

**Submission to the House Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander Affairs
Inquiry into the contribution of sport to Indigenous wellbeing and
mentoring**

The Australian Drug Foundation's *Good Sports* program focuses on making community sporting clubs healthier, safer and more family friendly places.

The *Good Sports* model is based on building relationships with club committees and encouraging them to engage in alcohol and tobacco harm reduction initiatives. More recently a focus on healthy eating has been added to the program.

The committee, acting as leaders of the club, are supported to gradually introduce practice and policy changes that promote a culture of 'responsible' drinking and health promotion within their club. This in turn encourages players and members to review their attitudes and beliefs and alter their drinking, smoking and eating behaviour.

Sport is an excellent platform for these activities as it is:

- An environment where alcohol misuse is common and smoking and junk food are also concerns
- An environment through which many people, in particular young men, can be reached
- An environment where team ethos is strong and changes in individual behaviour can be achieved through changes in group norms (the club culture)

It is our experience that using people's shared love of sport and passion to succeed, alcohol harm reduction and other preventive health messages can be conveyed in a non-threatening, non-confrontational manner through the environment of sport

The ADF believe that this sports-focused community engagement driven approach to preventive health has great potential for application in remote indigenous communities where sport is important.

Sport is very highly regarded in Indigenous communities. It engenders community pride and plays a crucial role in bringing people together and blends well with "traditional" cultural activities.

The ADF is currently undertaking a project in two remote communities in the Northern Territory to help us understand the best way to work with Indigenous people to introduce an adaptation of *Good Sports* that is culturally sensitive and relevant to their communities.

The ADF recommends that the Australian Government investigate the significant opportunities inherent in indigenous Australians using sport as a vehicle for preventive health activities within indigenous communities and that they review the potential for using Good Sports as a suitable program for achieving this objective.