



Australian Government

Australian Sports Commission

Fact Sheet

Active After-school Communities program — getting inactive children active



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Children are getting moving thanks to a wide range of free and enjoyable sport and other structured physical activities provided by the Australian Government’s Active After-school Communities (AASC) program.

The AASC program is an initiative delivered nationally by the Australian Sports Commission. It aims to engage inactive children and, through positive experiences, develop a love of sport that inspires them to join a local sporting club.

Something for everyone

Those involved in the program with South West Netball in Busselton Western Australia credit the AASC program’s success to its focus on having fun. As one participant says, ‘I know that the kids love it. They love the games. If it’s fun, they’re interested’.

The program increases exposure to organised sport, offering more than 70 different sports ranging from netball, rugby and cricket to gymnastics, lacrosse, hockey, squash, golf and bowls. In addition the program also delivers up to 20 structured physical activities, such as dance and circus skills.

A deliverer with the community sporting organisation Squash Magic in Bridgetown, Western Australia, points out that the program is ‘not all about the mainstream sports’. Because of its range of options, the program introduces children to activities they may never have experienced, giving them an opportunity to learn from local experts.

Engaging inactive children

Research shows that without the program many children would engage in sedentary activities after school, such as playing computer games or watching television.

A coach with East Coast Youth Basketball based in Swansea, New South Wales, says it was obvious that some children had previously been used to sitting in front of the television in the after-school timeslot. ‘They’re finally up there and they’re working with other kids out there, and developing skills, developing self-esteem. They feel better within themselves and their relationships with others are improving ...’

The program offers a healthy option for the vast majority of participating parents who say there is no other sport available to their child, or they were unaware of alternatives before their child became involved in the AASC program.

A parent from Perth says the program ‘is educating your kids that there is the option to be active rather than sitting inside watching TV. It shows them that they have the option to go outside and be active’.

Program deliverers have also noticed a marked improvement in children’s attitudes towards sport. An after-school care provider in Western Australia says, ‘We had a couple of kids who never really did much in the way of physical activity but they like the program because it’s all about fun and having a go, not how good you are’.

A coach with Chris Chandler Tennis Coaching in Frankston South, Victoria, believes several children whose parents could not afford tennis lessons are still able to learn the sport thanks to the AASC program. 'So they're getting a chance to play what they normally wouldn't'

Improving sporting abilities

The benefits of getting children active include better motor skills and sporting abilities, with those running the program highlighting a marked improvement in children from the start to the end of term.

A deliverer with Colac Junior Badminton in Alvie, Victoria, has witnessed this firsthand. 'A lot of them are not coordinated when they start off. A lot of them wouldn't have a clue what to do with a racquet and what to do with a shuttle, and then if you see them after eight weeks, you think "Wow, they've done really well".'

Enhancing self-esteem

As well as the physical benefits, the AASC program also has a positive influence on behaviour, improving confidence and self-esteem and helping children generate a more positive outlook on life.

Staff from Tara and District Branch Little Athletics based in The Gums, Queensland, have found children involved in sport 'always have a more positive outlook'. The organisation also found its members excelled at regional and state competitions after starting athletics at the AASC program.

An after-school care provider in Western Australia says, 'The program gives the kids an opportunity to try different things ... to give them a taste of something different ... this helps overcome their lack of confidence'.

An inclusive program

The AASC program gives children an opportunity to interact with other age groups as part of a team, as well as meeting children from other schools and different cultural backgrounds.

There is an emphasis on inclusiveness and the majority of program deliverers and providers believe children of all abilities feel welcome in the program.

An East Coast Youth Basketball deliverer says children build confidence over the course of the program. 'If it's a regular program that goes on year after year after year ... they see our faces on a regular basis, and they get to know us ... they'll run out and they'll grab our bags and carry our bags in for us. Little things like that. We are like friends to them.'

Deliverers also suggest that the AASC program provides children with an opportunity to participate in sports that they may not otherwise have had, due to financial or transportation barriers.

A coach with Chris Chandler Tennis Coaching in Frankston South, Victoria, believes several children whose parents could not afford tennis lessons are still able to learn the sport thanks to the AASC program. 'So they're getting a chance to play that they normally wouldn't,' he says.

Facts at a glance

In Semester 2, 2010:

- approximately 190 000 children around Australia participated in the AASC program
- approximately 140 000 children are more positive towards physical activity and sport due to the AASC program
- approximately 100 000 children are now interested in club membership due to the AASC program
- approximately 60 000 children participating in the AASC program are likely to join a club in the next six months
- 87% of participating children are engaging in structured after-school physical activity through the AASC program that they would not otherwise be doing
- 77% of parents say their child feels more positive towards physical activity as a result of the AASC program
- 91% of school and after-school care providers agree children who are less physically active feel welcome participating in the program

Active After-school Communities

Helping kids and communities get active

For more information visit
ausport.gov.au/aasc