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Australian Sports Commission

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Addressing the decline in sport participation in secondary schools

Findings from the Youth Participation Research Project

FULL REPORT

November 2017

Contents

Introduction

The Australian Sports Commission (ASC) is committed to keeping sports relevant and viable, whilst supporting all Australians to develop their physical literacy for active and healthy lives. The ASC is aware that the sport environment is changing and is dedicated to supporting our national sporting organisations to thrive and maximise their ability to contribute to participation outcomes. A key component of this commitment is the sharing of high-quality information, research and data to enable better decision making concerning participation.

Today more than ever Australians are time poor, have limited budgets, are being inundated by new forms of entertainment and face increasing barriers to participation. As society changes new preferences are emerging; Australians desire greater flexibility, more tailored products and sports that work for them.

This is magnified when looking at young Australians. Research shows that an early connection to sport can positively influence participation and encourage a lifelong love of sport. The Australian Government's $160 million Sporting Schools program helps schools increase student participation in sport and connects them with community sporting opportunities.

However a significant issue exists within the youth demographic (aged 13 to 17 years). The evidence is clear; during this period of their lives a significant number of young people stop participating in sport.

The ASC has investigated the fall in participation within this demographic in an effort to identify ways to keep youths active and engaged in sport and physical activity at this important time in their lives. In partnership with the sport and education sectors and La Trobe University, the ASC has undertaken the Youth Participation Research Project (the Project) which identifies and addresses the barriers to sport participation amongst Australian youths in the secondary school setting.

This report provides an overview of the Project. It shares the learnings from the Project, providing advice and recommendations on how the Australian youth demographic can be engaged in sport and physical activity in the secondary school setting.

Child participation by age

Child age

- ● Sport-related activity
- ● Non-sport-related activity

Adult participation by age

Adult age

- ● Sport-related activity
- ● Non-sport-related activity
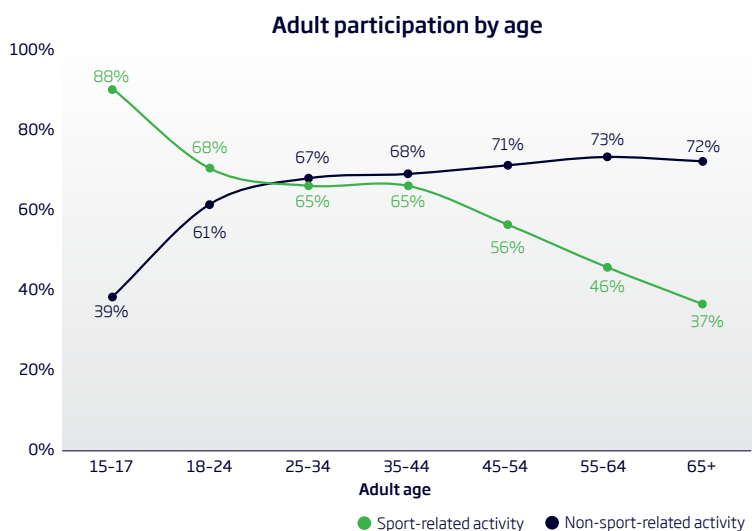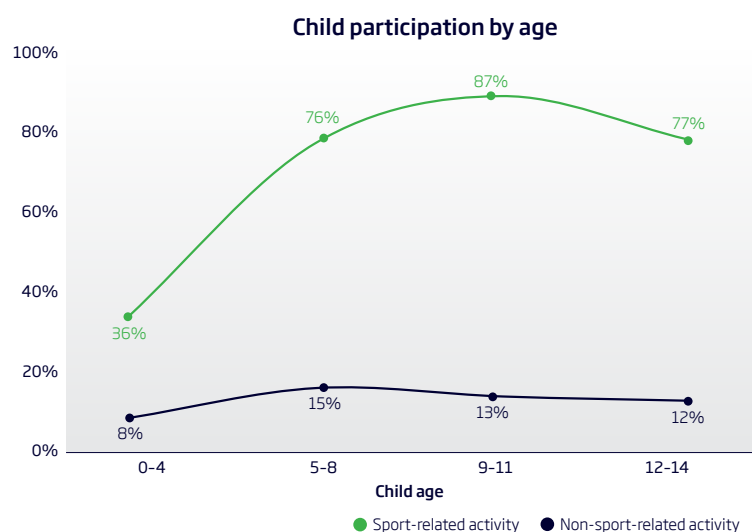
Project background

To address the decline in youth sport participation the ASC initiated the Youth Participation Research Project to better understand:

> what the barriers to sport participation are for disengaged students, and

> what interventions would effectively address these barriers, and sustainably engage and motivate youth to continue to participate in sport and physical activity.

Initial research undertaken by the ASC found that the school environment provides an ideal opportunity to improve participation outcomes for the youth demographic. The Project would build upon the existing global research to provide a better understanding of what is successful in the Australian school context.

The findings would inform the actions that the sport and education sectors could take to increase youth participation. Particularly, it would support sports' ability to develop youth specific products for the secondary school market. Whilst some sports have existing youth sport offerings in the secondary school market, many have not.

The research would also support the ASC to expand the $160 million Australian Government Sporting Schools program into secondary schools in 2017 – with a targeted focus on Year 7 and 8 students and particularly those from low socio-economic backgrounds, females, and the physically inactive. It would provide the ASC with tested strategies to engage these cohorts, who demographically make up a large proportion of youth disengaged from sport.

To assist in this research, the ASC engaged La Trobe University's Centre for Sport and Social Impact who conducted a pilot program involving secondary schools (across all Australian states and territories, and with government, independent and catholic education sectors) and sport sector partners, to evaluate, measure and report on the impact of interventions.

THE PILOT

The pilot ran over **5 SCHOOL TERMS**

With 8 **NATIONAL SPORTING ORGANISATIONS (NSOS)**

(RUGBY AU, netball AUSTRALIA, Athletics Australia, ROWING Australia, Australian Sailing, tennis Australia, AFL, GolfAustralia)

Across **100 SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

From this came

4 REPORTS providing in-depth data collected in Terms 2, 3 and 4 2016 and Term 1 2017

32 CASE STUDIES from site visits, teachers, deliverers and students

15 INDIVIDUAL SPORT REPORTS with findings across 2016 and 2017

These were informed by

1,345 parent/guardian surveys

282 teacher surveys

95 teacher interviews

6,600+ student surveys

64 deliverer interviews and surveys

36 NSO interviews

38 site visits

260♀ 306♂ in student focus groups

THE RESULTS FEATURED IN THIS REPORT

The research identified:

→ the groups of disengaged students, who they are, their barriers and motivations.

→ the value of the sport-in-school relationship and how to build it.

→ strategies to enhance engagement through program delivery, deliverer and design.

The research collated:

→ 10 Recommended development areas for sporting organisations currently delivering in secondary schools

→ 14 Program design and delivery principles for creating new secondary school sport programs

Understand the secondary school student demographic

Sport, as it is being delivered, is less able to meet secondary student needs. This is particularly true for disengaged students. It is important for sports and sport deliverers, schools and teachers, and parents and guardians to understand the barriers that impact these students, and what can motivate them to participate in sport for active and healthy lives.

Disengaged and physically inactive students are likely to be:

> female
> older
> from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

They are:

> less confident to participate in any sport
> less likely to perceive their family and friends as supportive of them playing sport
> less confident to try new sports
> less likely to value sport.

What motivates them to participate in sport?

> To improve their skills and fitness for a healthier, more energetic life
> To spend time with friends whilst having fun

40% had not participated in organised sport in the last 12 months

Average age **13.9** YEARS OLD

♂ **38%**
♀ **57%**

41% live in an area with a Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) of 5-7

20% went on no holidays in the past 12 months

Four cohorts of disengaged students

Disengaged students can be grouped into four distinct cohorts. They each have unique barriers and motivations.

