

Recruiting and retaining people from multi cultural backgrounds – what is currently happening in our sport and recreation clubs?

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Introduction

Australia has a dominant culture, which places great emphasis on sport and recreation participation, however, there has been a decline in the proportion of the populace joining formal sport and recreation organisations in the last decade²⁸. People from multicultural backgrounds have attributed to this decline due to the disproportionately low participation rates from those in the population who were born overseas²⁹. For example, in the state of Victoria, over 44 percent of residents were born or have at least one parent born overseas³⁰. For sport and recreation organisations to be viable and continue operating, a shift in paradigm regarding membership needs to take place. Clubs need to become more culturally diverse or face the prospect of a diminishing target group and a narrower membership base³¹. To achieve this, club administrators need to be willing and capable of implementing strategies, in order to provide opportunities for people from multi cultural backgrounds to participate in sport and recreation.

Project

The study sought to develop an understanding of community sport and active recreation clubs' willingness, capacities and schemes to provide opportunities for people from multi cultural backgrounds and specifically for Horn of Africans (HoA) and South East Asians (SEA), to participate in sport and recreation. It also explored the factors that facilitated and inhibited the planning and provision of special strategies to cater for these people. This study was part of a collaborative research between VicHealth and Victoria University.

The exploratory research in this study applied two divergent research methodologies to identify dominant motives, plans, constraints, practices and achievements from community sport and active recreation clubs. The sampled clubs were from the vicinity surrounding the City of Maribyrnong and Brimbank City Council. A qualitative approach explored the reasoning, practices and outcomes of sport and active recreation organisations in making special provisions generally for multi cultural people and specifically for Horn of Africa and South East Asia migrants. Subsequently, understandings derived from this analysis were then used to underpin a quantitative survey, of these issues using a larger, more representative sample (n = 241). A discriminant function analysis was then performed.

Results and discussion

Findings revealed the importance of community sport and active recreation clubs to be exposed to people from multi cultural backgrounds. It was not until a club began to experience a particular multi cultural group that it realised the lack of understanding and strategies it actually had to cater for these people. In addition, this realisation increased the number of constraints these clubs had to recruit and retain people from multi cultural backgrounds. Clubs that had a higher membership base (<10%) of, for example HoA and SEA participants, understood the tailored recruitment and retention strategies required for this population. These constraints and strategies shall be discussed during the presentation.

²⁸ Australian Sports Commission, 2000

²⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001

³⁰ Multicultural Affairs Unit, 1999

³¹ Booth & Tatz, 2000; Taylor & Toohey, 1999

References

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