildura United with their Active Participation funding application, hopes that the club is on its way to eventual self-sufficiency.

Having the right skills to apply for funding can be a barrier in itself. As Billy says, "For lots of people, the paperwork can be overwhelming. It does make a difference to have someone who is used to the terminology and how to apply."

"The whole idea of the soccer club's funding application was to develop the club to a point where it carries itself," Billy says.

"I see formal sport as providing valuable life skills training – punctuality, anger management, teamwork – and, therefore, work skills training. Soccer could help these kids turn the corner. Getting VicHealth funding is the only thing that has kept us going," says Billy.

**"We want to develop the club to a point where it carries itself."**

Acknowledging the reality that more time is needed to develop the clubs' skills, VicHealth has extended its support for a further 12 months. The extension funding is being used by the club to channel the passion of its supporters into identifying and training volunteers who can help to manage the club, including its finances and future fundraising plans. The club is working with Mallee Sports Assembly to ensure that off the field activity is helping to develop the club so the kids who are playing today have a bright future.

"Ensuring that there are physical activities like soccer that kids in remote areas can get involved in is crucial," says Buddy Parsons, the Aboriginal community liaison officer, and one of the volunteer bus drivers. He knows that in a disadvantaged community "too much empty time can become the enemy".

"If it wasn't for the soccer club, the kids would have nothing to do out here," he says.

"Playing soccer gives them stability," agrees Chris. "For a lot of the kids out here, the soccer club is all they've got."

By investing in the future of these little soccer players VicHealth Chief Executive Rob Moodie believes the rewards can be substantial.

"Some of these kids have amazing skills," he enthuses. "But for most of them the main benefit is that they have the chance to participate regularly in physical activity which they enjoy and which allows them to connect with other people in a positive way."

Down at the ground on a Saturday morning, the under-11s have just won their match 2–0. Chris points to one of the players, Jaharlyn Mitchell. "He's our biggest goal kicker. He can't outrun them, but he can out-skill them," he says.

"You're looking at the next Dave Beckham," Jaharlyn grins.

On the homeward journey, Buddy Parsons pulls the bus to a stop outside Jaharlyn's house. Jaharlyn balances on the fence before leaping into a back flip and off towards the soccer ball on the grass. He waits at the front door as Buddy toots a goodbye. "He's a great little player," Buddy says. "All he needs is a chance."

**To find out more about this project contact the Executive Officer at Mallee Sports Assembly, phone (03) 5021 3464.**

### Ways to improve participation for disadvantaged communities

- *Develop volunteer skills in the community*
- *Provide accessible transport for participants*
- *Supply essential equipment for new participants*
- *Think about ongoing funding*
- *Focus on participation as well as performance*
- *Invest time in developing a relationship with the community*

# 5

## Go west (and walk)



### Local councils plan together to get people moving

**When two local councils in Melbourne’s west started thinking about a program that could promote health through low-cost physical activity, they couldn’t go past walking.**

And so the seeds for *Walking Out West* were sown.

Five walking groups make up *Walking Out West*. There are two mums’ groups, a seniors’ group, a men’s-only walking group, and a Macedonian women’s group. Up to 20 people walk every week in each group and there are 450 walkers registered on the database.

Behind the successful idea are Melton Shire and Brimbank Councils, who got together with Brimbank Melton Primary Care Partnership to make physical activity a priority across the two municipalities.

Once they had decided to focus on walking, they successfully applied for a VicHealth Active Participation Grant. Careful project planning for the 12 months of funding became an important part of ensuring success.

Vanessa Tredwin, Project Officer for *Walking Out West*, realised that a steering group was required to build on the initial planning work.

“A group was set up very early on in the project to plan exactly how we would proceed. We kept the group small and focused on developing an action plan for the life of the project.”

The group, consisting of representatives from the Shire of Melton, Brimbank City Council, Melton-Brimbank Primary Care Partnership and Djerrivarrh Health Services, meets every month. They are supported by a project officer who is funded for 15 hours a week to coordinate the project. The remainder of the VicHealth funding has been used to train volunteers in first-aid, help groups with set-up costs and promote the walking programs.

Although the steering group is small, each of the members feeds information out to other agencies, including maternal and child health care, ISIS Primary Care, neighbourhood houses and the Western Melbourne Division of General Practice at two local networking groups. Vanessa says that the links between the steering group and other agencies are two-way: information can also be fed from these agencies back into the project planning.

“Liaising with partner agencies at the steering group and networking meetings has been vital as agencies can often promote walking groups directly to their clients, or suggest other links or ways of promoting the project.”

“The post-exercise catch-up over a cuppa has become just as rewarding as working up a sweat.”

For example, during the first year of *Walking Out West* the project team built up a very effective relationship with the maternal and child health care nurses who promote the mums’ walking group to most first-time mothers in the area. It has also been important to link walking groups with existing local community groups. In this case, the mums’ group is run and promoted by volunteers from the Mothers’ Network who already distributed a newsletter to over 500 mums in the area.

When *Walking Out West* was first developed, project partners hoped that as well as increasing awareness of the benefits of leading a healthier lifestyle, the program might also bring the community closer together.

According to Beryl Montgomery, aged 70, *Walking Out West* has achieved this.

“I do like walking,” Beryl says. “I’ve been involved since it started and I feel like my fitness has improved. I know a lot of women my age who wouldn’t go out walking by themselves. Having the company makes me feel safe. I think a lot of people do it for more than just the physical benefits – it’s good for the social side too.”

Her cousin Dot Perry, aged 58, is also involved.

