

FITZROY'S SHINING STARS: A CASE STUDY

BRIEF BACKGROUND

The Fitzroy Stars Football and Netball Club was formed in the 1970s and was an important weekly meeting place for the Melbourne Aboriginal community. In the 1990s, the club disbanded, against the community's want. Stars members and the Victorian Aboriginal community re-established the club back in 2008, with the help from organisations like Oxfam Australia (Oxfam) and the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth).

The Fitzroy Stars aims to provide a positive, supportive organisation to instill discipline, and create better health and wellbeing opportunities. The Stars support Aboriginal people to improve their lifestyle and broaden their opportunities. Sports can provide a platform for the creation of a strong and healthy community. The Stars model and advocate healthy lifestyles and aim to improve the life chances of their members – increasing positive images of the community and encourages social cohesion.

The club brings heritage and strengths of the future together through their values of:

- unity;
- respect;
- integrity;
- pride; and
- passion.

The Fitzroy Stars are a key to Closing the Gap in health inequalities in Melbourne between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. This is evident in a documentary completed by the Fitzroy Stars and Oxfam (in 2011) 'Fitzroy Stars help Close the Gap': <http://youtu.be/PBNMEEeZaqM>



Photos: Richard Kendall/OxfamAUS

THE BENEFITS OF THE CLUB

The Football players have started to go on an annual pre-season camp which has built the self-esteem and cohesion of the club.

The Netball team has also been considerably strengthened by Oxfam and VicHealth funding. Both the female and male Stars have benefited from a social club being developed at the Aboriginal Advancement League.

The Stars players are attempting to be role models within the Aboriginal Victorian community with some of the football players becoming White Ribbon Ambassadors.

Further, every player who joins the club now must abide by the Stars Code of Conducts developed for players. This document including new contract agreements, players rules and opportunities.

A social club and ground have been developed at the Aboriginal Advancement League providing increased opportunity for revenue and community support.

There has been increase in programs, activities and support mechanisms put in place for young Aboriginal Victorian people with the club membership building to over 200 members. One such program revolves around the reduction of drug use in the community.

Organisations, government and universities are approaching the Stars as an avenue to improve Aboriginal Victorian people's health, wellbeing and social determinants of health.



Photos: Richard Kendall/OxfamAUS

PARTNER REFLECTIONS

"The financial assistance provided by Oxfam and VicHealth is important but more so the forward thinking provided by both organisations. They offer the Stars a way of making our club sustainable and the advice and assistance that both give have ensured the survival of the club. We sometimes find ourselves in a football bubble - Oxfam and VicHealth always provide ideas that take us outside of our comfort zone and make us develop. Without this the club would not be at the same point we are today – we have come a long way since 2008 when this partnership began."

Simon Minton-Connell
Fitzroy Stars, 2010-present
CEO

"Having been involved in program managing the Stars at both Oxfam and VicHealth I see the benefit that mainstream NGO's and government bodies gain from this partnership.

"The Stars are a unique club and when Simon talks about the club being more than just about sports and more about community, he is not speaking rhetoric – this organisation is pivotal to the Victorian Aboriginal community. Organisations like VicHealth should continue to support the club because of its potential to make a real change to Closing the Gap in health inequalities in Victoria between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people."

Jonathan 'Yotti' Kingsley
Oxfam: 2010-2012; VicHealth: 2012-present
Senior Project Officer, Health Inequalities

"Oxfam values the partnership with the stars because it's important to have strong Aboriginal males – who act as role models for the younger generations coming through. The Fitzroy Stars is a good model of community people who work and take responsibility for the issues they face."

Josh Cubillo
Oxfam Australia: 2012-present
Health and Wellbeing Programs Coordinator,
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Peoples' Program