COHORT 1

Students who would like to participate in sport but are unable to due to environmental barriers

BARRIERS
> Lack of experienced sport teachers, sport culture, facilities or equipment in school
> Travel distance for deliverers or students in community
> Family support for sport fees and transport

MOTIVATIONS
> An interest or hobby
> Be active
> Learn new skills
> Social connection

COHORT 2

Long-term disengaged students who do not currently participate in sport because they have never connected with sport

BARRIERS
> Lack of interest, confidence, fitness, skill or motivation for sport
> Family prioritising academic ability; not supporting girls' sport participation
> Social norms of gender appropriate sports; peer pressure

MOTIVATIONS
> Try alternative sports
> Spend time with friends
> Improve their fitness level and live a healthier lifestyle (after psychological barriers are overcome)

COHORT 3

Students who participate (are present) but do not engage i.e. stand around talking, sit on sidelines

BARRIERS
> Lack of skill, fitness, motivation, confidence, interest; doesn't value sport; feeling self-conscious
> Cultural practices that prevent mixing genders
> Repetitive or unorganised activities; inexperienced deliverers

MOTIVATIONS
> Try a new sport where all students have a low skill level
> Spend time with friends
> Improve their fitness level

COHORT 4

Students who have dropped out of sport i.e. who do not choose it as an elective

BARRIERS
> Time pressures i.e. employment, academic, socialising
> Sport is too competitive and is a large commitment
> Females affected by gender stereotypes and social norms
> Injured through sport; finding it challenging to return

MOTIVATIONS
> Keep up their fitness and skills
> The challenge of competition without the commitment and intensity
> Stress relief

Barriers to sport participation

The barriers to sport participation for disengaged secondary students are outlined in more detail below. These barriers can be grouped into three areas:

1. Barriers to sport delivery – experienced by schools

2. Barriers to sport *within* school – experienced by students

3. Barriers to sport *outside* of school – experienced by students

◯ Barriers to sport delivery (experienced by schools)

Curriculum pressures

Health and physical education (HPE) classes are responsible for delivering theory. Balancing this with the delivery of actual physical activity can be challenging and reduce the time students are actively participating.

Teacher capability

Non-HPE specialist teachers can be unfamiliar or not engaged with the sport activity, and may lack the ability to motivate or engage students to participate.

Teacher resources (time)

School HPE and sport departments are time poor with a number of responsibilities. Introducing or changing a sport program can be a burden because sport programs are planned up to a year in advance. Additionally, the time taken to contact, consult and negotiate program delivery with sporting organisations can be time consuming and perceived as cost-ineffective.

Cost to students

For schools with a large number of disadvantaged or low socio-economic students, delivering a sport program which incurs transport costs (i.e. bus or facility hire) can be a barrier. Students are unable to afford this cost and the school is unable to absorb the expense.

Equipment and facilities

The range, age and quality of equipment and facilities in schools varies due to the varied amount of available funding for HPE departments. Facilities and space is a barrier for a number of schools, especially metropolitan schools where green space can be limited.

Communication and innovation between school and sport

Teachers who identify student cohorts who face specific barriers, face challenges themselves when organising a program. This includes scheduling the necessary time for planning and communications, and developing the ability and resources to innovate programs with the sport. Sport deliverers and teachers need to collaborate to schedule effectively and establish program solutions.

Sport workforce and delivery network

A major challenge for any school sport program administered through an NSO is the ability to fulfil the delivery requirements of the school. Issues include a limited workforce, particularly in regional and remote areas. Where sport deliverers are available, they are often overwhelmed by competing priorities, including situations where programs are timetabled for different schools but within the same time period, decreasing their ability to deliver to targeted cohorts and meet each school's time allocation.

2 Barriers to sport *within* school (experienced by students)

Loss of interest in sport

Year 9 has been identified as the age when students begin to lose interest in school sport in favour of other (technology based) leisure activities or time spent socialising. When participating in sport activities, students at this age are more likely than primary school students or those in Years 7 and 8 to be disruptive or demonstrate anti-social behaviour.

Competing extra-curricular commitments

Students have limited time at school to participate in sport. In addition to their curriculum classes, students in secondary schools participate in extra academic lessons, language and cultural classes, art programs (music, drama etc.), and other activities such as debating.

Long-term disengagement from sport

Students who have never connected with sport never develop a physical activity or sport habit, and as such have a long-term disconnection from sport.

Education and awareness of the benefits of sport

Students in schools where HPE does not include a strong theoretical component can be unaware of the benefits of physical activity and have little understanding of the possible consequences of an inactive lifestyle.

Injury

Students who have previously been injured playing sport are more likely to be cautious about the types of sports that they play (e.g. reduced contact). Schools have become conscious of their duty of care when selecting sports, and the fear of injuries (and their repercussions from parents/guardians) is a significant consideration.

Confidence

Students have varied levels of skills and abilities and the less skilled are more likely to lose their confidence and be less engaged in secondary school sport.

Cultural barriers

For students from particular cultural backgrounds, mixed-gender sport can be intimidating and uncomfortable. This tends to become more noticeable when these students reach Year 9, and more so for girls than boys. Other cultural challenges include delivering sport programs during religious observation times (such as during Ramadan), and newly-immigrated female students who have not participated in sport wearing Hijabs or other coverings.

In intensive English language schools, students may be unaware of Australian-based sports and participation in club sport. High student turnover makes long-term engagement difficult.

Gender

Gender and sport choice remains one of the most recognised barriers to sport participation. In some schools, girls prefer traditional female sports and boys prefer traditional male sports. The growth and success of females in male sports such as rugby and Australian rules football is slowly shifting these stereotypes. Recruiting each gender into the opposite gender's stereotypical sport requires a breakdown of perceptions by the sport, sport deliverers, teachers and students. Engaging (male and female) 'sporty' role models in the school to lead by example and participate in multiple sports will slowly change the culture in the school, encouraging younger students to follow.

Weather

Across all areas of Australia, weather presents the most common barrier to sport delivery, so it is important that sports maintain engagement by offering programs which are adaptable to the climate.

Familiarity with the sport

By secondary school, most students who are continuing with their sport activity have established their preferred sport and are less likely to incorporate or transition to new sports.

Barriers faced by their school

Schools face their own barriers, such as lack of facilities, lack of sport opportunities, budget restrictions, teacher experience and the knowhow to innovate. These barriers impact various student cohorts in different ways. For high-performing sport students who have the potential to enter into an elite pathway, inexperienced coaches at the school can severely hinder their ability to participate at the level they desire.

3 **Barriers to sport outside of school (experienced by students)**

Parent/guardian support

Students rely heavily on the support of their family to participate in sport outside the school environment, including meeting financial expenses (a barrier for low income families), and time commitments from parents/guardians (travelling to/from and staying during training/matches). Families with other children, single parents and/or working parents face challenges with prioritising other day-to-day commitments and activities.

Families may not value sport participation but put great emphasis on academic achievement or other extra-curricular activities. This can put pressure on their children to perform in those areas and subsequently disengage from sport both inside and outside the school environment.

Gender biases among parents in terms of the types of sports children can play, as well as injury fears, are additional barriers to consider.

Increasing time demands for extra-curricular activities

The most significant barrier to sport engagement outside school for students from Year 9 onward, is the increasing amount of activities they are involved in. These include social activities, paid work, household and farming duties, religious practice and academic study requirements. With the limited amount of leisure time left, students are aware that any extra-curricular activity requires further commitment of time.

