



Creating Chances

Football United

Football United's mission is to create chances for youth through the magic of football. We envision a world where every person can reach for their goals. Through its innovative Sport for Social Change processes Football United improves how community based organisations engage, educate and employ youth. Since 2006 Football United has delivered programs for over 8,000 children and youth. Robust research, combined with a tried and tested approach underpins the program to ensure sustainability. From its beginnings, Football United has grown significantly to reach children and youth across Australia.



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Background

Football United was founded in 2006 at UNSW's School of Public Health and Community Medicine Sydney, where the program headquarters remains auspiced by UNSW. Football United was developed from a vision that people's love for Football (soccer) can be used to build opportunities for belonging, racial harmony and community cohesion. Begun with a goal to support refugee and newly arrived immigrant youth and families in their transition into Australian society, as the program implementation progressed, Football United leadership noted that often community sport, as currently practiced, is exclusive rather than inclusive. Participation is largely not possible for many socio-disadvantaged youth. This vision has evolved to become a program which combines a number of effective mechanisms for engaging and re-engaging refugee and disadvantaged youth into their communities, fostering their educational experiences and promoting multicultural harmony in general.

Innovation

Football United balances between sport-based component and non-sport based components towards optimum participation for its participants. The literature and hands-on experiences indicate that success of any sport-based social interventionist program is largely determined by the strength of its non-sport components such as; leader-

ship development, life skills development, management skills development and community mobilisation tactic and application – what it does with young people once they are brought into the program through sport. Football United programs assure this balance between the sport-based and the non-sport based aspects of a program, where sport is just one part of a whole package of resources and social supports requiring a level of investment and intensive, day-to-day involvement far beyond that of most sport-based intervention programs.

Partnerships

Football United's partnership-based approach involves working with the community and community leaders to identify and address local needs. Football United was one of 32 programs and the only Australian organisation chosen by FIFA to participate in the first ever Festival for Hope World Cup tournament in June 2010 and again in 2014. Football United was recognised with a 2012 Australian Parliamentary Community Sports Award, a New South Wales Building Inclusive Communities Award, and its film was awarded an Australian National Human Rights Award in 2010.

Sustainability

All Football United programs systematically include local engagement, capacity building and leadership development pro-rams, which develop self-esteem and leadership skills

whilst building community morale and participation. In addition to football training and playing opportunities, the program elements include ongoing leadership and personal life-skills development processes. In early May 2014 Football United launched the Creating Chances Lifeskills through Football program, a consolidation of its components developed to date, to provide a comprehensive class-room and field based lifeskills program for youth.

Impact

Football United's activities are underpinned by research, including the Australian Research Council (ARC) funded Linkage Project that evaluates the effectiveness of utilising sport (football) to improve social inclusion for refugee children and youth in urban areas. Football United research findings indicate that Football United has made the following impacts in the area of social inclusion: Significant reduction in peer-related problems among male FUn participants, as compared to those in comparison sites.

Significant increase in positive orientation toward ethnic groups other than their own compared to data from comparison sites among male FUn participants.