



The Indigenous Softball Program



Having fun under the sun

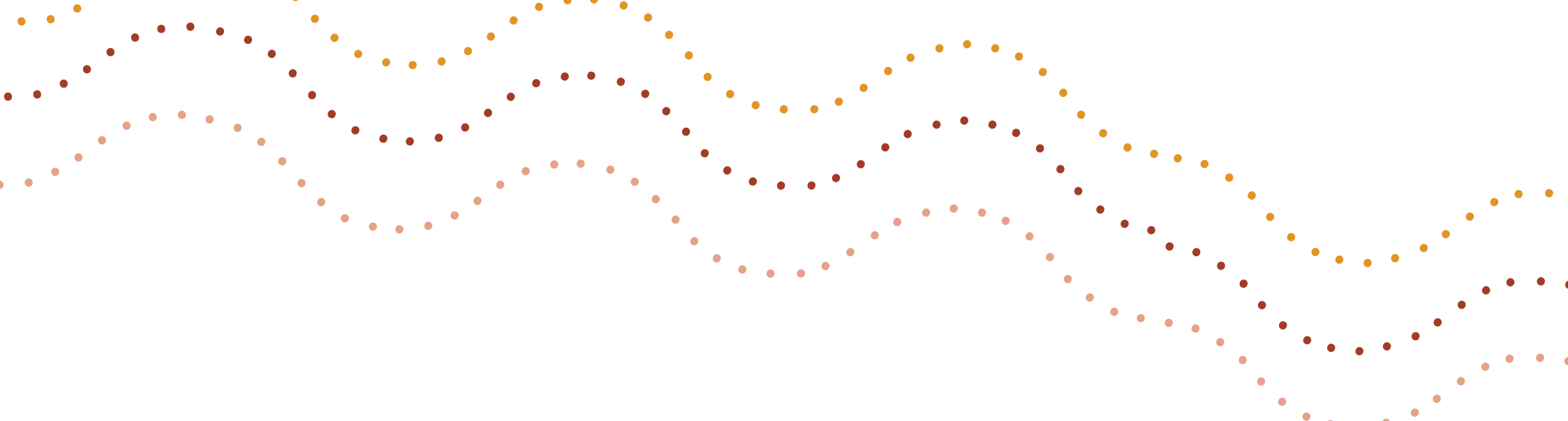
Softball Australia's Indigenous Softball Program continues to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to provide opportunities for Indigenous people of all ages, genders and abilities to participate in Softball in urban, rural and remote areas throughout Australia. Softball Australia and our Member States have been proactive in developing relationships and working with Indigenous communities and a variety of other interested or key stakeholders, including the Australian Government, the Australian Sports Commission, State Sport and Recreation Departments, National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy (NASCA) and Red Dust.



Photographer: Greg Heron



Let's play Softball



Softball Australia and our Member States have a long and proud history of promoting and delivering Softball to Indigenous communities. Our Indigenous Softball Program produces positive health and social outcomes by providing female and male Indigenous Australians of all ages and abilities with opportunities to participate in Softball – as players, coaches, umpires, administrators and volunteers. With Softball generally recognised as the preferred sport of Indigenous women, and becoming increasingly popular amongst Indigenous men, we are committed to expanding Softball programs in targeted urban, rural and remote areas across Australia.

Over the next 12 months we will provide over 100 programs including Softball competitions, coaching and officiating training sessions, and junior development activities to more than 8,000 Indigenous participants. We will also work with local communities to help them become self-sufficient so they can develop and deliver their own events and programs.

With the support of our Member States, program partners and sponsors, the Indigenous Softball Program will use Softball as a vehicle to close the health and opportunity gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

This promotional booklet showcases some of the great work happening now in Indigenous communities across Australia.



Sue Noble CEO

NT

In partnership with the Northern Territory's Indigenous Sports Unit and participating Shires, Softball Northern Territory attracts over 1,700 participants to the Territory's Shire Softball competitions. The competitions aim to increase participation levels of Indigenous women and children living in remote communities by way of a structured and regular sporting activity. Participating teams play a round-robin home-and-away format over a 10-15 week period. This format promotes wider community involvement and enhances inter-community relationships. Softball Northern Territory, through the delivery of coaching and officiating training courses, has increased the capacity of participating Shires to host a sustainable competition. The Shire competitions have clearly defined participation and development pathways, with winning teams representing their Shires at the Northern Territory Championships.