Changing sports

By the Years 9 to 10, students have already committed to a sport of choice, making this a barrier for transitioning students from school to community sport participation.

Students in Years 7 and 8 are more inclined to try a new sport, with the motivation to learn new skills and have fun. At this age, they may feel less pressured by competition and performance and have more time available.

Limited access

There are some students, particularly those in remote and regional areas, who wish to participate in sport but face limitations. They face long travel times, minimal facilities, and are more likely to experience financial challenges to fund transport and competition commitments. In many situations, only mainstream sports (e.g. netball and a football code) are available, so students with other sporting interests are extremely limited in their options.

In metropolitan areas, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, or who are new to the area, are faced with a lack of information or awareness of opportunities within their communities.

Skill competence for competition

Adolescents with undeveloped skills in a particular sport find it difficult to join a community team, as these clubs aim to be competitive at this age level. Sporting clubs may focus on selecting players or participants based on skill and commitment, leaving little opportunity for students who are less-skilled and who face time availability issues.

Conflict between school and out-of-school competition

Fear of injury can result in skilled sportspeople who play at a high level electing to commit to either school or community sport, not both.

Build successful sport-in-school relationships

A strong sport-in-school relationship is important to address the participation barriers that impact disengaged students. Successful relationships are founded on a shared understanding between the sport deliverer and the school of the program needs and the student group. Whilst sport program design and delivery need to be tailored to each school, there are core elements in understanding and building a sport-in-school relationship that apply across the sector.

This includes:

> understanding what motivates schools to deliver a sport program
> implementing the key relationships to succeed in sport-in-school delivery
> transitioning students to community clubs for ongoing sport participation, and
> building a more inclusive and positive sport culture in secondary schools.

Check out the 14 Pre-program question on page 11 to see how sport deliverers and teachers can create a shared understanding of program needs and the student group.

What motivates schools to deliver a sport program?

When determining which sport programs to deliver, teachers consider:

> budget and cost per student, per session and of necessary equipment
> equipment provided during the program, and if any will be retained as a legacy to the school
> the timing of sport competitions and gala days
> selecting a sport program they are already trained and experienced in, or if a sport program can provide training
> further community opportunities
> the benefits gained from external providers:
  - student skill development
  - professional development to learn alternate methods, skills and activities
  - students receiving healthy lifestyle messages from an alternate source
  - engaging deliverers that can inspire long-term sport participation
  - links to the community and community sport
  - reduced risk of isolation, particularly for CALD students who can improve sporting skills, expand their opportunities to integrate into the community, and learn about Australian sports.

Sport products should be flexible, adaptable and customised in all school settings. To encourage school participation and ongoing teacher and student engagement, programs must have a complementary effect on existing activities.

NSOs can demonstrate the value of their sport program by:

> justifying the time, resources and commitment required – because the introduction and ongoing management of an external sport program requires substantial commitments by the school, its staff and students.
> demonstrating how the program can improve the school's sporting culture – because sport culture plays an undeniable role in staff moral and job satisfaction, and student engagement.
> ensuring a high-quality program and deliverer – because HPE teachers have a high level of understanding about their students to deliver and engage them in sport, and so external sport deliverers must be seen to provide high quality expertise and diversity.
> designing the program for the secondary school market – because youth commitment to sport starts to waiver due to other interests, meaning program design must alter to their needs. They are more likely to enjoy a social program where skill development evolves and confidence increases without the pressure of drills, competition or ongoing commitment.

Key relationships to successful sport-in-school delivery

Key relationships within the school environment are critical for successful sport delivery that improves student sport participation.
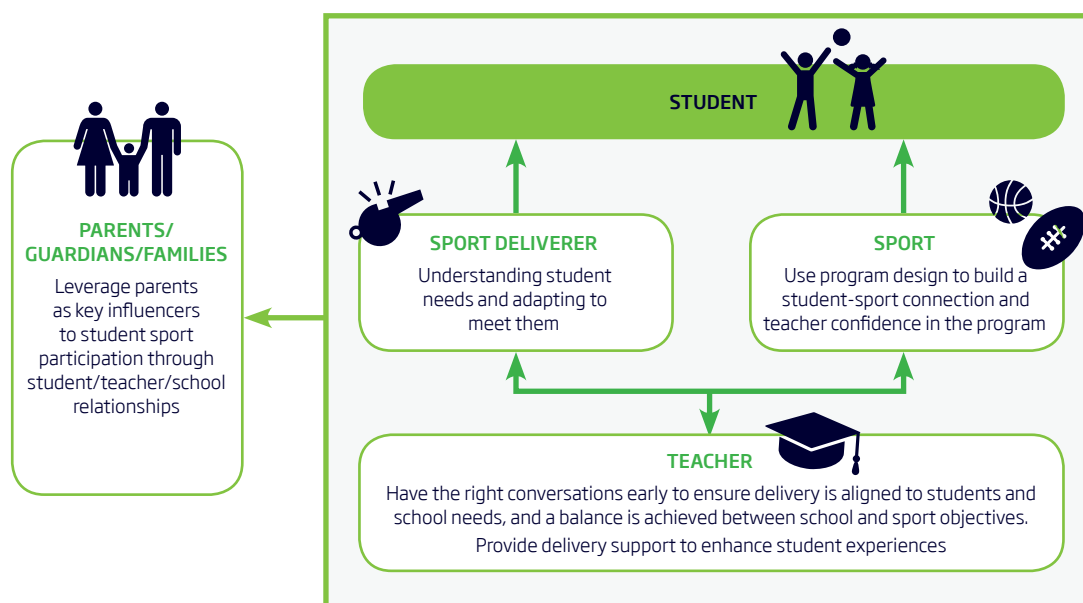
Sport – student relationship

Sport program design can help to build a student's connection to the sport, and can increase teacher confidence in the program. Consider these ideas to develop the sport-student connection:

Seek permission to bend the school rules (i.e. students can wear their sport uniform all day)

Support opportunities for off-site delivery

Access to merchandise (e.g. hats, balls, and particularly t-shirts), and the opportunity to wear/use these items, is an effective method for developing student ownership of the program and increasing sport culture in the school

Sport deliverers wearing branded uniforms increases student interest

Include some form of novelty in the program

Free or legacy equipment can enhance ongoing student engagement, particularly for those cohorts with limited sport knowledge or the inability to purchase their own equipment (i.e. low-SES)

Consider a versatile program design tailored to different student cohorts. For example:
> Long-term disengaged students are be more likely to engage in a fitness-based session with individual activities designed to build confidence
> Students who have ceased sport participation due to increased academic and time commitments are highly likely to engage in a social competition setting.

Teacher – sport deliverer relationship

Each secondary school, depending on their individual context and the diversity of their student cohorts, will have varied expectations. To align each program to the school context and student cohort, teachers should be included, supported and empowered in the planning and implementation of the program, as should sport deliverers by their sporting organisation. Sport deliverers and teachers can collaborate to support student sport participation in these five ways.

LEARN
how to identify disengaged students, and how to innovatively engage them through program delivery, deliverer or design

USE
the *14 Pre-Program Questions* to discuss administration and shared objectives of the sport program

UNDERSTAND
and clarify the roles of the sport deliverer and teacher in program delivery

DEVELOP
tools to build the school's positive sport culture, including reaching student families to encourage support

ESTABLISH
an open feedback channel between the school, the deliverer and the national sporting organisation, to continuously improve and maintain program quality

Take a long-term view

Taking a long-term strategic approach to sport programming and developing a strong relationship between the school and the sport deliverer can:

> improve the sport culture in the school. This is important for schools in areas lacking a strong culture in that particular sport (i.e. Australian rules football in New South Wales, or rugby in South Australia).