“I’ve had two hip replacements in the past five years and wanted to do a little bit of gentle exercise. We walk around the local park – about 2.5km – and it’s good to think I can walk that far,” says Dot, a retired bank officer who admits to having lost touch with people from her working life. Fronting up for her weekly walk is also “a good way of getting back into the community”.

Part of the steering group’s emphasis on effective project planning for *Walking Out West* has included thinking about what happens beyond the life of VicHealth’s funding grant, which was recently extended for a further 12 months.

“We have tried to make sure that all our walking groups are attached to an existing community centre or group that has the ongoing ability to support and promote the group when the project officer leaves,” says Vanessa Tredwin.

For the walkers, the links to these local community facilities have been a great bonus. Although the physical health benefits from the 45-minute long walk were initially the main focus for Beryl, Dot and their fellow walkers, it is the post-exercise catch-up over biscuits and a cuppa in the local elderly citizens hall that has become just as rewarding as working up a sweat.

As Dot says, “It’s nice just to have a bit of a chat”.

**For more information about the *Walking Out West* project contact the Social Development Unit at Melton Shire Council, phone (03) 9747 7200.**

### Keys to good program planning

- Set up a well-connected steering group to develop your project
- Keep the steering group small and action-focused
- Use partner agencies to promote activities
- Make links with existing community facilities and groups
- Ensure the project fits within broader community priorities

# 6

## Bridging gaps with basketball



### How sport is helping young people start a new life

**With their hot pink uniforms, the Dragons under-18 girls team certainly demand attention as they match up against the opposition in their weekend game of basketball.**

Seventeen-year old Rina, who plays centre for the Dragons, fled from Sudan with her older sister in the late 1990s. She's been living in Melbourne for two years. Two matches into the season, Rina thinks they've got a long way to go if the team is to get to the finals, but the main thing is that she's playing, making friends and having fun.

"Before the team started I just watched basketball on TV. It was too hard to find a court, let alone play," Rina explains.

Team coordinator Rhonda Hernandez, from the Northern Migrant Resource Centre in Preston, beams as she scores the game, although she's the first to admit that it isn't easy to get newly arrived refugee young people involved in physical activities. And she should know: Rhonda coordinates a number of basketball teams for young people like Rina.

One issue that she has particularly noticed is how difficult it has been to involve the young people's parents.

"Parental engagement and support is difficult to maintain. We've tried family days but the parents or guardians of these kids often have higher priorities such as employment, housing and education, as well as facing language barriers."

Rhonda observed that the kids themselves were very keen to get involved in local physical activities. In 2003, confronted with a growing group of teenagers who would wander around the local basketball courts during practice time, she decided to act. The *Bridging Gaps with Basketball* project was born.

The project, funded by a VicHealth Active Participation Grant for the past two years, is run by the Northern Migrant Resource Centre under the auspice of the Banyule City Council. The project was designed to establish five ongoing basketball teams for teenagers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. It took off immediately and there are currently seven teams running in two competitions. More girls and boys keep turning up to the training sessions wanting to play.

Rhonda says that she won't turn them away.

"Many of these kids have fled their country of birth and arrived in Melbourne to stay with surviving family members. They've got some big issues to sort out in their lives and playing sport gives them time out. We'll just have to look for more funding so that everyone who wants to play can play."

The project was initially managed by a steering committee made up of representatives from the Northern Migrant Resource Centre, Banyule City Council, Banksia Secondary College, the Banksia Basketball Association and the players themselves. Attendance was high to begin with but dwindled after a few months. After a while, Rhonda was effectively running the project single-handedly.

Rhonda knows this wasn't an ideal situation. Keeping partners engaged over the longer term is a common challenge for many projects and one that is difficult to overcome. "Of course it would have been better to have a greater sense of ownership among the stakeholders, but people are busy with many commitments and too little time."

Luckily, sustained support has come from several local police officers who have coached the teams in their non-working time. Sergeant Michael Wells says he's seen the players develop greater confidence and self-esteem as each season progresses. "They learn to trust each other and get to know us as people, rather than as police officers," he explains. "Most importantly, the players get an opportunity they otherwise wouldn't have had."

Basketball legend Lindsay Gaze has also given a considerable amount of his time to the players. Lindsay tries to attend most training sessions and his enthusiasm for the game is infectious.

Financial sustainability has been an ongoing issue, partly because of the popularity of the project. With a potential financial crisis looming, VicHealth offered to attract media interest in the project to raise awareness and attract new financial supporters.

"Our media coordinator pitched the story to a sports reporter from one of Melbourne's TV stations," explains VicHealth senior project officer Kate Rathbun. "After some persistence, the reporter and a cameraman filmed a training session, interviewed Rhonda and Lindsay Gaze and the story ran on the news bulletin the following night."

*"They've got some big issues to sort out; playing sport gives them time out."*

"Almost immediately after the story aired we were contacted by the Variety Club," says Rhonda. "They were keen to talk about offering their support to continue the project. Long live the media!"

While Rhonda says that "she would do it all again", she says there are some hurdles when working on community-based projects that you simply can't predict.

With a knowing smile she offers a final bit of advice to anyone starting a project from scratch: "Keep in mind that finding the resources and keeping a project sustainable can take far more time and effort than you think."

**For more information about *Bridging Gaps with Basketball* contact the Northern Migrant Resource Centre, phone (03) 9484 7944 or visit [www.mrcne.org.au](http://www.mrcne.org.au)**

### Getting your team on the court

- *Understand the issues new arrivals face in their day to day lives*
- *Explain local rules and the role of referees and officials*
- *Consider how you will make uniforms available and affordable*
- *Develop relationships with participants' families*
- *Find ways to overcome language barriers*



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