SA

Softball South Australia, through its partnership with the South Australian National Football League and the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Land Council, has supported the ongoing development of the Far North West Sports League (FNWSL) on the APY Lands. The League runs an 8-team Softball competition, which has been instrumental in building the sustainability of the participating Indigenous communities. The competition has been successful in providing community members, particularly women, with an increased sense of self-worth, leadership opportunities as coaches and team officials, as well as delivering the social, physical and health benefits associated with playing an active team sport.

The coaching, scoring and umpiring training provided by Softball South Australia in 2011 resulted in 17 umpires, 8 coaches and 3 scorers achieving nationally recognised accreditation. The FNWSL is close to achieving self-sufficiency, with most communities now having the capacity and capability to run their own competitions.



WA

Softball Western Australia, through its successful partnerships with Newcrest Mining, the Western Desert League and the Garnduwa community, delivers Softball programs to a number of communities in the Pilbara and Kimberley. The programs aim to build the capacity of communities to self-manage, organise and deliver Softball competitions and related activities. In 2011, Softball Western Australia conducted coaching, umpiring and scoring clinics that resulted in 23 Indigenous participants achieving nationally recognised accreditation and the formation of a new Softball Association in Broome.



NSW

Softball NSW is targeting Indigenous communities from Blacktown, Dubbo and Kempsey in order to increase their participation in state Softball programs. Planned activities include Softball Batter Up junior participation sessions, Come-and-Try Days and Community Coaching clinics – all of which link to local club and association competitions. Opportunities are also provided for Indigenous participants to access accredited coaching and officiating training, as well as development opportunities for players to help them progress from grassroots programs to elite competition.



VIC

Softball Victoria's Indigenous Softball Program centres around its partnership with the Worawa Aboriginal College in Healesville. As a result of the athlete development and coach education programs provided by Softball Victoria, Worawa College now competes in the Knox Softball Association C grade Women's competition. Softball Victoria, with Sport and Recreation Victoria's Indigenous Sports Unit staff, has provided cultural awareness training to Knox Softball Association members to support the entry of Worawa College into the competition.



An orange circle containing the text "TAS" in white, handwritten-style capital letters.

TAS

Softball Tasmania, in partnership with Softball Australia and Sport and Recreation Tasmania, is developing its Social Inclusion Strategy to ensure Softball is accessible to Tasmanians of all ages, cultures and abilities. Twelve clubs will be selected to receive cultural awareness training, coach and official accreditation courses, equipment and other resources to assist in developing a more accessible, welcoming and inclusive environment.

These clubs will deliver and promote inclusive programs, such as the national junior participation program, Softball Batter Up, to people from Indigenous communities.



A red circle containing the letters "ACT" in white, serif font.

ACT

Softball ACT continues to work with Sport and Recreation ACT to provide opportunities for Indigenous participants of all ages and abilities to participate in Softball. In 2001, the WhISPers Softball Club was established when three Indigenous women, including former Australian representative Joanne Lesiputty, established an Indigenous Softball team to compete in Canberra's Softball competition. With assistance from Softball ACT, Softball Australia and the ACT Indigenous Sport Program, WhISPers is now totally self-funded, boasts a number of junior and senior teams, and welcomes people from Indigenous and non-Indigenous backgrounds.

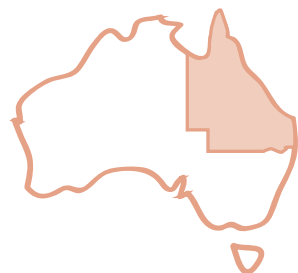


QLD

The Mornington Island Sports League project is a joint initiative of Womensport Queensland and Softball Queensland. Funded by the Department of Communities, Sport and Recreation Services, the primary objectives of the project are to increase sport participation for the Mornington Island community (specifically women and girls), and to build capacity to facilitate the delivery of independent community-based sport.

Social Softball games conducted by the Mornington Island Sports League in 2010 attracted more than 290 community participants, with the majority being women and girls. With the support of a local working group and regular visits by specialist program providers supported by Softball Queensland, participants now have the skills required to organise, play and officiate games. A day-long community Softball event in 2010 saw 60 participants in four teams compete against each other in a round-robin competition.

The success of the Mornington Island Sports League project can be directly attributed to local engagement, ownership and the efforts of a working group drawn from various organisations on the Island. The working group was instrumental in the design of a program based on the 'turn up and play' model, rather than the more traditional approach of training and formal competition. This more relaxed model succeeded in motivating the community to come and try Softball, making it more accessible and visible in the community.



The female sport of choice

Did you know....