> support continual improvement and ongoing student engagement (as opposed to the traditional one-term offering of 4-6 week programs)

> build the sport presence in the school and allow the deliverer to gain insights into student behaviour, both of which are valuable for ongoing engagement.

Make it mutually beneficial

The teacher and deliverer relationship can be mutually beneficial. Less-experienced teachers or deliverers are able to benefit from the skills and confidence of more experienced teachers or deliverers. As sport deliverers develop their experience, teachers become more confident in their ability to deliver with less supervision.

14 Pre-program questions

It is important for both the teacher and sport deliverer to discuss the program objectives and plan together using their combined expertise and knowledge. For example, the coordinator will understand the nuances of the school and its students, while the deliverer has access to the resources, opportunities and expertise of the sporting organisation. To build this understanding, teachers and deliverers should consider the below *14 Pre-Program questions*:

1. What is the School's desired outcomes for the program?

2. What is the Sport's desired outcomes for the program?

3. Who are the targeted students for the program? Determine:
   > their current level of sport engagement
   > their barriers to sport, and the opportunities for the program to address these
   > their skill levels

4. Is there an opportunity to engage disengaged students in the program?

5. What activities will be delivered in the program, and are these suitable for this student cohort?

6. What facilities and equipment are available from the school, and what can be provided by the sport?

7. What are the suitable times for delivery, and are there any sessions that may be affected by other school activities?

8. Is there an opportunity for the program to provide legacy equipment for the school and student?

9. What is the weather (hot/raining) contingency plan?

10. Can the program align to the curriculum?

11. Can the program build the sport culture in the school (e.g. connect with families)?

12. Is there an opportunity to involve community clubs and facilitate transition for students from school to community sport?

13. What costs are involved?

14. What are the roles and responsibilities of the supervising teacher and the sport deliverer?

Deliverer – student relationship

Deliverers need to gain an understanding of the students' barriers, motivations and existing engagement with sport through planning discussions with the teacher.

Where the student cohort is mixed, the deliverer needs to adapt the delivery of the program to best meet individual needs and preferences.

Parents/guardians/families

Parents and guardians are the key influence of sport participation for students. Building relationships between families, students, schools and the sport is crucial for engaging students.

Sporting organisations and schools can engage parents/guardians by developing innovative ideas and resources to value-add to their programs:

For academic-focussed schools and families, provide information regarding the complimentary relationship between sport and academic performance, and the benefits of sport for physical and mental wellbeing.

Host showcase events for families to attend alongside parent-teacher information sessions or other school events to maximise attendance.

Provide take-home sport program information, including photos of students and their achievements. This may include setting homework for the students to discuss the program and outcomes with parents/guardians and family.

Upload videos or photo stories with music on approved social media, school website or other online communication portals.

Encourage parents/guardians to volunteer at sport sessions, identifying those with existing links to community sport clubs.

Provide parents/guardians and students with information regarding community sport club opportunities.

Transitioning students to ongoing sport participation in community clubs

Youth transitioning from sport in secondary school to community sport face several challenges, including the limited entry level opportunities available for this age group. Community sport can be intimidating and disengaged students can fear:

> competition

> embarrassment of making mistakes

> time pressures

> social pressures, and

> financial cost to family.

Community sport organisations with a school presence can help students overcome some of the fear of the unknown, increasing the likelihood of transition. However, most secondary schools have reported having little to no contact with their local community sport clubs.

Transition to community sport is most evident from school sport programs that are based on a holistic design and develop a positive connection between students and community sport opportunities.

Transitioning students from sport in secondary school to community sport takes an integrated and long-term approach involving all key relationships. It includes:

Some students may want to participate in sport outside of school, but are unable to due to external barriers.

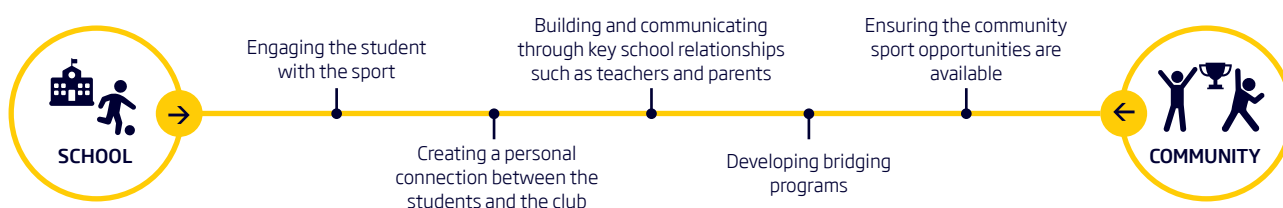|	
Regional and Remote students due to the lack and range of available sport opportunities	**CALD students** as local clubs are often not equipped with the appropriate equipment or deliverer skills for this cohort
Low- Socio Economic Status background students as cost, transportation and awareness of opportunities are ongoing barriers	**Low skill and ability students** are disadvantaged where community sport clubs lack opportunities for inexperienced or unskilled participants (with the majority of opportunities based around performance and competition)

SCHOOL → Engaging the student with the sport — Creating a personal connection between the students and the club — Building and communicating through key school relationships such as teachers and parents — Developing bridging programs — Ensuring the community sport opportunities are available ← COMMUNITY

Strategies that support the transition of students to community sport:

Identify local community clubs and their capacity to engage with the school and students.

Identify opportunities for students to continue their sport participation through inter-school sports and gala days. Or proactively organise local competitions or gala days for the school, or for a number of schools in the area.

Create school teams or encourage a group of students to join a community club together.

Engage school teams in community sport competitions.

Develop teams and interschool competitions based on student interest.

Sport clubs can recruit players, volunteers, administrators and supporters from schools, and in turn, students gain increased interest and are exposed to new opportunities.

Provide opportunities for senior students to undertake coaching and officiating accreditation to then apply in community sport clubs.

Provide students the opportunity to visit local sport facilities as part of a sport program. This could be a local club, or regional, state or national facility. Include the opportunity to watch teams train or play, have tours of the facility, or information sessions on the management and operation of the sport organisation.

Invite parents/families and club coaches to attend or run sport clinics and programs in the school. This offers parents/families a fun and healthy opportunity to engage with the school, increases the student-deliverer ratio and student engagement, and strengthens the sport culture in the school and wider community.

Develop bridging programs between schools and clubs.

Develop a personal connection between the community club and the student within the school environment e.g. ask a local club representative to attend a session, introducing themselves and offering a visit to the club.

Promote community sport opportunities in newsletters or send notices and information home with students.

Building an inclusive and positive sport culture

To be more effective in engaging students, teachers and the wider school community, sport programs should include tools, resources and activities to promote and build a positive school sport culture.

A secondary school's sport culture is built on the following:

> how the school community perceives and identifies with sport (in general and in specific sports)
> previous experience of individuals in the school community with sport
> opportunity to collaborate with other schools and sporting organisations
> capability of and resources available to the teacher
> personal values
> student interest

The following **six steps** outline the actions teachers and sport deliverers can take to build and foster a more inclusive and positive sport culture in their school.

1	2	3	4	5	6
UNDERSTAND the existing values and beliefs about sport in the school	**GARNER** leadership support from the Principal and parent leaders	**PROMOTE** the benefits of sport, as it relates to the broader school and community values (i.e. academic)	**DESIGN** and deliver opportunities to maximise student interests and mitigate barriers	**CONNECT** with surrounding schools and sport clubs to provide sporting opportunities that build community relationships	**SHARE** opportunities and stories of success within the school and community

1 Understand the existing values and beliefs about sport in the school

Individuals hold certain beliefs about sport in general, and specific beliefs about each individual sport.

Positive perceptions include:

> promotes a balanced lifestyle with mental health benefits
> physical health benefits
> social skills, leadership skills and teamwork
> social, fun and an opportunity to network with friends.

