

Raising a racket - new arrivals revive badminton

Increasing participation in physical activity through community sport and active recreation

This project is part of a VicHealth funding program known as PICSAR, which aims to increase participation levels in community sport and active recreation amongst people with disabilities and those from low socio-economic, Indigenous and new arrival communities.

The organisation

Badminton Victoria is a small organisation of three full-time and two part-time staff, based at the Melbourne Sports & Aquatic Centre, Albert Park. There are 50-plus member associations with over 5000 regular competition players. In addition, there are thousands more casual/social participants playing badminton around the state.

The project

This project aims to increase opportunities for Asian and new-arrival communities in Victoria to play recreational badminton. Development Officers have been appointed to work with these communities to develop links and partnerships with a view to expanding the reach of the project.

This strategy will hopefully lead to further interest in the sport and increased memberships in local clubs.



Enjoying a game of badminton. *Image courtesy of Belle Woods.*

A change of attitude head-starts a brighter future

The story

Badminton Victoria (BV) and its Development Manager, Peter Roberts, have learnt a valuable lesson. A willingness to embrace unexplored opportunities and work with existing and newly arrived multicultural communities has resulted in a change of attitude and a change of heart.

Now, instead of just focusing on producing club champions, BV sees

investing in community participation as a way to secure a healthier future for the sport. Peter Roberts now has his sights set on making a difference at a community level.

“To be honest, when I was told that we would be targeting new-arrival and Asian communities I was a bit apprehensive. I couldn’t see that this approach would lead to developing future champions. But now I am a champion of this project and

More information about Participation in Community Sport and Active Recreation (PICSAR) is available on the VicHealth website at: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/picsar

this strategy and realise that it's about providing opportunities at a community level and not all about developing champion players", says Peter Roberts.

BV approached the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) with an idea to work with new-arrival communities. CMY suggested Ballarat as a potential growth area as it has a large new-arrival community and CMY already had a part-time worker based there. BV also had a local resource: the Ballarat Badminton Association (BBA), one of BV's largest member associations, complete with an under-utilised 18-court stadium.

CMY's project worker, Belle Woods, was contracted by BV to work half a day a week to develop relationships with local new-arrival residents to introduce them to badminton. Belle's enthusiasm was phenomenal. She quickly established *Come and Try* days that were attended by members of Ballarat's African, Chinese, Filipino, Argentine, Iranian and Thai communities. A local bus company, Davis Bus Lines, provided free transport, with BBA providing coaches and barbecue lunches.

Free five-week introductory classes were offered to all participants. Sessions began running for Ballarat's Chinese, Togolese and German communities. A *Come and Try* night specifically targeting the local Indian community saw 70 people attend with a strong emphasis on family participation. A core group of 10 members from this group now play regularly at the stadium.

International students attending the University of Ballarat were also targeted through a special day complete with barbecue lunch. Between 20 and 40 students now participate each week, with the stadium providing a vital meeting point for one of the student groups. Students from India, China, Vietnam, Sweden, Germany, Singapore, France and Malaysia regularly participate.

BBA now has a booming casual court hire trade and says that half the people that attend regular social badminton come

from the community groups that attended the *Come and Try* days. The stadium has become a community hub and has a new pool of eager volunteers.

According to Peter Roberts, BV's board are delighted with the results of the Ballarat program and now proactively suggest other areas and groups to target.

"Our confidence has grown so much since the success of this partnership with CMY and the BBV. We now employ a sports development person to coordinate our work in this area. We are hoping to replicate the Ballarat model in areas such as Geelong and Bendigo", adds Peter Roberts.

BV is running two other community-based projects that have become self-sufficient after initial provision of start-up equipment and venue hire. A partnership with the Australian Vietnamese Women's Association now has two groups playing on different days at Gilmore Girls School in Footscray.

Another group, supported by Moreland City Council, participates in Brunswick. It has grown from the original six members to a flourishing database of 30. This group is now fully self-sufficient and its members represent a colourful mix of local cultures and ethnicities.

Currently, BV has people promoting this new focus on community participation at a state and a community level. A change of attitudes has also resulted in a change of fortune for some clubs that were struggling for members.

"From being sceptical and lukewarm I am now this program's biggest advocate. I look at all the faces of the new people participating and I think this has been fantastic! I have been very pleasantly surprised!" says Peter Roberts.

For more information on
Badminton Victoria go to:
www.badmintonvic.com.au
Telephone: (03) 9686 4777

PICSAR

Sport and active recreation organisations are well placed to assist VicHealth in addressing the health inequalities that result in poorer health outcomes for many groups in the community.

They have a tradition of providing opportunities for individuals and groups to:

- participate in physical activity,
- connect with other members of the community,
- feel part of their local community, and
- develop knowledge and skills that can be used in a range of contexts.

The Participation in Community Sport and Active Recreation (PICSAR) Program comprises three funding programs:

- State and Regional Grants
- Active Participation Grants
- Active Club Grants

The first two programs are long-term investments that work with State Sporting Associations, Regional Sports Assemblies, statewide peak agencies and regional organisations to increase participation in physical activity in specific target populations.

A learning snapshot from the independent evaluation being conducted by Monash University/ ARTD Consultants shows that:

1. partnerships are perceived as beneficial to program delivery
2. it is important that staff (paid or voluntary) have the required skills to implement activities
3. sports at all levels should consider adapting policies and activities to provide greater flexibility to promote inclusion.