- Softball is a popular sport in the Indigenous community. In 2010–2011:
 - More than 7,800 people participated in Softball Australia's Indigenous Softball Program – approximately 73% were female
 - 183 Indigenous people were involved in the management of Softball activities
 - 308 people participated in coaching and officiating accreditation courses. As a result, the number of Indigenous Australians involved in the management of Softball teams has grown significantly over the last few years
- Softball is the sport of choice among Indigenous women
- In 2009, an estimated 1.8% of male and 3.4% of female Softball participants across Australia were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders
- Softball Australia works closely with ARMtour and Red Dust to deliver Softball programs across outback Australia

"Indigenous women living in remote communities have said they would like more opportunities to participate in structured and regular sporting activities and Softball was their preferred sport."

Karl Hampton, NT Minister for Sport and Recreation

"Softball on the Lands helps bring family and friends together, it is a sport that everyone can play"

Tim Stewart,
SANFL, APY Lands
Development Coordinator

"I have loved playing Softball since I was a young girl, and now that I am older, I want to pass what I have learned down to the young women in Amata so they can enjoy everything about Softball that I got to. The young women love Softball because they get to play against other women from across the APY Lands and get to see their friends and family from other communities a lot more. It's good for the community because like football, it makes everyone feel happy."

Barbara Moore,
Amata Softball Manager

Promoting a healthy lifestyle

The National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy (NASCA) uses sport and sporting role models to encourage Aboriginal youth to value education, stay in school and increase their post school opportunities. Softball Australia is proud to partner NASCA through the Athletes as Role Models program (ARMTour).

ARMTour involves teams of athletes visiting remote Aboriginal communities to deliver educational, health, culture and sporting programs. Softball role models help convey four simple messages to remote Aboriginal youth:

- Provide inspiration, encouragement and support for students at school
- Enhance student self-esteem and self-confidence as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people
- Help students develop life skills, for example in communication, leadership and goal-setting
- Encourage participation in sport and recreation activities for healthy and positive lifestyles.

Since 1997, ARMTour role models have reached more than 8,000 young people in over 20 communities across Australia, with a current focus on the Central Desert region of the Northern Territory. Role models work to increase community and school partnerships, and inspire young Aboriginal people to greatness. The result is higher attendance rates at school (up 34% while role models are in a community, and remaining up by 19% for the following month), increased participation in sport and less destructive and dangerous behaviour among youth.



Red Dust Role Models is a non-profit health promotion charity that seeks to improve the health and wellbeing of disadvantaged youth in remote communities. Softball Australia is proud to partner with Red Dust in providing Softball role models to help deliver its Lifestyle Education Program. Red Dust utilises the profile and influence of positive role models from many walks of life, including sport, art and music to:

- Deliver health messages
- Inspire healthy lifestyle decisions
- Promote education as a path to personal development, employment and readiness for community leadership.





Benefits of Softball

As a team sport for all ages, cultures, gender and abilities, Softball offers participants many benefits:

- Shared enjoyment with friends and family
- Improved health and fitness
- Increased physical activity and mental alertness
- Sense of belonging to a community with shared interests
- Improved life skills, including quick thinking, loyalty, sense of responsibility, heightened concentration, judgment, discipline and teamwork
- Opportunities to compete and represent their community, club, state, or Australia
- Development of new skills, whether playing, coaching, scoring, umpiring or administration
- Ability to accommodate female and male participants of all ages and skill levels
- Affordability – players starting out do not have to make a big financial commitment
- Fun!

While the many benefits of Softball are as applicable to the Indigenous community as they are to the wider Australian community, other features of Softball stand out as being particularly beneficial to Indigenous participants including:

- Fostering of community spirit and pride
- Improved self-esteem and self-worth
- Access to great role models, including Stacey Porter and Jeff Goolagong
- Free or subsidised access to Softball equipment, coaching, officiating and scoring accredited training, competitions, carnivals, skill development clinics and programs such as Softball Batter Up.

Softball scores on all levels

Health

Softball is an outdoor game that is easy to play. It offers a great sense of wellbeing and a good balance of exercise, and is fun for a healthy mind and body.

Social

Participating in a structured sport that promotes fun, a team spirit and applause from friends and family creates a powerful sense of community, pride and togetherness.

Education

Collaborating with local schools to promote and play Softball encourages young Indigenous people to attend school, which increases their chance of gaining a formal education and greater opportunities in life.