Negative perceptions include:

> pressure to be the best, based on competition
> financial and time commitment
> distraction from more-valued academic pursuits
> students might suffer injury or embarrassment.

If sport is identified in a negative manner students are more likely to be disengaged. To overcome this barrier, their perception of sport needs to shift to a more positive experience based on fun, incorporating social elements and skill building activities in a supportive environment with likeminded and similarly skilled peers. When this occurs the value of sport is more likely to be realised.

2 Garner leadership support from the Principal, teachers, and parents leaders

Principal

It is essential to establish a shared positive language about sport in communications to the school, students, family and community. The value placed on sport in messaging through newsletters, emails, assemblies, social media and parent-teacher nights can be driven by the Principal.

Teachers

External funding (e.g. the Sporting Schools program), access to school resources, overcoming timetabling and administration issues and resource inadequacy, and requiring a teacher presence, all rely on the support of the Principal and wider teaching cohort.

Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians are a significant contributor to the school sport culture as they support the direction of the school by continuing to enrol their child, or giving/denying their child permission to participate in sport activities. The conversation at home about sport can significantly affect a student's attitude and engagement with sport. In small communities, long-term negative sport cultures can be entrenched and may take some time to reverse.

3 Promote the benefit of sport, as it relates to the broader school and community values

In schools where sport is not valued, it is instead perceived as an extra-curricular activity that competes against academic achievement and other extra-curricular activities (e.g. STEM, language, music, art)

There is an opportunity to reposition a non-competition sport program as a benefit to the greater wellbeing of students, and in turn improve aspects of their secondary school activities, both academic and extra-curricular. For example, sport can increase academic performance and improve student behaviour.

Some teachers have re-branded sport as a subject/ activity that can create 'healthy humans' and improve 'overall wellbeing', as opposed to creating elite athletes. Using words such as 'healthy', 'wellbeing' and 'holistic' can overcome parent, family, student and teacher objections to sport.

4 Design and deliver opportunities to maximise student interests and mitigate barriers

Designing and delivering innovative sport programs supports teachers and sport deliverers to shift the identity of sport into a more inclusive and positive light in the wider school community, and can garner support for future endeavours.

Examples of program innovation include:

Empowering students by allowing them to choose their own sport activities

Designing community integrated programs where a student partners with a mentor from a community sport club to learn how the club operates, receive coaching feedback and support their sport activities

Using vocational education and training (VET) students from cooking and fitness classes to design and deliver programs and events for younger students

Integrating sport activities into the broader curriculum (e.g. including sports in outdoor recreation to build student resilience and strength; using physical activity programs to improve student endurance for hiking)

5 Connect with surrounding schools and sport clubs to provide sporting opportunities that build community relationships

Resources to deliver sport in schools can be scarce, particularly if sport is not highly valued. Teachers without adequate resources and funding may find it challenging to innovate their sport activities. Schools who can successfully build relationships with community clubs can gain access to equipment, facilities and volunteers to deliver programs or mentor students.

Some teachers are unaware or unsure of the capacity of sports to deliver programs in their school, which can result in teachers perceiving barriers to sport delivery that in reality may not exist.

Perception	
The ability of a sport program to align to curriculum	The ASC has educated sports to find opportunities for curriculum alignment and has developed resources to support sports to align their programs
The equipment and facilities needed to deliver a program, such as full ovals and courts	Many sports can be delivered in modified areas with modified equipment
The perceived lack of interest of students	Student engagement and participation can be enhanced by: > empowering students to choose the sport > engaging a qualified sport deliverer with sport-specific knowledge and skill > taking students to visit community sport clubs (this can also reduce perceived barriers to community sport).
Fear of contact and injury, and how parents/guardians would react	Sports such as Australian rules football and rugby provide non-contact or low-contact options. In general, students do prefer some level of contact.
Some sports (such as golf and tennis) require a high level of skill to participate and deliver	Teachers can overcome this by: > engaging a sport deliverer with sport-specific knowledge and skill > engaging a sport deliverer who deliverers an NSO affiliated program > informal professional learning through observing and/or supporting an external sport deliverer > formal professional learning through NSO teacher/coach upskilling courses

> Access the *Australian Sports Commission Curriculum Alignment Guidelines* and *Teacher Professional Learning Guidelines* for sports at **ausport.gov.au/participating/education**

6 Share opportunities and stories of success within the school community

Share stories of success within the school community to support the growth of sport and a positive sport culture. Schools and sports can:

Email parents/guardians regarding positive changes made to sport delivery and invite feedback about their ideas and perceptions of how their child is now performing in sport

Share photos and feedback on student sport involvement via newsletters and on social media

Include sport program presentations and discussions at parent-teacher nights

Allow students to present about their involvement in the sport program at school assemblies and in class

Pitch articles for the local newspaper

Implement strategies to enhance engagement and participation

The following strategies enhance engagement and participation through the sport program delivery, deliverer, design and features. Sports, sport deliverers, schools and teachers can implement these strategies to improve participation in disengaged student cohorts, and make sport more enjoyable for secondary students overall.

Program delivery tips

Student recruitment	Allow students to nominate and participate with their friends, or familiar groupings i.e. school houses. Recruitment to a program is most effective when it includes various contact points to the student through multiple stakeholders, such as: › email or newsletter › peers presenting the program › promotional material, posters, flyers, newsletters › house competitions › lunchtime launch events.
Program timing	Program timing is influenced by the preferences of the sport and the school, location, facilities, and school sport culture. The most successful program times to engage students are: › during the school day › during class time to facilitate compulsory attendance. Lunch or after school are also good alternatives, although can have additional challenges. Some students are reticent to participate in certain sports outside of the traditional season e.g. disinterest in playing Australian rules football in a summer term.
Session timing	Flexibility in alternative delivery times can reduce session cancellations due to exams, camps or poor weather. Alternative session times include: **After-school** – popular in regional areas which have limited community sport options. However, transport in an issue, relying on school buses, public transport or parents. Older students may also need to be responsible for younger siblings at home. **Compulsory HPE classes** – can be used to increase engagement and enjoyment, potentially developing student sustainable positive attitudes towards sport. **Lunchtime** – increases visibility to potential participants, however participant numbers can fluctuate each session requiring flexible activities. Teaching staff may experience some challenges as they are required to take breaks, prepare for classes or supervise students during recesses. **School Sport** – an opportunity for students not selected in competitive community sport teams to train and build their skill in particular sports. **One-week intensives** – offers several sessions within a weekly period. However several sessions in a short timeframe is too intensive for students who do not engage with sport on a regular basis. **Elective HPE classes** – are the least effective in engaging students who have barriers to sport.
Number of sessions and frequency	Weekly sessions, with a total of 5-8 sessions, is recommended to engage and develop student skills. This is because: › programs delivered across two terms (or one session per fortnight) do not develop the rhythm or familiarity necessary for engaging students with sport › fortnightly sessions are found to be too infrequent for skill development › the minimum amount of sessions to engage students is four, however additional weeks enable programs to educate students with transferrable skills.

