



In League In Harmony

National Rugby League

In League In Harmony (ILIH) uses the Rugby League context of teamwork to promote social cohesion by providing learning experiences for the participants to develop their interpersonal skills and build their capacity to contribute positively to their communities. Launched in December 2012 the program reached 750 participants in its inaugural year. The program is relevant for male and females and particularly targets youth from CALD backgrounds between the ages of 12 to 16 years (School year 7-10). The program provides a safe and interactive environment for cultural exchange as participants learn to acknowledge, appreciate and celebrate Australia's diversity in culture and ability. Participants develop skills and understanding, assisting them to tackle social issues such as social isolation, racism, gender equality and bullying.



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Background

The NRL's mission is to bring people together to enrich their lives, which is demonstrated through its commitment of using Rugby League to promote equality and opportunities for all people. Western Sydney is recognised as the heartland of the sport of Rugby League and is also a region with the highest number of people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds in Australia. These communities include newly arrived migrants and humanitarian refugees who face challenges such as displacement due to war, persecution, racial and religious intolerance. As a result, many people are at risk of being socially isolated due to language and cultural barriers. Rugby League is an inclusive sport which unites people from all walks of life to feel welcome regardless of gender, culture, ability or social background.

Innovation

Coaches Talks & Training Sessions Participants take part in a series of interactive themed messages around the NRL's values of 'teamwork' and 'inclusiveness'. Messages are conducted in the classroom by NRL Education Officers and NRL Ambassadors. Rugby League skills sessions are tailored for participants new to Rugby League and the more experienced. The program uses movement as an educational tool not only to teach the students the fundamental skills of Rugby League, but also to promote

key messages such as positive communication, team work and respect. Modified versions of Rugby League are used such as NRL League Tag and NRL Touch football. A gala day is conducted in the seventh week of the program at a central location for all groups involved in the program to celebrate their new learnt knowledge and skills. Students participate in NRL League Tag and NRL Touch Football games and participants are presented with positive participation awards. To add to the celebration music, food, and guest speakers are elements of the festival. Developing the participant's capability to have a voice and develop their leadership is an important part of the ILIH program. Participants who have showcased positive engagement throughout the program are selected to be Ambassadors to promote ILIH messages. The youth Ambassadors take part in NRL tailored leadership workshops and are provided with the opportunities to develop their leadership skills through assisting NRL staff in gala days, public speaking and volunteer at events.

Partnerships

The NRL collaborates with stakeholders of the community to ensure that participants integrate into local Junior NRL teams as players, coaches, referees or sports trainers. ILIH resources are linked to the NSW Department of education's PDHPE syllabus and other key learning areas of school curriculum. Teachers

are provided with NRL's Learning with League resources which are utilised to reinforce messages once the program has completed. ILIH is supported by the Australian Government, Department of Social Services. The messages in the program are aligned with the objectives of the Australian Government's Diversity and Social Cohesion Program. Government initiatives such as Harmony Day and the 'It Stops With Me' strategy are reinforced throughout the program.

Sustainability

The program is in the second year of operation and aims to reach 1800 participants in 2014. A presenter's resource pack is being designed in collaboration with education and community services to ensure the program continues to be utilised by NRL to service more communities and participants. With ongoing support of the Australian Government and community stakeholders the In League In Harmony program will continue to contribute positively to the community.

Impact

Interviews were completed with a sample of key stakeholders across the In League In Harmony program to identify and examine the perceived social outcomes of the program. This included project officers, teachers, learning support behaviour coordinators and students who reported enhanced social cohesion, confidence and engagement in other school activities.