Photographer: Greg Heron

Key Partnerships



Australian Government



Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission



Role models

Stacey Porter

Stacey has demonstrated her skills on the diamond since 1997 when she first represented NSW. She has been a member of the AIS Softball squad since 2002.

At 20 years of age, Stacey became the first female Indigenous Australian to represent her country in Olympic Softball competition. Stacey won a silver medal at the 2004 Olympics in Athens and a bronze medal at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing. In 2006, Stacey also won a bronze medal in her first ISF Open Women's World Championship.

Over the years Stacey has received several awards for her outstanding achievements:

- 1997-1998 Best Batter in the Australian U16 Championship, Esther Deason Shield
- 1999-2000 Best Batter in the Australian U19 Championship, Elinor McKenzie Shield
- 2001 Most Valuable Player, Elinor McKenzie Shield
- 2005 Female Sportsperson of the Year, Deadly Awards

- 2005 Female Softballer of the Year, Softball Australia Awards of Excellence
- 2005 and 2010 Best Batter in the Australian Open Women's Championship, Gilley's Shield
- 2008 Sportsperson of the Year, National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee
- 2008-2010 Most Valuable Player, Gilley's Shield
- 2008, 2010 and 2011 Softball Australias Indigenous Athlete of the Year
- In 2010, Stacey captained the Australian Open Women's team, the Aussie Spirit, in their ISF World Championship campaign and in 2012 captained the NSW Firestars to win the Australian Open Women's Championship, Gilley's Shield.

Stacey is an exceptionally strong player and is arguably the best batter in the world. When Stacey is not playing professional Softball in Japan, she resides in Brisbane and actively promotes community awareness and recognition of Softball.

"As one of the Indigenous role models for Softball Australia, I'd like to acknowledge the work our sport is doing in our communities. I attended the first NRL All Stars vs Indigenous All Stars rugby league game in 2010. I was so proud of the powerful sense of community and togetherness the Indigenous people brought to the game and this is exactly what we can bring to Softball. This is a great relationship that I did not have the opportunity to grow from when I was a young athlete. With 'sport' as our common bond, I'd like to encourage the development between the Australian government, Softball Australia, our sponsors and the Indigenous communities."

Stacey Porter
Aussie Spirit Captain



Role models

"Playing Softball has given me so many exciting opportunities. I have been fortunate enough to travel the world representing Australia and playing in the North American and New Zealand Softball leagues. I have played alongside some of the best Softball players and met many great people, many of whom are life-long friends. I'd like to thank Softball Australia for developing the Indigenous Softball Program. Through this program Indigenous people of all ages are given the same opportunities I have been given to participate in Softball."

Jeff Goolagong

Jeff Goolagong

Jeff is a two-time World Championship player from the ACT. He was a member of the ACT Team that won the 2001, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2012 John Reid Shield, Australian Open Men's Championship. In 2012, Jeff was awarded Best Player in the John Reid Shield Grand Final. He was also a member of the winning team at the 2006 International Softball Congress Tournament and was selected in the All World Second Team as an outfielder.

In 2008, Jeff played in a number of high-level club competitions, including the ISC World Tournament and was a member of the Australian team that defeated New Zealand to win the Pacific International Series.

In 2009, Jeff played a vital role in ACT's win at the Australian Open Men's Championship, where he was awarded the Most Valuable Player for the tournament.

The pinnacle of Jeff's career came at the 2009 XII ISF Men's World Championship when the *Aussie Steelers* were crowned World Champions.



The art of Indigenous Softball

Softball Australia is pleased to acknowledge the young Aboriginal artists who created a unique Indigenous inspired Softball bat and ball to represent the special spirit and bond between Indigenous communities and the game of Softball.

The bat was designed and hand painted by Angelina Doolan (aged 18) to depict the theme of wildflowers in the wet season.

Kira Briscoe (aged 14) hand painted the ball using the elemental colours to represent air, water, fire and earth.

Angelina and Kira are students at the Worawa Aboriginal College in Healesville, Victoria.

Worawa Aboriginal College have a strong partnership with Softball Victoria through the development of the Worawa Aboriginal College Softball team who participate in the Knox Softball Association Women's Competition.





Thank you

A special thanks to everyone

Thank you for taking the time and interest to read what a difference Softball is making to the lives of those Indigenous Australians who contribute to, and participate in our sport.

Softball resonates with Indigenous communities, especially the women and girls in those communities. To keep the benefits flowing, we need to keep the game growing. Your support is most appreciated.

For more information visit www.softball.org.au
or contact us on 03 9417 0022