Session length	The ideal session length is 50-70 minutes (not including set-up or travel time).
	Session length and activity pace depends on age, ability, session frequency and activity type.
	> modify sessions based on the length of time available, rather than rush to complete all activities
	> introducing a new sport or modified game requires longer session times to explain rules and allow time for student engagement
	> secondary students have capacity for longer sessions and increase their engagement as sessions continue
	> limit time for sports that require high concentration (i.e. tennis, golf) or high activity (i.e. netball, athletics) to 50 minutes for younger students and 90 minutes for older students
	> allow additional time for transport and set-up and pack-down time. Adjoining a session to lunchtime, after-school or student-free time can provide the additional time.
Deliverer to student ratio	One deliverer to 15 students is ideal when delivering to groups including low skilled and/or disengaged students.
	Enlisting a teacher or utilising peers as coaches can assist with managing group size and skill level variations.
Facilities and equipment	Access to suitable facilities and the appropriate equipment is paramount to program success.
	An equipment-to-student ratio of 1:1 is recommended.
	In schools with substantial sport infrastructure, sport deliverers should determine existing school equipment to avoid duplication.
	Where school facilities are limited, off-site facilities such as local government recreation centres or sport clubs are options, however this can require organised transport such as buses.
	Funding can be sourced from funding programs (e.g. the Sporting Schools program) or through government and sporting organisation partnerships.
Number of participants	Students in larger groups (i.e. 40 students) are less likely to engage regardless of adequate student/deliverer ratios.
	Larger groups provide disengaged students with an opportunity to 'remove' themselves from activities (i.e. sit down, stand idle) without being noticed.
	During planning, schools and sport deliverers need to:
	> set a maximum number of participants per session
	> communicate with each other ideal participant numbers to avoid idle time between activities or the inability to run a particular game or drill
	> adapt activities to accommodate and engage very small or large groups.
Intensive English language schools	For schools with high CALD participants:
	> involve more deliverers to assist building both sport and communication skills
	> adapt instructions to include more body language and less verbal commands
	> utilise students and teachers with high English proficiency to translate instructions
	> include activities to build English literacy through the sport program
	> work with teachers to integrate English lessons before the session

Program deliverer tips

At a minimum, deliverers need to:

> have a high level of skill and experience with secondary school-aged students in order to engage those students who are disengaged from sport

> be more flexible in their program delivery than in a primary school, and

> be confident, knowledgeable and prepared to engage with students as part of the program.

Workforce recruitment	An effective and rigorous recruitment process for the sport deliverer workforce is essential to ensure the quality and quantity of programs, and to reduce high turnover of program deliverers due to 'casual' work structures.
Increasing workforce	Funding bodies, sports and schools can be innovative in the ways they source deliverers by: > identifying individuals who have links to students (i.e. chaplains and support officers) > identifying sport-minded individuals in the community (i.e. local gym instructors, personal trainers or community sport club coaches) > diversifying the skills of individuals to deliver multiple sports.
Workforce skills, experience and training	The most valued skills of a sport deliverer are: > most importantly – an ability to communicate with, and engage and control, a large group of students > specific sport skills and technical knowledge. Sport deliverers with experience in coaching or teaching in schools better demonstrate these attributes. Supervising teachers can assist less-experienced or younger deliverers to overcome limitations from age or experience through regular engagement. Building capability as a teacher or deliverer (in technical expertise in the sport, classroom management and knowledge of the student cohort) can mitigate limitations from age or experience – and can enhance student outcomes.
Exhibits confidence and enthusiasm	Students respond well to a confident, knowledgeable, engaging, attentive, energetic and enthusiastic deliverer. To maximise student engagement the deliverer should: > pay attention to the students > ensure an appropriate student-to-deliverer ratio > demonstrate sound class management skills > physically demonstrate skills and activities and be involved in playing games > provide expert advice and correction > provide a sense of fun and enjoyment.
Building student confidence	Teachers and sport deliverers can increase a student's confidence in sport by ensuring the student: > understands the deliverer's instructions > feels encouraged by the deliverer, their friends and their family > feels they have improved their skills > has fun with their friends.
Organisation and communication	It is essential for sport deliverers to be organised and communicate clearly with the school, including: > being punctual to set up the activities > communicating the session aims and activities to the supervising teacher > explaining the aim of each of the activities to the students. This helps teachers to be better prepared to support the sport deliverer and communicate with students during the session. Deliverers who are organised, confident and can quickly engage students in an activity are more likely to hold a student's attention throughout the session.

Teacher presence	Teacher presence brings > a level of control > respect > the ability to discipline students if required. Students are more likely to be disruptive if a teacher is not present. An active supervising teacher can assist sport deliverers to provide a quality and engaging program to all students. Students respond positively when the teacher joins in the activity with them as it can break down some barriers and make the activity more fun.
Multiple deliverers	The provision of multiple coaches or deliverers greatly enhances student engagement and program outcomes in schools with large or mixed student cohorts (i.e. mixed gender, skill or experience).
Mixed-gender deliverers	For those schools with mixed-gender student groups, male and female deliverers should be utilised. For single-gender cohorts, the same gender deliverer should be utilised (i.e. female gender deliverer for a female-only school).
Peer-to-peer learning	When learning new skills and participating in sports, students prefer to seek and receive feedback and guidance from their peers. Students prefer small teams with friends where they can receive instant, positive, empathetic feedback; as oppose to having direct or indirect attention drawn to them by a teacher or sport deliverer.
Empathy and resilience in design and delivery	To deliver a positive sport experience to students, sport programs need to be realistic about the level of skill required to complete activities, whilst including messages of resilience. **The need** Disengaged students are not a priority of sports, schools and program developers, whilst deliverers, who are 'sport-minded', generally lack the skills required to engage those lacking a similar mindset. However learning new skills can be mentally stressful, physically challenging and potentially embarrassing for students. Negative experiences can reinforce students' negative perceptions of sport, resulting in continued or further disengagement. Therefore programs must be empathetic to the student cohort in design and delivery, and realistic about the level of skill and time required. When learning a new skill, students believe they must be patient and mentally strong, ensuring the pressures of competition do not become overwhelming. Incorporating messages of resilience can teach students stress management strategies to enable them to cope with difficult and challenging situations – such as when learning a new skill or sport. Disengaged students place great importance on teachers and sport deliverers having conversations with them to understand their personal barriers, developing a mutual understanding and providing words of encouragement. **Opportunities** Building resilience during secondary school enables students to cope with increasing personal, social and educational challenges. Sport programs can provide holistic and curriculum aligned learning opportunities that build student resilience by addressing life skills such as mental health, wellbeing, bullying, addictions and gambling. Sport can become a student passion, and students who have a passion are more adaptive to stress.
Link to a well-known brand	Student excitement and engagement increases when deliverers are associated with a recognisable brand, or have merchandise or wear branded uniforms for elite sport teams.

Program design tips

Overarching advice for program design

Activities need to:

> be game-based with a high level of skill development incorporated if students are new to the sport

> be constant and inclusive, in order to minimise student downtime or long queues, which result in disengagement

> build and consolidate skills in a game

> build transferable sport sense skills such as strategy, body placement and player awareness

> promote and create team competition

> be conducted by a deliverer who has a bank of activities to draw upon, in order to handle potential circumstances (e.g. wet weather, disengaged students, varying literacy, age, skills and abilities, and student behaviour).

Sports can enhance their student participation by developing a diversified suite of activities that are flexible and adaptable for the different school environments and student cohorts.

Sports that have specific environmental, facility or equipment requirements can identify their target markets of school type and/or student cohort and design specific programs for each. In doing this, set clear expectations of student engagement and program outcomes, and articulate this to the school, teaching staff and students to manage expectations.

A three-tiered approach

Sports and schools should consider offering three program elements (either within a single program or as three separate offerings) that build on the capability and experience of the students.

1. activities based on building fitness and confidence	for inexperienced or unskilled entry-level students, particularly those disengaged from traditional school sport or physical education
2. a modified social competition	for students with some level of skill or experience
3. a traditional sport program based on building and refining skills and game play	for students who are actively engaged in sport and wish to continue into a performance or competition program

Program design considerations for the four cohorts of disengaged students

COHORT 1

Students who would like to participate in sport but are unable to due to environmental barriers

> Fitness/skill may be lacking if students have not previously had access to sport, so a program should consider basic skill development and fitness activities.

