



The Social Value of an Aboriginal Run Sporting Club



Research Project

The Centre for Sport and Social Impact (CSSI) at La Trobe University was commissioned by Rumbalara Football Netball Club to determine the social value of their club; a uniquely Aboriginal run community sport club in Shepparton, Victoria.

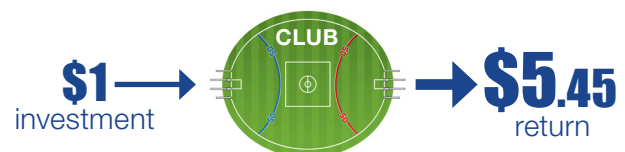
It is important to note that this research includes the views of people outside of the Rumbalara FNC. The research design deliberately sought to confirm the views of club members with people outside their club and utilised a number of existing data sources from government agencies to establish the social value of this club.

Social Return on Investment

The social return on investment for the Rumbalara FNC indicates that for every \$1 invested in cash, volunteer time and other resources to run the club, it generates at least \$5.45 return in social value in terms of increased social connectedness, wellbeing, and mental health status of its members and other community members; employment outcomes; personal development; physical health; Indigenous pride and support for the delivery of a range of non-sport programs for the Indigenous communities in the greater Shepparton region.

SROI is an increasingly accepted method for undertaking impact assessments, especially for community focussed organisations and has been identified by the Productivity Commission as a comprehensive method for social impact assessment. SROI is based on program logic – the process of identifying the inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts associated with an organisation.

**For every \$1 invested in
Rumbalara Football Netball
Club it generates \$5.45
return in social value.**



The social value of Rumbalara FNC

The club delivers a similar suite of sporting, social and business networking activities much like any other sports club in Australia, however, RFNC is unique in that it offers or facilitates a range of community focussed activities aimed at increasing the capacity of the Indigenous population to improve their mental and physical wellbeing. These programs range from providing financial literacy training to formal education and employment placement programs and are often delivered in partnership with other providers.

The club has unique financial and human resource challenges, arguably more challenging than most sport clubs, due to the limited internal fundraising ability of its members and a scarcity of well trained and competent volunteers to undertake key roles within the club.

RFNC is an institution with cultural authority led by Indigenous leaders; this creates an environment where programs are delivered with cultural sensitivity and over time, this has created a club that its members feel can be trusted.

Through the creation of this culturally safe space, the RFNC is able to engage at-risk population groups. By improving their capacity to deal with racial issues and increasing their pride in their cultural identity, individuals are more likely to continue their education, find employment, and are less likely to engage in criminal behaviour, substance abuse or experience social isolation. These factors lead to increased life quality and wellbeing, and potentially increased life expectancy.

The RFNC benefits the community by developing leadership and interpersonal skills of its members, transferring cultural knowledge, providing a family focussed social network, facilitating access to support services, influencing behaviour of young people, and instilling a sense of pride in individuals' Indigenous identity.

The RFNC has played an important role in facilitating awareness and understanding of Indigenous culture and values within the Shepparton and wider regional community.

RFNC, despite being unable to secure long-term sustainable funding, is a model of a successful program designed to improve the mental health and wellbeing of Indigenous Australians because it:

- takes a holistic approach and design programs specific to the context setting;
- is driven in consultation with the Indigenous community and built on the Indigenous values of family, connection and culture;
- empowers individuals while providing support;
- partners with relevant community organisations; and
- has a long-term, sustainable model which builds capacity in the community.

The RFNC has had a material impact in reducing youth suicide rates among Indigenous members of the community, improving mental health, reducing the cost to the community of delivering health services, assisted many members of the Indigenous community achieve in education and employment placement, and contributed to developing a generation of Indigenous leaders.

The RFNC continues to face some significant challenges, namely: inaccurate or misleading perceptions of its funding and resource base among other sport clubs, conflict of how to position the club as both an "average" sport club and as an Indigenous-run club, relatively poor media coverage of the benefits provided by the club, continued racism towards its members, and limited capacity to take a leadership role for cultural engagement in the future.



Members' views

"We've got a breakfast program for the kids at home games, they can come in and have breakfast before they play the game because there'll be a lot of kids that probably won't get breakfast before they come. The kids will hangout and catch up and they'll have a juice and toast and then go and play football together on the same team. It really has that family model"