> Students would benefit from an external deliverer, however transport and cost may be an issue.

> Intensive programs (i.e. three sessions in one week) are not realistically achievable for these students, unless barriers are overcome.

> Fulfil student motivations: an interest that lets them be active and learn new skills with social interaction.

COHORT 2

Long-term disengaged students who do not currently participate in sport because they have never connected with sport

> Try alternative sports where skill and experience level in the sport is evenly balanced amongst the student group.

> Ensure minimal individual competition and/or pressure of being on a team where 'winning' is the outcome.

> Fulfil student motivations: to build confidence, skill and fitness to live a healthier lifestyle.

COHORT 3

Students who participate (are present) but do not engage i.e. stand around talking, sit on sidelines

> Divide students by gender.

> Divide students by skill. The exception being in sports where skill is more levelled (such as sailing, rowing, golf) meaning individuals with greater skills do not 'dominate'.

> In mixed-skill classes, older or more-skilled students can be used to mentor younger or lesser-skilled students. This needs to be facilitated and led to ensure that intimidation does not occur and that the skilled students do not become 'bored'.

> The deliverer's ability to be supportive is paramount.

> Fulfil student motivations: to advance skill development and fitness in a friendly program with peers of similar ability and gender.

COHORT 4

Students who have dropped out of sport i.e. who do not choose it as an elective

> Avoid long-term commitments or requirements for training to elevate fitness and skill.

> If social competition is included, focus on friends and less pressure on training and skill.

> Mixed-gender design and delivery is suitable if the sport is non-contact; but preferably not mixed skill level.

> Fulfil student motivations: to destress, and keep up fitness/skills with social interaction and without the challenge of competition.

Student motivations	Students are motivated to participate in sport for these reasons: 1. Physical health and fitness 2. Learning or improving sport skills 3. Interpersonal skills i.e. teamwork 4. Mental stimulation and health 5. Social aspect and fun 6. Environmental benefits i.e. getting fresh air outdoors
First session or first activity	The initial activity or session should be chosen carefully to: › allow a deliverer to build rapport › assess the existing skill level of students. To engage students quickly, spend initial time on game and inclusive activities. Skill development can be incorporated later into the session or program. Students will judge whether or not a deliverer and the program are of high quality within the first five to ten minutes, and engage or disengage based on this. When a teacher notices students disengaging, or perceives a program is not up to standard, they are less likely to approve another externally delivered program.
Skill development	To ensure students' confidence in their skills, games should initially be based around foundation skills, and then extend into the full versions.
Games vs drills	Students and teachers prefer program activities which are delivered in a fun, game-based format, rather than focussing primarily on drills for skill development. Programs can include both aspects by ensuring enough variety of activities. When games (competitive and modified) are the focus of the program, teachers benefit by being provided sample scoresheets and other resources (such as rules, officiating guides) to support them ongoing.
Game sense approach	The game sense approach is the most effective in engaging secondary students, and particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. To fulfil student needs using a game sense approach, a deliverer who is competent at developing skills and communicating technique tips during games is required.
Modified sports	More enjoyment is gained by basing the program on a modified version of the sport, enabling students of all skills and abilities to start on a more even playing field. In delivering a modified sport program, the key considerations are: › the skill level of the student cohort › explanation of the rules › the team selection process › necessary adjacent activities › the use of modified equipment.
Rules and strategy	Learning the rules to a game is important to students as they are conscious of being prepared if and when a situation arises during a game. For example, if a ball goes out of play, students prefer to be prepared for what happens next, which in turn maintains their confidence while playing. In games where strategy is a key tactic, students are eager to learn game strategy elements.
Physical exertion	The least enjoyable activities are those that require physical exertion beyond a student's capabilities. Extending students too far beyond their capabilities can result in soreness, tiredness and erode their confidence. For example, by giving students the option to walk/jog, those who are unable to run will avoid embarrassment. Students also need to be physically prepared (i.e. stretching before and after a session).
Efficient activity transitions	Minimise set-up time and time transitioning between activities to reduce the opportunity for students to disengage. Knowing the ideal group size for activities, games and drills assist to reduce idle time in sessions and activity transitions. Activity length also needs to be considered so students to not disengage from boredom. Structure fun activities, equipment and 'touch points' with the students in the session, to ensure students remain engaged.
Student empowerment	Empower students to make decisions about the sports they participate in. Include the option for alternative sports. This can increase their confidence. Programs that provide alternative activities or responsibilities for students (i.e. scoring, umpiring) provide more opportunities for students, particularly those who would not normally participate in a sport session. Choice can also be used as an incentive and reward for participating well.

Flexibility and adaptability	Program design should have a level of flexibility to adapt to different student cohorts (including CALD students and groups of mixed gender, age, sport experience and ability). Accommodating student diversity also extends to physical size (e.g. considerations for a smaller student participating in rugby).
	Flexibility is important to adapt to different attendance rates across the term or school year, the weather, or facility availability. For example, program design for outdoor sports should include at least one activity adaptable to poor weather conditions that doesn't compromise student enjoyment and safety.
Team activities	Team activities are an effective method to include all participants in the session. Students who can choose their own teams are more likely to support them.
	Teams may also be allocated to ensure all teams have an even spread of abilities. However, avoid substitutions, as students affected by lack of confidence or peer influence can become disengaged if time is spent watching on the sidelines or cheering on others.
Activity length	For circuit drills of basic skills, shorter activities are more effective at maintaining student engagement.
	In game-based activities, such as a full game of football, longer activities are more effective at allowing students to have a free-flowing experience.
Competition	Students generally respond positively to competition, if it does not lead to:
	> the same individuals coming last, and
	> the students with less ability being left out.
Gender-specific programming	The majority of students prefer program design and delivery in single-gender groups. It results in higher levels of engagement and better outcomes for female students.
	Competition and intensity can increase in mixed-gender activities. Sport-engaged students may prefer this. However, for sport-disengaged students, increased intensity and competition is undesirable.
	An exception exists in sports (such as rowing or sailing) where male and female students generally start with the same level of ability, and there is no direct competition between them.
Dividing cohorts by skill level	Most students prefer being grouped by skill level in order to participate in activities. This is true across:
	> all age groups
	> both male and female students
	> large and small groups
	> sports where activities are based on team work or competition.
	If given options for different skill-level groups, students are capable of self-selecting their perceived or preferred skill-level group. This also provides options for students to select a group based on their desired level of competition.
	If given the choice of traditional sports or alternative/recreational sports, students with a low skill level may still opt to participate in traditional sport if they feel they have a supportive environment and are grouped with similar skilled students.
Sport culture	Building sport culture in the school greatly affects:
	> student sport engagement
	> the ability for a sport to develop a relationship with a school
	> the sport's ability to deliver a sport program.
	Teachers are very aware that:
	> sport programs that compromise or diminish the school's sport culture will affect ongoing student engagement
	> positive or negative sporting and HPE experiences in a student's early schooling impacts their likelihood of choosing HPE as an elective in senior secondary school
	> for disengaged students in particular, negative sport or HPE experiences are likely to reinforce their negative relationship with sport
	> the number of students choosing HPE or sport as an elective in senior secondary school may impact on teacher job security.

Program feature tips

These tips encourage sports to look beyond traditional modes of delivery in order to engage participants.

Gym-based programs	Small group gym-based sessions can build student connection to their body and confidence for sport. This format allows deliverers to discuss and improve a student's body strength and ability.
Bridging and wellness programs	Holistic programs based on building strength and body confidence (i.e. in a gym or functional fitness sessions including strength and conditioning) build confidence and prepare students for a sporting experience. They can incorporate a variety of topics for a healthy lifestyle including diet, stretching, weightlifting and mindfulness.
Fitness and stress relief programs	Secondary school students often need a space to release stress and mentally relax. Particularly for students in Year 9 onwards, who face increased academic pressures and find the additional pressure and time commitment from competitive sport too overwhelming. Fitness and stress relief-based sport programs can improve student physical and mental wellbeing, and in turn positively impact their academic or other pursuits. Support a shift in program design to emphasise stress relief and wellbeing by including an educational component for students and parents regarding the benefits of sport participation, and in messages such as 'sport as mental health' or 'casual participation'. Fitness and stress relief programs can be delivered in lunch or student-free time, and either be a sport students have previously played (to reduce the need to learn a new skill) or an activity that is accessible to all skill levels.
Injecting novelty	Injecting novelty excites and motivates students. Try introducing new and different experiences, such as:: > offering free equipment and merchandise > going to an off-site facility > having a new instructor > doing a new activity > participating in a gala day against other schools. Allowing students to disobey school rules (in a controlled environment) such as allowing them to wear their sport uniform all day, can generate interest and engagement.
Music	Allow students to play and select the music as it gives them a sense of ownership and a reward for increasing their engagement. The selection of music is important – choose the 'wrong' music and it may have the opposite effect on students!
Contact in sport	Don't be afraid to include contact in sport - students prefer it. The fear schools and students demonstrate around contact in sport appears to largely stem from parents/guardians and the potential for negative feedback.
Weather contingencies	Overcome weather barriers by developing a program that can be modified to a classroom environment.
Technology	Create innovative ways to include phones or technology into a program, so that they are not a distraction but rather a helpful tool (e.g. pedometers are used successfully in tennis).

Specific recommendations for sporting organisations

10 Development areas for existing sport programs

Upskill and support the workforce

1 Develop your deliverer workforce to better identify and engage disengaged secondary students, focussing on managing group dynamics to promote positive student interaction within their participant group.

2 Provide deliverers with the tools and resources to more effectively communicate with teachers, to define shared objectives and improve sport program administration issues.

Try alternative program strategies

3 Enhance existing sport programs with a 'fitness-based' program, targeting disengaged secondary school students to build their confidence, and provide the knowledge and skills they are seeking to support their shift to a healthier lifestyle.

4 Enhance existing sport programs with a 'stress relief' program for those students who can no longer commit to traditional sport activities. This could include a social competition for a traditional sport (suited to more-confident students) or a series of alternative sport or physical activities that focus on learning and developing new skills (suited to less-confident students).

5 Develop tools and resources to support deliverers and teachers to promote and build a positive sport culture within the school community. Include strategies to reach families to encourage them to support their students' sport participation.

Focus on the student experience

6 Develop and provide deliverers with guidelines for building more positive student group dynamics. Include considerations for dividing program cohorts by skill and gender to increase engagement.

Take a partnership approach

7 Consider ways your sporting organisation can achieve a balance between a prescribed program and allowing deliverers the flexibility to build a relationship with a school through tailored programs. Base this balance on the objectives and desired outcomes for the sport in the secondary school market.

8 Understand how sport can meet the needs and motivations of the various student cohorts, and develop programs based on this understanding. Establish relevant value propositions to target the identified market/s.

9 Provide deliverers with an open communication channel to better monitor and control program delivery, seek support, and provide feedback. Genuinely consider this programmatic feedback.

10 Consider the *14 Program design and delivery principles* when designing a new program or reviewing an existing program for secondary schools.

14 Program design and delivery principles for new sporting programs

1 **Objectives of the program** are negotiated, agreed to, shared and communicated between the funding body, school and sport

2 **Program administration** is clear, comprehensive and consistent, and utilises open and effective communication channels. Use the 14 Pre-Program Questions to support this communication (see full report)

3 **Program delivery is flexible** and adaptable to each secondary school context

4 **School sport culture** and perceptions of sport are considered in the design and delivery of the program

5 **Program design and delivery is innovative** to overcome entrenched barriers experienced by the student, teacher, school or community

6 **Student-centric program design** is applied and incorporates empathetic delivery based on an understanding of student motivations and influences

7 **Skill building** and **developing mental resilience** are dually incorporated in the program design

8 **Empower students** with the opportunity to choose their activities

9 **The program's value** to the student, school and greater school community is clearly demonstrated

10 **Opportunities to connect** with the local community and sport clubs are provided to encourage transition from school-based to community-based sport participation

11 **Three program elements** are offered (either within a single program or as three separate offerings) and include:
a) activities based on building fitness and confidence
b) a modified social competition
c) a traditional sport program based on building and refining skills and game play

12 **Program cohort is divided by gender** (for specific activities, sessions or days)

13 **Program cohort is divided by skill level** for sports with an emphasis on competition, either in their traditional or programmatic format (for specific activities, sessions or days)

14 **A skilled deliverer** conducts the program and receives support from their sporting organisation to modify activities and program delivery based on the needs of the school and student cohort.

Glossary

Youth	Secondary school students aged 13 to 17 years. Also referred to as students.
Barriers	The situations (real or perceived) that inhibit someone from participating in sport. Barriers can be grouped into three areas: 1. barriers to sport delivery – experienced by schools 2. barriers to sport within school – experienced by students, and 3. barriers to sport outside of school – experienced by students.
Disengaged students	Students who do not fully participate in sport. They can be grouped into four cohorts: 1. Students who would like to participate is sport but are unable due to environmental barriers. 2. Long-term disengaged students who do not participate in sport because they have never connected with sport. 3. Students who participate (are present) but do not engage i.e. stand around talking, sit on the sidelines. 4. Students who have dropped out of playing sport.
Extra-curricular activities	Activities that students do outside of school class time, such as socialising, paid work, household chores, a hobby, sports teams, time for religious practices or other studies such as language, art, music etc.
Health and Physical Education (HPE)	Education within schools, outlined by the *Australian Curriculum: Heath and Physical Education* (AC:HPE). It is to provide ongoing, developmentally appropriate and explicit learning about health and movement. It is compulsory from Foundation year in primary school to Year 10 in secondary school. It can be chosen as an elective in Years 11 and 12 in secondary school. Sport is included in the AC:HPE. Teachers, HPE teachers, and sport coordinators can all contribute to a school's HPE program and student learning under the AC:HPE. For the purpose of this report the term teacher or Health and Physical Education (HPE) teacher has been used. For more information on the AC:HPE visit www.australiancurriculum.edu.au
Program delivery	The delivery of a sport program. It includes consideration of the structure and elements of delivering a program, such as when and length.
Program deliverer	The person who delivers the sport program. This could be an external sport deliverer or coach, or the school's HPE teacher, sport coordinator or generalist teacher.
Program design	The content within and around a sport program. This includes the activities students do and how this is structured to maximise participation.
Program features	Unique aspects of a sport program that look beyond the traditional modes and responses to sport delivery and design in order to engage participants.
Sport deliverer	An individual external to a school who delivers sport to students in the secondary school environment. This includes coaches. See also program deliverer.
Student-centric	Where sport program delivery, deliverer, design and features are purposefully decided and executed with the student's needs and characteristics front-of-mind.
Sporting organisation	Any organisation that specialises in the delivery and administration of sport. This includes national sporting organisations (NSOs), state sporting organisations or associations (SSOs and SSAs), as well as private sport companies, and community sport clubs. The report is designed to support sport organisations at all levels.
Teacher	A teacher, HPE teacher, or sport coordinator within the school who contributes to a school's HPE program and student learning under the AC:HPE. As many individuals with differing titles can play this role, for the purpose of this report the terminology teacher or Health and Physical Education (HPE) teacher has been used.