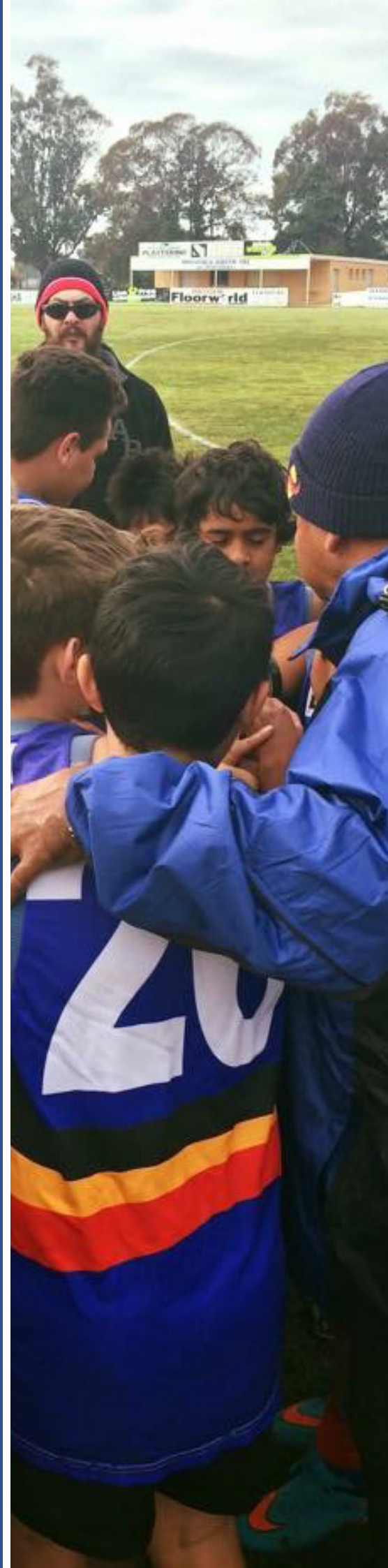
"Through the football netball club, and through our program's connection to the football netball club, we can knock on any door in the Aboriginal community and we're accepted and invited in, so you have a chance to work, not just with the individual but also with the family"

"A lot of people used to gather or connect in the waiting room at the clinic. We've never really been welcomed into tennis clubs, or rotary clubs, or social clubs around town. It's hard for people to step out of their comfort zones when there's been so many historical barriers to us participating in broader communities. By Rumbalara existing, it means there is a place where we can come together on a social platform that's not focused on a funeral or a sickness. Nothing else. We just come together around sport"

"It's a safe space. There's no judgement here. When they walk through the gates, I tend to think that during the day for some it's very hard to be black in this community. You can walk the streets and do your shopping and do your everyday business. For some Aboriginal community members that's extremely difficult. They walk in two worlds out there. When they enter the (RFNC) gates, they're just black. They're just themselves. They're just home. There's no one pressuring them, there's no one there going to look at them or be racist to them"

"When we host other clubs that come here, we do exactly the same as every other club does in the league. We have afternoon tea, we have a canteen, a kitchen. We play netball and football. We're exactly the same as others but it's good to invite mainstream clubs into our place, Rumba. A lot are still challenged by us I think. They don't know how to embrace us as just another team in the league. I think they're challenged by their own insecurities and how they think they need to embrace us"

"Rumbalara, it's not doing what other sporting clubs do, because it has to be different. It has the same challenges as other sporting clubs, but its challenges are far deeper and greater.... Its forcing people to interact with Indigenous people, basically, when before, they could have just kept us on the fringes, but all of a sudden, we're not on the fringes any more. We're here and you have to deal with us. That's what the club challenges, because it's like you can go home and you never have to meet an Indigenous person here in Shepparton, if you don't want to, but if you play against the Rumbalara Football netball club, you do. There's no way you get around that. That's the kind of impact that the ... That's what makes it a different sporting club."



The reach of the Rumbalara Football Netball Club

Community Activity Reach

Other Programs

- Eat, Play, Connect
- Brolga Business Networking Breakfast
- Nunyak Art Wall and local galleries
- Partnership with Victoria Police
- Community Leadership Programs
- Reconciliation Action Plan

Rumba Ripples

- 2 – 10 Partners
- 2 Permanent staff
- 147 Employed over 3 years

ASHE

- 3 Partners
- 4 Staff
- 50 – 80 Students yearly
- ASHEfest with local schools

Sporting Activity Reach

- Host of AFL community camps
- Coaching and leadership training with AFL teams
- Coaching and leadership training with Netball teams
- Annual derby with Fitzroy Stars
- Participate in the State-wide Koori Football Netball Carnival

Funding, Sponsors and Partners

- 6 program funders
- 6 main club sponsors
- 33 Minor club sponsors

Social Reach

- 333 Twitter followers
- 1366 Facebook followers
- Social functions
- 160 Naidoc Ball attendees
- 400+ Game Day spectators
- 1500 Unity Cup Day spectators

Club Members

- Life members
- Past players
- 130 Social supporters

Game Day Volunteers

- 25 Coaches and trainers
- 25 General volunteers

Management

- 9 Board members
- 2.5 Permanent staff

Players

- 79 Senior football players
- 78 Junior football players
- 55 Senior netball players
- 54 Junior netball players
- 14 Auskick
- 22 Net set go

For further information on this project contact:

Rumbalara FNC at www.rfnc.com.au

Centre for Sport and Social Impact at www.latrobe.edu.au/cssi